The Effectiveness of Using Visual Adaptation of A Short Story for Developing Speaking Skills Among Tertiary Level ESL Students of Engineering Studies in Madras Institute of Technology (MIT), Chennai.

Section A-Research paper

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING VISUAL ADAPTATION OF A SHORT STORY FOR DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG TERTIARY LEVEL ESL STUDENTS OF ENGINEERING STUDIES IN MADRAS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MIT), CHENNAI.

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Abstract

With the recent technological tools like ChatGPT and AI (Artificial Intelligence) influencing language learning, the importance of implementing blended classroom teaching methods become inevitable. To adapt to these innovations in language teaching this study attempts to develop the speaking skills of engineering students through visual adaptation of a short story using Task Based Language Teaching method. Students from Madras Institute of Technology (MIT) pursuing their education from engineering studies underwent language teaching through Task Based Language Teaching approach. In pre-test by using the traditional lecture method the performance of the student is assessed by giving them a task like role play to enact using dialogues and they are scored based on their performance. Likewise, in the post-test using traditional lecture method for control group and Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) method for experimental group the performance of the students is assessed by giving them a task like role play to enact using dialogues and they are scored based on their performance. The TBLT method is introduced through the visual adaptation of short stories from the selection of R.K.Narayan's 'Malgudi Days'. With the help of assessing the parameters of speaking skills such as Accuracy, Fluency and Content from the role play enactments; the marks scored by the students are recorded. By quantifying the performance of the students in the pre-test and post-test the scores are analysed to find the most appropriate method that can be employed in English language classroom of engineering students.

Keywords: Lecture method, Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), English as Second Language (ESL), task, role play, enactment, pre-test and post-test.

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1.   Introduction

Teaching English language through literature plays a dual role in making students understand the content as well as the language effectively. With the help of available authentic texts in different literary genres of English literature like the short story, novel, poetry, etc. students get involved in the understanding of the content and thereby enjoy learning. This enjoyment of learning, understanding of content, makes students get motivated to learn the language with confidence. Especially, for engineering students, the need for the English language is one of the most important criteria for employment. For which, the students need an effective and interesting method for learning the English language. With the help of literary genres like short stories, the understanding of the plot makes students confident to utter sentences in English using vocabularies from the short story. The students in learning process learn the plot, cultural, political background of the story too while learning a language. Literature makes students get awareness towards the society with the help of the plot and thereby teach the language. Where on one side students learn the language and on the other side, they too learn social awareness. While choosing Short Stories for teaching engineering students, their interest towards the story should be taken into consideration. So, the short stories are chosen for this research based on the plot, setting and simple language which is understandable and interesting to the students.

The collection of short stories as episodes from R.K. Narayanan "Malgudi Days" suited to the students' need kindling their interest towards the plot and motivated them to understand the story. There are four language skills like Listening, Speaking, Reading and writing which are interconnected with each other, where each skill contributes to the development of other skills. Therefore, proficiency in every skill is important in language learning process. But for this research the focus is directed towards speaking skill development. The main reason behind giving importance to speaking skill is the engineering student's need of the hour. As the main focus of this research is to give task based on the visual adaptation of a short story TBLT serves the purpose. Likewise, TBLT approach also helps in teaching the four language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. Where, this research is focused on speaking skills development. TBLT approach is learner-centered approach which aids the teacher to motivate and help the students. Understanding the importance of Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) method is crucial for this research.

The evolution of Task Based Language Teaching starts with the British Applied linguist David Wilkins, who in 1976 made a distinction in syllabus design, and divided it into the synthetic approach and analytical approach. In a synthetic approach, the language to be taught is first analysed and broken down into basic parts. Likewise, different parts of the language are taught step by step, and gradual acquisition takes place until the whole structure of the language is built up. And this approach belongs to the traditional way of forming syllabus. While, the analytical approach is organized regarding the purposes for which the learner is learning a language and the kind of language performance that is needed to meet these purposes. This analytical approach paved the way for the use of task, scholars like Allwright (1984) argued about the effectiveness of task as an input that helped the need for language instruction and concentrated on the need of the language use.

Thereby, the popularity of task Based approach started with the first recorded application of Task Based approach in Procedural Syllabus by Prabhu (1987). This procedural syllabus program was made on Bangalore Madras Project by Prabhu (1979-1984). This popularly called Bangalore project was a project conducted by Prabhu in schools in India where the students were given activities like information gap and series of problems which they were asked to solve with the help of teacher's supervision. Through this Prabhu argued that focus on language form prevents students from language learning. Prabhu claimed trough his project that language development is achieved by the outcome of natural processes. By which Prabhu's Bangalore project showed that the learners were successful in the natural process of language development than the students who were taught in traditional ways. After that, two scholars Long and Crookes (1992) defined task-based syllabuses into three categories as procedural syllabus, process syllabus, and task-based syllabus. The procedural syllabus states that structure can be learned when attention is given to the meaning. The learner through information gap and opinion gap activities consciously focus on solving the task with the help of meaning while the learner subconsciously perceives the language behind. Likewise, in process syllabus, the actual syllabus is formulated as the teaching and learning proceeds. This syllabus aims on the process of the learning rather than the product. Thereby, combining both procedural and process syllabus the new syllabus called task-based syllabus. This task-based syllabus is nothing but the Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

The framework of Task Based Language Teaching was first suggested by Jane Willis (1996) and then advocated by many scholars like Rod Ellis and David Nunan as three phases called pre-task, during-task, and post-task. Pre-task refers to framing the activity, planning the time, supporting students to

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perform in a task similar or model to the task they will perform in the during task and conducting brainstorm session to prepare them for the task. In During-task phase two kinds of options available to the teachers like task performance options and process options. In task performance option the teacher can allow students to complete their task in their own time or to set a time limit. This option is important because it can influence the nature of language the students produce. The process option involves the teacher and students in online decision making about how to perform the task as it is being completed. And finally the post-task phase has three major pedagogic goals: (1) to provide an opportunity for a repeat performance of the task; (2) to encourage reflection on how the task was performed; and (3) to encourage attention to form, in particular to those forms that proved problematic to the learners when they performed the task.

Further the aim of this research is to develop speaking skills of the engineering students, two teaching methods Traditional Lecture Method and Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are compared to find the effective method with the help of a literary genre, Short story. And, the aim of this study is to make engineering students learn and gain confidence in English language skills especially in speaking skills through literature (literary genres).The experimental method is used for this research to analyze and provide the clear cut picture of the study carried in the classroom. The students from Electronic and Communication, Mechanical departments of Madras Institute of Technology, Chrompet were taken as population. From the total strength of 60 students, thirty students were the control group and the other thirty students were experimental group. The hypothesis of this research is that the visual adaptation of a short story effectively helps students to learn the content of the short story and also to enhance the language skills like speaking skills. Likewise, the TBLT method is better than traditional lecture method in teaching and making students enjoy learning. And the research questions are to find which method is effective in enhancing Speaking skills of engineering students, Traditional Lecture Method or TBLT method? And to check whether the visual adaptation of a short story help in improving the Language skills especially speaking skills of engineering students?

Performance of the Students in the Pre-Test

This chapter showcases the performance of the students in Pre-Test. The students from English language classroom comprising of 60 students from different engineering departments at Madras Institute of Technology, Chennai were the participants for this research. The classroom was the heterogeneous population and randomly 60 students were separated as thirty plus thirty. The first thirty students were chosen as the control group, and the other thirty students were taken for the experimental group. Likewise, this research too examines the student's ability in terms of proficiency of English language like Accuracy, Fluency and Content for developing speaking skills in an English language classroom.In the experimental group, the remaining thirty students were selected and the group comprised of both male and female students. As the control group is assessed for heterogeneity, this group too focuses on finding the equilibrium. If the control group and experimental groups are assessed then the level of the students in speaking skills are identified. For pre-test both the control group and experimental group were given the lecture on the short story "Leela's Friend" from Malgudi Days of R.K.Naryanan. After the lecture, the students were grouped into five groups respectively with six members in each group. So, the control group had five groups enacting the short story and the experimental group also had five groups enacting the short story. Every enactment is recorded for analysis.

After recording the enactment, the video of the enactment is analyzed and assessed by giving special attention to the criteria's like Accuracy, Fluency and Content. Where, accuracy and fluency helps in assessing the students speaking skills and content helps in assessing the students' knowledge about the content of the story. On the purview of accuracy, the number of self-correction a group make while doing the enactment is assessed. Then, the use of verb tenses in the group is studied. And, finally the use of vocabulary like new vocabularies from the lecture is assessed. Likewise, on the fluency parameter, while enacting how the group exchanges the dialogues is assessed with the help of video. First, the group is assessed based on number of pauses of one or two seconds longer taken for saying dialogues. Secondly, the number of false starts is assessed. And, finally the repetition of words, sentences used by the group is assessed. Finally, the content parameter is analyzed with the portrayals of characters by the groups are assessed and then the sequence of the plot and understanding of the climax is assessed and graded. For analyzing these above stated checklists Rubric's takes a major role in assisting for assessing. Where, the student's proficiency skills are assessed and scored based on the criteria's proposed in rubric. For accuracy, figure 1 is the rubric and the different marks given to different criteria's are mentioned clearly in the rubric. By which the assessing becomes original and the results from the video are assessed to perfection.

Task Based Language Teaching (Tblt)
Performance of the Students in the Post- Test
In the post-test the research will focus on control group and experimental group performances.

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Where, the students of control group and experimental group in post –test undergo different treatments with Traditional Lecture Method and Task Based Language Teaching method respectively. Both the groups enact as a part of assessment and the progress of the group is shown as a bar graph.The thirty students divided into control group are taught in traditional lecture method. Where, the students were given lecture on the short story "The Hoard" by R.k.Narayan. The characters and the plots were lectured to the students for about twenty minutes.   After the lecture the students were grouped into five groups with six characters. Like the characters in the short story Charu, Charu's wife, Gopinath, Gopinath's mother, the sweet vendor and the Hindu priest. Then, the students were made to enact and their enactment is recorded as video for assessing. Assessing is based on checklist created under three criteria's like Accuracy and Fluency of speaking proficiency, and content on understanding of the story.

Visual Adaptation of A Short Story "The Hoard"
The summary of the short story" The Hoard" is explained in detail in the pre-test. This , visual adaptation of R.K.Narayan's " The Hoard" was done by director Shankar Nag . The entire episode runs for about 22 minutes and the dialogues used throughout the film are simple English language and the vocabularies used are too simple which is comfortable for the students to understand.

Post-Test for Experimental Group
The first phase in TBLT approach is Pre-Task. In this phase the students were given introduction about the short story "The Hoard" and its writer R.K.Narayan. Then, the process of the During-task phase is explained. Where, the students will be grouped into five groups with six characters in each group. And the students were instructed about the

enactment process, where the students have to focus the audience and the characters should be audible to the audience.
In During-Task phase the students were shown the visual adaptation of the short story "The Hoard" in the form of a short movie. The movie went on for about twenty minutes. And, after watching the movie the students were randomly grouped as five groups with six characters in each group. Then, one by one the group started enacting and every enactment is recorded as a video for assessment. Finally, in the Post-Task phase the students were asked to narrate the story, one from each group narrated the story. Some of the videos recorded on the enactment were reviewed and some feedback was given to the students while narrating the story on the spot regarding tenses and other grammatical aspects. As a post-task activity some questions were asked regarding the short story as a quiz.

Analysis of Pre-Test and Post-Test
The pre-test and post-test comparison is done in this research to find out the best teaching tool and method. The scores of the pre-test and post-test are shown in this tabular form (shown below) tells the difference of scores. The different scores of experimental group and control group are compared based on pre-test and post-test and based on different criteria's like Accuracy, Fluency and Content. The graphs shown below is the pictorial representation i.e., bar graph. The bar graph clearly shows the proficiency level of the students. As, denoted in the bar graph, the third green bar which stands for content is the most proficient. When the student's content level is found higher, then the proficiency level of accuracy and fluency skills are also found higher which is shown below as pre-test control group.

COMPARISON GRAPH
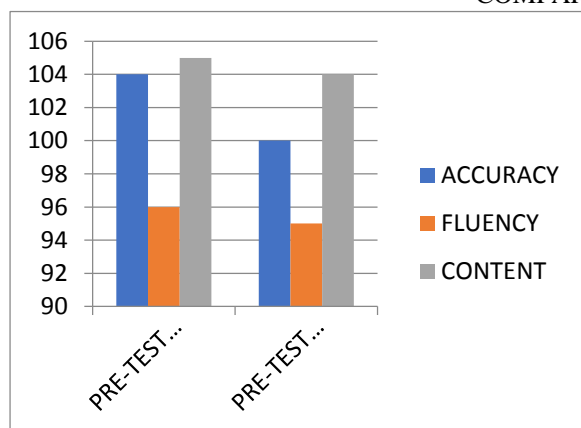
In the second graph the post-control group and post-experimental group are shown. Whereas, in this graph too the same assumption is seen like when the
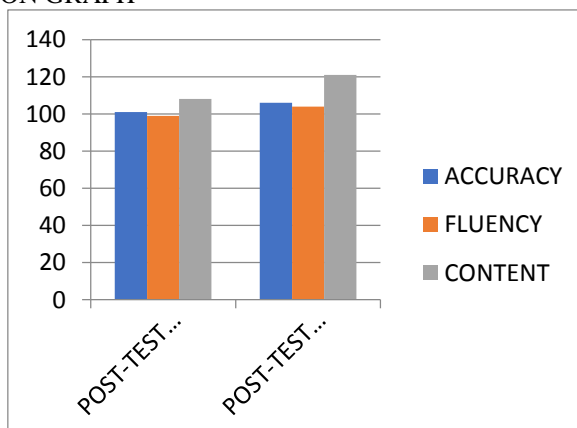
content is high in the experimental group , the groups fluency and accuracy levels are higher which is shown in the bar graph for post-test experimental

group.The third graph gives the clear sketch of the goal of this research. When visual adaptation of the short story is used with TBLT approach for
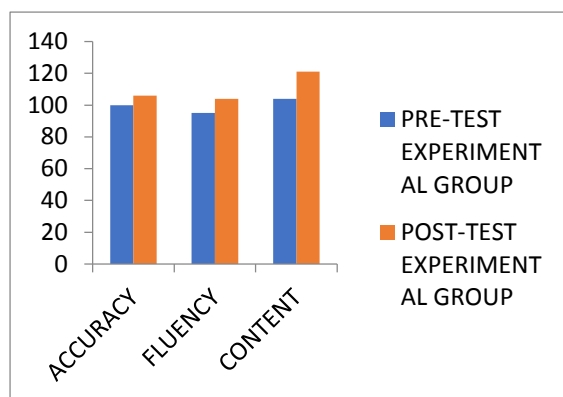
experimental group, the content level is increased. Thus, when the content level is increased the accuracy and fluency skills are also increased .
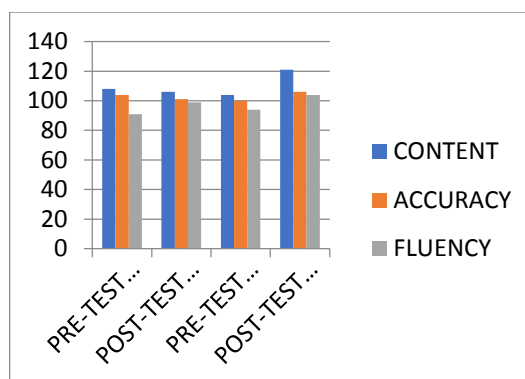
The above graphs describe that the hypotheses framed for this study are valid wherein the use of visual adaptation of a short story is an effective tool in developing the speaking skills of engineering students. Further, The Task Based Language Teaching method is better than Traditional Lecture method in teaching the language skill, especially the speaking skill. And, the analysis of pre-test and post-test shows that hypotheses presented above are correct.

2.   Conclusion

The visual adaptation of a short story proved effective in developing the speaking skills of engineering students. Then, the approach Task Based Language Teaching helps in using this visual adaptation of a short as task effectively. The authenticity of the visual adaptation of any literary genre is important, as mentioned in the second chapter, to include this tool in the classroom. So, when the authenticity is checked then there is no doubt this tool is going to be a great help for teachers to make students to develop any skills. The literary genre like short story has been a relevant subject for any engineering student as they have learnt in their school education. So, when the students learn the same literary genre's which they have learnt in a different perspective of watching visuals it will be interesting and motivating students.

When students are given chance to learn English language through literature and through a visual medium in addition to activities there is an assurance that students will enjoy and learn. In the perspective of engineering English language classrooms this methodology of using visual adaptation of a literary genre with activities is going to make students stress free unlike other subject classes and motivate them to learn. In this research it is found that while using visual adaptation of a short story the response from the students were amazing. The engineering students

were enjoying the plot of the short story and during the activities the way they responded to it was mind blowing. The students while enacting and narrating the story irrespective of their weak speaking they attempted with self-confidence. The students began to enjoy and learn by which the teaching task is fulfilled. And, the use of visual adaptations of a short story is proven to be effective in developing speaking skills by which this can be included in the syllabus of both arts and engineering colleges.

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