



ROLE OF MEDIA FOR ORAL PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH: A STUDY AMONG THE MA STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA

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[Citation: Rupak, M. A. W. (2019). ROLE OF MEDIA FOR ORAL PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY AMONG THE MA STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA, *Journal of ELT and Education*, 2(1): 19-26.]

Abstract

Article History:

Received:
20.01.2019

Revised:
27.01.2019

Accepted:
06.03.2019

Published:
23.03.2019

Media plays a significant role in communication. The ESL/EFL learners can utilize media in order to improve their English listening and speaking skills. Hence, the current comprehensive study aims at finding the role of media on acquiring oral proficiency in English language. In addition, it discusses the strong influence of broadcast media on our life, culture and above all on our language practice. Based on several prior relevant studies, this research tries to redefine the positive relation between media exposure and oral proficiency in English. Accordingly, 50 MA students were selected as the participants of the study. A questionnaire survey was conducted which was designed with 5-point Likert Scale and divided into 4 opinion groups. Finally, it reveals to what extent the ESL/EFL students can be involved in media contents and how they enhance their oral proficiency in English through media.

Keywords: Media, oral proficiency, Fluency, Speaking

1. Introduction

The media in its various forms has become a pervasive and endemic part of our lives. In this era of information and technology, foreign language learning has seen a drastic change. The availability of new media has added a new dimension to the language learning process. Using various kinds of media in classrooms has always been a challenge, and how to bring the media in classrooms is more than a challenge. The integration of entertainment and learning not only plays a role of positive reinforcer for the general audience (Slater, 2002) but also it provides sources of entertainment, educational learning and general information (Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2004; Singhal & Rogers, 2002). They enable teachers to meet various needs and interests of their students. They also provide students with a lot of language practice through activities using newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, movies, books, Internet, Social Media, etc. and tasks which develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. They entertain students and encourage reading English in general, both inside and outside the classroom, promoting extensive reading by giving the students the confidence, the motivation and the ability to continue their reading outside the classroom. Media “inform, amuse, startle, anger, entertain, thrill, but very seldom leave anyone untouched” (Biagy, 1996). In fact, not only has the media been found to convey cultural and social values (Lee & Tse, 1994; Tan, 1998; Walker, 1999; Yang, Wu, Zhu., & Southwell, 2004) by inundating us with news, views and exposure to culture and society, the internet and other forms of online communications have also become a fast and effective purveyors of cultural values and views (Melkote & Liu, 2000).

Media is all about virtual communication and language. People watch, read and listen to the contents exposed through different types of media. As an international language, English is the

most demanded, popular and widely used. From the BBC to the Hollywood movies and ESPN sports, the vast majority of international media contents are aired in English. Almost 90% of web pages are with English contents. It is obvious from our daily experience that our media involvement is influencing our language practice to a significant extent. A number of research works have been carried out to measure the importance of new media in language learning. This study is aimed at determining if there is any role of media in acquiring oral proficiency in English language. The more a user involved in English media contents, the more oral proficiency in English he/she acquires. Therefore, oral proficiency in English and the degree of media exposure of ESL students are positively interconnected.

2. Objectives

The major objective of this study was to depict the media exposure that plays role on acquiring oral proficiency in English language. The study also deals with the efficacy of media in EFL learning.

3. Literature Review

The relation between media exposure and language proficiency is an issue that is considered to be worthy of investigation. Many studies have been carried out in this topic already. The following literature reviews attempt to demonstrate and support my research hypothesis.

According to a comparative study in Iceland and Spain by Ortega (2011) it was found that Icelanders are considerably more exposed to English by the media than their Spanish counterparts. It was also found that the Spanish education system devotes more time to English teaching than the Icelandic one. Besides, Spain has more aggressive policies for improving competence in English. However, Icelandic students are expected to achieve higher proficiency levels. Therefore, it seems likely that due to higher exposure to English media Icelanders have better proficiency levels (Ortega, 2011). This paper incorporates the status of media exposure in Spain and Iceland and education systems of both countries. There are considerable differences in broadcasting ways and regulations between the two countries as the authorities expose distinct outlooks for English language e.g. two different broadcasting approaches in Spanish and Icelandic cinemas: Dubbing against subtitling. Therefore, since the Icelandic government is more open and moderate towards English media, people find more opportunity to involve themselves in English language, they show more proficiency in English language compared to the Spanish people.

According to another research article by Tafani (2009), it is found that using mass media in the classroom has a positive effect on acquiring language proficiency. Media provide huge information, they motivate students to speak and help them integrate listening, reading, talking and writing skills, through various kinds of activities (Tafani, 2009).

In a comprehensive study in Nigeria by Abegbija, Facomogbon & Abegbayo (2013), the role of mass media in distance learning was determined. Broadcast media involve the transmission of information, ideas and opinions through the usage of electronic devices. The Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is becoming more and more relevant and accepted as a form of global education.

Another study by Lin (2013) comes with a hypothesis that Exposure to genre-specific English television programs and the degree of American acculturation of Taiwanese College ESL students are positively correlated. There were three independent variables in the study: (a) Oral language proficiency level, 1-10, as set by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, (b) Number of hours of television watched per week, and (c) Number of hours engaged in social media per week. The dependent variable was the degree of American acculturation as measured on a Likert-scale survey. Finally, the study showed that English oral proficiency, media and acculturation are closely and positively interrelated.

According to a research paper by Bahrani (2011), audio-visual texts with greater iconic combinations are likely to be more comprehensible for language learning. In the research, it is found that exposure to news and mass media play a positive role on speaking fluency. TV news programming in English is not only a vast language learning resource which provides meaningful opportunities for non-reciprocal listening but a vital and immediate alternative source of

information. The pedagogical and informative aspects of news broadcasts in English may therefore often and dramatically intersect.

4. Methodology

The study has been carried out through sampling, data collection and data analysis. The samples are provided with a questionnaire including necessary instructions. The quantitative method of data collection has been chosen. The number of samples or participants in this study is 30. They are the Masters second semester students in the Department of English in Dhaka University. Their explicit consent to take part in this study was ensured before the survey. The data is collected through a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire is designed with Likert Scale and divided into 4 opinion groups. Subjects were asked to rate certain statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was distributed to all the subjects who were invited and asked to complete it within 15 minutes. The 5-point Likert Scale is designed to describe the attitude of the samples towards the relation between media use and language proficiency. The collected data have been analyzed by manually finding out the arithmetic mean from the Likert Scale values. Then the percentage of the responses is coded. It also includes descriptive statistics of the collected data. If the mean value is higher than 3, the opinions are supposed to be agreed. If the value is lower than 3, the opinions are to be taken as disagreed. There are graph charts done by Microsoft Excel for convenient perception.

5. Findings and Discussion

Table-01: Opinions on Learning Language through Media (Q.)

SL	Statement	Strongly Agree%	Agree%	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree%	\bar{x}
Q1	I prefer learning language through media.	70	30	0	0	0	4.7
Q2	I feel language learning is easy and interesting through media.	60	40	0	0	0	4.6
Q3	I feel I can unknowingly learn language through media	60	33.33	6.67	0	0	4.53
Q4	I think language learning becomes long lasting when learnt through media.	76.67	23.33	0	0	0	4.77
Q5	I think learning English through media is interesting as we prefer learning with entertainment	93.33	6.67	0	0	0	4.93

In the above table we see that most of the respondents strongly agreed with the statements they were provided with. The statements expose the positive outlook on media to be a language learning component.

As the mean value of each response is above 3, it is clearly figured that the respondents strongly support media as a great language learning tool. The following Chart-1 will further clarify the table.

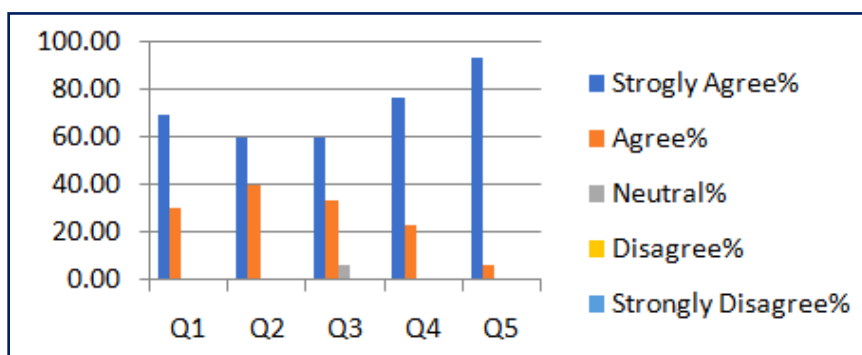


Chart-1

Table-2: Activities while exposed to media contents (Qa.)

SL	Statements	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	\bar{x}
Q1a	I listen to English and keep translating them to my mother tongue.	76.67	20	3.33	0	0	4.73
Q2a	I keep repeating the English speeches in my mind.	50	40	6.67	3.33	0	4.37
Q3a	I try to think in English	46.67	40	3.33	6.67	3.33	4.20
Q4a	I skip the unknown words	86.67	10	3.33	0	0	4.83
Q5a	I try to perceive the whole content based on my known words	76.67	20	3.33	0	0	4.73
Q6a	I learn new words through the gestures displayed on the media contents	63.33	26.67	6.67	3.33	0	4.5

The above table shows the users' activities while exposed to media. The statements in this segment describe how the users practice language during real time media exposure. Most of the respondents strongly agree with the statements and the mean value of each response is above 3 out of 5-point scale.

That means the media facilitates a good amount of language practice which further leads to acquire language proficiency. The following Chart-2 elucidates the table alternatively.

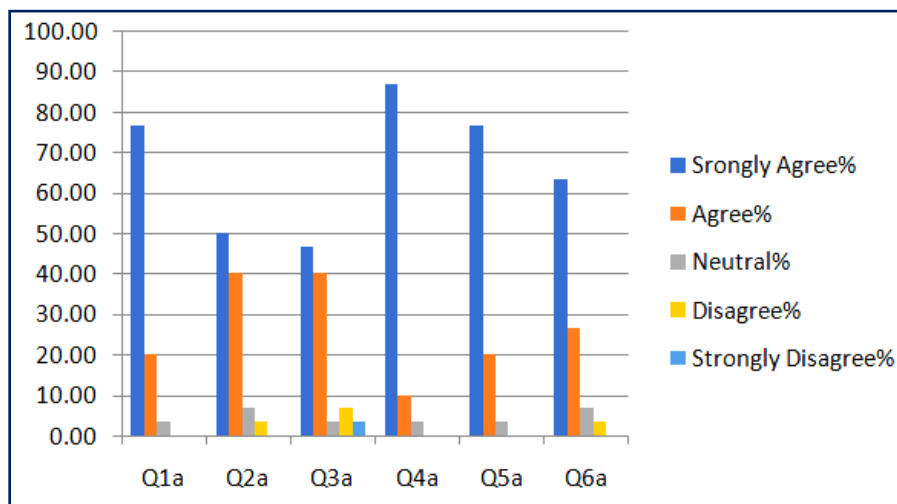


Chart-2

Table-3: Activities while not exposed to media contents (Qb.)

SL	Statements	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree%	\bar{x}
Q1b	I keep remembering what I watched and listened to	80	20	0	0	0	4.8
Q2b	I keep repeating my favorite dialogues in my mind	83.33	16.67	0	0	0	4.83
Q3b	Sometimes I utter loudly what I listened to	80	13.33	6.67	0	0	4.73
Q4b	I try to imitate the pronunciation style	80	20	0	0	0	4.80
Q5b	I search for the meaning of new words that I heard	73.33	20	6.67	0	0	4.67
Q6b	I try to apply those new words in my regular dialogues and writing	70	26.67	3.33	0	0	4.67
Q7b	I try to correct my wrong pronunciation	80	20	0	0	0	4.80
Q8b	I share the funny and important dialogues with my friends while gossiping	93.33	6.67	0	0	0	4.93

The above table shows that the majority of the samples support the statements. This segment of the questionnaire includes some language activities of the users while not exposed to media; however, the activities are directly influenced by media contents. Since, the mean value of each of the responses are greater than 3, the final response goes positive. That means the samples

engage themselves with ‘oral practice’ being influenced by the media usage. An alternative view of the responses is demonstrated with the Chart-3 below.

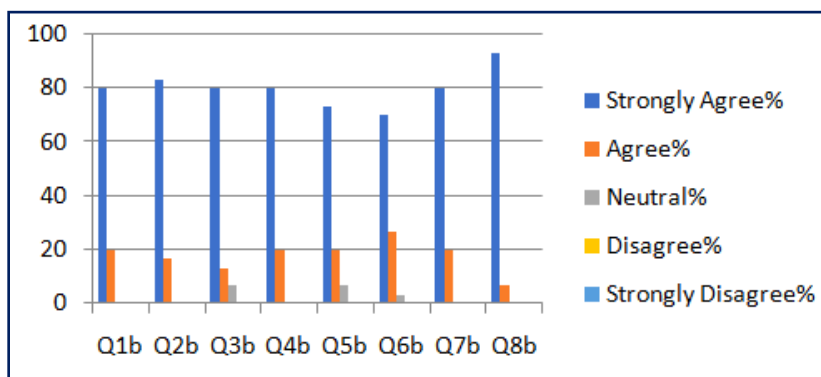


Chart-3

Table-4: Evaluation of Media in acquiring oral proficiency in English (Qc.)

SL.	Statements	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	\bar{x}
Q1c	I feel media enhances my listening skills	96.67	3.33	0	0	0	4.97
Q2c	I feel I can learn a significant amount of English through media	63.33	30	6.67	0	0	4.57
Q3c	I feel I can speak English well if I have more exposure to media	76.67	20	3.33	0	0	4.73
Q4c	My fluency and pronunciation becomes improved because of media	66.67	26.67	6.67	0	0	4.60
Q5c	I feel my intonation and gestures becomes appropriate because of media	56.67	30	0	13.33	0	4.43
Q6c	Because of extensive listening and watching through media, my English speaking becomes improved	83.33	16.67	0	0	0	4.83
Q7c	As I remember and speak the dialogues in my mind that I heard, it works as a speaking practice	90	10	0	0	0	4.90

This segment is the most important among the statement groups since it asserts the ultimate positive relation between media exposure and oral proficiency in English language. The table shows that the majority of the respondents support the statements. The statements are manipulated in a way that they mainly evaluate the importance of media exposure in achieving listening therefore oral proficiency in English. An alternative expression of the findings of this table is shown below in Chart-4.

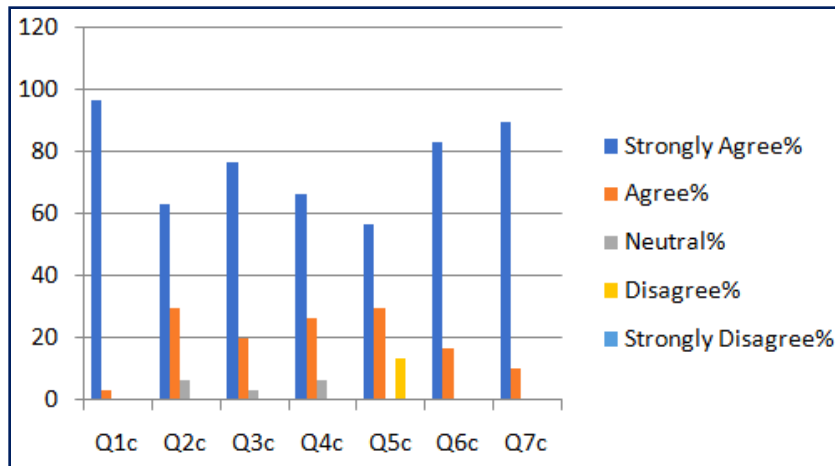


Chart-4

5. Interpretations of Findings

As per the discussions by far, it is clear that ESL students have a preference for media elements for different causes. In addition to entertainment purpose, they use it as an important tool for English language learning. As modern media is audio-visual, learners use it in acquiring both listening and oral proficiency. Media not only helps the learners practice English listening and speaking in real time basis, but also makes them learn while they are not exposed to it. Media helps ESL students learning new words, correcting pronunciation and making effective discourse by which they enhance their proficiency level in English. ESL learners pose a positive attitude to media in learning English. While exposed to media contents, they knowingly or unknowingly involve themselves in practicing English e.g. listening, thinking, translating for immediate perception, following and remembering the utterances and so forth. Being exposed to media, they get significantly influenced by the contents they are provided with. Then they engage themselves in monologues, imitation of the favorite utterances, searching for the new words which lead them to achieve good speaking ability. Finally, they evaluate media as an important tool to acquire oral proficiency in English. Most of them opine that media helps them improve their English-speaking skills.

6. Conclusion

The whole research comes into a conclusion that media and English oral proficiency are closely interconnected. Although there is a strong necessity of more empirical evidence in this context, this research has somewhat been able to draw a positive relation between media and oral proficiency in English. The main problem with this research is the method of data collection and sampling. Since this study is mainly based on the information provided by the samples, the information needs to be accurate; otherwise the whole study may become null and void. Moreover, it would be more acceptable if we could directly examine the true activities of the samples and conduct a systematic oral test of the samples. That means this research claims extended time and effort. Thus, the topic is strongly recommended for further studies.

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