



Exploring Ways of Developing Students' Oral Performance Using Moving Images: A Case Study

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Abstract - This Study investigated the impact of moving image on the oral performance of students during the academic year 2018-2019. The participants were 35 Beginner students learning English in an English language center in Benin Republic. The students' oral performances were recorded at the beginning and at the end of a six-month English language learning program. The researcher used the applications Web-based tools and mobile apps to measure students' speech rates as well as observations and interviews. An analysis of the collected data reveals with accuracy that the confidence of all students had increased towards using moving image by the end of the course and most students' speech rates had increased by up to 17 words per minute. Therefore, the researcher, strongly, advocates the frequent use of moving image in EFL classes.

Key words: moving images, web-based tools, mobile apps, EFL, confidence

Résumé

Cette étude est une analyse de l'impact de l'utilisation des images animées sur l'expression orale de 35 apprenants débutants dans un centre de langue au Bénin au cours de l'année académique 2018-2019. L'expression orale des participants a été enregistrée au début et à la fin d'un apprentissage de six mois d'anglais basé sur les images. Des observations, des entretiens de même que des outils Web et applications mobiles ont été utilisés pour mesurer l'impact de l'utilisation des images sur le parler des participants. Les résultats révèlent que le débit d'expression de la plupart des participants a augmenté de 17 mots à la minute à la fin du cours. Aussi note-t-on une certaine aise dans l'expression orale des étudiants. L'étude recommande l'utilisation fréquente des images animées dans les classes d'anglais langue étrangère.

Mots-Clés : Images animées, Outils Web, Applications mobiles, ALE, expression orale

Introduction

Technologies have brought about dramatic and ongoing changes in many fields in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In addition, related trends have accelerated the impacts of these changes: The interdependency of economies around the world and the international outsourcing of manufacturing services, have increased dependency of people, international multi-site collaboration in product development, and online collaboration and exchange. All these factors have become integral and intertwined elements of

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the modern day. As a result, for global collaboration to function effectively, a widely spoken common language is often required, and recent research (Farrel, 2010, p.25) has clearly shown that English has taken this role. Employers today want their employees to be proficient in English. English remains the language of international communication and business. The first implication of the above development is that the English Language is often seen as the key to gaining access to global markets by non-English speaking countries like Benin. While the importance of English is acknowledged around the world, this fact does not imply that English students in non-speaking countries are sufficiently prepared to meet with the 21st century's language skills requirements. Many studies have shown that among the 21st century skills (the ability to solve problems, work in teams, use online technologies, and engage in critical analysis ...) is the skill of communicating effectively with others (Farell et al., 2011, p. 81). Teachers must teach differently and effectively to equip students with the 21st century skills. As an African proverb goes: *"When the drumming tune changes, the dancing steps must also change."* That justifies why teaching skills must adjust and adapt to the current exigencies.

Learners nowadays behave differently than those of previous generations. They are born into a world of information technology. They prefer multitask rather than focusing on one thing at a time, and they can be more attracted to the ideas of a peer or a web video than what their teachers have to offer. Teachers today have to adjust to this change and be more open to innovations. Without familiarizing with today's changes teachers will probably not be able to enhance their teaching for the benefit of their students. In this twenty-first century, teachers have to adapt to change, guide, explain, and demonstrate. This study explores to access if and how using moving image can help students to improve students' speaking in learning English. Class course books, board games and role plays were not sufficient to develop students' oral fluency today. To the best of my knowledge, no study has ever been conducted so far to investigate the impact of moving image as a way to improve the proficiency of learners of English in the Beninese context. This current research fills in this gap. Besides this introduction, the rest of the research paper is organized as follow: the next section deals with the review of the literature; the third section is the methodology. While section four is about the results and discussion, section five concludes the study.

1. Review of the Literature

New technologies have permitted the possibilities to integrate multimedia aids activities—namely audio, visual, animation effects in the language classroom and they highly cultivate students' interest and motivation to learn



quickly and effectively (Pun, 2013). As Rana (2013) puts it, “we also need to take into account that as human beings, we’re very visual beings, that what we see tend to affect our judgment more, and technology helps in bringing that visual aspect to education”. Thus, it appears that multimedia aids help to apply communicative teaching by participating actively and learning effectively. There is a plethora of studies highlighting the positive effects of using multimedia on the oral performance of students in a language classroom. Grzeszczyk (2016) studies how the use of multimedia in foreign language classroom influences language teaching. The participants are 30 English teachers who filled in questionnaire. The study shows that students participate more willingly in multimedia enhanced lessons. The study shows also that CD recordings and videos were considered as highly effective materials in teaching English. Gilakjani (2012) investigates the impact of using multimedia to improve the quality of teaching English in Iran. The study reveals that most of the 100 participants (55%) preferred visual learning style than auditory (35%) and kinaesthetic (10%) learning styles and that the visual learning style has the greatest academic achievement in their educational major. Moreover, Bekleyen and Yilmaz (2011) focus their study on the use of free computer program that allows users to take a picture of what they see on their computer monitor and also allows users to add texts and highlight the picture. The instruments include a vocabulary test used to measure the students’ knowledge of the target vocabulary before and after a teaching period. It was found that the students had a positive attitude towards the use of computers in learning vocabulary.

2. Objectives of the Study

EFL teachers must teach differently and have greater success than ever before. In order to teach better, teachers have, according to Lieberman et al. (2001), to be at the centre of all efforts to reform and improve schools. This is the objective of this study. It is to explore ways to develop fluency in Beninese EFL classes using moving images. To reach this, the following two research questions guide this study:

- A. What are students’ attitudes towards using moving images in learning English?
- B. Can the description of moving images positively impact the oral performance of English language learners?

3. Methods

3.1. Materials

The main materials used included:

- Moving images



- A mobile application (*iCounterClick*) for teachers which measures students' speech rates by counting words and count each other's non-lexical fillers (*ahs, ums and ers*), and interjections (*and, but, you know, like*).
- Two recordings of students' speaking: One at the beginning and the other at the end of the programme.
- A pronunciation bank for analyzing speech samples.

3.2. Participants

The students who took part in this action research project were all at beginner level and studying general English. They were 35 beginner level students in an English language center in Benin. They were 24 males and 11 females. Most of them (62.5%) were students and the rest (37.5%) professionals. The professionals reported that they were learning English in order to have a better job or a better position in their already existing job. Concerning the students, 38.33% of them said that they were learning English in order to study in English-speaking countries; 42.55% were urged by their parents to learn the language and the rest (19.12%) wanted to travel to a foreign country.

3.3. Data collection procedure and analysis

The data collection spans over six months, from November 2017 to May 2018. To start the six-month programme upgrading from beginner to intermediate level, the participants' ability to speak English was accessed through students' voice recordings and an online pronunciation bank were used. Then the participants were intensively taught speaking skills using moving images. At the end of the semester, students' oral ability was evaluated using moving images description. The students' voice was again recorded and the online pronunciation bank used. The moving images used at the end of the programme to access the participants' oral performance were different from those used at the beginning and during the training. Twenty Students of the group were interviewed in order to deepen the results of the technological tools used. The results of the interview were transcribed and analyzed.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Participants' Attitudes towards using moving images

Students commented on how engaging the activities were compared to those in their own education systems, and several participants expressed an interest in using some of the techniques and tools in the future. Participants valued positively the moving image in teaching them English. (93% for "very effective"). All the 22 interviewees reported that asking them to describe or talk



about the message conveyed by the moving images help them greatly not only to learn quickly and effectively new words but also to use them in speaking. More specifically an interviewee stated: *"I think that it is important to know a word or the name of something in English before using it; but generally, we know the name of the object in English but it is difficult to use it in speaking. So, the flashcards permit to know the name of the thing and also to use it to speak"*.

Another interviewee confesses the following: *"The images are good to be used because they permit me to make an effort to speak English. When we started, it was a bit difficult but finally I got used to it and I can express myself better in English than before"*.

These results are in line with those of the previous scholars reviewed so far (Grzeszczyk, 2016; Gilakjani, 2012; Bekleyen and Yilmaz, 2011). Speaking in a foreign language has taken a unique position throughout much of the history of language learning and teaching. It has started to emerge as a branch of teaching and learning in the last two decades. But due to the difficulties attached to the study of language anxiety and speaking skills, it was easier for teachers, methodologists, applied linguists and linguists to focus on reading and writing rather than spoken language (Cater and Nunan, 2001). The EFL students have difficulty with English speaking and those of the secondary schools in Benin are no exception. This manifests itself in their achievement at the end of the English program; their performances are very poor in almost all English language skills, especially in speaking. In order to enhance speaking skills of Beninese secondary school EFL learners, I propose to develop an instructional program based on the learner-centered teaching activities and instructional techniques as a core unit of planning, teaching and evaluation.

A board and chalk are insufficient to teach effectively a foreign language today. Multimedia materials such as moving images, videos and recordings permit to teach better and call on learners to participate in the teaching activities. If students could see, hear and express their own ideas in their words, the knowledge they will acquire in this way will be easier to maintain and compared to the traditional teaching method (Ghassabsaraie, 2014). This explains their positive attitudes towards the moving images. The study shows that students participate more willingly in multimedia enhanced lessons and the recordings were considered as highly effective materials in teaching English.

4.2. Impact of using moving images on the oral performance of the participant learners

At the beginning of the training the majority of the participants (69.79%) were found to have serious difficulties to express themselves owing mostly to the lack of the appropriate words or verb to describe or talk about the action they wanted to express. At the end of the training, this proportion decreased to



15 participants, that is 15.62% who still appeared to have difficulties to speak the language. The interviews permitted to have a better insight into these results. Indeed, the significant decrease in the proportion of the learners having fewer difficulties to express themselves at the end of the training shows that using moving images has a positively significant impact on their oral performance. Describing these images puts them in a real-life situation and appears to force communication ability out of them.

The study found that most students' speech rates had increased by up to 17 words per minute at the end of the programme. The confidence of all students had increased by the end of the course, even among those who had been anxious at the start. The evaluation activity involving counting each other's non-lexical fillers and interjections using the *AhCounter* app was very successful, and most students managed to monitor and correct their own use of *ums*, *ers* and *ahs* to a level that they were comfortable with. I was surprised at how readily they embraced self-evaluation and how they naturally fed information back to each other about their performance.

Table 1. Non-lexical filler counts in a one minute speech before the program

Students	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
Beginning attempt	5	8	6	4	9	5	7	12	14	8	17	6	9	8	6	5	11	7	9	7

Table 2. Non -lexical filler counts in a one-minute speech at the end of the Course

Students	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
End term results	1	0	3	1	4	1	2	5	3	3	0	10	0	1	0	0	2	2	2	4

I reflected on what had helped most in developing the participants' fluency. Firstly, we found that measuring and recording the students' speech rates by using the *iCounterClick* app to count the number of words spoken per minute made students more aware of their speech rates (too slow, too fast). Secondly, The *AhCounter* app, used to count non-lexical fillers and interjections, proved successful in that students found it engaging and an effective means of feedback. I observed that the participants started to discover that their smart phones were not only extremely useful for texting messages, but also for reflecting on their own fluency. Most commented on how much they had noticed about their speaking from analysing and comparing their own recordings. The online pronunciation bank the *Speech Accent Archive*, however, had shown limitations for targeting fluency. For further researches, the *IDEA accent archive* can be used for highlighting features of different speakers' fluency.



This research cycle had much more focussed on exploring mobile images that could be used to improve oral fluency.

5. Implications

This study has some implications for EFL teachers. They are as follows:

- One way to move towards learner-centeredness in language teaching is to try new approaches to language teaching proposed by theoreticians.
- Although EFL teachers in Benin are not accustomed to moving images in language teaching in the educational system, this does not mean that one should put the Approach aside and follow traditional methods of language teaching.
- As the attitudes of Beninese EFL students were rather positive in this study, EFL teachers should be encouraged to adopt this approach in their classrooms.
- At broader level, English teachers should take steps to use technology in their classes. This requires a change of attitude or awareness as far as decision makers at higher levels are concerned.
- EFL teachers should bear in mind that once they choose to teach English through technology, they ought to evaluate their students' performance through technology-based syllabus.

Conclusion

This Study investigated the impact that moving images have on the oral performance of thirty-five students in EFL classes. The investigation showed that using moving images have a positive impact on the improvement of the oral performance on some EFL learners. One picture is worth a thousand words highlights the essence of using moving images in ELF classes. When the learner is describing a moving image, he or she is practicing and improving his or her vocabulary, grammatical and speaking skills altogether. And doing this practice over a long period and frequently will result in his or her easier and faster mastery of the language. On the basis of the results, it is suggested that moving images be used in teaching to EFL learners, the lack of which prevent them to express themselves in the language. Ensuring students' success requires a new kind of teaching, conducted by teachers who understand learning and pedagogy, who can respond to the needs of their learners and the demands of their time,

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