

Review Of Methods Used In Studies Regarding The Application Of Self-Video Recorded Speaking Task And Implications For English-Majored Students At A Higher Education Institution Of Vietnam

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Abstract: The application of students' self-video recorded speaking task (SRST) into English language teaching has become popular in the era of technology nowadays. However, each author has somewhat unique method to approach the issue. The article presented a thorough critical review regarding methods eight researchers have used to study the problem in their own contexts. After considering the strengths and weaknesses of each methodology and methods, this SRST can be adapted into the context of Ha Tinh University with English majored students.

Key words: SRST (self-video recorded speaking task), critical review, method.

1 INTRODUCTION

With the importance of speaking skills as a criterion to mark one's language competence, studies to seek for efficient ways to ace learners' speaking proficiency have blossomed over the last two decades (Göktürk, 2016, p.71). Among the burgeoning methods, Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is proved to offer many advantages in stimulating students' interaction through the use of communicative tasks (Nation, 1991; Newton and Kennedy, 1996; O'brein, 1996; Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2013).

Nation (1991) showed that problem-solving tasks were effective in improving intermediate learners' speaking skills. Besides, Newton and Kennedy (1996) proved that interactive tasks enhanced the quality of learners' negotiations and also their speaking accuracy. In another work, O'brein (1996) confirmed the positive impacts of the autonomous speaking environment on students' speaking proficiency and their motivation towards learning.

In the new era, the pervasion of technology has also brought important changes to the language learning and teaching field. As a new product of modern technology, with the benefit of helping users to record video files whenever and wherever they want, video cameras have made useful contribution to the improvement of learners' spoken language (Lonergan, 1984; Stempleski & Tomalin, 1990; Liu, Moore, Graham & Lee, 2002).

Considering the efficiency of TBLT and video cameras in speaking skills, the idea of combining the two has been established. Kirkgoz (2011) confirmed that the incorporation between video recording and TBLT improved students' motivation and proficiency in speaking. In line with that, Seedhouse and Almutairi (2009)

argued that as task-based activities were not easily analysed, the combination of recorded videos and TBLT would generate a holistic approach when all behaviour elements of the tasks would be interpreted.

However, in literature, researches on the application of TBLT combined with video recording in speaking skills are still limited. Many of the previous works either concentrated on each issue separately, or addressed the broader term: computer-assisted language learning (CALL) which means the application of computers (or technology in general) in language learning. This project, therefore, aims at making a specific contribution to the examination of the effectiveness of the incorporation between TBLT and video recording on learners' oral performances.

Currently, we (two of us) are in charge of a speaking course for sophomore English students at Ha Tinh University. In the proficiency examination at the end of the first year, 22 out of 30 students of the class did not satisfy the required standard (5.5 lels) in speaking skills.

We realized that, on the one hand, the current teaching approach was problematic. First, the designed lessons which focused on teaching separated model sentences and grammatical forms had severely restricted students' fluency. Besides, teachers were always controllers of the class and weaker students usually lost performing chances to stronger ones. Additionally, learners could not use up all of their resources to complete the tasks due to limited class time. On the other hand, our students who were all born in the new era, were eager for a lively authentic speaking environment where they could comfortably perform their verbal language.

From the discussion above, this research method proposal aims at investigating the effectiveness of the integration of video recording into task-based speaking classes. The first reason is that, pedagogical tasks with emphasis on meaningful interaction and natural use of language will switch students' focus on accuracy to fluency which may consequently advance their oral performances (Newton & Kennedy, 1996). Second, the learner-centered nature of TBLT and free use of self-recorded videos will be able to address the dominance of teachers and strong students in class. Likewise, the fact that every student can freely record themselves at any time, in anywhere will prompt the use of their own available resources to solve the tasks and express themselves more fully.

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2 CRITICAL REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

As the number of studies on the application of TBLT and video recording (or technology in general) into speaking skills expanded, a wide range of methodologies and methods can be addressed.

Jiang and Sun (2010) conducted a research at Harbin Normal University, China to explore the efficiency of the combination between TBLT and CALL on students' language proficiency and their perspectives on that integration. Based on the entrance exam results, 128 freshmen were divided into two equal groups. During two terms, apart from attending three intensive reading and one listening regular classes, the experimental group received an extra training with internet-assisted materials two hours a week. They were also facilitated with an autonomous and interpersonal learning environment throughout the process. After two terms, the mean scores between the entrance and end-term exam results were compared to examine students' proficiency development. Meanwhile, two closed-ended questionnaires were delivered to seek for students' perceptions. The first one was sent to 128 student participants, aiming at gaining students' opinions of CALL environment. The second one was delivered to twenty-five English teachers to investigate teachers' perspectives on their current teaching methods. The choice of methods in this study was rather suitable to address the two research questions. However, concerning the entrance and end-term exams, as they were two different tests, their contents would not be the same. Consequently, this did not ensure the reliability of the collected data. Besides, the closed-ended questionnaires more or less limited participants from expressing their perspectives, and with such a large-scale research (128 participants), the triangulation of investigators needs to be considered.

Also using TBLT as the treatment, Huang (2015) carried out a study to investigate its effects on learners' motivation and speaking and writing proficiency. It was an eight-cycle small-scale action research undertaken in the author's own class with twenty-nine students. The data collection, therefore, was formed in an AR frame. In the planning phase, a mixed questionnaire was sent out to identify problems in students' motivation towards speaking and writing skills. Based on the data analysis, TBLT was applied as the treatment. Over a period of sixteen weeks, group discussion and information-, opinion-, and reasoning-gap tasks were used to stimulate speaking environment. After each two weeks (one cycle), students' composition writing with related topics were collected. Meanwhile, short questionnaires and interviews were delivered to gain students' perspectives of the teaching method. At the end of eight cycles, the second mixed questionnaire and interviews concerning students' ideas about their proficiency improvement were delivered. Additionally, throughout the process, the teacher researchers noted down her observation in a teaching journal. The data was used for the reflection phase and to present the study results. A notable strength of this research, compared to Jiang and Sun, is that it had used an extensive range of qualitative instruments which would gain more in-depth insights into students' perceptions and motivation. In addition, the data was regularly collected: at the beginning, after each cycle and at the end of the course. This would ensure the reliability of the methods. However, the adoption of merely qualitative instruments to examine learners' improvement in language proficiency was a shortcoming compared to the previous study. This also lessened the study's validity as it did not fully answer the second research question. Concerning the design, this project gave a good example of an AR process which will be applied in my research. As for three instruments, only open-ended questionnaires will be adopted while the interviews and teaching journal will be omitted due to the time constraint and teaching burden. Instead, a more

practical method in which participants will provide their own information will be used.

Mudra (2016) also conducted an action research to investigate the impact of TBLT on the enhancement of learners' speaking skills. Thirty English students of the researcher's own class at STAIN Kerinci were selected. Over two cycles, three tools were employed to collect data: pre-post speaking tests, classroom observation and field notes. After a needs analysis in the planning phase, speaking tasks with various daily-related and problem-solving topics were adopted. During the teaching process, field notes from the researcher's observation and collaborators' reflections were collected. At the end of the first cycle, post-test was conducted to test students' improvement. The second cycle with the same procedure was implemented based on the data analysis and reflections on problems arisen in the first cycle. The adopted instruments seem to be practical to answer the research question. Specifically, the triangulation of methods among observation, reflection and a speaking test would help the researcher to obtain a comprehensive view at the improvement of students' language competence. Sharing the same research design with Huang (2015), this study also employed needs analysis and observation to facilitate the action research procedure. In spite of these strengths, a minus point of the study was that although the author had mentioned the pre-test, the procedure to conduct and collect this test was not described. Likewise, the instrument(s) used to collect students' needs was not provided. Those shortages in data collection reduced the validity of the study as well as showing some of the author's biases.

Kirkgoz (2011) carried out a study to examine the effectiveness and learners' perceptions on the combination between TBLT and video recording in teaching speaking skills. Twenty eight English freshmen in Turkish higher education were selected. The participants were trained with a new blended learning speaking course in which apart from three hours of task-based speaking lessons, they had to complete video recorded tasks assigned as homework on a weekly basis. The videos were viewed and evaluated during one extra hour added to the class time. The study employed mixed methods to collect data: pre-post-course speaking tests, students' weekly videos of extra speaking tasks, weekly informal interviews, and an end-of-course evaluation survey. The pre-post-tests were identically designed and their results were then compared in order to examine the impact of the blended approach. Meanwhile, after each class, the researcher informally interviewed students to obtain their opinions about the new approach. The last data was gathered via a survey at the end of the course, aiming at gaining participants' evaluation of the course. It can be said that the adopted methods had fully addressed the research questions of the study. Compared to the previous researches, the pre-post-tests of this work were properly organized. Furthermore, the fact that the same participants received the same training and were assigned the same tests in the same conditions showed the study's reliability. In addition, the method triangulation which can reinforce the strengths and reduce the weaknesses of each instrument had increased the validity of the study. However, although students' weekly video recording assignments were stated to be collected, no analysis of this data was presented throughout the study.

Nim and Son (2009) undertook a study to examine factors influencing the use of computer in class of English teachers and to investigate their perceptions on CALL and ways to enhance CALL practice. Twelve secondary in-service Korean teachers were involved in the study. A questionnaire and follow-up in-depth interviews were used to collect data. The closed-ended questionnaire consisted nineteen yes/no, multiple-choice and 5-point Likert scale questions were used to collect teachers'

information about their use of computer in classroom, together with their perspectives and attitudes towards the implementation of CALL. The semi-structured follow-up interviews which comprised seven open-ended questions were then applied to gain more thorough perceptions of teachers on the use of CALL in their own contexts. It can be said that the instruments were appropriate to answer the research questions. Similar to previous works, this research adopted questionnaire and interviews to investigate participants' perspectives. The follow-up interviews not only provide more in-depth information of participants' perceptions, but also can strengthen the consistency of the answers in the questionnaire. As explained before, the questionnaire will be adopted to my own research. Nonetheless, the in-depth perspectives will be obtained via learners' diary instead of interviews because in my situation, it seems to be more appropriate for both participants and researcher: While participants will have more time to reflect on their learning process, the time for collecting data can largely be reduced. Besides, it may be more comfortable for students to express their perspectives on diaries rather than through direct interviews with the researcher.

Gromik (2011) conducted a case study on nine Japanese university learners to examine the impact of cell phone video recordings on their verbal performances and the perceptions on this utilization. During a fourteen-week speaking course, aside from text-based exercises, 30-second cell phone video monologue in target language was assigned to students' practice every week. These videos were then sent to the teacher's email for marking and analysis. Before and after the application of the treatment, pre-post surveys were used to obtain specific information relating to students' use and the efficiency of cell phone on their language learning. Weekly cell phone video performances were also collected and analysed through the calculation of word per second to conclude the extent of improvement. The use of pre-post surveys seems to be sufficient to tackle the second research question. Notwithstanding, the use of other instruments, such as: process reports, interviews and observations were only stated but not provided. Besides, the counting of words per second in the recording analysis seems to be insufficient for a conclusion of an improvement in general speaking proficiency. The launch of pre- and post-surveys can help double check the data of perceptions. The pre-survey which plays as a needs assessment will also be applied in my research, while the post-survey will be replaced by the data from learners' diaries. The video analysis, however, will not be applied because of the complexity of the tools, so a pre-post-test will be adopted.

Göktürk (2016) undertook a study with the participation of ten intermediate language learners in a Turkish college to explore the effect of video cameras on learners' speaking fluency and their perceptions on this application. During the semester of fourteen weeks, students attended three hours of face-to-face speaking lesson per week, together with eight extensive speaking tasks using recording videos. These videos were then uploaded in the class Facebook group in order to receive comments and evaluation from other members. The final marks were given by the teacher-researcher and collected to be analyzed. A transcribing software was used to measure the silent pauses and disfluencies to millisecond. Regarding data collection, before and after students' submission of eight video tasks, pre-post-tests were adopted to examine the improvement in students' speaking fluency. The speaking format of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) was applied and the test performances were recorded and transcribed for later analysis. In addition, one week before the eighth video submission, seven learners were selected for a focus group interview. This was to learn more about their perceptions of the utilization of video

cameras in speaking classes. The employed methods were likely to be suitable to address the research questions. Also, the reliability of the scoring was ensured by the crosscheck of two raters. On top of that, compared to Gromik (2011), the recording analysis in this paper seems to be more complex and valid to address the issue of fluency. However, although the study was stated to be an action research, compared to Huang (2015) and Mudra (2016), the four basic phases were not strictly followed in this research. Specifically, there was no description of the planning and reflection phases. Furthermore, the use of merely focus group interview to obtain participants' perspectives can be a drawback. While only seven out of ten participants were interviewed which is unlikely to be representative, other factors such as impersonal answers or dominating individuals may reduce the effectiveness of the method. More particularly, if some participants felt uncomfortable sharing their true viewpoints or feelings with others with contrary ideas, or there was a participant dominating the conversations, reliable or useful insights will not be gained. This is the reason why without a triangulation with other instruments, it will not be used in my research.

Shakarami, Khajehei and Hajhashemi (2014) set out a research to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of mobile phone audio recording on learners' speaking development. Thirty-five English sophomores in an Iran university were chosen to participate in the study. The class was alphabetically distributed into two groups: experimental and control. Over one semester of fourteen weeks, the experimental group was required to submit weekly 30-second audio files of their English speaking to the instructor via email. The topics of these recordings were in line with the ones discussed in class. Data collection was divided into two phases. In the first phase, data of students' demographic information, problems in computer access, and students' technology competency was collected. In the second phase, students' speaking audios were collected and analysed. Similar to Gromik (2011), the researchers analysed the recordings based on the average calculation of word per second. The results of analysis of the first and final recording submissions were compared to conclude the development. Although the data collection description seemed to be appropriate to respond to the research questions, there were obvious leaks in this procedure. In fact, the authors did not state any specific instrument to collect data in the first phase. More importantly, the comparison of the two recording submissions which was solely based on word counting was rather crude to produce meaningful interpretations of the speaking improvement.

3 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, regarding the methods used in eight articles concerning the application of SRST in English foreign language teaching contexts above, it can be seen that most of the authors had triangulated a number of research tools to investigate the problem. Particularly, pre-post-tests were mostly used in order to measure participants' proficiency improvement, while qualitative methods (questionnaires, interviews, observation, etc.) were adopted to examine participants' perceptions. Many of the studies were also shaped in action research (AR) style. In AR, the researcher is also the teacher who identifies a problem in their class and decides to take an action (treatment) to fix or improve it (Mertler, 2015).

This incorporation can help reinforce the collected data and allow results to be cross-checked. As the connection between data and results in the answer of research questions can be strengthened, the study validity can be increased. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) also clarifies that while quantitative paradigms can be used to test or validate a constructed theory and help reduce

researchers' biases, qualitative results can provide inside information and explanations of the phenomenon. More specifically, if results from quantitative instruments show specific figures of the changes after the treatment, meaningful interpretation from qualitative tools can explain how and why that was the case. Generally, the mix of quantitative and qualitative methods will provide a holistic view of the research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

However, the mix of methods can be difficult for a single researcher and may cost more than one single method. It also requires more time and effort in incorporating the methods as well as in collecting and analyzing the data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Drawn from the thorough discussion of the methods used in previous researches, the future study concerning SRST issue in Ha Tinh University context will employ a triangulation of three methods: pre-post speaking tests, an open-ended questionnaire and learners' diaries. Specifically, pre-post speaking tests will be used to measure students' improvement after the treatment, while the questionnaire and learners' diaries will be adopted to investigate learners' perspectives on the effectiveness of the treatment.

Pre-test and post-test of the study will be conducted at the beginning and the end of the course. The two tests will identically be designed regarding their content, structure and assessment criteria. Each test will last for about fifteen minutes. Test format and rating scale will be adopted from the real module of the IELTS. Three teachers will mark the tests, using the same rating scale.

After the pre-test, an open-ended questionnaire with three main sections will be delivered. Participants will be required to write about previous teaching situations and their speaking learning process, their needs and expectations for the upcoming course, and opinions about the imminent application of TBLT integrated with video recording into the course. This information will shape the topics and content of the tasks in the forthcoming course, as well as suggesting specific actions in the action phase.

Also, during the process of applying the treatment, each participant will be required to write about their learning experiences with the new teaching approach. The writing should be conducted right after the face-to-face class with TBLT and continued until the completion of students' video speaking tasks. In this process, participants can freely choose what, when, and where to write their diaries. A guideline is given to suggest their ideas. The pieces of diary paper will then be submitted at the beginning of the video-checking class every week. In this research, these weekly learners' diaries can not only help obtain participants' perspectives, but also can provide information about the problems arisen and evaluation of the treatment throughout the time.

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