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Improving Accuracy in Business English through Integration of Social Learning Theory - an Experimental Study

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to show the academic requirements of Indian students in Business English. The paper initiates by exploring the role of Business English in the world of commerce and the setbacks inherent in teaching of Business English in an academic atmosphere. It aimed at proving the learning strategy through the implementation of Albert Bandura's Social Learning theory engages the learner as an active contributor and participant will implicitly improve their accuracy level in oral communication. In conclusion the findings and observations of the study are put forth.

KEYWORDS : Business English, learning strategy, oral communication, social learning theory, accuracy

Introduction

From a worldwide point of view, globalisation and business has promoted English as the language of international commerce. Tange and Lauring (2009) define corporate language as 'the privileged speech of a corporation, which may or may not be territorially defined'. Global recognition has pivoted it to being the most widely taught subject in English Language Teaching.

Progression of Business English as a subject

In the early 1960s and 1970s Business English was demarcated by the exclusive vocabulary; business jargon, reading economic texts, answering comprehension questions and repetition drills. From the 1970s onwards focus shifted to the four primary language skills. Late 80s concentrated on the development of business communication skills. Only the past two decades laid emphasis on effective business communication.

Necessity for prioritisation of accuracy in Oral Communication

Speaking is largely the most essential communication skill to take place in any given situation and analogously the most complex task. Complexity affects accuracy in information delivery. Lack of exposure to authentic circumstances is primary reasons for insufficiency in speaking proficiency and inability to produce accurate information. Working in organisational contexts has become the norm and it is prerequisite of teacher's to step up and meet the requirements of learners. There is a need to prioritise on acquiring oral communication from a business point of view and only that can enhance their skill in accuracy.

Accuracy

Accuracy as defined by the Oxford dictionary (2012) is the quality or state of being correct or precise'. Accuracy has been viewed from dynamic perspectives. The general conception of accuracy in relation to language has been; grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. In Business English, accuracy implies the acute reproduction of information without neglecting the details. Grice (1975) affirms in accuracy it is a prerequisite to deliver as much information required and curb from delivering more information than essential. The learners were tested and graded for their accuracy in reproduction of factual information provided to them in an implicit manner.

Need of the study

Speaking is an integral part of Business English but has been considerably neglected in teaching. Indian learners are found lacking in productive skills. Since the year 2009 recruitments have plummeted by 40% says a news report from Ahmadabad titled 'Campus Recruitments down by 40% since 2009: Study' by 'Times of India' dated January 30, 2013. The paper highlights that only 10% of graduates from Indian business schools excluding those from the top 20 schools were employed immediately after course completion in 2012. Students articulated that they witnessed only lectures devoid of practical skills requisite by the corporate sector today.

Objectives

- To test the students performance in Business English communication accuracy prior to, and post implementation of the learning strategy.
- To assess the effectiveness of Albert Bandura's Social Learning theory in improving students level of accuracy in Business English communication.

Limitations

- The study tests only the accuracy level of the learners.
- The accuracy level with respect to speaking skill only is tested.

Sample selection

A needs analysis was conducted by determining MBA students as the target population for the study. Since the focus of the study was Business English a deliberate selection of MBA students for the population was made. Purposive sampling technique was employed. The sample group consisted of I MBA students. This sample was selected for being a state university considering its population would be heterogeneous academically, socially and economically. The sample size was 60 students; both male and female from the aided and unaided department

Bandura's Social Learning theory in the class

Lectures alone prove to be insufficient; Business English exceeds mere delivery of words in a sentence. It is an animated delivery of thoughts that is distinctive from person to person and yet shares commonalities. Social Learning theory draws attention to the influential function of "vicarious, symbolic and self-regulatory processes" that stimulate activity. Bandura's theory propounds a method of holistic development in learning. This method addresses all the requirements of Business English learning. Firstly in vicarious learning a verbal description is delivered to the learners. Secondly for symbolic learning the teacher model that which was verbally taught to the students. Because a great deal of human thought is linguistically based, the process by which language develops is of major interest.' Bandura (1977). Psycholinguists state, since observational learning does not necessitate performance, language serves as a medium for prompt acquisition. To strengthen what was verbally instructed the teacher physically demonstrates. This is bolstered through screening videos, online media, television programmes and fictional characters that portray what was recently imbibed. Lastly the learners are encouraged to emulate what was recently taught idiosyncratically. Treatments based on performance accomplishments produce higher and stronger efficacy expectations than do vicarious experiences alone state Bandura et al. (1976).

Methodology

Students were randomly grouped into members of 10 per team. Prior to beginning the experimental study, students were given a pre-test at the rudimentary level to check their proficiency level.

Contrary to conventional classroom organisation each session consisted of vicarious, symbolic and self-regulatory processes whereby the

learner was given verbal instruction concerning accuracy in Business English and the various contexts of its application in Oral Business English in detail. Successively visual implications of the lecture was rendered to them in the form of case studies and video clipping, to elucidate that which had been imparted. Each group was randomly assigned a case study. After providing ample time for discussion and deliberation among peers, each group was given an opportunity to voice their opinions on the case study concerned. Subsequent to screening of the video students were encouraged to discuss about the video with reference to the topic. Learners were encouraged to engage in activities thereby enabling them to learn in a more personalised manner. In culmination to the events that took place, a simulation session was conducted. Each group randomly choose from the set of Oral Busienss communication activities. The teacher functioned as a mentor and encouraged vocalisation. A time period of 30 minutes was given for students to prepare the dialogues and assume roles. After the specified time for preparation, each team enacted with accordance to the specifications of their question. Each group was allotted 15 - 20 minutes to enact.

Performance evaluation

The activities were scored based on the number of repertoires it involved. For each question, one or several correct answers were provided in the language checklist. Answers identical to the given answer key and self-generated responses satisfactory in variable under consideration and context were graded 5 points each. Those replies relatively fair in terms of variables and context were awarded a 4 and answers that contained an average portion of content and variables were scored 3. Responses that include one of the two elements; variables and content were marked 2 points. Wrong answers in both aspects were graded a zero.

Achievement in Accuracy

Null hypothesis (H_0)

There is no significant difference between the mean score of the pre-test and post-test with regard to achievement in accuracy among the M.B.A students.

Test statistic

Paired Sample t-test is carried out for both pre and post test with respect to achievement in accuracy among M.B.A students.

Table No: 1 Paired sample t-test for both pre and post test of achievement in accuracy by experimental group

t-test	N	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-Test	60	3.612	6.303	59	0.00
Post-Test	60	4.057			

Inference

The above table 4.15 depicts the distribution of sample, mean, t value and significance level of the experimental group. The data reveals there is an increase in the mean score of the experimental group from the pre-test to the post-test after the treatment was administered to the testees following the pre-test. This shows a significant influence of the integrated theory method of learning on Oral business English Communication. It shows that students of the experimental group differed significantly in their learning strategies of Oral Business English Communication from the pre-test to post-test at a 0.000 level of significance. The mean score of pre-test is 3.612 and post-test is 4.057. The difference between both the scores is .1645. It is evident that the t-value 6.303, which is significant at 0.000 level with df = 59. It shows that the mean scores of pre and post test differ significantly, contrary to the null hypothesis that states there is no significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post test of the experimental group. It may therefore be deduced that accuracy learnt through theory integrated learning methods from the post test was found to be significantly higher than the pre-test. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected for the experimental group's pre and post-test. It is hence inferred and concedes with the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant difference between the mean score of the pre-test and post-test with regard to achievement in accuracy among the experimental group. It is evident from the above discussion that the integrated theory learning method is very effective in enhancing Oral Business English Communication of M.B.A students.

The study being both quantitative and qualitative in nature, students' participation and performance in class was observed. The researcher further interacted with the learners during breaks and after class hours to obtain their feedback and gain a diverse perspective. The information collected through this manner supplemented the quantitative data elicited.

Findings

- The accuracy level of the learners had improved tremendously from the pre-test to the post test
- The integration of Albert Bandura's Social Learning strategy was successful in improving students' accuracy level.
- Female students were more involved in producing accurate information.
- Female students scored higher than the male students in accuracy level of Oral Business English communication.
- Male students were more interested in participating in the simulation sessions.

4.2 Conclusion

Implementation of the theory as a learning strategy functioned as an integral part of productive education and improved their accuracy. Absence of effective learning strategy has resulted in the setback of learner potential realisation. This work has achieved to bridge learner needs and corporate expectations. It has been proven that the strategy employed has met the requirements of both ends.

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