



The Effectiveness of Group Work on Enhancing English Speaking Skills at Middle Level

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Abstract: The current study investigated the effectiveness of the group work in enhancing and improving the English-speaking skills of the students studying at middle level schools. In order to achieve this objective of the current study, quantitative type of the research was chosen in this study. The study used a quasi-experimental research design with a pre-test and post-test. The middle level school students studying at Mardan were selected as the study population. A sample of 35 students was selected from the middle level school students studying at Mardan. Mean analysis was conducted to find the mean scores and the difference in the mean scores, While the One-Sample t-test was conducted to compare the means and to determine the significant difference in the means scores values in the pre-test and post-test. The result of the pre-test showed that the average scores of the students were 54.71. The results showed that the mean difference between the pretest and the posttest was 13.31. This showed that there a positive difference between the mean values of the pretest and the posttest. The result shows that the performance of the students in speaking skills improved. The results of One sample T test showed that the difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and the mean score of the posttest is significant ($p=.000$) thus showed that the group work develops and enhances the speaking skills of students. The study recommended that student should be familiarized with the benefits from participating in group work for enhancing their speaking and conversant with the prosody of English language including stress, rhythm, intonation and pitch that should be identified. Keywords: Group work, Quasi- experimental research,

1. Introduction and Background of the study

In speaking a second language, the process of reciprocity and interaction among the teacher and students themselves are significant to learn and speak the language. The learning of the language is dependent on the interaction among the speakers of the language and the activities of the interactive tasks in a group helps more in the language teaching[1]. While it is evident that the history of human civilization is replete with various examples which show that progress and improvement are essential components of human life and there has been constant change which

has benefitted man. Many accepted ideas and standards were disregarded, and new theories and ideas were introduced and materialized but later such things were again deemed outdated and were replaced and steps towards improvement were taken [2].

Various languages which remained dominant and their acquisition were considered as a symbol of prestige and dignity but with the passage of time they lost their identity and vanished away slowly and eventually were replaced. Similarly in the present era English language has got a prominent status and cardinal place and has become a tool to move forward in the modern world hence its acquisition has become essential for every individual to compete at various spheres of life. The people who are very much good at speaking English, they enjoy special privilege and can handle the situation and understand the things in better ways[3]. If we have a bird eye view, we will find that its use has got dominance in government offices, courts of law, media industry, corporate offices, banking and above all it is an adequate means to access the information as a lot of material is available in English language and widely used in every day's practical fields. Hence no one can deny the importance of competency in speaking skills as communication is regarded strength of a man [4].

On the other hand, the standards of communicative language vary in Pakistan owing to various reasons and factors involved. Most of the language students who are very good in other subjects, but they are reluctant and hesitant and even cannot speak a few correct sentences and resultantly they cannot perform well in their fields and those who have less abilities can excel due to communicative competence and ability. Hence it is very pertinent that special heed may be given to such situations and remedial measures may be suggested through studies for the improvement in the days to come [5]. The importance of competency of English-speaking skills is occupying more weight age in the society and in the current situations, for successful job careers speaking skills are essential.

All students work together for the given tasks during group work; and materialize the tasks efficiently. It is an adequate tool to be used to develop /enhance speaking skills. Aljadili (2020)[6]explains that group work is a broad concept spanning a variety of approaches for two or more students to work together and initiate themselves. [6]claimed that language group work is a collaborative activity in which students share the tasks and functions of the teacher in groups and pairs." Through group work, kids may listen to various views and debate the speech abilities. It is generally believed that small groups' formation is more productive, suitable, and effective in group work learning process because the smaller the volume of the groups is, the more chances will be available for every student to participate in the learning process practically[7]. This also supports self-initiation, which helps language learning and group work makes learning process more realistic and communicative. Considering the significance of group work and learning and speaking, the current study investigates the effectiveness of group work in developing and enhancing the speaking skills of the students studying at middle level schools.

While in the context of Pakistan, the problem has been observed that our students at middle level face a lot of problems because of their incompetency in speaking skills and resultantly they cannot compete with the other ones who are even less competent in specific fields as language becomes a barrier for them. Similarly, there is limitation

of the empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the group work in improving the speaking skills of the students. Therefore, to fill this research gap, the current study investigates the effectiveness of the group work in enhancing and improving the English speaking skills of the students studying at middle level schools.

1.1 Research Objectives

Below are the objectives of the current research.

1. To measure the level of English speaking skills of students studying at middle level schools.
2. To investigate the effectiveness of the group work in enhancing and improving English speaking skills of the students studying at middle level schools.
3. To provide recommendations for improving English speaking skills of students through group work.

2. Literature review

2.1 Speaking Skills

One expert has different definition of speaking from another. [8] states that speaking is an activity in real life that is carried out by speaker to carry out his/ her ideas to interact with listeners. The activities are unplanned and their continuity is based on situations. According to [9], the activity in question is characterised as the ability to speak out or report in specific terms, or as the capacity to communicate or communicate a series of thoughts well. In addition, Wilson describes talk as developing the relationship between the speaker and the listener (1983). Cameron has another definition (2001). She argues that it's about getting others to grasp the feelings and thoughts of the speaker by utilising language to communicate. When people make expressions, they give their meanings, feelings, thoughts and wishes. Brown and Yule point out that, because to the loosely ordered grammar of words and phrases and the usage of components such as 'well' and 'oh' and 'uhuh,' a spoken language seem less conceptually complex than other language types like explanatory prose [9].[10] describes speaking as a fundamental oral communication between people in society. It speaks as a natural way of communicating both the expressions of thinking and the forming of a social behavior of the members of the society. In addition, [11] believes that the act of creating meaning and sharing through verbal and nonverbal usage in many contexts is a matter of speaking.

2.2 Problems in speaking skills

Students find it difficult to talk in the classroom. (2008: 24) Richards says that students are tough to portray them well and sometimes avoid situations that need such conversation. Some people who have the capacity to use speech for discussion might experience a disadvantage. [12] emphasized the requirement for second language students to manage the conversation as an engagement with a wide range of themes. At first, students can rely on familiar subjects to get through. However, fresh subjects are needed in order to proceed beyond this stage of conversation.

2.2 Importance of Teaching Speaking Skills

In light of the exponential growth of every facet of contemporary life—including travel, the internet, business, politics, international trade, technology, economics, social interactions, and communication between nations—it is essential that students acquire strong linguistic abilities. [13],[14] are just a few of the many academics who have

emphasized the significance of oral communication and oral presentation in the development of one's knowledge and proficiency in other language abilities (1999). Because Arabic is their native tongue, it might be difficult to capture their attention and motivate them to speak English throughout class. The inability to speak English fluently and clearly, despite years of study, is a common complaint among English as a foreign language students.

2.3 Role of Group Work In Developing /Enhancing Speaking Skills

Many studies have examined the value of group work as an educational method, but fewer have focused on its potential for improving the delivery of instruction in the area of public speaking. Students benefit academically, emotionally, and socially when they engage in cooperative group learning strategies in the language classroom. The following authors and their works have been cited for their contributions to this topic: [15],[16],[17],[18] . All of these research confirmed that student engagement and use of language in oral interactions were improved by collaborative group work. They also vouched for the efficacy of group projects in boosting students' linguistic output, independence, and drive. Group work, as defined by [19], is any academic task in which students work together to complete an objective. It's one of the adaptations made in the name of the student-centered learning philosophy to improve the quality of classroom communication and collaboration. Students are more likely to use the target language, show respect for one another's ideas, and reach compromises while working in groups. In addition, there are various options for individual growth and development for every member. For the last time, Student autonomy and responsibility, as well as the development of problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, were highlighted as benefits of incorporating group work activities into the classroom setting. Without a doubt, kids learn to collaborate and exchange ideas when engaging in group projects. [20] found similar results, concluding that group work equips and offers situations that may allow people and groups to alter not just their own but also community-level issues. A recent author, [21] , has placed too much emphasis on the need of collaboration and speaking out during group work.

2 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design using a pre- and post-test to answer the research questions. In this kind of study, participants are tested both before and after exposure to the experimental manipulation. Quasi-experimental design is utilized as one of the best ways in the study, as stated by Hatch and [22], as referenced by [7]. This is because it aims to compare the nature of human linguistic behavior that we intend to explore with that of actual experimentation.

3.2 Population and Sampling Technique

Based on the convenient sampling technique, which is the type of non-sampling technique, a sample of 35 students were selected from the middle level school students studying at PSCC Batrasi. The students were taken from three

sections. The convenient sampling technique can be used when it is known that all the units of the population fall under the criteria for the selection of the sample [2]. As all the students of the population possessed the eligibility for selection in the sample, thus based on the convenient sampling technique a sample of the 35 students was selected in this study.

3 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through statistical analysis techniques. The scores of the students were analyzed to mind the mean difference. Thus, mean analysis was conducted to find the mean scores and the difference in the mean scores, While the One-Sample t-test was conducted to compare the means and to determine the significant difference in the means scores values in the pre-test and pro-test.

4.1 Results of Students' performance in pretest

The performance of the students was measured in the pre-test through taking the speaking test that was designed based on the vocabulary, grammar and accuracy, fluency and coherence, pronunciation and presentation. The results of the test were marked, and each student was given the marks from 1 to 100 based on their performance. It is to be noted that the passing marks were 40. The below table shows the results of the pre-test.

Table4.1: Pre-test Scores

No of Observations (Students)	Pre-test Scores	Results
1	42	Passed
2	38	Fail
3	65	Passed
4	44	Passed
5	65	Passed
6	61	Passed
7	73	Passed
8	34	Fail
9	54	Passed
10	73	Passed
11	82	Passed
12	27	Fail
13	63	Passed
14	45	Passed
15	62	Passed
16	88	Passed
17	63	Passed
18	44	Passed
19	23	Fail

20	44	Passed
21	44	Passed
22	35	Fail
23	64	Passed
24	83	Passed
25	23	Fail
26	55	Passed
27	65	Passed
28	29	Fail
29	46	Passed
30	55	Passed
31	78	Passed
32	67	Passed
33	63	Passed
34	85	Passed
35	33	Fail
Mean scores	54.71	8 Failed 27 Passed

The above table is showing the results of the pre-test for the students English speaking skills. The result of the pre-test shows that the average scores of the students was 54.71. While the results also shows that 8 of the total students failed the test and the remaining 27 passed the test.

2nd Phase (Group Activates)

After the pre-test, the group activities were conducted with the students. The students were engaged in the group activities and were guided regarding the speaking skills. The students were also encouraged to work as team for improving their skills. The group activities involved the role plays, playing cards and handouts etc. after the group activates the post-test was conducted, and the scores of the students were measured through the marking procedure as in pre-test. The below table presents the scores of the students for the English speaking skills.

Table4.2: Post-test Scores

No of Observations (Students)	Post-test Scores	Results
1	44	Passed
2	65	Passed
3	45	Passed
4	64	Passed
5	67	Passed
6	93	Passed
7	75	Passed
8	44	Passed
9	59	Passed
10	82	Passed
11	42	Passed

12	56	Passed
13	65	Passed
14	77	Passed
15	86	Passed
16	88	Passed
17	95	Passed
18	76	Passed
19	38	Fail
20	76	Passed
21	86	Passed
22	55	Passed
23	73	Passed
24	78	Passed
25	42	Passed
26	67	Passed
27	67	Passed
28	52	Passed
29	55	Passed
30	76	Passed
31	88	Passed
32	78	Passed
33	76	Passed
34	87	Passed
35	64	Passed
Mean scores	68.02857	1 Failed 34 Passed

The above table is showing the results of the post-test for the students speaking skills. The result of the post-test shows that the average scores of the students was 68.02. While the results also shows that 1 of the total students failed the test and the remaining 34 passed the test.

Difference between scores of pre-test and post-test

The below table shows the results for the difference between pretest and posttest scores.

Table4.3: Difference between scores of pre-test and post-test Scores

No of Observations (Students)	Pre-test Scores	Posttest Scores	Difference
1	42	44	2
2	38	65	27
3	65	45	-20
4	44	64	20
5	65	67	2
6	61	93	32
7	73	75	2
8	34	44	10
9	54	59	5
10	73	82	9
11	82	42	-40
12	27	56	29
13	63	65	2

14	45	77	32
15	62	86	24
16	88	88	0
17	63	95	32
18	44	76	32
19	23	38	15
20	44	76	32
21	44	86	42
22	35	55	20
23	64	73	9
24	83	78	-5
25	23	42	19
26	55	67	12
27	65	67	2
28	29	52	23
29	46	55	9
30	55	76	21
31	78	88	10
32	67	78	11
33	63	76	13
34	85	87	2
35	33	64	31
Mean value	54.71	68.02	13.31

The above table is showing the difference between the average mean values of the average scores of the students.

The above table shows that the mean value for the pre-test was 54.71 while the mean value for post-test was 68.02, while the mean difference between the pretest and the posttest was 13.31. This shows that there a positive difference between the mean values of the pretest and the posttest. The results shows that the performance of the students in speaking skills improved. The below table shows the statistically significant of the difference between pretest and posttest.

5 Conclusion

The current study investigated the effectiveness of the group work in enhancing and improving the speaking skills of the students studying at middle level schools. The result of the pre-test showed that the average scores of the students was 54.71. While the results also shows that 8 of the total students failed the test and the remaining 27 passed the test. While the result of the post-test shows that the average scores of the students was 68.02. While the results also show that 1 of the total students failed the test and the remaining 34 passed the test. Similarly, the results showed that the mean difference between the pretest and the posttest was 13.31. This showed that there a positive difference between the mean values of the pretest and the posttest. The results show that the performance of the students in speaking skills improved.

5.1 Recommendations

1. Group work should be integrated in improving speaking skills of the students.
2. Students should work together in a particular task.
3. Objectives of the task must be predetermined.

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