

Approaches to Enhance Group Discussion Skills of Tertiary Level Students through Activity Based Teaching

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Abstract

English Language Teaching has now become a universal phenomenon and it has gained great significance in this era of globalization. The present growth in the industrial sector is throwing up new dimensions in terms of English language usage. Students are unemployable in the grounds of communication skills after teaching English till tertiary level in our country. Teaching in our country from past decades is considered as a process of transition of knowledge from a learnt person to the another who is new to the particular field. Abiding to this thought, the paper explores activity based teaching to equip students in group discussion for their future demands, where they learn not only by the transition of knowledge, but by doing it in action. Later, the paper explores on the performance of the students, their attitude on learning through activity based language teaching methodology and observation of their behavior while learning through activity based teaching. The study shows a positive impact on students learning by activity based teaching for group discussion.

Key words: Group Discussion Skills, Tertiary Students, Activities and Positive Attitude.

1. Introduction:

A group of people being analogous shares their opinion on a particular topic thus group discussion involves the exploration, as well as the discovery of truth through the mutual interest and understanding. As Prof Prasoon describes, "Group discussion which is popularly known as GD is a new version of interview deliberately structured in a way so as to take away the monotony of traditional interview. Although equal opportunity is given to each candidate, since they have to maintain the decorum and stick to the given topic, all the latent abilities of any one of the candidate do not come to the fore. But it gives the opportunity for the selector to select the best candidate from the lot available or participating" (10). Thus, the main two reason for group discussion are, first group discussion is done for mass elimination and second the selection criteria are based on actual company requirements. Colleges and universities embark on group

discussion. The group discussion is either topic based or case study based. In topic based group discussion diverse topics related to current economic, political, sports etc. are given for discussion. Whereas, in case based discussion real life case is presented.

1.1 Literature review

Group discussion is an important step towards selecting the apt candidate for the job. As prof.

L.L Lakshmanan and Dr. Nagarathinam says, ‘ In the job arena, various companies utilize this selection tool in different ways, like some conduct GD after written test and before the interview, others may conduct it even before the written test’ (169) Further, ‘The activities that happen in the classroom create a kind of environment for learning and as such offer different kinds of opportunities for language learning. Part of teaching skill is to identify the particular opportunities of a task or activity and then develop them into learning experience for children.’ (Cameron 20). Thus, a teacher holds the responsibility of making the group discussion as an activity to be a part of their language learning to help the students in their future endeavor.

1.2 Attribution Theory

Weiner in his Attribution theory speaks about the causal of particular behavior of an individual. An event has a particular effect on the human behavior. The future expectation of achievement and failure is predetermined by the stability of the prior performance. And, if the cause of former performance could change i.e. unstable, then the student will not expect the same experience to be repeated in the future. Further, if the cause of former performance is stable then the expectation from the students for the future performance will be the same.

In his interpersonal theory of motivation, the reactions of teachers, peers, parents etc. towards the individual in social context is observed. And the participant and the observer after the performance will look for a causal factor which may not be as same as of the observer and participant. Later the participants and observer will go causal dimensions for the factor and finally, they make an inference about the student. This inference leads to emotional response and a behavior.

Principles of Attributions which is a three stage process

- a. behavior is observed b. behavior is determined to be deliberate and c. behavior is attributed to internal or external causes.

Achievement can be attributed to:

- a. effort b. ability c. level of task difficulty d. luck.

Causal dimensions of behavior are:

- a. locus of control b. stability and c. controllability.

1.3 Experiential learning

According to David Kolb, learning is a process where knowledge is created by the experience. According to him, Experiential learning is a process which will link education, work and personal development. It offers a system of competencies for describing a job demand and corresponding educational objectives and it emphasizes the critical linkage that can be developed between the classroom and the “real world” with experiential learning method. (4)

Activity based teaching helps the students to be a part of the activity and they learn from the experience they gain in the activity. Here effective teacher student interaction happens and the students participate in the process of learning with interest. The knowledge gained from experience is more competent than the lectures given in the class. The researcher uses activity based teaching methodology to teach group discussion for tertiary level students.

1.4 Group Discussion

Three or more people with an interdependent goal who interacts and influences each other are a group (Galanes 8). Group discussion is where different individuals with some similarity be together in a group participates in an activity where they discuss about any topic to showcase their skills which will help others to find the best candidate out of many. It is a process of filtering where the main aim is elimination of the students or employee and selection of eligible candidate to identify the best candidate for any position in management colleges or being recruited in some companies.

The evaluation of Group discussion is done on major four areas as;

- Subject knowledge: The subject knowledge of any topic to speak for a second or minute should be the eligibility of a student. The topic can be on current events, national or international news, social, economic, political, scientific and environmental issues where the participant is expected to speak on the topic. The originality of ideas, analyzing skill and the perception on the particular topic is considered by the observer. The approach of a candidate towards the topic reflects the attitude and nature of the candidate and his view and perception of seeing the world. Journals, newspaper magazines and websites are the source of knowledge. The wide knowledge on a particular topic will lead to a proper presentation of ideas in a confident manner. After having the grasp of the topic the newer ideas are accepted as the ideas from new leaders.
- Oral communication of skills:
 - Complete knowledge of the topic will be successful when the presentation of that is made in a proper manner. Listening and speaking skill plays a vital role in the oral communication skill. Even the body language and presentation skills matter a lot.
- Listening skill: listening to others. The thread (continuation of discussion must be in touch by the speaker.
- Clarity of thought and expression: Clarity is making clear to the audience when it is necessary. Clearance the thought will help the individuals in the proper presentation of the ideas in the group discussion rounds.

1.5 Skills for Group Discussion

- Knowledge: To speak about any topic given one needs to be proficient in that topic knowing its past and the relevance in present era. This can be gained when they read newspapers, magazines, or any other books pertinent to that area. Even electronic media, social media and personal experience is a boon. Preparations for topics can be accomplished by grounding on major social, political and economic issues of that era.
- Speaking skill: GD is successful when the gained knowledge is presented perfectly. Speaking skill symbolize how the words are used to represent knowledge that we have gathered from different sources. Speaking skill includes the speed and accuracy, fluency and tone. Presentation should be about 20 to 30 seconds which can be done 2 to 3 times.

Talking too much is not worth appraising because it is not a speech where everyone will shoot and listen to us instead everyone has their view to be presented and neither we can kill the time and opportunities of others. Initiation is the beginning of the topic which will be perfect when done with quotes, facts or short stories and gives a positive impact. Whereas, summarizing the topic when the time ends if it is not initiated by others and speaking politely and gently is a best mode of presentation.

- **Listening skill:** One of the most dominant skills in the process of group discussion, as active listening aids to understand the topic properly and later analyze it. The analyzing is perfect when it is explored in social, political, economic and social way. Alertness in an individual's speaking and identifying the flaws of other speakers happens in active listening.
- **Body language:** Body language represents our character along with our knowledge. The gestures, hand movements, facial expression, tone of speaking and even paying attention to others opinion is the body language which represents an individual's respect to others. Giving opportunity for others while speaking and listen to them without interrupting is a positive point in Group discussion. Projecting low confidence with shaky hands and trembling voice or domination of the entire session distracts the opportunities of the speaker. Aggressive behavior and the interest towards personal matters projecting in the discussion should be avoided as body language helps in building good rapport with others and showcases one's interest in the activity.
- **Team work:** The individual in a group discussion needs to cope with the team, where one needs to present the ideas clear without having fights in the team. Attention should be paid not to make a Group discussion into debate.

A Group discussion tests our communication skill, management skills, Knowledge level, analytical and critical sense, logical presentation of views and the one who is successful in these areas are sure to crack the GD rounds.

1.6 Do's of Group Discussion

- The candidate should tacit the purpose of group discussion done by the institution or organization.

- Precise statements are appreciated.
- Right pace in speaking, care of voice and pitch must be maintained.
- Listening is valued.
- Talk with confidence
- Take care of body language; as looking everyone while talking, using hands than pointing others while talking etc.

1.7 Don'ts of Group Discussion

- Try to avoid debates, where one favors particular ideas.
- Interrupting others during their talk should be refrained.
- Try to speak in the group than being isolated and silent.
- Criticizing and speaking about the members in the group is appreciatory.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Objectives of the Study

The study concentrates on the development of group discussion skills of tertiary level student through activity based method. The study has following objectives:

- To understand the attitude of tertiary level students towards learning group discussion through activity based language teaching.
- To assess whether activity based language learning improved their presentation, analytical, leadership and listening skill

Specifically, the study concentrated whether the activity based language teaching helps the students to face the GD rounds in their real life and to observe what where the factors that influenced them during the activity group discussion, problems faced by them in this activity and the obstacles in the group discussion round.

2.2 Research design

The researcher used qualitative research to investigate the efficiency of teaching Group discussion through activity based method in English language classroom. The researcher

observed the students' performance and collected the data to know their opinion attitude on this method of teaching through Likert's scale question.

2.3 Participants of Research

The participants were of tertiary level students from St Vincent's Palloti college, which is located in kalyan Nagar, Bengaluru, Karnataka state in India selected from BBA and BCOM, even semester batch of 2017-18. The group had assorted students from rural and urban background. Next, the students were not exposed to activity based language learning before in their student life.

2.4 Procedure of Activity

The aim of the study was to teach the students the staidness of group discussion and endure them with real GD experience by activity based learning, where they will participate in the activity beyond listening to the explanation of what, how, do's and don'ts of GD in the classroom.

- Students' personal information as name, class studying to know their exposure to English language till grade, demographic details was collected to assess.
- In the beginning the researcher briefed on group discussion and the procedures followed in it to make them aware. The researcher along with introduction motivated them towards the activity by making cognizant on the benefits and need of Group discussion in their career and academics.
- Then the researcher divided the large classes into a group of seven to nine members according to the strength of the class. Maximum number of students in a group was nine, as less in number proper attention can be perfect.

The classroom was arranged for the group activity by utilizing the less resource as arranging the benches in front of the class where the students were facing each other. and rest of the students were observing them. The other members in the class were discerning the Group discussion. And when the topic was given the students had to start their discussion. Thus they were given the ambience of group discussion, and the researcher used to observe the participants and assist them in the activity. Each participant in the GD was given a bystander who observed their respective candidate and marked the positive and negative points of them.

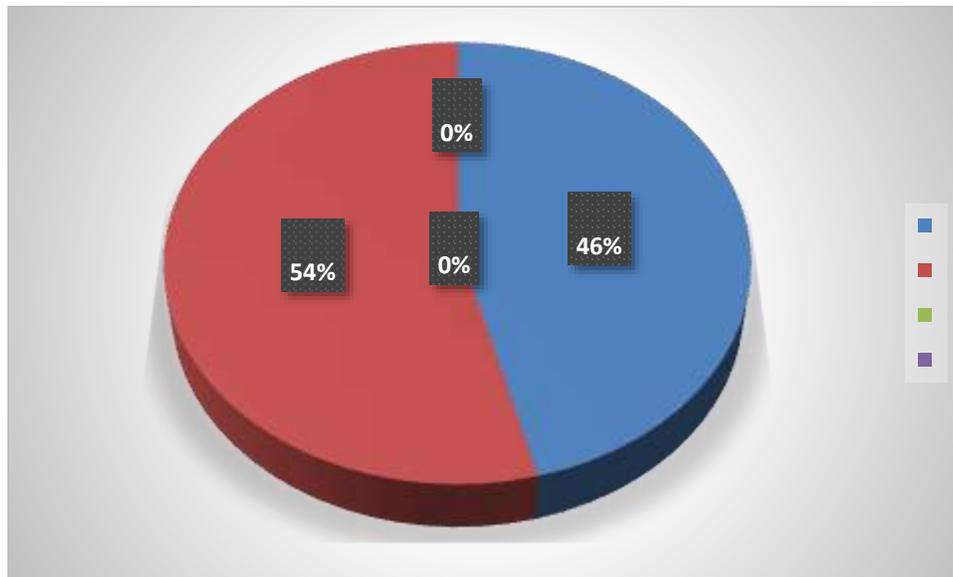
- Group discussion were topic based and the following topics were given for different groups as:

Ban on Cattle slaughtering in India – a justified or unjustified thought.

Digital India- a cashless economy

Transgender – responsibilities of Indian citizen.

2.5 Findings and Discussion



Data Analysis

The opinion was collected from 100 tertiary level students who belong to homogenous group of male and female from urban and rural background. To know the attitude of respondents towards group discussion, whether group discussion through activity based language learning improved their presentation, analytical, leadership and listening skill; 54% of students agreed to the opinion that there is development in their skills through this method of teaching, 46% of students strongly agreed to the view that activity based learning helped them to improve their necessary skills for GD rounds in their future. None of the participant felt that it wasn't helpful for them in learning language and communication skills. So, it is clearly evident that students liked the learning through activity based learning and it further it helps in their improvement.

2.6 Observations in the Group Discussion:

- a. Shy and nervousness: The students were found to be confident in the beginning when the instructions of group discussion was given, but as the GD round started they were nervous to speak. They couldn't share their ideas and were conscious of speaking. The researcher initiated the discussion for the first group in the class to shed their inhibitions and later motivated participants to speak. The changes were observed as students started speaking who denied to speak in the beginning, and once they were open up gained confidence for the next time.
- b. Lack of knowledge: Knowledge of the topic was a barrier for the students as they couldn't come up with proper ideas. The knowledge they had were from the memes that they had read in their electronic media and social groups. They couldn't come up with proper statements as they were not aware of the concept in political, social and economic sphere. The students realized the importance of gen on the current topics around the world but not to rely on the opinion of others.
- c. Discussion turned to debates: Initially the students were shy to share their views and when they were confident slowly they started to criticize others and turned the discussion to debate. The researcher pointed the changes when they deviated from discussion and the students gradually reduced the mistakes and got a clear picture of difference of discussion and debate.
- d. Body language: The students were mindful of the body language in the beginning and later, when they were comfortable sharing their view tend to forget the decorum of the group discussion. The body language used were not appreciatory, when they felt amiable ambience in the group and were confident in using the free body movements which was refrained by the researcher intermittently.
- e. Tone of speaking: The tone of speaking varied when the students where in the group discussion. As they were conscious in the beginning the speaking tone was unflustered, later the problems as criticizing others, taunting, speaking sarcastically, arrogance in voice, were observed and this was instructed by the researcher to be avoided for a better group discussion.
- f. Isolated candidates: In most of the discussions of ten membered group, at least two or three members were there who never shared their ideas and felt very difficult to speak in

front of the classroom. They lacked to get instant ideas to speak, but the researcher made the students to speak in the group by motivating them and encouraging them to share their views.

- g. Interruption in speaking: The students were very eager to share their views and they lacked the patience of listening to others and interrupted in between by adding their points. The researcher pointed out the mistake and they tried to avoid the behavior.
- h. Lack of confidence: The students in the first group in the class showcased less confidence than the members of other groups. Since it was their first experience they had nervousness, but by observing others and speaking for one time they were confident enough.
- i. Exposure gained confidence: The students were confident enough during the explanation on how and what about the GD rounds, they were brave but when they had to perform in the class the tensions aroused in their face. But, comparing to the first group the others performed well because they tried to avoid the mistakes done by their friends. After finishing each round of group discussion the students used to observe the plus and minus written by their counterparts observing them in the group discussion.

Conclusion

Study of students attitude towards learning group discussion through activity based teaching as studied in this paper shows the positive remark of students to this approach. Learning by doing is the best method to learn as they participate with complete interest and learn in a social context. Students taught through activity based method found effective in learning group discussion than being only informed how and what to do in traditional method.

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