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IMPROVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS' ORAL FLUENCY THROUGH YOUTUBE NON-FICTION VIDEOS**Abstract**

Success in English language teaching and learning depends on the use of effective approaches, methods and strategies. Nevertheless, with the proliferation of new technological tools, a shift from teacher-centeredness to learner-based is necessary to promote a learning climate and reflective practice in higher education. In light of this, the present article probed the effect of using YouTube non-fiction videos as pedagogical tools on the development of English language students' oral fluency. The aim is to change the traditional way of teaching the speaking skill, and move into a more dynamic and creative classroom atmosphere. To reach this purpose, the authors relied on a mixed-methods approach using four data collection tools, which consist of: teachers and students' questionnaires, students' evaluation checklist, unstructured interview as well as classroom observation. The sample is composed of third year Literature and Civilisation students, teachers of oral expression and teachers of civilisation, at the department of English, University of Bejaia. The results showed students and teachers' positive attitudes towards YouTube non-fiction videos in oral expression. In addition, they revealed that the use of YouTube videos as pedagogical tools implies three stages which are: pre-viewing, while-viewing, and after-viewing. Some insightful implications have been provided for further research.

Keywords: English Language Students, Oral Fluency, Pedagogical Tools, Training Program, YouTube Non-fiction Videos.

1. Introduction

In the twenty first century, English has become the language of global enterprise, democratic reform, and economic growth (Pennycook, 2017). This is why, the implementation of digital media and technology is seen beneficial for enhancing the quality of English language teaching and learning. The technological tools should be regarded as a medium for communication exchange between students and their instructors rather than an ultimate source for content delivering. To avoid the misuse of ICTs in EFL classes, on-going training and institutional support are highly required. To this end, the authors of the present article examined the use of YouTube non-fiction videos as pedagogical tools on the development of students' oral fluency. Many researchers proved the efficiency of such tools (For example, Kabooha, 2016; Kabooha and Elyas, 2018). The aim behind the choice of this medium is to assist students in understanding the way native speakers use English language in a

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genuine context. We believe that, instead of spoiling time and papers in EFL classes, encouraging a large scale of technological bases to be part of an effective communicative community is much more interesting and likely to lead to academic achievement and developmental growth. In fact, in higher education, the important devotion is not to fill students with useless content as receptacles, but to intelligently find ways to enable them speak, participate, share, and create an atmosphere where the target language is used correctly and purposefully.

This study is significant because of the following reasons:

- It will attract teachers' attention and interest toward the use of technological tools in their profession.
- The readers will gain knowledge of the techniques and activities that can be used with videos in FLT.
- They will understand speaking skill in general and oral fluency in particular.
- It will raise students' awareness of the importance of speaking skill in their professional life.
- It will act as a beneficial and instructive work for future researchers.

2. Review of Literature

Before reviewing the concept 'oral fluency', we think that it is noteworthy to present first a brief background of speaking skill in English Language Teaching (ELT). According to Richard and Rogers (1986), the teaching of speaking was not considered as important as reading and writing in the Latin and Greek period. The reason is that the purpose for learning a language at that time was mainly to be able to read and write literature. They added that the approach adopted was called Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which focused on the study of grammatical aspects of language and the use of translation as a means for comprehension. However, they pointed out that speaking gained its importance in ELT during the direct method era. In this period, it was believed that the primary goal for learning a language was to be able to speak and think in that language with no use of the mother tongue. More importantly, speaking was also emphasised during the Audio-lingual Method Era but it was criticised because students could not transfer the things they knew to other contexts and situations. However, with the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in 1970s, speaking was based on functions and notions.

2.1. Oral fluency

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), oral fluency refers to the ability to communicate ideas effectively with continuous speech and without causing comprehension difficulties. This means that a fluent speaker is the one who knows how to make his or her speech understood to others, and this is what English language students should be aware of when integrating themselves in communication. In turn, Thornbury (2005) reports that spoken fluency requires the capacity to have a store of memorised lexical chunks and a degree of automaticity. Hedge (1993) states that the term fluency gained two different meanings in ELT. The first is similar to the one given by Chambers Concise Dictionary, which defines fluency as '*the ability to speak and write a particular language competently and with ease*'. The second is defined as '*the ability to link*

units of speech together with facility and without strain, inappropriate slowness or undue hesitation' (p. 275). In other words, the first definition has a direct relation with language production, i.e. both speaking and writing are involved; whereas, the second is restricted to only speaking which is our main concern.

2.2. *Importance of Speaking for English Language Students*

Since English language nowadays has gained an outstanding status in the world because of many reasons such as commerce and technology, the need to master it has become more demanding. The followings show other elements that make speaking important in English language classrooms. According to Hasan (2014, p. 251), *'speaking skill when it is mastered, helps individuals promote their feelings, self-esteem and realisation as they feel happy when they realise that their messages have gone through'*. We do agree with this, because when students have a knowledge repertoire at their disposal, and do practice them in different contexts and situations, they will become more fluent and will develop a sense of achievement, confidence and joy.

In addition, Egan (1999) asserts that speaking can help students perceive, persuade, hypothesise and interpret messages. This is also a very crucial point because it allows them to integrate in real- life situations such as intervening in a conference, debate, participating in the classroom and so on, as well as gain the attention of the listeners. This can be supported by Wisker (2005) who says that, students who can communicate effectively in English, will have opportunities to take part in problem solving and creative thinking skills (cited in Singh, 2013). Furthermore, as stated by Baker and Westrup (2003, p.5), *'students who can speak English well may have greater chance for further education, of finding employment and gaining promotion'*. This is what we have noticed in some students in the setting under investigation. They could carry on their studies abroad because their potential in English as a foreign language was quite appreciated. Besides, Richards (2008) argues that students judge their success in learning through their evaluation about their improvement in speaking. Truly, by doing so, learning a foreign language will then become an active process. The students' awareness about the importance of this skill, will likely pave the way to more fruitful results.

From the aforementioned comments, arguments and real situational proofs, we recognise with emphasis how important the speaking skill is. This is why, according to all foreign language practitioners, it should be given many concerns and insights.

2.3. *YouTube Videos as Pedagogical Tools: Advantages and Problems*

A body of research revealed that videos in English language classrooms create an enjoyable and motivating atmosphere which can help students not only contribute the in-class discussions but also be the motive to attendance as the teaching-learning environment becomes more salient and sounder. As an example, one compelling study by Ljubojevic, Vaskovic, Stankovic and Vaskovic (2014) used videos during four minutes in order to develop the efficiency of learning. They found that the videos had positive effects on students' perception towards using new and varied teaching and learning tools as videos and on motivation. As these researchers focused on learning in general,

we however, as a limited research field, emphasise more on oral fluency which is one of the variables in this investigation demonstrating that short sequences of videos can bring great advantages for the students. Alimemaj (2010) argued that videos provide an authentic language used by native speakers, as well as all language genres (songs, debates, talks, poems...). This of course can be considered as a good way in order to learn a great deal of vocabulary, which is important for developing one's oral fluency. In addition, Burt (1999, p. 2) said that, '*videos present real language that is not simplified and is spoken at a normal speed with genuine accent*'. In this case, students will know how to react to the difficulties they encounter in speaking by getting used to hearing what native speakers use in their daily life.

Furthermore, Meyers (1999) claimed that seeing language in use spurs students' oral production and confidence in their speech (cited in York, 2011). Similarly, Richards and Renandya (2002) pointed out that by watching videos, students will know how people initiate, develop and end up their conversations. The lack of knowledge of these concepts impinges students to be fluent in the target language. In addition to seeing language in use, videos also develop students' cultural awareness of the target language. This can be confirmed by Stempleski (1987, p. 6) who pointed out that, '*through videos, students can see how people in the target culture live, their values, customs, clothing, food and how people in that culture interact with one another*'. Besides, watching videos can motivate students to engage in different tasks. Yassaei (2012) stated that videos can be effective tools for breaking up the routine and incline the students to study the English language.

Despite the aforementioned advantages, we admittedly agree that any technological tool is drawbacks free. According to Puhfahl and Rhodes (2003) using videos in EFL classroom is time consuming. Another disadvantage of videos as cited by Allan (1985) is the limitation of the software. In a similar vein, Brophy (2007) stated that using videos can result in a passive learning process. We think that this can happen if the students are not aware about the purpose of watching the video. Hence, it is up to the teacher to make his or her students understand the fact that watching a video at home is not the same as in the classroom. According to Davies and Pearse (2000, p.13), '*if learners are to participate willingly in class, they must understand what is expected from them*'. In this case, they will be ready both cognitively and linguistically for the task they are assigned to accomplish.

Methodology

2.4. Context

The study took place at the University of Abderrahmane Mira-Bejaia (Algeria) during the academic year 2014-2015. This University was created in 1983 as an Institute of Higher Education. Then, it was transformed into a University in 1998 and was named under the Martyr 'Abderrahmane Mira'. The campus of Aboudau was opened in 2003; it contains five faculties. For instance, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics, Management, and Business Studies,

Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, Faculty of Languages, and Faculty of Medicine.

As far as this research is concerned, the authors seek to answer the following **questions**:

1. Is speaking difficult to acquire? If yes, what makes it difficult?
2. How can YouTube non-fiction videos boost students' oral fluency?
3. Has this strategy proved beneficial?
4. What are the attitudes of both teachers and students towards using it in the oral expression session?

By asking these questions, the present article aims at investigating whether the use of YouTube non-fiction videos is an effective tool in oral expression session or not. In addition, it attempts to find out the strategies that can be followed to support the implementation of this tool (i.e. YouTube videos) in oral classes.

2.5. *Participants*

The participants of the present study consist of third year LLCE students, teachers of oral expression and teachers of civilisation, at the department of English, University of Bejaia. Concerning the students, they were divided into two groups (Group1=32 students, group2=33 students), which means the population contains 65 students. In our random sampling, we have two subgroups composed of subgroup A, group 1 (12 students), and subgroup B, group 2 (12 students). The first is the control group, and the second is the experimental. To remind our readers, the participants' age and gender were not taken into account because the researcher focused only on the most important elements that tackle the objectives of the present study. Below is a description of the participants' profiles:

2.5.1. *Teachers (Teaching experiences)*

Teachers of Oral Expression (8 participants)	Teachers of Civilisation (2 participants)
1-10 years	10-16 ears

Students (Levels in English)

Variables	Respondents/24	%
Very good.	3	12.5
Good.	11	45.83
Average.	8	33.33
Need work.	2	8.33
No answer	0	0
Total	24	100

2.6. *Procedures*

2.6.1. *Research approach, tools and data analysis*

The present article is based on a mixed-methods approach, using four data collection tools. The latter consist of observation, questionnaires, interview (unstructured) and students' evaluation checklist. These tools helped the authors

gain a greater insight concerning the students and teachers' perceptions towards videos in EFL classes. The data were analysed using frequencies, percentages and descriptive statistics.

Description and aim of teachers' questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire is composed of five sections. The first section gathers general information about the respondents, and contains four questions; one open and three close-ended questions. The second is entitled students' oral skills and difficulties, and comprises four close-ended questions. The third displays the teachers' attitudes and reactions towards their students' oral development, and consists of seven questions; one open, and six close-ended. The fourth is related with new technological tools in oral expression session, and has four questions; one open and three close-ended. The last one is about teachers' suggestions and recommendations. Our main objective in using this questionnaire is to evaluate the attitudes of teachers towards the new strategy in oral session.

Description and aim of teachers' interview

The teachers' interview contains three main sections. We have summarised them as follows:

- **Section One:** General questions (comprises three questions).
- **Section Two:** Teachers' experiences in using YouTube videos to teach civilisation (includes seven questions).
- **Section Three:** Teachers' suggestions and recommendations (contains one question).

The aim of the interview is to report the teachers' experiences with the use of YouTube videos in their teaching of civilisation.

Description and aim of students' questionnaire

The questionnaire is divided into four major sections. The first gives a general information/personal evaluation about the students, and it contains six questions; three close and three open-ended questions. The second depicts the students' view of oral expression session, and it comprises four close-ended questions. The third is about students' attitudes towards the use of YouTube videos in oral session, and it consists only of one close-ended question. The fourth section reports students' suggestions and recommendations. Our aim behind this questionnaire is to examine the reasons behind students' difficulties in speaking as well as their attitudes towards using YouTube videos in oral session.

Description and aim of classroom observation

In the present study, we conducted both a pre and post-observation. First, the pre-observation was carried out during the first semester of the academic year (2014-2015). We relied on an observation grid to record the data, and the main criteria that we evaluated were: students' oral participation, the way they answered, the amount of pauses and hesitations they made, repetitions, reformulations, false starts, mistakes/errors and finally self/peers' corrections. These criteria were based according to the dependent variable (oral fluency). Some of them were designed by the researcher; whereas, the other criteria like repetition, reformulation and false starts were extracted from the book of Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, p.157), '**Analysing Learner Language**'. Second, the

post-observation took only three weeks and at the end of each session. We gave students an evaluation checklist to assess the videos and their speaking as well as their opinion towards the use of the new strategy in oral session. The aim of the observation was to compare between the control group and experimental one before and after the implementation of YouTube videos to highlight whether there is a change in terms of students' participation and the way of speaking or not.

Description and aim of students' evaluation checklists

The students' evaluation checklist is divided into three outstanding elements. The students are asked to answer with yes or no to each question. The first element examines students' evaluation of the video; it comprises 5 questions. The second element is about students' evaluation of their speaking; it contains only one question and the justification is required. The last element reports students' opinions towards the use of YouTube non-fiction videos in oral session, and it consists also of one question. Our aim was to make a gradual evaluation of the effect of the suggested hypothesis on the experimental group and examine whether there will be a change in terms of students' attitudes towards the new strategy or not.

2.6.2. The training programme

The experiment took only three weeks because of many constraints that we encountered. The authors followed three stages. In the first stage (**pre-viewing**), we explained the objective behind watching the video. In the second stage (**while-viewing**), students were required to listen carefully and take notes as a way to prepare themselves for oral practice. In the last stage (**post-viewing**), it was a whole class discussion and debate, and then a role play was also used as another technique to create an enjoyable learning atmosphere. At the end of each session, students were given an evaluation checklist to evaluate the video, their speaking and their opinion about its use in oral session. The first video was about obesity in America; it took only 7 minutes and 56 seconds so as to allow the students have a great deal of discussion. The second video was about stronger self-esteem; it took 8 minutes and 3 seconds. The third video was about immigration in America; it lasted 5 minutes and 49 seconds. The choice of the themes was made by asking some students in the experimental group (informally) about the videos they like and the majority of them prefer videos on social issues.

3. Results and Discussion

Question 1: Is speaking a difficult skill? If yes, what makes it difficult?

To this question, we can say '**Yes**' and the things that make it difficult were being reported by our respondents (LLCE students and teachers of oral expression) like: students' psychological factors and disabilities, students' cultural differences, interests and level, lack of pedagogical equipment and tools and linguistics incompetence. We do consider the participants' position in regard to this question, and their answers go straightforward into our expectations. All the reasons mentioned can be overcome if students practise speaking inside and outside the classroom regularly, as well as encouraged to participate and perform various and rich tasks using motivated techniques and strategies. In addition, we

think that in the classroom, there should be more practice of output than input. In fact, knowledge is everywhere not just at school. There are books, internet and different means, which students can rely on to cultivate and enrich their culture of the language. What they really need is the application of knowledge in real-life actions.

Question 2: How can YouTube non-fiction videos boost EFL students' oral fluency?

We have obtained an answer to this question thanks to the teachers' interview in which we arrived at an understanding that the strategy can develop students' oral fluency by following the three stages of viewing: **pre-viewing**; **while-viewing** and **post-viewing**. In the last stage, students were required to personalise the topic by relating it to their life experiences and background knowledge. In addition, more practice should be devoted at this stage to allow students practise more their speaking. For example, making the whole class to discuss about the video, doing pair/group work and role-plays. Moreover, the objective of watching a video should also be emphasised in order to make students ready for oral practice. To illustrate, Altman (1989, p.110) states that, 'Video materials must be chosen not primarily for their inherent artistic value but for their ability to fulfil a particular function in a particular course'. To interpret it in another way, we can say that YouTube videos can enhance students' oral fluency through the design of effective communicative activities with the statement of specific objectives and classroom management. Similarly, Gezegin (2014) says that for video materials to be used successfully to promote students' oral fluency, teachers have to use them creatively.

Question 3: Has this strategy proved beneficial?

To some extent, 'Yes' and this has been confirmed by the students' evaluation checklists, the teachers' interview as well as the teacher's comments while doing the experiment. Also, we find it beneficial since it has enriched our knowledge of how to implement the suggested hypothesis in oral session. More importantly, we developed a positive attitude towards the use of technology in education in which we hope it will be a part of the syllabus in all the modules so as to motivate the students and create a better learning environment. Our view is shared by (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016; Kabooaha, 2016; Nova, 2017; Kabooaha and Elyas, 2018) who admitted that their students find learning English language with YouTube videos more useful and constructive.

Question 4: What are the students and teachers' attitudes towards using it in the oral expression session?

Concerning the students and teachers of civilisation, they all had a positive attitude; whereas, for the teachers of oral expression, only one of them who expressed a negative opinion because this teacher thinks they are not useful. We think that, in order to judge whether a given material is good or not, it has to be first experimented to see if it has attained the wanted objective or not. Actually, a language is better fostered when it is accompanied by both sound and picture, and this is what we have been able to reach and demonstrate throughout our

literature review. This must be understood: we are living in an era of technology, revolutionised materials and digitalised tools. In the moment when all the world education institutions are launching electronic platforms for distance education, when the teachers are ‘tutors’ and ‘virtual’, it is, according to us, a critical situation to mention audio-tapes which have vanished according to our investigations.

In a nutshell, we expected such results in the present study because we believe that in any research, the researcher may not always achieve the exact results he/she wants; there are always extraneous variables which maybe encountered.

4. Conclusion

The present study investigated the effect of using YouTube non-fiction videos as pedagogical tools on the development of English language students’ oral fluency. A mixed-methods approach, using four tools of data collection were adopted. Findings showed that students, teachers of oral expression (except for one), and teachers of civilisation expressed a positive attitude towards the new strategy we implemented. In addition to this, students’ evaluation checklist revealed that this type of technology helped them develop their oral fluency. For the implications, teachers need to design various and meaningful communicative activities; set the goals behind using YouTube non-fiction videos in oral session; guide students with video teaching instructions; encourage them to watch the video before coming to the classroom; raise their motivation and self-esteem, and give them opportunities to expose projects in the auditorium. The new strategy we implemented would be more successful if it was carried out for a longer period of time. Thus, we suggest future researchers to lengthen the duration of the experiment for at least a whole year to have time to analyse and interpret the data.

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Video Websites

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=obesity+in+america

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Stronger+self-esteem

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Comming+to+America%3A+immigration