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Impact of online English-speaking clubs on college students' speaking proficiency in Bangladesh

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Abstract: This quantitative study explored students' English proficiency by rehearsing English speaking through participation in an English Language club. The study was a group-post-test quasi-experimental design. Forty honors scholars were named to form the experimental group of the study. This trial group was tested using the pre-post speaking test before and after exposure to the language club. The trial lasted for three months, from September to November 2021. Research data were collected through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. Significant differences were established between the pre-test and post-test regarding speaking proficiency and chops. The findings indicated that sharing in the English–speaking club helps scholars get a probative terrain for speaking chops through discussion, donation, speech, lying, debate, and other speaking conditioning. The study concluded that the English Language speaking club effectively developed students' speaking proficiency.

Keywords: College students, English language club, speaking proficiency

Introduction

English is the most spoken language in the world, considering the total number of those who speak it as a first, second, or foreign language. The ability to speak English has become the main focus when learning it as a second or foreign language as many students learn English to develop their speaking skills. For many English learners, speaking English is the most difficult part of the language to master. To improve speaking skills, one must practice with other English learners or English speakers. One of the best ways to do this is by joining a language-speaking club or starting a conversation with an online English language club member. It may help them to build a good relationship with fluently speaking. Speaking is one of the ways to communicate with one another. When someone feels confused about something, she or he can ask directly the speaker that he is talking with. Cornbleet and Carter (2002) contended that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing receiving and processing information. Unfortunately, most college students still find it difficult to speak English, causal factors of this problem are such as lack of confidence in speaking English, lack of grammar mastery, lack of vocabulary, and feeling fear of making mistakes. However, each teacher has their own method to solve those students' speaking problems. Due to Covid-19, all colleges in Bangladesh were closed, and there was no way to continue the learning process, so online was the only way to set up a language club. The education quality of the graduation levels students was not perfect for this current situation. That's why we set up an online English language speaking club for the students of graduate level. Therefore, the researchers set up a dedicated online English language

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club in selected colleges where students were equipped with incredible linguistics in a well-structured and seamless manner. The objectives of this research were: (i) to investigate whether the speaking club improves the students' speaking ability and responses toward the implementation of the online speaking club, and (ii) to develop their English speaking skills after completing this professional learning community (PLC) cycle and be able fluent in their daily life and academic ground.

Theoretical Framework

After analyzing students' linguistic needs and attitudes team members and instructors held several meetings to discuss the necessary procedures to enhance student's attitudes and motivate them to learn English. The instructors suggested establishing an: online English language-speaking club. Then students were included in a language club through an online platform (Facebook group) and then registered. This decision was taken to fulfill the students' needs and performances of reading real and up-to-date incidental social topics, which are more related to their daily lives. Speaking clubs have the potential to be a powerful vehicle for motivating engaged and interested learners along with motivating the "disengaged and frustrated" ones. Some students appreciated the social aspect of Zoom classrooms, while others felt online education was best for them when they were working on their own. Online Education enables the teacher and the student to set their learning pace and flexibility of setting a schedule that fits everyone's agenda. Khan (2021) mentioned that the themes of 'Blended Learning' and 'Flipped Classroom' are the demand of time. Online education teaches a vital time management skill, which makes finding a good work-study balance easier. Focusing on student learning is the key element for a successful PLC. To find out best possible way to focus on student learning we conducted a survey through a questionnaire where we have traced some possibilities and drawbacks.

Literature Review

This issue is necessary to build up a better career for our students. By setting up an Online English Language club may help them improve speaking skill, remove unstableness, to build up communication skills in different languages in a Special way. This issue is affecting learning because those who are weak in language they are not able to get a better job or can't prepare themselves for a bright career to their ultimate goal. Brown and Yule (2000) underline that speaking is one of the basic skills as a measurement of language learners whether someone is successful in learning a language or not. According to Khalil et al. (2019), learners should learn how to speak English properly not only to pass their academic exams but also for public use in the outside world.

According to Galanes and Adams (2013), joining the speaking club offers advantages such as fellowship, companionship, moral and emotional support for views, a challenge to reticence, access to more information, equal speaking opportunities, a more pleasant environment than regular classes, and the acquisition of new vocabulary, knowledge, and information. English Club is one of the language learning strategies that helps to the student's achievement in speaking ability (Xu, 2018). Mouleka (2013) adds that an English club is a real place where the learning of English is more practical.

The previous related studies that were reviewed indicate a problem among learners in general and university students in particular regarding their speaking skills. For instance, El Sakka (2016), Salem (2014), Diyyab et al. (2013) and Hussein (2001) confirmed that in the universities, the problems of speaking are more serious. Moreover, English is listed as one of the official languages in more than a quarter of the countries of the world. Imagine how many opportunities we can have by improving our skills in the language. Better speaking skill is asked in different job circulars at home and abroad. Thus an unemployed being employed can contribute to the mass economy.

Methodology

Research Design

This quantitative study employed the one-group pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design. This design was selected because the instruments of the study aimed at investigating the effect of the

program based on online learning on the same students before and after the implementation of the program; therefore, the participants were compared to themselves. To further ensure the validity of the program, control of participants' maturation and developmental growth was ensured as the instructional program lasted for only eight weeks, which was a relatively short period. Students' developmental levels are stable over short periods. Quantitative data was collected and driven from the results of the pre/post-tests which assessed participants' speaking skills. On the other hand, quantitative and qualitative data were elicited from the analysis.

Students' developmental levels are stable over short periods, and consequently, spontaneous changes that a control group might detect are unlikely to occur, so the study lends itself to this design better than it does to other designs (Shadish et al., 2002).

Sample and Participants

The participants of the study were 40 (population) male and female first-year English department students divided into 4 groups with 10 (sample) members. Using online Duration of this PLC was 3 months.

Instrumentation

The researchers created a Facebook group named 'English Language Club' and added their students. The researchers selected the participants from 1st year honors students of the English department of Ashek Mahmud College, Jamalpur, Bangladesh. They were participating in recitation competitions, public speaking week, and speaking contests, and trying to speak frequently about what they have learned in this lockdown period of Covid-19. The resource person provided his lecture on Google Meet/Zoom apps. Recorded classes were given on social platforms like the Facebook group.

Students used tutor-developed instruments when the club was established. College authorities provide logistics support and our colleagues will motivate our students to join the Club. Books, periodicals, newspapers, recorder device (audio, video), resource person, classroom, Wi-Fi connections, well decorated digital classroom, smart board, logistic and financial support of college administration. At the same time, it is necessary to listen to English programs on Television, Radio, English news Media, and other Electronic media to improve speaking power. It will help us to get good ideas of pronunciation and speaking style. If we follow these things, it will be possible for us to achieve English-speaking skills.

Resource person familiarize their students with the idea of English learning as well as provide them practice in using English-developed ideas. The intervention of the team helped the student to develop their career.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, we used several techniques for collecting the data such as observation, questionnaire, and interview. The first step was observation. To collect valid data about the environment of the campus. The second step was an analysis of questionnaires. The questionnaire was distributed to the students. It was designed to help get more information about students' responses toward the implementation of the speaking club. Babbie (2010) defined a questionnaire as a document containing questions and other types of items designed to solicit information appropriately. To find out the percentage from all answers to every question, we used a percentage formula as in the following:

$P= (f/n) \times 100\%$ (Here, P=Percentage, f=Frequency, n=Number of sample and 100%=constant value)

The third step was an interview. Interview was conducted by resource person. He asked some questions related to the students speaking ability in the class. It is important to be fluent in speaking English for success in every step of life. An important matter here is to develop speaking skills.

Speaking Skill Checklist

The initial form of the checklist included five main speaking skills and several 18 speaking sub-skills and was presented to a panel of jury members.

Table 1. The selected speaking skills according to their high percentages were as follows:

Accuracy	Pronouncing correctly.
	Speaking comprehensible English.
	Applying appropriate intonation.
Fluency & Coherence	Speaking fluently almost with no repetition or minimal hesitation
	Developing topics fully and coherently.
	Speaking at a reasonable rate smoothly.
Vocabulary	Employing vocabulary items correctly.
	Using a variety of vocabulary
	Using some sophisticated words.
	Using aesthetic aspects of language
	(figures of speech, idiomatic expressions, sayings, proverbs, puzzles, and jokes)
Structure	Applying a variety of structures accurately and consistently.
	Using words, phrases, and sentences in the correct order.
Interaction (Communication strategies)	Initiating and logically developing simple conversations on familiar topics.
	Using fillers appropriately

The pre speaking test was to measure actors' speaking chops from the beginning of the PLD work and posttest was done after three months. A speaking skill test, with five main sections (with a total number of 15 questions) in the form of a structured interview, was designed by the experimenter in light of a table of specifications grounded on the specified five main speaking chops. Scoring the test, the total score of the test was 50. The total no. participant was 40. Each section of the test is worth 10 points and assesses two speaking chops except for the last section which assesses only one skill. Arranging a speaking and enumeration competition and debate session by using online literacy accouterments, similar to Google Docs.

Findings and Presentation of Data

Assessment of the program proceeded through two phases: The first one was to assess the study group's gradual progress in speaking skills. The second one was to determine whether the students achieved the objectives of the program. Such type of assessment was conducted at the end of the treatment period through the application of the pre-post speaking skill test. From the first step found it favorable to set up an online language club. The second observation found students agreed to set up an English language club. The observed data through questionnaire data were: Agree (50%), Strongly Agree (30%), Neutral (10%), Disagree (5%), and Strongly Disagree (5%).

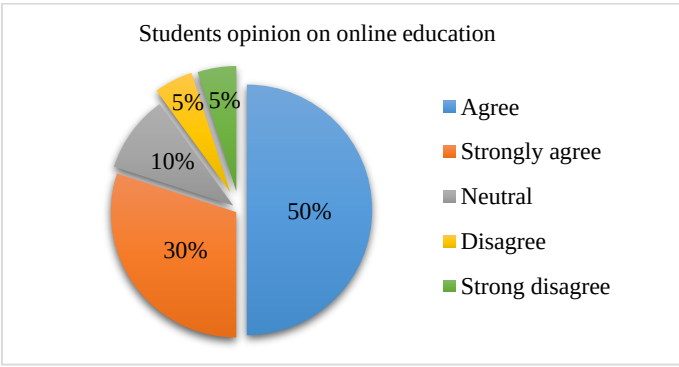


Figure 1. Showing results collected from the questionnaire

The third step from the interview resource person said that the speaking club could engage his students to be more creative and interactive in increasing their speaking ability through sharing ideas among the group. Some statistical data are shown in Figure 2. Here measured their speaking skill and indicated the mean scores of the study sample in the post-assessment of speaking fluency were higher

than their scores in the pre-assessment on the same skills, the value showed improvement (from 12.66 to 16.5).

The figure shows that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the participants on the post-application of the speaking test regarding accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, structure, communication strategies, and overall speaking skills.

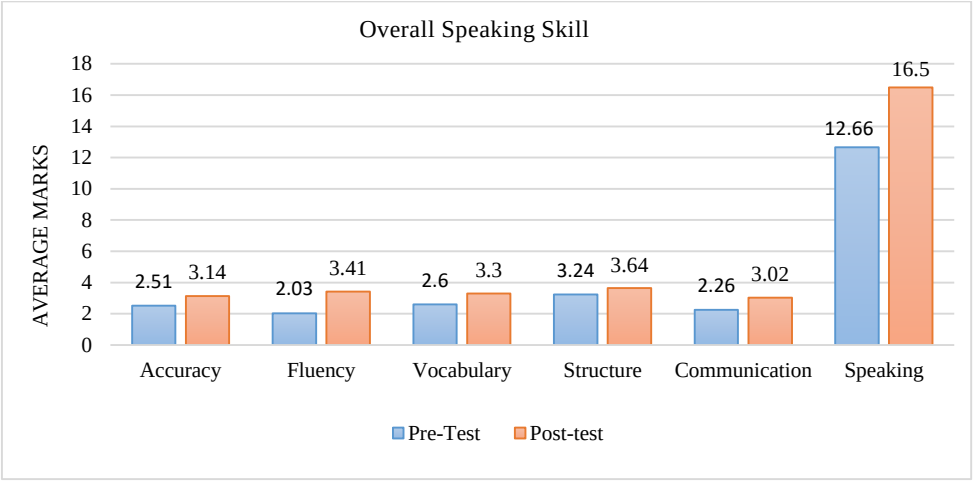


Figure 2. Overall speaking skill

The results of the present study are harmonious with results that proved the positive impact of online literacy on speaking and achievement in general similar to Chiu et al. (2010). At the end of the interview, the resource person said that the speaking club was veritably useful in tutoring speaking. The students enjoyed the speaking club. They were also more creative in exploring their ideas and participating in them among themselves.

This finding was in line with Melviza et al. (2017), the students felt that the English club was the most effective tool for motivating them to speak English with their peers. Additionally, Pereira et al. (2013) stated that the most beneficial learning occurs in non-threatening, stress-free, and comfortable environments, as provided by the English club. This finding was also in line with Hijrah and Umar (2021) that joining an English club could improve their ability to communicate in English. In the English club, they received instruction in speaking English fluently, and the mentors assisted them in doing so.

Conclusion

The researchers were veritably hopeful after setting up an online English language-speaking club scholars will be served and they will exercise in their diurnal life what they need to make them fluent in English. The resource person and the administration of our sodalities will give stylish support to run this design for the betterment of the scholars of our named sodalities. The club has also helped to increase the learners' mindfulness of the vital part of English in their lives and unborn careers. Those scholars now appreciate learning the language and make use of all the information they admit. Therefore, the charge of the club has been fulfilled. Grounded on the results of the study and conversations in the former section, we'd like to state some conclusions as follows. Speaking club bettered the scholars' speaking capability. The scholars' capability in speaking has bettered after they joined the speaking club. Grounded on the results of the questionnaires, the maturity of the scholars had positive responses toward the perpetration of the speaking club in literacy to speak. To add up, the results drawn from the present study that online language clubs can develop speaking chops and other language areas and aspects. The scholars claim that this speaking club is veritably useful for

them, similar to encouraging their amenability to exercise speaking English, to increase their speaking capability. Yet, the scholars still have some problems in speaking. The most common problem faced by the scholars in the speaking club is a lack of tone- confidence and English-speaking anxiety. Still, to arrive at a definite conclusion and recommendation more exploration work on a wider range of scholars should be tested over different areas (sodalities) of Bangladesh.

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