ISSN 1799-2591
Theory and Practice in Language Studies, Vol. 14, No. 9, pp. 2671-2678, September 2024
DOI: https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1409.03

# An Empirical Study on Enhancing Interview Skills Through Activity Based Learning at Graduation Level

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***Abstract*—This paper focuses on 'Activity Based Learning' (ABL) that helps students acquire the interview skills at graduation level. The main aim of this quantitative study was to see how Activity Based Learning (ABL) helped low and high achievers in Bachelors of Technology (B. Tech.) course to improve their interview skills. For the research, 40 students were chosen at random from III B. Tech. classes and were divided into experimental and control groups (20 students + 20 students). To measure the extent of interview performance among the participants an achievement test was devised and was given twice, once as a pre-test and once as a post-test. Primarily, the pre-test was used to show that with respect to pervious knowledge of interview skills, both the groups were similar. Later, Activity Based Language Teaching method of instruction to the experimental group and traditional language teaching method of instruction to the controlled group were adopted. The post-test was given at the conclusion to assess the students' progress. The researchers employed the independent sample t-test to see if mean scores' difference between the groups was significant at the 0.05 level. In the post test, the experimental group outscored the control group demonstrating that ABL is an effective approach in improving students' interview skills. The results suggest that the ABL method significantly develops and improves the interview skills of students when used in the classroom.**

***Index Terms*—Activity Based Learning, control group, experimental group, enhancing, interview skills**

## I. Introduction

Language is the prime tool for communication. Having attained the status of *lingua franca*, English became a tool to access information, share knowledge and communicate across the world. In academic context, the way a student learns a second language and uses it with certain proficiency mainly depends on the teaching methodology. In this competitive world, the interviewers are in search of candidates who can communicate well besides being able to interpret what others say with their creative mindset. Activity Based Learning plays a key role in developing communication and critical and creative thinking skills in the students. Kolb (1984), in his research stated that activity based teaching is

more suitable to promote learning when compared to traditional ways of teaching. Later Nunan (1995) proposed that the process of facilitating language learning from simple or brief to more complex or lengthy activities through a range of work plans is known as Activity Based Learning. Any pedagogical method that involves students in the process of learning in the classroom is known as activity-based learning (Prince, 2004, p. 223). Harfield et al. (2007) in their research state that during ABL students actively participate in learning experiences by merely not being passive recipients of knowledge. Powell and Kalina (2009, p. 242) say that ABL depends on the constructivist theory of learning according to which information cannot be given to humans which can be understood and used immediately, instead, by collaborating with others and based on the previous experiences, humans must develop their own understanding and they reinforce Churchill's (2003) research which states that ABL also enhances higher-level thinking ability in students. Domin's (2007) research proves that successful learning experiences could be experienced by learners by participating in various activities. According to Zahoor-ul-Haq et al. (2015), while using the Activity Based Learning technique in the language classroom, students are more likely to participate in the process of learning. This is because students are given multiple opportunities to develop their learning skills. Learning to speak is always a challenging task where the teachers carefully select a task for the pupils to practice speaking and lead them through the process (Mercer, 1998). Baker and Westrup (2000) opine that a teacher, besides being encouraging should realize that learners learn through mistakes while participating in a task. In order to be efficient and effective, activity-based learning takes up more room than traditional lecture-based approaches and necessitates additional and flexible physical resources (Breen, 1987). There are many activities which a language teacher could exploit in the classroom, which could create a free, frank and interactive atmosphere and therefore the teaching and learning of language will become very easy and spontaneous. Providing students with "real-world" contexts with various activities to practice effective interviewing skills can mean the difference between their achieving desired outcomes versus missing opportunities in interviews. Activity Based Learning also enables the students to analyse, assess, improve, and apply listening skills in the process of an interview.

## II. The Study's Rationale

This study looks into the impact of Activity Based Learning on the development of interview skills in low and high achievers in the III B. Tech. class. More specifically, the study tests the following hypotheses:

Ho1: In the pre-test conducted there is no significant difference between the a) mean scores of experimental and control groups b) mean scores of low achievers of experimental and control groups c) mean scores of high achievers of experimental and control groups with respect to achievement in interview skills.

Ho2: In the post-test conducted there is no significant difference between the a) mean scores of experimental and control groups b) mean scores of low achievers of experimental and control groups c) mean scores of high achievers of experimental and control groups with respect to achievement in interview skills.

## III. Method

### *A. Research Design*

The present research has employed a quantitative approach and used an experimental design with pre-test and post-test equivalent group. The experiment was carried out in a controlled atmosphere in a language classroom that is seen as a real-life laboratory with the goal of better understanding language learners' characteristics (Phakiti, 2014, p. 2).

### *B. Sample of Research*

The sample of research consisted of 40 students who were selected at random from III B. Tech classes. To this sample a pre-test made by the teacher was used. Two equal groups (20 students in each group) named as experimental group and control group were formed based on the pre-test scores. Low achieving and high achieving students in both the groups were also identified in the next level. High achievers were those whose scores were above the mean in both the control and experimental groups, while low achievers were those whose scores were below the mean.

### *C. Research Instrument*

An achievement test (mock interview with 10 test items (Appendix A) was developed to measure the extent of interview performance among the participants. The participants were given the test twice, once as a pre-test and once as a post-test. Primarily, the pre-test was used to show that with respect to pervious knowledge of interview skills, both the groups were similar. On completion of the study, the post-test was given to the students.

For the purpose of test development, a specification table was prepared. Keeping the specifications table in mind 10 test items that measure the performance of students in interview skills were devised. The parameters were the same for both the tests (the test items were not revealed to the students).

Along with the researcher who was trained in applying Activity Based Learning to teach English, another teacher was involved for the study. Teaching experience and teaching competencies were relatively equal in both the teachers. Since the researcher was already trained in the area, the task of instructing the experimental group was taken up.

### *D. Data Collection Procedures*

Lesson plan was prepared in tune with the ABL method for execution in the experiment group. The lessons were made interesting, engaging and relevant by choosing the activities carefully from the British Council's Learn English Select Face-To-Face Course, Level B-1course book (student's book and teacher's book) which was used as a part of Andhra Pradesh State Higher Education English Communication Skills Project, India.

These activities include employability skills, preparing for an interview, hard and soft skills, personal strengths and skills, writing a job advert, motivation in the work place, practice job interview, active listening skills, asking about job responsibilities, understanding job roles, understanding company structure, introducing oneself, job roles, managing stress, personality quiz, job fair, role play, Who am I?, virtual interviews and CV. The activities provided in the hand-outs were used and the activities were executed as instructed in the teacher's hand book Sample of execution of activities and hand-outs for one topic

'Employability Skills' is presented below:

Topic: Employability Skills
Handouts (Students' handbook)
Module 1, Lesson 3
Handout 1. (Module 1, Lesson 3)
[Information] Look at the three job advertisements and tick which skills you need for each job.

| Drivers wanted | Skills | |
|---|---|---|
| We are looking for drivers for our airport pick-up service. You must have a clean driving license and be able to speak Arabic. | Language | |
| | Digital | |
| | Numeracy | |
| | Machine operating | |

| Packers required | Skills | |
|---|---|---|
| Staff needed for our warehouse. You should be physically fit, good with numbers and be able to drive a forklift. | Language | |
| | Digital | |
| | Numeracy | |
| | Machine operating | |

| Full Time Hotel Receptionist | Skills | |
|---|---|---|
| A full time receptionist post at our international hotel in Goa. A good knowledge of English and good IT skills essential. | Language | |
| | Digital | |
| | Numeracy | |
| | Machine operating | |

| Full Time Hotel Receptionist | Skills | |
|---|---|---|
| A full time receptionist post at our international hotel in Goa. A good knowledge of English and good IT skills essential. | Language | |
| | Digital | |
| | Numeracy | |
| | Machine operating | |

Handout 2. (Module 1, Lesson 3)
[Information] Give two skills from the list below that would help the people below get the jobs they would like.
# Language # Digital # Machine Operating # Numeracy
Daya would like to work as an accountant for a big department store.
1. 2.
Charita would like to work in the foreign exchange office at the airport.
1. 2.
Suresh would like to work as an online maths teacher.
1. 2.
Ajay would like to be a bus driver for an international tour company.
1. 2.
Ikshana would like to be an architect.
1. 2.

Handout 3. (Module 1, Lesson 3)
[Information] Complete the information in the table below. Think about the job you'd like to do, the skills you need to do this job, the skills you have now and the skills you need to develop.

| The job I would like to do is _____ | | |
|---|---|---|
| For this job I need the following skills: | At the moment I have these skills: | The skills I still need to develop are: |

Plan execution (Teacher's handbook)
Module 1.
Lesson: Employability skills

Stage 1. (0-5 mins) Introducing the Topic
1 [T-Whole Class] Tell SS they are going to get a better understanding of what employability skills are in today's lesson. Briefly explain hard skills vs. soft skills. Ask SS to explain what they think employability skills are to their partner.
2 [Pair Work] SS very quickly share their understanding of employability skills. Allow 1-2 minutes for this.
3 [T-Whole Class] Feedback and ensure SS have a basic understanding of what employability skills are. Elicit (ask for) examples and write these on the board.

Stage 2. (5-15 mins) Defining Employability Skills
1 [T] Write the following on the board: 1. You learn these at school, online or from books 2. These skills will change in different situations 3. These skills are to do with emotional intelligence. Check SS understand emotional intelligence.
2 [T-Whole Class] Tell SS to discuss their answers to the mini quiz with their partners and decide which statements refer to hard skills and which to soft skills. Check SS have a basic understanding of the difference of hard and soft skills and explain what emotional intelligence is. (this is the ability to understand your emotions and other people's emotions).
3 [Pair Work] Allow enough time for this. Monitor. (Observe and guide if needed)
4 [T-Whole Class] Elicit SS answers. Clarify any areas of confusion. (1. Hard skills. 2. Soft skills e.g. good communication skills may be different depending on who you are talking to. Hard skills are the same and are measured in the same way. 3. Soft skills as you are learning how to respond to people). Hard skills are more about your knowledge of factual information.)
5 [T-Whole Class] Ask SS to look at >HO1in Module 1 Lesson 3 in the Learner Booklet appendix. Tell SS to tick which employability skills are required for the different jobs.
6 [I] Ask SS complete the tables on their own. Monitor. (observe and guide if needed)
7 [Pair Work] Ask SS to compare their answers in pairs.
8 [T-Whole Class] Feedback. (Drivers – machine operating (car) and language skills. Packers – machine operating (forklift) and numeracy skills. Receptionists – language and digital skills)
[Information] Tell SS that they will see Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is often the measurement used for hard skills and Emotional Quotient (EQ) for soft skills.

Stage 3. (15-25 mins) Identifying Employability Skills for Different Jobs
1 [T] Put students in groups.
2 [Group work] Tell SS to decide what employability skills would help the three people in >HO2. Monitor.
3 [T-Whole Class] Feedback. Elicit answers and check SS agree. Encourage SS to explain their answers. (Daya=numeracy is essential for accountants and digital as accountants use computer software packages when doing accounts. Charita – language to speak to customers and numeracy to make many calculations. Suresh – digital and numeracy Ajay – machine operating skills language as he would be dealing with tourists. Ikshana- numeracy digital.

Stage 4. (25-40) Identifying Skill sets and Areas for Development
1 [T-Whole Class] Ask SS to look at >HO3 to identify the skills needed for the job they would like to do, the employability skills they need for it and the skills they need to improve on. These can be hard or soft skills.
2 [I] SS do the activity. Monitor.
3 [Pair Work] Put SS in pairs and tell them to tell their partner about what they have noted down in their table.
4 [T-Whole Class] Ask one or two SS to lead feedback by talking about what their partners said.

The topic was dealt for 6 sessions with one session for each week. The duration of each session was 120 minutes. Conventional teaching method was adopted for the control group for the same duration. For the control group, teaching material from the assigned course book was used by the teacher. During the sessions, the learning experiences of students were also sought.

*E. Data Analysis*

Analysis of the relevant data was done to test the hypothesis. Each group's standard deviation, mean and means' difference were calculated. The experimental and control groups' means' difference was determined using an

independent sample t-test. At the level of 0.05, the significant mean scores' difference of the two groups was investigated with the help of pre-test and post-test scores.

## IV. Results

The difference between the control and experimental groups' mean scores were calculated on the pre-test and post-test by conducting the t-test. The following are the results, analysis and interpretation of available data:

### *A. Pre Test*

TABLE 1
THE DIFFERENCE IN THE MEAN SCORE VALUES ON THE PRE-TEST BETWEEN THE GROUPS

| Group | N | Mean | SD | t-value | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Table Value | Calculated Value |
| Experimental | 20 | 11.05 | 3.91 | 1.684 | 0.818* |
| Control | 20 | 11.35 | 4.07 | | |

*Not Significant d. f. = 38 Level of significance= 0. 05

0.818 was the calculated value of *t* while 1.684 was the table value of *t* as per Table 1. The degree of freedom was 38 with the results being tested at 0.05 significant level. The calculation of t-value showed that the table value (1.684) was greater than the obtained value (0.818). As there was no significant difference between the mean scores of both the groups, Ho1 (a) was accepted. The pre-test findings revealed that both the experimental group and control group had equivalent prior knowledge of interview skills.

### *(a). Low Achievers*

TABLE 2
THE DIFFERENCE IN THE LOW ACHIEVERS' MEAN SCORE VALUES ON PRE-TEST BETWEEN THE GROUPS

| Group | N | Mean | SD | t-value | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Table Value | Calculated Value |
| Experimental | 09 | 7.4 | 2.11 | 1.746 | 0.651* |
| Control | 09 | 7.8 | 1.72 | | |

*Not Significant d. f. = 16 Level of significance = 0.05

0.651 was the obtained value of *t* and 1.746 was the table value of *t* according to Table 2. The degree of freedom was 16 with the results being tested at 0.05 significant level. As a result, the table value of t (1.746) was higher than the obtained value of t (0.651). Ho1 (b) was approved due to the non-significant difference between both the groups' mean scores. The findings of the pre-test revealed that in both the experimental and control groups, the low achievers had equivalent prior knowledge of interview skills.

### *(b). High Achievers*

TABLE 3
THE DIFFERENCE IN THE HIGH ACHIEVERS' MEAN SCORE VALUES ON PRE-TEST BETWEEN THE GROUPS

| Group | N | Mean | SD | t-value | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Table Value | Calculated Value |
| Experimental | 11 | 14 | 2.215 | 1.725 | 0.883* |
| Control | 11 | 14.181 | 3.157 | | |

*Not Significant d. f. = 20 Level of significance = 0.05

0.883 was the obtained value of *t* while 1.725 was the table value of *t* as reflected in Table 3. The degree of freedom was 20 with the results being tested at 0.05 significant level. The calculation of *t*-value showed that the table value (1.725) was higher than the calculated value (0.883). Ho1(c) was approved due to the non-significant difference between both the groups' mean scores. As a result, in the experimental and control groups, the high achievers were identical on the pre-test in terms of their abilities with regard to interview skills.

### *B. Post Test*

TABLE 4
THE DIFFERENCE IN THE MEAN SCORE VALUES ON THE POST-TEST BETWEEN THE GROUPS

| Group | N | Mean | SD | t-value | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Table Value | Calculated Value |
| Experimental | 20 | 20.75 | 4.16 | 1.684 | 2.328* |
| Control | 20 | 17.6 | 4.04 | | |

* Significant d. f. = 38 Level of significance = 0.05

2.328 was the obtained value of t while 1.684 was the table value of *t* as per Table 4. The degree of freedom was 38 with the results being tested at 0.05 significant level. The calculation of t-value showed that table value (1.684) was less

than the obtained value (2.328). Ho2 (a) was discarded due to the significant difference in the mean scores between the experiment and control groups. The group taught using Activity Based Learning outperformed the other group in the interview skills, according to post-test results.

*(a). Low Achievers*

TABLE 5
THE DIFFERENCE IN THE LOW ACHIEVERS' MEAN SCORE VALUES ON POST-TEST BETWEEN THE GROUPS

| Group | N | Mean | SD | t-value | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Table Value | Calculated Value |
| Experimental | 07 | 16.285 | 3.238 | 1.746 | 21.934* |
| Control | 11 | 13.375 | 1.871 | | |

* Significant d. f. = 16 Level of significance = 0.05

1.746 was the table value of t while 21.934 was the obtained value of *t* as shown in Table 5. The degree of freedom was 16 with the results being tested at 0.05 significant level. The calculation of *t* -value showed that the table value (1.746) was less than the obtained value (21.934). Ho2 (b) was discarded due to the significant difference between the low achievers' mean score values in both the groups. Post-test results revealed that Activity Based Learning improved the performance of low achievers in experimental group than the low achievers in control group.

*(b). High Achievers*

TABLE 6
THE DIFFERENCE IN THE HIGH ACHIEVERS' MEAN SCORE VALUES ON PRE-TEST BETWEEN THE GROUPS

| Group | N | Mean | SD | t-value | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Table Value | Calculated Value |
| Experimental | 13 | 23.153 | 2.142 | 1.725 | 9.594* |
| Control | 09 | 21.555 | 1.89 | | |

* Significant d. f. = 20 Level of significance = 0.05

9.594 was the obtained value of *t* while 1.725 was the table value of *t* as shown in Table 6. The degree of freedom was 20 with the results being tested at 0.05 significant level. The calculation of *t*-value showed that table value (1.725) was less than the obtained value (9.594). Ho2(c) was discarded due to the significant difference in high achievers' mean score values in both the groups. The post-test showed that Activity Based Learning improved the performance of the high achievers in the experimental group than the high achievers in the control group.

## V. DISCUSSION

Significant variations weren't found in pre-test interview skills ratings between the control and experimental groups, according to the findings. However, post-test findings revealed that in terms of interview skills the performance of the experimental group fared much better than the performance of the control group. At the (0.05) level, the difference of post-test mean scores between both groups was significant. Similarly, the experimental group's low achievers and high achievers fared much better than those of the control group on the post-test in terms of acquiring interview skills. This resulted in abandoning the null hypothesis. After the experiment was done, on campus and off campus recruitment drives were conducted and 14 students in the experimental group got placed in reputed MNCs and the remaining students who didn't get through the interviews were able to clear all the rounds except the technical round which demands technical knowledge. Only 2 students from the control group got placed in MNCs and the students who didn't get placed were not able to get through the HR and other rounds also (the experiment and control group students are now in IV B. Tech.). Based on the results obtained, a decision was taken to implement activity based learning for enhancing the interview skills in students.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that ABL has enhanced students' participation and made learning and teaching more enjoyable. It increased the proficiency levels of both low and high achieving students in interview skills. According to the findings, students' ability to talk, self-confidence, spontaneity in speaking, and quick response to any scenario when engaging in interviews will all improve from a comprehensive training program that includes appropriate activities, teaching techniques, and resources. This study also showed that Activity Based Learning improved the performance of the low achievers in the experimental group. So there is a need for in-built flexibility in designing activities according to the topic and the teachers should be trained in doing so.

It is suggested that teachers use activity-based language education strategies to enable pupils to improve their interview abilities. Necessary training should be provided for the teachers so that they impart the skills to their subjects.

## APPENDIX

10 test items used for assessment

The test items were prepared based on the suggestions given by professors of EFLU, Hyderabad, India.

1) Introduction
2) Communication (verbal and non-verbal)
3) Soft skills
4) Spontaneity in speaking
5) Quick response to any situation
6) Elevator pitch
7) Listening
8) Job analysis
9) Connecting with the interviewer
10) Knowledge on CV

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