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THE USE OF SPEAKING STATION SITE FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN ESL CLASSROOM

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Abstract:

English language teachers or instructors need changes from time to time. In Malaysia, the focus of English teaching and learning has shifted from accuracy to fluency; the effective usage of the language. Today, students are expected to use the English language in daily communication as well as to learn the workplace English language communication skills. The common speaking lesson in the classroom only requires the students to respond to simple utterances. Thus making some students reluctant to speak. Due to this reason, English language teachers or instructors need to have a solid platform that can guide them in planning and creating better ESL classroom communication. This research was conducted with the aim to help teachers in conducting effective ESL classroom communication. A speaking station site is created to allow English language teachers or instructors to explore their course of action taken in teaching speaking activities after viewing the speaking station site. This speaking station site offers teachers or instructors a guide in the simplest education technology. The site does not require specific payment and almost all can access the link to the platform. The data was collected through interview questions conducted via Google form. Then, it was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results showed English language teachers or instructors are at ease with the speaking station site as it provides guidelines for them to plan effective communication classes properly. Further improvement can be considered in providing a checklist to ensure teachers or instructors evaluate their course of action.

Keywords:

ESL Classrooms, Communication, Speaking Station Site

Introduction

English has attained the status of an international or global language and is spoken in all the regions and countries in the world. Children develop their ability to speak confidently and fluently during their time in school. The process and progress of their ability to speak well continue when they are in college or university and this ability to speak well helps them throughout their life. In Malaysia, those who can speak English well are eyed by many multinational companies as they are going to deal on the international level. One can refer to this Chinese proverb that states “To learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world”. However, learning to speak a language is a rigorous journey and there is no specific time to begin as the saying goes “The best time to learn a language was 20 years ago. The second best time is now”.

In today’s modern world, English has been used as the language for communication all over the world since it has been accepted as a global language. The language is used to maintain international relationships and further studies. In fact, most of the books in many areas such as technology, law, medicine, engineering, and education to name some are in English. International scientific and research journals are mostly published in English. Looking into other fields such as tourism the English Language is used as the main international means of communication. The English Language is for internet purposes, software programmes, the official language for several countries, business communications, media, and for TV as well as radio programmes. Indeed, a long list of the use and importance of English will go on. In view of the above, English is taught in all educational institutions of the world from preschool to the university level. Therefore, a need to concentrate more on the teaching of English specifically in speaking skills should be highlighted.

Literature Review

English is made not only the compulsory subject in the Malaysian school curriculum at all levels of primary and secondary but at the tertiary level as well. It is viewed as the second language of the nation, and reflected in the Malaysian pluralist society where the learners are commonly bilingual, trilingual, or even multilingual. The notion of becoming a compulsory subject at all levels of education considering its wide use in domains such as higher education, politics, and jurisdictions (Ramiza Darmi & Albion, 2013; Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014).

Even though there are continuous advancements and rigorous programmes to improve the teaching and learning of English in schools, many students still perform a weak grasp of the language, especially in speaking; both at schools (Hiew, 2012) and at the tertiary level (Ismail et.al., 2012). Speaking and writing both are productive skills. For ESL learners, English writing skills are among the most critical skills to empower (Azlan & Yunus, 2020) and speaking is natural expression of language, which is not always consciously regulated (Delbio et.al, 2019). Speaking on one hand is still difficult to master if one has difficulty to utter a complete thought. It demands a mastery of conventions such as readiness and grammatical rules in order for the learners to be able to convey or utter the ideas. If one mistakenly utters wrong words or ideas, obvious errors can be noticed at large.

Speaking also helps learners to develop and reinforce their language skills in terms of grammatical structures, vocabulary, fluency, accuracy and appropriateness. Sayuri (2016) even states for a learner to speak well he or she needs to master several important elements such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In addition, Peyton

and Schaetzel (2016) claim it is a key progress through learning and into the workforce. However, most of the low-proficiency students are still struggling to speak even after they underwent a process of formal learning for eleven years of their schooling. The consequences are reflected in the results of school as well as national level examinations that show if the learners have not fully mastered the basic aspects of the language (Puteh et al., 2010).

Looking into language learning in school, the learning of ESL or English as a Second Language has always been a controversial issue. One common scenario that can be observed in Malaysia is the ESL learners from rural areas such as East Coast Peninsular Malaysia in the areas of Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan are usually less proficient in English compared to those ESL learners from West Coast Peninsular Malaysia (Peng & Hui, 2012). Looking at this matter, it is most appropriate and advisable for language teachers to consider and look into possibilities that can help to bridge the gap.

The SPM English from the previous years showed speaking is only accounted for via the ULBS classroom-based tests and the marks are tabulated into the final results in an undisclosed manner. As for SPM 2021, there will be 4 papers – Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening where all language skills are emphasised (The Star, 23 May 2020). Here shows, speaking is considered as one of the skills to be emphasised. What would be the role of teachers in teaching speaking skills? And why do teachers need to focus on the speaking skills of the students? As for the first question, speaking skills are considered to be the most important skill for language learners. Therefore, the role of teachers is to encourage learners to use English not only in the classroom but also in their daily conversations with their classmates, with teachers, and other English-speaking people (if they happen to find one). However, this exists only during the English period and some students refuse to participate actively in the speaking activities. Second question, the focus on speaking skills provides opportunities for teachers to rehearse the speaking activities with students. This is because the students have chances to practice real-life speaking in the safety of the classroom. However, this is not an easy task for teachers because often students choose to keep silent in the speaking class (Wardhany, 2020).

The inclusion of CEFR in the Malaysia Education Curriculum has indeed played a major contributor to what the English standard of the students should be. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) represents the international standard for the teaching and learning of languages. It is a worldwide recognised framework for describing language learning, teaching, and assessment. It is focused on the descriptors of what language learners “can do” in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing at six levels of proficiency. The CEFR describes what learners can do across five language skills: Spoken Interaction, Spoken Production, Listening, Reading, and Writing. CEFR provides teachers, test developers, parents, the learners themselves, and eventually employers, a much clearer picture of what someone at a given level is capable of doing. The description of language proficiency can be understood and interpreted in the same way by users everywhere. Traditionally, language learners have been described rather vaguely as beginners, intermediate or advanced learners. They are even given letter grades (e.g., A+, A-, B+, C or D) or reports in the numerical cores. The grades and numbers fail to explain what a learner is able to do in the target language. CEFR, is different in a way that it identifies three broad levels of language proficiency namely: Basic(A1 and A2), Independent (B1 and B2), and Proficient (C1 and C2). CEFR goes further in giving a clearer idea of what the levels actually mean by having the ‘can do’ statements at each level to describe a learner’s ability in some detail and in a positive manner.

Many leading Asian countries such as Japan, Hong Kong and South Korea countries have years adopted the framework and in 2016, with the execution of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the CEFR is gradually implemented into the Malaysian education system. Nonetheless, due to this curriculum reforms there are essential changes to be made in teaching, learning and assessment in the syllabus (Affendi Lee & Kassim, 2020) and the issue of lack of teaching and learning materials available occur as well (Sidhu et al., 2018). Therefore, a clear and concise guideline or framework needs to be formulated to address the specific needs of learning to speak for ESL learners (Atkinson, 2018).

Many researches have been done in the area of looking at various strategies, activities that can be used in teaching speaking, the inability to correct students' mistakes in spoken language and challenges faced by teachers in teaching speaking (Maryanti, 2021; Ramadhani & Bahri, 2017; Copland et al., 2014). However, very little research done on how teachers can teach speaking to students.

Hence, this research is carried out to adopt and develop a speaking station site to cater to the needs of the language teachers/instructors in teaching speaking effectively to students. Furthermore, it is also hoped that the site would be able to provide a guideline for language teachers/instructors in organising appropriate pedagogical approaches to achieve instructional goals when designing a module for the speaking component in the future.

Research Questions

1. Does the speaking station site help teachers to create effective communication in ESL classrooms?
2. How do teachers utilise the speaking station site in the ESL classroom?

Research Objectives

1. To help teachers to create effective communication in ESL classrooms using the speaking station site.
2. To explore teachers' course of action in teaching speaking using the speaking station site.

Research Purpose

Speaking skills are defined as the skills which allow people to communicate effectively. This skill provides the people ability to convey information verbally, and to express their thoughts and feelings in a way that the listener can understand. Those who learn English have a mission to fulfill their life ambitions, desires, and goals. In order to learn the English Language, learners have to learn all four skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Today, there is more demand for communication skills in the global market. Business organizations and software companies for instance are doing their business well by recruiting candidates who are good at oral communication skills. In view of this matter, there is a need to start teaching speaking skills to learners when they are at a very young age. Young learners grip the language with great speed and it will be easier for the teachers to develop speaking skills among these learners. Therefore, teachers have to adapt and adopt new strategies and techniques in the language classroom.

Under the Tenth Malaysia Plan for 2011 to 2015 (The Economic Planning Unit) as stated in Chapter 5, the government has implemented the 'Upholding Bahasa Malaysia and

Strengthening English' program during the Plan period (Ramiza Darmi & Albion, 2013). Apart from emphasising Bahasa Malaysia, English is given priority as well in the education policy and planning as the 'second language', where the language is being learned and spoken in the community where the language learning is taking place (Cohen, 2014). English has been placed as one of the core and compulsory subjects taught in schools so that Malaysians who have undergone the national education system are able to communicate in the language (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014). They have to go through this formal process of learning English as a second language for the rest of eleven years of their schooling and sit for school and national examinations.

Unfortunately, the long years of learning the language do not present most of the students to have the good speaking ability. According to Saraswathy and Azlina (2021) in their research entitled "ESL Learners' Challenges in Speaking English in Malaysian Classroom", Malaysian students' poor speaking skills have become a national problem. Another research done by Louise, Melor and Maslawati (2016) presented low performance of the language due to numerous factors and the focal factor showed the language was seldom used or practised as communicative purposes. The research on the practise of language teaching and learning conducted by Normazidah, Koo and Hazita (2012) portrayed Malaysian undergraduates have limited proficiency in the language due to their dissatisfaction of the language teaching. Similarly, research focused on undergraduates with low speaking ability conducted by Rusena, Melor and Harwaty (2018) pointed out that both teachers and students need to be motivated and passionate in the language teaching and learning. Nadesan (2020) identified secondary school students are unable to converse confidently during speaking activities. He emphasised a need in teaching strategies of what teachers should focus on in planning and guiding speaking activities. Based on the above related researches conducted only focusing on problems students and teachers faced.

However, this research plans to adopt and design a speaking station site that initially can help teachers and educators of ESL in teaching speaking. Hence, after taking into account the above scenarios, it is about time to overcome the difficulties faced by teachers for a speaking station site to be used in the teaching and learning of speaking skills.

Research Methodology

This study adopts the ADDIE model of instructional design. Branch proposes using the ADDIE model for it is one of today's most effective and appropriate tools for developing educational products and other learning resources (Branch, 2009, p.2). This systematic process is represented in the acronym ADDIE, which stands for the important components in the process of creating the instructional design, which are Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation.

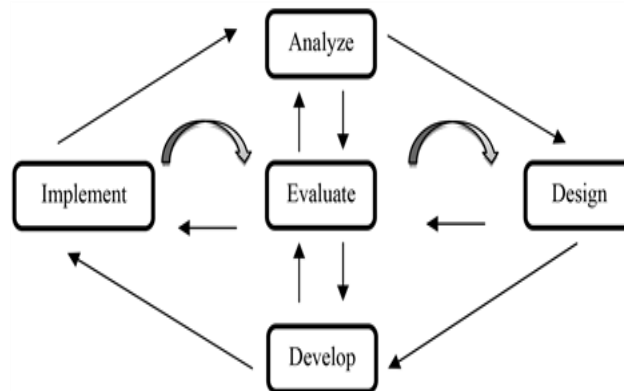


Figure 1: The ADDIE Model (Aldoobie, 2015)

ADDIE model enables instructional designers, any content's developers, or even teachers to create an efficient, effective teaching design by applying the processes of the ADDIE model. It is also widely used for its versatility since the model can be used in any environment, such as face-to-face or online interaction (Aldoobie, 2015).

Another reason for choosing the ADDIE model is because it is also known for its guiding traits which add credibility through analytical, evaluative, and philosophical procedures. Thus, ADDIE is a validating process that can be used to verify all products and procedures associated with the development of guided learning episodes (Branch, 2009).

This research however uses the adapted model of ADDIE whereby the Implementation phase is omitted and this is also in line with the adapted Type 2 Design and Development Research (DDR) Approach (Siraj et al., 2020, p.34). In the process of designing a model using the DDR Approach (Type 2), the three phases that are involved are as follow:

Table 1: DDR Approach (Type 2)

Phase 1 Need Analysis	i.Statement of problem ii.Needs analysis iii.Create product specification
Phase 2 Design & Development	i.Compiling relevant theories of teaching speaking ii.Synthesising theories from literature to devise a draft model iii.Develop draft model based on specification
Phase 3 Evaluation	i.Making adjustments to the draft model ii.Devise the final model iii.Conduct a survey among the instructors and teachers to evaluate the model

Source: Mohd Jamil, M. R., & Mat Noh, N. R. (2020).

Phase 1 Need Analysis

This is the initial starting phase for developmental research based on the DDR method where information on the context and environment is gathered. It is based on the analysis, recommendations and solutions to problems that can be made (Rossett, 1995, in Mohd Jamil & Mat Noh, 2020). This phase begins with the exploration of significant educational problems. Based on the literature review, the following issues have been identified:

- i. the lack of speaking competency among (L2) learners
- ii. the importance of a model/framework in teaching speaking.

Phase 2 Design and Development

In the second phase of the study, the findings from Phase 1 are used to guide the design. The analysis highlights the issues pertaining to the design of a speaking station site that offers teachers ways and ideas to facilitate teaching and learning speaking skills. A model of teaching speaking would be of help to teachers to teach how to communicate effectively in ESL classrooms. Further literature review is conducted in this phase in order to identify and map the relevant theories of teaching speaking, which shall make up the elements for the user-friendly Speaking Station Site Model. The elements are specifically selected to cater and guide teachers in conducting effective speaking lessons for ESL learners. The objective of this phase is to design and develop a speaking station site model for the teaching of speaking based on the information gathered in the Phase One (Need Analysis) and to obtain experts' consensus(experienced teachers) on the compiled elements of the draft model. The latter is crucial in the usage of speech situations, speech events and speech acts. This phase is indeed used to identify the skills and knowledge of language teachers.

Phase 3 Evaluation

Interview questions were used to collect data from the English Language teachers/instructors, which were later analysed to obtain the relevant data for the teaching of speaking. The instrument was adapted from the Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance (CLSP) Concordia University, Quebec Canada which specialises in teaching and learning processes used in the classroom.

Result And Discussion

This research aims to achieve two main objectives; first, to help teachers to create effective communication in ESL classroom; second, to explore teachers' course of action in teaching speaking through speaking station site. The analysis was conducted based on several questions and there were four sections. The 5-point Likert scale is used and the scale consists of the below points- (1)Strongly Disagree; (2)Disagree; (3)Neutral; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree. Section 1 focused on the demographic background of the participants in terms of gender, years of teaching experience and teaching position. Section II focused on the participants' teaching approach in speaking. Section III Rating Speaking Station Site and Section IV focused on future planning and attention of the participants.

In Section I, the data showed that most of the participants had more than 3 years of experience in teaching. Most of the participants had 15 years of teaching experience. This is important as teaching experience play vital role towards conducting a better teaching classroom.

Section II, showed the participant's approach to teaching speaking. There are 6 content questions for this section as listed in below Table 2:

Table 2: Approach to Teaching Speaking

Content 1-My focus in teaching is for all students to respond.
Content 2-I prepare my lesson using only the textbook.
Content 3-I use various activities in my class.
Content 4-I like to use group discussion in my speaking class.
Content 5-I have a problem if my activities are student-centered
Content 6-I discuss with other language teachers the best approach to speaking

Looking into Content 1, 11.1% of participants disagree and about 66.7% and 22.2% agree and strongly agree. As for Content 2, most participants stated 44.4% were neutral about the statement. The data showed from Content 3 and Content 4 that most of the participants agree (88.9%) to conduct group discussions in the classroom and a percentage of 55.6 recorded in Content 5 to having problem if they conduct student-centered activities. A 100% scored for Content 6 whereby the participants agreed to have a discussion with other language teachers on the best approach for a speaking lesson.

Moving on to Section III, is the part to rate the Speaking Station Sites. There are 10 items to rate the site as shown in below Table 3:

Table 3: Rating Speaking Station Site

Item 1-Ease of navigation
Item 2-Accuracy of information
Item 3-Quality of content
Item 4-Layout/Design interesting
Item 5-Meeting your needs
Item 6-I want to visit this site again
Item 7-There is an add-on information on teaching speaking
Item 8-I found a better way to teach speaking
Item 9-The site offers step-by-step suggestion to teach speaking
Item 10-I can comment on my students' mistakes Effectively.

The data showed Item 1, 7, 8 and 10 shared the same amount of 88.9% agree to the statements listed. About 77.8% portrayed the same degree of agree to Item 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9. A percentage of 66.9 portrayed for Item 2- accuracy of information. As for Item 4-Layout/Design interesting only a percentage of 55.6 received from the participants.

Finally, in Section 4 Future planning and intention covered as below Table 4:

Table 4: Future Planning and Intention

Content 1-I can focus more on my students' speaking skills rather than just speaking.
Content 2-I can collaborate with other language teachers on the best approach for speaking lesson.
Content 3-I think about what to learn in order to teach effective communication in the classroom.

Content 1 received 77.8% and 22.2% to the scale strongly agree and agree that the statement focuses more on the students' speaking skills rather than just speaking. Most participants reacted positively (77.8% & 22,2%) to Content 2 about having to collaborate with other language teachers on the best approach for speaking lessons. Most participants (88.9%) felt that they think about what to learn in order to teach effective communication in the classroom. The end of the questionnaire provides the opportunity for the participants to suggest further improvements for the site. They suggested building more examples of activities and speaking assessments.

Discussion of The Findings

Research Objective 1: To help teachers to create effective communication in ESL classroom. From the findings, it can be concluded that based on the teaching experiences of the participants ranging from 3 to 15 years have proven that the participants are able to conduct the teaching of speaking in ESL classroom. However, they do face difficulties in responding to group discussions and the student-centered activity. Therefore, the use of the Speaking Station Site can offer help whereby the participants can gauge their activities based on the step-by-step procedure. Each step clearly guides the users to plan what they can do.

Research Objective 2: To explore teachers' course of action in teaching speaking through Speaking Station Site.

Based on the findings, the data from Section III-Rate the Speaking Station Site and Section IV-Future planning and intention of the participants demonstrated that the participants are fully aware of what they can do in their teaching and planning of the speaking class. The findings of this research concur with previous researches that stated both language teachers/instructors and students need to be motivated in the language teaching and learning and also a need in teaching strategies of what should focus in speaking activities (Rusena, Melor & Harwaty, 2018; Nadesan, 2020).

Conclusion

As a final point, this research has offered the use of the Speaking Station Site for effective communication in ESL classrooms. From the findings, language teachers/instructors' teaching experiences play a major role in teaching speaking effectively. Apart from that, the approach to teaching speaking is important in order for the language teachers/instructors to create effective activities for teaching and learning. A constructive and a step-by-step guidelines from the Speaking Station Site would be much of help because the language teachers/instructors can offer feedback if the students do not perform satisfactorily or pleasingly. It is envisaged that these valuable findings could be useful to language teachers/instructors particularly primary, and secondary school teachers as well as language instructors who teach communicative

courses. The information gained from this research hopefully can help them by providing valuable insights into effective communication in ESL classrooms. There are some limitations to this research. First, there is no specific level for the learners provided in the site and second, speaking is not easy to maintain as there is possible misunderstanding of the information. Future improvement for this Speaking Station Site is to prepare a checklist to provide easy guidance for users and to update the information regarding speaking skills.

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