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**The Effect of Using Some Communicative Activities on
Developing EFL Oral communication skills and Reducing the
Anxiety of Primary Language School Pupils**

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بحث مشتق من الرسالة الخاصة بالباحثة

Abstract

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This study investigated the effect of using some communicative activities to enhance EFL oral performance and reduce the anxiety of primary language school pupils. The researcher adopted the quasi – experimental design. The participants were sixty sixth-year primary language school pupils from Al Wadi Al Shaky experimental language school, Abu Hammad Directorate, Sharkia Governorate, Egypt, who were equally divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was taught by using some communicative activities and the control group received regular instruction. Data were collected through an EFL oral performance test, an EFL oral performance anxiety scale and an EFL oral performance observation card. These instruments were pre – and post administered to both groups. The study material was designed and administered during the second term of the academic year 2021/2022. The results indicated that a) the experimental group outperformed the control group as a result of adopting the communicative activities, b) the experimental group did better in the post administration of the EFL oral performance test, the EFL oral performance anxiety scale

and the EFL oral performance observation card than in the pre administrations. Therefore, it can be concluded that using communicative activities is effective in enhancing EFL oral performance and reducing their EFL oral anxiety.

Key words: *EFL oral performance, EFL oral communication skills, communicative activities, communicative approach, CLT, primary language school pupils, oral anxiety*

Introduction

Because of the globalization of English, it has become an essential means of communication. So, nowadays, the ultimate goal of teaching and learning English as a foreign language is the ability to communicate effectively both inside and outside the classroom, as it has a positive impact not only on the academic process but also on the professional situation.

Communication is the art and process of creating and sharing ideas. The richness of those ideas is essential for effective communication. Effective communication allows others to get the message and receive accurate instructions to complete the assigned tasks. Communication breakdowns create barriers to the professional and personal development (Mcpheat, 2010:8-9).

Communication skills are the combination of verbal, interpersonal, and physical strategies required to interact confidently and effectively with a variety of audiences. A skilled communicator employs a variety of techniques (e.g., graphical, visual, statistical, audio-visual, and technological) to convey information (Crebert, et al., 2011: 1).

Wambui, et al (2012:2) & Camp & Satterwhite (1998: 4-5) categorized communication into two types based on channel: verbal communication and nonverbal communication: Verbal

communication is communication through words orally and writingly. Nonverbal communication refers to communication without the use of words and includes postures, gestures, facial expression, eye contact, and body language.

Demir (2017) reported that, while speaking involves expressing and listening involves comprehension, speaking and listening must be viewed as activities that form the communication process, complement each other, and cannot be separated. Similarly, Tavil (2010) demonstrated that teaching listening and speaking skills together improves oral communicative competence.

The spoken interaction between two or more people is known as oral communication (Rahman, 2010). In the same vein, Munro (2011:2) affirmed that oral language is communication through words when they are spoken. It is about speaking and listening, which means understanding and producing speech. It is about communicating ideas, intentions, goals, and feelings to others. Oral communication is the accurate interpretation, composition, and impromptu presentation of ideas, information, and values to a specific audience. The effective interpretation, composition, and extemporaneous presentation to a specific audience of ideas, information, and values (Baritaud, et al (2006:10).

Knowing more than just the grammatical and semantic rules of a foreign language is required to learn to communicate in it. Learners must also understand how native speakers use the language in the context of structured interpersonal exchange, where a variety of factors interact. The ability to use language appropriately in social interactions is required for oral communication. Interaction diversity includes not only verbal communication, but also paralinguistic elements of speech like stress and intonation, as well as nonlinguistic elements like gestures and body language. (Shumin, 2002:204).

Alrowayeh (2017) clarified that oral communication is an important factor in language learning because it facilitates the learning process, assists learners in achieving their learning objectives, expands opportunities for expanded learning, strengthens the connection between the learner and the teacher, and creates an overall positive experience. So, effective oral communication skills enable students to: improve their academic performance, broaden their employment options, improve their subsequent professional competence and increase their personal effectiveness. (Crebert, et al., ibid: 5).

Cregan (1998:7) added that the child's first important and frequently used structured mode of communication is the oral language. It is the primary means for each individual child to structure, evaluate,

describe, and control his or her experience. Furthermore, oral language is the primary cultural mediator, the means by which children locate and define themselves in the world.

As a result, developing oral communication skills is crucial, particularly for EFL primary school pupils. A number of studies, such as Abu Shady (2022); Farghaly (2020); El Kady (2016); El enein (2019) confirmed the significance of developing oral communication skills among EFL primary school pupils.

Alrowayeh (ibid) found that there are different factors that affect oral communication in EFL classrooms. One of these factors was the students' feeling of anxiety and fearing of making mistakes. Dollah, (2016) defined anxiety as a feeling of dread, fear, or apprehension that often has no clear cause. MacIntyre & Gardner (1994) defined oral anxiety as the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning.

Three types of anxiety have been identified by Woodrow (2006: 309- 310)

A) Trait anxiety:

It is a recurring personality characteristic in which a person feels worried in different situations.

B) State anxiety:

It is a passing state felt at a particular time.

C) Situation specific anxiety:

This is an example of a trait that frequently occurs in certain situations.

According to research on language learning anxiety, language learning should be categorized as situation-specific. Three aspects of foreign language anxiety were identified by Horwitz (1986:127–128):

A) Communication apprehension is a form of shyness characterized by a fear of social interaction.

B) Fear of negative evaluation is defined as how other people judge a message, avoiding situations where one might be evaluated and anticipating a negative evaluation from others.

C) Test anxiety refers to a particular form of performance anxiety resulting from fear of failing.

Young (1991) indicated the following sources of anxiety:

1) Personal and interpersonal anxiety; 2) Learners' beliefs toward foreign language learning ;3) beliefs of teachers about language teaching ;4) Instructor-learner interaction; 5) Classroom practices, 6) Language test.

Several studies, such as El -Naggar (2019); Kusmartini (2021) ; Mohamed, (2020); Bogotá &Rodríguez (2016) ; Imura (2004) , and Buben (2018) showed the negative relationship between learners' oral anxiety and enhancing their oral skills. In other words, as the oral performance increase, the oral anxiety decrease and vice versa.

The purpose of language instruction is to foster communicative competence using a method of instruction known as the communicative approach (Richard & Rodgers, 2001 :159). This approach is commonly understood to mean giving teachers communicative activities to include in their toolkit for teaching and allowing students the chance to practice a language they are learning in class (Ho ,2004) cited in (Littlewood ,2007).

It is possible to concluded that developing EFL pupils' oral performance and reducing their anxiety is a critical issue that should be researched. So the present study is an attempt to investigate the effect of some communicative activities on developing sixth grade primary language school pupils' EFL oral performance which is a key of communication and reducing their EFL oral communicative anxiety based on the results of the pilot study and the literature review concerning oral communication performance.

Communicative activities are any activities that involve the learner where the main goal is to effectively communicate meanings

(Littlewood ,2002: 16). They involve learners in comprehending, using, producing, or interacting with the target language, are an important component in an EFL classroom. (Nunan, 1989) cited in (Ochoa et al ,2016). Krashen and Terrell (1983:103) claimed that communicative activities are enjoyable and can help students feel less anxious. Luis (2021) indicated the following benefits of using oral communicative activities:

- All students are involved and compelled to speak up.
- They shorten teacher talking time in, help students gain fluency and encourage learners to consider language as a tool for communication.

In the same respect, Harmer (2001: 271) added that one benefit of communicative activities is that students develop habits of rapid language processing in English. Thereby, learners who are given chances to engage in interesting and meaningful communication can improve their communicative skills to the point where they can process the information they are hearing and respond quickly with appropriate words and phrases. (Amin ,2009).

Richard (2006) also noted some advantages of communicative activities:

- They can learn by hearing the language used by other group members

They will use more language than they would in teacher-led activities.

- Their level of motivation is likely to rise
- They will have the opportunity to improve their fluency.

Littlewood (ibid:17-18) concluded that the purposes of communicative activities are:

- giving students whole – task practice.
- improving students’ motivation.
- allowing learning happen naturally.
- creating a context which encourages leaning.

There are two categories of communicative activities: functional communicative activities and social interactive activities.

1-Functional communicative activities aim to encourage students to communicate as effectively as possible by using the language they already know. It is divided into four groups:

- A) Sharing information with limited cooperation
- B) Sharing information with unlimited cooperation
- C) Processing and sharing information
- D) Information processing in problem-solving situations

2-Social interactive activities concentrate on the ability to consider both the social and functional meanings of various language forms. They include discussion sessions, conversations, basic dialogues and

role-plays based on school experience, simulation and improvisation. (Littlewood, *ibid*:22-43).

Accordingly, numerous studies such as Mohammed (2019), Phansrisuwan & Adipattaranan (2018), Belouassa & Touloum (2017), and Al-Twairish (2009) emphasized the importance of using communicative activities on developing oral communication skills. This justified the researcher's attempt to examine the effect using some communicative activities on developing EFL oral communication skills and reducing the anxiety of primary language school pupils.

Context of the problem

In spite of the importance of the oral communication skills, results of previous research on oral communication skills in Egyptian schools revealed that there are many reasons for the persistence of many oral communication skills difficulties.

Most EFL teachers employ the traditional method, where they focus on grammar and teach vocabulary to be memorized either synonyms or Arabic “equivalents”. They devote the majority of class time to reading and writing skills while paying little attention to communication skills. (Abd El- Qader , 2020). This is because exams in all educational levels focuses on reading and writing skills while ignoring oral assessment.

Similarly, El Sallam (2018) added that the educational system places the teacher at the center of the learning process, and the students' role is to pass the final exam. This difficulty has been attributed to learners' fear of participation, low motivation, and the lack of awareness of the significance of oral skills in their lives. (Alanazi, 2019).

From the researcher's experience as a teacher of English in the primary stage, she observed that sixth grade primary language school pupils have problems in oral communication skills. To determine the pupils' current level, a pilot study was administered for a group of 12 sixth grade Omar El Farouk formal primary language school pupils to test how far they perform the oral skills relevant to this stage through an oral performance test and measure their level in oral communicative anxiety through an oral communicative anxiety scale. The results showed that the majority of the pupils have problems in oral communicative skills and suffer from oral communicative anxiety.

Hence, the present study is an attempt to enhance sixth grade primary language school pupils' EFL oral performance and reduce their EFL oral communicative anxiety using some communicative activities.

Statement of the problem

The problem of the study could be stated as follows: Sixth grade primary language school pupils have a low level in oral communicative performance and a high level in oral communicative anxiety.

Questions of the study

The problem of the study could be treated through the following main question:

- What is the effect of communicative activities on developing EFL oral communicative performance and reducing communicative anxiety of primary language school pupils?

This main question can be sub divided into the following questions:

- 1- What are the target EFL oral communicative performances that sixth grade primary language school pupils should perform successfully?
- 2- To what extent do the target pupils produce these performances successfully?
- 3- What are the communicative activities that are suitable for sixth grade primary language school pupils and may develop their oral performance and reduce their anxiety?

- 4- What are the dimensions of the EFL oral communicative anxiety that sixth grade primary language school pupils suffer from?

Purposes of the study

The study aims to:

- 1-Identify the EFL oral communication skills targeted for sixth grade primary language school pupils
- 3-Enhance oral communicative performance by using some communicative activities.
- 4- Reduce sixth grade primary language school pupils' oral communicative anxiety by using some communicative activities.

Significance of the study

It was hoped that the study would be significant to:

1-Pupils

It might enable them to enhance their oral communicative performance and reduce anxiety through the use of some communicative activities.

2- Teachers

It might provide them with a list of EFL oral communication skills necessary for sixth grade primary language school pupils to be taken into consideration while teaching the communicative

activities. It might also provide them with some communicative activities that might develop their pupils' communicative skills and reduce their communicative anxiety.

3-Course designers

It might be useful for them through designing their textbooks implementing the principles and implications of communicative approach to develop primary language school pupils' oral communication performance and reduce their communicative anxiety.

Instruments of the study

The instruments of the present study were designed by the researcher in the light of the dependent variables.

- 1- An EFL oral communicative questionnaire.
- 2- A pre – post oral communicative skill test.
- 3- An EFL oral communicative rubric.
- 4- An EFL oral communicative observation card.
- 5- An oral communicative anxiety scale.

Delimitations of the study

The study was limited to:

- 1- Sixty sixth grade primary language school pupils from Al Wady Al Sharky formal language school in Abu Hammad, Sharkia.

2- Some oral communication performances targeted for sixth grade primary language school pupils which were approved by the jury members.

3- Some communicative activities suitable for sixth grade primary language school pupils because these activities;

- provide more authentic opportunities to use the language
- they are fun and interesting for learners
- provide more exposure to target language.
- provide opportunity to use authentic materials (Bilash, 2009)

4- Some oral communication anxiety dimensions that the target pupils suffer from.

5- The second term of the academic year 2021- 2022.

Procedures of the study

To answer the previously mentioned questions, the researcher would conduct the following:

1-Reviewing literature and previous studies related to:

a) oral communicative performance to determine the skills required for the participants.

b) the use of communicative activities on developing EFL oral performance.

c) oral communicative anxiety to design an EFL oral communicative anxiety scale.

2- Conducting a list of EFL oral communicative skills necessary for sixth grade primary language school pupils through a questionnaire for EFL teachers, supervisors and EFL methodology specialists to validate it.

3- Designing a checklist of EFL oral performance sub-skills and judge it by a panel of specialists.

4- Designing a pre- post EFL oral communicative performance test to measure the participants' EFL oral performance, a rating scale EFL rubric and an EFL oral communication observation card and submitting them to a jury of specialists to determine their validity and reliability.

5- Designing an EFL oral communicative anxiety scale and judging it by a panel of specialists.

6-Designing an oral communicative anxiety dimensions' checklist and submitting it to a panel of jury members.

7-Designing some EFL communicative activities to develop the identified oral communicative skills for the sixth grade primary language school pupils and submitting them to EFL experts to determine their suitability.

8- Selecting the study participants of sixth grade primary school pupils from one of the formal primary language schools and dividing them into two groups.

The first is the experimental group (that would be taught through these communicative activities) and the second is the control group (that would be taught regularly).

9- Pre- administering the EFL oral communicative performance test to both groups to identify their real standard concerning the EFL oral communicative skills.

8- Pre – administering the oral communicative anxiety scale to both groups to identify their real standard concerning the EFL oral communicative anxiety.

10- Implementing the EFL communicative activities to the experimental group only aiming to develop the oral communicative performance.

11- Post -administering the EFL oral communicative performance test to both groups to investigate the effect of the chosen communicative activities.

12 –Post administering the oral communicative anxiety scale to both groups.

13- Comparing the results of the study instruments administrations to conclude the results.

14- Analyzing and treating data statistically.

15- Discussing and interpreting the results of the study, presenting conclusion, providing recommendations and suggestions of the study.

Definition of terms

Communicative activities

Any activities that encourage and require a learner to communicate with other people in the community, are considered communicative activities. Their real goals are to gather information, break down barriers, and talk about oneself. (Laylo, 2022).

In this study, the researcher defines them as oral classroom activities which motivate pupils to communicate, interact and use the target language rather than using the structure.

Oral communicative performance

Oral communication is a two-way process involving the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding between a speaker and a listener (Byrne, 1976, p. 8).

Oral communicative performance is the use of words to communicate when they are produced. It is about listening and speaking, which means understanding and producing speech. It involves sharing ideas, intentions, goals, and feelings with others. (Munro, ibid:2)

In this study, the researcher defined it as the pupils' ability to listen, comprehend information and ideas and converse clearly and accurately in the target language using some communicative activities. It includes remembering, recognition, comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and interactive communication.

Oral communicative anxiety

Ormrod (2011) defined anxiety as apprehension and uneasiness about the outcome of a given condition.

Foreign language speaking anxiety” (FLSA), “an individual’s fear or nervousness accompanied to either real or expected oral communication in foreign language with another person or people”. (He,2018).

In this study, the researcher defined it as a state of worry, fear, uneasiness and stress which blocks pupils before and during oral communicative performance in EFL classrooms. It has three components: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety.

Results of the study

The present study verified that:

1-There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control one in the post the oral performance test results, in favor of the experimental group.

2- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- post oral communicative performance test results, in favor of the post one.

3-There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and that of the control group in the post administration of the EFL oral observation card results, in favor of the experimental group.

4-There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- post administrations of the EFL oral observation card results in favor of the post results.

5-There is a positive effect of using the communicative activities on developing the EFL oral performance of the primary language school pupils.

6-There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the oral performance anxiety scale results, in favor of the experimental group.

7- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and that of the control group in the pre- post administration of the oral performance anxiety scale results, in favor of the post results.

8- There is a positive effect of using the communicative activities on reducing the EFL oral communicative anxiety of the primary language school pupils.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study, the following recommendations can be recommended:

Concerning EFL oral performance:

- More attention should be given to the teaching of oral communication skills in EFL classrooms.
- It is recommended that EFL teachers use communicative activities regularly in teaching English language skills in general and oral skills in particular, at various stages taking into consideration their students' age, interests, and linguistic proficiency levels.
- To improve oral skills, EFL teachers should be trained to use communicative activities in classrooms.
- EFL teachers can help their students improve their oral skills by allowing them proper time to interact with one another naturally and freely.
- In teaching oral performance, EFL teachers should minimize their talk and maximize their learners' talk.

- Rather than being the only source of information, EFL teachers should be facilitators, participants, motivators, observers, promoters, organizers, and feedback providers.
- As a source of classroom activities, interactive communication should be based on daily issues and real-life situations.
- EFL Teachers should use new technologies to teach language skills, particularly EFL oral skills.
- It is recommended that EFL communicative activities be extended outside of the classroom by using social networking sites such as Facebook or Skype.
- EFL teachers should diagnose problems encountered by pupils who have difficulties in expressing themselves in the target language and provide additional opportunities to practice the oral language.
- It is recommended that learners be at the center of the learning process and take responsibility for their oral skill development.
- In order to improve their EFL oral performance, learners should participate in classroom activities in pairs or small groups.
- EFL Learners should plan beforehand for their spoken performance in order to overcome potential obstacles during oral communication.
- More opportunities should be provided for EFL learners to practice oral skills in class
- Learners should listen to EFL audio recordings of real-life spoken conversations in the target language. This will improve their

academic communicative ability as well as their cultural background, which will help them learn English.

-EFL curriculum designers should design EFL teacher's guide containing communicative activities

-It is recommended that they include these oral skills when designing or modifying curriculum.

-Designing EFL curricula which involve attractive activities to reduce pupils' anxiety

Concerning EFL oral anxiety:

- EFL teachers should provide a relaxing, effective, friendly, and interactive environment in which learners are tolerant of their classmates' mistakes and value diversity. That attracts their attention, especially the shy ones, and motivates them to express their opinions, interact with one another, and positively take part in the classroom.

-EFL teachers should be implement activities that require group work to reduce their learners' oral anxiety

- EFL teachers should respect learners' feelings, ideas, and points of view and to provide equal opportunities for them to openly express themselves without fear.

-EFL teachers should provide learners with the vocabulary beforehand that they need in EFL oral activities.

- EFL teachers should give frequent positive feedback to the learners.
- EFL teachers should avoid correcting EFL pronunciation mistakes very often while being produced to lessen the anxiety.
- Concerning EFL students, it is recommended that:
learners should try to overcome their shyness or fear of EFL oral performance and use it as much as possible either inside or outside the classroom.

Suggestions for further research

Based on the current study results, and out of its delimitations, the following research areas can be suggested:

- 1-Communicative activities in relation to other EFL skills such as reading, and writing.
- 2- Communicative activities in relation to EFL vocabulary acquisition and its retention process.
- 3- Communicative activities in relation to grammatical competence with EFL learners at various educational levels.
- 4- Communicative activities in relation to EFL oral communication skills at various educational levels (preparatory, secondary and university) and in different language learning contexts.
- 5- Communicative activities in relation to communicative competence of EFL learners.

- 6- Communicative activities in relation to the critical thinking skills and the achievement.
- 7-Other communicative activities in relation to oral anxiety.
- 8-Communicative activities in relation to motivation.
- 9- Investigating the relationship between communicative strategies and developing the EFL oral performance.
- 10-Comparing the effect of communicative approach versus other educational approaches on developing EFL oral communication skills.
- 11- Communicative approach in relation to EFL learner's oral fluency and their self-esteem.

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