

Using communicative games to improve oral communication skills for the first year students at ICTU

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Abstract: English is a very important language, for it is an international mean of communication today. The majority of Vietnamese students have always faced difficulty in communicating orally in front of the crowd and this is one reason why oral communication skills have become an indispensable part of teaching and learning English in schools. People with proficiency of oral communication skills can become good speakers and listeners as well, especially in global world today. Therefore, a language class with interesting communication lessons requires the presence of funny elements including communicative games. The particular focus of this study is on the use of communicative games to improve oral communication skills.

Keywords: Communicative games, oral communication, 1st year student, ICTU

I. Introduction

In recent years, teaching communication skills has been popularly applied in Viet Nam. The use of communicative games to get more significant achievements on oral skills can be viewed as an innovative approach that helps the students to be more active in real life situations through the means of individual, pair and group work activities.

It is easily to be seen that language games which are used to teach Vietnamese students to speak English normally appear in training courses, in English Clubs or English Centers. However, they are seldom used in the speaking lessons of the universities as the time for each lesson is not much. Through the interviews between the researchers and some students at Thai Nguyen University of Information and Communication Technology (ICTU) – the researcher noticed that frequently-used activities for speaking lessons are normally talks about topics, news reporting, story telling or questions and answers.

With the findings gathered from this research, the teachers should take serious action and start to include variations in their teaching. A committee of teachers of English in each school start researching and collecting suitable games to use in language classroom and address to developing essential skills of learning language including oral communicative skills.

“A game can be defined as a fun activity with a set of rules and a competition element”. (Hadfield, 1990).

According to A Rahim (1998) defines, “Games as a form of play governed by certain rules or conventions.” He further elaborates that games can contribute to language proficiency in two ways. Firstly, they can be used to improve the learners’ command of language and secondly, games provide opportunities to use the language effectively.

For the purpose of the study, oral communication skills are defined as using strategies and techniques for effective oral communication with regard to the use of specific speech function by the non-native speakers.

II. Literature review

2.1. Importance of improving oral communication skills

Oral communication includes individuals conversing with each other. Maybe it is a direct conversation or a telephonic conversation. In these case, using spoken language seems to be the best ways to communicate. Speeches, presentations, discussions are all forms of oral communication. Oral communication is generally recommended when the communication matter is of temporary kind or where a direct interaction is required.

2.2. Characteristics of the communicative games

Communicative games include general characteristics of a game. In the Meizaliana’s study, he has proposed characteristics of games based on some others as follows:

Hadfield (2004) states that a learning activity can be called a game when there are rules, a goal and element of fun.

Celce-Murcia (2001) states that the use of game, role-play, pair-work, and other small-group activities has gained acceptance and is now widely recommended for inclusion in language teaching programs.

Harmer (2001) states that one of necessary elements for successful teaching and learning in class is engagement.

2.3. Types of games for English oral communication

Currently, a number of activities such as games popularly applied in most of the lessons of the English-speaking skills in our country are to change the academic atmosphere as well as help students' language learning become more easily. With the aim of conducting this paper, a few typical games are regularly used as follows:

Word games are held in many diverse forms such as puzzles, rebus, hidden word puzzles, etc.

Another popular activity for applying in oral lessons in the school is role-play conversation, drama, etc.

Students can practice their ability in eloquence and persuasiveness through rhetoric games such as debate, eloquence, quickly questioned-replied, etc.

2.4. Advantages of using games in language classes

Uberman (1998) reports nine benefits of games. Games "are learner-centered; promote communicative competence; create a meaningful context for language use; increase learning motivation; reduce learning anxiety; integrate various linguistic skills; encourage creative and spontaneous use of language; construct a cooperative learning environment; foster participatory attitudes of the students.

The advantages of using communicative games as communicative activities in English language teaching can be summed up in 5 points as follows

High motivation of games in students' learning with fun, enjoyment and excitement.

Limitless supply of chances to use language in authentic contexts.

Supply of practices on language use and language usage.

Creation of an agreeable and supportive learning atmosphere.

Promotion of interpersonal relations.

III. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

To carry out the study, the researcher used two comparable groups herein after referred as

"group" with a total 60 first-year students at ICTU for three months. The speaking lessons of the experimental group were given with the application of communicative games while the control group was taught with the use of present traditional method (without communicative games).

The two groups were evaluated at the beginning (by a pre-test oral examination) and at the end (by a post-test oral examination) of the three-month experiment duration to find out the significant difference in between the pre-test and post-test oral communication activities of the students of the two groups when the two approaches (communicative games approach and traditional approach) were conducted. The results (the scores given to students after each oral examination) were computed and tested for significance.

3.2. Subjects of the study

The correspondents in this study were 60 students of 20th course in the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022 in the ICTU. The sixty students belonged to two groups one of which was morning group and the other was afternoon group. Each group consisted of thirty students. For the subjects of the study, all of the students in those said groups were involved.

3.3. Research Procedure

After the pre-test oral examination, the researcher started researching for the two groups. For the experimental group (MG), the teacher used one or two of the communicative games to start the lesson in about ten to twenty minutes depending on the kind of the games and the main content of the lesson. Meanwhile, for the control group, the teacher used the traditional approach that was popular among most of the teachers of English who were teaching English at ICTU.

After three months of applying the communicative games approach in teaching the experiment group and using traditional approach in teaching the control group, the researcher conducted a post-test oral examination. After the exam, the researcher gave students scores and stored them for later computation, analysis and comparison with the scores of the students in the post-test oral examination. Then, the researcher started to gather all of the data and compute the scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test oral examinations.

3.4. Data Analysis

With the use of the research instrument and

evaluate test as the primary source of data, the researcher carefully sort out, tabulated, counted and organized through the aid of table all data that correspondingly produced through this study. Suitable description was used for its meaningful and relevant analysis and interpretation.

IV. Research Results and Discussions

4.1. Results of the Tests

The table shows a summary of the results of the pre-test and the post-test. Compared to the pre-test, a higher mean score was obtained on the post-test for the experimental group – there was an increase from 6.41 to 7.23. The mean total score for the control group decrease from 7.14 to 7.05. 68.23% of the students from the experimental group improved their post-test scores. Only 18% of the students in the control group had a better score in the post-test. 44.70% of the students in the control group showed no improvement in the post-test, while only 19.51% of the students from the experimental group showed no improvement in the post-test. 33.28% of the students in the control group scored worse in the post-test. Only 9.25% of the students in the experimental group scored worse in the post-test.

4.2. Results of the Survey

The table presents the survey results administered to the students after they had completed the activities conducted by the teachers to help them improve their communication skills. All the students in the experimental group agreed that they enjoyed the games that they had played. 12% of the students in the control group disagreed with Q1. A greater percentage of the students in the control group disagreed with Q2 and Q3, as compared to the students in the experimental group. However, a higher percentage of the students in the experimental group disagreed with Q4, as compared to the percentage of the students in the control group.

In the second part of the survey, students were asked about their feelings and to give suggestions to improve the activities. Students in the experimental group said that they like all the games, although some of the games were difficult. They liked the games which required them to communicate and cooperate with their friends. Some things the students did not like about playing games were the high noise level, students' quarrelling with each other and uncooperative teammates.

4.3. Summary of findings

The results show that the communicative games

help more than half of the students improve their results in the "Conversation" component of the oral examinations. The students in the experimental group also enjoyed their activities more than the students in the control group. However, 22% of the students in the experimental group felt that they were not able to communicate better at the end of the lessons compared to the 12% of the students in the control group. This could be due to various reasons, one of which could be because some of them had problems communicating with their classmates during the games.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

There is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group in their oral communication activities performances

The performance of the students using the traditional approach significantly differs from that of those using the communicative games.

Significant relationship exists between communicative games and the students' performance in oral communication activities.

5.2. Recommendations

Language teaching can be an interesting and a rewarding process when teachers take the effort to explore methodology through a variety of approaches. Role play and simulation are a few of the many methods available for adoption. Jones (1982) sums up the simulation technique as "one expression of the philosophy that students should be active participants in the learning process". Since the teacher and the students themselves play active roles in the classroom, language classes can become livelier, more challenging and much more rewarding.

Students inevitably learn to use language communicatively. Firstly, we must ensure that communication is purposeful instead of being merely traditional exercises and drills; and secondly, these require an integrative use of language in which communicating one's meaning takes proper precedence over the mere elements of language learning (grammar and pronunciation).

A number of things have to be done before a communicative game is used in the lesson. The students have to be clearly instructed and suitable roles have to be designated to individual learners. The teacher has to act as the controller and once the

activity begins, the teacher should not interfere but must give students the freedom to conduct the game.

If all the above considerations are observed prior to the playing of games, teachers will be able to conduct and facilitate the activities better. Students will then be able to benefit from the playing of language games. This study has shown that students are able to communicate better and can do better in the “Conversation” component when the teacher uses communicative games in the classroom.

Finally, the researcher hopes that, thanks to the results of this study, the educational administrators will take language games approach into careful and wholehearted consideration and one day language games will be used popularly and effectively in many language schools, colleges and university to improve the students’ English proficiency in general and English speaking in particular.

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Đề xuất quy trình dạy học môn Lịch sử..... (tiếp theo trang 22)

3. Kết luận

Giáo dục STEM là một trong những nội dung giáo dục quan trọng và có nhiều ý nghĩa với HSTH. Dạy học môn Lịch sử và Địa lí ở tiểu học theo tiếp cận STEM là cần thiết trong việc phát triển các năng lực chung cũng như các năng lực đặc thù của môn học cho học sinh tiểu học qua các nội dung giáo dục thực tiễn. Thông qua giáo dục STEM ở học sinh tiểu học, giúp học sinh móc nối các tri thức thuộc bốn lĩnh vực: Khoa học, Công nghệ, Kỹ thuật và Toán học để xử lý các vấn đề tồn tại trong thực tiễn đời sống, thông qua đó, hình thành và phát triển năng lực cho học sinh tiểu học.

Từ một số vấn đề lí luận về giáo dục STEM và dạy học môn Lịch sử và Địa lí ở tiểu học, bài báo đã đề xuất quy trình dạy học môn Lịch sử và Địa lí ở tiểu học theo tiếp cận STEM. Quy trình được đề xuất nhằm giúp giáo viên tiểu học định hướng cụ thể về việc tổ chức dạy học môn Lịch sử và Địa lí ở tiểu học theo tiếp cận STEM để việc dạy học Lịch sử và Địa lí ở tiểu học đạt được hiệu quả cao.

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