

## Enhancing EFL learners' Oral Aural skills through language laboratory facilities

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### **ABSTRACT :**

The lack of using language laboratories effect on teaching and learning English oral aural skills. This study aims at determining the relationship between language labs and the ways of teaching English oral aural skills. Three subject groups represent different situations were selected for investigation. Two instruments for data collection and statistical analysis to gain results were used. These instruments are tests and questionnaires. Certain procedures were followed in applying the questionnaire and conducting the oral aural tests. The two scales of reliability and validity of the tests were used to achieve consistent answers. The above instruments helped draw significant findings. These findings proved the importance of enhancing EFL learners' oral aural skills through language laboratories facilities and explained the relationship among language laboratories and the effective ways of teaching English oral aural skills. Also the study emphasized that most of pronunciation difficulties can be solved by teaching listening skill through effective instruments such as language labs.

**Keywords:** *Audio aids, Visual aids, Audio visual aids.*

### **المستخلص :**

قلة استخدام معامل اللغات يؤثر على المهارات النطقية السمعية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. تهدف الدراسة الى تحديد العلاقة بين معامل اللغات وطرق تدريس المهارات النطقية السمعية. لإجراء الدراسة تم اختيار ثلاث مجموعات دراسية. ادايتين لجمع البيانات وتحليل الإحصائي للحصول على النتائج. تمحورت الاداتين حول الاختبارات والاستبيان. صاحب استخدام هاتين الاداتين بعض الاجراءات لإجراء الدراسة. ساعدت هاتان الاداتان في الحصول على نتائج مهمة اثبتت اهمية تقوية المهارة النطقية السمعية لطلاب اللغة الانجليزية من خلال استخدام معامل اللغات كما اوضحت العلاقة بين معامل اللغات والطرق الفعالة لتدريس المهارات النطقية السمعية كما تم التوصل الى ان معظم المشاكل النطقية السمعية في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية يمكن ان تحل من خلال استخدام معامل اللغة الانجليزية.

### **INTRODUCTION :**

In learning a language, people listen then speak and later learn to read and

write. This sequence clearly shows the importance of aural skill in learning the

oral skill. The first step of learning a language in normal circumstances is to listen to the target language. O'Connor (1981: 1) mentions that "*language starts with the ear, when a baby starts to talk; he does it by hearing the sound of his parent and imitating them*". In another side, the four skills of a language: listening, speaking, writing and reading develop each other. In other words, what you learn and practice through the exercise of one skill is reinforced through further activities related to other skills. This point shows the integration of the language four skills. In English, as explained above, there is a strong relation between aural skill and the practical side of oral skill which is considered pronunciation. According to scholars' previous writing, and from my point of view, I think that the way you listen is the way you pronounce. This study investigates the negative effects of lack of using language labs for teaching the oral aural skills on Sudanese Schools (SS) in one side, and the role of effective teaching of listening skill in teaching pronunciation in the other side. Elements such as sound patterns, stress, intonation and the features of connected speech are very difficult to be mastered through the theoretical study of pronunciation. O'Connor (1980-79) states the following:

Vowels must be learnt by listening and imitating : I could tell that the English vowel /ɔ/: as the word saw is made by rounding the lips and placing the back of the tongue in a position

mid-way between the highest possible and the lowest possible positions, but it would be much more helpful if I could simply say the sound for you and get you to imitate.

Therefore, the study treats pronunciation from a practical point of view not a theoretical view. This treatment necessitates teaching pronunciation through listening by using effective equipment such as language lab. According to Al-Araby (1983: 89)" a language laboratory provides facilities for the practical application of what has theoretically been explained in the classroom". This enables learners to be ready to learn better features of pronunciation.

The researcher thinks that pronunciation is considered the practical side of spoken language. Spoken language consists of successions of sounds emitted by the organs of speech. According to Jones (1975: 1) "*these successions of sounds are composed of speech sounds and glides*". Jones (1975: 1) adds that:

"Speech sounds are certain acoustic effects voluntarily produced by the organs of speech; they are the result of definite actions performed by these organs. A glide is the incidental transitory sound produced when the organs of speech are passing from the position for one speech – sound to that of another by the most direct route"

He adds that:

"speech sounds are made voluntarily; they require that the speech organs shall be placed in certain positions or moved in certain ways. On the other hand the speaker glides occur as a result of pronouncing two speech sounds one after the other".

This researcher thinks that learners need a complete description of pronunciation in order to tackle its elements. This complete description necessitates describing phonetics and phonology and their elements. Although the two terms phonetics and phonology are different, they integrate each other, especially, in studying pronunciation or the practical side of human speech sounds production. Giving a complete description of pronunciation necessitates describing phonetics and phonology and their elements. In other words, a complete description of articulatory aspects of speech sounds production and the nature of the vocal apparatus during speaking in one side, and the rules that govern the system and patterns of speech sounds in the other side.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study attempts to investigate the impact of language labs on the performance of oral aural skills. The study is significant for the fact that it:

- a. Investigates the availability of language labs in Sudanese secondary schools.
- b. Draws the attention of teachers of English, learners and

officials to the importance of language labs.

- c. Explores the extent of English oral aural skills in Sudanese schools.
- d. Introduces the features of English aural oral skills which can be taught via language labs.
- e. Draws the attention of the English language teachers to the influence of the effective ways of teaching aural skill on teaching oral skill.

### **Materials and methods**

#### **Subjects**

This study was conducted in Khartoum state, Khartoum province. The population of the study was the students of Khartoum Secondary School for boys. Students in this school as in other schools study general subjects such as: Biology, Physics, History, Geography, etc. All the students in this school share the same circumstances such as: The academic year, the academic system, the number of subjects and the number of classes.

Commonly, the study selected some students as a sample. Specifically some students of the first year secondary were chosen to participate. The selection was according to the physical and cognitive growth. All the students study English language without concentrating on specific skills or in a balanced way. Moreover, they are native speakers of Arabic language with regard to a few number of learners who may have some local or tribal languages.

Two equal groups were involved in data collection procedures. The

experimental group and the teachers' group. Each group consisted of 30 members. The experimental group was from the same grade (The students of the first year secondary school), and the members of the group was male, age between 14 to 16 years. They belonged to one grade, too. The teachers' group also consisted of 30 teachers of English from different schools. All of them were male with different age.

### **Instruments**

In order to collect the data, the following instruments were employed in this study:

#### **The Oral Aural skills Test**

This test includes two tests:

##### **a) Oral test**

To obtain practical samples of data, an oral test was conducted. The purpose of this test was to limit the level of students' skills and the influence of language laboratories on producing the target sounds. To obtain these goals, the test consisted of simple words and sentences that were selected on the basis of frequency and recognition. Some phonological terms were used to direct and draw the attention to the points being tested.

The test consisted of four questions, each question consisted of five branches. The first question consisted of lists contained words chosen on the basis of the degree of pronunciation difficulty. These lists focus on allophones and silent letters. The second question consisted of lists focus on double consonants, double vowels and consonants and vowels sequences. The third question consisted of short simple sentences focus on intonation,

weak and strong forms, the place of stress. The fourth question included some sentences tested the features of connected speech such as: assimilation, elision, linking and rhythm. The mentioned lists consisted of items from the most problematic areas in pronunciation and they require intensive practice for the sake of tackling and controlling them.

The above-mentioned items attributed to aspects of pronunciation that need a high concentration for mastering them. Knowledge of phonetics and phonology may be useless in the case of school students learning English as a foreign language but listening effectively to the different features of pronunciation of English.

##### **b) Aural test**

An aural test was also conducted to obtain practical samples of data. To limit the level of students' aural skills and the influence of language laboratories on listening to the target sounds. To obtain these goals, the test consisted of simple words and sentences that were selected to listen from the native speaker directly. Some phonological terms were used to direct and draw the attention to the points being tested.

The test consisted of four questions; each question consisted of five branches. The first question consisted of lists contained words chosen on the basis of the degree of listening difficulty. The second question consisted of lists focus on double consonants, double vowels and consonants and vowels sequences. The third question consisted of short simple sentences focus on intonation, weak

and strong forms, the place of stress. The fourth question included some sentences tested the features of connected speech such as: assimilation, elision, linking and rhythm. The mentioned lists consisted of items from the most problematic areas in listening and they require intensive practice for the sake of tackling and controlling them.

The above-mentioned items attributed to aspects of listening that need a high concentration for mastering them.

### **The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire consisted of twelve points. These points investigated oral aural skills difficulties of Sudanese Students, the importance of using effective tools in teaching oral aural skills such as language laboratories in teaching pronunciation of English, and the influence of lack of using language labs on students learning oral aural skills of English.

These points were conducted in a questionnaire to collect data from teachers from different schools. This questionnaire confirms on the influence of language labs on handling the required features of better oral aural skills in a kind of accuracy and fluency. Besides, it contained points to explore the role of effective teaching on learning a language as a foreign language and its oral aural skills in particular.

To achieve these goals, special attention was paid to the language

used. The questions were sequenced in a manner as each question was put on a single line while the choices were distributed on two lines. They were put according to the alphabetical order of (a) – (b) - (c) – (d) and (e) with a box in front of each choice. Teachers should choose only support, oppose or withdraw. Besides withdrawing, supporting response contained two choices: agree and strongly agree, and opposing contained the choices: disagree and strongly disagree. This way of organization helped the study in saving time and effort in conducting as well as extracting results.

### **Data analysis**

In this study, there are two instruments for data collection. First, oral aural skills tests were designed to measure the actual levels of learners' performance. This oral aural skills tests were in a forms of a pre-test and post - test. Second, a questionnaire was designed to collect data about enhancing EFL learners' oral aural skills through language labs facilities.

### **Pre-oral test**

It was administered to the experimental group before the participants went over the training program. The study documented the performance of the participants to compare it with their performance in the post-test to see if there is a significant progress or not.

**Table (1) Total marks of the pre oral test**

Question No	Percent		
	Correct Answer	Incorrect answer	Total
1	44.25 %	55.75 %	100%
2	46.975 %	53.025%	100%
3	42.6%	57.4%	100%
4	45.35%	54.65%	100%
Total	45%	55%	100%

The purpose of making this table is to show the pre oral test results of the experimental group . the total average of the correct questions and incorrect questions. The responses showed that the total average of learners' correct answers was 45% while 55 % for incorrect answers. That means the experimental group members faced difficulties in pronouncing most of

English pronunciation elements. That proved the study's viewpoint that learners faced difficulties in oral skills.

**Post oral test**

After the experimental group had gone over a training program for three month through the language lab, the same pre oral test was administered to the group again.

**Table (2) Total marks of the post oral test**

Question No	Percent		
	Correct Answer	Incorrect answer	Total
1	93.6%	6.4%	100%
2	93.8%	6.2%	100%
3	91.2%	8.8%	100%
4	92.6%	7.4%	100%
Total	93%	7%	100%

The purpose of making this table is to show the total average of the correct and incorrect results of the experimental group. The responses showed that the average of learners' correct answers was 93% while 7% for incorrect answers. Comparing this table with the pre-test, the study finds that there is a difference between the two results. That means the use of language labs affects positively on the learners' pronunciation of different oral

skills elements. That means the result enhances the study's viewpoint by showing positive variables towards the influence of language labs in teaching oral skills.

Generally, the oral test revealed that positive teaching of language labs contribute to the development of the students' oral skills. Therefore, the hypotheses that were set to answer the main study questions have been validated and confirmed.

**Pre aural test**

It is administered to the experimental group before the participants went over the training program. The study

documented the performance of the participants to compare it with their performance in the post-test to see if there is a significant progress or not.

Table (3) Total marks of the pre aural test

Question No	Percent		
	Correct Answer	Incorrect answer	Total
1	41 %	59 %	100%
2	42 %	58%	100%
3	39%	61%	100%
4	40%	60%	100%
Total	41%	59%	100%

The purpose of making this table is to show the pre-test results of the experimental group and the total average of the correct questions and incorrect questions. The responses shows that the total average of learners' correct answers was 41% while 59 % for incorrect answers. That

means the experimental group members face difficulties in the aural skills.

**Post aural test**

After the experimental group had gone over a training program of using language lab, the same pre-aural test was administered to the group again.

Table (4) Total marks of the post aural test

Question No	Percent		
	Correct Answer	Incorrect answer	Total
1	93%	7%	100%
2	93.8%	6.2%	100%
3	92.3%	7.7%	100%
4	93.1%	6.9%	100%
Total	93%	7%	400%

The purpose of making this table is to show the total average of the correct questions and incorrect questions and the post test results of the experimental group. The responses shows that the average of learners' correct answers was 93% while 7% for incorrect answers. Comparing this table with the

pre-test, the study finds that there is a difference between the two results. That means the use of language labs affects positively on the learners' aural skills. That means the result enhanced the viewpoint of the study by showing positive variables towards the

influence of language labs in teaching different elements of aural skills.

### The Questionnaire

This instrument was done by a group of teachers of English language from different schools. It was intended to explain the responses of the teachers

Table (5) Total percentages of positive, negative and neutral variables of the questionnaire parts. SA= Strongly Agree. A= Agree. N = Neutral. S.D = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree.

Part No	Percentage					
	Positive Variables		Neutral	Negative Variables		
	S.A	A	N	S.D	D	Total
1	36.75%	45 %	4.25%	4.25%	9.75	100%
2	33.75%	44.25%	5%	4.5%	12.5%	100%
3	40%	50%	3%	1.75%	5.25%	100%
Total	110.5%	139.25 %	12.25%	10.5%	27.5%	300%

The purpose of making this table is to show the results of the teachers group attitudes towards the subjects of the parts of the questionnaire. The responses showed that the average of teachers' positive variables was 83.25% while 16.25% for negative variables. This table showed the total percentages between the questionnaire's parts. It enhanced the hypotheses of the study, and proved and the viewpoint of the study.

### Results

The researcher conducted his investigation under the following categories:

1- The role of the effective ways of teaching oral aural skill in solving listening and pronunciation difficulties.

towards three main topics: Difficulties of Sudanese students with oral aural skills of English, the role of effective ways of teaching aural skills and the influence of language laboratories on teaching English oral skills.

2- The influence of using language laboratories on teaching oral aural skills. The results were compared to examine the achievements of the study hypotheses at the level of the existence of Students oral aural skills difficulties, less oral aural skills difficulties of learners who use LL in learning English and the positive influence of its using the learning oral aural skills.

3- One of the reasons of oral aural skills problems is lack of using audio and audio-visual aids in teaching.

4- Effective teaching of aural skill can lead students solve most of oral skills problems.

5- LLs have a very important role in teaching English in general and oral aural skills in particular.



6- LLs raise students' motivation and interest. This increases students' obtain knowledge.

7- LLs help students to develop themselves by activating self-learning process.

8- LLs affect teaching of English oral aural skills positively.

9- Students who use LLs in learning oral aural skills are better than those who do not.

### Discussion

The results displayed the fact that, in all cases the experimental group has progress in learning. The experimental group that learned English by using language labs faced less pronunciation problems and was able to pronounce more accurate and fluent utterances. These were shown by the results provided by subjects as well as the improvement in their performance.

The difference between the pre and post-test in the experimental group in terms of using language labs in learning English in general and oral aural skills in particular was clearly reflected in the degree of accuracy and fluency in listening and pronunciation. That means, the experimental group was able to benefit of the circumstances provided by language labs such as motivation and concern for good oral aural skills, teaching strategies, teaching methods, social interaction and good surrounding environment of the learning situation. All these factors made a close connection between learners in one side and the aspects of native speakers oral aural skills in the other side.

Referring to the oral aural test results and the teachers' attitudes towards the questionnaire parts, the study finds that

LL affects learners positively. In other words, learners who use LL in teaching English face less difficulty than those who do not. Also, many of oral aural skills difficulties of Sudan Students can be solved by using effective ways such as LL. In the same time many oral aural skills difficulties happens because of lack of using LL.

This study emphasized that most of oral skills can be solved by teaching aural skills through effective instruments such as language labs. In other words, the extent to which learners succeed in producing accurate target utterances depends mainly on acquiring pronunciation through listening to native speakers using effective ways. That means obtaining better features of oral aural skills from tapes or compact disks previously prepares by native speakers or well qualified second language speakers or teachers, and using effective tools such as language labs in teaching, developed learners' accuracy and fluency.

To sum up, the study achieved the researcher objectives, answered its questions and proved its hypotheses. The findings succeeded in drawing attention to the influence of using language labs on teaching English language in general and Oral Aural skills in particular. This influence because language labs increased learners' phonological knowledge as well as phonological competence. The result of this increase was the ability to master the target oral aural skills.

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