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A CRITICAL REVIEW ON ORAL ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS (OECS)

Prodhan Mahbub Ibna Seraj*¹ and Hadina Habil²

¹Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Baru, Johor 81310
(E-mail: mahbub@graduate.utm.my)

²Language Academy, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Baru, Johor -81310.
(E-mail: hadina@utm.my)

ABSTRACT

In this digital era, English is such a lingua franca which is important to fill up our daily offline and online communication activities in all spheres of our life. Thus, EFL learners (graduate level) need to be skilled in oral English communication in functioning professional operation effectively in future career. It is observed that a graduate with good oral English communication skills (OECS) has a better chance in career advancement and promotion rather than one who does not. Thus, the objective of this critical review is to This critical review on 28 research papers from 2010 to 2019 chosen from the database of Springer and Scopus using selecting criteria of PRISMA model (2009) and analyzing through NVIVO (12 version) aims to explore and identify causes for poor OECS, teaching techniques for OECS and assessment procedure of OECS. The prime findings of this study are shown that there are several causes e.g. anxiety, teaching techniques e.g. using technology or features of mobile phone and assessment procedures e.g. School based assessment for OECS. The analysis of this study is conducted for detailed description of the concepts and ideas for teachers and academic administrators for teaching and learning OECS effectively and functionally. However, this study would provide in-depth understanding and insights on causes and assessment of OECS for teachers who are teaching at University level, administrators who are involved to design courses and above all graduate level learners in EFL contexts and suggest to investigate a paradigm shift of traditional pedagogy into mobile based pedagogy in future.

Keywords: (OECS, EFL and L2)

1. INTRODUCTION

The etymology of the term 'communication' comes from the Latin word 'communicare' (meaning to share) and the French word 'communis' (common) means one's experience sharing with others (Okoro, 2007). Thus, oral English communication skills is such a skill for EFL graduates for creating better opportunity in future career than the other who do not have such. Learners' oral presentation technique helps to improve oral communication skills or ability (Herrera & Vielma, 2018). It is the skill or capability to use sound and grammar system to communicate meaning (Idrus, Salleh, Wan Hassan, & Ali, 2013). Hence, it is very crucial for EFL university students to have good exposure in oral English communication skills (Idrus, 2016; Kernec, Levrai, and Bolster, 2017). Moreover, OECS needs special attention for learning and teaching in education programs for all disciplines so that students could be effective in their academic as well as professional life (Kunioshi, Noguchi, Hayashi, & and Tojo, 2012; Mitchell & Eng, 2010; Nikolic, Stirling, & Ros, 2018; Malthus & Lu, 2012; Tuomaitė & Zajankauskaitė, 2017). Again, there is a positive correlation between oral and written skill that makes EFL learners more efficient in language skill (Spencer & Petersen, 2018). But in EFL contexts, English oral communication skill is sought to be neglected in the curriculum at tertiary level. That's why learners in EFL contexts do not get proper oral exposure to be skilled in oral communication skills. This critical investigation illustrates the concepts that might help EFL teachers and students identifying the causes behind poor performance in oral English communication skills. Again, this paper would clarify EFL teachers' perception about types and functions of OECS and how could different teaching techniques be applied for teaching and assessing OECS in EFL contexts. Therefore, the objective of this review paper is to investigate causes for poor OECS, types of assessment of OECS and teaching techniques of OECS studied from 2010-2019 in different contexts. The findings show that technology might be integrated into teaching and assessment techniques to improve EFL learners' oral proficiency.

2. METHODOLOGY

For this critical review research papers as close to the topic as possible have been collected from Springer link and Scopus database by following the criteria described in the table-2.1 and figure 2.1. The collected papers have been sorted by following PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) model (Moher et.al, 2015) which mainly comprises four steps of literature research, quality assessment, eligibility and inclusion criteria, and studies included in qualitative, quantitative and mixed method synthesis of relevant papers is employed (figure 2.2). The purpose of using of PRISMA model is to select more appropriate research papers on the topic and sorting for scrutiny with NVIVO for systematic critical review. Sorted research papers have been imported and exported as ris. files from research management software Mendeley preparing to use with NVIVO -12 for grouping, categorizing and finding patterns in literature by developing nodes and sub nodes and exploring more graphical presentations.

| Database | Scopus | No of Research Papers |
|------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Search criteria | | |
| Searching phrase | Oral English Communication Skills | 316 |
| Subject Area | Social Science & Arts and Humanities | |
| Document types | Article, Conference paper, Book Chapter & Review | |
| Publication Stage | Final & Article in press | |
| Key words | Communication, Teaching, education, students, oral communication | |
| Source types | Journals, Conference proceedings, Books & Book series | |
| Language | English | |
| Year | 2010-2019 | |
| Database | Springer | |
| Searching phrase | Oral English Communication Skills | 1861 |
| Content types | Article, Chapter & conference paper | |
| Disciplines | Education & linguistics | |
| Language | English | |
| Year | 2010-2019 | |

Table-2.1 Searching criteria for articles

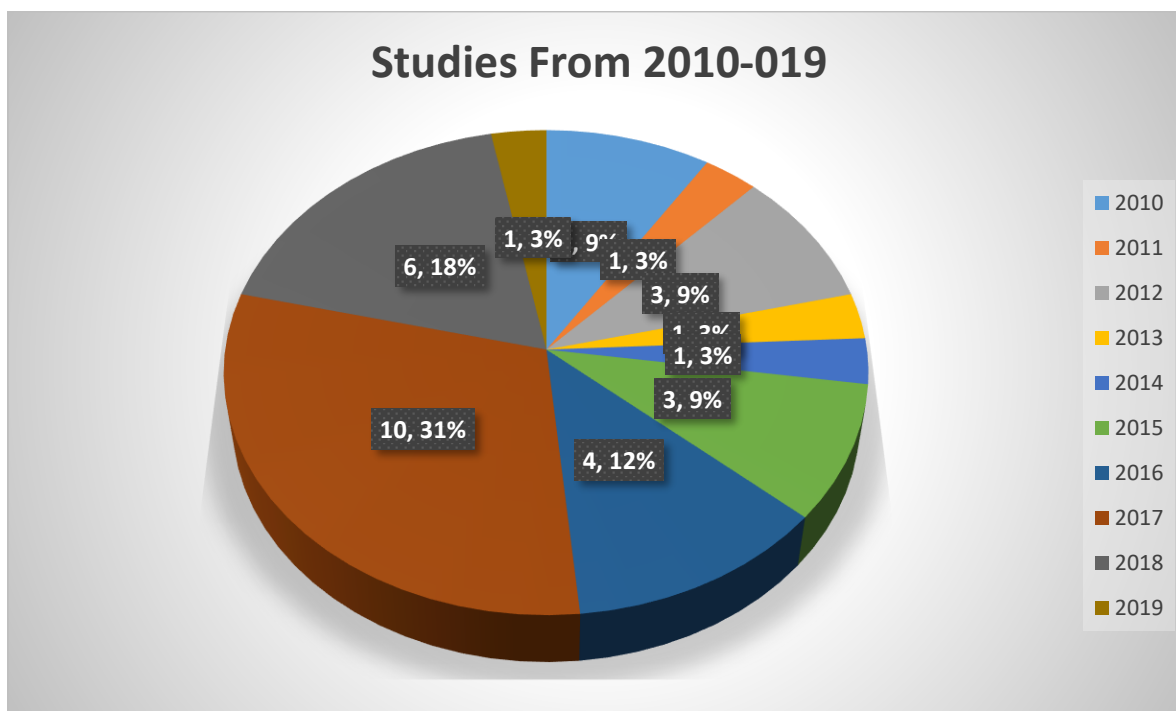


Figure 2.1 Distribution of Studies from 2010-2019

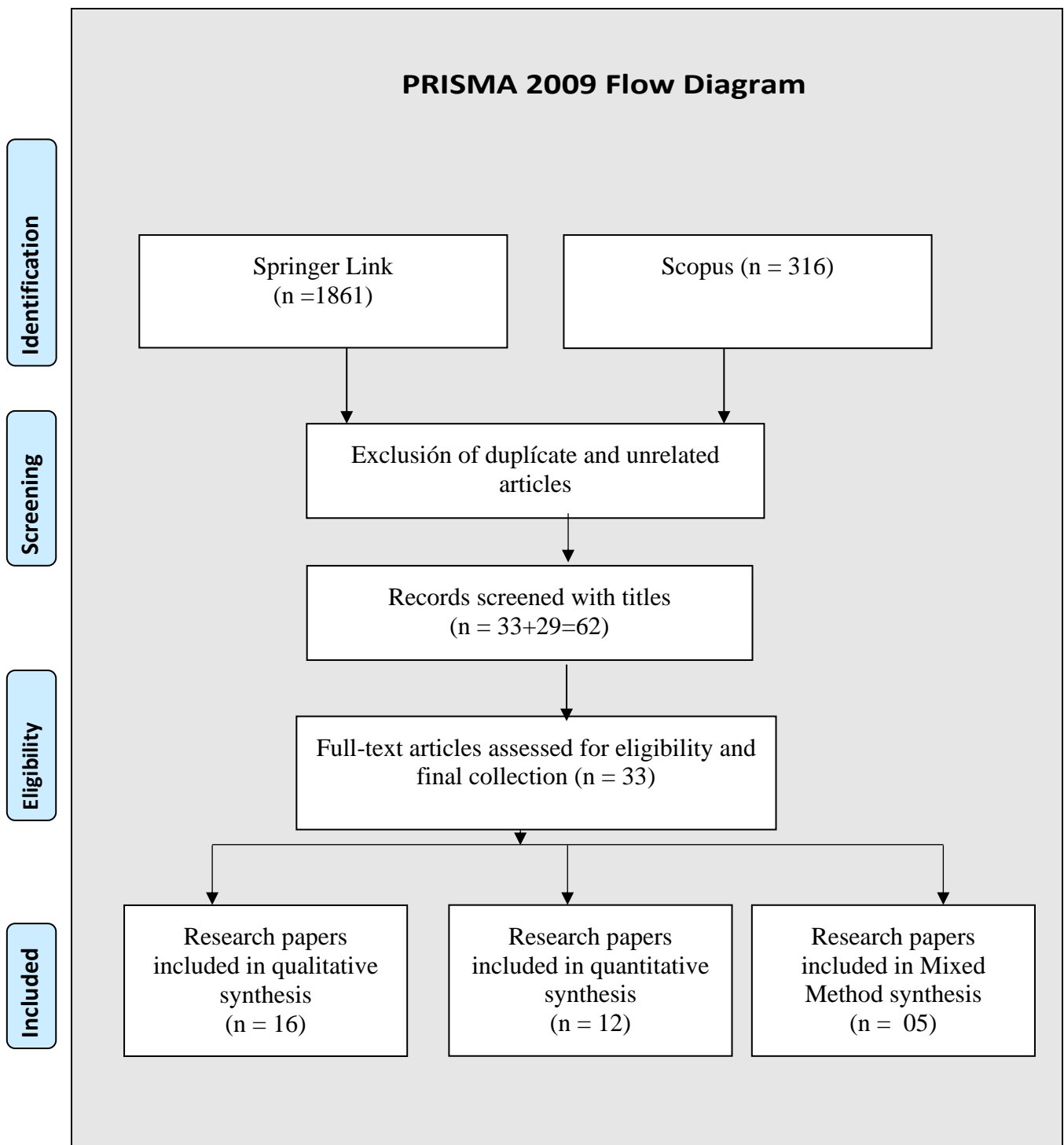


Figure 2.2 PRISMA flow chart for selecting process of articles

3. Discussion

3.1 Causes for Poor OECS:

In EFL contexts, learners' OECSs often fail to reach the standard mark, even sometimes is incomprehensible. This critical review has picked up several causes (Figure-3.1) which are responsible for learners' poor OECS. Anxiety is the prime cause which depends on learners' emotions, interests, intellectual factors, linguistic factors, affective factors, and classroom environment (Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017). According to MacWhinnie & Mitchell (2017), anxiety makes learners uneasy and anxious when they need to interact L2 with others. They found learners' self-interest into L2 and L2 learning experience are interwoven to provide lower

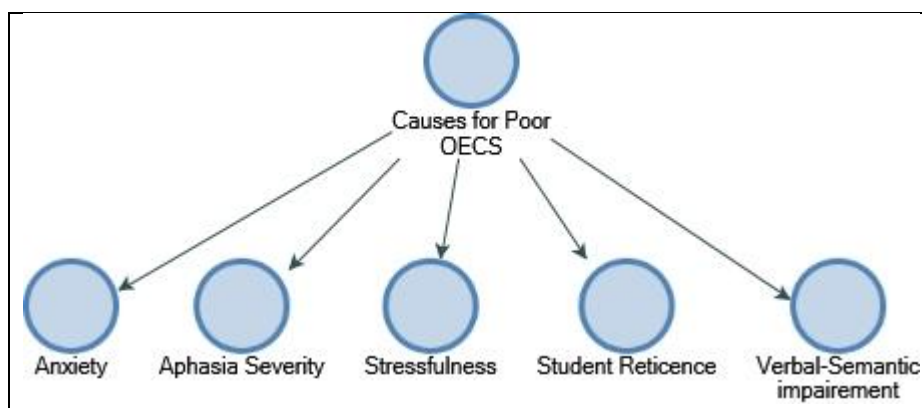


Figure 3.1 Causes for Poor OECS

anxiety that brings positive result in learning. On the other hand, learners who have high level of anxiety, have low performance in oral production (Szyszka, 2017). The other cause behind EFL learners' poor OECS is severity of aphasia; aphasia refers to impairment of producing speech due to lack of linguistic knowledge. According to Kong, Law, Wat, & Lai, (2015), co-verbal gesture is associated with oral communication in which severity of aphasia has significant impact on EFL speakers. Stressfulness is another negative washback for EFL learners which is resulted out of lack of experience in oral activities, sudden vacuum of linguistic expression in brain and insecurity about self-intelligibility for interaction (Schaller-Schwane, 2015). However, stressfulness is intertwined with EFL students' reticent behavior in regards with oral communication practice. Most of the EFL learners are reticent towards oral practice due to lack of opportunity (Soo & Goh, 2017). For this reticent behavior, learners fall into verbal-semantic impairment when they are interacting into reality. Thus, verbal –semantic impairment has negative impact on EFL learners' OECS (Kong et al., 2015). Thus, these causes are the responsible for learners' poor performance into OECS. This review suggests that these factors need to be addressed to mitigate and prompt learners' OECS due to practicality of learners' future career in this study. Besides

these, there are some reasons such as large size class, lack of oral exposure, learners' passiveness and lack of materials are not addressed. Therefore, teachers and academic administrators need to understand the problems faced by EFL learners and designed syllabus, assessment and teaching technique herewith to solve these problems.

3.2 Types of Assessment

It is sometimes difficult for EFL teachers assessing learners' performance in oral communication skills. Moreover, in some extents oral communication skill assessment spreads panic among EFL learners that hampers learners' OECS performance. Thus, selecting assessment system is required much effort and carefulness in regards with contexts. Different types of assessments have been used by EFL teachers in different contexts (Figure 3.2). According to Eng & Mitchell (2011), continued assessment brought consistent and positive result and made learners enthusiastic into oral communication skill course. Mobile-based peer feedback enabled learners monitoring their oral production and provide corrective feedback which improve their overall oral communication skill (Fang, Cassim, Hsu, & Chen, 2018). Similarly, teacher feedback that provides praise and constructive criticism on learners' oral skill make good rapport and help learners a lot (Wang, Yu, & Teo, 2018). On the other hand, Gan, Oon & Davison, (2017) advocated that school based assessment (SBA) which is innovative could be used for assessing English oral language skills. Another innovative assessment system namely mixed panel assessment examined by Kernec, Levrai and Bolster (2017) among undergraduate students at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China focusing on the use of a mixed specialist and nonspecialist audience for students' oral presentations assessment at the end of the semester. In the similar context Liu & Jia, (2017) examined the validity of university based assessment which indicated that there would be a major change in the teaching and learning and the provision of university supports. According to Heiman et al. (2012), oral case presentation is another important technique for assessing learners' OECS. The negative side of this type of assessment is very time consuming but technology in this regards help by recording learners' performance. Last but not the least assessment technique is teacher feedback which is traditional, process oriented, descriptive and formative in nature (Wang, Teo, & Yu, 2017). Above all, for validity, reliability and fairness of assessment six dimensions such as content type, interaction, authenticity, structure, examiners and orality should be followed otherwise test result should give the real picture (Memon, Joughin, & Memon, 2010). Another, indexed rating for oral assessment is CLIP (Coherence, Lexical, Grammatical and Pronunciation) indexing is very crucial in the sense of identifying learners' progress (Salamonson et al., 2019). This indexing rater can be used in any EFL contexts for assessing learners' oral performance. But, still there is the lack of recent study on how mobile phone used as an assessment tool for learners' OECS. Thus, attention should be drawn in this regard for further study.

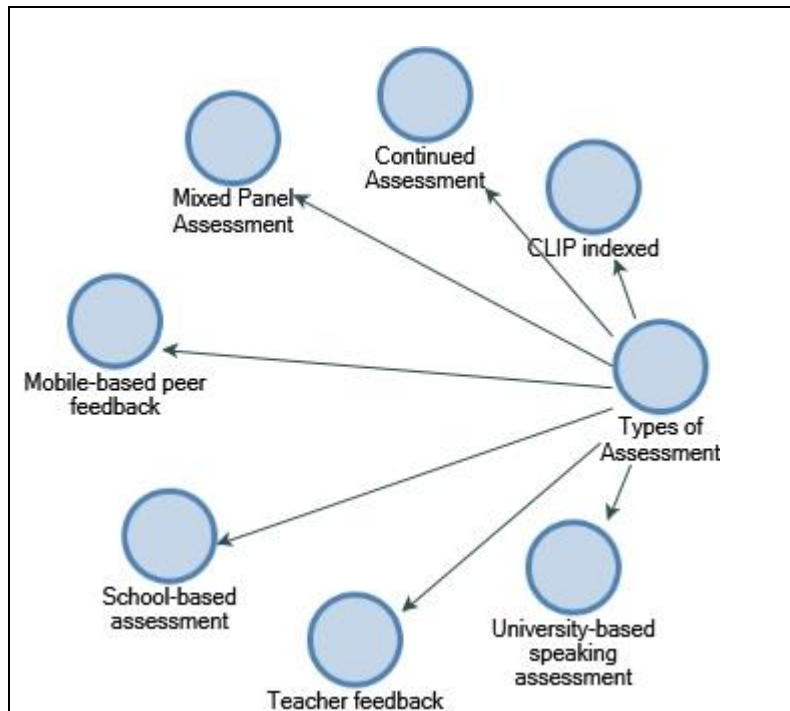


Figure 3.2 Types of Assessment

3.3 Teaching Techniques

Different teaching techniques (Figure-3.3) have been used for developing EFL learners into different contexts to get maximum effective result. The study held in the University of Toronto by Tallman, Weiss & Wilkinson, (2018) on teaching oral presentation skill by borrowing techniques from drama and theatre during the three year tenure of the course. In the first year course, students were introduced to create awareness of performance skills such as “taking space”, “grounding body” and articulation exercises which is known as “the method” or “acting method”. In the next two years, the instructors would apply the method from drama and theatre in which students would take part into turn taking or roleplay which would be recorded for further analysis of their performance. In this way the researchers provided a model of teaching oral presentation. Another teaching technique is automatization which led fluency in oral production (Onoda, 2014). Automatization is held through traditional presentation-practice-production consists of language-focused tasks, meaning focused tasks and language learning focused tasks. For developing EFL learners’ oral communication skill, microteaching has the favorable impact (Herrera & Vielma, 2018). Microteaching technique is the process of teaching in which a specific topic within the area of subject exposed to teach without prior preparation or well defined references. Kunioshi et al. (2012) proposed an online support site in which the Japanese–English Corpus of Presentations in Science and Engineering (JECPRESE) contained transcriptions of 74 presentations was designed for Japanese students. Here utterances were categorized according to the units of the speech that express speaker’s specific intents in the

presentation and frequent used words/expressions in the oral presentation.

In the case of ESL teachers' training, Soo & Goh, (2017) found that pre-service teachers opined that learners' engagement into open class discussion would be highly expected due to increase their high level fluency in oral presentation skills. Westerveld & Gillon, (2010) found positive effect of oral narratives as teaching techniques among young EFL learners. Oral narratives teaching technique was held through the activities story retelling, story generations and personal narratives. Hence, technology is now no longer outside of the classroom, mobile phone is being used as teaching tool. Darmi & Albion, (2017) in their study found positive impact of using mobile phone to improve EFL learners' oral communication skill. They used built in features on mobile phones (audio/video recording) to record and review the assigned tasks as roleplay in pair or trio or mock interview for oral interaction practice. Similarly m-learning apps provides exciting opportunities to engage learners to be skilled in communication skills (Smith et al., 2016). Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, (2015) proposed that social media could be a platform for synchronous and asynchronous oral communicative tasks in which learners could be exposed to real life discourses and acquainted with linguistic challenges. Again, Hart,(2016) examined web-based virtual language community connecting English-language learners in China with trainers in the United States, used to deliver short, one-on-one lessons designed to improve students' oral English communication skills and found positive impact among participants. Besides these,

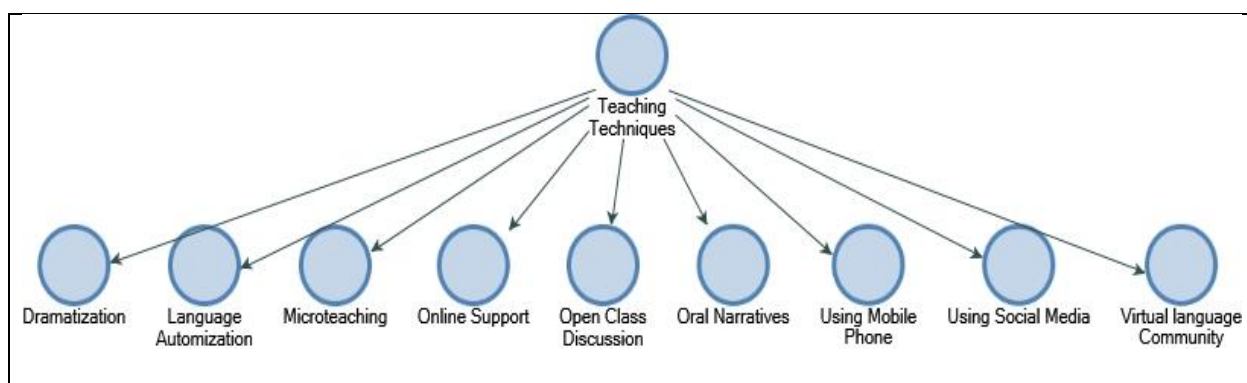


Figure 3.3 Different teaching techniques

Mobile phone has multifunctional opportunities which are not studied from teachers' perspectives. Thus, how mobile phone can be used as teaching technique for developing learners' OECS needs to be explored further.

4. CONCLUSION

Oral communication skills is a bit neglected into the curriculum of different EFL contexts. Moreover, EFL teachers sometimes become puzzled to teach and assess oral communication skills and so do learners. This review paper investigated to focus the causes of EFL learners' poor performance, teaching techniques and types of assessment methods of oral English communication skills for providing clear indications and insights

for EFL teachers, learners and researchers to deal with OECS according to different contexts. The study suggests that features of mobile might be integrated into teaching technique to provide a platform in and out of classroom as well as technology-based assessment techniques needs to be studied to improve learners' oral proficiency through providing feedbacks in EFL contexts. However, further research is needed to deal the problems such large size class, learners' passiveness, lack of oral exposure and teaching materials for OECS teaching with the help of technology.

5. RECOMMENDATION

This review paper has found the following recommendations to improve EFL learners' OECS;

- For developing oral communication skills a course related to it should be designed for all disciplines at tertiary level (Kernec, JL. Levrai , P. and Bolster, 2017)
- There is a need to make a paradigm shift of traditional language pedagogy (Schaller-Schwaner, 2015)
- For developing OECS EFL learners should be engaged with tasks of outside the class hours (Darmi & Albion, 2017).
- Teachers should create such an environment which reduce learners' anxiety for oral skill learning (MacWhinnie & Mitchell, 2017)
- Teachers' role should be modified (Wang, Yu, & Teo, 2018)
- Language pedagogy for oral communication should be designed to use audio/video features of mobile phones and provide such a convenient environment which encourage learners to share recordings (Darmi & Albion, 2017)

Bibliography: Mr. Prodhon Mahbub Ibna Seraj is currently doing his P.H.D as fulltime student in the faculty of Education at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Johor, will present this paper title "A CRITICAL REVIEW ON ORAL ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS (OECS)". He is an assistant professor at the department of English in Sylhet International University, Sylhet, Bangladesh. His contacting address is mahbubdu511@gmail.com.

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