

Incorporating Digital Aids for Promoting Public Speaking Skills

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ABSTRACT— *This research aims at investigating the effectiveness of using multimedia in a face-to-face task based education background. Main research questions were asked: (1) To what extent will students' public speaking skills be improved? (2) To what extent will students' attitudes towards giving oral presentation be changed? (3) To what extent can this be applied to other subjects and learning areas? The study sample consisted of higher diploma students with different specializations divided into experimental and control groups. A training course and two assessment methods were administrated. A multi-trait data collection method was applied (both qualitative and quantitative). There were significant differences between the control and experimental group. Pedagogical implications of the study have been discussed.*

Keywords— public speaking skills, self-monitoring, task-based learning, multimedia, videos

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching Public Speaking is a challenging undertaking for teachers. When learners are asked to express themselves in front of the whole class, many of them become stressful. They are reluctant to speak in the classroom, for they are afraid of making mistakes. They tend to focus more on the faults that they would make than on the whole speaking performance experience. They fear that their classmates and friends would laugh at them, or they are simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts (Ur, 2011; Bowman, 1989). Emotional variables such as stress, anxiety and shyness could discontinue students from speaking confidently in class. In order to remediate the problem, it has been suggested that a speaking performance needs to be prepared for as well as scaffolding. Scaffolding means a supporting framework to facilitate learning (Jones, 2006; Nunan, 2004). One way is by utilizing digital aids or multimedia such as videos which contain examples or models of speeches, oral presentations or stories, for they have been effective in promoting learning (Richards, 2006; Warschauer, 1996). The language input presented in videos provides support for students (Taylor, 2009). Face-to-face instruction alone might hinder students in refining their communication abilities. Integration of technology specifically video is necessary to examine its value in monitoring their L2 speech progress.

To examine the efficacy of the incorporation of digital aids especially video in a face-to-face task based instructional setting, to the higher diploma students with diverse concentrations in Omani higher education was the aim of this scholarship. The outcomes show that using video is effective in developing students' communicative skills in public. Self- monitoring and reflection were two important fundamentals of the study.

2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

2.1 Second Language Acquisition Theory

One of the primary goals of task-based language teaching and learning is the enhancement of oral presentation skills of students. This study was based on the succeeding identified hypotheses of Krashen's (1982) Second Language Acquisition theory:

2.1.1 Acquisition-learning Hypothesis

“Acquisition” and “learning” are the ways in which adult second language learners are adopting the target language. “Acquisition” is a subconscious and intuitive process of creating the system of the language. On the other hand, “learning” is a process in which learners focus on form, figure out the rules and become aware of their own process.

2.1.2 Monitor Hypothesis

Monitor is a device to monitor or edit the learner’s output. It is supposed to be accountable for editing, making correction consciously. In addition, such explicit and purposeful learning should be avoided for it may hamper the acquisition process. Monitoring should be activated only once fluency has been established.

2.1.3 Natural Order Hypothesis

Learners acquire the language rules in a predictable or “natural” order. Language features that are the easiest to state are not always the first to be acquired.

2.1.4 Input Hypothesis

“Comprehensible input” is the only true cause of second language acquisition. An important condition for language acquisition to occur is that learners understand language input that contains structures a bit beyond their current level of competence.

2.1.5 Affective Filter Hypothesis

“Affective filter” is a metaphorical barrier that inhibits learners from acquiring language even when the appropriate input is accessible. “Affect” refers to the feelings, motives, needs, attitudes and emotional states. The best acquisition will occur in an environment where anxiety is low and defensiveness absent. A learner who is anxious may ‘filter out’ the input, making it unreachable for acquisition.

The theory of Krashen (1982) evidently supported this scholarship. The use of video extracts in teaching and in giving feedback to students manifested the five hypotheses. Language input presented in the video extracts helped the students to acquire speaking skills a little beyond their acquired competence. Students replaying their recorded performances made them monitor their mistakes. Affective variables played a big part before, during and after their respective oral presentations.

2.2 Self-monitoring

Student self-monitoring is an effective instrument for improving speech performances. According to Loftin, Gibb, & Skiba (2005), self-monitoring has two components, measurement and evaluation: that is, the student (1) measures and records his own behavior (measurement), and then (2) compares that recorded behavior to a pre-determined standard (evaluation).

Self-monitoring is a skill that Public speaking learners must be equipped with. A learner who is able to monitor his speech act means he is motivated and willing to adjust to become a better performer. He does not only focus on what to say but also on how he would say. He contemplates on his strengths and weaknesses as well.

Krashen (1982) enumerates three types of language learners with regard to ‘monitor’ use. He distinguishes those learners that use the 'monitor' all the time (over-users); those learners who have not learned or who prefer not to use their conscious knowledge (under-users); and those learners that use the 'monitor' appropriately (optimal users). An evaluation of the person's psychological profile can help to determine to what group they belong. Usually extroverts are under-users, while introverts and perfectionists are over-users. Lack of self-confidence is frequently related to the over-use of the "monitor."

A teacher is accountable for teaching his learners self-monitoring strategies, of using cognitive skills to ponder on post-performance. Both teacher and learner must sit together and talk about the factors that could be improved, to keep track of what works and what does not work. A learner must not rely solely on a teacher for feedback. When he gains control over his own learning, he becomes more confident and develop a capacity to self-regulate his performance, and as a result he may become a skilled autonomous performer (Thornbury, 2005, Jones, 1996). In this study, the focus was to have optimal users, learners who monitor themselves properly. They felt better armed to self-monitor and self-correct spoken language in order to deal with challenges linked with talking in class.

Chang (2007) investigated the effects of a self-monitoring strategy on web-based language learning. Both students' academic performance and their motivational beliefs were investigated. The interaction between the use of a self-monitoring strategy and the level of learners' English proficiency was also examined. It was found that students who applied the self-monitoring strategy outperformed students who did not apply the self-monitoring strategy on both academic performance and motivational beliefs regardless of their English proficiency level; and (2) the influence of self-

monitoring was greater on the lower English level students than on the higher English level students. The positive findings suggest that encouraging students to develop self-monitoring could help increase the success of online learning. Several self-monitoring strategies had been utilized such as telling the learners the behavioral expectations, presenting the rating scale, and choosing a monitoring schedule.

Samuel (2010) described her experience of using pronunciation pegs, a method to foster the self-monitoring and self-correction of pronunciation mistakes with a view to helping university-level students deal with the ongoing challenge of producing target-like pronunciation. She was able to reflect on what makes adopting target pronunciation problematic, how pegs can be adapted to various learning styles, and how cultural differences can have an effect on the appreciation of pegs.

Wang & Chang (2011) used portfolios to assess Taiwanese students' English speaking performances (ESP). Students utilized their own learning portfolios to do learning assessment and self-correction. The researcher administered speaking evaluation forms and the PRCA-24 as the instruments. The PRCA-24 was used to assess students' communication apprehension and was analyzed by t-test. The research showed that using a portfolio is effective in improving ESP. It reduced students' communication apprehension through self-monitoring their ESP.

Samuel (2010), Wang & Chang (2011) and this study validated the importance of self-monitoring in speech presentations. Samuel (2010) focused on students correcting their pronunciation while in this paper, it was only one of the factors to be measured and evaluated. Wang & Chang (2011) asked students to utilize their own learning portfolios to do learning assessment and self-correction while in this study, students used their video recordings and compared them with the criteria presented and expounded on the pre-speaking activity.

Pellerin (2014) examined how the use of mobile technologies (iPods and tablets) in language classrooms contributes to redesigning task-based approaches for young Canadian language learners. The outcomes defined how the use of mobile technologies such as iPods and tablets contributed to reshaping language tasks and activities by assisting young learners to fashion their own learning environment and meaningful language tasks, as well as self-assess and regulate their language learning process.

2.3 The Use of Multimedia: Videos

Multimedia is characterized by the presence of text, pictures, sound, animation and video; some or all of which are organized into some coherent program (Phillips, 1997). In this study, video was used as a concrete example of multimedia.

Taylor (2009) defined video as moving images accompanied by sound delivered in the classroom on online streaming site such as YouTube or Google video, played on a computer or laptop projected via an LCD projector. It also means a recorded speaking performance of a student (Christel & Frisch, 2008).

Its integration in instruction builds bridges for promoting speaking skills of learners. It helps them to watch and see themselves and their fellow friends' performances; hence, they can monitor their mistakes and trace their developments (Neo, Tan, & Zarina, 2012; Sharma & Barrett, 2007, Lonergan, 1984).

Harmer (2001) mentioned that video offers foreign language learners a chance to improve their ability to understand comprehension input. Seeing language in use; cross-culture awareness and the power of creation are some of the reasons why video can add a distinct, additional element to the learning experience.

A number of empirical studies have examined the effectiveness of the use of video in ESL teaching and learning (Kirkgoz, 2011; Indriastuti, 2011; Sirrul Muna, 2012; Tugrul, 2012; Nicolas, 2012; Febriyanti & Arifin, 2013; Shinta Puspita, 2013; Maslachah & Abdullah, 2014; Subur & Abdullah, 2014).

As Kirkgoz (2011), designed and implemented a blended TBSC that combined face-to-face classroom instruction with video-recorded speaking tasks, for first-year student teachers. This implementation was found to be helpful in enhancing students' speaking skills by offering an innovative learning experience to students who were engaged in meaningful interaction, and improved in the areas where they needed improvement.

Indriastuti (2011) inspected the use of YouTube video to improve first grade students' speaking skills. The research showed that the students' speaking skills improved after teaching speaking with the use of YouTube video. The students were motivated in learning speaking, for they were eager in joining all the speaking activities. Similar to that, Sirrul Muna (2012) utilized YouTube videos to enhance eleventh grade students' speaking skills. The findings also revealed that YouTube video enriched students' speaking skills specifically their fluency, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

Tugrul (2012) examined students' perceptions of how incorporating a technological tool into the classroom education, the use of video camera for recording along with discussing in-class group project presentations, impacts their speaking presentation, communication and career-related skills, learning stimuli, and general subject assessments. This study implied that recording group project presentations on video and using these videos to evaluate student performances were

perceived as an effective, valuable, reasonable and good instructional technology in promoting learning. Findings also revealed that this educational technology experience enriched classroom education by contributing positively to students' overall course evaluations.

Nicolas (2012) led a case study at a Japanese national university. Nine participants used the video recording feature on their mobile phones to produce weekly video productions. The task required that participants produce one 30-second video on a teacher-selected topic. Based on the results, there was a rise in the number of words that learners spoke in a single monologue. Likewise, participants believed that using the mobile phone video recording feature was a beneficial activity. However, they did not believe that such a task was convertible to other courses. Due to technological advances, the discussion revealed, teachers need to comprehend the benefits and challenges of adding mobile phone devices as learning aids in their classrooms.

Febriyanti & Arifin (2013) investigated tenth grade students' speaking competence in reporting a procedure text by using video. The results of the speaking tests showed that the students' score improved in every test. The findings of the study indicated that using video significantly improved the students' communicative competence. Likewise, Shinta Puspita (2013) found that the use of video in teaching learning process augmented students' participation and enriched their speaking skills.

Maslachah & Abdullah (2014) conducted a research on teaching speaking narrative using short animated folktale video to tenth grade students. Three stages were used for video viewing, namely pre-viewing, viewing and post-viewing activity. The result displayed that the students' speaking skills with an emphasis on vocabulary became better. A questionnaire was given to elicit students' feedback on the use of the multimedia. Students agreed that the use of video in teaching speaking narrative was very beneficial to them. Also, Subur & Abdullah (2014) studied teaching speaking narrative through animated fable videos to eighth graders. The findings show that videos helped the students in retelling the story. As the students' responses suggested that students were mostly interested in video viewing and agreed that video was helpful in acquiring speaking ideas.

Most of the studies reviewed above investigated the effectiveness of video in teaching courses, while others integrated video in presenting lessons in class. In the present study, video was utilized in two ways: first was on the design and implementation of a blended TBSC that combined face-to-face classroom instruction with video-recorded speaking tasks through smartphone, and second was on the presentation of sample storytelling acts done by renowned story tellers.

2.4 Task-based Learning

'Task' has been elucidated by task-based learning proponents in diverse ways.

Littlejohn (1998) referred task 'to any proposal contained within the materials for action to be undertaken by the learners, which has the direct aim of bringing about the learning of the foreign language' (p.198). Equally, Skehan (1996) pointed the characteristics of a task: (1) Meaning is primary; (2) Learners are not given other people's meaning to repeat; (3) A task has some connection to the real-world; (4) Task completion has some priority; and (5) The assessment of the task is in terms of outcome.

Nonetheless, Estaire & Zanon (1994) defined tasks into two main sections: 'communicative tasks', in which the 'learner's attention is focused on meaning rather than form', and 'enabling tasks', in which the 'main focus is on linguistic aspects (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, functions, and discourse)' (p.13). Moreover, Long (1989) differentiated target and pedagogic tasks. Target tasks are "what the learner will eventually do in English" while pedagogic tasks are "activities worked on in the classroom to approximate the target tasks." (p. 6).

Ellis (2003) stressed both meaning and form in his definition of task:

A work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance direct or indirect to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills and also various cognitive processes (p.16).

Littlejohn (1998) and Skehan (1996) put gravity on meaning rather than form while Estaire & Zanon (1994) and Ellis (2003) gave equal importance on form and meaning. In this study, form and meaning were included in the criteria for marking the speaking performances of the Omani students. 'Pedagogic tasks' that had been defined by Long (1989) was applied to this research as well.

2.5 Classroom Application of Task-based Language Teaching

Nunan (2004) presented some principles to be reflected in a task-based program. Through ‘scaffolding’, learners should be provided with a supporting framework to facilitate learning. ‘Task dependency’ refers to one task growing out of, and building upon the previous one. The concept of ‘recycling’ allows learners to maximize opportunities for education. In TBL, active learning is expected so that learners gain the language by actively using it. Incorporation of form and function is a must to make the relationships between grammatical form and communicative function rich was also highlighted.

Several researchers like Arslanyilmaz & Pedersen (2010); Park & Slater (2014); Cavanagh, Bower, Moloney & Sweller (2014) have employed task-based language instruction to promote students engagement in real-life tasks.

Arslanyilmaz & Pedersen (2010) examined the effects of task familiarity through the use of subtitled videos on negotiation of meaning in an online task-based language learning (TBLL) environment. Aimed at improving input comprehension to boost second language acquisition, the volume of negotiation of meaning produced by non-native speakers (NNSs) had been explored. Ten NNS-NNS dyads collaboratively completed four communicative tasks using an online TBLL environment specifically designed for this study and a chat tool in WebCT-Vista. Five dyads were provided with subtitled videos prior to task completion; the remaining five dyads completed tasks without seeing the videos. The findings showed that NNSs who were acquainted with tasks involved in more negotiation of meaning as compared to their peers who were not.

To inform the future development of pedagogic tasks for academic English as a second language (ESL) courses, Park & Slater (2014) probed language learners’ real world tasks in mobile-assisted language learning (MALL). The results showed that ESL learners have already used numerous mobile device functions, but that ESL instructors were less motivated to use these for teaching. Additional support and concepts may be needed by instructors before they can assist their students to take advantage of their mobile devices for learning the English language. Tasks for listening and speaking as well as activities integrated with SMS and the Internet were given high grades by students and teachers.

Cavanagh, Bower, Moloney & Sweller (2014) recounted the progress of preservice teachers’ verbal presentation based on a technology-mediated video reflection system. Participants video-recorded oral presentations and uploaded them to an online blog to view and reflect on their performance and that of their peers. Four presentations by forty-one participants were analyzed using a range of criteria based on the Modes of Communication (voice, body-language, words and alignment between them) and the Constructed Impression of the communication acts (confidence, clarity, engagement and appropriateness). A momentous development across all criteria was the result of this endeavor.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of the integration of multimedia specifically video in a face-to-face task based education setting, to the higher diploma students with different specializations in Omani higher education.

The following were the research questions:

1. To what extent will students’ public speaking skills be improved?
2. To what extent will students’ attitudes towards giving oral presentation be changed?
3. To what extent can this be applied to other subjects and learning areas?

4. METHODOLOGY

The study used the quasi-experimental control group design. The aim was to investigate the effectiveness of using multimedia for developing students’ public speaking skills and helping students to overcome their fears and shyness of giving oral presentations. The sample of the study was divided into an experimental group and a control group, each of which was divided into two small groups so as to match the nature of the task-based learning tasks. Different researchers-prepared instruments such as oral presentation rubric, oral presentation attitude questionnaire and written feedback form and interviews were used.

The application of the study was divided into two levels, the first level included monitoring other people’s performance and the second level was based on self-monitoring.

4.1 The First Stage

Videos from some of the most famous international storytellers (Jane Blake and others) were used. These materials had been selected based on the following criteria:

4.1.1 The Language Used

The storytellers use Standard English which makes it easy for the students to follow and understand.

4.1.2 The Content Included

The content of the stories is international and can easily be accepted by students from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, each story has a fable with interesting characters to encourage students to follow it.

4.1.3 The Delivery Method Employed

The delivery method employed by the tellers shows the elements Ss learn about the storytelling as included in their course. The program included different stories. Each session focused on a different category and included observation forms.

4.2 The Second Stage: Self-Monitoring and Assessment

This stage focused on self-monitoring and self-evaluation strategies and critical thinking.

5. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

To answer the first research question “To what extent will students’ public speaking skills be improved?” a public speaking rubric was prepared and utilized. The rubric focused on four main categories: delivery methods, body language, organization and language. The data collected was analyzed using SPSS as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Mann-Whitney test results of significant differences between experimental group and control group in public speaking posttest

Domain	Experimental Group			Control Group			U value
	Mean	Sum of Ranks	Mean of Ranks	Mean	Sum of Ranks	Mean of Ranks	
Delivery methods	20.700	601.50	30.08	15.20	218.50	10.92	8.500
Body language	17.450	586.50	29.32	13.05	233.50	11.68	23.500
Organization	18.750	609.00	30.45	13.05	211.00	10.55	1.00
Language	21.150	609.50	30.48	13.80	212.50	10.52	0.500

The results show that there are statistically significant differences between means of scores of experimental group and control group in the posttest on the public speaking variable favoring the experimental group.

To answer the second research question “To what extent will students’ attitudes towards giving oral presentation be changed?” Oral presentation attitude questionnaire was used to collect the related data as presented in the following table.

Table 2. Wilcoxon test results of significant differences between pre and posttests on the oral presentation attitude

Domain	Mean		Z value	Effect Size	Sig.
	Pre	Post			
Attitudes	14.95	20.70	-3.968	0.93	0.01

As results illustrate there are statistically significant differences between means of scores of experimental group and in the pre and posttests on the students’ attitude variable favoring the posttest. This means that the students at the experimental group developed more positive attitudes towards giving oral presentation.

To answer the third research question “To what extent can this be applied to other subjects and learning areas?” qualitative data collecting method was applied which included both written feedback and interviews. The collected data was analyzed according to decoding protocols. The results reveal a significant difference between the responses of both groups as follows.

Table 3. Results on differences between the responses of both groups

Groups	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
Experimental	65%	2%	33%
Control	29.5%	22%	48.5%

These outcomes mean that students of the experimental group developed more positive views towards the applicability of using digital aids in learning; however, 33% of the experimental group indicated that they are not sure about this, which means that this area still needs more research. In addition, educators need to use digital aids in teaching different areas more often.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research display the effectiveness of using digital aids in developing public speaking skills. Self-monitoring and reflection were two essential basics of the study. Final results indicate that educators need to develop a better grasp of how technology can be used to facilitate learning. Also we need to have a better understanding of the ways in which students use digital resources. Digital aids can be of great benefits if used in the right way and at the right time putting in mind students' needs and different abilities. According to students views' using digital aids is more interesting and engaging. It encourages students to take more responsibility of their learning. It helps them reach autonomy. To conclude we need to say that more investigations on how to apply this technology in different learning areas are encouraged.

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