Developing English Speaking Skill Indigenously among the Prospective Teachers

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
History *Revised format: 30 Nov 2019* *Available Online: 31 Dec 2019* **Keywords** *Low Speaking Proficiency, Effectiveness Of Module, Content And Language Integrated Approach, Prospective Teachers* **JEL Classification:** *I0, I2*	Present research experimentally studied the effectiveness of indigenously developed Content and Language Integrated Modular Approach (CLIMA) especially designed for developing English language ability among university students. CLIMA is a blend of Content and Language Integrated Approach and the Modular Approach. Two equated groups of total 52 students from Bachelor of Education Programme (semester-I) participated in this randomised pre-test post-test control group experiment. The content used herein comprised a purposefully designed module of 5 units. Both groups were taught by the same specifically trained teacher on same days with an interval of one hour between the sessions with the two groups. Experiment was completed in 30 sessions (1.5 hour each) during 10 weeks. For both pre- and post-testing, the researchers used the Analytic Rubric of Fairfax County Public Schools (Virginia, USA). This Analytic Rubric has been termed as the Performance Assessment for Language Students (PALS). The experimental group witnessed (pre-testing = 31.6%, post-testing = 80.8%) a value addition of 49.2%; and the control group witnessed (pre-testing = 31.2%, post-testing = 66.2%) a value addition of 35.0%. Compared with TOEFL and IELTS, conclusively, CLIMA was found highly effective. Results are discussed in detail in the paper.

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1. Introduction

The faculty of speech distinguishes human race from the rest of the creation as it is one of the greatest blessings endowed upon man (Wilson, 2012). Better oral communication in English has been the passport to indigenous, global, cyber and virtual markets. Better proficiency in English speaking has also been a rewarding aspect for the diaspora communities.

The study will be useful for the students and English language teachers (ELT) interested in the fields like sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, applied linguistics, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The study will bring awareness among prospective teachers and teacher trainers about the standards and benchmarks for oral proficiency in English which are being followed internationally. The study will provide a model to the teacher education for the development of a module for English speaking skills which will be quite different from other existing modules. The current study may be very helpful for the

subject teachers (Non-language teachers-teachers of education in the current case) to teach English language as effectively as English teachers teach the language.

2. Literature Review

English speaking skills are the essential standard for teachers in all of the countries where English is regarded as second, foreign or official language. Pakistan is among the countries where English is used as official language and the medium of instruction as well. The system of education in Pakistan still maintains the significance of English as medium of instructions. Therefore, competence in communication skills, especially, the speaking skills are required in academics at levels from grade 1 to PhD.

In Pakistan, the level of English speaking proficiency has been reported very low among teacher education graduates (Alam, 2012; Bilal, Rehman, Rashid, Adnan, & Abbas, 2013; Coleman, 2010; Shahzad, Ali, Qadeer, & Ullah, 2011). It is not the issue of weak students only, even the high achievers in English written examination cannot speak English correctly (Bilal et al., 2013; Karim, 2012). There are many reasons of low level of speaking proficiency of graduates of teacher education in Pakistan including non-availability of quality teaching material and lack of assessment practices of spoken proficiency (Bilal et al., 2013; Tariq, Bilal, Sandhu, Iqbal, & Hayat, 2013). The content which is used to teach spoken skills to prospective teachers was mostly developed and contextualised in western culture (Tariq et al., 2013) and has not been so far adapted appropriately. The choice of any language teaching content must be made by giving due consideration to local culture and context. The use of subject matter as content in spoken language teaching improves motivation as well as achievement of prospective teachers (Khushi & Talaat, 2011). There is need to develop local subject matter based learning material for improving spoken English proficiency in Pakistan (Coleman, 2010).

Teachers are expected to be proficient and skilful speakers (Aslam, 2011; Cammarata, 2010). Speaking proficiency of the students depends much on the communication ability of the teachers. If the teacher in the classroom is deficient in oral communication, the students will also be deficient in speaking. If the teacher has wrong pronunciation, lacks fluency, grammatically incorrect and he/she does not have proper intonation, the students will certainly display all of these errors in the spoken English because they copy their teacher. That is why, effective communication skill is regarded as one of the professional standards for the teachers all over the globe (Aslam, 2011; Government-of-Pakistan, 2009) because excellent speaking makes excellent teacher (Aslam, 2011; Cammarata, 2010).

In teacher education, the need for proficiency in English speaking skills is growing consistently in rapidly changing world at global level. The teaching and learning of English speaking skills (ESS) through *Content and Language Integrated Learning Module* is becoming admired internationally. Modular approach used for the teaching and learning of English Language skills is more fruitful than traditional methods of teaching and learning of English Language skills. But in Pakistan, English Language and English speaking skills, is taught through the traditional methods; and traditional syllabuses ignored specific needs of individuals regarding learning language. So, the present research filled the gap between the existing and required levels of English speaking proficiency of prospective teachers. The current study also explored the effectiveness of the *Content and Language Integrated Module* made for improving the English speaking skills of future teachers.

Current study will be significant in such a way that the specific module for the development of English speaking skills is expected to influence positively the other areas/ fields of knowledge like *Sociology*, *Psychology*, *Philosophy* and *Research Methodology* in the making of contextualized modules. This study may serve as a reference to all – curriculum planners, teachers, students, employers and all other stake-holders in educational set up by providing them guidelines and presenting a valid document for how to design curricula for English speaking skills and how to develop, select and organize the learning/teaching material with special focus on the needs of the learners.

3. Methodology

To find out the effectiveness of the module for developing English speaking skills of prospective teachers, the researchers selected the *Randomised Equated Pre-Test Post-Test Control Group Experimental Design*. The experiment was conducted upon prospective teachers of first semester of Bachelor of Education program (2015-2016) from an institute of higher education (Pakistan). All of the enrolled students (52) were divided into *experimental* and *control* groups randomly.

The *control* group of the study was taught through the *traditional* way. The *experimental* group was taught through the *Content and Language Integrated Modular Approach* (CLIMA) which was developed by the researcher for this purpose after blending the two famous approaches (i.e. *Content and Language Integrated Approach* and *Modular Approach*). The teaching *module* (content/teaching material) used in this experiment was purposefully prepared, keeping in view the entry level and the required level of English speaking proficiency of the prospective teachers. This *module* consisted of 5 units.

Both groups were taught by the same *specifically* trained teacher on same days with a difference of one hour time interval between the sessions with the two groups. The *experiment* continued for 10 weeks. Entire activity of the *experiment* was distributed over 30 classroom sessions and each of the session was of 1 hour and 30 minutes duration.

Analytic Rubric of *Performance Assessment for Language Students* (PALS), prepared by Fairfax, Virginia (United States) was used for *pre-testing* and *post-testing*. The intra personal speaking proficiency (Monologue) and inter personal skill (Dialogue) were evaluated through two different performance tests, both in pre-test and post-test. Effectiveness of CLIMA was judged through the percentage of the scores in *pre-testing* and *post-testing*.

The Fairfax County Public Schools system (FCPS) came in to existence after the Civil War with the adoption by Virginia in 1870, which for the first time guaranteed free public education. FCPS has been evolving the assessment criteria. This school system has done a lot in order to establish the validity and reliability of the rating scales. FCPS has also developed the rating scales for the assessment of foreign languages. Both, discrete and holistic rating scales for the assessment of all four skills (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) are available. Speaking is assessed against six indicators: task completion, comprehensibility, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary and language control. Scoring is awarded from 1 to 4 with - and +. The raw scores are converted to percentage by the use of "A Conversion Chart" The FCPS rating scales have three levels namely level-1, level-2 and level-3

According to Shrum (2015), an effective example of performance-based assessment is the Performance Assessment for Language Students (PALS) project in Fairfax County, Virginia, the purpose of which is to design and implement performance tasks and evaluate the abilities of language learners. In order to design assessments that focus on what students know and can do in the foreign language, a task force of Fairfax County language teachers created a variety of performance tasks that place students in real-life situations in which they need to use the language. The tasks, together with scoring criteria, were developed and used for both formative and summative assessment purposes. "Tasks were designed so that they would "engage students in simulated real world tasks; have more than one right answer; reward skill development, creativity, and linguistic accuracy; promote problem-solving skills and tap higher-level thinking skills (especially in upper levels); and let the students know how their performance will be evaluated before they perform the tasks" (pp. 191–192).

Figure: The Model
Randomised Equated Pre-Test Post-Test Control Group Experimental Design
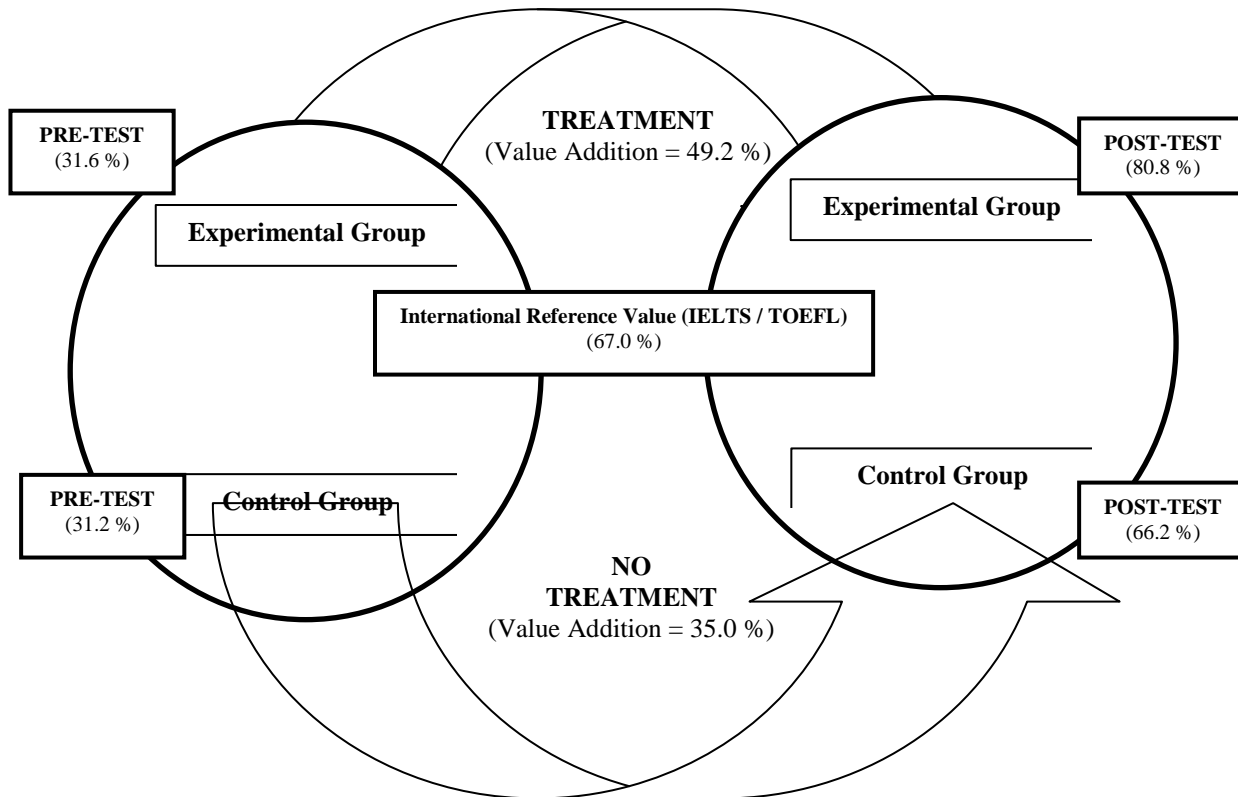
4. Results

The *experimental group* shows magnanimous development from *pre-testing* (31.6%) to *post-testing* (80.8%) with a value addition of 49.2%. The *control group* also witnesses the noticeable development from *pre-testing* (31.2%) to *post-testing* (66.2%) with a value addition of 35.0%. Both groups discern development in their speaking skills such a way that the magnitude of skill development in *experimental group* is admirable.

Comparing vertically, the difference between the *experimental* and the *control group* is +0.4% in *pre-testing* which expanded to +14.6 in *post-testing*. The net difference of +14.2 is recorded between the two *groups*, which is indeed laudable.

Table 1: Performance Assessment (percentage scores)

	Pre-Test Score (%)	Post-Test Score (%)	Value Addition	Reference Value IELTS/TOEFL
Experimental Group	31.6	80.8	49.2	67
Control Group	31.2	66.2	35.0	67
Difference	+0.4	+14.6	+14.2	

Conclusively the study discovered high effectiveness of the CLIMA; particularly, if these values are compared to that of the internationally accepted tests of English language i.e. TOEFL and/or IELTS which is 67% (for both). Results of *pre-* and *post-test* comparing the *experimental* and *control* groups have been discussed in detail in the paper.

Table 2: Overall English Speaking Proficiency of Prospective Teachers

	Groups	Mean Gain Scores	S D	*t*	p-value
Overall	Experimental	6.22	2.71	7.506	0.000
	Control	1.80	1.15		
Dialogue	Experimental	3.34	1.38	6.336	0.000
	Control	1.24	0.91		
Monologue	Experimental	2.88	1.49	7.258	0.000
	Control	0.56	0.56		

p<0.05   N = 50, *df* = 48

The table 2 reflects that independent samples t test was applied to compare the mean gain scores of English speaking proficiency of prospective teachers of experimental and control groups. The results indicate that, there is a significant difference between mean gain scores of the perspective teachers of experimental and control groups in the overall assessment of English speaking proficiency, in the assessment of Dialogue and Monologue. The statistical significance of difference in the mean gain scores of experimental and control groups indicates that the mean gain scores of English speaking proficiency of experimental group was better than that of control group.

The results conclusively reflect that the experiment ends very much successfully.

Table 3: Reference Scores of IELTS/TOEFL (percentage scores)

	All 4 Skills Required/Total (%)	**Speaking Skill** Required/Total (%)
IELTS	6/9 (67)	6/9 (67)
TOEFL	80/120 (67)	20/30 (67)

Table 3 demonstrates percentage scores as a threshold of internationally accepted English language tests i.e. IELTS and TOEFL.
If we reconsider the performance of the *experimental group* and the *control group* with respect to the threshold score of IELTS and TOEFL (i.e. 67.0%), we come to confidently confirm the successfulness of the experiment above all.

5. Discussion
The fundamental objective of the current study was to find out the effectiveness of the specific module developed for the improvement of speaking skills of prospective teachers. The results of the *experiment* show that the *module* based on the *Content and Language Integrated Modular Approach* (CLIMA) significantly improved English speaking skills of the individuals in the *experimental* group.

The prospective teachers in the *experimental* group improved their speaking skills significantly because of the effectiveness of the CLIMA *module*. Effectiveness of this *module* owes to multiple factors. The first factor in the success of the current *module* is the discursiveness which is employed in its making. The current module incorporates the insights taken from English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Content and Language Integrated Language learning (CLIL) and Modular Approach (MA). All of these approaches enhance motivation, minimize language anxiety, save the capital of time and effort and ensure the active

and productive participation of the learners and the instructor. That is why the high achievers and the low achievers in the *experimental* group would have improved their English speaking skills significantly.

The *module* used in the current study has a number of strengths. This *module* has blended the content area with English speaking proficiency. The speaking activities included in the module are based on a variety of subjects included in the course outline prescribed for the prospective teachers. Hence this *module* may lend a good support to the prospective teachers in other subjects like *assessment and evaluation in education*, *introduction to teaching*, *learning theories*, *foundations of education* etc. It may also support reflection on the learning process and this what is acknowledged by many researches (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Gajo, 2007; Coyle, Holmes, & King, 2009; Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010; Dalton-Puffer, 2008; Krashen, 1985; Lyster, 2007).

The *CLIMA module*, through the interactive activities, enhanced the motivation of learners. The enhanced level of motivation was remarkably noticed by the researchers; and it was also reported by the participants. Literature also reveals that acquisition of second or foreign language becomes easier and faster if motivation level of learners is set to high; and for this purpose, *CLIMA module* is observed as an effective tool to develop positive learning attitude among the learners (Coyle et al., 2010; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009; Evans & Fisher, 2009; Marsh, 2009; Macaro, 2008; Coleman, Galaczi, & Astruc, 2007; Davies, 2004; Grenfell, 2002; Pachler, Allford, & Field, 2000; Grenfell, 2002) have made comparative studies to know the attitudes of learners towards Module for Foreign Language (MFL) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and concluded that the attitude of learners towards MFL deteriorated across time whereas the attitude towards CLIL remained consistently positive along with progress in the content area; and it was because of CLIL's activity oriented approach, intrinsically.

The module used in the *experiment* kept the learners actively engaged in improving their English speaking skills. The *CLIMA* classroom became playfields for the learners to play with their speaking ability (Byrnes, 2006; Leung, 2005; Grenfell, 2002) observes that CLIL presents challenges to the learners; and these challenges activate them in cognitive and psychomotor domains. Effective communication skill is well acknowledged as one of the standards for the teachers almost everywhere in the world (Aslam, 2011; Government-of-Pakistan, 2009). Level of English speaking proficiency of teacher education graduates in Pakistan has been found very low by many researchers and experts (Coleman, 2010; Shahzad, Ali, Qadeer, & Ullah, 2011; Alam, 2012; Bilal et al., 2013b).

There are many reasons of low level of speaking proficiency of outgoing graduates of teacher education in Pakistan including non-availability of quality teaching material and lack of assessment practices of spoken proficiency (Bilal et al., 2013b; Tariq et al., 2013). The content which is used to teach speaking skills to prospective teachers was mostly developed and contextualised in western culture (Tariq et al., 2013). The choice of any language teaching content must be made by giving due consideration to local culture and context (Khushi & Talaat, 2011). The use of subject matter as content in spoken language teaching improves motivation as well as achievement of prospective teachers (Khushi & Talaat, 2011). There is need to develop local subject matter based learning material for improving English speaking proficiency in Pakistan (Coleman, 2010).

The first objective to be achieved in the current study was the development of a module for the improvement of English speaking proficiency of prospective teachers. The teaching/ learning material of English language in Pakistan is developed/ compiled in the form of books and anthologies (Khushi & Talaat, 2011; Sarwar, 2001). In the public sector, the functional and notional syllabuses have rarely been in use for the teaching of English as Second Language (ESL) or English as Foreign Language (EFL) (Pasassung, 2003). The books / anthologies which are being currently used for the teaching of English do not incorporate the material and techniques required for the development and assessment of speaking skills (Rubdy, 2008). Therefore, the analyses of educational situation, syllabuses and methods of teaching in relation to the development of English speaking proficiency through a specific module made room for

the experiment to be conducted and the new approach to be exercised in teacher education with special focus on the development of English speaking proficiency (Ghazi et al., 2010).

The module was made and presented to the experts. The experts discussed the content and organization of the material. The themes presented in the module were also discussed. The major allegation was against the length of the sentence. The researcher was suggested to make structure of the sentences easy by decreasing the length the sentence as well as the length of the activities. Later on, the participants of the pilot test also suggested the researcher to modify the activity in which the length of the sentence was greater.

This module was unique in its structure and content. This module was made to cater to the needs of the market and capability of the learners. The concept and practice of need analysis are new in our situation but the literature reveals that the needs assessment in teaching and learning of English speaking proficiency has been the order of the day since 1950s. Global scenario is still dominated by the concept and practice of need analysis. The need analysis in the area of language policy reveals that English language and excellent English speaking proficiency are the valuable currency in the global market and economics of education. In teacher education, the need for proficiency in English speaking skills is growing consistently in the fast changing global world (Aslam, 2011; Cammarata, 2010).

As English has overpowered the globe, different communities learn English for different needs. The needs of a doctor of medicine are different from the needs of a business man. The need of a nurse to learn English is not the same as that of an MBBS doctor; the need of a taxi driver is not the same as that of a waiter in the hotel or a tourist guide; the need of a student of biology will not be the same as that of computer science. The need assessment in ESP has contributed to develop the scope of ESP in terms of variety and consequently a myriad of the branches of ESP exists now. Some of the branches include: English for academic purposes (EAP), English for occupational purposes (EOP), English for vocational purposes (EVP), English for medical purposes (EMP), English for business purposes (EBP), English for legal purposes (ELP), and English for sociocultural purposes (ESCP) (Belcher 2009). The current study may be labelled as English for secondary school teachers because effectiveness of the course and content is proved in the post-test and the success of the experiment owes a lot to the base line study which was conducted by the researcher during his previous research project.

The effectiveness of the current module is an evidence of the globalised validation of modern trends in concept and practice of teaching and learning through such modules. The literature clearly shows that the educational world is shifting from traditional approaches of teaching/learning to modular approaches because of its promising latent strength. In fact, *modular approach* teacher uses modules to teach for specific purpose like programmed instruction instead of traditional book (Mlitwa, 2010)

Another interesting element is the significant improvement in English speaking skills of prospective teachers in the *control group*. The reasons for such an unexpected improvement of control group may be because of some extraneous variables that might have '*polluted*' the *control group*.

6. Conclusion
The *Content and Language Integrated Modular Approach* (CLIMA) was found effective in improving English speaking skills of prospective teachers. The module successfully bridged the gap between the initial level (31.6%) of speaking skills, measured through PALS' *Analytic Rubric*, and the desired level (67% required in IELTS/TOEFL). It was concluded that the *module* was effective because it excellently filled the gap between the existing and the required levels of English speaking skills of prospective teachers.

As English speaking skills of the prospective teachers enrolled in the Bachelor of Education programme,

at an institute of higher education (Pakistan) were improved significantly, it is hoped that this *CLIMA module* may be used in teacher education programmes elsewhere.

Further research on the *CLIMA module* for its suitability in developing English speaking skills for other languages may be valuable.

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