DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN CLASSROOMS:
THE USE OF VIDEO CLIPS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

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ABSTRACT

Speaking skill seems to be the most difficult language skill to teach Myanmar students, probably because English is used only in the classroom. The aim of this study is to compare the results of the teaching technique using a form of digital technology with those of a traditional teaching technique. We provided some Myanmar university students with motivating exposure to English speaking through video clips and gave them the opportunity to develop their English speaking skill. Third-year students at the University of Computer Studies at Panglong were taught by means of group activities and individual activities using video clips. We followed the new trend: videos were presented with only short durations. Their improvements and responses were assessed through a questionnaire. As a control group, another group of students were taught without the aid of video clips. When the results were compared, both groups showed significant improvements but the group that was taught with video clips was more motivated and they were found to look forward to the speaking lessons. It is accepted that student motivation is a key element in the learning process, and thus we conclude that teaching English skill using video clips is a welcome addition to the variety of classroom activities.

Keywords: speaking skill, exposure, digital technology, video clips, third-year university students, activities, motivation

1. Introduction

Teaching English speaking skill is a boring task in Myanmar language classrooms. Using traditional methods, the teachers can produce students whose speaking skills are passable but classrooms lack the condition for motivation.

As a result, the presenter studied different teaching techniques and settled on using video clips. The results are encouraging and the process and the findings are presented in this paper.

The Importance of Speaking

Speaking can be simply defined as conveying messages verbally from one individual to another (Richards, 2008). Speaking is also a tool for communication. We communicate with each other to share our knowledge and to express our thoughts and ideas. According to Hedge (2000), speaking is defined as a skill by which people are judged while first impressions are being formed. As it reflects people's thoughts and personalities, it is an important skill in both first and second languages.

Why speaking skill needs to be taught

Speaking skill plays an important role in the second language learning and teaching. In spite of its importance, teaching speaking skill has been undervalued in Myanmar for many years because of the previous exam system in which only reading

and writing skills were focused on. Baker and Westrup (2003) said that "a student who can speak English well may have greater chance for further education, of finding employment and gaining promotion." Nowadays, we are living in the age of communication. In order to be able to communicate with the people around the world, it is necessary for the learners to acquire the English speaking skill. Besides, today's international organizations and enterprises are expanding their business around the world and looking for those who are proficient in English speaking skill to communicate with other people. Therefore, those who are good at speaking skill have a better chance to get jobs. The speaking skill is an important skill for the learners and it is integrated with the other language skills because by learning this skill, they can develop their vocabulary and grammar, and then their writing skill can also be improved. If the learners master the speaking skill, it is thought that they have also mastered all of the other language skills. Therefore, this skill is given priority in the classrooms.

Difficulties Experienced in Learning Speaking Skill

In the second language learning, the speaking skill seems to be more difficult than other language skills. The learners think that they have several difficulties when they try to express what they want to say in their speaking class. The barriers they encounter when learning the speaking skill are as follows.

Lack of Interest in the Topic

In the speaking classes, most of the learners are silent. This may be because of the topics which the teachers have chosen. If the learners have little knowledge about these topics, they have nothing to say and they keep silent. Not having appropriate vocabulary and being unable to use correct grammatical structures also make the learners lose interest in the topics.

Solutions

Depending on the learners' prior knowledge, the lessons should be planned so that they can improve their speaking skill. According to the learners' age and interest, the teachers need to create the speaking activities in order for them to be able to actively participate in learning speaking skill. In addition, before the activities, the teachers should give the learners exposure to the real language situation by using digital teaching aids like video clips and teach appropriate words and grammar structures which will be used in the chosen topics.

Deficient Listening Skill

If the learners do not understand what other people are saying, they are not able to reply.

Solutions

Encouraging the learners to practice listening skill through movies is a useful way to improve this skill. The teachers should ask the learners to use phrases such as "I'm sorry, I didn't understand that."; "Could you repeat that, please?", "Could you say that again, please?" in the conversation if they don't understand what other speakers say.

2. Pronunciation

For the second language learners, English words are difficult to pronounce. When speaking English, the learners need to consider not only pronunciation but also intonation. If their pronunciation is not correct, the listeners will not be able to understand what they say and the conversation will be broken down.

Solutions

The more the learners are exposed to English, the more they can pronounce the words correctly like native speakers. While teaching speaking skill, the teachers should use the recording script or video clips which give the learners real language structures to improve their pronunciation.

Lack of Confidence

Ur (2000) stated: "Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom, worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts." It is because they do not have self-confidence in speaking English in public.

Solutions

The teachers should encourage the learners to practise the speaking skill by using topics which they already know, and teaching target vocabulary and correct grammar structures beforehand. If they have knowledge and sufficient words of the topics used in the speaking activities, they are able to speak more. The more they speak, the more they think it is easier to speak and the better their speaking skill will be. The better they speak, the more confident they will be at their speaking English. Instead of asking the learners to speak in front of the whole class at the first stage of learning speaking skill, which can prevent them from speaking confidently, the teachers should arrange pair work and group work in the speaking class. While doing their work, the teacher should observe what they are doing and assist them if required.

As the learners are not living in the English-speaking environment, what makes it hard for them to master the speaking skill is a lack of exposure to the language in the real situation and in their environment. As a result, the teacher should find effective ways for them to meet their needs.

Digital Technology in Language Learning

In today's digital age, not only everyday life is affected by technology but also language learning comes to depend on tools such as videos, applications, and websites, alongside digital devices. Knowing these tools are beneficial to the development of learners' language skills, teachers tend to use them in the classrooms to facilitate classroom environment and to provide the learners with a variety of learning activities. In addition to traditional text books, teachers create lessons by using a wide range of multimedia such as podcasts, YouTube-based videos, songs, news broadcasts, and interviews on radios and on the websites for the improvement of students' speaking and listening skills. These lessons provide learners with authentic materials and better insight into the natural use of English. Blogging platforms such as Blogger or WordPress are used to encourage learners to create online blog for the enhancement of their writing skill. The Internet also enhances the classroom environment with a variety of

online games by which learners can practise vocabulary, grammar exercises and reading skill. Depending on availability of technological devices, teachers choose tools for their classrooms. While teachers in the developed countries use advanced and modern tools and digital devices with the Internet access in the classrooms, those in the developing countries like Myanmar widely use tools such as video clips and electronic devices like personal computers, projectors and TV sets without the Internet access.

The Advantages of learning Speaking Skill from Video Clips

Video clips are valuable tools in the countries where English is regarded as a foreign language which is used and spoken only in the classroom because they provide the learners with the language of real-life conversations with visual supports such as facial expressions and gestures simultaneously and a variety of language structures with correct pronunciation. Mirvan (2013) stated that employing video materials in a classroom can enhance students' motivation to learn since it can expose them to a wide variety of situations that can help them comprehend similar situations in real life. As learners' lives are also integrated with video clips, they can be used as a motivator to make learning speaking skill more entertaining and enjoyable. By watching and listening to video clips in the speaking class, the learners are able to understand how and when to use the words and phrases correctly. Knowing about the culture of the target language enhances learning language skills. The learners can learn English-speaking cultures in video clips for the improvement of their speaking skill.

3. Methods of Teaching

Experimental Group

Two groups of students consisting of 10 students in each group are given the following activities.

What Happens Next?

The video clip, Let's Learn English Lesson 43: Time for Plan B from VOA Learning English, is selected for the task. In this activity, the video clip is stopped a minute early before the ending and the learners are asked to predict what will happen at the end of the movie. While they are watching it, the teacher is going around the class to assist them if necessary. After watching it, they are asked to share their prediction to the class. Finally, the rest of the video clip is played to check whether they are right.

Question and Answer

This activity is simple and useful. The video clip, Let's Learn English Lesson 43: Time for Plan B from VOA Learning English, is also used for it. Beforehand, the learners are taught new words in the video clip and some language which will be used in the next speaking activities. The learners are asked to focus on the action and what the speaker says. This video clip lasts 5 minutes. To facilitate the learners' comprehension, subtitle is used. After watching it, they are asked to answer the questions which are related to the video clip:

- Where is the speaker going?
- What has happened to her?
- How does she try to solve her problem?

- Why does Ashley refuse to help her?

- What is Plan F?

Act-It-Out

Let's Learn English Lesson 43: What Can You Do? from VOA Learning English is used for Act-It-Out speaking activity. To do this activity, learners are put into groups of three and each learner in the groups has his or her own role which is chosen in accordance with the learners' level of fluency. They are given the instruction to write their own script reflecting one of the scenes in the video clip and all of the groups are asked to act out their roles in front of the class.

Tell the Story

Three or more video clips are selected for this activity. All learners in the class are randomly given one of these video clips. After watching the clips they have got, they are asked to write the summary of what happened in it. Then the teacher arranges the learners into groups of two who have different video clips. After that the teacher asks them to share with each other what they have watched. Finally, some learners are selected to describe the video clips they have watched to the class. This activity is integrated with the writing skill. After teaching the learners how to write summary writing, the teacher plans this speaking lesson so that not only speaking skill but also writing skill can be tested.

Control Group

In teaching the control group, the teacher gives tapescripts of the video clips like the following instead of showing the video clips.

Tapescript of Let's Learn English Lesson 43: Time for Plan B

In this lesson, Anna loses her wallet. Her friends are not able to help her. It's time for Plan B!

Anna: Hey there! Tonight, I am teaching my ukulele class. It is far away. So I am going to ride the Metro. Oh, no! I lost my wallet! It has my Metro card, my credit card and my money! Oh, no!

It's time like this I remember my father's important words.

He said, "Anna, never........" No wait, "Always have emergency money."

It's empty. Time for Plan B. "Extra Emergency Money." No! It's empty too!

Anna, it's time for Plan C. Hi, Marsha

Marsha: Hi, Anna. What's up?

Anna: I'm stuck downtown without any money. Would you be able to come? Please?

Marsha: Anna, I can't. I'm too busy. I have to give a big presentation in one hour. Sorry!

Anna: That's ok. Good luck with your presentation!

Marsha: Thanks!

Anna: Time for Plan D. Hi, Jonathan! How's it going?

Jonathan: Hey, Anna. Things are great. What's up?

Anna: Well, I was wondering if you could give me some money.

Jonathan: What?

Anna: See, I lost my wallet and I'm stuck downtown and I.....

Jonathan: Anna, I wish I could. I'm at the airport with my mother. Her flight leaves in two hours.

Anna: That's okay. Tell your Mum to have a nice trip!

Jonathan: I do. I wish. I could help. Thanks. Bye!

Anna: That's serious. Time for .....Plan E. Hi, Ashley! What are you doing?

Ashley: Oh! Hi, Anna!

Anna: Ashley, I was wondering, uh, would you be able to come downtown? And could you give me $20?

Ashley: Anna, I can't.

Anna: I'll pay you back the money. I promise.

Ashley: Anna, I'm not worried about the money. I am babysitting. That's very very, bad!

Anna: Well, losing my wallet is bad, but it's not the end of the world, Ashley.

Ashley: I was talking to my niece, Anna.

Anna: Well, thanks anyway, Ashley!

Ashley: Good luck getting money.

Anna: Good luck babysitting.

Ashley: Thanks!

Anna: Well, Plan A, B, C, D and E did not work. Think, Anna, Think.

Anna picked up her ukulele and said, "Time for Plan F." Then she played it and sang, "..won't you give, could........" Thank you very much, sir!........ " Would you give me money, won't you give ...." Thank you very much!....... "Could you give me, won't you give me money....until next time!.. won't you give me money?"

Then the activities of "What Happens Next, Question and Answer, Act-It-Out and Tell the Story" are asked to perform with the aid of tapescripts.

4. Findings

After teaching the experimental group using the video clips and the control group using the tapescripts, their performances are evaluated. Subsequently, the feedbacks of all the participants are collected by means of questionnaires and interviews.

Fig.1 Questionnaire

Learner's Lesson Evaluation

Tutor:

Date:

Below are a series of statements. Please respond by **circling** the number you most reflects your opinion.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Stror Disa£
The content was presented at a level which could readily be understood	5	4	3	2	1
There was opportunity for group work	5	4	3	2	1
There was opportunity for individual participation	5	4	3	2	1
The material presented had practical relevance	5	4	3	2	1
The lesson content built on prior learning and experience	5	4	3	2	:
I was motivated to learn	5	4	3	2	:
Lesson helped reinforce learning	5	4	3	2	1
The teaching technique used helped me learn effectively	5	4	3	2	1
The tutor achieved a good rapport with the group	5	4	3	2	1
There was opportunity for feedback and evaluation	5	4	3	2	1

It is found that the experimental students are more eager to learn and th comment that time flies during the lesson and it is observed that they are mo motivated than the control students. The tutor achieves an intimate relationship wi the students.

The experimental students find out that the video materials improve their listenir comprehension ability more than written tapescripts.

Although there was no significant difference between the speaking performanc(of the two groups, the experimental group looks forward to their English lessons th; include learning from video clips.

5. Conclusion

Nowadays a plethora of teaching aids are available. Video technology is among th most useful aids in teaching English. It is found in this study that video clips ad variety to the teaching and learning experience and they are a welcome addition to th collection of language teacher's tools.

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