

The Role of Co-Curricular Activities in Improving English Language Speaking Skill of Grade Ten Students at Pinyudo Secondary School in Gog Woreda Gambella, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles of Co-Curricular Activity (CCAs) in improving English language speaking skill of grade ten Students of Secondary School at Gog Woreda in Gambella Regional state. The study was designed using quasi-experimental research design. To collect the necessary data among the existing grade ten students, 44 students selected from section using simple random technique were used as study sample. From these students 22 were assigned as experimental group and the remaining 22 students assigned to form the control group. To data was collected using test as instrument. The data gathered were analyzed using statistical tools such as: means, standard deviations; and significance level were conducted with the T test using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 24). The finding of the study indicated as there was a difference between the experimental and control groups students English speaking performance. In addition, the findings showed as there is significance difference in the mean score of the experimental and control groups of students participated in the study. Moreover, the finding showed as there is difference with regard to aspects of speaking skills between the learners. Based on the findings it was recommended that the school teachers and administration should give high attention for implementation of CCAs in the school integrating it with regular class room lessons. In addition, the school's teachers and students should conduct experiences sharing with other schools which have better implementation of CCAs. Furthermore, curriculum designers at different level are highly recommended to use CCAs as integral part of regular class room lesson in designing materials. Moreover, future researchers are recommended to make deep investigation including other variables on the area.

KEYWORDS

Co-Curricular Activities; speaking skill; aspects of speaking skills; Foreign Language.

INTRODUCTION

The use of regular instruction may be a cause of weariness among the students in the language learning process as to different scholars. For instance, AlMuntasser (2020) stated that the regular method is one of the oldest methods in learning Foreign Language (FL) that does not allow students to learn FL in conversation, especially where English is used as a FL. In regular instruction, there are some sources of knowledge such as curricula and

the teacher which do not help as such students to practice the language in the classroom (Thanasoulas, 2002). For this reason, the modern and innovative approaches of education emphasize on all round development of children. The process of education is not something static and stagnant. Instead, it is a continuous and lifelong endeavor and it has two parts; curricular and Co-Curricular Activities (Gebretsadik, 2012). Consequently, as curricular program, Co-Curricular Activities are practiced in schools found in different countries of the world in general and Ethiopia in particular.

According to MOE, (2010), co-curriculum is one of the opportunities for children to demonstrate their talent. Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs) are also recognized as a source of enrichment and vitalization of the school curriculum such as the nurturing of hobbies, interests, and growing talents. In line with this, as different countries, Ethiopian education system has own CCAs in primary and secondary schools. As described in the beginning, curriculum and co-curriculum together make better change in children cognitive and skills development. Thus, cognitive development is mostly taken care of by curricular activities and skills development in Co-Curricular Activities and by the actual activities outside classroom teaching (MOE, 1994).

Learning Foreign Languages in school has always been productive as it not imparts linguistic skills but enables the students to explore and learn about related cultures and lifestyles. This incredibly important communication skill can only be cultivated by interacting with people who will help the students in their careers and life (Manthan, 2019). According to Oz (2017), people have the opportunity to express themselves, share ideas, and connect with others in society through language. In today's world, communication in the mother tongue is not sufficient, and a universal language such as English should be known. With this regards, Tan and Pope (2007) states it is important to learn to speak English fluently as it is accepted as an intercultural and common language in the world

Speaking English is a necessary skill that individuals should have in order to express their feelings and thoughts effectively in a Foreign Language (Ugurlu, 2018). In addition, there are many factors, such as affective factors fear of making mistakes, anxiety, and attitude, lack of vocabulary lack of practice that affect students' speaking skill (Aykac, 2014).

So, to practice English speaking skills in most Ethiopian schools, the only place students are exposed to the language is the classroom environment (Scott and Ytrebeg, 2015).

Therefore, though these and other studies indicates the importance of CCAs in improving students English skill in general and speaking skill in particular, its implementation in Gambella region found to be imminent. Consequently, the research is initiated to conduct this study on the role of Co-Curricular Activities in improving the students speaking skill in the study area; so as to assess whether there is statistically significant difference between the students in the experimental and control groups in their speaking skills due to participation in Co-Curricular Activities in School.

Statement of the Problem

Scholars pointed that Co-Curricular Activities provide opportunity to address some of the limitations of the regular classroom-based learning. As a result, currently available documents showed that Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs) are being implemented in different countries including Ethiopia. Ministry of Education, Ethiopia described CCAs are an integral part of students' holistic, well-rounded education. It helps nurture in students' qualities such as resilience, tenacity, confidence and perseverance, which prepare them to

adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world (MOE, 1994). In addition, the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (ETP, 1994), described some issues related to CCAs in its objectives, formal and non-formal program help to promote the relevant and appropriate education, training and aesthetic that can help to develop and enrich students' inquisitive ability and raise their creativity and interest.

According to Mitchell (2015) and Sawant (2015) co-curricular are closely associated to language learning because they contract new phenomena interpreting different skills of a language including speaking skill. For this reason, the researcher believes that creating favorable conditions inside and outside the classroom through CCAs might have great contribution to the learners' language skills development particularly speaking. Doing so also helps the researcher to examine the role of Co-Curricular Activities in improving the students speaking skill.

Hence it is widely accepted by scholars that Co-Curricular Activities hold a place of great importance in the field of the education for all round development of students. In connection to this, Tan and Pope (2007) suggested that implementing Co-Curricular Activities in schools enable students to use their spare time effectively.

There are various studies conducts on the area in other parts of the world though there are few studies conducted in our country. To mention some, Lezaro and Anney (2016) found that student involvement in the Co-Curricular Activities of secondary-primary school is too minimal. Likewise, Siraj,(2011) and Temesgen (2018) reported that most secondary school in Ethiopia has not successful in adequately engaging students in their co-curricular programs. Binyam Atnafie, (2008) conducted study on the role of extra class activities in improving students' English language speaking and listening skills at Gilgel Beles College of teacher Education. This study finding pointed that extra class activities tend to have an important role on the improvement of students' English language speaking and listening skill.

In addition, Gebretsadik (2012) made an investigation on the area in which the finding showed that Co-Curricular Activity like school clubs help teachers' to enhance students' motivation and to develop their talents. The research deduce from the above works as none of them were conducted specifically on the role of CCAs on students speaking skills. A part from these studies conducted in other parts of Ethiopia, to best of the researcher's knowledge there are no studies conducted on the area in Gambella region.

Besides, the researcher noticed from his experience in the study area that the learners' have low level in speaking skill which might be attributed to traditional curricula in the language teaching and learning process. From this the researcher has understood that conducting study on the area might help to come with scientific evidence on improving students speaking skills, and implement CCAs intensively in the school so as to improve learners English speaking skill. The researcher also believes that there might be a relationship between CCAs and learners oral proficiency. The dearth of study on the area and personal experience initiated the researcher to uncover the role of Co-Curricular Activities in improving grade ten EFL students' speaking skill in the study area. This study answers the following research questions:

1. Are there any significant differences between the experimental and control groups students' students' speaking skills improvement as a result of participating in Co-Curricular Activities in the School?
2. Are there any significant differences between the experimental groups students' mean scores in speaking aspects as a result of participating in Co-Curricular Activities in the school?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Co-Curricular Activities and Speaking Skill

Scholars defined co-curricular activities in different ways. For instance, AlMuntasser, (2020) defined co-curriculum activities as non-traditional methods that allow students to explore new things by themselves, and help students to choose a suitable activity for them without obligating. Co-Curricular Activities are programs or out-of-class activities supervised and financed by the school, which provides curriculum-related learning and character building experiences (Gebresadik, 2012). In addition, Jan. et, al (2004) stated that Co-Curricular Activities are activities sponsored by the district and approved by the school board and are designed to provide opportunities for students to participate on an individual or group basis in school and public events for the improvement of skills. Moreover, Editorial team (2022) stated that co-curricular activities promote the growth of diverse mental and personality dimensions, including intellectual, emotional, social, moral and artistic development.

Speaking is an essential skill that Foreign Language (FL) learners need to learn to communicate their idea with other and succeed in their academic world. Speaking skill is a productive skill which allows learners to talk with others in which learners need to have a high background of aspects of speaking in English to receive and perfectly producing words AlMuntasser (2020). This shows as speaking is one of the most important skills language learners should master. Hedge (2000: 261) defines speaking as "a skill by which people are judged while first impressions are being formed." that is to mention, speaking is a very important skill which is the main way to communicate with each other. Hedge argues that the ability to speak in a Foreign Language is difficult, and the ability of speaking takes an extended time to develop. To this fact, Thornbury (2005) stated that foreign language-speaking differs from natural language speaking in terms of the lack of grammar and vocabulary knowledge of learners, the case of building utterances accurately and reclaiming words has not yet become automatic in FL speaking.

Aspects of Speaking Performance

Pronunciation

The practicing pronunciation helps EFL learners to be aware of a variety of sounds and its features and how to produce sounds in mouth (AlMuntasser, 2020). The scholar added that learners should be aware of where words should be stressed, when to use a falling one and when to use raising intonation. In line with this Thornbury (2005) mentioned that pronunciation is the evidence of the student's ability to produce understandable utterances for the listeners. Moreover, AlMuntasser (2020). mentioned that of pronunciation refers to produce words in a clear and understood way. Finally, Harmer (2008) also pointed out that there were different issues associated with pronunciation, and these issues are individual sounds, sounds, spelling, stress, and intonation.

Fluency

Hughes (2002) defined the fluency as the skill of the expression with high quality reasonably and accurately without too much hesitation; otherwise, the weak level of speaking makes the listeners lose their interest. Besides, Hedge (2000: 54) added: "The term fluency relates to the production and it is normally reserved for speech. It is the ability to link all units of speech together with a facility without strain, inappropriate shyness, or undue hesitation." Moreover, Hughes (2002) mentioned the importance of balance between coherence and fluency which allows FL speakers to improve their

abilities to speak. According to the point of view for Thornburg (2005) who explained the importance of fluency and fast in speaking, but he said that native speakers should stop during speaking which it helps FL learners to understand them perfectly. Also, Thornburg (2005) added a lot of pausing during speaking is evidence of a lack of abilities in speaking.

Grammar

According to IELTS (2001), the grammatical accuracy refers to the range and also the appropriate use of the learners' grammatical structure that involves the length and also the complexity of the utterances additionally to the ability to use the subordinating clauses. Thornburg (2005) lists the subsequent features of spoken grammar. First, the clause is that the basic unit of construction and clauses are usually added (co-ordinate). In addition, Arief. P (2018), stated that grammar is a model of those linguistic abilities of native speakers of language which enable them to speak fluently. Based on explanations and definitions above one can deduce that grammar is a science of rules that governs the order of sentences, phrases, and words to show some meaning. Knowing grammar appropriately might help to improve our abilities of expressions of various issues using speaking.

Vocabulary

The speaker should have enough vocabulary to can connect with the listener without borders AlMuntasser (2020). Scholar added that students often find difficulties when they attempt to express what they need to say, they lack the suitable vocabulary, and that they sometimes use words incorrectly like in the case of synonyms that do not carry a similar meaning in all contexts; Students then, ought to be ready to use words and expressions accurately. According to Harmer (2001), the amount of knowledge of the word classes also allows speakers to perform well-formed utterances.

The teacher education institution (TEI) principal would need to play a key role in fostering and promoting the use of English throughout the institution, MoE (2005: 4). This indicated as in order to encourage students' involvement; teachers are typically seen to contribute to the creation of activity programs in educational institutions. In each of the aforementioned situations, it is stated that students shouldn't participate in the co-curricular program at the expense of their normal classroom instruction unless the activities are comparable to the learning that takes place there. The MoE (2005) explicitly states that everyone in the TEI community must play their part in order for the goals of club activity programs to be successfully accomplished.

Effective EFL Speech Club Activities

Yadav (2019) speech Club is a platform for language learners to develop their public speaking skills. Participating in such club gives students an opportunity for practicing their public speaking skills and their language skills. The notion of speakers' club was guided by the *International Toastmaster* which aims at developing public speaking and oral communication. There are various activities suggested by different scholars, which could potentially be used outside the classroom to aid the development of one's oral skills. These activities are suggested to extend the student opportunities outside the classroom to develop their oral proficiency and oral expressions (Jenkins, 2009). The author categorizes the activities as: broad casting, public speaking, debating, storytelling, and discussions of various levels. Bromley (1988) adds dramatics and language games to the lists. The following section treats some of them.

Dialogues and Group Discussions

According to Keefe and Jenkins (1997) discussions and dialogues help learners develop team learning. The authors noted that discussion is concerned with explaining a point of view in order to win an argument. Similarly, Parmar (2022) noted, group discussion is an excellent technique to engage students in class discussions providing opportunities for students to practice their communication skills. Teachers who want to engage students in meaningful conversations should consider group discussions. With this regards, Gillies (2015) asserts that practicing speaking in groups helps students to explore the various structures of the language, allowing them to develop new patterns of thought. In addition, Martin et al (2009) mentioned that an instructional activity actively engages students in critical thinking and requires the use of multiple perspectives.

Enthusiastically, discussion helps learners learn content, and help them develop logical thinking. Bromley (1988) argues that discussion and dialogue help learners develop their speaking and listening skills at a time. The author further notes that discussion is a useful activity to integrate language with content. Discussions can take place after content-based lessons for a variety of reasons. Students may try to reach a conclusion, share opinions about an event, or identify a solution in their discussion groups. This points as the teacher must determine the aim of the discussion activity prior to the discussion. As a result, discussion points are relevant to this goal, and students don't waste time talking about unrelated things (Hayriye, 2022).

Language Game

Accordingly, Schuna (2010) stated that playing educational games also helps learners with focus, self-esteem, and memory. This indicates as educational games can help children focus because they are being patient while waiting to advance to the next level. In addition, Quinn (2012) studied the fact that serious games create a hands-on, minds-on opportunity that allow players to actively focus on, create, and change a scenario whilst simultaneously learning about consequences of choice in the situation. Therefore, from the above discussion it is possible to deduce that when students become more engaged and committed to succeeding in the game, they become more willing to learn about the scenario the situation is taking place in.

Debate Contest

Krieger (2005) suggests debate is an excellent activity for language learning because it engages students in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways. The scholar added that in addition to providing meaningful listening, speaking and writing practice, debate is also highly effective for developing argumentation skills for persuasive speech and writing. Regarding the issue of debate, Barkley et al (2005) state that there are three benefits of debating for students. It can boost students' motivation to speak the FL, foster their critical thinking, and develop their acceptance of friends' opinions. In general, researchers have reported several benefits of using debates in the FL classroom in which debates can foster critical thinking skills, which are important for language learning.

Drama

According to Saricoban, (2004) drama raises the students' awareness of the target language and culture. The same author pointed that Drama provides an authentic arena for natural language use in real situations with an emphasis on reciprocal, synchronized, unpredictable audience interactions. In addition, Kao, Carkin and Hsu (2011) reported that during the

process of building the drama context, EFL learners had the chance to evaluate and practice their listening and speaking skills critically. These scholars claimed that drama is a tool with the potential to engage English FL learners and promote their oral proficiency. Moreover, Schultz and Heinigk (2002) also stated that the benefits of using drama in language teaching and learning are numerous. It has been observed that involving language learners in drama production stimulates development of the analytical skills and creativity.

The Role of Co-Curricular Activities

Co-Curricular Activities are considered to be very important and a fundamental method to develop English skills particularly speaking in the students life. Dream Career.com, (2016) identified the following roles of co-curricular activities.

Strengthen Overall Personality and Self Confidence

Co-Curricular Activities help to enhance the all-round personality of the students to strongly face the turbulent road of the future. The goal of co-curricular activities is to give better fitness to students and inculcate a sense of sportsmanship, competitive spirit, leadership, meticulousness, cooperation, team spirit and team spirit. The hidden motive behind all this is to develop self-confidence and to learn to trust the team.

Creates greater Sense of Responsibility and Exposure to New Activities

Students pursuing any co-curricular activities of their choice give preference over those who are not involved in any such things. These things make a major difference when students are considered for the most popular courses Dream Career.com, (2015). When students in their early teens are given some responsibility or a task to handle like first aid or for that matter managing the class painting board, their efficiency to handle such situations becomes much better. This fosters the sense of responsibility and accountability. These activities stimulate playing, painting, acting, dancing, singing and speaking skills in students.

Besides, Kalbiso (2019) mentioned Co-Curricular Activities give the students a chance to think out of their box and get creative ideas of their own with the help of a guide. According to Xiao and Luo (2009), English language learners who participate in co-curricular activities have greater confidence. In similar way, Ali et al (2017) most students learn English because they believe it will benefit them Moreover, Sharna (2019) stated with this regard that Co-Curricular Activities are activities that allow students to participate with other passion for a particular activity, allowing them to build relationships with peers outside the classrooms.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research design used in this study was quasi-experimental research design. White and Sabarwal (2014) quasi-experimental methods that involve the creation of a group are most often used when it is not possible to randomize individuals or groups to treatment and control groups. With this regard two groups were assigned randomly (experimental and control) at two points of experimentation: One, before the treatment (pre-test) and the other is after the treatment (post-test). The first group was assigned as the experimental group and taught Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs); the second group was assigned as the control group was taught regularly. A pre/post technique was used in this quasi-experimental study. Both the experimental and control groups were taught the same material on the same

days of the week by the teacher. Students were given the same test before and after the experiment to measure differences in their speaking skills.

The populations of this study were grade ten students learning English at the study area. The study sample was 44 students taken from four sections of grade ten which are A-D having 11 students from each class using random sampling. The participants of the study consisted of 44 students intentionally assigned into two groups. The first consisted of 22 students who were assigned as the experimental group while the second consisted of 22 students who were assigned as the control group.

To collect relevant and reliable data for the current study oral test was employed. As a result, students in both groups were made to sit for an oral (pre and post) test. The test material adopted from AlMuntasser, (2020) and necessary amendment were made based on the pilot study. To analyze the data collected, descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations and significance level were conducted using T-test, with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 24).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings Related to pre-test

At the beginning of the study, pre-test was conducted to students of the experimental group and the control group in order to see whether the two groups were at a similar level of speaking skill achievement, or not.

Table 1. Results of Pre-test Group (Control vs. Experimental) in the Speaking skill

	Group	N	Mean	Std.	T-value	p-value
Pretest	Control	22	16.09	4.47	-.440	.661
	Experimental	22	16.54	4.94		

Table above shows as there is no significant difference between the control and experimental groups in speaking pre-test because the value of T = -.440. This indicated that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control and experimental group in the speaking pre-test.

Table 2. Result of the Students' Performance on the Pre-test in the Aspects of Speaking

Speaking Aspect	N	Mean*	SD
Pronunciation	22	4.6750	1.5084
Fluency	22	4.8250	1.5342
Grammar	22	4.7250	1.5012
Vocabulary	22	4.9500	1.3764
Total	88	4.8	0.06

This table shows means and standard deviation of the students' performance on the pre-test in the speaking aspects; we can see a virtual difference between the means.

Findings Related to Research Question one

The first question reads: Are there any significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups students' performances in speaking skill due to the method of teaching (CCAs vs. regular instruction)?

Table 3. Result of Post-test for Control vs. Experimental in the Speaking skills

	Group	N	Mean	Std.	T-value	p-value
Posttest	Control	22	16.30	4.16	-.440	.000
	Experimental	22	21.35	4.66		

As can be seen from the experimental group students mean score in the post test (M=21.35, SD=4.66) was greater than the control group (M=16.30, SD=4.16). Simply looking at the mean scores presented, one may conclude that means of the experimental group surpasses that of the comparison group after the intervention. However, the extent to which this difference was statistically significant need be checked in the inferential statistics. Thus, an independent sample t-test was computed. An independent sample t-test displayed in table revealed that the experimental group outperformed significantly better than the comparison group ($t=-.440$, $df=41$, $p<.05$) at the significance level .05. Consequently, we can conclude that CCAs has positive effect to improve EFL students' achievement in Speaking Skill. This finding is consistent with the findings of (Klinger et al., 1998; Klinger & Vaughn, 1998; Fan, 2010).

Findings Related to Research Question two

The second question of the study reads: Are there any significant differences in the experimental group students' mean scores in speaking aspects; due to the method of teaching (CCAs)?

Table 4. Results of the Students' Performance on the Post-test in the Aspects of Speaking

Speaking Aspect	N	Mean*	SD
Pronunciation	22	8.2000	.89
Fluency	22	7.9000	1.17
Grammar	22	7.6500	1.04
Vocabulary	22	5.0500	1.9
Total	88	7.18	1.83

**Mean out of 10*

Table above showed the means and standard deviations of the experimental group student scores in aspects of speaking post-test. It indicated as there is a practical difference between the means.

CONCLUSION

Based on the summary of main findings, the following conclusions were made. The result of the study of the pre and posttest pointed as there is difference between controlled and experimental groups of students participated in the study. This supported by the result of mean score which controlled groups achieved 16.30 whereas the experimental group obtained 21.35. So, this clearly indicates as using CCAs has impact on improving the students speaking skills. In addition, with regard to whether there is difference in aspects of speaking skills of the learners, there is difference between the means and standard deviations of the experimental group student and the controlled once.

All in all, the results revealed in this study concerning the role of CCAs on improving students' academic speaking skill have confirmed the hypotheses of the study. This means that there is significant relationship and difference between students' co-curricular involvement and speaking skill improvement. The findings might help one to come in to conclusion that well-planned and organized CCAs are an effective way of improving EFL learner's speaking skill.

Recommendation

Based on the major findings of the study and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are forwarded to the concerned bodies:

The school teachers and administration should give high emphasis for implementation of CCAs in the school integrating class room lessons with CCAs to boost students' participation in their regular classes. In addition, EFL students should be supported to use various types of activities inside and outside classrooms since activities can bring new thoughts into the Foreign Language classroom, raise students' thinking, and help the educational process to be more effective and modern. Teachers also should find a suitable way to support their teaching with CCAs in their English classes that may help students to reach the required level of proficiency in speaking. This means more attention should be paid to the integration of CCAs into language learning and teaching environments, especially speaking skill in the English language and using different activities in teaching English language speaking skills. Since the curriculum favors these activities, the school's teachers and students are recommended to share experiences from school having successful CCAs.

Moreover, the curriculum designers at different level are highly recommended to use CCAs in the curricula plans of the course English language by incorporating suitable lessons to CCAs in teaching English language skills particularly speaking. Furthermore, the researcher recommends future researcher to make deep investigation on the role of CCAs in improving students EFL speaking and related skills.

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