

PDF - EFFECT OF TEACHER TRAINEES' EXPOSURE TO DIGITAL LANGUAGE LABORATORY ON THEIR ACHIEVEMENT IN ORAL ENGLISH - researchcub.info

ABSTRACT

English language teachers have been used to the presentation method of language teaching. This situation has led to poor performance of students in some areas of English language studies. This study was designed to find the effect of digital language laboratory on teacher trainee's achievement in oral English. A quasiexperimental design which involved the use of intact classes was adopted for the study. There were three research questions which were answered while three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. All the seventy-seven year one students of the department of language studies, Enugu State College of Education Technical, Enugu and sixty students of the department of English, Institute of Ecumenical Education Thinkers Corner, Enugu were used for the study. In assigning the subjects to control and experimental groups, these seventy-seven students of ESCET and sixty students from Ecumenical were used respectively. The experimental group was exposed to digital laboratory method while the control was exposed to the presentation method of teaching. The instrument used for the study was Oral Production Test. The scores obtained from the pretest were used for the item analysis and the calculation of the reliability indices. Applying Kuder Richard formula 20 the reliability indices of 0.98 was found. The mean scores and the standard deviation were computed and were used for answering the research questions, while the analysis of variance was adopted to test the hypotheses. It was found that digital language laboratory method of teaching was significantly more effective than the presentation method in the teaching of oral English. The results of the study show that the use of digital language laboratory method enhances instruction on oral English. It was recommended that oral English teachers should adopt the use of digital language laboratory as a method of teaching phonetics and phonology.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Language is recognized as one of the greatest human achievements. The acquisition of language is unique to human beings. Although other species can communicate in their own way, only humans have attained the most highly developed system of communication by the use of words and expressions (Bell, 1981). Communication is the transfer of message from one party to another so that it can be understood and be acted upon (Eyre, 1983). This goes to show how important language is to human beings.

Language can be acquired and can also be learned. For language acquisition, it is the term most commonly used to describe the process whereby children become speakers of their native languages (Bell, 1981). It can also mean a natural acquisition of a second language while language learning can best be explained as a process of problem-solving in which the learner exposed to the data of the language attempts to create cognitive maps.

Language learning is also a term commonly used to describe the process whereby children and adults formally learn a language mainly a second language. It is a complex set of processes especially when that language is a second one to the learner.

In Nigeria, English is the second language. It is a second language because there are other indigenous languages. Nigeria had about two hundred and fifty indigenous languages in use before the introduction of English language (Anibueze, 2007). English is firmly established as the official language and outside the mandatory official context, English is the major language of instruction, social services, business communication and occupational purposes. It is notionally considered as a measure for literacy and outstanding status. It is the language for scientific and technological innovation. It is also used for international trade and conferences. English is virtually the language now in use at home, in the market places, in religious houses, in playgrounds, in social and political gatherings.

English is necessary for accessing discourse at a global level, from international relations to popular culture and to academia (Makay, 2002). English language is the first and foremost medium of national and international communication in this present time. Nigerians need English so as to be able to communicate and interact with the native speakers and non-native speakers. Nigerian child needs English language to be able to communicate with his neighbours. Indeed, the Nigerian child requires proficiency in it so as to be able to express his everyday experiences. Nigerian children have to understand other people and be understood with less difficulty (Azikiwe, 2007).

English language is needed in Nigeria for individual development and educational advancement and employment. This is true when one considers the mental exercises that are needed to be accurate in writing and reading, speaking and listening in foreign language other than the mother tongue. The teaching of the English language in Nigerian schools and colleges is organized around these four language skills- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. But despite all efforts made to teach these skills, the Nigerian students' level of language proficiency is still below expectation.

The English language paper is presently divided into three broad groups – paper I- Essay, comprehension and Summary, paper II- Objective questions and paper III Test of orals. The little emphasis placed on test of orals is evident as paper I- Essay, Comprehension and Summary gets the lion share of the mark allocation of 100 while paper II- Objectives and paper III share the remaining insignificant marks of 100. Also in the planning of the time table, the timetable planners usually see English as one subject and allot equal number of time to English as other subjects. When this happens the subject teacher only concentrate on essay and comprehension that will provide him with enough exercises as would be demanded by the principals and state supervisors.

From 2002 to 2004, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) Chief Examiners' reports of the students performances in West African Secondary School

Certificate Examination (WASSCE) showed that the overall performance of students was poor. A close look at the reports by Chief Examiners will help to confirm the poor performance of these students. In (2002) Students' weaknesses were discovered in the area of essay writing. According to the report, majority of the students were ignorant of the components of essay topics such as content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy. The report from the Chief Examiner further explained that many compositions were seriously marred by poor spellings, poor punctuations and faulty grammar. Also the students were ignorant of the use of comma, full-stop and question mark. Interchangeable use of words is another error discovered. For instance where for were. The uses of ones for once, no for know, had for heard and so on.

The Chief Examiner in (2003) examination report gave some weaknesses discovered among Senior Secondary School Students. The students were found to be ignorant of the proper use of punctuation and letters, the proper use of capital and small letters, the different between the present and past tenses, restating the ideas of passage in different words and expressions and identifying parts of speech and how they function in sentences.

The (2004) Senior Secondary School Examination report showed that, the students could not punctuate properly and could not spell adequately. The evidences of the students' poor performances in their examinations now call for proper examination of the problems hindering the students from meeting up to expectations in the use of the English language.

Many things can hinder students' progress in academic performance. These hindrances can be traced to teachers and their teaching methods, poor learning environment, students' poor background and indiscriminate use of mother tongue. The ability to detect the problems of students in their process of learning is very important. The major problems according to Nnamani (2010) is that when a student fails, people blame him for not performing well without minding or taking a look at the factors that might have impeded or caused his poor performance.

In the school system English language is a compulsory subject. At the junior secondary school level, the English language comprises of language and literature. Language is divided into four components – morphology, syntax, lexis and phonology. All these are integrated into one and taught as a single subject in both junior and senior secondary schools. Oral English as part of phonology has to do with speech sounds of a particular language like English which can be effectively taught with the use of the digital language laboratory. Speech is very important in English language teaching and learning. Ezeomeke (2000) states that no matter the dexterity of a professional, he needs to speak to attract clients and no matter how well a teacher may be, he also needs to speak well to motivate his students. This is probably why Wilkins (1972) cited in Ezeomeke (2000) insists that although mastery of both the spoken and written forms are necessary for effective language use, speech is the primary manifestation of language and writing is both secondary and

dependent on it.

In addition, Oral English is important because it helps the students to develop the ability to understand an internally accepted variety of English at a normal conversational speed (Ezeomeke 2000). It also helps them to develop the ability to engage in sustained dialogues and conversations with other users of internationally accepted variety of English. Students, especially those of them in senior secondary schools, dread the subject because of its technical nature. This has been traced to either the technical nature of phonemic symbols or the methodology applied by the teachers. No wonder Okoli (2007) writes that Phonetics and Phonology are often dreaded by many students especially as some students find it difficult to apply themselves to a lot of punctuation practice drills which usually punctuate phonetics and phonology courses.

In secondary schools the time table officers usually see English language as a single subject and allot equal number of teaching periods and time with the other subjects forgetting that significant priority should be given to the subject because of its status and fundamental position in the lives of individuals and various components that made up the language. To this Okoli (2007) writes that language is far too complex a field of study to be studied exhaustively in a single work. This is because knowledge of a language includes knowledge of the morphemes, words, phrase and sentences. It also includes knowing the sounds of the language and the way they are combined to produce meaningful units. These aspects of knowledge associated with language clearly indicate that language study is a multi-disciplinary field.

In view of the above, when a teacher is assigned to teach English language as a subject the teacher finds it very difficult to cope with the limited number of periods and time. The teachers often touch the only area that they may likely be conversant with and neglect other components which is usually the oral English. Since a teacher must show evidence of sufficient written work for him to be regarded as doing his work well before the school principal and supervisors, his concentration will be heavier only on essays and comprehension which provide him such evidence. Oral English does not provide teachers such opportunity since according to Onovo (2001), it is practically oriented exercises which are informed by the fact that language, particularly speech is more or less a habit, better learned by imitation, activities and practice.

In educational setting it is believed that man is a bi-product of nature and nurture. Hence, man can have his potentials adversely affected by environment. This is why it is today believed that no race is endowed with more innate superiority than others but that differences in mental ability are caused by the environment. The home plays great roles in the shaping of the child and his performance in the school. It is in realization of the above fact that Egbe and Omeje (2005) state that one of the important consequences of formal education is the progressive removal from the family of its education function. They

maintain that even in the most advanced countries of the world, the school does not take over completely from the family. The family shapes the character of the child who, before he commences school and even after starting school, continues to live with his parents and is deeply influenced by them.

Writing on the impact of home environment as a major factor on language development, Adeniran (1987) cited in Ikonta and Maduekwe (2006) states that there is high correlation between a child's performance in school and in his socio-cultural environment. He states that children of middle class and upper strata of the social milieu perform better at schools in English language due to a combination of factors such as the use of English language in the family communication and availability of stimulating facilities such as library, films and other electronic gadgets to enhance or build up the children's intellectual ability.

Children who come from higher socio-economic homes are more highly motivated at home to read than children who come from lower socio-economic homes (Okonkwo, 1998). He maintains that elite parents make sure that their children acquire English at the appropriate time. But children who come from lower social economic homes have a problem in learning English because there might not be sufficient books to read. Such parents may not teach their children nursery rhymes or tell them bedtime stories in English. If they do at all, they do that in their vernacular.

Parents with high academic attainment prepare their children towards learning and this encouragement is reflected in their children's academic achievements (Mayorie, 1980). The educated parents use Received Pronunciation while addressing their children at home and in school the children are made to learn and use the Received Pronunciation while the illiterate parents use vernacular in their every day communication. Consequently, the children from the lower class families find it difficult and emotionally disturbing to change from their sub-group language to literate or Received Pronunciation. Taylor (1987) observes that educated parents place a relatively high premium on education. He also confirms that this serves as a positive catalyst to their children who strive to attain the maximum potentials. Linguistic interference which is the disparities between mother tongue and the target language constitutes poor performances of students in oral English. Onovo (2001) explains that most Nigerians had acquired an indigenous Nigerian language naturally and had become proficient in it before they were taught the English language in school. Consequently, the features of the second language often interfere with the learning of the second language.

Many authors like Tifen (1980) and Eme (1984) cited in Okoye (2010) feel that oral English is not taught using proper strategies like drills in our secondary schools. This results in the students being faced with the problems of oral communication in higher institutions of learning. All these problems could be overcome if only teachers, students and school administrators could adopt good strategies which the digital language laboratory can

provide to the teaching of Oral English.

To this Mebelle (2001) writes that as a second language in Nigeria spoken English has been bedeviled with the rampant act of pronouncing very poorly the vowels and the consonants that make up word. This situation has, in recent time, deteriorated due to the fact that lecturers who incidentally are equally poor in the art of speaking correctly and efficiently do not pay attention to the teaching of spoken English. Yet the students who pass through them gain admission to various Institutions as fresh students and perhaps, discover that they had not acquired adequate speaking skill.

Students need to acquire sufficient knowledge and expertise in the art of speaking in order to enhance their ability to communicate effectively outside the school environment when they eventually go out into the public service or overseas. Student here refers to teacher trainee which means a student majoring in education or who is pursuing a course of study in education. This student is expected at the end of the course of study to teach in an institution of learning be it higher or lower school. This type of student is a potential teacher who will equally mould the academic career of other people in future. It is pertinent that the teacher trainee receives quality instruction in his other area of specialization so as to be able to face the challenges of teaching. Teachers are trained to be able to withstand the hurdles involved in the job of teaching as a life changing profession. Teaching entails a lot of modeling as the teacher is one of the major factors in the mentoring activity of the child. Apart from parents a teacher is the next companion of a child.

A teacher Trainee in English Language, for instance, should be both linguistically and communicatively competent to be able to make impact on the learner. If he or she lacks competence in any aspect of the English language, the teaching and the learning process will be seriously jeopardized. The training of such potential teachers should not be handled with a wave of hand rather they should receive quality instruction that could be provided by a well equipped digital language laboratory.

The digital language laboratory owes its existence to the recognition that the spoken form of the language is central to effective communication and that it should have as large a share in instructions as do written form. In order to implement this, the text book (which is essentially graphic) should be supplemented with the sound recordings of the native speakers. In support of this, Onovo (2001) opines that the method of teaching and learning English contributes to the evolution of the Nigerian variety of the English Language. Initially, the learning of English was confined mostly to the classroom. There was equally over-reliance on textbooks and letters of the alphabets as cues to the pronunciation. Hence spelling pronunciation is a feature of the Nigerian English.

It is therefore presumed, that more were needed than just simple conversation. Carefully structured audio-lingual exercise which the students participate in a controlled way is needed. Learning of a foreign language is promoted by an attractive

foreign atmosphere which can be created by the careful planning and installation of a digital language laboratory. The digital language laboratory is a teaching aid as Ezema (2008) explains.

“Language laboratory is a teaching aid which can provide useful practice both oral and aural skills and also to a certain extent in reading and writing. The teacher’s role in the laboratory is that of a manager. He makes sure that students exploit fully the laboratory facilities to good effect”.

The digital language laboratory is however, an aid of a rather- different sort from those which have been available to teachers of modern languages. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines language laboratory as study room equipped with electronic sound reproduction devices, enabling students to hear model pronunciations of foreign language and to record and hear their own voices as they engage in pattern drills.

It is important that teachers adopt the use of digital language laboratory to their language classes especially in oral English because of the extreme mother tongue interference. Due to the impact and influence of information technology on society and education digital language laboratory should become the trend in foreign language teaching and learning.

In teaching, so many methods and techniques have been introduced and adopted in the time past that, the teacher has so many methods of instruction with which he could enrich his lesson. In essence, methods of instruction chosen by the teacher should be practical- oriented rather than theoretical. The method should make the learners think, say and hear. Among the various methods of teaching are presentation method, discussion method, inquiry method, activity method, inductive method, deductive method, laboratory method and questioning method (Opinmi, 2007)

Most teachers have been using presentation method where instructions are given, through verbal communication. Teachers are found very often to be unskillful in the use of this method and it often turns out to be stale and boring in the classroom (Opinmi, 2007). Presentation method has to do with the presentation of ideas and information through verbal communication. There is little or no interaction between pupils and teachers in the use of this method. Direct experience of the materials being learnt is completely absent from this method. It usually takes the forms of prepared speech, lecture, story-telling, illustrated talks, use of resource persons etc. Presentation method is teacher-centered. The technique involved in presentation method includes;

- Prepared speech by an individual which can be read to the listeners or audience at the end of which questions and answer session is allowed. This is a teacher-centered method which tends to limit the role of the pupils in the classroom.

- Lecture method: The teacher in this wise occupies the position of a lecturer and gives lecture on some topics. Explanations are seldomly offered as students are often made to think and

come up with more information. Students are expected to take notes while the lecturer lectures. It is also teacher-centered in nature.

- **Story Telling Method:** Under this method, the teacher makes story out of the topic and tells this to the students. For this to be effective, the teacher must handle the art of story-telling skillfully and intelligently so that the students will not be rendered dormant and passive. They should be involved in the story from time to time. This will prevent students from falling asleep. The story should always be directed towards bringing out the experience or knowledge that the teacher wants the students to have at the end.

- **Use of Resource Person:** Professionals such as Bankers, Lawyers, Accountants, Town planner, Architects, Medical Doctors and host of others can sometimes be invited to speak on their areas of specialization. This gears up the interest of the students in the school. It avails them the opportunity of asking questions and having first hand information about various professions. There is little or no personal interaction between students and teachers in the use of this method. The majority of teachers, as Opinmi (2007) puts it, do not use proper methods in teaching. The methods the teachers use according to him are boring and cannot arouse the interest of students in learning and the resultant effect on the students is sleeping, chatting and moving out of the class during oral English lesson. Since some other methods have failed in teaching of oral English, the need arises to encourage the use of digital language laboratory which is both activity oriented and child centered. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) minimum standard (2004 –2008) recommends practical method through the use of digital language laboratory.

The fundamental aim of the laboratory is to produce much and regular practice in listening to models, in imitating these models and in repetitive oral drills. Constant listening builds up the ability to understand the foreign language. Oral drills strengthen the ability to speak English language fluently. With mechanical equipment in the laboratory every student is able to get active language practice through-out the period. No student is left out in the practice even the dullest among the students. Learning is used to encompass four aspects of a person – cognitive style, that is preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning; patterns of attitudes and interests that affect what an individual will pay most attention to in a learning situation, a tendency to seek situations compatible with one's own learning patterns and a tendency to use certain learning strategies and avoid others (Lawrence, 1984). Learning style according to Willing (1988) is inherent and pervasive and is a blend of cognitive affective and behavioural elements (Oxford & Ehrmani 1988). In classifying learning styles there are "field independence vs dependence", "Analytic vs global processing", "cooperation vs competition and "Tolerance for ambiguity". Learning strategies, on the other hand, are often-conscious steps or behaviours used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention recall and use of new information (Oxford, 1990). Many different strategies can be used by language learners. Such as metacognitive techniques for organizing,

focusing and evaluating one's own learning; affective strategies for handling emotions or attitudes, social strategies for cooperating with others in the learning process: cognitive strategies for linking new information with existing ones and analyzing and classifying and soon.

As the model or the teacher pronounces the words the students follow suit. In the traditional classroom each student advances at the same pace. Each one must cover the same amount of material and there is little possibility for differentiation. In the digital language laboratory, however, it is possible to provide for different levels of learning and to adjust the rate of progress to the capacity of learner. Sharp and dull students are recognized and they have a sense of identity. For example, a set of students may understand the differences in the pronunciation of the sounds.

/t /and /d/ as in *church* and *fridge*, // and // as in *thank* and *the* while another set of students may find it difficult. The equipment in the laboratory allows the students to study until they master it. Even when the teacher is not there the student can get additional practice by making use of the laboratory during free periods and regular school hours.

Inside the language laboratory the teacher is linked by headphones to every student. Since her voice is heard by the students she has a much closer relationship. She commands complete attention. The teacher deals with a group in which everyone is participating eagerly. Instruction is on an individual level because there is an intimate private interchange between the teacher and the learner. The teacher can build up certain qualities that are lost in the classroom namely self evaluation and criticism on the part of the student. The student pronounces words correctly and is allowed to evaluate and criticize himself based on what he has heard from the model.

A modern digital language laboratory is a network of computers, plus appropriate software, which provides most of the functions of a conventional (analogue) language laboratory together with integration of video, word-processing and other computer applications. It is a modern laboratory where text, images, audio and video are provided for learners to record their own voices and playback the recordings, interact with each other and the teacher and store results. In the laboratory teachers can intervene and control the learner's computers via the teacher's console.

The purpose of a digital language laboratory is to involve students to actively participate in language learning exercises and get more practice than otherwise would not have been possible in a traditional classroom environment. The teacher has a computer with appropriate software for conducting exercises in a digital language laboratory; all students in the class can speak simultaneously without distracting each other regardless of class size. Without a digital language laboratory, in a class of more than 10 students, each student gets less than one minute of speaking practice.

Gender has been found to be related to language learning. The role of gender

in language learning achievement has generated a lot of interest lately. Research shows that the gender of a learner is significant in assessing his or her achievement in a language class. The variation has been the subject of a lot of research. Yule (1995) found that female speakers tend to use more prestigious forms than male speakers even within the same social and economic background. Also girls achieve more than boys in foreign language acquisition (Offorma, 2001).

Statement of the problem

Digital language laboratory is a technique for engendering problem-solving, activity and communicative language learning.

The most serious problem confronting learners of the English language is that the language is not widely used in their immediate environment. As a result, the learner has no exposure to the language outside his classroom. A person learning the language of his immediate environment has many teachers made up of the people with whom he interacts daily. The non-use of teaching methods that are problem solving, activity oriented and student centered, such as the digital language laboratory, may be the root cause of poor performance of students in oral English. Other teaching methods, such as presentation method, do not allow teachers to adopt learning to the level of students' understanding. In most cases, teachers who teach second language are themselves non-native speakers. So, they neither speak the language fluently nor intelligibly. The students, therefore, find oral English difficult.

Given the nature of phonology and phonetics, teachers find it difficult to use presentation method to teach the rudimentary aspect of oral English study. This situation calls for the need to seek ways of making the teaching of oral English more effective to ensure that students achieve higher in the English language. Since little or no empirical studies exist to prove the superiority or otherwise of digital language laboratory method over presentation method on teacher trainees' achievement in Oral English, the need therefore arises for the study of the effect of the use of digital language laboratory on teacher trainees' achievement in Oral English. The researcher, therefore, seeks to find out whether teacher trainees' exposure to digital language laboratory has any effect on their mean achievement in oral English.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the effect of teacher trainees' exposure to digital language laboratory on their mean achievement in Oral English.

Specifically, the researcher seeks to find out

1. the effect of digital language laboratory on the students' achievement in oral English.
2. effect of gender in students' achievements in oral English if taught with digital laboratory method.
3. if students' socio-economic background affects their achievement in oral English when taught with the digital laboratory method.

Significance of the study

Findings from this study will provide invaluable information to the following:- Government, the Nigerian Education Research Center, curriculum planners, teachers and students. Also, awareness will be created for the installation of digital language laboratories in schools at both primary, secondary and higher education levels. The study will sensitize the teachers of English language to adopt a better teaching approach to oral English. When students acquire a higher level of proficiency in English language, they will be able to widen their academic horizon.

It is expected that this study will be significant to educationists and educational administrators. The use of presentation method of language teaching will be emphasized as curriculum planners will find need to improve upon it. Curriculum planners will definitely find empirical data on which to base curriculum innovations or modifications. Practicing teachers will find this study useful as it will suggest a better method of language teaching to them as a sure way to achieving their set objectives with less pain. This is because the students can even practice what they learn often and on until they master it as posited by Behaviourists.

Scope of the study

This study will be carried out in Enugu State College of Education Technical and Institute of Ecumenical Education Thinkers' Corner all in Enugu. The classes to be used are year one students in the Department of Language Studies.

The study focused on ENG112-Introduction to phonetics and phonology. The course content includes;

- Phonetics and Phonology: Definition and distinction
- Organs of speech and mechanism of speech sounds
- Consonants and vowels
- Introduction to phonemic Transcription
- Stress: word-level and its effects on pronunciation
- Stress – sentence level – emphatic and normal speech.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following Research questions.

1. What is the effect of digital language laboratory on students' mean achievement in oral English?
2. To what extent does gender affect students' achievement in oral English?
3. To what extent does students' socio-economic background affect their achievement on Oral English?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study

Ho1

There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of teacher trainees taught

oral English using digital language laboratory and those taught using presentation method.

Ho2

There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of males and female students taught oral English using digital language laboratory method.

Ho3

There is no significant difference in the achievement scores of students from high socio-economic background and students from low socio-economic background when taught with digital language laboratory method.

EFFECT OF TEACHER TRAINEES' EXPOSURE TO DIGITAL LANGUAGE LABORATORY ON THEIR ACHIEVEMENT IN ORAL ENGLISH

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Regards!!!