

A Case Study of Non-English Majors' Performance in Speak2Me Virtual Learning Environment

Lin Yuan

School of International Studies, Binzhou Medical University, Yantai, China

Abstract—The paper discusses the application of the learning system of Speak2Me into the oral English teaching of non-English majors. The paper finds that the participants' oral English accuracy and fluency have been improved, which proves the potentials of the use of Speak2Me on the non-English majors' Oral English Teaching.

Index Terms—Speak2Me, oral English, attitude, performance, virtual environments

I. INTRODUCTION

Driven by educational pressure and demands of society, students are encouraged to practice the autonomous learning mode, particularly web-based oral English learning. The knowledge and skills to effectively incorporate technology in the classroom become particularly important and they are being raised in a society that is rapidly changing as a result of the influx of new technologies, specifically mobile technologies that provide pervasive and faster worldwide links to commerce, communication, and culture (Hardison, D. 2004). Besides, the rise in popularity of portable electronic devices such as laptop, digital cameras, mobile phones with decreasing physical sizes and increasing storage capacities is promoting a transition to a 'Mobile Age'. Web-based autonomous English learning mode, as a supportive form of educational platform, has gained great popularity on campus. Since "Speak2Me ESL model supports assertions that students integrate verbal and visual representations better using verbal and visual materials than when they receive verbal [or text] material only". (Deborah K. LaPointe, 2004). Among the popular learning systems, Speak2me may be regarded as the one of the biggest conversation-based English learning system in China.

In addition, based on the theory of constructivism, "people are always intellectually active - they do not learn passively, but go out of their way to try to make some meaning in what is taking place in their environment. Our constructions of life are conditioned and constrained by our experiences and this means that - since we all have different experiences - we are all likely to have different perceptions about ideas, actions, behaviors, incidents, situations, tasks, feelings, and so on" (Bentley & Watts, 1994). Learning activities had better be implemented within authentic contexts (Savery & Duffy, 1996). In the real-like learning environment, various interfaces are provided, such as, text, image, sound and video. Learners are greatly motivated and encouraged to explore their potential abilities to participate and cooperate with their peers during the study.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to find out if the students' oral English is improved with the help of Speak2Me two oral English tests are conducted before and after the use of Speak2Me on the non-English majors' Oral English Teaching. Specifically, the students' performances in the two tests are evaluated from two aspects: one is their English fluency, and the other is their English accuracy, which are the two key evaluation criteria for oral English proficiency. The relevant data related to the two aspects such as the vocabulary, the repetition rate, the delivery speed, the disfluency markers and the errors are collected and both qualitative and quantities analyses are conducted.

A. Participants

The experiment involved 20 sophomores from a medical college in East China. All of them major in clinical medicine. Besides their medical courses, these participants have an average of more than 5 hours of English classes, which includes listening, spoken class and intensive English.

In order to make sure they can generally represent the students at different levels. The participants are not selected randomly, but they are divided into three different groups, namely, excellent, average, and poor according to their test scores of a pre designed oral test. Hence there are 3 excellent students, 14 average students and 3 poor students in the study. More details are presented in Table 3.1.

TABLE 1.1
TEST SCORE RANGE OF PARTICIPANTS

Score Range (Max =100)	Participants (n = 20)	
	Number of participants	Score Average
90-100	3	92.46
80-89	14	84.59
60-79	3	76.58
Under 60*	0	0

Note. * Any score under 60 is regarded as a failure for the evaluation.

B. Tasks and Activities

The whole study is conducted almost two months, involving everyday half- hour online course study, group online discussion, one-one discussion, conversation records and offline presentations. With personal email account, participants can easily and freely register on Speak2Me.

At the very beginning of the program, all the participants are required to list their net-names and email addresses to the teacher. But they still communicate with each other in their net names, which makes participants feel safer and less anxious. In addition, all the participants also are required to choose their own courses based on individual learning goals, such as, interests, making friends, English Band Examination. Every week the online activities and assignments would be given out and posted on the teachers' website beforehand. What is worth mentioning, learners can practice oral English with the Chabot tutor—Lucy. After each course, participants are supposed to share their learning experience on their own blog in Speak2Me.

In order to study the effect of Speak2Me on non-English majors' Oral English learning, two tests are conducted on the 20 participants before and after the use of Speak2Me in the Oral English teaching, which are Test 1 on Apr. 9th, 2013 and Test 2 on Jun. 12th, 2013 respectively. The participants are given one topic and three minutes to prepare it and then three minutes to present it. The two tests are conducted in the same way with the same topic and test time. After each test, the participants' pronunciation, stress, rhythm, intonation and tone are firstly judged. In order to get complete first-hand materials, each participant's presentation is recorded and transcribed. Based on the transcript of the participants' oral English test, the relevant data about vocabulary, the repetition rate, the delivery speed, the disfluency markers and the errors are collected and both qualitative and quantities analyses are conducted to analyze the participants' oral English fluency and accuracy. At last, the results of the two tests are compared to find out the effect of the use of Speak2Me on non-English majors' Oral English learning. The following table 2.2 described the tasks and activities conducted in Speak2Me.

TABLE 1.2
THE SCHEDULE OF TASKS AND ACTIVITIES

Activity	Date	Content	Note
Activity 1	Apr.9 - 10	Pre Study Test & Questionnaire	On listening and speaking
Activity 2	Apr. 11 - 17	Speak2Me Sign Up	Register in the internet and get familiar with the online environment
Activity 3	Apr. 18- 29	Speak2Me Online activities	At least tow topics of study should be completed during this process.
Activity 4	Apr 30 - 31	Five minutes' Presentation	Conducted in language lab and recorded, transcribed and saved
Activity 5	May. 1 - 26	Speak2Me Online activities	At least four topics of study should be completed during this process.
Activity 6	May. 27 - 28	Five minutes' Presentation	Conducted in language lab and recorded, transcribed and saved
Activity 7	May. 29 - Jun.10	Speak2Me Online activities	At least two topics of study should be completed during this process.
Activity 8	Jun.11-12	Pre Study Test & Questionnaire	On listening and speaking

C. Pilot Study

Ahead of a real study, a pilot study was conducted for two days, which can help the researcher to understand the general steps and also exam the possible technical difficulties in the real study. The first pilot was conducted in Apr. for 2 days. The participants include the researcher and her net friend in America. The researcher stayed in her faulty dorm to exam the learning environment because it had the same Internet speed with the participants' dorms.

This pilot focuses on the effectiveness of the programs, which include user friendliness, audio-video quality, reliability and cost. Since all the users' can register Speak2Me freely and easily (only with personal email address), the pilot mostly concerned about audio-video quality, and reliability.

The results turned out that audio-video quality had much to do with the quality of microphones and the speed of Internet. In addition, to use headset could reduced much noise and echoes, but on the other hand, the speakers were not allowed to use too many gestures and movements. Besides, due to the slow net speed, the images usually were delayed for several seconds. Because of the insensitive speech recognition technology, speaker sometimes confronted difficulties when practiced conversations with Lucy. The speaker was asked to repeat what just said again and again by Lucy, which easily annoyed the speaker.

The second pilot was carried out in the following days. In this pilot, the researcher used a broadband cable with a speed of 7mbps in school library and computer lab respectively. Several times of interactions with the same graduate in America were conducted in the morning of 8:00-9:00 on weekdays, and 7:00-9:30 on weekends. The result turned out more satisfactory in terms of images and sound quality than the first pilot. Therefore, the researcher decided to require

all the participants study in school library or computer rather than in their dorms.

D. Data Collection and Analysis

The actual study was conducted for two months in an eastern medical college. The following described the procedures of data collection.

1. Introduced Speak2Me to the participants and arrange all of them to get familiar with the learning environment.
2. Ask participants to complete the pre study questionnaires.
3. Conduct the pre study test in one of the Language Labs.
4. Monitor participants' courses schedules and comment their performance.
5. Assign participants to make a speech based on the course topic and recorded, transcribed and saved to their own Space in Speak2Me every week.
6. Conduct post study test in a language lab.
7. Ask participants to complete the post study questionnaire
8. Analysis the data collections and then present the results.

III. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In this study, the relevant data about vocabulary, the repetition rate, the delivery speed, the disfluency markers and the errors are collected with the help of AntConc 3.2.1 and both qualitative and quantities analyses are conducted to analyze the participants' oral English fluency and accuracy. At last, the results of the two tests are compared to find out the effect of the use of Speak2Me on non-English majors' Oral English learning.

A. Data on English Accuracy

Accuracy is a key evaluation criterion for oral English proficiency. It shows in different aspects, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, errors including lexical errors, grammatical errors, cohesive errors and pragmatic errors. In this part, the data on the above aspects will be collected and analyzed.

1. Pronunciation

After each test, the participants' pronunciation, stress, rhythm, intonation and tone are firstly judged. The total score is 10. Each of the four aspects, pronunciation, intonation, stress and rhythm takes 25% respectively. The students are sorted according to their final scores from the lowest one to the highest one and the order remains the same in other tables.

TABLE 2.1
SCORES OF THE PARTICIPANTS' PRONUNCIATION- TEST 1 & TEST 2

Student	Pronunciation		Intonation		Stress		Rhythm		Scores	
	Test1	Test2	Test1	Test2	Test1	Test2	Test1	Test2	Test1	Test2
1	1.8	2.0	1.3	2.0	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.7	6.4	7.6
2	1.5	1.7	1.8	2.2	1.8	2.0	1.4	1.5	6.5	7.4
3	1.6	1.9	1.7	2.1	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.9	6.8	7.8
4	1.6	1.8	1.8	2.2	1.9	2.0	1.8	1.9	7.1	7.9
5	1.7	1.9	1.7	2.0	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.0	7.1	7.8
6	1.7	2.0	1.8	2.2	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.0	7.2	8.1
7	1.9	2.1	1.7	2.0	2.0	2.2	1.6	1.6	7.2	7.9
8	1.9	2.2	1.8	2.2	2.1	2.3	1.6	1.7	7.4	8.4
9	1.9	1.9	1.8	2.0	2.2	2.2	1.6	1.4	7.5	7.5
10	1.8	2.0	1.9	2.2	2.1	2.2	1.7	1.6	7.5	8.0
11	1.8	1.8	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.0	1.7	1.7	7.6	7.6
12	1.7	2.0	2.1	2.5	2.2	2.4	1.7	1.7	7.7	8.6
13	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.1	2.2	1.6	1.6	7.7	8.3
14	1.9	2.2	2.1	2.5	2.1	2.3	1.7	1.9	7.8	8.9
15	1.8	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.2	2.4	1.7	1.8	7.9	8.7
16	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.5	2.0	2.1	1.7	1.7	7.9	8.6
17	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.0	2.1	8.1	8.8
18	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.0	2.1	8.3	9.0
19	2.0	2.3	1.9	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.2	8.3	9.4
20	2.1	2.3	2.0	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.1	2.2	8.5	9.2
Average Scores	1.84	2.04	1.89	2.24	2.05	2.18	1.76	1.82	7.53	8.28

Table 3.1 shows that among the 20 participants, 18 participants' (90%) general pronunciation has been improved with the greatest improvement of 1.2 and the lowest of 0.5. The other two participants keep the original level and the average improvement is of 0.75.

As for the four aspects: pronunciation, intonation, stress and rhythm, they have been improved to varying degrees. The average improvement of the pronunciation, intonation, stress and rhythm are 0.2, 0.35, 0.13 and 0.06 respectively. The greatest improvement is in intonation, followed by pronunciation, stress and rhythm.

Comparing the participants' performance in the two tests, it shows that the influence of the first language (L1) transfer on English pronunciation, especially the influence of dialect, in Test 2 is much less than that in Test 1. For

example, in Test 1, 6 of the 20 participants have problems in pronouncing /s/, /ʃ/ and /θ/, while in Test 2, only one participant has this problem. In test 1, almost all the participants tend to add “er” after some consonants, for example China, [tʃaɪnə] and America [əˈmerɪkə] are pronounced as [tʃaɪnər] and America [əˈmerɪkər]. While in Test 2, only three participants have such problems. In Test 1, 18 of the 20 participants did not distinguish the sound /v/ and /w/, while in Test 2 all the 20 participants distinguished the two sounds clearly.

Besides the improvement in the pronunciation of single sound, the participants’ English intonation and rhythm have also been greatly improved. The stress of words and sentences, eclipses, assimilation, links and rhythms are better performed in Test 2 than those in Test 1.

2. Errors

As for the terms of “errors”, there are many arguments on the definition of it from different standpoints, each defining error from different levels of the language. However, they have one point in common that errors are deviations from a “selected form” of language performance. Learner’s errors are inevitable byproducts of the process of learning a language and they provide the teacher with information about how much the learner has learnt, so through the collection and analysis of the errors the participants made in the two tests, we can see the effect of the use of Speak2Me on their oral English learning.

For the sake of convenience of discussion, in this paper the errors are grouped into two types: inter-lingual errors and intra-lingual errors. Inter-lingual errors refer to those errors caused by the learners’ native language influence. That is the negative transfer or interference of the learners’ first language in linguistic and pragmatic aspects. For example, in Chinese “because and so” and “though and but” are usually used in the same sentence. Influenced by this Chinese rule, EFL often make such sentences as “Because I get up late, so I’m late for the class.”, “Though I want to improve my English, but I don’t know what to do.” Intra-lingual errors refer to those errors caused by the faulty or partial learning of one item of the target language upon another. For instance, the noun “boy” has its plural form “boys”. Likewise the learners assume that “child” has its plural form as “childs”.

In the typescripts all the errors are marked and the actual numbers of errors collected from the typescripts are presented in Table 3.2 after classifying all the errors. In Test 1 the inter-lingual errors and intra-lingual errors are 160 and 74 respectively, while in Test 2 the inter-lingual errors and intra-lingual errors are 85 and 50 respectively. Comparing the total number of the two types of errors in the two tests, it is obvious to see that the errors made in Test 2 is much less than that in Test 1, of which the inter-lingual errors has decreased more than the intra-lingual error. The decreasing rate of the former is 47%, while the decreasing rate of the later is 32%.

$$\text{Decreasing Rate} = (\text{Errors in Test 1} - \text{Errors in Test 2}) / \text{Errors in Test 1}$$

This shows that Speak2Me is very effective in the correction of spoken errors, especially the inter-lingual errors made by the EFL learners. That is to say, since Speak2Me provides an authentic situation for the EFL to practice their oral English, it can help to weaken the negative transfer or interference of the learners’ first language in linguistic and pragmatic aspects.

TABLE2.2
ERRORS IN TEST 1 & TEST 2

Students	Inter-lingual Errors			Intra-lingual Errors		
	Test 1	Test 2	Decreasing Rate	Test 1	Test 2	Decreasing Rate
1	12	7	0.42	5	3	0.40
2	10	6	0.40	4	2	0.50
3	11	6	0.45	5	2	0.60
4	13	8	0.38	6	3	0.50
5	9	5	0.44	4	3	0.25
6	11	6	0.45	6	3	0.50
7	10	4	0.60	5	4	0.20
8	6	4	0.33	2	1	0.50
9	9	3	0.67	5	2	0.60
10	10	6	0.40	4	4	0
11	7	3	0.57	3	4	-0.33
12	8	4	0.50	4	2	0.50
13	12	6	0.50	6	5	0.17
14	7	5	0.29	2	2	0
15	3	1	0.67	1	2	-1
16	6	2	0.67	4	1	0.75
17	5	3	0.40	2	0	1
18	4	3	0.25	3	2	0.33
19	3	2	0.33	1	3	-2
20	4	1	0.75	2	2	0
Total	160	85	0.47	74	50	0.32

3. Vocabulary

Relevant studies have proved that vocabulary play an important role in the accuracy of oral expression. The simplification of vocabulary will influence the expression of ideas. The vocabularies used in the two oral English test by

each participant are calculated with the help of AntCont3.2.2. The results are listed in Table 4.5 .It shows that after the two-month-use of Speak2Me in their Oral English learning, 14 of the 20 participants' vocabulary has been increased with the greatest increase of 47 vocabularies and the least increase of 2. Before the experiment, the vocabulary of the 20 participants is 952, while after the experiment their vocabulary is 1079 with the increase of 127. Though it can not prove that the participants' vocabulary has been definitely enlarged, it is proved that the participants' productive vocabulary has increased, so they can vary their expressions. The vocabularies the participants used in the Test 1 are commonly used in daily life. It has a great difference between the vocabularies the participants have already learnt. If all the vocabularies the participants have learnt can be used in their oral expression, their oral English can be greatly improved. Speak2Me can, to some extent, solve this problem, because it focuses on the language in use.

TABLE 2.3
VOCABULARY- TEST 1 & TEST 2

Students	Vocabulary-Test 1	Vocabulary – Test 2	Improvement
1	99	97	-2
2	97	99	2
3	98	86	-12
4	83	89	6
5	117	102	-15
6	102	107	5
7	118	124	6
8	128	132	4
9	124	128	4
10	129	124	-5
11	129	137	8
12	138	133	-5
13	140	157	17
14	134	168	34
15	125	123	-2
16	160	190	30
17	144	158	14
18	150	180	30
19	130	172	42
20	149	196	47
Total	952	1079	127

Besides that through the calculation of the participants' vocabulary with AntCont3.2.2, it is found that the word repetition frequency in Test 1 is much higher than that in Test 2. Researches have proved that repetition frequency is one of the factors that may influence the effects of expression. Comparing the word repetition frequency in the two tests, it shows that the participants' oral expression in Test 2 is more effective than that in Test 1.

TABLE 2.4
WORD REPETITION FREQUENCY

Rank	Test 1		Test 2	
	Freq	Word	Freq	Word
1	288	I	211	the
2	244	the	159	To
3	196	and	114	And
4	162	to	108	A
5	114	we	100	Of
6	97	you	73	In
7	92	er	64	Is
8	90	in	55	You
9	87	my	53	We
10	86	a	45	For
11	83	is	43	Can
12	79	was	42	It
13	75	it	40	More
14	74	that	39	Are
15	58	time	38	Have
16	54	have	37	Be
17	51	very	37	Not
18	49	life	36	I
19	48	our	36	With
20	48	he	35	education

B. Data on English Fluency

Broadly speaking, fluency is a general term for spoken language level, “the ability to talk in coherent, reasoned, and semantically sensed sentence, the ability to have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts and the ability to be creative and imaginative in language use”.(Gregory,2001).For the purpose of the present study, oral fluency is defined as the ability to speak an acceptable variety of a second language (English in this case) with smooth continuity

and coherence of content that are also felt by the listener. The oral fluency can be evaluated by different variables, which can be classified into two categories: temporal indices, such as speaking rate, average length of pause, phonation ratio and mean length of speech run and performance indices, relevant to various disfluency markers such as repetitions, self-corrections, filled pauses, and the like. In this part, the data on the two aspects are collected and analyzed.

1. Speaking Rate

Speaking rate is one of the factors that influence the language fluency. It refers to the syllables spoken within a specific time frame. The speaking rate in Table 3.5 is calculated in the following way.

$$\text{Speaking Rate} = \text{Number of syllables} / \text{Total Time (2 Minutes)}$$

According to Levelt (1989), speech production consists of three main components: the Conceptualize, the Formulator and the Articulator. To produce a speech involves all of the three components. That is the speaker needs to conceptualize a message, formulate a speech plan, and articulate the syllables with appropriate pitch pattern. For L1, new messages are conceptualized and new speech plans are formulated simultaneously as syllables are articulated and the whole process is largely automatic. For L2, however, the process is non-automatic. Since their knowledge of L2 grammatical rules has not been proceduralized, all the three stages have to rely on the efficiency of working memory. When working memory is not able to process as quickly as to keep on conceptualizing new messages and formulating new speech plans at the same time the syllables are being articulated, the speaker has to stop articulating, and he/she can only start again when the new messages and new speech plans are ready for articulation. Those pauses in articulation will lower the speaking rate and thus influence the oral fluency. Table 3.5 shows the mean speaking rate of the participants in Test 2 is higher than that in Test 1. That is to say the participants' working memory has become more efficient with the help of Speak2Me for two months. The time difference between articulation and the conceptualization of new messages and the formulation of new speech plans has been lessened.

Sine Speak2Me provides an authentic situation for oral English practice, it can help to improve the participants' working memory efficiency, and thus increase their speaking rate and make their oral English more fluent.

TABLE 2.5
SPEAKING RATE

Students	Speaking Rate in Test 1	Speaking Rate in Test 2
1	78	97
2	93	122
3	74	148
4	82	89
5	92	142
6	86	137
7	120	146
8	89	153
9	114	163
10	89	151
11	102	163
12	118	139
13	123	157
14	136	140
15	90	142
16	148	149
17	158	138
18	164	156
19	166	188
20	203	184

2. Disfluency Markers

Temporal indices concern the rapidity of speech production, while performance indices concern the smoothness of speech production. It is relevant to various disfluency markers such as repetitions, self-corrections and hesitation like "um, ur, er, em". In this part, data about repetitions, self-corrections and hesitation are collected and analyzed.

Repetition refers to that the words, phrases or clauses are repeated with no modifications of syntax, morphology, or word order.

Self-correction refers to that the words, phrases or clauses are repeated with some modifications of syntax, morphology, or word order. It also refers to that the lexical items are immediately substituted for another.

Hesitation refers to that the initial phoneme or syllables are uttered one or more times before the complete word are spoken. It also refers to the filled hesitation like "um, ur, er, em".

Table 3.6 shows that the disfluency markers in Test 2 are obviously less than that in Test 1, especially repetition followed by hesitation. In Test 1 the average repetition times is 14.6 and the average hesitation time is 8.6, while in Test 2 they are 9.7 and 6.7 respectively. The numbers of self-correction are similar in Test 1 and Test 2. The decrease of the disfluency markers means that the participants' oral English fluency has been improved through the two-month oral English practice with the help of Speak2Me.

TABLE 2.6
DISFLUENCY MARKERS-TEST 1 & TEST 2 (TIMES)

Students	Repetition		Self-correction		Hesitation	
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2
1	27	21	5	4	15	13
2	25	20	0	1	13	10
3	21	19	4	4	15	11
4	24	21	7	6	10	7
5	23	16	3	4	12	8
6	19	12	4	3	9	9
7	15	9	5	6	6	7
8	18	11	3	2	11	9
9	17	10	1	1	10	6
10	13	5	5	4	8	7
11	16	9	3	3	6	7
12	11	7	0	2	7	4
13	9	6	4	1	10	7
14	10	9	2	0	6	3
15	6	3	3	5	4	5
16	9	3	1	1	8	5
17	10	4	5	4	6	2
18	6	1	3	4	9	8
19	8	6	4	3	3	2
20	5	2	2	2	4	3
Average	14.6	9.7	3.2	3	8.6	6.7

Therefore, the design of the research and the data collection and analysis are introduced to find out if the students' oral English is improved with the help of Speak2Me which has provided a simulated situation to talk with native speakers. In this part two oral English tests are conducted before and after the use of Speak2Me on the non-English majors' Oral English Teaching. The students' performances in the two tests are evaluated from two aspects: one is their English fluency, and the other is their English accuracy, which are the two key evaluation criteria for oral English proficiency. The relevant data related to the two aspects such as the vocabulary, the errors, the speaking rate and the disfluency markers and are collected and both qualitative and quantities analyses are conducted. After the data collection and analysis, it is found that the participants' oral English accuracy and fluency have been improved, which proves the effectiveness of the use of Speak2Me on the non-English majors' Oral English Teaching.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Through 2-month learning with the help of Speak2Me, above the results of the tow test, we may assume that the participants speak faster with fewer pauses. Besides that repetition, hesitation, and self-correction have decreased after that. This shows that Speak2Me is very effective in promoting the students' oral English fluency. In Speak2Me the learners are offered more authentic information of the language, thus they have more opportunities to construct new understandings of spoken English. Besides, the communication and interaction with the virtual tutor promote the users to construct and reconstruct continuously. In brief, Speak2Me could facilitate the oral English learner to do more mental exploration in their learning process, which will in turn promote their oral English fluency.

In addition, the participants also perform better in Test 2 than in Test 1 in terms of language accuracy. Their pronunciation is more standard. Their vocabulary has been enlarged. Both inter-lingual errors and intra-lingual errors have decreased in Test 2. This shows that Speak2Me may be very effective in promoting the students' oral English accuracy. Speak2Me applies distinct speech recognition technology and provides the users with an authentic situation to have interactive conversations with a virtual tutor called LUCY. What the users hear and practice is authentic English. This will help to promote the learners' English accuracy.

Above all, Speak2Me provides the learners with a comfortable and relaxing environment and various interesting and meaningful topics, which could relieve their psychological pressure and resisting feeling of learning. The users will feel less anxious and after learning they will feel more confident when they speak.

APPENDIX

Pre study Test

Task 1: Listening and retelling the passage.

Listen to the following passage very carefully, which will be read for twice. The first time is in a normal speed. Try to understand the general idea of the passage. For the second time, the passage will be read sentence by sentence with intervals of 10 seconds. And then you are supposed to retell the story based on your understanding. You are given 3 minutes before you began your recording and supposed to complete your presentation in 10minutes.

Scripts:

Studying more effectively is often times part one's own individual learning style and the amount of time that it takes you to learn new material, as well as some of what's going on in terms of your adjustment issues to a college

environment and the work that is required, the level of work. Students come to college many times with memories of what it was like in high school, to be able to cram for a test or to be able to study the night before and be able to get something together their presentation together.

Task 2: Express your opinions

There are following questions concerning the topic of “College life” on everyone’s computer screen. You are supposed to choose one of them to express your opinions and then record, transcribe and save it on your computer screen in 30 minutes.

1. Why is it a good idea to set yourself some goals?
2. What are your plans for academic success?

Post study Test

Task 1: Listening and retelling the passage.

Listen to the following passage very carefully, which will be read for twice. The first time is in a normal speed. Try to understand the general idea of the passage. For the second time, the passage will be read sentence by sentence with intervals of 10 seconds. And then you are supposed to retell the story based on your understanding. You are given 3 minutes before you began your recording and supposed to complete your presentation in 10minutes.

Scripts:

In college, it does not work that way. It’s very different. So it’s very important to learn how you study. Learn when the best time of day for you to study. Some people can study very well very late at night, and as long as you don’t have a morning class that might work for you. The other thing is that if you are having trouble. Don’t afraid to ask. Many times going to a faculty member in their office hours and explain to them that you noticed that you weren’t doing very well on a quiz, and do they have any input for you, do they have advice. Pretty much every college or university also has a learning center. This is an office where trained professionals can talk with you, can find out when you like to study, how you like to study, and they may even discover that there are some unique issues to the way that you learn or you study.

Task 2: Express your opinions

There are following questions concerning the topic of “College life” on everyone’s computer screen. You are supposed to choose one of them to express your opinions and then record, transcribe and save it on your computer screen in 30 minutes.

1. What are your comments on your college life?
2. What do you think your major? Do you want to change it?

REFERENCES

- [1] Bentley, D., & Watts, M. (1994). Primary science and technology. Bristol, PA: Open University Press.
- [2] Deborah K. LaPointe. (2004) Language learning in a virtual classroom. *International Society of the Learning Science*.11 (4), 79-85
- [3] Gregory. (2001). The stativity of knowing, learning, and research. *American Psychologist*, 53 (1), 5-26.
- [4] Hardison, D. (2004). Generalization of computer-assisted prosody training: Quantitative and qualitative findings. *Language Learning & Technology*, 8(1), 34-52
- [5] Levelt. (1989) The study of educational potential of second life and its enlightenment to distance education. *Modern Educational Technology*, 18(1), 81-83
- [6] Savery, J. R., & Duffy, T. M. (1996). Problem based learning: An instructional model and its constructivist framework. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

Lin Yuan was born in Shandong, China in 1979. She received her MA degree in linguistics from Yantai University, China. She is currently a lecturer in School of International Studies, Binzhou Medical University, Yantai, China. Her research interests include second language acquisition and instructional technology for foreign studies.