Ain Shams University
Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

The Effect of Using Feature Films to Develop prep Stage Students' Speaking Skills

A thesis submitted for partial fulfillment of the M.A. degree in Education
(Curriculum & EFL Instruction)

Submitted by

Neveen AbdEllattif Elsayed Elnaggar

Submitted to

The Department of curriculum & instructions,
Faculty of Education, Ain Shams University

Supervised by

Dr. Asmaa Ganem Gheith
Professor of Curriculum
&TEFL Instruction,
Faculty of Education,
Ain Shams university.

Dr. Ramadan Farid Nassar
Lecture of Curriculum
& TEFL Instruction,
Faculty of Education,
Ain Shams university.

2015

Researcher's Name: Neveen AbdEl-Lattif El-Sayed El-Naggar**.**

The Title of the study: The Effect of Using Feature Films to develop Prep Stage Students' Speaking Skills.

Source: Ain Shams University, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

Supervisors: Dr. Asmaa Ganem Gheith & Dr. Ramadan Farid Nassar.

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to design a feature film based program to develop the speaking skills of the second year preparatory students. Participants were 33 second-year preparatory students in Om ElMo'mnean preparatory school for girls, Kafr Elzayat administration, ElGharbia governorate in the academic year 2013-2014. The design of the present study is based on the one-group design to investigate the effect of using feature films on developing the speaking skills. In this study, the researcher used feature films as authentic audiovisual material to expose students to authentic language in real contexts. A pre-post speaking test and analytic speaking skill rubric were designed and used to assess the sub-skills of speaking: communication, accuracy and fluency. Results of the present study indicated that the speaking skills of the second-year preparatory stage students were developed. There were statistically significant differences between the two mean scores of the pre and post speaking test of the participants in favor of their posttest mean scores.

Key words: Feature films – speaking skills – Analytic speaking rubric.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my most profound thanks and sincere appreciation to my supervisor, **Dr. Asmaa Ganem Gheith,** professor of curriculum and instruction (TEFL), Faculty of Education, Ain Shams University, for her continuous support and limitless encouragement. I warmly thank her for her critical insight and enormous patience. She generously gave much of her time, thoughtful guidance, and stimulating ideas throughout this research.

I'm also grateful to my supervisor, **Dr. Ramadan Farid**, Lecture of Curriculum and Instruction (TEFL), Faculty of Education, Ain Shams University, for his continuous feedback and insightful remarks.

I wish to thank **Dr. Magdy Mahdy Ali**, professor of curriculum and instruction (TEFL), Faculty of Education, Ain Shams University, for accepting examine this research and to be a part of the dissertation committee giving his valuable time and effort to enrich and modify this work.

Thanks are extended to **Dr. Abd Elrehim Saad Eldin Elhilaly**, professor of curriculum and instruction (TEFL), Faculty of Education, Elazher University, for accepting examine this research and to be a part of the dissertation committee giving his valuable time and effort to enrich and modify this work.

Last, but definitely not least, my special thanks go to my beloved family; especially, the soul of my father who represents the source of motivation to do this research, my wonderful mother, for her constant support and encouragement. I am also indebted to my brother for his silent contributions and faith in my abilities, my precious sister and my dear nephew, for their spiritual support, and endless love. Without their contributions of time and thoughtful help, this research would not have possible.

Utmost thanks to my small family, my dear husband who supported me all the way through; and my newborn daughter **Lavania**, remains more than anything I can put in words. Thank you.

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CHAPTER ONE

Background and Problem

1.1 Introduction

Teaching oral and speaking skills in a foreign language context is not an easy task, especially for the teacher who has heavy burden to choose the suitable method of teaching oral activities. EFL learners' reluctance to speak English in the classroom is a problem commonly found in EFL contexts. That is why Sayed (2005) asserted that the ability of students to be able to communicate naturally in English is one of the long term goals that language teachers would like to achieve in class. There is a gap between what students learn at school and how the language is used in everyday life. It is necessary, therefore, to give this skill more attention and more consideration.

Given the role of speaking skill in learning English as a foreign language in Egypt is somewhat limited for a number of reasons. First, English speaking or oral communication in English for Egyptian students is deemed to be difficult since English is not their native language. Second, since English in Egypt is a foreign language, the exposure to authentic language input in English is limited. Third, the pronunciation of Egyptian teachers of English in most government schools is another dimension that should be taken into consideration. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to achieve good standards of spoken English since the input the students receive may be insufficient.

On the other hand, the classroom should be a non-threatening place where students are not scared of making mistakes and being ambiguous in oral communication. Students may feel nervous in speaking a foreign language due to lacking of confidence or having pressure to speak loudly. Language teachers should spot this and do their best to create an easy and cheerful learning environment for their pupils.

Teachers are now encouraged to implement innovative multimedia tools such as audios or videos in EFL classrooms, because they seem to be more

convenient, entertaining and handy. Due to the increasing importance of visual and media images, films have a great potential in the language classroom, as they bring "together a large variety of modes" (Kress, 2010). Films are rich multimodal texts containing linguistic meaning, but they also contain other modes that are sometimes more difficult to illustrate or provide in the standard language lesson. Films are perfect vehicles for introducing students to different types of popular culture.

Accordingly, the use of film in the classroom can uphold the motivation of the learners, because of its playful component. Using films through specific task activities provides an ideal vehicle for active learning, as well as encouraging interaction and participation. The communicative potential of its use has been commended (Chan & Herrero 2010):

- It facilitates comprehension activities that are perceived as 'real'.
- It creates a curiosity gap that facilitates the exchange of opinions and ideas about the film;
- It helps to explore non-verbal elements;
- It develops oral and aural skills;
- It provides meaningful contexts and vocabulary, exposing viewers to natural expressions and natural low of speech.

The popularity of using films as a teaching vehicle relies on its unique educational properties. Champoux (1999) argues that, film enhances the learning process in ways unavailable in other media, by providing entertainment which can motivate students and stimulate interest. Thus, films can trigger greater participation involvement that can in turn enrich the learning experience.

Films are also employed as valuable teaching aids in sharpening students' powers of observation, developing their skills and the habits of perceptive

watching. By looking at a film students and viewers engage with it intellectually and creatively. As Eken (2003) mentioned a film provides a rich and popular context for students to talk together and exchange ideas. Films help bring the outside world into the classroom, motivate students, encourage them to communicate with each other more eagerly, and help them to learn from each other. Arthur (1999) as well stated (as cited in Çakir, 2006) that a film can give students realistic models to imitate a role-play; can increase awareness of other cultures by teaching appropriateness and suitability.

Feature film provide a wide array of pedagogical options and represent a rich resource of intrinsically motivating materials for learners more than any other media made for EFL / ESL teaching. Feature film provides students with a film to be enjoyed rather than a lesson that needs to be tested on. Moreover, Stempleski (2000) added that feature film provides a wealth of contextualized linguistic and paralinguistic terms and expressions, authentic cross-culture information, classroom listening comprehension and fluency practice (As cited in King, 2002).

1.2 Context of the problem:

The ability of students to communicate freely is one of the basic problems in Egypt especially in governmental schools. Developing children's speaking skills is a real challenge for many EFL primary teachers in Egypt.

1.3 The Pilot Study

The researcher of the present study made interviews with a group of teachers and supervisors (N= 8) in Om El-M'mnean preparatory school for girls, Kafr El-zayat administration in El-Gharbia governorate. They all agreed on the severe shortage of the ability to speak English to most of preparatory students in general. When they were asked about the reason of this problem, they asserted that this is because of overstock curriculum and the increased

number of students in classrooms which does not enable teachers to leave adequate time to students to talk. When they were asked about students' ability to communicate with each other and with their English teachers, they emphasized their students' inability to express themselves appropriately and naturally.

This problem was revealed also through holding discussions with students. Open questions seemed to help students to think more and stimulate them to talk and express themselves. These discussions were hold with one class (N=38), the results revealed that about 91% have difficulty in communicating with each other and in using their prior knowledge correctly. About 86% have different problems in expressing their opinions by using suitable words appropriately or their ideas. About 62% students have fatal grammatical errors. However about 80% of students did not have enough confidence to talk smoothly without hesitation. It is concluded that students are able to read and write, but they find difficulty in their English speaking skills in general. The main reasons were diagnosed for students' limited speaking skills as follows:

- Shyness.
- Lack of appropriate language (vocabulary and structures).
- Fear of making mistakes.
- Lack of confidence.
- having nothing to say.

1.4 Statement of the problem:

The problem of this study is that the prep stage students have difficulty in producing appropriate oral exchanges.

This may be due to lack of opportunities to listen English spoken inside the classroom. This means that the teacher has to provide the students an appropriate context for spoken English. It is thought that creating a classroom

environment in which students can participate in a semi real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks can promote oral language.

1.5 Research Questions

In order to investigate this problem, the present study attempted to answer the following main question:

What is the effect of using feature films on developing the 2nd year prep stage students' speaking skills?

In an attempt to answer the above question, the following questions had to be answered:

1. What is the existing level of the 2nd year prep stage students' speaking skills?
2. What are the characteristics of feature films that can be used to develop the 2nd year students' speaking skills?
3. How can a program based on feature films affect the 2nd year prep stage students' speaking skills?

1.6 Delimitations

The present study is delimited to:

1. A class was consisting of thirty-three students in Om El-M'mnean preparatory school for girls (N= 33), Kafr El-zayat administration, El-Gharbia governorate. This class was randomly selected.
2. The feature films that were used in the program were reported by experts to be most suitable to students' level maturity and appropriateness of content.