

THE EFFECT OF RECIPROCAL LISTENING ACTIVITIES ON FIFTH PREPARATORY STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

Asst. Prof. Dr. Nadia Majeed. Hussein & Asst. Prof. Sabeeha Hamza Dehham

**Middle Technical University, Technical Instructors Institute Training*

***University of Babylon, College of Basic Education*

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to improve speaking skill by using interactive listening activities depending on the reciprocal teaching strategies by the teacher. The researchers followed the experimental design into which they have randomly chosen a sample being selected from the fifth preparatory stage in AL-Thawra Preparatory School for Girls. They divided the sample into two groups, experimental and control, each of which includes 30 students. The researchers pre-tested the two groups. Then, they applied the reciprocal listening activities to the experimental group but the control group was taught in terms of the prescribed method. After completing the second semester, the researchers post-tested the two groups to measure the difference in the progress. The results obtained from the statistical data proves that there is an improvement in the students' speaking skill for the experimental group students which means that reciprocal listening activities do have an effect on students' speaking skill.

Keywords: listening, interactive, students, fifth grade preparatory, improvement, skill, speaking

1. INTRODUCTION

Listening is considered a very important skill in language learning and language acquisition. It is a complex and active skill that requires interactive teaching within which language learners need more conscious, systematic and purposeful help. The complex nature of speaking skill when listening to the language, in addition to the neglect of listening skills in English school textbooks, have urged the researchers to adopt some psychological and educational principles underlying "reciprocal teaching".

According to Azmi et al. (2014: 1-6), there are a lot of difficulties that learners may encounter in the speaking skills processes. Teachers use some recorded materials that do not have high quality. In addition, the cultural knowledge of language has a significant effect on the learners' understanding. If the listening task involves completely different cultural materials then the learners may have critical problems in their comprehension. It is the responsibility of teachers to

give background knowledge about the listening activities in advance.

The present study has attempted to integrate reciprocal listening activities from the teacher's perspective and interactivity from the learner's perspective in joint activities. The present study can help English language teachers use the same activities. A further significance of the study is that it provides the field and the Ministry of Education in Iraq with a speaking skills test that can be used in evaluating the speaking skills of fifth grade in preparatory schools.

2. RECIPROCAL TEACHING STAGES

Palincsar and Brown (1984:286) are the first to describe reciprocal teaching. The procedure is further refined and ever-since has been described by many in relation to the teaching of listening. Reciprocal Teaching is an instructional procedure that is designed to improve speaking skills. This is achieved by encouraging a group of students to interact with the instructor to construct meaning and build understanding

from a range of passages. Reciprocal Teaching, as described by Palincsar and Brown (ibid: 290), has four stages; predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarizing.

2.1 Predicting

During the prediction stage the learner must anticipate what happens next. The prediction is based on prior knowledge, the structure of the passage, headings, content and illustrations. The prediction stage also provides learners with a motivation to continue interacting, as they often wish to determine if their initial prediction is correct. Prediction encourages learners to think ahead.

2.2 Clarifying

As part of the clarification stage learners are encouraged to identify areas of difficulty, such as unfamiliar vocabulary, unfamiliar passage structure or new and difficult concepts. These difficulties make students lose track of the meaning of the passage; therefore, they cannot access what it contains. During the clarification stage learners are encouraged to fix areas of deficit and then re-playing the passage audio to restore meaning. The clarification stage is particularly useful for learners who have a history of problems with speaking skills, as these learners often have difficulty in making the passage flow and thus lose meaning.

2.3 Questioning

The questioning stage provides the learner with an opportunity to explore the meaning of the passage. The learner is encouraged to identify the key components of the passage and generate questions. Before a learner can successfully generate a question, he/she must first find the relevant information within the passage. This process ensures they become more actively involved by designing and answering questions rather than just responding to the teachers questions. The question stage also helps the learner monitor their own comprehension. It is a means of self checking. This stage also reinforces summarizing strategies.

2.4 Summarizing

The summarizing stage encourages the learner to identify and integrate important information presented within the passage. Summarizing may happen over a sentence, a paragraph or the whole passage. 2.3.2 Dialogue Glaser (2005:213) states that The process of attentive listening and reflecting back what was said can

also help the speaker clarify her or his thoughts because it provides feedback to the speaker on how she or he is being perceived. It helps the speaker think and articulate more clearly (especially when clarifying questions are asked), and helps the listener see the bigger picture as she or he rehearses summarization while listening.

3. PROCEDURES OF RECIPROCAL TEACHING

Reciprocal Teaching is carried out with a small group of students and a teacher, all of whom work together to hear a passage. A small part of the passage is spoken aloud. After the passage has been heard, the instructor is responsible for helping the group comprehend what was said by verbally engaging in four expert reciprocal listening strategies: questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting (Palincsar, 1991:65; Palincsar & Klenk, 1992:211).

In each reciprocal teaching session, the teacher is the first learning leader. After the teacher models expert strategy use, each learner in turn is given the responsibility of being the learning leader. The teacher and other students are constantly helping the learning leader to perform the four strategies, but the learning leader must actually do the questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting (Brown & Campione, 1996:289; Rosenshine & Meister, 1996:118).

Engaging in these four strategies encourages students to monitor their own speaking skills. For example, if a student is unable to summarize the main points of a passage, it is likely that he/ she did not comprehend the main point. Here, the strategy fosters comprehension because it signals to the student that he/ she needs to listen again to comprehend the main point, rather than continue listening without understanding (Brown, Palincsar & Armbruster, 1984:120).

4. ADVANTAGES OF RECIPROCAL TEACHING STRATEGY

A significant body of research (Carter, 1997:64; Palincsar & Brown 1984:254, 1986:73; Palincsar, Brown & Campione, 1989:524; Palincsar & Klenk, 1991:192) has shown that students who have been struggling with listening and are taught how to think about a passage in this way are able to feel comfortable taking part in discussions and engaging with both fiction and non-fiction grade level passages. They begin to understand how to make sense of what they are hearing

whether it is in the context of listening, pleasure classroom listening, social studies passages, science passages, or even in math word problems. Their speaking skills levels improve dramatically.

5. SPEAKING

Speaking is an act of making vocal sounds. We can say that speaking means to converse, or expressing one's thoughts and feelings in spoken language. To speak often implies conveying information. It may be from an informal remark to a scholarly presentation to a formal address.

5.1 Speaking skills

Speaking skills are the skills that give us the ability to communicate effectively. These skills allow the speaker, to convey his message in a passionate, thoughtful, and convincing manner. Speaking skills also help to assure that one won't be misunderstood by those who are listening.

Many language learners regard speaking ability as the measure of knowing a language. These learners define fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. They regard speaking as the most important skill they can acquire, and they assess their progress in terms of their accomplishments in spoken communication. Language learners need to recognize that speaking involves three areas of knowledge:

- i- Mechanics (pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary).
- ii- Using the right words in the right order with the correct pronunciation
- iii- Functions (transaction and interaction): Knowing when clarity of message is essential (transaction/information exchange) and when precise understanding is not required (interaction/relationship building).

Social and cultural rules and norms (turn-taking, rate of speech, length of pauses between speakers, relative roles of participants): Understanding how to take into account who is speaking to whom, in what circumstances, about what, and for what reason.

6. THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING SKILLS

The four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are all interconnected. Proficiency in each skill is necessary to become a well-rounded communicator, but the ability to speak skillfully

provides the speaker with several distinct advantages. The capacity to put words together in a meaningful way to reflect thoughts, opinions, and feelings provides the speaker with these important advantages:

1. *Ability to inform, persuade, and direct.* Business managers, educators, military leaders, lawyers, and politicians, among others, seek to develop their speaking skills to such a level that they are transformed into master communicators. Speaking clearly and confidently can gain the attention of an audience, providing the golden opportunity for the speaker to make the message known. Wise is the speaker who gains and then holds the attention of an audience, with well-chosen words in a well-delivered presentation, forming a message that is effective, informative, and understood.
2. *Ability to stand out from the rest.* When one thinks of speaking skills, one tends to think of it as a common skill. Think again. The ability to stand before others and speak effectively is not an ordinary ability. Many people are deathly afraid of public speaking; others have little ability to form thoughts into sentences and then deliver those words in a believable way. The bad news is that at any given moment the world has precious few with the speaking talents of, say, Winston Churchill or John F. Kennedy. The good news is that a speaker whose skills are honed and developed with constant application and hard work can stand out.
3. *Ability to benefit derivatively.* Well-developed verbal skills can increase one's negotiation skills. Self-confidence is improved. A growing sense of comfort comes from speaking in front of larger and larger audiences. A reputation for excellence in speaking can accrue over time, thereby imparting certain credibility to the speaker.
4. *Career enhancement.* Employers have always valued the ability to speak well. It is, and always will be, an important skill, and well worth the effort in fully developing.
5. *Personal satisfaction.* Speakers who have experienced a connection with an appreciative audience through a well-composed and well-delivered presentation often find a deep level of fulfillment that is seldom achieved in other forms of communication. The normal sense of nervous tension can give way to feelings of accomplishment and exuberance when an audience expresses its outward appreciation to a speaker. It's a reward, of sorts, for all the hard work and preparation that goes into honing your skills.

7. DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The present study makes use of an experimental design to investigate the impact of reciprocal listening activities in developing the speaking skills of the study sample. The experimental design is an approach to research into which situations are set up to test specific hypothesis or idea in which different variables can be determined (Longman, 2010: 210). The two groups were exposed to a pre-test and post-test prepared by the researcher to validate the effectiveness of the experiment on the two groups. The pre-test was piloted on 5th preparatory schoolgirls at the beginning of the second term (2018-2019) in Al-Khansa Preparatory School on the 16th of February, 2017 before they had studied the English textbooks designed for 5th preparatory schools and the test was submitted to a panel of 14 experts preceded by a letter to establish its validity and reliability.

The population is the 5th grade students in all the preparatory schools for girls in Babylon governorate in the academic year 2018/2019. The sample of the present study comprises (63) students of Al-Thawra preparatory school in Babylon Governorate. Such a sample is divided into two groups. The first group (A) is the control group, it consists of (31) students. The second group (B) is the experimental one, it consists of (32) students. After exclusion the sample decreased to (60) students, (30) students for each group. The experimental group received the treatment based on reciprocal listening activities taught by the researcher during nine weeks in the second term of 2018/2019. The researcher herself taught the experimental and the control group during that period of time.

8. EQUIVALENCE OF THE GROUPS

The researcher is sure of the equivalence between the two groups the (experimental and the control) before getting started with the experiment. There are certain variables that affect the experiment results. These variables are as follows:

1. *Students' Age*
2. *Students' Scores in the First Course*
3. *Academic Achievement of the Parents*
4. *Students' Scores in the First Course*

9. CONTROLLING EXTERNAL VARIABLES

After equalizing the two groups (experimental and control) with the internal variables and its significance on the dependent variable (the progress) statistically, the researchers tried to decrease the external variables that affect the experiment and possibly the dependent variable. These variables are as follows:

1. The sample was chosen randomly as well as the equivalence between the two groups that was shown earlier.
2. There were no obstacles or accidents that affected the steps, procedures or circumstances of the experiment.
3. The absence of some students did not cause any experimental extinction because the numbers between the two groups was equal.
4. The growth factor has no effect on the dependent variable because the experiment took a short period of time (nine weeks)
5. The researchers used the same instrument for both groups under the same circumstances.
6. For the sake of preventing the differences between the two groups including teaching methods and the way of dealing with students, the researchers themselves taught the two groups (experimental and control). They also had consolidated the course content which is the last four units of the textbook English for Iraq for the 5th preparatory students.
7. The period of the experiment is the same for the two groups (the experiment and control) started on (20th February, 2017) to (25th of April, 2017) for the two similar classes and under the same physical circumstances.
8. The researchers gave ten lessons a week one lesson for each group every day with close hours.

10. TEACHING MATERIAL

The researcher took part of teaching the last four units (5,6,7,8) of the textbook English for Iraq in the second course of (2018/2019) and chose the following lesson for each unit (see appendix2) :

- ❖ Unit Seven: Who wants to be a millionaire.(p:88-89) from the textbook
- ❖ Unit Eight: A person who cuts hair.(p:98) from the textbook

11. THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

In this group, the researchers have prepared 30 lesson

plans and 100 behavioural objectives according to reciprocal teaching strategy by Palincsar and Brown (1984:286) following four stages (predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarizing). These steps are as follows:

1. Preparing the students to use Reciprocal listening activities by explaining that they will be taught how to improve their speaking skills.
2. Introducing the **Summarize** strategy by reviewing an oral passage that students are familiar with. That way, students can focus on the strategy without getting frustrated by too difficult content.
3. Starting by the use of **Think Aloud** strategy as modelling how to summarize the section. Saying something like, "OK, this passage is about healthy habits; let me see if I remember all the important points. I remember that there is not just one type of healthy habit but there are many things that people do to be healthy. So that can be my first sentence of my summary. 'There are many ways of being healthy. So now I need to explain what I mean by that.'"
4. Demonstrating the **Clarification** Strategy and using the **Think Aloud** process continually. Using the same procedure to identify a part of a sentence or passage that might be confusing.
5. Introducing the other reciprocal teaching strategies by modelling them. The chosen passages are from their course content, (e.g., passages that have multiple headings, pictures, or graphs that allow students to practice "predicting").
6. Setting up pairs or teams to clarify roles. Also, asking a team leader to model use of the strategy or lead the task while other students respond.
7. Asking the students to report back on their discussion and highlight interesting ideas from the group.

12. PRE-TEST ADMINISTRATION

The researcher tested and administered both groups

Groups	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of significance
					Calculated	Tabulated	
Exp.	30	17.5	6.36	58	4.15	2	0.05
Con.	30	14.0	5.65				

Table: T-test Statistics for the Students' Scores of the Post-test.

In addition, there is no statistically significant difference between the mean ages of the students in the experimental and control groups. This table shows that the two groups are equivalent in the age variable

the experimental and the control on the 20th of February, 2018. This process aimed at comparing between the scores of the students' achievement and between the pre- and post-test which were scored by the researcher and the teacher of English in the same school.

13. POST-TEST

The researchers post-tested the students of both groups on the 25th of April, 2017. The same procedures of the pre-test were followed as well as the validity, reliability, pilot study, scoring scheme, item facility and item discrimination. All were seen by the same panel of experts along with the post-test sample.

14. RESULTS

In order to investigate the aim of this study which is the impact of reciprocal listening activities on 5th preparatory students' speaking skills, improve the students' performance and examine the hypotheses, the data obtained from the pre- and post-test of the experimental and control groups are statistically analyzed. This analysis proves if there is any significant difference between the two groups in the pre- and post-test.

According to the results obtained from the post-test of both groups, it is shown that the mean scores of the EG (17.0) and of the CG (14.5) means that the scores of the experimental group is higher than that of the control one in speaking skills performance which is successful.

Using the t-test formula, for two independent samples, is not clear to show the significant difference between the two groups. But it was found that the computed t-value (4.15) is higher than the tabulated one (2) at (0.05) level of significance under (58) degrees of freedom as the following table shows:

Groups	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of significance
					Calculated	Tabulated	
Exp.	30	208	12.7	58	1.092	2	0.05
Con.	30	209	8.48				

Table13: Students' Ages of the EG and CG.

It has been proved that there is a statistically significant difference of 0.05 between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and the control groups concerning the first course scores.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of significance
					Calculated	Tabulated	
Exp.	30	58.6	14.2	58	1.95	2	0.05
Con.	30	58.6	10.6				

Table14: t-test Statistics of the Students' Scores in the First Course.

The experimental part also shows that there is a statistically significant difference of 0.05 between the mean scores of students of the experimental and control groups in the speaking skills post-test results in favour of the experimental group".

15. DISCUSSION

The results of using the reciprocal listening activities in the present study are as follows:

1. The researchers used modern ways in teaching such as ;(audio, Data-show, laptop, PowerPoint and coloured markers, etc.). These techniques help the class make more fun and interesting.
2. They adopted logical steps in introducing the lesson, where the start with warming up in order to stimulate students to start a new lesson and also for the purpose of reviewing the previous lesson information. Then, they used reciprocal listening activities step by step such as (prediction, clarification, self-questioning, and summarizing activities) .
3. Reciprocal listening activities are effective and an important technique in speaking skills for that it helps the students understand the study material. With the help of this technique of teaching, the students can recall any piece of information that they learned in previous lessons.

16. CONCLUSIONS

According to the results, some conclusions have been drawn:

1. The reciprocal listening activities have proved to be effective in the students' speaking skills
2. Using these four activities (prediction, clarification, self-questioning, and summarizing activities) helps students increase their energy and enjoyment in the class.
3. Reciprocal speaking activities play an important role in stimulating the basic senses (listening and speaking) and make the learning more active and effective. They also increase the students' knowledge of phonology, grammar and vocabulary.
4. The use of modern technology during class encourages students to develop their speaking skills. It also enhances their knowledge and understanding as it appears in their performance in the post-test.

REFERENCES

- Azmi, B. M., Celik, B., Yidliz, N., & Tugrul, M. C. (2014). "Listening Comprehension Difficulties Encountered by Students in Second language Learning Class". *Journal of Educational and Instructional Studies in the World*, 4(4), 1-6.
- Brown, A. L., & Palincsar, A. S. (1989). Guided, cooperative learning and individual knowledge acquisition. In L. B. Resnick (Ed.), *Knowing, learning, and instruction: Essays in honor of Robert Glaser* (pp. 393-451). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Brown, A. L., Campione, J. C., Ferrara, R. A., Reeve, R. A., & Palincsar, A. S. (1991). Interactive learning and individual understanding: The case of reading

and mathematics. In L. T. (VolEd.), Landsmann (Ed.), Culture, schooling, and psychological development: Vol. 4. Human development (pp. 136–170). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Brown, A. L., & Campione, J. C. (1996). Psychological theory and the design of innovative learning environments: On procedures, principles, and systems. In L. Schauble, & R. Glaser (Eds.), Innovations in learning (pp. 289–325). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Glaser, T. (2005). *Dialogic Listening: Sculpting Mutual Meanings*. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado.
<http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/stew7468.htm>.

Palinscar, A. S., & Brown, A. L. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension fostering and comprehension monitoring activities. *Cognition and Instruction*, 1, 117 -130.

Palinscar, A. S., & Brown, A. L. (1985). Reciprocal teaching: A means to a meaningful end. In J. Osborn, P. T. Wilson & R. C. Anderson (Eds.), Reading education: Foundations for a literate America (pp. 229 – 310). Lexington, MA. Heath.

Palinscar, A. S., Brown (1986). The role of dialogue in providing scaffolded instruction. *Educational Psychologist*, 21, 73–98.

Palinscar, A. S. (1991). Scaffolded instruction of speaking skills with first graders at risk for academic difficulty. In J. Bruer (Ed.), *Toward the practice of using sound instruction* (pp. 50–65). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Palinscar, A. S., & Klenk, L. (1992). Fostering literacy learning in supportive contexts. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 25 (4), 211- 225.

Rosenshine, B., & Meister, C. (1994). Reciprocal teaching: A review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 64(4), 479–530.

Rosenshine, B., Meister, C., & Chapman, S. (1996). Teaching students to generate questions: A review of the intervention studies. *Review of Educational Research*, 66 (2), 181 – 221.