



Received: 18-04-2023
Accepted: 28-05-2023

ISSN: 2583-049X

The Impact of ICT Integration in Improving the Grade 3 Students' English Speaking Skills

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Abstract

Speaking is the most important skill among the four language skills to interact and communicate with others in the social community. As English is widely used across the subjects worldwide, it is very essential to acquire the English-speaking skill to communicate and succeed in their respective field. However, most of the students' in Bhutan encounter difficulty in speaking English as it is the second language. There are also lot of other reasons such as lack of exposure, lack of vocabularies, lack of interesting teaching and learning strategies, etc. that motivates them to speak English. Thus, this research aims in finding the improvement in grade 3 students' English-speaking skills through integrating ICT in teaching and learning. This study employed mixed method and the data was collected through observing the control and experimental group using rubrics. The questionnaires were also administered to study the students' perception on speaking English Language and

some of its significance. The experiment group were given extra classes for an hour every day where they are engaged in various activities through the integration of ICT.

The research finding indicated that students in experiment group was far better in language structure and comprehension, whereas not much differences was shown in fluency between the two groups. Therefore, it was concluded that there was improvement in students' English-speaking skills through the integration of ICT in teaching and learning. It was also found that most students were aware that speaking English helps them in their academic performance, though most of them do not completely agree that English speaking is more important than Dzongkha.

From the finding, it could be suggested that the teachers could use the various interventions such as ICT to improve students' English-speaking skills in teaching and learning.

Keywords: ICT Integration, Students, English Speaking

Introduction

Many Bhutanese students confront lots of speaking difficulties in English. Speaking English involves thinking, watching, talking, and reading. The development of speaking skills at early stage is crucial. It has become a common topic in education research which ultimately enables an individual in fluent speaking.

Ever since Bhutan emerged from the period of isolation and opened its door to the outside world, and with the introduction of modern education, speaking has been one of the important aspects in the Bhutanese education system. And till today, the Ministry of Education gave equal importance to all the aspects of learning skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. The curriculum implemented in the schools covers all these skills.

Improving speaking skills for foreign language of students has always been a challenge till the emergence of new technology. Today the use of technology has become an important part of speaking learning process. They have revolutionized the process of learning. The use of ICT has the great potential to change the existing teaching and learning method. Incorporating ICT for teaching students learn how to speak is indispensable for giving opportunities for students to learn in an information age. In education, ICTs play crucial roles in facilitating teaching and learning. They have revolutionized the process of learning and language teaching. According to Naciri, (2019) ^[6], the use of technologies has the great potential to change the existing language teaching methods.

It is a well-known fact that the English-speaking skills of students are at average and below average rate with most students speaking only in words and phrases to convey their ideas and concerns during the class activities as well as outside the four walls of the classrooms. However, with the shift in assessment modalities from summative assessment to formative assessment, it is expected to bring about some changes in students learning. Rinchengang Primary school has always strived to make education relevant to the real-world situation, numerous activities are being organized for the children at the school

level and every teacher makes an effort to inculcate the same in their lessons.

Over the years, despite the best effort from the school and the teachers it has been observed that the English-speaking skills of the students have steadily declined and no effort seems to have worked out till now. It is a worrying issue for the school as well as for all the stakeholders as speaking being the basic tenets of any language. Never the less ICT is the new way forward and as more and more kids are exposed to ICT it is only befitting that we as educators re-ignite our passion for teaching by embracing and indoctrinating new technologies in our daily teaching.

The use of technologies transformed classroom communication methods and transformed instruction strategies. Therefore, this research strives to bring improvement in students' speaking skills through the integration of ICT.

Objectives

1. To help the students improve their communication skills (fluency and pronunciation).
2. To find out the attitude of students towards speaking English language and their awareness on significance of speaking English language.

Reconnaissance

Situational Analysis

Since the start of modernization in the 1960's, the Royal Government and our forefathers have always placed education sector at the epitome of every development plans. Over the decades we have seen tremendous changes pulsating and reverberating in every hearts of the students that have passed out from the school system and are currently leading the nation.

One such school is Rinchengang Primary School located just on the other side of the mighty PunaTsangchhu facing the historically significant WangdueDzong and opposite to one of the most successful town planning in Bhutan (Bajo Town). The school was established back in the year 2008 to fulfill the objective of Universal Primary Education for all. The school was originally established to enroll the children of people living in and around Rinchengang village (the famous clustered village that every students comes across in their text book), who for some reason had very low enrollment for primary education during that time.

However, in the recent years, due to the two hydro power projects and the new hospital that has come up in the area, the school has seen a significant rise in the number of students that are being enrolled and that has put a lot of pressure on the infrastructure of the school as well as on the human resource disposal. The school has always strived to make education relevant to the real-world situation, numerous activities are being organized for the children at the school level and every teacher makes an effort to inculcate the same in their lessons. Over the years, despite the best effort from the school and the teachers it has been observed that the English-speaking skills of the students have steadily declined and no effort seems to have worked out till now. It is a worrying issue for the school as well as for all the stakeholders as speaking being the basic tenets of any language.

The school currently has language policy and literary activities in place, offering various opportunities for students to participate in and get familiarized with oratory

skills but the big question remains how many students can these programs reach out to and how many students will actually benefit from these programs.

Therefore, it's must that teachers explore new technologies, pedagogies, social media platforms and stroll a bit outside the usual boundaries.

If nothing else, the pandemic has taught us the value of taking teaching and learning onto the screens. As per the mandate of the time integration of ICT in learning is felt much and it must be mandatory. Though no one would deny the importance of integration of ICT in learning but the basic fact that remains is that schools are not ready so are most of the students especially due to lack of resources.

Face-to-face teaching can sometimes be a little passive. For example, students often come into the classroom and the teachers has already organized everything for them. However, with online learning the students have to get more involved and take more responsibility. They need to clear their own doubts and do their own explanation which they usually may not in a classroom. Most teachers have expressed their opinion that they have observed students who are usually silent or quiet in class often speak up during online classes and that kids are more interested in virtual learning though the same can never be said about the teachers and parents.

Information About the Class

The participating students for this action research will be as follows:

Table 1: Information About the Class

Class / Section	Total strength	Girls	Boys
Three	37	21	16

The participating students all come from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. We have students with highly qualified parents, literate parents, illiterate parents, simple peasant and laborers with majority of the participating class falling under the later two groups.

It has been observed in the participating classes that students whose parents are literate are doing much better in speaking foreign language and are more confident to come up and participate in all the activities and programs the school offers whereas the opposite has been observed for the students whose parents are illiterate. Though the members of the participating classes almost have the same zeal and zest for learning ICT. In the past most of the participating students have shown slight improvement in reading and writing through co-curricular activities and literary activities organized by the school as well as the activities that are being assimilated in the lessons.

Therefore, we believe that by integrating ICT in English language classes it will enhance the speaking skills of the students and would be more relevant for the future netizens.

Literature Review

In English language, all four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing reinforces each other and are very essential to enrich teaching and learning of English. From this four skills, most of the students find difficulty in speaking English due to the environment, encouraging situation and lack of practice and motivation. Speaking is part of language skills which is very much needed to improve students' communication competencies such as

expressing themselves and learning to follow the social and cultural rules applicable in each communicative circumstances but teaching and learning speaking skills has always been one of challenges for most of the teachers and students. Kuppuraj (2017) ^[4], feels that speaking skills has acquired intense attention in any profession a person pursue and to become distinct and exceed in his/her profession, it is very essential to be very expressive, explanative and persuasive. Furthermore, among the four language skills, speaking has long been cited as the most significant ability, EFL learners are supposed to master (Mohameed & Asma, 2020) ^[5]. Therefore, integration of ICT has great impact on students' speaking skill in and out of the classroom. So, this study brings out the integration of ICT to improve English speaking skills of grade 3 students in Rinchengang Primary School, under Wangdue Phodrang Dzongkhag.

As per Mohameed & Asma (2020) ^[5], integration of ICT in English classroom has a significant impact on teaching oral production and comprehension which affects students' oral language proficiency. They also expressed that ICT provides abundant authentic resources and materials which aids in teaching and learning speaking skills. In addition, Naciri (2019) ^[6], estimates that adoption of ICTs plays a major effect to facilitate and improve learning, particularly speaking skills. She further adds that Integration of ICT in classroom enhance interaction between teacher and students, provides logical input and output, develop critical thinking skills, create student-centered classroom, encourages independent learning and increase students' motivation and confidence to effectively learn English language. Thus, the aid of ICT enhances smooth and clear communication between teacher and students and among students themselves.

Benmeddah (2017) ^[1], also found that ICTs is essential in the teaching learning process to enrich the speaking abilities with joyful atmosphere where students responded positively towards these technological materials. In addition, he stated that the teachers should inculcate different ICT tools and activities in the classroom to motivate the learners rather than counting only on the traditional way of teaching oral skills. Therefore, integrating ICT in English classrooms not only improves communication skills, it can also foster better teaching and students' academic performance. Similarly, the employed experimental study where the experimental group were frequently exposed to various ICT tools whereas, the control groups were taught in the traditional method and concluded that employing ICT tools such as interactive CD, Video clips, Powerpoint and online learning to teach and learn speaking English as a foreign language has positive effect on students' motivation. The students also expressed that Integration of ICT when learning speaking would benefit them in their future career and this reflects that students' were aware of the importance of the integration of ICT tools in learning speaking skills. In support of this, Houcine (2011) ^[3] states that the implementation of ICT has many advantages such as increasing learners' motivation, involvement, empowers independent learning, develops learners' collaboration and communication and consequently improve learners' attainment.

Therefore, use of ICT in education has to be highly encouraged as it has become one of the most important tool which facilitates and influences teaching and learning leading to the production of highly qualified learners who are productive in the workplaces of today's society.

According to Naciri (2019) ^[6], ICT has revolutionized the process of teaching and learning language and has transformed classroom communication methods and instruction strategies. Moreover, the study by Sailun & Idayani (2014) ^[7], concluded that use of ICT increases students' motivation, speaking skills and students' learning effectiveness. Most of students in this study affirmed that use of ICT developed their speaking skills, enhanced their knowledge and creativity. Thus, Speaking skill is the real time need which demands extensive reading and listening practices. Similarly, Kuppuraj (2017) ^[4], states that ICT play a vital role in enhancing and improving the students' worldly knowledge and exposure to recent materials and trendy endeavors.

Hence, it's evident that integration of various ICT tools in teaching and learning plays a significant role in improving students' English-speaking skills and thus, facilitating them to become successful, proficient and professional in their lives.

Action Research Question

1. Will integration of ICT in teaching and learning improve students' communication skills (language structure, fluency and comprehension)?
2. What are students' perception on speaking English language and its significance?

Methodology

This study employed mixed method to improve the data collection whereby it enabled us to get the whole picture. The method of collecting data was through observing the control and experimental group and administering questionnaires to the students. After a month, both the groups will be kept in a class and provide the same activity (retelling the story, picture story and running story). Both the groups will be assessed as per the set rubrics and the result will be compared. The questionnaires will be administered to all the grade three students to find out students' perception on speaking English Language and the significance of speaking English language. The data will be collected within the span of one month (August 1st to 28th).

Intervention plan

The suggested strategies that we want to carry to improve the students' English-speaking skills are as follows:

- Use of ICT tools such as youtube (stories, rhymes, child's play) for the experimental group. Normal classroom teaching for the control group without integration of ICT tools.
- Reporting the daily news in the classroom.

Ethical Plan

There are number of ethical principles that should be taken into consideration when performing action research. At the heart of these ethical principles are the need to benefit others and do no harm to all the participants and the concerned stakeholders. With this principle foundations of ethics at the core of our research practice we would like to seek the permission of the school administration to conduct the team action research in the school. We would also like to seek the permission of the esteemed teaching and non-teaching staff of the school for their feedbacks and interviews during the data collection phase. Furthermore, we would like to seek the permission of the parents and students for they would be

the main participants of the research for interviews and questionnaires. The research team promises to minimize the risk of harm or put the participants in position of discomfort; to obtain informed consent before any interview or questionnaires; to protect anonymity and confidentiality during and after data collection; to avoid deceptive practices and will always provide the right to withdraw if the participants are not willing to take part in the research. Moreover, all the information gathered will solely be used for research purposes.

Action/Intervention for the Experiment Group

After, submitting the action plan, we divided the class in two groups (control and experimental) and started conducting different classes for the experimental group. First, we selected and downloaded few activities to be carried out with the experimental group and prepared an anecdotal record form for the students in experimental group. The activities carried out were listening and re-telling the story, picture story, running story. In the first week, we presented them a video of a short story. After watching the video, we asked them to discuss in pairs and re-tell the same story. The students discussed in pairs and told the story to the whole class. This activity continued with different stories for a next classes where the students discussed and told the story in groups, pairs and individually. For the second week, we presented a set of pictures on a screen, told them to make a story in sequence and share with their friends. Like the first activity, students were asked to discuss in groups, pairs and then individually. The third activity for the third week was a running story. We presented video on how to form a running story. After watching the video, the students were divided in groups and were asked to practice the same story. In the following classes, they were asked to create a running story by themselves and share with the whole class.

Observation

We started observing the students in experiment group focusing on the areas such as language structure, fluency and comprehension and recording our observation in the anecdotal record form. As per our observation, in the beginning, most of the students were hesitant and not confident enough to re-tell the story even after playing the video for several times. They are not that fluent and made heaps of grammatical errors. Moreover, most of them couldn't comprehend the whole story. Only few students tried to comprehend the story in their own words with some grammatical and pronunciation errors. The students' started progressing in all the areas from the second activity (picture story), though most of them still creates lots of pronunciation and grammatical error. They were given multiple chances to tell the story by looking at the picture on the screen. We also facilitated and amended them with pronunciation and grammatical problems. After the third activity, we observed that most students could speak more fluently and clearly with good pronunciation and grammatical errors were rare compared to the first activity.

They could also speak comprehensive sentence with expression and confidence. Only few students were not able to speak fluently, nevertheless, they could complete the sentence with limited pronunciation and grammatical error. The intervention was carried out for the period of three weeks.

Action/Intervention for Control and Experiment Group

We also prepared a rubrics consisting of a. language structure b. fluency and c. comprehension to assess and compare the speaking skills of two groups in the end. We prepared a questionnaire for all the students (both control and experimental group) to find out their perception towards speaking English language and its significance.

Results

We assembled all the grade three students in a class and conducted few activities through integrating ICT to compare the speaking skills of the students in control and experimental group based on the areas such as language structure, fluency and comprehension.

After the assessment, we calculated the average score and created a bar graph based on the score as shown in Table 2 and Fig 1.

Table 2: Speaking skills of Grade 3 students

Skills	Average Score	
	Experiment	Control
Language structure	3	2.2
Fluency	3	2.6
Comprehension	3.2	2

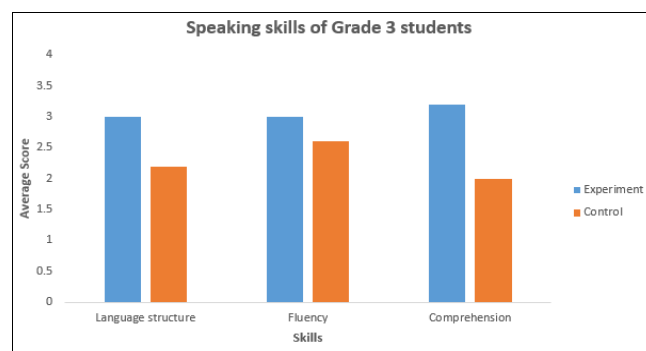


Fig 1: Speaking skills of Grade 3 students

The result showed that the average score of students in experimental groups are 3 in language structure, whereas the students' in control group scored only 2.2. However, it was also found out that there was not much differences in fluency with the average score of 3 and 2.6 recorded by the experiment and control groups respectively. The average score for comprehension was shown as 3.2 by the experiment group and 2 by the control group.

Therefore, it was concluded that there was improvement in the students' speaking skills through the integration of ICT.

Table 3: displays the perception of grade 3 students' towards speaking English language and its significance.

Table 3: Students' attitude towards Speaking English language

S. No	Questions	Percentage (100%)		
		Totally agree	Don't completely agree	I disagree completely
1	I like all of my friends to speak English with me.	41.7	52.8	5.6
2	English speaking is more important than Dzongkha.	30.6	66.7	2.8
3	I enjoy speaking English at all times.	44.4	47.2	8.3
4	It is easy for me to communicate in English.	30.6	61.1	8.3
5	Speaking English gives me confident in front of my friends.	61.1	33.3	5.6
6	Speaking English helps me to have good performances in my academic.	75.0	25.0	0.0
7	I ask someone to help me improve my English speaking.	41.7	27.8	30.6
8	I practice ways to check whether the listener understood what I say.	25.0	55.6	19.4
9	I know that speaking English means not only answering the teacher's question.	44.4	50.0	5.6
10	I encourage myself to try to speak in English at all times.	44.4	52.8	2.8

To find out the students' perception towards speaking English language and its significance, ten questions were asked to 36 grade 3 students. Dichotomous questions consisting of 3 levels such as totally agree, don't completely agree and I disagree completely were used. The students' will use (✓) against the level they feel they fall under. After collecting the questionnaires, the researcher converted the numbers under each level and question in percentage.

As per the table above, only few students completely disagree with most of the statements and almost half of the students completely agree or do not completely agree with most of the statements. From the ten statements, 75% of the students completely agrees with the statement, "Speaking English helps me to have good performance in my academic" and no one completely disagrees with this statement. The reasons to account for such finding could be whenever the teacher conducts class test or term test, the students who converse mostly in English in and outside the classroom scores higher compared to those who don't converse in English. However, 30.6 % of the students completely disagrees with the statement, "I ask someone to help me improve my English speaking", which is the highest percentage in completely disagree category. This could be because, most of the students are hesitant to speak English and prefers to speak in Dzongkha. Therefore, they do not takes part in speaking activities. Sharma (2018) [8], also believes that because of the speaking anxiety, the students were nervous to produce utterances in English and were unable to answer the questions in or out of the classroom.

In summary, most of the students believed that Speaking English gives them confidence in front of their friends and it also helps them to improve their academic performance. However, more than half of the students moderately feels that English speaking is more important than Dzongkha and communicating in English is easy.

Conclusion

After analyzing the result, it was concluded that there was improvement in students' English-speaking skills through the integration of ICT in teaching and learning. The result showed that the students in experiment group was far better in language structure and comprehension, whereas not much differences was shown in fluency between the two groups. Therefore, the interventions that we applied to improve students' speaking skills helped for improvement in most of the students. Hence, to improve the students' speaking skills, different activities through integration of ICT is very easy to understand by the students and it is an efficient method. Moreover, students' enjoys watching the videos and

repeating the dialogues. It was also found that most students were aware that speaking English would aid them in their academic performance.

Though, the intervention applied was successful, it would have been more effective if the anecdotal record of individual students with more categories in rubrics was prepared and maintained. So that we can record and judge the improvement of individual students. Furthermore, pre-test and post-test method would be more convenient and easier to apply and analyze if the sample chosen is only one section as the interventions used will cater all the students equally in the class. The researcher needs to include the interventions in their yearly plan and implement from the start of the academic session to obtain precise result at the end of the academic session.

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