# The effectiveness of Communicative Language Approach in Enhancing English Speaking Skills of EFL Adult Learners in Egypt

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## ABSTRACT

*This research aims at investigating the effectiveness of using communicative activities in developing the English speaking ability of Egyptian college students. The study adopted the quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design. A group of 40 first year college students were selected from a private university in Cairo in the Academic year 2016- 2017 (20 students in the experimental group and 20 students in the control group). Students of the experimental group were taught by means of the proposed program of the current study; while students in the control group received regular instruction.*

*The equipment and materials consisted of a pre-posttest administered to both groups before and after the treatment and an analytic speaking rubric for assessment. Quantitative data collected were statistically analyzed to validate the research hypotheses. Results of data analysis revealed that the experimental group students outperformed their control group counterparts in overall speaking proficiency. There were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre-posttest in favor of the post-test scores.*

***Keywords:*** *:Speaking skill, communicative competence, pre-posttest, communicative language teaching (CLT), language practice.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English is an international language used to communicate in the fields of education, technology, trade and politics and is learnt nowadays as a foreign language in many countries around the world. In Egypt, as in many other outer circle countries (Kachru, 2006), English has been an integral part of education policy in Egyptian schools and universities. Nunan (1999) maintains that success in learning a language is determined in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language. The speaking skill is an essential element for the success of oral communication since it is the person's ability to express himself/ herself orally, fluently and accurately in real life situations. Therefore, speaking is probably a priority and a necessary tool for most learners of English.

In spite of this fact, it has been noted that a conventional teaching approach is often applied in most Egyptian educational institutions in which learners are required to strictly focus on the lesson content and what the teacher pours into their minds without actively engaging in communication and exploring any real-life subjects. Emphasis is given to the skills of writing and reading at the expense of listening and speaking because exams only measure those skills. This often results in the poor performance of students in speaking skill. Studies conducted by Farahat (1997), El Khuli (2000), Hussein (2001), and Ahmed (2007) all indicated that students were unable to communicate orally in English because of inadequacy in expressing themselves clearly and intelligibly. This was mainly attributed to the teacher who used traditional methods for teaching English in the classroom.

The research problem can be identified in the weakness of Egyptian college students' speaking skills which may be attributed to the traditional teaching methods used by English instructors at the preparatory and secondary stages. According to regular instruction, the control group students in this study are given very little chance to practice their speaking skills or engage in interactive classroom activities. They are strictly taught to learn new vocabulary and master some writing genres in order to pass their final exams successfully. Therefore, the researcher developed the suggested program to include activities that are meant to give the speaking skill more room in the syllabus.

*Research questions:*

The present study attempted to answer the following main questions:

1-  What is the effectiveness of using communicative activities in developing the English speaking ability of Egyptian college students?

2-  What are the features of a speaking program that adopts the communicative approach and aims at developing the speaking skills of college students?

*The study hypotheses*

1-  The experimental group exposed to the suggested program outperforms the control group receiving regular instruction in overall speaking proficiency in the post test.
2-  The experimental group mean scores on the post-test exceed the pre-test scores in overall speaking proficiency.

*Variables of the study*

Independent variable: This refers to the treatment implemented in this study based on the communicative approach of language teaching.
Dependent Variable: This refers to the experimental group students' performance in the speaking post-test.

## 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
Communicative Language Teaching

### 2.1 Historical perspective

The field of second or foreign language teaching has undergone many shifts and trends over the last few decades. Numerous methods such as the direct method, grammar translation, the Audio-lingual Method, the Total Physical Response (TPR), the Natural Approach, and many others have emerged and replaced each other. Those past methods were criticized by many scholars due to their drawbacks and focus on grammatical structures rather than developing communication.

It was clear that the functional and communicative potential of language were inadequately addressed in language teaching. Drawing on the work of functional linguistics, British applied linguists claimed that language teaching needs to focus on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures (Li, 1997). Subsequently, the term communicative was used to describe programs that adopted a functional-based syllabus. It was also generally believed that there was no one single best method that meets the goals and needs of all learners and programs. What has emerged from this time is an assortment of communicative language teaching (CLT) methodologies that encompass eclectic ways of teaching that are adopted from various methods. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), CLT starts with a theory of language as communication and its objective is to develop learners' communicative competence.

### 2.2 Principles of CLT

Speaking is an interactive process of establishing meaning that entails producing, receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Its form and meaning depends on the context in which it occurs, the participants, their shared experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes of speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and progressive. Speaking is an interactive communicative process that involves speakers and listeners. In a communicative process, speakers need to learn to adapt their talk to the listeners, use a range of ways to express themselves,

employ speech to clarify their ideas and convey their talk to develop thinking and reasoning.

Different researchers presented their understandings in relation to communicative language teaching. Ying (2010) argues that CLT is an approach to the teaching of second languages that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. It is also referred to as a "communicative approach to the teaching of foreign languages" (Ying 2010, p.2). In the same vein, Larsen-Freeman's study (2000) argues that CLT aims broadly at the theoretical perspective of a communicative approach by enabling communication.

 There is a general consensus (Brandl, 2008; Nunan, 1991) on the qualities and principles required for CLT and they include:

- Use tasks as an organizational principle
- Promote learning by doing. Activities that require frequent interaction among learners or with other interlocutors to exchange information and solve problems are highly encouraged.
- Provide rich and meaningful input
- Promote cooperative and collaborative learning
- Focus on form
- Provide corrective feedback
- Recognize affective factors of learning such as anxiety and motivation
- Use of authentic material and communication activities linked to "real-world" contexts that bring familiar situations into the classroom.
- Approaches that are learner centered and take into account learners' backgrounds, language needs, and goals and allow learners some creativity and role in instructional decisions

### *Furthermore, proponents of CLT make a clear distinction between three types of practice:*

- Mechanical practice; which refers to the drills used for practicing a given vocabulary or grammar item
- Meaningful practice; which refers to controlled activities students do with the aim of practicing language
- Communicative practice; refers to activities that use real world contexts and unpredictable language for language practice (Richards, 2005, p.6).

In many CLT course books, exercise sequence takes students from mechanical, to meaningful, to communicative practice.

### *Communicative activities*

In order to create a lively interactive and motivating speaking lesson, the instructor should engage learners in pair and group work and try to apply a variety of classroom techniques and activities. Pair and group work allows each student to work at the pace of his or her small group or pair. The teacher is not considered as the dominant figure or the only source of information. Rather, students learn from each other and this creates opportunities for learners to share knowledge. In order to be successful, learners need to become acquainted to use English without the teacher's permanent support. Therefore, working in pairs or groups helps them to build up their independence and confidence for further conversations. Kayi (2006) suggests numerous activities that could be implemented in a speaking class and that allow learners to work in pairs and groups:

1- Discussions
2- Role play
3- Simulations
4- Information gap
5- Brain storming
6- Story telling
7- Interviews
8- Story completion
9- Reporting
10- Playing cards
11- Picture Narrating
12- Picture Describing
13- Find the Difference

### *Teacher's roles*

During communicative activities that aim at the improvement of learners' speaking abilities, the teacher has many roles to perform. Among the many roles that Harmer (1991) lists for teachers to play in a classroom are:

a. Prompter: asking eliciting questions to activate the lesson
b. Facilitator of students' learning: providing the necessary vocabulary and training beforehand
c. Consultant: answering students' questions and offering advice

d. Organizer: making careful choice of topic from a great number of different activities; giving clear instructions
e. Feedback provider: giving positive signs and remarks when commenting on students' response (pp. 57- 62).

## *Accuracy versus fluency*

Accuracy and fluency are both important goals to attain in communicative language teaching. Whereas fluency may be an original element in many communicative language courses, accuracy is also important to achieve by addressing elements of phonology, grammar, and discourse in learners' spoken output (Hemmens, 2011). Accuracy encompasses similarity to native speakers' grammar, formal correctness, and appropriateness. Fluency refers to the nonexistence of pauses and other signs of struggle in word-finding. It is the natural language use in situation where the learner's attention is on the effective communication of meaning.

The Monitor hypothesis of Krashen (1982) explains how monitoring learners' utterance can contribute to the achievement of accuracy but its use should be limited. He suggests that "monitoring" can sometimes act as an obstacle that forces the learner to slow down and concentrate on accuracy rather than fluency. Teachers should be able to prioritize their goal in a speaking activity and accommodate their roles in class accordingly. If the main aim is to get students to speak, teachers' contribution should be kept to a minimum.

It is supposed that the less teachers speak (Teacher Talking Time or TTT) the more time and space they will allow to their students (Student Talking Time or STT). Furthermore, correcting learners' mistakes should be done after finishing the speaking activity in order not to hinder their flow of thought. On the other hand, if the main aim is accuracy, the teacher should focus on students' mistakes and dedicate some time to their correction. While practising accuracy, students become more apprehensive of their own mistakes in speaking straight away because the teacher does not wait until finishing the task. This approach is suitable while focusing on grammar or other pronunciation aspects and ensures that students realize and correct their mistakes and also prevent their repetition (Cotter, 2013).

## 2.3 Communicative competence

Speaking English as a second language is the productive skill in the oral channel to communicate with other people. Burkart (1998) maintains that language learners need to recognize that speaking involves three areas of knowledge:

a- Mechanics (pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary). Mechanics is the ability to use the right words in the right order with the correct pronunciation.
b- Functions (transaction or information exchange; and interaction or relationship building)
c- Social and cultural rules and norms (turn taking, rate of speech, length of pauses)

Communicative competence is the goal of language teaching by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The term "communicative competence" is defined as the knowledge of both rules of grammar and the appropriate use of language rules in a given social context (Hymes, 1971). Canale and Swaine (1980) describe communicative competence as consisting of four basic components:

· Grammatical competence: producing a structured comprehensible utterance (including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling)
· Sociocultural competence: using socially-determined cultural codes in meaningful ways, often termed "appropriacy"
· Discourse competence: shaping language and communicating purposefully in different genres (text types), using cohesion (structural linking) and coherence (meaningful relationship)
· Strategic competence: enhancing the effectiveness of communication (i.e. deliberate speech) and compensating for breakdowns in communication (i.e. comprehension checks, paraphrase, conversation fillers) (pp. 28-31).

This theoretical model of communicative competence has undergone some further modifications over time. Bachman (1990) proposed a more complex model of communicative competence. According to this model, communicative competence is divided into language competence, strategic competence and psycho-physiological mechanisms.

*Language Competence includes:*

**1. Organizational Competence including:**

(a) Grammatical competence   (b) textual competence involving: cohesion/coherence and conversational analysis.

**2. Pragmatic Competence including:**

(a) Illocutionary competence consisting of speech acts and language functions. These might include the following functions:

- Ideational (which express people's experiences of the real world)
- Manipulative (which are used to affect the world around us)
- Heuristic (which extend people's knowledge of the world around us)
- Imaginative (which comprises creative language use for aesthetic purposes).

(b) Sociolinguistic competence: includes sensitivity to differences in dialects or varieties, and register.

**Strategic Competence** consists of three phases: assessment, planning and execution.

**Psycho-physiological Mechanisms** include factors such as: Channel - visual/auditory, and mode - productive/receptive (pp. 84- 89).

Various studies were conducted in the area of using communicative tasks to enhance foreign learners' speaking skills. In a study carried out by Obadi (2003) to examine the oral fluency of EFL students of the department of English in Aden University, the researcher discovered that the oral competence of the subjects was generally poor due to lack of practice and unsuitable curriculum content. The researcher designed a program to improve students' oral performance based on communicative tasks which give students enough time to practice English and create an encouraging atmosphere of learning. Results were significant and students showed improvement in oral performance and in some linguistic and social skills.

Torky (2006) conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of tackling communicative tasks in developing the English language speaking skills of secondary stage students. The participants were 76 first year secondary students who were randomly selected from one of Cairo's governmental schools. A task-based program was developed by the researcher and was taught over a period of three months. It was concluded that the program proved to be effective in improving students' overall speaking proficiency, speaking sub-skills (grammatical, discourse and pragmatic subskills), as well as fluency. It was finally recommended that speaking instruction should be given more attention in Egyptian EFL classes. More time and effort should be exerted to develop this main skill and its sub- skills.

Lochana and Deb's (2006) project in a school in India revealed evidence in support of a task-based approach to language teaching and learning. They developed an experiment in which non-task-based textbook activities were converted into task-based ones in order to test two hypotheses: (1) Task-based teaching enhances the language proficiency of the learners', and (2) Tasks encourage learners to participate more in the learning processes. Their findings suggest that TBL is beneficial to learners not only in terms of proficiency enhancement but also in terms of motivation.

Aljarf (2007) examined the effect of task-based language teaching on 52 female students at the college of language at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The students were enrolled in a two-hour speaking course in their third semester. The research teacher used TBLT principles in teaching instruments and procedures. Pre-post tests showed that students could speak more fluently after program implementation. They could use correct forms of grammar, follow pronunciation patterns and generate ideas more easily.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design (20 students in the experimental group and 20 students in the control group). Students of the experimental group were exposed to the proposed program that was tailored by the researcher and embedded in the learners' official curriculum. The activities attempted to develop the speaking skills of the experimental group. On the other hand, students in the control group received the

regular conventional instruction. A pre-posttest was administered to both groups. In order to compare the mean scores of the two groups on the pre-test, a t-test for independent samples was applied. Table (1) shows the difference between the mean scores of the two groups.

*Table (1): Test Results of the Speaking Pre-Test Comparing the Control Group and Experimental Group Mean Scores*

| Group | N | M | S.D | df | T- value | Significance Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Control | 20 | 10.7 | 3.61 | | | 0.68 |
| Experimental | 20 | 11.2 | 4.04 | 38 | 0.41 | (not significant at 0.01) |

Table (1) shows that the estimated t-value was 0.41 which is not statistically significant at 0.01 level. Therefore, the two groups were almost at the same level of proficiency in speaking before the treatment.

## Instruments

The current study made use of four main tools:

• **The speaking skills checklist**

The checklist was designed to determine the most important speaking skills to be developed for first year ACU students. The speaking skills included in the checklist in its first form were determined after reviewing:

1- Skillful listening and speaking book 1.
2- The general learning objectives as specified by the English Language Department at ACU.
3- Previous literature and related studies concerned with developing speaking skills.

• **The pre-post speaking test**

The final version of the pre/post speaking test, after being reviewed by the jury members, included a warm-up stage and four sections or interactional tasks that tackled a variety of speaking skills corresponding to those taught during the program. The contents were as follows:

The **warm- up stage** aimed at creating a friendly atmosphere and eliciting expressions of greeting (hello, how are you, how is everything and so on).

**The first section (Exchanging personal information)** involved a set of discussion questions that required

students to talk about their personal lives, hobbies, character, and friends.

In **the second section (Giving opinion)**, the student had to give and support his/her point of view with respect to a given topic (life in the city). This included showing agreement or disagreement with a given opinion supported with reasons.

**The third section** is a Picture description task which required students to talk about two different photographs and compare/contrast two holiday destinations.

**The fourth section (Talking about extremes)** consisted of a discussion about extreme sports. It focused on the language used to talk about dangerous sports and expressing ability.

• **The Analytic Speaking Rubric**

The researcher developed a rating scale in the light of the speaking skills identified in the current study. The scale was adapted from Torky (2006) with slight modifications. It measured linguistic competence (which is divided into grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) and discourse competence. For each of the four sub skills, five levels were identified. Level five represented the highest level while level one was the lowest. Each of the four sub skills was given equal weight of 5 marks out of 25 total marks. The rubric was submitted to jury members to assess its validity.

• **The proposed program**

*Learning objectives of the program*

By the end of the program, students should be able to:

1- converse with general clarity using pronunciation, stress, and intonation patterns which allow for overall intelligibility.
2- demonstrate effective word choice, vocabulary, idioms, grammar and sentence structure allowing accurate communication.
3- identify, recognize, and correct their own verbal mistakes.
4- maintain and develop interaction and negotiate towards an outcome with very little support.
5- use a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.

*Content of the program*

The selected components of language competence were developed throughout four elaborate units. They

were adapted from Skillful Speaking and Listening: Book 1 (Baker & Gershon, 2012). Some of the communicative activities and vocabulary input proposed by the Skillful book seemed to be dull, monotonous, and uninteresting for learners. The researcher, therefore, made the appropriate modifications in order to ensure the efficiency of the program. For example, the teacher researcher added vocabulary worksheets, sample dialogues, and grammar exercises from various internet websites to enhance the lexical and syntactic repertoire of learners in the controlled practice stage. Also in many instances some of the questions found at the beginning of each unit that were meant to be used as a warm up and to trigger a discussion were rather boring. These were exchanged by more lively and interactive ones.

During their English language courses, ACU students study a customized version of Skillful which is divided into levels 100, 101, and 102. The book contains only Reading and Listening parts and most instructors use supplementary materials to address the speaking and writing skills. According to regular instruction, students are given very little chance to practice their speaking skills or engage in interactive classroom activities. They are just taught to master grammatical forms, learn new vocabulary and writing genres, and do some listening and reading comprehension. With all this content that must be learnt for passing the final exams successfully, the speaking part becomes neglected and students usually display very low speaking proficiency levels. The activities developed by the researcher are meant to fill in the gaps in the teaching material and give the speaking skill more room in the syllabus. Table 2 is an illustration of the framework for the skills and tasks incorporated in the first four units:

*Table (2): OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO*

| Unit | Vocabulary | grammar | pronunciation | Speaking skill | Speaking task |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Unit 1: character** | Hobbies and interests + personality adjectives | Present simple tense | Word stress | Making introductions | interviews |
| **Unit 2: Size** | Living in the city vs. living in the country words | Present continuous for changes and trends | Word contractions | Giving opinion for/against something | Small talk or presentations |
| **Unit 3: Speed** | Adding –ed and –ing to form adjectives + talking about holiday destinations | Comparative and superlative forms of adjectives | Reduced forms | Talking about similarities and differences | Small talk or presentations |
| **Unit 4: Extremes** | Words about extreme sports | Expressing ability | Pronouncing can/can't | Using appropriate discourse markers | Role plays |

## *The proposed teaching strategy*

The teaching strategy adopted in this study was designed in the light of task based instruction. According to task based instruction, communicative activities are applied in three different phases.

These phases are explained as follows:

## 1- Pre- communicative Activities Phase: (Controlled Activities Phase)

The overall purpose of these activities is to prepare learners for a later phase of communicative activities by providing them with the needed linguistic forms and the necessary links between forms and meaning.

## 2- Communicative Activities Phase: (Guided Activities Phase)

In this phase, learners use their linguistic repertoire in order to communicate specific meanings for specific purposes. The focus here is to communicate meanings effectively regardless of grammatical mistakes.

## 3- Meta-communicative Activities Phase: (Free Activities Phase)

By this third phase, the learner has already mastered both the linguistic aspects and the ability to employ them in real- life situations. This is the phase where learners are communicatively competent and are able to evaluate their own progress (Littlewood, 1981).

# 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
## 4.1 Quantitative Statistical analysis

### Verifying the Hypotheses of the Research
### The First Hypothesis

*"The experimental group exposed to the suggested program outperforms the control group receiving regular instruction in overall speaking proficiency in the post test"*

In order to test the validity of this hypothesis, a t-test for independent samples was used to compare the mean scores of the two groups on the post- test. Table (3) describes the results.

*Table (3): t- Test Results of the Speaking Post-Test Comparing the Control and Experimental Group Overall Mean Scores*

| Group | N | M | S.D | df | T value | Significance Level | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Control | 20 | 11.0 | 2.47 | 32 | 5.9 | Significant at 0.01 level | 2.1 |
| Experimental | 20 | 17.25 | 4.03 | | | | Large |

Table (3) shows that the calculated t value (5.9) is statistically significant at 0.01 level and the effect size is 2.1. Thus, it can be concluded that the proposed strategy has a significant effect on the experimental group students' overall performance as compared to that of the control group students. The difference between the control group and experimental group students' ability to speak can be illustrated in the following figure.

*Figure (1): The overall Mean Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups in the Speaking Post-Test*
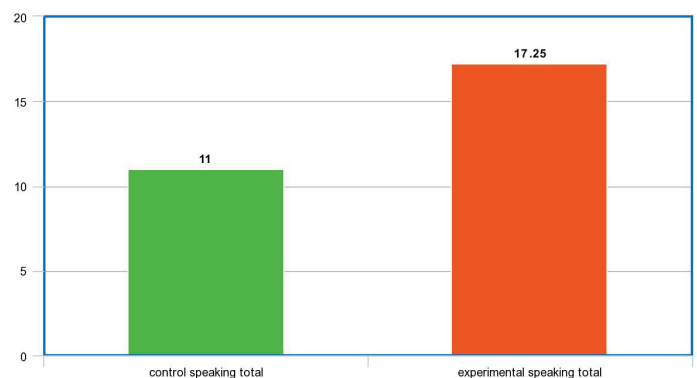


Furthermore, independent samples t-test were conducted to examine the differences between the control and experimental mean scores with regard to the speaking sub-skills (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and discourse competence). The results are shown in Table (4).

*Table (4): T-Test Results of the Speaking Post-Test Comparing the Control and Experimental Groups in Speaking Sub-Skills*

| Speaking Skills | Control group Post-test Mean | Experimental group Post-test Mean | t-value | Significance Level | df | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.Grammar | 2.5 | 3.45 | 3.08 | 0.004 | 38 | 1.004 Large |
| 2.Vocabulary | 2.35 | 3.25 | 2.83 | 0.007 | 38 | 0.92 Large |
| 3.Pronunciation | 2.75 | 3.75 | 3.18 | 0.003 | 38 | 1.034 Large |
| 4.Discourse Competence | 1.9 | 3.2 | 5.28 | 0.001 | 38 | 1.71 Large |

As shown in Table (4), there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group students and the control group students on the speaking post- test in favor of the experimental group in the four above-mentioned sub-skills.

*The Second Hypothesis*

**"The experimental group mean scores on the post-test exceed the pre-test scores in overall speaking proficiency."**

A t-test for paired samples was used in order to verify the validity of this hypothesis. The results are shown in Table (5).

*Table (5): t- Test Results Comparing the Speaking Pre-Test and Post-Test Overall Mean Scores of the Experimental Group*

| Group | N | M | S.D | df | T value | Significance Level | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-Test | | 11.2 | 4.04 | | | **Significant at 0.01 level** | 3.43 |
| Post-Test | 20 | 17.2 | 4.03 | 19 | 7.47 | | Large |

The statistical results in the table above clearly show that there is a difference in the performance of the experimental group before and after the treatment as far as overall speaking proficiency is concerned. The estimated t-value (7.47) is statistically significant at 0.01 level and the effect size value is 3.43. Thus, it can be said that the results of the t-test proves to be statistically consistent with the above stated hypothesis. The difference in students' performance can be attributed to the effect of the proposed strategy. The following figure can illustrate the results.

*Figure (2): The overall Mean Scores of the Experimental Group on the Speaking Pre-Test and the Post-Test*
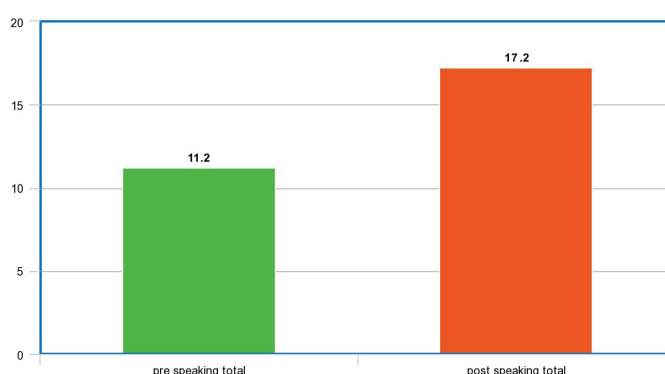


Moreover, paired samples t-tests were employed in order to investigate the difference in the performance of the experimental group students before and after the implementation of the program with regard to the speaking sub-skills (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and discourse competence).
The results are shown in Table (6) below:

*Table (6): t- Test Results Comparing the Speaking Pre-Test and the Post-Test Mean Scores of the Experimental Group in Speaking Sub-Skills*

| Speaking Skills | Pre-test Mean | Post-test Mean | t-value | Significance Level | df | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.Grammar | 2.4 | 3.45 | 3.05 | 0.007 | 19 | 1.4 / Large |
| 2.Vocabulary | 2.25 | 3.25 | 2.082 | 0.006 | 19 | 1.4 / Large |
| 3.Pronunciation | 2.85 | 3.75 | 2.78 | 0.002 | 19 | 1.27 / Large |
| 4.Discourse Competence | 2 | 3.2 | 4.06 | 0.001 | 19 | 1.86 / Large |

Table (6) shows that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the speaking pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group in favor of the post- test with respect to the above mentioned sub-skills. It can be inferred from the calculated effect size in each skill that the proposed program has a large impact on the experimental group students' performance.

## 4.2 Discussion
### 4.2.1 Overall speaking performance

First, results of the study showed that the experimental group students performed significantly better on the speaking post-test than the control group students who were taught conventionally. The analysis of the t-test revealed that t=5.9. Thus, the program proved its effectiveness in the development of learners' overall speaking proficiency. Moreover, the t-test results of the speaking post-test comparing the control and experimental groups in the four speaking sub-skills (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and discourse competence) proved that there were significant statistical differences at 0.01 level. Also, the calculated effect size was "large" in the four sub-skills.

Second, there were statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre-test and post-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the post-test scores since t=7.47. In addition, analysis of the t-tests revealed a great impact on the experimental group students' performance as far as the four speaking sub- skills are concerned. t- test results comparing the speaking pre-test and post-test mean scores of the experimental group in the four mentioned speaking sub-skills showed that the effect size was "large". Therefore, these results proved the effectiveness of the program in enhancing the overall speaking performance of the experimental group students.

### 4.2.2 Factors enhancing speaking skills

In fact, the effectiveness of using the communicative approach in developing students' speaking skills in this study can be attributed to a number of factors: Firstly, the pre-task phase provided learners with the relevant input to be used later at both the main-task and post-task phases. It incorporated a set of controlled-practice activities that enhanced their range of vocabulary, grammatical structure and pronunciation skills, all contextualized and related to the theme of the lesson. Secondly, the main-task phase included guided activities that enabled learners to carry out the intended language functions using the linguistic repertoire they acquired in the pre-task phase. It also contained direct instruction of rules (focus on form) and some drilling to help them master the necessary forms. Finally, in the post-task phase, learners were engaged in varied types of communicative activities to practice and produce the language freely. The tasks instructed them to employ language in real-life situations and interactive contexts.

Another factor which contributed to the success of the program is the variety of tasks (interviews, presentations, and role-plays) that helped create interest and increased learners' motivation. They served to meet their different learning styles and needs. Students were encouraged to use language creatively in a risk- free environment without the intervention of the instructor. Performing the tasks in pairs and groups broke the monotony of class. Assigning roles (leader, writer, representative, and time- manager) gave the opportunity for each student to feel that he/ she was important and had a role in the group. This created self-confidence and helped meet the different social needs of the students. Mixed ability students were grouped together so that weak ones benefited from good ones and get motivated.

Last but not least, fluency and accuracy were two complementary targets during the lessons. However, fluency was valued over accuracy during the free activities phase since the learners' focus was on communication rather than paying attention to the correct use of exact language forms. Thus, the teacher provided positive or supportive feedback during the post-task phase and kept negative or corrective feedback till the end of the task.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The proposed strategy proved to be effective in improving EFL first year college students' performance

in speaking skills. The results of the study supported the research hypotheses as follows:

1-    There is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group exposed to the suggested program and the control group receiving regular instruction on the post-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the experimental group. Moreover, there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group students and the control group students on the speaking post-test in favor of the experimental group in the four speaking sub-skills (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and discourse competence).

2-    There is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the speaking pre-test and post-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the post-test scores. Also, there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the speaking pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group in favor of the post- test with respect to the four speaking sub-skills (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and discourse competence).

## Concluding remarks

The present study provides evidence for the effectiveness of using communicative activities in developing learners' speaking skills. Activities in the pre-task and main-task phases are of pivotal influence in enriching learners' lexical, phonetic, grammatical resources so that they perform the final speaking task efficiently. This is supported by the findings of Obadi (2003) and Torky (2006). There is evidence that using a variety of communicative activities raises learners' motivation and meets their different learning styles. Engaging in group and pair work fosters self-confidence for weak students as they start learning from their more proficient classmates. One of the basic components in CLT is the role of positive and negative feedback in class. Providing supportive feedback after finishing the task allows for more fluency and free self- expression for students. However, maintaining balance between accuracy and fluency is a key element to a successful speaking class.

## Implications of the study

In light of the present research conclusions, a number of implications could be made. First, more attention should be given to speaking instruction in order to develop the communicative competence of Egyptian college students and equip them with the necessary tools to reach success in the global market. Second, employing the communicative approach is highly recommended in speaking instruction since it increases learners' motivation and fosters their fluency and proficiency. Learner-centered teaching should be encouraged in our EFL classes. The focus should shift from the teacher to the learner. Teachers and instructors are highly advised to adjust their teaching material and design syllabi that cater for learners' needs, interests, and different proficiency levels. Tasks that require students to analyze, brainstorm and gain independence away from the authoritative figure of the teacher should be greatly emphasized.

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# APPENDICES
## Appendix (A)

**Pre-post speaking test**
**Warm up**

Good morning/ afternoon/ evening. My name is _____ And your name is_____.

### Section One (Exchanging personal information)
**First of all, I'd like to get introduced to you.**
• Where are you from?
• Could you describe your family to me?
• What do you usually do in the weekend?
• Tell me about your different interests.
• Talk about the character of one of your friends.

### Section Two (Giving opinion about something)
• Did you grow up in the city or in the countryside?
• What are some differences between living in the city and living in a small town?
• What are the biggest problems with living in cities?
• How are city people and country people different?
• Why do you think some people like to live in big cities? Are you for or against this?

### Section Three (Description)
I'm going to give you two different photographs. They show two different holiday destinations. I'd like you to compare and contrast these photos and say which holiday destination would you personally prefer? And what are some of the advantages/ disadvantages of each?

### Section Four (Talking about extremes)
• What sports can you play?
• Can you name any dangerous/extreme sports?
• Would you like to try a dangerous sport one day? Why or why not?
• Why do people enjoy risky sports?

|   | Grammar | Vocabulary | pronunciation | Discourse Competence |
|---|---------|-----------|---------------|----------------------|
| 5 | A relatively effective use of grammatical rules. (within his/her level of Proficiency and the taught grammar points | The speaker uses relevant, adequate and correct vocabulary. (within his/ her level of language proficiency) | Pronunciation is Intelligible characterized by the appropriate use of stress, the smooth linking of words, and the use of appropriate intonation. | The speaker contributes fully and effectively throughout the interaction. Can expand and develop topics. Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers effectively. |
| 4 | Almost no grammatical inaccuracies except for occasional few grammatical errors. | Almost appropriate range of words with few difficulties. Occasionally uses inappropriate words. | Almost acceptable stress, linking of words, and intonation. Flaws in articulation, stress and intonation rarely disturb the listener. | The speaker contributes with ease for most of the interaction with occasional difficulties in negotiation. Uses a range of cohesive devices with few errors. |
| 3 | Some grammatical and word order errors occur which may cause mis-understanding. | Vocabulary range is somewhat limited. Some Misunder-standings may arise from inaccurate word choice. | Stress, intonation and linking words are sometimes faulty. | The speaker handles communication for parts of the interaction with deviations at times. Responses may be short. Uses only basic cohesive devices with errors. |
| 2 | Frequent minor and major errors in grammar that impede comprehension | Frequent misuse of word, and limited vocabulary make comprehension quite difficult. | Serious errors in, Pronunciation and stress; often influenced by the mother language, which makes understanding difficult. | Difficulty in maintaining contributions throughout. Rare use of even simple conjunctions. |
| 1 | Almost all grammatical patterns are inaccurate. Grammatical Mistakes severely hamper communication. | Vocabulary is irrelevant, inadequate and limited even for the most basic communication. | Severe and constant pronunciation problems cause almost complete unintelligibility. | Communication is totally dependent on repetition. No use of cohesive devices which interferes with discourse competence. |

## APPENDIX (B)
### The Analytic Speaking Rubric

## APPENDIX (C)
### Sample lesson

### Session 4 – Unit 4
### Extremes

### Objectives
By the end of the session, students will be able to:-
1-      Identify and use vocabulary about extreme sports
2-      Produce grammatical patterns and structures to talk about ability and possibility
3-      Recognize and pronounce "can" and "can't" in affirmative, negative, and interrogative sentences
4-      Use phrases and words to give you time to think before speaking
5-      Interview a classmate through a role play activity

### Warm up
•       Teacher familiarizes the students to the topic of "extreme sports" through the "Discussion Point" questions and the pictures provided.

### Mechanical/ Controlled Practice
1-      Students practice using a new set of vocabulary by working in pairs to match sentences. Then they fill in the sentence gaps using the names of sports provided.
 2-     Teacher guides students to use of can/ can't to express ability. Then they work on changing some sentences into the negative form and forming questions and short answers using the appropriate structure.
3-      Students are exposed to the listening tracks to help them pronounce the weak form of "can" in natural speech and the strong stressed form to emphasize meaning.
4-      Students take turns asking and answering questions to pronounce "can" appropriately.

### Meaningful/ Guided Practice
Students are introduced to the necessary techniques to fill silence while they think before responding to a question. They learn about discourse markers such as "hmm, er, pardon",..etc
•       They listen to speakers and decide on the technique that each one uses.
•       Finally, they work in pairs to take turns asking and answering a set of questions using the speaking skill.

### Communicative/ Free Practice
#### A-      Analysis
Students read a short paragraph and they are asked to underline the expressions that express interest in extreme sports.

#### B-      Practice
1-      Students work in pairs (host and guest) to plan and design a T.V interview with a world champion who won a competition in one of the extreme sports.
2-      Students role play and act out the interview in front of their classmates.
3-      Teacher monitors and gives feedback.

## Unit 4
## Extremes



### Discussion Point

**Discuss these questions with a partner.**

1. What sports do you like to play or watch?
2. Do you think a sport should be dangerous? Can you name any dangerous sports?
3. Are you an adrenaline junkie?
4. Why do you think some people like dangerous sports?

**Name the sport in each picture.**

[Rock climbing - mountain biking - snowboarding – skydiving]



………………………………..



………………………………..



………………………………..



………………………………..

**Vocabulary Preview**

**A) Match the numbers on the left with the letters on the right to form sentences.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. If you drive too fast, there is a risk | a. to carry water, food and a tent. |
| 2. I like some adventure on my holidays, | b. somewhere where there is  no doctor. |
| 3. This island is very remote. It's a long | c. so this year I'm going to Africa safari. |
| 4. An extreme sport is a sport which is | d. you jump out of the plane. |
| 5. Open your parachute ten seconds after | e. difficult, dangerous and exciting. |
| 6. If you're going camping, take a pack | f. that you might have an accident. |
| 7. A first-aid kit is important if you go | g. way from anywhere else. |

**B) Which word or phrase fits?**

Mountaineering- mountain biking-  snowboarding –
skydiving –  rock-climbing

1. If you like the idea of jumping out of a plane, why not try _____?
2. If you want to ride a bike off the road, then you should take up _____.
3. _____ is very difficult. You have to climb up rock cliffs using ropes.
4. In _____, you ride down a mountain on a board like a small surfboard.
5. If you want to climb to the top of tall mountains, try _____.

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**Speaking: Expressing Ability**

# SPEAKING  Interviewing about memory

You are going to learn about expressing and asking about ability, pronouncing *can* and *can't*, and taking time to think before speaking. You are then going to use these to interview someone about his or her memory.

## Grammar

### EXPRESSING AND ASKING ABOUT ABILITY

We can express and ask about ability using *can / could* and *be able to*. Study the forms:

| Form | Example |
|---|---|
| **Present ability** | |
| subject + *can* + base form | They can survive in cold weather. |
| subject + *cannot* + base form | They cannot survive in cold weather. |
| subject + *is / are + able to* + base form | The professor is able to see me today. |
| subject + *is not / are not + able to* + base form | The professor is not able to see me today. |
| **Wh- questions** | |
| *Wh-* + *can* + subject + base form | What can you remember from the lecture? |
| *Wh-* + *is /are* + subject + *able to* + base form | What are you able to recall about that day? |
| **Yes / no questions** | |
| *Can* + subject + base form | Can you remember the teachers' names? (Yes, I can. / No I cannot.) |
| *Is / Are* + subject + *able to* + base form | Are you able to remember the details? (Yes, I am. / No, I am not) |

1 **Change these statements into the negative.**

1  I can speak German.
2  That animal is able to survive without water.
3  Miki can recall all the details of the story.
4  They are able to live deep underground.
5  He can memorize a long poem perfectly.
6  I am able to recall all the major news events.

2 **Make one** *yes / no* **question and one** *wh-* **question for the affirmative statements in exercise 1.**

3 **Ask and answer the** *yes / no* **questions in exercise 2 with a partner.**

# Pronunciation skill

## PRONOUNCING *CAN* AND *CAN'T*

In natural English *can* is usually spoken in its reduced or weak form /kən/. When this happens, it is unstressed and the following verb is stressed.

can GO    can REMEMBER

*Can't* is always spoken in its stressed strong form /kænt/.

CAN'T GO    CAN'T REMEMBER

We say *can* in its strong stressed form /kæn/ to emphasize it in a contrast, or when we are giving a short answer to a question about ability or possibility.

She CAN'T SPEAK CHINESE, but she **CAN** SPEAK JAPANESE.

CAN you PLAY FOOTBALL? YES, I **CAN**.

1    🔊 2.21  **Listen and complete these sentences with *can* or *can't*. Then listen again and repeat.**

1   Brad _____ remember what happened 20 years ago.

2   Jill _____ remember what time her class begins.

3   Many extremophiles _____ live in a normal environment.

4   Sarah _____ memorize a long poem in ten minutes.

5   _____ humans live in very extreme environments?

6   _____ fish live in the Dead Sea?

2    **Work with a partner. Take turns asking and answering these questions, giving short answers with a contrast. Focus on your pronunciation of *can* and *can't*.**

1   Can you swim?                          3   Can you speak English?

2   Can you memorize the order          4   Can you cook?
     of a pack of playing cards?          5   Can you run a kilometer?

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# Speaking skill

## TAKING TIME TO THINK BEFORE SPEAKING

Often we want to give ourselves thinking time before responding to a question. Here are four techniques you can use to fill silence while you think:

1  Ask the speaker to repeat the question: *Pardon? Sorry? Excuse me?*
2  Make "thinking noises": *Hmm. Er.*
3  Use English expressions which mean you are thinking about your answer: *Let's see. Let me think. Give me a second. Just a moment.*
4  Repeat the question slowly.

1  🔘 2.22 **Listen and check (✓) the techniques the speakers use.**

|   | Technique 1 | Technique 2 | Technique 3 | Technique 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 |  |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |  |

**Speaking Task**

Read this presentation. Underline the expressions that state why Mike enjoys mountain climbing.

**Mike**

Mountains offer a challenge I find impossible to ignore. I started climbing about twenty years ago, and I've now climbed three of the highest five peaks in Europe. Of course it can be dangerous, and I've had some scary moments, but the sense of achievement when you reach the top is amazing. When you're pulling yourself up that wall of rock it feels like you're in a battle against nature – it's not a feeling you can get from anything in everyday life.

**Interviewing (Role plays)**

You are a T.V host who is interviewing a world champion in snowboarding. Plan and write some questions to ask your guest about reasons for enjoying such dangerous sport and what difficulties he/ she faces. Work with a partner and present your interview.