

IMPROVING THE SPEAKING

Improving the Speaking Skills of Arabic Language Learners

Ismaeil Elrehaima

California State University, Monterey Bay

Introduction

Problem Statement

Students studying the Arabic language at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) are not progressing as efficiently in their speaking skills as they are in their reading and listening skills. Many of the students are not able to express themselves fluently and clearly, often speaking in “broken sentences”.

Acquiring excellent speaking skills is paramount for DLI students because it enhances not only their abilities to communicate, but also their confidence, their credibility and their value to the government. The government has already spent a vast amount of money training these students to be expert linguists. For this reason, the students’ success is a major concern for both the students and the government. It is the researcher’s contention that these students’ speaking skills will be enhanced by implementing visual and audio technology, such as PowerPoint presentations and multimedia demonstrations, into the curriculum.

In order to research the validity of this conjecture, the researcher will be conducting an original research study that includes an extensive literature review as well as a “true experimental design” study that

compares the progress of a group of students receiving multimedia enhanced instruction with a control group of students who have not received multimedia enhanced instruction.

Rationale for the research

This research is important because there is a strong need to enhance the outcomes of Arabic language learners' speaking skills at DLI. Having fluent speaking skills in Arabic is critical to the success of these students' job performance; and miscommunications could prove to be disastrous. This is a particularly critical point considering the highly sensitive nature of communications between the United States and Arabic speaking countries.

Statement of the Research Objectives

- To discover a method of improving the Arabic speaking skills of DLI students, so that their speaking skills are on par with their listening and reading skills
- To improve the competency and confidence of these students so that they are able to perform their jobs at the optimum level.
- To develop a multimedia enhanced curriculum (if the hypothesis is proven to be correct) that can be used in future classes and in other schools as well.

Hypothesis

DLI students' Arabic speaking skills will be enhanced by implementing visual and audio technology, such as PowerPoint presentations and multimedia demonstrations, into the curriculum.

Definition of Terms

Defense Language Institute (DLI): This is a widely recognized government institution that teaches foreign languages to military personnel and some high ranking government officials. The Arabic language department is part of Middle East School 1, which is one of three schools in DLI designated to teach Arabic.

DLI Student: For the purposes of this study, the term DLI student refers only to the students of team C2, Department C, which is the group of students the researcher teaches.

Multimedia: This refers to audio, video and technology enhanced images and presentations including photographs, PowerPoint presentations, DVDs, and CDs.

Summary

Students studying the Arabic language at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) are not achieving the desired level of speaking proficiency. Excellent speaking

skills are critical to their futures as interpreters and linguists for the United States government. The purpose of this study is to discover whether implementing multimedia instructional devices into the curriculum will solve this problem. An experimental study will be used in conjunction with an extensive review of the relevant literature to determine the validity of the above-stated hypothesis.

Literature Review

Importance of the Topic

Historically, few students achieve superior and distinguished levels of proficiency in any foreign language. In fact, relatively few courses even propose to bring students to the superior level, at which students can expect to use the language professionally while having obviously less than native control of linguistic and cultural elements, let alone the distinguished level, at which students begin to approach the level of an educated native speaker. These levels are called Level 3 and Level 4, respectively, on the 5-level US government scale (Kramsch, 1996).

For many years, there has been a tacit assumption among foreign language educators and administrators that language programs cannot be expected to bring students

any further in the classroom than the advanced high level. Consequently, few teachers have much experience in teaching students at the superior level, yet there is a growing awareness of the need to do so (Kramsch, 1996).

Current Status of the Topic

Since the early 1960s, methods that treated foreign language as a mechanism for converting information encoded in one linguistic system into the forms of another linguistic system have been ever better informed by theory and research in both general learning and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). In very recent years, SLA has become a discipline of its own, and non-applied linguistic theory and research has had a decreasing influence on foreign language teaching methods (Bygate, Skehan & Swain 2001).

That does not mean, however, that teaching practices have become any less focused on learning needs at lower levels of proficiency, rather than considering an ultimate goal of near-native proficiency from the very beginning. As a result, few methods contain essential elements for teaching very advanced students, and many practices set the student up for increasingly hindered progress as s/he climbs the proficiency ladder (Naiman, 1996).

As psychologists have learned more about the functioning of the human brain, foreign language educators have been given more sophisticated tools for determining appropriate methods for classroom instruction. Some of the most important are summarized below.

1. Information must pass through sentient memory. For language students, this usually means that unless they pay attention to and understand what it is they are seeing or hearing, they are not likely to absorb the material effectively.

2. Information is "stored in diverse locations (form, function, pronunciation, and context are not one category once language enters storage; even if vocabulary is lexicalized within a specific content or context). With syntax, morphology, and lexicon separated neural components, students may be able to negotiate meaning with gross grammatical error" (Allott, 1989, p. 69).

3. Stored information can be overwritten. In the language classroom, this can translate into a special form of "forgetfulness": at lower levels, when students learn the past tense forms, present tense forms can sometimes become inaccessible; "at higher levels, formal language, instead of becoming synonymous with other

registers (and available as alternative expressions), can on occasion, replace those other registers, especially while the individual student's interlanguage is struggling with forms in free variation during development periods" (Brown, 1994, p. 157).

4. Reconstruction, rather than recall, is the process used by the working, or activated, memory. Therefore, teachers can expect students to make mistakes, which no amount of correction will prevent. This is not about instances where students do not know the correct forms – which can be corrected through overt instruction and practice, but about miscues and slips of the tongue that occur in native language speech as well as foreign language speech. Sometimes a piece of information can become temporarily irretrievable and result in grammatically flawed speech, including sometimes lower levels of speech than one normally expects from high level students (Brown, 1994).

Unfortunately, language educators have been slow to incorporate these discoveries into classrooms because the discoveries have not been framed in ways that relate directly to language teaching (Byrnes, 1999). Therefore a clear need exists for workable strategies such as the incorporation of multimedia instructional tools to be

researched and developed based on what experts have discovered about how students learn most efficiently.

Because of growing attention toward proficiency-oriented goals and a focus on the development of communicative competence (Kramsch, 1996), most foreign language education programs share a number of characteristics that differentiate today's cutting-edge programs from those of the past. These characteristics include authenticity in task and language, a role for content, attention to learner differences, incorporation of elements of schema theory, use of higher-order thinking skills, and application of adult learning theory (Byrnes, 1999). While multimedia language-learning opportunities, including those that are Internet-based, have proliferated in recent years, little or nothing of an instructional nature has been available for the highly advanced language learner (Rogers, 1995).

A need clearly exists for strategies that promote multimedia language-learning opportunities. According to Bygate et al (2001) "Strategic Activities" are language learning strategies embedded in a learning activity. They are selected to enable the user to interact with the text in ways that address one or more of the targeted objectives. They can also present the learner with ways

to interact with multimedia materials, including PowerPoint presentations, CDs, DVDs, photographs, and web pages.

Relationship between the Literature and the Problem statement

There is growing interest in using the capability of new technology in an efficient and effective way to meet the instructional and research needs of faculty and students. The use of information technology is one of many steps to excellence. Yet the renewed interest in furthering excellence in foreign language instruction through information technology has brought with it a greater emphasis on the need for quality leadership in this capacity (Maly, 1993). Competence, integration of learning, collaboration with industry, cooperation among instructors at various levels, cooperative acquisition efforts and transferability of learning from one class to another are all important elements in the goal to improve the speaking skills of the students learning Arabic at DLI.

Holden (2004) asserts that the proper authoring tools are the most important component in helping students to develop new skills. However he warns that it is critical to "bear in mind that not all tools are appropriate for all training methods. Buying a tool

without doing the research can be a costly mistake" (p. 24)

He also argues that improvements in learning actually derive from the instructional design not the medium that delivers it. However, current developments are not using flexible online delivery with interactive technology only as a medium, but also as a tool that enhances the potential of adult learning principles and the potential for lifelong learning that transcends national boundaries. Of course, sound instructional design remains vital, but it is now intertwined with the medium in providing the learning experiences. The key lies in how effectively the academic and technical teams can work together to get the best out of the linkage to create learning experiences of higher quality than basic class teaching ever could.

According to O'Neil and Perez (2003):

"One benefit of technology-based instruction appears to be that fewer students are left behind. Because sequence, pace, difficulty, content, and/or style of technology-based presentations can be tailored to each student's unique needs, some progress by each student can be ensured...For example, Fletcher (1991) found in a review of 44 empirical

comparisons, the spread (variance) of postinstruction measures, such as test scores or time to complete instruction, increased in every case more under conventional instruction than under interactive multimedia instruction. This trend was observed despite an overall increase in relative mean achievement scores of about 0.50 standard deviations under interactive multimedia instruction" (pp. 87-88).

Educators are ultimately responsible for the success of their teaching efforts and can no longer afford to assume that all students of all ages will learn through whichever strategy the teacher prefers to use. Why gamble with the potential success of a teaching effort? For the adult student who has been unsuccessful with untailored teaching styles, learning is a misery, and there is little chance that the student will suddenly adjust his or her learning style or even be capable of adjusting it. For example, as is stated by Uhlig (2002) "The successful student will view on-line classes as a convenient way to receive their education- not an easier way" (Uhlig, 2002)

Thus ultimately, educators need to decide whether they want students to adjust or to learn. If learning is the objective, then a clear understanding of adult

learning styles must be developed and applied for teaching efforts to be successful. The needs of students are different and changing, and this problem must be continually addressed in adult education efforts. More importantly, how students learn must be given top priority, or instructors may never be fully successful in capturing their attention and minds. In reality, it may be more important for instructors to have an understanding of the learning process and skill in facilitating individual and group learning than subject matter skill.

According to Brookfield (1991), learning may not take place if the teaching is not structured to facilitate learning, even when the teaching model is appropriate. As outlined by Sims, the learning principles that will most greatly affect the learning of students and the success of teaching efforts are: 1) "Setting the stage" i.e., providing clear instructions and modeling appropriate behavior when emphasizing particular skills or competencies; 2) "Increasing learning during teaching", i.e. providing active participation, increasing self efficacy, matching teaching techniques to students' self-efficacy, providing opportunities for inactive mastery, ensuring specific, timely, diagnostic, and practical

feedback, and providing opportunities for students to practice new behaviors; and 3) maintaining basic knowledge in particular areas, i.e. developing learning points to assist in knowledge retention, setting specific goals, identifying appropriate reinforcers, teaching students how to reinforce their learning, and teaching students how to take responsibility for their own learning (Brookfield, 1991). These factors indicate that the instructor must ensure that the environment is made ready for learning.

Although incorporating these principles of learning is desirable, many adult education courses do not have them or are designed without consideration of individual learning differences and motivation. This is a lesson second language education instructors can learn: make sure all of the elements needed for successful learning are in place. Application of these principles can increase the learning that occurs during teaching. Ultimately, a strong component of successful teaching of both adults and children is an increased appreciation and understanding of what is known about the types of learning, the process of learning, and the appropriate differences in teaching strategies that best apply to the individual student.

Understanding how students learn is an important part of selecting appropriate teaching strategies. Research into how people learn has advanced along two major schools. The first is the stimulus response school, best exemplified by Pavlov's classical conditioning research and by Skinner's work in operant conditioning. This view focuses on reinforcement of step-by-step mastery of content and skills (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982).

The second school is the cognitive approach, which focuses on the cognitive processes as the source of learning. This school is exemplified by the early work of the Gestaltists and by Piaget's work in developing a continuum of cognitive development. Cognitive learning means knowledge learning. It not only includes the knowledge per se, but also what to do with it or how to apply it. Thus the investigative process and the principles of problem solving and decision making are part of this group. Much learning of this nature is imparted by the lecture method, but can be reinforced by a variety of learning methods such as private study, role plays, and case studies. The cognitive view has dominated most contemporary research on how humans learn (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982).

A relatively recent extension of the cognitive view is the ELM. This model describes the four-stage learning cycle that individuals move through in order to effectively learn and apply concepts. The model has its roots in the psychological literature and has recently been advanced by Kolb (1984). This learning theory states that individuals have two major competing dimensions of learning: the concrete/abstract and the active/reflective. The concrete/abstract dimension indicates how a human processes experience and information. Over time, most individuals develop preferences for a specific dimension by selecting one of the two competing dimensions of the learning cycle: concrete versus abstract and active versus reflective. These preferences are a result of personal experiences, personality differences, and environmental and prior educational factors. One preference is not necessarily better or worse than another; the important fact is that these differences exist and must be recognized by an educator.

The four stages of the ELM are the polar points of the two learning dimensions. The four stages are: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Kolb has

assigned titles to the learning styles in each group. For example, divergers prefer concrete reflective learning situations. Convergers do best in abstract active learning situations, and so on with the assimilators and accommodators. Kolb additionally developed an instrument, the Learning Style Inventory, which is an update from an earlier instrument, to measure the learning styles of individuals. Prior research by Kolb and others has shown an association between the states of the learning cycle and the type of instructional strategy that is most effective in that state (Kolb, 1984).

Some scholars contend that development occurs in a linear fashion, moving sequentially, step by step, stage to stage. Some have even mapped out the adult life course as a series of steps. A result of this linear development is increased attainments that are relatively easy to see and measure. Others such as Hudson (1999), favor nonlinear or cyclical approaches to development. According to Hudson, cyclical development has distinctive principles that yield richer consequences. It actualizes one's potential for personal complexity, which is easily overlooked and hard to measure.

Among the major theories of learning, behaviorism is fairly well defined, and most instructors and trainers in

the United States associate the term and the theory with its leading contemporary proponent, B.F. Skinner. This is not the case in adult learning theory. There have been many adult learning theorists, researchers, and practitioners, each contributing an element to its development. Malcolm Knowles' theory on adult learning has been used effectively in training in business and industry. Knowles has postulated his adult learning principles and practices under the label of "andragogy" (Knowles, 1984).

As is commonly understood in the world of teaching and training, adherence to adult learning theory calls for the design of learning activities to be based on the learners' needs and interests so as to create opportunities for the learners to analyze their experience and its application to their work and life situations. The role of the instructor or trainer is to assist in a process of inquiry, analysis, and decision making with learners, rather than to simply "transmit" knowledge. In the context of adult learning practices, the learner exercises greater autonomy in matching his or her preferred modes of learning to the specified learning objectives and also has more say about what the outcomes of the learning process are intended to be.

The emphasis on methods that encourage insight and discovery makes it a familiar approach, close to the unstructured way many people have acquired new knowledge or developed new skills since reaching maturity. Knowles says he originally defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn, in contrast to pedagogy as the art and science of teaching children" (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). Later he came to see andragogy as "simply another model of assumptions used alongside the pedagogical model . . . most useful when seen not as dichotomous but rather as two ends of a spectrum" (p. 43).

The principles and practices that fall under the umbrella of andragogy are based on several crucial assumptions about how adult learners are different from children. Margolis and Bell (1984) give us a useful summary of those assumptions, distilled from Knowles's major works. These are:

1. Adults are motivated to learn as they develop needs and interests that learning will satisfy. Therefore, learners' needs and interests are the appropriate starting points for organizing adult learning activities.

2. Adult orientation to learning is life- or work-centered. Therefore, the appropriate frameworks for organizing adult learning are life- or work related situations, not academic or theoretical subjects.

3. Experience is the richest resource for adult learning. Therefore, the core methodology for adult learning programs involves active participation in a planned series of experiences, the analysis of those experiences, and their application to work and life situations.

4. Adults have a deep need to be self-directing. Therefore, the role of the instructor is to engage in a process of inquiry, analysis, and decision making with learners.

5. Individual differences among adult learners increase with age and experience. Therefore, adult learning programs must make optimum provision for differences in style, time, place, and pace of learning. (Margolis and Bell, 1984, p. 17)

Summary

Interactive learning based on multimedia instruction has been shown to improve learning outcomes in adults as well as in younger students. It has also been shown to speed up the amount of time it takes to increase proficiency

levels. While not all students learn in the same way or at the same pace, the evidence seems relatively clear that the instructions methods chosen by the instructor can have a dynamic impact on skill improvement.

Method

Participants

The participants of this research will be chosen through convenience sampling and they will be assigned randomly into two groups. They are students of the Defense Language Institute (DLI), Middle East School 1, Department C, Team C 2. There are thirty students. It is important to know that they are military personnel of different ranks and from different branches of the armed forces. Their ages range between 19 – 28 years old. Most of them have just finished high school and some of them are college graduates. Regarding their gender, 75% are male and 25% are female. Most of them do not have much experience, because they joined the army right after finishing high school, but the older ones are mature and full of life experience. The entire group has received a great deal of military training. 95% of the group is very motivated, because they will be financially rewarded if they pass their final exam and also a bright future is waiting for them in the field of Arabic translation. When

they were asked about their interests, their answers showed that they are interested in different things, such as reading, writing, camping, fishing, watching movies, traveling, etc. Studying Arabic is mandatory for all of them. They have very good attitudes and are very easy people to deal with. They have come from all over the county and from different social and cultural backgrounds. Because of their solid computer skills, all of them are excellent in using technology. They are now in week eight of their studies, which will last for sixty four weeks. They are at the very beginning of the course.

Research Design

The research design of this study will be True Experimental Design. The subjects will be selected and assigned randomly to experimental and controlled groups. The experimental group will receive their instruction during the speaking hour through multimedia "video clips, recorded audios and PowerPoint". The controlled group will not. In this research, the independent variable is the use of multimedia for teaching speaking skills. The dependent variable will be the students' speaking level according to the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR). In other words, the result of the speaking test will be the independent variable. Other fixed variables are

reading, listening, and speaking topics. The use of video clips, recorded audios and PowerPoint presentations will be the cause, and any change in the students' speaking level will be the effect.

Data collection plan

A plan has already been set to collect the required data. There will be two phases of data collection: the first phase is the pre-test, when the entire group of students will be tested, so that the researcher will be able to point out their base or reference line. The second phase of the data collection is the post-test. It will take place at the end of the research, and the entire class will be tested again to note if there is any kind of differences in the result of the two groups. The type of collected data will be the recorded performance of each student in the group. The video clips of each student in the group and the notes, or the comments, made by the researcher throughout the different phases of the research. Also, data regarding the overall satisfaction will be collected through a questionnaire at the end of the study. The idea behind collecting this data is that it will be used for analyzing the findings.

Operational definition of all variables

The students will be tested at the beginning of the project, so that the researcher can set a base or reference line for the students. Then the experimental group will receive all their speaking hours through multimedia using video clips, recorded audios and PowerPoint presentations. The controlled group will receive the same study material, but not through multimedia. The estimated research time is six month. The researcher will be responsible for collecting and maintaining the data. The study material, which the two groups receive during the research, will revolve around introducing themselves, talking about their families, describing their cities and describing objects, such as their homes and their cars. They will have one speaking hour everyday, Monday through Friday, from 1:30 to 2:30. After that, the two groups will be tested again to see if there is any difference in their performance levels. It is expected that the second test will show the effect of using multimedia in teaching speaking. Any change in the speaking level of the experimental group will be attributed to the treatment, which is the use of multimedia in teaching speaking. Here are the terms used in research: the term dependent variable refers to the

result of the students. The term independent variable refers to the teaching methods (i.e. whether multimedia is used or not). The term multimedia refers to video clips, recorded audios and PowerPoint presentations. Experimental group refers to the group that receives their instruction through multimedia. Controlled group is the group the does not receive their instruction through multimedia. The word subject refers to the students. The term ILR refers to Interagency Language Roundtable, a document explaining the different levels of any language.

Reliability and validity of instruments

The instruments of the research have a great deal of reliability, because there is not a big variation between the groups. A base test will take place to set a reference line. Also, the starting level of the groups is similar and their results in other skills are similar as well. Another important thing is that they are randomly selected. The instruments of the research have a great deal of validity, because all other factors are permanent. The two groups have the same teacher, same study material and same facilities. The only difference is the method of teaching or, in other words, the use of multimedia.

Result of pilot studies

No pilot result has been conducted yet. It will be conducted with the minimum number of participants to verify the experimental design before conducting the actual experiment. It is going to be a model of the full research study on a smaller scale, with fewer subjects and a shorter time frame. It can help in deciding between two approaches and makes the researcher and his team familiar with the procedures of the research protocol.

Proposed analysis of data

In regards to the statistical analyses that will be used to compare the findings the following will be shown and compared.

- The bar graph or a histogram of both the test group and controlled group.
- The mode which helps in pointing out the most frequent value assumed by a random variable
- The median which helps in dividing the higher half of samples from the lower half.
- Percentile will be used by the researcher as a value on a scale of one hundred that indicates the percent of a distribution that is equal to or below it.

- Quartile is a statistical term describing a division of observations into four defined intervals based upon the values of the data and how they compare to the entire set of observations.
- Arithmetic mean is the sum of the observations divided by the number of observations. It is often quoted along with the standard deviation.
- Standard deviation will be used as a measure of how spread out the data is.
- Correlation will be used as a measure of the relation between two or more variables.
- Descriptive statistics will be used to describe the basic features of the data in a study. They provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Together with simple graphics analysis, they form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data

As it was mentioned earlier in this research, the study has not yet been conducted, but the collected data will be thoroughly processed and analyzed by using a computer statistical package, such as Excel, to compare the results of the two groups. All the statistical techniques will be used, and many statistical tables will be seen in this section of the research. There will be tables and

histograms to show the mean difference between the groups percentage wise. Also, the result of the data will show the standard deviation, or the standard error of the mean values, to clarify the differences between the means of the treatments. Finally, the significant differences will be tested at the level of significance ($\alpha = 0.5\%$)

Results of Data

The results of the data analysis will be presented in tables as well as graphs. It is expected that the result of this research will show a drastic increase in the level of the students' speaking skills. Also, it will prove that the use of multimedia in teaching the speaking hours has a positive effect on the students speaking skills. The one major finding will be that teaching speaking through the use of multimedia will enhance the speaking skills of DLI's Arabic language students.

Implications and limitations

The traditional methods currently used by teachers to teach speaking have been shown to be ineffective in retaining student attention. Therefore, it is anticipated that teaching speaking skills by using multimedia will decrease students' inattention and energy levels and increase focus during classes. Improving focus and attention is the primary goal of the proposed program.

Using multimedia will also help the student to articulate more clearly about the speaking topic because they will have all the tools on-hand that are needed, from ideas to vocabulary to examples. This will greatly strengthen the students' speaking skills. With the positive results that are forecast, this program can be generalized in all the schools of the many diverse languages taught at DLI.

Applying multimedia in class is not an easy job and not every teacher has the technical knowledge to do so, which will require a financial and time commitment from the schools so as to be able to use all of the new technology effectively in the classrooms. There is no doubt that conducting such training will be expensive and time-consuming, delaying the application of this modernization. Even after training, preparing multimedia tasks and activities will require input and increased work from all staff involved. However, the end result will be a decrease in the workload of the teachers and an increase in the students' speaking proficiency.

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Appendices

Copies of instruments that will be used

The following sequence of speaking topics will be used throughout the program.

- The teacher will tell the students about the speaking topic which they should talk about.
- The students will watch a video clip about that specific topic.
- The students will listen to a radio program or any recorded audio about the same topic.
- The teacher will give a PowerPoint presentation to provide the students with the vocabulary that they need for speaking about the designated topic.
- The students will spend the rest of the hour talking about that topic and trying to apply what they watched on the video clip and what they listened to on the radio with the help of the vocabulary list presented through the PowerPoint presentation.
- The teacher will move around the students helping them and fixing their grammatical and pronunciation mistakes when needed.

In regards to the satisfaction survey that the students will take at the end of the program, there are

several questions that should be asked. The researchers' preference is that the responses be written versus a multiple-choice scale. Some responses, however, will remain on a scale of one to five, one meaning strongly disagree and five meaning strongly agree. The format of the questionnaire will be as follows:

- The tasks were clear and easy to understand.

1 2 3 4 5

- I think this program will help me speak better.

1 2 3 4 5

- I liked this program.

1 2 3 4 5

- I would like to see more lessons like this one.

1 2 3 4 5

1. Do you recommend this program to other people and why?

2. Would you prefer to receive your speaking hour with the use of multimedia or by receiving traditional teaching and why?

3. What do you like about the new teaching method?

4. Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

5. Is there anything in the program that you disliked?

Timeline

The estimated time for this program is six months, starting 1 May 2007. On this day, each student will take a pre-test to establish a base proficiency. During the pre-test, each student will be recorded speaking about him/herself as well as their family, car, and home. For the remainder of the six months, one class hour each day will be dedicated to improving speaking skills. On or around 1 Nov 2007, each student will take a second test, speaking about the same topics as in the beginning. The researcher will check the amount of improvement between the first and second recordings to establish the amount of progress during the study period.