A Socioemotional Learning Program for Developing Preparatory Stage Pupils' EFL Speaking Skills and Self-Confidence

By

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Abstract

This research investigated the impact of a proposed socioemotional learning (SEL) program on developing EFL speaking skills and self-confidence in speaking for second-year preparatory stage pupils. The quasi-experimental research design was adopted using two groups: a control group received regular instruction, and an experimental group studied through the proposed program. Instruments designed and used were an EFL speaking skills test, a speaking analytic rubric, and a self-confidence scale. Throughout the treatment, the experimental group pupils were engaged in multiple SEL strategies and tasks addressing the five core SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making to assist pupils in their speaking performance and self-confidence. The results indicated that the experimental group pupils outperformed their control group counterparts on both the speaking skills test and the self-confidence scale. In addition, the experimental group pupils' post-speaking and self-confidence levels were much better than their pre-levels. Accordingly, the proposed SEL program proved to have a large effect on developing pupils' EFL speaking skills and self-confidence. The research recommends investigating the use of SEL strategies to improve basic education pupils' other English language skills.

Key words*: speaking skills, self-confidence, socioemotional learning*

المستخلص

برنامج فى التعلم الاجتماعي العاطفي لتنمية مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية والثقة بالنفس لدى تلاميذ المرحلة الاعدادية

تناول البحث الحالى أثر برنامج مقترح فى التعلم الاجتماعي العاطفى (SEL) على تنمية مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية والثقة بالنفس أثناء التحدث لدى تلاميذ الصف الثانى الاعدادى، وتبنى البحث المنهج شبه التجريبي باستخدام مجموعتين: مجموعة ضابطة تدرس من خلال التدريس المعتاد ومجموعة تجريبية تدرس من خلال البرنامج المقترح، وتضمنت الأدوات المستخدمة: اختبار مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية ، ومقياس أداء تحليلى للتحدث، ومقياس الثقة بالنفس، وتضمنت المعالجة البحثية انخرط تلاميذ المجموعة التجريبية في استراتيجيات متنوعة قائمة على نظرية التعلم الاجتماعى العاطفى من خلال توظيف كفاءات SEL الخمس الرئيسة وهى: الوعي الذاتي، والإدارة الذاتية، والوعي الاجتماعي، ومهارات العلاقات، واتخاذ القرارات المسؤولة، وذلك لمساعدة الطلاب في تنمية مهارات التحدث و الثقة بالنفس، وأشارت نتائج البحث إلى تفوق تلاميذ المجموعة التجريبية على أقرانهم في المجموعة الضابطة في كل من اختبار مهارات التحدث ومقياس الثقة بالنفس. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، كانت المستويات البعدية فى التحدث والثقة بالنفس لدى تلاميذ المجموعة التجريبية أفضل بكثير من مستوياتهم القبلية. وبناء على ذلك، أثبت برنامج SEL المقترح أن له تأثير كبير على تطوير مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية لدى تلاميذ الصف الثانى الاعدادى والثقة بالنفس لديهم أثناء التحدث، ويوصي البحث بدراسة استخدام استراتيجيات SEL لتحسين مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية الأخرى لدى طلاب مرحلى التعليم الأساسى والثانوى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم الاجتماعى العاطفى، مهارات التحدث باللغة الانجليزية، الثقة بالنفس

Introduction

Speaking, among the four basic language skills, is of exclusive importance in daily life and is a vital complementary tool in communication. Speaking refers to using words or sentences that contain meaning to convey a message and express one's own thoughts and emotions. Speaking is considered the target goal of EFL learners to achieve success in their academic, professional, and personal lives. Speaking skills provide many advantages for students, such as broadening knowledge, adding personal experience, and exchanging information related to their lives. Thus, EFL learners need to understand how to convey ideas orally and to employ the use of English words, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency in an accurate manner.

Speaking English has always been a challenge, especially in countries where English is used as a foreign language. In Egypt, children start learning English at a very young age, yet they still struggle to communicate in English, even at the secondary or university stages. GÜRLER (2015) emphasized that EFL speaking has so many barriers, such as psychological, physiological, physical, systematic, and attitudinal. Lack of self-confidence, in particular, is regarded as a psychological and attitudinal barrier that makes it hard for learners to speak a foreign language and even their mother tongue fluently. Besides, Riera (2021) indicated that the traditional methods of learning/teaching a foreign language have paid little attention to emotions, and generally, students are not motivated to speak until they reach a higher level. Many students are not confident enough to communicate in English, either because they are introverted or because they believe they do not possess the needed skills for interaction in that foreign language.

According to Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, a number of affective factors play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in language acquisition and development. These factors include: motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. It was that learners with

high motivation, self-confidence, good self-image, and low anxiety are better equipped for success in second or foreign language acquisition. Similarly, students who are feeling anxious or have low self-esteem can 'raise' the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that hinders comprehensible input from being used for acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Thus, feeling stressed or anxious can make it hard, especially for non-native English speakers, to acclimate to a classroom.

Socioemotional learning (SEL) is highly recommended for its positive effects on the quality of English language instruction as it fosters reducing students' anxiety and promotes a safe learning environment, supporting the improvement and shining of students' positive emotions. (Hanna, 2017). SEL is a process of obtaining and effectively implementing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required for understanding and managing emotions, setting and achieving positive goals, feeling and showing empathy for others, establishing positive relationships, and making responsible decisions in life for both children and adults. Early studies examining the impact of SEL suggest that its integration into school curricula and culture can help students better manage personal and collective behavior, raise their achievement rates, and foster their language development (Adams & Richie, 2017).

Accordingly, incorporating SEL practice in schools might help establish a healthy communicative context that could help students feel comfortable and safe speaking in English and, ultimately, improve their speaking skills. The English language, in general, can be supported when instruction and teaching practices are explicitly designed to promote the five core competencies of SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. This would significantly enhance academic achievement, reduce negative behaviors, and decrease emotional distress. SEL, in the current research, is implemented

within a program framework for developing preparatory stage pupils' EFL speaking skills and promoting their self-confidence.

Review of literature

This section presents a review of literature and previous studies related to the variables of the current research, which are: EFL speaking skills, self-confidence, and socioemotional learning, while shedding light on the relationship between them.

Speaking skills

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that includes forming and sharing messages through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in multiple contexts, serving different functions. Speaking skills center around two areas: fluency and accuracy, and it is essential to strike a balance between them due to their significant impact on the success of oral communication (Mazouzi, 2013). Fluency is the learner's ability to produce the spoken language "*without undue pausing or hesitation*" (Skehan, 1996, p. 22), since too many hesitations and pauses may hinder speaking fluency and disappoint the speaker.

Speaking accuracy refers to "*the extent to which the language produced conforms to target language norms*" (Yuan & Ellis, 2003, p. 2), which addresses correct pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

- Grammar: learners' accurate use of grammatical structures requires the length and complexity of the utterances and the well-structured clauses.
- Vocabulary: learners select suitable words or expressions in suitable contexts and use them correctly.
- Pronunciation: it is the lowest language element learners typically pay attention to (Thornbury, 2005). For correct communication, learners should master phonological rules, be aware of the different sounds and their pronunciations, and know the stress, intonation, and pitch.

All these skills help learners speak the English language easily and effectively. Unfortunately, speaking fluently and accurately has always been an important concern and a major challenge in countries where English is used as a foreign language. Qasim (2021) emphasized that EFL students are in the red zone as they encounter various problems in speaking English. They are confused about giving ideas in English, have a low vocabulary, and possess poor accents and pronunciation.

In the Egyptian context, many studies (e.g., El-Sawy, 2013; Diyyab, 2014; Salem, Qoura, Alhadidy, 2017; Gohar, 2018; Khalil, El-Nagar, & Awad, 2019; Gaid, 2020) indicated that the students have weak speaking skills and lack the communicative and linguistic competence needed for continuing a conversation in English without occasionally code switching to Arabic. Speaking is a terribly neglected skill in Egyptian schools, mainly because it is not a component of assessing language learning. Thus, neither teachers nor students give it sufficient care, and learners, then, do not have sufficient opportunities for speaking practice or active engagement in real-life situations for English language use in a spoken form. Furthermore, despite the importance of enhancing learners' speaking skills, EFL teachers often underestimate the right learning methods to improve learners' speaking performance, and most of the time they adopt traditional teaching methods and strategies.

Additionally, Nadiah, Arina, and Ikhrom (2019) analyzed students' performance in public speaking. It was revealed that students spoke with unclear meaning and unclear words, possessed monotonous intonation, and had many pauses. Concerning the nonverbal speaking aspects, students did not make eye contact, and their facial expressions hindered successful communication. Their speech included a lot of repetitions, and they showed nervous expressions. Students lack self-confidence and have a negative mindset (do not believe in themselves).

The different speaking difficulties faced by EFL students are reflected in students' negative feelings of fear of making mistakes and being anxious about situations where they are asked to speak in public. This contributes to students' lack of self-confidence. Students with high self-confidence are more likely to speak well without feeling embarrassed or awkward, and vice versa. In fact, self-confidence is one of the most influential affective variables influencing their success in English-speaking skills. The next section sheds light on self-confidence and its correlation with speaking.

Speaking and self-confidence

Self-confidence has been viewed in various ways throughout the literature. Researchers' views generally involve belief in one's own abilities to undertake a specific action to achieve an outcome (Bandura, 1977). It was also indicated that "*confidence is not about being the one who speaks the loudest or who dominates every moment. …….. It's about being rooted in who you really are, freeing up your mind from obsessive worry and self-doubt*" (Markway & Ampel, 2018, p. 24). Thus, self-confidence refers to believing firmly in one's own strengths and abilities to overcome different kinds of challenges.

Sar, Avcu, and Işıklar (2010) determined two forms of confidence: inner and outer. Inner confidence lies in the love of one's own self, self-knowledge, setting explicit goals, and thinking positively. Inner-confidence is a person's thoughts and emotions that demonstrate how satisfied and at ease s/he is. Outer-confidence addresses factors like communication and the ability to control feelings. It is essential not to have any contradiction between an individual's levels of inner and outer confidence so s/he is pleased with him/herself and has high self-esteem.

Regarding the relationship with speaking performance, many researchers have fostered a mutual relationship between these two variables. For example, Salim (2015) emphasized that students should have sufficient self-confidence to be able to convey messages

easily, overcome fears and negative thoughts, and communicate easily, especially in oral class presentations. Students who can speak fluently and confidently as a result of their high self-confidence can promote their academic achievement in the speaking course because they meet the assessment criteria for speaking performance.

Additionally, GÜRLER (2015) and Aulia and Apoko (2022) emphasized the existence of a significant correlation between self-confidence and speaking performance among EFL students. Consistently, Nadila (2020) identified the factors influencing students' lack of self-confidence in speaking English. Administering and analyzing questionnaires revealed that factors affecting students' lack of self-confidence include feeling ashamed or afraid of colleagues' comments when speaking English incorrectly, lack of pronunciation, poor vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and lack of preparation before the English class.

To conclude, students' negative emotions tend to be more discouraging than encouraging. Feelings of stress, fear, and nervousness block students' ability to perform successfully in a foreign language classroom. Lack of self-confidence is also among the emotional states that make speaking so difficult. It can distract students from the language learning process and hinder their ability to practice and improve their speaking skills. To overcome students' lack of self-confidence and thus elevate their speaking performance level, students need to be engaged in learning that supports them socially and emotionally through employing activities such as scripted role-plays with dolls, artistic activities, social emotional wheels, talking in front of a mirror, practicing pronunciation, rehearsing with friends, storytelling, watching YouTube videos, etc. Socioemotional learning is recommended for implementation since it prioritizes providing varied opportunities for students to practice speaking and focusing on developing their self-confidence before asking them to improve their speaking skills.

Socioemotional learning (SEL)

Many researchers agree that social and emotional skills are malleable. Children are not born with their personality traits set and defined. With emotional support, encouragement, and early intervention, they can develop skills such as persistence, resilience, self-confidence, and curiosity to their enormous benefit. (Feinstein, 2015 & Stannett, 2022). Emotions are important in the classroom since they have an effect on learners' language development in general and on speaking in particular. In other words, the emotional state can facilitate or hinder learning. For example, students learn and act more successfully when they are secure, relaxed, and excited about the subject matter. Emotions can support energizing students' thinking, as well as intervene with speaking. Negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, lack of self-confidence, and sadness have the potential to discourage students' learning efforts.

Basu & Mermillod (2011) emphasized that there should be a kind of integrity between the emotional mind and the cognitive one since negligence of one over the other leads to behavior that is incomplete. Emotional intelligence skills are higher psychological processes that balance the two minds for reaching academic success and personal well-being. Emotionally intelligent behavior is reflected in the ability to think constructively and behave wisely. Wise and effective behavior requires the ability to control feelings and express emotions in healthy ways. SEL is thought to be effective in harmonizing the cognitive and emotional minds and is essential to successful behavior.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020a, para. 1) regarded SEL as "*the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions*." According to Reicher (2010) and Philibert (2018), SEL is an effective approach closely linked to quality teaching and

learning, as it is designed to improve the quality of classroom interactions, academic development, motivation to learn, and teacher-student engagement through empirical practices and classroom activities that infuse social-emotional competencies into teacher-student interactions.

SEL, thus, is a methodology that allows students of all ages to better understand and feel their emotions and demonstrate empathy for others. This helps students make reliable decisions, create plans to reach their goals, and establish positive relationships with others. CASEL (2020a) determined and illustrated the five SEL competencies as follows:

Figure 1

The five core SEL competencies

Source: CASEL (2020a)

‒ Self-awareness: the ability of learners to recognize their emotions and thoughts and how they affect behavior, and to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses to better build confidence in their abilities.

- Self-management: learners' ability to successfully control their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations, as well as setting and working toward goals.
- Social awareness: the ability to empathize with others and act in an ethical manner.
- Relationship skills: the ability to establish healthy and rewarding relationships with others. This includes listening to and being able to communicate with others, peacefully resolving conflict, and knowing when to ask for or offer help.
- Responsible decision-making: the ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms.

Putting SEL into practice requires time, effort, and good planning. It is essential to build a safe environment where learners feel comfortable, secure, and free to share their thoughts and feelings about the issues they deal with in the EFL classroom because students usually struggle with emotional issues such as self-esteem and confidence (Crisafully, 2020). Thus, it is vital to implement student-centered activities that support learners' confidence by deciding on their own, monitoring their goals, collaborating with colleagues, and learning from each other. Using activities based on SEL enables learners to speak openly, make mistakes without serious consequences, gain awareness of themselves and others, and develop skills of empathy (Corley, 2020). Furthermore, SEL demands contextualization and personalization of the learning experience through enhancing the relevance and usefulness of the activities, so that students can link what they learn with their real lives (Adams & Richie, 2017).

Elias et al. (1997) suggested multiple methods for SEL instruction. For example, using storytelling and biography to provide the class with topics for effective expression of sensitive or difficult feelings, challenges, or situations. For younger students, teachers might read a children's book that addresses the topic, while for older ones,

teachers may refer to an aspect of a story, historical context or figure, or current event. In addition, artistic expression is provided as one of the highly recommended methods since art often has emotional content and can foster students' understanding of emotions and how to express them in secure and appropriate ways. Artistic activities are often the perfect "starter" to enhance children's engagement in a new topic

Moreover, Onishchik (2013), Ariyan (2017), and Ariyan et al. (2022) suggested multiple techniques for implementing SEL, including:

- Using plays in foreign language classes at the early stages of learning creates conditions for learners' personality development in addition to enhancing not only their communicative competence but also their attitudes, motivations, and emotional and social traits.

- Playing with a doll is of special social and developmental significance. Accepting the role of a character portrayed by a doll or any other character (from fairy tales, cartoons, videos, or stories for children) creates appropriate conditions for the formation of social competence.

- Problem stories can also be employed as an efficient means to assist the social and emotional development of young learners since they reflect a character in a difficult or funny situation. Pupils' engagement in such stories makes them feel strong, smart, and knowledgeable. Such types of stories help children empathize, reflect, and express their opinions and attitudes, which undoubtedly contribute to the enhancement of their emotional and intellectual spheres.

- Using fairy tales supports personality development at three levels: informational, operational, and value-oriented. In the sphere of learning English, a fairy tale allows learners to experience a sense of joy from cooperation, live new social experiences, and develop their own creative performance.

– Music affects the emotional state of the child and has a significant impact on creating emotional empathy and enhancing the learner's imagination and its aesthetic characteristics.

Such SEL strategies enhance students' different skills related to cognitive development, promote their focus and motivation, improve relationships between students and teachers, and increase their confidence and success. These strategies can be applied to create a powerful and integrated model of human intelligence and a learning model that respects and celebrates diversity and provides instructors with the tools to meet high standards (Elmi, 2020). Multiple studies were conducted to highlight the role of SEL in improving various skills, especially language skills. For instance, Muin (2019) investigated the implementation of socio-affective strategies to improve students' self-confidence in speaking tasks. Before implementing the socio-affective strategies, students' self-confidence in speaking was low because of the boring models of speaking and being afraid of making mistakes in structure, pronunciation, word order, and diction. After the experiment, results revealed that there was an improvement in students' self-confidence due to using socio-affective strategies.

Consistently, Ganasan, Abdul Aziz, and Jamal (2022) indicated that emotions such as anxiety and lack of self-confidence tend to cripple students' communication, as learners often struggle with such negative feelings, particularly in situations where they become the center of attention. The theory of SEL was employed to explore students' speaking anxieties, and the findings revealed that students are faced with incessant nervousness and fear when speaking in public. Exposure to SEL strategies has positively enhanced their oral communication through the incorporation of self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making. Those strategies could alleviate learners' negative emotions stemming from their fear of speaking and boost language learners' confidence.

Riera (2021) also examined how some SEL-based activities could be applied in secondary education to support students' EFL speaking skills while fostering their emotional state. The research revealed that SEL has been proven to be very valuable in creating positive relations between students and establishing a safe and communicative environment. The SEL activities used were successful in fostering students' communication skills as well as enhancing their self-confidence.

According to what has been previously stated, it is essential to create a kind of balance between students' emotional and cognitive minds. SEL is recommended for creating this balance as it is an important component of personal development, helping students build self-awareness, manage emotions, develop empathy, and establish positive relationships. Students' engagement in SEL activities not only promotes these skills but also enhances their overall well-being and success in various life aspects. Regarding the language sphere, SEL is increasingly recognized as significant for effective communication and language learning. However, many educators find the integration of SEL into curriculum design to be a challenging task, often due to its perceived complexity. The current research, then, examined the impact of incorporating SEL within a proposed program for developing pupils' EFL speaking skills and boosting their self-confidence.

Context of the problem

EFL learners' oral language development has been neglected in EFL teaching and assessment. Many foreign and Egyptian studies (e.g., Salem, Qoura, Alhadidy, 2017; Khalil, El-Nagar, & Awad, 2019; Gaid, 2020; Aulia & Apoko, 2022; Kinasih & Olivia, 2022) have been conducted to determine the difficulties encountered by EFL learners. Research revealed that learners usually struggle with speaking dilemmas. They also experience a lack of confidence in oral communication. When they have a dialogue with their peers or with the teacher, they are afraid of making mistakes in the use of

grammar, pronunciation, fluency, or vocabulary. Other studies (e.g., GÜRLER, 2015; Nadiah, Arina, & Ikhrom, 2019; Hasan et al., 2020; Nadila, 2020; Ganasan, Abdul Aziz, and Jamal, 2022) revealed that students often experience 'glossophobia' and are faced with both internal and external fears that negatively affect their oral communication. EFL pupils who are not confident in their abilities are not able to overcome their fears and negative thoughts, so they will not be able to speak English fluently.

What adds to the problem in the Egyptian context, in particular, is that the final formal tests of different levels at schools do not include a part for assessing speaking. However, speaking skills are always emphasized as a skill that needs to be developed since they permeate all other language skills. Such a conundrum should be directly tackled by equipping those struggling pupils with social and emotional learning strategies. SEL practices are implemented to lower student anxieties. That way, pupils' language learning "filters" will consequently be lowered, their confidence will be enhanced, and their speaking performance will be fostered.

Statement of the problem:

Based on the previously mentioned literature review, problem context, and researcher's teaching experience, the research problem was identified as:

"Preparatory stage pupils suffer a weakness in their EFL speaking skills. Their low speaking level negatively affects their self-confidence, and vice versa, as pupils' low self-confidence leads to weak speaking performance. Thus, the current research examined the impact of a socioemotional learning program on developing preparatory stage pupils' EFL speaking skills and self-confidence."

Questions

The current research attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the features of a socioemotional learning program for developing prep stage pupils' EFL speaking skills and self-confidence?
2. What is the impact of the socioemotional learning program on developing prep stage pupils' EFL speaking skills?
3. What is the impact of the socioemotional learning program on developing prep stage pupils' self-confidence?
4. What is the relationship between students' speaking performance and their level of self-confidence?

Purpose

The main purpose of the research was to investigate the impact of a proposed socio-emotional learning program on developing prep stage pupils' EFL speaking skills and self-confidence.

Delimitations

The research delimitations were as follows:

– A number of second-year preparatory stage pupils (N = 56) at Mohamed Abdo Al Fedawi School for Elementary Education, Aga Administration, Dakahlia Governorate.
– EFL speaking skills necessary for preparatory stage pupils (namely, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility).
– Designing the proposed SEL program in the light of six units (7 to 12) from "New Hello!" for the second-year prep stage, and implementing it throughout the second semester of the 2020/2021 academic year.

Operational definition of terms

Speaking skills: Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that includes forming and sharing meaning orally through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in multiple contexts. It is an activity to express one's thoughts and emotions in different situations. Major EFL speaking skills are: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility.

Self-confidence: It is a belief in one's own abilities to undertake a specific action to achieve an outcome. It is about being rooted in who a learner really is and freeing up his/her mind from obsessive worry and self-doubt. Self-confidence is one of the influential emotional variables on learners' fluent and accurate speaking performance.

Socioemotional learning (SEL): The definition of CASEL (2020a, para. 1) is adopted in the current research. SEL is "*the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.*" The five core SEL competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Research emphasized that enhancing those competencies and incorporating SEL strategies into the English language curricula would significantly foster pupils' different language skills.

Hypotheses

The research tested the following hypotheses:

1. There is a statistically significant difference at (≤ 0.05) level between the mean score of the control and the experimental groups in the post administration of the EFL speaking skills test in favor of the experimental group.

2. There is a statistically significant difference at (≤ 0.05) level between the mean score of the experimental group

pre-post administrations of the EFL speaking skills test in favor of the post administration.

3. There is a statistically significant difference at (≤ 0.05) level between the mean score of the control and the experimental groups in the post administration of the self-confidence scale in favor of the experimental group.

4. There is a statistically significant difference at (≤ 0.05) level between the mean score of the experimental group pre-post administrations of the self-confidence scale in favor of the post administration.

5. There is a positive correlation between students' EFL speaking performance and their self-confidence.

Method of the research

Participants

The target research participants were 56 second-year preparatory stage pupils (N = 56) at Mohamed Abdo Al Fedawi School for Elementary Education, Aga Administration, Dakahlia Governorate. Two intact classes were selected: one class (N = 28) represented the experimental group and was taught through the socioemotional learning program, whereas the other class (N = 28) was assigned as the control group and was taught according to regular instruction. The age range of the pupils in both groups was thirteen to fourteen years old, and they all had similar backgrounds in the English language because they had begun receiving EFL instruction in the first year of primary school.

Design

The research adopted a quasi-experimental design using two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group studied through the proposed socioemotional learning program, while the control group received regular instruction. Both groups received the pre- and post-administration of the EFL speaking skills test and the self-confidence scale.

Instruments

The following instruments were designed and used to achieve the purpose of the current research:

A. An EFL speaking skills test.

B. An EFL analytic speaking rubric.

C. A self-confidence scale

A detailed illustration of each one of these instruments is presented in the following section.

A. The EFL speaking skills test

An EFL speaking skills test was prepared for: identifying the homogeneity level of the control and experimental groups and determining the participants' pre- and post-levels in EFL speaking skills; thus, assessing the impact of the proposed program on the target skills. The test consisted of three main questions, each measuring the five target EFL speaking skills: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility. The test was like an interview to help pupils demonstrate their speaking performance in various situations. The questions were as follows:

1. The first question is an interview with each pupil about personal information regarding his/her family, free time, favorites, and hobbies.

2. The second question is describing a picture of social media tools, giving an opinion, and reflecting on whether s/he is addicted to one of the social media applications.

3. The third question is a discussion about the pupil's future plans and what important study tips s/he recommends for achieving academic goals.

To assess the validity of the test, it was presented to a number of TEFL specialists to assess the questions according to their appropriateness for the level of the second-year prep stage students, their suitability for measuring the target skills, and the clarity of the questions and instructions. The jury commented that the test

questions are appropriate to the pupils' language level and would properly measure the target EFL speaking skills.

The internal consistency and reliability of the EFL speaking skills test were established through the test pilot administration to twenty pupils, other than the main research participants. ***Firstly***, the internal consistency was estimated by calculating the correlation coefficient between the score of each skill and the total score of the creative writing test; the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

The correlation between the score of each skill and total score of the test

Skills	Correlation Coefficient
Vocabulary	0.683**
Grammar	0.551*
Pronunciation	0.682**
Fluency	0.780**
Comprehensibility	0.717**

Note.   **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficients are positive at either 0.01 or 0.05 levels, which indicates the valid internal consistency of the EFL speaking skills test. ***Secondly***, the Cronbach Alpha (α) value of 0.814 was obtained to assess the reliability of the EFL speaking skills test. Thus, the reliability of the test was established, allowing it to be used as a research tool. The test in its final form is presented in Appendix A.

The time of the test was also determined by calculating the total time taken by all the pilot participants to complete the test and dividing it by their number (20). The mean time was, then, obtained as 200/20 = 10 minutes (+5 minutes for test instructions). Thus, it was found that 15 minutes would be considered a suitable time for the pupils to respond to the speaking test.

B. The analytic EFL speaking skills rubric

In order to score the EFL speaking skills test, an analytic scoring rubric was prepared based on the five target EFL speaking skills: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility. The scoring rubric included a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (the minimum score) to 4 (the maximum score), and it was applied to each of the three test questions. Thus, the total score for each skill was 12 and for the whole test was 60. The rubric was given to a group of TEFL specialists to assess its validity in light of its accuracy, clarity, and suitability for measuring the target skills. Based on the jurors' comments, the rubric is linguistically clear, and it properly covers the EFL speaking skills under investigation.

To estimate the inter-rater reliability of the rubric, the multi-observer method for the same pupil's performance was utilized. In order to evaluate the speaking performance of twenty pupils who were not the main research participants, a colleague had to act as a co-rater alongside the researcher. The coefficient of agreement between the raters' estimates was determined using the "Cooper" equation as follows:

Percentage of agreement = (the number of times of agreement / the total number of performances) $\chi 100$.

It was found that the mean of the agreement coefficient between the two raters was 84%, which reflects a strong agreement level. This indicates that the test and its scoring rubric are reliable assessment tools. The final form of the rubric is presented in Appendix B.

C. The self-confidence scale

A scale was prepared for assessing pupils' self-confidence level in speaking classes before and after implementing the socioemotional learning program. The items of the scale were adapted from multiple resources (e.g., Shelton-Strong & Mynard, 2018; Azimova, 2020). The scale included 23 items addressing students' perceived level of confidence by responding to a set of statements related to self-

confidence in speaking classes. The scale was also translated into Arabic to ensure students' full comprehension of each statement.

To ensure objectivity, the scale included positive as well as negative statements. A 5-point Likert scale (① never true, ② rarely true, ③ sometimes true, ④ mostly true, and ⑤ always true) was used to reflect students' points of view. To maintain the validity of the scale, it was submitted to a number of TEFL and psychology professors to assess the statements in terms of clarity and appropriateness. The jury commented that the scale is comprehensive and appropriate to assess pupils' self-confidence level.

The scale's internal consistency and reliability were measured by administering it to a pilot group of 20 pupils other than the main research participants. **Firstly**, the correlation coefficient between the score of each statement and the total score of the self-confidence scale was calculated, and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

The correlation between the score of each statement and total score of the self-confidence scale

STATEMENT	CORR.	STATEMENT	CORR.
1	0.563**	13	0.677**
2	0.561**	14	0.539*
3	0.577**	15	0.542*
4	0.648**	16	0.527*
5	0.543**	17	0.650**
6	0.693**	18	0.623**
7	0.685**	19	0.642**
8	0.512*	20	0.514*
9	0.562**	21	0.609**
10	0.476*	22	0.534*
11	0.732**	23	0.604*
12	0.576**		

Note.   **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 2 illustrates that the correlation coefficients are positive at either 0.01 or 0.05 level, which emphasizes the valid internal consistency of the self-confidence scale. *Secondly*, the Cronbach's Alpha (α) value of 0.704 was obtained to measure the reliability of the self-confidence scale. Consequently, the reliability of the scale was established, permitting it to be employed as a research tool. The final form of the self-confidence scale is presented in Appendix C. Furthermore, the time needed to complete the scale was estimated by dividing the total amount of time spent by all the students in the pilot administration by their total number (20). It was found that providing 20 minutes to students in addition to 5 minutes for instructions would provide them with a sufficient 25 minutes to finish the scale.

Designing the socioemotional learning program

To design the proposed SEL program, the phases of the ADDIE model (analysis, design, development, implementation/teaching, and evaluation) were adopted as a guide for systematizing the design process. These phases were implemented as follows:

1. Analysis: reviewing literature related to EFL speaking skills and the speaking difficulties faced by young learners in the Egyptian and Arab context, it was indicated that speaking is regarded as a difficult part of language development and communication, and speaking activities form a real challenge for basic education pupils. Those pupils face many difficulties related to pronunciation, including adding extra vowels, intonation, and stress. They also encounter other difficulties regarding the lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Moreover, speaking fluently and producing comprehensible output is a major challenge for them. Besides, some affective issues negatively influencing pupils' performance in EFL speaking classes are related to nervousness, shyness, apprehension, and lack of confidence. These variables raise pupils' affective filters and block them from producing comprehensible speaking output. Many previous studies also fostered the correlation between such

affective variables and speaking performance since the relationship is mutual and they impact each other. Accordingly, there is a dire need for Egyptian pupils to be engaged in different activities to help them overcome their speaking difficulties and develop their speaking performance as well as their self-confidence in speaking classes.

2. ***Design***: this phase uses the information obtained from the analysis phase to make informed decisions about creating the proposed SEL program. It determines the specific learning objectives, the structure of the content, the length of time for each lesson, the best tools and materials to use, and helpful strategies for pupils.

2.1. Objectives: the SEL program aimed at:

- Developing prep stage pupils' EFL speaking skills, which are:
  - Pronunciation: producing sounds to convey meaning. This includes paying attention to language sounds (segments), other aspects of speech such as intonation, phrasing, stress, timing, rhythm (supra-segmental aspects), how the voice is projected (voice quality), and even the nonverbal gestures and movements that are closely related to the proper way of speaking a language.
  - Vocabulary: using relevant, adequate, and appropriate words for serving multiple functions efficiently.
  - Grammar: using grammatical rules accurately. This includes the range (quantity) and correctness (quality) of grammatical structures (e.g., nouns, pronouns, tenses, adjectives, adverbs, etc.).
  - Fluency: ongoing interaction while maintaining spontaneous and smooth output, adopting a natural rate of speech with few errors that might distract the listener from the speaker's message.

– Comprehensibility: producing clear, efficient, and comprehensible output. This skill addresses the ease of understanding the student's speech.
▪ Developing pupils' self-confidence in speaking.

2.2. Content

The content of the proposed SEL program is mainly task-based, aiming at developing second-year prep stage pupils' EFL speaking skills and their self-confidence in speaking. The content was designed in light of six units (7 to 12) from "New Hello!" for the second-year prep stage. The program was presented in seven speaking sessions, including an orientation session, which was delivered at the beginning of the experiment to familiarize students with the program objectives and the procedures of each session. The main six sessions provided students with enough opportunities to practice various SEL activities. Each session was taught in two consecutive periods (90 minutes) and was organized into six main steps (objectives, materials, warm-up, presentation, practice, and assessment). The main procedural phases of each session were as follows:

– **Warm up:** this phase focuses or hooks students into the session. Introductory activities and tasks are used to stimulate students' interest in the topic, break the ice, and encourage them to actively participate in the speaking tasks.

– **Presentation**: this phase includes presenting the new material in a clear and lively manner while having fun and laughter moments within the session. Connections are also made to what students already know to build a meaningful personal understanding of the material. Besides, the teacher asks questions about pupils' suppositions and previous knowledge, elaborating on their correct and incorrect responses; encourages them to link bits of knowledge; and asks about their feelings; and calls for individual reactions to what is presented.

– **Practice**: this phase is for articulating what socioemotional speaking strategies and tasks will be used to enable pupils to practice the target skills with close guidance and feedback from the teacher and from peers.

– **Assessment**: through additional SEL tasks, pupils demonstrate their speaking performance and reflect on what and how they learned. Pupils are also allowed to evaluate the sessions and then give their comments and suggestions.

2.3. Strategies

Previous research about SEL emphasized that pupils' English language skills are developed when the SEL core competencies are enhanced. Thus, throughout the program sessions, multiple SEL strategies were employed. These strategies are clarified in Table 3.

Table 3

SEL strategies used in the proposed program

Competency	Definition	Strategies
Self-awareness	The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, weaknesses, strengths, and values and how they affect behavior.	• Posting motivating signs in English. • Providing vocabulary for feelings. • Using social emotional wheels. • Leading small and large group discussions about feelings. • Using short stories to discuss characters' feelings. • Using artistic activities (e.g. drawing) to encourage students' reflection on their weaknesses and strengths. • Using soft music.
Self-management	The ability to successfully control one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations, as well as setting and working towards goals.	• Teaching self-assessment techniques such as self-talk, yoga positions, and relaxation exercises to reduce stress and make speaking easier. • Using role play and stories. • Play-acting with toys. • Using photos and videos. • Sharing examples of success stories and celebrities.

Competency	Definition	Strategies
		• Encouraging students to set collective as well as individual goals. • Assigning team projects.
Social awareness	The ability to empathize with others and act in an ethical manner.	• Discussing the word "empathy" as part of vocabulary. • Using scaffolds to support students' speaking. • Providing opportunities for sharing one's talents and interests. • Discussing informal topics. • Celebrating historical figures and characters in literature who supported their communities. • Using appreciation boards.
Relationship skills	The ability to establish healthy and rewarding relationships with others.	• Use team-based, collaborative teaching practices. • Providing authentic feedback. • Establishing class meetings to encourage speaking and listening. • Modeling good conflict resolution skills. • Use problem-solving.
Responsible decision-making	The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions.	• Routine modeling of good decision-making. • Examining problems or moral situations from literature. • Conducting discussions about important issues and their consequences.

2.4. Materials

The proposed SEL program made use of different materials such as: handouts, PowerPoint presentations, videos, pictures, materials for simulating some real-life situations and some online materials.

3. *Development:* this phase included finalizing the preparation and design of the SEL program (Appendix D), according to what was mentioned in the "design phase.".

4. *Implementation*: this step included implementing the proposed SEL program. The experiment started with **pre-administering** the research instruments (the EFL speaking skills test and the

self-confidence scale) to pupils of the control and experimental groups at the beginning of the second semester of the 2020/2021 academic year to assess their real levels regarding the target variables, in addition to establishing the homogeneity between the two groups. The *t*-test for independent samples was used to show whether there was any difference between the control and experimental groups concerning the EFL speaking skills test, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Establishing homogeneity between the control and experimental groups in the pre-administration of the EFL speaking skills test

Skills	Group	N	M	SD	*t*	df	Sig.
Vocabulary	Exp.	28	4.9643	1.20130	1.621	54	None
	control	28	4.4643	1.10494			
Grammar	Exp.	28	4.5000	1.10554	0.388	54	None
	control	28	4.3929	.95604			
Pronunciation	Exp.	28	4.3214	1.18801	0.689	54	None
	control	28	4.5357	1.13797			
Fluency	Exp.	28	4.2857	.93718	1.446	54	None
	control	28	4.6429	.91142			
Comprehensibility	Exp.	28	4.4643	.92224	1.431	54	None
	control	28	4.8214	.94491			
Total	Exp.	28	22.5357	2.75523	0.466	54	None
	control	28	22.8571	2.39929			

Table 4 illustrates that *t*-values are not significant for both speaking subskills and the total, which indicates that there was no significant difference between the mean score of the control and experimental groups on the EFL speaking skills test. Thus, both groups were homogeneous in their speaking performance levels before implementing the experimental treatment.

Furthermore, the self-confidence scale was administered to both groups before the treatment to measure pupils' level of self-

confidence in speaking and assess the homogeneity between the two groups. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Establishing homogeneity between the control and experimental groups in the pre-administration of the self-confidence scale

Group	N	M	SD	*t*	df	Sig.
Exp.	28	53.2143	3.73529	1.129	54	None
control	28	52.0000	4.29470			

Table 5 shows that the *t*-value is not significant for the difference in means between the two groups in self-confidence. Therefore, the pupils' self-confidence levels of both groups were homogeneous prior to implementing the experimental treatment.

The experimental treatment was then executed by teaching the control group through regular instruction, while the experimental group was taught through the proposed program. The experiment was carried out throughout the second semester of the 2020/2021 academic year. The proposed SEL program was implemented through the following procedures:

- An orientation session was presented to help the experimental group pupils become familiar with the SEL program, its objectives, content, materials, strategies used, and the phases of each session.
- The students then studied the main sessions, following the same phases in all modules (warm-up, presentation, practice, and assessment). Throughout the sessions of the program, different SEL strategies, addressing the enhancement of the core five SEL competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making), were employed to foster pupils' EFL speaking performance as well as their self-confidence.

5. *__Evaluation__*__:__ this final ADDIE stage assesses the impact of the proposed SEL program. It included:

   – Formative evaluation was conducted throughout the tasks of each session on an ongoing basis, through which pupils' responses to the SEL tasks are evaluated on an ongoing basis and where pupils are provided with tailored and authentic feedback. Pupils were also asked to reflect on each session and give their points of view regarding the tasks and the materials used.

   – Summative evaluation, which focused on the overall impact of the proposed program through **post-administering the research instruments.** The following section presents the related results of the pre- and post-administrations.

Results

Testing the first hypothesis

To verify the first hypothesis, which stated that" there is a statistically significant difference at (≤ 0.05) level between the mean score of the control group and the experimental group in the post-administration of the EFL speaking skills test in favor of the experimental group," *t*-test for independent samples was used, and the related results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Comparison between the control and experimental groups in the post-administration of the EFL speaking skills test

Skills	Group	N	M	SD	*t*	df	Sig.	(η2)	Size level
Vocabulary	Exp.	28	8.8929	1.10014	11.137	54	0.01	0.70	large
	control	28	5.4643	1.20130					
Grammar	Exp.	28	9.3929	.87514	15.530	54	0.01	0.82	large
	control	28	5.0714	1.18411					
Pronunciation	Exp.	28	8.9286	.81325	20.866	54	0.01	0.89	large
	control	28	4.3571	.82616					
Fluency	Exp.	28	9.0357	.83808	16.004	54	0.01	0.83	large
	control	28	4.7500	1.14261					
Comprehensibility	Exp.	28	9.2857	.76290	17.342	54	0.01	0.85	large
	control	28	5.1429	1.00791					
Total	Exp.	28	45.5357	2.02726	33.994	54	0.01	0.96	large
	control	28	24.7857	2.51451					

Table 6 illustrates that the experimental group's mean scores are higher than those of the control group for each single subskill and for the overall speaking performance. In addition, *t*-values are significant at 0.01 level for each subskill as well as for the total, which indicates that the experimental group pupils outperformed their control group counterparts in speaking skills. This supports the positive effect of the SEL program on the experimental group pupils' speaking performance. Such an impact was emphasized by obtaining the values of η2, which are large for the separate skills and the total. Thus, the first hypothesis is accepted.

Testing the second hypothesis

For testing the second hypothesis, which addressed the significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group's pre- and post-administrations of the EFL speaking skills test, the *t*-test for dependent samples was used, and the results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Comparison between the experimental group's pre-post administrations of the EFL speaking skills test

Skills	test	N	M	SD	*t*	df	Sig.	d	Size level
Vocabulary	Pre	28	4.9643	1.20130	12.924	27	0.01	2.442	large
	Post	28	8.8929	1.10014					
Grammar	Pre	28	4.5000	1.10554	17.870	27	0.01	3.377	large
	Post	28	9.3929	.87514					
Pronunciation	Pre	28	4.3214	1.18801	15.513	27	0.01	2.932	large
	Post	28	8.9286	.81325					
Fluency	Pre	28	4.2857	.93718	21.399	27	0.01	4.044	large
	Post	28	9.0357	.83808					
Comprehensibility	Pre	28	4.4643	.92224	19.113	27	0.01	3.612	large
	Post	28	9.2857	.76290					
Total	Pre	28	22.5357	2.75523	33.900	27	0.01	6.406	large
	Post	28	45.5357	2.02726					

The results in Table 7 reveal that *t*-values are significant at 0.01 level for each particular skill and for the total speaking test. This emphasizes that a statistically significant difference exists between the mean scores of the experimental group's pre- and post-administrations of the EFL speaking skills test in favor of the post-administration due to implementing the proposed SEL program. In addition, the values of Cohen's d support the large effect size levels of the program on the target skills. Thus, such results led to proving and accepting the second hypothesis.

Testing the third hypothesis

The third hypothesis claimed that "there is a statistically significant difference at (≤ 0.05) level between the mean score of the control and experimental groups in the post-administration of the self-confidence scale in favor of the experimental group." To verify it, the *t*-test for independent samples was used, and the results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Comparison between the control and experimental groups in the post-administration of the self-confidence scale

Group	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig.	(η2)	Size level
Exp.	28	81.5000	4.14997	25.861	54	0.01	0.93	large
control	28	52.6071	4.21056					

Table 8 illustrates that the *t*-value is significant at 0.01 level, which supports the statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups in self-confidence in favor of the experimental group. The obtained value of η2 (0.93) also indicates that the SEL program led to the significant superiority of the experimental group. Accordingly, the third research hypothesis is proved and accepted.

Testing the fourth hypothesis

The *t*-test for dependent samples was used to verify the fourth hypothesis, which stated that "there is a significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group's pre- and post-administrations of the self-confidence scale in favor of the post-administration." Results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Comparison between the experimental group's pre-post administrations of the self-confidence scale

Measurement	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig.	d	Size level
Pre.	28	53.2143	3.73529	29.787	27	0.01	5.629	large
Post	28	81.5000	4.14997					

Table 9 reveals that the *t* value is significant at 0.01 level, which supports the statistically significant difference between the experimental group pupils' mean scores in the pre- and post-administrations of the self-confidence scale in favor of the post-administration. Additionally, the value of Cohen's d fosters the large

effect size of the proposed SEL program on developing pupils' self-confidence in speaking. Consequently, the fourth hypothesis is accepted.

Testing the fifth hypothesis

The fifth hypothesis claimed that "there is a positive correlation between pupils' EFL speaking scores and theirs on the self-confidence scale." The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to verify this relationship, as clarified in Table 10.

Table 10

Establishing the correlation between speaking and self-confidence

Correlation coefficient	Speaking	Sig. level	Direction
Self-confidence	0.530	0.01	Positive

Table 10 indicates that the value of "r" is significant at 0.01 level, which emphasizes that there is a positive correlation between pupils' improvement in speaking skills and their level of self-confidence. Thus, the fifth and last research hypothesis is verified and accepted.

Discussion

The current research investigated the impact of a proposed socioemotional learning (SEL) program on developing prep stage pupils' EFL speaking skills and self-confidence. Reviewing literature and previous research (e.g., Salem, Qoura, Alhadidy, 2017; Khalil, El-Nagar, & Awad, 2019; Gaid, 2020; Aulia & Apoko, 2022; Kinasih & Olivia, 2022) revealed that pupils encounter many difficulties in EFL speaking, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, and fluency. What makes the problems more complicated is the pupils' feelings of anxiety and lack of self-confidence. To address this problem, a proposed program based on SEL was prepared and implemented to enhance the target pupils' EFL speaking skills and self-confidence.

To achieve the purpose of the current research, the quasi-experimental research design was adopted where the experimental and control groups administered an EFL speaking skills test and a

self-confidence scale before and after implementing the experimental treatment. The previously mentioned statistical results emphasized that the experimental group pupils outperformed their counterparts in the control group in the EFL speaking skills test. In addition, the experimental group pupils' post-speaking level was significantly higher than their pre-level, which indicates that the proposed SEL program has a large effect on developing pupils' speaking performance.

Regarding the self-confidence scale, the results section revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and that of the control group in favor of the experimental group. Besides, the experimental group pupils' post-self-confidence level is much better than the pre-one. This emphasizes that the proposed SEL program had considerable potential for fostering pupil' self-confidence in speaking. These results concerning speaking and self-confidence are consistent with the earlier studies carried out on assessing the effect of SEL on promoting students' EFL language skills in general and on speaking and self-confidence in particular. For example, Muin (2019), Elmi (2020), Riera (2021), and Ganasan, Abdul Aziz, and Jamal (2022) stressed that SEL strategies are effective means for positively enhancing learners' oral communication through the incorporation of multiple strategies addressing important competencies like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Those strategies could successfully alleviate students' negative feelings stemming from their fear of speaking and boost language learners' confidence.

Moreover, the results revealed that there is a positive correlation between pupils' speaking performance and self-confidence. This means that as pupils' speaking performance improves, their confidence in speaking increases too, and vice versa. This type of correlation was also emphasized by other researchers (e.g., GÜRLER, 2015; Nadiah, Arina, and Ikhrom, 2019; Hasan et al.,

2020; Nadila, 2020; Ganasan, Abdul Aziz, and Jamal, 2022). It was stressed that in order to master speaking, the pupils need to have good self-confidence since self-confidence does not correlate with any other language element as it is correlated with speaking. It is a non-linguistic factor that determines learners' readiness to practice their speaking performances in classroom activities. It can be assumed that the higher the level of pupils' self-confidence, the better their speaking performances will be.

Implementation of the proposed SEL program included the incorporation of many SEL strategies (Table 3). Those strategies equip students with the necessary skills to communicate properly in different social and emotional situations. SEL can reduce stress by easing the pressure of meeting the desired academic benchmarks. It enhances learners' communication skills, including oral, written, and non-verbal communication. Through SEL, students can develop the ability to listen, speak, cooperate, work in teams, manage societal pressure, and open up about stress when required. These positive results are highly consistent with pupils' comments and feedback regarding the SEL program. Sample pupils' comments are: "*Before using these strategies, I feel nervous and anxious because I am not fluent and feel that everyone is judging me. After SEL, I feel more confident and I deliver my speech smoothly," "with SEL, I can handle my mistakes through everyday practice and recording myself speaking in English*," and "*SEL enables me to recognize my feelings and thoughts; I can speak freely and manage my goals*.". The results, along with pupils' comments, prove that the proposed SEL program is effective in developing pupils' EFL speaking performance as well as their self-confidence.

Conclusions

The current research assessed the effect of a proposed SEL program on developing pupils' EFL speaking skills and self-confidence. The statistical analysis of the research data emphasized the large effect of the program on developing speaking performance and boosting the

self-confidence of prep stage pupils. As a result, the following conclusions are highlighted:

- The higher the level of pupils' self-confidence, the better their speaking performances will be.
- SEL helps pupils develop their EFL speaking skills by fostering competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.
- SEL facilitates the creation of a supportive and caring learning environment where pupils' self-confidence is enhanced, their negative feelings of nervousness and anxiety are reduced, and their emotions are properly controlled; thus, their affective filters are lowered and their performance is better.
- SEL equips pupils with the necessary tools to manage daily challenges, build positive relationships, and thrive both academically and personally.
- With more pupils experiencing trauma in their lives and schools being overwhelmed with pupils who need support, it is essential to provide tools for helping pupils manage stress and build resilience so they can grow up healthy and happy.

Recommendations

Based on the research results and discussions, the following recommendations are presented:

- Assessment of EFL speaking skills should be an essential component of the formal summative assessment process in Egypt.
- Enhancement of EFL speaking skills should be given full attention due to the fact that effective speaking performance affects students' success in their academic and professional lives.
- SEL strategies should be employed in EFL classrooms to ensure students' English proficiency development.

- SEL should be incorporated into school curricula to positively affect pupils' emotional competence, academic achievement, and mental well-being.
- Teachers who use SEL curricula should ensure that high expectations are communicated to students by eliciting their thoughts, displaying model work, providing specific feedback to spur improvement, and emphasizing that making mistakes is an important part of learning.
- SEL skills should be promoted in the classroom to help young learners become stronger, more effective, self-conscious, and socially aware individuals in the years to come.
- Teachers have to be properly trained on implementing SEL strategies so they can support learners' various social and academic skills.

Suggestions for further research

The following research suggestions are presented based on the research results and recommendations:

- The impact of SEL on enhancing pupils' other EFL skills: writing, reading, and listening.
- Evaluation of the English language curricula for different educational levels in light of SEL.
- The effect of SEL strategies on developing minor English language skills such as pronunciation, spelling, etc.
- The impact of SEL on improving kindergarten children's English language skills such as vocabulary learning, phonemic awareness, etc.
- Assessing the effect of using SEL activities on learners' personality traits.

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