

**Using a Collaborative E-learning Environment to
Develop Speaking Skills among EFL Second Year
Preparatory School students**

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of a collaborative e-learning environment in developing EFL 2nd year preparatory students' speaking skills. This experiment was conducted during the academic year 2022/2023. The participants of the study consisted of (60) Second-Year Preparatory students at Al Shahid Hamdy Preparatory School for Boys, Kafr El Sheikh Directorate. Instruments of the study were an EFL speaking skills checklist and an EFL speaking scoring rubric. In this study, pre post-test was used with two groups (experimental and control, 30 students each). Results of the study revealed that the experimental group posttest scores in speaking were significantly better than their pretest ones. Data were statistically analyzed by the Sample t-Test. Findings showed that the experimental group outperformed the control one. It is concluded that using a Collaborative E-learning Environment proved to be effective in improving some EFL speaking sub-skills among second Year preparatory School EFL Students. Teaching speaking skills using a Collaborative E-learning Environment is recommended among primary and secondary stages.

Keywords: Collaborative E-learning Environment, EFL Speaking Skills, Online Learning.

استخدام بيئة تعلم إلكتروني تشاركية لتنمية مهارات التحدث لدى طلاب الصف الثانى الإعدادى دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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مستخلص

أجري هذا البحث بهدف تحديد مدى فاعلية استخدام بيئة تعلم إلكتروني تشاركية لتنمية مهارات التحدث لدى طلاب الصف الثانى الإعدادى دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. و تم اجراء هذا البحث خلال العام الدراسى (٢٠٢٢-٢٠٢٣). واشتملت العينة المشاركة في الدراسة على مجموعتين أحدهما تجريبية و عددها (ن=٣٠) والأخرى ضابطة و عددها (ن=٣٠) . تم إعداد اداة البحث التي تضمنت اختبار لمهارة التحدث الذى تم تطبيقه قبل المعالجة وبعدها. و أظهرت نتائج الاختبار البعدي وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط درجات المجموعة التجريبية و المجموعة الضابطة لصالح المجموعة التجريبية. حيث قام الباحث بتدريس مهارة التحدث لدى طلاب المجموعة التجريبية باستخدام بيئة تعلم إلكتروني تشاركية . بينما تلقت المجموعة الضابطة التعليم بالأساليب المعتادة طبقا لأنشطة الكتاب المدرسي و نتيجة لذلك، تم التحقق من فاعلية استخدام بيئة تعلم إلكتروني تشاركية لتنمية مهارات التحدث لدى طلاب الصف الثانى الإعدادى دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. يوصى الباحث بإستخدام بيئة تعلم إلكتروني تشاركية فى تدريس مهارة التحدث باللغة الانجليزية لدى تلاميذ المرحلتين الابتدائية و الثانوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: بيئة تعلم إلكتروني تشاركية، مهارات التحدث الفرعية، التعلم الإلكتروني.

Introduction

Speaking is an interactive skills in which parties of speech engage together in order to convey a certain message (Brown, 2014). Speaking is one of the most complicated skills for EFL learners since it involves many skills. The ability to organize the discourse, the ability to discriminate ideas and content, the ability to pronounce words perfectly, and the ability to pursue discourse flow (Kelsen, 2009).

The new internet-based modes of language learning have always been described as reliable sources for language learning. With internet-based applications, students can practice language learning through motivating activities such as games due to attractive features associated with games. The emergence of internet gave researchers an opportunity to facilitate language (Halic et al., 2010).

One of the main functions of language teachers is to provide as many opportunities as possible for their learners to develop their speaking skill in the target language so that they can interact with others under varied linguistic and social circumstances using such language subsystems appropriately and spontaneously.

Meanwhile, the utilization of online tools in learning management systems platforms generate stimulating chance to promote the collaboration and learning of the

learners (Robles, 2017) ensuring the learners interaction with peers, lecturers and content in order to obtain knowledge and support the process of learning (Ozkara & Cakir, 2020). Meanwhile, E-collaborative learning focuses on producing rather than receiving knowledge, shifting education from lecturer-centered to student-centered (Mawad, 2020). It allows the learner to assess current knowledge while also encouraging the new knowledge creation (Sahoo & Mohammed, 2018).

Mapile & Lapinid (2023) aimed to determine the applicability of implementing Collaborative Learning in online setting to help students develop their interaction with one another and improve their academic performance. Participants of the study consisted of Grade 8 intact pilot section of a public school in an urban community which yielded only 20 valid responses. Quantitative data were taken from Student Attitude Survey, individual and group learning activity sheets, and achievement test, while qualitative data were taken from focus group discussions. Transcripts of the recorded online collaborative learning were analyzed using content analysis following Garrison's Practical Inquiry Model. Results showed that there is a significant increase in students' scores in the activities done collaboratively than those done individually. Additionally, results of the content analysis of the video recording transcripts showed that among the four categories of Garrison's Practical

Inquiry Model, students made more extensive use of integration and exploration during online collaborative learning.

Alharbi et al. (2022) conducted a study to expose the impact of e-collaborative learning environment on development of critical thinking and higher order thinking skills. The experiment was conducted on female students of kindergarten department who were randomly assigned to two equal groups. The instruments were a critical thinking scale and a higher order thinking skills test. Results showed that E-collaborative learning environment had significant and positive effect on development of critical thinking of first group, that mediated by define and adjust variables, hypothesis testing, and reasoning. Results showed also that the difference in grades of female students in the first group that was taught via E-collaborative learning and second group that taught via E-individual learning in higher order thinking skills was statistically significant in favor of the first group.

Than & Pianchana (2024) conducted a study through a mixed-methods approach to determine whether implementing online collaborative learning (OCL) strategies in English-speaking classes had an effect on developing English-speaking skills and exploring the opinions of Myanmar migrant students in Thailand. A purposive sample group of 20 participants was chosen

from the estimated 250 enrollments in the third semester of 2023 at the Bawaalin Myanmar Vocational Training Center in Thailand. The sample group was taught through OCL settings for a month. Its effectiveness was assessed using the three data collection instruments. The findings demonstrated that the English-speaking skills of Myanmar migrant students were developed, and their opinions toward the applied method were also at a high level. Therefore, online collaborative learning was strongly recommended for making a choice for teaching all subjects and skills in order to attain similar goals.

Based on the previously mentioned literature and related studies, the researcher concluded that there are studies that have already been conducted and proved the effectiveness of a collaborative e-learning environment to improve EFL learners' speaking skills (Alharbi et al. 2022; Ochoa, 2016; Than & Pianchana 2024). The researcher suggested using a new treatment to improve learners' speaking skills.

Sources of the Problem

Observation

The researcher observed that EFL second year preparatory school students encounter difficulties in speaking skills. When students are asked to share in activities or speak in front of their colleagues, it was clear that they get worried and shy.

An Interview

The researcher interviewed EFL teachers and supervisors, and asked them about the difficulties EFL students encounter regarding speaking skills, they revealed that EFL students find difficulties in pronunciation of some sounds and they have a lot of grammar mistakes. They have not the ability to form clear and good sentences. The researcher interviewed some students. He asked them about the extent to which they are engaged in English classes. Some students declared that English classes are not favourable to them. They added that they do not understand the teacher while speaking or explaining pieces of grammar. So they got frustrated. They lack dedication, enthusiasm, courage to challenge and concentration. For all these factors, the researcher finally concluded that speaking skills lack attention in the Egyptian school in general and in the preparatory stage in particular. A collaborative e-learning environment may allow students to develop students' speaking skills because of its features. These features include using online communication tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams. Collaborative e-learning environment can consist of various assessment methods such as Google or Microsoft forms to provide instant feedback and revision. Synchronized and unsynchronized features can enable learners to share comments, exchange files such as images, videos, and

texts. Thus, the researcher aims to develop speaking skills for 2nd year preparatory school students.

The Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study on a group of (n=30) students at Old Preparatory School for Girls in Kafr El Sheikh Governorate, during the academic year (2022-2023). To conduct a pilot study, the researcher made some interviews with the senior teachers and some supervisors regarding the difficulties that students face when they speak and the needed speaking sub-skills for students. The researcher applied a diagnostic test to find out their level in speaking skills. As for speaking test, it aimed to measure the student's ability to communicate effectively in English. This included evaluating their fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. It also measured their ability to express their opinions, organize their thoughts, and participate in discussions. It has three sections: First section is about talking about yourself. Second section asks about family, daily schedule, best/worst school subjects, and after school activities. Third section about describing photos which asks some questions about time, people and food. It concludes with additional extension questions.

The students found difficulty in expressing themselves or even talk about simple topics. These difficulties related to shyness, anxiety, lack of vocabulary and lack of motivation.

The findings of the pilot study give a further proof that students have a problem in their speaking skills. This might be related to insufficient opportunities to learn those skills in the classroom. Besides, students scarcely participate in the classroom in the target language which leads to their poor level of English language. The researcher notices that some students do not want to participate in the speaking activities to avoid other peers' criticism and sarcasm.

Table (1) Results of The Speaking Test (pilot study)

Speaking skill	Total score	Max. Score	Min. Score	Mean score	SD	Percentage
Pronunciation& Fluency	9	7	2	4.5	1.8	16.80%
Vocabulary and grammar	9	7	1	4.03	1.9	14.90%
Content ideas	9	8	3	5.16	1.5	19.10%
Total	27	22	6	13.69	5.2	50.81%

Table (1) shows results of the speaking test of the pilot study which reveals that the percentage of the students' scores in speaking test is 50.81%. According to the mastery level indicators, they must reach at least 80% and above. The percentage of the students' scores in EFL speaking skills test means that students of preparatory stage need more improvement to enhance their speaking skills.

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student teachers must reach at least 80% and above. The percentage of the students' scores in EFL speaking skills test means that students of preparatory stage need more improvement to enhance their speaking skills. This might be related to insufficient opportunities to learn those skills in the classroom. Some students do not want to share to avoid other peers' criticism.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the literature review, the researcher's experience and the results of the pilot study. It is evident that preparatory school students suffer difficulties in regard to some speaking sub-skills namely, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and fluency. Thus, the researcher suggested using a collaborative e-learning environment to develop second year preparatory school students' speaking.

Research Questions

- 1- What is the effectiveness of using a Collaborative E-Learning Environment on developing speaking skills among the 2nd year preparatory stage students?
- 2- What is the effectiveness of using a Collaborative E-Learning Environment on developing pronunciation among the 2nd year preparatory stage students?
- 3- What is the effectiveness of using a Collaborative E-Learning Environment on developing grammar among the 2nd year preparatory stage students?

- 4- What is the effectiveness of using a Collaborative E-Learning Environment on developing fluency among the 2nd year preparatory stage students?

Research Hypotheses

- 1- There is a statistically significant difference at the ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level of significance between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in “ speaking skills “ on the post-administration of the speaking test in favor of the experimental group.
- 2- There is a statistically significant difference at the ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level of significance between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in “pronunciation“ on the post-administration of the speaking test in favor of the experimental group.
- 3- There is a statistically significant difference at the ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level of significance between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in “grammar“ on the post-administration of the speaking test in favor of the experimental group.
- 4- There is a statistically significant difference at the ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level of significance between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in “fluency“ on the post-

administration of the speaking test in favor of the experimental group.

Methodology:

Research Design

The present research adopted a quasi-experimental design of one experimental group and another control one. The tool was administered as pre-posttests. The two groups experienced the same conditions except that the experimental group was taught using a collaborative e-learning environment, whereas the control group was taught by traditional method.

Participants

The participants of the study were 60 second year preparatory school students who studied English as a foreign language for more than 8 years. They were selected from Al Shahid Hamdy Preparatory School. They were assigned into an experimental group and control group (n=30 students per group). They were relatively at the same age ranging from 14 to 15 years old.

Instruments

The researcher designed a speaking test. Its validation and reliability were estimated. It focused on four speaking sub-skills: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and fluency. These sub-skills were chosen by the authors

since they are considered the most significant sub-skills mentioned in second year preparatory school students' book.

Material

- A teacher's guide for teaching the targeted speaking skills to the experimental. The control group was taught via regular instruction according to the teacher's guide recommended by the Egyptian Ministry of Education.

Validation of the Speaking Test

The initial form of the speaking test was submitted to a panel of TEFL jury to judge the items of the tests in terms of content validity and face validity. After judging the test, the jury provided the researcher with modifications which were taken into consideration when preparing the final form of the test. The speaking sub-skills were pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and fluency.

Internal Consistency of the speaking Test:

The internal validity coefficient was computed by Pearson formula (Larson-Hall, 2009). The correlation between the scores of every single skill to the total score was calculated.

Table (2): Internal Consistency of the Speaking sub-Skills

Speaking Skills	Pearson Correlation
Pronunciation	0.71
Grammar	0.72
Vocabulary	0.67
Fluency	0.68

Table (2) indicates that the correlation coefficient for pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and fluency with the total score were 0.71, 0.72, 0.67, 0.68 respectively. Thus, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Speaking Test Structure

The researcher designed an EFL speaking test. It was intended to investigate the extent to which a collaborative e-learning environment was able to improve second year preparatory school students' speaking skills. The researcher reviewed literature and previous studies concerned with developing speaking skill tests (Kurniati et al. 2015, Bohari 2020, Radwan 2012, Farag 2022 and Harroug 2022). He also analyzed second year preparatory school students' textbooks and the teacher's guide to determine the skills of speaking related to second year preparatory school students.

Scoring the Speaking Test

The test was scored using the speaking rubric adopted by the researcher to evaluate the speaking skills of thirty

students in the speaking pre-posttest to ensure the reliability of scoring results.

The Experiment

At the beginning of the academic year (2022-2023) a speaking test was validated, piloted and administered to measure second year preparatory school students' speaking skill. The researcher verified that there were no prior significant differences between the experimental and control groups in speaking skills.

The researcher started the proposed intervention. The environment was conducted through twelve sessions. Each session (30-40 minutes each) had its own objectives, time and procedures. While the experimental group received speaking skills teaching using collaborative e-learning environment, the control group received the traditional method of teaching.

Data Analysis

Data obtained were analysed by independent samples t-test using the statistical package for the social science (SPSS, Version, 25). Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient formula was used to test the reliability of the speaking test to the study sample. To investigate the correlation between the scores of every speaking skill to the total speaking score, the internal validity coefficient was calculated using Pearson's formula.

Results discussion

Testing the First Hypothesis

There is a statistically significant difference at the ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level of significance between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in “pronunciation” on the post-administration of the speaking test in favour of the experimental group.

In order to test this hypothesis, the t-test for independent samples was calculated to compare the mean scores of the two groups on the post-test. Relevant data to this hypothesis are provided in Table (3).

Table (3): The t-value of the Post-test on Pronunciation.

Groups	n	Means	SD	df.	t	Eta squared
Experimental	30	3.33	0.479	٥٨	2.644	0.108
Control	30	2.90	0.759			

* Significant at 0.5 level.

It is clear from the results illustrated in Table (3) that the mean scores were 3.٣٣ and ٢.90 the SD were 0.٤٧٩ and 0.759 for the experimental and control groups respectively; (df = ٥٨, t = 2.644 P> 0.05). Thus, the first hypothesis is accepted.

Testing the Second Hypothesis

There is a statistically significant difference at the ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level of significance between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in “grammar” on the post-administration of the speaking test in favour of the experimental group. To test the validity of this hypothesis, the t-test for independent samples was calculated to compare the mean scores of the two groups on the post-test. Relevant data to this hypothesis are shown in Table (4).

Table (4): The t-value of the Post-test on Grammar.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df.	t	Eta squared
Experimental	30	3.60	0.621	58	5.196	0.318
Control	30	2.40	1.102			

* Significant at 0.5 level.

Table (4) shows that the mean scores were 3.60 and 2.40, the SD were 0.621 and 1.102 for the experimental and control groups respectively; ($df = 58$, $t = 5.196$, $P > 0.05$). So, the second hypothesis is accepted.

Testing the Third Hypothesis

There is a statistically significant difference at the ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level of significance between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in “fluency” on the post-administration of the speaking test in favour of the experimental group.

To prove this hypothesis, the t-test for independent samples was administered to compare the mean scores of the two groups on the post-test. Relevant data to this hypothesis are provided in Table (5).

Table (5): The t-value of the Post-test on Fluency.

Groups	n	Means	SD	df.	t	Eta squared
Experimental	30	3.33	0.606	58	4.550	0.263
Control	30	2.43	0.675			

* Significant at 0.5 level.

Table (5) points out that the mean scores were 3.33 and 2.43, the SD were 0.606 and 0.675 for the experimental and control groups respectively; (df = 58, t = 4.550, P> 0.05). Thus, the forth hypothesis is accepted.

Testing the Fourth Hypothesis

There is a statistically significant difference at the ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level of significance between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in “overall speaking skill” on the post-administration of the speaking test in favour of the experimental group.

In order to test the validity of this hypothesis, the t-test for independent samples was calculated to compare the mean scores of the two groups on the post-test. Relevant data to this hypothesis are exhibited in Table (6):

Table (6): The t-value of the Post-test on Overall Speaking Skill.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df.	t	Eta squared
Experimental	30	13.83	1.683	58	9.152	0.591
Control	30	9.80	1.730			

* Significant at 0.5 level.

Table (6) manifests that the mean scores were 13.83 and 9.80, the SD were 1.683 and 1.730 for the experimental and control groups respectively; (df = 58, t = 9.152, $P > 0.05$). Thus, the fifth hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

It can be concluded that theoretical knowledge about English pronunciation and phonology should be accompanied by useful web-based resources that the students can utilise for self-study. Those tools that are perceived as user-friendly and useful would more likely to be used again in the long run, which would eventually yield better learning outcomes. Therefore, it might be suggested that online tools help in improving pronunciation features. This lines with Loaiza Quintero (2018) and James (2016)

The improvement in pronunciation due to the nature of the online environment. It provides students more practice and monitor their pronunciation and correct their mistakes with their peers. This is in line with Hamdy (2020), Eksi (2016) and Browne and Fulcher (2017).

Collaborative e-learning environment helped students use some accurate structures and vocabulary which contributed to their fluency. Moreover, speaking fluency involved the ability to produce the spoken language without undue pausing or hesitation. Additionally, fluency can be associated with knowledge and use of multiword expressions. The results clarified the efficacy of pair work and group work in promoting accuracy and fluency. The presented evidence suggests that grammar instruction can clearly benefit from incorporating both pair work and group work through collaborative e-learning environment. These results concur with Browne and Fulcher (2017), Derakhshan and Beheshti (2016), Thomson (2017) and Odehova and Perlova (2022), Salhy et al. (2024).

The results revealed that there is improvement in students' speaking skills due to using online technology resources. The online collaborative learning developed the English speaking skills according to Than and Pianchana (2024). These results are in line with Adhelia and Triastuti (2023), Kew et al. (2023), Tran et al. (2024) and Then and Pianchana (2024).

The online environment is considered a student-centered model consequently learner's motivation and actual learning increased. Additionally, learners who

meet with success in assuming new responsibilities gain self-confidence and achieve better results.

Conclusion

A collaborative e-learning environment can effectively develop second year preparatory school EFL students' speaking skills. A collaborative e-learning environment had a great effect on developing students' speaking skills. Further studies are recommended to develop speaking skills of primary and secondary stages. The researcher concluded that next researches should combine the benefits of collaborative e-learning environment as well as face-to-face learning to make the best use of each mode.

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