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Using a Multimedia-Based Program to Developing Student English Language Speaking Fluency Skills in Sokoto State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of using a multimedia-based program for developing EFL speaking fluency skills in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The sample of the present study consisted of thirty in senior secondary schools in Sokoto state. The study sample was taught using the multimedia-based program. The tool of the present study was an EFL speaking fluency test with a rubric for assessing the participants' performance. The test was applied to the study sample before using the multimedia-based program in order to measure the level of the participants in EFL speaking fluency skills. Then, the test was re-applied after using the program. Results of the study revealed that the study sample's EFL speaking fluency skills were developed after using the program. Accordingly, the multimedia-based program was found to be effective in developing EFL speaking fluency skills among second year student teachers.

Keywords: EFL speaking fluency - multimedia.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching speaking skills has become increasingly important in English as a second language due to the large number of learners who want to use English spontaneously and freely for communicative purposes. Recently, English language speaking skill has begun to be taken seriously. Previously, it seemed to be assumed that the student would just learn this skill somehow in the general process of learning English as a second language in secondary schools. It seemed reasonable to think that the student would acquire this skills while learning to write, read and listen. However, this process does not seem to produce the desired results. The need for speaking mastery in English has been increased due to the strengthening position of English as a language for national and international communication. It has become apparent that students of English as a second language have considered themselves good and successful learners if they can communicate fluently and effectively in English. (Graves, 2008; Nazara, 2011). At present, the ability to speak English fluently has become a must, especially for English Language students. According to Derwing, Rossiter, Munro and Thomson (2004, p. 661) fluency is considered an important characteristic of second language speech for a variety of reasons. English Language learners' need to speak fluently range from a mere desire to feel confident when talking to others in English, to an urgent need to pass a language test of spoken English. Regardless of the reasons, teachers and researchers of English as a

second language should place greater emphasis on fluency through finding new ways to incorporate fluency-enhancing methods and activities in their classroom teaching. Recently, technology has brought a drastic change in the world and now is revolutionizing education. Technological innovations are providing a range of possible solutions that can develop teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The incorporation of recent technologies in traditional face-to-face classrooms has changed the way people teach and learn. Consequently, using multimedia-based programs in traditional English Language classes has revealed to be a powerful teaching medium (Harstell & Yuen, 2006; Shephard, 2003) as it proved to be a successful technological medium to grab the students' attention and motivate them to learn, in addition to be able to present authentic situations that the students will not have the opportunity to see in real life situations.

The infusion of multimedia in English Language instruction has considerably changed the way teachers teach and students learn. According to Kurt (2011, p. 185), the incorporation of multimedia programs in traditional learning environments has widely benefited learning and teaching. This incorporation has increased active participation among students, fostered the quality of the learning outcome and offered opportunities for learners to have control over their learning time and place. The multimedia-based programs include some multimedia instructional materials such as, graphics, videos and audios.

It has been argued that using multimedia-based programs in EFL speaking classes can provide the students with valuable resources to compliment their studies and enhance their speaking fluency skills. The multimedia instructional material used in this study is the instructional online and offline videos. This instructional material helps the students to learn according to their own paces and abilities. Moreover, the students can stop, rewind, pause, and re-start the video according to their own needs. On a more practical level, the instructional videos allow the students to catch up if they miss traditional face-to-face sessions. (Brotherton, & Abowd, 2004; Hermann, Hurst, & Welte, 2006).

Statement of Problems

In spite of the importance of English Language speaking fluency skill for English Language students, reluctance to participate freely and spontaneously in oral activities is clearly observed in several students' behaviours. English language learners show little interest in the oral activities, also they rarely asked questions when they do not understand anything during the class. The following are the research objectives, which is to find:

- (i.) The English Language speaking fluency skills required for secondary students.
- (ii.) To what extent do English Language speaking fluency skill reach.
- (iii.) The form of the multimedia-based program to be use
- (iv.) The effectiveness of using a multimedia-based program in developing some English Language speaking fluency skill.

Literature Review

English Language speaking skill is important for communication in English Language classrooms. In learning to speak, there are two main goals: accuracy and fluency. Both accuracy and fluency, in English Language speaking classes, are of equal importance. However, language teachers and researchers have always considered accuracy the most important oral ability. Their students are always asked to focus on the elements of correct phonology, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse. (Brown, 2001, p. 8). Thus, accuracy has long been considered more important than fluency. According to Gosuch (2011, p. 5), underestimating speaking fluency skills in English Language classes has hindered the students' achievement in English.

1) English Language speaking fluency:

Learners of English as a second language always give a high priority to speaking as the most important characteristic of language learning. Every learner wishes to be able to communicate orally using the language in real situations. So, if the students find themselves with no opportunity to learn how to use the language freely and spontaneously, they may lose interest in learning. However, classroom observations in English Language speaking classes have revealed that the primary focus of English Language teachers was always on reading and writing skills, rather than on speaking and listening. It is possible, therefore,

that a lack of instruction focused on fluency development can cause problematic matters for students in English Language classes. (Derwing, Murray, & Thomson, 2008; Glover, 2011).

Speaking fluency is an initial and important goal in language teaching. Fluency represents a major element in judging speakers' ability and proficiency in English Language classes. Koponen and Riggenbach (2000, p. 8) 6 asserted that "fluency in language assessment is comparable to continuity, smoothness, or evenness of speech without extreme breaks or hesitations". Accordingly, English Language fluency instruction needs to be dealt with as an essential part of learners' development.

English Language speaking fluency skill were categorized, according to (Badr, 2008; Romero, 2006; Smith, 2003; Zhang, 2009), as: speaking at a normal speed without stumbling over words and sounds with perfect English, conveying the speaker's message in an easy, clear, and understandable way, using a simple language that suits the listener's level, producing comprehensible sentences with no major complications, exposing ideas calmly and spontaneously, arguing persuasively, organizing the oral production both cognitively and physically, manifesting a certain number of hesitations, pauses, backtracking and corrections, and using gap-fillers correctly.

A major issue that continues to challenge language instructors and researchers is how to ensure that learners can develop and foster their English Language speaking fluency skills. Widiati and Cahyono (2006, p. 271) illustrated that English Language students need to feel they are able to use the language in real situations as it represents an intrinsic motivation for them. They added that there are certain features that may arouse the speakers' interest and attention to use the language spontaneously, these features are: (1) topic: the topic of the lesson must be of interest and importance for the students in order to be able to capture their interest and attention; (2) visual focus: it is much easier for the students to concentrate on thinking about something if they can see that something or at least some depicted or symbolic representation of it, sight is an extremely powerful and demanding sense; (3) open ended: a task that is open-ended allows lots of students' responses during English Language speaking classes;

(4) information-gaps: it is true that the transmission of new ideas from one participant to another does occur in most real time language-based transactions, and when this factor is built into a classroom language learning situation, it will be a challenge to add purpose and authenticity to the learning environment. Videos were found to decrease the gap that may be found during English speaking classes.

Consequently, some researchers attempted investigating speaking fluency skills trying to improve them among students of English using different approaches, strategies, and techniques. For example: Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010) explored the impact of role play on fostering the speaking fluency and accuracy among English Language students. English Language sophomores studying in different universities in the city of Ilam-Iran constituted the intended population. Out of this population, 60 learners were randomly drawn for the purpose of the study. Every participant was placed in experimental and control groups according to their scores from the top to the bottom. To measure the participants' speaking ability, the study has utilized English Language speaking as a pre- and post-test. The results revealed that role-play was practically shown to be an effective and fruitful activity for English learning courses in general and for English Language speaking fluency and accuracy in particular.

Kessler (2010) compared characteristics of fluency in student audio journals recorded in a laboratory setting with those recorded using mobile audio devices. Forty undergraduate university students recorded weekly audio journals for a 10-week term. The frequency of preferred recording environment was observed. Two independent raters assigned rank scores to the students' volume, pausing, utterance length, and rate in relation to the observable influence of anxiety upon fluency in order to determine if there is a significant difference between fluency in these two environments. Results of the study revealed that audio journal recorded was found to be effective in developing speaking fluency skills among university students.

Bahrani (2011) aimed at investigating the effectiveness of exposure to audio/visual mass media in developing speaking fluency. To achieve this purpose, a sample speaking test was administered to one hundred language learners in Iran which is an English Language context and one hundred language learners in Malaysia which is an English Language context. Then, forty participants from each context were selected. During the experiment, English Language participants had exposure to audio/visual mass

media while the English Language participants had exposure to social interaction. At the end, both groups took another sample speaking test. The results showed that the English Language group performed better which proved that exposure to technology promotes speaking fluency.

Dincer, Yesliyurt and Takkac (2012) investigated the effect of autonomy supportive climates on English Language learners' achievement in speaking fluency. 55 Turkish university students participated in this study as the study sample. The study tools were a questionnaire, a perceived competence scale, an engagement question and demographic questions. The results of the study showed that autonomy-supportive instructor behaviours were positively correlated with students' development in English Language speaking fluency skills.

2) The Multimedia-based Program:

Recently, English language courses that combines face-to-face traditional learning with the applications of technologies, in particular computer-assisted language learning (CALL) have been found to promote foreign language learning effectively. These courses can give students flexibility to work independently, at their own pace in order to promote English language acquisition. (Graham, 2006; Singh, 2003). With the use of multimedia-based programs in English Language speaking classes, the availability of a variety of media technologies allows users to use certain multimedia instructional materials such as: online and offline instructional videos available at different educational sites, download certain videos and audios, as well as record audio and video files in a reasonably short amount of time leading to increased use of multimedia instructional videos in learning environments. (Odhabi & Nicks-McCaleb, 2009, p. 330).

The incorporation of a multimedia-based program in traditional English Language learning environments has proved to offer opportunities for providing pedagogically sound activities for developing speaking fluency. The importance of using multimedia instructional videos lies in the teacher's ability in preparing students to receive the message of the video. In addition to, providing creative ideas with different purposes to enhance English Language speaking fluency. Some teachers use traditional-based activities to promote the students' fluency skills, rather than incorporating multimedia with its online or downloadable instructional videos as a powerful tool for developing speaking Fluency (King, 2002; Lin, 2000). New learning and teaching approaches have suggested that teachers of English as a foreign language should encourage their students to use technological innovations within EFL speaking classes using every available technique such as: cell phones, digital cameras, computers, projectors, and televisions.

The use of instructional video as a multimedia material in English Language speaking classes clarified a number of interesting patterns. First, it is evident that the purposes for and manner in which instructional video has been used in teaching English Language speaking has changed, instructional video have proved themselves to be a flexible medium which is adaptable in both form and function. Second, technological innovations have also influenced the educational environment; the teacher in his/her speaking classes should have much more information about the instructional videos. Moreover, instructional videos have certain characteristics, they represent lasting records, they can be collected, edited and recombined, and finally they sustain a set of practices that are very different from traditional teaching. (Brophy, 2008, p. 22)

Some researchers investigated the effectiveness of using instructional videos as a multimedia material in English Language teaching and learning. For example, Hwang (2005) illustrated that Video provides; (1) simultaneous audio/visual input, and (2) complete and contextualized conversations, and thus proves to be a rich vehicle in foreign language instruction. The instructional videos created to promote English language learning, is particularly outstanding in that it contains captivating storyline, true-to-life scenarios, on-location scenes, various social interactions, realistic yet easy-to-follow linguistic and cultural information, as well as high-quality filming and acting. Viewing these videos, learners observe social, cultural, and discursal conventions, and even go through a range of emotional experiences along with the characters. Results of the study revealed that the multimedia video material develops the students' understanding of English-specific ways of thinking, of lexical/syntactic choices, and of formulaic expressions.

Yang, Chen and Jeng (2010) examined the effect of integrating video-capture virtual reality technology into physically interactive learning environment for English learning. The learning activities comprised

six stages, holding specific tasks and learning objectives. The system consists of five functional modules, such as providing an interface for teachers to incorporate appropriate learning materials according to their specific teaching requirements. An empirical study was conducted to examine the effect of the use of the PILE system by comparing two different types of English learning methods with 60 English Language university students in Taiwan. Four different tools were used to assess the different aspects of the system. The results demonstrated that the proposed PILE system effectively developed English learning in a classroom environment.

Liu (2011) aimed at exploring the use of video lesson modules in a teaching methodology course to prepare preservice teachers for supporting the English-language development of pupils at K-8 schools. The basic material of a lesson module was a video lesson featuring instruction of an experienced classroom teacher in an English-language development setting of a local school district. A total of 112 preservice teachers, enrolled in a teaching methodology course of two consecutive semesters, participated in this study. After the participants used the lesson modules as part of the methodology course required in the credential program, they provided feedback by completing a survey. The results indicated that high reliability exists in the application of the materials for different groups of participants who admitted benefiting the most in application of English-language development instructional strategies.

METHODOLOGY

The research will use the following tool in order to fulfil its purpose:

An English Language speaking fluency test to measure students' fluency skills with a rubric to be used as a rating scale.

Validity of the Test:

To validate the English Language speaking fluency test in its preliminary form, it will be submitted to experts. They were requested to judge the test face validity in terms of clarity, instruction and suitability for the students' level. Lecturers from Education and English Departments of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, were involved in the validation of the instrument which they indicated that the test guidelines were clear and appropriate. Yet, they suggested some modifications and noticed some errors which the researcher had to correct. Finally, they indicated that the test appeared to be a valid measure of EFL speaking fluency skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before the implementation of the multimedia-based program, most of the students were found to have lack in their EFL speaking fluency skills and they face problematic matters in their EFL speaking fluency skills. In addition, they showed little interest in the oral activities. However, after the implementation of the program, the study sample made notable gains in EFL speaking fluency skills with its four sub-skills. Their errors were decreased resulting in an increase in EFL speaking performance. These gains might be attributable to the use of the multimedia-based program. The incorporation of recent technology within the traditional classroom environment had helped the students learn according to their own abilities, pace and attitudes. The positive feedback of the teacher also helped the study sample to reduce their speaking anxiety and learn to take personal command of their own development in EFL speaking skills.

Thus, it is concluded that the multimedia-based program was effective in developing second year, Faculty of Education, English section students' EFL speaking fluency skills.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the delimitations as well as the findings of the study, the following conclusions can be imbedded. The study sample showed a great development in EFL speaking fluency skills with its four sub-skills (Organize the oral production both cognitively and physically, Manifest a certain number of hesitations, pauses, backtracking and corrections, Use gap-fillers correctly, and Produce language spontaneously without interlocutors) Consequently, it can be concluded that the multimedia-based program was found to be effective in developing EFL speaking fluency skills among secondary school students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The multimedia-based program should be implemented in teaching EFL speaking skills to English section students.
2. More attention should be paid to EFL speaking skills as these skills are very important for the, English section students. Certain courses should be taught in order to enhance the students' speaking skills.
3. EFL university instructors should encourage their students to apply the multimedia-based program in their micro-teaching sessions.
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4. EFL university instructors should clarify the importance of EFL speaking fluency skills to their students. Besides, they should illustrate the importance multimedia-based program as it offers chances to keep up with the recent EFL approaches.
5. EFL university instructors should give their students time for self-assessment and self-monitoring. Accordingly, the students will become less anxious and more motivated in speaking classes.

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