

Facultу of Education-Ain Shams University
Curricula and Methodology Department

1170V
The Effect of the Functional Notional
Approach on Developing Secondary
Stage Student Listening and
Writing Skills

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Ph.D Degree in Education(Curricula
and Methodology)

373 19
A K
By

Asma Kassem Ahmed Mahmoud

Supervised by

Dr. Abd-El Miseeh Daoud

Dr. Zenab El Shirbini

Professor of Methodology

Associate Professor Of
Methodology

Faculty of Education

Faculty of Education

Ain Shams University

Ain Shams University

1987



Faculty of Education-Ain Shams University
Curriculum and Methodology Department

The Effect of Functional-Notional Approach to Syllabus
Design on Developing Secondary Stage Student
Listening and Writing
Skills

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Ph. D. Degree in Teaching English
As a Foreign Language

By.

Asma Kassem Ahmed Mahmoud

Supervised by

Dr. Abd-El Misseh Daoud
Professor of Methodology
Faculty of Education
Ain Shams University

Dr. Zenab El-Shirbini
Associate Professor of
Methodology
Faculty of Education
Ain-Shams University

1 9 8 7



the writing test	123
the listening test	124
Results of the pre-tests	125
Writing test	125
Listening test	126
Steps followed in teaching	126
First Session	126
Second Session	127
Third Session	128
The control group	129
Post-tests	129
The grades of the subjects in post-tests	130
The listening test	130
The writing test'	131
Post-tests results	132
Writing	132
Listening	134
 <u>Chapter V.</u>	
Analysis of Results	135
Conclusions	142
Recommendations	142
Suggestions for further research	143
 <u>Bibliography.</u>	145
<u>Appedices</u>	/
Appendix 1. Lists of Course Content Specifications	161
Appendix 11. Samples of the Teaching Materials...	173
Appendix 111. Listening Pre-Post Test	189
Appendix 1V. Writing Pre-Post Test	191

Council of Europe	59
Wilkins	60
Richterich	63
Van ek	66

Chapter III.

Designing the F/N Syllabus	70
Stage 1 : Students' needs survey	70
Stage 2 : Description of the purpose of the course	83
Stage 3 : The syllabus type.....	84
Stage 4 : Course content specifications ...	87
Stage 5 : Pedagogical syllabus	88
Principles followed in choosing teaching materials	88
Gradation of the course content	90
Sequence of activities	91
Phase 1. monitored practice	91
Phase 2. contextualized practice ...	92
Phase 3. communicative practice	93
Types of communicative activities.....	95
Authenticity	97
Methodology	100
Evaluation	102

Chapter IV.

The Experiment: Materials and Procedures	
Steps of the experiment	106
Principles followed in designing the units...	107
General parts of a unit	107
The listening materials	108
The writing materials	109
General characteristics of listening and writing activities	110
The Syllabus	113
Pre-Post tests	119
The listening test	119
The writing test	120
The subjects	120
Administering of pre-tests	121
Scoring of the tests	121
Reliability and validity of pre/post tests...	121
Grades of the subjects in the pre-tests.....	

List of Tables

1.. Means of the Scores of the Writing	125
Pre-Test for the Control and Experimental Groups	
2. Means of the Scores of the Listening Pre-Test for the Control and Experimental Groups.....	125
3. Means of the Writing Post-Test for the Experimental and Control Groups and the Percentage of the Means.	132
4. Means of the Listening Post-Test for the Experimental and Control Groups and the Percentage of the Means.	133

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Acknowledgment	viii
Thesis Abstract	1
Introduction.....	4

Chapter 1.

Context of the Problem	10
Definition of the Problem	15
Statement of the Hypotheses	15
Limitations of the Study	15
Research Procedure	15
Aim of the Study	16
Previous Studies	16
Operational Definitions of Terms	16

Chapter 11.

Writing Skill	18
The importance of the writing skill	18
Analysis of the writing skill	20
Problems students meet in writing	23
Teaching Writing	24

Listening Skill

Analyzing the listening skill	28
Factors that affect understanding speech messages	32
Listening sub-skills	33
Some observations about listening skill	33
Different listening situations	34
Teaching the listening skill	35
Listening tasks	38
Techniques for improving the listening skill...	40

The Functional / Notional Approach

Evolution of the F/N approach	42
Characteristics of the F/N approach	46
Components of the F/N approach	49
Principles underlying the construction of F/N syllabus	50
Different types of F/N syllabus	51
History of the functional view	54
Major contributors	59

List of Figures

1. The means of the over all tests for experimental and control groups. 133

Acknowledgment

I wish to express my thanks to all those whose co-operation contributed to the completion of this study. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Daoud and Dr. Shirbini for their constructive criticisms of the drafts and their valuable suggestions.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Strain who, in spite of being in America, never withheld his sincere help and advice.

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between the F/N approach to syllabus design and the writing and listening skills of secondary stage students. For the purpose of this study the writing skill was limited to :

- a) Choosing the option that identified a specific function.
- b) Supplying the appropriate item for a specific situation.
- c) Writing a dialogue, and a paragraph on identified topics based on specific functions.

The listening skill was limited to :

- a) Finding out specific information .

The sample consisted of 74 students enrolled in the second grade, science section in Beni-Suef Secondary School for Girls. They were divided into two groups : the experimental and control. The material taught to both groups consisted of the grammatical structures included in the set book : Practice and Progress. The time allotted for the writing and listening activities was three hours per week for a period of seven weeks.

The students in the control group worked on the exercises found in Practice and Progress (i.e., listening to or reading a passage then answering orally some questions, practising the grammatical pattern under study, doing some grammar exercises, and doing paragraph writing with guide words based on the passage) .

The material taught to the experimental group consisted of five units based on the structures included in five lessons in Practice and Progress and to which situational

and functional dimensions were added. The identification of the functions and situations relevant to our secondary stage students was done on the basis of an analysis of the students' communicative needs. It was found that our students study English for purposes of social survival and pursuing higher education. It was thought that acquiring a "common core" of functions could help our students to satisfy their needs.

In teaching listening care was taken to ensure that tasks made use of the sub-skills that make up the general listening skill, and the purpose for listening approximated authentic life listening. Through pre-listening discussion of topic, situation and characters students were helped to see the communicative function of the grammatical structure under study.

The writing activities reflected progression from monitored exercises to communicative open ended activities that emphasized fluency. It was felt that open-ended activities, personalized questions, narrating and describing events and creating dialogues would help the students use the linguistic forms for communication. Employing techniques such as paired practice and small groups helped to create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, and increased cooperation among students which was conducive to more students' participation in the learning process.

An analysis of the post-tests data indicated significant achievement associated with the experimental group in writing; t test = 5.52, $p < .01$, one tailed, (72 df) but insignificant achievement in the listening skill: t test = 1.67, $p < .01$, one tailed, (72 df.)

On the basis of the data, it was possible to conclude that for a population such as that studied, the adoption of the E/N approach to syllabus design resulted in the improvement of the writing skill and partial improvement in the listening skill.

Introduction.

A Brief Overview of Different Approaches and Methods to Learning and Teaching Foreign Languages.

In this part foreign language teaching is traced back to the renaissance .

Titone (1968) notes that in Europe the study of language has a very ancient history beginning from the Greeks through the grammarians of Alexandria and Rome to the Scholastic grammarians of the Middle Ages and the normative grammarians of 18 th 19 th Centuries.

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983 pp. 3-4) point out that educationists have been plagued by questions such as how people learn a second language, how they can be motivated to continue learning a second language, and how teaching can be improved. Different answers have been given to such questions at different times. New approaches evolve from earlier approaches and reflect ideas of the past as well as those of the present. The reaction against the excesses of one approach leads to devising a new one which tries to correct the weaknesses of the old. But if the new approach is interpreted, it will have its own weaknesses, and the process continues.

Bell (1981, 80) notes that during the period from the Renaissance to the beginning of the 19 th Cent. the orientation to language teaching was functional, teaching people to communicate face-to-face with the native speakers of that language. The use of L2 was preferred and the L1 was avoided where feasible. Rules were deduced by the

learners from the material provided by the teacher. As the nineteenth century progressed the grammar translation method emerged.

Grammar-Translation Method

By the 19th Cent, the learner was required to memorize rules which were presented in tables and paradigms. The use of the L1 became essential because most learning was through translation and the explanation of the grammar of the L2 was in the L1. The learning of the language was seen as a valuable mental discipline rather than acquiring of communication skills (Bell, ibid, 83) Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983, 4) report that we inherited the traditional grammar method which is still in use in many of our schools from the teaching of Latin which was not taught for active use. The primary concern was with the written language of classical literature. Authentic spoken communication was ignored. As Kelly puts it "language skill was equated with ability to conjugate and decline" (1969, 53). But the excessive use of grammar and translation led some teachers to reject both parts of the method and an alternative was provided by the direct method.

The Direct Method :

As the 19th Cent. progressed considerable advances took place especially in phonetics. In the last decades of the 19th Cent. and the first quarter of 20th Cent. three key axioms prevailed which had great effect on language teaching. They were : language is a system, language is speech and language is conventional. An emphasis was laid on the teaching of grammatical structures. Items and structures were graded in terms of "easiness" and

"usefulness". Translation was rejected as a method of teaching. The aural-oral skills were emphasized. Reading and writing were deferred for months. (Bell, 1981, 88)

Reading Method

Gasparro (1984, 16-17) points out that dissatisfaction with direct method procedures led to a commission headed by professor Coleman who made a study of foreign language teaching. The Coleman Report, published in 1929, recommended that only reading be taught as an attainable and appropriate goal for school students. Until the second world war, intensive and extensive reading was accompanied by the teaching of grammar rules based principally on the structures found in the reading passages.

Structural Approach

Structuralist linguistics arose in 1930. Four axioms were associated with structuralists : language is speech, language is a system of forms combined in regular ways to create sentences, the language system is arbitrary, and language is for communication. The structuralists adopted a mechanistic position in relation to human learning. They saw language as a human activity, and as a result, they believed that learning language was achieved by building up habits on the basis of stimulus response chains. To build up these habits, patterns of the language had to be repeated and drilled until they could be produced as habitually and automatically as those of the mother tongue. (Bell, 1981. PP. 92 - 98).