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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Developing Extemporaneous Speech through Situational Language Teaching in ESL Classrooms: An Action Research Study

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### ABSTRACT

The prime objective of the study is to explore the effectiveness of situational language teaching method in improving extemporaneous speech skills of ESL learners. Extemporaneous speech is an important life skill that is required to excel in academic and professional settings. Situational language teaching focuses on activities that are essential to master in real-world scenarios. The methodology employed in this quasi-experimental study is based on the principles of action research cycle. A convenience sample of 30 ESL learners from The Islamia University of Bahawalpur was chosen and subjected to extemporaneous speech tasks before and after the intervention of seven days long situational language teaching. The grading of the speaking activity of ESL learners was done by adopting the rubrics of IELTS test for speaking. The scores of pretest and post-test were subjected to paired sample *t*-test. The results of the study showed a statistically significant improvement in extemporaneous speech skills of ESL learners. Hence, the study recommends the incorporation of situational language teaching activities for the enhancement of extemporaneous speech skills of ESL learners as it augments the academic achievement, language proficiency, fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and self-confidence of students.

**KEYWORDS** Action Research, Extemporaneous Speech, Quasi-Experimental, Situational Language Teaching

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### Introduction

Mastering the art of extempore is inevitable as unrehearsed speaking is required in many real-life contexts such as viva voce and interviews. Despite of an excellent academic background, high grades, and praiseworthy writing skills, students fail to show mastery in scenarios that require public speaking. The traditional methods of teaching ESL often fall short in endorsing students with the skills necessary for spontaneous verbal communication. Situational language teaching offers an alternative approach that emphasizes learning language through meaningful contexts and real-life situations. This pedagogical method aligns with the needs of ESL learners who need to communicate in various social and professional environments using English. It has been observed that there is a limited empirical research on its effectiveness in enhancing extemporaneous speech. This study addresses this gap by examining how situational language teaching can be effectively integrated into ESL instruction to improve students' ability to speak extemporaneously. The study not only aims to generate practical insights for educators but also to contribute to the broader field of ESL pedagogy.

It is pertinent to define key terms in a research as they are an integral construct of the study and they also provide clarity, transparency, and validity to the findings.

### **Extemporaneous Speech**

A kind of speech with little rehearsal is known as extemporaneous speech (Assaf & Yunus, 2020). It is a kind of speech that is prepared, organized meticulously, and practiced by the speaker before the real-time of delivering the speech (Schwartzman, 2007).

### **Situational Language Teaching**

Situational language teaching method purports to construct a situation that will be controlled to teach the target language material in such a way that the learner will feel at ease in comprehending the meaning of the utterance he hears (Luqyana et al., 2023). Meaningful and situation-based activities are used in situational language teaching paradigm.

### **Action Research**

Action research is carried out by educational practitioners and professionals to improve their pedagogical practices since it is a process of action, evaluation, and self-reflection where evidences are obtained to implement changes in classroom practices (McNiff, 2013).

The ability to speak extemporaneously is a critical skill for ESL learners as it reflects their capacity to communicate spontaneously and effectively in real-life situations. Many ESL learners struggle with extemporaneous speech due to limited practice opportunities and traditional teaching methods that prioritize rote memorization over practical language use. This gap in proficiency can hinder their overall language development in using English. Situational language teaching method focuses on the use of language in real-life scenarios and particular contexts. However, there is a scarcity of research on the impact of situational language teaching method on the development of extemporaneous speech skills among ESL learners at graduate level. This study is based on the principles of action research that aims to explore how situational language teaching can be implemented in ESL classrooms to improve students' ability to speak extemporaneously. This research focuses on the encouragement of communicative competence among ESL learners by following action research cycle.

The study is situated within the paradigm of action research and employs a quasi-experimental design. This study intends to enhance the overall speaking proficiency of ESL learners by investigating the impact of situational language teaching on extemporaneous speech. Mastering extemporaneous speech skills can lead to greater fluency, better communication in real-life situations, and increased confidence in using English language.

### **Literature Review**

Speaking is a multi-purpose activity and is a central construct of communication (Herlina & Holandyah, 2015). Traditional teaching methodologies aimed at instructing speaking skills by making the learners memorize a dialogue or respond to a drill. However, according to Rhalmi (2009), situational language teaching method involves practical instruction by emphasizing grammar, vocabulary, active skills (speaking and

writing), and passive skills (reading and listening). Many studies have been undertaken to elucidate the significance of extemporaneous speech. Similarly, there is a plethora of literature on the effectiveness of situational language teaching. Various studies advocating the inevitability of mastering extemporaneous speech and practical utility of situational language teaching are cited below.

Extemporaneous speech is a type of public speaking which enables the students to practice speaking in public without preparation. Many ESL learners face difficulty in speaking spontaneously in front of public because of their deficient speaking competence. Assaf and Yunus (2020) conducted a qualitative study to investigate extemporaneous speech engagement of ESL learners at undergraduate level in the University of Palestine. The study consisted of a purposive sample of 35 students from the Department of English Language and Literature at University of Palestine. The researcher interviewed 5 students of the same class to examine the development of extemporaneous speech and speaking skills. Qualitative data sets were analysed by using thematic analysis and the analytical field notes were also employed in the study. The results of the study showed that the students of the department showed a praiseworthy performance in extemporaneous speech tasks. Moreover, they had positive perspectives and viewpoints about mastering extemporaneous speech. They actively participated in the activity and they depicted willingness to learn about extemporaneous speech skills. Speaking proficiency of the chosen sample of students was improved after the strengthening of extemporaneous speech ability. Students' self-confidence and fluency enhanced and they were able to speak freely and fluently with their peers after the development of their extemporaneous speech skills.

Masna et al. (2020) explored how elementary school teachers perceive the use of the situational language teaching method for vocabulary instruction. Their study aimed to identify the benefits of this method and examined the challenges faced by ESL teachers while implementing it. The study was qualitative in nature where the researchers gathered data through semi-structured interviews with five ESL teachers from elementary schools in Aceh Barat. The findings of their study revealed that the situational language teaching method augments student motivation and facilitates an effective teaching-learning process. However, there are certain challenges in implementing it like preparing course materials and managing student boredom. Despite of these challenges, this method is beneficial for students in overcoming difficulties regarding memorizing vocabulary and it can be a valuable tool for English vocabulary instruction.

Luqyana et al. (2023) examined the effectiveness of situational language teaching in improving speaking skills of ESL learners at Junior High School. The study concluded in the favour of situational language teaching because the speaking skills of the students were improved after they received a treatment in the form of the said teaching method. The pretest and post-test scores of the students and the themes of interview analysis were in the favour of situational language teaching method. From the lens of the study of Luqyana et al. (2023), it is an effective and a helpful method to augment students' speaking skills, fluency, and confidence.

### **Material and Methods**

The design of the study is quasi-experimental and it is a single group pretest post-test research. A convenience sample of 30 ESL learners from BS level was taken from Department of English Linguistics, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur. According to Gravetter and Wallnau (2016), a minimum sample of 30 is recommended for studies involving statistical tests. In this study, situational language teaching is the independent

variable while extemporaneous speech is the dependent variable. The pretest of the participants was taken before the treatment and they were called to the dais to deliver their extemporaneous speech. Participants were assigned a topic and given a preparation time of 10 minutes. The grading of their extemporaneous speech activity was done by following the rubrics of IELTS speaking test. Participants were asked to deliver their extemporaneous speech for 20 minutes. The test questions, time allowed, scoring rubrics were all adapted from the official website of IELTS. To ensure inter-rater reliability, all the 3 researchers did scoring of the speaking test independently and the value of Cohen's kappa turned out to be 0.74 which is considered as a substantial value.

IELTS rubrics for speaking measures the speaking proficiency of students in four areas:

- (i) Fluency and coherence
- (ii) Lexical resource
- (iii) Grammatical range and accuracy
- (iv) Pronunciation

Each of the four areas carry equal weight. Students are scored out of 9 in each of the 4 areas, making a grand total of 36.

After gathering pretest scores, the treatment was given to the participants. The situational language teaching activities were planned and validated by various subject-specialists. The duration of the treatment lasted for 7 days. According to Dornyei (2007), in experimental studies, the duration of the treatment has ranged from one day to much longer periods. Hence, the amount of time given to the treatment depends on the nature of the study. ESL learners were assigned various situational language teaching activities and they were asked to perform those activities under the guidance and assistance of researchers. The day-wise breakdown of situational language teaching activities is as follows:

**Table 1**  
**Situational Language Teaching Activities**

<b>Days</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Day 1	Picture and information description activities
Day 2	Role plays and switching role plays
Day 3	Story telling
Day 4	Interviews
Day 5	Group discussions and talk shows
Day 6	News reporting
Day 7	Impromptu debates

After the treatment of 7 days, ESL learners were again called to the dais to deliver their extemporaneous speech. The same process of rehearsal time, speech delivery, and grading was repeated. The scores of pretest and post-test were subjected to paired sample *t*-test by using SPSS version 26. The results of the *t*-test highlighted the difference in the mean scores of pretest and post-test.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study is based upon the principles of *Cyclic Action Research* by Dickens and Watkins (1999). Action research is carried out by teachers for themselves. It begins by identifying a problem and strives to present a plan of action and strategies to improve pedagogical practices and augment academic achievement of learners. Action research is cyclic in nature consisting of four stages:

- (i) Plan: Identify a specific problem or area for improvement and then develop a strategy or intervention to address it.
- (ii) Act: Implement the planned strategy or intervention in the classroom setting by putting the theoretical plan into practical action.
- (iii) Observe: Collect and analyse data on the effects of the intervention through various measurement techniques.
- (iv) Reflect: Evaluate the outcomes of the intervention and devise a new plan of action.

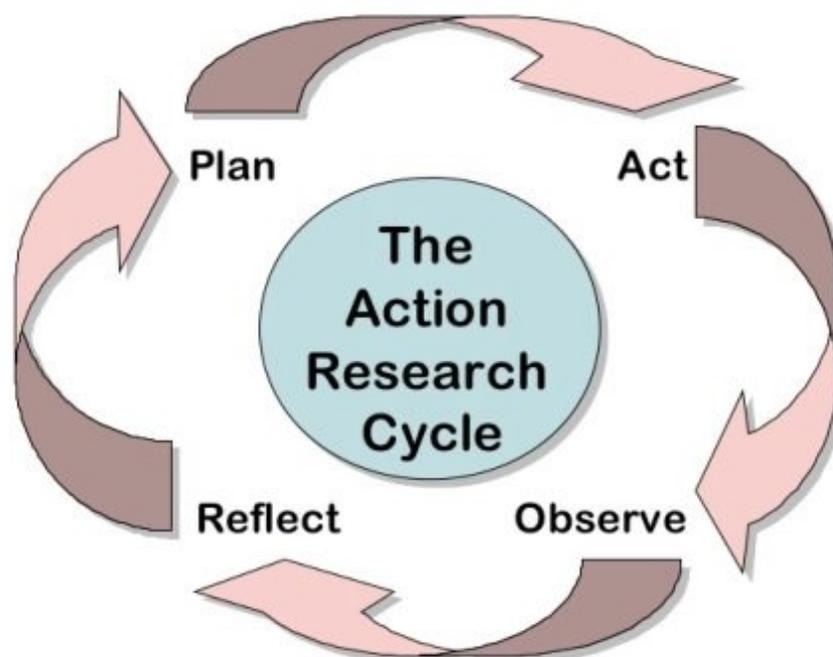


Figure 1. The Action Research Cycle, Adopted from Kaye and Harris (2017)

The study embodies the essence of action research by integrating planning, acting, observing, and reflecting in a systematic manner. The study began by identifying the need to improve extemporaneous speech skills of ESL students. A strategy was developed to implement situational language teaching over a period of one week. The planned situational language teaching sessions were carried out with the students that aimed at enhancing their extemporaneous speaking abilities. To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, pretest and post-test based on the IELTS speaking rubrics and principles were administered. The data collected from these tests provided quantitative measures of student's progress. The application of a *t*-test on the pretest and post-test scores aided to understand the impact of intervention. This reflection not only informed immediate teaching practices but also provided insights for future iterations of the action research cycle.

## Results and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the study consists of a single group pretest post-test research design. The researchers did the scoring of extemporaneous speech of ESL learners by using the rubrics of IELTS before and after the intervention. The scores obtained by ESL learners in pretest and post-test are provided in the table 2. A convenience sample of 30 students is considered for this study. In order to keep the anonymity of students, they are referred as S1, S2, ..., S30.

**Table 2**  
**Pretest and Post-test Scores of ESL Learners**

Students	Pretest Scores	Post-test Scores
S1	7	32
S2	11	24
S3	8	23
S4	10	32
S5	11	31
S6	13	34
S7	10	32
S8	7	29
S9	10	33
S10	13	30
S11	8	23
S12	11	33
S13	8	34
S14	10	31
S15	11	28
S16	12	26
S17	10	34
S18	14	31
S19	12	30
S20	12	33
S21	10	32
S22	11	27
S23	13	33
S24	10	30
S25	7	23
S26	10	33
S27	10	28
S28	11	30
S29	8	24
S30	10	27

A paired sample *t*-test was conducted by using SPSS version 26. The results of statistical analysis are provided in table 3 and table 4.

**Table 3**  
**Paired Samples Statistics**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	10.2667	30	1.87420	.34218
	Post-test	29.6667	30	3.57514	.65273

**Table 4**  
**Paired Sample *t*-test**

		Paired Differences					<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair1	Pre test Post-test	- 19.40000	 3.39980	 0.62072	- 20.66951	- 18.13049	-31.254	29	0.000

The mean scores indicate a substantial increase from the pretest to the post-test suggesting that the intervention was effective. The standard deviations and standard errors provide insights into the variability and precision of the mean scores. The paired sample *t*-test results provide strong evidence that the intervention had a significant impact on the students' extemporaneous speech skills. The mean score increased by 19.40000 points from pretest to post-test. This large increase indicates substantial improvement. The standard deviation of 3.39980 shows the extent to which the differences in scores vary among the participants.

The standard error of 0.62072 indicates the precision of the mean difference estimate. The confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from -20.66951 to -18.13049. This interval does not include zero which indicates that the observed difference is statistically significant. The *t*-value of -31.254 with 29 degrees of freedom is very high in magnitude, indicating a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores. The *p*-value of 0.000 is less than the typical alpha level of 0.05 which indicates that the difference between pretest and post-test scores is statistically significant.

The results of the paired sample *t*-test demonstrate a significant improvement in students' extemporaneous speech skills by following the seven-day situational language teaching intervention. The mean score increased from 10.2667 on the pretest to 29.6667 on the post-test with a mean difference of 19.40000. The *t*-test yielded a *t*-value of -31.254 and a *p*-value of 0.000 which indicates that the observed improvement is highly significant. These findings suggest that the intervention was highly effective in enhancing the extemporaneous speaking abilities of the ESL students.

## Conclusion

The study depicted a substantial improvement in ESL learners' extemporaneous speech skills after the implementation of situational language teaching activities. The results of the pretest and post-test of the study indicated that situational language teaching approach proved effective in enhancing the students' ability to speak spontaneously in real-life contexts. The findings of the study highlighted the effectiveness of situational language teaching in augmenting practical language skills of students. Hence, ESL course instructors should incorporate situational language teaching into their instructional practices so that the speaking abilities of ESL learners could be improved. The practical applications of this teaching methodology include designing classroom activities in such a way that they prove to be beneficial for real-world scenarios, encourage spontaneous dialogue, show effectiveness in professional endeavours, and attain native-like fluency in the target language. These strategies will multiply ESL learners' confidence and engagement with the target language.

## Recommendations

The significance of the study lies in the fact that it will provide valuable insights into effective strategies for implementing situational language teaching in ESL

classrooms. Moreover, educators can get benefit from practical approaches to teaching that move beyond traditional methods of pedagogy. However, the results of the study well inform curriculum developers and educational policymakers about the benefits of incorporating situational language teaching in ESL classrooms. Mastery of extemporaneous speech is a necessary skill as it develops the ability to organise thoughts and express ideas coherently. In the professional world, extemporaneous speaking skills are highly valued in situations such as meetings, presentations, interviews, and networking events. It can enhance career prospects and professional growth. Through this study, ESL teachers will be able identify effective instructional strategies, leading to more effective teaching and better student learning outcomes within the context of extemporaneous speech and situational language teaching.

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