Improving English Speech Skills in the College Classroom through the Use of Videotaping, Self-Monitoring, and Reflective Journal Writing

Pi-Ying Hsu
Department of Applied Foreign Languages
Chaoyang University of Technology

Abstract

The study was designed to investigate the effects of self-monitoring, actualized by videotaping, and reflective journal writing on college students’ English speech skills. 42 EFL students who majored in English in a university were recruited to participate in this study. The participants were randomly assigned to either a self-monitoring or a control group. The researcher videotaped students’ monthly English speeches. Only the students in the self-monitoring group were asked to review their videotaped speeches. The videotaping, self-monitoring, and reflective journal writing helped students reduce communication apprehension and enhance English speech performance.

Key words: self-monitoring, videotaping, reflective journal writing, English speech skills
Introduction

Oral performance in English is commonly required in courses offered in most universities in Taiwan and some graduate programs even require public speaking in English as a general education requirement for graduation. However, just like the native speakers of English, many students who speak English as Foreign Language (EFL) enter the English speech classroom with high levels of anxiety and limited speech skills. Lacking of speech skills can undermine learners’ self-confidence and negatively influence estimations of a speaker’s credibility and abilities (Morley, 1998).

Most textbooks and lesson plans for beginning speech students usually place emphasis upon specific themes and issues that assess what a good speaker is. Few books attempt to mention any communication technologies, such as videotaping of students’ performances, to help learners reinforce concepts and identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own performances. Past research evidence has considered videotaped performances as an effective feedback tool (Dhonau & McAlpine, 2002; Glenn, 1996; Rateliff, 1996). Taping a speech allows the speakers to gain a sense of what they look and sound in the eyes and ears of the audience, self-monitor their oral performance afterwards and improve their future speech delivery (Lucas, 2001).

In the current study, the researcher applied three major intervention strategies: (1) the use of videotaping technique; (2) the introduction of self-monitoring strategy; and (3) the practice of writing reflective journal entries in the English speech class. The study was designed to investigate the effects of self-monitoring, actualized by videotaping, and reflective journal writing on college students’ English
Improving English Speech Skills in the College Classroom through the Use of Videotaping, Self-Monitoring, and Reflective Journal Writing

speech performance. Specifically, it posed the following research question: does the use of videotaping, self-monitoring, and reflective journal writing enhance students’ English speech performance?

Practically, this research developed an instructional strategy in English speech class, actualized by videotaping, self-monitoring, and reflective journal writing, which enhanced students’ learning. Theoretically, the study enriched our understanding of the process of self-monitoring and its effects on students’ learning behavior.

Literature Review

Videotaping is a powerful communication technology in helping English language learners improve their language skills. It plays an increasing role in both English as a Foreign Language classroom instruction and self-study. The videotaping of students’ performances provides the instructors and students with a method of audiovisual feedback that can be used to reinforce concepts and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the student’s performance. Past research evidence has considered videotaped performances as an effective feedback tool (Dhonau & McAlpine, 2002; Glenn, 1996; Rateliff, 1996). Taping a speech allows the speakers to gain a sense of what they look and sound in the eyes and ears of the audience, self-monitor their oral performance afterwards and improve their future speech delivery (Lucas, 2001).

Research also showed that students hunger for positive feedback on their second performance after the self-monitoring sessions and consequently the evaluation is usually high on praise and low on direct criticism (Phillip, Kougl, & Kelly, 1985). Bankston and Terlip (1994)
worked with 84 undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory oral communications class. The students attended the same lecture and were taught by the same instructor. Their presentations were videotaped in class. Student appreciation of the evaluation criteria was surveyed and the results indicated that students in the experimental condition did exhibit a higher level of appreciation for criteria and were more accurate at predication their grades in relation to the instructor’s assessment of their performance.

In Glenn’s (1996) study, students were encouraged to conduct their impression management assessment when they observed a recording of their first speech performance, focusing on verbal and nonverbal deliveries. The findings suggest that the use of videotape has greatly enhanced the quality of student presentations, improved the classroom climate, and helped produce positive educational outcomes in the areas of delivery style, structural development, and research.

Self-monitoring, defined as “observing and tracking one’s own performance and outcomes” (Zimmerman, 1998, p.78), has been shown the enhancing effects on college students’ learning and performance in different tasks. Lan (1996) provided a protocol that helped students to record the amount of time spent in learning important concepts in an introductory statistics class and monitor their understanding of these concepts, the results showed that students’ academic performance on course examinations and use of learning strategies in the class were improved.

Researchers (Lan, Repman, & Chyung, 1998) also showed that college students’ knowledge retention and problem-solving ability were improved by displaying a diagram of a problem-solving procedure on computer monitor or asking a series of questions to guide students the
problem-solving procedure step by step.

Although researchers believe that self-monitoring do benefit students’ learning, students’ involvement of using self-monitoring strategies is quite low. Lan (1998) conducted a study and investigated self-monitoring strategies used by students at different school levels. The results indicated that only about 20% of elementary students used self-monitoring strategies to observe or track their learning process and outcomes. Only 50% of graduate students involved themselves in self-monitoring of learning tasks. Zimmerman (1998) explained three reasons for student’s unwillingness of using self-monitoring: (1) students might be unaware of the effectiveness of self-monitoring on learning, so they might not have the desire to use the strategies; (2) students might have low self-efficacy in using self-monitoring, so they may not have the confidence to apply these strategies; (3) students might not value the learning outcome, so they do not have the motivation to use the self-monitoring strategies.

Golub and Reid (1999) suggested a solution to the problem of low involvement of self-monitoring strategies. They believe that reflective journal writing is an effective means to enhance metacognition. Metacognitive reflections through journal writing give students an opportunity to analyze their own methods of thinking. Also, students become more aware of strategies that help them become better communicators through reflective journal writing.

Moon (1999) identifies many purposes of writing journals. For example, “to deepen the quality of learning, in the form of critical thinking or developing a questioning attitude,” “to enable learners to understand their own learning process,” “to increase active involvement in learning and personal ownership of learning,” “to enhance the
personal valuing of the self towards self-empowerment,” “to foster reflective and creative interaction in a group.” (pp. 188-194).

Boud (2001) indicates that "important reflection can occur once the immediate pressure of acting in real time has passed. Reflection is not only a process of thinking, but also a process that involves feeling, emotions, and decision making. The process consists of three features: return to experience, attending to feelings, and reevaluation of experience (pp. 13-14). Cognitive activities stimulated by reflective journal writing include observation, speculation, doubt, questioning, self-awareness, problem stating, and problem solving (Holt, 1994).

The advantages of self-monitoring and reflective journal writing are theoretically thorough, but little empirical evidence is found. In the present study, the problems of stage fright, speech skills, and opportunity to deliver public speaking were examined through the preliminary observation, checklists, and interviews with the students. A review of solution strategies suggested by research and an analysis of the problem setting resulted in selection of three major intervention strategies: (1) the use of videotaping technique; (2) the introduction of self-monitoring strategy; and (3) the practice of writing reflective journal entries. The researcher applied these three strategies in the English speech class and separated learning and self-monitoring by videotaping students’ English speech performance in class, so they were able to self-monitoring their performance afterwards. The researcher predicted that after-performance self-monitoring strategy and reflective journal writing would improve students’ English speech performance in the classroom.
Method

Participants

Forty-two EFL college students who majored in Applied Foreign Languages in a university in Taiwan were recruited to participate in this study. Students were asked to participate voluntarily in this research. After signing up their consent forms, the students were randomly assigned to a treatment group and a control condition: 22 students in the self-monitoring group and 20 in the control group.

Instrument

The instrument used in this study was the Toastmaster International speech contest evaluation form. The criteria for speech contest include speech development, effectiveness, speech value, physical, voice, manner, appropriateness and correctness. For each aspect, specific performances are listed as the criteria that speakers need to manifest on that aspect. Two raters evaluated students’ monthly English speech performances independently. This form was administered before and after the treatment to yield pretest and posttest scores of speech performance.

Procedures

This study was a pretest-treatment-posttest design. Students were randomly assigned to either a self-monitoring group or a control group. The pretest was conducted to evaluate the participants’ English speech skills and communication apprehension in the second week of a semester. Students’ speech performance was videotaped by the researcher. After delivering their first speech, the presenters were asked to turn in a 2-page reflection paper one week later.
After the pretest, students received instruction of designing and delivering an English speech, practiced four types of speech (informative, persuasive, entertainment, and impromptu), discussed with peers and the instructor. Students in the experimental group reviewed the videotapes of their speech performances. Students in the control group were shown commercial videotapes of speech performance. After each speech assignment, students were asked to complete a reflective journal entry.

In the final phase, students delivered their final English speech and completed the journal entries to get the score of the posttest. Data collected throughout the semester were from my observation report, checklists, interview, videotaping of students’ individual speeches, peer/teacher feedback paper, two raters’ evaluation on speech, as well as students’ reflective journal entries. ANCOVA was used to test the effect of using videotaping, self-monitoring, and reflective journal writing on college students’ English speech performance.

Data Analysis

The researcher averaged the two raters’ ratings on the English speech evaluation forms in the first speech and the final speech performances to create a first speech score and a final speech score for each student. The agreement between the two raters shown in correlation coefficients was .78 for the first speech score and .82 for the final speech score. With the acceptable interrater reliability, the researcher averaged the two raters’ ratings to create a pretest score based on the first speech and a posttest score based on the final speech.

An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was computed to test the
effect of self-monitoring on students’ English speech performance with the pretest score as the covariate and the posttest score as the dependent variable. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was met, \( F(1, 40) = 1.75, \ p=.32 \). The treatment effect was significant, \( F(1, 39) = 5.8, \ p= .008 \). As predicted, students in the self-monitoring group had better English speech performance (\( M_{\text{unadjusted}} = 78.5, \ M_{\text{adjusted}} = 78.8, \ SD= 7.25 \)) than students in the control group (\( M_{\text{unadjusted}} = 63.7, \ M_{\text{adjusted}}= 63.4, \ SD= 9.3 \)).

**Discussion**

Videotaping the English speeches allows the speakers to realize what they look or sound like in the eyes and ears of their audience. The use of videotaping, self-monitoring, and reflective journal writing has greatly enhanced the quality of students’ English speeches. Practically, this research developed an instructional strategy in English speech class, actualized by videotaping, self-monitoring, and reflective journal writing, which enhanced students’ learning. Theoretically, the study enriched our understanding of the process of self-monitoring and its effects on students’ learning behavior.

Psychologists have found educational level or age is related to self-monitoring learning. Because of limited sample size, this study did not examine the interaction effect between self-monitoring and age or experience. The variables of age and level were experimentally controlled by a balanced distribution of the participants. In the future study, the researcher will treat the variables of age and experience as independent variables to examine the interaction effect between self-monitoring learning and age or educational level.
Finally, videotaping, self-monitoring, and reflective journal writing can be used not only in English speech skills training, but also in other learning tasks, such as teacher training, theatrical performance, learning of athletic and musical skills, or any other learning situations where learners’ learning and performance can be recorded on video tapes.
Improving English Speech Skills in the College Classroom through the Use of Videotaping, Self-Monitoring, and Reflective Journal Writing

References


Glenn, J. (1996). Using video to enhance content and delivery skills in the basic oral communication courses: Summarizing the uses and benefits. Paper presented at the Fall Conference of the Kentucky Communication Association, Lake Cumberland, KY.


Improving English Speech Skills in the College Classroom through the Use of Videotaping, Self-Monitoring, and Reflective Journal Writing

提升大專生英語演講技巧之研究：從錄影回饋中學習自我持續觀察與省思

徐碧靈
朝陽科技大學應用外語系

摘要

本研究旨在探討應用錄影回饋、自我持續觀察、與自我省思日誌於提升學生英語演講能力之效益。大約四十二位主修英文之大學生素與此為期約一學期之研究。

在學期初，研究者針對怯場、演講技巧、缺乏演說機會等問題和學生進行訪談以及教室觀察。研究者希望在本研究中藉由錄影技術，學生自我持續觀察上台演講的表現，針對自己所觀察到的各種演講策略使用、是否達成目標，以及演說表現的優缺點與研究者以及同儕進行討論，並書寫自我省思日誌。

本研究分為前測、演講課程訓練、以及後測三階段，為期約一學期。在演講課程訓練期間，實驗組學生同時接受自我持續學習方法之指導。本研究的資料蒐集來自研究者的觀察記錄、訪談、學生個人演講錄影、教師與同儕之回饋報告、兩位評審評量成績，以及學生之自我省思日誌。

研究文獻及本研究結果均指出此種自我學習之模式能增強學生演說能力，降低上台焦慮，並提高學習動機與信心，同時學生之間更培養出支持合作之學習氣氛。本研究嘗試發展此教學模式，將其應用在英語演講課，希望可幫助教師更瞭解學生自我持續觀察學
習之過程以及學習行為之影響。

關鍵詞：自我持續觀察、錄影、自我省思日誌、英語演講技巧