Kashihara, A. et al. (Eds.) (2024). Proceedings of the 32nd International Conference on Computers in Education. Asia-Pacific Society for Computers in Education

Impact of Online Video Dubbing Activities on Grade 5 Students' Pronunciation, Accuracy, and Fluency in English Speaking: An Experimental Research

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Abstract: The increased adoption of dubbing software, which gives students a chance to imitate native speakers' pronunciation of English, has led to a surge in research on its application in foreign language learning. Some reported effects on students' oral English, particularly in terms of intelligibility and comprehensibility, can be identified. However, the related studies on students' spoken English, in terms of pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency stressed in the Nativeness Principle, are still in their nascent stages. To address this issue, this study adopted an experimental approach to figure out whether dubbing activities affect grade 5 students' English speaking in these three factors. Two classes served as the experimental group (n=104) to learn English speaking with online video dubbing activities for 12 sessions while the other two classes (n=102) participated as the control group to learn the same content traditionally without the dubbing activities. For pre-tests and post-tests, a 15-item, 3-factor English Speaking Proficiency Questionnaire was adopted (i.e. pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency). The results of ANCOVA showed a significant difference in the overall English-speaking proficiency of students between the two groups ($F = 8.291$, $p = 0.004$; $\eta^2 = 0.039$). Besides, the students in the experimental group had a significantly higher level of pronunciation ($F = 15.899$, $p < 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.073$) and fluency ($F = 7.018$, $p = 0.009$; $\eta^2 = 0.033$) compared to the students in the control group after engaging in dubbing activities for one month. However, no significant difference between these two groups was observed in students' spoken English accuracy ($F = 0.411$, $p = 0.522$; $\eta^2 = 0.002$) after the intervention. The project's second phase used a qualitative approach to explore the reasons behind the research findings. Students and language educators taking part in this program shared their perspectives on how dubbing activities affected the English-speaking abilities of the participants. The related findings will be presented in a separate paper. Overall, this quantitative study aimed to help English educators and researchers understand the impact of online video dubbing activities on elementary students' spoken English learning.

Keywords: Online Video Dubbing Activities, Nativeness Principle, Pronunciation, Accuracy, Fluency, English Oral Learning

1. Introduction

Online video dubbing activities involve performing dubbing work (re-recording audio for videos) through the internet or other online platforms to improve learners' abilities, such as language speaking, listening, and other aspects of competence (Wu & Ekstam, 2021). With the development of technology like online video dubbing software, students' English-speaking abilities could be improved effectively. These tools allow students to practice accurately imitating native speakers' intonation and speed of speaking English. At the same time, the increased use of such dubbing software has sparked a surge of research, especially those about foreign language acquisition (Wei et al., 2022). However, many current studies on using dubbing software primarily focus on instructional methods and pedagogies of related

audiovisual activities (e.g., Burston, 2013; Chu, 2019). The related research on its impact on students' spoken English, in terms of pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency stressed in the Nativeness Principle, is still limited (Zhang, 2016). This explains why this study investigated the impact of online video dubbing activities on students' spoken English.

Selecting a popular online video dubbing software, this study conducted a one-month English dubbing program in four classes to explore the influence of these dubbing activities on students' spoken English in terms of pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency (Brown, 2007; Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2018), as the Nativeness Principle stresses (Levis, 2005; Thomson & Derwing, 2015; Wang & Wen, 2023) to fill in knowledge and research gap.

This study was guided by the following research question: Does the implementation of online video dubbing activities affect grade 5 students' pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency in English speaking?

2. Literature Review

2.1 How Dubbing Software Addresses the Difficulties of Oral English Education

English serves as both a means of communication and a gateway to the world. However, in a test-based education system in mainland China that is heavily focused on test scores, there is generally an excessive emphasis placed by parents, teachers, and students themselves on reading and writing skills. This tends to result in overlooking the significance of oral English learning (Zhang, 2021).

With the emergence of more and more effective dubbing software, students' oral English abilities might have an opportunity for improvement. Firstly, watching English short videos can provide students with exposure to conversational English spoken by native speakers and can improve the students' speaking skills (Abrar & Aya, 2021; Carolinaliwati et al., 2021). Besides, as communication and collaboration are effective ways to promote English speaking (Abuseileek, 2007), when organizing dubbing activities, teachers can guide students in role-playing in which students are allowed to imitate the pronunciation of native speakers. Such a collaboration process can create an immersive English language environment. Funny in nature, dubbing shows, along with other gaming activities, have it potential to enhance students' engagement (Barrio et al., 2016; Ullah & Anwar, 2020), and can foster students' greater motivation for practicing spoken English (Burns, 2017). Moreover, the utilization of dubbing software, which offers students immediate feedback on their dubbing performance (Chu, 2011), can facilitate student sharing and commenting, leading to increased engagement and promoting a sense of achievement similar to what is observed on social media platforms (Aloraini & Cardoso, 2022; Yu et al., 2022).

2.2 Uncovering Research Gap: Impact of Dubbing Activities on Students' Spoken English Proficiency

The utilization of dubbing software in English learning and teaching has witnessed a surge, leading to increased research on incorporating dubbing activities into foreign language learning (Wei et al., 2022). Some scholars studied Audiovisual Translation (AVT) mode which refers to the translation of audiovisual content, such as videos, from one language to another (Ávila-Cabrera & Corral, 2021). It is suggested that dubbing learning in a foreign language can improve students' pronunciation and accuracy through repeatedly listening, echoing, and imitating (Jao et al., 2022). Some experts found that video dubbing activities can enable students to make use of their prior knowledge and language skills to comprehend contextual messages so that they can gradually improve their ability to convey messages and emotions (He & Wasuntarasoph, 2015). Some dubbing projects encouraged students to dub some short films to improve their vocabulary and language skills. Such projects increased students' motivation as they progressed from teacher-directed, task-based instruction to self-initiated, task-based learning (Danan, 2010). Regardless of all these previous studies, research

exploring the impact of dubbing activities on students' spoken English proficiency is still in its early stages (Zhang, 2016). For instance, Wei et al. (2022) investigated the use of English film dubbing activities in the oral English learning of Chinese university students, focusing mainly on the effects in terms of intelligibility and comprehensibility. However, research exploring the impact of dubbing activities on students' spoken English, specifically pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency as the Nativeness Principle stresses, still lacks sufficient coverage.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Rationales of Selecting the Nativeness Principle

Levis (2005) proposed two foreign language speaking evaluation principles. He introduced the Intelligibility Principle, which focuses on the degree to which the speaker's oral expression is understandable, in opposition to the Nativeness Principle, which emphasizes the similarity between learners' pronunciation and native speakers' pronunciation.

This research selected the Nativeness Principle as the theoretical foundation for several reasons. Firstly, the dubbing activities generally require students to accurately imitate the intonation and speed of native speakers' speech, aligning with the Nativeness Principle's emphasis on the similarity between learners' and native speakers' pronunciation. Moreover, for the intervention, the focus of this research was to encourage students to imitate the pronunciation of the native speakers in the videos, but not to encourage students to convey information and express feelings in their own words. Therefore, the Intelligibility Principle which focuses on the understandability of the second language speech and the expression ability of students was not appropriate for this research. Furthermore, for the data collection method, tests of comprehension and intelligibility should consider both speaker and listener. However, this research conducted both the pre-tests and post-tests by using a self-report instrument, a 15-item, 3-factor English Speaking Proficiency Questionnaire. The testing method did not incorporate the listener and would not collect data on the comprehensibility and intelligibility of the students' oral expressions as the Intelligibility Principle emphasizes. Based on all these reasons, the Nativeness Principle was selected as the theoretical framework in this research.

2.3.2 Reasons for Assessing Pronunciation, Fluency, and Accuracy in Spoken English

Levis (2005) introduced the Nativeness Principle and Intelligibility Principle but did not specify the assessment criteria and dimensions for evaluating second language speech according to these principles. Scholars have discussed various assessment criteria related to second language speech in the research, such as pronunciation, segments, prosody, accent, accuracy, comprehensibility, intelligibility, and fluency (Bakar & Abdullah, 2015; Derwing & Munro, 2015; Duijm & Hulstijn, 2018; Lennon, 1990; Stephana de Wolf et al., 2017).

Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2018) proposed two different directions for assessing spoken English in the fields of teaching, research, and testing. One direction is speaker-centered, emphasizing the accuracy or nativeness of language pronunciation and the fluency of speaker performance. Another direction is listener-centered, focusing on intelligibility and comprehensibility, assessing how easily the listener can understand the speaker's intention (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2018). This view extends Levis's Nativeness Principle and Intelligibility Principle, identifying several dimensions (i.e. pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency) for spoken English assessment that align with the Nativeness Principle. This echoes the point of view of other scholars as they have suggested that the evaluation of spoken English should primarily focus on dimensions, such as pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy (e.g. Brown, 2007)

In this research, the three dimensions of pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency (Brown, 2007; Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2018) were adopted and focused to investigate the impact of online video dubbing activities on grade 5 students' English speaking.

2.3.3 Reasons for Assessing the Similarity between Students' Pronunciation and the Two

Dominant English Accents

According to the Nativeness Principle, pronunciation refers to how speakers use their vocal organs to produce the individual sounds of a language (Derwing & Munro, 2015). This includes rhythmic features like intonation, stress, and rhythm. The accent is part of this criterion. Accent, as a form of language use, can reflect a person's geographical, social, and ethnic background. Different regions, social classes, and ethnic groups develop their language habits and accent characteristics. Identity can be as influential in shaping accents as biological factors (Levis, 2005; Thomson & Derwing, 2015).

However, this study did not place much emphasis on the connection between accent and social identity. Instead, it primarily measured the degree of similarity between the students' pronunciation and the two dominant accents of English (American English and British English). Firstly, measuring accent must depend on the listener, because accent is a perceptual phenomenon (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Accent refers to the listener's impression of the speaker's pronunciation. The listener's judgment of the sounds is crucial. To conduct the pre-tests and post-tests, this research employed a self-report instrument, of which the pronunciation dimension included questions that asked students to assess the similarity between their pronunciation accents and American/British English accents. However, the testing did not involve actual listeners. It did not collect data on how students' accents were perceived by others. Meanwhile, the dubbing videos provided by the software predominantly feature the two dominant accents - American English and British English. As a result, in this study, the self-report instrument was used to measure the changes in the similarity between students' pronunciation and the two dominant English accents after the intervention, focusing on the dimension of pronunciation alone, rather than exploring aspects related to racial biases or other ideological factors.

2.3.4 Three Dimensions of English Speaking Guiding the Entire Research Process

As shown in Figure 1, the three dimensions, namely pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy in spoken English, guided the entire research process of this project. Based on these three dimensions, the research maintained consistency across its key components (e.g. the theoretical framework, the intervention foci, and the data collection, etc.).

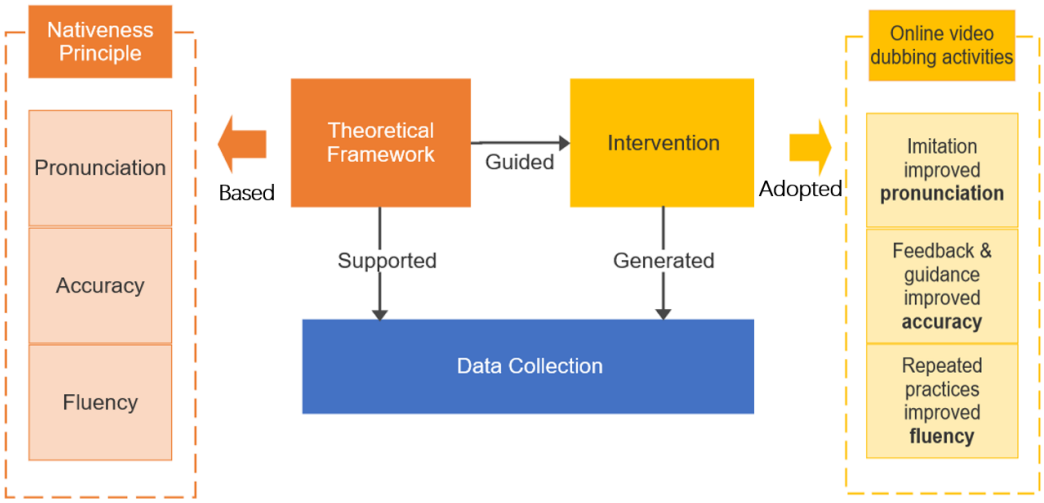

Figure 1. Three Dimensions Guided the Entire Research Process

For the theoretical framework, these three dimensions aligned with the Nativeness Principle, which encourages learners to imitate the intonation and pronunciation of native speakers (Thomson & Derwing, 2015). The three dimensions served as the concrete standards of the Nativeness Principle and can be used as assessment criteria for evaluating students' performance in oral English, exhibiting how the Nativeness Principle guides the assessment in this study.

For the intervention, the selection of these three criteria was supported by solid reasoning. Given the nature of dubbing activities, it is reasonable to expect that students' English speaking would change in these three aspects after the one-month intervention. For pronunciation, the study organized students to participate in 12 sessions of dubbing activities to imitate the pronunciation of professional voice actors, helping students to better understand and master the correct way of speaking English and make improvements in pronunciation. For accuracy, the dubbing software scored students' performance and gave feedback and guidance to help learners correct errors or inaccuracies in oral English. Moreover, students were provided with accurate scripts and lines, facilitating them to understand and convey the emotions and intentions of the characters correctly. Regarding fluency, through repeated practice and demonstration of different roles and scenarios during the intervention, students' oral expression could become more fluent.

For data collection, a self-report instrument, a 15-item, 3-factor English Speaking Proficiency Questionnaire was adopted, based on the three dimensions: pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy (Brown, 2007) of oral English assessment, to measure students' spoken English proficiency.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design: An Experimental Research

This study invited four grade 5 classes in mainland China, totaling 206 students, to participate in the research. As shown in Figure 2, the experimental group consisted of two classes (n=104) who engaged in English learning through online video dubbing activities during 12 sessions. Meanwhile, the control group comprised the other two classes (n=102) learning the same content but without dubbing activities. Data was collected through questionnaires for both groups at two different time points: one time shortly before the intervention, and one time shortly after the intervention. Quantitative data was obtained to assess whether there were changes in students' oral English proficiency across three dimensions: pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy. A simple random sampling method was adopted when selecting these samples.

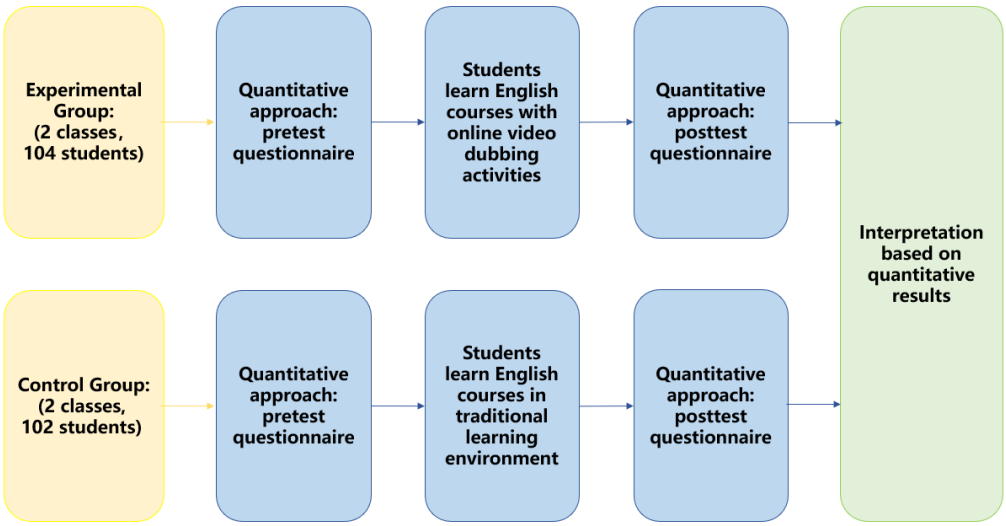

Figure 2. Overview of Research Design

3.2 Research Procedures

Before the intervention, the teacher was provided with a briefing on the online English video dubbing activities, including why the activities were selected, how the activities were to be carried out, and how this task would be evaluated, to help the teacher better understand the research purpose and instructional principles.

An intervention was conducted over four weeks, where students in the experimental group participated in three 20-minute sessions per week. Four enchanting fairy tales (Peppa Pig, Lion King, The Jungle Book, and Moana) were selected for the intervention because of their interesting nature. Each fairy tale was divided into three segments, each containing approximately 14 sentences. Students tackled one segment during each session, completing three segments within a week. For the students in the control group, they practiced speaking English using traditional learning methods, reading aloud the picture books of the fairy tales. Each session lasted 20 minutes, with three such sessions per week over one month.

As shown in Figure 3, the study adopted the audio-visual activity teaching method (Chu, 2019) to guide each dubbing session (5 steps including 3 times of dubbing):

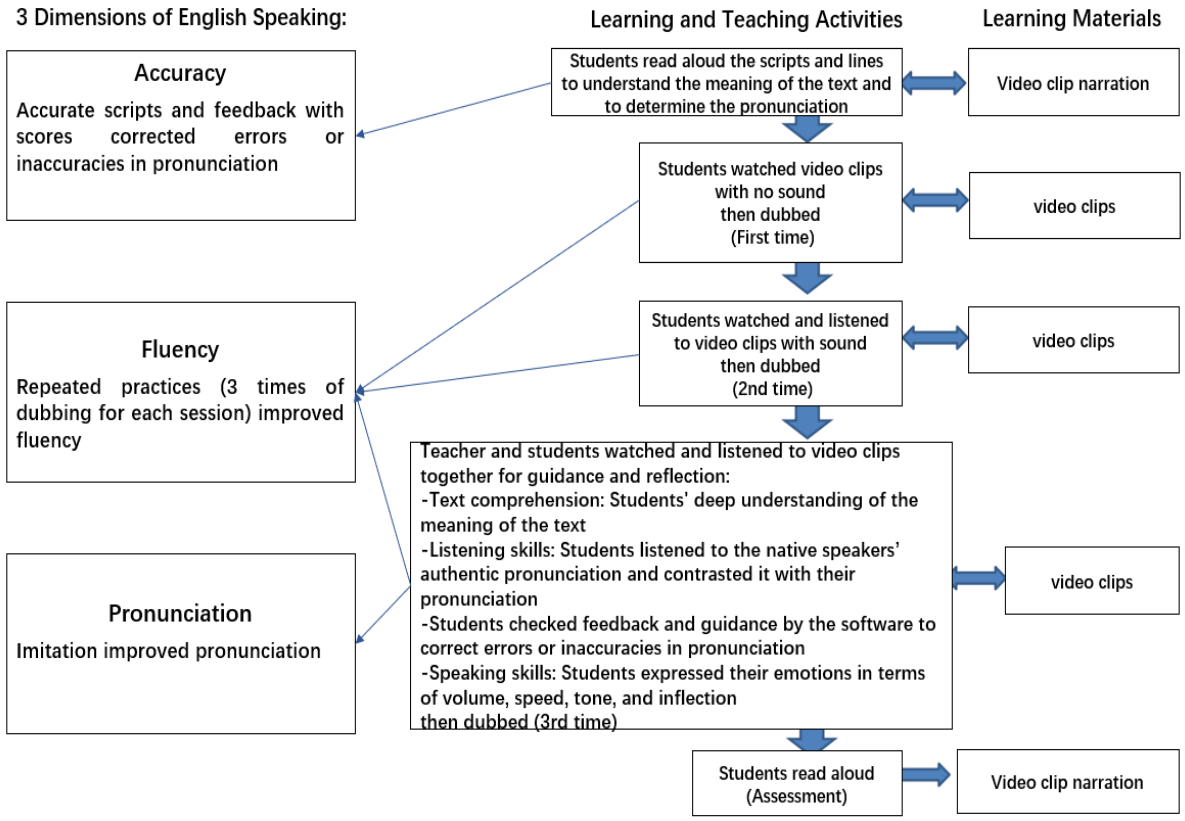

Figure 3. Principles Guiding Dubbing Activities of 12 Sessions Involved

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative data on the students' spoken English proficiency was collected shortly before and after the intervention program for both the experimental group and the control group.

The quantitative data collected from the research questionnaire was analyzed by using IBM SPSS 28.0 in this study.

For the pre-tests data, to ensure the internal consistency of the three dimensions of the English Speaking Proficiency Questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. Then descriptive analysis was conducted, and the t-test analyses were used to confirm that there were no significant differences between the control and experimental groups in the pre-tests.

For the post-tests data, descriptive analysis was conducted. The Levene's test of homogeneity of variances was conducted. The pre-test scores of the three dimensions in both groups were treated as covariates that could potentially influence the post-test results but could not be controlled. ANCOVA with a confidence interval of 0.95 was employed to adjust the post-test results and address potential confounding effects. The independent variable in this analysis was the intervention, specifically the dubbing activities, referred to as the “group”. The dependent variable included each of the three dimensions of participants' English proficiency and each specific aspect of the post-test.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

For the pre-tests data, the calculated Cronbach's alpha values for each factor exceeded 0.7 (α_P = 0.808， α_A= 0.899， α_F= 0.715，α_{OESP}= 0.920), indicating that the three dimensions of the English Speaking Proficiency Questionnaire represented a reliable instrument with internal consistency.

Independent samples t-test results were greater than 0.05, indicating that there were no significant differences between the experimental and control groups before the experiment ($p_{Pre\text{-}P}$ = 0.803, $p_{Pre\text{-}A}$ = 0.299, $p_{Pre\text{-}F}$ = 0.272, $p_{Pre\text{-}OESP}$ = 0.481).

The Levene's test of homogeneity of variances was conducted and the results ($p_{Post\text{-}P}$ = 0.227, $p_{Post\text{-}A}$ = 0.442, $p_{Post\text{-}F}$ = 0.283, $p_{Post\text{-}OESP}$ = 0.418) indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met.

Table 1 displayed the results of descriptive analysis of the pre-tests and post-tests in terms of the three dimensions of students' spoken English. These results demonstrated that there was an obvious improvement in students' spoken English proficiency in terms of pronunciation and fluency in the post-tests for the experimental group.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Students' English Speaking in Pretests and Posttests*

Dimension	N	Pretests		Posttests	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pronunciation					
Experimental Group	104	3.748	0.678	4.210	0.645
Control Group	102	3.773	0.725	3.916	0.735
Accuracy					
Experimental Group	104	4.052	0.712	4.158	0.732
Control Group	102	3.941	0.811	4.035	0.740
Fluency					
Experimental Group	104	3.856	0.696	4.294	0.624
Control Group	102	3.749	0.696	4.026	0.751
Overall English Speaking Proficiency (OESP)					
Experimental Group	104	3.885	0.624	4.221	0.596
Control Group	102	3.821	0.684	3.992	0.692

4.2 ANCOVA

The results of repeated measures of ANCOVA, as shown in Table 2, indicated that the overall English-speaking proficiency of students in the experimental group was significantly higher than that of students in the control group (F = 8.291, p = 0.004; η^2 = 0.039). Moreover, significant differences were observed in the pronunciation (F = 15.899, p < 0.001; η^2 = 0.073) dimension and fluency (F = 7.018, p = 0.009; η^2 = 0.033) dimension, between the experimental group and control group. However, no significant difference was observed in students' English-speaking accuracy (F = 0.411, p = 0.522; η^2 = 0.002). These results implied that the utilization of dubbing activities in the English classroom significantly enhanced the pronunciation and fluency of students in English speaking, but did not necessarily result in a better grasp of knowledge and skills related to the accuracy of oral English.

Table 2. *ANCOVA Results of Students' English Speaking in Experimental and Control Groups*

	F	p	η^2
Pronunciation	15.899	< 0.001*	0.073

Accuracy	0.411	0.522	0.002
Fluency	7.018	0.009*	0.033
Overall English Speaking Proficiency (OESP)	8.291	0.004*	0.039

Note: Experimental Group n = 104, Control Group n = 102. *p<0.05.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, a pretest-posttest experimental approach was employed to investigate the impact of dubbing activities on students' English speaking. The findings indicated that integrating online video dubbing activities into grade 5 students' oral English learning had a positive influence on students' overall pronunciation and fluency. These results aligned with several studies investigating the implementation of dubbing activities in educational settings (e.g., Burston, 2013; Chu, 2019; Danan, 2010; He, 2015). These studies indicated that dubbing activities offered ample chances for students to engage in pronunciation practice, fostering a more fluent spoken English.

However, in terms of enhancing students' oral speaking accuracy, the findings of this study diverged from certain prior research. Despite engaging in the dubbing activities twelve times in one month, the students did not demonstrate notable enhancements in the accuracy of their oral English. These results contradicted a previous study's findings that film dubbing can serve as an effective means to motivate students to engage in foreign language speaking and enhance their speaking accuracy (e.g. Jao et al., 2022). There are a few potential factors that may explain the differences between the two studies. Firstly, the participant samples differed significantly between the studies. The previous research involved 26 college students at a science and technology university in Taiwan (Jao et al., 2022), whereas this study focused on 206 elementary grade 5 students in mainland China. College students possess more developed cognitive capacities and a broader base of background knowledge compared to elementary school students. As a result, they are better equipped to comprehend and apply the feedback provided by dubbing software to optimize the accuracy of their pronunciation. In contrast, elementary school students' language skills are still emerging, and their vocabulary knowledge tends to be more limited relative to college students. During the dubbing process, grade 5 students generally encounter numerous unfamiliar words. They might first master the meanings and pronunciations of these unknown words before dubbing. Consequently, the student's vocabulary expanded during the dubbing process, leading to encountering fewer unknown words, reduced stuttering, increased speech speed, and overall improvements in fluency. Furthermore, the two studies differed in the length of their respective interventions. The previous study had an intervention period of two months, whereas this study had a shorter intervention period of one month. Given the longer duration of the intervention in the prior research, the effects of the dubbing activities on the students' spoken English proficiency were likely more pronounced. This difference in intervention duration may help explain why the two studies reported divergent findings regarding the impact of dubbing exercises on students' English pronunciation accuracy. These findings are worth a further investigation of the effectiveness of dubbing activities in oral English education.

In the second stage of this project using a qualitative approach, it collected the interview data from both students and teachers. The goal was to determine if it was feasible to provide explanations with credible evidence for how dubbing activities have a more significant influence on certain aspects of spoken English among elementary school students while having less impact on other aspects. The related results and findings will be presented in another paper.

There were several limitations in this study. Firstly, a key limitation of this study is that students' English-speaking proficiency was measured through a self-reported questionnaire, which may not provide a fully accurate representation of their abilities. Future research should incorporate more robust assessments of English-speaking proficiency, such as standardized oral exams or one-on-one interviews with trained raters. This would help ensure a more

accurate evaluation of the students' actual language abilities. Besides, this study selected the dimensions of spoken English assessment based on recommendations from previous research, specifically focusing on pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency (Brown, 2007; Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2018). However, a comprehensive measure of spoken English should include both intelligibility and nativeness criteria. Future research can consider incorporating more dimensions to assess the impact of using video dubbing activities on spoken English learning. Additionally, it is important to recognize that oral proficiency requires long-term training. The impact of the relatively short duration of the intervention (one month) in this study might be limited compared with the long-term effects of English dubbing activities on learners' oral proficiency if it could be implemented. Finally, the sample size of this study (N=206) was relatively small, which could limit the generalizability of the findings.

Regardless of the limitations stated above, this study did explore the influence of dubbing activities on elementary students' spoken English, specifically in terms of pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency, guided by the Nativeness Principle. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of how dubbing activities impact students' spoken English, the qualitative data obtained in the second phase of the research project will be presented in another paper to discuss how the two dimensions (pronunciation and fluency) of students' spoken English were more significantly affected by dubbing activities than the dimension of accuracy, hoping that the results can provide a deeper comprehension of how dubbing activities could be better integrated into the research and practice of learning spoken English in elementary schools.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere gratitude to the one fifth-grade English teacher and 206 fifth-grade students from an elementary school in Jiangsu Province, China, who generously participated in this research activity. Their active cooperation was essential - without their involvement, we would not have been able to complete the full month of the experimental research, nor collect the valuable data that informed our conclusions. We also would like to thank all the people who participated in this research and helped review this paper.

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