Using Student Centric Methods of Teaching such as Case Study Method for Enhancing English Language Proficiency in Management Institutes

Ms. Sangeeta Shahane, Dr. Neeti Mahajan, Dr. RenuVerma and Ms. Monica Mahajan

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Introduction

To conduct business in any organization the most important requirement is the need to communicate with all the stakeholders who are part of any business activity. Employers, owners, employees, suppliers, customers, government bodies and financial institutions are some of the stakeholders who form a part of business activity. Managing a business implies coordination of activities which occur in diverse groups. The task of communicating effectively has become more challenging because diverse cultures and technology have changed the scenario as well as requirements tremendously.

The objective of any Professional course is to enhance employability skills of the learner and Management Education is no exception. Effective Communication in English Language has been viewed as one of the key competency of Employability skills and therefore most institutes attach a great importance towards helping the students in mastering this skill.

The Indian Industry has seen tremendous growth and it is estimated that at present it is contributing almost 350,000 engineers and 2.5 million university graduates (Sharma, Sangeeta. & Mishra, Binod, 2009) annually to our workforce. Yet at any given time millions of graduates remain unemployable in the country, this happens because due to its competitive edge on global platform Indian industry can ill-afford to hire candidates who would result in lowering of the hiring standards and would have a direct impact on the working within an organization.

Statement of the Problem

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Today's challenging economic situation means that it is no longer sufficient for a fresh graduate to have knowledge of an academic subject; increasingly it is necessary for a student to gain those skills which will enhance their prospects for employment'.

In the present global scenario, in order to compete at workplace with the global workforce, the ability to read, write and speak effectively in English seems to be not just beneficial but also essential. This ability would have a direct impact on the effective display and usage of the employability skills.

Having functional knowledge of English either in the form of reading, writing or speaking further adds value to the Candidates credentials and also aids in maintaining a social position.

For long, Language Teaching in India has laid greater emphasis to listening, reading and writing. In comparison, at workplace, various communicative tasks which a Manager has to perform involve both written and oral skills. Enhancing these require an active usage of LSRW skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) by the learner.

The Management Institutes have time and again incorporated courses in academic curriculum aimed at improving the communication skills of their students. A major concern for the teachers and learners of English as a second Language has been the lack of opportunities and appropriate environment for the students to practice and master their oral communication skills which is compounded further by a heavy volume of courseware/syllabus in other subjects.

Students who can speak grammatically correct English still face a problem in expressing themselves on specific subjects or topics be it banking, marketing, economics, finance, law, Human Resource or medicine etc. because of lack of vocabulary related to the domain subject.

The domain subject faculty in management institutes have usually either criticized or overlooked the linguistic shortcomings of their students because enhancing communication skills and English proficiency has always been considered as the sole responsibility of the language teachers.

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This study has attempted to undergo a dynamic shift in imparting of domain knowledge with an additional objective for the domain faculty. The objective is to make them a part of enhancing the student's English fluency by making changes in their pedagogy.

Literature Review

'Case based method of teaching' involves a variety of communicative exercises in the classroom. The faculty can make class participation of the student an integral part of evaluation (Golich, V. L. et al, 2000). In Case Method, research suggests participation has atleast three components -(a) Participation- reading the materials ahead of time,(b) Speaking- offering insights, observations, analysis, opinions, asking questions and responding to another students' comments ; and (c) Listening- to what others have to say, following the arguments and remembering the points.

There is need for proper objectives to suit the learners of the language and with introduction of new teaching methodologies, one needs to focus on the intended outcome for better results (Depsy Merlin, 2013). One of the main developments that have come into prominence is 'Student Centered learning approach' for optimising language learning outcomes. This approach clearly states that the students project satisfactory outcomes when motivated (Prabha. g, 2013) and this motivation can either be internal or external.

Education system is required to play a role in developing the personal attributes required as part of employability skill by the employers such as loyalty, personal presentation and adaptability in conjunction with communication skills. These skills contribute to productive and harmonious relation between employees and customers (ACCI, 2002)

Feasibility of integrating 'Task Based Language Teaching' (TBLT) as an alternative to the rather less effective, yet widely practiced method known as 'Grammar Translation Method' for the purpose of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) reading comprehension has also been attempted by the practitioners of ELT (English Language Teaching). Teaching through tasks

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and integrating this approach in academic curriculum is an innovative one (Iranmehr, A.et al, 2011).

A variety of 'Activity' based approaches have now evolved over last decade. Of these the latest is that of incorporating multimedia into English Language Classrooms.The role and importance of Internet in language learning especially vocabulary and usage of second language has also found prominence with the practitioners of English Language Teaching (Joycilin, A, S. 2010).The faculty can utilise the presence of advanced technology in everyday life of an adult learner (Mohanty, Seemita. 2013) as an additional aid to supplement regular classes.

Objective of the Study

The present study aims at comparing the traditional teacher centric approach of teaching and student centric approach to enhance oral proficiency of the learner.

1. To study the difference in teacher centric and student centric method of teaching by the domain faculty in Management subjects.

2. To find out the effect of the shift in teaching pedagogy from Lecture Method to Case Method on the use of oral communication by the students.

3. To suggest ways to create opportunities for increasing oral communication of the students for second language acquisition during the teaching of Management subjects.

Data was collected from students pursuing their first year of management course in a reputed Management College in the NCR region where the researcher is presently teaching.

The time period was first semester of the academic year 2013-14 for the above mentioned students.The sample size was of 150 first year students who were enrolled for a management programme in an Institute in NCR.

Theoretical Base

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(a) The two pedagogical arguments proposed for the development of Second Language (L2) were taken as a theoretical base in this study. These were advanced by Ellis Rod(1986) and are as follows:-

1. 'Learners are able to acquire new L2 knowledge as a result of taking part in communication. In the process they pick up knowledge from the input they are exposed to through interaction' and

2. 'Learners need the opportunity to communicate in order to develop fluency. While trying to communicate they develop the strategic competence required to deal with communication problems and at the same time they internalize their existing L 2 knowledge.'

(b) According to a definition by Thomas. G. (2011), the case studies are, "analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods". In Management education the cases used for discussion are based on a variety of business situations which help the learner in understanding the underlying concepts while analysing the scenario in a specific context.

The Research Method

Research was based on primary data and was Exploratory in nature. Structured questionnaire with close ended questions was used for collection of data. The Questionnaire was administered on a selected sample which was getting exposure to conventional lecture based method in some sessions and Case based method of teaching in the other sessions during the semester.

Participation of the students in various oral communicative tasks such as active interaction amongst the students in the classroom, raising and responding to questions and group discussion on the topic were taken into consideration. Besides the time taken by the faculty in speaking in the class and prior preparation on the topic were also considered while preparing the questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Findings

Qualitative analysis was done on the collected data and some of the important findings were as follows:

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The difference between lecture method and case study method has been studied on on six parameters which are - prior reading, active interaction, asking questions, responding to queries, discussion on a topic and total time spent by faculty in interaction. Findings indicate that the case study method shows a higher level of usage, out of all the communicative tasks in comparison to lecture method (Exhibit 1.1)

In both Lecture as well as case methods the opportunities for oral communication for the students has been reported by the students in the class room. But significant variations in the opportunities are created for oral participation of the students in class when there is a shift in teaching pedagogy from Lecture based method to Case based method (Exhibit 1.1).

The researcher has compared the results between these two methods on six parameters which are - prior reading, active interaction, asking questions, responding to queries, discussion on a topic and total time spent by faculty in interaction. Findings indicate that the case study method shows a higher level of usage of all the communicative tasks by the students in comparison to lecture method (Exhibit 1.1)

Under lecture method the first parameter which is 'prior reading' finds acceptance with just 9% of students, whereas under the case method the results indicate that almost 35% of the students go through the reading material before the session. This signifies that for a case discussion, significant number of students read the study material.

In case study as compared to lecture method, the possibility of higher and better level of case discussion with meaningful interaction amongst participants would take place on the topic since prior reading and preparation by the students is considerably higher. Also with a small number of students involved in prior reading in lecture method it is difficult for the faculty to encourage and carry out a meaningful debate on the topic (Exhibit 1.2).

Under the second parameter which is 'active interaction', the variation in student participation between lecture and case methods is once again seen to be leaning significantly

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towards the case method thereby confirming that in case method more opportunities are being created for the participants to speak out.

The third and the fourth parameters in the study are 'asking questions and responding to queries'. In both Lecture and Case methods responding to queries by the students have been observed to be higher than asking questions.

Under the fifth parameter the findings reveal that the total number of students who engage in a 'discussion on the topic' in case method is considerably higher at almost 40% in comparison to the lecture method where the discussion on the topic is almost at 20% only .

The findings of the sixth parameter indicate the time used by the faculty to speak in the class is 56% in lecture method and only 42.1% in the case method. These findings reveal little difference in the amount of time spent by the faculty in speaking in both the teaching pedagogies.

Since the time spent by the faculty in speaking in the classroom is inversely proportional to the time made available for the total number of students for interaction hence findings indicate that in case study almost 60% of the time is available for student participation whereas in lecture-based method only 44% of the time the students could interact. This also indicates that the faculties teaching through lecture have moved away from conventional lecture method which is a positive gain. In order to make the session more interactive the faculties still need to practice the art of engaging maximum students to participate in the class discussion on the given topics.

As is visible in Exhibit 1.2 the faculty in lecture method seems to be interacting less than the conventional one-way lecture method, but here the group interaction on the topic is taking place with very few participants coming prepared with prior reading. Thus there would be very little chance of meaningful interaction on the topic. As compared to this in Exhibit 1.3 the results of Case Method show a higher level of oral communication skills in group and faculty is also giving a lot of time to the students to interact. With the prior reading by the total number

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of students showing positive results the chances of meaningful interaction in a group on the topic would be higher.

Result Discussion and Conclusion

This research was undertaken to find out the ways in which Second Language Acquisition (SLA) can take place in the classroom during the teaching and learning of different management subjects related to Finance, Marketing and Human Resource in a Management Institute through 'Lecture Method' and 'Case Method'

On the basis of the findings and analysis of the research it can be concluded that 'Case study method' as a process and 'cases' as study material, as compared to the lecture method havethe ability to create immense opportunities to communicate among the participants. This method unlike lecture method is highly participatory in nature and will enable the learner to acquire L2 knowledge while acquiring conceptual knowledge in the class.

The constructive approach to learning is the base of student centric teaching. In this method it is believed that learning does not happen solely through 'input' by receiving knowledge from the world. Rather process of learning is experiential in nature and knowledge is created as individuals try and make sense of their 'Experiential' world.

The ethos behind this kind of approach to learning is that student is at the centre of the teaching-learning process. Here the focus is on making the teaching so flexible that students' participation is maximized.

In the Case study method, the 'Case Methodology' provides ample scope for holding discussions on a given topic by involving the learner in thinking actively, analysing critically, raising questions and extracting responses. Thus, while trying to communicate, the learner gets an opportunity to develop fluency and 'strategic competence'. Under the able guidance of a trained faculty the students can be successfully engaged in a discussion to understand the concepts.

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In case method the students are provided with appropriate 'Cases' and additional reading material well in advance which they are required to read and prepare for the session. During class discussion, this preparation will lead to the usage of new vocabulary while the participants would actively use existing L2 knowledge, in presenting of new ideas.

In the conventional lecture method, the teaching pedagogy has always been 'Teacher Centric' with very little or no scope for student interaction. Carrying out a meaningful interaction with maximum participation would be almost impossible due to lack of any formal need on the part of the student or instruction by the faculty for 'prior reading' in a lecture session.

The faculty in this particular sample have supplemented lecture method with additional material of their own choice, because there were no formal directives at the Institute level to introduce interactive tasks. Allocating time out of lecture session to be spent in class discussion depends entirely on the choice of the faculty as was done in this particular sample. Hence in absence of any formal guidelines only those faculty who have the requisite experience in providing 'study material' and handling meaningful discussions amongst maximum participants can successfully undertake this activity.

The faculty led discussions during the lecture would help the students to carry out class interaction but to acquire specific vocabulary and fluency in second language, participants need to be provided with specific and uniform study material for better prior preparation. Since this is not a well-documented, formal method very little uniformity is found in the way these interactions happen in a lecture session.

Case method of teaching as compared to lecture thus turns out to be superior and better organised since a lot of work has already been done on the cases and the teaching notes. Uniform study material is already available for students in the form of 'Cases' prepared by experts, which are 'Information oriented', consist of facts and figures and make an interesting reading for the participants. These cases come with teaching notes and additional reading material which helps the faculty as well as students to prepare systematically for the sessions and also provide better guidance to carry out fruitful discussion in class.

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The findings from the present sample indicated that one of the major reason which might hamper the working of the case method is the inability of the faculty to speak less and have the expertise to motivate the entire group of students in 'prior reading' of the study material and later in engaging them in meaningful discussion with maximum participation. Poor communication skills of the faculty would also be a cause of concern.

For Enhancing Employability skills of the job aspirants in the Management Institutes, they should be trained to master their communication skills and English language while they are pursuing their higher studies. Hence all the stakeholders must work to overcome the drawbacks for a smooth transition from 'Lecture Method' to 'Case Method'.

Some of the common teaching-learning strategies that can be used for creating opportunities to speak in the classroom are:

Simple Strategies/ Methods	Complex Strategies/ Methods
Debates	Simulation
Discussions	Discovery/Enquiry Learning
Asking questions	Problem based learning
Guided Learning	Project based learning
Team work	Case based teaching
Pair work	Teaching with Botanical and Museum Collection
Practical Work	Individual assignments

Table 1-Common teaching-learning strategies

Suggestions for Stakeholders

In order to achieve the goal of providing ample opportunities for communicating in the class for developing English Language fluency without hampering the process of acquiring content knowledge use of 'Case Method' as a teaching pedagogy can be used by the domain faculty instead of lecture method.

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There are a number of student centric methods that develop the habit of preparing a theoretical or conceptual base for the students and prepare them for the class. These methods also helps teachers in preparing sessions around the problems. Through these methods the teacher is able to set a stage for active engagement in the classroom. Once the faculty decides to include the objective of creating opportunities for meaningful interaction in the classroom they can pick different methods and create interest of the students in the learning process.

Listed below are some of the strategies that can give the required results and are thought to be appropriate for the Business Schools:

Inquiry Learning- This type of learning starts when students are presented with questions to be answered, they are given problems to solve, and observations which are to be explained. This 'Inquiry Learning' is part of almost all the learnings such as Project Based, Case Based, Discovery learning or Problem Based Learning. This is the most appropriate method for inexperienced faculty or first-time users of this method.

Problem Based Learning- When the students are provided with a real worlds' problem. Here students are required to work as interns and find solutions to the problems. Which are viable in real life. Here the teachers act as facilitator and helps in the process of looking for solutions. The activities conducted in the class room can vary from group discussions, to mini lectures, to teams sharing their views. This method should be used when students are to be trained on problem solving, team work and lifelong learning.

Project Based Learning and Hybrid Approaches- in this approach the teachers' role as facilitator is to give assignments to the learner which requires that the students perform one or more tasks which would lead to developing of some final product such as a design, a model, a device etc. The final step in the process of this kind of approach is presentation in the form of oral or written report. This method is suitable for courses that deal with process or product design development.

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Case Based Teaching- This method is best used when learning includes decision making in authentic situations. In this kind of inductive teaching method the teacher provides a case study to the students which might be real world situation, historical or hypothetical. The students are required to solve problems based on the information provided and give solutions.

Discovery Learning- This inductive method begins with the process of Enquiry-Based Method wherein the students are asked questions and are required to answer, they are given to solve the problem or observation to explain. This is followed by the student working individually on completing their assigned tasks in order to draw their own conclusions.

Just-in-Time Teaching- Here the students are given assignments to complete on-line before class begins the teacher reads the responses and accordingly plans for the sessions. The assignment to be completed by students and to be uploaded for faculty requires students to go through the text material and find answers to the questions.

Some of the suggestions for the faculty members who would like to use Case method with the dual purpose of Enhancing domain knowledge as well as English proficiency of the learners are as follows:

a) **For the Institutes**

• Curriculum designers, Faculties and students should be sensitised about the gap that exists between the student's communication levels and the expectations of the industry from job aspirants.

• Institutes to take a policy decision to finaliseStudent centric methods of teaching for the students to enhance oral competency.

• The goal of enhancing second language fluency should be given prominent importance to be achieved by the Institutes.

• Faculty Development Programmes to explain the role of teaching pedagogy and how to teach through the chosen pedagogy should be provided.

• Equip the faculty with appropriate reading material, contemporary and relevant cases with case notes and popular web sites.

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- Provide additional aid in the form of infrastructure and equipments such as mikes, camera, language lab, IT facilities such as projector, Internet availability and well equipped library for making the exercise yield better results.

b) For the Curriculum Designers

- Provide guidance for teaching through both the Lecture and student centric method of teaching with additional help to achieve the objective of enhancing communication skills of the students.
- Suggest reading material for the students which is customised, conversational and contemporary for both Lecture and Case methods.
- Resource material should be suggested keeping in mind the level of interaction it would provide to the participants.
- Prepare and provide customised teaching material and teaching notes for lecture method.
- Provide, develop and recommend additional study material such as popular websites, Videos, films etc to the faculties with teaching notes to bring uniformity in teaching material.
- Provide effective evaluation tools to test the conceptual as well as L2 knowledge of the students to the faculties.

c) For the Faculties

- Prepare session plan according to the objectives.
- Prepare lessons according to the teaching notes.
- Provide clear instructions to students about preparing for the class and to give them reading material. The method of evaluating the conceptual knowledge along with English proficiency should be made known to the students in advance.
- Plan and reduce time spent in speaking on the topic and provide time for student interaction to encourage more participation from the students.
- Follow the procedure given in teaching notes and adhere to the timings stipulated in teaching notes for lectures or for cases.
- Give specific instructions to students to prepare for the class in order to enable a meaningful interaction.

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- Creating forums to enhance the reading and writing skills of the students since the present generation is quite tech savvy.

d) For the students

- Commit themselves to developing their second language fluency.

- Prepare for the class discussions, assignments and case analysis by following instructions of the faculty.

- Actively participate in the class discussion by interacting as well as listening to others and utilise every opportunity to enhance knowledge as well as English fluency in the classes.

Limitations

- Due to time constraint the researcher has not studied all the disciplines of Management studies separately. If done, this would have made the research more exhaustive.

- It was not possible for the researcher to check the progress made by the students in their oral communication and hence only opportunities are being taken into consideration.

Tables

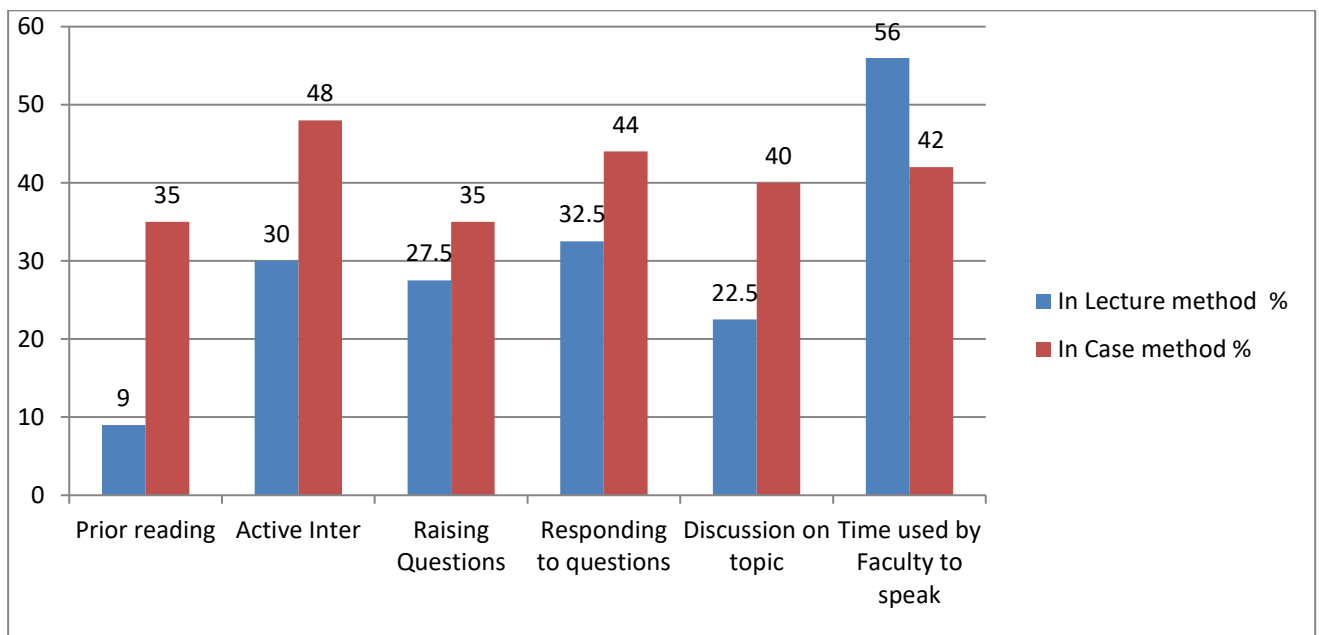1. Difference in communication opportunities with change in pedagogy

Exhibit 1- Difference in communication opportunities with change in pedagogy

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2. Communication tasks carried out by students during lecture method

In Lecture method %

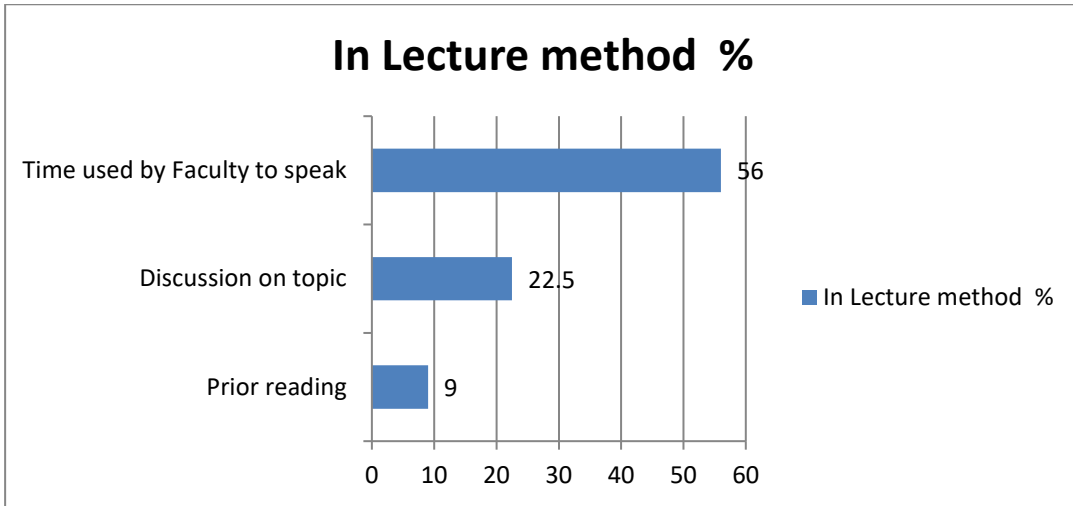|	
Time used by Faculty to speak	56
Discussion on topic	22.5
Prior reading	9

Exhibit 2- Communication tasks carried during lecture method

3. Communication tasks carried out during case method teaching

In Case method %

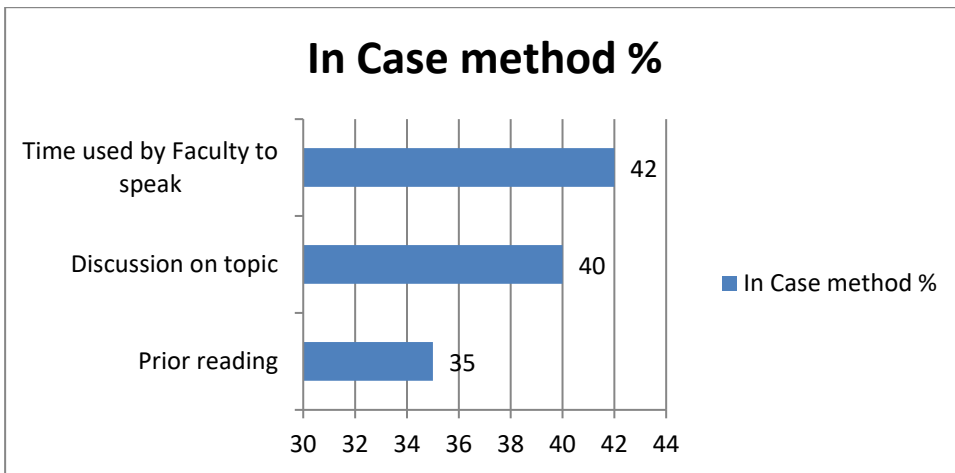|	
Time used by Faculty to speak	42
Discussion on topic	40
Prior reading	35

Exhibit 3-Communication tasks carried out during case method teaching

4. Comparitive display of 6 major communicative tasks used during lecture method by students

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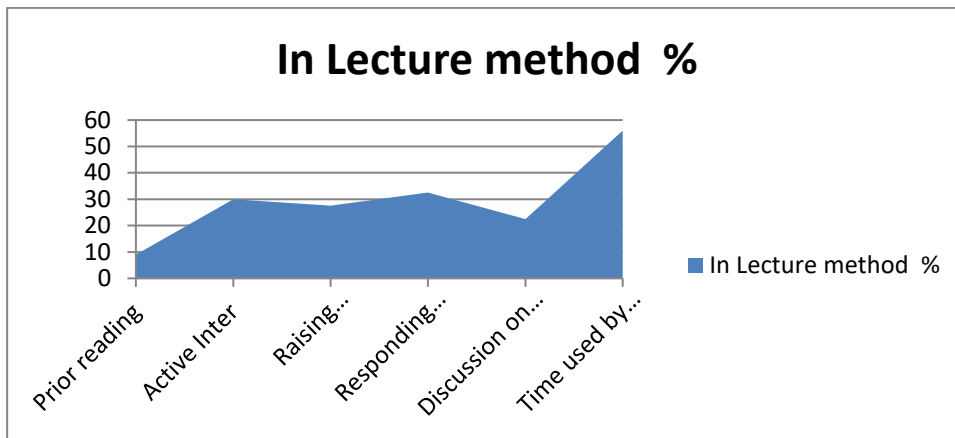Proficiency in Management Institutes   459

Exhibit 4-Comparitive display of 6 major communicative tasks used during lecture method by students

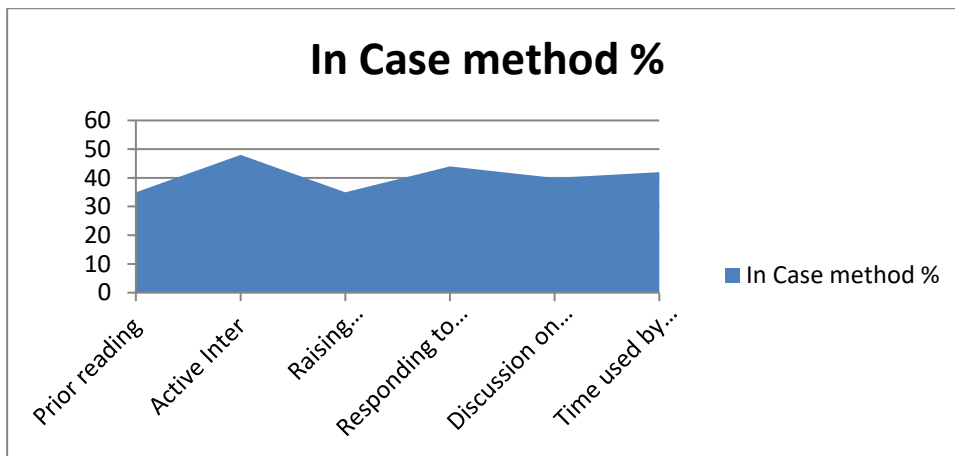5. Comparative display of 6 major communicative tasks used during case method by students

Exhibit 5- Comparative display of 6 major communicative tasks used during case method by students

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