



The Effectiveness of Using the Communicative Approach in Developing EFL Primary Stage Pupils' Listening Comprehension and Physical Response A Research Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

he main aim of this research is to investigate the effect of $usin_{i}T$

the communicative approach on developing primary stage pupils distening skill at the levels of listening comprehension and responding to physical actions. Three statistical hypotheses were formulated to guide this research. The research adopted the one group research design to examine the study hypotheses. The participants consisted of (N=30) fifth primary stage pupils in Om El-Mo'meneen Private School, 6th October educational directorate, in the academic year 2020/2021. the researcher designed instruments and materials which included a pre-post listening skill test, an observation checklist, and a Teacher's Manual. The researcher used t-test for paired groups to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre and the post-administration. The results were analyzed statistically and revealed that the treatment group post-measurement outperformed the treatment group pre-measurement. Hence, results concluded that using the communicative approach was effective in





developing EFL primary stage pupils' listening skill at the levels of listening comprehension and responding to physical actions. **Key Words:** communicative approach – listening comprehension –

responding to physical actions.

Introduction

Listening is the receptive language skill without which communication inside the classroom cannot be made easily. Effective oral interaction among pupils and between them and their teacher during the various activities depends mainly on the pupils' ability to understand the spoken language.

Along with this, Newton & Nation (2020) claimed that Listening was the natural precursor to speaking; the early stages of a learner's language development were dependent on listening. Putri et al (2018) also emphasized that listening skill played a large role in enhancing students' English proficiency. Therefore, improving students' quality of listening was important.

Tendiami (2017) claimed that in learning English, students should study four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening was one of the receptive skills and believed as the first skill that was taught to students in order to improve their skills in English, yet the teaching and learning about listening was not an easy thing to do. Listening was usually conducted as an individual activity where students worked on their exercise themselves. This could cause problem when students who were introvert and had less knowledge could not discuss their work and, in the end, they could not do the exercise.

Developing listening seems to be simple but it is not. White and Evans (2005) asserted that it appeared to many people that listening was a simple, a passive activity: one that required little effort. However, in recent years there had been increasing realization that true listening and understanding of what one heard required effort, focus and concentration. Driscoll & frost (1999) also believed that listening was frequently called a receptive skill, but the term was misleading as most listening required a readiness and an active co-operation on the part of the listener and it required understanding, interpreting and





building. **Review of Literature and Related Studies**

Listening is a critical element in the competent language performance of second /foreign language learners, whether they are communicating at school, at work, or in the community. Listiyaningsih listening comprehension was regarded (2017)revealed that theoretically as an active process in which individual concentrated on selected aspects of aural input, from meaning from passages, and associated what they heard with existing knowledge. Along with this point, El-Naggar (2001) revealed that a new paradigm emerged. It described listening as an interactive, integrating process in which listeners engaged in dynamic construction of meaning. While attending to spoken language, listeners predicted topic development, used a series of definable subskills, related what they heard to their personal prior knowledge and creatively reacted to what speakers said.

Murphy (2018) revealed that successful foreign language communication depended on listening ability just as much as speaking. Listening took place in real time. Listening took place in all kinds of daily contexts, and people listened for a variety of motives, such as to receive information or as part of social interaction. Classroom listening activities, however, often fell short of mirroring what happened in the outside world.

Thus, Sevik (2012) revealed that developing listening skills was an essential component of any ESL/EFL curriculum for young learners. If it was true that listening skills were the most important outcome of early language teaching, then this explained the continuing demand for methods that successfully improved the learners' listening skills.

Burkart (2004) revealed the importance of teaching listening stating that language learning depended on listening. Listening provided the aural input that served as the basis for language acquisition and enabled learners to interact in spoken communication. Burkart also asserted that listening was the language modality that was used most frequently as it had been estimated that students might receive as much as 90% of their in-school information through listening to instructors and to one another.





Sariçoban (1999) stated that listening was the ability to identify and understand what others were saying. For learners, listening was how spoken language became input (i.e., it was the first stage of learning a new language). In the classroom, this happened by listening to the teacher, a CD, or other learners. It was the process of interpreting messages—what people said.

Indrasari (2019) confirmed that designing listening tasks was not a simple way. In designing the tasks, the teacher should consider the types of listening performance in order to match the instrument of the task with the learning objectives. Teacher should also concern more on what aspects/micro skills that the teacher wanted to measure through the task.

English pupils needed to develop listening skills and listening strategies to become proficient in listening. According to Brown (2000), one of micro skills in listening could be as follows:

- a. Retain chunks of language of different lengths in short-term memory.
- b. Discriminate among the distinctive sounds of English.
- c. Recognize English stress and patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, intonational contours, and their role in signaling information.
- d. Recognize reduced forms of words.
- e. Distinguish word boundaries, recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance.
- f. Process speech at different rates of delivery.
- g. Process speech containing pauses, errors, corrections, and other performance variables.
- h. Recognize grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), patterns, rules, and elliptical forms.
- i. Detect sentence constituents and distinguish between major and minor constituents.
- j. Recognize that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms.
- k. Recognize cohesive devises in spoken discourse.





- 1. Recognize the communicative functions of utterances, according to situations, participants, goals.
- m. Infer situations, participants, goals using real-world knowledge.
- n. From events, ideas, etc., described, predict outcomes, infer links and connections between events, deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification.
- o. Distinguish between literal and implied meaning.
- p. Use facial, kinetic, body language, and other nonverbal clues to decipher meaning.
- q. Develop and use a battery of listening strategies, such as detecting key words, guessing the meaning of words from context, appeal for help, and signaling comprehension or lack thereof.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) revealed that Physical response was built around the coordination of speech and action, focusing on teaching languages through physical activity. This was an extremely useful and adaptable teaching technique, especially in the case of young learners who listened to their teacher's instructions in the form of commands and then followed those instructions. For example, in the introduction of new commands, the teacher first said, "Wash your hands," and then showed the action to this command. Next, the teacher gave the command and asked the students to perform the action. Similar routines were carried out all through the lesson.

On the other hand, the communicative approach is one of the methods that engage the teachers to be more creative to create activities which support the students to use the language for communication. Murphy (2018) revealed that the abilities of listeners were likely to vary widely in an EFL classroom, and activities should attempt to accommodate students' individual strengths and weaknesses. Instead of placing the burden on the teacher to focus on and tend to each learner and her needs, a communicative approach to listening attempted to let the learners work out meaning in groups. It allowed them listen collaboratively and figure out the language that they did not know by



using the language that they did know. In this way, they achieved not only listening to an aural text, but also listening to each other.

Furthermore, in teaching a language by using communicative approach, there are several principles that should be understood by the teachers. Richards (2005) described the following principles, which should be taken into consideration in teaching English:

- a. Learners learn a language through using it to communicate;
- b. Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities;
- c. Fluency is an important dimension of communication;
- d. Communication involves the integration of different language skills;
- e. Learning is a process of creative construction and involve trial and error.

In this respect, Alibekova & Urinboyeva (2020) revealed that the main task of teaching English at the present stage was the formation of a foreign language communicative competence, considered as a certain level of development of linguistic, speech, sociocultural and educational cognitive competencies, which allowed the learner to expediently vary speech behavior depending on the functional factor of foreign language communication.

In an experimental study conducted by Aalaei (2017) to measure the effect of the implementation of the communicative approach (CA) on Iranian students' listening skills, various communicative activities were used with the experimental group while the control group was exposed to traditional, non-communicative, instruction using structurally based methods, such as the audio-lingual method. The main result of the study indicated that the CA had a positive effect on the students' listening skills.

Thus, reviewing literature revealed that listening was of great importance to the pupils' language development and interactive competence. Therefore. Developing listening was important through using the communicative approach that provided EFL pupils with authentic activities and real-life situations.





Context of the problem

Believing in the importance of developing listening for primary stage pupils, one may assume that teaching, and learning listening skill get considerable attention in our primary schools, but that does not appear to be the case. Through the researcher's complete observation, in which he did not involve himself with the group being observed at all, to eight EFL primary school teachers' performance inside the classroom, he found out that most of them (six teachers) seemed to have no systematic strategy to follow. They lacked basic knowledge of how best to develop or teach listening. They also did not try out any of the commonly found ways of working in the language classroom: helping pupils to find out for themselves, making things plain to them/ allowing for periphery learning and encouraging pupils to use and refine their understanding.

To support the researcher's observation, he made oral interviews with these teachers. When teachers were asked about teaching listening, they expected listening skill to be developed naturally through the other three skills: reading, speaking and writing. Obviously, they taught listening as if it were a piece of reading.

The pilot study: In addition, the researcher administered a diagnostic test as a pilot study on 20 EFL fifth-year primary stage pupils, Om El-Mo'meneen Private School, 6th October Educational Directorate, Giza. The results showed that they had difficulties with their listening skill including listening comprehension (vocabulary and sentences) and responding to physical actions.

Statement of the Problem

Most primary stage pupils have difficulties with listening comprehension and responding to physical actions. Thus, this research is an attempt to solve this problem through using the communicative approach in which some effective learning strategies can be used.

Research Questions

The problem of this research can be stated in the following research question:





What is the effect of using the Communicative Approach (CA) on developing EFL primary stage pupils' listening comprehension and responding to physical actions?

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research can be stated as follows:

- 1. To examine the effectiveness of teaching using the Communicative Approach in developing EFL primary stage pupils' listening comprehension.
- 2. To promote the EFL primary stage pupils' ability to understand the spoken language and react appropriately to different communicative situations.
- 3. To shed light on the importance of developing EFL primary stage pupils' listening skill.

Research Hypotheses

To answer the research question, the hypotheses are formulated as follows:

- 1. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the research participants on the listening skill pre- and posttest administration concerning listening skill abilities as a whole in favor of the posttest mean scores.
- 2. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the research participants on the listening skill pre and posttest administration concerning listening comprehension in favor of the posttest mean scores.
- 3. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the research participants on the listening skill pre and posttest administration concerning responding to physical actions in favor of the posttest mean scores.

Significance of the Research

The importance of this study can be shown as follows:

- 1. Guiding teachers and curriculum planners to follow an effective approach to improve the listening skill of EFL primary school learners.
- 2. Presenting a means for developing the pupils' four language





skills, as it helps in developing the pupils' listening comprehension and it is a fact that listening is the first language skill to be developed and it is perhaps the most important of all, the basis for the other three language skill.

3. Shedding light on the importance of developing EFL primary stage pupils' listening comprehension and responding to physical actions and later on in the other stages.

Participants

The participants of this research included 30 fifth year primary EFL pupils in a private school called Om El-Mo'meneen Private School at 6th October Educational Directorate in 6th October Governorate. They received instruction based on the Communicative Approach. Also, a pre/post listening skill test was given to the treatment group before and after the treatment.

Instruments and Materials

1- A listening comprehension test of two parts (listening comprehension: *vocabulary and sentences*) prepared by the researcher to measure listening comprehension.

2-An observation checklist (sheet) prepared by the researcher to measure the participants' ability to understand the spoken instructions by physical response.

3- A Teacher's Manual to guide the teacher how to teach according to the communicative approach

Validity and Reliability of the instrumentation

To confirm the validity of the listening comprehension test and the observation checklist, they were submitted to a board of TEFL and testing experts who agreed on the suitability of the items for the grade level, the vocabulary used and the test length.

In addition, a preliminary format of the test was piloted on a randomly selected sample of 20 fifth-year primary stage pupils to determine whether the items were clear, understood and workable. In the light of their responses, test directions and items proved to be homogenous, clear and comprehensible and the time taken for answering the test was calculated in this stage. The data collected from the pilot study were also used for calculating the reliability of the test.



As for the reliability of the test, the researcher used the split-half method. In this research, the correlation between the two 50-item halves of the final exam was = (0.87), so the estimated reliability was as follows:

Rest = $\frac{2(0.87)}{1+(0.87)}$ = $\frac{(1.75)}{(1.87)}$ = 0.93

Hence, the reliability of the test was (0.93) which means that it is reliable to be administered in this study.

Research Design

The present research adopted the one group treatment design to investigate the effectiveness of using the communicative approach in developing EFL primary stage pupils'.

Delimitations of the Research

This research was delimited to the following:

- 1. Listening skill and its components:
 - a. The pupil's ability to understand the spoken language at the level of word meaning and sentence meaning.
 - b. The pupil's ability to understand the spoken instructions by responding with physical actions.
- 2. EFL primary fifth graders in a private school in 6th October Educational Directorate in 6th October Governorate. The rationale for choosing these subjects is that EFL primary-Fifth graders are supposed to acquire basic listening skills based on primary four and that listening should be developed in an early stage. As for 6th October Governorate, it is the place where the researcher lives and works.

Definition of Terms

a) Listening Comprehension: Cao & Lin (2020) defined listening comprehension as a complex, active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know.

Listening comprehension, in the current research, could be defined as the pupils' ability to discriminate among the distinctive





EFL vowel and consonant sounds, understand the spoken language at the level of word meaning and sentence meaning, and understand the spoken instructions by responding with physical actions.

b) The Communicative Approach: Richards et al, (1992: 21) defined it as an approach to foreign or second language teaching which emphasized that the goal of language learning was communicative competence.

The communicative approach, in the current research, could be defined as an approach to language teaching that emphasized interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of EFL teaching and learning.

Results and Discussion Hypothesis One

This hypothesis states that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the research participants on the listening skill pre and posttest administration concerning listening abilities as a whole in favor of the posttest mean scores.

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used *t*-test for paired groups to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-administrations. The mean and standard deviation were also computed. The results of these statistical methods were shown in table 1 as follows:

Table 1

't'-Test Results for the Mean Scores of the Treatment Group Students on the listening Skill Pre- and Post-test as a whole

Domain	Measur	N	Mean	Std.	df	t	Sig.
	ement			Deviation			(0.05)
listening	Pre	30	18.866	9.761		14.02	.000
abilities as					29		
a whole	Post	30	26.433	7.509		1	

Table 1 showed that there was a significant difference at the significance level (0.05) between the treatment group students' mean scores in the pre- and post-administrations of the listening skill test as a



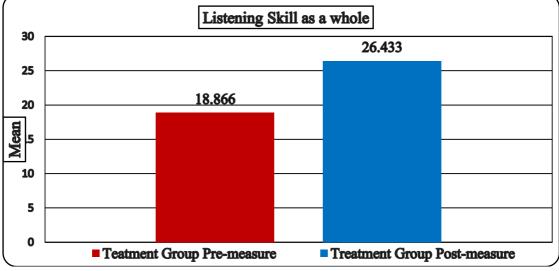


whole in favor of the post-administration. This was because the value of "t" calculated (14.021) was larger than the value of "t" tabulated (1.699).

This difference between the treatment group students' mean scores of the pre- and the post-administrations of the listening skill test was shown in the diagram of figure 1 as follows:

Figure 1

The Difference in Mean Scores Between the Treatment Group's the Listening Skill Pre- and Post-tests as a whole



Hypothesis Two

This hypothesis states that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the research participants on the listening skill pre and posttest administration concerning listening comprehension in favor of the posttest mean scores.

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used *t*-test for paired groups to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-administrations. The mean and standard deviation were also computed. The results of these statistical methods were shown in table 2 as follows:

Table 2





't'-Test Results for the Mean Scores of the Treatment Group Students in the Listening Comprehension Domain on the Pre- and Post-tests

Domain	Measureme	Ν	Mean	Std.	df	t	Sig. (0.05
	nt			Deviatio			(0.05
				n)
Listening	Pre	3	14.6	3.855	2		
Comprehensi		0	14.0	5.655	9	12.08	000
on	Post	3	19.93	2.909		9	.000
		0	3	2.909			

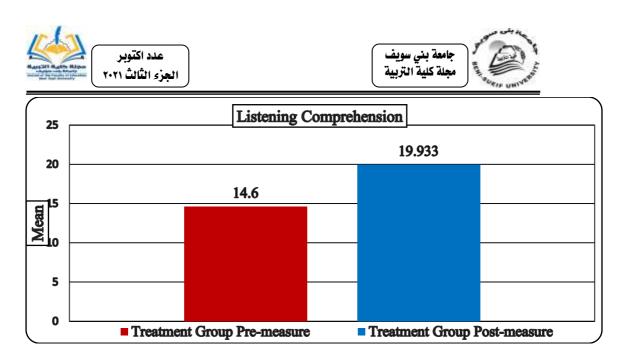
Table 2 showed that there was a significant difference at the significance level (0.05) between the treatment group students' mean scores in the pre- and post-administrations of the listening comprehension test in favor of the post-administration. This was because the value of "t" calculated (12.089) was larger than the value of "t" tabulated (1.699).

This difference between the treatment group students' mean scores of the pre- and the post-administrations of the listening skill test regarding the listening comprehension domain was shown in the diagram of figure (2) as follows:

Figure 2

The Difference in Mean Scores Between the Treatment Group's Listening Comprehension Pre- and Post-tests

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Hypothesis Three

This hypothesis states that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the research participants on the listening skill pre and posttest administration concerning physical response in favor of the posttest mean scores.

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used *t*-test for paired groups to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-administrations. The mean and standard deviation were also computed. The results of these statistical methods were shown in table 3 as follows:

Table 3

't'-Test Results for the Mean Scores of the Treatment Group Students in the Physical Response Domain on the Pre- and Posttests

Domain	Measurement	Ν	Mean	Std.	df	t	Sig.
				Deviation			(0.05)
Physical	Pre	30	4.266	2.391	29	12 440	000
Response	Post	30	6.100	2.202		13.449	.000

Table 3 showed that there was a significant difference at the significance level (0.05) between the treatment group students' mean scores in the pre- and post-administrations of the physical response test

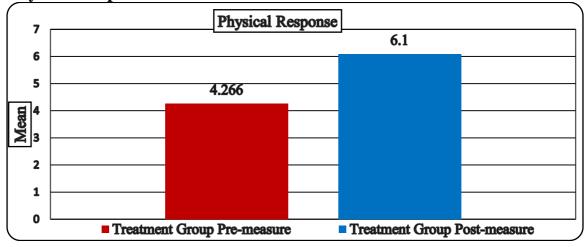


in favor of the post-administration. This was because the value of "t" calculated (13.449) was larger than the value of "t" tabulated (1.699).

This difference between the treatment group students' mean scores of the pre- and the post-administrations of the listening skill test regarding the physical response domain was shown in the diagram of figure (3) as follows:

Figure 3

The Difference in Mean Scores Between the Treatment Group's Physical Response Pre- and Post-tests



The findings of the current research indicated that at the level of listening comprehension and responding to physical actions, fifth-year primary stage pupils taught using the communicative approach treatment did substantially well. It meant that using the communicative approach was effective in developing EFL primary stage pupils' listening comprehension and responding to physical actions. That is because the communicative approach teacher provided the participants with communicatively well-designed activities as the communicative competence was the desired goal. These activities gave the participants the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas, which required them to understand the spoken language to interact appropriately. The various communicative activities used in this research trained the





participants to listen and understand well in order to continue interacting with their peers.

The finding related to the effectiveness of using the communicative approaches in improving the primary stage pupils' listening comprehension and physical response was consistent with a study by Wei et al (2018) which indicated that the communicative approach contributed to improving students' English-language skills.

Using the communicative approach was effective in developing the participants' listening comprehension and physical response because they were given ample opportunities to exchange their ideas freely with one another and with the teacher through activities like pair-work and group-work activities. The teacher also facilitated the involvement of the participants' communicative knowledge and abilities from the outset rather than overlooked them for the sake of some apparent fluency with text. Situations, dialogues, role-playing, problem solving, interviews, debates, games gave the participants an opportunity to practice the language.

To conclude, the activities that the communicative approach teacher used proved to be significantly effective in improving the participants' listening skill (listening comprehension and physical responses).

Conclusions

This research came to the following conclusions:

- The use of the communicative approach (CA) as a teaching Approach to develop EFL primary stage pupils' listening comprehension and physical responses is effective.
- The Communicative approach proved to be effective in developing EFL primary stage pupils' understanding at the level of sentences. That is because the participants throughout the lessons are trained in exchanging ideas with each other and with the teacher. They were familiar with exchanging comprehensible speech in the form of sentences conveying their meanings.
- The usage of the communicative approach was significantly effective in developing EFL primary stage pupils' ability to respond to the spoken instructions by physical actions.





• The Communicative approach teacher provided the participants with many opportunities to use their foreign language naturally so that they could participate in different situations with ease.

Recommendations

In the light of the results of the current research, there are recommendations as follows:

- EFL curriculum designers should design course syllabi based on the Communicative Approach for all grades of the primary stage as it is effective in promoting EFL primary stage pupils' listening comprehension and physical responses.
- Curriculum planners and course designers should take into consideration the difficulties that may encounter the communicative approach implementation especially caused by the educational system (large classes, insufficient funding), EFL teachers (lack of training), EFL learners (preference for a certain learning style, low English proficiency) and the approach (lack of effective assessment instruments)
- EFL teachers should link the classroom activities with the real world outside.
- EFL learners' needs, ideas, interests, and favorites should be incorporated into the topics of the course syllabus so that learners can be more attentive and interested throughout the lesson.
- EFL learner's errors should be tolerated because on the long run EFL primary stage pupils will correct themselves according to the natural order in which language is acquired. Regular practice, remedial work and interpretation can improve pupils' English.
- Testing the listening skill should be incorporated into the exam items. It should be periodically examined from early stages by using simple techniques.





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