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## **A Study on the Influence of Speaking Strategies in Developing the Oral Skills of OBC Undergraduate Students**

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### **Need for this Study**

Many regard English as a means of getting academic advancement and social elevation. To maintain or to promote social status and family prestige, parents persevere to admit their children in English medium schools. Notwithstanding the pronouncement of politicians that no more English medium school will be permitted, the demand continues unabated. Higher fees are no deterrent; parents are willing to make enormous sacrifices to ensure upward mobility for their children. Success in the job market or even marriage market has come to be equated with fluency in English (Prabhala, *The Hindu*, 1994).

Speaking can be viewed as a muscular activity also. People use speech organs to produce sounds. In learning to speak our own language, we learn certain specific muscle habits. Where sounds of a second language are different from those of our mother tongue we have to learn new muscle habits (Fribsy, 1957, p.43).

Learners have to be exposed to English through clearer pronunciation, slower pace, simpler structures and common vocabulary. Many writers believe that it is interaction with other people, which plays the most crucial role in enabling acquisition to take place. Natural learning depends on the learner's active engagement with the language.

The purpose of this study is to find out the influence of speaking strategies that can promote the skill of speaking in the target language, that is English. The population selected for this study is the consists of students from Other Backward Classes (OBC) at the under graduate level in the arts and science colleges affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

Spoken English skill is influenced by a variety of factors and they are environmental, sociological, potential and an intrinsic motivation or interest. In Indian educational system no importance is given to speaking in English. English is not spoken even inside English classroom. Most of the OBC students are from the lower middle class family and students of these stratum lack proficiency in spoken English. This may be traceable to their social or economic backwardness or to the fact they happen to be first generation learners or lack of exposure to the opportunities wherein the language competence is operative. Various recruitment researchers have recorded their findings based on their campus-interview experience that there is a marked difference between students from Northern and Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu in terms of performance with regard to linguistic competence-spoken English. Therefore it is important to improve the spoken English skill of OBC students studying in the Arts and Science Colleges.

Lack of speaking competence deprives the opportunities for the college students to take up interviews for employment. Many students dream of getting placement in the IT sector. Though they score well in their theory exams and showcase themselves as meritorious students yet they struggle hard to face the interviews which are generally conducted in English where they check the communication ability of the candidates. English is essential to prosper in this competitive world. As the investigator is an English lecturer who faces the ESL classroom everyday she feels that it is the need of the hour to develop the spoken English of the students. Hence this study is an attempt to explore the possible methods of improving the spoken English of the OBC First Degree students in the Arts and Science Colleges affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

The investigator conducted a pretest among 50 students who formed the sample for the study. After the pretest she taught them oral skills using some strategies and conducted a post-test.

Students were assessed on the following dimensions of speaking skill –

- Appropriateness of Response
- Grammaticality
- Use of Cohesive Devices
- Fluency
- Choice of Words

The investigator showed a video CD with a busy street to the students and they watched it for 5 minutes. Then they discussed what they have seen with each other in the Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

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group and this was followed by an interview by the investigator, where the investigator met individual students and asked them questions to check their speaking ability.

Following is the scoring key used by the investigator.

S. No.		Max. Marks (10)	Marks
a)	Appropriateness	2	
b)	Grammaticality	2	
c)	Fluency	2	
d)	Use of Cohesive Devices	2	
e)	Choice of Words	2	
	Total		

The analysis of the pretest showed poor achievement in the skill of speaking. The investigator felt that good communicative skill in the target language was an important factor in this digital era. Since the investigator is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English of VOC College, Tuticorin, Tamilnadu, she gave special training to the randomly selected sample of students of VOC College who were part of the pretest.

Following are the speaking strategies used by the investigator to promote the skill of speaking among the students (50 in total) who formed part of the sample. After three months of training the investigator conducted an achievement test to see the development of skills in the students.

### Strategies Employed to Develop Speaking

- Brainstorming
- Storytelling
- Topic Based Discussion
- Task Centred Fluency Practice
- Role Play

### Objectives

- To find the difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the OBC students studying in VOC college of Arts and Science affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.
- To find the difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the male OBC students studying in VOC Arts and Science College affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.
- To find the difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the female OBC students studying in VOC Arts and Science College affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.

## Hypothesis

- There is no significant difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the OBC students studying in VOC College of Arts and Science affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.
- There is no significant difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the male OBC students studying in VOC Arts and Science College affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.
- There is no significant difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the female OBC students studying in VOC Arts and Science College affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.

## Analysis of Data

### Null Hypothesis – 1

There is no significant difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the OBC students studying in VOC college of Arts and Science affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.

**Table – 1**

### **Difference between Pretest and Post test Scores in the Oral Skills in English among the OBC Students**

Skills	Test	N	Mean	SD	Calculated 't' Value	Table Value	Remark
Appropriateness	Pretest	53	0.04	0.19	17.65	1.98	S
	Post test	53	1.42	0.53			
Grammaticality	Pretest	53	0.11	0.32	16.57	1.98	S
	Post test	53	1.47	0.50			
Fluency	Pretest	53	0.17	0.43	15.21	1.98	S
	Post test	53	1.55	0.50			
Use of Cohesive Devices	Pretest	53	0.04	0.19	18.50	1.98	S
	Post test	53	1.25	0.43			
Choice of Words	Pretest	53	0.02	0.14	19.37	1.98	S
	Post test	53	1.28	0.45			
Total	Pretest	53	0.38	0.97	23.18	1.98	S
	Post test	53	6.96	1.83			

From the above table, it is found that the calculated 't' values (17.65, 16.57, 15.21, 18.50, 19.37 and 23.18) are greater than the table value (1.98) for 104 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

### Null Hypothesis – 2

There is no significant difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the male OBC students studying in VOC Arts and Science College affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.

**Table – 2**

#### **Difference between Pretest and Post test Scores in the Oral Skills in English among the OBC Students with regard to Gender – Male**

Skills	Test	N	Mean	SD	Calculated 't' Value	Table Value	Remark
Appropriateness	Pretest	32	0.06	0.25	12.43	2.00	S
	Post test	32	1.41	0.56			
Grammaticality	Pretest	32	0.19	0.40	11.52	2.00	S
	Post test	32	1.50	0.51			
Fluency	Pretest	32	0.28	0.52	10.27	2.00	S
	Post test	32	1.59	0.50			
Use of Cohesive Devices	Pretest	32	0.06	0.25	13.29	2.00	S
	Post test	32	1.28	0.46			
Choice of Words	Pretest	32	0.03	0.18	14.41	2.00	S
	Post test	32	1.31	0.47			
Total	Pretest	32	0.63	1.18	16.41	2.00	S
	Post test	32	7.09	1.89			

From the above table, it is found that the calculated 't' values (12.43, 11.52, 10.27, 13.29, 14.41 and 16.41) are greater than the table value (2.00) for 62 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

### Null Hypothesis – 3

There is no significant difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the female OBC students studying in VOC Arts and Science College affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.

**Table – 3**

#### **Difference between Pretest and Post test Scores in the Oral Skills in English among the OBC Students with regard to Gender – Female**

Skills	Test	N	Mean	SD	Calculated 't' Value	Table Value	Remark
Appropriateness	Pretest	21	0.00	0.00	12.91	2.02	S
	Post test	21	1.43	0.51			
Grammaticality	Pretest	21	0.00	0.00	12.91	2.02	S
	Post test	21	1.43	0.51			
Fluency	Pretest	21	0.00	0.00	13.22	2.02	S
	Post test	21	1.48	0.51			
Use of Cohesive Devices	Pretest	21	0.00	0.00	13.56	2.02	S
	Post test	21	1.19	0.40			
Choice of Words	Pretest	21	0.00	0.00	13.00	2.02	S
	Post test	21	1.24	0.44			
Total	Pretest	21	0.00	0.00	17.63	2.02	S
	Post test	21	6.76	1.76			

From the above table, it is found that the calculated 't' values (12.91, 12.91, 13.22, 13.56, 13.00 and 17.63) are greater than the table value (2.02) for 40 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

### Findings

1. There is significant difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the OBC students studying in VOC college of Arts and Science affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.
2. There is significant difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the male OBC students studying in VOC Arts and Science College affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.
3. There is significant difference between the pretest and post test scores in the oral skills in English among the female OBC students studying in VOC Arts and Science College affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.

### Discussion

The result of the post test scores shows significant improvement in the skill of speaking after training the male and female OBC undergraduate students for three months using the speaking strategies. This shows that if students are trained in the skill of speaking using some tasks, their performance can increase to a higher level. Many researchers pointed out that children learn English as a subject and not as a living language. They memorize the rules of grammar but they fail to apply the rules in their usage. They feel shy to speak in English as they are not given opportunities in speaking in English. To overcome these problems, appropriate training may be imparted as attempted in this experiment.

It is very important that teachers in the second language classroom always interact in English in the classroom. The students can be motivated to interact with teachers and peer

groups in English. Further, watching English programs on TV, listening to radio, loud reading, reading newspapers would help to develop the spoken language skills in English.

The role of the teacher in an interactive classroom is very important. The teacher is the driving force behind students' interaction. Teachers have to create a climate in which students feel at ease to communicate in the target language. The class serves as a comfortable and stimulating environment where teacher-student and student-student interaction happens spontaneously and naturally. It is the teacher who puts the wind in the sail of interaction and promotes and nourishes it constantly.

## **Conclusion**

To allow students to interact spontaneously in English, teachers must set up situations and scenarios that call for speaking in English fluently. Teachers can use varied interesting strategies to develop the skill of speaking among the students. Teachers must try to give more activities in the language classroom. Innovative methods can regulate the language habits of the students. Teachers are to find new methods very often and must make all the students to get involved in the language learning process.

## **References**

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