

Using Extempore as a Technique to Improve Oral Communication Skills in Pakistan

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Abstract:

During the last decade, Oral communications skills have got great significance during academics and practical life in Pakistan. Extempore which proved to be a very helpful technique for students of undergraduate (Department of English), disclosed the more successful road for better future jobs. This paper basically deals with the use of extempore technique in English class. Firstly, students were introduced to what this technique is and then they were given topics and time to arrange their main points. At last, questionnaires were given to students to check their responses on the extempore technique. The strength of the class was 63. The class was of co-education and combination of arts and science background education. The findings showed that extempore is learned once and practiced again and again, helped learners throughout their life. The findings also showed that this technique can train the mental faculties of students and make their thinking ability more sharp. This all would be useful for the oral skills of learners.

Key words: Extempore Technique, Oral Communication Skills, Pakistan

1. Introduction:

Oral communication skills play a significant role in studies and after studies in specific or general disciplines or in professional settings. A student with better communication skills can drive the meetings, discussions and conferences as well as he can work as a leader or as a group member. For this purpose, a student must have a good command on oral communication skills to tackle all the demands or needs of his field.

Oral communication also has greater significance in presentations, meetings taking part in discussion and arguments as well as working in groups. If particular techniques, opportunities, techniques or tips are given to the students they will be able to reach or achieved their particular goal or objectives and then they became a member and a part of their society in a better way.

Oral communication skills help the student's hidden abilities to come to into practice so that they would be able to communicate and listen effectively in different contexts. Communication is a kind of tool through which we can orally present our arguments, presentations and discussions. Oral communication course is introduced to practice and develops skills through assignment. To develop skills of communication we must focus on verbal and non verbal factor, when we are going to deliver message.

To develop such skills in a better way, a useful technique has been used that is called 'Extempore'. This is a type of speech that is spontaneously spoken at the moment without any kind of preparation. This technique is also called impromptu speaking, improvised speaking, and off the cuff and extemporaneous speaking .It is basically a scale to analyze the presenter's ability to perform under limited time span and stressed or unexpected conditions. "A good audience is an inspiration and stimulation to thinking on one's feet; exactly as in conversing with an intelligent and friendly person one's

spirit is stimulated” (Prov. 27:17). A student or a performer has to think ideas and then presentation of those ideas before heads of different organizers. So crucial requirements are quick and witty mind to think and speak in an effective way. By using these two major elements or facilities extempore could be more and more furnished. This could surely gain the attention of an audience and shows the presenter’s outstanding thinking faculties.

Oral communication skills are essential for higher education because these skills involves the mixing of verbal, interpersonal and physical strategies which are important to interact, so the student interacts confidently and effectively among the huge audience. At university level, these skills involve group presentations and sometimes individual presentations, which not only give self-confidence to the students but also help them how to work like a team. So these skills are more helpful for learners during studies. There are some advantages of these skills like:

- Oral communication helps the students to create an interest.
- Their academic performance can be improved.
- It will help the students to improve or enhance their personal effectiveness.
- It will help the students to increase their means of employments.
- Learners would be able to lead any class or conference in a directional way.
- Audience would leave the place with clear mind (No ambiguities).
- This would make the presenter more vigilant.
- Eye contact with students would develop self confidence and learner would be aware of the audience response.

Employers need satisfied and effective skills to be communicated because they have to interact with staff or

people effectively, they have to attend the meetings, and they have to give directions and explanations so the employers should have an effective communication skills.

An Australian Research has found some elements, which are very important for communication:

- Listening and understanding
- Speaking directly
- Establishing and using networks
- Being self-assured
- Share information

Oral communication opportunities were also given to the students such as tutorial group, Seminar presentation, Poster presentation, viva, conference presentation, meeting scenarios. So, class facilitators have to convince the students to participate in classroom activities and tell the students the role and importance of communication in the future. Class teachers or Professor has a central role in motivation of student. After that students would actively participate in the classroom.

1.1 Oral communication course:

There have been introduced the some important tips for Undergraduate students of English language and literature that are followed as:

- They should feel comfortable using English as a language.
- Gestures and body language.
- They should make their talks small.
- Time management and audience satisfaction.

There are certain types of activities in the oral communication course:

Structuring information:

- Students should express the topic clearly in one statement.

- Topic should be sequential in order to form cause and effect.
- Presenter should link the ideas and points them as firstly, my second point and finally.

Mastering the art of Delivery:

Presenter should not memorize the whole speech. He or she should try their best to start their speech with a Quotation; it would enhance their confidence level. Speakers should try their best to engage the listeners. For emphasizing certain things, use your hands and eyes.

So from the above whole discussion we notice that communication with certain expressions plays an important role for interaction, and for the students to make this oral communication effectively, therefore we have introduce the technique of extempore to the students that they will be able to speak with confidence and effectively.

1.2 Task-Based Approach

Task based learning provides a substitute for language teachers. In a task based class, teacher does not initially decide that what language will be considered. The session is based around a task which students have to complete and language is the tool for its completion. The task is an activity in which students have to achieve a specific goal by using language. The activity can be real life situation and learners can use any language, they just focus on meaning of situation. Helping others, sharing experiences and playing with friends can all be taken as a real task.

The aim of task-based approach is to develop a need to learn and use language. The tasks will produce their own language and provide a chance to students for language acquisition. Task based lessons follows certain stages.

Pre-task:

The teacher assigns a topic to the students and give introduction on that particular topic that what they will have to do at that task. The pre-task stage can include recording of people doing that task through which learners get help.

- Task cycle: task> planning> report

Task:

The students complete their assigned tasks in groups or in pairs and even individually by using language resources mentioned to them by their teachers.

Planning:

Learners make a short oral and written report so that they can tell the class what they have done in their task and what are their findings related to the task. Before presenting it to the class they practice it in the group to avoid hesitation afterwards.

Report:

Learners then present their report to the class. The teacher calls the student turn by turn for giving presentation on their task and also gives feedback. Teacher now becomes instructor. Language focus and feedback are important aspects in this stage. This stage also unfold the efforts of teacher and student both.

Analysis:

The teacher then asks student to analyze a certain part from the text of recording. The teacher also focuses on the use of language by students. This stage gives the teacher a certain feedback about the preparation of student as well.

Practice:

Keeping in mind the needs of learners on the basis of analysis or a rough feedback about student, teacher selects expressions, language and content areas which are needed to be practiced more to flourish them. The students then do practice to overcome these shortcomings and increase their confidence level. This also improves their fluency and accuracy in speaking skills.

Advantages of task-based approach:

- It gives student a whole exposure to language and patterns of language forms.
- The students are free to use any language they want.
- It is a communicative approach which helps students to improve their communication skills.
- It increases their confidence level and they don't feel hesitation.
- It gives student opportunity to speak and share information with class.
- This approach not only make student responsible but also helpful in generation of leadership qualities.

2. Literature Review:

It is observed that during last decade, that at outset there was not much focus on oral communication skills in Pakistan. This was due to lack of knowledge and awareness. But at the last years of this decade, people felt a gap in effective communication. Then they started to focus on these skills. As there was a rise in competition for jobs, so people were intensively convinced towards these skills. Oral communication skills are gradual and life long process. Adolescents attain these skills through different techniques. Many of them achieve a big level of competence but some of them could not understand the basic oral skills. In past, many researchers

have done their works on different skills which would be helpful for the students during their academic and practical life.

Jacobs and Marshalls worked on some skills but they were not aware of the term so they considered these skills as 'soft skills'. After that Stich and Others (1974) worked on communication skills and then identified the basic capacities and abilities of seeing, looking and hearing. By these skills, there was a progress in some other sub skills like reading and writing etc. Carl Storz et al. and Aout (2002) worked on oral communication skills (presentation skills). They published a practical guide in a short form in which they discussed six important features for a successful communication in class or a big audience. They stressed on preparation and planning as the most important factors. Secondly there is structure of speech and necessary language. Third one is visuals and how to make the best use of them. Forth one is how to create an interest and establish a relationship with audience. 2nd last is what sort of body language should be there during presentation. And last one is your voice (pitch and intonation) and pronunciation. In another piece of writing by Adel Jendli, Christine Coombe and Neila Miled, there is a description about what the importance of oral communication skills is and how students make their presentations more effective by using some techniques than other students. One important thing with which this piece of writing deals is the oral communication skills development among students by daily interactions.

“College alumni have ranked communication courses as the most important courses that led to their advancement and promotions” (Gustafson, Johnson, & Hovey, 1993; Hinkin, 1996; Murphy & Hildebrandt, 1988). So it is clear oral communication skills at college and then at the start semesters of university education is very essential which are helpful not only during academics but also in professional life.

3. Research methodology:

In oral communication skills, the technique 'Extempore' proved to be very helpful not only for high scorers but also for middle minds. So when doing any research, research methodology is like a driving force of a research. It determines that how a researcher is going to do a research work. It is also a way to judge the research works. Under methodology; one follows different techniques to make research relevant and appropriate. This particular section of research discloses the details of sampling, total strength of people being contacted, how questionnaire, interviews, data collection and analysis have been done. The present research is participant's observation, not direct observation. In participant observation, one observes the people more deeply. This observation was overt that how many people were contacted by questionnaire? The purpose was to know about the developments in oral skills of students. The technique which is used for this purpose is Extempore. The students were of Department of English, class of undergraduate (initial semester).

It is explained clearly that extempore was used as a technique to judge the progress in students. The students were first introduced to the extempore technique and then how to prepare the topic. Then they were asked to start the presentations. Different topics were assigned to each student related to job policies, general topics of daily life, national and international issues, foreign relations and politics of country etc. They were given a specific time to practice and to think about their topics. Some students made written points and some started explaining directly. They were at last observed and assigned some marks which were decided at the start of presentation as below.

Contents- 7 marks

Complete expressions (including facial and body language) - 8 marks

Overall progress was good as compare previous one (without extempore). As students have to go in practical field after completion of their studies, so extempore is very helpful for them.

4. Findings:

As the progress of the students was obvious, and students were not looking tiresome that's why the findings were also unambiguous. First of all, students were introduced to the details of topic. Secondly, a practical session was practiced. Though some Students were not familiar with the work, so they were little curious about the technique. But when they were properly guided and evaluated on the basis of their performance, the results were commendable. They were taking it serious then.

It is mentioned earlier that in methodology, a questionnaire was developed which consists of some questions related to the technique discussed above. The sole purpose of that paper of questions was to analyze that either students are taking it serious, developing their interest or considering it a burden upon them. What are their views about this technique of impromptu? Whether their inner thinking abilities are being polished and becoming sharp minded? So on the basis of all questionnaire, it was analyzed that there was a change in mental abilities of learners and in the way of selection and presenting the words in a sequenced and well organized way. Total no of students were 63 of B.S English 1st semester. Above 46 out of 63, gave a good response overall.

There were assigned marks for two elements being focused, contents and facial expressions (including body

language and facial expressions). Detailed summary of exact figures is given in tables below. But if we talk about general findings, it would be assumed that overall development was much above than just satisfactory only when at first time disclosed to this technique. High achievers were not too much low as compare to students of low ranks. From fixed standard, more strength of the students was above with the difference of minute gaps.

5. Conclusions:

It was the being observed by the open discussion of students that extempore technique proved to be very helpful technique. It has not only trained them to think more in less time but also guided them how to present those thoughtful ideas in well organized way. Except open discussions in class, formal or informal discussions among class mates, or debate competitions, this extempore technique boosted up the confidence level of learners. All in all, this technique would give a spark to all learners to face this world of competition in a brave way.

In Pakistan especially, there is a dire need of some improvements in educational system. Mostly at university level, oral communication skills are given less importance at some stages. For example, no such techniques are unveiled to students and no practical work is done in class. Sometime, even students are not being introduced to what proper presentation skills are and how one can make a presentation efficient. All the students do not belong to the same educational background. There should be spent some time during some initial semesters on the practice of oral communication skills and useful technique extempore so that performance of students may become substantial. This would help them to gain self-confidence, further interest in studies and good grades as well. This would also assist them to search out better job

opportunities which are ultimate goals after studies. If we take a mathematical figure, it would be deduced that 73% of total strength was counted in upper marks level (8-5) in contents and 24 % of the total strength were in below category (4-1). This was the math of contents. On the other side, result of expressions was little less than the contents in highest score. 78% of students were in good ranks and 22% learners were below the fixed level (4-2). But in collective form results nearly match with each other.

6. Future research scope:

On the basis of findings it could be clearly seen that this extempore technique has helped the students of initial semester of English a lot in flourishing some hidden abilities. So it is supposed that in future the level of use of this technique could be helpful for future leaders and new comers in this initial semester. The area of oral communication skills could be widened to some lower classes e.g. college or school level, so that more well trained and competitive students can come to higher education with already development of these oral communication skills. This study could be done on some bigger strength class as well. This technique would be more helpful for those people who all the time remain in public eye like a politician, a hotel manager, a tourist's guide etc. Further study would be according to the demand of academics and market of jobs. In future, there should be some work on extempore on matriculation level or below than that. This step would produce more shined and competent students.

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3. It assisted in time managing.

- a. b. c. d. e.

4. Time for arranging points is 2-3 minutes. Either it is sufficient?

- a. b. c. d. e.

5. It is easy to speak by following extempore.

- a. b. c. d. e.

6. Topic plays a vital role in the present technique.

- a. b. c. d. e.

7. Extempore promotes active thinking.

- a. b. c. d. e.

8. It keeps thinking faculties more vigilant (thinking related to assigned topics).

- a. b. c. d. e.

9. It only helps during academics, not during future jobs, meetings etc.

- a. b. c. d. e.

10. This technique flourishes oral communication skills and presentation skills.

- a. b. c. d. e.

Topics: students discussed by using extempore.

1. Might is right
2. Politics is worship
3. Hard work is a key to success
4. Silence is precious
5. Knowledge is power
6. Pakistan is progressing
7. Boys have better management skills
8. Girls have better pronunciation
9. Who is your favorite teacher and why?
10. We should respect elders
11. Problems in our educational system
12. Solutions of these problems in educational system
13. Science is beneficial

14. Sports are necessary for a student
15. Arrange marriages are better
16. Morning walk keeps everyone fit
17. Worlds is getting progressed
18. Jobs are rare than degrees
19. Banks are better than tanks