

Speech and Oral Communication Students' Manner in Asking Smart Questions Using English Language as Medium of Interaction Inside the Classroom

Emmie T. Ribaya

Rizal Technological University, Mandaluyong, Philippines

Abstract

The study's objective focused on the manners of Speech and Oral Communication students in asking smart questions using English Language as medium of interaction inside the classroom, specifically their communication skills' level of confidence and assertiveness when associated with non-intellective variables such as age and sex.

Descriptive research and no sampling scheme were utilized because the whole population of two classes with ninety-seven students was used as respondents. Findings manifested that respondents are moderately effective in their communication skills but less self-confident and assertive in using English as medium of interaction.

Assumptions conceptualized that students must realize the importance of effective communication skills to become successful in completing college requirements and for their future. With this concept, students must value self-confidence and assertiveness in their communication manners because these will empower them as students and as future human resource. A globally competitive world recognizes future human resource that makes difference by valuing that the power to speak and act rather than seek permission and just follow instructions develop productivity and self-fulfillment. Speech classes should introduce training exercises on building self-confidence and assertiveness in oral communication to prepare students become self-assured. Finally, Educational institutions must be vigilant of the technological advances reshaping our world because communicative competence takes greater significance since the product is essentially a service and the recipients of the service are impressionable students.

Keywords: Speech Manner, Students, Communication Skills, Confidence and Assertiveness

Introduction

In university, whether inside the classrooms or administrative offices, communication takes on even greater significance because the mission is essentially a service and the recipients of the service are sensitive students. Learners must be aware of how communication transcends the fundamentals of talking and listening, and English professors must reiterate that communication includes words, listening, self-esteem, self-disclosure and feelings to facilitate an active interacting learning process inside the classroom. This simply shows that students must be trained to comfortably convey messages because competence in communication is necessary to become successful in all undertakings.

The communication activities in a speech class generally take place inside the classroom and involve sharing information with fellow students. To develop an atmosphere of lively interactive exchanges of ideas, professors must understand the culture and style how students convey their ideas as it takes place within the classroom. As reinforced by Broadhead (2004), there is a need to expose students to varied viewpoints as possible. But educators must be vigilant in introducing free speech on campus especially inside the classroom in such a way that freedom of expression is observed responsibly by students.

While Leeds (1987) conceptualized that asking skilled questions is the most productive, positive, and helpful skills to improve one's communication attitude. According to her, people usually converse most of the time and asking questions will keep the discourse successfully. By the end, the communicators will be thinking and responding confidently and assertively. Through the process of asking questions, one will undertake personal evaluation that necessitates "brutal honesty" to obtain the best information about our manners to different practical situations. Furthermore, Leeds also

conceptualized that learning to question yourself is as valuable as asking smart questions to others, thus developing our competency in communicating with different personalities.

The concepts collected established the framework of this study which was focused on discovering the manners of Speech Class students in asking smart questions as a tool in probing their level of confidence and assertiveness in smartly expressing their ideas.

Methods and Procedures

A descriptive normative-survey method of research was used to discover the existing Speech practices of students in asking smart questions. No sampling scheme was used since 100% of the whole student population of two Speech Classes was used as respondents wherein sixty-three students participated in the study. Majority of the students are 18 – 20 years old and the dominant sexual classification is female. The main tool utilized in the gathering of data is a modified questionnaire using the model of Dorothy Leeds’ Smart Questions which were validated through a dry-run. Modifications were made on the instrument to guarantee its applicability to local classroom interactions. A Personal Data Sheet had been included to acquire data on respondents’ profile in terms of age and sex.

Interpretation of problems that need ranking and scoring was made by assigning numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 with verbal explanation, as follows,

- 3.21 – 4.00 - highly effective
- 2.41 – 3.20 - moderately effective
- 1.61 -- 2.40 - less effective
- 0.81 – 1.60 - least effective
- 0.00 -- 0.80 - ineffective

With regards to problems number 3, where scoring ranging from 1 to 125, the following verbal interpretations were used,

- 101 - 125 - highly self-confident and assertive
- 91 - 100 - moderately self-confident and assertive
- 75 - 90 - less self-confident and assertive
- Less than 75 - least self-confident and assertive

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Communication skills of the students according to age group.

Age Group	N	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
15 – 17 years old	23	3.26	Highly Effective
18 – 20 years old	34	3.30	Highly Effective
21 years old and above	10	2.63	Moderately effective
Average		3.06	Moderately effective

Data in Table 1 reveals that age is not a big factor to become an effective communicator. Essentially, they must have an appropriate formal education with practical training to become smart enough in conversing with diverse kinds of people. Given the importance of the ability to communicate competently, Morreale, Osborn and Pearson (2004) expressed that communication discipline should be a priority in school. People has the inherent ability to utter ideas but not with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that characterize communication competence. The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately is learned, and this is practiced in Philippine schools through face to face or work groups with people of varied backgrounds since the medium of instruction is English; although, a lot of times the respondents cannot avoid making use of Filipino Language in expressing their ideas even in an English Class especially if they are already engrossed with the subject matter.

Table 2: Communication skills of the students according to sex.

Sex	N	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Male	23	2.59	Moderately effective
Female	40	2.78	Moderately effective
Average		2.68	Moderately effective

Though findings in Table 2 manifest a slight difference in mean scores, sex is actually an intimidating factor. When students are involved in exchanges of ideas, female students inside the classroom are more accurate with their information, enjoy verbal interaction but with information overload, there is a tendency that their thoughts get mixed-up.

Male students avoid getting involved in discussion and when they speak what is in their minds, they go straight to the point. They avoid unnecessary confrontations once they have expressed their stand and get communication satisfaction easily. The attitudes of the male students confirm Littlejohn, (2002) concept that ego involvement and the latitudes of Social Justice Theory manifest once a person displays an attitude towards a message. The author exposed that the higher someone's ego involvement in a belief, the less likely they are to change their opinion, and thus the wider the room of rejection and the opportunity of non-commitment and acceptance become narrower. Conversely, the lower someone's ego involvement, the wider their latitudes of acceptance and non-commitment, and the narrower the latitude of rejection.

In a female dominated country like Philippines, communication dominance especially in social situations is a pleasure on the part of females because they tend to be more self-confident and a bit aggressive in all situations. But it is a common knowledge that over-confidence is as destructive of good performance as is under-confidence. If under-confidence leads to timidity, over-confidence promotes disorganize work. This position shows that competence cannot be measured by sex, education and performance cause big difference.

Table 3: Level of confidence and assertiveness students generally apply when handling various situations regardless of variables.

Various situations	Means	Verbal interpretations
1. How to get your phone call through.	2.42	Moderately Effective
2. When your suggestion is turned down.	3.24	Highly Effective
3. Coping with a work overload.	3.63	Highly Effective
4. Making review-scheduling decisions	3.68	Highly Effective
5. When your professor chews you out.	3.43	Highly Effective
6. Answering your professor’s open-ended unexpected question.	3.16	Moderately Effective
7. “Tell me about yourself”.	2.67	Moderately Effective
8. A sudden request that you transfer to other section.	3.00	Moderately Effective
9. Handling a proposal rejection.	2.92	Moderately 10. Effective
10. Meeting a new classmate	2.30	Less Effective
11. How to show strength in a group	3.60	Highly Effective
12. “We’ll get back to you.....”	1.97	Less Effective
13. Handling unsolicited advice.	3.42	Highly Effective
14. The main function of questions.	3.81	Highly Effective
15. What to do when you weren’t listening	3.16	Moderately Effective
16. Recovering from a poor presentation	3.33	Highly Effective
17. Breaking the ice when dealing with a tough classmate.	3.38	Highly Effective
18. Giving advice to others.	2.33	Less Effective
19. Handling the blame for a group report	3.59	Highly Effective
20. When an overly eager classmate fills in for you.	2.48	Moderately Effective
21. Deciphering confusing directions	2.98	Moderately Effective
22. Responding to criticisms directed at your group.	3.11	Moderately Effective
23. How you deal with a confrontational person	3.76	Highly Effective
24. Handling an unresponsive person assigned to your team.	2.79	Moderately Effective
25. Being drafted to volunteer.	2.97	Moderately Effective
Total Mean Scores	77.13	Less Confident and Assertive

Situations in Table 3 manifested that their weakest points are meeting a new classmate, when told “we’ll get back to you’ and giving advice to others. Mwinsheikhe, H. M. (2007) explained communication dimensions such as accuracy of information, desire for interaction and trust are the greatest moderator of the relationship between performance and satisfaction. The authors’ concept justifies the being less self-confident and assertive of the respondents because the students are not comfortable dealing with new classmates, not confident in giving feedback to assert their opinions and unsure if they can give solutions to a problem. The causes of these findings perhaps the insecurity or anxiety they feel every time they need to speak in foreign language.

On the positive side, the ability to communicate supports sound psychological development. One’s self concept is acquired through interaction with others. Achieving self-actualization involves communication activities such as making contributions in groups, exerting influence over others and using socially acceptable behavior. In this period of very advanced technology with diverse cultures coupled with different dialects because Philippines has different regions with different mother tongues, it is essential that every student has a positive classroom atmosphere, productive learning experiences and drives for excellent performance to achieve desired outcomes. The advanced technology and diverse culture and language may greatly distract the attention of a student and may unable to reach his/her utmost potential. In Philippines education system, intensive training on innovative teaching methods is a must to introduce powerful techniques towards a more effective and efficient teaching and learning experience for the students.

As proposed by Chonjo (2006), beginners must made to understand that interaction is the best way to appreciate English language. In a circumstance that students receive input and naturally provide feedback using English language is an effective way to learn English instead of the conventional memorizing dialogues and pattern practices which are the conventional methods practiced by most Filipino Speech Professors.

Vuzo (2007) and Mbagha (2015) as further corroborated by Afitska, O. & Clegg, J. (2010) stated that asking questions technique strongly induce classroom interaction. Foreign language learners who cannot assert and do not have enough confidence to start and withstand exchanges of information must be given a chance to formulate or answer questions because this will make them feel better when engaged in a continuous interaction.

Table 4: Correlation of the students’ communication skills grouped according to variables.

PEARSON R VALUES	
Variables	Communication Skills’ Mean
Age	-.150
Sex	.286(*)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4 reveals that correlation of students’ communication skills according to age portrayed negligible correlation meaning the degree of association is almost non-existent neither linear influence nor relationship to each other. A low degree of correlation was manifested in terms of sex which means there is low linear relationship. Results further signify that one’s communication skills is not measured by age and sex. Building confidence and assertiveness in oral communications means more practical oral exercises preferably natural exchanges of information.

McLellan (2018) mentioned that people who are smart in asking question are more likeable compared to people who choose to disengage in any interaction because of fear, negative assumptions and insecurities. Studies proved that whatever the case may be, a person must get over it since asking questions cause more positive results, such as: stimulates learning, provokes performance innovation and develops relationship.

Table 5: Correlation of the students’ overall level of confidence and assertiveness grouped according to variables.

PEARSON R VALUES	
Variables	Level of Confidence and Assertiveness
Age	-.206
Sex	.357(**)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 5 exhibits the correlation between the students’ level of confidence and assertiveness according to age and sex. The findings exhibited low linear correlation implying a small influence in the association of the said paired variables. The r coefficient between the communication skills’ grand mean and age revealed negative value demonstrating an inverse relation of the aforesaid profile.

Finally, as manifested in Table 4 and based on the data gathered, there is no significant correlation between the communication skills and level of confidence and assertiveness of the Speech Class student when grouped according to age and sex.

Conclusion

The student-respondents are moderately effective in their speech manners in asking smart questions when English Language is used as medium of interaction which resulted to being less confident and assertive when engaged in classroom oral exchanges of ideas.

The speech manners and level of confidence and assertiveness of the student-respondents have no significant correlations when grouped according to age and sex.

The abovementioned findings are important indicators that there is really a need to improve the strategies practiced by English Professors in the Philippines in building the confidence and assertiveness of Filipino students in transmitting their ideas especially in oral on-the-spot exchanges of ideas.

The fears and anxiety observed by the researcher in the students' speech manner must be dealt by conducting constant question and answer sessions to practice and build their confidence in oral communication.

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