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**Effects of a Program of Online Cooperative
Activities on EFL Preparatory School Students'
Fluency in Speaking Skill**

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Abstract

Numerous EFL learners encounter diverse difficulties in speaking. Hence, this study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of an online cooperative activities (online debate and online think-pair-share) in enhancing third year preparatory school students speaking fluency. The researcher selected a one experimental group with a pre/post research design. The participants consisted of 30 male students. The current study followed the quasi-experimental design. The treatment lasted for eleven online sessions distributed on the course of three months. The experimental group benefited from the online treatment. And to investigate its effectiveness, a pre/post speaking tests were administered. In order to analyze the data, t-test was used to compare the mean scores of the experimental group's pre and post tests of fluency speaking skill(s). Moreover, the researcher utilized qualitative techniques in the current study i.e. reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, to have the opportunity to give more comprehensive analyses to the results of the study. Results showed that cooperative online activities in EFL speaking classes had significant effects on students' overall speaking fluency and its sub-skills; mechanical skills (speed and pauses), appropriate language use skill and judgment skills (create and develop thoughts).

Key Words: cooperative learning, online, debate, think-pair-share.



Introduction

The researcher focused in this research on the speaking skill for its importance in communication. The importance of improving English speaking skills in EFL classrooms cannot be overstated. as in today's globalized world, English is the language of international business, education, culture and many other fields. As a result, there are many benefits to improving English speaking skills in EFL classrooms which include: improved access to education, increased opportunities for employment, enhanced cultural understanding and increased confidence.

One of the most important teaching/learning strategies is the usage of cooperative learning which was implemented; and the current research based on it. It is recognized as the instructional use of groups through which students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning (Johnson et al. 1994) which emphasizes on learning that occurs as an effect of community (Johnson and Johnson 1999). Noteworthy, Johnson and Johnson (2009) stated the five main items of cooperative learning which are: positive interdependence, face to face promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and social skills, and group processing. And the importance of cooperative learning is conveyed in many researches and studies (Al-Yaseen, 2014 - Celik et al. 2012 – Tran et al. 2019 – Sadiq, 2017). I can mention the research of Sadiq (2017) as an example when she conveyed: cooperative learning connects learners together to find a shared objective. Furthermore, the study of Tran et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of cooperative learning because it achieves the goals of improving time management



and study habits, increasing motivation, enhancing problem-solving skills and improving critical thinking skills. And overall, the benefits can be summarized, as it was reported and agreed on mostly by all the researchers, to be an effective way to improve student achievement, motivation, and social skills. It can also help to reduce student conflict and create a more positive classroom atmosphere.

It is critical to add to the field of education based on the spirit of the age if it leads to enhancing and improving learning. Here comes the importance of using technology as it is playing an increasingly important role in our lives, and it is essential that professionals, educators, and learners reflect on their basic beliefs about education and training in order to use technology to its fullest potential. Kumar (2018) asserted that technological devices can help learners and teachers in a variety of ways, and it is important to use these devices in a way that maximizes their benefits.

E-learning can be defined as a type of learning that takes place online and uses a variety of multimedia technologies. It can be accessed offline or online, and is supported by electronic hardware and software. E-learning is often used in formal educational settings, such as schools and other instructional institutions, but it can also be used for informal learning, such as learning a new skill or hobby.

And as North Carolina Education Cabinet and Office of the Governor (2017) announced *"There are many different terms used to describe learning that is delivered online, but they all essentially mean the same thing. E-learning is a broad term that encompasses all forms of learning that are delivered electronically, including distance education,*



computerized electronic learning, online learning, and internet learning."

E-learning can be delivered in a variety of formats, including text, audio, video, and interactive simulations. It can be synchronous, meaning that students and instructors interact in real time, or asynchronous, meaning that students can access the learning materials at their own pace. E-learning has had an interesting impact on the learning environment. Although it represents tremendous potential in the way it could revolutionize learning (Thorne, 2003).

Speaking is the ability to express oneself confidently and fluently that truly unlocks the power of language. In today's interconnected world, the ability to communicate effectively in English is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. It opens doors to academic and professional opportunities, expands horizons, and empowers individuals to share their unique voices on a global stage.

There are several researches which confirmed many of speaking problems among preparatory school students, for example: noun-verb confusion, incomplete uttered sentences, incorrect pronoun usage, pronunciation of words etc. And out of the researcher's experience in teaching in preparatory schools, he noticed the existence of such problems among students and he conducted a pilot study to recognize the effects and the main reasons of these problems.

The pilot study included a speaking test for the students. This test aimed to put the researcher's hand on the main reasons of the speaking problems. By analyzing it he found some of these problems such as: fluency, mechanical skills (pauses and speed), inappropriate language use and judgment skills (create and develop thoughts).



In an attempt to help solve such speaking problems and based on the advantages of cooperative learning reported in several studies around the world, the researcher thought of designing a program following the guidelines of one of the famous instructional design models like that of Smith (2004), Dick and Carey (1978, 2013) or Kemp (2019) in which some cooperative learning strategies; namely online Think-Pair-Share and online debate are integrated as an attempt to tackle and develop the target students' EFL speaking skill(s). Moreover, the researcher relied on utilizing online learning for more flexibility and making the utmost use of the available resources online along with the instructional design model of Dick and Carey.

This research, however, tackles on-line cooperative learning strategies within the framework of a systematically designed program, and thus results will be attributed to a combination of components: cooperative strategies, online work and systematic design of the program. This is in fact what distinguishes this research from other attempts in the area of cooperative learning.

Study Questions

The current study aims to tackle students' difficulties by seeking answers to the following questions:

- What is the effect of the proposed program of online cooperative activities on the speaking fluency of the 3rd preparatory school students?



Sub-questions:

- a- What is the effect of the proposed program of online cooperative activities on the mechanical skills (pauses and speed) of the 3rd preparatory school students?
- b- What is the effect of the proposed program of online cooperative activities on the appropriate language use of the 3rd preparatory school students?
- c- What is the effect of the proposed program of online cooperative activities on the judgment skills (create and develop thoughts) of the 3rd preparatory school students?

Hypotheses of the Study

In order to handle the above questions, the following hypotheses will be examined:

- There is a significant difference at level 0.05 in the mean scores of the experimental group students on the speaking fluency between the pre and posttests in favour of the posttest.

Sub-hypotheses:

- a- There is a significant difference at level 0.05 in the mean scores of the experimental group students on the mechanical skills (pauses and speed) of the 3rd preparatory school students between the pre and post tests in favour of the posttest.
- b- There is a significant difference at level 0.05 in the mean scores of the experimental group students on the appropriate language use of the 3rd preparatory school students between the pre and post tests in favour of the posttest.



- c- There is a significant difference at level 0.05 in the mean scores of the experimental group students on the judgment skills (create and develop of thoughts) of the 3rd preparatory school students between the pre and post tests in favour of the posttest.

Study Delimitations

There is a number of delimitations related to the current research, as follows:

- 1- This research was conducted on a group of 30 EFL 3rd Prep. school students in Al-Geel Al-Muslim school for boys, chosen randomly those who can use the internet effectively during the second term of the scholastic year 2021-2022.
- 2- It focused only on two strategies of cooperative learning: think-pair-share and debate.
- 3- Among the several speaking subskills, this research handled only with the following subskills:
 - a- mechanical skills (pauses, speed)
 - b- language use
 - c- judgment skills (create and develop thoughts)

Literature Review

In this part, the researcher is discussing the literature review and the nature of the current study. The researcher tackled the issues of speaking, cooperative learning, online learning, debate and think-pair-share strategies; as the implemented cooperative learning strategies.

Cooperative learning:

Educators can form learning goals in a way that elevate and fortify cooperation, competitiveness, and individuality. Different classes have



their distinctive instructional activities aimed at attaining the goals and carried out within a structured-objectives framework. A learning objective is a required futuristic condition that illustrates command of the subject under study. Structured goal is defined by how students interact with the teacher and each other amid the class. Johnson and Johnson (1999) found during a typical classroom, all students are intended to compete, cooperate with others, and work individually for fun. It is the teacher's role to take the suitable decision about a structured goal to be fulfilled in the lessons.

Cooperation means working together to attain prevailing goals. In cooperative environments, students attempt to attain results that is beneficial not only to themselves but also all group members. Johnson & Johnson (1993) defines cooperative learning as the pedagogical use of small groups so that students work together to enhance their own and reciprocal learning. While Jacobs et al. (2002) defines it as requirements and techniques that assist students work together more skillfully.

Importance of cooperative learning:

"Teamwork makes the dream work, but a vision becomes a nightmare when the leader has a big dream and a bad team". Maxwell, J. (2002)

Teamwork and cooperative learning are both important skills that can be learned in the classroom. Teamwork is the ability to work together with others to achieve a common goal. Cooperative learning is a teaching method that uses small groups to help students learn. So that, there are many similarities between teamwork and cooperative learning. Both require students to communicate effectively, share ideas,



and work together to solve problems. In both cases, students must be willing to compromise and put the needs of the group ahead of their own (Johnson and Johnson, 2009).

Moreover, cooperative learning can help students develop teamwork skills in a number of ways. First, it provides students with the opportunity to practice working with others in a supportive environment. Second, it teaches students how to share ideas and solve problems collaboratively. Third, it helps students develop a sense of responsibility for the group's success.

Theory underpinning cooperative learning:

"Theory without practice leads to an empty idealism, and action without philosophical reflection leads to mindless activism." (Elias & Merriam, 2005)

Actually, it's frequently hard to follow ratify only one learning theory in the instructional field. In this research, the researcher is basing on the constructivism theory as the stem of the cooperative learning. Constructivism is a theory of learning that states that learners construct their own knowledge through previous experiences and interactions with the world around them (Jonassen, 2013). This means that learners actively participate in their own learning, rather than passively receiving information from a teacher or textbook.

Vygotsky's social constructivism theory of learning (2017) emphasizes the importance of social interaction and collaboration in the learning process. He believed that learners construct their own knowledge through interaction with others, such as teachers, peers, and family members. This interaction allows learners to share ideas, receive



feedback, and build on each other's knowledge. Vygotsky's approach can be summarized as “cooperative” and “cultural.” His studies affirmed that the development of individuals, including their ideas, languages, and cognitive processes, is a consequence of culture. These abilities are evolved through social interactions with others; accordingly, they illustrate the shared knowledge of a presented culture.

Online learning

Educators and researchers have exerted efforts to define online learning or e-learning. According to Houston University (2023), it is a form of education that allows students to learn from instructors who are not physically present. Students and instructors can interact with each other either synchronously or asynchronously. Maddison et al., in the Distributed Learning (2017), defined it as Online learning is a method of education where students learn through electronic media, such as the internet, computers, and mobile devices. The American Council on Education (2006) defines online learning as instruction delivered to learners at a distance via electronic media. These definitions all emphasize the use of electronic media to deliver instruction and the separation of students and instructors in time and space. However, there is no single, universally accepted definition of online learning. Moreover, Shahin (2021) studied the importance of online learning as a mandatory option in the time of emergencies and crises. Hence, a great example was obvious in the worldwide crisis of Covid-19 with its shedding causes and repercussion. Here comes the inevitability of online learning as the most acceptable solution to this crisis.

Benefits of online learning:



On the benefits of employing online classes, there are many credited and admitted benefits or advantages to be discussed. It meets the varying needs of diverse students. Students in inner city and rural schools expand their learning opportunities by providing access to classes that are not offered in a traditional classroom setting (Watson & Johnson, 2010). Online learning can be a great option for students to provide them with a more flexible and accessible learning environment due to risks or health reasons. In online learning, non-native speakers can take their time to think about what they want to say, plan their responses, and imitate the academic language used by other students (Sfard & Kieran, 2001). This can give them a valuable opportunity to practice their English skills and contribute meaningfully to the discussion (Graham & Hodgson, 2008).

Theory underpinning online learning:

There are numerous approaches of thought on learning, and none are used particularly for the design of online learning. Hence, there is no sole learning theory to follow, we can use a combination of theories to develop e-learning materials. According to Siemens (2004), we now need a theory of the digital era to help the improvement of educational materials for the connected world. Teachers need to be able to utilize established learning theories to the digital age, using the cornerstones of connectivism to guide the development of effective teaching materials. Instructional strategies should be chosen neatly to motivate students, enable deep processing, whole-person empowerment, accommodate individual differences, increase meaningful learning, encourage



interaction, provide related-to-content feedback, facilitate the contextual learning, and provide support during the learning process.

constructivism and connectivism

constructivism and connectivism can be complementary learning theories. Constructivism can be used to create a learning environment where learners are active participants in the learning process, and where they are able to share ideas and collaborate with each other. Furthermore, Connectivism can be used to connect learners with each other and with resources, and to help learners apply what they are learning to real-world problems. By using constructivism and connectivism together, practitioners can create a more effective and engaging learning environment for their students.

Think-Pair-Share

According to Lyman (1987), think-pair-share (TPS) is a cooperative learning strategy in which the teacher poses a question and students think about the answer individually for a short period of time, then discuss the answer with a partner for a few minutes more. Finally, the teacher calls on students to share their responses with the whole class. He also stated that it is a cooperative discussion strategy to help students work in group. Lyman created this strategy in 1985 to develop students' independent thinking skills to help encourage students to learn individually, actively cooperate in groups, and share their work. He asserted on its importance in developing students' ability to think independently, promote independent learning, teamwork and presentation skills. The previous characteristics can be also considered the benefits of the strategy.



Think-pair-share strategy is a cooperative learning technique that can be used in EFL classrooms to promote student participation and improve oral communication skills. It has three stages to be implemented in order to get the utmost outcome of the benefits of this strategy.

- 1- **Think:** is the first stage is in which the teacher asks, as a lead-in, an open-ended question or prompts students to think about a specific topic. Students have a few minutes to think about the question or topic on their own. The aim at this step was to prepare students by activating their prior knowledge and attracting their attention. Following this step, the question to be asked to the students was orally presented and the students were asked to think of answers. No specific time was specified, which took about ten minutes with the monitoring of the teacher. During this period of time, the students were allowed to use the internet and do small-scale online research about the subject.
- 2- **Pair:** is the second stage as the students are paired up online with a partner and discuss their thoughts and ideas about the question or topic. According to Pressley et al. (1992), this step provided students a chance to find out and gave them a fair opportunity to learn what they know and what they need to know.
- 3- **Share:** is the third stage where the teacher calls on some of the pairs to share their responses online with the whole class.



Raba (2017) expressed that TPS presents enormous potential for improving peer collaboration and communication. It may be utilized to expand student engagement in the learning process. Think-Pair-Share (TPS) has its impact on the development of the students' speaking communication skill, enhancing critical thinking, creating opportunities for students to work independently, and enhancing their self-efficacy, participation, understanding, and satisfaction after an intervention. Because of its impact on teaching and learning, it creates a democratic environment where students learn without fear of teachers and peer criticism as mentioned in (Sharma & Saarsar 2018).

Debate

Debate is a highly recommended strategy for developing discussion skills for persuasion goals besides transferring comprehensive listening and speaking practice. Davidson (1995) wrote that via students' practice they represent recognizable progress in their expressing and defending thoughts skills through debate strategy, furthermore, they easily can spot the defects in each other's arguments (Ali et al. 2012). Moreover, Nisbett (2019) advocated his point of view about debate as a crucial pedagogical method for acquiring learning analytical thinking skills and reflecting on one's thoughts validation.

There are many definitions of debate one of them is of the International Debate Education Association which defines it to be "a way for those who hold opposing views to discuss controversial issues without descending to insult." All definitions of debate assume that a debate is a formal discussion of a controversial issue between two teams, each taking a different point of view and clearly explaining their



arguments to engage the audience and to that end appropriate examples and evidence were used to support their claims. In the EFL classroom, debate can be used as a teaching strategy to help students improve their speaking, listening and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, Najam (2017) described that it allows students to express their opinions. Debates can be used in English classes as a tool for practicing English in real-life situations. According to Fukuda (2005), the main purpose of a debate is to convince the audience that their point of view is correct. Debate speeches allow us to think from different perspectives and enhance public speaking skills.

"Debate is an excellent activity for language learning because it engages students in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways. In addition to providing meaningful listening, speaking and writing practice, debate is also highly effective for developing argumentation skills for persuasive speech and writing." Krieger 2005, p. 25

Advantages of debate:

One of the most influential figures in the development of debate in EFL/ESL classrooms is **David Leuser**. He is a professor of English at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire. He has been teaching debate in EFL/ESL classrooms for over 20 years. In 2003, he published a set of instructions for conducting classroom debates, which have been widely used by teachers around the world. Leuser's instructions provide a step-by-step guide for setting up and running a debate in an EFL/ESL classroom.



Leuser (2003) asserted that utilizing debate in EFL/ESL classrooms supply students with the suitable chance to collaboratively and cooperatively work in group situations. Moreover, the students are able to discover new information and utilize knowledge into action due to the students' discussion and organization of each point of view. The students in a classroom debate situation helps them learn via an amiable competition, discuss controversial topics and enhance skills in the relation to leadership, interpersonal impact, teamwork, group problem solving and oral presentation.

Debate can be valuable too in improving critical thinking skills as it requires students to research a topic, gather evidence, and make arguments. This process helps them to develop critical thinking skills, such as the ability to analyze information, identify bias, and evaluate arguments. Also, it increases oral fluency since it provides students with opportunities to practice speaking English in a formal setting. This can help them to improve their fluency and pronunciation. Another asserted advantage is the raise of cultural awareness for debate can help students to learn about different cultures and perspectives (Kennedy, 2009).

In addition, debaters must master word pronunciation, stress, vocabulary, brainstorming, script writing, logic construction, reasoning, and rebuttal. Therefore, practicing debating in English requires many skills that ultimately lead to learning the English language. In an EFL environment where students do not have enough opportunities to practice English in real-life situations, debate gives them an opportunity to use language as a logical expression of opinion. This is an individual



exercise where students are expected to apply all language skills, as well as conversation, presentation and vocabulary development skills. Ebata (2009) puts it succinctly: When learning a new language for universal communication, students need to express their thoughts. Critical thinking skills are essential for student speaking. The use of debate was a powerful technique for strengthening my students' speaking and critical thinking skills. English teachers and professionals have already proven that debate is a powerful tool in English teaching, which is a powerful motivator for English teachers who are new to debate in their classes.

Method

Participants

Participants in the current study were thirty boy students of the third year Preparatory School students. They were assigned to one experimental group. The students have been studying English for almost nine years. Their ages ranged from 14 to 15 years. Moreover, they have the ability to use the internet effectively.

Design of the Study

This research used a quasi-experimental design of one group pre/posttest, with the participants completing an online pre-speaking test, followed by the target programme and then a post-speaking test. The researcher utilized mixed method approach where both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect and analyse the results of the programme, with statistical analysis conducted and the reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action exercises during the sessions and pre/posttests being audio-recorded online. The qualitative analysis was used to explain and justify the results of the quantitative analysis.



Instruments

1. *Quantitative instruments:*

1.1. *Pre and post speaking tests*

Two parallel speaking tests were prepared by the researcher to evaluate students' speaking performance. Each test form included three reading passages followed by closed questions to assess students' speaking fluency skill(s). The topics of the speaking tests were chosen based on the students' familiarity with the topics and having information about them. One test form was administered as a pre-test and the other as a post-test for both the experimental group in the second term of the school year 2021/2022.

1.2. *Scoring rubric*

A scoring rubric was designed to grade the students' performance. The rubric included three subskills of fluency: mechanical skills (pauses and speed), appropriate language and judgment skills (create and develop thoughts). This rubric was modified under the instructions given by the jury. The terms of the rubric were written to include only one skill each, precise and specific, moreover clearly written.

2. *Quantitative instruments*

2.1. *Reflection-in-action practice:*

This type of worksheet is meant to get the students' reflection on the administered programme during the experiment. The researcher distributed these work sheets with some questions in order to get their feedback and feelings on the previously studied sessions and what they expected from the following sessions. The worksheets included questions to the students to speak about their feelings about the



material of the programme, the previously taught sessions, their expectations about the following sessions, the types of assignments they had done and the difficulties they faced.

2.2. *Reflection-on-action practice:*

The researcher aimed at gathering information about the students' reflection on their learning of the whole programme and their views about the administered program of online cooperative activities and willingness to use them in learning English which can help analyze results of the study. The students were asked to talk about the difficulties they faced during the whole programme, whether they gained confidence to use English in different situations they may be obliged on in order to achieve adequate communication with others, moreover if they feel that they have gained more speaking skills to utilize in the future.

The Treatment

The treatment lasted for eleven online sessions: a pretest session, an orientation session, eight sessions utilizing online cooperative strategies, and a posttest session. It is notable to mention that each session consisted of one hour which didn't include the rest of the interaction among the students with each other to complete the required tasks and assignments. The approximate estimated time of the students' online interaction with each other away from the sessions ranged from forty-five to sixty minutes to fulfill the rest of the required tasks and practices. To prove the effective participation of all the students in the required tasks, the researcher encouraged the students to participate actively by giving them the chance to speak their minds



freely and express their thoughts. Moreover, to confirm interaction among the students with each other online away from the sessions, they were required to record their meets together.

Overview of the program:

The program had the following main characteristics:

- 1- The program had eleven sessions.
- 2- Each session had specific learning outcomes.
- 3- All the activities were based on content that was relevant to the learners' interests.
- 4- Each session covered all the subskills that were taught.
- 5- The Online Think-Pair-Share strategy was used in half of the treatment sessions; i.e. 4 sessions, while the Online Debate was used in the other half of the treatment sessions; i.e. 4 sessions.
- 6- Motivation techniques were employed in each session.
- 7- Each session required the students to speak about a specified topic.
- 8- The students' progress was measured in each session to track their improvement.
- 9- Homework was given based on each taught topic.

Implementation of the program:

- 1- After the program was designed, it was time to apply it and test its effectiveness in improving the subskills and start the treatment.
- 2- A session was held to explain to the students the goals, the requirements, the procedures, the roles of the students and the researcher (as a teacher), the benefits they could gain, the time and duration of the program.



- 3- Pre-testing the students.
- 4- Setting up the online tools that would be used to apply the program as the researcher utilized zoom app to meet the students in every planned session.
- 5- Beginning the experiment with the first planned session and then continuing according to the plan until the end of the program.
- 6- Giving the post-test.
- 7- Finding results and analyzing them both numerically and descriptively.

Results

1- Quantitative results

After administering the treatment program to the students, the researcher analyzed and compared the mean scores of the pre and post tests of the experimental group using paired samples t-test. Table (1) shows the collected data.

Table (1)

Paired Samples t-test of students' speaking pretest and posttest scores

Skill	test	N	M	SD	df	t	P
Speaking	Pre	30	9.00	1.894	29	24.524	0.01
	post	30	26.97	3.079	29		
Fluency	Pre	30	4.00	1.114	29	21.336	0.01
	post	30	10.93	1.230	29		
Mechanical skills (pause and speed)	Pre	30	1.37	.490	29	16.656	0.01
	post	30	3.97	.615	29		
Appropriate language use	Pre	30	1.33	.606	29	13.036	0.01
	Post	30	3.40	.498	29		
Judgment skills (create and develop thoughts)	pre	30	1.30	.596	29	13.145	0.01
	post	30	3.57	.728	29		



As presented in the previous table (Table 1), the results of the paired samples t-test showed that there were statistically significant differences between the pre and post tests mean scores on all speaking subskills (i.e., fluency, mechanical skills, appropriate language use and judgment skills) in favor of the posttest. This shows that the suggested program of online cooperative activities positively affected students' fluency skills.

2- Qualitative results:

2.1. Reflection-in-action:

In this type of qualitative method, the students were asked some questions to answer freely. The researcher took notes of the students' responses in order to ensure that his program abides by the set objectives and goals, furthermore, this will help the researcher in analyzing the results and have more insightful views of the students about the conducted program.

a- Regarding the first question about what the students liked or didn't like about the previous sessions:

By studying the students' responses, the researcher found that the students liked the new method they are using to learn, and it made a difference in their speaking proficiency. While they didn't like some technical problems facing them like the instability of the internet connection.

b- Regarding the second question about the students' feeling when dealing with different treatment of the studying material:

By studying the students' responses, the researcher found that the



students felt excited about the new treatment of the material they studied. Moreover, they were engaged during the sessions.

c- Regarding the third question about the sessions' building on what the students learned in previous ones:

By studying the students' responses, the researcher found that they replied as the sessions were well organized and nothing to be studied or asked about unless they had had previous background about it.

d- Regarding the fourth question about whether they liked the type of assignment they had:

By studying the students' responses, the researcher found that the students were actively engaged in the assignment they had and were excited about the interaction with their colleagues in the group and eager to discuss what they have done with the whole class. While some of the students were shy but this was overcome with the encouragement and reinforcement.

e- Regarding the fifth question about the challenges the students faced:

By studying the students' responses, the researcher found that the students had some difficulties - at the beginning of applying each of the two online strategies (online think-pair-share and online debate) but after following the exact instructions they found it easy to carry on what is needed in each session.

2.2. Reflection-on-action:

Reflection-on-action is more trusted than reflection-in-action since it happens as a perspective of the whole the programme after finishing



the whole treatment sessions. This allows the students to formulate a holistic picture of the program to be able to reflect and give their feedback on the journey from the beginning till the end.

a- Regarding the first question about the biggest challenges that the students faced throughout the program:

By reviewing the students' responses, the researchers found that most students had some technical problems such as unstable connection. Some of the students were skeptical about the benefits of using online learning platforms. The students had a challenge to communicate for such a prolonged time during an English class, but this was dealt with through continuous encouragement and reinforcement. Moreover, a little number of the sample were shy and couldn't able to communicate adequately with their group members, but they overcome this issue in the end.

b- Regarding the second question about how confident that the students feel now when they are in need to communicate in English:

By reviewing the students' responses, the researchers found that the students declared that it is their first time to be exposed to this amount of time to speak their thoughts and share their ideas in English. They have never had the opportunity to use that much of time in communicating in any English class. Their continuous interact with their colleagues and sharing their thoughts in English has helped them to gain more confident to use English whenever needed.



c- Regarding the second question about whether they feel they've gained more speaking skills that they can use in the future:

By reviewing the students' responses, the students reported that they have gained more speaking skills they were unable to think of their importance in communication. They have gained more skills regarding pronunciation, word stress, grammar accuracy, and better use of words in the appropriate contexts. They have also gained the skills of creating and developing thoughts.

Discussion

These findings suggested that the administered program has a significant positive effect on the target participants' targeted speaking skill(s). The current study's findings are consistent with those of Shawqy et al. (2021), Fares (2021), and Ayoub (2021).

Conclusion

This research delved into the potential of online cooperative activities (online think-pair-share and online debate) to elevate the speaking skills of EFL third preparatory school students. A mixed-methods approach, encompassing quantitative analysis via SPSS and qualitative analysis through reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, revealed a resounding success for the proposed approach.

The program is designed to improve students' speaking subskills through various activities and strategies, such as the Online Think-Pair-Share and Online Debate techniques. The use of Zoom as the primary online learning tool provides a rich communication experience, with features like an online whiteboard, recording function, and media sharing capabilities.



The program's effectiveness is evident in its design and implementation. The eleven-session structure allows for a systematic progression of learning, with each session focusing on specific learning outcomes and content relevant to the learners' interests. The activities are varied and engaging, requiring students to speak about specified topics and providing opportunities for motivation techniques to be employed in each session. The evaluation method, the spoken test, is an effective way to measure students' progress in the subskills taught. Additionally, the assignment of homework tasks ensures that students continue to practice and improve their speaking skills outside of the sessions.

The program offers a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to teaching English as a Foreign Language, focusing on speaking subskills and leveraging the power of online learning tools to enhance the learning experience. The program's design and implementation demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting students in their language learning journey and fostering a positive and engaging learning environment.

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