

" A Communicative Activities-Based program to Enhance EFL Secondary Stage Students' Communicative Competence and its Effect on Their Success and Failure Attribution."

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Abstract

The current study was mainly intended to develop the EFL secondary schoolers' communicative competence and success and failure attribution through communicative activities. To fulfill this purpose, it adapted the two-group pre-post design, quasi-experimental- control group design. Sixty EFL first secondary schoolers from Hussienia Secondary School for Girls, Hussienia Directorate, Sharkia Governorate, Egypt, were randomly assigned into two groups; thirty schoolers for the experimental group and thirty for the control one. The instruments of the study were a communicative competence test, and success and failure attribution scale. The instruments were pre-post administered to both groups. The current study was conducted over a period of four weeks, over ten session for researching, acting, reflecting and practicing communicative competence, through the first term of the academic year 2022- 2023. Finally, the results of the study revealed that communicative activities-based program had a positive effect on developing the EFL communicative competence and success and failure attribution of secondary stage schoolers.

Keywords: *Communicative Activities, Communicative Competence, Success and Failure Attribution, Secondary Education, Egypt.*

Language and Communication

Communicating ideas is the usual answer to the question of why language is used. Indeed, this is the most recognized function of a language. Whenever people speak about themselves or their circumstances or ask for information, they use language in order to exchange facts and opinions. The fundamental common function to most uses of the written language is the transmission of information, whereas the fundamental common function to most uses of the spoken language is the maintenance of social relations. Thus, English is a core pillar for global communication. It enables people all over the world to communicate either through verbal or nonverbal language.

Ibrahim (2012) stated that the basic process of human communication through all verbal and nonverbal modalities must be learned with appropriate competence before any subject matter can be placed in an appropriate human context. Also, Royani (2016) maintained that the goal of teaching oral proficiency is communicative efficiency. Learners should make themselves understood using their current proficiency to the fullest. They should avoid confusion in their message due to faulty pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary and observe the social and cultural rules that apply in each communicative situation. That's to say the meaning of an utterance (a sentence, a clause , a phrase , a word, etc.) does not entirely depend on its form , but it also depends on who says that, to whom , where, why, in what manner and in what effect.

Brown (2001), Savignon (2003) and Abdul Aal (2016) assured that communicative competence characterizes the ability of language schoolers to interact with other speakers. Their ability to do an activity was distinguished from their ability to recite dialogues or perform on discrete point tests of grammatical knowledge. Activities encourage students to ask for information, seek clarification and whatever other linguistic resources. They also could negotiate meaning and stick to communicative task at hand. Teachers were invariably leading learners to take risks and speak.

According to communicative language teaching, there are two main activity types. Littlewood (1981) indicated the functional communication activities and the social interaction activities. Each type focuses on different aspects. In functional communication activities, there are tasks such as comparing images or pictures to notice difference and similarities. They also work in sequences of events in a set of pictures, how to solve problems, give instructions and follow directions or complete a map. In social interaction activities, there different tasks like debates, dialogues, discussions, role play, improvisations and simulations.

Littlewood (1981) grouped activities into two kinds; 1) pre-communicative activities including structural activities and quasi-communicative activities, 2) Communicative activities including functional communication activities and social interactional activities. If we focus on the communicative activities: the functional ones demand students to make use of their language knowledge to solve a problem or complete a gap. The social activities demand the schoolers to pay more attention to the context and roles the people involved, and to distinguish what is appropriate or in appropriate language use.

The term " Communicative Competence" is comprised of two words, the combination of which means " competence to communicate". This simple lexico-semantic analysis uncovers the fact that the central word in the concept "communicative competence" is the word competence. As competence is one of the most controversial terms in the field of general and applied linguistics. Its introduction to linguistic discourse has been generally associated with Chomsky who drew what has been today viewed as a classic distinction between competence; the monolingual speaker-listener's knowledge of language and performance; the actual use of language in real situation. Bagaric and Mihaljevic (2007) assured that according to many general and applied linguists, Chomesky's distinction between competence and performance is based on the fundamental .

Celce-Murcia et al's model includes five main components: discourse, linguistic, actional, sociocultural, and strategic competence. It seeks to an updated and explicit description of language. It differs from Bachman and Palmer's model as it places lexical knowledge with linguistic competence.

In Bachman's model, vocabulary belonged to grammatical competence , but lexical knowledge was shifted into pragmatic dimension. Bachman and Palmer highlighted the interdependence of meaning and sociocultural context.

Di Nicuolo (1991) focused on two main testing approaches: indirect, discrete-point proficiency testing and direct, integrative proficiency testing. Savignon (1991) distinguished these in characterising communicative competence as the ability of learners to interact meaningfully, as distinct from their ability to perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge.

Context of the Problem

The problem of the current study is emphasized in the following ways:

1. Reviewing the previous studies that tackled communicative competence, communicative activities and attribution of success and failure ; for example Brown (2001), Savignon (2003) and Abdul Aal (2016). These studies revealed that there is a weakness in communicative competence. Also, they indicated that most students justify their failure and success by external, stable and uncontrollable factors.
2. Interviewing some in-service teachers to ask them about the importance of developing students' communicative competence and success and failure attribution factors, they assured that students need more activities to develop communicative competence and students need to understand that they can succeed or fail as a result of their effort.

Pilot Study

In order to provide an evidence for the problem of the lack of communicative competence and success and failure attribution, a pilot study was conducted.

A communicative test was done to confirm the problem. It consists of four(4) questions: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. (See appendix A) Also, success and failure questionnaire was conducted to identify causes of success and failure. It includes twenty three(23) different causes

of success and failure. The response scale ranged from 1=agree to 2=disagree.

The questionnaire and the test were conducted to measure the communicative competence and success and failure attribution of a group of thirty EFL secondary schoolers, enrolled in the first secondary stage , Hussiania Secondary School for Girls, Hussiania, Sharkia governorate, Egypt.

Table (1): EFL Communicative Competence Pilot Test

No.	Skills	Ss. Number	Percentage of Error
1	Recognising phonemes	30	72%
2	Recognising lexical elements.	30	80%
3	Recognising semantic and grammatical meanings.	30	70%
4	Introducing themselves/talking about their lives.	30	80%
5	Listening for details.	30	76%
6	Asking for and expressing opinion.	30	76%
7	Producing written conventions in appropriate contexts.	30	85%

Table (1) indicates that there is a weakness in schoolers' performance according to communicative competence components.

The findings of the test revealed that the majority of the schoolers did not perform communicatively well. That is why, it is suggested to use a communicative activities- based program to improve schoolers' communicative competence and modify their attribution of success and failure . Also, using activities is the new policy of the Education Ministry in teaching EFL.

Statement of the Problem

Based on what is mentioned above, it could be claimed that a considerable number of first secondary schoolers lack communicative

competence. Thus, the current study attempts to develop communicative competence through answering the following main question:

" What is the effect of a program based on some communicative activities on developing communicative competence and success and failure attribution of secondary schoolers?"

The following sub questions could be derived from the above main question:

1. What are the communicative competence components required for the first secondary schoolers ?
2. What are the features of the proposed program based on communicative-activities that may enhance secondary schoolers' communicative competence ?
3. What is the effect of the proposed program on:
 - a- Developing communicative competence of the target schoolers.
 - b- Their success and failure attribution?

Hypotheses of the Study

The current study aims at testing the following hypotheses;

1. There is a statistically significant difference (at 0,05) between the two mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post administration of the communicative competence test favoring the control group.
2. The program has a positive effect on developing the communicative competence of the first secondary schoolers.
3. There is a statistically significant difference at(0,05) between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post administrations of the success and failure attribution scale favoring the control group.

4. The program has a positive effect on success and failure attribution of first secondary schoolers.

Aims of the Study

The current study aims at ;

1. Developing EFL communicative competence of the first secondary schoolers.
2. Improving success and failure attribution of the students of first secondary schoolers.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this study is important for:

EFL Secondary schoolers, as it may:

- a- Develop their communicative competence. They would be able to communicate well using the grammar, which they learnt as well as how and when to use utterance appropriately.
- b- Develop their success and failure attribution. They would understand the causes of their outcomes, control them and predict the course of similar future ones.

EFL Instructors, as the study may provide them with a practical description of a program based on some communicative activities that would be useful in developing EFL students' communicative competence as well as their success and failure attribution.

EFL Curriculum Developers, as the study would may draw their attention to adopt new EFL trends in designing and developing curricula such as communicative activities that aim at changing the role of the student from a passive recipient to an active positive learner who is able to participate with the teacher in the classroom and take control of his learning and communicate competently in the target language.

EFL Supervisors, as the study may motivate them to conduct training courses for teachers of EFL to raise their awareness of communicative

activities and stress their significance for improving and developing communicative competence as well as its effect on success and failure attribution.

Delimitations of the Study

The current study would be delimited to :

1. A group of EFL schoolers enrolled in the first secondary stage, Hussiania Secondary School for Girls, Hussiania, Sharkia Governorate, Egypt as they are available for application of the proposed program.
2. Some communicative activities required for first secondary schoolers which were approved by the jury members.
3. Some dimensions of communicative competence required for first secondary schoolers which were approved by the jury members.
4. The academic year 2022 - 2023.

Instruments of the Study

The following instruments will be designed and used in the current research:

1. A checklist of communicative competence components.
2. A communicative competence oral and writing test.
3. A communicative competence oral and writing test rubric .
4. A success and failure attribution scale.

Procedures of the Study

To answer the research questions and test its hypotheses, the researcher will adopt the following procedures:

1. Reviewing the relevant literature and previous studies related to communicative activities , communicative competence and success and failure attribution such as Brown (2001), Savignon (2003), Ibrahim

(2012) and Abdu Allah (2013) to design the theoretical framework and instruments of the research.

2. Designing a list of the most important communicative competence components and submitting it to a jury of TEFL to validate it.

3. Designing a success and failure attribution scale and submitting it to a jury of EFL members to validate it.

4. Designing a communicative activities - based program , and determining its objectives, content, strategies, and activities.

5. Designing the pretests and posttests of communicative competence and submitting them to the jury members to validate them.

6. Choosing the study participants from the students of first secondary stage students, and assigning them to experimental and control groups.

7. Pre-administrating the research instruments to the both groups to assess their communicative competence and success and failure attributions pre-level.

8. Implementing the program designed by the researcher on the experimental group.

9. Post-administering the research instruments to the experimental group to measure the effect of communicative activities based program on their communicative competence as well as their success and failure attribution.

10. Comparing the pre and post results of the experimental group to these of the control group.

11. Treating and analyzing data statistically using the appropriate statistical method.

12. Discussing and interpreting the results.

13. Drawing the conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further researches.

Methodology and Participants

The current study adopted the quasi-experimental design to investigate utilizing a communicative-activities based program to develop secondary schoolers' EFL communicative competence and their success and failure attribution. This design was a major source for collecting data, in which sixty participants, at Hussienia Secondary School for Girls, Hussienia Directorate, Sharkia Governorate, Egypt, were divided into two groups (control and experimental groups). The experimental group was taught through the communicative activities-based program while the control group was taught through regular instruction. The study instruments were designed to study the participants before and after the implementing of the experiment. The program was implemented during the first term of the academic year 2022-2023.

Definition of Terms

Communicative Activities

Gomez (2019, p.16) defined communicative activities as a set of either functional or social activities. The functional activities demand students to make use of their language knowledge to solve a problem or to complete a gap. The social activities demand the students to pay more attention to the context and the roles of the people involved and also distinguish what appropriate or inappropriate language use.

Operationally, a communicative activity is a situation in which a secondary schooler is demanded to pay more attention to the context and the roles of the people involved and also distinguish what appropriate or inappropriate language use is, in order to improve his or her communicative competence and success and failure attribution. As shown in the literature review, the activities used may include readers' theater, story reading, role play.

Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is a term in linguistics which refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology,

phonology as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately.

Communicative competence refers to a learner's ability to use language to communicate successfully . Canale and Swain (1980) defined it as composing competence in four areas words and rules, appropriacy, cohesion and coherence and use of communication strategies.

Operationally, communicative competence can be defined as the first secondary schoolers' ability to use a language, or to communicate, in a cultural appropriate manner in order to make meaning and accomplish social tasks with efficacy and fluency through extended interactions.

Success and Failure Attribution

Weiner (1972, 2002, 2005) defined attribution as a cognitive theory of motivation originated from social psychology and describes the way people explain causes of an event, their own behavior as well as the behaviors of others.

Operationally, success and failure attribution is the first secondary schoolers' ability to understand the causes for their academic outcomes, controlling them and predicting the course of similar future ones. They, also, specify relationships between causes for perceived success or failure, the resulting affective reactions and expected change in performance on a future similar task.

Post-test Statistics

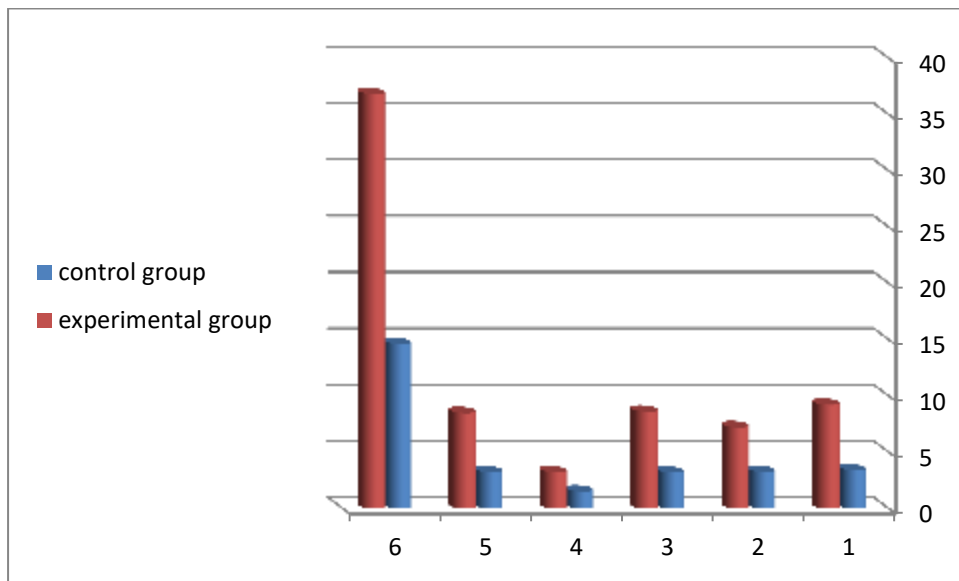
To determine whether schoolers' EFL communicative competence improved after implementing the communicative activities-based program, the hypotheses of the study were tested by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program (Ver. 26).

To verify the first hypothesis, the researcher used the Independent Sample t-test to compare the mean scores of the experimental group schoolers with the control group schoolers, on the post-test. The results are presented in the following table:

Table(1): Communicative Competence Post t-test Results of Both Groups

Competence	control group n = 30		experimental group n = 30		df	t value	The . effect size η^2	effect strength d	Statistical significance
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation					
Discourse	3.4	0.855	9.233	1.04	58	23.731	0.906	6.209	large
Linguistic	3.266	0.827	7.233	0.678	58	20.295	0.875	5.291	large
Actional	3.2	0.924	8.633	0.764	58	24.768	0.914	6.52	large
Sociocultural	1.533	0.571	3.233	0.626	58	10.986	0.675	2.882	large
Strategic	3.233	1.072	8.5	0.820	58	21.365	0.887	5.603	large
The test as a whole	14.633	1.973	36.833	2.134	58	41.824	0.967	10.826	large

Figure (1): Mean scores of both groups in the posttest results of the communicative competence test



To verify the second hypothesis, the researcher calculated the effect size (η^2) and the effect strength (d , w^2) to show a positive effect of the program on developing communicative competence. Table (2) shows these results.

Table (2): The effect size (η^2), and the effect strength (d), (w^2) of the pre /post communicative competence test of the experimental group

Competence	Pre n = 30		post n = 30		df	T value	η^2 The effect size	effect strength		Statistical significance
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation				d	w^2	
Linguistic	3.66	0.691	7.233	0.678	29	23.416	0.949	8.627	0.901	large
Actional	3.433	0.626	8.633	0.764	29	29.628	0.968	11	0.936	large
Sociocultural	1.166	0.592	3.233	0.626	29	13.676	0.865	5.062	0.756	large
Strategic	3.4	0.621	8.5	0.820	29	30.268	0.969	11.182	0.938	large
The test as a whole	15.066	1.981	36.833	2.134	29	40.021	0.982	14.772	0.963	large

Table(3): Effect Volume Levels

effect	large	medium	small
Effect size D	greater than 0.8	0.5 to 0.8	0.2 to less than 0.5

Results of the Study

1. There is a statistically significant difference (at 0,05) between the two mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post administration of the communicative competence test, favoring the experimental group.
2. The program has a positive effect on developing the communicative competence of the first secondary schoolers.
3. There is a statistically significant difference at(0,05) between the two mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post administration of the success and failure attributions scale, favoring the experimental group.
4. The program has a positive effect on success and failure attribution of first secondary schoolers.

Results of the pre/post communicative competence test revealed the significant effect of the communicative activities-based program on enhancing secondary schoolers' communicative competence as well as their success and failure attribution. In line with Gomez (2019), this study asserted that communicative activities are useful teaching techniques for developing EFL communicative competence and modifying schoolers' roles. During sessions, schoolers were active participants rather than passive recipients of information. In addition, this study showed that schoolers were more interested in participating in communicative activities, and they had fun in doing these activities which affects success and failure attribution positively.

Analysis of the Results

According to the results of the EFL communicative competence pretest, both of the experimental and the control groups had problems in communicative competence as a whole .

Discussion of the results

The results of the experimental and control groups on the EFL communicative competence pretest indicated that the schoolers of the two groups were almost homogeneous as there were no significant differences between the two groups before administering the experimental treatment of the study. In addition, it was obvious that the levels of the two groups in communicative competence in the pretest were low.

After experimentation, results revealed that the level of the experimental group taught using the communicative activities-based program was higher than that of the control group taught using traditional methods of teaching.

This result indicated that the communicative activities-based program used in the current study had a positive effect on first secondary schoolers' EFL communicative competence as well as their success and failure attribution. The performance of the experimental group schoolers in the post administration of the communicative competence test, and success and failure attribution was higher than that of the control group.

Conclusion

Based on the data obtained from the results of the communicative competence test, and success and failure attribution scale , the study findings showed that the schoolers' mean scores on the communicative competence post-test , and success and failure attribution scale results were higher than those on the pre-administration of the test and the scale. This indicated that there was an improvement in the schooler's levels after they got treatment through using the communicative activities-based program. This means that the program was effective in improving the first year secondary stage schoolers' communicative competence , and their success and failure attribution.

Furthermore, it was also noticed that the students were motivated during the communicative activities-based program to participate in classroom activities ,and hence they develop their EFL communicative competence and success and failure attribution. Also, the program help

them to work cooperatively and share their ideas. Moreover, communicative activities were attractive and created a like-native environment to support students develop their communicative competence as well as their success and failure attribution. In addition, the program gave the participants the chance to be active learners who were responsible for their own learning experiences.

Recommendations

Recommendations focused on providing training sessions for schoolers on how to engage in fruitful communicative activities and work as a member of a large group or sub-group in communicative activities sessions, setting up sub groups in light of students' communicative abilities so that high contributors work together and low contributors work together; reducing class size so that schoolers can communicate competently; using communicative activities with other techniques to maximize their usefulness and enhance schoolers' interactivity and participation.

Suggestions also emphasized the need to extend the use of communicative activities outside the classroom through using conversation programs such as zoom, and teams. These sites could be a great extent, solve the problem of time, and help slow schoolers to build their confidence in using the target language, improve their communicative competence as well as success and failure attribution.

Communicative activities should be used by teachers to collaborate with their colleagues in order to find new teaching techniques and solve EFL communicative competence problems. They offer new strategies of teaching such as active learning. They may also open the gate in front of teachers to update their skills and find new resources of their career development.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The following topics are suggested for further research:

- 1.Using communicative activities to develop other language skills: writing, reading, listening, and speaking.
- 2.Using active learning to improve the low-achievers' communicative competence.
- 3.Using virtual world applications to enhance listening and speaking skills.
- 4.Using communicative activities to investigate their effect on preparatory schoolers' EFL communicative competence and success and failure attribution.

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المستخلص العربي

عنوان الدراسة: "برنامج قائم على الأنشطة التواصلية لتنمية الكفاءة التواصلية في اللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب المرحلة الثانوية وتأثيره علي عزو النجاح والفشل لديهم."

تمثل الدراسة الحالية محاولة لتنمية مهارات الكفاءة التواصلية الرئيسية والفرعية باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لطلاب المرحلة الثانوية من خلال الأنشطة التواصلية، وأثرها علي عزو النجاح والفشل لديهم، ولتحقيق هذا الغرض استخدم الباحث نظام المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة الضابطة، حيث اختار الباحث ستين طالبة عشوائيا من طالبات الصف الأول الثانوي بمدرسة الحسينية الثانوية بنات، إدارة الحسينية التعليمية، محافظة الشرقية، حيث اشتملت المجموعة التجريبية علي ثلاثين طالبة، واللاتي درسن باستخدام الأنشطة التواصلية، وثلاثون طالبة للمجموعة الضابطة واللاتي درسن باستخدام الطريقة المعتادة، وقد قام الباحث بإعداد اختبار للكفاءة التواصلية ، ومقياس عزو النجاح والفشل وتطبيق كليهما قبلها، وبعديا، وقد استغرقت الدراسة عشر جلسات خلال اربعة اسابيع من الفصل الدراسي الأول للعام الدراسي 2022-2023 م. وبعد إجراء التحليل الإحصائي توصلت الدراسة إلي انه للبرنامج تأثير إيجابي في تنمية الكفاءة التواصلية وعزو النجاح والفشل لدى طلاب الصف الأول الثانوي .

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأنشطة التواصلية، الكفاءة التواصلية، عزو النجاح والفشل، التعليم الثانوي، مصر.