

The Relevance of an Eclectic Approach to Improving Speaking Skills: A Quantitative and Qualitative Study in Kerala

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Abstract

The significance of being able to communicate effectively in English in modern times cannot be overstated. The desire and aspirations of learners worldwide to speak English fluently is shared by learners in Kerala. The current study seeks to ascertain whether an eclectic approach might improve learners' speaking abilities in Kerala. For this goal, an experimental method is adopted, in which students are divided into experimental and control groups before seeking the opinions of those who received treatment based on the eclectic approach. The study makes use of both quantitative and qualitative evaluations.

Key words: Eclectic approach, speaking skills, quantitative study, qualitative study

Introduction

Effective English communication increases the ability to relate to people from all over the world. The increasing demand for English language has made it an invaluable skill to acquire. (Sooria & Saravana, 1666) English language has evolved into that liberating force that enables learners to compete in the employment markets, access information, and participate in global education. Richards states that “the mastery of speaking skill in English is seen as a priority for many EFL learners across the world”. Additionally, he states that “learners consequently often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course based on how well they can communicate in the spoken form” (67,85). The mastering of speaking skills, however, is the most challenging of the four English language skills.

Though words are an important component of speech, they have not received adequate attention from the outset. However, due to the importance of vocabulary, it has recently become a prominent topic of study. It not only increases language output and comprehension, but it also serves as a good indication of language acquisition and improvement. Pronunciation is another aspect of speaking. Speaking is an action

that requires the production of sounds in the vocal cord. The ability to make precise sounds is essential for effective and understandable spoken communication.

The current study investigates the applicability of an eclectic approach to the development of vocabulary and pronunciation, thereby improving the speaking skills among learners in Kerala. The viewpoint and attitude of learners who received treatment based on the approach are sought for this purpose. The research employs qualitative as well as quantitative assessments.

Eclectic Approach

For the efficient teaching of English language, numerous language-teaching methodologies and approaches have developed over time. Every method of teaching a language is intended to help students pick up the language, and its significance cannot be understated. However, to address the needs of all the students in a class with a diverse student body, teachers and course designers realized the importance of an integrated approach. As a result, the Eclectic method gained popularity. Depending on the class objectives and unique student characteristics, this method incorporates the fundamentals of several teaching strategies. Rivers (1981) states that an eclectic approach allows language teachers "to absorb the best techniques of all the well-known language-teaching methods into their classroom procedures, using them for the purposes for which they are most appropriate".

The method also emphasizes how crucial it is to combine various linguistic abilities. It makes sense that the proper blending of the many techniques can be successful because learners need to learn a variety of abilities. Therefore, the best traits can be combined to get the best outcomes.

Literature Review

From the review of different related literature conducted by the researcher, it is found that several studies have been done to improve the speaking skills, its subskills and other skills of English through Eclectic approach. However, not many studies have been done that focused on the development of pronunciation and vocabulary to enhance the speaking skills of undergraduate learners in the Ernakulam district in Kerala. Hence the researcher intends to explore this area.

Objective

One of the study's goals is to determine how successfully learners in Kerala can enhance their vocabulary and pronunciation, thereby improving their ability to speak, by employing an eclectic approach. The study also aims to comprehend learners' attitudes and opinions on the approach employed.

Research question.

Based on the study's purpose, the researcher wishes to investigate the following research questions:

How well does the eclectic approach help learners improve their oral communication skills?

What are the views and attitudes of the students towards an eclectic approach to oral skill development?

Methods adopted

To investigate the effectiveness of the Eclectic approach on the learners' pronunciation and vocabulary to enhance their oral capabilities along with the learners' attitude and opinion of the approach adopted the researcher has adopted a mixed method that involved a quasi-experimental method and descriptive method. The quasi-experimental method enabled the researcher to evaluate the cause and effect of the variables and the use of descriptive method helped the researcher to the attitude and opinion of the adopted approach to improve the learners' speaking capacity.

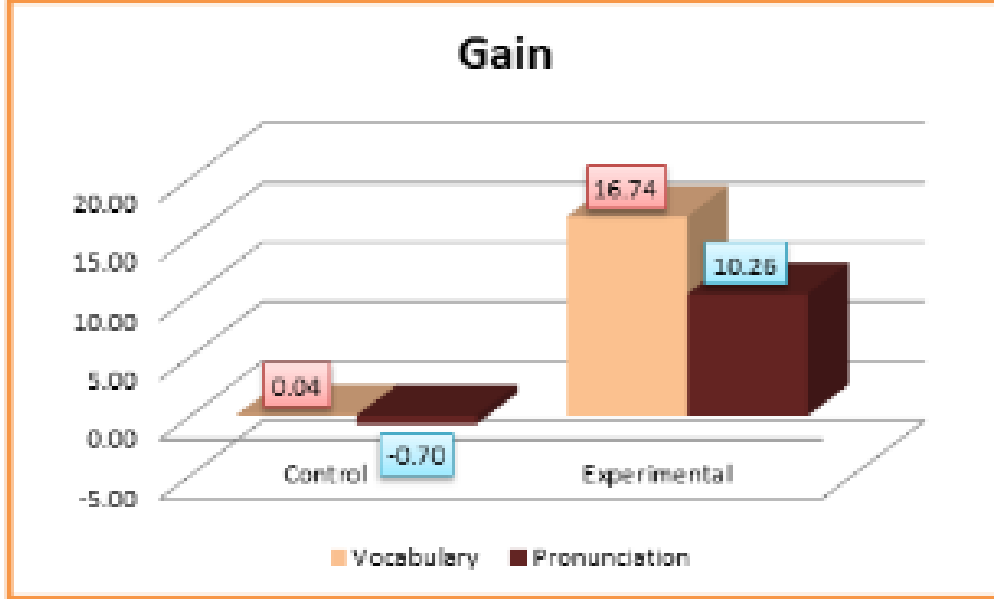
Treatment

In the current study, to gauge the effectiveness of the Eclectic approach, an experimental method was adopted with two groups of learners experimental group and control group. 43 undergraduate students received an Eclectic approach-based treatment to help them pronounce words more clearly and expand their vocabulary to improve their speaking abilities. Classes were held twice a week for 1.5 hours for the course of the treatment, which was administered for about two months. After the treatment, the data analysis showed that the learners' speech skills had significantly improved. The table and the bar graph below exhibit the comparison between the two groups of learners along with the gain obtained by the experimental group.

Table 1 Comparison of the pre-test and post-test

Variable	Group	N	Mean Score		
			Pre-test	Post-test	Gain
Vocabulary	Control	70	9.50	9.54	0.04
	Experimental	43	10.16	26.91	16.74
Pronunciation	Control	70	6.91	6.21	-0.70
	Experimental	43	9.70	19.95	10.26

Bargraph1 Gain after the post test



When the mean values of the two groups in both the pretest and the posttest are assessed, it is discovered that the Experimental group's Vocabulary $M=10.16$ and Pronunciation $M=9.70$ in the pretest, but Vocabulary $M=26.91$ and Pronunciation $M=19.95$ in the post test. Vocabulary $M=9.50$ and Pronunciation $M=6.91$ in the controlled group, and Vocabulary $M=9.54$ and Pronunciation $M=6.21$ in the post test. The findings demonstrate that students in the experimental group have significantly improved their speaking abilities. Thereby proving that the Eclectic approach is effective in developing the oral capacities of the learners.

Learners' perspective about Eclectic approach

After receiving the Eclectic approach-based instruction, the students in the experimental group were given a questionnaire to gauge their opinions on the method used to hone their oral skills. To support the data's findings and provide a better understanding of the students' perspectives on the treatment they received utilizing an eclectic approach, a focus interview with the students was conducted.

Description of the questionnaire

A 5-point Likert scale with the options Agree, Strongly Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree was used to develop the questionnaire. After the treatment was completed in the experimental group, the questionnaire was put into use to monitor and assess how the students felt about the given care. Two components make up the questionnaire. The development of pronunciation and vocabulary as well as the eclectic approach are discussed in the first part. The second portion investigates how students feel about learning through an eclectic method.

Section 1 The development of pronunciation and vocabulary using an eclectic approach.

Thirteen questions on a five-point Likert scale are posed to the respondents to gauge how learners feel about the eclectic approach's role in the development of their vocabulary and pronunciation. Scores for

the responses range from 1 for "Strongly disagree" to 3 for "Neither agree nor disagree." 4 indicates "Agree" and 5 indicates "Strongly agree." Based on the total scores for all 43 respondents on the 13 questions, the mean% score is calculated based on the view of the learners' level.

[$MPS = \text{MeanScore} \times 100 / \text{Maximum possible score}$]

This score is divided into four categories: poor or low if the mean% score is less than 35%, average if the mean% score is between 35% and 50%, good or medium if the mean% score is between 50% and 75%, and excellent or high if the mean% score is greater than 75%. The sample Z test is used to determine the significance. The table below displays the variable's Mean, SD, Mean% Score, and Z value. (R. R. et al, 169).

Table 2. Mean, standard deviation, and z value for student opinion on Eclectic Approach on pronunciation and vocabulary development

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean % score	CV	z	p value
Student perspectives on the Eclectic Approach, as well as the development of pronunciation and vocabulary	43	52.28	2.97	80.43	5.68	7.790	<0.001

The quality of learners' opinion is excellent or high, as indicated by the mean percentage score of 80.43% for the Eclectic Approach and the growth of pronunciation and vocabulary. Given that the value is less than 20%, the CV suggests that this score is stable. We formulate the hypothesis to determine whether the sample information we observe is representative of the population as a whole or to confirm whether learners have a high or low level of perspective.

H₀: The level of learners' opinion on their Eclectic Approach and the growth of pronunciation and vocabulary less than 75% of the total score (H₀: MPS > 75%).

H1: The level of learners' opinion on their Eclectic Approach and the growth of pronunciation and vocabulary is more than 75% of the total score (H1: MPS<75%).

The sample Z test was applied to evaluate the hypothesis, and the outcome is shown in table 2a. According to the table, the test is significant because the p value is less than 0.05 and the Z value is positive. The null hypothesis is thus rejected, and it may be deduced that learners' opinions on their eclectic approach and the growth of their vocabulary and pronunciation are excellent or high at a level greater than 75%.

Table2a Mean, SD, and z value for students' perceptions of the eclectic approach and the improvement of their vocabulary and pronunciation

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean % score	CV	z	p value	Level
1. EA enabled me to broaden my stock of vocabulary	43	4.14	0.64	82.79	15.44	3.996	<0.001	Excellent or high
2.EA helped me to learn many contextual vocabulary	43	4.00	0.22	80.00	5.46	7.512	<0.001	Excellent or high
3. I believe that the correct words come to me more naturally now.	43	3.84	0.53	76.74	13.85	1.076	0.288	Good or medium
4.I started to make a note of new words	43	3.56	1.05	71.16	29.61	-1.194	0.239	Good or medium

5.I started using the new words that I learn, into my speech	43	4.02	0.56	80.47	13.82	3.224	0.002	Excellent or high
6.EA helped me to improve my pronunciation	43	4.07	0.46	81.40	11.24	4.583	<0.001	Excellent or high
7.EA improved my vowel and consonant pronunciation	43	4.37	0.49	87.44	11.19	8.341	<0.001	Excellent or high
8.I started making a conscious effort to pronounce words correctly.	43	4.14	0.56	82.79	13.52	4.563	<0.001	Excellent or high
9.EA improved my speaking skills	43	4.28	0.67	85.58	15.57	5.206	<0.001	Excellent or high
10.The activities gave me opportunity to use English in different situations	43	4.07	0.51	81.40	12.45	4.137	<0.001	Excellent or high
11. EA assisted me in developing my turn talking	43	4.00	0.65	80.00	16.37	2.504	0.016	Excellent or high

from the group exercises.								
12.I am confident to initiate a conversation in English	43	3.72	0.70	74.42	18.84	-0.272	0.787	Good or medium
13.I no longer feel anxious at the thought of speaking in English	43	4.07	0.26	81.40	6.33	8.135	<0.001	Excellent or high

Table 2a demonstrates that a considerable proportion of students were positive about the efficacy of the Eclectic approach in improving their speaking skills. In item 9, approximately 48.8% of students agree with the statement, 39.5% strongly agree, and 11.6% are undecided.

The questionnaire's items 1-6 concerned vocabulary development. Item 1 revealed that approximately 76.7% of learners agree and 20.9% strongly agree that the Eclectic approach has broadened learners' vocabulary stock, while item 2 revealed that nearly 93% of learners agree and 2% strongly agree that the Eclectic approach has enabled learners to learn many contextual words. Item 3 shows that about 88.4% of learners agree and 9.3% strongly agree that appropriate words emerge more readily into the learner's speech. Furthermore, as noted in item 4, the student started taking notes on new terminology. This statement is supported by 83.7% of the population, 2% are neutral, and 14% disagree.

79% of respondents agree with the statement that using the method will improve pronunciation, and 14% strongly agree. About 63% of people agree, with 37% strongly agreeing, that their vowel and consonant pronunciation has improved as a result of the practise. Additionally, as shown in item 9, 67% of students agree and 23% strongly agree that they have started making conscious efforts to improve their pronunciation.

According to Item 11, the method's activities gave learners the opportunity to use the language in a variety of settings. 74% of respondents agree, and 16% strongly agree. Furthermore, roughly 76.7% concur, with 14% strongly concurring that the exercises improved their ability to take turns. According to Item 13, 81.4% of respondents agree, 14% are neutral, and 4.7% disagree that the strategy gave them the confidence to commence conversations.

All the figures above indicate that the strategy has instilled in the students a positive attitude towards vocabulary and pronunciation growth, consequently boosting their speaking skills.

Section 2 Students' perceptions of the eclectic approach to learning

Respondents are asked seven questions using a five-point Likert scale to gauge the level of students' attitudes towards studying utilizing an eclectic approach. Scores for the replies range from 1 for "Strongly disagree" to 3 for "Neither agree nor disagree." 4 indicates "Agree" and 5 indicates "Strongly agree." The total scores for all 43 respondents' responses to the 7 questions are determined, and from there, the mean% score of students' attitudes towards learning using an eclectic approach is derived.

$$[MPS = \text{MeanScore} \times 100 / \text{Maximum possible score}]$$

This score is classified into one of the four groups as mentioned earlier.

Table 3 The Eclectic approach's mean, standard deviation, and z value for students' attitudes towards learning.

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean % score	CV	z	p value
Students attitude towards the learning in EA	43	29.65	1.38	84.72	4.65	16.184	<0.001

The average percentage score for students' attitudes towards learning using an eclectic approach is 84.72%, which indicates that the quality of students' attitudes is outstanding or high. Given that the value is less than 20%, the CV suggests that this score is stable. We create the hypothesis to determine whether the sample data that we observe is representative of the population as a whole or to confirm whether students have a positive attitude towards learning utilizing an eclectic approach.

H0: The level of students' attitude towards learning using an eclectic approach is less than 75% of the entire score (H0: MPS > 75%).

H1: The level of students' attitude towards learning using an eclectic approach is greater than 75% of the overall score (H1: MPS<75%).

The Z test is employed to examine the hypothesis, and the results are shown in Table 2a. The table shows that the p value is less than 0.05 and the Z value is positive, indicating that the test is significant. As a result, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the degree of students' attitude towards learning using the Eclectic approach is greater than 75%, indicating excellent or high performance.

Table 3a Mean, Standard deviation and z value for Students attitude towards the learning in EA

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean % score	CV	z	p value	Level
14.EA approach was exciting and pleasurable	43	4.05	0.65	80.93	16.14	2.978	0.005	Excellent or high
15.I had a strong motivation to attend the classes	43	3.98	0.15	79.53	3.83	9.750	<0.001	Excellent or high
16.The classes were boring	43	4.91	0.29	98.14	5.99	25.814	<0.001	Excellent or high
17.I feel free to give my opinion on a topic	43	3.88	0.76	77.67	19.63	1.150	0.257	Good or medium
18.EA promoted teamwork	43	3.91	0.29	78.14	7.52	3.502	0.001	Excellent or high
19The activities provided were related to life, so was not bored.	43	4.07	0.40	81.40	9.88	5.215	<0.001	Excellent or high
20EA classes made me nervous	43	4.86	0.64	97.21	13.15	11.391	<0.001	Excellent or high

Students considered the methodology fascinating and enjoyable, as seen by the figures in item 14 above. Approximately 76.7 pupils agreed with the statement, with 16.3% strongly agreeing. Only 2% of pupils disagreed. Nearly 98% of respondents to question 15 stated that they were highly motivated to attend the courses. When asked if the classes were boring, 90.7% of those polled disagreed, with 9.3% strongly disagreeing. Learners were also asked for their freedom to express themselves. Almost 79% agreed, 9% strongly agreed, and 4.7% strongly disagreed.

In item 18, students were asked if the eclectic approach to learning facilitated teamwork. 9.3% of respondents were undecided, while 90.7% agreed. Item 19 asked students if their interests were important to their life and kept them from becoming bored. There were 83.7% who agreed, 11.6% who strongly disagreed, and 4.7% who were indecisive. Finally, when questioned in item 20 whether the Eclectic approach made them nervous, 95.3% disagreed and 4.7% agreed.

Discussion of results

The findings of the data analysis revealed that almost all of the participants have a good attitude towards incorporating the Eclectic approach to improve vocabulary and pronunciation. The findings demonstrate the efficacy of the Eclectic approach in improving learners' speaking skills.

Section 1 presents learners' perspectives on the usage of the Eclectic approach in the development of vocabulary and pronunciation to improve their speaking skills. Section 1 also demonstrates a favorable attitude towards the method. It was also said that most of the participants agreed on the approach's efficiency in developing vocabulary and pronunciation. Furthermore, the learners claim that the technique instilled in them the usage of new vocabulary and the newly learned words, and the learners also began to make conscious effort to enhance their pronunciation. Furthermore, the data from the learners show that they began to feel less apprehensive and more secure in beginning interactions.

Nearly all of the participants in section 2 Eclectic learning method stated that the learning was fun and engaging, and learners were keen to attend the lessons. Due to their freedom to express their thoughts, the students spoke with confidence. Additionally, it was noted that because all the exercises had a real-world application, the students weren't bored. Additionally, the students didn't feel anxious.

Description of the focus interview

The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions to encourage students to share their thoughts and experiences. During the interview, the teacher recorded the responses on her phone and took notes on relevant terms and responses. The teacher also ensured that all students participated equally. Learners were asked to provide as many responses as possible to help the study.

Discussion of the interview findings

The goal of the focus interview was to find out what the learners in the experimental group thought about the Eclectic approach. The qualitative findings were classified as follows: benefits of the Eclectic approach

in boosting learners' oral capacity, learning utilizing the Eclectic approach, and disadvantages of the approach.

Analysis of the data shows that the students are enthusiastic about using eclectic methods to enhance their speaking abilities. According to the outcomes of the post tests, the strategy has greatly enhanced the learners' vocabulary and pronunciation, which has improved their speaking abilities.

Although participants expressed support for the technique, they also mentioned how it helped them build a sense of self-learning, which is a huge shift for the learners. New terms are now being noted by the students, who are also starting to expand their vocabulary. They became more conscious of both their own and other people's pronunciations. All of this has helped the students' ability to talk more clearly.

Furthermore, the group activities enhanced the links between the participants, allowing for the effective completion of all tasks. Also, these activities provided participants with speaking partners. The participants were not given the opportunity to practice speaking in a typical circumstance. The activities provided them with several opportunities. Moreover, the technique enhanced their confidence and decreased their nervousness, fear of failure, and concern about being judged.

The learners have consequently advised the tactic to other peers. Since speaking English has become increasingly important in today's world, the technique will aid learners in achieving their goal. The method was also a novel experience as well as an enjoyable way for students to pick up the speaking abilities they required to advance their oral communication skills.

Conclusion

The findings from the test demonstrated a considerable improvement in the oral capabilities of the learners in the experimental group, allowing the researcher to conclude that the eclectic approach is successful in strengthening the learners' speaking skills. Furthermore, statistics from the questionnaire and focus interviews show that the participants have a favorable opinion towards the Eclectic approach. The technique produced significant differences in the learners' vocabulary and pronunciation, helping them to increase their speaking abilities. Along with improved speaking skills, the pupils displayed increasing confidence when speaking English. Additionally, using this strategy inspired students to learn more. Moreover, they recommend their peers to use the approach.

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