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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY IN ADULT EDUCATION IN MOTIVATING TO PROMOTE THE SPEAKING SKILLS OF NON-NATIVE ADULT SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

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Abstract

This very small scale (due to limited time and resources) exploratory and almost wholly qualitative research (Qual–quan) study seeks to examine how non-native adult speakers of English (NNASE) can be motivated to speak English as a foreign language (EFL) more and better via the utilization of counseling psychology rather than through traditional teaching methods over a 3 month period of English language lessons in a classroom environment. The approach taken in this study resembles the Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching but it is more than those traditional methods used in the 1950s through the 1960s in British and Australian schools, and involves a combination of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, widely used from mid-1970s to the 1980s period, Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach and Counseling Learning Techniques.

Keywords: Counseling; Approaches; Gestalt, Cognitive Behavioral; Reality/Choice; Person-Centered; Narrative; PADI (Problem Definition; Attempted Solutions; Desired Changes; Intervention Plan); NNASE (Non-Native Adult Speakers of English).

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1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale for Counseling Learning

Oral narration in counseling learning, of experiences and issues is a free flow of speech between the trainer and the trainee; as natural as a personal interaction with another individual which could improve speaking skills over time.

2. Basic Counseling Approaches That Could Be Used to Teach NNASE

The following counseling therapy approaches could be used as and when required to spice up the lessons, mainly: Problem- Solving Approach (PADI), Gestalt therapy, Person-centered approach, Cognitive - Behavioral therapy (CBT), Choice or Reality and Narrative therapy.

3. Background of the NNASE

These trainees are poor in English and need to use it in their workplaces, mostly from the lower-income bracket, some are school dropouts, at primary or secondary levels, and had little formal education in English. Mostly Chinese (80 or more percent or more), few Malays, even fewer Indians and the rest minority races like Filipinos, Indonesians, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, etc.

3.1. Study Sample (the Choice of the Research Participant) and Teaching Methodology

Only one participant has been chosen for this qualitative research study: an unmarried Indian national, in his early 30s, with little formal education in Tamil; not fluent in speaking English. A total of 6 counseling learning sessions were done. Each session, a different counseling approach was used for learning different parts of the lesson: Warm-up, Introduction, Evaluation or the Application stages in the WIPPEA (CASAS model), namely: PADI, Gestalt, CBT, Choice/Reality, Person-Centered and Narrative counseling approaches for learning, purely, speaking skills. Each session lasted about 15-20 minutes and another 10 - 15 minutes for discussions; a total of approximately 30 minutes. Overall, the participant spent not more than an hour at each session as time had to be given for briefing (5-10 minutes) and debriefing the learner; filling a student satisfaction survey form (5-10 minutes).

3.2. A Social Media Survey

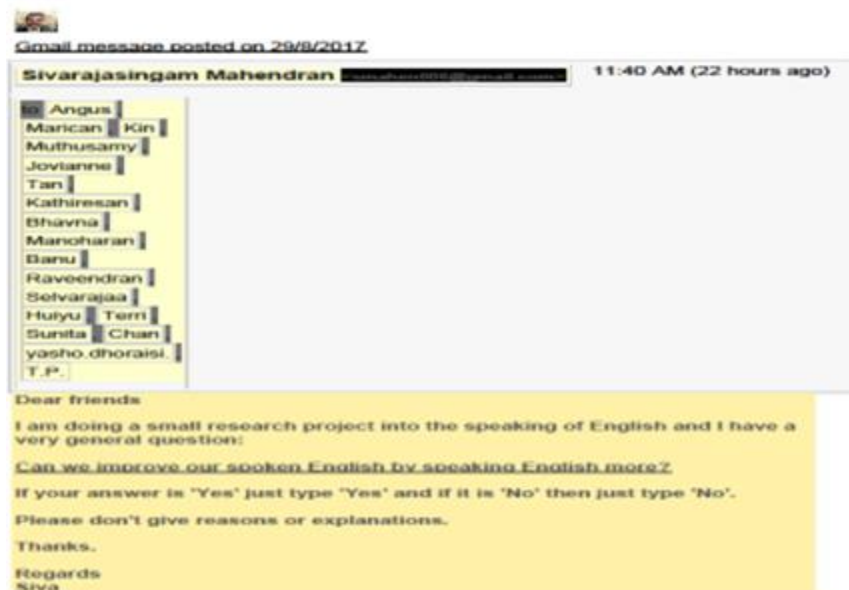


Diagram 1: Question Posted on Social Media Sites (Gmail, Whatsapp and Facebook)

A simple random sample survey was done ad hoc on some social media platform (Gmail, Whatsapp and Facebook) on whether speaking more in English can actually improve the spoken English levels of people and the results (Diagrams 1 and 2) were astounding.

Diagrams 2 and 3 (shown below) show clearly the preference by the NNASE to use spoken English more to improve their language skills than other modes of learning.

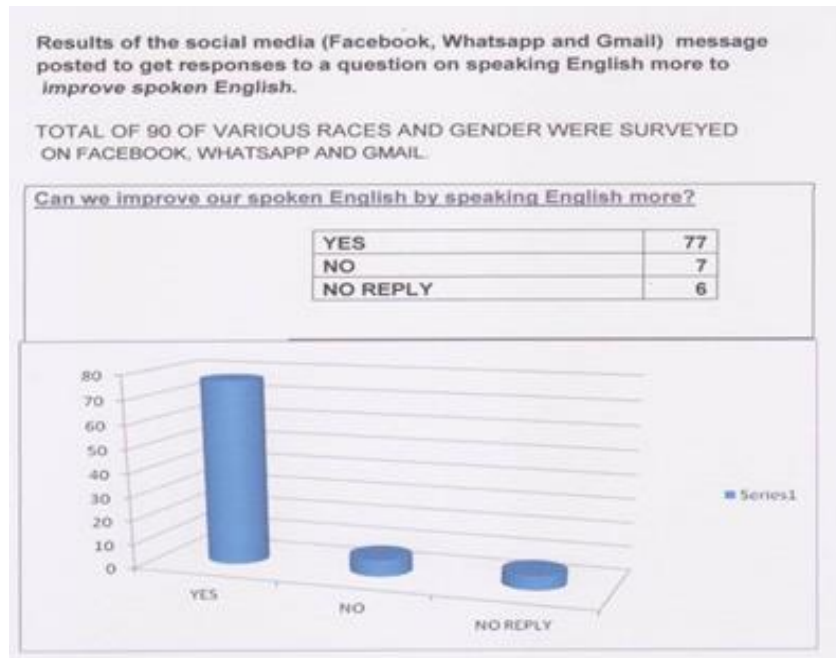


Diagram 2:

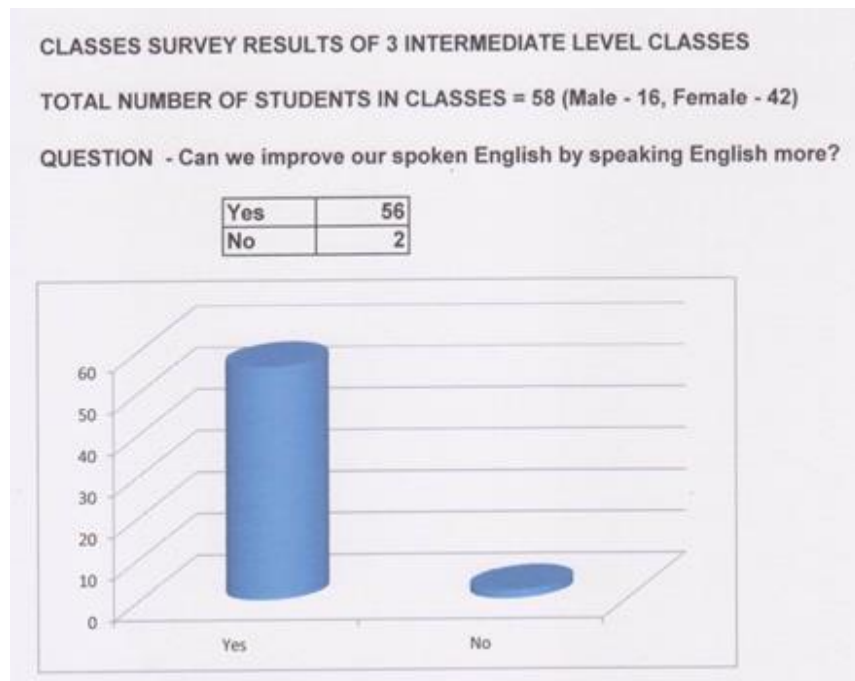


Diagram 3: Speaking Difficulty Survey Questionnaire

Sample of my End Of Course Training Evaluation Report by a class of trainees in the Intermediate Level										
Course Evaluation Summary Report										Generated By: CHANSZ
Course Title : WSQ ESS - WORKPLACE LITERACY - INTERMEDIATE										Date: <input type="text"/>
Batch ID: <input type="text"/>										
Course Date : From : <input type="text"/> To : <input type="text"/>										
Trainer: SIVARAJASINGAM MAHENDRAN										
		Sum	Feq	Avg	No of 5	No of 4	No of 3	No of 2	No of 1	No of 0
A	Effectiveness of Trainers			5.0						
1	Trainer had good knowledge & practical understanding of the subject	59	12	4.9	11	1	0	0	0	0
2	Trainer was effective in communicating ideas and concepts.	60	12	5.0	12	0	0	0	0	0
3	Trainer was able to stimulate and maintain interest of the students.	60	12	5.0	12	0	0	0	0	0
4	Trainer uses good illustrations, practical examples, case studies etc.	60	12	5.0	12	0	0	0	0	0
5	The trainer-to-trainee ratio was appropriate.	60	12	5.0	12	0	0	0	0	0

Diagram 4:

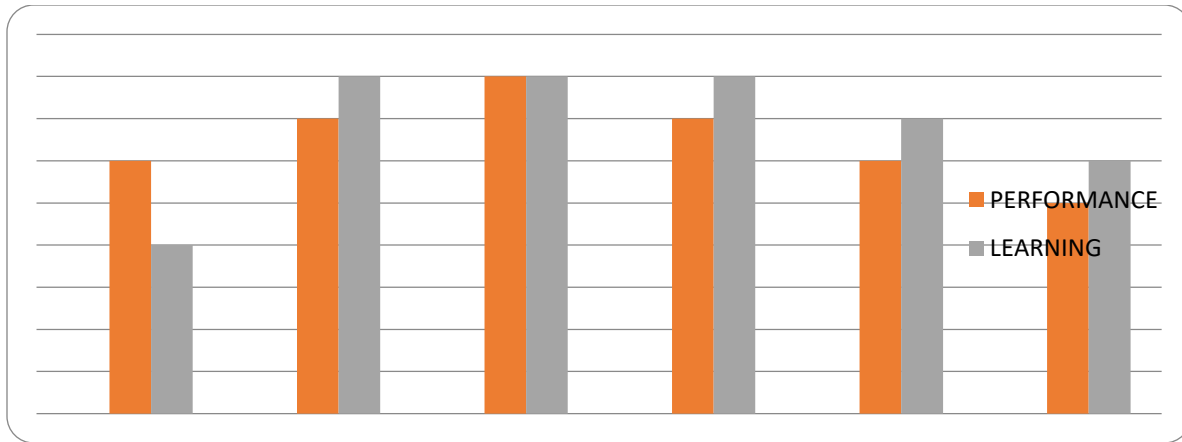
SPEAKING DIFFICULTY SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE	
Based on the Likert scale of 5, (1- Not true to 5 – Very true)	
1. I can speak well.	4
2. I think others know what I speak.	4
3. Short answers to questions are easy to speak.	4
4. Long answers to questions are easy to speak.	3
5. I can speak well in a one to one situation.	4
6. I can speak well in a group or in front of people.	4
7. I can speak well without making mistakes in pronunciation.	3
8. Shorter words (less syllables eg. 'enter') are easier to speak / pronounce.	5
9. Longer words (more syllables eg. 'Demonstration') are not so easy to speak/ pronounce.	4
10. Difficult words (words that I do not know, have difficulty pronouncing or understand eg. Entrepreneurial') make speaking difficult.	2

Diagram 5:

The student had some problems in fluency (slow to respond, pronunciation errors, slanging at times, slurred at times, and intermittently stopping to think what to say) phonemic errors (words starting with p, b, k), morphemic (plurals not pronounced well, simplification of words truncating them at times, missing inflections like 'er' or 'ed') errors in speech.

STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY		
Based on a scale of 0 to 10. (0- nil to 10- most learning)		
Counselling learning approach	Performance	Learning
1. Gestalt	6	4
2. Cognitive behavioral therapy (cbt)	7	8
3. Reality / choice	8	8
4. Narrative	7	8
5. Padi	6	7
6. Person -centered	5	6

Diagram 6:



SPEAKING DIFFICULTY AND POST-TEST EXPECTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Please fill the form completely. Circle your response as appropriate.

Name (Optional) _____ Gender: Male / Female

Language spoken mostly at home: Chinese / Malay / English / Tamil / Others (_____)

Education: No / Primary / Lower Secondary / Upper Secondary / Diploma / University

Medium of Education: English / Chinese / Tamil / Others (_____)

Employment: Working (part-time/fulltime) / Not working (housewife/retired/searching for job)

Age Range: 21-30 / 31-40 / 41-50 / 51-60 / 61-70 / Over 70

	Tick (✓) the columns according to the scale: 1-not true to 5 -very true	1	2	3	4	5
1	I can speak English well.					
2	I think others know what I speak.					
3	Short answers to questions are easy to speak.					
4	Long answers to questions are easy to speak.					
5	I can speak well in a one to one situation.					
6	I can speak well in a group or in front of people.					
7	I can speak well without making a mistake in pronunciation.					
8	Shorter words (less syllables eg. 'enter') are easier to speak / pronounce.					
9	Longer words (more syllables eg. 'demonstration') are not so easy to speak / pronounce.					
10	Difficult words (words that I do not know or have difficulty pronouncing or understand eg. 'Entrepreneurial') make speaking difficult.					
11	I have improved in my English speaking skills.					

Diagram 7:

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE 3 CLASSES IN THE SURVEY RESEARCH

1. Number of males = 16
2. Number of females = 42 } Total = 58
3. Age range: 31-40= 7, 41-50 = 3, 51-60 = 13, 61-70 = 26, Over 70 = 9.
4. Racial composition: Chinese = 54, Malay=1, Tamil=1, Punjabi =1, Cambodian = 1
5. Educational levels in class: University graduates = 3, Diploma holders = 4, Upper Secondary = 14, Lower Secondary = 18, Primary level = 18, No Education= 1.
6. Medium of Education: English = 16, Chinese = 39, Malay = 1, Tamil = 1, Cambodian =1.
7. Employed: Part-time = 14, Full time = 21, Not working = 23.
8. Pre-test score – levels: (2) = 6, (3) = 21, (4) = 12, (5) = 8, (6) = 9, (7) = 1, (0) = 1.
9. Post-test score- levels expected: (2) = 1, (3) = 11, (4) = 8, (5) = 16, (6) = 15, (7) = 5, (8) =2.

Diagram 8:

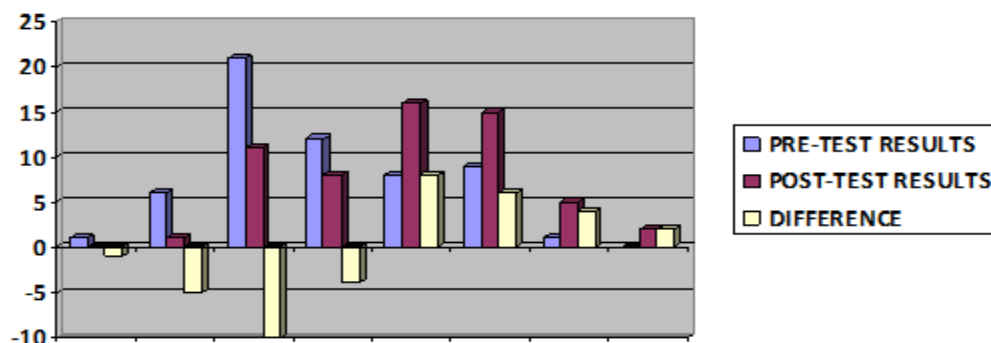
4. Meta-Analysis of the Speaking Difficulty and Post-Test Expectation Questionnaire

The figures in **Diagram 8** speaks volumes about the type of NNASE in the 3 classes in the exploratory survey research as they are mostly older adults more than half (36/58) of whom have basic education up to lower secondary levels and of whom 39/58, or 67%, learnt in the Chinese medium of instruction at school in their formative years of education where English was hardly used except for a subject during their curriculum time, perhaps, once a day for about 40 minutes per lesson, as was the case during the late 1950s - 1980s period in Singapore.

The expected post-test speaking scores which the NNASE hoped to achieve shows a marked increase from their pre-test scores. They generally felt that their spoken English levels had improved and they felt more motivated about speaking with others in English, since beginning their 3 – month course.

WPL English Literacy Levels	0	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Pre-Test Results	1	6	21	12	8	9	1	0	58
Post-Test Results	0	1	11	8	16	15	5	2	58
Difference	-1	-5	-10	-4	+8	+6	+4	+2	

Diagram 9: Comparison of Pre and Post Test Results by Achievement Levels



SPEAKING CONFIDENCE SURVEY	LIKERT SCALE				
	1	2	3	4	5
I can speak English well.	4	19	28	6	1
I have improved in my English speaking skills.	0	5	24	25	4

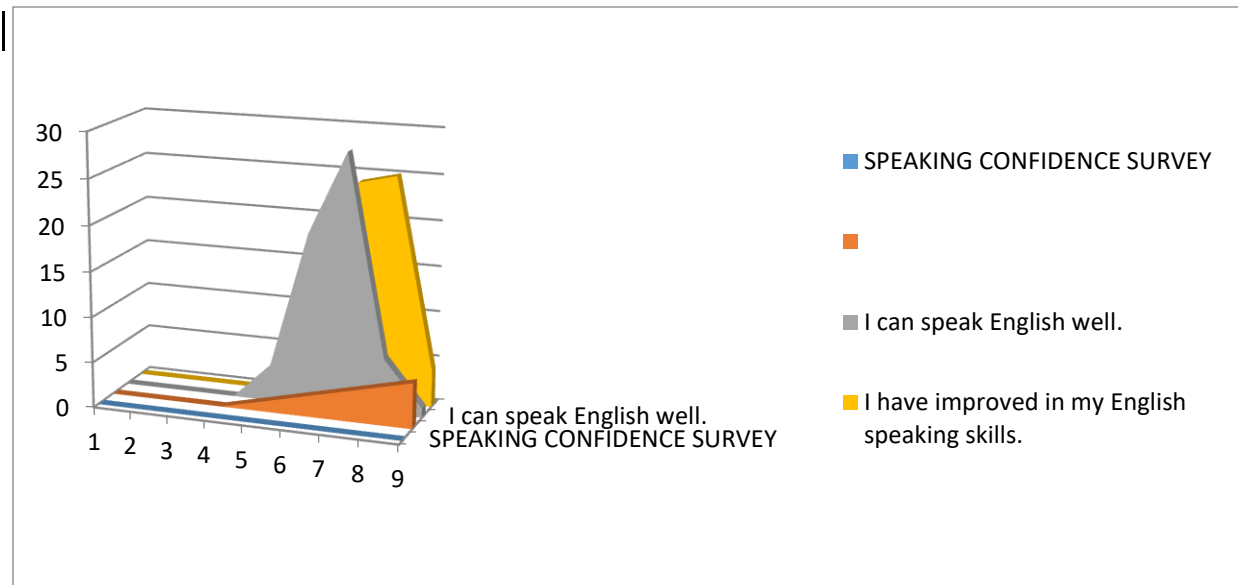


Diagram 10:

5. Limitations of the Research

- Only one modality of language learning can be used effectively for Counselling Learning as it is mostly about speaking rather than reading, writing or listening.
- The research study is based on few individuals and principally one individual was involved in giving his views so there would be no bias.
- The research surveys and results were obtained within a short 3 months period.
- As this is an exploratory qualitative research study, the results and reports are all subjective and tentative and only skims the surface of learning methodologies.
- This qualitative research study is experimental in nature and thus the margin of errors may be more than could be expected in other types of research like action research, mixed methods or grounded theory research where the probability of errors are much lower.
- The multi-cultural NNASEs as one homogenous group of participants for the research survey study may not yield accurate results as could be expected from more quantitative –based research study.
- As only Spoken English levels were surveyed, it is still insufficient to conclusively reflect the final results of the NNASE in the overall post-test results which include listening, reading and written components.

6. Conclusion

I reiterate that counseling learning approaches like the ones presented in this small, exploratory mostly qualitative research survey would be better alternatives as the positive initial results have shown in this study than other more traditional or even some highly organized methods of teaching propounded by extensive or intensive researches in recent years.

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