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A Proposed Strategy based on Augmented Reality Applications to Develop EFL Secondary School Students' Oral Communication Skills

A Thesis

Submitted for the Fulfillment of the Requirements of Master Degree in Education, Curriculum and Instruction (TEFL)

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Abstract

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The present study aimed at developing secondary school students' EFL oral communication skills through a strategy based on augmented reality applications. Sixty students from first year secondary school at Zagazig Secondary School were chosen to represent the study participants who were assigned to a control group (N=30) and an experimental group (N=30) during the first term of the academic year 2023/2024. Two units of the text book "Hello English for Secondary School" for the first term were modified to suit the augmented reality applications. The study was carried out through twelve sessions within a period of nine weeks (24 hours). For collecting data three instruments were designed: 1. A questionnaire 2. An oral communication skills test (OCST). The results showed that the augmented reality applications developed the participants' oral communication skills as they provide EFL students with the required aids and method to practice oral communication skills.

Keywords: Oral Communication Skills, Augmented Reality Applications, Communication Anxiety.

1.1. Statement of the proplem

First year secondary school students' are weak in the oral communication skills.

1.2. Research Questions

This study aimed to find an answer to the following main question:

How can a proposed strategy based on augmented reality applications be used to develop some oral communication skills in English as a foreign language among secondary school students?

The following sub-questions were derived from the above main question:

1. What are the oral communication skills of secondary school students?

2. What are the features of a proposed strategy based on augmented reality applications for developing EFL oral communication skills?

2. What is the effectiveness of the proposed strategy in developing some EFL oral communication skills among secondary school students?

2.1. Delimitations of the study

1. A group of 1ˢᵗ year secondary students (60 students).

2. Oral communication skills.

3. A proposed strategy of augmented reality activities relevant to the targeted oral communication skills, appropriate for the study participants.

1.4. Procedures of the study:

First: To answer the first question, which states: What are the oral communication skills that need to be developed for secondary school students?

The researcher did the following:

A- Reviewing the previous studies and literature related to the variables of the study.

B - Preparing a list of oral communication skills.

C - Presenting a list of oral communication skills to the arbitrators to ensure their suitability for application.

Second: To answer the third question, which states what is the image of the proposed strategy based on augmented reality applications?

The researcher followed the following procedures:

A - Determining the foundations for building the strategy.

b- Determining the steps of the strategy.

C- Preparing oral topics according to the proposed strategy.

D- Presenting the proposed strategy to a group of arbitrators to ensure its suitability for implementation.

Third: To answer the third question, the text of which is what is the effectiveness of the proposed strategy in developing some oral communication skills in English as a foreign language among secondary school students?

A- The number of research tools represented in:

- Oral communication skills test (prepared by the researcher)

B - Determining the research sample, which consists of two groups, one experimental (30) and the other a control group (30) of first-year secondary students.

C- Applying the tools beforehand on the two groups.

D- Teaching the participants book (Hello English for Secondary) using the proposed strategy for the experimental group and teaching for the control group using the regular method.

E- Post application of the study instruments.

G- Analyzing the results and statistical treatments by comparing the two applications, the pre and post.

1.5. Significance of the study

The results of this study were hopefully expected to be useful to:

1- EFL students:
 It enabled students to enhance oral communication skills and reducing their speaking anxiety.

2- EFL teachers:
A- Reforming school teachers' concepts and prospective while teaching as they rejected traditional methods of teaching.

B- It provided teachers with practical procedures in using an Augmented Reality to enhance oral communications skills.

3- Researchers:

It was a starting point for them to conduct more research.

4- Curriculum designers:

those activities helped them integrate the augmented reality strategy on designing EFL Textbooks.

1.6. Aim of the study

The study aimed at utilizing an augmented reality based strategy to develop oral communication skills of secondary school students.

1.7. Design of the study

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design. It followed the pre/posttest and control and experimental group design. So, two classes were chosen to represent the two groups. Furthermore, the experimental group was taught New English For secondary schools students using the Proposed Strategy based on Augmented Reality Applications to Develop 1st year Secondary School Students' EFL Oral Communication Skills. On the other hand, the control group was taught the same course in the regular way.

Pretest → **Treatment** → **Posttest**

Experimental Group
Figure (1)
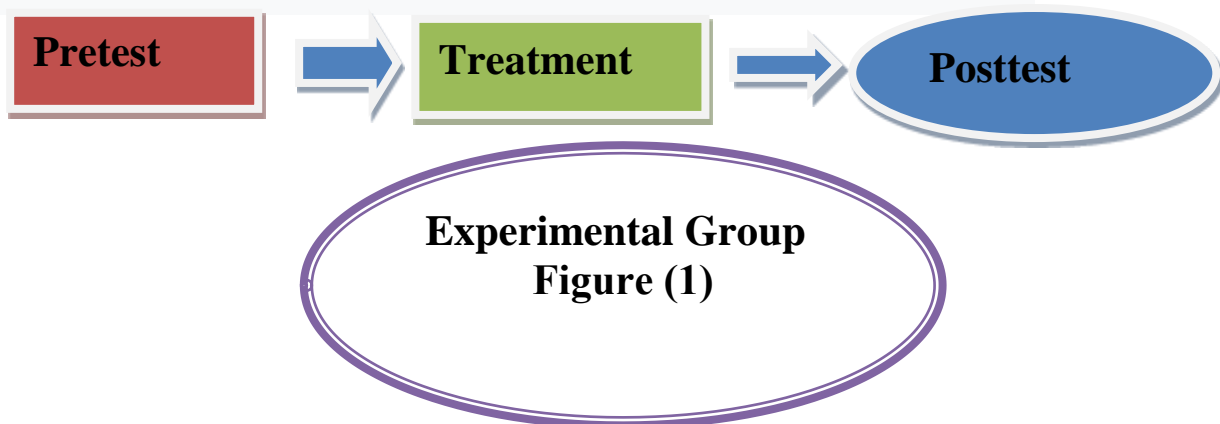
1.7.1.Participants and Settings of the Study

The study participants included 60 first-year governmental secondary stage students. They were chosen from one of Sharkia secondary governmental schools namely Zagazig secondary school for girls in Zagazig city during the school year 2023/2024. The experimental group included 30 students and the control one included 30 students. An Oral Communication test and was given to the two groups before and after administering the strategy proposed.

1.8.   Instruments of the study

To implement the strategy, the researcher designed the following instruments:

1- An oral skills checklist of the main and sub-oral skills, judging it by EFL jury members and modifying it according to their opinions.
2- A pre-post EFL oral skills test, to measure the students' proficiency of EFL oral skills.
3- Rubric.
4- Oral communication activities.

1.8.1.Description of the Instruments

To design the oral communication questionnaire the researcher reviewed the student's book, teacher's book, the workbook, and related literature.

1.8.2.The EFL Oral Communication Questionnaire:

Aim:

The oral communication questionnaire was designed to identify and survey the most important EFL oral communication skills necessary for first-year governmental secondary school students.

1.8.3. The Oral communication Test

- *Test purpose*

The EFL oral communication test was used as pre-posttest for measuring EFL first-year secondary school students' oral communication skills. It was also used as a post-test to explore the effectiveness of the Proposed Strategy based on Augmented Reality Applications to Develop Secondary School Students' EFL Oral Communication Skills.

- *Administration of the Test*

The test was pre-administered to the control and the experimental groups in October 2023. It was post-administered at the end of December 2023. Both conditions were the same in terms of place and time. During the test administration, the researcher clarified the content of the test and its directions. The researcher ensured that all the participants had understood the required points.

- *Scoring the Test*

The total score of the test was twenty-five points. Scoring the EFL oral communication skills test was run according to a rubric designed by the researcher for evaluating the participants' mastery of the EFL oral communication skills on the pre-post oral communication skills test.

- *Timeframe of the Test*

- The researcher determined the test time by conducting a pilot study on (30) students. Those students were not from the participants of the study. The researcher used a stopwatch to determine the time consumed by each student to answer the test. The researcher calculate the appropriate test time using the following formula:

- Test time =   Total of time taken by each student_____

    - Number of students

- Test time= $\dfrac{1350 \text{ min}}{30}$ = 45 minutes

Test Validity

The test was validated by the jury members (Appendix A). Based on the jury members' remarks, some items were modified or deleted. In additions some new items were added.

Test Reliability

The test reliability was measured by administering the test to 30 students *(other than the participants and control group)*. The researcher was used Cronbach Alpha to calculate test reliability.

Table (3): Test reliability using Cronbach Alpha

Test Dimensions	No. Items	Cronbach Alpha
Communicative competence	6	0.775
Sociolinguistic competence		
Non-verbal competence		

It is clear from the above table that the total test reliability equals (0.775). This value is significant at 0.01 level. The test

approved to be reliable and it can be administered and used in the present study.

Establishing groups homogeneity:

To establish homogeneity, the test was administered before the experimental treatment to make sure that the students of the two groups (the experimental and control group) were equivalent in their oral communication skills.

Table (4): T-test results of the experimental and control groups on the oral communication test

Test Dimensions	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-test for Equality of Means		
					t	df	Sig.
Communicative competence	Control	30	3.200	1.921	-0.726	58	0.471 not sig.
	Experimental	30	3.567	1.995			
Non-verbal competence	Control	30	1.967	1.383	-0.313	58	0.755 not sig.
	Experimental	30	2.100	1.788			

Linguistic competence	Control	30	2.500	1.250	-0.489	58	0.627 not sig.
	Experimental	30	2.700	1.764			
Total	Control	30	7.667	2.813	-0.797	58	0.429 not sig.
	Experimental	30	8.367	3.746			

Table (4) indicates that *t*-values are not statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This means that there are not statistically differences between the mean scores of both experimental and control groups in oral communication skills as well as its sub-skills before conducting the experiment. Therefore, any differences on post administration of the communicative competence test will be attributed to the experimental treatment.
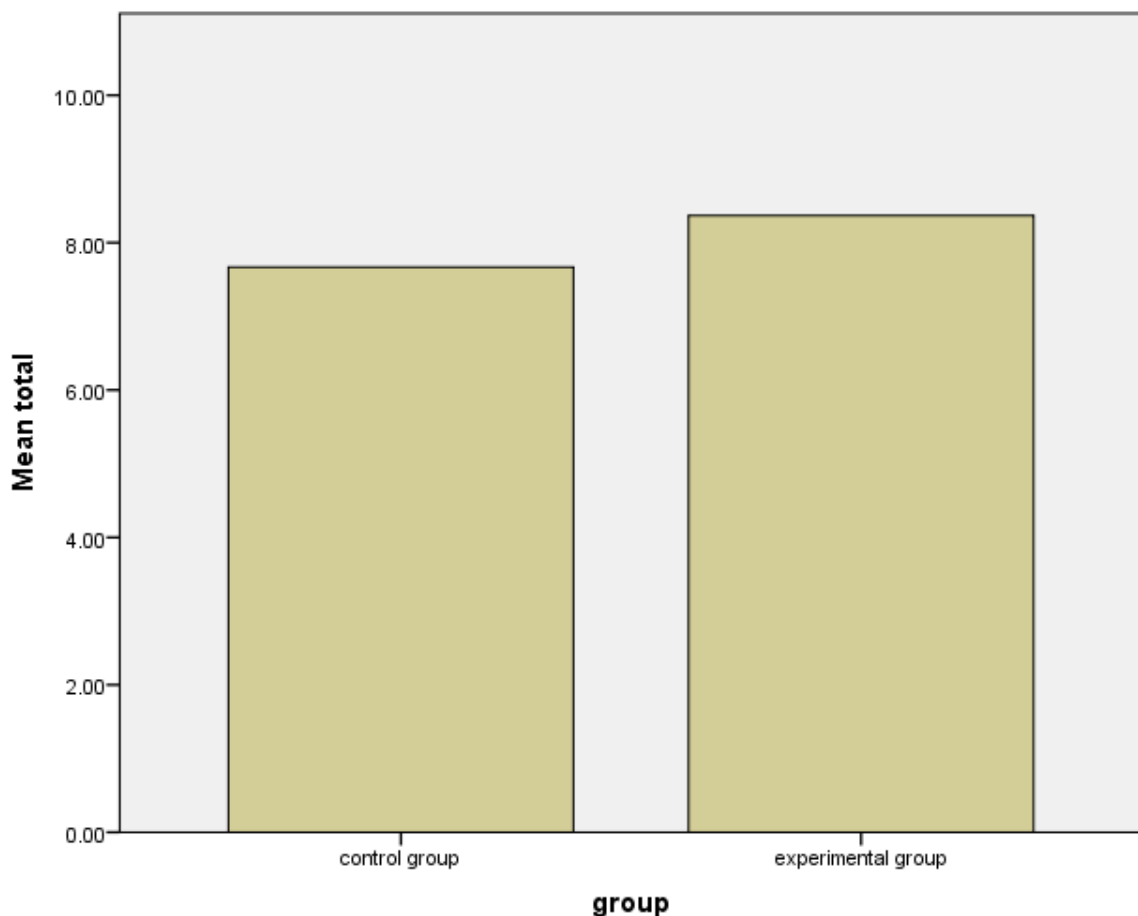
Figure (2): the differences between the experimental and control groups on the pre application of the oral communication test total.

It is clear from the previous graph that there are not any significant differences between the experimental and control groups on the pre application of the oral communication test total. Both groups are nearly equal.

1.9. Theoretical Background

1.9.1. The nature of Oral Communication skills

The process of conveying information from one person to another using a particular language, both verbally and nonverbally, is known as oral communication (OC) (Shehata, 2019).In this way, OC includes paralinguistic elements like intonation, stress, and voice tone in addition to verbal communication. To effectively communicate, non-linguistic signals including gestures, body language, eye contact, and facial expressions are also employed. Students may lose interest in learning English language and become demotivated if they are unable to communicate effectively.

Improving the right communication skills is crucial for supporting one's goals in practically every aspect of life, including job. Thus, OC becomes crucial for assisting individuals in discovering who they are, defining their relationship to their surroundings, comprehending the viewpoints of others, selecting important vocabulary for a conversation topic, employing crucial phrases in various dialogues, paraphrasing spoken language, and answering various kinds of questions (Abdikarimova et al., 2021).

Garg (2018) defines OC as the efficient communication of concepts or specific information through spoken and visual aids. In this way, OC is a social process that can convey a variety of meanings and messages rather than just being a means of speech exchange. Man's need for OC comes from his or her drive to meaningfully express themselves, receive feedback from others, build connections, and make relationships.

1.9.2. Importance of EFL oral communication skills

Several research have revealed the low level of students oral English communication skills across various educational stages (Abd El-kader, 2018; Abd El-Khalek, 2018).

Numerous investigations have been carried out to improve EFL students' oral communication abilities. For instance, Abd El-Khalek (2018) used a program based on compensation strategies to overcome young learners' oral communication difficulties. Abd El-kader (2018) used a few kinesthetic activities to enhance the oral performance of EFL

students. Additionally, Iamsaard and Kerdpol (2015) used dramatic activities for improving English communicative skills of eleventh graders.

The integration of the other linguistic components indicates the importance of oral communication. Stated differently, OC assists students in improving their reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary by having them practice in real-world, straightforward tasks. Students can, for instance, communicate their ideas, tell tales, make wishes, ask for assistance, offer their opinions, discuss shared interests, apply prior information, ask questions, offer feedback, and display the various purposes of language (Aboulhadeed, 2021).

Even with the growing significance of their views and thoughts in certain EFL programs. For instance, many EFL university students do not have enough opportunities to express their opinions both inside and outside of the classroom. They are also unable to listen to someone speak English for an extended period of time. Thus, in order to succeed in job interviews, enhance business, gain confidence, secure better employment chances, present information, run meetings, and engage in lively debates, EFL university students still need to hone their OCSs (Srinivas, 2019).

1.9.3. Characteristics of EFL oral communication:

Dagmara (2012) determined the characteristics of oral communication as follows:

a. **Flexibility**: OC enables speakers to affect listeners by their tone, body language, introjections, and expressions. Furthermore, depending on the circumstance, speakers' statements are easily modified or reinforced.

b. **Immediate feedback**: Quick feedback is given by OC to both speakers and listeners, giving them the chance to clarify any unclear points or ask questions. In addition, feedback can be communicated nonverbally as well as verbally by asking questions, seeking clarification, keeping eye contact, smiling, being silent, and offering minimal verbal encouragement in

order to enhance comprehension and prevent miscommunication.

c. **Dependence on Non-Verbal Tools**: Observing others' movements, eye contact, facial expressions, and body language is important while communicating nonverbally. It is true that for a speaker to be effective, grab people' attention, and engage them in conversation, their body language must reflect what they are saying.

d. **Less Time:** The time spent composing messages and sending them via mail or email is reduced with OC.

e. **Opportunity for Correction:** No matter how proficient a speaker is, mistakes are inevitable when speaking to others orally. But in a matter of seconds, OC makes it possible for the participants to edit their messages.

It is important to note that OC aims at getting one's message across to others openly and unambiguously which requires effort from both the sender of the message and the receiver.

1.9.4. Communicative Competence in EFL

The first model of communicative competence was introduced by Canale and Swain (1981), who separated it into three main categories: sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and grammatical competence. Lastly, a fourth component—discourse competence—was added to Canale and Swain's (1984) revised version.

According to Hymes (1972), the phrase "communicative competence" refers to both the ability to manage language form and the understanding of how language is used in various situations. Accordingly, learners cannot be effectively engaged in real-life communications by simply learning the target language knowledge; they also need to develop the target pragmatic competence, express ideas clearly, distinguish when it is appropriate to communicate, and select suitable vocabulary in various sociocultural contexts (Chen, 2010).

According to Puspa et al. (2020), verbal and nonverbal communication were included in the definition of communicative competence. Additionally, identifying themselves, making connections with others, navigating the environment to engage with others in the globalized world of today, and creating interpersonal relationships in social contexts are the primary goals of communicative competence (Turko et al., 2021).

However, as proved by Mohsen (2008), communicative competence is the capacity of learners to effectively communicate in the target language, understand what others are saying, and achieve successful interactions in a variety of real-life contexts. Accordingly, the communication of EFL students will be competent if cultural knowledge, communicative context, and language use combine to produce expressively smooth construction (Mayo & Barrioluengo, 2017).

1.10. The nature of augmented reality

As stated by Hidayat, ET. al. (2021), augmented reality is "a form of technology that enhances the real world through computer-generated content where text information files, audio videos, and two- and three-dimensional shapes can be inserted, as well as added." As Ozeren and Top (2023) note as a technique that enables the simultaneous real-time mixing of computer objects and real-world software with digital content.

According to Belda-Medina and Mahri-Gomez (2023), it is a technology that combines digital elements (text, image, audio, video, and 3D models) with real-world items. Additionally, it offers users a perfect interface that combines the virtual and physical worlds, allowing them to interact with virtual objects inserted into sceneries of the natural world.

Augmented reality (AR) is not a fresh idea. Studies using AR technology in educational environments have shown numerous benefits for teaching and learning (Akcayr & Akcayr, 2017). The fact that AR technology no longer requires the acquisition of expensive gear and equipment is one of the reasons it is so popular. This technique can also be advantageous for computers and mobile devices. One important advantage of implementing AR technology in education is the rise in students' learning achievement (Chang, Hou, Pan, Sung, & Chang, 2015 Ferrer-Torregrosa et al., 2015).

The researcher in this study defines it as an interactive technique that uses wired and wireless devices to add information and virtual digital objects in three-dimensional forms in the real world. This allows the student to interact with the content by stimulating his senses and improving his oral communication skills.

1.10.1. The advantages of augmented reality

There are numerous benefits to using augmented reality technology in the classroom and in education. According to Anderson & Liarokapis (2010, p. 2), the advantages of augmented reality technology are those:

1. Give the teacher information that is easy to understand and brief.

2. The instructor found it straightforward to input his data and information and convey it.

3. Permits communication between the instructor and the student. It

can be expanded with ease.

4. Explicit procedures between instructor and student.

5. Encourages students to find information on their own.

6. Offers an enjoyable environment for learning for students of various ages and learning types.

7. It supports academic subject instruction.

1.11. Testing the Hypotheses (the results)

1.11.1. Hypothesis One

"There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups on the post application of the oral communication test as a whole and its sub-dimensions"

To investigate the effect of implementing augmented reality applications on the experimental participants' performance in oral communication skills and to compare their post level of skill performance developed by the proposed learning strategy, A t-test for independent sample was used to determine any statistical differences between the experimental and control group participants' mean scores on the post test results. These results are presented in table (7)

Table (7): T-test results of the experimental and control groups on the post oral communication test

Test Dimensions	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-test for Equality of Means		
					t	df	Sig.
Communicative competence	Control	30	4.133	1.041	-16.535	58	0.01
	Experimental	30	8.333	0.922			sig.
Non-verbal competence	Control	30	3.667	1.268	-15.655	58	0.01
	Experimental	30	8.233	0.971			sig.
Linguistic competence	Control	30	3.967	0.718	-19.567	58	0.01 sig.
	Experimental	30	8.000	0.870			
Total	Control	30	11.767	1.633	-31.168	58	0.01
	Experimental	30	24.566	1.546			sig.

It's clear from table (7) that there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control group at (0.01) level in favor of experimental group. This means that the augmented reality applications were effective in enhancing students' communicative competence. Thus, the first hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis *"There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups for the post application of the oral communication test as a whole and its sub-dimensions"* was accepted. The researcher attributes these differences to the proposed strategy.
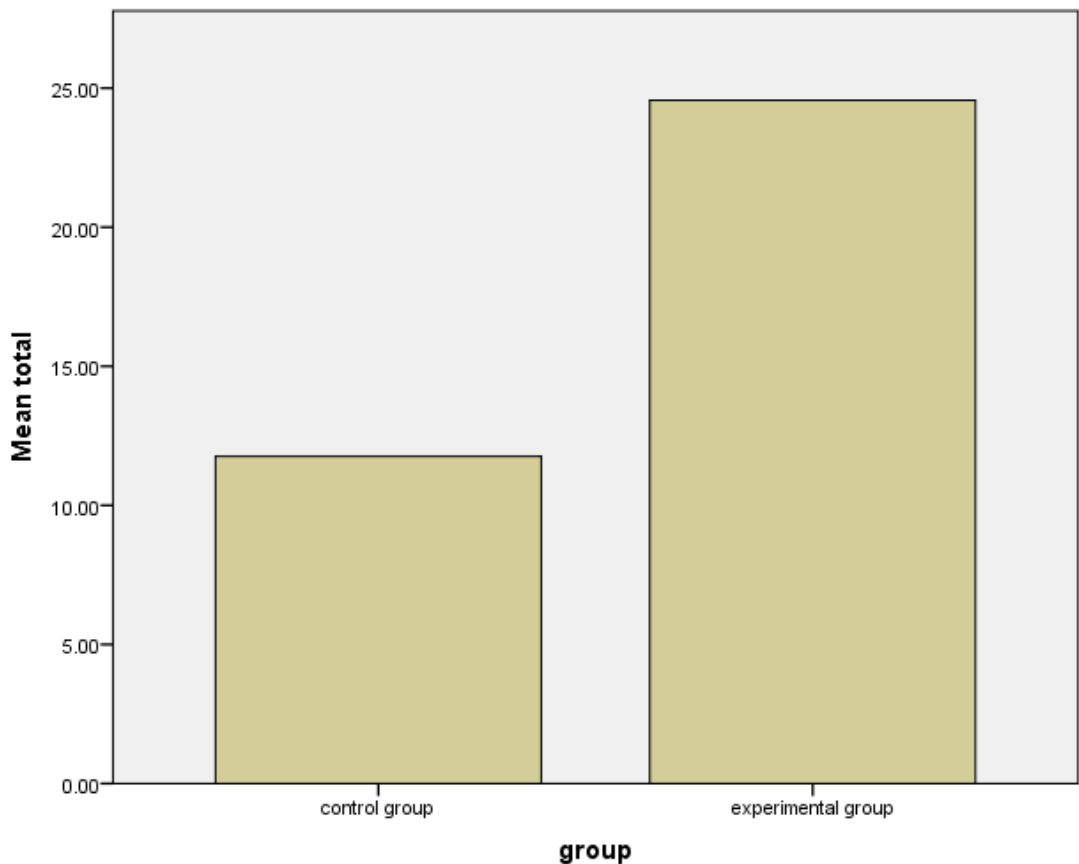
Figure (4): the differences between the experimental and control groups on the post application of the oral communication test as a whole.

It is clear from the previous figure that experimental outperformed the control group on the post application of the oral communication test total. It can be included that the augmented reality is effective in enhancing students' communication skills as

AR enhances the study materials and makes them interesting and attractive.
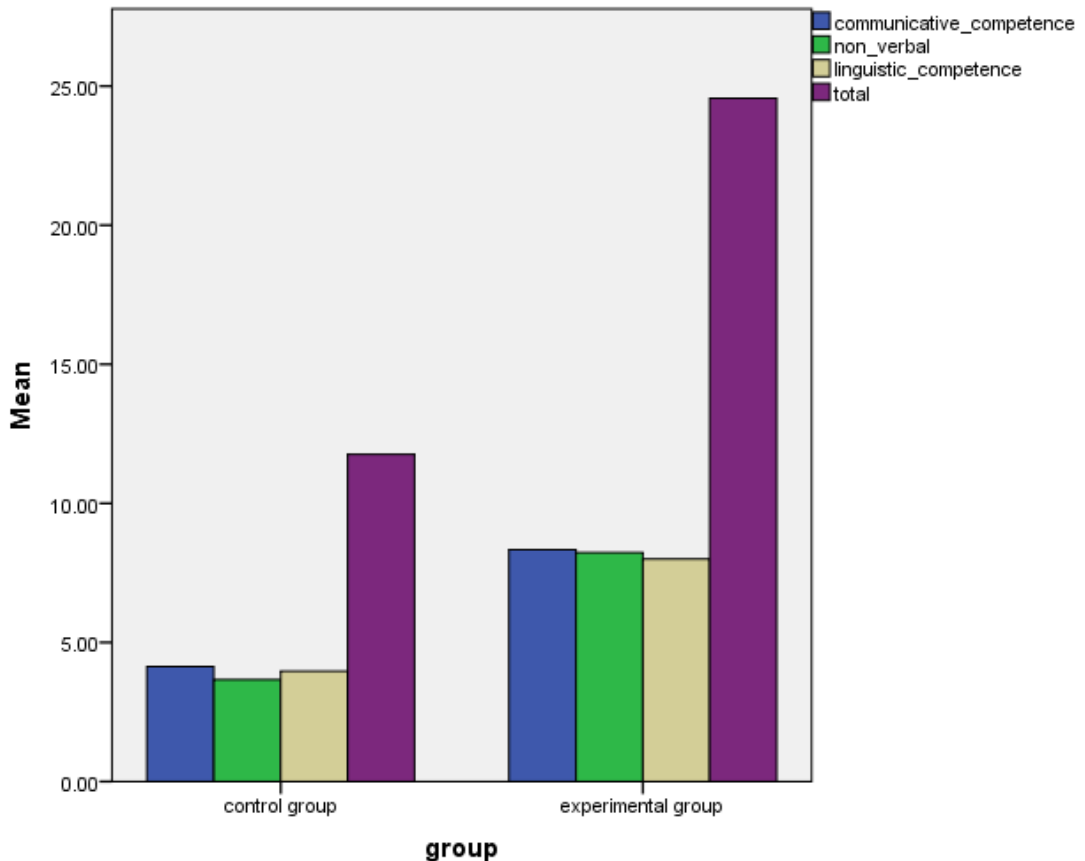

Figure (5): the differences between the experimental and control groups on the post application of the oral communication test as a whole.

It is clear from the previous figure that experimental outperformed the control group on the post application of the oral

communication test total and sub skills. It can be included that the augmented reality is effective in enhancing students' communication skills.

1.11.2. Hypothesis Two

"There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students in the pre and post applications of the oral communication test as a whole and its sub-dimensions"

To investigate the effect of implementing augmented reality applications on the experimental participants' performance in oral communication skills and to compare their post level of skill performance developed by the proposed learning strategy, A t-test for independent sample was used to determine any statistical differences between the experimental and control group participants' mean scores on the post administration of the oral communication skills test results. These results are presented in table (9)

Table (9) t-test results of the experimental group on the oral communication test

Test Dimensions	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.	☐☐	Effect size
Communicative competence	pre	30	3.567	1.99	-14.104	29	0.01	0.872	High
	post	30	8.333	0.922						
Non-verbal competence	pre	30	2.100	1.788	-5.268	29	0.01	0.489	Medium
	post	30	8.233	0.971						
Linguistic competence	pre	30	2.700	1.764	-4.613	29	0.01	0.423	Low
	post	30	8.000	0.871						
Total	pre	30	8.367	3.746	-14.654	29	0.01	0.881	High
	post	30	24.567	1.546						

Table (9) indicates that there is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean scores of the

experimental group the pre and the post administration of the oral communication test regarding each sub-skill of and regarding the oral communication skills as a whole

In communicative competence, the value of Eta square was (0.872) which indicates a high effect size and it also indicates that 87.2 % of the variance in students' communicative competence can be attributed to the experimental treatment.

In non-verbal competence, the value of Eta square was (0.489) which indicates a medium effect size and it also indicates that 48.9 % of the variance in students' non-verbal competence can be attributed to the experimental treatment.

In linguistic competence, the value of Eta square was (0.423) which indicates a low effect size and it also indicates that 42.3 % of the variance in students' linguistic competence can be attributed to the experimental treatment.

In total, the value of Eta square was (0.881) which indicates a High effect size and it also indicates that 88.1 % of the variance in students' oral communication skills which can be attributed to the experimental treatment. Thus, the third hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis *"There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students in the pre and post applications of the oral communication test as a whole and its sub-dimensions"* will be accepted. The researcher attributes these differences to the proposed strategy.
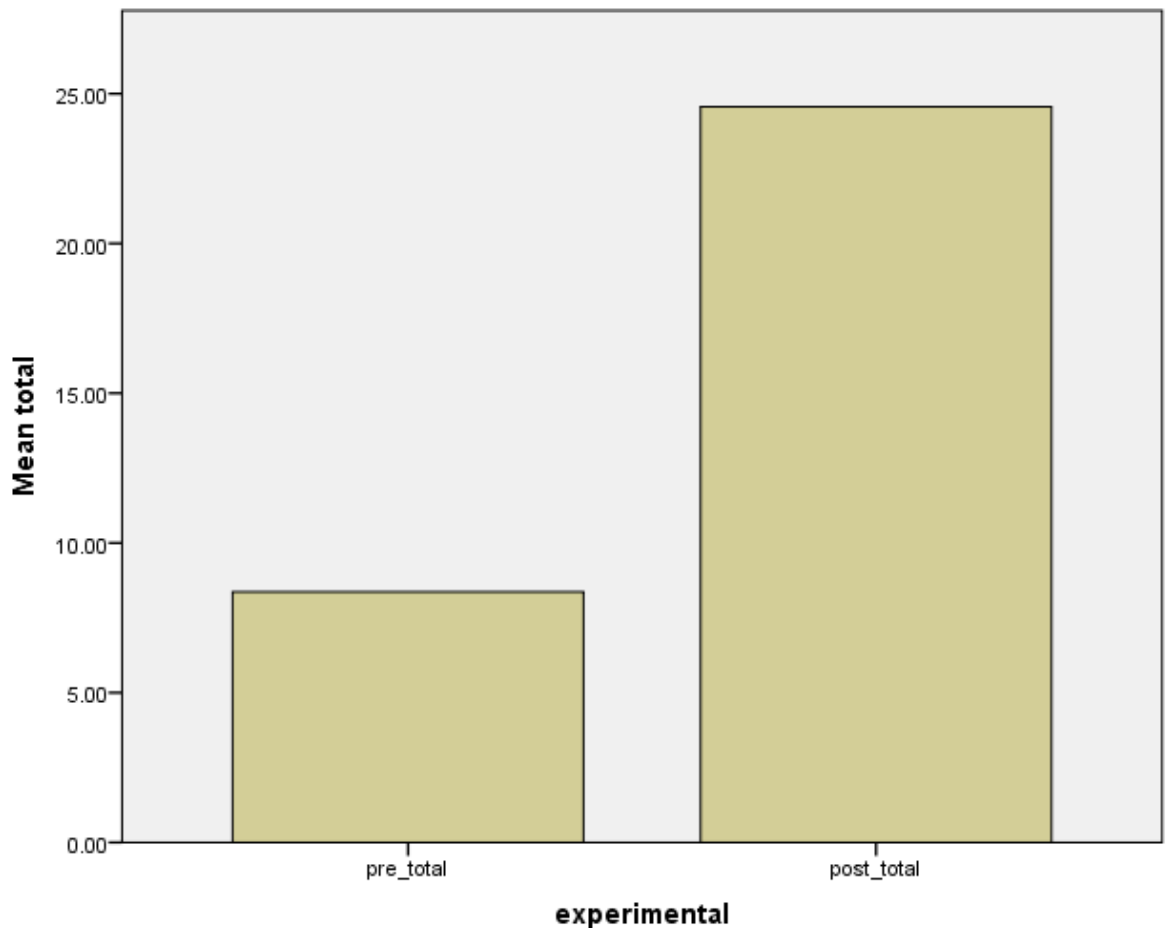
Figure (8): the differences between the experimental and control groups on the post application of the oral communication skills test total.

It is clear from the previous figure that experimental outperformed the control group on the post application of the communication skills test total. It can be included that the augmented reality is effective in enhancing students' communication skills.

1.12. Discussion of the results

Results show that, in spite of the low performance of the participants on the pre test, the experimental participants' progress in the post test results could be attributed to the fact that they practiced variety of activities of EFL oral communication skills.

Hence, the significant difference, shown on the post administration, is due to exposing this group to the augmented reality applications. Providing the experimental participants with a variety of activities through this strategy, changing the method of teaching, dividing the roles among the experimental participants to improve their EFL oral communication skills gave them to interact with each other and to react to the material presented to them. Through this interaction they created cooperative environment in which less emphasis was placed on transmitting information from the teacher and more on the experimental participants. So, the augmented reality applications adopted throughout the study and the teaching strategy has been based on the augmented reality applications helped the participants through several innovative steps.

During the experimentation, it was noticed that the experimental participants had a positive attitude towards augmented reality applications. They felt more confident and believed they were capable of achieving an academic task.

The results of the present study are compatible with the results of the study conducted by Awad (2016); Salem (2020); Muhammad (2020).

1.13. Conclusion:

Based on the study findings, discussion, and interpretation, it is possible to include that:

- Regarding EFL oral communication skills:

1. The use of the augmented reality applications has been proved to be effective in improving EFL first year secondary school students' EFL oral communication skills and reducing their communication anxiety.

2. Applying the augmented reality activities has improved the understanding of conversations and dialogues and increased the experimental participants' creativity in composing them.

3. Teaching can he learner-centered, with the teacher acting as a facilitator and supporter while engaging in the augmented reality applications.

4. Using the augmented reality applications has encouraged collaborative learning and allowed the experimental participants to interact with each other.

5. Appreciating efforts of the experimental participants and giving positive feedback encouraged them to orally perform freely without inhibition and hesitation.

6. Using the augmented reality applications helped the experimental participants overcome some of their oral performance difficulties and weaknesses.

7. The experimental participants were able to communicate freely, ask Questions, express feelings and opinions, and take control of the communication process without fear.

8. During the sessions of implementing the communicative activities, the experimental participants were active to communicate orally in English.

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