

Full Length Research Paper

Effectiveness of active learning strategy in improving the acoustic awareness skills and understanding what is heard by the basic stage students in Jordan

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This research aims to get acquainted with the effectiveness of the active learning strategy in improving the acoustic awareness skills and understanding what is heard by the basic stage students in Jordan by answering the two following questions: This research has been applied to a sample of 60 students from the basic third grade in Al-Ahnaf Ben Qais school in Amman, this school is purposefully selected because of the location being close to the researcher, and its administration and teachers cooperation with the researcher. Two branches were randomly selected, one experimental and the other is control, each branch consisted of 30 students. Referring to the theoretical literature and previous studies and the researcher experience, the researcher developed two tests to measure the acoustic awareness skills and understanding what heard skill is. It is clear from Table 1 that the mean of the experimental group individuals was up to 16.27 with standard deviation of 1.84, and for the control group, the mean was up to 12.23 with standard deviation of 2.58, to determine whether the difference between the means with statistically significance, t-test is performed for two independent samples, the results were presented in Table 2. It is clear from Table 2 that (t) statistical value was up to 4.04 which was significant at 0.05 level and less, and when reviewing the means, it became clear that the mean of the experimental group was up to 16.27, while the mean of the control group individuals was up to 12.23, this indicates that there is an effect on the experimental treatment in developing the level of understanding of what is heard.

Key words: Active learning, acoustic awareness skill, basic stage students, learning strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Education aims at the first place to help the learners in integrating comprehensive growth through the learning system in all of its components - the teacher, the learner, curriculum, the surrounding environment, teaching strategies, and through the functional interaction between

the teacher as a leader and the counselor; the simplifier in the learning teaching situation, and the learner as the beneficiary, the participant and the targeted from the educational process, and the curriculum - in its wide meaning - as the mirror that reflects the society's goals

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and conditions, and interpret its systems, trends, and its political and economic attitudes under which the generation shadowed. Education in the present contemporary societies considers an organized and meaningful process and active instrument in preparing the qualified human for life, through developing the individual's personality from all sides, and correcting his behavior to achieve his interest and happiness, and contributes to the development and progress of the society. Education in this meaning considers effective human activity since the society greatly depends on education, it is the means for his survival, continuity, development and advancement, since development and progress are deeply rooted in the individual's life (Rozon, 2007).

Lorenzen (2006) found out that the active learning is a way of students teaching allowing them to effectively participate in the activities that takes place inside the classroom. This participation takes them beyond the role of the passive listener individual who basically writes the notes, to a person who makes the initiative in the different activities with his peers through the learning teaching process inside the classroom. The teacher role here in lecturing is less, and directs the students to discover the educational materials that leads to more understanding in the scholastic curriculum, since active learning activities include a set of different teaching methods and techniques, such as the use of small group discussion, roles playing, making different research projects and asking multi-level questions, the first and basic goal of all these activities encourage the students to be self-learners under the teacher's supervision. The importance of the active learning emerges as showed by Abu-Ra'yash (2006) in its ability to form the learners previous knowledge through the active learning when learning new knowledge, this agrees with the perception that inducing the knowledge is the necessary condition for the learning. Learners through the active learning reach meaningful solutions to the problems, because they link the new knowledge or solutions to their familiar ideas and procedures. Without using the solutions of other persons, learners through the active learning receive enough enforcement about their understanding of the new knowledge and the need to reach an output to express an idea through the active learning, this forces the learners to get information from previous knowledge may be from more than one topic, then connecting them.

Active learning shows the learners their ability to learn without the help from authority, and this enhances their self-confidence and independence, and most of the learners prefer to be active during the learning process. Sa'adeh et al. (2006) study on active learning goals are: Encouraging the students to acquire many critical thinking skills when those students experience different educational experiences individually or in group, or in under their teacher's supervision and direction. This will

make them acquire the inference and distinguish skills, which are the critical thinking skills, and encouraging the students to use critical reading, since the many activities they perform may direct them carefully to investigate what they are reading, understanding its meaning very well, and asking many questions about it, and also to increase their understanding and build on it new ideas and opinions with the cooperation of their colleagues, and under their teacher's supervision.

Diversifying the relevant educational activities for the students to achieve the desired educational goals

The nature of the active learning gives way for the diversification in the activities relevant to the students' needs, interests, abilities and attitudes, these cannot be met except with the presence of many activities from different sources and origins. All languages including English language are voices, and voice is the heard effect results from the vibration of the vocal cords, and the passage of air through the mouth and nose. Voice is characterized by being high, low, wide and narrow, and by voice the human is able to express himself and to determine his psychological attitudes towards the things and persons. The voice is also use to influence others by controlling the voice degree according to the meaning and the receptions status. The process of generating acoustics stimulates different situations like reading, speaking, singing and employing it in a relevant way (Al-Hazemi, 2002). Also, the acoustic stimulates have semantic function, through them it is possible to explain the speech's different meanings and semantics, and clarifying them, and these two functions are integrated. Language scientists see the rhythm as a mode of controlling modes in the voice layer (Al-Sayed, 2003).

Ability to read depends on two basic processes for the child to be a good reader, these processes are the ability to distinguish the voice and the ability to make formative distinguishing, since the words meanings and sounds link together because the sound is the smallest acoustic unit able to change the meaning (Al-Amayreh and Hamdan, 2006). The term awareness of the linguistic sounds also contains knowledge about the letters sounds individually and collectively which means the ability of the student to make the fit between the sound and the letter, this should be taken into account when teaching. Also, the teacher should perceive that children come to the first grade or before it with different levels of awareness about the sounds, while others are unaware of any acoustic part in the word and others may have awareness about the syllabus (Aw'ad and Babli, 2010). Listening as mentioned by many language experts is a mental activity that enables the students at the different stages especially in the first three grades to practice the deliberate listening, and also to pay attention to the heard material, focusing

on it to be able to understand it through the received message.

Madkour (2007) mentioned that listening is an art that consists of complex processes and are interrelated, it is not only a receiving process since it is a process through which the listener pays intentional interests and care to what his ears are receiving being it sounds and linguistic symbols. Repetition will not become useful without training on sound practices to implant these correct responses and fixing them (AL-Dosari, 2000). Since teaching the learners is not a one way thing because of the individual difference, this represents the biggest obstacle for achieving the desired goals, the issue requires the necessity for making new educational strategies and approaches far away from the traditional approaches, and based on educational theories and methods (Rosset, 2002). The huge development in information and communication technology, and its multi capabilities in developing and creating educational strategies and approaches are consider as an issue imposing great importance (Fox et al., 2003). From these considerations, this research comes to get acquainted with the effectiveness of active learning in improving the acoustic awareness skills and understanding the heard by the basic grade students in Jordan.

Research problem

Research problem stems from the suffering of some students in the basic education stage from weakness in their listening skills, and weakness in their abilities to distinguish between the sounds of close letters in the text, or distinguishing between the words` sounds, and distinguishing between the acoustic pictures of the linguistic modes such as the command, prohibition, astonishment calling, negation and other modes which leads to weakness in communication with other speakers, and misunderstanding the receivable acoustic message. The researcher noticed the weak interest from the first grades teachers` part in these skills which has led to their weakness in linguistic communication from one side, and attaining the understanding and the interaction from the other side. So, the natural reaction to this problem represents in achievement weakness the scholastic and educational materials. Although, the idea of the active learning initial appearance in its early form, appeared in the beginning of the 1980s of the 20th century. The educators focused on it at greater degree during the 1990s, but its application in the educational fields remained limited. Sa`adeh et al. (2006) stated that the active learning expresses a way of learning and teaching at the same time, in which the students participate very actively in the activities and the exercises through diverse and rich educational environment which enables them to listen positively and think rationally, and deep

contemplation about everything they write between each other with the presence of the teacher who encourages them to hold the responsibility for their self-teaching under his precise supervision. The researcher tried the active learning to know its effect in improving the acoustic awareness skills and understanding what is heard by the basic stage students in Jordan.

Significance of the research

The significance of the present research emerges from the topic's importance that it deals with, so it is hopeful to contribute to the following advantages:

- 1). Benefiting the teachers by adopting the active learning strategies and principles in teaching.
- 2). This research might contribute to reduce the students weakness in the acoustic awareness skills and understanding what is heard.
- 3). Making the educational institutions in Jordan aware of the importance of the active learning and its components.
- 4). Encouraging the researchers to conduct more studies that address the active learning strategy in the teaching process.

Research objective

This research aims to get acquainted with the effectiveness of the active learning strategy in improving the acoustic awareness skills and understanding what is heard by the basic stage students in Jordan by answering the two following questions:

Research questions

- 1). What is the effect of the active learning strategy in improving the acoustic awareness skills of the basic third grade students in Jordan?
- 2). What is the effect of active learning strategy in improving the listening comprehension skills of the basic third stage students in Jordan?

Research hypothesis

This research attempted to test the validity of the following two hypothesis:

- 1). There is no difference with statistically significance at level $\alpha=0.05$ between the means of the research samples between individuals in the third grade students in the acoustic awareness skills test attributes to the type of the teaching strategy (active learning / normal).

2). There is no difference with the statistically significance at level $\alpha=0.05$ between the means of the research sample's between individuals in the basic third grade students in understanding what is heard test attributes to the kind of the teaching strategy (active learning / normal).

Research determinants and limits

The research is limited to:

Human limits - third grade students in Amman Directorate of Education.

Spatial limits - Amman Directorate of Education.

Temporal limits Scholastic term 2016.

Generalization of the research's results is determined by its human, spatial and temporal limits and by the degree of the research instrument of validity, stability and objectivity of the research sample of individuals' response.

Procedural definitions

Active learning strategy: it is an organized process for teaching the basic third grade students in a form that enables them to effectively participate in the activities conducted inside the classroom, this participation takes them beyond the role of the passive listener person who writes down the notes to a person who starts the initiative in the different activities made with his peers during the learning teaching process inside the classroom, and practices the thinking, analyzing and inference. The role of the teacher directs the students to explore the educational materials that lead to understanding the introduced topic.

Acoustic awareness skills: The ability of the basic third grade students to perceive the voices of the linguistic units, letters words sentences, the linguistics modes, and to know their semantics through this awareness of the voices of these units, as measured by the test prepared by the researcher.

Skills of understanding what is heard: It is the ability of the basic third grade students to perform linguistic mental performance in understanding what the heard material contains that represents the basic and secondary ideas, and identifying the beginnings and the ends, and evaluating what is heard. This skill is measured by the test prepared by the researcher.

Literature review

The illustration of the related literature review with the present research variables are:

Mestree (2006) conducted a study which aims to build a strategy based program on meta-cognitive and measuring its effectiveness to develop the critical listening skills, and the literature testing of the basic ninth grade students. The semi-experimental method is used in applying the educational program, the study individuals number reached 120 male and female students, the results showed the presence of differences with statistical significance at level $\alpha=0.05$ in the students' performance on the critical listening skills test (total degree) and on each skill of these skills. Also, the results showed the presence of differences with statistical significance at level $\alpha=0.05$ in the critical listening skills test on the total degree attribute to the interaction between the method and gender, in favor of the females. Farfoara (2008) conducted a study which aims to determine the effectiveness of an educational strategy based on the active learning in achieving the critical concepts of the secondary stage students in Jordan. Study individuals consisted of 130 male and female students of the first secondary students, the branches were distributed randomly into two groups to achieve the study goals. The researcher prepared a test for literature critique and grammar test, the study concluded that there is an effect on the educational strategy based on the active learning in the achievement of the individuals who were taught by this strategy and in favor of the experimental group.

In a study conducted by Al-Astal (2010), the study aimed to investigate the effect of applying two strategies for the active learning in the basic ninth grade students achievements in the history subject and in developing their critical thinking. Study sample is limited to three groups, using the random method results revealed the superiority of the active discussion strategy over the directed (modified) lecture strategy, and the normal method in the achievement and critical thinking, and the superiority of the directed (modified) lecture strategy over the normal method in the achievement and critical thinking of the basic ninth grade students. Awad and Babeli (2010) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a cognitive training program in developing the acoustic awareness skills of a sample of children suffering from learning difficulties in reading, and the effect of the program in increasing their reading speed, study sample consisted of 31 students from the fourth grade at Bilad Al-Rabah school in Qatar. The study used the acoustic awareness test for the children, and testing the reading speed and a training program to develop the acoustic awareness skill. The study recorded the differences with statistical significance at post-performance on the acoustic awareness test and in favor of the experimental group, and differences with statistically significance in the post-performance on reading speed test in favor of the experimental group.

Al Odwan (2012) investigated the effect of the directed reading thinking activity through using cooperative

learning on English secondary stage students' reading comprehension in Jordan. This study answered the following research question: What is the effect of the directed reading thinking activity through cooperative learning on English secondary stage students' reading comprehension in Jordan? The subjects of the study were chosen purposefully from public schools in Amman Second Directorate of Education. It consisted of 42 students who were enrolled in two sections in one school. The experimental group encompassed 22 students and the control group encompassed 20 students. The teaching program was based on a strategy which included the direct reading thinking activity through using cooperative learning designed to teach four units to the experimental group. The units were taken from the English course textbook "Jordan Opportunities" prescribed for the Eleventh Grade in Jordanian public schools during the second semester of the scholastic year 2007/2008. The same units were taught to the control group through the traditional strategy. For the purpose of the current study the researcher used: A reading comprehension test. Means, standard deviations and analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) were used to reveal the findings of the study which were as follows: There is a statistically significant difference at $\alpha=0.05$ in reading comprehension in favor of the experimental group among English secondary stage students in Jordan due to the instructional strategy. At the end of this study, the researcher proposed several recommendations and suggestions.

This study was carried out to investigate the level of students' awareness of the self-monitoring strategy of reading comprehension skills in Jordan and its relationship with the desire to learn. The sample of the study was selected purposefully and consisted of 523 students from the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades for the second semester 2011/2012. The researchers had developed two questionnaires; one for the self-monitoring and the other one for the desire to learn. The results of this study showed that the level of the desire to learn was high among the students while self-monitoring strategy for learning to read was moderate. Also, there were statistically significant differences between self-monitoring strategy and the desire to learn due to sex variable in favor of females. Also, the results indicated that there was a positive correlation between self-monitoring and the desire to learn while there was no difference in the strength of the relation due to grade or the educational level of parents, Lubbad (2013) investigated the effectiveness of a multimedia based learning program on developing seventh graders' listening comprehension skills and attitudes in Gaza governorate. The target skills were four listening sub skills (understanding the main idea, pointing out specific details, deducing meaning of an unfamiliar lexical item from the listening text and inferring the moral lesson of

the listening text). To achieve this aim, the researcher selected a representative sample of 86 EFL female students studying at Al Mamounja Prep girls school which is run by UNRWA in the Gaza strip. The participants were divided into two equal groups: a control group, 43 students and an experimental one, 43 students. The instruments were, an achievement test, an attitude scale and an interview. The achievement test was used as a pre test to prove groups equivalence. Moreover, it was used as a post test to measure any possible differences between the target groups. The collected data were analyzed and treated statistically through the use of SPSS. The attitude scale was used to measure students attitudes toward listening skill before and after conducting the multimedia program.

In addition, the interview was used for low achievers whose writing ability was weak at the end of each English listening class to be sure from their understanding to the listening comprehension text. The findings indicated that there were statistically significant differences between both groups, in favor of the experimental one, in understanding the main idea, pointing out specific details, deducing meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from the listening text and inferring the moral lesson of the listening text due to the program implemented. In addition, implementing the effect size equation, the results revealed that the program had a large effect size in favor of the experimental group. In the light of those findings, the researcher recommended the necessity of implementing multimedia program in teaching English listening comprehension. Also, the researcher suggested that further researches should be conducted on the effects of multimedia program on developing different English language Skills and in other fields of educational activities. Jawarneh et al. (2014) investigated the effect of the Monro and Slater strategy and the McFarland strategy in developing the critical thinking skills of eighth-grade students in Jordan. The sample consisted of 209 eighth-grade students, divided into three groups: two experimental and one control. The California Achievement Test was used to measure critical thinking skills. The results of the study indicated significant differences between the control and experimental groups in favor of students in the experimental groups who studied via distinguishing between reality and opinion. The study concludes by offering a number of theoretical and practical implications for the field of study. Such implications include incorporating critical thinking skills in courses and providing training for teachers on how to use such strategies when teaching courses.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The researcher depended on the semi-experimental method through selecting the experimental and control group to test the research hypothesis which aimed to get acquainted with the

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the scores of the experimental and control group individuals on understanding what is heard test.

The group	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Experimental	30	16.27	1.84
Control	30	12.23	2.58

effectiveness of the active learning strategy in improving the acoustic awareness skills and understanding what is heard of the basic stage students in Jordan .

Research individuals

This research has been applied to a sample of 60 students from the basic third grade in Al-Ahnaf Ben Qais school in Amman, the school is purposefully selected because of the location near to the researcher, and its administration and teachers cooperation with the researcher. Two branches were randomly selected, one experimental and the other is control, each branch consisted of 30 students.

Research instruments

Referring to the theoretical literature and previous studies and the researcher experience, researcher developed two tests to measure the acoustic awareness skills and understanding what is heard skills.

Statistical treatment

The researcher used the relevant descriptive and analytical statistical methods available in (SPSS) program statistical package for social sciences to answer the research's questions and testing its hypotheses which are:

- 1). Frequencies and percentages.
- 2). Means and standard deviations.
- 3). One way ANOVA.
- 4). Pearson correlation coefficient.
- 5). t-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of each hypothesis

First hypothesis which states

There is no difference with statistically significance at level $\alpha=0.05$ between the means of the study sample individuals in acoustic awareness skills attribute to the type of teaching strategy (Active learning / Normal). To answer this hypothesis, means and standard deviations were calculated for the individuals in the control and experimental group as shown in Table 1. It is clear from Table 1 that the mean of the experimental group

individuals reached 16.27 with standard deviation (1.84) and for the control group the mean reached 12.23 with standard deviation (2.58), to determine the difference between the means with statistically significance, t-test is performed for two independent samples as presented in Table 2. It is clear from Table 2 that (t) statistical value reached 4.04 which was significant at 0.05 level and less, and when reviewing the means, it became clear that the mean of the experimental group reached 16.27, while the mean of the control group individuals reached 12.23, this indicates that there is an effect of the experimental treatment in developing the level of understanding what is happened.

This can be explained that the students in the experimental group benefited from the new teaching strategy (active learning) which was considered as one of the newest strategies through employing a number of skills that help the students progress in the learning and transferring the effect of learning and acquiring the concepts facts and instructions. In a relevant way, this confirms the importance of employing new strategies which aim to help the students in increasing their achievement, and acquiring the ability to adjust with the science requirements, and developing their thinking to enable them to move to higher levels of learning compared to the individuals in the control group taught by the traditional method which did not improve their ability to increase achievement and developing their acoustic awareness skills. This result agrees with the result obtained by Farfoara (2008) study which showed the presence of effect of the educational strategy based on the active learning in the achievement of the individuals taught by this strategy and in favor of the experimental group, and differ with the results of Tuckman (2001) study that showed that the students statistically significance reduced regarding the active learning and the achievements they made.

Second hypothesis which states

There is no difference with statistically significance at significance ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of the research sample individuals in understanding what is heard test attributes to the teaching strategy (Active learning / Normal). To answer this hypothesis, means and standard deviations of the experimental and control groups

Table 2. T-test results of two independent samples for the difference between the control and experimental group individuals in the level of understanding what is heard.

T-value	Degree of freedom	Significance	Critical value
4.04	58	0.00	1.97

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of the scores of the individuals in the experimental and control groups on understanding what is heard test.

The group	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Experimental	30	16.85	1.81
Control	30	11.43	1.49

Table 4. T-test results for two independent samples of the differences between the experimental and control group individuals in understanding what is heard.

T-value	Freedom degree	Significance	Critical value
11.20	58	0.00	1.97

individuals were calculated as shown in Table 3. Table 3 shows that the mean of the control group individuals reached 11.43 with standard deviation of 1.49, and the means of the experimental group individuals reached 16.85 and standard deviation (1.81), and to determine whether the difference between the means with statistical significance, t-test is performed for two independent samples, the results are shown in Table 4. It is clear from Table 4 that (t) statistical value reached 11.20 which is significant at level 0.05 and less, and when reviewing the means, it became clear that the mean of the experimental group is 16.84, while the mean of the control group reached 11.43, this indicates the presence of effect of the experimental treatment in developing understanding what is heard.

It is possible to explain that the students in the experimental group taught by the active learning strategy allowed them the active participation in the activities with the teacher directing them, and by active learning the students acquired new knowledge, this agrees with the concept inducing the knowledge as a necessary condition for learning, and by the active learning the learners reach meaningful resolutions to the problems and it is possible that the strategy help the students interact with all activities introduced inside the classroom compared to the traditional method based on dictation, and the role of the teacher will be limited. So, the effect of this strategy appeared to improve the level of understanding of what is heard in the experimental group compared to the control group. This result agrees with the result from Farfoara (2008) study which showed the presence of effect of the teaching strategy based on the active learning in achievement of the students who were taught by this

strategy and in favor of the experimental group, and differ from the result of Tuckman (2001) study that showed that the students statistical significance reduced regarding the active learning and the achievements they made.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the research results, the researcher recommends the following:

- 1). Conducting workshops and training courses for the teachers to train them on the active learning strategies and on the other modern teaching strategies.
- 2). Motivating the teachers to increase the students participation in the educational process, and the need for the field visits by the supervisors.
- 3). Increasing the classroom interactions to develop the active learning in an active classroom environment.
- 4). Conducting other similar studies to investigate the effect of learning strategy in improving other linguistic skills.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Appendix 1

Test of Understanding what is heard:

Name:

Time:

School:

Date:

Grade: Sixth Grade

Dear Student

Peace be upon you and God's mercy and Blessing

The test consists of five clauses; you are required to listen carefully to the text, and after that:

1. Reading the test clauses thoughtfully and deeply.
2. Answering the questions within the determinants of each question.
3. Reviewing the answer and be sure about its accuracy.

Thank you for cooperation

Researcher

Dear Student:

Listen to the text carefully then answer the following questions

"Mohammad and Samiya went to the zoo, they saw there the lions and the tigers, and another number of animals, an a group of birds, they were happy to see the animals and the birds, they gave the bird and the animals some food"

1. During the presence of Mohammad and Samiya in front of the lion cage, one of the children jumped to the cage what is the appropriate action?
2. Mohammad made his hand very close to the wild animals, what is your opinion about the behavior?
3. The writer described a number of wild animals, and he did not mention the names of other animals, in your opinion, what is the reason?
4. If you have the choice to go to the zoo or to the swimming pool what will you choose, why?
5. Try to find three relevant titles to the text?

Appendix 2**Acoustic Awareness Test****Name:****Time:****School:****Date:****Grade: Sixth Grade****Dear Student**

Peace be upon you and God's mercy and Blessing

The test presented to you consists of five clauses; you are required to understand the text acoustically, then

1. Listen to the test clauses deeply and thoughtfully.
2. Answer the questions according to the determinants in each question.
3. Reviewing the answer and makes sure about it correctness.

Thank you for your cooperation**Researcher****Test Clauses****Dear Student:**

Read the following text then select the correct answer:

Samira wrote: Dear teacher, we send you love and respect gratitude () for your great and honest efforts, you have plated in us love of science and faith, honestly and order.

1- One of the following words forms a verb

- a- wrote b- Sameera c- love

2- The relevant punctuation sign in the Bracket () is:

- a- Dot b- Comma c- Question mark d- Dash

3- One of the following words is adjective

- a- Trustworthy b- Science c- Planted

4- One of the following words indicates to the Ethics

- a- teacher b- Honesty c- Running

5- One of the Following verbs is in the past tense

- a- go b- is going c- went