مجلة كلية الدراسات الإسلامية والعربية

مجلة علمية محكمة

اقرأ في هذا العدد

مَجلَّـة
كُلِّيَّة الدِّراساتِ الإسلاميَّةِ والعربيَّةِ

مجلة علمية محكَّمة
نصف سنويَّة

المحتويــــات

ملخص البحث

دور البيئة التعليمية في تطوير تعلم اللغة الثانية

د. خالد الخاجه

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة دور فصول المحادثة في بيئات غير رسمية يقوم بها متحدثون من أبناء اللغة الأم في تحسين مستوى متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانية.

فقد أجرينا تجربة على مجموعتين من المتعلمين أعطيت خلالها لكل منهما خمس عشرة ساعة من المحادثة باللغة الانجليزية. يشرف على المجموعة الأولى متحدثون من أبناء اللغة الأم وفي محيط غير رسمي والثانية يشرف عليها متحدثون من غير أبناء اللغة الأم وفي محيط رسمي. وأظهرت النتائج أن المجموعة الأولى من فصول المحادثة باللغة الانجليزية حققت نتائج أفضل بكثير من المجموعة الثانية.

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whether is specifically conversation with native-speakers that produces large gains.

A second condition based on the findings of this study is whether the effects observed for the Type of Environment Instruction variable mean that ESL classes should be entirely structured so as to emphasize conversation. Perhaps there is really little need for traditional instruction except in the most basic area of language learning.

With respect to the foregoing, it will be remembered here that Slade and Gardner (1993) argued strongly against turning the ESL classroom into an instructional format that basically focused on conversation. However, the magnitude of the findings observed in this study suggests this may be a viable option. In any case, it is recommended here that future researchers interested in this research attempt to conduct studies that even more strongly demarcate the formal and informal instructional environment than was done in this study. Only through such studies will it be possible to determine the degree to which conversation should be part of the ESL instructional environment.

Finally, it can be noted that this study made no attempt to examine whether the magnitude of gain produced by the different instructional environments differed in relation to student variables such as differences in students ages, gender, socioeconomic status, and so forth. It is recommended that any researcher interested in replicating this study began to examine whether the strong effects observed for the Type of Instructional Environment variable are moderate by one or more subject variables. Such studies will allow for the development of ESL conversation-based programs that are specifically tailored for diverse student characteristics.

Conclusions

Given the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the data support the notion that the Informal Instructional Environment increase English proficiency in ESL instruction to a significantly greater extent than does the Formal Instructional Environment.

Table 3

Results of Specific Comparison Tests (Protected T-Tests)

Concluded on the Type of Instructional Environment by testing Interaction

Observed For the Performed Analysis of Variance.

	PRE-FORMAL	PRE-INFORMAL	POST-FORMAL	POST-INFORMAL
PRE-FORMAL	0	2367	3.8469**	11.2448**
PRE-INFORMAL	0.2367	0	3.6102	11.0080**
POST-FORMAL	3.8467	3.6102	0	7.3979**
POST-INFORMAL	11.2448**	11.0080**	7.3979**	0

A key question that can be asked here is whether native speakers of English are really required for the superior performance of the informal Instructional Environment Group? Perhaps all that is needed is for the teacher (regardless of whether he or she is native speakers of English) to encourage the students to engage in conversational dialogue in English.

The reviewed research strongly emphasized the need for a stronger element of conversation to be present in ESL classes but was less definitive as to whether this conversation must be with native-speakers. It is recommended here that future researchers attempt to examine this question. One way in which this examination could be included would be to replicate this study by including a third variable, namely the Native/Non-Native Speakers variable.

In one condition, students' conversations would be with native speakers of English while in the other it would be with non-native speakers. Comparison could then be made of the magnitude of improvement shown in both groups to determine whether it is the conversation alone that produces large gains or

Given the foregoing argument, it can be concluded that the Informal Instructional Environment Group was superior to the Formal Instructional Environment Group in terms of its effects on English Fluency. It can also be concluded that English Fluency was improved at posttest over what it was at pretest.

Table 2

Results Observed For Analysis of

Variance Conducted on English Fluency Test Score

SOURCE	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Between Grps	2001.68	29			
Factor A	277.35	1	277.27		<0.000
Error	1724.33	28			
Within Grps	1560.50	30			
Factor B	1050.02	1	1050.02	110.33	<0.000
A x B	244.02	1	244.02	25.64	<0.000
Error	266.47	28			
TOTAL	3562.18	59			

However, what needs to be noted here is that when the analysis of variance yields a significant interaction, it is the nature of the interaction, and not the main effects, which provide the true nature of findings (Linton & Gallo, 1975). Therefore, a series of specific comparison tests (Protected t-tests) were concluded to determine the precise nature of the significant interaction.

The findings observed for the specific comparison tests are presented in Table 3. As can be seen from examination of the pattern of significant findings, the specific comparison tests confirmed the superiority of the Type of Instructional Environment variable. What these findings show is that the effects of the Type of Instructional Environment variable significantly differed at different levels of the Testing Variables. Specifically, findings indicate that the magnitude of increase from pretest to posttest for the Formal Instructional Environment conditions is significantly smaller than the magnitude of increase observed from pretest to posttest for Informal Instructional Environment condition.

Table 1

Cell and Marginal Means Observed For Groups.

TYPE OF CLASSROOMS ENVIRONMENT			
TESTING	**Formal**	**Informal**	**MARGINALS**
Pretest	21.80	22.07	21.93
Posttest	26.13	34.47	30.30
MARGINALS	23.97	28.27	

Specifically, it was found that the English proficiency levels of the Informal Instructional Environment group (Mean = 34.47) were significantly higher than the English proficiency levels of the Formal instructional Environment group (Mean = 26.13).

In an effort to obtain a fuller picture of the findings, one additional analysis was conducted; this was a mixed analysis of variance examining English Fluency scores at two levels of the type of Instructional Environment Level and at the two levels of the Testing variable. The findings observed for this analysis are presented in Table 2.

As can be seen from inspection of table 2, the results of performed ANOVA were significant. Specifically, findings were:

(1) A significant main effect for the Type of Instructional Environment Variable (F = 4.5; DF = (1.28; P = 0.428).

(2) A significant main effect for the testing variable (F =110.33; DF = (1.28; P < 0.0001), and

(3) A significant Type of Instructional Environment Variable by testing interaction (F = 25.64; DF = (1.28; P <0.0001).

The main effect observed for the Type of Instructional Environment Variables means that, in general, the Informal Instructional Environment scores (Marginal Mean = 28.27) were significantly greater than the formal Instructional Environment Scores (Marginal Mean = 28.27). Similarly, the main effect observed for the Testing variable indicates that students' posttest Scores (Marginal Mean = 30.30) were significantly greater than the pretest scores (Marginal Mean = 21.93).

language achievement. Finally, in a study of the interrelationships among three tests (a standardized English-as-a-Second-Language test, a cloze test, and a written composition test) Hanania and Shikhani (1986) concluded that adding the cloze test to the ESL test provided a more accurate reflection of students' communicative proficiency.

Data Analysis

The study's hypothesis was tested using the t-test analysis to compare the posttest score of the Formal Instructional Environment group with the posttest score of the Informal Instructional Environment group. Prior to the comparison of posttest scores, a preliminary t-test analysis was conducted to compare the two groups' pretest scores; the purpose of this comparison was to determine whether the two groups began the study equated on English proficiency.

The t-test analysis was selected because it was amenable to the level of data measurement (ratio data) and because it is sensitive statistic which is to say that it can be used to detect even small differences between groups (Lapin, 1980). All of the performed t-tests utilized the conversational .05 significance level. This means that findings were not said to be significantly unless only five out of 100 times or less they could have been obtained on the basis of chance alone. The conversational significance level was selected because review of the existing research did not provide reason or justification for the use of an unconventional significance level.

Results

Table 1 presents the cell and marginal means observed for both subject groups. The first analysis conducted on these data was a comparison of students' pretest means for the English Fluency Test. The findings of this analysis were not significant ($t = 1.08$; $df = 28$; $p = 0.302$). Failure to find significance meant that the two research groups began the study equated on language proficiency. Therefore, subject selection methods could be discounted as an intervening factor producing any differences in posttest scores.

The second performed analysis was also a t-test analysis which was conducted to examine whether the posttest of the formal and informal instructional environment groups significantly differed. The results of the analysis were significant ($t = 3.19$; $df = 28$; $p = 0.0044$).

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The second condition was the informal instructional condition in which for 15 hours per week students received some formal instruction but primarily utilized class time speaking the language with native speakers. Both classes were approximately 15 weeks in length.

Prior to beginning instruction, both groups of students were required to complete the study's test instrument, the English Fluency Test. Instruction then began. On the last day of the classes, students were once again administered the English Fluency Test.

Instrumentation

The study's dependent measure of English Fluency was collected using researcher-designed questionnaire which was developed using the Cloze procedure. This instrument was named the English Fluency Test.

Test development procedure utilized the cloze procedure steps outlined by Fotos (1991). The first of these procedures involved selecting passage of 100 words each out of students' ESL text. Every fifth word in the passage was then deleted and replaced by an underlined blank of a standard length.

These tests were duplicated and given to students without time limits. It should be noted here that all students in the study, at pretest, had not yet read the text passage from which the test were made. Students were instructed to write in each blank the words they believed was deleted.

Responses were scored correct when they exactly matched the words delineated (minor misspelling were disregarded). Given the number of deleted words and the number of selected passage, it was possible for students to score as low as zero (no items correctly answered) to 50 (all items correctly answered). Obviously, the higher the score, the more fluent the student was in English.

It is important to note here that there is research support for tests developed using the cloze techniques being valid and reliable indictors of English fluency. For example, in Fotos (1991) study of the use of a cloze-procedure test to measure the English-as-a-Second-Language proficiency of Japanese college students, it was found that the cloze test correlated significantly with an essay test and improved prediction of ESL proficiency. Based on these finding, Fotos (1991) concluded that carefully constructed cloze tests could be useful in integrative language assessment.

Similarly, in an extensive review of the research on cloze procedure, Baldauf and Prospt (1978) concluded that the existing work on the psychometric soundness of tests developed using the cloze procedure had shown the cloze methods and procedure to provide a valid measure of both reading and

Hypothesis

Based on the foregoing discussion of the ESL literature on the structure (formal versus informal) of the international ESL classroom environment, the following hypothesis was formulated.

Research Hypothesis: Subjects exposed to ESL instruction which emphasizes conversation with native English speakers will show significantly greater gains in English proficiency than will subjects exposed only to traditional formal ESL instruction which does not emphasize conversation with native speakers of English.

Methodology

Research design:

The conducted study utilized a 2 x 2 pretest-posttest design with two independent variables: (1) type of classroom environment with two levels (formal and informal); and (2) testing with two levels (pretest and posttest). The study's dependent variables consisted of students' course on the researchers-designed Cloze test measuring English proficiency.

The design may be considered to be quasi-experimental in nature because while it employed methods of random assignment of subjects to groups, it did not randomly select students from the school's entire ESL population but rather utilize students which were already assigned to a particular class. However, as noted by Best (1991), a good deal of formal educational research utilizes the whole class method of subject selection and may be considered to a relatively valid method of collecting data given the constraints of utilizing students in an educational environment.

Participants

Respondents in the study consisted of 30 Arab ESL students, all of whom had graduated from government schools in the Middle East and had been taught English by non-native speakers. However, in the ESL university classes they were currently taking, all subjects were being taught by native speakers of English.

Data collection methods

One class at the institute was selected as a Subject group. This class contained thirty Subjects. These thirty Subjects were then randomly assigned to one of two conditions. The first condition consist of the formal instructional environment condition in which students received 15 hours per week of traditional instruction in English as a second language with little conversation with native speakers.

and control groups (n = 1.879), most of the 2.583 soldiers in Army ESL programs were well-educated and their English-speaking skills were weak. It was also found that all three programs produced gain in English proficiency, as measured by the English Comprehension Level Test developed by the Defense Language Institute English Language Center. However, the longer the training time was, the greater the gain. Oral proficiency data showed that six week subjects gained at about the same rate as three month subjects for certain skills.

It was argued that one reason significant differences in gain were not observed between groups was that even the conversational structure ESL course did not heavily emphasize conversation and so the context variable was insufficiently operationalized. This argument is supported by the finding that although ESL students generally liked their programs and teachers, they felt, regardless of the instructional programs they were in, that there was a need for more practice in conversational skills.

Of course not all educators agree with the notion that ESL instruction is maximized through the inclusion of a good deal of informal conversation with native speakers. Slade and Gardner (1993) argue that the traditional instructional approach of effective for second language learning, stated the casual conversation can be adequately described, that it has a grammatical structure, and that it is of benefit to English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) learner for the structure of conversation to be explicitly dealt with. In other words, it is possible for ESL class that emphasizes conversation with native-speakers because all of the crucial elements in discourse can be described.

As these crucial elements, Slade and Gardner (1993) state that two central issues surround the teaching of casual conversation (see also Huang 2008 and Chuang 2009). These are: (1) whether to simplify the language input or to use authentic data, and (2) whether in fact it is more effective to have no input, but to engage learners in tasks and activities in the classroom that will generate conversation. Based on a discussion of the nature of casual conversation and the difference between classroom discourse and conversational discourse, the authors conclude that conversational interaction with native or non-native speakers is not a sufficient basis for the teaching of casual conversation. It is argued that syllabus input should use examples of authentic conversational interaction, with any simplification being in methodology.

What the foregoing research shows is that while there is some disagreement, most studies support the notion of the informal ESL instructional environment which emphasizes conversations with native speakers of English as a viable means of increasing language proficiency in the average ESL class.

comprehension of implicature; (2) a motivation/attitudes questionnaires to measure the non-native subjects' motivational levels for learning English and their attitudes towards American culture and people; and (3) the Michigan Proficiency Test, a standardized test of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. In addition, a post-test interview was used to gather information from non-native speakers regarding the choices they had made on each implicature question.

According to Omara (1993), analyses of data supported the notion of differences between native and nonnative speakers in their comprehension and interpretation of implicatures. It was also found that though of stay was a significant predictor of non-native speakers' comprehension of implicatures. In other words, Omara's study shows that there is, from a pragmatic viewpoint, good reason to include a good dose of conversation with native speakers in ESL instruction if one of the goals of the program is to teach students proper comprehension and interpretation of implicatures.

There have been a number of additional studies which support the notion of the informal instructional environment in ESL classrooms. For example, Tsang and Wong (1995) reported one seven? case studies of a 15-hour conversational English program for Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong college students. A comparison of pretests, course work, and posttests showed increases in English proficiency for most of these students.

In another study, Hass and Smoke (1990) stated that most ESL education would benefit from the institution of conversational workshop to help ESL students acquire true language competency as well as factual and cultural knowledge. The authors also felt that one of the features of these workshops should be informal dialogues with native speakers.

Similarly Ebel (1985) stated that conversational English should have a large part of the ESL classroom. She suggests that teachers who are native speakers can greatly assist students to improve their communication skills. In fact, Ebel states that cooperation and communication among students is necessity as it is only through conversation with native speakers that students can learn the motivational character of natural conversation. She refers to this process as the "mainstreaming" of the limited English speakers.

In another study, Oxford-Carpenter, Harman and Redish (1983) evaluated the effectiveness of three Army ESL programs which differed in their length (6 weeks, 3 months, and 6 months), content and functioning; one of these differences was that one instructional program more heavily emphasized conversation with native speakers than did the others.

Results of the study showed that compared with unmatched comparison

that can have a negative or positive effect as to how and why people learn a second language? These factors included: age; attitude/behavior; aptitude; immersion into the target language, culture, and the environment; background; experiences; personality and willingness to take risks; traveling; experiences; comparability between the native/first or second language and the target language; feeling and expectations; external helpers; strategies to deal with target language speakers in real life situations; interaction with target language speakers; degree of oral language proficiency; target language speakers' attitudes toward second language learners; long term goals and learners' motivation for learning the target language; cognitive strategies to improve target language skills; socio-cultural issues, and exposure to formal or informal instruction. Reading informal/formal instruction, students believed that ESL classes would produce greater learning if conversational English was emphasized more often.

In addition, data analyses indicated that there were several classroom environment issues. These issues were found to be associated with: student to student interaction (including motivation to work with classmates, perceptions of other classmates and acceptance of classmates' personalities); teacher and student interaction; and physical layout of the classrooms.

In another study related to students' attitudes and beliefs about the formal versus the informal instructional environment of ESL classes, Omara (1993) noted that ESL students often complain that their proficiency problems are pragmatic in nature. Specifically, students state that conversational strategies differ course-culturally and that without a good deal of conversation with native speakers, they are likely to miscomprehend and understand conversational implicatures. Omara states that this point has also been repeatedly made by ESL educators in favor of the informal instructional environment. However, is this complaint valid?

In an effort to test this notion, Omara (1993) investigated the way native speakers of Arabic and (American) English interpret and comprehend implicatures. Based on the existing research several hypotheses were tested. These stated that Arab speakers' ability to interpret implicatures in English may be influenced by four variables: (1) overall proficiency level in English (measured by standardized ESL tests); (2) length of exposure to American culture; (3) level of motivation to learn English and attitudes toward Americans and American culture; and (4) strategic interference due to the differences in pragmatic functions between Arabic and English.

The study comprised 136 students (61 Arabs 75 Americans). Data were collected using: (1) an implicature questionnaire designed in the form of a multiple-choice test to test the native and nonnative subjects'

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine whether the English Language Proficiency of Arab students enrolled in an ESL course increased more as a function of an informal classroom instructional environment which exposed students to a good deal of conversation with native English speakers or whether the English Language Proficiency of students increased more as a function of the traditional formal classroom environment in which an instructor basically lectured to students on English and did not often expose them to conversation with native speakers of English.

The research conducted may be considered an outgrowth of the existing work in the field on the informal ESL environment. A sampling of this research is here reviewed in order to provide context to the undertaken research.

Review of Literature

How do students feel about learning English as a second language and can their feeling be related to more informal classroom structure which emphasizes conversation with native speakers? In this regard, Perez (1995) conducted a qualitative case study of new and returning foreign students' and second language teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward English as a second language learning and instruction; she also attempted to describe the language learning environment.

Perez's (1995) study was conducted during a ten-week intensive English language summer program. Data were collected from foreign ESL students and their ESL teachers. Students were enrolled in an intermediate composition class (200 level), or an intermediate grammar class (200 level), or advanced listening class (300 level) in an English institute in the United States. Data were collected through both initial and final interviews with new and returning foreign students, as well as their teachers and other key personal.

Classroom observations (including videotaping) were also analyzed, and additional data regarding assessment was provided by the new and returning students, teachers and other key personal. Analyses involving sorting, categorizing and analyzing data to determine the factors that were perceived as affecting English as a second language learning for the particular group of participants involved in the study.

According to Perez (1995), finding suggested that second language (English) learners believed that there were a number of factors and difficulties

Abstract

The Role of the Teaching Environment in Developing Second Language Learning

Dr. Khalid AlKhaja

Do ESL students enrolled in informal classes that emphasize conversation with native-speakers of English experience greater gains in English proficiency than do ESL students enrolled in formal or traditional ESL classes, which do not emphasize conversation with native-speakers? The present study attempts to answer this question.

The respondents in the study consisted of Arab ESL students, all of whom had been originally taught English in all their educational stages by non-native speakers of the language and who are now taking ESL university classes with native speakers of English. All students were pre and post-tested using a researcher-designed instrument measuring language proficiency. The instrument was designed using the cloze procedure.

One half of the students was assigned to ESL classes where conversation with native speakers of English was not emphasized (the formal instructional environment condition) and the remaining half was assigned to ESL classes which emphasized conversations with native speakers of English (the informal instructional environment condition). Both classes were provided with 15 hours of instruction per week for a period of 15 weeks.

A comparison of the pre-test scores of students on both conditions using the t-test analysis has shown no significant difference. Results indicated that both groups of subjects began the study with the same English language proficiency. A comparison of the post-test scores of students has revealed that students in the informal instructional environment condition achieved greater gains in English language proficiency than did students in the formal instructional environment condition. Based on these findings it was concluded that ESL classes emphasizing conversation with native speakers of English are superior in terms of improving English language proficiency than ESL classes which do not emphasize conversation with native speakers of English.

The Role of the Teaching Environment in Developing Second Language Learning

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