

The Role Of Discussion Method In Enhancing Speaking Skills Among Undergraduate Arabic Students At The New College Chennai

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Abstract

The impact of the discussion method on the speaking skills of undergraduate Arabic students at The New College, Chennai, India, warrants a thorough examination. This study aims to determine how significantly the discussion method affects students' speaking abilities. It employs a quantitative research approach using a saturated sampling technique, with research instruments including questionnaires, interviews, and documentation, encompassing 26 Arabic undergraduate students from the 2022-25 cohort. The findings indicate that implementing the discussion method in teaching Speaking Skills effectively engaged students' interest in learning and was relatively easy to follow. According to the results of the T-test, the calculated value (t_{hitung}) is 9.648, which exceeds the table value (t_{table}) of 2.056 at a significance level of 0.025. Hence, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. In contrast, the null hypothesis (H_o) is rejected, concluding that the discussion method positively influences the Speaking Skills of undergraduate students at The New College, Chennai. Additionally, the coefficient of determination test yielded a result of 0.782, indicating that the discussion method accounts for 78.2% of the variance in Speaking Skills.

Keywords: Speaking; AFL; India; Academic Role

INTRODUCTION

Education is an extremely important educational effort for improving human quality and enhancing life in the future. This includes the teaching of the Arabic language, which is used in the Holy Quran. Muslims are encouraged to learn Arabic due to the importance of the language in understanding the meanings of the Quran. Arabic has become a global and significant language in the world, as many people use it. The main motivation for learning the language is the ability to use it itself, which is commonly referred to as language skills. There are four language skills: listening, writing, reading, and speaking.

Many students choose to enroll in Arabic language education programs at Islamic boarding schools, in comparison to students in higher education and public schools. Although most students who come from Islamic boarding schools have a considerable amount of exposure to learning Arabic, they gain a wealth of knowledge from studying the language. Among the four language skills, we will discuss speaking skills here. Speaking skills refer to the ability to express words to convey thoughts in the form of

opinions, desires, or feelings to others. Speaking is considered one of the fundamental skills, and students should master it to measure the outcomes of their Arabic language learning. It is essential for teachers to learn in order to be able to express the right and correct words, especially in the Arabic language. One of the obstacles to learning Arabic is the less favorable environment for developing Arabic language skills. Speaking in Arabic is a complex skill. It requires fluency because speaking involves expressing thoughts and feelings using the correct words and sentences, taking into account grammatical structure and phonetics, in addition to other aspects of language skills such as listening, reading, and writing. Speaking skills are certainly linked to conversation, which includes discussions, presentations, dialogues, speeches, storytelling, and more. Conversations in Arabic are usually referred to simply as dialogues in the Arabic language.

One notable book on modern conversation is "Al-Arabiyyah Baina Yadaika". This book is designed to teach beginners the Arabic language and addresses the challenges in conversation. It is classified as a textbook for teaching conversation, focusing specifically on the teaching of speaking skills. This conversation is conducted with fellow students or teachers. This conversation, to be conducted daily, although some may do it once or twice a week at specific times. A common problem we face, especially in Arabic language education programs, is that many students come from public and private higher secondary schools rather than schools that have previously taught them Arabic, such as Islamic schools. However, it can be stated that students from government schools are eager to learn Arabic despite lacking a foundational background in it. Many people believe that Arabic is difficult. To speak Arabic effectively requires intensive practice. One of the ways to learn the Arabic language that emphasizes speaking is through the conversation method. Therefore, this research aims to explore the impact of the conversation method on speaking skills among students in the Arabic language department at The New College, Chennai, India.

METHOD

The type of research used in this study is correlational quantitative research. This research was conducted to explain and test the relationships between variables and to examine the quality of these variables and the testing of hypotheses, as well as to seek generalizations that possess predictive value for forecasting symptoms. Quantitative research requires the use of numbers, starting from data collection and interpretation and the emergence of results. The population of the research consisted of students from the Arabic Department, The New College, Chennai. The total population in this research was 26 undergraduates, Major-Arabic students from the Arabic Department at The New College, affiliated to the University of Madras, admitted in 2022 (2022-2025). The sampling technique used in this research is cluster sampling. Cluster sampling is a sampling method where all members of the population are used as samples. This method is applied when the population is relatively small, less than 30 individuals, or when the researcher wants to generalize with minimal errors.

Thus, the sample used consists of 26 respondents from the Arabic Department. Data collection techniques were implemented through questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. For data validity, the research employed validity tests and reliability tests. The techniques used for data analysis included normality tests, correlation tests, T-tests, and calculating the determinant factor.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is known that the method of teaching speaking skills in the Arabic Department class of 2022-25, applies the conversation method, as it was implemented in the previous semester using a unit of conversation in dialogue groups. Students are given the opportunity to study, memorize conversations and practice them. The technique involves dividing the groups, where each group is responsible for studying and discussing each week on their dialogues. The presenter gives students the opportunity to ask questions about the dialogues that were discussed. After that, the presenter asked the students to read the conversation used in dialogues between individuals or in groups.

Furthermore, concerning the explanations related to foreign vocabulary, in addition to group divisions, the instructors provide insights on word origins, structures, and so on. For students to comprehend the instructor's explanations, it is essential since not all students have a foundational knowledge of the Arabic language. However, understanding what the instructor explained previously is possible for students because the instructor is able to adjust the context using simpler languages that the students can understand. At times, the instructors also engage students in conducting dialogues using Arabic during the teaching process, but they do not fully execute it since many students are still in the learning phase of the Arabic language.

Moreover, motivation and support from the instructors and the environment greatly influence learning, especially concerning understanding religion, as well as the ability to continue learning the Arabic Language. Therefore, motivation must be strong. Sometimes, motivation alone is not enough; additional inspiration is also necessary to be more beneficial in understanding the Arabic language. This type of speaking skill learning was implemented by the researcher in the previous semester. Few students feel happy and excited because learning like this actually makes students improve their ability to speak Arabic faster.

Learning the speaking skill requires significant time to develop and perfect. This requires encouragement from the students themselves to implement this learning as expected. If students continue to practice speaking, they will master speaking skills in Arabic, becoming proficient in numerous vocabulary words and grammatical rules and achieving proficiency in all four language-skills, not just speaking. Every method has its advantages and own limitations, which is also true for this conversation method. Regarding interaction between instructors and students or among the students themselves, this results in students being more active in speaking Arabic and having an expanded vocabulary, especially when contextualized within predetermined topics related to daily activities, for example. However, a drawback is that students still struggle with understanding vocabulary and constructions, as they may start to forget everything they have learned in the classroom once they do not use the Arabic language frequently. Instructors who teach using this method need to facilitate vocabulary memorization by having students engage in dialogues in pairs. Additionally, anxiety and lack of self-confidence are disadvantages of this method, which complicates learning for both educators and students trying to master the Arabic language. The obstacles faced include students learning Arabic who are not accustomed to reading and speaking in the language. On the results derived from interviews between the researcher and the instructors, there is an emphasis on the importance of employing the conversation method, particularly for students in the Arabic Department who are learning using this approach. It is expected to reveal the ability of Arabic students from the 2022-25 batch at The New College, Chennai

concerning their speaking skills, as assessed through their learning outcomes. The speaking skills evaluations, which have been adjusted according to the grading criteria. There are only two students who achieve satisfactory grades, while the rest receive good or satisfactory grades, which indicates that learning speaking skills using effective dialogue methods is relatively good.

Table 1. Grading Interval

Grade	Range	Score
A	100 - 86	1
B	85 - 70	2
C	69 - 60	3
D	59 - 50	4

It should be noted that the students obtaining grades of "D" or "E" are not necessarily due to their speaking skills, but may also reflect other aspects such as attendance, participation in class, and other activities which are part of the assessment of a student's ability in the Arabic Department. Therefore, supportive aspects include any factors that contribute to the learning of speaking skills. The teacher sets the minimum competency level (Minimum Completion Standards) that students must achieve, which should not be less than 75. Therefore, students must be capable of obtaining a score of 75 or higher to pass this course.

Normality Test

The purpose of the normality test is to verify whether the residual values are distributed normally or not. The normal Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with SPSS version 22 was used for this decision: if the significance level is less than 0.05, the residual values are distributed normally. If the significance level is greater than 0.05, the residual values are not distributed normally.

Table 2. Normality Test (One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test)

Unstandardized Residual	
N	26
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	
Mean	0.0000000
Std. Deviation	3.85995700
Most Extreme Differences	
Absolute	0.170
Positive	0.098
Negative	-0.170
Test Statistic	0.170
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.036 ^c
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)	
Sig.	0.353 ^d
99% Confidence Interval	
Lower Bound	0.340
Upper Bound	0.365

Test distribution is Normal
Calculated from data

Lilliefors Significance Correction
Based on 10,000 sampled tables with starting seed 2,000,000

Based on the results of the normality test, it is known that the significance level of 0.365 is greater than 0.05; therefore, it can be concluded that the residual values are normally distributed.

Correlation Test

The significance level taken in this study is 0.05: a decision rule states that if the correlation value is less than 0.05, then the variables are correlated; if the value is greater than 0.05, they are not correlated. The results of the correlation test using SPSS version 22 are as follows:

Table 3. Correlation Test

Variable		Method of Discussion	Speaking Skills
Method of Discussion	Pearson Correlation	1	0.884**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	26	26
Speaking Skills	Pearson Correlation	0.884**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	26	26

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Based on the results of the correlation test above, the correlation coefficient for variable X is 0.884, which is greater than 0.374, indicating a strong positive correlation. The correlation value for variable Y is also 0.374.

T-Test

The decision rule is as follows: if the value is less than the critical t-value, then we accept the alternative hypothesis (H_a); if it is greater, we reject H_a at a significance level of 0.05. The t-test results using SPSS version 22 are presented in the following table:

Table 4. T-Test (Coefficients^a)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.476	6.251		0.076	0.940
	0.892	0.092	0.884	9.648	0.000
Dependent Variable: Speaking Skill					

Based on the results of the t-test, the calculated t-value is approximately 9.648, which is greater than the critical t-value of 2.048 at a significance level of 0.025. Therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis (H_a) and reject the null hypothesis (H_o). It can be concluded that there is an effect of the discussion method on Speaking Skills among the 2022-25 Batch of undergraduate Major-Arabic students at The New College, India.

Table 5. t Critical Value Table (α for Two-Tailed Tests)

α	0.050	0.025	0.005	0.010	0.020	0.050
df=1	3.841	5.024	9.240	6.314	5.991	3.841
df=2	2.920	4.303	7.537	4.301	4.000	2.920
df=3	2.353	3.182	5.387	3.182	3.000	2.353
...
df= ∞	1.960	2.576	3.291	2.576	2.576	1.960

α for One-Tailed Tests

α	0.050	0.025	0.005	0.010	0.020	0.005
df=1	3.078	6.314	9.240	6.314	5.991	3.841
df=2	2.920	4.303	7.537	4.301	4.000	2.920
df=3	2.353	3.182	5.387	3.182	3.000	2.353
...
df= ∞	1.645	2.576	3.291	2.576	2.576	1.645

1. Degrees of Freedom (df): This refers to the number of independent observations in the sample, typically calculated as the number of observations minus 1.

2. The values vary based on the significance level (α) used. For instance, if you are using a significance level of 0.05, the use of the critical t-value will depend on the degrees of freedom for your specific sample.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R^2) Model Summary^b

Model		R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	884 ^a	.782	.773	3.933

Predictors: (Constant), Method of Discussion. Dependent Variable: Communication Skill or Speaking Skill.

Based on the results of the coefficient of determination, the obtained result is $R^2 = 0.782$, which indicates that the method of discussion has an influence on Speaking Skills. The researcher concludes that the method of discussion affects Speaking Skills. This research aims for instructors who teach Speaking Skills to utilize the method of discussion within more effective educational strategies. This is not only for instructors but also for any potential teachers who may apply the method of discussion in teaching Speaking Skills. The researcher conducted interviews with instructors and several students. The data obtained by the researcher was used as additional information regarding teaching Arabic through the method of discussion compared to Speaking Skills in the Arabic Department, 2022-25 batch, at The New College, Chennai, India.

CONCLUSION

Teaching Speaking Skills in Arabic for the undergraduate 2022-25 through the application of the method of discussion utilized by instructors and studying dialogue enhance the students' mastery of vocabulary, especially for students who are learning Arabic solely. The method of discussion is very effective in teaching Speaking Skills. The method of discussion influences Speaking Skills in the Arabic Department, Batch 2022-25 based on the calculated t-value of 2.056, which is significant at the 0.025 level. Therefore, the decision in this study is to accept the alternative hypothesis (H_a) and reject the null hypothesis (H_o). This leads to the conclusion that there is an influence of the discussion method on Speaking Skills among the 2022-25 Batch students at The New College, Chennai, with a coefficient of determination of 0.782, indicating a significant impact.

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