Using NLP for developing English oral communication skills of ESP learners.

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Abstract

The current study investigates the effectiveness of using Neuro Linguistic Programming on developing English oral communication skills of ESP learners. Participants involved in the present study were 60 freshmen college student (30 male and 30 female) who were enrolled in the Higher Institute of Engineering and Technology located at New Damietta City. They were assigned at random into two groups: experimental (n=30) and control (n=30). Both groups were taught by the same instructor. However, the experimental group was taught via Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Meanwhile, the control group received the regular type of instruction. Instruments used in this study included: (a) A questionnaire for determining the most important oral communication skills required by the targeted learners, and (b) an oral communication test that was used before and after implementing the suggested teaching strategy. T-test results revealed that experimental group students' oral communication skills were significantly developed more than the control's as a result of using Neuro Linguistic Programming. It could be concluded that Neuro-Linguistic Programming is effective for enhancing English oral communication skills of ESP learners.

Keywords: Neuro Linguistic Programming, ESP learners, and oral communication skills

1. Introduction

Recently, there has been a great demand for applying English in several educational fields to prepare learners for their professional career. This idea is asserted by Kiabi and Heidar (2015, p. 3) who mention that educators are increasingly facing a

problem of how English teaching programs can effectively meet the challenges designed by industrial and technological innovations. This idea refers to the importance of planning new EFL courses that make use of innovative materials, and technologies. In that sense, learners' needs analysis has been a priority before designing any English courses to be offered at the university level.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is considered a linguistic field of study by many researchers (e.g., Hossain, 2013, p. 17; Kite, 2008, p. 77). The term *specific* in ESP refers to the specific purposes for learning English where activities and disciplines within a professional and vocational framework take place (Tsao, Wei, & Fang, 2008, p. 247).

The relationship between ESP and communication is clear because the primary goal of ESP courses as mentioned by Kiabi and Heidar (2015, pp. 2-3) is to teach professional communicative competence. It builds and extends the foundations for accurate communication; and includes learner's grammatical, lexical and functional skills. Moreover, communication skills, especially the oral ones, are regarded extremely important and impressive skills for life, (Moslehifara & Ibrahim, 2012, p. 350). According to Chohan & Smith (2007, p. 1); Isabelli (2003, p. 150); Rahman

(2010, p. 3) oral communication skills covers a range of abilities such as spoken interactions exchanged between people, which is very complex than it seems.

The importance of oral communication skills comes from helping humankind to use words to express emotions, thoughts, needs, and opinions in a spoken language. For Darling and Dannels (2013, p. 4), oral communication skills help learners to: (a) improve their academic performance; (b) increase their employment opportunities; (c) enhance their subsequent professional competence; and (d) improve their own personal effectiveness.

Researches such as Griffith graduate project (2004, p. 1) and Riemer (2007, pp. 92-96) conclude that communication skills have two basic forms which are verbal and nonverbal communication. It can be formal such as official communication or informal such as friends' chats. On the other hand, nonverbal communication includes body language, visual forms, and emotional expressions of a sender and/or a receiver (Griffith Graduate Project, 2004, p. 1 & Riemer, 2007, pp. 92-96).

According to Riemer (2007, p. 92), a skillful communicator draws on a number of different graphical, visual, statistical, audio-visual and/or technological means to get the point across, which can be developed through using various methods. These methods include classroom discussions, presentations, peer reviews, role-play, and/or videos of student presentations with individual feedback. All of the before mentioned methods are involved in Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques. NLP deals with different learning styles; it stands for a number of models and techniques to describe the relationship between mind and language, in both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Statement of the Problem

The present researchers have observed that the Egyptian university students had a low level of performance in oral communication. Semi-structured interviews had proved that phenomenon. Hence, the researchers tend in the present study to investigate how far *Neuro Linguistic Programming* can develop university students' oral communication skills. Their suggested treatment includes various activities that can help learners employ oral communication skills into daily tasks such as posting or sharing ideas with others which may assist them become more effective communicators. Major question of the study is:

How far is NLP effective in developing students' oral communication skills?

2. Review of literature

Communication has a great role in improving learners' learning abilities by designing a communication course and incorporating it into the engineering curriculum. In a field study, Seetha (2012) used different methods of teaching communication skills. That study made use of a simulative approach with presentation, role-play, peer review, and video- modern technology. The results of that study showed that the improvement in the communication course facilitated advancements in engineering education through streamlining fundamental communication skills.

Another study that was concerned with the importance of oral communication skills was conducted by Törnqvist (2008), who used a questionnaire to interview 3 English teachers and 85 pupils in 9th grade in Sweden and to find out why oral communication was an important part of English teaching. That researcher used a qualitative method to find out how hard oral ability assessment was. Reasons behind that included that the

learners were shy or unmotivated to participate orally, and the teachers did not concentrate on its assessment.

There are several studies which handle the use of NLP techniques in the learning process. For example, Şaman (2006) investigated the use of NLP techniques in teaching English. That research offered an asset to English language teachers to become more efficient and reduce their feelings of anxiety, by investigating their current attitudes, solving their learners' difficulties, and creating a secure and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. That study made use of a questionnaire and a textbook which was taught during the educational period, utilizing reading texts, grammar topics and speaking activities.

The sample of Şaman's (2006) study consisted of 36 learners enrolled in two pilot classrooms at a *Preparatory School of Çağ University*, which was a private university in *Mersin*. That course contained 14 hours of teaching. After implementing those activities in the classroom, results showed that, the participants learned to use their unconscious mind by means of stories and other kinds of activities in NLP. Those activities provided the learners with a chance to develop their basic skills in English such as reading, writing, listening and particularly speaking.

Netten and Germain (2012) demonstrated how the findings of cognitive neuroscience can assist educators to understand the complexity of learning, and to develop more effective instructional practices in neuro-linguistics. They followed some principals that included: acquisition of an internal grammar, the use of a literacy-based pedagogy, a project-based pedagogy, authentic communicative situations, and the use of interactive teaching strategies. Results of such practical applications of the Neuro linguistic approach (NLA) indicated that research contribution in cognitive neuroscience improved learning process.

3. Methodology

The researchers adopted the quasi experimental approach where two groups were assigned as the participants of the study: the experimental, and the control groups. The research includes two variables; the first variable is NLP techniques, the second variable is oral communication skills. The experimental group was taught oral communication skills via NLP techniques, meanwhile the control group was taught via the regular instruction. The experiment lasted for eight weeks, and both groups were taught by the same teacher.

3.1. Participants of the study

Participants of the present study included 30 male and 30 female first-year college students who were enrolled in the Higher Institute of Engineering and Technology, located in New Damietta City in the academic year 2016 ∕ 2017. They were assigned into two groups: the experimental (n=30) and the control (n=30). The participant's age in both groups ranged from seventeen to nineteen. Whereas the experimental group was taught by Neuro Linguistic Programming, the control one was taught by the regular traditional instruction.

3.2. Hypotheses

The present study investigated the following hypotheses:

1. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the pre-test concerning oral communication skills.

2. There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in the post-test, concerning oral communication skills, in favor of the former.

3.3 Instruments

The present researchers constructed the following instruments:

1. An oral communication questionnaire which was designed to identify the most important oral communication skills required by university students learning technology.

2. A pre/ post oral communication test was which designed and codified in the light of the questionnaire to determine learners' oral communication performances.

3.4 The treatment

The purpose of the suggested treatment was to develop oral communication skills of those who study at the Higher Institutes of Engineering and Technology by using Neuro Linguistic Programming techniques. The researchers designed a program that was comprised of (12) sessions. This program was taught to the participants of the experimental group for a total period of time 12 weeks (0nce a week). The treatment was preceded, and later followed, by the oral communication performance test in order to investigate the impact of the proposed treatment.

4. Results and Discussions

In order to verify research hypotheses, the 22nd version of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences/Personal Computer (SPSS/PC) was used for conducting the statistical analysis to:

1. Calculate the average (mean scores) and standard deviations.
2. Determine (with the use of the Independent Samples t-test) the significance of differences between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups concerning oral communication skills.

4.1. Verifying the first hypothesis

The first hypothesis states that: *there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the pre-test concerning oral communication skills.* In order to verify this hypothesis, the researchers used the Independent Samples t-test to compare between the experimental and the control groups before using NLP as a strategy for developing oral communication skills of the students studying at the Higher Institutes of Engineering and Technology located at New Damietta City. Table 1 shows the significance of differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control concerning their

performance in the pre-test used to measure oral communication skills.

(Table 1). Mean, standard deviation, and significance of the pre-test.

Main skills	Groups	Independent Samples T-test				
		N	Mean	SD	T	Sig. Level
Speaking	Experimental group	30	19.10	5.01	0.18	0.86
	Control group	30	18.83	6.30		
Listening	Experimental group	30	13.53	3.23	1.55	0.13
	Control group	30	11.93	4.64		
Oral communication skills	**Experimental group**	**30**	**32.63**	**5.83**	**0.99**	**0.33**

As for speaking skills, the Results indicate that the mean score of the experimental group in pre-test is (19.10), and the standard deviation is (5.01). Regarding the control group, the mean scores for the control group is (18.83) and the standard deviation is (6.30). Table 1 illustrates that t-value is (0.18), p value is (0.86), which is bigger than (0.05) indicating the equivalence of both groups in speaking skills.

Concerning listening skills, the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-test is (13.53); and the standard deviation is (3.23). As for the control group, the mean scores for the control is (11.93), and the standard deviation is (4.64). Table 1 demonstrates that t-value is (1.55), and p. is (0.13) which is bigger

than (0.05), also indicating the equivalence of both groups in listening skills.

Regarding oral communication skills, the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-test is (32.63) and the standard deviation is (5.83). On the other hand, results related to the control group reveal that the mean scores for the control is (30.77) and the standard deviation is (8.53). This table shows that t-value is (0.99), and p. is (0.33) which is bigger than (0.05). It also shows the equivalence of both groups in oral communication skills.

The following figures prove that the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups were almost at the same level.
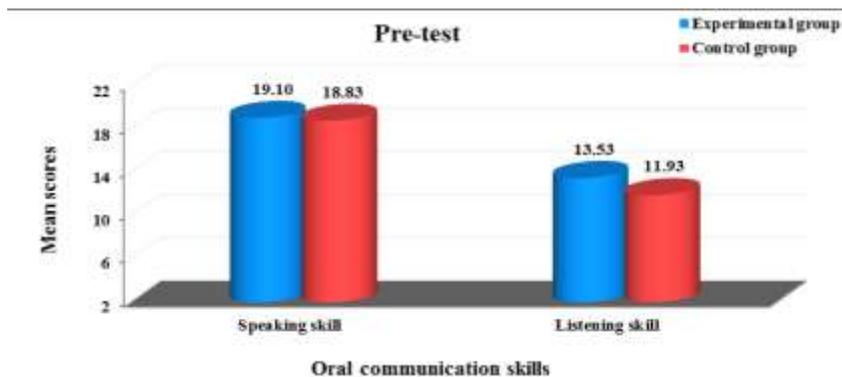

Figure 1. Mean score of both the experimental and the control groups in the pre-test concerning the main skills of oral communication skills.
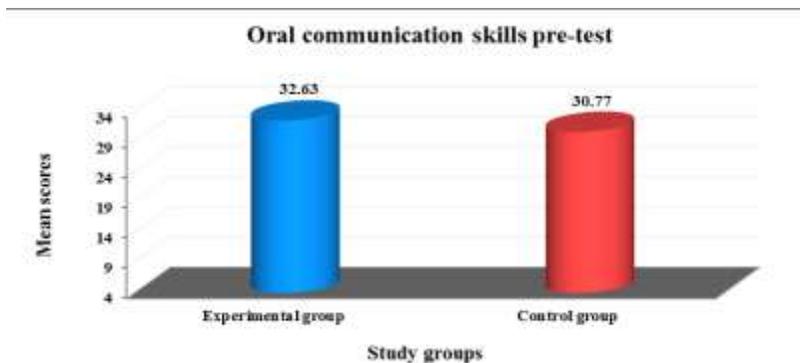
Figure 2. Mean score of both experimental and control groups in the pre-test concerning oral communication skills.

Based on the results of the pre-test, the percentages shown in figure 3 prove that the learners of both groups had low level in their oral communication skills, and their performance was significantly low. In that sense, they had low levels of listening performances, this might be attributed to many problems that were faced by the learners such as: incorrect listening to the words, the different accent of the speaker or the inability to understand the meaning of the words. This result goes in line with the results of Ghoneim's (2013) study.

Results related to speaking skills reveal that the learners also have low scores that might be attributed to students' inability to pronounce words correctly, lack of confidence, or being taught by a traditional method. This result is consistent with Torky's (2006).

To conclude, the experimental and the control groups were almost at the same level concerning their oral communication skills. On the basis of data shown in table 1, it is obvious that there were no statistically significant differences in oral communication skills and the mean rank scores of the experimental and the control groups in the pre-test was at $\geq (0.05)$ level. Hence, it could be said that the first hypothesis was verified.

4.2. Verifying the second hypothesis

The second hypothesis states that *there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in the post-test, concerning oral communication skills, in favor of the former.* In order to verify the second hypothesis, the researchers used the Independent Samples t-test for the sake of comparing the scores of the experimental group and those of the control after the treatment that utilized NLP for developing oral communication skills of the students studying at the Higher Institutes of Engineering and Technology as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Mean, standard deviation, and significance of the post-test.

Main skills	Groups	Independent Samples T-test				
		No.	Mean	SD	T	Sig. level
Speaking	Experimental group	30	49.53	10.66	8.63	0.001
	Control group	30	31.43	4.26		
Listening	Experimental group	30	21.63	3.71	8.08	0.001
	Control group	30	13.53	4.05		
Oral communication skills	**Experimental group**	**30**	**71.17**	**13.49**	**9.67**	**0.001**
	Control group	**30**	**44.97**	**6.20**		

Table 2 shows the results of the Independent samples T-test in comparing the mean scores of the two groups (the experimental and the control groups) in the post-test concerning oral communication skills. Detailed results may be described as illustrated below.

Concerning speaking skills, the mean score of the experimental group in the post-test is (49.53) and the standard deviation is (10.66); while in the pre-test, the mean score is (19.10) and the standard deviation is (5.01). As for the control group, the mean score is (31.43) and the standard deviation is (4.26). Table 2 illustrates that t-value is (8.63), and p. is (0.001), and it is less than (0.05). These values indicate that the students

of the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control in the post-test, concerning speaking skills.

The same thing could be said about listening skills; where the mean score of the experimental group in post-test is (21.63) and the standard deviation is (3.71). As for the control group, the mean score is (13.53) and the standard deviation is (4.05). Table 2 illustrates that t-value is (8.08), and the probability is (0.001) which is less than (0.05). These values indicated that the students of the experimental group significantly scored higher than the control group scores in post-test concerning listening skills.

Regarding overall all oral communication skills, the mean score of the experimental group in the post-test is (71.17) and the standard deviation is (13.49). As for the control group, the mean score of the control group is (44.97) and the standard deviation is (6.20). Table 2 illustrates that t-value is (9.97), and the probability is (0.001), which is less than (0.05). These values indicates that the students of the experimental group significantly scored higher than the control group, in the post-test concerning over all oral communication skills.

The following figures show the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post-test which indicates significance in favor of the former.
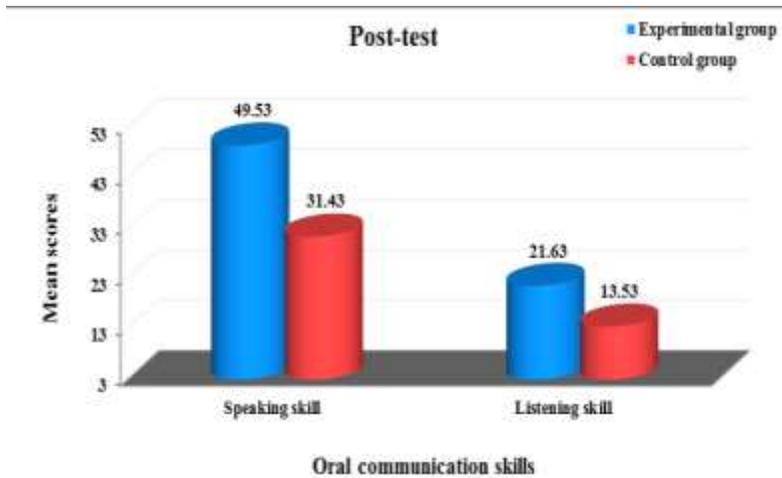

Figure 3. Mean score of both the experimental and the control groups in the post-test concerning the main skills of oral communication skills.
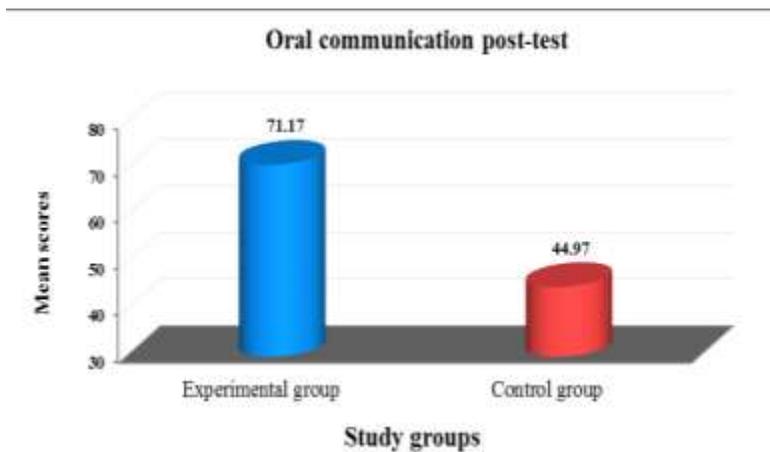

Figure 4. Mean score of both experimental and control groups in the pre-test concerning oral communication skills.

The before mentioned results indicate that, the mean score of the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control. Hence, there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control in the post-test; probably because of being exposed to the proposed treatment. These differences were in listening and speaking individually as well as in overall oral communication skills.

In addition, results found in table 2 indicate that the control group level improved to some extent in oral communication skills. However, the experimental group improved more significantly because they have been taught via an effective strategy; namely NLP. It might be said that these results were due to the effective characteristics of NLP activities as a highly communicative strategy that creates a comprehensible input to facilitate effective rapid language learning. This result is supported by similar ones as proved by other previous studies such as Dadour's (1995) and Ragab's (2010).

Finally, it could be concluded that the results of the present study indicate that the students in the experimental group outperformed their counterparts in the control group on concerning oral communication skills. Thus, it can be claimed

that this study has contributed towards a further evidence of the benefits of using NLP in EFL classes because the use of NLP techniques and activities gives learners the opportunities to develop their oral skills as shown through their active respond in role-playing and oral presentation. This is considered by Saman (2006), Sarada and Smrithi (2015).

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