



Giving Explicit Communication Strategy Instruction: Its Effect on Grade 11 EFL Students' Speaking performance Based on Debate Technique

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v12i3.6570>

Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to investigate if explicit communication strategy has any significant effect on EFL Grade speaking performance based on debate technique. The study used Quasi-experimental research design that employed quantitative research approach with research instrument namely questionnaire and rubric scores. The participants of the study were Grade 11 Natural Science Students at Wallaggaa University Boarding Special Secondary School. The setting and participants were chosen based on purposive sampling technique. The existing two intact classrooms of Grade 11 were assigned to control group (N=35) and experimental group (N=35) using random sampling technique. The duration of the study was 2 months. For both control group and experimental group, a rubric score with 5 point rating scales that contains 8 categories consisting of 36 items upon which students speaking performance was measured by raters was used. Based on preliminary issues _ for reliability test, Pearson correlation was used for rating scale of rubric score. To this effect an statistical test independent sample t-test ANCOVA and MANOVA were employed and values of aspects of speaking performance were computed as (Lambda (8, 61) = 0.403, p = .000). As p (.000) < the critical cut off point (0.05), statistically a significance difference was observed which could become in coincidence with results obtained from all independent sample t-tests. Partial Eta squared with value 0.597 (which is almost .600 implies the difference between control group and experimental group to be big. Thus, it was recommended that the intervention of communication strategy instruction be taken into consideration to enhance EFL Special Secondary school students " speaking performance .

Keywords: *Effect; Communication Strategy; Speaking Performance*

Introduction

In learning English language, speaking is usually considered the core skill. Speaking is actually an activity involving two or more persons in which the speaker and listener react to what they say and hear each other for their communication. In speaking, we tend to get something done, explore ideas, work out some aspects of the world. Speaking is one of the most crucial language skills in our lives. It is the most needed skill in our everyday interactions, and the way we speak reveals our identities and views of the world (Hatipoğlu, 2017b). Speaking performance is the overtly observable and concrete manifestation or realization of competence.

With respect to speaking performance, Rudner & Boston (1994): Wiggins (1989) state as task that requires students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and strategies by creating a response or a product. Speaking performance requires students to perform a task or generate their own responses. Speaking performance is authentic when it mimics the kind of work needed to be done in a real-world contexts. Speaking performance tasks may require students to make an argument with supporting evidence in English or history or social science. Performance tasks often have more than one acceptable solution or answer and also require students to explain their reasoning.

In line with the definitions above the researcher sticks to debate technique initiating and promoting speaking performance. Congruently with views of Rudner & Boston (1994) and Wiggins (1989), the researcher believes that in a debate presentation while students argue for /against, they practically demonstrate their speaking skill. This in turn helps them to show progress in speaking performance. By the same token, the researcher suggests that communication strategy might be important in order to develop students' speaking performance.

Statement of the Problem

English language is taught as a subject starting from elementary schools to tertiary level and is made possible to be medium of instruction from secondary schools to tertiary in Ethiopia. However, as speaking is confined only to classroom, students, and, EFL teachers themselves do not use English to communicate outside the classroom. Rao (2019) states that students face difficulty in speaking English even after graduating from universities. Again, regardless of its importance, learning speaking skill has been skipped. Because of these facts, students' speaking performance appears to be very poor and therefore in such an environment, what the subjects /students are expected to do to improve speaking performance is decisive. For the enhancement of different skills of English including speaking, respective strategies available theoretically need to be put into practice / implemented in the classroom. This situation requires us to implement strategies and techniques working well in order to improve students language. Accordingly, the effect explicit communication strategy has on EFL students' speaking performance based on debate was worth studying.

Taking into account the Ethiopian context, Tekeste (1990) contends that despite English being a medium of instruction commonly from high schools onwards students could not follow their studies in English because their knowledge of English was poor. As a result, after completing high schools, students are unable to speak and write the target language. Hailom (1993) contends, even the most highly selected students joining the universities have serious problems to communicate in English. In his research Alamirew (1992) also argues that the students who succeeded in joining the universities themselves do not seem to be significantly better than those who are in high schools. Gessesse (1999) also says that the English language proficiency of many of the students who come to the universities and colleges is low perhaps because of the poor language background that they bring from the primary and secondary schools. The research findings by the (MoE, 2005) stated that it is a widely held belief that the status of English is low in Ethiopian schools at all levels. Accordingly, the problem is common for all language skills including speaking. Ethiopian students learn English starting from primary to tertiary level to

improve their communication skills. EFL students in Ethiopian universities, colleges and schools, are not competent enough in their communication both from perspectives of speaking and writing (Fisher & Swindells,1998).

Concomitantly with this, the researcher on his experience of teaching at high schools and university has come up with similar problem on the ground of identification of the poor performance of students' speaking, particularly despite changes made to incorporate and treat all skills equally, the researcher thought _ communication strategy might contribute to students' progress in speaking Performance. From this, it is possible to forecast among different variables that can affect speaking, communication strategy can be one factor.

The Research Hypothesis

RH₁: There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking performance based on debate technique between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy and those who did not receive the intervention.

Review of Related Literature

The concept of Speaking

Speaking is actually an activity involving two or more persons in which the speaker and listener react to what they say and hear each other for their communication. In speaking, we tend to get something done, explore ideas, work out some aspects of the world. Speaking is one of the most crucial language skills in our lives. It is the most needed skill in our everyday interactions, and the way we speak reveals our identities and views of the world (Hatipoğlu, 2017b).

Speaking performance

Speaking performance is the overtly observable and concrete manifestation or realization of competence. It is the actual doing of something. According to Rudner & Boston (1994); Wiggins (1989) speaking performance uses tasks that require students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and strategies by creating a response or a product . Speaking performance requires students to perform a task or generate their own responses. Speaking performance tasks may require students to make an argument with supporting evidence in English or history or social science.

Debate Technique

A debate technique is an argument put forwarded by speakers either supporting or opposing a certain topic /. Debate is presented as a valuable learning activity for teaching/learning critical thinking and improving communication skills. Paulette and James (2000) state that debate is a speaking situation in which opposite points of view are presented and argued. A debate is about the real or simulated issue. The learners' roles ensure that they have adequate shared knowledge about the issue and different opinions or interest to defend.

Communication Strategy Communication strategy is the way and means we employ when we experience a problem in communication, either because we cannot say what we would like to say or because we cannot understand what is being said to us. The source of the problem could be linguistic (I.e. we lack the necessary knowledge of the language), cultural (i.e. we are not aware of or can't cope with the cultural demands of the situation) or even contextual (Mariani,2010). Communication strategy prior to impacting speaking performance, might have influence on cognitive factors including speaking self-efficacy.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study followed a quasi- experimental research design that involved two groups of participants labeled the control group and the experimental group which made possible pretest –posttest non-randomized experimental design to take place.

Research Approach

Quantitative research approach was employed and the quantitative data was collected by using instruments_ rubric score to assess students' speaking performance from view point of aspects _ vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, comprehension, message delivery, content and organization.

Setting and participants

The setting of the study was Wollega University Boarding Special Secondary School found in Nekemt town. Participants of the study were Grade 11 Natural Science Students. The reason for selection of Grade 11 is that the researcher supposed students in the aforesaid grade had more practices and confidence in getting engaged in advanced level of technique of speaking such as debate compared with grade 9 and 10. Grade 12 was also excluded for two reasons. At the time (in the year 2016) pilot study was conducted, Grade 12 was not available in both pilot study and main study settings. The second reason is that had there been, grade 12, they would have been busy preparing themselves for university entrance exam, particularly during posttest intended to be given.

Sampling Techniques of the Study

As there are only two Natural science sections, at each grade level (9th, 10th and 11th), the existing two sections of grade 11 in the year 2015 second semester became directly subjects of the study. The presence of only Natural Science Stream in this special school is that students are expected to work towards preparing competent students ,who will further their study in Science and Technology in the future. In Grade 11 there were 38 (in section “A”) and 37 students (in section “B”) totally 75 students in the aforementioned year and Semester in the school. From the two sections, the respective English teacher and the researcher used a simple random sampling technique to assign the subject of a study into Control group and Experimental group. Accordingly, CG and EG was written with the same size of pieces of paper. Then after, representatives of section “A” and section” B” were invited each to pick up one of the wrapped pieces of paper. Based on this simple random technique, section “A” was found to be control group and section “B” was found to be Experimental group.

Data Gathering Instruments

Rubric Score /Rating Scales

In assessing speaking performance, tests dealing with enactments are needed to take place. The performance can be concerned with demonstrating process or product (McMillan, 2018). Performance assessment is a task that student demonstrates specific skills. Speaking Performance test involves doing rather than just knowing about it. To assess speaking performance based on debate a checklist of rating scale, or rubrics were needed. Rubrics are better used for scoring in performance assessment (Lane, 2013).

The rating scale/Rubric score in this study was adapted and used in accordance with the objectives of study formulated /research hypotheses and literature review. To this effect, the rating scale was adapted from Duncan, Matthew, and Gustav (2006). In addition, the researcher adapted rubric scores suggested by Brown (2010).

Using the rating scale, performance of each and every member in a group was scored by 2 pairs of raters (R1 and Rater 2) ticking (x) under the respective scale rated from 1-5. The raters were earlier informed and assigned where two of them are considered as pair 1 and two others of them as Pair 2. All raters were informed in advance I.e pair 1 to work on the first 18 items, and pair 2 to work on second other 18 items. The engagement of two pairs of raters in rating the rubric scores by sharing aspects of speaking /items work on is to ease the burden of marking/rating provided that the number of items were 36 and, as a result to increase reliability. In witness to this, the items were computed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and the value was found > 0.7 implying the presence of internal consistency /indicating the existence of strong relationship among questionnaire items.

From view point of validity, the development and refinement of rubric /rating scale began with having the items commented on by the researcher's advisor and senior TEFL PhD students. This step helped improve the items in many respects. Initially, the comments were useful to edit /rephrase so that they could easily be understood. Thus, where there were redundancy, repetitions were avoided, and items which were vague were modified.

Data Collection Procedures of the Pretest / Posttest)

Seven groups (where each group) consist of five members were formed for both control group and experimental group. These seven groups consist of $7 \times 5 = 35$ students in each and 70 students in both groups were considered for pretest and posttest assessments. The debate presentation required a group of five members. In control group 7 groups, and in experimental group, too 7 groups were formed. Then, all groups consisting of five members were given following topics which are familiarized to students.

- Rural Life is preferable to Urban Life
- Knowledge is better than Money
- On-line learning is preferable to face-to-face learning
- Abortion should be legalized.
- Prostitution should not be allowed in our country.
- Athletes are better than Doctors.
- Being wealthy is better than being healthy.
- Export of wheat should resume for the good image of Ethiopia.

To deal with topics assigned, groups that consist of five members were formed where one member acts as chair person, two members arguing for the motion (one being proposer and another being seconder), and two other members arguing against the motion (one being proposer and another being seconder).

After two weeks, a pretest was given for both on debate presentation that was assessed by raters scoring students' speaking performances. Ten minutes after the last debate presentation was over, questionnaire on self-efficacy was administered by the researcher and respective teacher to make students elicit their views. The administration of questionnaire took place at different classrooms but at the same time 2:45-2:55 pm for both control and experimental groups. Then, communication strategy instruction was given for experimental group. The experimental group learnt 19 types of communication Strategy_ Comprehension Checks Confirmation Checks, Interpretive Summary, Achievement, Guessing Strategies, Code-Switching, The Literal Translation Strategy, Coining Words, Paraphrasing Strategies, Requesting Help for Meaning Transferring Use of General Words, Use of Similar Sound Words, Circumlocution

,Clarification Request, Expressing Non-Understanding, Repairing, a Tendency to Improve Accuracy, Retrieval Strategy, Negotiation of Form, Nothing to Say (Avoidance/Reduction strategy) as an intervention.

Finally, both experimental and control groups were given similar related topics to previous ones in conducting post-test where each member in a group has the same share of task as in pretest. The topics given for posttest are as follows.

Farmers are better than Merchants

Abortion Should be legalized.

Affirmative actions should not be allowed for girls in our country.

The government should subsidize the supply of fuel to decrease cost of Life

Computers should replace teachers

Universities should set higher admission criteria for students from private schools

Unitary government is preferable to Federalist government.

The above procedures took place before the intervention and after the intervention. In both pretest and posttest, students were given two weeks to outline, generate and organize their ideas (providing reasons and evidences) that helped them support or oppose the motion by writing first. During this time, they put their ideas on a paper in detail, rehearsed / practiced several times. Degree of their dependence on a paper happened to decrease in accordance with frequency of their practice .and they did it until their degree of their reliance on the paper fell dramatically and until they managed talking orally almost by 90 %. Then, after a week, they presented the debate orally in a class. Only glancing for main idea was possible during debate presentation in the class.

Methods of Data Analysis

The quantitative data gathered through rubric scores/rating scale were organized and displayed in tables to be analyzed quantitatively through the application of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Prior to analysis of results, Pearson correlation and Normality assumptions for deciding between Parametric/Non parametric statistics were employed. Then, to see the effect communication strategy has on speaking performance based on debate technique independent samples t-tests. ANCOVA and MANOVA were used. As speaking performance in this study consists of aspects (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, comprehension, message delivery, content and organization) value of the speaking performance depends on each constituent /aspect of speaking performance, for each an independent samplet-test was employed. Consequently, value of speaking performance is equal to results obtained from all aforementioned aspects. In confirmation, (MANOVA) Multivariate Analysis of Variance) was employed. According to Perry (2005) and Pallant (2016), MANOVA is used when there are sub-dependent variables (like in the context of the study aforesaid aspects) all at the same time. Similarly, Hinton, et al. (2004,) explain that MANOVA is applied to “examine the effect of the independent variable(s) on the composite dependent variables.” One-way MANOVA, the experimental and the control groups’ means were computed in order to see if there were mean score differences before and after the intervention.

Results

Prior to conducting the main statistical analysis, reliability tests were checked for rubric score. Accordingly, the Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to estimate the strength of the relationship between the scores by two different raters. As the computed Pearson correlation product between Rater 1 and Rater2 were with values ≥ 0.7 for all aspects of speaking performance in the both control and experimental groups, strong relationships could be observed in both pretest and post test. The results depict that there is a meaningful relationship between the scores on each aspects of speaking Performance. This implies that the rating /scoring of speaking performance of an individual student by two judges is significantly consistent and stable. With regard to homogeneity of rubric scores Levene's Test was considered, with Sig. value > 0.05 , suggesting "Equal Variances Assumed" and with Sig. value < 0.05 signifying "Equal Variances Not Assumed. In order to check Normality, the researcher upon conducting a test of skewness and kurtosis for both the study groups on each aspect of speaking performance, found statistical values of Kurtosis and skweness to be between the required range of -1 and +1 showing the acceptability level. This means that the distribution of scores for each aspect of speaking performance is normal. Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that series of scores that ranging between -1 and +1 for both skewness and kurtosis are acceptable and taken for guarantee to conduct inferential statistics assuming that the data are reasonably normally distributed. Thus, accomplishing the pre statistical tests enabled the researcher to conduct the main statistical analysis.

Table 1: Independent Sample t-test on over all Rubric Scores (posttest)

Aspects Speaking Performance	Group	N	Mean	S. D	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pronunciation (posttest)	Control	35	3.408143	0.2937238	-4.349	68	0.000
	Experimental	35	3.757429	0.3734524			
Grammar (Posttest)	Control	35	3.478571	0.2357827	-4.499	53.316	0.000
	Experimental	35	3.846429	0.4223596			
Fluency (Posttest)	Control	35	3.431429	0.2784109	-4.499	53.316	0.000
	Experimental	35	3.715714	0.3747100			
Comprehension (Posttest)	Control	35	2.692857	0.3933534	-7.243	68	0.000
	Experimental	35	3.300000	0.3019544			
Content (Posttest)	Control	35	3.468571	0.2958253	-2.822	68	.006
	Experimental	35	3.691429	0.3616721			
Organization (Posttest)	Control	35	3.460714	0.2872464	-7.159	68	0.000
	Experimental	35	3.967857	0.3051983			

In Table 1 above, values obtained from six independent sample tests from rubric scores on aspects of speaking performance are $<$ the critical cut off point (0.05). Thus, it can be safely said that there were statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups on the post- test t speaking performance between control group and experimental group.

As there was a statistically significance difference was observed in pretest of vocabulary and Message Delivery of Speaking Performance, they were not included in the above independent sample t-test. In order to see whether there was confounding variables affecting for the difference obtained in pretest, ANCOVA was used in posttest and the result revealed the existence of a statistically significance difference in the aforementioned aspects /sub –variables.

Table 2: Summary of the Results of the Analysis of ANCOVA on VocabularyDependent
Variable

	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	2.733 ^a	2	1.366	10.798	0.000	0.244
Intercept	8.611	1	8.611	68.048	0.000	0.504
Pretest	0.129	1	0.129	1.021	0.316	0.015
Group Level	2.139	1	2.139	16.901	0.000	0.201
Error	8.478	67	0.127			
Total	925.625	70				
Corrected Total	11.211	69				

a. R Squared = .244 (Adjusted R Squared = .221)
k

The one-way ANCOVA result in Table 2 above showed that ($F(1, 67) = 16.901, p = 0.000$) or $F(1, 67) = 16.901, p(0.000) < \text{the critical cut off point } (0.05)$. Therefore, there was statistically a significant difference between the two study groups on the dependent variable after the covariate was statistically removed. Thus, it could be inferred the excelling of an experimental group was ascribed to intervention (communication strategy instruction). Any how the partial Eta squared with value of 0.201 is small size.

Table 3: Summary of the Results of the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on Message DeliveryDependent
Variable:

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected	2.134 ^a	2	1.067	29.891	0.000	0.472
Intercept	5.608	1	5.608	157.070	0.000	0.701
Pretest	0.000	1	0.000	0.009	0.925	0.000
Group Level	1.782	1	1.782	49.915	0.000	0.427
Error	2.392	67	0.036			
Total	921.352	70				
Corrected Total	4.526	69				

a. R Squared = .472
(Adjusted R Squared = .456)

As seen from Table 3 above, the value, is found to be $F(1, 67) = 49.915, p = 0.000$. $p = 0.000$ which is $< \text{conventional cut-off point } (0.05)$. Thus, the value on speaking performance from aspect of Message Delivery indicated that there was statistically significant difference between the two study groups after controlling the scores on the same variable pre-test administered before the intervention. The overall implication was that the difference between the study groups was due to Communication strategy intervention. The partial Eta squared with value of 0.427 shows moderate effect size of difference.

Analysis and Results of the Posttest Rubric Score

Table 4: Summary of the MANOVA Results on Combined Aspects of Speaking Performance

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis	df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ^c
Wilks' Lambda	0.403	11.284 ^b	8.000		61.000	.000	0.597	90.27	1.000

Looking at the Table 4 above the result of each aspect of speaking performance as an independent sample t-tests show are < 0.05 (the critical cut off Point). Again, the computations of outputs from MANOVA is (Lambda (8, 61) = .403, $p = .000$). As $p (.000) < \text{the critical cut off point } (0.05)$, a statistically significance difference was observed. Being in coincidence with results obtained from all independent sample t-tests. Therefore, there was statistically a significance difference between posttest control group and Experimental group. This means that the two groups were at different levels of speaking performance in all aspects. Hence, it could be inferred that the intervention communication strategy improved overall aspects of speaking performance. "There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking performance based on debate technique" between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy and those who did not receive the intervention," These results of confirmed the hypothesis.

In general results from Table 2 Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5 above directly addressed RH2 "There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking performance based on debate technique" between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy and those who did not receive the intervention,"

Discussion

The research hypothesis sought to test "There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking performance based on debate technique" between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy and those who did not receive the intervention." The results of posttest computed using an independent sample t-test based on data from questionnaire indicated descriptive statistics with mean of experimental group excelling mean of control group. Besides, inferential statistics from independent sample t-tests for each speaking performance aspect is with P value $< \text{the alpha level /critical cut off point } 0.05$. Again, the value of P value of speaking performance from aspect of vocabulary and Message Delivery is < 0.05 indicating the existence of statistically significant difference between the two study groups after controlling the scores on the same variable pre-test administered before the intervention. On the top that Which suggests the existence of statistically a significant difference between control group and experimental group. The surpassing of experimental group result is attributed to the of intervention communication strategy. In strengthening this, results obtained from MANOVA on combined sub-variables _vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, comprehension, message delivery, content and organization is again with P value $< \text{the critical cut off point } (0.05)$ implying the existence of statistically a significance difference between control and experimental group. The as seen in all statistical tests using independent samples t –tests, ANCOVA and MANOVA P value is $< \text{the alpha level of } .05$. The presence of statistically a significant difference which indicated the experimental group surpassing the control group is due to intervention of communication strategy.

The results of the study go in line with those of other studies employing communication strategy. Concomitantly with this, Bandura (2013) explains that "what people think, believe and feel affect how they behave." In a similar situation, communication strategy equips the learner with enhancing self-efficacy (what they think and how they think) which later contributes to improving speaking performance. The result obtained byImane (2016) revealed that students got awareness of strategies in improving oral

proficiency. Rabab'ah's (2015) found progress on (EFL) students' oral communication owing to intervention of communication strategy. Similarly, the result obtained by Teng (2012) indicated students who received communication strategy more performed than those who did not receive the intervention.

Conclusions

Examples of methodological limitations include the fact that data were collected from only one study making it highly improbable that the results of this study can be applied to the broader EFL setting. Since the students enrolled in the institutions in Ethiopia came from quite comparable EFL learning backgrounds, the study's conclusions can be applied to Grade 11 students attending special Secondary Schools from all around the country. Consequently, the results obtained from data analysis show that the intervention helped the experimental group develop their speaking performance (with better manifestations of SP aspects indicators like vocabulary, pronunciation grammar, fluency, comprehension, message delivery, content and organization) in comparison to the control group. Participants in the experimental group were instructed to employ 19 types of communication strategy that help them enhance participants' speaking performance. According to the results obtained the intervention improved students' speaking performance of the experimental. Therefore, below are the recommendations made by the researcher: To begin with, in order to improve students' speaking performance, it is imperative that explicit communication strategy instruction need to have a room by EFL teachers, curriculum (syllabus) designers, and material writers. Additionally, in order to delve deeper into the subject, future researches focusing on English as a foreign language (EFL) speaking classes of special secondary schools are needed.

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