Developing Oral Fluency among EFL Learners through Using Edutainment

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Abstract

This research aimed at uncovering the effect of using the edutainment method of teaching in developing the oral fluency skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The problem of the study is summarized in the lack of fluency skills among EFL learners; consequently, the descriptive analytical method was adopted for solving the research problem and verify the feasibility of edutainment. After reviewing and analyzing the related literature of the variables of the research, the results revealed that the edutainment method was very effective in developing the EFL learners' oral fluency. The research concluded that edutainment is an effective method of teaching which must be utilized for enhancing the EFL learners' oral fluency.

Keywords: Edutainment, Oral Fluency, EFL Learners.

تنمية الطلاقة الشفهية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من خلال التعليم الترفيهي

الملخص

هدف البحث الحالي إلى الكشف عن تأثير استخدام أسلوب التعليم الترفيهي في التدريس في تنمية مهارات الطلاقة الشفوية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وتتلخص مشكلة البحث في نقص مهارات الطلاقة بين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، ومن ثم فلقد تم الاعتماد على المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لحل مشكلة البحث والتحقق من جدوى التعليم الترفيهي، وبعد مراجعة وتحليل الأدبيات ذات الصلة بمتغيرات البحث، أسفرت نتائج البحث أن طريقة التعليم الترفيهي ذات فعالية في تنمية الطلاقة الشفوية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وخلصت نتائج البحث إلى أن التعليم الترفيهي يعد أحد الوسائل الفعالة التي يجب توظيفها لتعزيز الطلاقة الشفوية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعليم الترفيهي، الطلاقة الشفهية، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

Speaking Skills and Language Learning

The individual ability to speak fluently is one of the most important skills that can a person possess in the twenty first century; not to mention the individual's ability to speak a foreign language. More than that, the ability to speak fluently is one of the ultimate goals of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Speaking is an essential tool that enables the EFL learners to achieve different tasks and functions directly and without a need for an assistance. Added to that, the ability of the EFL learner to speak fluently guarantees the success not only in the academic life, but also in every life sphere of life (Zaremba, 2006).

One the other hand, speaking is considered one of the neglected kills among the other skills. It is not receiving the required attention as the other skills. When telling that a person belongs to a specific language, we say that he is a native speaker not native writer, reader or listener (Bardovi-Harlig & & Salisbury, 2004). With this in mind, speaking is not an easy skill, but it is the most complex and sophisticated skill to be mastered especially by foreign language learners. The ability to speak entails knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, intonation and many other language aspects; not to mention, the EFL learners' ability to speak fluently, which is more sophisticated skills than the ability to speak native language (Thornburry,2005).

Chuanchaisit and Prapphal (2009) confirmed that running a conversation in English entails a number of requirements which cannot be neglected. Conversation is a social activity which occurs between two individuals or more who are discussing

a specific topic in a social context. Although, the persons who are running the conversation have enough knowledge about grammar and vocabulary of the written language, they cannot hold the base of running the conversation. Among the elements which a person might possess to run the conversation are:

1) The ability to negotiate the meaning.

2) The ability to adapt to different contexts.

3) The ability to adapt to the social rules.

4) The ability to adapt to cultural rules.

5) The ability to cooperate while speaking.

6) The ability to take turns.

Speaking Fluency

Richards (2008, p.14) provided a definition for fluency as follows "natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence".

Although, when learning a language, accuracy is one of the most important aspects of any language product, in speaking fluency is of crucial importance more than accuracy in terms of achieving the purpose of communication. Fluency means the English speaker's ability to use the language effectively and smoothly in a meaningful communication. Such communication ought to be intelligible, meaningful and collaborative. The English fluent speaker has the ability to express

him/herself without hesitation, pauses, repetition, or much self-correction (Harmer, 2015).

Ur (1996) depicted a number of features of the fluent speaking which are delineated in the following lines:

1) The EFL leaners must practice speaking as much as possible as speaking is a productive skill which cannot be mastered without practicing "practice makes perfect".

2) The participation in the conversation is an important delimitation as all the learners must take turns and take part in the conversations. The speaking activity is not delimited to a number of fluent students, but all students must participate.

3) The teacher must increase the students' motivation to participate in the classroom conversations. They must be eager to take part in the class speaking activities.

4) Activities are set according their linguistic levels. The teacher must adjust the activities to suit the students' level of language in order to participate and develop their language.

Thornbury (2012) developed a measurement of speaking fluently. He identified three aspects for assessing speaking fluency, namely speech rate, amount of talk and pauses.

- **Speech Rate**

Speech rate means the speediness of the speaker when speaking. Such speed may vary according to the situation and the social context. It was identified that the average speaking rate is 125 to 150 words per minute. Such number of words includes the filled and silent pauses done by the speaker while speaking (Ullakonoja, 2009).

- **Amount of Talk**

Macfadyen et al. (2004) demonstrated that the amount of talk is the total number of words produced by the speaker including the pauses filled in terms of one speaker involved in the conversation.

- **Number of Pauses**

Pauses are considered a natural aspect of speaking, especially in conversations. The pauses can occur while speaking without hindering the flow of communication; on the other hand, some frequent pauses occur while speaking hinder the flow of communication. The number of such pauses is considered a feature of lack of fluency while speaking. The number of pauses is not assessed directly, but there are a number of specifications which must be taken into consideration while assessing the EFL learners' fluency via pauses as follows:

1) Using pause fillers

2) The place of the pause

3) The occurrence of the pause

4) The span of the pause

5) The usage of repetition

6) The run length

Features and Measurement of speaking fluency

Newton and Nation (2020) pinpointed that fluency is considered one of the measurements which can be used by the teacher for identifying which students master the speaking skill.

1) Fluency is demonstrated when learners participate in the speaking activities and do such activities with the normal speed without pauses or hesitations with a proper flow of conversation.

2) Speaking fluently entails that the learners use the language without exerting much effort, but use the language smoothly with a suitable flow of speech.

3) Fluency is one of the sophisticated skills which are mastered after a great deal of practice.

The Status-quo of Teaching Speaking

In the most teaching learning contexts of English, especially, English as foreign language, the EFL learners do not have enough time or opportunities to

practice their language whether inside the classroom due to the requirements of time and syllabus or outside the classroom as they may have lots of written materials or listening tracks or TV programs to learn from them; however, they do not have partners to interact with, which might affect their abilities to speak fluently (Samaranayake, 2016).

Shedding light into the EFL learners, many research papers showed that EFL leaners do not have the competence to hold the floor of speaking confidently without making repetition or many pauses. They are not successful to use English fluently (Chuanchaisit & Prapphal, 2009).

There were many reasons were identified depicting the reasons for the lack of oral fluency skills among EFL learners. Some students may have low levels of language proficiency. Some students do not have sufficient vocabulary to express themselves or they may not have the proper grammatical knowledge which enables them to obtain the required accuracy of the spoken language. Another group of students may suffer from shyness or they are not self-confident to express themselves in front of other people. Such reason may be the result of lack of practicing speaking more in order to be able to communicate effectively or run the conversation fluently (Cao et al., 2021).

With this in mind, there are many methods of developing speaking fluency and among such methods "the edutainment". It is one of the most recent methods of teaching which can be utilized in teaching most linguistic skills. It depends greatly

on raising the learners' motivation and interest in the learning situation (Fairuzzabadzi, 2015).

Edutainment

The use of edutainment as a teaching method for developing EFL learners speaking skills depends mainly on enhancing the learners' confidence and motivation to participate in the learning process. It is one of the methods which depends greatly on the students being active in the learning situation. The learners are not focusing in learning the language, but they are focusing on the game and how to play such game which resembles the authentic situations of using the language (Kirriemuir& McFarlane, 2004).

The purpose of the edutainment is to attract the learners' attention by involving them in the learning situation. The effectiveness of using edutainment in teaching language skills was examined by a number of studies which showed positive effect in developing language skills (Fairuzzabadzi, 2015).

Features of Edutainment

There are a number of features of edutainment as depicted by the available literature (Fossard, 2008; Wang et al., 2007; Charsky, 2010; Buckingham and Scanlon, 2001).

1) Edutainment is depending on mixing a number of many components such as sound, animation, video, pictures and live role playing.

2) It is a type of entertaining which aimed at educating via entertaining using all the facilities provided by technology such as music, sound, video, and computer games.

3) Edutainment is considered a hybrid type which depends mainly on visualization and animation, and at the same time, it aimed to entertain and learn.

4) Edutainment helps in increasing the student's enthusiasm and excitement in the teaching learning process.

5) Edutainment can be used in teaching difficult subjects and the learning process will be enjoyable and the information will be retained after a long time.

Types of Edutainment

Using edutainment in education was an alternative to traditional methods in education. White (2003) categorized edutainment into four different types as follows:

1) Location-based edutainment

2) Edutainment by purpose and content

3) Edutainment by target

4) Edutainment by type of media contains

Computer Edutainment

The computer edutainment is one of the prominent types of edutainment. It has a number of features which can be used in developing oral fluency among EFL learners, especially young learners. The literature review reveled a number of important features of computer edutainment as follows (Yulandari, & Rahman, 2019):

1) Computer edutainment is a source of fun for learners, especially young learners.

2) It is immersive as it includes the student in the learning situation and transfer the identity of the player to the student.

3) Computer edutainment encourages collaboration and competition which inspire the players to use the leaning in a meaningful context.

4) Communities of practice is one of the products which are the results of edutainment.

5) It is an interactive environment for acquiring the language skills with fully participation from the learners.

Problem of the Research

A wealth of literature in the body of the research confirmed that EFL learners in all levels are lacking the skill of speaking fluently due to many reasons, mainly the lack of practice among learners inside and outside the learning environment. Although, speaking fluently is an important characteristic of EFL learners, they are

suffering from lack of proficiency in such skills. Therefore, the present research aimed at investigating the effect of edutainment in developing the peaking fluency skills among EFL learners. The present research sought to the answer the following question:

"What is the effect of edutainment method in developing speaking fluency among EFL learners?"

Methodology

This research made use of the descriptive analytical method for answering the research question and achieve the goal of the research. Practically, the researcher revised and analyzed the available literature, to the best of his knowledge, to attain a cut and dried answer for the research question.

Results

The results of the literature reviewed and analysis conducted revealed that edutainment is one of the promising methods or approaches which might attain very successful results in developing language skills. Not many researches were conducted and exploring the effect of edutainment in developing speaking skills; however, all the results attained pinpointed that edutainment has significant effectiveness in developing speaking skill. Such results pinpointed the effectiveness of edutainment in developing speaking fluency among EFL learners.

Conclusions

In the light of the research results attained, the researcher proposed the following conclusions:

1) Speaking Fluency is one of the most important skills for language learners which must be paid the due attention in the teaching learning and evaluation processes as the EFL learners must be assessed basically based on their speaking skills.

2) Edutainment is one of the successful methods which might be investigated in future research for verifying its effectiveness in developing different language skills.

3) Adding fun for the learning process is suitable to some extent for the young learners, but the old one need much focus on the content.

4) Technology has become part and parcel of the 21st century classroom, and it cannot be neglected or cancelled.

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