

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background of the Study

Everybody living in this world needs to understand and be understood. Thus we stand in need of expressing and understanding messages; in other words we need to communicate with one another. Dealing with this idea, Rivers states:

"Students need to study different ways of thinking, communicating, and acting in their relationships with others. They need to know how a message is expressed and understood; how language and thought are intertwined; how to express their meaning unambiguously and without offensiveness; and how to listen to what others are trying to communicate".¹

However, not all of us realize that the ability to communicate is of great importance and value, until we are placed in a situation where we cannot make our thoughts and wishes known because of a difference in language. In such a situation, we will see it all, that the inability to communicate can be

¹ Wilga M. Rivers, Speaking in Many Tongues, Essays in Foreign Language Teaching, Cambridge University Press, 1963, p. 25.

a frightening thing. In order to be able to communicate, we need a 'vehicle' to transport our message somewhere, that is language. It is generally accepted that the function of language is to communicate ideas. As stated by Stack, that language is a system of communication by sound - a special kind of sound produced by the human vocal organs and falling on the human ear.²

In connection with this thesis, the language we are discussing is English, with its role as a foreign language.

As English is an international language by which we are able to get in touch with people from different countries, and above all, as it is greatly crucial for further studies since many books are written in English, it becomes an urgency for us to learn English as a foreign language. It is true that the students are given more and more explanation about grammatical patterns and the like, but they need more than merely grammar. There is no need to doubt that their foremost destination in learning a language is emphasizing more on being able to use the

² Edward M. Stack, The Language Laboratory and Modern Language Teaching, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 117.

language, that is by having conversations, either daily or occasionally. Supporting this idea, Rivers says:

"Since language is a means of communication, it is not enough for our students to learn words, phrases, grammatical features, if they will not be able to produce these in a way which makes their utterance comprehensible to a native speaker of the language".³

Whenever we express something to other people through our words, it does not mean that we have already carried out a communication, until the words we express are understood by the person we are getting in touch with. Thus communication itself involves two activities: listening and speaking. Rivers sets down her viewpoint about this. She says:

"...communication is a process involving at least two people. Speaking does not of itself constitute communication unless what is said, is comprehended by another person".⁴

Listening is first because through listening the students can train their ears by listening to the native speaker's voice through the tape, and at the same time they will be able to recognize the sounds

³ Wilga M. Rivers, Teaching Foreign Language Skills, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 112.

⁴ ibid., p. 135.

of the language, and differentiate among its various components. Above all, they can imitate the native speaker's voice to pronounce English words, phrases and sentences accurately as well. Unless they recognize phonemic differences, they cannot successfully undertake to produce them. While speaking, according to Stack, includes training in correct positioning of the vocal organs and formation of linguistic habit through intensive practice.⁵

The emphasis on being able to communicate in a foreign language (in this case English) has led to the coming of the term "audio lingual" method, a method which aims at developing listening and speaking skills first (as the foundation on which to build the skills of reading and writing). Through this method, the students are expected to be accurate in pronunciation since they are trained to repeat the whole utterances perfectly, by making use of various drills.

Talking about drills, it has been clearly known that it has something to do with this expression: "Language is a set of habits". Therefore, learning a new language means learning a new set of

⁵ Stack, op.cit., p. 117.

habits. Thus, there must be constant practice in listening to, speaking, reading, and writing the target language, i.e. English. In other words, the students should master the pronunciation, grammatical patterns and vocabulary in such a way that they will be able to communicate in English automatically. Lado says:

"We observed that the complex process of communication through language as we know is made possible by the system of habits which operates largely without our awareness. These habits are deeply set in the nervous system of the individual and in his muscular, intellectual, and emotional processes".⁶

Since habit is the most essential aspect emphasized on the foreign language learning, especially in listening and speaking skills (these two skills belong to the audio lingual skills of the language), the only way for any person to learn a new language is to build up in himself a set of habits which will correspond, as closely as possible, to those of the native speakers of the target language. Then the ideal way of learning English is by staying in English-speaking countries such as England or the USA, in which the learner is supposed to have more oppor-

⁶ Robert Lado, Language Testing, Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1967, p. 13.

tunities for direct contact with the language as he is studying outside the classroom. It has been generally assumed that a learner's exposure to English speech and culture is very important. In line with this notion, Hall gives his viewpoint. He says:

"The best model for the target language - i.e. the best person to imitate in his or her use of the language - is a native speaker, someone who has learned it as his or her mother tongue".⁷

However, not everybody has such a chance. Having native English teachers can be a great idea; yet, not every school has the capacity of employing one. Moreover, in order to be able to use the language well in their oral communication, English teachers provide their students with a lot of practice and drills, and the students need to be given regular and frequent opportunities to use English. This, of course, takes a long time; and it frequently occurs that the students cannot finish drilling themselves using the drills provided.

People have been trying, with the help of modern technology, to develop various types of audio-visual teaching aids such as television, film, radio, tape recordings, and also language laboratory. Based

⁷ Robert A. Hall Jr., New Ways to Learn a Foreign Language, Bantam Books, Inc., 1986, p. 56.

on the facts above, and realizing that communication is an extremely essential action through which people understand and be understood, the writer has conducted a study to question whether the use of language laboratory, as one of the technological teaching aids, helps the SMA students improve their listening and speaking skills, in order to be able to communicate orally in English.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to answer the following problems:

a. Major Problem:

How can the language laboratory help improve the SMA students' aural oral ability to communicate in English?

b. Minor Problems:

How can the language laboratory help the SMA students improve their:

- listening skill?
- speaking skill?

1.3 The Objective of the Study

Derived directly from the above formulated

problems, the objective of this study is to find out whether the use of the language laboratory, as one of the technological teaching aids, helps the SMA students improve their aural oral ability to communicate in English orally. Since communication is an action that involves two language skills: listening and speaking, then the writer will discuss the advantages of making use of the language laboratory for improving the students' listening skill and speaking skill.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

This thesis is designed to make SMA English teachers aware of the use of the language laboratory in improving the students' audio lingual language skills, that is listening and speaking skills.

Hopefully, this study can be of some help and support for any SMA English teachers to make the teaching-learning activities in the language laboratory more effective so that their teaching will be more successful. Besides, the writer also hopes that this study will encourage SMA students more and more to use the language laboratory as a means of improving their aural oral ability to communicate in English.

1.5 The Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is limited only to the use of a two-way communication system of laboratory in which there is a tape recorder and a headset at each booth, including some switches which enable the student to record his own voice and to communicate with his teacher. In such a laboratory, the student can work by himself under the teacher's control.

The communication discussed in this study is limited to oral communication, which involves the two language skills: listening and speaking.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Since this study concerns the use of the language laboratory in improving the SMA students' listening and speaking abilities, then this study is based on the theory of language laboratory, with its relation to the theories of listening and speaking skills. Furthermore, as listening skill and speaking skill belong to the audio lingual skills of the language, then the theory of Audio Lingual Method will also be the base of this study.

1.7 Assumption

This study is based on the assumption that the language laboratory program is an extra course for SMA students, so it is not a core one. Furthermore, the schools are the ones which can afford a language laboratory.

1.6 Definition of Key-terms

To avoid misinterpretation and / or misunderstanding, it is necessary to define the following key-terms:

a. Language

As stated by Stack, language is a system of communication by sound - a special kind of sound produced by the human vocal organs and falling on the human ear.⁸

b. Language Laboratory

According to Hayes, it is a classroom or other area containing electronic and mechanical equipment designed and arranged to make foreign-language learning more effective than is usually possible without it.⁹

⁸ Stack, op.cit., p. 117.

⁹ A.S. Hayes, Language Laboratory Facilities, London: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 1.

Furthermore, according to Lado, it is a special room for practice by the students with sound equipments.¹⁰

c. Listening

The skill of listening to a foreign language is the immediate and unconscious recognition of its significant element (sound), and the comprehension of the meaning which the combination of these elements conveys (meaning).¹¹

d. Speaking

It is the act or an instance of uttering words; a mutual relationship limited to casual greeting or conversation.¹²

It includes training in correct positioning of the vocal organs and formation of linguistic habit through intensive practice.¹³

e. Communication

¹⁰ Robert Lado, Language Teaching, Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., New Delhi, 1964, p. 175.

¹¹ Catharina Ratna Kristanto, The Use of Language Lab as a Means of Teaching Listening Comprehension at SMA an Unpublished Paper, p. 3.

¹² Merriam Webster, Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged. Merriam - Webster Inc. Publishers, Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A., p. 2185.

¹³ Slack, op.cit., p. 117.

Communication is an art that deals with expressing and exchanging ideas effectively in speech or writing through the graphic or dramatic arts and that is taught as an integrated program at various levels of education in distinction to traditional separate courses in composition and speech.¹⁴

1.8 Methodology

In carrying out this study, the writer does not do a field study. She merely conducts a library study. She collects the information from books and articles which are related to her study.

First of all, she collects the data and information from any books and articles that are related to her study. She reads books about the language laboratory and some articles which have relations to the teaching of English as a foreign language, especially the teaching of audio lingual skills of the language.

Secondly, she studies parts of the information that support her study and makes use of some parts as the basic to support her study.

¹⁴ Webster, op.cit., p. 460.

1.10 The Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter deals with the background of the study, statement of the problem, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, theoretical framework, assumption, definition of key-terms, and methodology. Chapter two presents the description of Audio Lingual Method, the audio lingual skills of the language including listening and speaking skills, and the relationship between those two skills. Chapter three deals with the definition of language laboratory, the advantages of language laboratory, the types of language laboratory, the types of drills / exercises done in the language laboratory, and the equipments of a listen-respond-compare language laboratory. The steps of teaching listening and speaking using the language laboratory will be presented in chapter four. And chapter five will be the conclusion of the study.