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The Effectiveness of a Program Based on Connectivism Theory and Some e-learning Platforms in Developing EFL Oral Communication Skills for University Students

A proposal

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Introduction

Oral communication is one of the most important elements of the educational process. Language is the most important tool for communication, through which an individual can express his/her thoughts, feelings, and desires. The teacher or learner cannot transmit or receive information without having good language communication skills. Oral language communication consists of (listening and speaking). Oral language skills are perhaps the most important as speaking English is one of the requirements of the 21st century .The English language is the first global language and importance in most fields. Speaking English is one of the requirements of the 21st century. It is the language of the times and the language of communication and most popular communication among people. Speaking English fluently becomes a prerequisite for a job seeker's acceptance or getting scholarship. Also, English language is the official language of many university study areas and is also widely used in electronic websites on the Internet, as its learning and mastery contribute in helping students to use websites and benefit from its contents such as books, scientific journals and published research that develop their knowledge, knowledge and culture. Speaking in English is one of the basic foundations of an individual's life on the cultural and social level. Language is a mean of social media, as it is a tool for understanding, exchanging experiences and interacting with others.

Learning the English language aims to develop four main skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing, and they are related to each other, and each influences and is affected by the other. Several studies and research confirmed the importance of listening and speaking and its prominent role in

acquiring the language and the need to develop it through effective teaching strategies that help students to train in their skill and mastery it.

According to **(Kurita, 2012)** the main difference between the most successful and the least successful learners is their ability to use the listening skill as a learning tool and the listening skill is very important in learning English because it is the key to learning a foreign language and receiving language input. **Mulvania (2019)** declared that listening is essential to communicating respect for another person.

Through listening person can acquire language with all its elements, so that he can recognize the sounds of the language and understand the meanings and vocabulary. Without listening, man cannot speak, read or write, as a person spends his awake hours in a linguistic activity, which are distributed as follow 50% of listening, 30% of speaking, 16% to read, and 9% to write **(Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016)**

Listening is an important component in the communication process. It is the process of receiving what the speaker is saying and understanding the meaning of the speech and then responding. As listening is a complex process in which the listener connects between what he hears and what he knows **(Rost, 2009).** Listening can be used to improve other skills such as speaking or reading skills in all classes. The listening skill cannot be developed alone, but it must be combined with other skills and it is almost impossible to separate the skills. It is important to integrate the skills in order for the classrooms to become more feasible and motivate students to participate actively in classroom **(Cheung, 2010).**

Melanlıoğlu (2013) considered listening in the communication process and defined this skill as meaning and react to the voices heard. **(Morlet, 2010)** defined listening as an automatic mental response to sound that requires no effort while listening, and interest is active and focused in order to understand the meaning expressed by the speaker, which is the ability to receive and interpret audible messages accurately in the process of communicating with others. As (**Coskun**, **2010**) defined listening as a measure of sound waves

traveling through the air to the brain that process audible information. While defined it as a **(Michael, 2016)** complex process in which the listener interacts with the speaker to build meaning, understanding, and reasoning for the information.

Listening and speaking is one of the most important language skills, **Ainin (2020)** asserted that listening skills are an important part of communication and are the basis of second language learning or foreign languages, so speaking English is one of the requirements of the 21st century to get a good job opportunity in all career areas or to obtain a scholarship. **Davenport & Hannahs (2012)** pointed out the importance of students practicing speaking skill in the classroom , He also stressed that the skill of speaking is difficult to develop easily, as it requires the learner to use sounds accurately, and enables grammatical formulas and a speech synthesis system that help to express what he wants to sayin different life situations.

Speaking is the ability to communicate in everyday life situations, and the successful development of speaking skills is a major challenge, especially in situations where students are outside of the classroom **(Pawlak, 2014).** According to **(Burns and Seidelhofer, 2010)** learning to speak, whether in the first language or in other languages, involves developing accurate and detailed knowledge about how and when to communicate and the complex skills to produce and manage interactions, such as asking a question or answering it.

(Dash, 2013) defined speaking skill as a productive oral skill and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning, it has many different aspects including phonetic and grammatical , accuracy, correct use of vocabulary, fluency, comprehensibility as fundamental elements of an effective communication.

"The degree of students' success in speaking depends on to what extent the language resources that they have are employed effectively in communication,

which affect their fluency in speaking, and to what extent are the speaking strategies used in communication. Most students suffer during speaking from hesitation, temporary suspension, and false starts… etc."**(Derwing, 2017, p. 246)**

Students should use speaking strategies that will help them overcome fear of speaking. According to many studies, task-based learning focuses on the use of language in Realistic life tasks that encourage students to learn in a more interactive way as it gives students an opportunity to acquire and learn the language and then employ what they have learned in everyday life situations where students play a positive, interactive role, and an essential pillar in the learning process; students collaborate with their colleagues through interactive collaborative group work listening and speaking to each other **(Thomas & Reinders, 2010 ; Shehadeh & Coombe, 2012; Reinders & White, 2010).**

Moreover, Julia T. Wood (2009) described oral communication as a systemic process in which people interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings. The important terms are process which is ongoing, continuous and always changing; systemic which happen within a system of interconnected parts that affect each other; symbols which represent things and meanings where any act of communication involves two essential aspects.

Munawrah (2016) stated that English as a global language and Oral communication is a way of exchanging information through the sense of hearing and making meaning of what was practiced. oral communication take place when one person or more sends and receives message that are distorted by noise, occur within a context, have some effect, and provide some opportunity for feedback with some basic elements. These are context, source-receiver, messages, channels, noise and effects.

Connectivism Theory is one of the most recent theories in the field ofeducation that strives to overcome the restrictions imposed on behavioral,

cognitive and constructive theory. Connectivism Theory connects the prominent elements from the three frameworks (educational - social - technological) in order to developing new theories in the digital age. It is a theory that discusses education as a network of personal knowledge that is created with the aim of engaging students in education, supporting communication and interaction across the web. Connectivism Theory uses the internet and computer technology as helping tools ineducation **(Bair & Stafford**, **2016).**

In light of previous criticisms of learning theories: behavioral, cognitive, and constructivism, Siemens presented a theory called the Connectivism theory. **(Siemens, 2005)** defined it as a theory that seeks to explain how learning occurs in electronic environments and how they are affected by the social changes.

The Connectivism theory requires the learner to make new decisions based on scientific foundations, where the learner realizes when the previously acquired information is replaced with new information and knowledge in the sense that it requires the learner to make a decision in forming new relationships in this contract, all of this is vital and fundamental for a process Learning for the learner **(Stafford, 2015)**.

The e-learning platform also helps to exchange ideas and opinions between teachers and students, and to share scientific content. It helps to achieve high- quality educational outcomes. The concept of e-learning refers to providing educational content electronically, which enables the learner to interact actively with both the content and the teacher and his peers in the class simultaneously or asynchronously, and enables the learner to learn at any time and time with the speed and the method that suits him. The "E-learning Platform" provides an interactive learning environment. Web List 2 enables teachers to do their tasks

combining the advantages of electronic content management systems with socialnetworks. (**http://www.tewtjournal.org**)

Furthermore, the educational platforms are not restricted to the spatial, temporal or cultural boundaries, as they are universal in languages, and they actively help to exchange experiences between specialists, thus achieving the concept of the globalization of education. Examples of e-learning platforms are Moodle, Edmodo, wiki, Google classroom, Microsoft Teams, and spirael; the researcher used two of them (Moodle, Google Classroom, and Microsoft teams) as e-learning platforms in this study.

For these and other considerations, the researcher tried to conduct research to verify the effectiveness of an electronic program based on tasks and some e-learning platforms to improve listening and speaking skills among second year EFL students at Helwan University.

Context of the Problem

Listening and speaking are one of the most difficult skills in the English language and a critical problem facing students, and despite of the importance of listening and understanding the audio material that enables students to speak with mastery, most teachers teach it in traditional ways and do not give them enough time like other skills. Due to the lack of practice and training, we find that most students listen, but their ability to understand is weak, they are unable to understand and interpret what they hear. Ulum (2015) stated that listening skill is the weakest skill of EFL students who encounter different kinds of listening problems.

This constitutes a major problem for students which lead to a lack of their ability to speak fluently and decrease their ability to understand and perceive what they hear. Also, most students rely on memorization to pass the speaking test rather than practicing it. Some students worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism, and complain that they cannot think of anything to say: they have no reason to express themselves beyond the guilty feeling that they should be speaking. Some of EFL instructors confined to teach their students reading, academic writing and grammar; from their point of view, there is not enough time for them to teach listening and speaking skills because they face the problem of the necessity of completing the course in time; thus students do not get a real, and authentic opportunity to practice their listening and speaking skills well.

The researcher personal experience: where the researcher works as an English instructor

at Oxford training center, the researcher has noticed that first year English students lack of listening and speaking skills, which negatively affects their language acquisition and mastery; this due to the lack of participation of most students in different communicative situations within English language classes for fear of making mistakes, students' lack of confidence in themselves , their insufficient ability to speak English fluently, their inability to build correct verbal sentences in addition to their insufficient ability to understand and perceive what they hear.

The results of several previous studies confirmed that students' lack in listening and speaking skills **(Abu Hatab, 2010; Abo Shela, 2010; Lubbad, 2013; Shehadeh, 2016; El Masharwe, 2017)** all confirmed the low level of students in listening and speaking skills and EFL instructors ignore to teach listening and speaking skills in the classroom , also confirmed that students 'inability to express, opinions, ideas and students' inability to understand the meaning of what they are hearing which poses a real problem affecting students 'mastery and learning language.

The pilot study

In order to identify 2nd year EFL university students' listening and speaking skills, the researcher administrated a pilot study through administrating

listening and speaking test on a group of students ==(N= 35).== The test aimed to assess 2nd year EFL university students' listening and speaking skills. Where they demonstrated lack in their ability to use the simplest language expressions to communicate during the test. The results have proven that most of those students lack basic listening and speaking skills, also their low level in listening and speaking skills. The average score in the test was **36%.** The researcher conducted formal interviews with EFL instructors at Helwan University to identify and reveal the EFL instructors' opinions, strategies, suggestions, and techniques that they are used to develop oral communication skills for 2nd year EFL university students. Also, it aimed to find solutions for students' weakness in listening and speaking skills. The EFL instructors were asked to answer some questions ==(See Appendix A).== The results showed that most of the EFL instructors don't focus directly on listening and speaking skills during teaching the courses. They confirmed that most of the learning activities are content-based designed which neglect developing such essential listening and especially speaking skills. As a result, they do not have adequate time to design listening and speaking activities within the syllabus. Moreover, in their opinion teaching via some e-learning platform may be suitable solution where they can contact with their students anytime anywhere.

Statement of the problem

The problem of study is determined by the lack of second year EFL university students in listening and speaking skills, which may be the result of traditional teaching methods in the pre-university stages. To address this problem, the researcher decided to design an electronic program based on task based learning strategy and some e-learning platforms in the light of connectivism theory that will provide some real tasks and activities to improve students' listening and speaking skills. The aim of teaching is to prepare learners for the present and the future through real language interaction with others.

Questions of the study

The present study attempt to answer the following main question:

What is the effectiveness of a program based on connectivism theory and some e-learning platforms in developing oral communication skills foruniversity students?

From the main question derived the following sub - questions:

1- What are the current level of second year EFL university students in listening and speaking skills?

2- What are the necessary EFL listening and speaking skills to be developed?

3- What are the features of the program based on connectivism theory and some e-learning platforms in developing some listening and speaking?

4- How far are some e-learning platforms effective in developing second year EFL university students in listening and speaking skills?

5- To what extent are the students satisfied with the program?

The purpose of the study

1 - Developing students oral communication skills by using an electronic program based on connectivism theory and some e-learning platforms. Students will work in groups and cooperate to accomplish activities, speaking, listening, dialogue and discussion to each other to improve oral communication skills of EFL students.

2- Enabling EFL students from oral communication skills to communicate in English with fluency, accuracy and proper mastery.

3- Increasing students' motivation to learn the English language and acquire oral communication skills via some e-learning platforms.

Significance of the study

It is expected that the study will be beneficial for:

a. **Students**

This study seeks to train students to practice oral communicationskills through program based some e-learning platforms. Because the university stage is the

stage of honing students' expression and thinking skills on the one hand, and a starting point towards developing and qualifying the present and the future on the other hand. They will be able to communicate orally in English as a skill needed to cope with the requirements of the 21st century.

b. EFL Instructors

Learn about the effectiveness of a proposed program based on the connectivism theory and some e-learning platforms in developing oral communication skills for second year EFL university students at Helwan University.

c. Curriculum developers and designers

Shedding light on oral communication skills and the importance of their development for second year EFL university students through a proposed program based on connectivism theory and some e-learning platforms where it provides the opportunity for students to acquire language and practice it in real communicative situations and activities through dialogue, discussion and listening to each other.

d. EFL researchers

This study may benefit for researchers in the field of teaching English language via e-learning platforms.

Delimitation of the study

The present study is delimited to:

1- A randomly assigned two groups of participants from second year EFL university students. They will be **80** students from Helwan University at Cairo.

2- The critical oral communication skills and sub- skills identified then submitted them to specialized jury member.

3- The duration of implementing the electronic program at the second semester of the academic year **2020/2021**.

Hypotheses of the study

The present study aimed at verifying the following hypotheses:

1- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the EFL listening skills test in favor of the experimental group.

2- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of EFL speaking skills in favor of the experimental group.

3- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of EFL listening skills in favor of the post administration.

4- There is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of EFL speaking skills in favor of the post administration.

5- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the subjects of the experimental group on post measurement of the students' satisfaction questionnaire of learning by using some e-learning platforms.

Instruments of the study

The researcher used the following instruments:

1- List of oral communication skills.

2- A program based on some e-learning platforms (Moodle, Google classroom, Microsoft Teams, and ELLLO library).

3- Pre/post oral communication skills test.

4- Students' Interview Questionnaire was submitted on Google drive.

5- Scoring rubric to assess students' oral communication skills.

6- Self-assessment checklist.

7- Peer- assessment checklist.

8- Participants' Satisfaction Questionnaire.

Procedures of the Study

1- Preparing a theoretical framework from the previous relevant studies of the listening and speaking literature.

2- Preparing a list of listening and speaking skills to be developed of second year EFL university students.

3- In light of the previous steps, the criteria for (objectives, content, teaching methods, tasks, evaluation) will be extracted.

4- Preparing a questionnaire in order to determining the students' attitudes, needs, and interests, then analyzing it to establish the content accordingly.

5- Designing a program based on Connectivism theory and some e-learning platforms (Moodle, Google classroom, and Microsoft Teams).

6- Designing scoring **rubric** and submitting it to a jury of specialists to validate it.

7- Submitting the list and the program to a jury of specialists to validate and to identify the required listening and speaking skills for the second year EFL students at Helwan University.

8- Designing the program taking into consideration the following:

- Objectives

- Content

- Methodology

- Assessment

9- Selecting random participants of second year EFL students at Helwan University,and divided them into two groups, experimental group and control group.

10- Designing pre-posttest and submitting it to jury of specialists to validate it.

11- Teaching the program to the study participants.

12- Administrating the pre-posttest to the study participants before/after implementation.

13- Statistical analysis of data.

14- Discussing the findings of the study and drawing conclusions.

15- Presenting recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Definition of Terms

Connectivism Theory: Siemens (2017) introduced Connectivism as a learning model that present insight into the learning competencies and tasks required for learners to demonstrate in the digital age. According to Rice (2018),"connectivism is a learning theory that explains learning as a serious of networks connections" (p.7).

In the current study: It is a general framework for online activities where students acquire listening and speaking skills through the implementation of these activities, students cooperate and interact with each other via some e-learning platforms to develop their oral communication skills.

E-Learning platforms: The concept of e-learning refers to providing educational content electronically, which enables the learner to interact actively with both the content, the teacher and peers in the class simultaneously or asynchronously. It allows the learner to learn at any time, with any speed and the suitable. Learning Platform provides an interactive learning environment. Web List 2 enables teachers

to do their tasks combining the advantages of electronic content managementsystems with social networks. ()

In the current study: an interactive e-learning environment that provides students with an opportunity to interact with each other and with the researcher and enables students to have an audio-visual reception, pictures, text, videos, and presentations.

Oral Communication: Munawrah (2016) stated that English as a global language and Oral communication is a way of exchanging information through the sense of hearing and making meaning of what was practiced.

In the current study: oral communication is the student's ability to listen and speak in English and master some listening and speaking skills effectively through learning, training and practicing them in real-life situations.

Speaking skill: (Richard, 2016) defined Speaking as the act of transmitting information by expressing one's thoughts and feelings through spoken language. Speaking abilities are important components of interpersonal skills. A person who cannot or does not know how to speak well is most likely lacking in essential interpersonal skills

(Dash, 2013) defined speaking skill as a productive oral skill and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning, it has many different aspects including phonetic and grammatical , accuracy, correct use of vocabulary, fluency, comprehensibility as fundamental elements of an effective communication.

In the current study: is the ability to use the English language accurately and fluently to express opinions in different real life situations, arrange ideas, explanation, interpretation, criticism using vocal tones, link the meaning to the communicative position and measured by the degree which student gets in the test.

Listening skill: (Morlet, 2010) defined listening skill as an automatic mental response to sound that requires no effort during listening process, and understand

the meaning expressed by the speaker, which is the ability to receive and interpret audible messages accurately in the process of communicating with others.

In the current study: is the student's ability to receive, understand, and perceive the audio material, predict the topic, identify main idea, identify specific information, summarize what is the speaker said in his/her own words, and draw conclusion and general understanding.

The remainder of this dissertation will be organized as follows:

 Chapter Two: Review of Literature and Previous Studies

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion of Results

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

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