The Impact of the Use of the Language Laboratory on the Development of the Students' Speaking Skills:

An Empirical Study[*]

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Abstract

The current research aims at discovering the impact, of the use of the two strategies audio/tape recorder and audiovisual/ video tape in the language laboratory7 on the development of the students' speaking skills at the department of English/Teachers College/ University of Mosul. The sample consists of 36 students (12 males and 24 females) who have been selected from among third year students during the first

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course of the academic year 1997-1998. The speaking skills test has been prepared by the researchers themselves depending on-previous studies and researches so as to test the hypotheses. The findings show significant statistical differences between the first experimental group and the second experimental group in the speaking skills rest for the benefit of the second group in comprehension, grammar and pronunciation. This indicates that the audiovisual strategy is an effective means in teaching conversation.

Introduction

The process of teaching English as a foreign language is supposed to encourage more communication, among; learners, and less dominance on the part of teachers (Holden : 1979 , p. 134) .So, it needs new strategies and orientation that intends to create a successful learner of an FL.' Moreover, the attitude towards learning English as one of the main school subjects, encourages the people concerned to put more efforts in this respect and to deal with language differently. Such a view as Carrol (19745:, p. 2) identifies, is determined v mainly, by learners1 attitude, general intelligence., perseverance, quality of instruction and opportunity for learning (Cited in Grittner: 1974- p. 2) which determine success in learning an FL. This is on one hand. On the

other hand, a teacher of an FL should keep in mind that TEFL is a rather complex and difficult task. The set objectives cannot be brought about by merely adopting a single method. This is so, because as Corder states: "if we could learn a second language in the way we learned, our mother tongue, all our problems would at an end " (1%6, p. 7). Hence, the new orientation of TEFL should be focussed on the development of those methods and strategies that are intended to create a successful learner of an FL.

The Significance of the Study:

The current research deals in particular with TEFL. It is an attempt to identify the most effective media or equipment for TEFL in the LL namely the tape-recorder or the video-tape. Moreover, it meets our needs which has been the major part and psychologists concern during the past two decades (Rivers: 1993, p. 2). The study can be considered relevant to bridge the gap of previous researches concerning the assessment of speaking skills.

The Problem to be Investigated

Within the Iraqi context, the process of TEFL is generally viewed as unsatisfactory especially in terms of teachers' teaching spoken

English rather than written English. Furthermore, there is noticeable gap between the actual teaching of spoken Lansuaae in the departments of English and the requirements for developing speaking skills.

Aims of the Study

As Adam (1963), Stack and Lee (1966) and Lango (1986) focus the salient role of LL in the process of TEFL, which has been our emphasis to arrive at the following aims:

• to probe the most effective strategy used by teachers .

• to identify the way the whole operation of developing students' speaking skill is managed.

• to know how and why LL should be installed .

The Hypotheses

1. There is no significance statistical difference between the mean scores of the development of the first experimental group (i.e. taught by audio aid "tape recorder" in the LL) in the total speaking skill test.

2. There is no significance statistical difference between the mean scores of the development of the   first   experimental   group (i.e. taught by audiovisual aid "video tape" in die LL) in the total speaking skill test,

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3. There is no significance statistical difference between the mean scores of the first and second experimental groups in the total speaking skill test,

4. There is no significance statistical difference between the mean scores of the development of the two experimental groups in the comprehension domain of the speaking skill test.

5. There is no significance statistical difference between the mean scores of the development of the two experimental groups in the grammar domain of the speaking skill test.

6. There is no significance statistical difference between die mean scores of the development of the two experimental groups in the fluency domain of the speaking skill test.

7. There is no significance statistical difference between the mean scores of the development of the two experimental groups in the pronunciation domain of the speaking skill test.

Limits of the Study

The present study is limited to the investigation of spoken language in the language laboratory of the third year students/ department of English/Teachers College/University of Mosul/ durins

the academic year 1997-1998. The choice of materials is based on its suitability to cover the four sub-skills of speaking (comprehension/ grammar/fluency pronunciation). These materials are taken from the prescribed textbook on conversation.

Definition of Basic Terms

- Language laboratory is a technology which uses a combination of tape-recorders, films and records (Kauffman: 1963, p. 40).

- LL is a place where students can listen to the material, authentic English of native speakers and try to. imitate it (Lengo:1986, p. 42).

The Theoretical Survey

The Role of Teaching Aids in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning:

Whiting (1988, p. 252) states that teaching is a traditional activity with a main objective to impart information , knowledge, creativity and understanding. Teachers on their part promote language development by providing learners with frequent opportunities to listen to and speak the language in various conversational settings. As far learning is concerned. Psychologists consider the process of learning the establishment of a set of neutral and muscular habits so as to enable

automatic functioning (Brooks: 1960, p. 21). Moreover, language teaching in contrary to" other objects as it requires well-constructed and programmed materials to achieve certain objectives (Filipovic: 1972, p. 15). In response, language teachers are now hurrying to equip their LLs and classroom with videos equipment and to experiment with the best methods for incorporating foreign video materials into their teaching (Altman: 1989, p. V).

The Language Laboratory Movement

In the light of the changes which have taken place in the world over the last two decades, the purpose and methods of teaching and learning modern foreign FLs need now to be reviewed. Kingi in his research entitled "The History of Language Laboratories-Origin and Establishment", 1995 discusses the LL case and states that it was Edison's invention of the tin foil phonograph in 1877 that made the first LLs possible. In U.S.A., the LLs were given impetus by funds provided when the National Defence Education Acts was passed in 1958. Then, various types of LLs appeared (Rivers: 1982, p. 6). In Britain, LLs came into use early in 1960s (Strevens: 1977, p. 157) and the first LL was installed in the early Technical College 1961 (Lamb: 1967, p. 49). In Iraq, LL movements started in 1960's when Baahdad College

installed some form of LLs, In the early-1970's, the College of Arts of Baghdad University installed two sophisticated LLs. Later, another two LLs were set up in the same college. The Iraqi Ministry of Education has also begun installing different types of LLs in Secondary Schools (AL-Algawi: 1987, p.15).

Review of Literature

1. Lorge (1962) hypothesized that (1) learners who learned language in the LL learned more than those who learned language outside the LL, (2) learners who studied by using LL gained higher grades than others especially in understanding conversation and listening domains. She arrived in conclusion with a sample of 713 males that the experimental group gained better linguistic skills acquisition than the control group.

2. AL-Algawi (1987) investigated "The Effect of the Use of the Language Laboratories on Pupils' Oral Competence", through using two instructional methods/namely a traditional approach and an LL approach. The results showed that the mean score of the control group as higher than that of the experimental group. Furthermore, the range of variation among subjects in the experimental group had relatively widened.

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3. Altman's research (1989) "Video Outside the Classroom" showed that the use of video in the LL could provide an environment in which students could take full advantage if careful planning was available.

4. Koerner (1991) carried out a study entitled %i Making Optimal Use of the language Laboratory "to facilitate the learning of FL. The equipment included videotape recorders, audio cassette recorders, microcomputers and printers. The results showed that students' enjoyment in such facility had encouraged learners to bring various audio and audiovisual equipment not only o LL but also to the classroom.

5. De Porto (1997) investigated the developing of the speaking skills by creating situations for EFL courses. The results showed that simulations became, to a certain extent, 'the spinal cord of the course in which functions, patterns, vocabulary and even culture could be a new identity.

Method of Research

The study has been built on the pretest-posttest equivalent groups design. So, the researchers has chosen the experimental design in which two experimental groups construct the experiment of the research. This is so because as Van Dalen (1979, p. 280) states "when

full experimental control cannot be achieved, the researcher can use quasi-experimental designs that provide partial control . The sample consists of (36) students as in the table below:

Number of Students in the Experimental Groups

Groups	Mate	Female	Total
A experimental	6	6	18
B exoerimental	6	12	18
Total Number	12	24	36

The Prescribed Teaching Materials

• The 1-5 units of the book " People You Meet BBC English by Radio and Television ", 1979.

• The second six units of section (B.) of the textbook " Penguin Elementary Speaking Skills'" by Stephen Kirby and Key , 1989.

• "ETC Program. A Competency Based-Listening/Speaking Book 6: Issues and Answers" by Elaine Kim and Leslie F. Darmek, 1989 textbook prescribed for teaching conversation.

Behavioural Objectives

They are set according to Bloom's and -Valette's educational objectives which have been quoted   from the first six units prescribed for teaching conversation during the experiment.

Instructional Programme

According to the audiovisual and audio method in the LL for the two experimental groups, the programme was presented to a group of sports specialized in education and methodology.

The Speaking Skill Test (SS Test)

It was prepared by the researcher herself depending on previous studies and experienced teachers of conversation in English. Moreover, in the present study, the validity of the test has been confirmed through its presentation to a panel of experts . The split-half reliability method has been used. This was done by separating odd-and even-numbered items (Van Dalen: 1979, p. 139 and Harris: 1969, p. 15). Thus, the SS Test was given to 36 third year students (sample of the experiment) at the Dept. of English/ Teachers College/University of Mosul. Moreover, Pearson Correlation coefficient with Spearman Brown Prophecy formula (Ferguson: 1979, p. 113-438) has been used.

The Experiment

The experiment started on the 25th of Oct. 1997 with a pretest in SS Test firstly given to the two groups simultaneously. Then, the lecturer started teaching conversation to both groups , following the procedure of teaching (audio'/ audiovisual). It lasted ten weeks and was stopped on 5th Jan. 1998. On the 10th of Jan. 1998 , a posttest was carried out with them. Hence , the experiment was completed.

The Findings

The findings show significant statistical difference between the two groups in the SS Test for the benefit of the second experimental group (i.e B Experimental Group that has been taught by using the audio-visual aid 'Video-tape") in the comprehension, grammar and pronunciation domains.Whereasin the first experimental group (i.e A experimental group that has been taught by using the audio aid "recorder") significant statistical differences have been calculated in the fluency domain. Likewise,'"tile LL is a good tool for developing students' soeakinn skills.

Recommendations

- As LL is primarily an aid to develop speaking skills , it will benefit teachers most if they concentrate on these skills during their time in the LL.

- Since learning is an active process, language learners should not be passive audience.

- A LL should be opened several hours a day for listening and practicing with pleasure.

Suggestions

The researcher suggests several studies such as:

• The Impact of the Use of the Language Laboratory on the Students' ability to Translate.

• The Impact of the Use of the Language Laboratory on the Students' Writing Skills.

• The Impact of the Use of other strategies on the development of the Students' Speaking Skills.

• Students' Attitudes Towards the Use of the Language Laboratory in TEFL in the University of Mosul.

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ملخص

أثر استخدام مختبر اللغة على تطوير المهارات الكلامية للطلبة
– دراسة تجريبية –

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يهدف البحث الحالي إلى تحديد أثر استخدام ستراتيجيتين: الأولى سمعية متمثلة بآلة التسجيل والثانية سمعية بصرية متمثلة بجهاز الفيديو في مختبر اللغة على تطوير المهارات الكلامية لطلبة قسم اللغة الإنكليزية/ كلية المعلمين/ جامعة الموصل. تكونت عينة البحث من 36 طالباً (12 ذكور و 24 إناث) ممن تم اختيارهم من بين طلبة السنة الثالثة وخلال الفصل الدراسي الأول للعام الدراسي 1997-1998. تمّ إعداد اختبار المهارات الكلامية من قبل الباحثين اعتمادا على الدراسات والبحوث السابقة بغية اختبار الفرضيات. تظهر النتائج وجود فوارق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين المجموعة التجريبية الأولى والمجموعة التجريبية الثانية لصالح المجموعة التجريبية الثانية في مجالات الاستيعاب والنحو والتلفظ. يظهر هذا فعالية الستراتيجية السمعية البصرية كوسيلة لتدريس مادة المحادثة.

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