

Can Hierarchy of Learning based Instructional Design Enhance Speaking Skills among Secondary School Students?

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ABSTRACT

Education is a powerful weapon which has the solidity to carve out a potent society. The constraints imposed by current status of education plays major role in the way how children acquire skills. The studies conducted shows that school students lack speaking skills which puts a slur in their whole career. This paper attempts to explore the possibilities of improving speaking skills among students through a self made instructional design. The design is based on the Hierarchy of Learning Theory formulated by Robert M. Gagne. This theory states that the learning process takes place through several stages and the device plan includes materials corresponding to all these stages. The device plan prepared engages students for a month in learning process and finally evaluates the result of the program to know whether the device plan is effective in improving speaking skills in students. For that, the result of a pre-test and a post-test conducted are compared quantitatively. The findings are drawn from the result of the comparison and analyzed thoroughly.

KEYWORDS : Hierarchy of Learning Theory, Instructional Design, Speaking Skills, Secondary School Students

INTRODUCTION

An action research is a systematic enquiry used to gather information about an event, process or method and attempts methods to correct, guide and evaluate certain aspects of them that are usually of cosmic importance. An individual action research involves working independently on a project and trying to find solution to certain problems with the help of the result derived from the study. The phases of action research include planning, acting, developing, and reflecting. The main goal of action research is to enhance the standard of education. Teachers are the common action researchers. One of the common challenges faced by current system of education is the lack of communication skills. Among the four skills of language, speaking skill occupies the prominent position when it comes to communication. Speaking skills allow the learner to convey the message in a passionate, appropriate and convincing manner. But the opportunities provided by the current educational system is less and that hampers their confidence in using the language. This paper exhibits an action research that focuses on enhancing speaking skills among secondary school students through a self made instructional design. Even in this twenty first century, people are facing huge problems in speaking confidently in English. Several measures can be taken to overcome such linguistic scenarios. One such measure is taken and evaluated in this attempt.

The Hierarchy of Learning is the theory formulated by Robert M. Gagne to exhibit the stages through which learning process takes place in humans. According to the theory, there are

eight stages through which a child learns. There are eight stages that start from signal learning and end with problem solving. A child cannot pass to the next level without acquiring the previous level. The stages are in the order simple to complex.

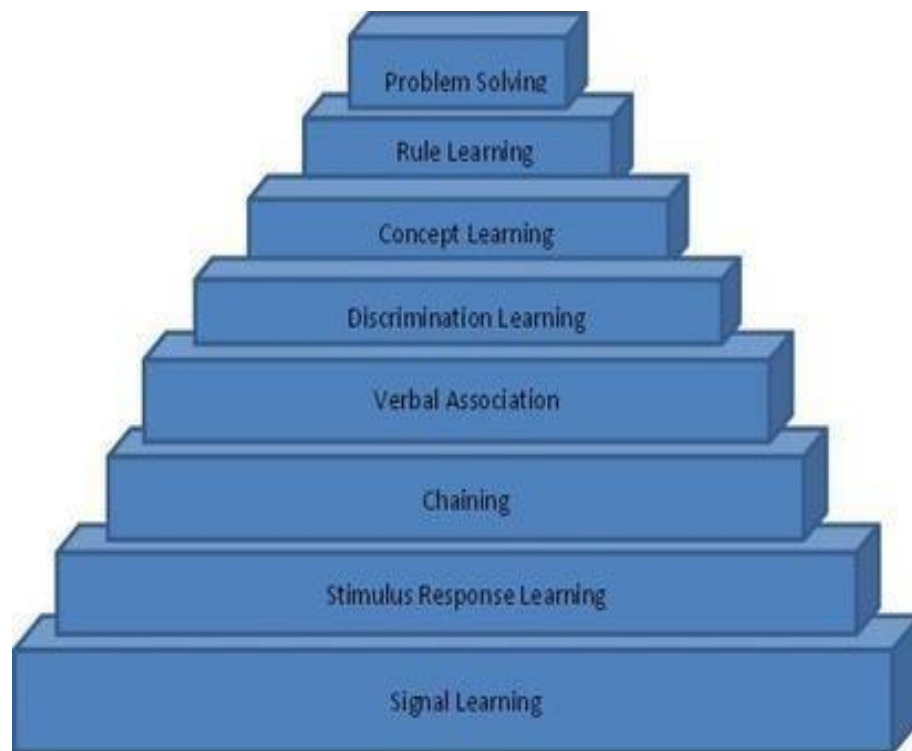


Figure 1. Gagne's Hierarchy of Learning Theory

STAGES IN GAGNE'S THEORY

- **Signal Learning**-The student is conditioned to produce an expected response for stimulus that may not normally produce that response.
E.g.: Understands gestures
- **Stimulus Response Learning**-The learner learns to make a precise movement of the muscle in response to specific stimulus
E.g.: Acknowledge for being appreciated
- **Chaining**-The student is conditioned to connect two or more already learned stimulus-response relationships into a connected order.
E.g.: puts jumbled words together
- **Verbal Association**-The student produces associations through verbal links.
E.g.: Translates words from one language to another
- **Discrimination Learning**-The student is capable of performing different responses to a chain of identical stimuli.

E.g.:Discriminatesbetweenhomophones

- **Concept Learning**-The learner acquires a capacity to respond to stimuli that a class of objects shares in common.
E.g.:Understandsabstractconcepts
- **Rule Learning**-The acquiring of knowledge and understanding of a relationshipbetweenconcepts.
E.g.:Understandsrelations
- **Problem Solving**-The application of principles that have already learned.

E.g.:Applying an equation in a problem

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As a part of the B. Ed curriculum, the investigator had to go through teaching practice of 10 weeks each during the third and fourth semesters respectively. During both the phases, the investigator noted the inhibition of students in speaking English. There were a total of 25 students in IX F and the investigator decided to choose the 10 backward students for the study. Majority of them found it difficult to answer the questions in English or express their ideas in the same. The reasons were different. The investigator identified it through observation which is followed by conversation with students. For the confirmation, an interview was conducted with the concerned English teacher in the school. Once the identified problem was confirmed, the investigator decided to focus on speaking skills and find a way to improve those skills of the students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study is titled as “AN ACTION RESEARCH TO CHECK WHETHER IT IS POSSIBLE TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS” with the help of an instructional design based on Gagne’s Hierarchy of Learning Theory.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Hierarchy of Learning Theory:- It is a learning theory developed by Robert M. Gagne in which

he divided the learning process in human beings into eight stages. Here the investigator tries to construct an instructional design based on this theory and apply it in a STD IX class in order to enhance speaking skills.

Instructional Design:- It is the methodical development of instructional specifications by means

of learning and instructional theory to guarantee the worth of instruction. Here the instructional design constructed by the investigator intends to improve the speaking skills of students.

Speaking Skills:- These are the skills that give us the ability to communicate effectively. That is,

conveying a message in a convincing manner.

Secondary School Students:- Students who are between 13 and 16 years of age. That is, VIII, IX and X STD students

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is conducted in the secondary school students of a single school to talk about the whole secondary school students
- The analysis is done based on the results drawn from a single device plan
- The study is conducted in a short small span of time.
- The focus is given to speaking skills only

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The study conducted in 2016 by Doan Linh Chi named as *Guidance for Learners' Improvement of Speaking Skills* says that the teacher must engage students in various group activities that improve their speaking skills and evaluate them frequently. His project was fruitful which proved that student activities lead to development of speaking skills among students.

The Importance of Speaking Skills is an article by Gerald Gillis and published in 2013. It talks about the importance of speaking skills in life. According to the study, Career enhancement, being competent, communication skills, ability to convince, and personal satisfaction are the merits of a person with speaking skill. Speaking provides us with a superior connection with listeners that is rarely achieved in other forms of communication.

The Impact of Gagne's Theories on Practice is a work by Dennis Fields published in 1996. He says that Robert Gagne's theories had a considerable blow on instructional designers. He mainly predisposed teaching and skill acquisition and adopted customary practices as a stimulus for the expansion of theory. Gagne sought to relate theory to practice, and was much fascinated in inculcating theory to school practices in order to make it more inventive and resourceful.

Harmer (1991) studied the necessity of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in the process of learning. According to him, the Students' approach toward speaking the language can be influenced by diverse external factors, such as people in close atmosphere, earlier speaking practice in a foreign language or the career opportunities on hand after obtaining foreign language communication skills.

In a study named *Gagne's Hierarchical Theory of Learning: Some Conceptual Difficulties*, David Soulsby says that Gagne lacks the soundness of conceptual foundations. Also he questions the practicability of the theory formulated by Gagne. According to him, if the lower class teachers fail to feed the children with proper information, the later stages wouldn't happen well.

ACTION HYPOTHESES

- The students of secondary school faced difficulty in speaking English fluently.

- The instructional design constructed helps to improve the speaking skills of students of secondary school students.

OBJECTIVES

- To improve the speaking skills of secondary school students with the help of an instructional design based on the Hierarchy of Learning Theory formulated by Robert M. Gagne.
- To evaluate the effect of the instructional design in enhancing speaking skills among students.
- To go through some studies that have already been conducted on similar topics

ACTION DESIGN

	PHASES	ACTIVITIES
I	Identification of the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ classroom activities of students ➤ test ➤ interaction
II	Confirmation of the problem	➤ students lack speaking skills
III	Establishing the problem	➤ pretest
IV	Selection of strategy	➤ Instructional design based on Gagne's Hierarchy of Learning Theory
V	Implementation phase	➤ practice
VI	Evaluation phase	➤ Posttest

Table 1. Action Research Template

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

sl. no.	CATEGORY	N	MEAN	standard deviation	t value	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE	RESULT
1	PRETEST	14	30.60	5.90	3.44	0.01 LEVEL	SIGNIFICANT
2	POSTTEST	16	20.08	9.08			

Table 2. t score of Pre-test and Post-test

Table 2 shows that the mean and standard deviation of pre-test is 30.06 and 5.90 consecutively and of post test is 20.08 and 9.08. The t value is 3.44 and it is 0.01 levels significant. So the hypotheses can be accepted. The pretest was conducted in a group of

fourteen students and post-test in a group of sixteen.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Drawn from the analysis of data collected, the hypotheses are being accepted. It is concluded that the instructional design constructed can help teachers to improve speaking skills among secondary school students. The teachers can adopt these measures in order to keep their students good at speaking which will motivate them to speak in public as well. It is a need in this century to improve the communicative competency of students so that they can be confident as well as fluent in interacting with the external world. The related studies on this topic also prove that such attempts to deviate from the cliché methodology of teaching are normally effective in classrooms.

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