

COMPARISON OF GENRE ANALYSIS APPROACH AND AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD IN THE TEACHING OF DISCUSSION SKILLS IN THE CONTEXT OF MUET SPEAKING EXAMINATION.

*Hjh Hafiza Aini bte Hj Hassan, PM Dr Hadina bte Habil
Faculty of Education
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia*

Abstract

Since the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) was introduced in 1999, the learners who wish to further their studies have to prepare themselves to sit for four papers – speaking, listening, reading and writing. Among all the papers, the learners are mostly intimidated by the speaking test. This is the paper which tests their speaking skills formally. This study will focus on two ways of teaching speaking skills – the Genre Analysis Approach and the Audio-lingual Method. The subjects will be form six students who are preparing to sit for the MUET tests. The subjects will be in two different groups, each will experience a different way of teaching – one via he Genre Analysis Approach, while another the Audio-lingual Method. The subjects' responses will be analysed and compared. Finally in the conclusion, the researcher will be able to make recommendations of the strengths of the two ways and how the language teachers can adapt and adopt them to be utilised in their English Language classes, especially in teaching speaking.

1.0 Introduction

When a secondary school leaver plans to further his studies, he will have to sit for an English paper, which is called MUET. It has been a nightmare to those candidates who find themselves assessed separately in all four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. The assessment will be formal, and the result will determine which courses they can pursue in or whether they can carry on with the chosen course. This is because the universities and colleges of higher education have already set the minimal requirements of the bands for the MUET result that the students should attain for them to be allowed to register in the respective courses.

Although these students have been exposed to the formal teaching of English Language since primary school up till form 5, they have never been assessed formally in speaking the way they are assessed in MUET examination. The nearest will be their oral assessment in their secondary school which they either choose their own topics, prepare beforehand or done informally during lessons.

In MUET Speaking test, however the candidates are only given the topic when they are seated in their group of four in the examination room together with two examiners. The test will be in two parts – Task A and Task B. The candidates are only given two minutes to digest the given situation, understand the task that they have to carry out and prepare their points to be presented after the two minutes are up. Usually, the members in the same group are given the same situation but with different points of view. Each member does not know the points of view given to the other members until the presentation of Task A. Each candidate is allocated with two minutes to present their justifications to support the point of view allocated for them

pertaining the given situation. During the presentation of Task A, the candidates are also required to understand points of view presented by the other members and make short notes as this will help them in the presentation of Task B. Once Task A is performed, the candidates are given another two minutes to prepare for Task B.

In this task, the candidates are required to have a discussion, choosing the best point of view among the four given by comparing and contrasting the points of view which they presented in Task A. During this presentation, the candidates need to show their maturity and ability to manage a discussion, performing the skills which are essential in a discussion.

One of the challenging tasks that need to be carried out by the MUET candidates is in the MUET Speaking test whereby they should be able to discuss on the chosen topics given within the limited time allocated among their four group members. The topic of the discussion is only given to them when they are seated in the examination room. The time given is only two minutes for them to digest the situation and prepare their points and notes according to the point of view prepared for them. They have to suit the point of view to the situation given to them and give justification to it. During this time, they do not know the points of view prepared for the other members of the group.

2.0 Literature Review

For a language to be understood, the community must have shared knowledge and understanding towards its usage. Carter and McCarthy (1997) explain that a language is in some way preformulated. The idea is that the language forms must be routinised and patterned. This highlights the importance of the language community to have shared knowledge of the forms to understand each other. With this idea in mind, two ways of teaching speaking has been chosen for this study in preparing the learners for their MUET Speaking test. The first is the Genre Analysis Approach, and the second, the Audio-lingual Method. Both ways highlight on the form and structure of the language, only the execution of the lessons will differentiate one from another.

Genre analysis at first was being applied in the field of communicative, focusing on the structure and language features of particular genres, guiding the students to have a control over the specific genres that they have to produce in professional and academic environment. For example, Swales (1981) being very concerned in helping the students to improve their writing skills came up with a model for writing article introductions. Bhatia (1981) on the other hand looked into the legal materials.

From there, Genre Analysis evolved into having the analysis of the genre as social action, looking into how genre works in the different sociocultural settings, achieving various purposes, how genres group together in differing or similar sets, forming systems and networks (Miller 1984; Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995).

As the development, an interest in the relationship between the context and the linguistic features of the genres developed. This is specially highlighted in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL).

Inspired by the systematic approach of the Genre Analysis and the flexibility allowing the communication to take place, Hafiza (2007) has developed 12 moves which are essential for the candidates to perform well in responding to Task A MUET Speaking test. From her study, she finds that the Genre Analysis Approach which she adopted

has helped her learners to respond to Task A MUET Speaking Test better. She sees that the learners are more aware of the structure of the response that is required to be accepted as a good response. The materials improvised and recordings exposed to the students have helped them to be alert of the steps that they have to follow and perform during their response.

3.0 Statement of Problem

Speaking is a complex and challenging activity, especially to those whose English is their second language. This is because the students do not have enough practice in using the language outside their English Language class. The English Language teachers are also faced with the challenge to teach the language to the learners and make the learners practice the language while they are in the classroom and even outside. Despite the phenomena above, MUET expects the learners to be able to speak in a formal way. However, the informal manner of speaking is already intimidating to the learners, what more the formal style of speaking.

Due to the complexity of the characteristics mentioned above, only a small number of students is able to communicate effectively, and the reason for their ability might be due to their English speaking family background.

With the lack of speaking skills in the candidates, the teaching materials in the market, and the urge to assist the candidates in their performance in the speaking test, the researcher decides to adapt two approaches – Genre Analysis and Audio-lingual Method, and compare the effectiveness of these methods to the candidates.

4.0 Research Objectives

This study will be carried out to meet the following objectives:

- 4.1 To tailor more effective lessons for oral communication by applying the Genre Analysis Approach, and the Audio-lingual Method in instilling the oral skills of managing a discussion in the learners' response to the tasks similar to task B in the MUET Speaking Test.
- 4.2. To compare the effectiveness of the Genre Analysis Approach in speaking lessons to the Audio-lingual Method.
- 4.3 To determine ways in which the use of the Genre Analysis Approach and the Audio-lingual Method help learners to be more aware of the skills of managing a discussion.

5.0 Research Methods

In order to carry out the research, first of all, the samples will be identified. By using stratified sampling, the students of lower six will be chosen. 2 groups of average achievers and another two groups of low achievers will be identified. Questionnaires will be given to them and they will also be interviewed to get their profile.

The students will have to sit for a speaking test, based on the previous MUET Speaking test papers. The responses will be recorded and transcribed. Then the lessons will be tailored to the students' needs.

After sitting for the Speaking test, a pair of average and lower achievers will be exposed to the speaking lessons based on the Genre Analysis Approach while another pair will be taught using the Audio-lingual Method.

5.1 The genre analysis approach

The Genre Analysis Approach will be adopted from Robert (1997) framework, and it will be as below:

1. Presentation (Observation and Hypothesis forming)
2. Presentation (Clarification)
3. Practice (Restricted Use)
4. Production (Authentic Use)

Before the lessons are carried out, the lesson will be identifying the moves essential to be highlighted to the earners so that they will be able to identify and pick them up during the observations. Once the moves are identified, they will be used as samples of discussion. These samples will be recorded as teaching materials, and the transcriptions will also be prepared.

Presentation (Observation and Hypothesis forming)

The students will be exposed to recordings, and they will be guided to identify the moves concerned. The researcher will take a role as a facilitator and guide the students to identify the moves. This will take a while and the teacher will need to repeat playing the recordings to the students. Once the identification is done, the teacher will distribute the transcriptions of the recordings.

Presentation (Clarification)

Once the moves are established, the learners will be exposed to more recordings of discussions. At this stage they practice recognising the moves orally. This activity will also be followed with the distribution of the transcriptions.

Practice (Restricted Use)

This is the stage where the students are exposed to the transitional verbs needed and other phrases which are essential to the functions that they need to perform in their discussions. They will refer to the transcriptions as they go through each function, e.g. to interrupt, to disagree, etc.

Production (Authentic Use)

At this stage, the learners practice the skills that they have learned in situation similar to the MUET Speaking test. This is important as they need to be able to produce their responses within the limited time, as allocated during the real MUET Speaking test.

5.2 The audio-lingual method

The lessons on the speaking skills based on the Audio-lingual Method will be focusing on the functions that the students will have to carry out during the discussion in the MUET Speaking test. Once the functions are identified, the researcher will categorise them and provide phrases that the students have to produce.

Once the phrases are prepared, the drilling and pattern practices are prepared based on the Audio-lingual Method (Richards, J.C. et-al. 1986) which are:

1. Repetition
2. Inflection
3. Replacement
4. Restatement

5.2.1 Repetition

At this stage, short utterances are prepared based on a situation similar to the MUET Speaking test. The researcher will utter the phrases aloud and the students will repeat the utterances as soon as they hear it.

5.2.2 Inflection

The second stage, the researcher will prepare utterances and the students will be asked to change them into another form. For example, they will be asked to change the utterances into past tense or future tense, or changing the subjects or objects into singular or plural.

5.2.3 Replacement

The next stage, the students will be asked to change the objects mentioned in the utterances by using pronouns. This will prevent the students from repeating the name of the objects in their responses.

5.2.4 Restatement

The last stage here, the students will be required to rephrase utterances that they hear produced by the researcher. Here, the researcher will telling them the function that they have to produce within the given situation, and the students will have to give their responses right after that.

After the learners are exposed to the lessons, they will have to sit for another Speaking test, situation taken from the previous MUET Speaking test. Their responses will be recorded and transcribed. The transcription will then be analysed to determine the achievement of the objectives of the research.

6.0 Expected Findings

The researcher would expect to see that the learners who have a better proficiency in the language will find the Genre Analysis Approach really enlighten them to the form and structure of the response that they need to produce. They would feel that the approach really benefits them as they are engaged in exploring the genre thoroughly.

However, learners with lower proficiency would feel that they benefit from the Audio-lingual Method as the drilling helps them to produce sentences as needed for them to participate in the discussions better.

7.0 Conclusion

This research will basically exposing the students with two ways of learning the speaking skills, that are the Genre Analysis Approach and the Audio-lingual Method. The former are the recent teaching style which are gaining its popularity while the latter have been practiced for 5 decades. Nevertheless, despite the vast difference in the number of years they have been practiced, there are a lot of advantages which can be gained as both have their strengths which can be exploited in the education world.

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