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DIGITAL LANGUAGE LABORATORY: A RESUSCITATIVE INNOVATION IN ORAL ENGLISH PEDAGOGY IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ENUGU STATE

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Article Info

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Abstract

This study was designed to examine the significance of the individual and collective contributions to students' learning of oral English via the Digital Language Laboratory. Based on this, one research question and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The study is quasi experimental design which involved the use of intact classes. All seventy-seven year one students of the Department of Language Studies, Enugu State College of Education (Technical) ESCET, Enugu and sixty students of the Department of Language Studies, Institute of Ecumenical Education Thinkers Corner, Enugu were used for the study. In assigning the subjects to control and experimental group, the seventy-seven students of ESCET and sixty students of Ecumenical were used respectively. The experimental group was exposed to Digital Laboratory Instructional Resource Mode while the control group was exposed to the Presentation Instructional Mode of teaching. The instrument used for the study was Oral Production Test, the scores obtained from the pre-test were used for item analysis and calculation of reliability indices. Applying Kuder-Richardson formula 20 the reliability indices of 0.98 was found. The mean scores and the standard deviations were computed and were used for answering research question, while the analysis of covariance was adopted to test the hypothesis. It was found that Digital Language Laboratory Mode of teaching oral English was significantly more effective than the Presentation Instructional Mode. The results of the study show that the use of Digital Language Laboratory Instructional Mode enhances instruction on oral English. It was recommended that oral English teachers should adopt the use of Digital Language Laboratory as an instructional mode of teaching phonetics and phonology.

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Introduction

Language is one of the significant elements that affect international communicative activities (Ahmadi 2018). Students utilize different parts of English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing for their proficiency and communication (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). In addition, Ahmadi (2017) stated that one of the important elements for learning is the strategy that instructors use in their classes to facilitate language learning process. In Nigeria English is used as a second language. With the spread and development of English around the world, it has become an important means of communication among the people of different cultures and languages. At present, the role and status of English in Nigeria is higher than ever as it is a medium of instruction and curriculum in educational institutions. English is one of the important medium of communication in the world, so it is important to learn the language. As a result, English Language teaching has been one of the most important subjects in education. In fact, there are more non-native speakers than native speakers of the language (Pun 2013). 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 need 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 the mental exercises that are needed to be accurate in writing and reading, speaking and listening in foreign language other than the mother tongue are considered. 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-Essays, comprehensions 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 get the lion share of the mark allocation of 100 while paper II-objective and paper III share the remaining insignificant marks of 100. Also in the planning of the time table, the time table 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 concentrates on essay and comprehension that will provide him enough exercises as would be demanded by the principals and state supervisors.

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 limited number of periods of time. The teachers often teach 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.

Furthermore, many authors like Tifen (1980) feel that oral English is not taught using proper instructional mode like the Language Laboratory in our secondary schools. This results in the students being faced with the problems of oral communication in higher institution of learning. All these problems could be overcome if teachers, students and school administrators could adopt good strategies which the Digital Laboratory can provide to the teaching of oral English. As the popularity of English is expanding day by day and worldwide, the teachers of English feel the need pf change in their language teaching strategy for maximum academic achievement.

Student Achievement has become a hot topic on education today, especially with increased accountability for classroom teachers. The ultimate goal for any teacher is to improve the ability level and prepare students for adulthood. Defining student achievement and factors that impact progress is critical to becoming a successful teacher. Student achievement measures the amount of academic content a student learns in a determined amount of time. Student achievement will increase when quality instruction is used to teach instructional standards. There are many variables that can impact successful student achievement, but the most critical are classroom instruction and learning disabilities. It is important to remember that all students do not learn the same way or at the same rate.

Classroom instruction is the most important factor that impacts student achievement. As a teacher you influence the quality of instruction, set expectations for learning and measure the level of understanding. If the standard is not presented in a way that a student can understand, or if it is taught in a way that is boring, it can be very difficult for a student to meet the required level of achievement. A good teacher will use strategies such as discussion among students, videos or stories to gain students' attention and to support the learning process. Several studies that has been carried out on various factors affecting student achievement, offer deeper and insightful reflection on the topic. It is the scholastic standing of a student which shows the individual's intellectual abilities (Adeyemi, 2008). It measures and appraises a student's educational growth. So, tests of achievement asses what the learner has learnt in school. According to Schnitzer (2005), achievement refers to tests designed to assess student's current scores in academic area. This can be viewed as an indicator of previous learning that can be used to predict future academic success. Schnitzer explains further that individual achievement is determined by comparison of results with average scores derived from large representation of local sample.

Normally, students achievement is measured in terms of pass or fail in subject examinations. Scores can equally be expressed in terms of grade-level equivalent. In Nigeria, students' academic achievement in the institution of higher learning are determined through the semester examinations and either Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) or Bachelors Degree in Education (B.Ed). The students' achievements in Oral English have not been encouraging. Many factors have been reported as being responsible for this, but more specifically, poor listening and speaking skills have been repeatedly mentioned as major factors. It is therefore necessary to look for some measures of improving students' achievement in Oral English. This study is therefore set to find out the effects of Digital Language Laboratory as a resuscitative innovation in Oral English Pedagogy and students' achievement. As a result of the close connection between teaching and achievement of students, it becomes important therefore to teach the Oral English in a manner that will improve student achievement through effective approaches and methods thus it is imperative to find out the effect of Digital Language Laboratory as a resuscitative innovation in Oral English pedagogy.

There are teachers who use the leading edge of technology and scientific development (Young and Bush 2004), but the majority of teachers still teach in the traditional manner using the presentation instructional mode. Digital Language Laboratory is a unique state of Art solution developed to improve communication of all level by concentration on basic language learning skills. It helps to improve oral as well as written skills of student. It teaches how English can be used in day-to-day activities.

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. It is important that teachers adopt the use of digital language laboratory to their language class 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. Among the various instructional modes of teaching are presentation mode, laboratory mode and questioning mode

(Opinmi 2007)

Most teachers have been using presentation mode where instructions are given, through verbal communication. There are little or no interaction between the pupils and teachers in the use of this mode. Direct experience of the materials being learnt is completely absent from this mode. It usually takes the forms of prepared speech, lecture, storytelling, illustrated talks, use of resource persons and so on.

The fundamental aim of the laboratory is to produce much regular practice in listening to models, 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 throughout the period. No student is left out in 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 and avoid others (Lawrence 1984). The modern language teachers have new challenges and duties given by the new era. The tradition of English teaching has to be drastically changed with the remarkable development of newer technologies such as the modern digital language laboratory.

The digital language laboratory with the help of audio, visual and animation effect motivates the students to learn Oral English quickly and effectively. Rena (2013) noted that teachers must take into account the fact that human beings are very visual beings in that what they see tend to affect their judgment more and modern digital laboratory helps in bringing the visual aspect to education. It is hard to achieve the goal of teaching Oral English effectively through the traditional teaching mode because it hampers the students' capacity to understand the phonological realization and sound system of the language. The presentation mode makes the students passive recipients of knowledge. But digital language laboratory will be of great help to integrate teaching and learning of Oral English by providing the students greater incentives. Suleyman (2008) noted that the utilization of digital language laboratory breaks the monotony of the traditional classroom teaching and is enjoyable and simulating. Digital language laboratory encourages students' positive thinking and communication skills in learning the language. The use of digital language laboratory offers the students with more information than text books and helps them to be familiar with cultural background and real-life language as they listen to the native speakers' utterances. The learners not only improve their listening ability but also learn the culture of the target language. Language laboratory improves teaching content and makes the best of class time. It breaks the teacher-centred traditional teaching and fundamentally improves the teachers' teaching efficiency and has become central to

language practice (Motteram 2013). For large class, it is difficult for the students to have speaking communication, but the utilization of language laboratory materializes to face to face teaching. Pun (2013) stated that as a number of English learners are growing up, different teaching strategies such as the digital language laboratory should be experimented to see the effectiveness of oral English language teaching.

Research Question

Specifically, this study attempts to answer the following research question

What is the effect of digital language laboratory on students' mean achievement in Oral English?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Oral English using Digital Language Laboratory and those taught, using presentation instructional mode. **Method**

This study is a quasi- experimental design. It is a true quasi experiment because the study involved the use of intact classes. The equivalence of the treatment and control group was attained by assignment of subjects to treatment and control conditions (Ali, 1996).

This study was carried out in Enugu Urban Area in Enugu State. The study was carried out precisely at the Enugu State College of Education Technical (ESCET), and Institute of Ecumenical Education Thinkers Corner. All these institutions were chosen because they are educational institutions that have Department of Language Studies. The population of this study consists of all the year one students offering English in the Department of Language Studies of both the Enugu State College of Education Technical and Institute of Ecumenical Education Thinkers

Corner Enugu. There are 77 students from Enugu State College of Educational Technical and 60 students from Institute of Ecumenical Education Thinker's Corner, all in Enugu giving a total of 137. This population involves 48 female students and 29 male students from Enugu State College of Education Technical and 40 female students and 20 male students from Ecumenical, giving a total of 77 female students and 60 male students.

All of the 77 year one students of English Department, Enugu State College of Education Technical Enugu and 60 year one students of the Institute of Ecumenical Education Thinkers' corner Enugu for the academic year were used for the study. The two higher institutions were selected by purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used because the researchers' discretion is needed in selecting the schools that were appropriate for the study. The criteria for this selection are based mainly on the higher institutions in the locality that have departments of language studies. In assigning the experimental and control group, the 77 students from Enugu State College of Education Technical were purposively assigned to the experimental group. This is so because there is no digital language laboratory in Enugu State College of Education Technical while Institute of Ecumenical has a digital language laboratory. Each group received the same course content but with a different approach and strategies. The research instrument used to find out the effect of Digital Language Laboratory as a resuscitative innovation in oral English pedagogy and student achievement in oral English was Oral English Achievement Test (OEAT). The instrument comprised two sets of tests for each set. For the listening comprehension tests, there is the question pattern and the Narrative pattern. For the speaking test, there are two patterns too; the pronunciation pattern and the sentence pattern. Each question attracts 2 ½ marks making a total of 100 marks. The instrument made use of Received Pronunciation (RP) and was adopted from an Oral English Course for Teachers Colleges compiled from the West African Examination Council (WAEC) which makes it standardized.

The Oral English Achievement Test (OEAT) was face validated by two experts in Language Education from Arts Education Department and two other experts in measurement and evaluation from the department of Science Education all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The validators were required to go through then item of the oral tests for proper wording of the oral tests and clarity of the instruments.

The instrument was administered to year one students of English at Our Saviour Institute of Science and Technology (Osisatech) Enugu. The instrument was shared to the students so as to listen to the tape and identify the answers. At the end of the tape the instrument was collected immediately. The scores of the response of the students from the trial testing were used in computing the reliability of the test. applying Kuder- Richardson formula R-20 the reliability was found to be 0.98.

Result

What is the effects of Digital Language Laboratory as a resuscitative innovation in student mean achievement in oral English?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Achievement Scores for Experimental and Control Groups

Groups	pre-test scores		post-test scores	
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Experimental	60	55.42	8.33	64.58	6.45
Control	77	37.06	7.95	45.38	7.50 Mean Deviation
16.36	19.20				

Table: The table shows mean and standard deviation of achievement scores for experimental and control groups. The results on the table reveal that mean of the pre-test scores for both experimental and control groups are 55.42 and 37.06 respectively; while the mean for the post-test scores are 64.58 and 45.38 respectively, Therefore, it can be concluded that the experimental group (the group taught with digital language laboratory) achieved higher than the control group (the group taught with conventional approach). **Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Oral English using Digital Language Laboratory and those taught using presentation methods.

Table 2: ANCOVA table for difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Oral English using Digital language laboratory and those taught using presentation methods.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	12743.87	4	3185.99	65.44	.00
Intercept	11311.28	1	11311.28	232.32	.00
Pretest	11.79	1	11.79	.24	.62
Groups	4701.95	1	4701.95	96.57	.00
Level	255.40	1	255.40	5.25	.02
Group ^ Level	76.13	1	76.13	1.56	.21
Error	6426.89	132	48.69		
Total	415537.00	137			
Corrected Total	19170.86	136			

Table 2: Shows calculated F-ratio for difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Oral English using Digital language laboratory and those taught, using presentation method. Results on the table revealed that for the groups F- calculated (96.57) is significant at 0.00, this F- calculated value is equally significant at 0.05; because 0.00 is less than 0.05, that is (0.00<p>0.05). Hence, there is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Oral English using Digital language laboratory and those taught, using presentation method. **Discussion of the Findings**

The major findings in this work showed that there were differences in the mean achievement scores of the two groups taught differently in Oral English. Test of significance showed that there was significant difference in achievement between the experimental and control groups. The digital laboratory approach seemed to be more effective than the presentation method. This may be because the digital laboratory method gave more room for

students practice and participation. In other words, it is student-centred. Secondly, the enthusiasm to participate in the new method might be a factor that might have helped the students to perform better than their counterparts. On the other hand the control group is used to presentation method and there was nothing so fascinating that would lead to their enthusiasm.

The interpretation of the data of the experiment suing ANCOVA yielded a result in favour of digital language laboratory approach in achievement in Oral English as a more effective means of teaching English 112 (introduction to phonetics and phonology) in a College of Education. This means that the Oral English is more effectively taught in the language laboratory than the presentation method. **Conclusion**

The analysis of the data obtained from the experiment and the results led to an inevitable conclusion that the digital language laboratory mode of teaching is significantly a better instructional mode of teaching Oral English than the conventional classroom mode (presentation mode). The researcher, therefore, logically concluded that the use of digital language laboratory in teaching Oral English phonology was more effective than the use of presentation mode in Oral English.

Curriculum reforms, modifications and innovations are usually offshoots of research findings; therefore, curriculum planners will have the need to suggest alternative digital language laboratory approaches to the traditional classroom approach for a more effective instruction.

Teachers in educational system will learn from these findings that not one method is the best in all situations, and this will enable them to adopt a mode depending on the objectives. When teachers try the new instructional mode- the digital laboratory mode in language teaching, it will yield a higher dividend academically than the presentation approach irrespective of the fact that the difference may not be significant in all aspects of language teaching according to the findings of this study.

The digital language laboratory mode of language teaching places the learners at the centre of all learning activities. This is because they are motivated and are involved in learning. It gives them opportunity for selforganized practices as opposed to the presentation mode that place the learner in a passive position. The activity based digital language laboratory does facilitate oral instruction

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research and the implications, the following recommendations are made.

1. Regular in-service training and refresher courses should be organized for practicing teachers of English to update their knowledge in the digital language instructional mode.
2. Lecturers in the universities and colleges of education should make extra efforts to expose student teachers to different digital language laboratory approaches to English education.
3. Heads of institutions should ensure that serviceable digital language laboratories are installed and used in their institutions, especially for the oral instruction.
4. Heads of institutions should ensure the regular maintenance and servicing of digital language laboratory to provide optimum utility.

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