

The Impact of Self-Video Recordings in Raising Oral Production

El Impacto de la Autograbación de Videos en la Producción Oral

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact that self-video recordings of oral task-based activities have on the development and/or improvement of students' speaking skills. The study was conducted over an eight-week period during which fifteen participants wrote a script for a TV cooking show and videotaped their rehearsals in order to receive teacher feedback. Finally, they made a closing presentation, TV show style, during which a recipe was followed while they explained its steps and gave tips. Data examined by means of videos, structured interviews, and students' reflections showed that participants' oral production was enhanced mostly due to the analysis that the students were able to do of each one of their rehearsals, which also helped the teacher to give more meaningful feedback. This action research intervention resulted in an increase of vocabulary, self-confidence, motivation, fluency, and better pronunciation.

Key words: *Video recordings, task-based activities, self-confidence, motivation, action research*

Resumen

Este reporte de investigación examina el impacto de auto-videograbaciones de actividades basadas en tareas en el desarrollo y/o mejoramiento de las habilidades orales de un grupo de estudiantes. El estudio se llevó a cabo a lo largo de un periodo de ocho semanas durante

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las cuales los participantes escribieron un guion para un programa de cocina por televisión y videograbaron sus ensayos a fin de recibir retroalimentación de parte su maestra. Finalmente, hicieron una última presentación, al estilo de un programa de televisión, de una receta de cocina mientras la seguían paso a paso y daban consejos. Los datos examinados a través de los videos, entrevistas estructuradas y reflexiones de los estudiantes mostraron que la producción oral de los participantes mejoró debido en gran parte al análisis que los estudiantes hicieron de cada uno de sus ensayos, lo cual también ayudo a la maestra a darles una retroalimentación significativa. Esta intervención en el marco de una investigación acción resultó en un incremento de vocabulario, de la autoconfianza y la motivación, así como en un desempeño más fluido y una mejor pronunciación.

Palabras clave: *Videgrabaciones, actividades basadas en tareas, autoconfianza, motivación, investigación acción*

A globalized economy means that our country's borders are increasingly open to the constant interchange of products, ideas, and some other elements of culture. This process has occurred due to the development of telecommunications which have brought people closer to people from different cultures, forming a global community that requires a means to share knowledge, information, and to trade or conduct business. Thus, it is necessary to use a common language that serves all these purposes. It appears English has become that global language we need.

Another major aspect that this phenomenon has had an impact on is the development of the tourism industry all over the world. Through the internet it is now possible to know about new, wonderful and remote places in any part of the world, which motivates people to travel and visit them.

Mexico has not been spared this effect of globalization; according to the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics, (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2015), the number of international visitors to national destinations reached 23.7 million in 2013, a new historical maximum in our country. It must be highlighted that of all the tourists that visit Mexico, 55% are American.

Thus, although tourist service providers have to cater to the needs of domestic tourists, to a large extent; they also have to be prepared to provide services and goods to this growing market of American tourists that are frequent visitors in our country. In this regard, it is not surprising that in Mexico, learning English as a foreign language has become an important asset for businesspersons, travel agents, tour guides, and the like.

In view of the constant growth of international tourism in our country, together with the adoption of English as the universal language for communication around the world, the importance of this language and the reasons for learning it need not be emphasized,

especially for those people who work in the tourism industry or who are majoring in tourism related areas, such as gastronomy and tourism management.

As a consequence of this, English in colleges offering majors in tourism and gastronomy has become an essential subject of their curricula, with instruction often adopting the form of English for Specific Purposes courses. This is an approach that considers the language needs of the students and also takes into consideration the sociocultural contexts in which these students will be using English (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

In view of the fact that tourist service providers and their clients interact mostly orally, it is more important for the students to be competent at communicating this way. Thus, they can assist their customers appropriately by giving them explanations, making suggestions or giving advice, and even doing business with them in order to sell or buy services or products such as the dishes of a menu in a restaurant, tickets for a concert or a day trip to an archaeological site.

From this point of view, although developing the four skills is vital for the acquisition of the language, it may make more sense for some of these universities and their students to focus more on one or two skills—speaking and listening—than in the others.

Consequently, it is essential for students who study gastronomy to be able to explain accurately the procedure of a recipe, to have a good command of the vocabulary related to the kitchen and/or food so that they understand the instructions that can be given in this context, to mention a few examples. For this reason, the intention of the present action research study was to implement a video recording strategy that has an impact on the learners' oral production and on their vocabulary acquisition.

Background

Increasing students' oral production in order to improve their communicative competence should be a great concern for any teacher. This was precisely the main objective of this research project. In view of this, first it was necessary to review some of the literature about English for Specific Purposes and Learner-centered Education in order to analyze the characteristics of the curriculum that the participants of this research are following. In this way, the particular language needs of these learners could be understood.

Additionally, the characteristics of current teaching approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Cooperative learning and Task-based learning (TBL) were examined. Likewise, some concepts related to speaking strategies and the use of technology in ELT are explored as a way to establish an argument for the strategy that was designed.

Finally, some previous research on the topic is cited to become familiar with the application of technology in English Language Teaching (ELT); more specifically, the use of video and audio recordings as a technique to improve the oral production of the students.

English for Specific Purposes

Celce-Murcia (2001) defines English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as an approach to ELT based on the assertion that all language teaching should be accommodated to meet the specific learning and language use needs of distinct groups of group of learners. This is achieved by making use of activities, lexis, register, and grammar elements pertaining to the field of knowledge it is oriented to. While ESP focuses on the language appropriate to these activities, it must also be highlighted that one of the key elements of ESP is that it is also “sensitive to the sociocultural contexts in which these students will be using English” (Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 43).

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP should be defined in terms of what it is not. Even though ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines, it is not a special form or variety of English. It is true that ELT practitioners engaged in ESP have to pay special consideration to teaching words and grammar for a specific area or field but it is not just about that; it is necessary to consider what functions of the language need to be performed by the learners, in order to help them to develop the abilities that are required to do so. Finally, ESP, like general English, may use different methodologies in specific teaching situations; thus, it is not different from other language teaching. In other words, there is no ESP methodology but methodologies that have been applied in ESP classrooms and that are more or less suitable for it.

In this regard, ESP should not be seen as a methodology but simply as an approach to language teaching, which, according to Celce-Murcia (2001), possesses four absolute characteristics:

- It aims to meet the needs of particular learners. In the present study, ESP attempts to meet the specific needs of students of gastronomy, tourism or business.
- It is related to the content of particular disciplines, occupations or activities.
- It takes into account the syntax, lexis, discourse and semantics of the activities chosen for a specific curriculum. This means that an ESP program will be centered on the language appropriate for each occupation.
- It is in contrast to the idea of General English.

As Hutchinson and Waters (1987) point out:

What distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of a need as such but rather an awareness of the need. If learners, sponsors and teachers know why the learners need English, that awareness will have an

influence on what will be acceptable as reasonable content in the language course and ... what potential can be exploited (p. 53).

The ESP movement can be categorized in two main groups: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). That is the case in this action research intervention strategy, which includes English for Professional Purposes (EPP) and Vocational ESL (VESL).

Learner-centered Education

So far, the importance of considering the needs of the learners as a major issue for the development of an ESP curriculum has been established. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), it is necessary to identify what the learner needs to do in a target situation and it is convenient to analyze those situations in terms of necessities (what the learner has to know in order to perform effectively in the target situation), lacks (what the learner knows and does not know), and wants (the learner's view or perception of his/her own needs).

Bearing in mind the importance of the participants' needs for broader lexis, the reason for considering ESP as learner-centered approach is understandable. As stated by Nunan (1988), a learner-centered approach needs a collaborative effort to create a curriculum, meaning that it should be planned between teachers and learners, allowing learners to be part of the decision-making process regarding the content and how it should be taught. In addition, Brown (2007) points out that a learner-centered instruction includes techniques that motivate students by making them accountable for the acquisition of knowledge, engaging them in learning by focusing on their own needs, learning styles and objectives; these may vary depending on their competences and their motivation for learning English. It is a teacher's duty to get to know their students so that they can plan class activities taking into account their students' interests and skills. Learner-centered education requires fostering class collaboration and delivering explicit skill instructions regarding the topic in order to encourage pupils to reflect on what they are learning and push them to keep on studying.

On the other hand, it is important that the students set their own learning goals because "an absence of goals can lead to aimlessness and a lack of any sense of direction. Some people will tend to look for "quick-fix" immediate solutions to problems without thinking through the possible long-term consequences" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 74). It seems that the goals should be set individually by each learner according to their own capabilities, in this way it may increase the possibilities of achieving them.

Another important technique is giving some control to the students and allowing creativity and innovation, as in this case, where the students managed their own video production. Brown (2007) argues that some teachers may be reluctant to give control to the

students, especially when these students are beginners because they do not know the language; nevertheless, this should be understood as a way to help the students to be independent and become more effective learners. This is also supported by Cullen, Harris and Hill (2012) who state that:

Sharing power with students is a key factor in learner-centered practices as well as in developing creativity. Giving students opportunities to choose fosters engagement with content and helps ensure that they find activities relevant. The same is true in regard to creativity. Amabile's extensive study of creativity (1996) outlined the factors that affect creativity in learning environments. Most important is openness, both physically in terms of classroom configuration and metaphorically in terms of a sense of freedom and safety (pp. 18-19).

Thus, it can be concluded that creativity and innovation can be promoted by giving the students freedom to decide about their learning choices. A serious attempt must be made to enhance a student's sense of competence and self-worth (Brown, 2007).

A learner-centered curriculum should take into account the development of a sense of competence in the students. Williams and Burden (1997) consider that teachers should make them feel capable of learning the language by creating a positive self-image of themselves. Apparently, developing a sense of competence in the students leads to a better performance in the acquisition of a language. One of the reasons for this improved performance may be that students are not afraid to express themselves in English or to make mistakes.

This is pinpointed by Cullen et al. (2012), who argue that students' beliefs about their ability or self-efficacy have a strong impact on their learning. "Students with high self-efficacy are more persistent ... in the face of difficulties. They interpret failure not as a personal failing but as a single poor performance that can be overcome..." (Cullen et al., 2012, p. 16).

Communicative Language Teaching

There seems to have been a great concern for developing new and better ways to teach English as a foreign language. That is why several methods and approaches have emerged, intending to be the panacea of English teaching.

One of them, which has apparently been quite accepted within the English teachers' community, is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It is difficult to provide a definition, nevertheless what is clear, is that it sets as a goal the teaching of communicative competence. According to Richards (2006), CLT involves the acquisition of language knowledge that allows the learner to use language for negotiating meaning in a variety of contexts for different reasons and activities. The ability to handle vocabulary and grammar

to build isolated sentences with no real use is not evidence of true communicative skills. Rather, authentic language use is about knowing how to adapt our choice of language to the setting and the people around us, how to shift between formal language use and informal speech depending on the environment. It is also about knowing when to use language that is appropriate for conversation, as an alternative to the one used for the production of written communication; that is, different types of texts, whether descriptive, narrative, expository, or argumentative. CLT seeks to develop different kinds of communication strategies and language skills that are necessary to keep communication flowing in spite of imperfections in the learner's language knowledge.

Additionally, Brown (2007) offers some other characteristics as a description of CLT, such as:

The use of language techniques to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes.

A focus on students' flow of comprehension and production and a focus on the formal accuracy of production are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques.

Students have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom.

Students are given opportunities to focus on their own process through raising their awareness of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for production and comprehension.

Students in a CLT class are active participants in their own learning process. Learner-centered, cooperative, collaborative learning is emphasized, but not at the expense of appropriate teacher-centered activity (pp. 46-47).

Moreover, "acquisition studies suggest that classroom communication can foster language acquisition, particularly if learners are given opportunities for productive language use and the negotiation of meaning in small-group work" (Nunan, 1988, p. 87). Opportunities for productive language use can be given through different tasks that serve as genuine practice within the classroom. According to Nunan (1988) some of these activities are considered collaborative communication activities such as: problem-solving tasks, role plays and simulations. Having students video record themselves is a good example of a role play activity aimed at fostering language production.

Task-based Learning (TBL)

It is said that TBL has its origins in Communicative Language Teaching. According to Brown (2007), it is one of the most prominent perspectives within the CLT framework. However, there is disagreement about it because for some authors TBL is a completely different approach while some others claim that TBL is at the very heart of CLT (Ellis, 2003, as cited in Brown, 2007).

This approach uses tasks as a medium for language teaching. Peter Skehan (1998a, as cited in Brown, 2007) defines tasks as:

An activity in which: meaning is primary; there is some communication problem to solve; there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities; task completion has some priority and the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome (p. 50).

In other words, a task is an activity performed by a person which, in order to be completed successfully, requires or demands certain knowledge, abilities and attitudes from the learner. In this case, the knowledge and abilities needed are related to the use of a foreign language, bearing in mind the attainment of an objective.

Brown (2007) argues that a “task-based instruction is a perspective within a CLT framework that forces you to carefully consider all the techniques that you use in the classroom in terms of a number of important pedagogical purposes” (p. 52). This means that, when planning an activity it is important to consider the communicative dimensions of it; that is, be clear about what the learner needs to do with the language or the goal to pursue, what input from the teacher is going to be needed, the role of the teacher and the learner, and finally, the considerations for assessment.

According to Brown (2007) the characteristics of TBLT, also known as Task-based instruction, are the acquisition and use of authentic language that enables the learner to carry out meaningful tasks that stretch beyond isolated forms of language that are of little help, if any, in real-world contexts. The elements of tasks cannot be chosen carelessly or thrown together recklessly. Instead, they have to be carefully designed and selected so that they provide specific scaffolding that can be helpful in achieving communicative goals that are well defined. This allows the TBLT practitioner to engage learners in authentic problem-solving activities tailored to their level of language proficiency and to assess accurately the results and success of one task over another at some later stage.

Cooperative Learning

Up to this point, two of the most embraced approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT) have been addressed; nonetheless, keeping in mind the characteristics of both approaches, it is difficult to imagine the implementation of communicative activities that do not involve cooperative learning. Cooperative Learning refers to:

A systematic instructional method in which students work together in small groups to accomplish shared learning goals. The data in a large amount of research shows, compared with competitive and individualistic efforts, cooperation has positive effects on a wider range of outcomes (Johnson & Johnson, 1991; Slavin, 1995; Kagan, 1999). People operating in a

cooperative learning activity attain higher achievement level than those who function under competitive and individualistic learning structures. Other findings in cooperative learning research show cooperation has positive effects on relations among students, self-esteem, long-term retention, or depth of understanding of course material, etc. It has been tested as one of the most effective and constructive teaching strategies (Zhang, 2010, para. 1).

Brown (2007) states that a curriculum based on cooperative learning possesses the same characteristics of a learner-centered program. It involves pair and/or team work as a way to achieve goals. This can be made possible by sharing information through mutual cooperation among learners. On the other hand, this author points out that sometimes cooperative learning is used as a synonym of collaborative learning; however, “in cooperative learning models, a group learning activity is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners and in collaborative learning, the learner engages with more capable others, who provide assistance and guidance” (Brown, 2007, p. 53).

Zhang (2010) argues that this approach has been gaining great acceptance in the language learning classrooms due to its contributions to create opportunities for communication and for improving productivity. Cooperative language learning provides opportunities for comprehensible input and output; two important factors in raising students’ achievement. It also assists in creating a good learning environment as students are encouraged to help each other learn and tackle a common goal. Additionally, it augments the use of a variety of language functions and thinking skills; for example, students have to organize their ideas to be able to put them in words and share them with their classmates, which in turn boosts their own understanding. Moreover, it promotes learners’ autonomy and responsibility by requiring that students engage in collaborative study and teamwork that help them build their own learning.

Speaking Skills

Speaking is a productive skill. It is defined as an interactive process through which, we construct meaning. This involves producing, receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994, as cited in Burns & Joyce, 1997). It also may be considered one of the most difficult skills to teach and/or to work with. This statement is based on the complaints of many teachers about how difficult it is to have their students speak English during the class. Although the reasons for this problem can be many, one of them has to do with the fact that “Speaking requires that learners not only know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary (linguistic competence), but also that they understand when, why, and in what ways to produce language (sociolinguistic competence)” (Cunningham, 1999, para. 3).

In other words, when speaking, the speaker has to take into account several factors in order to address his/her interlocutor correctly. Speakers have to be aware of the fact that “the form and meaning are dependent on the context in which (they) occur, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving” (Cunningham, 1999, para. 3).

However, as confirmed by Cunningham (1999), it is possible to find or identify patterns in the language, that is, expressions and/or utterances that are recurrent in certain discourse situations. In the case of professionals in the tourism field, some functions would include taking orders at a restaurant, providing information for a tourist, or explaining to customers how a dish is prepared. These language functions can be classified and charted in order to design goal-oriented oral tasks that eventually help the learner to succeed in a given speech task.

According to Byrne (1991, as cited in Peña & Onatra, 2009) oral tasks:

Involve the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding. It means that learners have to be taught to speak as well as to listen. Both listening and speaking are such common activities in the daily routine that we seem to confuse ourselves as being experts when we are only users. Hence, when learners understand the difference between hearing something and listening attentively to someone, they can then grasp a variety of communication requirements that range from talking to an audience in a meaningful transactional mode, to speaking with each other by building up the discourse as the conversation flows in an interactional task. The conjunction of these relevant elements in the classroom is a contribution to the gradual achievement of communicative competence (para. 7).

On the other hand, there is an assumption that learners will be able to transfer the knowledge and skills developed within the classrooms to new contexts and situations in the real world. Nevertheless, Nunan (1998) considers that the shift of skills from the classroom context to other real life settings does not always happen as promptly as one would expect. The classroom is a sheltered environment where conditions are to a large extent accommodated to suit students' capabilities and needs. In view of this, it is necessary to become involved in the implementation of scaffolding activities designed to provide a bridge between what happens in the classroom and what students can realistically expect to take place in authentic communication, where they might feel more vulnerable. In order to do this, there is a whole range of communicative activities, such as games, simulations, and role plays that can help students gain fluency. In addition, there are a number of drills and controlled practice activities that can go a long way in reducing mistakes and enhancing accuracy.

In this view, Nunan (1988) has stated that various tasks types have been developed to simulate genuine whole task practice in the classroom. These include information gap tasks, language games, simulations, and role play, which are considered collaborative communication activities. He believes that these activities manifest the following characteristics:

- They provide learners with opportunities to hold conversations.
- They make learners help each other to construct meaning.
- They entail the learning of turn-taking rules.
- They focus on comprehensible and meaningful input and output.
- They require the participation and deep involvement of the learner.

Additionally, it is important to consider some other concepts related to the development of communicative competence. “There are six terms in second language research and pedagogy regarding speaking skills: Fluency versus accuracy, interlanguage, comprehensible input, pushed output and negotiation of meaning” (Folse, 2006, p. 30).

According to Folse (2006), a speaking activity can focus on fluency or on accuracy. “Fluency here refers to the amount of language produced in the task, while accuracy refers to the linguistic correctness of what is said in the task” (Folse, 2006, p. 30). This author explains that in conversation classes the most important thing is that students talk; thus, fluency activities can be more suitable, especially if these activities not only encourage them to talk but require them to speak.

Folse (2006) points out that interlanguage is “the language that is in between the native language and the target language (English)” (p. 33). He claims that this language is clearly full of errors which are a sign of language development. “Second language learners’ errors follow a fairly predictable pattern in which these errors are deemed a normal and necessary part of the language acquisition process” (Corder, 1981, as cited in Folse, 2006, p. 33).

The concept of interlanguage is closely related to the concept of comprehensible input. Teachers should attempt to design speaking activities for a proficiency growth, while making language comprehensible. According to Folse (2006), this can be done through clear and careful articulation of vowels and consonants so that the learner avoids mispronouncing adjacent sounds and words. It is also important to be aware of recurrent mistakes in pronunciation on the part of ESL students. These errors are often the result of either English pronunciation and spelling patterns or a student’s native language getting in the way; for example, English has the same number of written vowels (five) as Spanish, but there can be as many as nineteen different vowel sounds. One more thing that can help is to keep an eye on grammar and vocabulary that learners might find confusing or might not be aware of. This can only be done through careful observation and monitoring so that the teacher becomes fully aware of the students level and what is accessible to them.

Additionally, Folse (2006) recommends waiting until a third attempt to explain something to students has been made before we start paraphrasing. Waiting a little will give students the opportunity to understand more complex lexis and structures.

It should be noted that, in addition to comprehensible input, there is a pushed output which is the moment when learners make utterances, rethink them and modify them if necessary, thus the importance of giving students the opportunity to express themselves on video. According to Swain and Lapkin (1995), during this process of modifications their interlanguage is impacted and restructured for good.

Finally, negotiation of meaning is a process in which “the speakers attempt to successfully convey information to one another; they reach mutual comprehension through restating, clarifying and confirming information” (Folse, 2006, p. 40). Having the students holding conversations where they have to negotiate meaning is an excellent way to stretch their interlanguage because “the learners’ vocabulary, an especially important part of second language proficiency, is reinforced” (Folse, 2006, p. 42).

Technology in ELT

The last twenty years have been characterized by a great and accelerated development of technology, which has had a deep impact on different fields such as education. Currently, there are a lot of applications, multimedia devices (smartphones, cameras, laptops, pads, and computers), networks, and all kinds of software that serve as learning tools. Vanderplank (2009) claims that “we have been experiencing a revolution in digital technology since the late 1990s” (p.1), with the convergence of television, digital media, and computer technology, which has brought about exciting opportunities and countless possibilities for language teachers and learners. A case in point of multimedia applications that have furnished language teachers and learners with an effective tool to enhance language acquisition is digital video (Tschirner, 2001). This would not have been possible before the arrival of sophisticated computers (Tschirner, 2010) that have currently become a powerful, effective element of modern language teaching and learning.

However, it seems that “their effectiveness as instruments of learning is not inherent; their power is derived from the teachers and students who use them. Their effectiveness is measured by whether they improve student performance and help students reach full potential” (Jordan & Follman, 1993, p. 66). The use of all types of audio-visual resources, self-video recordings in the present case, to boost foreign language learning must be carefully crafted. It must be used at the appropriate time and place so that it is motivating, enhances acquisition, facilitates learning, and has a positive impact on learners (Çakir, 2006). It is also important to have a well-defined pedagogic purpose in mind; objectives that are clearly defined often lead to a better organization of the students’ efforts to accomplish the goal set for the activity (Hobbs, 2006).

The application of technology within the EFL classroom encompasses a wide range of techniques which can be used in various degrees depending on the learning goals. According to Jordan and Follman (1993) information can be presented in several formats (text, video and audio) by means of technology and each of them provides good opportunities for learning. Likewise, using technology as a learning strategy presents many advantages, that is:

Technologies enable teachers to focus their energies on coaching students with their individual growth. Teachers can give special attention to certain individuals without neglecting the progress of others who are successfully guiding their own learning. Students are enabled to work individually or in small groups at their own pace, taking advantage of access to vast sources of information and working with complex connections among varied disciplines. Technologies stimulate students as active learners who control the pace and direction of content, questions, and responses” (Jordan & Follman, 1993, p. 66).

Orlova (2009) points out that the use of video recordings can be especially valuable for non-native teachers and English speaking trainees and trainers as there are several skills that can be further developed by means of this tool such as observation, analysis, and discussion of classroom work. Video recordings allows practitioners to focus on their communicative competence, level of language proficiency, knowledge of essential language functions, style of teacher-student interaction, and other nonverbal elements of their teaching practice (Orlova, 2009).

As videos allow documenting students’ language production, there is more meaningful feedback; that is, “video recording student performance enables teacher and students to recall the activity for a more considered and objective analysis than is possible during the event and they can focus not just on the words but also on all the nonverbal features which contribute to communication” (McGovern, 1983, p. 87). Assessment is more reliable and valid as well.

In addition, by self-video recording their performance, students “can observe their own current English oral proficiency and thus discover areas they need to improve” (Shrobbree, 2008, p. 76). Furthermore, McGovern (1983) states that having students prepare and practice an activity that is to be video recorded, either in class or at home, can raise their interest and give them a sense of purpose, a feeling of satisfaction that emerges from the experience of watching themselves performing. McGovern (1983) points out that this can be a very rewarding activity when students carry out a task or do an activity or presentation that they formerly thought was above their level of proficiency.

Objectives

The main purpose of this project was to determine whether the use of video recording is a useful technique for increasing the oral production of the students in the second semester of their Gastronomy degree. Additionally, this research attempted to identify possible improvement in terms of amount of vocabulary gained, mostly specific vocabulary associated with the kitchen such as kitchen verbs (cook, boil, simmer, bake, etc.), utensils, ingredients, and measurements. Finally, it was also expected that the implementation of the strategy would have a positive impact on the students' motivation by helping them to develop self-confidence and good feelings toward the learning of English. An increase in vocabulary usage as revealed by the video recordings attested to the effectiveness of the intervention plan and the attainment of the objectives.

Methodology

For this research study, it was important to carry out a process of observation and reflection in order to design and implement a strategy that would achieve the objectives. Action Research (A.R.) gave the researcher the opportunity to become involved in a self-reflective process so as to analyze his teaching practice and thus address a problematic situation within the classroom through the implementation of certain strategies. Also, due to the characteristics of A.R., it was possible to determine the effectiveness of the intervention in a relatively short period of time, giving the researcher the chance to complete several different cycles to achieve the goal that was previously set and thus, attempt to solve the problem.

Additional advantages of this methodological design were that the research study could be set within a very specific context, the researcher was able to join in with participants, continuous evaluations and modifications could be made as the project progressed, and the study led to open-ended outcomes (Koshy, 2005). It was a very rewarding process as it provided a sense of achievement and improvement.

The whole process involved four specific stages which became a repetitive cycle (Burns, 2010). The general steps as outlined by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, as cited in Burns, 2010) that were followed in this investigation were:

- **Planning:** the objective was identified and a plan of action was developed to bring about improvement in the students' speaking skills. Initial research was carried out to be sure about the situation. This was done through the observation of the students' performance in a task and through a questionnaire.
- **Action:** it involved the implementation of deliberate intervention. The intervention included writing a script for a cooking TV show and the video recording of each rehearsal.

- Observation: this implied the analysis of the effects of the intervention and documenting the perceptions of the people involved in the research.
- Reflection: the results emerging from the data were evaluated in order to assess the real effectiveness of the strategy.

Context

The present study was carried out in Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico, at a private university. This university has two B.A programs, Tourism and Gastronomy. English teachers focus on the students' developing communicative skills rather than any other skills. The goal is that students develop the ability to hold meaningful conversations with English speaking tourists. They also need to be prepared to deal successfully with prospective job interviewers so that, hopefully, they can be hired by some of the large companies operating in our country and abroad.

The approach to English teaching at the school can be labeled as English for Specific Purposes. All the resources, activities and materials used in class are related to these two main fields: Tourism and Gastronomy. The students majoring in Tourism have four 50-minute classes per week, whereas students majoring in Gastronomy have three 50-minute classes per week. Most of the classes are large - twenty to thirty students - and students have different levels of English proficiency.

The students do not work with any particular text books. There are specific topics to be covered but each teacher has freedom to choose what to teach first, how to teach it and what materials to use, which means that they can organize the contents the way it suits them better. At the end of every semester, each group is assigned a special project. All the groups of the same semester and major have to do the same thing.

English is not a mandatory subject of the syllabus for the B.A. in Gastronomy. Thus, some students may be reluctant to take this class. Fortunately, the new generations are more conscious of the importance of learning this language and most of them are more willing to take the class.

Participants

There were fifteen research participants in this investigation. The participation in the study was voluntary. However, the participants had to complete all the stages outlined above and follow all the steps involved in each one of them, and do the final presentation. Almost all the participants come from middle-class families and only 39% of all of them are from Xalapa. In most cases, their parents make a considerable effort to support them, pay for tuition, books, and housing. Their ages range from eighteen to twenty-two years of age.

Most of the participants can be considered beginners at the A1 or A2 level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning, Teaching, and Assessment (Council of Europe, 2017). However, a disparity was observed regarding their level of language proficiency. While about 20% seemed to have some command of English, about 15% of them did not have any knowledge of the language at all.

The general attitude of the students toward English is of acceptance; the students are aware of the importance of leaning English, especially for their major because it increases the possibility of getting a better job. However, most of them think it is quite difficult and some others simply do not enjoy learning this language. Moreover, the majority do not make any effort to study the language at home.

English is compulsory in middle and high school in the basic education system in Mexico, with all registered students taking at least 6 years of English before going to college or university. However, it is well known that these courses account for little if any practical knowledge of the language as in the case of the participants.

Intervention and Data Collection Tools

The results of their first semester final oral exam indicated that most of the students had trouble explaining the procedure of a recipe because they did not know enough vocabulary related to this genre (verbs used in the kitchen, utensils, ingredients and measurements). Besides, they did not know how to build clear sentences and/or how to connect them in order to sound natural when explaining a procedure. Additionally, the majority of the students had a pronunciation problem, making it difficult to convey a clear message.

An intervention plan was designed where video recordings were used as a way to tackle all these problems. The aim was to increase the participants' opportunities for oral production and meaningful communication with teacher and peers. Videos were also used as a data collection tool. In qualitative research, video-recording seems to have excellent benefits because, through the videos, the researcher can observe and analyze in great detail certain phenomenon which, otherwise, would be very difficult to capture. Nevertheless, it was also necessary to come up with a set of other data collection instruments to gather information that could be helpful in assessing the effectiveness of the intervention.

Observations were an important data collection tool. The observation sheets used for this purpose had three sections to organize the information: one for common mistakes, one to write the score of the different aspects that were considered in the rubric designed for the research purposes and one for a general description of what was happening in the video that could explain the score given to each aspect of the rubric. The elements that were considered in the rubric handed out to the participants beforehand are: pronunciation, fluency, tone and intonation, coherence and interaction, and body language.

All the participants were interviewed at the end of the implementation of the strategy. These structured interviews were audio-recorded. There was a list of key questions prepared in advance to determine the students' perceptions about the use of video recording as a way to improve their oral production.

At the end of the implementation of the action plan, the participants were asked to write a personal reflection about the convenience of using video recording to improve their oral production. They had to analyze whether there had been any changes in their performance and, if so, what kind of changes they had noticed. Many of the students also wrote about their feelings toward the activity and how they were motivated to do the task successfully.

The Action Plan

The intervention plan for further action aimed to improve oral production and vocabulary acquisition of the participants. The main point of the strategy was to video record their performance when producing a cooking TV show. After a video clip was turned in, feedback was given to help the participant improve oral production and acquire vocabulary. The intention was that after rehearsing (they could video record themselves as many times as they wanted as rehearsal) and doing a couple of videos, the students could be capable of performing a cooking TV show "live" and prepare, in real time, the recipe that had been rehearsed. Thus, the strategy assessed not only the final product but also the whole process.

The intervention strategy was carried out in three cycles: the students video-recorded themselves at home twice, plus the final presentation in the classroom, where the teacher videotaped their performance. The general steps that constituted the implemented strategy were the following:

- Pre-production stage. It lasted two weeks. The main goal was to provide students with enough input to prepare them for the oral task (cooking TV show). The students took a quiz to assess how much kitchen vocabulary they could recall; pronunciation and language management were also assessed.
- Production stage. It lasted five weeks. The participants put into practice what they had learned in the first stage. They acted out their recipes and used English to tackle a task: to video record their performances.
- Post-production stage. The teacher analyzed each video and prepared a report in order to give the students feedback. The participants reflected about their work and they corrected their mistakes for the next video recording. The result of this analysis together with the results of the interviews and the students' personal reflections were used to determine whether the video recordings worked as a useful tool to increase and improve the students' oral production in English.
- Final presentation.

It was hoped that after each rehearsal, it would be easier for the participants to remember the vocabulary. The assumption is that when someone says something out loud and it is done at the same time, this vocabulary could be internalized to be used in the future. Additionally, it was assumed that their pronunciation would improve due to repetition, which eventually could have a positive effect on the participants' self-confidence and motivation.

Results

Due to the characteristics of the strategy that was implemented, it was considered important to focus the attention on both the process and the final result. Thus, two types of evaluation were used. Formative evaluation was carried out through the two videos that the students recorded during the second stage of the strategy. The students received feedback after each video so that they could make changes for the next video-recording. Additionally, the students were continuously assessed through the rehearsals performed in class. Summative evaluation took place at the final presentation when the students had to cook for real and explain the recipe while being video recorded. Finally, the participants were interviewed and they were asked to write a self-reflection about their perceptions on the whole process.

The Interviews

The interviews were conducted immediately after the final presentation so as to capture the emotions and perceptions of the students regarding the usefulness of the strategy that was implemented as a way to improve their oral production in English. The participants' insights are summed up below.

Summarized results from the interviews:

- English is perceived as a necessary but demanding subject, not enjoyed by most of them.
- English pronunciation is complex and confusing. However, almost all the participants reported improvement in their oral performance, mostly in terms of pronunciation.
- Video recording was a new useful experience that helped them learn about the language. They assured that the intervention strategy worked because they put in practice vocabulary learnt in class.
- The participants' motivation to study English increased. Apparently, seeing themselves speaking English gave them a sense of attainment.
- All the participants gave themselves a good grade. In a 1—10 grading scale, the average grade was 8.

The Videos

The videos provided the researcher with the opportunity to record the performance of the students to determine whether there had been an improvement in the students' oral production or not. On the other hand, using them as a means to evaluate the students' progress seemed to be a suitable instrument which would be not only useful for formative evaluation purposes but also for self-assessment. Through the videos, the participants became aware of their mistakes and corrected them in a more conscious way. The production of the videos at the second stage of the intervention strategy enabled the participants to record themselves as many times as possible. Thus, they had several opportunities to practice and this way, they could feel more confident in the final presentation. Due to time constraints, most of the participants were able to video record only two performances and the final one, which does not necessarily mean that they did not rehearse enough. They had to practice their dialogues at home and then record their video. They were asked to re-hearse their lines while acting the steps of the recipe so that it was easier for them to acquire the vocabulary and understand what they were saying.

The expectation was that from the very first video the students would show a good understanding of the vocabulary and the expressions that were in their scripts by acting out their lines. Congruency between what they said and their performance was expected. Nevertheless, this did not happen the first time they video recorded themselves. Most of the students did not memorize their lines and it was evident that they were reading, not acting. Besides, they used Spanish when delivering their speech and almost all of them did not act out the steps of the recipe. They just sat on a chair or stood motionless in a kitchen reading everything without the appropriate intonation and without moving or acting out their recipe. What is more, it seems that most of them, in fact, did not know what they were saying in spite of having reviewed the vocabulary before video recording. This was concluded due to their continuous pausing in the wrong places and because they sometimes did something different from what they were explaining.

Likewise, it was expected that the participants would make many mistakes in pronunciation as the majority of them were beginners and they were not so used to speaking English. However, not only did they make mistakes with pronunciation but also with syntax. At this point, self-correction was not expected to take place because the participants were not aware of their mistakes yet. The participants' performances were assessed according to the rubric mentioned above. Most of the participants did poorly and only a pair of students' performance was of acceptable quality.

After the first video, the participants received feedback from the teacher who pointed out their mistakes. Then, the students rehearsed in class to correct them and they were asked to produce a new video. When they produced the second video, there were many significant changes in the quality of their performance.

Summarized results from the second video recording:

- A reduction in the use of mother tongue. Only four participants out of fifteen used Spanish to continue with the dialogue.
- A reduction in the use of visual aids to say their lines. In comparison with the first video, there were five participants who did not read at all, four that read half of the time and six who still read all the time.
- An improvement in coherence. This time, the majority of the students acted out what they were saying; only four of them continued to say the lines while doing nothing. Additionally, it was clear that they had a better idea of what they were expressing, their intonation improved and this time no one did something different from what they were saying.
- The appearance of self-correction was an unexpected outcome which showed that the students' awareness of pronunciation and intonation had risen; now they also knew where to pause.
- The number of students who performed acceptably increased. The progress achieved was easier to notice through the scores that they got. This time, most of the students were rated higher. Even though some of them still did poorly, their improvement was remarkable as they produced clearer and more comprehensible utterances; something that did not happen in the first video.
- The emergence of improvisation was another unexpected outcome. Four students took risks and tried to say things that were not their lines in order to convey the message. Three of them accomplished this successfully.
- There were fewer mistakes in syntax than in pronunciation. It seems that the students could remember their lines and were less likely to make mistakes in syntax. There was also some progress with pronunciation. They were able to correct the pronunciation of several words and thus reduce the amount of mistakes; however, they continued to mispronounce many other words.

The final video was recorded in the school kitchen during the last week of the intervention strategy. It was the final presentation of the course. This also worked as the final assessment. For this presentation, the students had to bring all the ingredients and the utensils to prepare a chocolate brownies recipe. The students were expected to pretend they were cooking for a TV show. Below is a description of the results obtained.

Summarized results from the final video recording:

- Practically all the participants avoided the use of Spanish, except for one participant who used a filler in Spanish. The rest of them did not use their mother tongue at all.
- Almost half of them did not read at all. Apparently, the ones who needed to take a look at their notes during the presentation did so because they were not able to control their nervousness which made them forget their lines. It seems that the

stress caused by oral activities has a great impact on the final result. This was corroborated by the participants' comments after their presentations.

- In terms of coherence, that is the congruence between what is said and what is done, all of the students performed well and did exactly what they were saying.
- The appearance of self-correction was more frequent; more than half of the participants rephrased a sentence and/or corrected the pronunciation of some words. This was an important achievement.
- This time there were fewer mistakes in pronunciation and syntax in comparison with the participants' previous work. Those who had pronounced poorly and could not make themselves understood were able to convey a clearer message. In spite of these results, some of the students' mistakes seemed to have become fossilized because, despite the teacher's feedback, they continued making the same mistakes in pronunciation. Nevertheless, this did not prevent them from conveying the message.
- Again, there was some improvisation as more students decided to take risks with the language, which is positive.
- The students' progress became evident in their final performance. All of the participants scored well on the rubric, which was a reflection of their improvement.

Conclusion

The analysis of data as produced by the videos, the interviews and the observations provided valuable insight into the emotions and perceptions of the participants regarding the usefulness of the implemented strategy. It can be safely concluded that even though the majority of the participants did not like speaking English, they wanted to learn because it is important for their degree. English comes across to them as difficult mainly because of pronunciation and the fact that their teachers have not helped them in that respect.

None of the participants had ever video-recorded a task in English; for all of them it was a new and challenging experience. Some found the activity pleasant and interesting, some said it was useful to learn and to correct mistakes, and others found it difficult. Regarding the usefulness of video recording as an instrument to improve and increase oral production in English, most participants seemed to think it was an excellent strategy that helped them improve pronunciation, fluency and vocabulary.

As for commitment, almost all of the participants appeared to have felt motivated to continue studying English. They realized they were capable of speaking English if they put their mind to it. They also found additional advantages in video recording themselves, such as gaining self-confidence, losing fear of speaking in public and a desire to learn more. It must be acknowledged that they made an effort in spite of their nervousness and weaknesses. This is confirmed by their assessment of their own work, which was graded quite well. Giving the participants the opportunity to practice video recording themselves

twice before their final performance helped them correct their mistakes and realize they could succeed in doing the activity.

As mentioned above, all of the participants' pronunciation and fluency seemed to have improved at the end of the intervention. Awareness of their mistakes in pronunciation was increased, which helped in correcting them. As a consequence of increased motivation, the participants appeared to be willing to use this strategy again, after the implementation, as it helped them to get rid of their fear of speaking English.

At the end of the implementation, the participants were asked to write a reflection about the process that they had gone through. It seems that, at the beginning, many of them felt tongue-tied; that is, it was difficult for them to pronounce words correctly, they could not remember their lines or what they had to say so their fluency was affected. Further, it was difficult for them to understand what they were saying themselves. Some admitted that in the first rehearsals, they had no idea of what they were saying. They also realized that for the first time ever, they could read something in English and understand it, and in the last video, they knew exactly what they were saying.

Regarding the acquisition of vocabulary, the participants were able to learn new words related to their area of interest (kitchen vocabulary). Acquiring new vocabulary was beneficial because it helped them to understand bits of language when watching a video or a TV program. This way, they were able to take risks and add new words in their presentations while reinforcing vocabulary they already knew.

Motivation is essential when learning anything. It was rewarding to see that the participants' motivation seemed to have risen as they were happy and willing to do all the class activities. Apparently, they overcame their fears of speaking English.

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