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Impacts of Extra Class Activities on Students' Listening and Speaking Skills

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Abstract:

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of extra class activities in improving students' language-listening and speaking skills. It also aimed at identifying effective extra class activities to develop students' skills. Forty students were selected using simple random sampling. The students divided in to experimental and control group. The former received the treatment (extra class activities), whereas the latter did not receive the treatment. Experimental research design was employed for the study which was mainly quantitative over qualitative techniques for triangulation purposes. The results were analyzed using independent and paired samples t-test. Questionnaires and focus group discussion also used as supplementary data collecting tools. Therefore, the qualitative data were analyzed through qualitative (Latent) content analysis. The results indicated that the students in the experimental group outperformed the students in the control group in their overall listening and speaking skills ability. The result from questionnaire, interview, and focused group discussions showed that the students have positive attitudes towards the extra class activities though there were no such activity programs in the school.

Keywords: *In this paper, the terms extra class, extracurricular, or co-curricular are interchangeably used to refer to activities done by students and teachers such as special tutor class to develop their listening and speaking skills*

1. Introduction

In the Ethiopian educational system, the learning of English begins at the elementary level and it gives different functions at various organizations. A document from the Federal Ministry of Education (MoE, 2007) reveals that English is a corner stone in the development of Ethiopia's commerce, communication systems, technology, and education. Similarly, most students are exposed to English as part of their curriculum in junior high school or even earlier in their lives (Chern, 2002).

In Lalibela preparatory school where this study conducted, all subjects have been given in English except Amharic (mother tongue). Most of the time, St. Lalibela preparatory school students were limited to engage themselves in extra class listening and speaking activities since they have little experience for those skills in extra class activities. Consequently, this lack of experience results poor listening and speaking proficiency. Based on this, when the researcher analyzed grade 11 students first semester speaking and listening skills continuous assessment result, 79% of grade 11 students scored below the average.

Studies show that over 80 percent of communication is spent in speaking and listening, which lends credence to the belief that teaching these skills is not just desirable, but critical (Benson, 2001). For instance, according to Mendelsohn (1994), 40-50% and 25-30% of the total time spent on communicating takes up listening and speaking, respectively. When we see these figures, speaking and listening are difficult skills to master when learning a foreign language such as English in a teacher-based learning environment. Here we could understand that listening and speaking are used for more than any other single language skills in normal daily life. It means that we could expect to listen twice as much as we speak, four times more than we read, and five times more than we write on average.

As Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999) pointed out that teaching English in primary and secondary education has always put more emphasis on reading and writing in preparation for various types of entrance exams. As a result, most students have difficulty in understanding and speaking English. The problem with speaking English is even more severe because students lack opportunities and motivation to speak English in everyday life and in public (Tsou, 2005). Liu (2005) also described that if students do not take extra English courses outside the official curriculum, they would only have limited experience in listening and speaking English before they join higher institution. Some would not even have the opportunity to receive further training in listening and speaking English in institution due to the limited resources of the institution.

Guest and Schneider (2003) believed that taking a look at previous studies on this subject reported that Researchers have found positive associations between extracurricular participation and academic achievement. Although researchers agree that extracurricular activities influence academic performance, the specific effect that various activities produce is

debated. One longitudinal study, conducted by the National Educational research centre of Walnut Creek (California) found that participation in some activities improves achievement, while participation in others diminishes achievement (Broh, 2002). Fung and Wong (1991) also states that although the overall correlations of involvement in extracurricular activities with academic performance and peer acceptance have not been found to be statistically significant, there is strong evidence showing that genuinely positively relations do exist between some of the sub-scales. Further studies may help to clarify these points.

The present researcher experience has noted that most students are incapable of interacting with plasma lessons and teachers (i.e cannot understand fast, natural native speakers). Students have trouble with sounds because they cannot listen the pronunciation and fear during presentation and participation. Also, students lack practice to learn listening and speaking skills inside and outside classroom to improve their poor performance which is at risk unless something is done to upgrade their listening and speaking skills.

Moreover, the present researcher has observed that extra class activities for listening and speaking skills seem to have received less emphasis except the teachers teach and the students learn those skills in a single sub-section of each unit at Lalibela preparatory school. So, the present researcher supports the view that extra class activities is one important option to consider in improving and promoting academic success of students and also it seems quite appropriate to give a room for extra class activities in order to improve listening and speaking skills. The researcher is, hence, motivated to conduct this study because of the failure to use extra class activity to teach listening and speaking skills appropriately by EFL teachers and the absence of any experimental study to test its effects in EFL classrooms in the school with related to the two skills (listening and speaking).

Therefore, with all the above insights, the present researcher found it extremely appealing to examine the impact of extra class activities at Lalibela preparatory school whether it brings a change on students' performance in their listening and speaking proficiency or not.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Influences of Extracurricular Activities and Academic Performance

Argument regarding the existence of co-curricular activities in public schools has taken place for over 100 years, with heightened debate occurring the past 25 years. According to Camp (1990), educational leaders did not generally accept supplementary activities for public school students prior to 1900.

Proponents of co-curricular activities believe co-curricular activities have played a critical role in civic and social education in high schools for more than 60 years (Kleese 1994). Opponents argue these same activities have detracted time and effort from academics and negatively impacted achievement and investment in school (Lewis, 2004). From these quotations, it is possible to figure out the way we practice and implement in governmental installation affect the social (communities) attitudes because of the failure of students' academic performance in effective and systematic organized way.

2.2. Extracurricular activities in Assisting the Learning of English as Foreign Language (EFL), and its skills

Extra class activities cover almost all sorts of field of studies including social science, real life science, humanities, language and literature, linguistics, and so on. From this, it can be understood that extra class activities can facilitate the process of EFL/ESL (English as Second Language) learning so long as they cover language. Furthermore, the fact that most of school club activities involve social gatherings makes the activities language oriented.

Speaking and listening are dynamic processes. Teachers have a significant role in providing a range of contexts for speaking and listening so that students expand their experience and knowledge. According to Nation and Newton (2009), the aims of a course in listening and speaking are: to help the learners to be able to cope with meaning-focused input and meaning-focused output as soon as possible; to motivate them in their language study by getting them to engage in successful listening and speaking; and to make the early learning as relevant as possible to their language use needs.

When the researcher observes the study area school environment, language learners do not interact with the material they are learning, and it is difficult for them to understand and integrate it. In the school, extracurricular activities do not create a rich source of environment for the purposeful practice of speaking and listening skills in order to experiment with the language and with many opportunities afforded from it such as having better grades or test scores and higher educational attainment, attending school more regularly, and having a higher self-concept. By way of conclusion, it might be stated that both listening and speaking skills performance of students and their teachers practice at Lalibela preparatory school is dependent on the belief they have about their own towards extra class activities.

2.3. Nature of Extra Class Activities

It appears that the benefits of ECAs are particularly apparent in the following areas of language learning:

2.4. ECA and Learner Motivation

Maintaining a high level of motivation in language learning is one of the strongest factors in successful language acquisition because it provides the primary impetus to initiate and sustain the driving force of second language learning (Dörnyei, 2005). Extracurricular has a vital role in building instrumental motivation, (Hudson, 2000).

2.5. ECA and Authentic Language Input Materials

Extracurricular activities offer a lot of opportunities for creating situations where real language is used, for example, with the help of authentic materials defined as materials that were not originally created for teaching purposes (Nunan, 1988).

2.6. ECA and Language Learning and Teaching Methods

The role of extra class activity very strongly depended on the way engaged in language class. In the classroom, realistic learning is seen as revolution of knowledge within the student rather than from the teacher to the learner. Nunan (1999) argued that learning to learn is more important than learning a particular chunk of subject matter.

To sum up, Student activities outside the classroom would appear more learners centered and keep the language learning more communicative. Medgyes (1986) argues that foreign language can be learnt only in real communicative situations where real messages are exchanged. Bax (2003) also assures that context of learning is all what we need to consider seriously since there are many different ways to learn languages, that the context is a crucial determiner of the success or failure of learners.

Apart from this, extracurricular activities are believed to create favorable learning conditions for students to practice all language skills, which even lay foundations for students' future career. Extra class activities create a rich source of environment for the purposeful practice of speaking and listening skills. Extra class activities are very important and essential part of an education system. The co-curriculum aspect prepares and moulds the student to be holistic. Nevertheless, from the review literature sections, most authors elucidated that more emphasis has generally been given to the curriculum aspect resulting from the students' inability to link the excellence in performance academically to the active participation in co-curricular activities.

If language learners do not interact with the extra class activities and school materials, it is difficult for them to understand and integrate it. In class where students are reluctant to speak and listen, it is often helpful to integrate a stem or other structure to encourage these skills. According to the cited authors in the above chapter, the way we implement language activities allow students of all abilities and interests to participate and make manifest language skill lessons in a fun, realistic, and right away. Therefore, the above literature review section and subsections explore the philosophy of extra class activities as well as ways to foster spontaneous speech and increase listening skills for language learners. It also indicated that extra class activities play starring roles in students' language skills improvement, and they have also been playing dominant roles in the classroom if the students engage in such activities outside the classroom. Those issues which were raised in the above main sections and subsections were a guide or indicators for language learners and teachers that introduces these supplements (extra class activities) to the language classroom.

3. Methodology

3.1. Hypothesis

- H_1 : There would be statistically significant difference between the mean score of students in the experimental and control groups in their speaking and listening tests due to the presence of extra class activities in the case of grade 11 students.
- H_0 : There would not be statistically significant difference between the mean score of students in the experimental and control groups in their speaking and listening tests due to the presence of extra class activities in the case of grade 11 students.

3.2. Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to investigate impacts of extra class activities on students' speaking and listening skills. In addition, examining what kinds of extra class activities should be given emphasis to improve students listening and speaking skills.

3.3. The Research design

To examine the impact of extra class activities, on the improvement of learners' English language skills, particularly speaking and listening skills, the researcher had chosen experimental method.

3.4. Grouping and Sampling

In this study, the researcher sampled 40 grade 11 students (for both experimental and control groups) from among 404 students. On the other hand, simple random sampling technique was employed to select subjects for the study.

3.5. Instruments

In this study, three data collection instruments (quantitative and qualitative data gathering instruments) were used. First, to obtain the necessary data, test was administered as a major data collection tool. Second, to consolidate the data gathered through testing, questionnaire was distributed to the experimental group in order to assess their reflection about the extra class activities. In addition, a focus group discussion was held with the experimental group students if they were comfortable with the extra class activities they were involved in.

The speaking proficiency and listening comprehension tests designed for both experimental and the control groups. Both of the speaking and the listening tests were adapted from standardized tests, which were prepared by Cambridge University in 1996, and also the researcher had converted the plasma video files in to listening cassette tapescripts using various software such as Video Cutter, MP₃ (Motion Picture Audio layer 3)Cutter, Video Converter....etc. Moreover, the researcher adapted ten criteria from different sources for raters (Association of Language Testers in Europe, ALTE (2012) and Brown (2000).

3.6. The Experimental Group

Since the purpose of this study is to investigate the impacts of extra class activities on students' English language skills improvement (Speaking and Listening in focus), the experimental group was provided with opportunities to be treated by various extra class activities for 25 hours. This was done besides the regular classroom instruction which each group was attending.

3.7. Data Collection and Analysis method

To analyze the data collected through the above tools, both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were employed. Here the researcher used the sequential explanatory strategies for this study of mixed method data analysis. As Sandelowski (2003) cited in Dornyei, (2007), there are two main purposes for combing methods: to achieve a fuller understanding of a target phenomenon and to verify one set of findings against the other or goal of triangulation. Therefore, even though quantitative data gathering tools were analyzed as a major, qualitative data analysis (latent content analysis) was also carried out that obtained from interviews, open ended questionnaires and focused group discussion. For the quantitative data, the statistical procedures of the sample T-tests (Independent and paired sample t-test) were used to determine if there is any difference between the overall listening and speaking skills performance of the experimental and control groups in the pretest and posttest.

4. Findings and Discussion

Group Statistics					
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Experimental	20	4.65	1.34849	.30153
	Control	20	4.40	1.04630	.23396

Table 1: Significance difference between mean scores of the control and experimental groups on listening skill pre test

The results of the pretest in table 1 indicated that the two groups obtain almost similar scores on the pre-test listening skill. The mean scores of the control and the experimental groups are 4.4 and 4.65 respectively.

Table 2: Significance of difference between mean scores of the control and experimental groups on speaking skill pretest

The following tables depicts that the mean scores of the pre speaking tests for experimental and the control group is 2.75 and 2.29 respectively. This also indicate that the pre-test mean of each of the measures of the variable for in both the experimental and control groups mean was found to be almost the same.

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	20	2.75	1.27415	.28491
Control	20	2.29	.75666	.16919

Table 2

Independent Samples Test									
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	2.789	.103	.655	38	.516	.25000	.38165	-.52261	1.02261

Table 3: Independent samples t test of the mean scores of the control and experimental groups on listening pre-test

As can be seen from the following table, the mean scores of the control and experimental groups on listening pre-test are the same. That is to say the pre-test scores ($t = .655$, $df = 38$, $p = .516$) revealed that there is no significant difference in listening skill mean scores between the two groups before the treatment. The effect size for this comparison is weak effect (0.20) which implies that the two groups have similar scores on listening skill pretest.

Independent Samples Test									
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	6.863	.013	1.378	38	.176	.45650	.33136	-.21430	1.12730

Table 4: Independent samples test of the control and experimental groups speaking skill pre Test

From the above table, it could be concluded that the pre-test mean of each of the variables in both the control and experimental groups appeared to be similar although this needs to be checked by further inferential statistics analysis. But the effect size, which is 0.37 shows that the magnitude of the difference between the control and the experimental groups is modest or small on speaking skill pretest.

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Experimental group listening pretest – control group listening pretest	.250	1.802	.403	-.593	1.093	.620	19	.543
Pair 2	Experimental group speaking pretest – control group speaking pretest	.456	1.392	.311	-.195	1.108	1.466	19	.159

Table 5: Paired samples test of the two groups for both skills pre-test results

The t -tests shown in the above table reveal that there were no significant differences between the pre-test measures of the control and experimental groups where $t = .620$ and 1.466 for the listening and speaking pretests respectively. Both of

the significance 2 tailed figures 0.543 and 0.159 surpass the p- value 0.05 and; hence, they make the differences between the two groups statistically insignificant. From this it can be concluded that the differences observed in the paired samples statistics in table 5 above are also insignificant.

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Experimental group listening posttest	5.58	20	1.591	.355
	Control group listening posttest	3.58	20	.877	.196
Pair 2	Experimental group speaking posttest	4.87	20	1.852	.414
	Control group speaking posttest	2.46	20	.767	.171

Table 6: Paired samples statistics of the two groups for the posttest results

From the above table, it can be seen that the experimental group has the mean scores of 5.58 and 4.87 in the listening and the speaking posttests respectively. On the other hand, the control group has the mean scores of 3.58 and 2.46 in the listening and speaking posttests respectively. When we see the above mentioned figures, they show that there exist differences among them. However, similar to the case in the pretest mean scores, it would not be possible to bring to a close that the observed differences are statistically significant or insignificant. Therefore, in order to make a conclusion as to whether the differences are statistically significant or not, the t-test has been computed for both the listening and speaking posttests. For that reason, Table 7 below computes the t-test values of the two skills' posttest results.

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Experimental group listening posttest – control group listening posttest	2.000	1.732	.387	1.189	2.810	5.164	19	.000
Pair 2	Experimental group speaking posttest – control group speaking posttest	2.408	1.973	.441	1.484	3.332	5.457	19	.000

Table 7: Paired samples test of the two groups for the posttest results

The table shows that the paired samples test of the two groups: the experimental and control groups. As can be seen from the above table, the t- value of the listening post test for the two groups is found to be 5.164 at $p=0.05$ where 95% is the confidence interval of the difference . From this table, we can clearly see that the significance two tailed obtained is .000. Therefore, the number .000 is less than the p-value i.e., 0.05 which makes the difference between the two groups statistically significant in their listening posttest scores. Therefore, it can be possible to conclude that the differences observed in the paired samples statistics i.e., the differences in the mean scores of the listening posttest between the two groups in table 7 above also tends to be statistically significant.

After carefully gathering the appropriate data using the three instruments of data collection, the data were analyzed in an integrated manner using different tools. Finally, based on the findings obtained, conclusions were drawn. The following were the major findings.

The findings from the test results showed that the two groups (experimental and control) were similar in their mean scores of the listening and speaking pretests, i.e., before the experiment, there were no statistically significant difference in the mean scores between the two groups in the listening and speaking pretests. On the other hand, after the experiment, there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the listening and speaking posttests among the experimental group that showed a statistically significant progress. From this it can be concluded that extra class activities tend to have a positive impact on the improvements of students' English language skills (listening and speaking skill in this case).

The finding of the data from experimental group responses of the majority of students indicate that the impact of extra class activities in improving listening and speaking skills was found to be high since almost all students have positive attitudes towards the given treatments. The qualitative data analysis of focused group discussion also showed that those students who were involved in the experimental group expressed that they enjoyed and benefited a lot from extra class activities and improved listening and speaking skills.

5. Conclusion

Following the end of the treatment, posttest was given to both groups and the t-test was used for statistical analysis of the posttest result. Accordingly, both the descriptive group statistics, the independent and paired samples t-test showed that there is statistically significant difference between the posttest performance of the study group and the control group. The mean score of the experimental group was found significantly higher than the control group. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) of this study which states that there would be a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control group students in their listening and speaking posttest results as a result of the presence of extra class activities was accepted. On the contrary, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. As a result, it is concluded that the study group performed significantly better than the control group due to the presence of various extra class activities, which were employed for 25 hours.

The responses made by the experimental group students to the questionnaire and to the group discussion questions in general showed that the student have been found to have a positive attitude towards the activities. This would be due to the ambition of the students to improve their speaking and listening skills and due to absence of the practice of such activities in the school. Despite this fact, the students are not aware that extra class activities are learner lead ones that they were seen to foreword the blame to the school and their teachers for the absence of such activity programmes in the school. In summary, based on the data analysis of students (tests, questionnaire, and discussion) and English teachers (questionnaire and interview), extra class activities have a positive impact on in improving students listening and speaking skills.

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