Speaking Skills among Saudi Female Students @ College of Arts & Science, PSAU, Wadi Aldwasir---Need Profile

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Abstract: *The present paper deals with the need profile of speaking skills among the Saudi female students of College of Arts & Science, Wadi Aldwasir, Saudi Arabia. It presents the growing demand of English in the context of Saudi millennia and its role in the job market for the women in Saudi. It focuses on the description of speech evolution and it development in the world. Further, it elaborates the education system in Saudi Kingdom and stresses on English Language Learning at Colleges of Arts & Science, Wadi Aldwasir. It throws a light on the need profile of speaking skills among Saudi girls. It concludes with designing a few oral activities for the target students.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The range of employment for Saudi females is being expanded in the twenty-first century. In such prevailing situations, students of Arts are expected to possess multiple skills to communicate perfectly in different situations. They are required to think creatively and critically and demonstrate both interpersonal and team skills. There is a desperate need of possessing a set of soft skills demanded by recruiters. Professional and result oriented firms alwayspursue for the employees who can communicate influentially and efficiently. Speaking skills are cited as the most important decisive factor in choosing the executives. A lack of sufficient speaking skills serves only to be disqualified in the placement interviews.

Accordingly, students are required to possess an ever-increasing range of skills to maintain relevance with the global environment of the new millennium. Speaking skills are a vital component of these, recognized by academia and industry alike. Indeed, communication skills are considered an outstanding part in the make-up of the new global employee.

The research focuses on the three colleges affiliated to Prince Sattam Bin Abdul Aziz University (PSAU), Wadi Aldwasir. The three colleges under the study are College of Arts & Sciences, College of Education and College of Medical Sciences, Wadi Aldwasir.

It is apt to discuss the importance of speaking skills in the present scenario with an emphasis on the need for improvement in the speaking skills of students, especially in the target colleges affiliated to PSAU, Wadi. After a brief look at the profile of the students the researchers have felt the need for study of the appropriate new techniques for improving their speaking skills for acquiring better placement. The aim is to help the students the entire range of skills required for a successful profession. Since in any profession, one of the important skills that are looked for in a candidate is the ability to communicate persuasively.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars have surveyed   on the evolution of speech. In the view of scholars, the art of communication is as old as civilization itself. It is in fact, older than the written word or the spoken word. Human beings have learned to communicate much before they learned to speak, read or write. They have learned to express through sounds, gestures and actions.

Therefore, the art of speech has evolved over the years. It goes back in time to the biblical era, mythological times and even to the pre –historic period. People have learned to express themselves even before they evolved fully into their present- form. It has been long yet fascinating and rewarding journey through time from sounds, grunts, actions, signs, gestures and gesticulations to the world of reading, writing and sophisticated methods of speech.

In the process of civilization, human beings have learned to interpret sounds, understand actions and use signs and gesticulations to communicate. Messages are conveyed through sounds, cries and drumbeats. The spoken word has added a new dimension to the world of learning. Sages and saints of yore have learned to pass on the sacred verses and holy texts through word of mouth. Thereafter, human beings have learned to use symbols and pictures to convey messages. This in turn has led to the invention of writing. Early writings are engraved on stones and palm leaves. Further, the invention of printing has brought about a great revolution in human civilization. Various inventions have made possible the recording of the spoken word or ideas led to the evolution of different languages likewise.

Gradually, the emergence of new media T.V has added new dimensions to the world of communication. Advancements in technology have further enabled storage and retrieval of oral and written records in an effective mode.

Education System in Saudi Arabia

The Ministry of Higher Education was established in 1975 to administer all aspects of higher education learning in Saudi Arabia. Earlier, universities were controlled by the Ministry of Education. It also supervises scholarships, international academic relations, and educational offices abroad. There are twenty-one well established universities in Saudi Arabia. Students study on average four years obtaining a Bachelor degree in the social sciences or the arts, and five or more years obtaining a Bachelor degree in other sciences such as engineering and medicine. Universities and Teachers" Colleges are the main suppliers of teachers to schools.

The goals of the Saudi educational dogma are to maintain well-organized education by meeting the religious, economic and social needs of the country and eradicate illiteracy among Saudi adults. Interestingly, the Sultan provides free education to all.

Therefore, the overall aims of the Ministry of Higher Education are:

* It offers support and services for the kingdom's universities and colleges.
* It is accountable for the supervision, coordination and follow-up of post- secondary programs and the connection with the national development programs in different fields; it also provides the various sectors with the necessary technical and administrative manpower.
* It also governs scholarships of Saudi students studying abroad, synchronizes international inter-university relations and oversees the educational and cultural mission offices in different countries.

III. METHODOLOGY

English in the College of Arts & Sciences @ PSAU

The present study is concerned with the three colleges affiliated to PSAU in Wadi Aldwasir. The main purpose of an English course in the prescribed syllabus at all levels in the College of Arts & Science for Girls @ PSAU, Wadi Aldwasir is to support the learner develop into an efficient user of English. At the end of the course a student should be capable of using English correctly, smoothly and suitably for communication through the development of languages skills, the mastery of language elements, the development of communication skills, the inculcation of literary skills and the development of study skills.

IV. FINDINGS

Need Profile of Speaking Skills among Saudi Women

English as an element of communication, in the global market, opens better prospects for the students in the field of their interest. Though English is studied as a second language it still holds the prime position in the international milieu. Speaking skill development is a productive skill of leaning process, which would help the student in expanding their knowledge and confidence in using it.

The study endeavors to choose applicable techniques in order to improve the speaking skill of the female students under the present study. The students who appear for the undergraduate programs are from Arabic background and they are exposed to English as a language only in their secondary standards (Grade 7). The influence of the first language and their inability to express their thoughts the right way generates reticence among the students. Henceforth, it becomes necessary for this study to create situations and help them to be acquainted with a predictable set of spoken exchanges like greetings, excuses, apologies and compliments that are followed by social and cultural norms, often following a pattern.

Based on this background it becomes necessary for the proposed study to make language acquisition fun, employing various techniques like group activities, peer learning and multimedia that facilitate the communicative skills of the students.Aptly, the female graduates need to acquire the skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking in English in that order, to survive within the educational framework.

It is found out that many undergraduates are incompetent in speaking skills which is one of the prominent productive language skills. Speaking skills are important for a graduate to be a successful learner. It is felt that by incorporating group work strategies and multimedia students would improve their oral skills.

Thus, the answers to these questions have immediate repercussions on teaching methods and on the organization of the courses. Activities like pair work, group work, individual or group presentation, as well as general discussions have become quite familiar and often-used ways. Terms like teacher-centered student-centered, students' participation, confidence, motivation, interest, relaxed atmospheres, encouragement, creativity, and so on were often heard at the discussion meetings.

The method that action research is directed may be helpful for teachers in exploring the new curriculum. The Saudi female students as mentioned earlier are supposed to be efficient in the following oral activities:

- Group Discussions
- Debate
- Mock Interviews
- Oral Presentations
- Role Play

V. SUGGESTIONS

Therefore, the current study has attempted to create a few exercises essential for the students to enhance their communication skills.

1.   Group Discussions

It is noticed that often students feel awkward to share their views openly in group activities. They rarely shed their inhibitions due to several reasons. One among them may be their insufficient knowledge in vocabulary. The following strategies may help them improve their performance in the oral activities.

Jigsaw Strategy to instruct Group Discussions

The jigsaw strategy is helpful in developing the skills and expertise necessary to participate effectively in group activities. It focuses on the following skills.

i. Listening Skills: Students must listen carefully to others' views.
ii. Speaking Skills: They must express their views effectively.
i.   Co-operation: It is essential to empathize with others' opinions.
ii.   Creativity: Students must contribute innovative ideas.

Evaluation Sheet:

The students should summarize the impact of the discussion on their understanding of the topic. The main purpose of the summarization is to reflect their actions such as-what went well and what could be done in the next discussion to rectify their mistakes.

Overall Reaction			
I learned	Lot	Some	None
I participated			
I enjoyed			

Table-1

General Dynamics			
	Yes	Some	No
Every one Participated			
Leadership was distributed			
Focused on resolving			
Uncertainties			
Comparing insights			

Table: 2

Positive Roles		Negative Roles	
Initiating		Deviated from the topic	
Gate Keeping		Interrupted others	
Asked/gave information		Monopolized	
Restated point		Failed to listen	
Asked for Summarizing		Premature Evaluation	
Gate Keeping		Irrelevant examples	
Time Keeping		Apologizing	
Encouraging		Withdrawal	
Tension release		No eye contact	
Gave/asked examples		Less contribution	
Summarized discussion		Body language	

Table-3

Note: Students should mark (√) for the roles they played.
Students should mark (x) for the roles others acted.

2.   Debate

Generally, debates are a very formal process, but the classroom teacher can exercise some flexibility in the process of argument.

Groups:

The students should be divided into two groups-

1. For (Affirmative)-Students who support the topic.
2. Against (Opposing) - Students who oppose the topic.

Format:

Firstly, the 'For' group presents their views and then the 'Against' group present their contradictory views. The argument continues for three minutes.

Purpose:

Debate is one of the several extra-curricular activities that are organized as part of 'personality development'. Debates enable the students to:

- Develop and enrich their knowledge base.
- Develop and use objectivity in attitude and expressions.
- Develop and use debating skills such as:
1. Introduction-It gets the attention of the audience.
2. Body-It retains their attention.
3. Conclusion-It receives applause.
4. Politeness and courtesy in tone and language.
5. Appropriate non-verbal behaviour.
6. Tone and speed variations.
7. Pauses, repetition and silence.
8. Power of reasoning.
9. Appropriate lexis and structure.
10. Brevity and precision.

Thus, the students should plan their speeches to make the audience listen, think and react. Hence, it requires attractive introduction, solid matter and a thought provoking conclusion. The speech should be delivered in appropriate lexis and structure to provide clarity in thought and expression.

Exercises

Students need to think about the topic, gather their ideas from different sources, organize their information on paper and finally give a shape to those ideas. Mostly, debate center around a few problems such as:

- Health or Wealth
- Luck or Hard Work
- Joint Family or Individual Family

Evaluation:

Name: Class:

	Needs Improvement	Developing	Good	Excellent
Reasoning				
Communication				

Table: 4

3.   Mock Interviews

Employers use interviews to assess the fitness of the candidates in their organization. Hence, the candidates need to exhibit their skills and personal attributes in an impressive manner.

Process of Interviews:

The process of interviews is as follows:

- Resumes are collected
- Resumes are reviewed
- Candidates are selected
- Candidates are contacted
- Interview schedule is fixed

Strategies
- Students should answer honestly
- Prepare for unexpected questions in advance
- Be professional
- Examples/Illustrations should be provided of the strengths/achievements

Assessment:

The candidates are generally assessed in the following way:

	Weak	Average	Good	Excellent
Initiative: Demonstrated Teamwork Skills Project Management Multi -Tasking				
Communication Skills Professional Manner Clarity of Responses Interpersonal Skills Self- Knowledge				
Interest in the position Enthusiasm Knowledge of the organization				
Accomplishments Academic Performance Related work and experience Campus activities				

Table-5

4.   Oral Presentations

The ability to communicate through effective speaking is an important language skill development. Generally, an oral presentation consists of three main parts: Introduction, Body and conclusion.
- Introduction: The main purpose of the topic introduction is to build rapport with the audience and gain their attention.
- Body: The main part of the presentation is the body. It should explain, support and defend the information revealed in the introduction. All points should be covered. Examples and illustrations should be provided.
- Conclusion: Speech should be concluded with well-planned ending.

Check List

Name of the presenter: Title of presentation
Course: Section: Starting Time: End Time:
 Evaluator: Elapsed Time:

	Poor	Average	Excellent
Appropriate Introduction			
Well organized thoughts and ideas			
Adequate support for ideas			
Definite conclusion			
Visual ideas			
Question& answer Session			
Use of allotted time			
Non-verbal behavior			
Delivery and Grammar			

Table: 5

5.   Role Play:

Role Playing helps the students to develop interaction among their peers. It promotes and develops critical and creative thinking, attitudes, values, interpersonal and social skills.

Purpose:
Role playing allows students to take risk free positions by acting out characters in hypothetical situation. They understand the values and positions of other people. It is an enlightening and interesting way to help students view a problem from different perspective.

Procedure:
1. The situation representing some aspects of reality is presented.
2. Students should be divided into groups.
3. Assign them roles.

Activity:
- Two friends planning to spend a weekend.
- Mr. X with a customer care Executive over phone.

VI. CONCLUSION

The above activities are helpful in improving the speaking skills of the students. The researchers adopted three step procedure--- presentation, practice and use in training the experimental group certain oral activities. The response to this process is remarkable and students showed a definite pattern in speaking. Initially students sought the help of the peer group very often to complete the process of the oral activities. Many students observed indirect and social strategies of working with others and cooperating with others. As the training progressed, the students clearly showed an inclination to work out the activities on their own. It can be said that their confidence levels would definitely improve and the objective of trying to achieve learner autonomy would indeed materialize.

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