

Effective Public – Speaking Intervention: Pre and Post Assessment

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Abstract - The increasing use of communicative English in a globalized world has forced academicians and teachers to re-think the methods of teaching English in classrooms. The teaching of English is no longer confined to theoretical instructions in classrooms. In the last few decades, there has been a great emphasis on spoken English. Many educational institutes have come up with language laboratories equipped with computers and other language teaching tools to bring amelioration in the communicative skills of learners. Usually, this language lab intervention is confined to one semester or at the most in two. It remains to be researched how far this technique of learning spoken English brings benefits to the learners. This study has devised a pre and post assessment questionnaire to find out whether the teaching imparted in one semester in the language laboratory makes any significant difference. This research has focused to assess ten parameters of public speaking namely:

- *Confidence level in public speaking*
- *Accuracy and correctness in public speaking*
- *Rich vocabulary and word power*
- *Fluency in speaking*
- *Group discussion skills*
- *Personal interview skills*
- *Presentation skills*
- *Effective use of body language*
- *Clarity and organization of thought in public speaking*
- *Meaningful listening skills*

Keywords- Communicative English, Language Laboratory, Assessment, Intervention

INTRODUCTION

The increasing use of communicative English in a globalized world has forced academicians and teachers to re-think the methods of teaching English in classrooms. The teaching of English is no longer confined to theoretical instructions in classrooms. In the last few decades, there has been a great emphasis on spoken English. Many educational institutes have come up with language laboratories equipped with computers and other language teaching tools to bring amelioration in the communicative skills of learners. Usually, this language lab intervention is confined to one semester or at the most in two. It remains to be researched how far this technique of learning spoken English brings benefits to the learners.

Often, in India, especially in the colleges taking up professional courses, the role of the core subjects is emphasized upon. As it strengthens the technical knowledge of students and it fosters their progress in the work environment. However, one of the growing concerns of the recruiters is their discontent with the kind of orientation the new recruits have in business correspondence and public speaking skills. English has become the language used most extensively at the workplace all over India. New recruits are expected to have a good hand at it. Be it speaking up their minds at a meeting, presenting an interesting concept in a seminar, negotiating with clients, providing feedback and reports at work or any other communication at work whether formal or informal, the recruits are expected to exhibit their speaking skills every now and then. Therefore, it is very important for English teachers in professional colleges to ensure the applicability of the skills taught in the classroom by assessing whether the desired skills have been acquired by the students or not?

In all theory as well as practical courses, at the end of the term, some assessment tool which is very often written in orientation is used to evaluate the learners. The objective of which is to simply declare the student whether the student has passed the exam or failed in it so that he can be promoted to the next semester. It must be emphasized that the objective of imparting instructions in theory class and the entire exercise of developing skill/competency is not to simply assess the learner to promote him to the next stage of learning in the hierarchy of programmes offered by the institutes.

It is not only desirable but mandatory to devise methodology by which the students' skills/ competency is assessed at the entry point to the semester and the exit point of the semester with special reference to a particular course so that it becomes clear to the teachers to understand how far the teaching of the course has facilitated the targeted skill or competency among learners. Only then, the students will be able to apply the theory to practice at work.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research study is to find out how far the skill of public speaking develops among the learners with the intervention of language lab. This degree of development in the skill of public speaking is found out with the help of pre and post assessment tool, a questionnaire containing ten different items related to public speaking. This would enable the teachers to understand the degree of development in the skill of public speaking with regard to ten important areas of public speaking which included Confidence level in public speaking, Accuracy and correctness in public speaking, Rich vocabulary and word power, Fluency in speaking, Group discussion skills, Personal interview skills, Presentation skills, Effective use of body language, Clarity and organization of thought in public speaking and Meaningful listening skills.

HYPOTHESIS

Language Lab intervention techniques make a significant difference in the various parameters of public speaking.

SAMPLE

This study was conducted on the sample of 120 first semester students of undergraduate programme of engineering faculty form Shri Ramdeobaba College of Engineering and Management, Nagpur.

PROCEDURE

The author of this study devised a five-point scale questionnaire containing 10 items with the objective of finding out the level of ten different parameters of public speaking competency. This questionnaire was administered to all the 120 students at the entry of the semester and again on the last day of their semester. The scores of pre and post assessment were calculated to find out the difference in the development of a degree of public speaking competency.

Interventions provided to the students during the semester

During the stretch of the semester, the students were oriented in various areas of public speaking ranging from basic techniques to participate in an extempore to advanced communication activities like group discussions and interviews. The duration of the module was 22 hours: 2 hours per week for a semester. Several individual, as well as group activities, were conducted, in which students got an opportunity to assess themselves and identify their strengths and weaknesses. As, many of the activities conducted were in groups, the students got opportunities to work in teams, which help them develop interpersonal skills. The language lab module is represented in the table below showing the sessions conducted, duration of the sessions, and the activities administered to the students.

Table I
Table Showing the Module of Activities Conducted in the Language Lab

<i>Session</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Speaking Skills	2 hours	Stage presence, conduct while speaking, organization of thoughts	A Magic Bag, JAM Sessions
Listening Skills	2 hours	Barriers to effective listening, listening comprehension, vocabulary development	Listening Comprehension
Presentation Skills	4 hours	Mode of delivery, data collection, Organization of content, the importance of audio-visual aids, orientation to PowerPoint Presentations, individual and group presentations.	Power-Point Orientation, Group Presentations by students
Non-verbal communication	2 hours	Importance of personal appearance, positive gestures & postures, facial expressions, kinesics, chromatics, etc.	Videos on Effective Body Language Demonstration of gestures & postures and what they convey
Group Discussion Skills	6 hours	Fundamentals of GD, participating techniques, do's & don'ts of GD, practice sessions	Orientation through PPTs, Videos, Practice Session and Feedback Session
Interview Skills	6 hours	Fundamentals of Interviews, pre-interview preparation (self-analysis, preparing CVs, post-interview preparation (positive follow-ups), frequently asked questions and strategies to answer them.	Self-analysis using techniques like SWOT, Resume making, Mock Interview Session and Feedback Session

RESULTS

The analysis of the pre and the post-assessment confirmed the hypothesis that language lab intervention produced a significant difference in all the ten areas of competency of public speaking.

It was revealed that the area of confidence registered the highest development i.e 1.43 and that of vocabulary showed the lowest score of 0.86. The Confidence parameter was followed by Listening Skills with the score of 1.4, Body Language with the score of 1.36, Accuracy with the score of 1.23, Fluency with the score of 1.13, Group Discussion Skills and Interview Skills with the score of 1 each and Presentation Skills with the score of 0.96. The following table shows the pre and post scores of all the ten parameters.

Table II
Table showing Degree of Difference in Pre and Post-Assessment for the Ten Parameters of Competence

Competence Parameter	Pre - Assessment	Post- Assessment	Degree of Difference
Confidence	2.93	4.36	1.43
Accuracy	2.86	4.1	1.23
Vocabulary	2.73	3.6	0.86
Fluency	2.8	3.93	1.13
GD Skills	3.7	4.7	1
PI Skills	3.1	4.1	1
Presentation Skills	3.2	4.16	0.96
Body Language	3.13	4.1	1.36
Organization of thoughts	3.43	4.63	1.2
Listening Skills	3.33	4.73	1.4

CONCLUSION

This has brought us to interesting conclusions that the intervention in the language lab regarding public speaking for one semester brought about notable development in the skills of content delivery such as confidence, listening skills, and body language. The core elements in speaking such as vocabulary, accuracy, and organization of thoughts were less developed with the language lab intervention. Thus, this study indicates that one semester's intervention is sufficient to enhance non-verbal skills that help to effectively deliver the contents at the time of public speaking, but the duration of one semester is not enough to bring about real changes in other areas of language learning such as accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, etc. Therefore, it is suggested to the policy makers especially to those of the professional colleges that the period of an intervention of language learning should be extended from one semester to at least three to four semesters. It is to be appreciated that the learning of the skills such as accuracy, fluency, organization of thoughts and improving vocabulary relatively takes a longer duration to show improvement.

LIMITATIONS

Like any other research study, this study also suffers from obvious limitations. The sample size was restricted only to 120. Secondly, it was drawn only from one engineering college. There could have been more areas of competency of public speaking while the questionnaire designed for this study was restricted to only ten areas. Also, the tool used for assessing the language skills was a self-report questionnaire, a more objective tool like a test could have been employed at the pre-assessment and post-assessment to get more genuine scores. Moreover, the difference in methodology adopted by the different teachers to facilitate the competency of public speaking can also influence the results.

Annexure I
Pre Orientation Assessment for Communication Skills Practical

Name: _____

Year& Semester: _____

Batch and Roll No: _____

Date: _____

**Rate yourself on a scale of 0 to 6 on following skills:
(0 indicates the least score and 6 indicates the highest score)**

1. Confidence level in public speaking- ____
2. Accuracy and correctness in public speaking- ____
3. Rich vocabulary and word power- ____
4. Fluency in speaking- ____
5. Group discussion skills- ____
6. Personal interview skills- ____
7. Presentation skills- ____
8. Effective use of body language- ____
9. Clarity and organization of thought in public speaking- ____
10. Meaningful listening skills- ____