



## Techniques for Developing Speaking Skills among Higher Secondary School Teachers in Virudunagar District: A Study

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### Abstract

English is the means of global communication and its utility value continues to extend to all areas in the current world. The areas where English is used include media, global communication and Internet which demand a good knowledge of English. English Speaking is the basic skill that is required for effective global communications. This aspect of the English Language makes the need for English speaking in schools. Speaking in English is the bottom line for high school English teachers as they can create a proper foundation for students in English. In spite of this important aspect of English language learning, most teachers of English in high schools of Virudunagar district are not able to communicate in English fluently for many reasons. This study is devoted to the research of speaking skills of these teachers and suggests methods that can enhance their speaking skills. It also attempts to discover their unwillingness to speak in English and find ways of overcoming this barrier.

### Keywords:

Speaking skills, communicative competence, enhancing, methods, oral communication background, motivation, psychological competence.

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## 1. Introduction

English globally displaced other languages within a short period of time to become the leading means of worldwide communication. Its dominance can be found in most areas including media and Internet. People get benefitted in modern education, research, science, trade, etc. It has literally become impossible to effect global communication without a working knowledge of the English language. Generally any language learner acquires four skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing where speaking and writing are productive skills.

*“Speaking, therefore, as a skill is defined as the oral mode or the productive skill which is more complicated and which involves more than just pronouncing words”- Iqbal (2012).*

These skills must be focused in classrooms by teachers as speaking is the soul of language learning. For effective communication in English, learners need to be knowledgeable in both grammar and vocabulary. On acquiring some of these basic structures, students can practise speaking skills under the guidance of their teachers.

*“In some ways speaking can be considered the most difficult skill to acquire as it requires command of speech production sub-skills like vocabulary retrieval, choice of grammatical patterns, and sociocultural competence” - Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000),* In the acquisition of a foreign or a second language, speaking plays a dominant role. Speaking has acquired great importance along the history of English teaching since it is referred as an interactive process of

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constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994). Usually teachers focus on speaking skill to make their students communicate well. Speaking builds people's link, personality and character. Speaking skills are needed for expressing one's ideas and opinions as well as impressing the others. Teachers have to realize that they need to focus more on this skill to prepare the learners for employment, interaction with others and perform well at work places.

A person without oral communication skills will suffer in this era of competition and may find it difficult to achieve a higher position. The main reason of poor speaking skills of English teachers of virudunagar district is their unwillingness to communicate due to many factors. Many researchers like have proposed methods to enhance speaking skills by means of syllabus design, teaching principles, types of tasks and materials, and speaking assessments (Bailey, 2005) (Goh, 2007). The aim of this paper is to define the strengths and weaknesses of speaking skills of high school teachers at virudunagar and demonstrate the possibilities of enhancement of their speaking skills.

This paper discusses the strategies that can improve speaking skills of high school teachers of Virudunagar District.

### Teacher Speaking Proficiency Assessment

Many teachers agreed that the ability to speak was the measure of knowledge of a language. They opined that the ability to converse with others should be stressed more than the ability to read, write or understand a language. The type of research used in this study is an induced-deduction method. It is induced as issues are observed, data gathered based on the aim of the research for qualitative information. It is a deduced methods as the information is verified through results obtained from the survey. The population for this research was chosen from English teachers at high schools of virudunagar district. Forty teachers were female and 50 teachers were males. Moreover, 60 teachers were from rural areas and 30 Teachers were from the urban areas. The following figure, Figure 1 depicts the population distribution taken for the study.

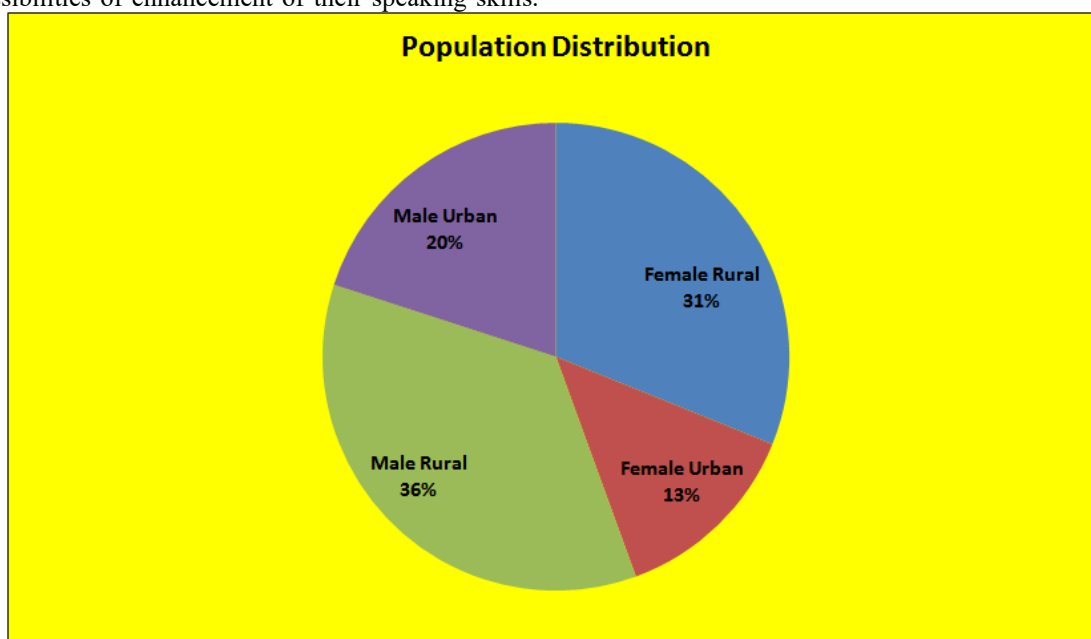


Fig. 1 – Distribution of the Polulation in the Study

The groups were re-examined with pre and post tests for researching quantitatively. The population was split into groups of 10 for assessment and an internal competition. The assessment of speaking ability was done on the following parameters in pre and post tests.

- **Pronunciation** – Observations on each word that was pronounced for correctness and clarity.
- **Highlighting and intonation** – The emphasis and rise and fall of pitch in words were observed.

- **Correction** – The grammar, syntax, and construction was observed as errors and mistakes can give a negative impression on listeners and create confusion.
- **Vocabulary** – The store of words and their choice was tested as vocabulary verbalizes thoughts and ideas effectively.
- **Voice Quality** – The teachers were tested for voice which should be clear, crisp and full as it is the means by which the message is transmitted to the listener.
- **Fluency** – Teachers spontaneity in language use was observed.

### General Questions used for Speaking Assessment

- Tell me your name and address.
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- Why do you Teach English?
- Can you briefly describe the plot of the last movie you saw?
- Tell me about a time you took a long car trip.
- How would your best friend describe you?
- What is your favorite holiday?
- Tell me about a special photograph in your home.

### Activities undertaken for Enhancing Speaking skills of Teachers

Teachers follow traditional classroom speaking practices a question and answer are pre-determined. The actual purpose of real communication is to accomplish tasks that are extempore like conveying a message or obtaining information or express an opinion. To make teachers speak and develop their communicative competence the following activities were undertaken for a month. Each teacher spent two hours in the evening before leaving home for five days and half a day on school holidays except Sundays.

- **Using nominal responses:** Teachers who are not confident in their ability to speak often stay silent while others do the talking. Teachers were given minimal response phrases like “Yes”, “I agree”, “Heard about it” etc., to encourage them to begin participating in different types of exchanges. These responses allowed the participants to focus on what others were speaking in the class.
- **Group Interactions:** The activities were made enjoyable by using this interactive strategy to develop their fluency in English. Groups spent talking about their favorite music stars, songs and movies. Leading or starting a discussion about a favorite movies or books familiar to all gives an opportunity to express in their own words without inhibitions.
- **Audio visual material usage:** Teachers were taught and forced to make use of various audio visual materials such as cassette recorders, videos, computers,

projectors, magic boards. It was stressed that teachers should use these materials when teaching. The teachers were also educated on the proper use of these materials like a cassette player in a lesson based on listening while overhead projectors in presentations.

- **Mother tongue in Teaching:** Teachers who were afraid to speak were allowed to speak in their mother tongue and then explain it in English. Teachers combined the two languages thus focussing around translations and interpretations.
- **Storytelling:** Storytelling is an the art of narrating a tale from memory rather than reading and is one of the oldest of all art forms. Storytelling is the original form of teaching and has the potential of fostering emotional intelligence and helps gain insight into human behavior. It also promotes language learning by enriching learners’ vocabulary and acquiring new language structures. Moreover, storytelling can provide a motivating and low anxiety context for language learning. This activity was done for the teachers as storytelling as a technique can improve the speaking abilities of a person.

### Analysis

Analyzing methods of enhancing speaking skills it becomes clear that enhancement methods are not as difficult as they seem to be and every teacher can choose those that she considers more appropriate for her class according to their level of knowledge of English. In Virudunagar by using modern technologies in ELT, including Internet-based techniques, listening to audio and video, creative tasks like storytelling can generate students’ interest in English speaking . Given that language development can occur only through interaction, it can be assumed that more interaction leads to more language development and learning and influence the frequency of communication (Clément et al., 2003; Yashima et al., 2004), can contribute to second language acquisition. Researchers have suggested that generating a Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is a crucial component of modern language instruction (MacIntyre et al., 2003).

The current emphasis on communicative competence when taught or practiced can produce students who are technically capable of communicating, particularly inside the classroom, but may not be amenable to doing so outside the

classroom (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Many competent L2 learners tend to avoid L2 communication Dörnyei (2003), but by engendering WTC, language instruction can achieve its social goal of bringing cultures into contact. Secondly, they can function as autonomous learners, making independent efforts to learn the language through communication and without the help of others. Finally, they can extend their learning opportunities by becoming involved

in learning activities not only inside, but also outside classrooms. Sometimes, to overcome the language barrier, it is necessary to use fairy-tales, poems, jokes, or to become a part of a situation where one should speak only the foreign language. Thus, even if language barriers exist, they can be overcome it by WTC. Table 1 details the speaking fluency assessment Scores of English Teachers of High schools from Virudunagar

**Table 1 - Teachers Assessment Scores on Speaking Fluency**

Classification	Rural		Urban		Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Excellent	2	2	4	3	11
Good	3	2	3	5	13
fair	13	18	2	5	38
Poor	7	5	2	4	18
Very Poor	3	5	1	1	10

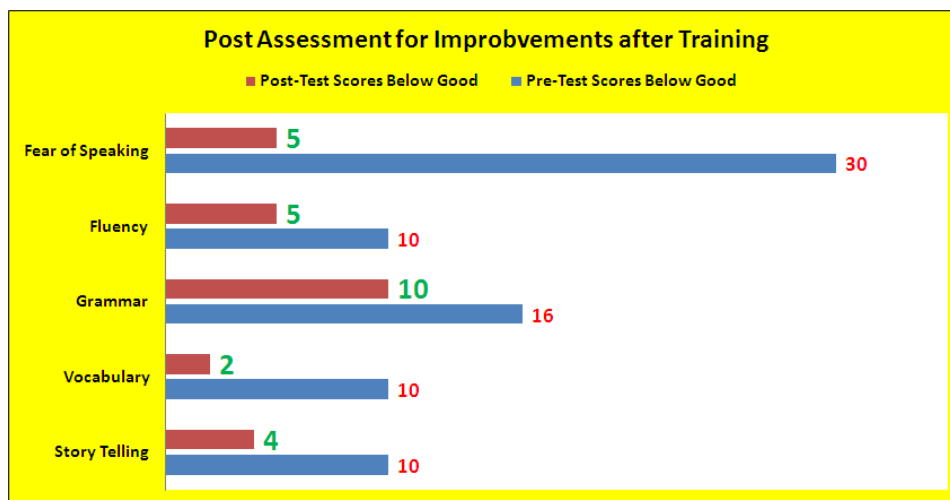
It is evident from the table above that more than 70% of the teachers did not belong to the good or excellent category is speaking assessments. Rural teacher scored lesser than urban teachers. The main problem that was found with teachers from rural areas was their fear of

speaking.

Table 2 lists the post-test scores after training while figure 2 depicts the comparison between pre-test and post-test outcomes after the training imparted to teachers.

**Table 2 - Teachers Post-test Scores after training**

Classification	Pre-Test Scores Below Good	Post-Test Scores Below Good
Story Telling	10	4
Vocabulary	10	2
Grammar	16	10
Fluency	10	5
Fear of Speaking	30	5



**Fig. 2 – Comparative scores of teachers after the application of speaking skills enhancement methods**

It is evident from Figure 2 that teachers have improved

after application of methods for enhancing their speaking skills. Teachers poor in story telling reduced

from 10 to 4, Teachers with vocabulary problems reduced from 10 to 2, Teachers poor in grammar reduced by six, Fluency in speaking increased by five and almost 25 teachers shed their fear of speaking.

### Conclusion:

Many teachers of high schools were not in a position to communicate satisfactorily in the English language. This study has discussed the issues of communicative competence, methods of enhancing oral communication, and ways of overcoming the language barrier. It was significant to learn different views of researchers on the problem of speaking skills of students. The aim of this work

*“to define strengths and weaknesses of speaking skills of English teachers at Virudunagar and to demonstrate the possibilities of enhancing their speaking skills ”*

was achieved as it has been proved that the integrated use of modern techniques can yield positive results and lead to the improvement of communicative competence. Learning English by using new methods in education and travelling and working abroad makes people willing to learn the language, develop their ability to speak fluently, and help them overcome the language barrier. The findings from this study also show that the main reason of poor speaking skills of teachers is their unwillingness to communicate due to fears

The main aim of the study was to assess and improve teacher's competence in speaking skill. It was evident that no systematic strategies were applied by them. Very few teachers followed the technique of reading aloud a paragraph or two or focussed on improving their listening skills. Some of the teachers listened to English news and watched English movies, but majority of the teachers did not do so. Almost all the teachers felt that the time utilized inside the classroom was not sufficient to bring improvement in their listening skills, due to the pressure of completing portions as per the prescribed textbooks and schedules. In order to improve the situation, an experimental study was conducted and the results showed that a significant change in the speaking skills of the teachers when the proposed methods are applied for improving their speaking skills.

We can conclude that WTC needs to be an important component of SLA. Hence, the main suggestion is to overcome the language barrier and build a strong WTC for teachers and indirectly students to be fluent speakers in English.

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