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**The Effectiveness of a Task- Based Instruction program in  
Developing the English Language Speaking Skills  
of Secondary Stage Students**

*A thesis*

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# Introduction and problem

## Introduction

Language is a means of thinking and transferring culture from one generation to another as well as from one nation to another. It is also a means of communication among people. Hence, many countries emphasize teaching languages other than the native language to its citizens.

Over the last three decades, English has become the most important foreign language in the world. At present, English is the language for international communication; science; commerce; advertising; diplomacy and transmitting advanced technology. It has also become a "lingua franca" among speakers of languages that are not mutually intelligible (Willis, 1996, a and Coury & Carlos, 2001). Furthermore, in the age of "globalism" we live nowadays, the interdependence of nations and countries creates a need for a global language and no language qualifies for this better than English (Abousenna , 1995: P .xv).

The status of English on the international level is a major factor that contributes to the increase in the importance of English in Egypt. As a matter of fact, English has become an important asset for anyone seeking employment in business, industry or technology in Egypt. Accordingly, the main aim of teaching English in our secondary schools is to enable students to communicate in English so that they become able to enroll in the labor market and to cope with the challenges of higher education as well. Thus, eventually the need for equipping Egyptian EFL secondary stage students with effective speaking skills, as the most important means of communication, has arisen and more focus is given to spoken English at the secondary stage (Directives for General Secondary School, 2005-2006).

Speaking is one of the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). It is the means through which learners can communicate with others to achieve certain goals or to express their opinions, intentions, hopes and viewpoints. In addition, people who know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of that language. Furthermore, in almost any setting, speaking is the most

frequently used language skill. As Rivers (1981) argues, speaking is used twice as much as reading and writing in our communication.

Speaking has usually been compared to writing, both being considered "productive skills", as opposed to the "receptive skills" of reading and listening. Speaking also is closely related to listening as two interrelated ways of accomplishing communication. Every speaker is simultaneously a listener and every listener is at least potentially a speaker (Oprandy, 1994: 153 & EL Menoufy, 1997: 9).

Speaking has been classified to monologue and dialogue. The former focuses on giving an interrupted oral presentation and the latter on interacting with other speakers (Nunan.1989: 27). Speaking can also serve one of two main functions: transactional (transfer of information) and interactional (maintenance of social relationships) (Brown and Yule, 1983: 3).

Developing speaking skills is of vital importance in EFL/ESL programs. Nunan (1999) and Burkart & Sheppard (2004) argue that success in learning a language is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language. Therefore, speaking is probably a priority for most learners of English (Florez, 1999). Speaking instruction is important because it helps students acquire EFL speaking skills thus converse spontaneously and naturally with native speakers. Furthermore, if the right speaking activities are taught in the classroom, speaking can raise general learners' motivation and make the English language classroom a fun and dynamic place to be (Nunan, 1999 & Celce-Murcia , 2001). In addition, speaking can support other language skills. Recent research has considered oral interaction as an important factor in the shaping of the learner's developing language (Gass & Varionis, 1994). For instance, it was proved that learning speaking can help the development of reading competence (Hilferty, 2005), the development of writing (Trachsel & Severino, 2004) as well as the development of listening skills (Regina, 1997).

Taking into account the importance of developing EFL speaking skills, it is vital to determine the speaking skills SL/ FL learners have to acquire in order to converse with native language speakers.

Actually, it was assumed that the interactional nature of spoken language requires the speaker's ability to use motor-perceptive skills, which are concerned with correctly using the sounds and structures of the language, and interactional skills, which involve using the previous skills for the purposes of communication. This means that EFL students should acquire the knowledge of how native speakers use language in the context of structured interpersonal exchanges in which many factors interact (Bygate, 1987& Brown, 2001). In addition, speaking requires that learners understand when, why, and in what ways to produce language ("sociolinguistic competence") (Burns & Joyce, 1997; Cohen, 1996 and Harmer, 2001: 269-270). A good speaker hence synthesizes this array of skills and knowledge to succeed in a given speech act.

Florez (1999) highlights the following skills underlying speaking:

- Using grammar structures accurately;
- Assessing characteristics of the target audience, including shared knowledge, status and power relations, or differences in perspectives;
- Selecting vocabulary that is understandable and appropriate for the audience, the topic being discussed, and the setting in which the speech act occurs;
- Applying strategies to enhance comprehensibility, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, or checking for listener's comprehension;
- Paying attention to the success of the interaction and adjusting components of speech such as vocabulary, rate of speech, and complexity of grammar structures to maximize listener's comprehension and involvement.

A careful examination of all previously mentioned speaking skills emphasizes that speaking is a high complex mental activity which differs from other activities because it requires much greater effort of the central nervous system (Bygate, 1998: 23). It includes sub processes and involves distinct areas of planning. First the speaker has to retrieve words and phrases from memory and assembles them into syntactically and propositionally appropriate sequence (Harmer, 2001: 269-270). Speaking also happens in the context of limited processing capacities due to limitations of working memory, and thus a

consequent need for routinization or automation in each area of production arises. This means that the speaker should process the information he listens to the moment he gets it. Besides, speaking involves a sort of monitoring during and following speech production and the managing of communication under a range of external pressures (Bygate, 1998: 23 & Basturkmen, 2002: 28).

Taking into consideration the current view of speaking as a complex skill and a multi-facets cognitive process, it is important then to consider more closely the features of effective instruction that can facilitate the acquisition of these skills and processes by SL/ FL learners. Oprandy (1994) and Nunan (1999) propose that effective instruction should be characterized by the following:

- ✧ The whole should be more important than the parts. This means that both synthetic and analytical procedures used to teach speaking should share a common concern with the whole rather than the parts.
- ✧ Instruction should enable learners to reflect on their own as well as on others' processes and strategies in an active way.
- ✧ There should be ample opportunities for interacting to expand the repertoire of experiences with the target language with its various ideational, interpersonal and textual functions for which speech is used.
- ✧ There should be opportunities for learners to practice both linguistic and communicative competencies.

However, despite the importance of developing speaking skills among ESL/ EFL learners, instruction of these speaking skills has received the least attention, and many English teachers still spend the majority of class time in reading and writing practice almost ignoring speaking skills (Scarcella & Oxford, 1994: 165; El Menoufy, 1997: 12 and Miller, 2001: 25).

According to previous research, this may be due to the disparity between the spontaneous nature of the spoken language, and the structuring necessary to rearrange it into an acceptable, and correct form to be learned that causes problems for both teachers and students (Badrawi, 1997). More specifically, problems faced by the teachers include the following:

- ❖ Giving each student sufficient time to speak within the constraints of the lesson is not easy especially that many teachers have large classes of students who they must keep control of.
- ❖ Teaching speaking requires the focus on each individual student who might have his own phonological and linguistic weaknesses and problems. This makes speaking instruction a time-consuming process.
- ❖ As opposed to other skills, speaking does not lend itself to tangible evidence so crucial for feedback (Scarcella & Oxford, 1994: 165 and El Menoufy, 1997: 12). Therefore, assessing speaking is time consuming and not practical (Miller, 2001: 25).
- ❖ Unlike written language, spoken language consists of short, often fragmentary utterances. It is characterized by the use of non-specific words and phrases, fillers, repetition, loosely organized syntax and an overlap between one speaker and the other. This makes instruction sounds less systematic (Nunan, 1989: 26; Hall, 1993 and Nunan, 2005).

As for problems faced by learners, psychological, social and linguistic obstacles can be scrutinized. According to Scarcella & Oxford, 1994: 165 and Florez, 1998, these are as follows:

- ❖ **The conflict between fluency and accuracy:** Though a student may gain confidence in using the new language by being let uncorrected, his language will continue to be inaccurate/ incorrect.
- ❖ **Lack of confidence:** Apparently, some students feel uncomfortable in their first hesitant attempts at speech in the second language.
- ❖ **Pronunciation:** The most prominent problems are: phonetic confusion, interference from the written form, interference from the mother language and failure to use the weak forms.

Thus, in the light of the previous constraints speaking is always scarified. Yet, helping learners develop their oral communication skills is important and, even with large classes or difficult teaching situations; it is not something that can be ignored just because it is difficult (Miller, 2001: 25). Hence, some research was

conducted to investigate the most suitable methods for teaching speaking in EFL contexts.

A general review of the different approaches to teaching EFL speaking reveals that two views have dominated: a direct approach and an indirect one. The direct approach includes "skill getting". It is highly controlled and it helps learners focus on specific elements of speaking proficiency which are isolated and practiced (Littlewood, 1992 and Ernst, 1994). It includes activities such as: pattern practice drills, analysis of spoken genres structures, and activities where learners construct rules inductively (Ellis, 1994).

The indirect approach, on the other hand, increases learners' autonomy with a focus on the production of 'authentic' and functional language. The essential focus is on communicative tasks mediated through negotiation and the sharing of information (Ellis, 2003). This is related to concepts such as 'skill using', 'real life' and 'whole task' practice. They include activities such as: discussion, information gap, simulations and talking circles which are utilized to enhance learners' ability to anticipate the kinds of oral communication needs that may arise in conversation management (Bremer et al, 1996).

Proponents of these two methodological propositions note that the relationship between them is complex. The sole dependence on only one of the above approaches can negatively affect EFL speaking skills. Clearly, the indirect approach is mainly directed at improving students' ability to achieve communication. However, it cannot be assumed that achieving communicative effectiveness will set up the necessary conditions that promote accuracy of production (Burns, 1998: 104; Bygate 1998; and McCarthy & Carter, 2001, b).

Thus, the need arises for combining the two models- direct and indirect - in an integrative teaching approach where analytical activities are embedded within communicative tasks to help EFL learners acquire efficient speaking skills (Aston, 1997).

Fundamentally, communicative tasks, representing the indirect approach, can have a positive effect on teaching speaking. Fotos (1998) and Finch (1999) proved that tasks give learners experience of spontaneous interaction through

negotiating turns to speak, using and responding to questions, reacting to others' contributions and using communication strategies. Lee (1995: 440) and Ellis (2003) argue that tasks can promote all three dimension of oral communication: expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning.

However, this over-emphasis on communication during performing tasks increases the risk of a greater reliance on ready-made acquired and probably incorrect language which becomes resistant to change and hinder language development. In addition, instruction based on tasks lacks clear connection with a broader theory about second/foreign language acquisition, and the role the cognitive processes and strategies play in language learning (Skehan, 1996 and Ellis, 2002).

Hence, the need emerges for adopting a direct approach to contrive sufficient focus on form (accuracy) to enable interlanguage development to proceed without decreasing the naturalness of the communication that tasks can generate. To achieve this goal, the cognitive approach focuses on how tasks are implemented to maximize chances of focus on form (Skehan, 1996: 42).

The main assumptions underlying the cognitive approach are as follows:

- 1- Second/foreign language learning is interpreted according to the “dual mode of processing”. This means that SL/FL learn through both a rule-based system and a lexically-based system through which the learner accumulates lexical phrases (chunks) and uses them as wholes (Skehan, 1998: 119 and Skehan, 2000).
- 2- *Awareness* (consciousness) is vital in language learning because it gives the learner more efficient strategies to notice the gap between his current language system and the language he encounters (Van Patten, 1996: 55).
3. Fluency is regarded as performance that is based on chunks which function as units and are retrieved as wholes (Skehan, 2002).
- 4- Attention is a process that affects different stages of FL learning and performance. It is controlled by certain rules as follows:
  - a. Learners have only limited amounts of attention available during language use. This constrains the capacity of the learner to focus on a number of different areas simultaneously (Foster & Skehan, 1996: 300)

- b. Meaning is primary when attentional resources are limited. On the other hand, form can be attended to, if there is no pressure on attentional resources (VanPatten, 1990).

In the light of the previous main assumptions, an instructional strategy is proposed for first year secondary students in the current study for tackling communicative tasks according to the cognitive approach that include three main stages. First, students are exposed to a pre- task stage which aims at increasing the chance that some restructuring will occur in their language system (Skehan, 1996 & Harmer, 2001). Then in the during- task stage, students are engaged in the task, plan for reporting the task results and report the task output in front of their peers. Finally, the post- task stage aims at the raising of linguistic consciousness on the basis of which learners can make conclusions about the spoken language. It aims also at helping students practice structures and patterns related to the spoken discourse (Willis & Willis, 1996 and Skehan, 2002). This model is called "Task based instruction"(TBI).

### **Context of the problem.**

Teaching speaking is one of the main goals of teaching English at the secondary stage in Egypt (Directives for General Secondary School Teachers, 2005-2006). The learning objectives of the first secondary year, in terms of speaking skills, as determined by the Ministry of Education directives and the students' syllabus (Gomm, 1999, Hello series), are as follows:

- Initiating exchanges and responding appropriately.
- Expressing a range of functions to satisfy social and future needs. (giving opinions, greeting, showing anger...etc.)
- Presenting and seeking full autobiographical details.
- Telling events in temporal sequence.
- Giving short presentations on familiar topics.
- Expressing ideas on everyday topics.
- Forming a range of questions.
- Asking for and giving information about everyday life situations (giving directions, describing a process, describing people and so on).

However, in spite of the importance of the speaking skill at the secondary stage, students suffer weaknesses in their speaking performance. This can be attributed, in the light of the researcher's experience, to the prevailing traditional methods of teaching speaking. Students most of the time are rarely required to say more than a few words in response to some 'display' questions raised by the teacher. Moreover, the methods adopted rarely offer students a clear explanation or instruction of what constitutes speaking and how native speakers actually speak. Thus, the speaking skill remains a far-fetched goal or an ambiguous entity that is assumed to be hard to reach by students like other skills.

Speaking, also, is not given enough time or attention while teaching English to first year secondary stage students. This may be due to the evaluation system adopted that focuses only on reading and writing while neglecting listening and speaking skills.

To come to a closer identification of the problem, the researcher conducted a pilot study based on an informal questionnaire administered to 20 secondary stage English language teachers and supervisors (10 teachers and 10 supervisors). This questionnaire aimed at identifying the methods and techniques currently employed to develop speaking skills among first year secondary students. The questionnaire is in appendix (A).

**Results of the pilot study revealed that:**

- 1- 88% of the teachers and supervisors do not have adequate knowledge of the speaking skills necessary for first year secondary students. Thus, when they were asked to mention the speaking sub-skills necessary for first year secondary students, most of them focused on grammatical competence skills including grammar, sentence structure, and pronunciation neglecting other important sub-skills such as, organizing discourse coherently, using appropriate discourse markers, managing conversation and varying language according to social situations.
- 2- Most of the teachers (90%) reported that students are not provided with adequate opportunities to practice speaking due to the short time of the

lesson. However, speaking practice is just restricted to giving short answers to some questions.

- 3- Most of the teachers reported that students rarely practice any pre-speaking activities that aim at raising their consciousness of the spoken language characteristics. Students are not also encouraged to plan for the speaking activities included in their course book "Hello 6". They immediately launch in speaking and the teacher intervenes more than one time to correct grammar and pronunciation mistakes. Similarly, teachers do not give students any opportunities to self-evaluate their speaking performance.
- 4- 85% of the teachers do not teach students the distinctive features of the spoken language such as the sound system, turn taking strategies, and socio-linguistic norms. They claim that such teaching would be of low value as long as students' speaking skills are not evaluated according to the formal written examination system
- 5- 78% of those secondary teachers expressed their need for better teaching strategies and methods that would increase their students' motivation and willingness to actively engage in speaking tasks and consequently improve their speaking skills.
- 6- 93% of the teachers and supervisors nearly know nothing about both task-based instruction and the cognitive approach to language learning and their implications in teaching speaking in EFL contexts.

Moreover, the researcher attended some English classes in some secondary schools to conduct informal observations. These observations aimed at investigating the students' oral proficiency throughout their answers to the teacher's questions and their interaction during classroom activities. Furthermore, the observation aimed at investigating the methods followed to teach speaking at this stage. The researcher noticed that:

\* Students were required only to answer some display questions following a reading text or guided by some structures which have no impact on improving their oral communication skills. Even in dialogue drills,

students just memorized the whole dialogue and some were asked to act it out in front of the class as they learned it by heart.

\* The teacher most of the time controlled the class by doing most of the speaking and directing all the language production. Most of the time, the teachers were obsessed with correcting their students' errors. This made the students passive recipients waiting for direction and afraid of making mistakes.

\* Students lacked motivation to speak. In addition, most of the students could not express themselves adequately and even found difficulty answering simple open-ended questions. Students continued to make the same errors even after being corrected many times.

\* Some of the problems encountered by the students were in using: correct grammatical structures (verb tenses, interrogative and negative statements...etc), pronunciation (sound system, stress, intonation), and conversational strategies (turn-taking, negotiating meaning and so on).

Moreover, through conducting an informal content analysis of the speaking activities included in the students' textbook (Hello 6), some shortcomings were noticed as follows:

- ♣ There are few activities tackling the speaking skill.
- ♣ Most of the activities present tightly controlled or guided situations with no purpose other than to practice specific language forms. They do not include real information gaps or a clear interactional purpose to motivate students to communicate. Precise instructions accompany all oral exercises along with a list of structures and vocabulary to be used (Ex. unit 3, exercise B).
- ♣ The students are asked to perform the following types of activities :
  - Answer comprehension questions.
  - Make up short dialogues or give opinions on given statements/situations/or topics.

Thus, it can be concluded that students lack real experience of oral communication and thus they lack the skills and strategies necessary to convey the message and understand interlocutors.

The problem of the study was further supported by the results of previous related studies in the Egyptian context such as the studies of Ghanem (1983), El Touky (1986), Hussein (1986), Ghoneim (1992), Seddik (1999) and Al Khuli (2000) which emphasized the fact that EFL speaking skills are neglected in Egyptian secondary classes, which leads to the observable shortage in students' ability to communicate. This was attributed to teachers' overemphasis on accuracy and grammatical correctness, the teacher's low proficiency, the limited evaluation system, and most importantly the methods of teaching adopted that don't motivate the students to use the language spontaneously. Thus all the previous studies highlighted the need for adopting better teaching strategies to foster EFL secondary students' speaking skills.

All the previous considerations necessitated conducting the current study that attempts to address the problems of the students' weakness in speaking through applying Task Based Instruction (TBI) as an effective approach to develop first year secondary students' speaking skills.

### **Statement of the problem:**

As stated before, the research problem can be identified in the students' poor mastery of the necessary EFL speaking skills that should be developed in the secondary stage. This might be attributed to the traditional methods of teaching adopted by most EFL secondary stage teaches to realize the objectives. Therefore, the current study attempts to develop the necessary speaking skills for first year secondary students through the use of a task- based proposed program designed in the light of the cognitive approach to language learning. In other words, the study attempted to address the following main question:

- What is the effectiveness of a suggested task -based instruction program designed in the light of the cognitive approach in developing secondary stage students' speaking skills?

### **Five sub- questions were derived from this question:**

- 1-What are the speaking skills necessary for first year secondary stage students in the light of the aims of instruction at this stage?
- 2- What are the theoretical bases and principles for designing a proposed task-based program in the light of the cognitive approach to develop secondary stage students' speaking skills?
- 3- What are the features of the suggested program according to the determined principles?
- 4- How far is the proposed program effective in developing Egyptian first year secondary students' overall speaking?
- 5- How far is the proposed program effective in developing Egyptian first year students' speaking sub-skills?

### **Aim of the study**

#### **This study aimed at:**

- 1- Identifying the speaking skills necessary for first year secondary school students.
- 2- Identifying appropriate strategies for designing a task- based program in the light of the cognitive approach to develop the speaking skills of first year secondary students.
- 3- Constructing a proposed program to develop first year secondary school students' speaking skills.
- 4- Measuring the effectiveness of the proposed program in developing first year secondary students' overall speaking skill as well as speaking sub-skills.

### **The study hypotheses:**

#### **The study hypotheses are as follows:**

#### **a) Hypotheses comparing the experimental and control group mean scores on the post -test:**

- 1- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group exposed to the suggested task-based program, and the control group receiving regular instruction on the post-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the experimental group.

2- There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group, and the control group on the post-test in speaking sub-skills (grammatical, discourse and pragmatic subskills), as well as in fluency in favor of the experimental group.

**b) Hypotheses comparing the experimental group mean scores before and after the treatment:**

3- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on the speaking pre-test and post-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the post-test scores.

4- There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre-test and the post-test in each speaking sub-skill in favor of the post-test scores.

**Variables of the study:**

**Independent variable:** This refers to the treatment implemented in this study (the proposed task- based instruction program implemented with the experimental group versus the regular instruction received by the control group)

**Dependent Variable:** This refers to the experimental group students' performance in speaking with its different grammatical, discourse, pragmatic competences as well as fluency skills.

**Delimitations of the study:**

Since it is beyond the limits of a single study to consider a wide range of factors, the study was restricted to:

- ❖ First year secondary stage students.
- ❖ Two intact first year secondary classes in a governmental Egyptian school. These two classes were randomly assigned to be the control and the experimental groups of the study. Therefore, results of the present study can be generalized within that population.
- ❖ A limited duration for implementing the proposed program (a school term, i.e., nearly three months).

- ❖ A proposed task- based program designed by the researcher and based on the cognitive approach consisting of twenty seven speaking lessons taught over seventy four classroom periods (fifty- minutes each) to develop first year secondary school students' speaking skills.
- ❖ Developing only speaking skills suitable for EFL first year secondary students. These included grammatical, discourse and pragmatic competencies sub-skills as well as fluency.
  - **Grammatical competence: This includes the following skills:**
    - Demonstrating intelligible pronunciation.
    - Following grammatical rules accurately.
    - Using relevant, adequate and appropriate range of vocabulary.
  - **Discourse competence: This includes the following skills:**
    - Structuring discourse coherently and cohesively
    - Managing conversation and interacting effectively to keep the conversation going.
  - **Pragmatic competence: This includes the following skill:**
    - Expressing a range of functions effectively and appropriately.
  - **Fluency:** This means speaking fluently demonstrating a reasonable rate of speech.

### **Significance of the study:**

Significance of the present study lies in the fact that it was the first attempt to bring about integration between communicative tasks and the cognitive approach in Egypt throughout a suggested program aiming at developing EFL secondary stage students' speaking skills. The current study was, hence, an attempt to overcome the shortcomings in teaching the speaking skill, which is considered a basic skill. Besides, it emphasized the importance of providing EFL first year secondary students with activities and opportunities to raise their awareness of speaking underlying skills. The current study, also, suggested some strategies to help first year secondary stage students understand how to plan for speaking, monitor their speaking performance, perform publicly in front of their peers and analyze spoken discourse characteristics.

**Beside the previous considerations, it is hoped that the current study results may contribute practically in the Egyptian TEFL field through:**

- ❖ Providing English language teachers, supervisors and curricula designers with a list of speaking skills necessary for first year secondary students to be taken into consideration in planning and designing speaking activities suitable for those students as well as in evaluating their speaking performance.
- ❖ Contributing to a rethinking and modification of the teaching methods currently adopted to develop speaking skills in Egyptian secondary stage schools.
- ❖ Providing secondary EFL teachers with a better understanding of the cognitive processes underlying the speaking skills and how to benefit from this understanding in teaching speaking skills.
- ❖ Helping textbook authors take into consideration the principles and propositions of the cognitive approach when designing communicative tasks to be included in students' textbooks as a means of fostering their overall speaking proficiency and its sub-skills.

### **Tools of the study:**

**The current study made use of the following four main tools:**

- ☞ A speaking skills checklist submitted to a panel of jury to determine its validity and the appropriateness of the skills needed for Egyptian first year secondary students; constructed by the researcher.
- ☞ A pre-post proficiency speaking test to measure the overall speaking proficiency and speaking sub-skills of both the experimental and control groups before and after the treatment; constructed by the researcher.
- ☞ An evaluation rating scale to score students' oral performance on the pre and post speaking test.
- ☞ A proposed task-based program designed by the researcher in the light of the cognitive approach to train the experimental group students on the necessary speaking skills. This includes the program objectives, methods of teaching, activities and evaluation techniques.

## **Definition of terms:**

### **Effectiveness:**

It is the ability to achieve desired goals and outcomes (El Lakani & El Gamal, 1996).

It is defined operationally in this study as the ability of the proposed task-based program in the light of the cognitive approach to develop first year secondary students' overall speaking and its different subskills.

### **Task:**

For the purposes of this study, a task was defined as an activity in which:

- ◆ Meaning is primary
- ◆ There is a goal which needs to be worked toward.
- ◆ The activity is outcome-evaluated
- ◆ There is a real world relationship.
- ◆ Interaction among students is the means for achieving the task outcome.

### **The cognitive approach:**

This is an information processing theory concerned with the nature of what is learned, the role of consciousness, the role of performance factors, and the way attention impacts upon language learning (Skehan, 1998).

**The cognitive approach** is defined operationally in this study as the approach that explains the role of the cognitive processes the Egyptian EFL first year secondary students go through while speaking and which must be drawn upon to plan for instruction and thus develop and enhance their speaking skills.

### **Task-based instruction:**

In the light of the cognitive approach, task-based instruction is defined as a framework that combines features of communicative tasks and principles of the cognitive approach to language learning. It consists mainly of three phases, pre-task, during- task and post-task stages.

In this study, **task- based instruction** is defined operationally as the program, including communicative tasks designed in the light of the cognitive

approach and administered to the experimental group students to develop their spoken ability.

### **The instructional program:**

The program is defined as a systemic educational plan designed to achieve a specific purpose or result (Nagger, 2003: 816).

In this study, it is defined operationally as a teaching plan that consists of teaching/ learning aims, objectives, content (communicative tasks), methods of teaching and evaluation techniques that go with the principles and propositions of the cognitive approach. This plan aims at fostering the experimental group students' English speaking skills through the use of communicative tasks accompanied by pre, during and post task activities designed in the light of the cognitive approach.

### **Speaking:**

Speaking is defined as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, the participants, and the purposes of speaking (Burns & Joyce, 1997).

Speaking is defined operationally in this study as the secondary stage students' ability to express themselves orally, coherently, fluently and appropriately in a given meaningful context to serve both transactional and interactional purposes using correct pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and adopting the pragmatic and discourse rules of the spoke language. In other words they are required to show mastery of the following sub competencies/ skills:

- **Linguistic competence:** This includes the following skills:
  - Using intelligible pronunciation.
  - Following grammatical rules accurately.
  - Using relevant, adequate and appropriate range of vocabulary.
- **Discourse competence:** This includes the following skills:
  - Structuring discourse coherently and cohesively
  - Managing conversation and interacting effectively to keep the conversation going.

- **Pragmatic competence:** This includes the following skill:
  - Expressing a range of functions effectively and appropriately according to the context and register.
- **Fluency:** This means speaking fluently demonstrating a reasonable rate of speech.

### **Defining some techniques included in the program:**

#### **Planning:**

Planning is defined as involving learners in evaluating what sort of language is needed to complete a given communicative language task, determining whether he or she has command of that language, and taking steps to learn additional lexical items and plan the use of relevant constructions (Crookes, 1989: 380).

#### **Consciousness raising:**

It is a term referring to increasing learners' awareness of particular features that are prominent in spoken discourse in more inductive natural ways rather than artificial ones. It implies a certain degree of "focus on form" which means, with regard to speaking instruction, emphasizing not only grammatical regularities but also higher level organizational principles or rules governing language use beyond the sentence level (Fotos, 1993: 386).

#### **Self- monitoring/ evaluation:**

Self monitoring is defined as alerting FL learners to their points of strength and weakness in terms of speaking by assisting them to develop the ability to compare their performance with some norm (Willis, 1993: 150).

#### **Corpus/ data-driven learning:**

It is defined as giving FL learners the opportunity to use the spoken language corpora (collections of authentic language texts) as a resource to obtain information about spoken language via activities, which introduce students gradually to data analysis (Tan, 2003).

## Theoretical Background

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section is focused on investigating the speaking skill. This includes definitions of speaking, characteristics of spoken language, as well as purpose and genres of speaking. This section highlights also various classifications of speaking skills and sub-skills.

The second section deals with the definitions, theoretical foundations, components and classification of communicative tasks as well as the effectiveness of these tasks on language development in general and speaking proficiency in particular. Moreover, the section addresses different instructional approaches of tackling tasks and the pitfalls of these approaches that necessitate the application of the cognitive approach.

In the third section, the cognitive approach is investigated. This includes definition of the approach, the main concepts underlying its premises and its interpretation of speaking performance and learning. This section ends up with a detailed analysis of the cognitive approach implications with respect to EFL speaking instruction.

Finally, the fourth section tackles task- based instruction, which is, based on the integration of the cognitive approach and communicative tasks. This involves a deep investigation of the rationale for integrating the cognitive approach and communicative tasks. It illustrates also the main procedures and stages adopted to teach speaking skills within the context of task- based instruction suggested model.

## I- the Speaking skill

### Defining Speaking:

Reviewing previous research related to defining speaking, it was noticed that two main approaches are adopted to define speaking, the bottom-up and the top down approach. Explaining the bottom up view, Bygate (1987: 5-6) points out that traditionally the focus in speaking was on motor perceptive skills. Within this context, speaking is defined as the production of auditory signals designed to produce differential verbal responses in a listener. It is considered as combining sounds in a systematic way, according to language specific principles to form meaningful utterances. This approach is adopted by audio-lingualism. Eventually, in terms of teaching speaking, the bottom-up approach suggests that we should start with teaching the smallest units- sounds- and move through mastery of words and sentences to discourse (Cornbleet & Carter, 2001: 18).

Actually, the problem with this approach is that it overlooks the interactive and social aspect of speaking, restricting it only to its psychomotor sense. Moreover, it is hard to ensure a satisfactory transition from supposed learning in the classroom to real life use of the skill.

Alternatively, Bygate (1998: 23) advocates adopting a definition of speaking based on interactional skills which involve making decision about communication. This is considered a top- down view of speaking.

Adopting this view, Eckard & Kearny (1981), Florez (1999) and Howarth (2001) define speaking as a two-way process involving a true communication of ideas, information or feelings. This top-down view considers the spoken texts the product of cooperation between two or more interactants in shared time, and a shared physical context. Thus, proponents of this view suggest that, rather than teaching learners to make well-formed sentences and then -putting these to use in discourse we should encourage learners to take part in spoken discourse from the beginning and then they will acquire the smaller units (Nunan, 1989, 32).

Attempting to elaborate more on the interactive nature of speaking, Burns & Joyce (1997) and Luoma (2004: 2) define speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving. However, speech is not always unpredictable. Language functions (or patterns) that tend to recur in certain discourse situations can be identified.

It is this latter approach that is adopted in the current study, and speaking is defined as the learner's ability to express himself/herself orally, coherently, fluently and appropriately in a given meaningful context.

### **Aspects of speaking:**

Eventually, aspects of the speaking skill need to be closely scrutinized and put into consideration. These aspects pose some challenges and identify some guidelines for understanding this skill and hence design instructional activities to prepare learners to communicate effectively in real life situations.

#### **a. Speaking is face to face:**

Most conversations take place face to face which allows speakers to get immediate feedback, i.e. “Do listeners understand? Are they in agreement? Do they sympathize (Cornbleet & Carter, 2001: 16). Thus communication through speaking has many assets, such as facial expressions, gestures and even body movements. Speaking also occurs, most of the time, in situations where participants or interlocutors are present. Such factors facilitate communication (El Fayoumy, 1997: 10, Widdowson, 1998 & Burns, 1998).

#### **b. Speaking is interactive:**

Whether we are speaking face-to –face or over the telephone, to one person or a small group, the wheels of conversation usually turn smoothly, with participants offering contributions at appropriate moments, with no undue gaps

or everyone talking over each other (Bygate, 1998: 30 and Cornbleet & Carter, 2001: 27)

Turn taking, a main feature in interaction, is an unconscious part of normal conversation. Turn takings are handled and signaled differently across different cultures, thus causing possible communication difficulties in conversation between people of different cultures and languages (Mc Donough & Mackey, 2000: 84).

### **c. Speaking happens in real time:**

During conversations, responses are unplanned and spontaneous and the speakers think on their feet, producing language which reflects this (Foster et al., 2000: 368).

These time constraints affect the speaker's ability to plan, to organize the message, and to control the language being used. Speakers often start to say something and change their mind midway; which is termed a false start. The speaker's sentences also cannot be as long or as complex as in writing. Similarly, speakers occasionally forget things they intended to say; or they may even forget what they have already said, and so they repeat themselves (Miller, 2001: 27).

This implies that the production of speech in real time imposes pressures, but also allows freedoms in terms of compensating for these difficulties. The use of formulaic expressions, hesitation devices, self-correction, rephrasing and repetition can help speakers become more fluent and cope with real time demands (Bygate, 1987: 21; Foster et al., 2000 and Hughes, 2002: 76).

Actually, exposing students to these spoken discourse features facilitates their oral production and helps them compensate for the problems they encounter. It also helps them sound normal in their use of the foreign language.

## Spoken versus written discourse:

Understanding the subtle differences between written and spoken discourse helps in planning instruction in the light of these distinctions. It helps also to overcome the problems with traditional approaches to teaching speaking overlooking such differences.

Basically, spoken discourse is different form written discourse in three main parameters: planning, contextualization and formality. Speech is more commonly unplanned, contextualized and informal than writing. In addition, speech is more reciprocal than is writing (Yule, 1989: 165; Nunan, 1989: 26; Eggings, 1990 and Carter & McCarthy, 1997).

Specifically, speaking can be distinguished from writing in many areas. These include:

☞ **Discourse structure:** the spoken discourse is characterized by: reciprocal openings and closings, interactive negotiation of meaning and conversation structures. Besides, it is characterized by the use of simple linking devices (discourse devices) such as 'and, ' but', 'anyway', 'right' rather than complicated ones used in written discourse (Nunan, 1999: 22; Dinapoli, 2000: 1 and Miller, 2001).

☞ **Typical features** of the speech stream (e.g. segmental and supra-segmental features, pauses, hesitations, interruptions, and false starts) (Bygate, 1998, b: 21).

☞ **Features related to the cultural nature** of speaking. The spoken discourse contains numerous social and contextual factors as well as pragmatic presuppositions (Carter & McCarthy, 1997: 13).

☞ **Grammatical and lexical features:** As for grammar, the spoken language is characterized by:

- Contractions and elliptical constructions lacking subjects or rejoinders; ex: (sure, me too, or not now, thanks) (Widdowson, 1998).
- Incomplete sentences called “utterances” (Yule, 1989: 170).

- Fronting which refers to the movement of an element from its position and its relocation as the first element in a construction to allow a focus to fall on it (Nunan, 1989: 26 and Foster et al, 2000)

As for lexis, spoken English has a lower lexical density than written English, using more grammar words and more verb phrases than noun phrases. Furthermore, spoken language is characterized by what is called "*vague language*" which refers to objects and events in general terms especially when speakers are uncertain or don't want to sound too particular; e.g. (by the window or something) (Widdowson, 1998).

Spoken language is characterized also by fixed expressions that play an important part in enhancing fluency during speaking. Examples of fixed expressions include expressions such as "a matter of fact, once and for all...etc"(Carter & McCarthy, 1997: 18 and Segowitz, 2000).

### **Purpose of speaking:**

It was argued that the purpose of speaking can be either transactional or interactional. Apparently, there are some differences between the spoken language used in both transactional and interactional discourse.

In transactional discourse, language is used primarily for communicating information. Language serving this purpose is 'message' oriented rather than 'listener' oriented (Nunan, 1989: 27). Clearly, in this type of interaction, accurate and coherent communication of the message is important, as well as confirmation that the message has been understood. Examples of language being used primarily for a transactional purpose are: news broadcasts, descriptions, narrations and instructions (Richards, 1990: 54- 55). Speaking turns serving this purpose tend to be long and involve some prior organization of content and use of linguistic devices to signal either the organization or type of information that will be given (Basturkmen, 2002: 26).

On the other hand, some conversations are interactional with the purpose of establishing or maintaining a relationship. This latter kind is sometimes called the interpersonal use of language. It plays an important social role in

oiling the wheels of social intercourse (Yule, 1989: 169). Examples of interactional uses of language are greetings, small talks, and compliments. Apparently, the language used in the interactional mode is listener oriented. Speakers' talk in this type tends to be limited to quite short turns (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1994: 43 and Richards, 1990: 54-55).

However, in spite of the distinctions between the two types, in most circumstances, interactional language is combined with transactional language. This helps to ease the transactional tasks to be done by keeping good social relations with others. In, other words, we can say that speakers do one thing by doing another (Brazil, 1995: 29). So both purposes can be viewed as two dimensions of spoken interaction.

Analyzing speaking purposes more precisely, Kingen (2000: 218) combines both the transactional and interpersonal purposes of speaking into an extensive list of twelve categories as follows:

- 1- **Personal** - expressing personal feelings, opinions, beliefs and ideas.
2. **Descriptive**- describing someone or something, real or imagined.
3. **Narrative**-creating and telling stories or chronologically sequenced events.
4. **Instructive**-giving instructions or providing directions designed to produce an outcome.
5. **Questioning**-asking questions to obtain information.
6. **Comparative**-comparing two or more objects, people, ideas, or opinions to make judgments about them.
7. **Imaginative**-expressing mental images of people, places, events, and objects.
8. **Predictive**-predicting possible future events.
9. **Interpretative**-exploring meanings, creating hypothetical deductions, and considering inferences.
10. **Persuasive**-changing others' opinions, attitudes, or points of view, or influencing the behavior of others in some way.
11. **Explanatory**-explaining, clarifying, and supporting ideas and opinions.
12. **Informative**-sharing information with others

This list correspond closely to the language functions explained by Halliday (1975).

### **Speaking genres:**

The genre theory assumes that different speech events result in different types of texts, which are distinct in terms of their overall structure and kinds of grammatical items typically associated with them (Hughes, 2002: 83). Carter and McCarthy (1997) classify speaking extracts in terms of genres as follows:

- ♣ **Narrative:** A series of everyday anecdotes told with active listener participation.
- ♣ **Identifying:** Extracts in which people talk about themselves, their biography, where they live, their jobs, their likes and dislikes.
- ♣ **Language-in-action:** Data recorded while people are doing things such as cooking, packing, moving furniture... etc.
- ♣ **Comment-elaboration:** People giving casual opinions and commenting on things, other people, events and so on.
- ♣ **Debate and argument:** Data, in which people take up positions, pursue arguments and expound on their opinions.
- ♣ **Decision-making and negotiating outcomes:** Data illustrating ways in which people work towards decisions/consensus or negotiate their way through problems towards solutions.

It is recognized that no speech genre can be entirely discrete; for example, narratives can be embedded within other main generic categories. Furthermore, speaking genres overlap with language functions explained before.

### **Speaking sub- skills:**

Many people believe that informal everyday conversation is random. Moreover, unfortunately, most ELT course books do not deal with speaking by breaking it down into micro- skills. Instead, they often have the vague aim of "promoting learner's fluency" (Sayer, 2005: 14).

However, a fundamental issue to understand the nature of speaking is to analyze it in terms of competencies- underlying abilities- that characterize the speaking proficiency. It is generally assumed that such underlying abilities have some sort of structure, made up of different components, with some sort of interaction and interrelationship between them. It is also assumed that different performances draw upon these underlying abilities in different but comprehensible ways (Bachman, 1990 and Widdowson, 1998).

Of course, identifying these competencies will help in teaching them and hence determining how far they have been achieved.

Eventually, some of the taxonomies used to define speaking sub-skills adopt a communicative stance assuming that speaking is mainly used for communication. These are mainly general models of language ability that are used to analyze speaking as well as other skills. However, there are other taxonomies that are considered speaking-specific which concentrate on distinguished characteristics of speaking. These taxonomies are based on analyzing competencies underlying conversational skills.

The models or taxonomies belonging to both previous categories provide alternative frameworks for defining speaking skills. One model can be selected or several ones can be integrated to provide a more comprehensive perspective of speaking ability (Luoma, 2004: 60).

### **Communicative competence taxonomies:**

As was argued before, these models consider speaking a manifestation of the learner's communicative competence (McCarthy & Carter, 2001: 58). Sub-skills underlying communicative competence are addressed by several researchers as follows:

#### **The communicative competence model:**

Canale (1984) developed a framework of communicative competence based on an earlier version by Canale and Swain (1980). He distinguished among four elements in communicative competence: Grammatical

competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence.

- ↪ **Grammatical competence** includes language rules such as vocabulary, formation of words or sentences, and pronunciation.
- ↪ **Sociolinguistic competence** addresses the appropriateness in terms of both the meaning and form, which can vary with the status of participants, objectives of the communication and norms of the communication.
- ↪ **Discourse Competence** includes an understanding of how spoken texts are organized and is related to the cohesion and coherence of utterances.
- ↪ **Strategic Competence** is compensatory in nature, drawn on when the developing language system of the second/foreign language learner is deficient in some regard. It refers to mastery of both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies.

The criticism directed to this model was mainly based on its lack of operational descriptions of how these sub-competencies actually operate when speakers use language. In other words, it focuses on language knowledge; and it does not say anything about skills in using language (Yoshida, 2003: 3).

### **The communicative ability model:**

The “communicative ability” model is developed by Van Ek (1987). This model consists of six components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic, socio-cultural and social competences. Other than socio-cultural and social competence, these components are almost equivalent to the categories suggested by Canale’s model. However, Van Ek separated socio-cultural competence from sociolinguistic competence and added social competence as a distinct area. According to Van Ek, social competence includes motivation, attitude and self-confidence to handle social situations which are involved in the skill to interact.

### **Bachman model (1990), (1996):**

The Canale and Swain approach has been further developed by Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996), who proposed a similar but more complex detailed model. According to this model, communicative competence is divided into language competence, strategic competence and psycho physiological mechanisms.

#### **Language Competence includes:**

**a. Organizational Competence including:** grammatical competence and textual competence involving: cohesion/coherence and conversational analysis.

#### **b. Pragmatic Competence including:**

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, the following can be inferred from Bachman's model:

- ◆ Textual competence bears a close relationship to Canale and Swain's discourse competence, but it becomes a part of "organizational competence", which implies that "textual competence" is considered by Bachman a part of a somewhat autonomous knowledge base.
- ◆ There is a more complex account of pragmatic knowledge in Bachman's model. This account is broadly concerned with knowledge of how to use language appropriately and effectively in different contexts.

- ◆ The greater status given to strategic competence since it is seen as central to communication.

Actually, the problem with the communicative competence models is that they overlook fluency- an important component of speaking skills that doesn't belong to the previous categories. Thus, Faerch et al. (1984) and Chambers (1997) consider fluency a part of communicative competence which is different from strategic competence. According to their model of communicative competence, all competencies interact, together and all should lead towards fluency which implies using the previous competencies in real time without undue pauses or hesitation. Fluency, also, gives the speaker confidence and makes his communication clearer and more impressive (Segaowitz, 2000).

### **Conversational skills models:**

These models are based on the assumption that communicative competence models emphasize the language use situation and detract attention from the analysis of interaction between language knowledge and the other knowledge components. Thus these models provide a further attempt to depict the knowledge and skills underlying conversational ability. Conversational models are as follows:

#### **Speaking as an activity, Bygate (1987):**

Bygate makes a basic distinction between the knowledge base that enables learners to talk on the one hand, and the skills that are actually involved when they are engaged in interaction on the other. Accordingly, Bygate divides speaking skills to: Planning skills, selection skills and production skills.

To enable planning in an interactive speaking situation, learners need to know "information" and "interaction" routines. Information routines may be identified as either expository or evaluative. The principal types of expository routines are narration, description, and instruction. For example, narrative routines consist of essential components: setting; time; participants and events (Albert,

2004). Evaluative routines typically involve explanations; predictions; preferences and decisions (Foster, 2001).

Actually, information routines suggested by Bygate correspond in part to discourse competence adopted by Canale and Bachman. Moreover, it is clear that they are similar to speaking genres suggested by Carter and McCarthy (1997).

Interaction routines, on the other hand, include the learner's knowledge of the kinds of turns typically occurring in interactional situations. Eventually, this does not necessarily mean knowing a text off by heart, but just knowing what expectations and possibilities can be realized in a given situation (Foster, 2001).

Thus, in message planning, the underlying knowledge of routines enables learners to predict what might happen and pre-plan their contributions and interaction management skills (Bygate, 1987: 39).

Selection skills encompass the learners' ability to build on their knowledge base of lexis, phrases and grammar to choose how to say what they want to say. The skills related to this ability have to do with negotiation of meaning by choosing an appropriate level of explicitness and ensuring understanding on the part of the listener.

Productions skills are closely related to the time-bound nature of speaking. The related skills are facilitation and compensation to produce speech in real time. Speakers can facilitate their speech production by simplifying structure using ellipsis, formulaic expressions, fillers and hesitation devices, ex: "well, you see, right". They can compensate for difficulties by using self-correction, rephrasing, and repeating. Having a ready stock of these markers, speakers sound fluent even if the speaking situation is demanding (Cornbleet & Carter, 2001: 61).

## Weir (1993) & House (1996)

Weir and House draw their taxonomy from Bygate but used a quite different classification. According to their taxonomy, spoken language skills are divided to routine skills and improvisation skills.

Routine skills are divided into information routines and interaction routines. The information routines are the same identified by Bygate. However, the Interaction routines are further divided to gambits, discourse strategies and speech acts.

Gambits are used to establish, maintain, and end contact. Three classes of gambits are differentiated through their focus on the previous turn (Uptakers), the following turn (Appealers), or the current turn (Clarifiers).

Discourse Strategies reflect on how speakers make use of their knowledge of interactional structures, manipulating these in order to gain their goals (Dinapoli, 2000: 1).

Speech acts (language functions) used in the opening, closing, and core phases of the discourse are emphasized also by this model.

The improvisation skills resemble the skills included under strategic competence in the communicative competence models. It involves the use of discourse processing strategies to evaluate communicative effectiveness and make any necessary adjustments.

Thus, conversational skills models consider both discourse competence and pragmatic competence, explained by the communicative competence model, a dialogic phenomenon that combines both pragmatic appropriateness of utterances and smooth continuity in ongoing talk.

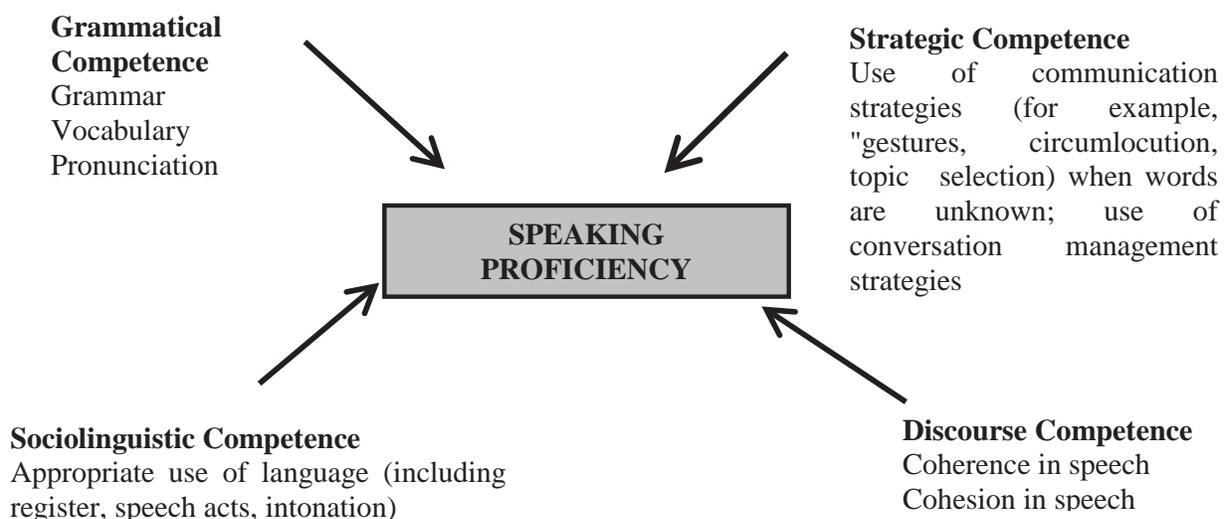
## **Integrating communicative and conversational models:**

Obviously, the work of Bygate, Weir and House, in defining speaking skills, is remarkable. However, these classifications can be improved by integrating them into a model of communicative competence adapted for speaking and addressing production skills. Confirming this fact, Celce-Murcia

(1995: 5) argues that there is a need for an updated and explicit description of language teaching areas generated with reference to a detailed sound model of communicative competence. Moreover, as Louma (2004) claims, the communicative competence models are highly useful in determining the definitions of what is and what is not intended to be assessed in a particular assessment procedure. What this means is that a sort of integration should be brought about between conversational models and communicative competence models.

Taking the previous considerations into account, the skills adopted in the present study are mainly based on Canale & Swain and Bachman communicative competence models. However, some skills are drawn from conversational models to cater for the gaps in the communicative competence model and to enrich its underlying competences with further details and skills. In other words, all the models presented are benefited from to determine the identified speaking skills. Thus, a clear investigation of the communicative competence model underlying skills in terms of speaking and how this relates to conversational skills models is necessary.

Procedurally, based on the communicative competence model, Scarcella & Oxford (1992: 154) defines the skills underpinning speaking competences in the following figure:



*Figure (1)*  
*Skills underlying speaking proficiency*

These four competences are not mutually exclusive but they overlap and the current study defines the subskills under each competence, according to the previous taxonomies, as follows:

**1-Grammatical competence** includes using correct grammar, pronunciation and adequate vocabulary (Riggenbach, 998, 55).

**Using grammar correctly** in speech implies the ability to produce the distinctive grammatical structures of the language and to use them effectively in communication taking into consideration the characteristics of spoken grammar. For example, spoken clauses, rather than complete sentences, are often joined with coordinators like "and" or "but", or not joined through conjunctions, but simply uttered next to each other, with possibly a short pause between them. Thus simple phrasal structure and purposeful repetition can often be markers of high proficiency (Hughes, 2002: 61 and Luoma, 2004: 6).

**Using vocabulary** adequately implies the ability to recognize and use words in the way that speakers of the language use them. It implies using the common collocations of words and fixed phrases. This includes also the use of vague language (Luoma , 2004: 24).

**Pronunciation**, according to Morely, 1996: 2; Florez, 1998: 2 and Cornbleet & Carter, 2001: 18, includes elements such as:

- ☞ **Sounds:** These include consonants, vowels and consonant clusters;
- ☞ **Intonation:** This refers to the pattern of pitch changes. There are two basic patterns: rising and falling;
- ☞ **Rhythm:** It is created according to the position of stress within a single word or a group of words. Within words stresses have fixed positions but stress within a group of words can move according to meaning;
- ☞ **Linking and assimilation:** When sounds are linked in spoken language, changes occur because of the influence of neighboring sounds.

**2- Discourse competence:** With respect to transactional speech, it is argued by Dornyei and Thurrell (1994: 40) that discourse competence implies the ability to use various information routines- evaluative and expository- including their sequential stages in conversations. It includes also the ability to

use the typical rituals for starting or closing a conversation and for changing the subject.

With respect to the interactional element of spoken discourse, it is based on the speaker's knowledge of interaction routines and the typical interactional features including boundaries such as openings and closings, interrupting, as well as sequential organizations of turns and topics (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1994: 43; Dinapoli, 2000: 4 , and Young, 2002: 245).

Concisely, **discourse competence** includes the learner's ability to:

- structure discourse coherently so hearers can easily follow the sequence of what is said. This implies an adequate knowledge of information and interactional routines (Louwerse & Mitchel, 2003);
- use grammatical and lexical references appropriately to refer to people and objects so listeners can keep track of them (Foster, 2001);
- use discourse markers that cue coherence relations. These are divided into those that mark informational relations and those that mark conversational relations. Conversational discourse markers consist of discourse particles (well, now, anyway) used by participants to maintain conversational coherence. Informational markers include those signaling the introduction of a topic, a shift to a new topic and a summary of the topic. They include also inter-sentential connectors such as markers indicating causative relations, concessive relations and so on (Young, 2002);
- keep a conversation going through (ensuring that people will listen, showing interest and interrupting politely to clarify or challenge what someone has said) (Yoshida, 2003: 14);
- manage turn-taking which entails taking a turn of talk, holding a turn, and relinquishing a turn (House, 1996: 229).

**3- Pragmatic Competence** is quite linked to “appropriateness” suggested by Cornbleet & Carter (2001: 20) and (Pohl, 2004). It is affected by the context, purpose and interlocutors in the conversation.

Pragmatic competence includes two sub-competences: Functional competence and sociolinguistic competence (Pohl, 2004).

a. **Functional competence** refers to the ability to accomplish communication purposes in a language. It includes the use of speech acts and phrases associated with them. Hence, to achieve a certain function, some forms are considered appropriate while others are not. Language functions classification is based on listing the main functions for which the language is used (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1994: 41 & Rose, 1994: 53).

**The main language functions suggested according to** (Rose, 1994: 53 and Tsui, 1995: 192) are:

- **Social functions** include functions such as (greeting, introducing people, complaining, thanking and apologizing).
- **Information** includes functions such as (asking for factual information, providing personal information, describing and narrating).
- **Giving opinion includes** functions such as (asking for an opinion, giving an opinion, agreeing, disagreeing and predicting).
- **Requesting** includes functions such as (requesting, asking favors and accepting or refusing a request).
- **Directing** includes functions such as (encouraging, persuading, suggesting, advising, instructing, and threatening).

b. **Sociolinguistic competence**, on the other hand, is defined as the awareness of how to speak appropriately in different situations and to different people, with varying degrees of formality. Here, the focus is on politeness strategies which entails that the more distant the social relationship between the speaker and hearer, the more politeness markers we would expect to be required (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992: 57 and Yoshida, 2003: 15).

**4- Strategic Competence:** In addition to the other three competencies, effective speakers use compensatory and achievement strategies for example; (gestures, circumlocution, topic selection...etc) to assist when they don't know all the words to say.

According to Scarcella & Oxford (1992: 156), strategic training helps students to manage output in the form of the following skills: (interrupting, asking for clarification, asking for explanation and changing the topic).

Here it is clear that strategic competence subsumes many of the skills involved in other competencies. Moreover, it includes other subs-skills such as compensatory and achievement strategies (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1994, 41& Yoshida-Morise, 1998, 206).

**Fluency**, although not a main component either in communicative competence models or conversational models, is adopted in the current study. Fluency is related to using all speaking skills in the context of the time-bound nature of speaking. It relies on the speaker's ability to use facilitation skills (fillers, lexical phrases, ellipsis...etc.) and compensation skills (self-correction, rephrasing, or repeating) to cope with ongoing fast communication (Widdowson, 1998 & Segowitz, 2000).

## Conclusion

This section provided an overall overview of research and literature tackling speaking and its constituent skills at both the transactional and interactional levels.

Speaking definition, purposes and genres were presented. In addition, aspects of speaking and features characterizing and distinguishing speaking from writing were elaborated. These features have to be taken into consideration when planning for speaking instruction and assessment.

Furthermore, a detailed account of speaking skills was provided. Most of the taxonomies provided helped in elaborating the nature of speaking skills and the specific manifestations of these skills in terms of real life interaction. Models belonging to two categories were presented: the communicative competence models and models based on analyzing conversational skills. Actually, the current study generally adopts the communicative competence model as the most comprehensive one; yet it attempts to draw some details from other models to enrich the communicative competence model and cater for its gaps. For example, skills related to informational and interactional routines, conversation management, and turn taking are included in the current study. This analytic speaking model - instead of a holistic model- was adopted in the current study relying on the assumption that an individual speaker may not develop different facets of communicative competence at the same rate, so it is vital to focus on his progress at every component independently (Taylor, 2000: 1).

Through analyzing the communicative competence models, it could be inferred that linguistic, pragmatic and discourse competences are, in a sense, the basic competences. Strategic competence has a less integrated quality in that it is meant to function in an improvisatory compensatory manner when problems are encountered. Furthermore, there is much overlap between the skills underlying strategic competence and those underlying other competencies. Moreover, fluency was added to the model, although not considered a component of the communicative model by some theorists. This is due to the fact that fluency is a basic component in speaking that can never be compensated for by other skills.

## **II- Communicative Tasks and teaching speaking**

In most EFL classes, teacher- pupil exchanges have little communicative value because there is no real information being exchanged. Typically, a teacher asks a “display” question (that is, a question the teacher knows the answer to), an individual student answers, and the teacher evaluates or corrects the answer. Eventually, this is an unrealistic use of language and these questions have clear limitations in terms of how much genuine communication practice the student receives (Dinapoli, 2000: 1).

Evidently, for genuine communication to occur in the language classroom, teacher-student (and student-student) exchanges must go beyond display questions and should be based on the gap that occurs between interlocutors when one does not know in advance what the other is going to say (Liao, 2001: 38).

Thus, there has been a strong movement, over the last decade, away from the highly structured, teacher-oriented foreign language instruction in favor of a task- oriented, communicatively based, and learner centered teaching. This was influenced by the communicative approach to language learning (Thomson, 1992: 524). Accordingly, the fundamental concept underlying communicative tasks is that the teacher does not predetermine what linguistic forms will be learned (Yule& Powers, 1994: 166 & Hedge, 2000). The underlying assumption is that tasks will engage naturalistic acquisitional mechanisms, and drive language development forward.

### **Theoretical Rationale for Tasks**

For foreign language learners, the classroom may be the only available environment where they can try out what using the foreign language feels like, and how more or less comfortable they are with different aspects of FL pragmatics (Kasper, 2001: 520). Thus using tasks conforms to the most prominent hypotheses interpreting FL acquisition.

The use of tasks as vehicles for facilitating L2/FL development is supported by Swain's *output hypothesis* (1985). Swain argued that it is through the process of producing language (output) that learners may be able to test their theories about the target language, gain control over form, and perhaps internalize linguistic knowledge. Thus, output produced in tasks is not the result of the language learning process, but rather a step in the process (Adams, 2003: 248).

Another prominent reason for using tasks in the FL classroom evolved from Long's "interaction hypothesis" (1996). According to this hypothesis, learners, throughout interaction, often negotiate meaning to achieve mutual comprehension. The effort to achieve mutual comprehension involves the use of a variety of strategies, such as asking an interlocutor to confirm message content, or requesting that an interlocutor explain something further. This sort of interaction was assumed to foster L2/FL development. Similarly, from a communicative competence perspective, tasks were assumed to help learners engage properly with discourse by doing it (McCarthy & Carter, 2001": 59; Dinapoli, 2000: 1 and Ellis, 2003: 58).

Vygotsky's socio cultural theory also is one of the foundations that support the use of communicative tasks. Three concepts are tightly related to task-based learning. These are interaction, activity and mediation (Myers, 2000: 11). According to this theory, tasks, rather than being externally defined, are in fact internally constructed through the moment to moment verbal interactions of learners during actual task performance. This was assumed to facilitate language acquisition.

### **Definition of communicative tasks:**

Although tasks have many definitions ranging from formal grammatical exercises to complex classroom simulation, tasks here are to be dealt with in a communicative sense.

Several definitions of tasks were provided by communicative approach theorists; most of them focus on the interactional and purpose- driven nature of

tasks and use these characteristics to distinguish between tasks and other activities.

Nunan (1989: 10) and Nunan (2005: 5) define a task as a classroom activity which involves learner comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on "meaning" rather than "form". In addition, a task must be capable of giving learners "a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right". In this way, according to Lee (2000), tasks focus on meaning rather than a specific linguistic feature.

Ellis (1994: 595), defines the task as some kind of activity designed to engage the learner in using the language communicatively or reflectively to arrive at an outcome other than that of learning a specified feature of the target language.

Long & Crookes (1992: 55) and Skehan and Foster (1999: 94), agreed on their definition of tasks as they described them in terms of five characteristics, according to their perspective, a task is as an activity in which:

- ◆ Meaning is primary
- ◆ There is a goal which needs to be worked toward and the activity is outcome-evaluated
- ◆ There is a real world relationship.
- ◆ There is a problem orientation
- ◆ Interaction is carried under time pressure

A complementary approach to defining tasks is to show what tasks are not. In this respect, and according to Willis (1996, a) and (Willis, 1996, b), tasks do not give learners other people's meanings to express, they are not practice-oriented or concerned with language display and they do not embed language into materials so that specific structures can be focused upon.

Similarly, Bruton (1999: 4) claims that tasks reject the itemized specification of synthetic syllabus, the assumed one by one focus with mastery in production as a requirement for progression.

Furuta (2001: 15) stresses skills integration during communicative tasks. Thus, he defines a task as a posed problem or an activity that has a goal or

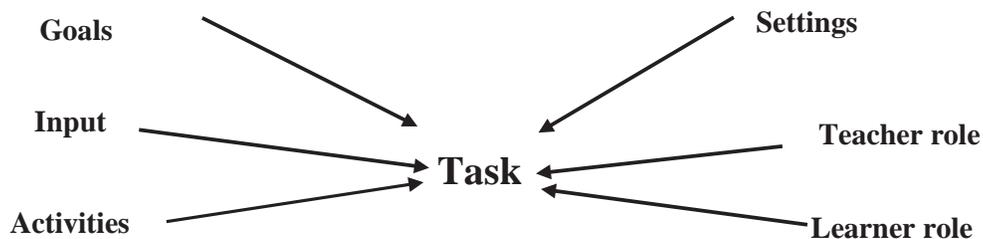
outcome that is not linguistic, but which is reached through a variety of linguistic skills.

Brown (2001: 50) compares the task and technique. According to his point of view, in some cases the task and the technique might be synonymous. But in other cases, a task may be comprised of several techniques (for example, a problem solving task that includes grammatical explanation, teacher-initiated questions, and a specific turn-taking procedure). Tasks are always bigger in their ultimate ends than techniques. He provides some criteria for examining communicative tasks such as: achieving communicative goals, including problem solving elements and going beyond forms to real world context.

So, it is apparent that in the core of each definition is an emphasis on the communication of meaning and on the importance of sharing information among students to achieve a certain goal. Hence, most of these definitions show how communication requires two or more participants, who express, interpret and negotiate meaning together. During performing tasks, students are free to use whatever language forms they want, without imposing any structures on them. Furthermore, most of the previous definitions focus on finding a relationship between the task and real world situations, hence fostering the learner's ability to deal with these situations effectively in the future.

### **Task components:**

Nunan (1989: 48), Finch (1997), Brown (1998) and Nunan (2005) define task components as follows:



*Figure (2)  
Task components*

- **Goals** are the general intentions behind any given task. They may relate to a range of general outcomes or may directly describe teacher or learner behavior.
- **Input** refers to the data that form the point of departure for the tasks.
- **Activities** specify what learners will actually do with the input.
- **Teachers and learners roles** refer to the part that learners and teachers are expected to play in carrying out the task as well as the social and interpersonal relationships between the participants.
- **Setting** refers to the classroom arrangements specified and it also requires consideration of whether the task is to be carried out wholly or partly outside the classroom.

### **Advantages of tasks in speaking instruction:**

Basically, learners performing communicative tasks negotiate to establish the meaning of unfamiliar aspects of the task language, and the procedure necessary to achieve task goals and this fosters their language acquisition (Courtney, 1996: 320; Finch, 1999 and Lee, 2000: 33).

Apparently, using group work and pair work throughout tasks increases the amount of learner's talk going on in a limited period of time and lowers the inhibitions of learners who are unwilling to talk in front of the full class thus increases their motivation (Ur, 1996: 121; Zacarian, 1996; Finch, 1997 and Ellis, 2003).

In addition, from the pragmatic competence perspective, tasks may engage students in different speech events and communication actions. Tasks such as role plays, simulations and drama engage students in different social roles. Such tasks provide opportunities to practice the wide range of pragmatic and sociolinguistic abilities students need in interpersonal encounters outside the classroom (Kasper, 2001 and Ellis, 2003). Tasks also help develop students' ability to produce coherent, fluent sentences, so they enhance their discourse competence (Sayer, 2005: 14 and Slimani-Rolls, 2005: 196).

Furthermore, although tasks seem to support only interactional purposes of speaking which consist mainly of short turns, tasks can be developed to cater for long turns and transactional talks as well (Ur, 1996: 131 and Zacarian, 1996).

Thus, in more details, tasks offer the following advantages for the EFL speaking classroom:

1. **Meaning:** When tasks are the means of learning, the target language takes on meaning as students try to focus on actual problem solving. Instead of the TENOR situation (Teaching English for No Obvious Reason), students have a reason for learning (Norman, 1996: 598; Willis, 1996, b: 54 and Hedge, 2000).

2. **Ownership:** If students are allowed to see the task through all of its stages (task completion), without the teacher playing an interventionist role, they can achieve a valuable (and motivating) sense of fulfillment and heightened self-confidence that comes from understanding, performing, and reflecting on the task by themselves. In other words, tasks transform the curriculum from one that is teacher -based to one that is learner-centered (Lee, 2000 and Furuta, 2002:28).

3. **Learning levels:** Learners take on content matter (input) that is appropriate to their current stage. In this way, students are allowed to progress through tasks at their own rate, and this helps them to concentrate on aspects that are suitable for their learning level (Ellis, 2003).

4. **Assessment:** Tasks help students focus on outcome, show them their learning needs, and help them evaluate their communicative competence (Finch, 1997 & Ellis, 2003).

5. **Error-correction:** When students are conducting problem solving in groups, errors in communication become evident to the whole group, and the teacher (functioning as a language resource) can be asked to supply the necessary language, giving "the right information to the right people at the right time" (Ellis, 2003).

6- **Skills integration:** tasks always imply several skills areas, not just one. In this way the four language skills are approached in an interconnected way (Brown, 2001: 244).

## **Factors considered in designing tasks:**

Research provided a detailed account of the factors to be taken into consideration when designing tasks with the aim of fostering speaking skills. These are as follows:

### **Thought:**

A task aiming at developing speaking should at the same time involve thinking out. The kind of thinking involved can be described in terms of logical processes: generalizations, exemplifications, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, alternatively (Ur, 1981).

### **Result:**

Each task should have its outcome in the form of a tangible result. This helps to focus and define what the group has to do. It, also, provides a clear signal that the group has finished and thus provides a basis for feedback (Brown, 1998: 6 and Myers, 2000: 10).

### **Language practice efficiency:**

Tasks should help students practice both transactional as well as interactional functions of language; long turns and short turns. It should help students express themselves in different situations, feelings and relations (Ur, 1981 and Myers, 2000: 10).

### **Interaction:**

The teacher has to make sure that the students interact together during the task and that the task cannot be performed much easier by each student alone (Ur, 1981 and Riggensbach, 1998: 65).

### **Interest:**

According to Scarcella & Oxford (1992: 90), tasks generate highly positive student attitudes and motivation as long as they are perceived to be interesting and relevant. Interest can be guaranteed through:

- The challenge of performing the task itself. This means that the task must be hard enough to demand an effort on the part of learners, but easy enough for it to be clear that success is within grasp.

- The subject of the task should be familiar to the students and imaginative at the same time.

### **Classifications of communicative tasks:**

Previous research in the domain of task-based interaction has provided insight into a variety of task types, and the potential effect of those types on oral performance. Reviewing previous research on task types relevant to developing speaking skills, it is apparent that tasks can be grouped in different ways:

- ❖ **Pair/ Group tasks:** According to Scarcealla & Oxford (1996: 159) pair tasks involves students' work one-on-one with others in class. On the other hand, group tasks involve more than two students.
- ❖ **Closed/ open tasks:** Closed tasks have just a single correct answer. They are very structured and have very specific goals. On other hand, open tasks are more loosely structured, with a less specific goal, for example exchanging anecdotes on a theme (Nunan, 1999: 53 and Willis, 1996, a: 28).
- ❖ **Information gap tasks:** When one conversation partner has knowledge relevant to the situation discussed, which is unknown by the other partner, an 'information gap' is said to exist. The need to acquire the information triggers communication between the two which bridges the 'information gap' (Nation, 1990; McDonough & Mackey, 2000 and Slimani-Rolls, 2005: 196).

In this type of tasks, one student can have some information, and the other student has to find it out by asking questions. On the other hand, both students can have different pieces of information and they tell each other to reach a final goal (Nunan, 2005: 66). In other words, information gap tasks can be a one way or a two-way activity.

Information gap tasks are considered to be effective in developing speaking as learners are encouraged to use and extend their range of positive communication strategies, which they employ as means of overcoming any shortcomings in language competence. They also include the dimension of

negotiation of meaning -a significant component in the speaking process (Legutke & Thomas, 1993: 85 and Ellis, 2003).

❖ **Opinion gap/ reasoning gap tasks:** Opinion gap tasks involve identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude. The task may require using factual information, formulating arguments, and justifying one's opinions. A reasoning gap task involves deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference or deduction and interacting with others to deliver these inferred new information (Ellis , 2000: 199 & Liao , 2001: 41).

❖ **Information processing tasks:** In this type of tasks, all the participants have access to the same information. However the task requires some sort of cognitive or emotional involvement. Examples of this task are listing and ordering, comparing, ranking, and problem solving tasks:

**a) Listing and ordering tasks:**

Listing means that students have to refer to their previous knowledge and agree on a list of items/ aspects/ features which serve the task goal. The processes involved, according to Willis (1996, a: 26) are:

- ❖ Brainstorming, in which learners draw on their own knowledge and experience either as a class or in pairs;
- ❖ Fact finding in which learners find things out by asking each other;
- ❖ The outcome would be the completed list.

**Ordering tasks,** involve three main types:

- ♣ Sequencing items, actions or events in a logical or chronological order;
- ♣ Categorizing items in given groups under given headings;
- ♣ Classifying items in different ways where the categories are not given (Ur, 1981 and Klippel, 1984: 59).

**b) Comparing tasks:**

These tasks require students to discuss and define differences and similarities between various elements (Klippel, 1984: 59). Hence, students

should be familiar with expressions such as: both, neither, all, something, and nothing in common.....etc (Swain et al, 2002).

### **c) Ranking (rating) tasks:**

In this task, the group has a collection of several concepts, usually expressed in words or short phrases, which all belong to one recognizable set. Students have to rate these and put them in order of priority or importance according to various criteria. The criteria may be given to the group, or they may not be given at all. This rearranging phase is usually followed by a period of discussion, when students explain or defend their choices in pairs or small groups (Willis, 1998). For instance, students can rate personal characteristics in order of their importance for a given role or job. Another example is survival games which are based on an account of a group of people who are in an isolated situation cut from civilization. The students have to decide which of given list of items are most essential for their survival and return home, and to place them in order of priority (Ur, 1981& Bygate, 2002).

As for language functions, ranking tasks enable students to practice agreeing, comparing, contradicting, disagreeing, and giving reasons.

The procedures of using ranking tasks, according to Klippel (1984: 59) are as follows:

- The students are made familiar with the task through an oral presentation by the teacher or by reading some handouts.
- Each student works on his own and writes down his solutions.
- When each student has finished his list, the students sit down together in small groups and try to agree on a common listing, which has to be presented and defended in a final general discussion.

### **d) Problem solving Tasks**

Problem solving tasks are considered the most authentic tasks, since they resemble tasks that take place in real life situations (Bruton, 1999: 7). Problem-solving tasks can't be considered information gap tasks because all participants have the same information. However, it is a reasoning gap task, because

different students will have different opinions on how to solve the problem (Klippel, 1984: 102-103 & Martin, 1997: 131).

Actually, some of the problems require just one correct solution, however, most of the tasks under this category lead to a discussion of several ways of solving the problem. The problem tasks themselves range from the imaginary to the more realistic which the learners might conceivably have to face outside the classroom. Badrawi (1997: 97), Willis (1996 a: 27) and Liao (2001: 40) classified problem solving tasks to: short puzzles, real life problems, guessing tasks and completion tasks.

The language needed for problem-solving tasks depends on the topic of each task, but in general students will have to make suggestions, give reasons, accept, modify or reject suggestions and reasons given by others (Nation, 1991).

#### ❖ **Social interactive tasks:**

These tasks are those involving a relatively detectable degree of role transparency. Examples of these tasks are role-play, drama, scenario, and interviews. Role play and interviews are discussed below.

##### **a) Task -based role plays:**

Role play refers to all sorts of tasks where learners imagine themselves in a situation outside; sometimes playing the role of someone other than themselves (Dinapoli, 2000: 6 and Liao, 2001: 40).

The most critical element to consider when designing role-play tasks is that they should satisfy communicative tasks criteria especially the focus on a certain outcome to be achieved at the end of the task. In other words, role play tasks should include a problem solving element (Willis, 1996,b: 54).

Bygate (1987: 67) and Swain et al. (2002) identify different kinds of role play according to the kind of control practiced as follows:

- Role-playing controlled through cued dialogues.
- Role-playing controlled through situation and goals.
- Role-playing in the form of debate or discussion.

It is apparent that the second and third types conform to the definition of communicative tasks since they give learners a goal to achieve without too much control on what they are supposed to say.

**(b) Interview tasks:**

Interviews can encourage students to share personal information of different kinds. This includes: anecdotes (talking about terrible accidents), personal reminiscences (talking about past regrets of doing or not doing something), attitudes, opinions, preferences (talking about favorite places to go) and personal reactions (what makes you annoyed/ stressed/ happy and so on) (Martin, 1997).

Interviews encourage students to use the necessary question-and-answer structures. With advanced learners, language functions like asking for confirmation (Did you mean that ...? Do you really think that...?) hesitating (well, let me see ...), contradicting and interrupting (hold on a minute) can be practiced as well (Dinapoli, 2000).

Reviewing the previous task classifications, it becomes evident that some of them categorize tasks according to their purpose or according to the distribution of information among participants. Others consider how much freedom of turn taking and negotiation learners are allowed. However, what is obvious in all these classifications is the general overlap between different types of tasks; most of the previously explained tasks can fall under more than one category (O' Brein, 1996).

**Pedagogical proposals of tackling tasks:**

Approaches to instruction which make meaning primary, such as communicative tasks, obviously have considerable appeal in terms of authenticity and linkage with acquisitional accounts of language development. However, there are pitfalls with such approaches, generally stemming from the consequences of putting such an emphasis on meaning (Skehan, 1998: 40). The pitfalls are identified as follows:

□ They over-emphasize communication, which increases the risk of a greater reliance on lexically-based language, strategic behavior and elliptical language. These lexicalized items may become resistant to change and analysis which may lead to fossilization. This implies that foreign language development and foreign language use may enter into some degree of mutual tension since the priorities of real-time language use may distract attention from noticing forms (Yule and Macdonald, 1992).

□ There is no easy means of assuring systematic language development. The reliance is always on negotiation of meaning. The outcome of this negotiation is a conversational behavior, which can be described, as essentially local in character and lacks long terms effect. As a result, it may not be possible to rely on tasks to automatically drive language development (interlanguage) forward (Ellis, 2003).

□ There is little clear connection with a broader theory about second/foreign language acquisition, and the role of noticing, acquisitional sequence, information processing, and so on. As a result, there is insufficient connection with the nature of interlanguage development. This brings us to a final criticism that there is insufficient detail as to how plans can be made and systematic teaching arranged (Skehan, 2002: 291).

Hence, the challenge of using tasks is to contrive sufficient focus on form to enable interlanguage development to proceed without decreasing the naturalness of the communication that tasks can generate. To realize this goal, the main issues addressed by all traditional pedagogic endeavors focused on how tasks are selected and implemented to maximize chances of focus on form.

Prabhu (1987), in this context, advocates the use of pre-task activities to sensitize the need for language form.

More recent proposals on task-based instruction have shared a preoccupation with the importance of the form-meaning relationship, and accept that this relationship is problematic. Loschky and Bley-Verman (1993), for example, distinguish between three structure-to-task relationships:

1     **Naturalness:** where the use of a structure during a task would be unforced, and where alternative structures would do equally well.

2     **Utility:** where the use of a particular structure would help the efficiency of the completion of the task, but could be avoided through the use of alternative structures.

3     **Essentialness:** where, in order to complete a task, a particular structure has to be used. They propose that the teacher has to use the third of these conditions and device tasks which force the use of particular structures to ensure a focus on form.

More recently, Willis (1996, a) proposes that the task should be approached through three stages: pre-task, during task and post task phases. He advocates starting with the task in order to create a need for language. He also stresses the importance for learners to analyze after the task is done.

Although Willis's approach consists of a wide range of activities and guidance as to how instruction can proceed in such a way as to bring form into focus, it does not link effectively with a clear comprehensive foreign language theory. However, the approach adopted by Willis (1996a &b) was the starting point from which Skehan (1998), the proponent of the cognitive approach, started his work.

The cognitive approach assumes that if task-based instruction is to be viable, it has to be situated within a theoretical viewpoint more grounded in contemporary information processing perspective. This will lead to adopting an intermediate position for tackling tasks, in which naturalness of tasks still has importance, but attempts are made, through task choice and methodology, to focus attention on form (Skehan, 1998: 42).

## Conclusion

In this section, communicative tasks were defined. Moreover, factors to be considered in designing tasks as well as task components were elaborated. A classification of tasks was presented and the instructional techniques and advantages of each task type with reference to speaking were illustrated.

Most of the tasks presented were benefited from in the current study taking into account the objectives to be achieved and the language functions to be practiced in each task.

It was then assumed that communicative tasks although beneficial have many problems that have to be solved through applying a sound foreign language acquisition approach based on information processing theory. Fundamentally, in the current study, the cognitive approach is suggested as the theoretical basis upon which communicative tasks can be grounded to achieve long-term language development in general and speaking skills development in particular.

In order to understand how communicative tasks can be applied in the light of the cognitive approach, it is vital to understand the concepts underlying this approach and explore the implications of these concepts in terms of learning/ teaching FL speaking. This is the focus of the next section.

### **III- The Cognitive approach to language learning/Teaching**

This section aims at sketching out the cognitive (psycholinguistic) approach of foreign language learning. This includes presenting the basic concepts underlying this approach and shedding light on the stages of information processing model suggested by the cognitive approach to interpret both language learning and use. Finally, the implications of the cognitive approach in terms of speaking instruction are addressed.

#### **The cognitive approach and language learning:**

The cognitive approach attempts to apply the principles of contemporary cognitive psychology to the domain of second/foreign language learning. In this sense, the theory is derivative as it applies a broader framework to the domain of second/ foreign language research (McLaughlin, 1988: 33).

The cognitive approach searches for explanations of foreign language cognition in terms of mental representations, attention and information processing. It gives due concern to language performance not just competence- a domain that has received less attention than that of competence within the language processing field (Skehan, 1998b: 62).

Interestingly, the cognitive approach deals with the foreign language as a special phenomenon different from first language. As McLaughlin (1990: 113) and Ellis (1994: 26) argue, in the case of foreign language learning the following generalizations apply:

- ◆ There is an existing knowledge system (the L1).
- ◆ The FL learner has considerably greater cognitive abilities and schematic knowledge than the first language learner.
- ◆ Ongoing performance may have an impact upon the nature of language learning.

#### **Concepts underlying the cognitive approach:**

Before presenting the cognitive approach interpretation of foreign language learning and use, it is necessary to highlight some concepts underlying the

information processing model adopted by the cognitive approach. These are as follows:

↗ **The Interlanguage system:** This concept is concerned with the linguistic development the foreign language learner undergoes. The development of this interlanguage system is related to cognitive processes capable of manipulation or change. These processes are divided to those concerned with planning processes and those concerned with monitoring their operation (Skehan, 1998 b: 4).

↗ **Restructuring:** Fundamentally, what makes the learner restructure his interlanguage is the emergence of a new principle that the existing interlanguage violates in some way. The process of restructuring is governed by a set of inference strategies and hypothesis testing (McLaughlin,1990: 146 and Adams, 2003: 352).

↗ **The limited attentional system:** The cognitive approach assumes that the human attentional system is a limited mental resource or capacity. One chooses to attend to some thing at the expense of others, and the use of attentional resources themselves has costs as far as the processing of potential material is concerned (Schmidt, 1993).

Relying on the previous concepts, the cognitive approach describes language learning and use in terms of an information processing model.

### **The Information processing model:**

The information processing model constitutes of three stages: input processing, central processing and output processing. These stages express what happens in the learner's mind during language learning and use- especially during speaking. The information processing model hence attempts to offer explanation of the operations working at each stage:

#### **A: The first stage: input processing**

VanPatten (1996) suggests two principles that govern the processing of input for FL learners:

◆ Learners process input for meaning before processing it for form.

- ◆ Attention to form requires that we give learners more time and lighten the burden on their cognitive capacity so that they can learn these forms.

Hence, it is claimed that in order for input to become intake and be available for further processing, it has to be 'noticed' or 'detected' under consciousness (Tomlin & Villa, 1994; VanPatten, 1996 and Kasper, 2001: 510).

In this phase, consciousness is interpreted, in Schmidt's (1994) terms, as focal attention or "noticing" that is a necessary condition for storing information into long-term memory (Tomlin & Villa, 1994). Analyzing the role of noticing in FL learning, Fotos (1993: 389) proposes that a language learner goes through four steps:

- A feature in the input is noticed, either consciously or unconsciously.
- An unconscious comparison is made between existing linguistic knowledge (interlanguage), and the new input.
- New hypotheses are constructed on the basis of the differences between the new information and the current interlanguage.
- The new hypotheses are tested through attending to input and also through the learner's output using the new form.

Van Patten (1996) provides the following model to show how noticing the input affects language acquisition.



Hence, the framework places noticing in a mediating role between input and the memory system, represented by "intake" which leads to language development. After the input is noticed it is stored in the form of representations to undergo what is called "central processing" this is interpreted in the following section.

## **B: The second stage: Central processing**

Having considered input processing, we need to examine what happens to the input within the system. Three questions immediately arise:

- What sort of information organizational system is involved?
- What sort of processes operate upon such a system?

- What role does learner's awareness play at this phase?

### **1- The sort of organizational system (*the dual mode of processing*):**

Two theories explain how language knowledge is organized in the FL learner's mind: the rule-based system and the exemplar-based system. In the former, it is assumed that what is learned in language consists of many underlying rules which become the basis for generalization and transfer. The rules can be restructurable, when new rules replace the old ones. Thus, it is assumed that the rule-based system is sensitive to feedback. The problem with this system is that it leads to a heavy attentional burden during language use (speaking). Besides, the stored rules take a lot of time to retrieve and apply which renders communication in real time difficult (Moudraia, 2001).

In the latter case, exemplar-based system; learning is interpreted as the accumulation of chunks (lexical phrases/ units). These chunks are stored in a very large memory system, and are governed by few rules. They are then retrieved by the learner as they were stored and used without thinking of the rules underlying their structure. This helps the learner keep with the speed of the ongoing discourse. The problem with this system is that it can't be adapted easily for the expression of new more complex meanings. It is not also responsive to feedback to produce general change in language performance (Wood, 2002: 5).

As argued by cognitive theorists, findings in this area are most consistent with a "*dual mode of processing*" in which there is evidence for both rule-based learning and exemplar-based learning (Celce-Murcia et al., 1997: 146 and Foster, 2001: 90). Clearly, neither the rule-based nor the exemplar system is ideal separately. The former emphasizes representation at the expense of processing while the latter is the reverse. The former leads to the development of an open, form-oriented system, while the latter emphasizes meaning, and is less appropriate for underlying system change. For FL learners, both systems are feasible, but how they exist, or coexist will depend on a range of factors: context of learning, nature of instruction, individual differences and so on. Thus, what is needed for FL learners, to approach first language users, is to help them mobilize both systems in a balanced way as appropriate to different communicative context and goals. When

time is pressing, memory-based communication is appropriate; when there is more time, the rule-based system can be accessed so that they are adaptable to ongoing changes in communication conditions (Skehan, 1998: 91 and Ellis, 2003: 131).

## **2-Processes which operate on the system:**

In addition to the nature of organization, it is important to consider how learning can take place to affect the current organization. The major debate is the contrast between implicit and explicit learning. Implicit learning is incidental and does not involve selective attention to features of input that feed into the learning process. In contrast, explicit learning does involve selective attention and conscious induction of abstract rules (Schulz, 1991 & Schmidt, 1993: 211).

Cognitive approach theorists argue that the two forms of learning have an integrative relationship. There is additional benefit to having both which seems to go further than the simple 'sum of the parts'.

## **3-The role of awareness:**

For Schmidt (1990) and Tomlin & Villa (1994), consciousness in the sense of awareness at the central processing stage enables the learner to notice the gap between his current language system and the language he encounters; this is termed “the matching problem”. Similarly, it is proposed that awareness may enable learners to appreciate better the instruction they are receiving and to recombine and restructure materials. Finally, awareness may help learners operate the “dual mode system” where they may need to combine rule-based and exemplar-based systems during performance.

## **C: The third stage: Output**

In terms of spoken performance output, the cognitive approach adopts what is called “instance based model”. It is assumed that in real time production, FL learners, in order to achieve fluency, rely more on the ready made lexical units stored in their memory (memory based system) than on the rule-based system (Chambers, 1997 and Wood, 2002: 6). So even if a powerful rule system exists, this system is by-passed and the FL language user draws on his memory system to

produce a great deal of language quickly and enable real time communication to proceed.

In other words, language output produced during speaking relies heavily on the learner's existing language system and does not allow a development or (restructuring) of that system, which might lead to "fossilization" if the language used is not correct. This means that during production, focus on form is not naturally connected with communication. Thus, it is crucial to benefit from consciousness in the sense of control which helps the learner to plan on-line and monitor his performance during speaking, thus integrating the newly acquired rules into fluent performance.

Analyzing this framework, the following can be inferred about the information processing system:

- ❖ It doesn't have all the resources to process all the language input received thus it prioritizes meaning, with the result that a focus on form has to be engineered in some way (VanPatten, 1990).
- ❖ It benefits from some degree of *awareness* at different stages (Fotos, 1993).
- ❖ It can produce language more effectively from lexicalized representations unless we provide special processing conditions (Crookes, 1989).
- ❖ It has a tension of the twin goals of wanting to solve current communicational real-time problems to convey meaning (fluency) while also producing and employing correct forms or language rules (accuracy) (Cook, 1994 and Skehan, 1998). A further conflict that FL learners have to handle is one between controlling just simple rules (accuracy) on the one hand, and acquiring more complex rules to change the underlying language system (complexity) on the other hand (Ellis, 2003: 130).

Based on these assumptions, the cognitive approach suggests some instructional principles and strategies that can guide speaking instruction in the foreign language. This is the focus of the coming section.

## **The cognitive approach and speaking instruction:**

Before identifying the implications of the cognitive approach with respect to teaching speaking, it is vital to analyze three concepts/goals underlying linguistic performance in general and speaking in particular. These are: accuracy, complexity, and fluency (Skehan, 1998: 46). Basically these three concepts are used by cognitive approach theorists to describe the learner's overall interlanguage development. To serve the purpose of the current study, the three concepts are considered aspects or levels that determine learners' development with regard to all speaking sub-skills.

The first aspect is **accuracy** or form control which concerns the extent to which the language produced, in terms of grammar, vocabulary, discourse, pragmatic features, conforms to target language norms and the extent to which learners try to produce correct, but possibly limited language (Ellis, 2003: 103).

**Complexity** or restructuring concerns the elaboration of the language that is produced and the ability to use speaking skills in a more native-like way. It reflects the degree of language development. For instance, with respect to discourse competence, complexity can refer to learner's ability to use more elaborated organizational structures (Ellis, 2003: 104).

The last concept, **fluency** concerns the learner's capacity to use speaking competencies (linguistic, discourse and pragmatic) and their sub-skills in real time without undue pauses (Segaowitz, 2000).

Eventually, there is a conflict in achieving these three goals. A focus on accuracy only makes it less likely that interlanguage change (complexity) will occur; more likely that speech will be slow. A focus on complexity increases the chances that new forms/structures will be incorporated at the expense of accuracy and fluency. Finally, a focus on fluency will lead to language being produced more quickly; and with lower priority being attached to getting language right, or to the use of new forms (Foster and Skehan, 1996 and Bygate, 1998).

The cognitive approach provides ways to overcome the difficulties of achieving such conflicting goals. According to this approach, a process has to be contrived so that the foreign language learner can go through two processes parallel to those the

first language learner experiences: "analysis" and "synthesis". On the one hand, the learner needs to be prepared to focus on structure, and to identify patterns. On the other hand, the results of such analysis need to be reintegrated into fluent performance. So, according to Skehan (1998b: 91) "the two processes are in constant dialectic".

Procedurally, the cognitive approach helps FL learners:

- ◆ Practice pre-speaking planning and online planning (Skehan, 1998a).
- ◆ Analyze the spoken language to infer inductively the characteristics of spoken discourse through raising their awareness (Hughes, 2002: 61).
- ◆ Prompt their noticing ability, in the context of interaction, by realizing when they don't know the necessary forms to express a given meaning (Adams, 2003: 252).
- ◆ Self monitor their performance through evaluating their own as well as their peers' oral production (Skehan, 1998a).
- ◆ Use prefabricated and lexical language in an automatic way to achieve fluency (Bygate, 1998b: 31).

The next section will highlight strategies to realize these aims.

### **a- Planning and oral production:**

It was argued by cognitive approach scholars that control may be extended into fluent oral performance through planning and rehearsal (Bygate, 2002: 30).

Planning is defined by Crookes (1989: 380) as involving learners in evaluating what sort of language is needed to complete a given language task, determining whether he or she has command of that language, and taking steps to learn additional lexical items and, plan the use of relevant constructions.

It was defined by Skehan (1998: 67) as the potential to prepare what is going to be said. This potential for preparation introduces a new element which may have interesting effects on a variety of aspects of language performance.

Levelt (1989) distinguishes between three main levels of planning: conceptualization, which focuses on the content of the message; formulation, which is concerned with finding words or phrases to communicate the message;

and articulation, the execution of the precise articulation. These three types of planning are somewhat different, however planning at each level occurs simultaneously.

Bygate (1998b) and Howarht (2001: 41) argue that what teachers do to encourage learners to anticipate what sort of language they will use during planning, is very similar to what second-language users do in real life. In which case, many learners are already consciously using preparation to help themselves to communicate and could be encouraged to do so in class as well.

As was mentioned previously, foreign language learners, especially those with limited proficiency, find it difficult to attend to meaning and form at the same time. However, when they have opportunity to plan the linguistic and propositional content of an upcoming task, they can compensate for these processing limitations (Brown, 1998: 6 and Yuan, & Ellis, 2003: 2).

### **Types of planning:**

The planning discussed here is not confined to explicit planning conducted by the students before performing a task; however it includes a more implicit unintentional kind of planning. Therefore the difference between the two should be clarified.

#### **1- Pre-speaking planning:**

Pre-speaking or explicit planning means giving participants time in advance to plan their speech in terms of words, phrases and ideas. This can be achieved by requiring learners to write notes on a sheet of paper to ensure that they did in fact engage in planning and that there is evidence of this planning to be removed at the end of the planning period (Crookes, 2001: 372 and Ryo, 2005). This kind of planning is termed "strategic planning" by Ellis (2005).

Actually, providing learners with the opportunity to plan in advance encourages them to organize the propositional content and this results in greater fluency during actual task performance. It also helps them handle communicative strains and pressures (Mehnert 1998: 84 and Ryo, 2005). Empirically, it was proved that speech rate increases and total pausing time decreases by giving learners planning

time, but the improvement diminishes with more planning time. Training students on pre-speaking planning, according to Ortega (2005), can lead to the automatization of planning in the long run.

It was assumed by Mehnert (1998: 99) and Ellis (2003: 103) also that the advantage of planning is that it helps to free the learner's attention during speaking and helps him focus on accuracy and complexity rather than relying only on ready-made lexical phrases to cope with real time demands. It also indulges learners in various rule-learning opportunities to foster language acquisition (Ortega, 2005). It was also assumed that pre-speaking planning helps to foster online noticing and hypothesis testing, as well as monitoring during speaking (Mehnert, 1998: 99 and Robinson, 2003: 50).

As for planning conditions, previous studies proved that the teacher-fronted condition generates significant accuracy effects, while the solitary planning condition has greater influence on complexity, fluency and turn length (Foster and Skehan, 1999).

Furthermore, pre-speaking planning was assumed to reduce the amount of online planning necessary (Ortega, 2005). Clearly this implies that there is another kind of planning which needs to be elaborated namely "online planning".

## **2- Online planning:**

Online planning, on the other hand, is defined by Yuan & Ellis (2003: 6), as the process by which speakers attend carefully to the "formulation stage" during speech planning (Yuan and Ellis, 2003: 6). Hence, the difference between pre-speaking planning and on-line planning is that the latter is directed primarily at the first stage of speech processing "conceptualization" (planning propositional content), while on-line planning allows time to attend more closely to "formulation"- grammar and vocabulary.

On-line planning happens inside the speaker's mind; the speaker always thinks during speaking about the words and structures he/she uses. This means that time is of obvious importance for the planning and execution of speech acts during performance (Ryo, 2005). Allowing learners more time to speak is hypothesized to assist the on-line planning and production of speech acts in the following ways:

- ❖ It allows the speaker to search his linguistic resources, especially grammatical, during the formulation stage.
- ❖ It facilitates the process of pre-production and post-production monitoring.

With regards to the effects of these two types of planning on linguistic performance (fluency, accuracy and complexity), it was found out that on-line planning enables learners to improve grammatical accuracy but results in reduced fluency. Pre-task planning, on the other hand, encourages attention to message conveyance that is reflected in both greater fluency and greater lexical variety (Ellis, 2003: 126 and Yuan, & Ellis, 2003: 23).

Therefore, the cognitive approach assumes that it is possible that if learners were able to both pre-plan and plan on-line, the problems of their limited capacity would be reduced and they would be able to give adequate attention to all aspects of language during speaking (Ellis, 2003: 127 and Yuan & Ellis, 2003: 24).

## **B- Explicit vs. implicit speaking instruction:**

The implicit approach of speaking instruction involves setting up lifelike communicative situations in the language classroom and leading learners to acquire communicative skills incidentally by seeking meaning. Theoretical concepts that underpin implicit approaches are related to 'skill-using' and 'communicative practice' (Celce-Murcia et al, 1997: 141; Burns, 1998: 103 & Hedge, 2000).

The explicit approach, on the other hand, includes the process of 'skill-getting' where learners focus on specific micro-skills, strategies and processes involved in speaking. Teaching following this approach adapts various features of direct grammar instruction to the teaching of conversational skills (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1994: 41 and Hedge, 2000).

Cognitive approach theorists support the use of explicit instruction. They argue that this kind of instruction enables learners to acquire explicit knowledge which helps them to monitor their language use (Ellis, 2003: 160). It facilitates noticing of new forms and make possible for students to notice the gap (compare what is noticed in the input with what learners are producing themselves). Explicit instruction of speaking skills, according to Ellis (2002: 164), can be carried out via

direct teaching or discovery learning. The most important strategy pertinent to the latter is “raising consciousness”.

### **Raising learners' consciousness/awareness:**

Given that a focus on form is not naturally guaranteed through speaking activities, a number of cognitive approach investigators have explored what can be done to make it more likely that form in input will be attended to and even noticed. What was suggested was “consciousness raising” (CR), a term referring to increasing learners’ awareness of particular features that are prominent in spoken discourse in more inductive natural ways rather than artificial ones (Fotos, 1993: 386). It implies a certain degree of “*focus on form*” which means, with regard to speaking instruction, emphasizing not only grammatical regularities but also higher level organizational principles or rules governing language use beyond the sentence level (discourse rules, communicative strategies, and pragmatic efficiency) (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1994: 48 and Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003).

Willis & Willis (1996: 64) contrast C-R with other practice activities. Among the characteristics of C-R, they list:

- The attempt to isolate a 'specific linguistic feature for focused attention'.
- The provision of ‘data which illustrate the targeted feature’. This data should be drawn from spoken texts which learners have already processed for meaning.
- The requirement that learners ‘utilize intellectual effort’ to understand the targeted feature.

Raising consciousness can be practiced by helping students focus on characteristics of authentic spoken discourse by themselves (discourse analysis) or by encouraging them to reflect on their own spoken performance (self-monitoring) (Jones, 2001: 155). Both levels of consciousness raising are discussed in the following section:

## 1- Learning through spoken discourse analysis:

The use of discourse analysis in instructional contexts is supported by the "experience model" of language learning. According to this model, students can be placed into the role of language researchers rather than simply being the passive recipients of pre-packaged texts. The analysis and classification of discourse encourage the learner to stand back a little from language and become an observer of it as discourse –analyst rather than just rule –discoverer (Riggenbach, 1990: 159 and McCarthy & Carter, 2001b: 59).

Basturkmen (2002: 26) calls this approach learners-as observers- of -discourse approach. It is also termed “the discovery- based approach” by Ellis, (2002: 164).

It has many advantages. To begin with, it is motivating to students, so they may be more likely to remember what they learned. It encourages students to form and test hypotheses about L2 spoken language rules, which is believed to be central to ultimate acquisition as students can redefine their own rules. Moreover, a discovery approach enables learners to recognize that the rules of the spoken language are conventional rather than logical; they do not always operate on the basis of what students consider to be normal reality (Carter & McCarthy, 1995: 154 and Milne, 2000).

Burns (1998: 114) and Koester (2000: 178) consider this approach a means of raising “metalinguistic knowledge”. According to Willis (1993: 151), if students are exposed to natural language data, and their perception of differences heightened, the explanations which students will generate will be intensely personal, and fully internalized. The powerful insights thus gained, throughout this method, are closely linked to each learner schemata (Riggenbach, 1990: 152). Furthermore, this approach can be very useful in developing students' pragmatic competence (Pohl, 2004).

Practically, there are a number of ways in which such discourse analysis can be carried out (Ellis, 2002: 166). One is by requesting students to identify the examples of the target structure in the data. Another is by highlighting the example in some way, for instance, by italicizing them. Evidently, this implies activities

which involve sorting, matching, identifying and describing, which Lewis (1993: 149-154) considers a kind of student-centered exploration. Throughout this exploration, the teacher can provide learners with good questions about the input, helps them to correct, clarify and deepen their perceptions.

Students can basically hold discussions in L1 to describe what they see. Whatever description students offer must be valued as an important contribution to the learning process. Teachers may help by providing new or better-focused questions. But any contributions of this kind, however, must be made in the spirit of partnership not correction.

Empirically, most of the studies investigating the effectiveness of this approach found out that learners enjoyed the experience of analyzing the spoken data, and that their perceptions of intended speech acts matched closely those of native speaker (Riggenbach,1990:154 and Basturkmen, 2002: 27). Furthermore, it was proved that if students are used to analyze language in this way, they will be able to transfer this to their independent language learning, which may be important for successful language learning (Fotos ,1993; Rose, 1994: 58 and Milne, 2000).

As for the data used in the analysis, Riggenbach (1990) stresses the importance of using written transcripts not just listening to audio material, because listening alone does not provide students with the ability to notice the subtle features of language. To obtain authentic spoken samples, students may make use of real authentic data produced by native speakers or they can use what is called “spoken language corpora” and so they indulge in what is called “corpus/ data –driven learning”.

### **Corpus/data- driven learning:**

The language corpus is a very large collection of authentic language texts (produced by native speakers) which are assembled via computer programs. These texts are available in electronic form on CD-ROM and over computer networks, to access it rapidly. Most of them are domain specific that address generally either the written or the spoken genre (Guillot, 2002: 15 and Tan, 2003).

Accordingly, students can be given the opportunity to use the spoken language corpora as a resource to obtain information about spoken language via activities, which introduce students gradually to data analysis (Sinclair, 1997: 30; Gavioli, 1997: 83 and Tan, 2003). Using these corpora help learners form descriptions of their own different from that learned in textbooks, dictionaries or from teachers. Of course, these descriptions are not perspectives; rather they are subject to critical analysis and revision (Gavioli & Aston, 2001: 242-243 and Hughes, 2002: 61).

Specifically, students are exposed to samples of limited size, “concordances”, which may facilitate identification of recurrent patterns of a semantic or a pragmatic nature (Tribble & Jones, 1990; Pickard et al, 1994: 301; Gavioli, 1997 and Tan, 2003). Analyzing concordances can help students, also, recognize real examples of language use which are recurrent over multiple contexts so provide the learner with an ample view of the authentic use of various expressions. Furthermore, it helps them realize that the meanings of spoken expressions are dependent very much on their context. (Sinclair, 1997: 35; Gavioli, 1997; Tan, 2003 and Nesselhauf, 2003: 223).

Evidently, the focus, with respect to speaking, can be on interactional phrases, vague language chunks, as well as patterns of discourse and how they are signaled. The linguistic features thus identified through concordance can become the focus of language study exercises (Tribble & Jones, 1990).

The discussion up to this point has concentrated primarily on ways in which discourse analytic techniques can be used by EFL learners to examine native speakers' speech. Another focus of consciousness raising is speech produced by language learners themselves or self-monitoring. This is discussed in the coming section.

## **2- Self / Peer-monitoring:**

One way of achieving self –directed learning in speaking instruction is through encouraging students to evaluate their performance. Once alerted to the errors they tend to make, they are more likely to begin to self-correct (Willis,

1998). The key element of awareness raising here is assisting students in developing the ability to compare their performance with some norm (Willis, 1993: 150)

Therefore, with the advent of audio and video recorders, it is now possible to extend the type of self-monitoring that has always been available in writing to the speaking skill. For example, organizational concerns such as the logical progression of ideas and use of appropriate transitions are all features that students can monitor. The linguistic areas of vocabulary and grammar represent another focus of analysis for learners (Thomson, 1992: 525).

In this context, students' transcriptions of a chunk of their own audiotaped discourse may be especially helpful in pinpointing errors, and through subsequent analyses, students can examine how their messages could have been presented more effectively. According to Lynch (2001: 125- 131), this is considered "proof listening" as compared to "proof reading" and it involves learners recording, reviewing and editing their own speech. Clearly, this method reduces the inhibition the students can feel if they are evaluated or given feedback while they are speaking in front of the class.

An effective alternative to student self-analysis of recorded speech samples is to have students serve as each other's critics. Peer students can outline the structure of each others' talk and discuss problems (Riggenbach, 1990: 60).

### **Starting points for raising awareness:**

Whether observing native speakers' performance or their own performance, learners should take into account how native speakers evaluate communication and on which criteria they focus (Yoshida, 2003: 2). According to the cognitive approach, the most important elements students' awareness should be drawn to include elements subsumed implicitly under speaking competences: linguistic, discourse, pragmatic and strategic. For each competence, raising awareness will raise different points (Burns, 1998: 111; Koester, 2000: 18 and Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor, 2003).

First, as far as grammatical competence is concerned, students' awareness should be drawn to how spoken and written languages vary, especially when the setting for the spoken discourse is informal, as with conversations. In other words, instruction should be based on the grammar and vocabulary of spoken language not on that which reflects written norms (Eggings, 1990 and Carter & McCarthy, 1995:141). Furthermore, pronunciation should be focused on through drawing students' attention to the characteristics of speech stream and the sound system (Morely, 1996 and Rajadurai, 2001: 18).

The goal of consciousness raising with respect to pragmatics is not to insist on conformity to particular norms, but rather to help learners become familiar with the range of pragmatic devices and strategies in the target language (Rose, 1994: 52 and Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003). Hence, Students have to be exposed to various speech acts including constituent stages. This is called "conversation routines". To perform the act of apologizing, for instance, the speaker has to acknowledge responsibility, offer repair and give an explanation or excuse (Pearson & Lee, 1992: 113; Foster, 2001 and Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003). Furthermore, students should be made aware that "directness" and "indirectness" is context sensitive and that they should use different degrees of directness according to the context. Barraja-Rohan (2000) and Pohl (2004) claim that conversational analysis represents a conscious attempt at understanding of L2 pragmatic features in conjunction with positive/negative pragmatic transfer from first language (L1). They suggest that the learner should be exposed to four stages to acquire pragmatic characteristics. These are as follows:

- \* Awareness raising phase which includes observation of conversational and interactional phases.
- \* Reflective phase which includes discussion about the feature and cross-cultural discussion.
- \* Experimental phase which includes student's practice of conversations including the target feature.
- \* Introspective phase which includes evaluation of students' conversations and identification of pragmatic transfer from L1.

Finally, elements of discourse competence should be stressed. Apparently, raising students' awareness of spoken language should be genre-specific. This

means that categories and sub-categories of spoken genres can be presented in the classroom and their predictable sequential stages can be analyzed and discussed. This will include also the strategies used by speakers to avoid breakdown, turn taking techniques and the negotiation of meaning strategies employed. In other words, learners can examine how language is structured both at the macro- and micro levels (Burns, 1998: 111 and Sayer, 2005: 15).

Furthermore, discourse devices used in spoken discourse should be addressed. This includes two levels: Micro- level discourse organizers which include lexical phrases used for low-level links between clauses or adjacent sentences ex: (logical connectors, evaluators, summarizers...etc). Macro-organizers, on the other hand, refer only to the discourse devices that signal the organization of transactional discourse which are highly structured, with clear coordinate and subordinate levels (Nattinger & DeCarrico,1992: 105 and Dornyei & Thurrell, 1994: 43).

### **C: Teaching lexical phrases:**

As was argued before, cognitive approach theorists argue that spoken fluency is closely related to the learner's ability to use ready-made lexical phrases (Chambers, 1997; Celce-Murcia et al, 1997: 146 and Moudraia, 2001).

Thus, acquainting foreign language learners with lexical phrases should aim at allowing them to express ideas they are not yet able to construct creatively which ease frustration and help them understand the syntactic rules of the language thus fostering their language acquisition. Furthermore, it can help them to use a word collocational range and restrictions on that range (Lewis, 1998: 15 and Nattinger & DeCarrico,1992: 20). Thus, this lexical perspective implies exposing students to the following:

**1- Collocations and polywords:** .This implies teaching verbs and adjectives that go with each content word. It implies also teaching polywords - short fixed phrases; ex: "how do you do?" (Moudraia, 2001 and Nesselhauf, 2003: 237).

**2. Institutionalized utterances and Sentence heads:** These constitute of phrases and sentences which contain slots which can be replaced either with words, short phrases or complete sentence; ex: a----ago (very long time, day...) (I think that...) (Foster et al., 2000; Lewis, 2001: 51-52 and Pohl, 2004).

## Conclusion

In this section, light was shed on the cognitive approach of language learning and different concepts underlying it. It mainly focused on how the cognitive approach is helpful in explaining foreign language learning in general and learning speaking in particular. Language learning was explained in terms of an information processing model including three stages (input, central processing, output). This model supplied an organizing framework for more detailed discussion of the functioning of each separate stage. Generalizations which emerge from this model indicate how attentional resources are limited, and that this constraint has far-reaching effects on foreign language processing and use specially in speaking. Therefore, it was suggested that conditions should be set up so that form is noticed and chances maximized so that such noticing can connect with underlying interlanguage development.

Thus, various pedagogic issues were raised with respect to teaching speaking. Most of them focused on planning and techniques for raising learners' awareness so that a focus on form is guaranteed and a long term change in interlanguage system is realized. Particularly, the following was recommended:

- ❖ Encouraging students to plan before they indulge in oral performance.
- ❖ Adopting an explicit approach to teaching speaking sub-competencies including raising students' consciousness to features of the spoken discourse.
- ❖ Adopting a data-driven perspective to teaching spoken genres features.
- ❖ Enhancing students' self-evaluation during and after speaking.
- ❖ Emphasizing the lexical dimension of speaking by training students on noticing and using lexical phrases.

It was argued that these implications should be taken into account when designing communicative tasks to develop speaking skills. These implications eventually help overcome some of the problems inherited in tasks and capitalize on their advantages for FL speaking instruction. Hence, the starting point is to devise means for integrating the cognitive approach suggested teaching strategies and communicative tasks to support speaking instruction.

The next section thus attempts to provide a framework for integrating the cognitive approach and communicative tasks, that takes into account the discussion presented so far.

## **IV- Integrating communicative tasks and the cognitive approach**

### **(Exploring the middle ground)**

#### **Rationale for the integration:**

Obviously, both the cognitive approach and communicative tasks represent two distinct theoretical frameworks, namely socio-cultural and information processing theories. Each theory has its own perspective and hence shortcomings (Kasper, 2001: 525). Tasks aim at giving learners confidence in trying out whatever language they know and give them experience of spontaneous interaction (Ellis, 2003: 80 and Feneey, 2006: 199). Hence, communicative tasks are mainly directed at improving students' abilities to achieve communication in real time.

However, the theoretical perspective supported by the cognitive approach suggests that it cannot be assumed that achieving communicative effectiveness via task performance will set up the necessary conditions that promote longer-term language acquisition ( McCarthy and Carter, 2001b: 59).

Accordingly, as was mentioned before, a need emerges to bring about an interaction between the two theoretical frameworks (the cognitive approach and communicative tasks). Communicative tasks based on the cognitive approach will thus attempt to bridge the gap between current research on cognitive approach and current application of tasks to achieve communicative goals (Burns, 1998: 104).

This integration between the two perspectives is considered a “principled communicative approach” by Celce-Murcia (1997). This means that the communicative approach (tasks) is applied in a more systematic way to help develop FL learners' speaking ability and interlanguage system.

#### **A framework of task based instruction:**

From a cognitive perspective, a task is a device that guides learners to engage in certain types of information-processing that are believed to be important for effective language use and language acquisition (Ellis, 2000: 198 and Feneey, 2006: 200). Thus, the cognitive approach attempts to provide an organizational framework

that can structure the ways in which tasks are implemented. The underlying assumption supporting this framework is that task-based learning should manipulate the learner's focus of attention; and that there should be balanced development towards the three goals of complexity, accuracy, and fluency (Ellis, 2003: 130).

Eventually, three main general procedures were proposed as the basis for planning and designing a framework for task –based instruction conforming to the cognitive approach, these are as follows:

❖ **Choosing a range of target structures:**

It was proposed that particular forms cannot be taught in any guaranteed way, but, in contrast, fertile conditions can be set up which maximize the chance that development will occur. Thus, it is required to determine a set of target structures, skills or elements which may be made salient in attentional terms, and the intention is simply to create favorable conditions rather than require particular aspects of language forms to be internalized.

❖ **Selecting and sequencing tasks to achieve balanced goal development:**

The purpose of having a system for analyzing task difficulty is that it allows tasks to be selected and sequenced according to some principled basis. The rewards, if tasks are well-chosen, are: an effective balance between fluency and accuracy and the opportunity for previous restructuring to be applied (Carr and Curren, 1994; Robinson, 2001: 40 and Robinson, 2003). Moreover, tasks should be sequenced gradually to approximate real life language use situations (Robinson, 2000 and Ellis, 2003: 235).

The cognitive approach claims that tasks can be categorized according to four main criteria:

**Type of information included:** More cognitively familiar information will certainly be easier and is certainly associated with greater fluency, but such is not likely to extend proficiency in the language so effectively. Similarly, concrete information as the basis for tasks is likely to be easier but ultimately restricting, so that it is important to include some abstract tasks (Ellis, 2003).

**Task organization:** Structured information seems to lead to greater accuracy and fluency, particularly with planning time is available. Less structured information and disorganized information produce greater complexity, again especially when linked to planning (Skehan, 1998: 66 and Ellis, 2003: 127).

**Operations** carried out in tasks are similarly two-edged. Clearly, more complicated operations, with many elements or relationships, and of an unpredictable nature are going to be more difficult. However, once again, learners will need to be able to handle tasks other than simple ones (Robinson, 2003).

As for **task output**, convergent tasks are considered preferable to divergent tasks, since they trigger more negotiation of meaning. In contrast, there must also be opportunities to produce more complex discourse, involving longer turns; hence divergent tasks should be included as well (Prabhu, 1987; Pica et al., 1993 and Brown, 2001).

According to these factors, it can be guaranteed that tasks representing different dimensions are present in the instructional treatment to ensure balanced development of the goals of accuracy, fluency and complexity (Ellis, 2003: 103 and Robinson, 2003).

### ❖ **Implementing tasks to manipulate attentional focus**

This means that there is a need for a provision of a most effective opportunity to focus learners' attention on form in the context of meaningful language use (Willis, 1996b: 52). To provide this opportunity, as Howarth (2001: 41) argues, a process-based approach to speaking should be adopted which follows this sequence:



According to Skehan (2002: 294), Ellis (2003: 250) and Feneey (2006: 201), This process-based and focus on form can be guaranteed in task-based instruction as follows:

- ❖ At initial stages of task use, conditions need to be established to maximize chances of noticing.

- ❖ In the task completion phase, effective attentional conditions need to be engineered so that form is on focus. Specifically, this means that attentional demands which arise out of a task need to be of appropriate level so as to ensure that transacting tasks do not consume all attentional resources.
- ❖ There must be also opportunity for reflection and awareness after the task is accomplished so that whatever is accomplished during a task can be processed more deeply and consolidated.

Accordingly, the suggested strategy of the present study consists of three main stages (pre-task, during task and post task). Under each stage, various activities and teaching strategies are included (Bruton, 1999: 4).

### ✍ Pre task Stage:

The pre-task stage may not try to predict what language will be needed, but instead give learners a pre-task to do, and then equip them with the language that they need (Willis, 1996 a& b). Thus, it could be inferred that there are a number of reasons for engaging in pre-task activities, these are as follows:

**a- To introduce new language:** The pre-task stage can be useful as one means of introducing new elements into the interlanguage system. It helps also to activate topic related words, phrases and target sentences that will be useful in carrying out the task (Rooney, 2000: 2).

**b- To promote restructuring in the underlying language system.** Foreign language acquisition is not simply a cumulative process. Hence pre task stage triggers a reorganization of existing structures (Willis, 1998: 2).

**c- To mobilize language and recycle language.** Part of the function of pre-task activities is to cause the learner to bring to prominence material which is stored, but which may not be active. This corresponds to Chafe's (1994), in Skehn (1998: 138), notion of a 'semi active level of consciousness.

Very close to the previous point, is the need to bring back to consciousness language which we may not have used for a while, and which needs to be reactivated. The difference is that "recycling" language may be

more specific in orientation, rather than creating conditions which enable the learner to "mobilize" whatever language seems relevant.

**D- To ease processing load:** It may be important to use the pre-task phase to clarify ideas that will need to be expressed, either by retrieving relevant information into the foreground, or by drawing learners into thinking through task demands (Van Patten, 1994). The result will be that more complex language can be attempted (Crookes, 1989) and greater accuracy can be achieved as well.

**F- To push learners to interpret tasks in more demanding ways:** Pre-task work can cause learners to be more ambitious in what they try to say. This may well be crucial in pushing learners to try out new forms of language which they feel they do not yet control effectively but which are worth experimenting with. In this way, pre task work motivates learners to use more complex structures to express meaning (Rooney, 2000: 2 and Skehan, 1998: 138).

### **Types of pre-task activities:**

Pre-task activities of three major types can be used: teaching; consciousness raising; and planning.

#### **♣ Teaching**

Teaching is clearly concerned with the introduction of new language, and perhaps with restructuring. It may be explicit (and of a more traditional sort), or implicit in which learners need to search for generalizations. According to the cognitive approach, speculated inductive approaches may be more effective to achieve restructuring of the underlying system, as the new elements of language which emerge inductively are related more effectively to the developing underlying system (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1994: 41 and Brown, 1998: 6). Teaching can be used with all speaking skills, for instance to teach students how to interact effectively they are taught what is called "conversational routines" to enhance their conversation management skills and thus their discourse competence (Foster, 2001 and Adams, 2003: 349).

### ♣ **Consciousness raising**

This sort of activities change the learner's awareness of elements of the task before it is done, with the result that the task is then approached and performed differently (Kumaravadivelu, 1993 and Rose, 1994: 59).

Consciousness raising activities might require students to find particular aspects of language or classify some corpus of language. It might include exposure to material with some aspects highlighted (Doughty, 1991). Similarly, applying the strategy of discourse analysis, learners could observe similar tasks being completed on video, or they could listen to or read transcripts of comparable tasks, perhaps done by native speaker, but with guidance as to what should be focused upon. The goal is to help learners derive from the data information as to how current communicative goals can be achieved (Aston, 1997: 267).

As shown before, at this stage, students' attention can be drawn to skills included under speaking competencies: linguistic, pragmatic, and discourse competence (Kumaravadivelu, 1993 and Sayer, 2005: 21). For instance, students can be required to pragmatically analyze examples of different strategies used in realizing the targeted speech acts and consider the contextual factors influencing the choice of such strategies.

### ♣ **Planning**

A task done without planning time is more likely to lead students to choose relatively undemanding language. Hence planning helps to ensure that any thing learned through consciousness raising or teaching can be drawn upon during language use and production, and that learners do not rely excessively on lexical based phrases in their speaking. As was proved by research, the following can be concluded about planning:

- Different lengths of time available for planning influence performance in different ways (Robinson, 2003);
- Planning time available for complex tasks has a more dramatic effect than with easier tasks which draw on more familiar information (Foster and Skehan, 1996);

- Online planning can be facilitated by giving learners more time to fulfill the task goals (Yuan and Ellis, 2003 and Ryo, 2005);
- Teacher-led planning is preferable to solitary planning as it is more standardized; and it is likely to introduce a greater level of efficiency and organization (Foster and Skehan, 1999: 223).
- Undetailed planning produces the highest levels of accuracy; while detailed planning serves the goal of complexity (Foster and Skehan, 1996 and Ellis, 2000: 126).

As McDonough and Mackey (2000: 89) and Albert (2004: 279) argue, detailed guided planning for spoken tasks might include urging students to think of the following:

- Problems the listener can have, and how they can be solved.
- How to help the listener understand the structure of discourse, ex. (the order of the events in narrative accounts).
- Ways to make sure the listener won't get lost through checking understanding.
- Grammar and vocabulary needed to do the task.
- How to avoid difficulties and solve problems with grammar and vocabulary.

### **During -task stage:**

The main factor affecting performance during the task is the choice of the task itself. Tasks should not be so difficult that excessive mental processing is required. Nor should tasks be so easy that learners do not engage seriously, with the result that no gain is made in term of stretching interlanguage or developing greater automaticity (Kumaravadivelu, 1993 and Willis, 1998).

But in addition to task choice, there are implementation decisions that teachers can make to alter the difficulty of a task, and manipulate the way in which attention is directed. Thus, two general aspects of during-task activity will be covered: Manipulation of attention and the extended task procedure.

### **a- Manipulation of attention:**

A number of choices which may influence attentional availability are available to the teacher. These will be considered to affect the communicative stress within which task performance operates. These are: time pressure, support, control and stakes.

- **Time pressure:** Other things being equal, it is assumed that greater time pressure will mean that there is less time for attention to form either in terms of accuracy or complexity. However, time limit should be stated for each task (Furuta, 2002: 18).
- **Support:** Basically, if support is provided during the task, it can ease attention management, since it can give the learner information which does not then need to be retained in memory (Skehan and Foster 1998: 143).
- **Control:** It is also possible that learners themselves have a role to play during the task. For example, they can give themselves more time to do the task, or reduce the task to content which is easier for them to handle (Kumaravadivelu, 1993).
- **Stakes:** This is concerned with learners' goals during performing the task. For instance, asking students to conform to the use of certain structures and to use them accurately will lead to students' achieving less acceptable levels of fluency and using cutting edge language structures (Foster and Skehan, 1997).

### **B-Attention and more extended task procedures**

This is concerned with how tasks are structured in a more extended manner. Willis (1996b) and Rooney (2000: 2) suggest that within this stage there are the three phases: (1) doing the task, (2) engaging in planning for post-task, and (3) reporting.

#### **1- Doing the task:**

This phase allows students to use and test whatever language they possess (Asato, 2003 and Ellis, 2003). At this stage, the teacher's role is to circulate within the class and help learners formulate what they want to say, but not to

intrude, and least of all to correct the language which is produced. The task sensitizes the learner to the language, which needs to be used; in that it links with subsequent pedagogic activities, which are intended to build upon what language the task has sensitized the learner to. The emphasis is on spontaneous, exploratory talks and confidence built within the privacy of small groups (Willis, 1996b: 56).

The patterns of interaction at this stage, according to Furuta, (2002: 18), take one of the following forms:

- ❖ Individual students circulating, talking to different students.
- ❖ Students doing a task singly then exchanging ideas in pairs.
- ❖ Students in pairs (as equals or with one student leading).
- ❖ Students in groups.

Logically, pair work allows more individual student talk in a given time than group work.

## **2- Planning for presentation:**

In the planning stage, learners may prepare themselves for the coming report. At this stage, groups who are preparing are encouraged to draft, redraft, and rehearse what they are going to say. The purpose of this stage is to stimulate a natural desire in the learners to improve upon their language (Willis, 1996a: 147 and Willis, 1998). Students can use corrective feedback to each other or from the teacher. The purpose of rehearsal at this stage is for the reporter to correct grammatical mistakes and check that the content of the report covers the opinions that the members of the group mentioned in their discussion (Furuta, 2002: 20).

During the planning period, the teacher should be available to answer any questions concerning vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. This means that the language supplied will be in response to perceived students' need. Moreover, the students are provided with many resources such as grammar books, corpus-driven data and dictionaries. Students could also be given special roles such as writer of notes, user of the dictionary, and presenter. The emphasis is on clarity, organization and accuracy as appropriate for a public presentation (Willis, 1996b: 57; Guillot, 2002 and Hughes, 2002: 61).

### 3- Reporting:

According to Willis (1998), reporting gives students a natural stimulus to upgrade and improve their language. It represents a linguistic challenge.

In the report stage, the results of the planning bear fruit, and one or more groups/pairs (but not necessarily all) make a report to the other class members telling them what they achieved in their groups. This is the public performance which itself heightens attention to form and accuracy, and which also constitutes the validating activity for the previous planning.

At this stage, the teacher should indicate what kind of information students are going to look for or listen to in each other's reports and what they will do with the information provided (Furuta, 2002: 20 and Rooney, 2003). The purpose of the report will differ according to the type of the task. For example, in a problem-solving task; the report will ask students to compare and list strategies of solving the problem, evaluate solutions, or vote on the best solution. On the other hand, in an ordering and listing task, students are asked to publicly justify their priority to persuade each other (Willis, 1996b: 57).

After each presentation, the listeners are invited to ask questions of the speaker and/or make comments. The teacher can comment on the content of the reports, rephrase but gives no public correction (Norman, 1996: 599).

#### Post -task stage:

Eventually, after the two preceding phases of pre-task and during- task, there should be some degree of language focus where a variety of activities can be engaged in. These, may be of a consciousness -raising nature, where further input is provided and learners are required to process this input in a way which makes pattern regularities or features more salient. Alternatively, there may be some degree of explicit focus on a particular aspect of the spoken language system. There may even, at this stage, be some degree of practice oriented work (Willis, 1998). But, importantly the focus on language comes after a task has been done with the intention that any language which is focused upon is relevant to learners and

required for a communicative purpose. The underlying assumption at this stage is that learners have to be reminded that fluency is not the only goal during task completion, and that restructuring and accuracy also have importance. So post- task activities provide another means of inducting effective use of attention during tasks, and of balancing the various goals that are desirable (Koester, 2000: 176).The two steps involved here are:

**a. Altering attentional balance:**

Regarding attentional balance, the central problem is that one cannot interfere with the way the task is being done without compromising the central quality of a communicative approach, primacy of meaning. As an alternative to within-task interference, the same goal may be achieved by making students aware during their task performance of the post-task activity to come. In other words, it is assumed that the foreknowledge of certain post task activities will lead the learners to allocate slightly more attention to form during the task, rather than prioritizing task completion to the exclusion of other goals (Nunan, 2005: 122). Post task activities assumed to have such effect are as follows:

- **Awareness that task-based performance will be recorded and analyzed**
- **Awareness of an upcoming public performance**

Task performance can be recorded on videos or tapes, and then learners in their own groups can analyze their performance in terms of form or communicative effectiveness thus promoting their self-directed learning potential. Other researchers advocate requiring students to transcribe segments (of one minute or so) of what has been said during the task to increase their awareness of their own performance (Willis, 1998). To facilitate transcription, the teacher has to determine an approximate word limit (Willis, 1996a: 96). The analysis can be in terms of accuracy, complexity, and use of particular structures (Skehan, 1998). At one level, this requires the development of meta-cognitive (self- evaluation) skills on the part of the learner. At another, it requires a willingness to become involved with language itself and to direct attention to this area so that emerging structures can be internalized more effectively (Skehan, 1998: 28).

In public performance, on the other hand, learners are asked, after they have completed a task, in the privacy of their own group, to repeat their performance publicly in front of some sort of audience (Willis, 1998). The audience could be the rest of a learning group, (who themselves may also have been doing the same task), the teacher, or even a video camera. In this way, a concern with syntax and analysis can be infiltrated into the task work without the heavy-handedness of teacher intervention and error correction. Clearly, once students are clear as to what happened in terms of their oral performance, they are in a better position to see what they need to do in order to improve (Foster & Skehan, 1996: 303 and Ellis, 2003: 152).

These learner-centered activities aiming at self-analysis or self-evaluation are termed “process evaluation activities” by Legutke and Thomas (1993: 149), who claim that exposing learners to such activities can provide them with an overview of their own learning and involvement in the planning and organization of future learning. They also provide essential feedback for the teacher on the execution of the task and the students’ proficiency. This self-evaluation is done with reference to feedback sheets. The sheets should be staged and selective if it is to avoid swamping the students (Nolasco and Arthur, 1987: 118). In addition, the teacher has to avoid using jargon and the evaluation sheet should be worded as simply as possible.

### **b- Reflection and consolidation**

For the second aim, reflection and consolidation, the issue is to encourage learners to restructure, and to use the task and its performance as input to help in the process of ‘noticing the gap’ and handling the shortcomings in the underlying interlanguage system that the noticing has revealed. The aim of this stage is to promote observation through identification and critical investigation of spoken discourse linguistic features (Willis, 1996a: 103 and Hughes, 2002: 61). It also helps them build security and confidence with their learning (Asato, 2003).

Willis (1996b) proposes that learners can be given activities which require them to: identify- consolidate, classify (either structurally or semantically), hypothesize-check and search for patterns.

This stage can be divided into two main activities, namely, analysis of the grammatical elements, functional points and vocabulary used during the task and practicing the outcome of the analysis. This practice helps to reinforce the speaking skills in a natural way (Furuta, 2002: 19).

For the activities aiming at analysis, there is potential, at this stage, for the use of well-chosen (authentic or spontaneous) spoken texts to be the basis for analysis. The user-friendly concordance softwares (corpus driven language) might be especially useful in this regard. Such possibility may be particularly effective in cases where previous task-based work has been able to highlight areas of language which would be ideal for further hypothesis testing (Tribble & Jones, 1990). Of course, students can ask the teacher individual questions and go on to investigate other features that they notice. The important thing is that they are all working at their own level and at their own pace and making discoveries that are meaningful to them (Willis, 1998: 103 and Guillot, 2002).

Basically, students' attention may be drawn to grammar and vocabulary. This includes attention to words and parts of words, especially those which make up a very large proportion of spoken texts. These are referred to as grammatical words. Activities with words, according to Willis (1996a: 109) and Nesselhauf (2003: 230), might include:

- ❖ Exploring collocations: students can be given two or three familiar collocations from a transcript, and asked to use a dictionary to find other useful ones based on the same verb or noun.
- ❖ Classification according to grammatical function
- ❖ Exploring meaning and effect of alternative choices of form.

Pronunciation should also be a factor to be put into consideration. Actually, the goal is for students to realize “comfortable intelligibility” which can be understood with little effort on the part of the listener (Rajadurai, 2001: 11). The pronunciation activities include awareness raising, listening discrimination activities, controlled practice and feedback, and guided practice and feedback (Morely, 1996 and Florez, 1998).

**Activities aiming at practicing at this stage might include:**

↻ **Repetition:** Repetition of useful phrases or dialogues can be done by individuals, students in pairs, or, if led by the teacher, with the whole class in chorus or in large groups, with each group taking one part (Swain, 2002).

↻ **Listen and complete:** Teams or pairs write a list of useful phrases or sentences. One learner says half or a little more of each item; other students complete. The first team or pair to complete it successfully gets a point (Riggenbach, 1990).

↻ **Gapped examples:** Learners (singly or in pairs) write out a list of five or ten useful sentences from the transcript, omitting one word or phrase from each one. They exchange with a partner or another pair, who has to complete them from memory. Or they can read them out to the whole class for completion (Riggenbach, 1990).

↻ **Rearranging parts of a conversation into the right order:** To help students understand the discoursal characteristics of spoken language, they can be asked to rearrange texts relying on discourse devices employed to begin, terminate or change the topic of the conversation (Skehan, 1998 and Furuta, 2002).

↻ **Pattern practice drills:** These include practicing phrases for conversational maintenance, particularly those of nominating and clarifying topics; speech acts like expressing politeness, requesting, questioning; and phrases to connect utterances and fill pauses to give a feeling of fluency and coherence. Eventually, pattern practice drills help students gain fluency with certain basic fixed conversational routines (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992: 119 and Milne, 2000).

↻ **Controlled variation:** This can be introduced to the students with the help of simple substitution drills. The goal would be to have learners segment and introduce new patterns of their own on analogy with the kind of analysis they do in the classroom (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992: 117 and Riggenbach, 1998).

↻ **Exchange structures:** These are structures that describe expected sets of successive utterances. For instance, a summon is usually followed by a response, a closing is followed by a parting, an assertion by acceptance or disagreement. All

these exchanges should be practiced with the appropriate linking discourse devices to give conversations coherence and fluency (McCarthy & Carter, 2001b).

Although it might seem at the first sight that this stage focuses on separate speaking sub-skills, it should be noted that this emphasis is the result of analysis of students' common errors and language needed during the task itself. Consequently, this does not contradict with the idea that speaking sub-skills should be taught in the context of speaking as a whole.

It was assumed that the task-based instruction strategy, in this integrative sense, realizes the four optimum conditions of language learning. These are: exposure, use, motivation and instruction (Willis, 1998).

Exposure is achieved at the pre-task stage through exposing learners to authentic texts and exposing them to direct teaching. Students experience also a high quality of language exposure during the task through group work and negotiation of meaning (Asato, 2003). Students are exposed to input and instruction at the post task stage through focusing on specific language features.

Use of language occurs in the opportunities given to students to express themselves spontaneously and in planned ways. This happens during the task and at the post- task stage. Group work helps students also negotiate meaning as they ask for information, seek clarification, and use circumlocution. Willis (1996a) argues that the pre and during task stages ensure a smooth transition from private to more public interaction, each has it useful characteristics as follows:

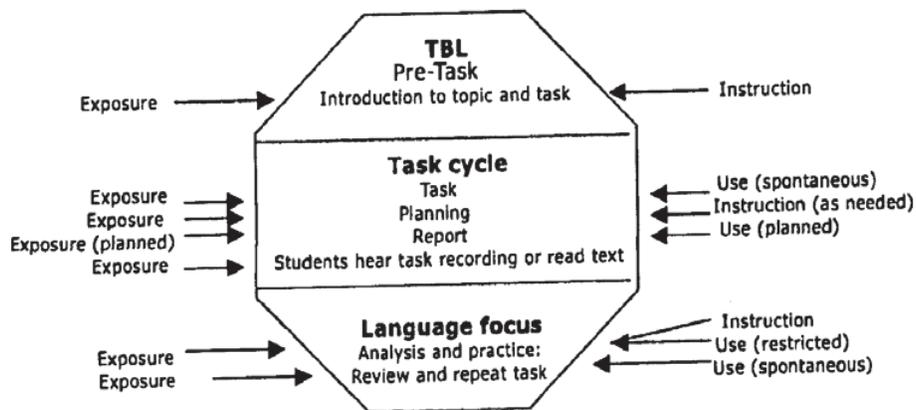
Private interaction	Public interaction
In pairs or small groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spontaneous</li> <li>• Explanatory</li> <li>• Ephemeral</li> <li>• Focus on meaning and conveying message</li> <li>• Correction rarely requested</li> </ul>	Talking to whole class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planned</li> <li>• Rehearsed</li> <li>• Permanent (recorded)</li> <li>• Focus on accuracy, fluency, and organization.</li> <li>• Correction is required</li> </ul>

(Willis, 1996a: 55 and Willis, 1998).

Motivation in task based instruction is sustained by providing learning environments where students can willingly practice risk taking without being afraid of mistakes (Feneey , 2006: 200).

Finally, instruction proved to be effective in helping students use appropriate learning strategies (Willis, 1998 and Feneey, 2006: 199). At the pre-task stage the teacher introduces the topic and the new language which increase students' confidence and interest in the topic of the task. At the during-task stage, the teacher acts as a language adviser and provides feedback. He acts also as a facilitator who encourages students to explore, identify and practice specific speaking skills at the post task stage.

The framework of task-based instruction in the light of the optimum conditions of learning is as follows:



*Figure (3)*  
*Task based instruction and optimum conditions for language learning*

## Conclusion

This section focused on the suggested model of task-based instruction designed in the light of the cognitive approach principles.

Actually, the model attempts to overcome the problems of communicative tasks and enhance language learning on a sound theoretical basis that takes into consideration cognitive mechanisms underlying foreign language learning.

Throughout the three stages (pre, during and post task), students are exposed to various opportunities to focus on form in a natural way.

In summary, examining this framework shows how students use and experience language in task-based instruction in a radically different way from traditional methods. This is as follows:

- All three phases are genuinely free of language control and learners rely on their own linguistic resources.
- The task supplies a genuine need to use language to communicate, and the other components follow on naturally from the task.
- In all three phases, language is used for a genuine purpose - there are outcomes to achieve for the task and the purpose of the drafting, rehearsal and practice at the planning stage is to help learners adjust their language for the report stage.
- There is a genuine need to achieve accuracy, complexity and fluency so it is no longer a question of either accuracy or fluency at any one point in the task cycle.

## General conclusion

This chapter has been a key one in the sense that it presented a detailed overview of the main concepts underlying the current study.

First, speaking as a fundamental skill was defined, and its component skills were analyzed and a need was set to develop these skills in a structured manner that ensure the use of these skills during real time performance.

Therefore, using tasks as activities derived from communicative language teaching, was considered an attempt to confront the need to engage naturalistic learning processes as a means of enhancing language use and hence language acquisition.

However, it was proved that simply providing tasks to be completed, under some circumstances will over-emphasize a lexicalized approach to language performance. In other words, although communicative tasks can lead to interlanguage change to be more likely to occur, it is also important that any change be drawn upon during normal language use and production.

Thus, it was assumed that drawing on cognitive psychology, will help to set a framework which avoids or at least minimizes these problems. The cognitive approach accepts that language learning is not any sort of simple, linear, cumulative process. Instead, learners must be able to develop their interlanguage systems in more complex ways, through cycles of analysis and synthesis.

Therefore, it was proved that integrating both the cognitive approach and communicative tasks can provide a useful approach for teaching speaking skills. This approach gives learners the opportunity to slow the language production process down in order to give themselves the time to experiment, analyze and improve that language to avoid relexicalising inaccurate language, which can lead to fossilization (Howarth, 2001: 44).

The discussion in the previous chapter thus suggests that there are methods of analyzing tasks, both for difficulty and for type, and that as a result; we can try to work with syllabus in a well-defined and principled way. Moreover, a detailed

teaching strategy for task based instruction was suggested. The strategy is composed of three stages:

- ♣ Pre-task stage
- ♣ During task stage
- ♣ Post task stage

Pre-task activities can include inductive learning activities; consciousness-raising activities; and pre-task planning. During the task stage implies speaking spontaneously focusing on fluency and using whatever language is available. Post-task activities include reflection, consciousness-raising activities, as well as public performance and post-task analysis-oriented activities. These activities enable learners to allocate their attention differently between form and meaning while they are completing an earlier task.

Accordingly, this task- based instruction approach (TBI) is adopted in the current study taking into consideration the students' level and the speaking objectives to be fulfilled.

## Review of related studies

This chapter presents a survey of the studies related to task- based instruction and the cognitive approach and their effectiveness in developing the speaking skills.

The first section tackles the studies concerned with the effectiveness of using communicative tasks in developing speaking proficiency in English as a foreign/second language.

The second section tackles studies concerned with the implications of the cognitive approach in terms of teaching speaking. It tackles some of the techniques congruent with this approach and examines their effectiveness in developing various speaking competencies.

The third section reports on research attempting to integrate the communicative tasks and the cognitive approach principles. This section is divided into two main parts. The first one concentrates on studies dealing with communicative tasks features, such as task information, task goals, learners' factors and familiarity with the task. The results of these studies benefited cognitive approach researchers in sequencing tasks and manipulating syllabus organization.

The second part deals with studies concentrating on methodological issues related to handling tasks that aim at developing speaking through the techniques suggested by the cognitive approach within a framework consisting of three stages: pre-task, during task and post task.

## **I: Communicative tasks and developing speaking:**

In this section, studies supporting the use of communicative tasks as a means of developing speaking proficiency and speaking skills in SL/ FL are reported. These studies analyzed in detail how communicative tasks can procedurally be defined in ESL/EFL contexts. They also examined how tasks can affect students' grammatical, discourse and pragmatic competences.

**Nation (1991)** conducted a study which focused on problem-solving tasks and used them to develop the speaking skills of a group of 35 intermediate students who were learning English as a second language in England.

The strategy adopted to apply problem solving tasks was as follows: focusing on a learning goal and topic; deciding on the problem and outcome; specifying the context of the problem; and splitting the information and assigning roles. In other words, each student was given a part of the information and was asked to exchange it with his classmate to solve the assigned problem.

The students' development was assessed throughout a speaking posttest designed to satisfy the study goals.

The results of the study supported the effectiveness of problem solving tasks in developing learners' overall speaking proficiency.

**Newton and Kennedy (1996)** attempted to determine the effect of communicative tasks not just on overall oral performance but on sub-competencies subsumed under speaking, namely grammatical, discourse and pragmatic competencies.

Thus, they conducted a study to examine the effect of applying communicative tasks on adult upper-intermediate learners' oral production in general and their grammatical, discourse and pragmatic competence in particular which occurred during their interaction.

The sample of the study consisted of 40 ESL pre- university students. The students' performance during doing the tasks was recorded and analyzed to examine the underlying skills.

The tasks used were of two types: those based on giving learners different pieces of information (split information) to exchange, and those based on giving same information (shared information) to deal with.

The results indicated that communicative tasks influence the occurrence not only of more or less talk and negotiations but also of particular linguistic features and structures. Split information tasks encouraged more interaction and negotiation than shared information tasks. However, it was concluded that the shared information tasks can be used to encourage reasoning, argumentation, and other pragmatic skills.

**O'brein (1996)** examined the effectiveness of a course based on communicative tasks to develop speaking proficiency among advanced non-native speakers aged from 17 to 40.

Three elements were applied throughout the course: 1) ongoing need assessment, 2) collaboration between the teacher and students in designing the tasks and 3) regular students' assessment of their accomplishment of the task.

The students' progress was measured via a speaking test applied individually to students. In addition, attitude assessments were administered.

The course proved to be effective in developing students' speaking proficiency as it created conditions in which they were able to engage in meaningful interaction while their attention was focused not on explicit features of the language but on understanding the message and using the language they felt they needed. Moreover, students acquired positive attitudes toward the course as they felt that they were an integral part of defining the content and style of the course.

Similarly, **Bygate (1999)** attempted to use other types of tasks and investigated their effectiveness both in terms of overall speaking performance, grammatical as well as discourse competence. The study examined the spoken performance of EFL Hungarian secondary school students on two types of unscripted task - an argument task and a narrative task. In the first task, students indulged in an opinion gap activity, as they had to share their opinions and reach a

final consensus. On the other hand, the narrative task was a one-way activity in which students told a story they just read about to their partners.

The students' progress was measured through a speaking test and a grammar test that focused on grammatical patterns and structures used by students.

The study reported significant improvement in the learners' oral performance and grammatical competence apparent during their speaking. It was concluded that both communicative (argumentative) and narrative tasks can contribute to language development by leading learners to establish a routinized relationship between task and language. This means that each task helps students practice the interactional routines associated with its genre which improves EFL learners' discourse competence.

**Dinapoli (2000)** examined how linguistic and pragmatic elements can be developed in natural spoken discourse using scenarios and role play tasks.

The sample of the study consisted of a group of students who were learning English for specific purposes (English for Tourism courses at the tertiary level). Two forms of role play tasks were applied. In the first one, students were asked to think of the dialogue that would take place to do the task; while in the second one students were asked to indulge immediately in the role play task trying to reach an outcome as far as possible.

The results proved that planned and unplanned role-playing can be adapted to communicative tasks definition by giving it a goal orientation. Using these role plays provided a great deal of spontaneity in the L2 classroom as they enhanced students' motivation. Furthermore, role plays and scenario tasks proved to be effective in developing both linguistic and pragmatic competences for this group of learners.

Analyzing the role of communicative tasks in developing interactional skills as a manifestation of discourse competence, **Mc Donough & Mackey (2000)** stressed the positive effects of communicative tasks on students' turn taking and negotiation skills.

The sample of the study consisted of eight intermediate FL learners in a high school in Thailand who carried out tasks in three fifty minute class session over a one-week period.

Nine communicative tasks were designed to target both form and meaning and a small scale study was carried out to test these tasks. The tasks selected were jigsaw tasks in which learners worked in pairs to determine how two pictures of a similar scene were different, information-gap tasks in which one learner described a picture while another learner drew it, and story sequencing tasks in which learners interacted orally to create a story by putting pictures in order.

The results showed that the tasks were effective in promoting skills related to negotiation and recasts. It was concluded that tasks can be designed to promote conversation interaction involving specific linguistic forms. Such tasks provide learners with the opportunity to focus on particular linguistic and discourse structures while being involved in meaning - based communication.

**Myers (2000)** similarly focused on interactional competence among second language (L2) learners. In his study, he analyzed the interaction of 23 first-semester French students while performing a group task created according to criteria of goal-oriented tasks. The task focused on a particular grammatical point and students' group discussions and activities were recorded. Components of effective tasks were realized throughout the treatment (interaction between form and meaning, real communication, interactive *learning*, later success).

Different structures of group interaction were used by students: leaders and followers, turn taking, cooperative production, and individual production. In addition, students used many tools to regulate the task such as meta-task talk, appeal to others for grammatical and lexical support and scaffolding where students negotiated form and meaning to come up with the right answer and evaluative comments.

The results indicated that communicative tasks encouraged learners and enhanced their oral performance as well as their ability to negotiate meaning and form thus supported their FL acquisition. Most significantly, the task encouraged

communication in the sense of expressing, interpreting and negotiating meaning. Students were also given the opportunity to see the relevance and authenticity of the language they were learning by means of communication.

**Shehadeh (2001)** examined the effectiveness of engaging students in communicative tasks on their self- and other-initiations- a means for correcting mistakes during speaking to produce modified output (MO). This modified output is considered important for successful second language acquisition.

Twenty seven ESL speakers of English representing 13 different L1 backgrounds-performed three tasks (picture description, opinion exchange, and decision making). Modified output was defined as the modifications that non-native speakers made to their output to make it more comprehensible and accurate as an indicator of discourse and strategic competence. The self –initiation emerged when the learner realized by himself that there is something wrong with his utterance that should be modified. On the other hand, others' initiations were based on the corrections given by peers.

Results showed that communicative tasks gave students opportunities to practice both self- and others'-initiations, hence provided students with abundant opportunities to produce Modified input; significantly more resulted from self-initiation. These results suggest that learners need both time and opportunity during tasks to initiate and complete repair of their own messages in the context of communicative tasks

In the same context, to investigate the use, or otherwise, of conversational adjustments (CAs), an indicator of strategic and discourse competence, **Slimani-Rolls (2005)** conducted a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of language produced in one-way information task, a two-way information task and a decision-making task.

The sample consisted of 20 ESL students from an international higher education college in London studying towards a Bachelor's degree in International Business Administration.

The study revealed that the quantitative analysis supported the results and showed that the use of CAs generated by the students in the two-way communication task was indeed significantly higher than in the one-way task and the decision-making task. However, while the overall group's quantitative behavior confirmed the use of CAs, the qualitative analysis showed that the individuals' performance in their use differed widely within and across task types. The inherent characteristics of two-way task design seemed to focus learners' attention on getting the missing information without engaging in much meaning negotiation. Conversely, the one-way and decision-making tasks seemed to offer more scope for language manipulation and more opportunities for genuine communication.

## Commentary

**It is clear from reviewing the previous studies related to the effectiveness of communicative tasks in developing speaking that:**

- ❖ Communicative tasks proved to be effective in enhancing students':
  - ❑ overall speaking proficiency
  - ❑ grammatical competence
  - ❑ Pragmatic competence reflected in the students' ability to use language appropriately.
  - ❑ Interactional discourse competence reflected in the students' ability to negotiate meaning, and use turn taking strategies.
  - ❑ Ability to manage conversation and adjust it according to their listener's responses (discourse competence).
- ❖ It was, also, concluded that tasks can be designed to promote conversation interaction involving specific linguistic (grammatical) forms. Such tasks provide learners with the opportunity to focus on particular linguistic structures while involved in meaning -based communication.
- ❖ The most effective types of task suggested are: jigsaw tasks, problem solving tasks, one- way information –gap tasks, story telling tasks, argumentative tasks, opinion exchange tasks, role plays and scenarios. Language functions addressed in the previous studies were: narrations, descriptions, expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing.

- ❖ Role plays applied in the previous studies were adapted to conform to the definition of communicative tasks. This means that role plays were not practiced as mere dialogue repetition; however, students were given a problem to solve to give them a real reason to interact and play genuine roles. These tasks triggered students' motivation and encouraged them to speak spontaneously and fluently.
- ❖ There is evidence that students should be encouraged through giving them adequate time during task performance to correct themselves rather than waiting for correction from either the teacher or peers. This self-correction can have a longer effect on language acquisition.
- ❖ Both one-way and two-way tasks have their advantages with one way task giving chance for more negotiation of meaning and more opportunities for genuine communication than two-way tasks.

## **II: The cognitive approach and developing speaking:**

Studies in this section are concerned with the effectiveness of some strategies supported by the cognitive approach in developing learners' speaking skills. Although some tasks were used in these studies; yet most of the speaking tasks presented are monologic and lack any sense of real life interaction characterizing communicative tasks. Furthermore, studies in this section don't attempt to bring about a systematic integration between the suggested strategies and communicative tasks.

### **a. Studies focusing on explicit instruction and consciousness raising:**

**Slade & Gardner (1993)** focused on the issue of whether explicit instruction and consciousness raising facilitate the acquisition of conversational skills. They investigated whether it is possible to describe casual conversation, and to explicitly deal with it and raise student's awareness to the stages underpinning this kind of conversation. Two central issues related to casual conversations were examined (1) whether to simplify the language input or to use authentic data, and (2) whether in fact it is more effective to have no input, but to engage learners in activities in the classroom that will generate conversation.

The sample of the study consisted of a group of advanced ESL learners who were taking a speaking course in a University in Northern California.

The study proved that learner-learner interaction, although valuable for other reasons, is not a sufficient basis for the teaching of casual conversation. Students who were exposed to authentic texts and required to analyze them were more able to perform better with respect to their speaking skills. It was argued that syllabus input should use examples of authentic conversational interaction, with any simplification being in methodology not the input.

Recognizing that pragmatic competence is considered to be one of the neglected aspects in English language teaching, **Kubota (1995)** conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of providing Japanese students with consciousness raising activities to promote their mastery of conversational English indirect implicatures (indirect speech acts).

The sample selected was 126 Japanese English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) learners who were enrolled in a Japanese university.

Student participants were divided into three groups. In one group, pragmatic competence was dealt with implicitly during instruction without being given due focus; in the second, consciousness-raising activities evolving from group discussion were used. The third group was a control group. All subjects received a pre-test and two post-tests, including a multiple choice test and a spoken sentence-combining test.

Results indicated that both the experimental groups generated significantly better responses. However, the conscious-raising group performed better in the post-test than in the pre-test. Results confirmed that teaching conversational implicatures through consciousness-raising activities was highly facilitative. It was concluded that exposure to the pragmatic system may be a crucial factor to induction, and it may be advantageous for learners to process language on their own.

**House (1996)** attempted to compare explicit versus implicit learning of pragmatic competence in terms of speaking. Furthermore, the effect of fostering learners' self monitoring skills was examined. Particularly, the study explored whether pragmatic fluency can best be acquired in the classroom by provision of input and opportunity for communicative practice alone, or whether learners profit more when additional explicit instruction in the use of conversational routines is provided.

Two randomly selected groups of advanced German university students of English (15 students in one group, 17 in the other) with an average 12 years of English instruction took part in the study.

In the explicit version of the treatment, students received explicit meta-pragmatic information about the socio-pragmatic conditions governing the use of routines and their pragmatic functions. Students received one substantial handout at the beginning of the course that contained meta-pragmatic information about specific discursive practices. Students were further asked to reflect upon, discuss, and suggest alternative realizations of their own role-play and scenario productions

during playback sessions. These sessions regularly followed the various (audiotaped) conversational activities they had to fulfill. Students were expected to interpret their own output with explicit reference to the metapragmatic information they had received in previous sessions. In the implicit version, students received no meta-pragmatic information.

The tests and selected samples of the weekly recordings at various stages of the courses were rated by two English NS (native speakers) judges according to the pragmatic fluency criteria listed earlier.

Results of the study showed that both groups improved over the instruction period, but that the explicit group proved superior in using a more differentiated spectrum of discourse strategies. Moreover, the self-monitoring techniques provided helped in improving learners' speaking skills.

Similarly, **Eslami-Rasekh** (2004) explored the effect of explicit meta-pragmatic instruction on the speech act comprehension and use of advanced EFL students (pragmatic competence).

The subjects included 66 Iranian EFL participants who were undergraduate students, participating as members of intact classes. The two groups (one control and one treatment) were fourth year students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Isfahan University. A group of American students were used to provide the baseline for the study.

The speech acts of requesting, apologizing, and complaining were selected as the focus of teaching. The study included a set of programmed instructional materials explaining the realization and interpretation patterns, rules, strategies, and tokens of the three speech acts under study. Each speech act set encompassed the major sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic patterns and strategies of interpreting and realizing one particular speech act at the "explicit," "conventional," and "implicit" or "indirect" levels.

Teacher-fronted discussions, cooperative grouping, role-plays, and other pragmatically oriented activities were used to promote the learning of the intended speech acts. The instruction followed the following procedure:

1. Teacher-fronted discussion of various meanings a single utterance might convey in different contexts (e.g., "it is hot in here").
2. Asking students to come up with examples of the target speech acts (e.g., requests) in their L1 and L2 and to discuss the differences and similarities.
3. Asking students to role play the intended speech acts for the whole class.
4. Frequent sociopragmatic or paralinguistic deviations observed in students' examples were taken as teaching points.
5. Students were then provided with dialogues in English and asked to extract the intended speech acts performed by native speakers and to compare it with their own strategies

A multiple choice pragmatic comprehension test was used both as a pretest and posttest to measure the effect of instruction on the pragmatic comprehension of the students. Moreover, a speaking test focusing on pragmatic competence was developed.

The results revealed that explicit metapragmatic instruction facilitated interlanguage pragmatic development. Students' speech act comprehension and use improved significantly.

Focusing on how to teach discourse and strategic competence explicitly, **Nakatani (2005)** examined current patterns of oral communication strategy (OCS) use, to what degree these strategies can be explicitly taught, and the extent to which strategy use can lead to improvements in oral communication ability.

In a 12-week English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course based on a communicative approach, sixty two female learners were divided into two groups. The strategy training group (n= 28) received metacognitive training, focusing on OCS use, whereas the control group (n= 34) received only the normal communicative course, with no explicit focus on OCSs. The effects of the training were assessed by three types of data collection: the participants' pre- and post course oral communication test scores, transcription of the task performance, and retrospective protocol data for task performance.

The findings revealed that participants in the strategy training group significantly improved their oral proficiency test scores, whereas improvements in the control group were not significant. The results of the transcription and retrospective protocol data analyses confirmed that the participants' success was partly due to an increased general awareness of OCSs and to the use of specific OCSs, such as maintenance of fluency and negotiation of meaning to solve interactional difficulties.

### **b. Studies focusing on planning:**

**Ellis (1987)** investigated the effect on performance of engaging students in planned versus unplanned discourse on their performance in three related tasks one written and two spoken focusing on the use of different forms of the past tense.

The sample of study consisted of seventeen intermediate learners of English as a second language.

In the first condition, learners had to write a story from a picture series. In the second activity, the same learners had to speak a story to the same set of pictures that had already been written about without reference to the previous written versions. In the third activity, learners had to speak a story to a new set of pictures without planning. Ellis proposed that the three activities provided learners with progressively less planning time. The performance of the learners on three forms of the past tense was analyzed.

The results demonstrated that average accuracy of performance across all three past tense morphemes declined as a function of less planning time being available. This means that planning affects the accuracy of the spoken discourse. This implies that when planning time is reduced, on-line processing capacity becomes less available, and accuracy decreases.

### **c. Studies focusing on self-evaluation/monitoring:**

**Katchen (1991)** tried to draw on self-evaluation as a form of raising learners' awareness. Thus, he focused on the specific practical techniques used to enhance students' self-monitoring skills during oral performance.

The sample of the study consisted of a group of (EFL) college students learning English in Taiwan, East Asia.

The study made use of video cameras to record student dialogues and role plays. Then the tapes were reviewed by students to critique language usage and grammar use during speaking. After that, students were encouraged to repeat their dialogues more than once and record it to notice improvement. Students were asked to watch critically and point out grammar or vocabulary errors or concentrate on pronunciation to notice their own mistakes and improve their acting of the assigned role plays. Moreover, students were asked to record some presentations and were given grading sheets including the areas to focus on in their performance.

Overall, the results proved that encouraging students to practice self-evaluation via video cameras helped them analyze their own speaking skills, observe, and become more *self-critical* of their errors. Furthermore, it helped students improve their oral performance as measured by speaking tests.

Attempting to look for a more practical technique for self-evaluation and encouraging students to speak fluently at the same time, **Schneider (2001)** conducted a study to examine the advantages of letting students tape record themselves while speaking in pairs (Pair taping). He assumed that this technique will allow FL learners to concentrate on making their output comprehensible and focus more on accuracy.

The sample of the study consisted of fifty EFL Japanese college students in their eighth year of English study. Students had the choice of pair taping- for an equivalent amount of time once a week or four times a week during the English class. Within this format, students could talk about whatever they wanted to, whenever they liked, and with whomever they wished

Students' performance was measured throughout a speaking test beside some other qualitative self-reports answered by the students.

Results from self reports and speaking tests showed that learners who chose "pair taping" reported increase in ease of speaking, improvement in speaking and ability to communicate in English. Furthermore, pair taping gave students more

responsibility for their learning, thus fostering self –directed learning strategies. The learners who did pair taping appeared to be more relaxed, confident, and enthusiastic than before.

However, the pitfall of this study is that it doesn't indicate explicit criteria against which students can evaluate their oral performance.

**Basturkmen (2002)** conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of learners' observation of spoken discourse and student's self evaluation on their pragmatic competence and ability to participate actively in discussions for academic study.

The sample of the study consisted of forty ESL high intermediate and advanced level students at the University of Auckland in New Zealand.

The program involved two main types of activities. The first one was based on leading students to observe the spoken discourse of expert English speakers. The second type of activities involved encouraging student to record, observe and reflect on their own speaking and interaction during conversations guided by provided criteria (self –evaluation techniques).

Results of the study supported the effectiveness of raising students' awareness of pragmatic features of spoken discourse. Moreover, the activities promoted learners' ability to integrate these pragmatic features into their interlanguage system which was apparent in their use of these features. Besides, the students' attitudes towards learning speaking improved as well as their motivation to express themselves publicly.

#### **d. Studies focusing on data –driven (corpus-driven) learning:**

Apparently, the potential for language corpus (samples of authentic use of spoken texts) in language teaching has been the focus of attention of the cognitive approach. However, few empirical studies were conducted in the domain of using these corpora in teaching speaking.

One of the studies centered on speaking is the study of **Sun (2000)**. The purpose of this study was to report on an "Internet-based *concordance*" approach to

language learning and to investigate Taiwanese (EFL) students' attitudes toward this learning tool and performance with respect to speaking.

A 3-week, on-line corpus lesson was designed and implemented with a sample of thirty-seven EFL college students at a Taiwanese university. A questionnaire survey and a speaking test were then administered to investigate students' proficiency and feedback on the Web-based *concordance* lessons.

The results of the study indicated that students tended to have positive attitudes toward the use of the Internet (to search for spoken language corpora and concordance) in learning language in general and learning speaking in particular. Furthermore, their oral performance improved. It was concluded that the internet offers too much potentially useful and authentic spoken English and thus proved to be effective in developing students' speaking proficiency.

## Commentary

The studies in this section investigated the effectiveness of some techniques suggested by the cognitive approach in fostering students' speaking skills. Reviewing these strategies the following can be concluded:

- ❖ **Explicit instruction** of speaking skills taking the form of direct teaching proved to be effective in fostering learners' oral proficiency. The most salient areas affected by this instruction are pragmatic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (interaction strategies, maintenance of fluency and negotiation of meaning). Explicit instruction does not only foster the learners' understanding of spoken discourse characteristics, however, it helps them to use these characteristics as well as competencies in actual speaking activities that even casual everyday conversation can be taught explicitly.
- ❖ Fostering learners' abilities to **notice spoken language characteristics** by themselves, throughout authentic listening texts, helps them internalize these characteristics as they are based on their own schemata and needs. It enhances students' speaking proficiency including pragmatic and discourse competences.
- ❖ Both explicit instruction and consciousness raising activities proved to have a positive effect on students' attitudes towards learning to speak.

- ❖ Planning proved to be effective in improving students' oral performance especially in improving their accuracy during speaking.
- ❖ Fostering students' ability to self-evaluate and self-monitor their oral performance through encouraging them to record, observe and reflect on their own speaking helps them become more self-critical and promotes their speaking skills. Furthermore, it fosters their confidence and self-directed learning potential. The techniques used are: transcription of texts produced by the students, video cameras, and pair taping. Furthermore, criteria against which students can compare their performance should be provided clearly.
- ❖ Use of online **data-driven learning** (corpus based learning) and concordance proved to be effective in enhancing students' spoken performance and attitudes towards learning speaking. However, practical issues have to be put into consideration.

### **III: Communicative tasks and the cognitive approach (Attempts of integration):**

Research under this category followed two main trends. The first one is concerned with the analysis of communicative tasks properties and examining the effect of these properties on developing learners' speaking skills. The second trend is focused on tackling methodological aspects of applying communicative tasks. It is concerned with techniques to be applied before the task, during the task or after the task to develop learners' speaking skills.

#### **a-Examining the effect of task properties:**

Cognitive approach research has focused on cognition and the role that cognitive processes play in determining the ease or difficulty of any particular task. It is argued that an understanding of the effects on the learner of task properties such as cognitive load, task complexity, and demands on attentional resources will help alert teachers and syllabus designers to the relative ease or difficulty that a task represents for the learner.

The following studies are thus concerned with analyzing task features, positing particular dimensions as the basis for characterizing tasks and studying the relation between these features and speaking proficiency embodied by the competing goals (accuracy, complexity and fluency). The main dimensions identified are as follows:

- ◆ Type of information and interactional requirement;
- ◆ The output or the task goal;
- ◆ Factors related to the learners involved in the task;
- ◆ Familiarity with the task.

#### **1- Studies focusing on types of task information and interactional requirements:**

**Brown (1991)** proposed three different dimensions for the analysis of communicative tasks according to their outcomes: tight-loose, closed-open, and procedural-interpretative. A tight task is one which has definite sub-tasks from which the group participants do not have the opportunity to stray. With the second contrast (closed/open), if the 'answers' to a task are drawn from a limited set, the

task is regarded as closed. Finally, procedural tasks are those which involve getting things done, without any need for interpretation. In each case, the other pole of the dimension is the opposite of the characteristics given.

Three tasks which incorporated variety in terms of these dimensions were applied. The first two tasks involved responding orally and discussing opinions related to poetry, and although one of these tasks was categorized as tight and closed, the other was judged loose and open. The third task involved explaining a process including some procedures. Brown measured task performance in terms of fluency (repetition, prompts, rephrasing), repairs (negotiation of meaning), and hypothesizing (when a participant is drawn into making a hypothesis).

Results proved that there were no differences between the groups for fluency or repair, but that the use of hypothesizing (taken here to represent complexity) was significantly greater for the two interpretative tasks than for the procedural one (where, in fact, these qualities were non-existent).

**Robinson (1995)** conducted a study to distinguish between a narrative task performed orally when learners tell their partners a series of events in the present tense while looking at pictures of wordless cartoon, (here -and -now and simple tasks) and a similar narrative task performed from memory without looking at the pictures, and delivered in the past tense (there -and -then, complex task).

The sample of the study consisted of high beginner to intermediate level L2 learners of English from a variety of L1 backgrounds (Tagalog, Japanese, Korean, and Mandarin).

Complexity of the oral performance was measured in terms of multi-propositional utterances, lexical density, and percentage of lexical words per utterance; fluency in pauses per utterances and words per utterance; and accuracy in target-like use (TLU) of a task relevant feature of production.

The results of the study showed that the complex there-and-then condition elicited significantly more lexical variety and more accuracy with a strong trend to greater fluency for simple tasks, but with no significant findings for complexity.

**Rahimpour (1997)** conducted a study aiming at examining input factors influencing task difficulty and their effects on oral production.

The sample of the study consisted of fifty international students, aged 18 - 40 years, from different language backgrounds in a high school in Australia.

Participants in the first condition were presented with three narrative tasks at three levels of task complexity: 1. Here - and - Now; 2. There - and - Then; and 3. Here - and - Now / There - and - Then. Participants in the second condition undertook only levels 2 and 3, due to the nature of the task. The data was analysed in two ways. First, a within -subjects design was carried out for the open and closed tasks respectively, with task complexity as the within - subjects variable.

The elicitation task consisted of narratives based on cartoon strips representing the two or three levels of task complexity. The recorded narratives were transcribed and analyzed for accuracy (as measured by Error - free utterances and target- like use of articles), linguistic complexity (percentage of lexical words), and fluency (words per pause).

The results revealed that there were significant differences among the tasks in terms of accuracy and fluency. A significant difference was also found between the closed and open conditions for the fluency measure, but not for linguistic complexity. There was also a trend towards greater accuracy in the closed condition.

**Robinson (2000)** examined the effect of task complexity on FL learners' oral language performance.

The sample of the study consisted of thirty university Japanese students learning English as a foreign language.

The tasks implemented were described as one-way, interactive, closed and dyadic task, in which one participant was asked to view a randomly ordered series of pictures showing characters performing different actions, and decide which chronological sequence they should be arranged into in order to depict a coherent story, and also to tell a partner (who could ask questions) about the story that the series of pictures described. The partner was instructed to sequence his own randomly ordered series of pictures in the order that corresponded to his partner's

story. The simplest sequence consists of three pictures depicting three stages, or successive actions. It does not require reasoning about the motives, intentions or other thoughts of people. However, in the most complex version, pictures can only be successfully sequenced if such motives, intentions and thoughts can accurately be inferred. Hence, reasoning demands were the only factor differentiating task complexity.

The results showed that more complex tasks would lead to more attention to, and incorporation of task relevant input. In other words, the greater the cognitive demands of the task, the more learners will attend to, and use, input to the task and so incorporate and practice aspects of the FL oral proficiency.

**Young-Geun (2000)** held a similar contrast between "here and now" tasks and "there and then" tasks and considered both these tasks as representing two poles of contextualization. Moreover, he compared the learners' performance on both single tasks and dual tasks.

The sample of the study consisted of twenty one learners of Korean as a foreign language at the University of Hawaii.

In the here and now tasks, learners described a series of events to their partners in the present tense while looking at pictures illustrating them. In There-and-Then (T/T) tasks, learners first viewed the illustration then were required to perform the narrative from memory without looking at the pictures, and deliver it in the past tense. In the same way the single task included giving directions to a partner from point A to point B on a map (single task), while the dual task included giving directions without the route marked on the map for the speaker.

Results showed that complex tasks elicited more accurate and complex oral production while the simple task elicited more fluent language. Thus this study supported other studies indicating that complex tasks increase students' ability to use more complex elaborate language.

Similarly, **Robinson (2001)** examined the effects of the cognitive complexity of tasks and learners' perception of task difficulty on their oral achievement in sequencing tasks.

The sample of the study consisted of forty four Japanese University undergraduates at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo. Participants were randomly assigned to the role of speaker (information-giver) or hearer (information receiver) on two map tasks.

In the simpler condition, a small map of an area known to the Japanese L1 participants (their own college campus) was used. In the complex condition, an authentic street map of a much larger area likely to be unknown to the participants was used. In both tasks, one participant was instructed to give directions to a partner who had only point "A" marked on their map. This was therefore a one-way (since the information-giver was instructing the partner on how to get to point B), closed (since there was a definite correct solution) interactive task (since the partner was able to ask questions about the directions they were given).

The results showed that task complexity significantly affected the lexical variety and fluency of speaker production. The study also showed significantly greater interaction, measured in hearer comprehension checks on the complex version, and also a trend to more clarification requests in the same direction. However, accuracy was not significantly affected by task difficulty.

**Based on the above results, it can be inferred that:**

- Type of task information can predispose learners to channel their attention in predictable ways towards various language areas.
- Complex tasks elicit more accurate and complex oral production while simple tasks elicit more fluent language. The effects for greater accuracy on simpler tasks are possibly due in part to the learner's avoidance of problematic forms and to narrowing of their production to known language forms.
- Tasks based on interpretation and reasoning produce more elaborate complex language than task based on giving instructions and directions. This may be due to the fact that more complex tasks make greater demands on proficiency and hence elicit more feedback. Such feedback provides an interactive context (e.g., through use of clarification requests, confirmation checks, and responses to them).

- Difficult tasks can increase students' ability to produce more lexically dense language as well as complex structures. In addition, more complex tasks lead to a greater learning of new forms and integration of input.
- Two way tasks are better than one-way tasks as they allow for more interaction between participants.

## **2. Studies focusing on task goals:**

**Duff (1986)** examined the contrast between convergent and divergent tasks. In the former case, an arbitrary but agreed upon solution has to be arrived at collectively, whereas in the latter case, a range of opinions is unavoidable and indeed acceptable.

The sample of the study was thirty two pre-advanced students learning English as a foreign language in a high school.

The task representing the convergent goal was the desert island game (a choice of six items from larger groups of items that you would like to have if marooned on a desert island). In contrast, the divergent task was exemplified by a discussion on 'the good or bad effects of television'.

The results did not show any overall difference in the amount of language produced with each task type, but did point to significant interactional and discoursal differences. The convergent tasks produced many more and shorter turns, while the discussion generated fewer but longer and more complex turns. This means that convergent tasks, containing a need for and agreed upon answer, produce more turns in discourse and more negotiation for meaning than divergent tasks, where arguing different viewpoints is the nature of the task.

### **Based on the results of the previous study, one can state the following:**

- Convergent tasks- that have only one solution- produce many more and shorter turns, and more negotiation for meaning than do divergent tasks or open tasks. Divergent tasks, on the other hand, generate fewer but longer and more complex turns. Accordingly, this means that both types (convergent and divergent) can have a positive effect on learners' performance as they enable them to develop a more sound repertoire of communicational capacities.

### **3- Studies focusing on task participants:**

**Plough and Gass (1993)** examined the effects on task performance of participants' familiarity with one another. They used two tasks, a 'spot the difference' task and a 'who will survive' task, with two EFL groups of subjects: an unfamiliar group, and a familiar group where partners carrying out the pair work had known one another for 4-7 months.

Performance on the task was scored to focus on interactional features, with the general hypotheses being that familiar subjects would use more interactional language, defined as (overlaps, sentence completions, echoes, and negotiation of meaning indices).

The results showed that interactional features occurred more often with spot the difference task with respect to both groups. However, with respect to the negotiation of meaning, indices occurred more frequently with the familiar pairs than the unfamiliar ones.

**Albert (2004)** investigated the effect of *learners' creativity* on performance in oral narrative *tasks*.

Participants in the study were Hungarian EFL learners whose creativity was measured with a standardized creativity test. The relationships among three aspects of creativity—originality, flexibility, and creative fluency—and different measures of task performance were examined.

The findings suggest that the three components of creativity have a differential effect on the measures of task performance. Creative fluency was positively correlated with the quantity of talk. Originality was negatively related to the quantity of talk, and positive correlations were found between originality and the complexity of narratives. The magnitude of the correlations indicates that creativity affects participants' output in narrative tasks only moderately.

❖ **Based on the above, it can stated that:**

- Participants who are familiar with each other can interact better and can use more negotiation strategies during performing tasks.

- Learners' creativity might affect their performance on the assigned task by improving their performance.

#### **4- Studies focusing on the effect of familiarity with the Task itself:**

**Plough and Gass (1993)** researched the effects of task familiarity on students' performance. The familiar groups were defined as students who had done comparable tasks twice in class shortly before the actual data collection, while the unfamiliar group had not been exposed to such tasks before. The familiar group was therefore potentially affected by the familiarity of what was expected of them, but also the potential staleness of doing something they might find unchallenging.

The results obtained were mixed. There was a tendency for the pairs familiar with the task to use more confirmation checks and for the unfamiliar pairs to use more interruptions. This proved that the unfamiliar pairs were more deeply involved with the task they were doing, with the possibility that the familiar had been bored. The study interpreted also greater sentence completion on the part of the pairs familiar with the task as indicating a greater enthusiasm to get the task over and done with.

Following the same trend, **Maclean, (2000)** conducted a study to examine the benefits of using task repetition in an English for specific purposes course.

The performances of two learners at markedly different levels of English proficiency were compared. The two tasks were two information-gap tasks which required learners to exchange complex information.

The results proved that students at different proficiency levels benefited from the opportunity to recycle communicative content as they repeated complex tasks. This suggests that task repetition may be a useful pedagogic procedure and that the same task can help different learners develop different areas of their interlanguage competence.

Repeating the same experiment on another group of learners, **Bygate (2002)** compared performance on a task practiced over a 10 week period with performance on tasks that had not been practiced.

Subjects were eighty four overseas students at the University of Reading. Two sets of tasks were designed for the study: a narrative set and an interview set. In the narrative task, students were required to retell a Tom and Jerry cartoon after three weeks. The interview tasks on the other hand were structured around pictures.

The student's oral production was measured in terms of repertoire or the range of language features used, accuracy which refers to the adequacy of the choice of lexical item, collocation and overall errors, and fluency which refers to amount and type or repetition.

The study showed that redoing a task is associated with a number of changes in the nature of performance, all of which add to the density of the ideas which are expressed. The study proved that the repeated performance of the task seemed to engage a more syntactic mode, with subjects showing greater tendency to self - correct and to enhance fluency as well. It was clear also that language complexity and underlying propositions were in a more ambitious relationship to one another.

**Based on what was previously mentioned, it can be concluded** that both familiar tasks and unfamiliar ones lead to different results. Unfamiliar tasks lead to more interaction on the part of students while familiar ones lead to more enthusiasm, greater organization, greater language complexity and fluency.

## **B- Methodological considerations for tackling communicative tasks:**

There has been a significant quantity of research on task implementation conditions that follow the cognitive theory premises. These studies focus mainly on the use of communicative interactional tasks to develop speaking and they attempt to explore choices available before the task is done, during the task, and after the task.

Within the first of these phases, there has been a significant quantity of research exploring the effects of **pre-task planning**:

**Crookes (1989)** conducted a study aiming at investigating the effect of pre-task planning on students' performance with respect to both speaking accuracy and complexity.

The sample of the study constituted of forty adult non-native speakers of English all of the same L1 background –Japanese. They were students with intermediate or advanced level of spoken English who study in the University of Hawaii.

Two information gap tasks were used; the first task asked students to give a description to their peers and the second task required them to give their peers an explanation of some arguments. The study investigated the effect of giving learners ten minutes time to plan their speech in terms of words, phrases and ideas, compared with learners being required to embark on the task immediately. Students were asked to make written notes on a separate sheet of paper to make sure they were engaged in planning. The study compared the performance of the two groups of learners, planners and non planners, on a wide range of speaking measures.

The results indicated that the students who were exposed to planning conditions outperformed the second group in the following areas: their ability to produce a greater variety of vocabulary, their competence in producing more complex language, their use of error-free utterances, and their ability to use many subordinate clauses. However, general measures of accuracy did not show significant differences between the two conditions.

However, from the point of view of the researcher; it is difficult to know what the study subjects actually did during the planning time available for them unless clear guidelines were provided. Moreover, in the previous study, Crookes used an information-gap task which may interact differently with the planning condition compared to other tasks.

To shed light on the interaction between types of tasks and planning and the effect of guided planning, **Foster and Skehan (1996)** investigated two main factors: task design and processing conditions

The study used a contrast in task types (personal, narrative, decision). The first was a personal information exchange task in which subjects were required to tell their partners how to get to their home to turn off a gas oven that had been left on. In a narrative task, pairs of students had to construct a story based on a series of pictures with common characters but no obvious storyline. Finally, students were required to participate in a choice/decision-making task in which they had to decide upon the appropriate punishment for each of a series of crimes.

The three tasks essentially opposed clear structure for the information required with progressively less predictable structure and interaction. The study also examined three different implementation conditions for each task (unplanned, planned but without detail, detailed planning) on the variables of fluency, complexity and accuracy.

The sample of the study consisted of thirty two intermediate level adult learners of English.

In the first implementation, planning was comparable to that used by Crookes -10 minutes' planning time, in which subjects were required to make notes to be taken away at the end of the planning time. In the second, subjects were given guidance as to how they might use the 10 minutes' planning time, with the guidance taking the form of suggestions that attention should be directed to anticipate the language which might be needed, the discourse, and the content of the tasks to come.

Results show that the different tasks had different effects upon performance. The personal and decision tasks led to significantly higher accuracy than the narrative ones, while the personal task led to lower complexity than the other two tasks. The narrative and decision tasks generated the least fluency, very significantly so compared with the personal task.

As for the effect of planning condition on complexity and fluency the relationship is monotonic (the greater the planning the greater complexity and fluency). With accuracy, however, the planning values were found with undetailed planning condition. But most interestingly of all here, there was a very clear interaction for complexity and fluency between planning condition and task. Complexity and fluency increased relatively little for the personal task whereas with the more demanding decision task and especially the narrative task, the changes in performance were dramatic, with very marked improvement when planning time is used effectively.

**Skehan & Foster (1997b)** investigated the effects of different task implementation conditions (planning versus not planning), on the fluency, accuracy, and complexity of the language that is produced when interactional two way narrative tasks are carried out.

Task performance was analyzed in terms of competition among fluency, complexity, and accuracy. The study was applied to 47 young adult low-intermediate subjects.

The results show that the fluency of performance was found to be strongly affected by degree of inherent task structure; more structured *tasks* generated more fluent language. In contrast, complexity of language was influenced by processing load. Accuracy of performance seemed dependent on an interaction between the two factors of task structure and processing load.

It was concluded that pre-task preparation can have an effect in combination with task structure, but the nature of the pre-task preparation, linked to the conditions under which the performance will be required, is critical.

**Mehnert (1998)** focused more on the issue of planning and hence attempted to proceduralize this concept but giving it clear definition and explaining practical considerations. He conducted a study investigating different lengths of planning time before applying communicative tasks as different conditions on students' speaking proficiency.

Subjects were four groups of learners in a university context performing two communicative tasks each. The tasks varied in the degree of structure they contained; the three experimental groups had 1, 5, and 10 minutes of planning time, respectively, before they started speaking. The control group had no planning time available. Tasks performance was measured in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy.

The results of the study indicated that fluency improved with each increase in planning time. The effect on accuracy of performance was found for the one minute planning condition; five and ten minutes planning did not confer any additional accuracy advantage. In contrast, the no planning and the one and five minutes planning conditions did not differ from one another in terms of complexity, whereas all were surpassed in this regard by the ten –minute planning condition. The results suggest that, when faced with limited attentional resources for speech production, second/foreign language speakers are given planning time, they channel this resource initially to accuracy and fluency, and only later towards attempting more complex interpretations of tasks.

The study recommended the importance of investigating methods to make L2 learners more effective planners, such as, with the help of instruction, continued practice, or consciousness-raising activities like verbalization.

**Foster & Skehan (1999)** examined different sources of planning (teacher-led, solitary, group-based) as well as different foci for planning (towards language or towards content). Using a decision-making task conducted in groups, data was collected using a 2'2 research design contrasting source of planning (teacher-led, group) and focus of planning (language vs. content).

Subjects were sixty six students from six intermediate-level English classes at a large adult college. Most of the students were in their twenties, with a few in their early thirties. Only 13 were male.

The results indicated a number of statistically significant effects. The teacher-fronted condition generated significant accuracy effects, while the solitary planning condition had greater influence on complexity, fluency and turn length. This means that in the teacher-fronted condition, both complexity and accuracy benefit, suggesting that subjects are able, by whatever means, to distribute their attention to make broad-ranging improvement.

Group-based planning did not lead to performance significantly different from the control group. Left to themselves, it appears that student groups did not operate as efficiently as when either the pretask preparation time was organized by the teacher, or when learners were able to work independently. Finally, there was little effect on performance as a result of the language vs. content planning condition.

This conflicts with what was proposed by Skehan and Foster (1997) when they drew attention to the tradeoffs evident in levels of performance on a variety of tasks. However, this finding supports the results by Robinson (1995), who proposed that more complex performance should be accompanied by greater accuracy.

The implication here is that there is a role for the teacher, in pre-task work, to channel attention and to ensure that the language used in the task makes a pedagogic contribution.

**Ortega (1999)** investigated whether planning opportunity results in increased focus on form during planning time, as well as at the level of production outcomes during task performance. Accordingly, the study was designed to answer two general questions:

1. Does pretask planning opportunity increase the syntactic complexity, lexical range, accuracy, and fluency of planned output?

2. What do learners actually do when they plan? How do they allocate limited attentional resources? Do they take advantage of planning opportunity to focus on form?

Thirty-two EFL students were recruited as volunteers from advanced-level and from non-language classes in a variety of disciplines at the University of Hawaii'. Of the 32 learners, 11 were male and 21 were female. Speaker age ranged from 18 to 46.

The story-retelling task type was chosen for the study. In the planned condition, the speakers first listened to a taped version of the story while looking at a strip of eight pictures. They then had 10 minutes to prepare for the story retelling to one of their peers who could ask them further questions. Speakers were told they would have 10 minutes to prepare for the story and could spend the available time in any way they liked. They were told to make notes if they wished but to try not to write full sentences, and they were informed that they would not be able to keep their notes during the actual retelling. Under the unplanned condition, the same procedure was followed, but speakers retold the story immediately after the aural and visual prompts.

Results provided support for the claim that planning before speaking can promote an increased focus on form by providing space for the learner to devote conscious attention to formal and systemic aspects of the language needed to speak. Students were able to produce significantly more fluent and complex language but there were no effects for lexical range and accuracy. Additionally, planning brought about an increase in students' self-confidence and gave them a sense of self-improvement during performance. This can be taken as evidence that planning lessened communicative stress and lowered the perceived difficulty of the task.

An additional perspective is the contrast between **pre-task planning and online planning**. The former focuses on the pre-task stage while the latter focuses on the during task stage.

**Fangyuan (2001)** investigated the effects of pre-task and on-line planning on second-language oral production during communicative tasks with respect to fluency, complexity, and accuracy.

The subjects were thirty Chinese learners of intermediate English language proficiency attending a four-year university in China.

Students looked at two series of pictures and then recounted the story in the pictures to their partners who could ask them for more details. In the no-planning (NP) condition, subjects were asked to retell the story immediately after looking at the pictures within a limited span of time. In the on-line planning (OLP) condition, subjects were to retell the story immediately after looking at pictures but encouraged to take as much time as needed. In the pre-task planning (PTP) condition, subjects were given 10 minutes to plan the task in advance but required to complete the task within a limited span of time. In all cases students had to communicate to understand the story from each other.

Results revealed that the subjects exposed to pre-task planning achieved significantly greater complexity than the no-planners in the oral task, and that the online -planning subjects obtained significantly greater accuracy than the no planner in the oral task. A general pattern was found favoring pre-task planning in all three areas and online planning in complexity and accuracy. This study suggests that both pre-task planning and on-line planning can influence oral language use, but in different areas and to different extents.

It is clear from the previous study that pre-task planning is operationalized as the time given to students before the task; no detailed guidance is provided on how to help students benefit from this time to enhance their oral performance.

Similarly, **Yuan and Ellis (2003)** attempted to compare the two kinds of planning (pre- task and online planning) on students' oral proficiency in terms of realizing the three levels of interlanguage development: fluency, accuracy and complexity.

The sample of the study consisted of forty two full-time undergraduate students who were English majors in the International Business Department of a Chinese University.

In the pre-task planning condition, students were given 10 minutes to plan their oral performance of the task in terms of content, organization and language before telling the story. Then, they were required to produce four sentences for each of the pictures within 5 minutes limit. In this way, students were pressured to perform the task with limited opportunities for on- line planning.

In the on-line planning condition, students were required to produce at least four sentences for each of the six pictures after 5 minutes, but they were given unlimited time to enable them to formulate and monitor their speech plans as they performed the task.

The tools implemented throughout this study consisted of: a questionnaire measuring how the students felt about the tasks and how they made use of the planning time and a speaking test including measures of accuracy, fluency and complexity to evaluate the quality of the students' oral production.

The results showed that pre-task enhanced grammatical complexity while on-line planning positively influenced accuracy and grammatical repertoires. The pre-task planners also produced more fluent and lexically varied language than the on-line planners. These findings help to further the understanding of task conditions needed to promote accuracy, complexity and fluency.

**Ryo (2005)** conducted a similar study to compare the effects of both online planning and pre-task planning. The study attempted to answer the following question: Do FL learners focus on form in online planning more frequently than pre-task planning and no-planning conditions?

The sample of the study consisted of twenty seven Japanese speakers of English (male = 11, female = 16) who were of different levels.

The task the students had to perform was a story telling task including 3: 6 picture cartoons taken from a popular story-telling resource book for EFL learners. The students had to tell the story to their partners who could ask further questions to

understand the story. In the pre-task planning condition, students were given 10 minutes to plan their performance of the task. Then, they were required to tell the story within 2 minutes limit to their partners. In this way, students were pressured to perform the task with limited opportunities for on- line planning.

In the on-line planning condition, students were required to tell the story pictures after 30 seconds, but they were given unlimited time to perform the task.

Student's fluency was measured through calculating number of filled pauses, length of run, and length of pauses. Complexity was measured through considering number of discourse devices used, and number of clauses per turn. Accuracy was measured through calculating percentage of error-free clauses as well as percentage of target-like verb forms and articles.

The results showed that pre-task planning enhanced grammatical complexity and fluency, while on-line planning positively influenced accuracy and grammatical repertoires. It showed also that there are conflicts between achieving fluency and accuracy and fluency and complexity.

An additional technique integrated with communicative tasks was **consciousness raising and self evaluation** of oral performance:

**Lynch (2001)** focused on the role of self evaluation on students' performance on communicative oral tasks in an academic context. He examined the impact of reflective noticing activity in which pairs of adult learners of English for Academic Purposes transcribed their own performances of communicative classroom speaking tasks.

The sample of the study consisted of eight students in an oral communication skills class who came from different countries and who were used to practice academic scenarios in the form of role play.

Some students ' performance during assigned tasks was recorded with video camera. Working collaboratively, students then transcribed, discussed and edited the transcripts of their own performance, making a large number of changes, which were overwhelmingly for the better. These edited transcripts were passed on to the

teacher, who made further corrections and reformulations, and then discussed the changes with the learners.

It was concluded that collaborative transcribing and editing can encourage learners to focus on form in their output in a relatively natural way. It also underlined the role of the teacher in this sort of post-task intervention, especially in the area of vocabulary. Noticing in the study was supported by a range of sources-reflective self-correction, interactive peer- correction and supplementary teacher intervention- which might represent the optimal mix of feedback. Furthermore, this method helped student analyze their output after communicating usefully; thus it proved to be less inhibiting for learners.

The study called for further future studies to focus on the long term effect rather than the short one of noticing on language learning and acquisition.

Previous studies also explored the role of **direct teaching during tasks** on students' performance.

**Genc (2005)** examined the effectiveness of "post-active focus on form" which involved drawing learners' attention to the form after the task has been completed. In other words, teacher observed students during the process of communicating in L2 and completing the task and notes down learners' errors and problematic forms. Then a session for "focus on form" was organized.

The subjects in the study were 62 Turkish learners of English attending Grade 5 at a private elementary school in Turkey. There were three groups that were formed of students from three different classrooms. Group 1 consisted of 21 students, Group 2 consisted of 19 students and Group 3 had 22 students. The subjects were at the age of 11-12.

The task implemented for all three groups of learners was a picture description task. Group 1 received proactive focus on articles before they performed the main task of "picture description". Group 2 received reactive focus on articles, so this group started directly with the main task of "picture description". When the students had problems with using articles and made mistakes during the task, the teacher intervened and implemented the same techniques of focus on form, which are input enhancement activity and production activity. Group 3 received postactive

focus on articles, so the students in this group started directly with the main task “picture description”. After they completed the main task, the teacher organizes a separate session for focusing on articles.

Comparing pretest and posttest scores within each group, an obvious gain was found for all the three of them. Therefore, it was concluded that “focus on form” definitely helps to make articles in English more salient and increases learners’ correct use of them during task performance.

However only few studies attempted to measure the **interaction of more than one stage (pre task, during task and post task stages)** to handle communicative tasks.

**Skehan and Foster (1997a)** investigated the effects of both planning and subsequent public performance, as a post task activity on the priorities that learners set during task performance. The study probed whether it was possible to influence the way attention is allocated during task completion through using a two by-two research design in which two planning conditions (no planning versus undetailed planning) were related to two post-task conditions (no post-task versus post-task public performance).

The study used a contrast in task types (personal, narrative, decision). The personal information exchange required subjects to describe to a partner what had most surprised them about life in Britain. The narrative was based on two cartoon strips and pairs of students took it in turns to describe the story represented by their strips. For the decision-making task, subjects were given three letters to a magazine describing various personal problems. Each pair had to agree on the best advice to give to the letter-writers.

Confirming the results of the earlier study, there was a clear effect with the planning group outperforming the non-planners on accuracy measures. The results for the post-task were more complicated, however, since there was an interaction between planning and post-task conditions. Having to do a post-task led to greater accuracy for the non-planners, suggesting that there are alternative means for achieving the same goal: devoting attention to accuracy. In contrast, there was an

effect for the length of time a task was run, with fluency, accuracy, and complexity all lower after only five minutes of a task performance.

Planning values were found with undetailed planning condition. Therefore trade-off effects were clear; to improve in one area often seemed to be at the expense of improvement elsewhere.

It is so obvious from both the study of Foster and Skehan (1996) and Foster and Skehan (1997a) that the two studies share many factors: the task types investigated, the planning variables, and measures of complexity, accuracy and fluency used. However, the study of Foster and Skehan (1997), examined the effectiveness of providing students with post task activities to enhance their performance.

**Sayer (2005)** investigated the effectiveness of activities designed to raise learners' awareness of conversational strategies before communicative tasks on their oral performance. Besides, he explored the effectiveness of practicing self evaluation during the task and how this self evaluation can be fostered through data-driven language at the post-task stage. The goal was to test whether direct instruction had any effect on students' performance in terms of their discourse competence and their awareness of patterns of interaction, strategies to use and pitfalls to avoid. The skills developed were: monitoring, negotiating meaning, and turn taking.

The sample of the study consisted of twenty three students (17 females and 6 males) between the ages of 21- 24 in the BA TESOL program in a public University of Mexico. All were L1 Spanish speakers from the Southern Mexican state.

The teaching methodology adopted included a brief explanation of some discourse strategy, "say holding the floor", and then a communicative task was carried by students to practice the strategy together.

During some tasks, each pair of students had an observer who used a simple instrument or checklist to take note of particular aspects of the conversation (e.g. length of turns for each person, strategies for negotiating meaning. This encouraged peer and self evaluation. Another strategy was to have the students record

themselves during the task, and immediately after a task was completed, make a transcription. This was debriefed with the group by presenting a self-critique of their strong and weak points.

The students also went to the self-access center to find examples from talk shows, radio interviews, and movies which illustrated specific interaction strategies. This approach to tasks got the students critically involved in thinking about and analyzing their own language use and the course content became relevant and meaningful. It indulged them in data-driven learning.

It was concluded that just because a given task calls for the students to engage in conversation, it does not mean that it will necessarily generate 'natural' interaction; rather turn-taking must be developed consciously.

## Commentary

**Reviewing previous studies included in section three, it can be concluded that:**

- ❖ **Consciousness raising activities** can be adopted by exposing students to authentic listening texts and encouraging them to work as discourse analysts. These activities show students how the spoken interaction takes place in real life situations.
- ❖ **Teaching** can be incorporated in task-based instruction at the pre-task stage, the during-task stage or the post task stage. Direct teaching proved to have a positive effect especially on students' grammatical competence as well as discourse and pragmatic competence.
- ❖ **Planning** in the context of communicative tasks can bring about an increase of students' self-confidence during task performance. In particular, some implications can be drawn about planning. These are as follows:
  - It is interesting to compare the operationalization of planning across previous studies. Typically, FL learners were allowed to take notes while planning but not to keep their notes while performing the task. Besides, students did not have the opportunity to access resources such as a dictionary, a grammar book or the teacher. The only study that compared different operationalizations of planning is the one by Foster and Skehan

(1996). The conditions and techniques used for applying planning was not specified in most of the previous studies, thus according to Forster & Skehan (1996: 302) research attempting to influence the nature of planning would seem desirable.

- With regard to teacher- led / solitary planning, there is evidence that teacher -led planning is preferable to solidarity planning as it produced the most balanced gain in the different aspects of performance. This may be due to the fact that teacher- led planning is more standardized; and it is likely to introduce a greater level of organization to all learners since it is the product of preparation on the teacher's part.
- As for the interaction between planning and tasks types, the cognitive approach proved that task difficulty can be minimized through using planning. (Foster and Skehan, 1996 and Foster and Skehan, 1997). In other words, the more cognitive load involved in the task, the clearer the effect of planning in enhancing complexity and fluency.
- As for the comparison of pre-task planning versus online planning, there is an indication that:
  - \* Fluency can be best enhanced if learners are given opportunities to do both types of planning, online and pre task planning.
  - \* The crucial factor influencing accuracy is the opportunity to plan on line and not pre-task planning.
  - \* The pre-task planners also produce more fluent and lexically varied (complex) language than the on-line planners.
- As far as time of planning is concerned, it was found out that accuracy was affected more by allocating short time of planning; while fluency and complexity were influenced more by longer periods of planning allocated before the task.
- ❖ Only few studies attempted to experiment a comprehensive framework for handling communicative task constituting pre-task and post task activities. The attempts were made by Skehan and Foster (1997) and Sayer (2005). The post task activities employed were in the form of self-evaluation activities as well as

exposure to authentic discourse samples and analyzing them in terms of discourse skills. According to these studies, post-task condition proved to be effective in developing discourse skills. Furthermore, fostering students' ability to self-evaluate their oral performance enhanced their speaking skills and self-directed learning potential

- ❖ Use of **online data-driven learning** (corpus based learning) proved to be effective in enhancing students' spoken performance and attitudes towards learning speaking. However, practical issues have to be put into consideration.

## General Conclusion

**Reviewing the previous studies in the three sections, it can be concluded that:**

- ❖ There is evidence that communicative tasks have a positive effect on developing speaking competencies: (linguistic, pragmatic, discourse and strategic) as well as fluency.
- ❖ Many factors related to task type can affect spoken performance (complex tasks elicit more accurate and complex oral production while simple tasks elicit more fluent language) – (interpretive tasks produce greater complexity than tasks based on explaining set processes)- (two way tasks are better than one-way tasks)- (convergent tasks produce more negotiation of meaning than divergent tasks) - (students who are familiar to each others interact better than unfamiliar students)- (unfamiliar tasks lead to more interaction on the part of students while familiar ones lead to greater organization and greater language complexity).
- ❖ Techniques suggested by the cognitive approach to develop speaking proved to be effective in developing learners' speaking sub-skills as well as in giving them the potential of self -directed learning. The key techniques suggested are:
  - Explicit instruction
  - Consciousness raising
  - Data-driven learning
  - Self –evaluation
  - Planning before speaking and during speaking.
- ❖ The cognitive approach provides insights and criteria that can be drawn upon when planning and sequencing tasks so that easy tasks are handled before complex ones. It was argued that such sequencing may have important predictable effects on language development (pushing learners to greater lexical density, accuracy, and may also have important effects on interaction).
- ❖ **Methodological considerations** of applying tasks were addressed by many studies and the following can be inferred:

- There has been a significant quantity of research exploring the effects of pre-task stage especially pre- task planning, teaching and raising student's awareness. In brief, such research suggests that planning has the effect of beneficially extending learners' speaking performance in the short term at least. Whether this effect will continue into the long term and whether it encourages interlanguage development needs to be considered further.
- There is only one study dealing with during-task manipulation which included assigning an observer of pairs during working on tasks to give them feedback about their performance.
- Post task manipulation has not been explored extensively since only two studies have focused on this area. The effect shown in one of these studies is rather weak, being neither additive nor general (the effect was found only for the decision-making task, and not on the narrative and personal tasks). In the second study, the activities were restricted to using self-evaluation checklists to assess student's oral proficiency.

Consequently, the previous studies are the starting point from which the current study started.

First of all, it is evident that most of previous studies restricted its focus to measuring three levels of language proficiency (accuracy-complexity -and fluency). Most of the previous studies have been undertaken within a theoretical framework that has tended to be rather narrowly concerned with the occurrence of some linguistic features. There has been virtually no interest in the analysis of the communicative outcomes of task interaction except for discourse competence tackled by Sayer (2005). Therefore, the researcher thinks that it is important to tackle the communicative competence as a broad concept embodying the spoken proficiency with all its details and skills.

In addition, most of the previous studies investigated separate techniques of the task-based instruction model. It is obvious that no study, except that of Skehan and Foster (1997a) and Sayer (2005), attempted to investigate empirically the

effectiveness of more than one strategy suggested by the cognitive approach to promote speaking skills within communicative tasks framework.

Moreover, no study attempted to integrate all these components (planning, consciousness raising, explicit instruction, self-evaluation, and post task public performance) in a more comprehensive framework including a pre-task stage, a during task stage and a post- task stage. Thus, the current study is an attempt to investigate the broader framework of task –based instruction including its various techniques and teaching methods.

Most of the previous studies were concerned with assessing the short term effect of task- based instruction. In a sense, the studies focused on the effect of some cognitive approach techniques on students' performance during performing the tasks. No study focused on the long term effect of adopting the cognitive approach- including sub-strategies- on students' language development after receiving the instruction. So there should be an attempt to extrapolate from current findings to longer term change which is the focus of the current study.

Other than these previous considerations, the current study drew some implications and benefited from the previous studies as follows:

- Different types of tasks were incorporated to achieve different goals. In other words, both simple and complex tasks were presented to help develop students' skills at different levels and cater for language representing the transactional as well as the interactional dimensions of speaking.
  - For example, with the one- way and two- way categorization, tasks included in "description" lessons were mostly one- way tasks, however "exchanging personal information" and "giving opinion tasks" represented two- way tasks.
  - As for the convergent/ divergent categorization, "description tasks" and "narration tasks" represented the convergent type; on the other hand, divergent tasks were represented in "exchanging opinions tasks".

- Tasks were sequenced from simple to complex to achieve various goals effectively, i.e. simple tasks preceded tasks, one-way tasks preceded two-way tasks, convergent tasks preceded divergent tasks and so on.
- Pre- task planning and online planning are two teaching techniques that were focused on in task design to promote spoken performance. Because each type of planning develops certain aspects of spoken language proficiency, it was better to encourage students to practice both of them in each task to get the best results.
- Guided planning in the form of "teacher- led planning" was operationalized and applied in a subtle clear way that directed students to all aspects and skills of speaking performance.
- Planning was given about 10 to 15 minutes in every task as proved effective by previous studies.
- Students' self-evaluation was fostered after task performance through encouraging students to record their performance and reflect upon it and providing clear criteria against which they could compare their progress. Furthermore, an observer (one of the students) was assigned to analyze students' performance during some tasks.
- Explicit instruction and awareness raising activities were used in the current study as an integral part of task-based instruction framework.
- Although the three goals (accuracy, complexity and fluency) were addressed implicitly in the design of the tasks employed in the current study, they were not the object of evaluation and measurement, however the study examined the effectiveness of task based instruction with reference to a broader model of communicative competence.

# Method

This chapter presents the experimental part of the study. It provides description of the design, subjects, tools and duration of the study. It also includes description of the proposed program.

## **I. Design of the study:**

The quasi-experimental design called the non -equivalent group design was employed in the present study. This research design seemed most appropriate for the present study as random assignment of subjects to control and experimental groups was not possible. This is because the classes used in the study were intact groups administratively defined in terms of levels, teachers and classrooms.

In this study, two intact classes were randomly selected to represent the experimental and the control groups. The experimental group received training throughout a task- based program (TBI) for developing their speaking skills. On the other hand, students in the control group received regular instruction. A pre/ post speaking test was given to the two groups before and after the treatment.

It must be mentioned here that comparing the two groups performance in speaking is not fair. This is because the control group students did not practice the same material the experimental group students practiced. Besides, the time of instruction for both groups was different. However, use of a control group in the study was thought to give more evidence that any progress in the experimental group students' performance in speaking would be due to the treatment.

## **II. Subjects of the study:**

A group of seventy six first year secondary students were randomly selected from one of Cairo governmental secondary schools, namely Saray El Kobba Secondary School for Girls, in the school year 2005-2006 (38 students in the experimental group and 38 students in the control group). The reason this school was selected is that it was seen to be a representative sample of Egyptian secondary stage governmental schools, with a large population of first year secondary students

distributed in 17 classes. In addition, the researcher had applied some studies that were a part of her job requirements there before.

Students' age in both groups ranged from fifteen to sixteen. The students in the sample of the current study had been learning English as a foreign language for five years, two at the elementary stage and three at the preparatory stage. The students thus constituted a homogenous group in terms of their learning history and English proficiency.

First year secondary students usually have six classroom periods of English language instruction per week. Each lesson lasts for 50 minutes. The English language syllabus consists of vocabulary practice, grammar study, reading, listening comprehension, speaking as well as writing.

**Instructors of both groups:** The control group received regular instruction by the regular classroom teacher. According to regular instruction, the control group students were given little communicative opportunity to practice the speaking skills. Students rarely practiced any pre-speaking activity that aimed at teaching them the characteristics of the spoken language. They were never guided to use planning before the speaking activities included in their course book Hello 6. Most of the exercises the regular instruction group was exposed to focused on practicing answers for some questions or mechanical drills and tightly structured dialogues. Most of the speaking skills and competences were neglected. Besides, students receiving regular instruction were not offered any activities to help them analyze or reflect on their own performance.

*On the other hand, the researcher taught the experimental group students herself for the following reasons:*

- a. She could have a better control of the instructional variables.
- b. The regular classroom teacher might have little or no knowledge of the teaching strategy adopted by the program and its theoretical foundations.
- c. Time constraints that could hinder the regular classroom teacher to teach the program adequately.

### **III-Tools of the study:**

#### **The present study made use of three main tools:**

- ❖ A speaking skills checklist.
- ❖ A pre-post speaking test to measure first year secondary students' speaking skills; designed by the researcher.
- ❖ An evaluation rating scale measuring students' oral performance on the pre and post speaking test. See "scoring the test" pages: 154-159.
- ❖ A proposed program designed by the researcher in the light of task- based instruction and the cognitive approach to train the experimental group students on the specified speaking skills.

#### **a. The speaking skills checklist:**

##### **• Purpose of the checklist:**

The checklist was designed to determine the most important speaking skills necessary for first year secondary students.

##### **• Sources of the checklist:**

The speaking skills included in the checklist in its primary form, were determined through reviewing:

1-The procedural objectives included in the Ministry of Education directives. The following speaking skills were viewed to be necessary by the Ministry of Education as indicated in its directives (2005 – 2006):

- Initiating exchanges and responding appropriately.
- Expressing a range of functions to satisfy social and future needs. i.e. (Making suggestions, giving advice, agreeing and disagreeing with others' opinions, giving directions ...etc).
- Presenting and seeking full autobiographical details.
- Retelling events in temporal sequence.
- Giving short presentations on familiar topics.
- Expressing ideas on everyday topics.
- Forming a range of questions

2. The teacher's guide as well as the students' textbooks.
3. Previous studies and the literature focusing on developing communicative competence in general and speaking skills in particular in ESL/EFL contexts: Swain (1985), Celce-Murcia (1995), Bygate (1998) Burns (1998), Shumin (1997), Turner (1998), Nelson (1999), Taylor (2000), Howarth (2001), Miller (2001), Hughes (2002) and Yoshida (2003).
4. Previous literature and related studies concerned with developing speaking skills among Egyptian secondary stage students: El Touky (1986), Bishay (1989), Hussein (1986), and Al Khuli (2000).

• **Content of the checklist:**

The checklist was composed of four columns. The first column included the 15 speaking skills arranged in three main categories (linguistic, discourse, and pragmatic competence) beside fluency. The linguistic competence was broken down into grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Discourse competence included organizational features of the spoken language, such as coherence and cohesion, and conversation management skills. Pragmatic competence was related to functional skills and appropriateness. These skills had to be rated by a panel of jury according to a rating scale containing three levels: very important, important and less important. Each level of importance was given an estimated value to be scored by the researcher, i.e., very important= 3, important= 2, and less important= 1. Furthermore, the panel of jury was required to add to the list any speaking skills they considered important.

• **Validity of the checklist:**

The checklist was submitted to a panel of jury specialized in the field of curricula and methods of teaching English to determine (a) the degree of importance of each skill, (b) appropriateness of the skills suggested to first year secondary stage students as well as (c) the relationship of each skill to either grammatical, discourse and pragmatic competences. The jury was composed of twelve specialists in the field of methods of teaching English and four supervisors at

the ministry of Education counselor's office.

**Some of the modifications suggested by the panel of jury were:**

1. Combining all pronunciation subskills together instead of dealing with them separately. This was suggested to decrease the difficulty of scoring each sub-skill such as: using correct intonation, stress, vowels, linking sounds together and so on. Similarly, combining the two closely related grammar skills "using simple and complex sentences" and "using grammatical rules accurately" into one skill, namely, "following grammatical rules accurately".

2. Merging the two closely related discourse skills "organizing discourse so that listeners can follow what is said" and "using appropriate conjunctions" into one skill, namely, "structuring discourse coherently and cohesively".

3. Omitting the skill of "ensuring comprehension on the part of the listener" because it was considered advanced and more suitable for students at the university or advanced level.

4. Identifying the range of vocabulary and grammar expected of students at this stage to avoid underestimating words and structures used by students within their level of proficiency.

5. Combining the skills included under pragmatic competence namely "expressing a range of functions" and "using different ways of expressing functions appropriately" under one heading "expressing a range of functions appropriately". This was suggested to decrease the load on the raters as both skills can be dealt with together.

The jury indicated that the checklist was valid and the skills included were clear and adequate. Seven skills were selected to be focused on in the current study. Those skills were the ones that received the highest frequency according to the jury's opinions (skills agreed upon at least by 75% or more by jury members). The checklist in its initial and final forms and the names of the panel of jury are in appendix (B).

***The speaking sub- skills selected by the study according to their high percentages were as follows:***

### **Grammatical competence including:**

1) Demonstrating intelligible pronunciation, i.e.: features such as stress, rhythm and intonation as well as linking adjacent sounds.

2) Following grammatical rules accurately. This refers to the range (quantity) and correctness (quality) of grammatical structures. (Ex: tenses, adjectives, adverbs....etc.)

3) Using relevant, adequate and appropriate range of words. This refers to the number and correctness of vocabulary and word collocations used.

### **Discourse competence including:**

4) Structuring discourse coherently and cohesively.

5) Interacting and managing conversation effectively to keep it going.

### **Pragmatic competence including just one skill:**

6) Expressing a range of functions effectively and appropriately (varying form and meaning according to the status of participants, register, objectives and norms of the communication).

### **Fluency: this means**

7) Speaking fluently without hesitation and undue pauses and adopting a natural rate of speech.

## **b. The speaking Test:**

### **● Objectives of the test:**

A pre/ post speaking test was constructed and administered by the researcher. It was used prior to the program implementation to make sure that students of both groups were at the same speaking level before starting the experiment, and hence the progress achieved by the experimental group could be attributed to the program they had been exposed to. As a post-test, it was used to investigate the effectiveness of the proposed task- based program in developing the selected speaking skills.

### **● Constructing the test:**

**The test was constructed through following these steps:**

- Identifying the skills measured by the test through the results of the checklist.

- Identifying the appropriate genres, according to the Ministry objectives and panel of jury opinions, in the light of which test tasks have to be designed.
- Reviewing previous studies concerned with how to develop speaking tests in EFL: Baker (1989), Bachman (1990), Robinson (1992), Hall (1993), Weir (1993), Farrell (1998), Riggenbach (1998), Turner (1998), Nelson (1999), Kenyon (2003), and Luoma (2004).

**The following points were taken into account when designing the speaking test:**

- The test attempted to represent a comprehensive perspective of the learners' speaking proficiency, thus realizing the criterion of 'situational authenticity'. This was achieved through including a variety of oral exchanges in the test (semi-structured conversations, interviews, arguments, information gap tasks and role-plays) reflecting the features of the target-use situations as much as possible. Thus, the test elicited both long and short turns and the learners got opportunities to speak in different contexts reflecting genres and functions taught in the program. This eventually means that the test tasks prompted different grammatical structures, vocabulary, discourse skills and pragmatic strategies.
- The test reflected 'interactional' authenticity. This was realized by stimulating an interactional rather than a responsive atmosphere. The test consisted mainly of reciprocal exchanges where both the examiner and the student had to adjust messages and take each others' contributions into account.
- Questions in each task were relatively presented according to the degree of their difficulty so that they ranged from easy to difficult (starting with yes/no questions and controlled responses and moving to more open- ended questions).

**● Description of the test:**

The final version of the pre /post speaking test, modified after the pilot study, included a warm- up stage and eight sections or interactional tasks corresponding to those taught during the programs.

**The test sections/tasks were as follows:**

The warm-up stage focused on settling the examinee into the exam, creating a friendly atmosphere and eliciting expressions of greeting (hello, how are you, how is everything and so on). This was created through some compliments paid by the examiner as well as through few easy questions focusing on invoking "small talks". Short turns were more common at this stage; usually more spontaneous phrases, rather than neat sentences.

**The main interview:** This involved a set of tasks aiming at triggering students to demonstrate their performance in different situations, each represented a specific genre/ or macro function and included eventually other sub-functions the learner had to perform. The eight sections or tasks were as follows:

**The first section** focused mainly on "exchanging personal information" between the examiner and the student. This section included mainly open-ended questions and a few yes/no questions. Students were asked about their lives, their daily routines, their likes and dislikes, their families, their hobbies and so on. A number of functions were measured in this part, such as expressing routines/hobbies and habits, giving personal information, giving opinions and so on. Moreover, to make sure that the students could seek information, they were asked to interview the examiner to obtain information about her personal life, likes/dislikes and her daily routines.

**The second section** focused on discussing the students' opinions about their "future plans, predictions and hopes". A number of functions were measured in this part, such as giving opinions, predicting the future, expressing hopes ...etc. Thus, in this section, all skills measured were closely related to expressing future intentions.

The **third section** required students to "give and ask for directions". The learner was asked to look at a city map and give directions to the examiner from one place to another. The interaction between the examiner and the student took the form of a role play with the examiner assuming the role of a stranger. Then, roles were shifted with the student taking the role of the stranger and asking for directions, asking for clarification or thanking the examiner for help.

The **fourth section** included a task that required the student "to ask for and give advice" to one of her friends. It also required students to indulge in a role play with the examiner to make, accept or refuse suggestions politely.

The **fifth section** required the student to "talk about the past". This took two forms. The first one was based on narrating events in the right order from a series of pictures. The second form included asking students to talk about a personal story or some events that took place in the past.

The **sixth section** elicited spoken discourse related to "giving opinion". The student had to give and support her point of view with respect to a given topic (TV is good or bad). This included showing agreement or disagreement with the examiner's opinion as well as giving reasons for the adopted opinions.

The **seventh section** was mainly based on "description". Three main tasks were handled in this section. First, students were asked to describe one of two pictures showing scenes of common events: a class at a primary school and a scene at the sea beach. They were asked to imagine that they were describing the picture to someone who couldn't see it. Hence, they were encouraged to describe the people and activities in the picture as clearly as possible including illustrative details such as colors, clothes, weather...etc. Furthermore, in this section students were asked to describe their house briefly and one of their best friends in terms of both appearance and character.

The **eighth section** focused on "social English". It required students to respond appropriately to a set of situations- representing various degrees of formality and relationships. It took the form of a semi-structured rather than free role-play task, as students were given their own opinions about an imaginary situation, rather than assuming an unfamiliar role.

The interview ended up with a brief winding down phase aiming at putting the student at ease again and encouraging her to use expressions related to leave taking (bye bye, nice to meet you, it was a pleasure talking to you...etc.).

Functions and sub-functions in each section and the accompanied speaking skills were determined procedurally before administering the test. This facilitated the selection of tasks that reflect the content of the lessons taught during the

program as far as possible. The functions/ micro functions measured in the test are indicated in the following table.

**Table (1)**  
*Functions/ micro function measured throughout the test tasks*

<i>Sections</i>	<i>Functions measured</i>
<b>Warm up and section (1)</b> <b>(exchanging personal information)</b>	Greeting, small talk, giving personal information, giving/seeking personal information, expressing opinions and giving reasons, expressing likes/dislikes, expressing preferences, routines, habits and hobbies.
<b>Section (2)</b> Expressing future intentions	Giving personal information, predicting the future, expressing opinions and giving reasons, expressing future intentions, and expressing future hopes.
<b>Section (3)</b> Giving directions	Attracting attention, giving directions, asking for directions, thanking, replying thanking, greeting, leave talking
<b>Section (4)</b> Giving advice/ making suggestion	Giving/ asking for advice, asking for and making suggestions, accepting or refusing suggestions, giving reasons, thanking and replying thanking.
<b>Section (5)</b> Talking about the past	Narrating a story, talking about past events, giving opinions, agreeing/disagreeing with others' opinions.
<b>Section (6)</b> Describing	Describing people's characters and appearance, describing places, describing houses and scenes, giving opinions, and giving reasons for opinions.
<b>Section 7</b> Giving opinion	Giving/ asking about opinion, agreeing/ disagreeing with others' opinions, and giving reasons.
<b>Section 8:</b> Social situations	Making excuses, apologizing, making requests, asking for permission, showing sympathy, offering help, and asking about health.

- **Techniques for conducting the test:**

- The test was conducted throughout an interview that acted as a broad framework and included many tasks and elicitation techniques. The interaction between the examiner and the student rather than student/student interaction was selected because requiring students to interact together can have many pitfalls resulting from the unpredictability of the interaction and the differences in students' level of proficiency.

- The interview followed a pre-determined structure. However, it allowed both the examiner and the student a great degree of freedom. Thus,

although the examiner maintained firm control, she kept the initiative as well. The learner had the freedom to answer, as she liked, or to develop her comments and opinions. When the examiner felt that the functions of one section had been achieved, she moved on to the next or moved to develop the topic further or raised a new one trying to make the transition as smooth as possible.

□ The examiner had a prepared list of written prompts for every section/task. This list contained quite a wide variety of questions and topics to avoid constant repetition. Moreover, questions used in the interview were adapted to students' response as much as possible to maintain the student's confidence and the flow of the interview. This flexible method of eliciting answers provided enough support even for students who had trouble with speaking so that at least some performance would be recorded from every student. However, students were not allowed to repeat or record again when they fell into mistakes.

□ In the earlier stage of the interview, the examiner took care to help the student's confidence by filling awkward pauses, and perhaps by providing words the student was searching for. The questions could be repeated once if the student wished, but without changing the wording. As the interview progressed, the examiner pulled back a bit to give the learner more space to exhibit her proficiency.

□ The examiner adopted different techniques to extract answers especially from timid and shy students (calming down, speaking friendly, using probing questions and yes/no questions).

□ The examiner put into consideration the importance of avoiding the following:

- \* Overcorrecting the student;
- \* Interrupting the student unless necessary;
- \* Imposing her own opinion unnecessarily;
- \* Using a teacher style.

- **Test construct validity:**

With respect to the communicative competence model adopted in the current study; the test covered grammatical competence and some aspects of discourse and pragmatic competences. Grammatical competence was reflected in all turns that the examiner took, and it was assessed through three criteria: vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

Discourse competence was evidenced in the students' ability to structure their ideas and make their contributions relevant. It was reflected also in their ability to maintain a coherent flow of language either within a single utterance or over a string of utterances. Also assessed here was how relevant the contributions were to what had gone before and how students encouraged the interlocutor's turns.

Pragmatic competence was assessed in the course of the test interaction as the students were expected to perform a set of functions: description, narration, giving opinions, giving advice, as well as other functions that occurred during interaction. Furthermore, pragmatic competence was assessed more deeply through providing students with a set of social situations to which students had to respond appropriately.

Fluency although not a component of the communicative competence model, was measured in terms of the learner's rate of speech and her ability to communicate in real time without undue pauses or hesitation.

- **Content Validity:**

To measure the test content validity, the first version of the test consisting of eleven tasks was submitted to twelve TEFL professors, assistant professors, lecturers and EFL testing specialists to evaluate its tasks in terms of content appropriateness and skills measured. Moreover, the jury members were asked to evaluate the test as a whole in terms of: (a) number of tasks and appropriateness to the functions measured, (b) suitability of the tasks to first year secondary students' linguistic level and (c) suitability of the test to measure the intended skills.

The test proved to be mostly a valid one, as it measured what it was intended to measure in most cases.

**However, the following remarks were highlighted:**

- The test was too long for students. Therefore, it was suggested that some tasks could be omitted keeping only the tasks that reflect closely the situations taught in the program.
- Relating the context and words used in all tasks to learners' culture (Egyptianizing tasks) to ensure authenticity and avoid any cultural or linguistic misunderstanding that can mask students' real proficiency. Ex: clear and Egyptian names of the streets in the map were used instead of foreign names.
- With respect to the first section dealing with "giving personal information", it was suggested that the examiner should write more alternatives beforehand especially for the questions which might not be answered by some students for any reasons, so that the conversation would flow spontaneously. Ex: what do you do in your free time? was replaced with the alternative "if you have free time, what would you like to do"? in case student didn't have free time.

All the previous jury's suggestions and recommendations were carefully taken into consideration. Hence, the final version of the test consisted of eight tasks. The test measured the specified seven speaking sub- skills in each section so that each skill was measured eight times except for the skill "organizing discourse coherently" was measured seven times as it was not measured in the last section "responding to social situations". This is due to the fact that the last section didn't lend itself to measuring this skill.

**For the last version of the test, names of the jury and criteria for validating the test see Appendix "C".**

**● Piloting the test:**

A pilot study of the speaking test was conducted. It aimed at timing the test and determining the difficulty and the suitability of the tasks selected to extract the expected skills.

A small pilot study was carried out to establish this purpose. Therefore, 20 students were selected randomly from one first year secondary class in Saraya EL

Kobba Secondary School for Girls. Students of the pilot study belonged neither to the experimental nor to the control groups.

- **Results of the pilot study:**

The pilot study results revealed that the majority of students obtained low scores with regard to their speaking skills. Moreover, most of them stated that speaking tasks that required them to speak for a long time were more difficult than questions demanding just short answers. This may be due to the fact that students were mostly accustomed to answering such easy questions which do not require a lot of planning or a wide range of linguistic or communicative abilities. In addition, the following was concluded:

- ◆ **Test time:**

It was estimated that a period of 30 to 35 minutes would provide enough time for each student to complete the test. No one needed an extension of time to complete the test. This time was estimated in the following way:

**The time taken by the fastest student + the time of the slowest student**

2

$$\frac{25 + 45 = 35 \text{ minutes}}{2}$$

2

Thus, it was decided therefore to allow 35 minutes for test completion by each student. It was recognized that this would be sufficient to ensure that all the students had sufficient time to complete the test. Time allotted for each test section is in appendix (C).

- ◆ **Test suitability:**

It was proved that the test was suitable to students and that the tasks included extracted the intended skills. However, the pilot study helped the examiner to take the following points into consideration.

- ☞ Giving more time to the warm up stage to help students feel at ease and decrease their tension.

☞ Modifying some words and phrases because they proved hard for students to understand. Moreover, some questions were omitted to shorten the test and make it more practical for students to answer.

☞ Giving clear instructions and explaining difficult words before "narrating a story from pictures" task, as students found it difficult to understand words such as "dry cleaners" and "wet paint"

- **Test reliability:**

Reliability of the designed speaking test was measured by calculating the consistency of the ratings provided by the three raters who scored the test to see how far they agree (inter-rater reliability). This was the method adopted to measure the reliability of speaking tests as suggested by previous scholars (Baker, 1989: 60). Other methods could not be adopted for practical considerations. The degree of inter-rater reliability was established by correlating the scores obtained by students from rater "A" with those from rater "B" as well as those from rater "C". It was assessed through correlation coefficients, Cronbach alpha. The following table shows the correlation coefficients among individual raters of the pre- post tests:

**Table (2)**  
**Summary of the correlation coefficients among individual raters**

<b>Test</b>	<b>Raters</b>		
<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>I, II</b>	<b>I, III</b>	<b>II, III</b>
	0.81	0.86	0.87
<b>Post- test</b>	0.86	0.87	0.90

Through comparing the correlation coefficients in the above table to the correlation coefficient extracted from the statistical tables at 0.01 level, it was found that the estimated correlation coefficients were statistically significant at 0.01 level. This shows reliability of scoring. Hence, since the above table indicated high statistically significant correlations among the three raters, scores were pooled to get an average score for each speaking skill.

## • **Test instructions:**

The examiner explained the purpose of the test and the topics to be discussed to students before the test. Furthermore, before each section, the examinee was given further details about the task and what was expected of her. For instance, in role play tasks, students were given their cards and were asked to read them carefully and ask any questions before recording the answer.

In some tasks, difficult words were explained to students. The test instructions for each section were sometimes given in Arabic, to make sure that students had understood what is required.

### **Furthermore, the following instructions were given to students:**

- ❖ Answer the questions and try to interact with the examiner as far as possible by asking her questions, and by showing that you are following. The raters will evaluate how well you communicate in English.
- ❖ Be sure to speak loudly enough for the machine to record clearly what you say. Try to relax and avoid tension while answering the test to provide the best answer.
- ❖ Plan for each task quickly by thinking of words, expressions and grammar you need to use in the task.
- ❖ Avoid using Arabic while giving the answers. If you can't understand the examiner ask for clarification in English.

## • **Test Administration**

### **Conditions of pre/ post test administration:**

After estimating the suitable time for taking the speaking test based on results of the pilot study, the pre-test was administered to the control and experimental groups in relatively the same conditions. The test required a quiet room (an empty class, an empty lab or the school library) to conduct the interview. These conditions were facilitated by the school administration as far as possible. Students were examined individually and their responses were recorded with a high quality tape recorder and sometimes with a video camera. Moreover, a booklet was handed to each student before the test. The booklet included the topics the student had to ask

the examiner about, the role play cards they were asked to act, the pictures they had to describe and the map they were asked to use to give directions.

Although the test conditions were almost good, some obstacles were faced as follows:

☞ Sometimes it was hard to find a quiet place to administer the test in, ex: the library was always very crowded.

☞ Difficulties were encountered in taking students from their classes to administer the test to them to the extent that the National Center for Educational Research had to communicate with the school administration to offer help in this respect.

☞ The time taken to administer the pre and post test was too long (2 weeks for both). Every day the examiner administered the test to only 6 or 7 students because the school day could not allow more than that.

The pre- test administration started on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September, that is, 13 days prior to the experiment. The pre test ended on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October. The post- test was administered on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 2006 and lasted for 13 days, so it ended on 8<sup>th</sup> of January. It was administered to both the experimental and the control groups.

- **Scoring the test:**

Students' spoken performance was evaluated by three raters in the light of a designed rating scale which gave detailed guidance to the raters and thus helped to ensure they paid attention to the same aspects of performance for each learner.

The rubrics of the rating scale were designed in the light of the speaking skills identified in the current study, the definition of each speaking skill as illustrated by the communicative competence model, conversational models as well as by the most recent international EFL speaking tests. Ex: the Oral Proficiency Interview "OPI", Cambridge EFL Speaking Test, Simulated Oral Proficiency Interviews "SOPI", ACTFL speaking scale, and the Interagency Language Roundtable scale "ILR" speaking scale" (Stansfield, 1989; ILR, 2004; Malone, 2000; Caldwell& Samuel, 2001 and Luoma, 2004).

The rubrics of the rating scale covered all identified speaking skills. Thus, the rating scale helped to provide detailed feedback about the effectiveness of the

program with respect to each speaking skill as well as with respect to the main competencies. The descriptors used in the scale were characterized to be brief, clear, definite, and comprehensible independently without reference to other descriptors. The rating scale was submitted to the jury members who validated the speaking test. They were asked to determine the suitability of the rating scale bands to the level of the students and the clarity of the descriptors included under each band. The jury indicated that the rating scale was valid and the descriptors clear and adequate.

For each speaking skill, five bands/levels were identified. Level/band (5) represented very good performance, level (4) represented good performance, level (3) represented fair or accepted performance, level (2) stood for poor or deficient performance and level (1) for very poor or unaccepted performance. Each band/level included a set of indicators or descriptors for the performance of each skill. Thus, each band descriptor generated a quantitative grade score for ranking and scoring students' spoken performance.

To assess the score assigned for each skill, the mean score was calculated for each skill (adding the scores assigned to each skill and dividing them by number of test sections). The means for all skills were added together to calculate the total score. Hence, the test was scored out of 40. To measure students' performance in each genre, the student's scores in all skills were added for each section and thus each section was marked out of 35. This was done for all sections, except for section eight (social situation) which was marked out of 30. For the test specification and final form of the rating scale rubrics, see table (3) and (4).

**Table (3)**

**Pre-post test specification indicating test sections and scores assigned to each section/ skill.**

Speaking skills	Grammatical competence			Discourse Competence		Pragmatic competence	Fluency	Total score on the test/ sections
	Grammar	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Coherence	Managing conversation			
Section (1) Exchanging personal information	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Section (2) Talking about the future	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Section (3) Giving directions	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Section (4) Giving advice/ suggestions	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Section (5) Narration	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Section (6) Giving opinions	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Section (7) Giving descriptions	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Section (8) social situations	5	5	5	—	5	5	5	30
<b>Total of each skills</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>Average score for each skill</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Total test score= 40</b>

**Table (4)**  
**The rating scale rubrics for correcting students' speaking performance**

**First: Grammatical Competence**

<b>1- Grammar</b>				
<b>5 (V. good)</b>	<b>4 ( good)</b>	<b>3 (fair)</b>	<b>2 (Poor)</b>	<b>1 ( very poor)</b>
A relatively effective use of grammatical rules (within level of proficiency 1 <sup>st</sup> secondary).	<b>Almost</b> no grammatical inaccuracies except for occasional few grammatical errors.	Some grammatical and word order errors occur which may cause misunderstanding.	<b>Frequent</b> minor and major errors in grammar that impede comprehension; speech may be characterized by a confusion of structural elements.	<b>Almost</b> all grammatical patterns inaccurate, except for a few stock phrases. Grammatical mistakes severely hamper communication.
<b>2-Pronunciation</b>				
<b>5 (very good)</b>	<b>4 (good)</b>	<b>3 (fair)</b>	<b>2 (Poor)</b>	<b>1 ( very poor)</b>
Pronunciation is intelligible. An acceptable rhythm of speech characterized by the appropriate use of stress, the smooth linking of words, and the use of appropriate intonation.	Almost acceptable stress, linking of words, and intonation. Flaws in articulation, stress and intonation rarely disturb the listener.	Stress, intonation and linking words are sometimes faulty.	Serious errors in pronunciation. Stress, intonation and phonemic articulation are generally poor and often heavily influenced by the mother language, which makes understanding difficult.	Severe and constant intonation and pronunciation problems cause almost complete unintelligibility.
<b>3-Vocabulary</b>				
<b>5 (very good)</b>	<b>4 (good)</b>	<b>3 (fair)</b>	<b>2 (Poor)</b>	<b>1( very poor)</b>
The speaker uses relevant, adequate and correct vocabulary and word collocations (within her level of language proficiency)	Almost appropriate range of words with few difficulties Occasionally uses inappropriate words and word collocations.	Vocabulary range is somewhat limited which might sometimes prevent communication of the message. Sometimes uses incorrect word collocations and some misunderstandings may arise from inaccurate word choice.	<b>Frequent</b> misuse of word, and limited vocabulary make comprehension quite difficult	Vocabulary is irrelevant, inadequate even for the most basic parts of the intended communication. Vocabulary is extremely limited.

Continued Table (4) (rating scale) rubrics for correcting students' speaking performance

**Second: Discourse Competence**

<b>1. To organize discourse coherently and cohesively (coherence and cohesion).</b>				
<b>5 (V. good)</b>	<b>4 (good)</b>	<b>3 (fair)</b>	<b>2 (Poor)</b>	<b>1 ( very poor)</b>
Discourse is generally coherent with clear, logical organization. It contains enough details to be generally effective. Cohesive devices, references, fillers are used effectively.	The speaker can almost structure the discourse according to the genre. The discourse is almost coherent. Few errors in the use of cohesive devices, which don't affect organization.	Discourse is sometimes affected by its unclear organization and it may lack enough details. Mostly simple cohesive devices are used. Referents and conjunctions are used sometimes incorrectly.	Response is often incoherent, loosely organized and utterances hesitant, often incomplete and restricted in length. Response often lacks details. Rare use of even simple conjunctions.	Response is incoherent. Utterances halting, fragmentary with no references and no use of cohesive devices and lack of linguistic competence interferes with discourse competence.
<b>2. To interact and manage the conversation effectively to keep the conversation going.</b>				
<b>5 (very good)</b>	<b>4 (good)</b>	<b>3 (fair)</b>	<b>2 (Poor)</b>	<b>1( very poor)</b>
The speaker contributes fully and effectively throughout the interaction. She takes turns, maintains conversation through showing understanding, backchannelling, and expanding on responses or developing topics.	The speaker contributes with ease for most of the interaction, with only occasional difficulties in negotiation. She can almost take turns, ensure comprehension, show understanding, backchannel and develop topics.	The speaker contributes effectively for some of the interaction, but with intrusive deviations at times. Responses may be short without attempt at elaboration. Turns might sometimes be irrelevant to what is said.	Rarely able to understand enough to keep the conversation going. Difficulty in maintaining contributions throughout. The speaker's turns are always irrelevant to what was said.	Communication is totally dependent on repetition, and repair. The conversation totally stops.

Continued Table (4) (rating scale) rubrics for correcting students' speaking performance

**Third: Pragmatic Competence**

<i>To express a range of functions effectively and appropriately (functional competence)</i>				
5 (V. good)	4 (good)	3 (fair)	2 (poor)	1 (Very Poor)
The speaker is able to fulfill a wide range of functions to satisfy the goal of the task. The speaker generally considers register and demonstrates appropriate response.	The speaker is almost able to fulfill required functions clearly and effectively. Almost appropriate response to audience/ situation. Errors not significant enough to be likely to cause social misunderstandings.	The speaker may lack skill in selecting language to carry out the intended functions. Evidence of response to role and setting, but inappropriate responses may sometimes cause social misunderstanding.	The speaker often lacks skill in selecting the language that addresses the intended functions. Functions most of the time are performed unclearly and ineffectively. Generally inappropriate response to audience/ situation.	Unable to perform the functions in the spoken language. No evidence of ability to respond to audience/ or register.
<b>Fourth: Fluency: to speak fluently demonstrating a reasonable rate of speech.</b>				
5	4	3	2	1
The speaker can express herself fluently and smoothly with no pauses and hesitation.	Delivery is smooth with few pauses that don't strain the listener or impede communication. Pauses to think of ideas rather than language.	Occasional and noticeable hesitations. Communication is achieved but strains the listener at times. The speaker may pause to think of language.	Delivery is often slow and utterances are characterized by frequent pauses and hesitations that impede communication and constantly strain the listener.	Delivery so slow that only few words are produced.

• **Training raters:**

The purpose of training the raters was to ensure that the three raters would give comparable ratings to students' performance according to the scoring criteria. The focus was on clarifying the guidelines included in the rating scale and maintaining adherence to them for the conduct of rating.

The training was conducted with the help of a training sheet including actual examples of performance other than those included in the rating scale. It included expressions, grammatical rules, vocabulary, cohesion markers and functions expected of students in each section.

The raters could share understating of the scale through repeated discussions, revisions and scale application to a sample of students. Furthermore, the raters were provided with samples of students' performance on the pre and post test to help them understand mistakes students can make with respect to all the speaking skills. The names of the raters, the scoring training sheet and samples of students' performance on the pre/ post test are in appendix (D).

### **c. The program:**

The following is a description of the steps the researcher went through to design the current program in the light of task-based instruction.

#### **•Aims of the program:**

The suggested program aimed at developing the speaking skills necessary for first year secondary students through engaging them in communicative tasks tackled according to the cognitive approach to language learning. The speaking skills targeted throughout the program belonged to three categories (linguistic, discourse and pragmatic competence). Furthermore, they included fluency, which does not belong to any of the previous categories.

#### **•Assumptions of the program:**

**The program was based on the following assumptions derived from, speaking skills definition, communicative tasks and the cognitive approach to language learning:**

- Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. The spoken discourse has many features that distinguish it from the written discourse. This includes: lexical and grammatical characteristics and others related to the cultural and interactive nature of speaking.
- Speaking skills are classified in the light of communicative competence models into grammatical, discourse and pragmatic competence. Fluency, although not a main component in the communicative competence model, is a vital speaking skill as it reflects the learner's ability to use all other skills in real time.

- Effective instruction in ESL/ EFL speaking involves engaging learners in meaningful communicative tasks that have a specific outcome to be achieved. It also entails allowing students the opportunity to produce both long and short turns as well as both transactional and interactional discourse.
- The cognitive approach enhances language learning as it takes into consideration the cognitive mechanisms underlying foreign language learning. Thus, it provides an organizational framework that can structure how communicative tasks are implemented to develop speaking skills.
- Implications of the cognitive approach can be successfully applied to foster EFL learners' speaking skills by means of carefully selected pre-, during and post- tasks activities which manipulate the learner's focus of attention; and provide a balanced development towards the three goals of accuracy, fluency and restructuring the existing language system.
- According to task- based instruction (the integration of communicative tasks and the cognitive approach), pre-task activities should increase the chances that either new elements be incorporated into the underlying language system or that some re-arrangement of existing elements will take place. This can be achieved by raising students' awareness of spoken discourse. Another way is through pre-task planning which enhances learners' ability to improve their attention to form (accuracy) rather than focusing only on meaning (fluency).
- In task- based instruction, learners are considered active participants in their learning and hence they assume more responsibilities in monitoring their learning through self- evaluation. Accordingly, the teacher's role changes to that of a facilitator, a guide and an anxiety alleviator who offers students help when needed.
- According to task- based instruction propositions, post- task activities should aim at helping students practice the spoken language forms, patterns and skills. They have to be of consciousness -raising nature, where further input is presented. There should also be some degree of practice-oriented work of difficult skills and elements encountered during speaking.

## • Learning objectives of the program:

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

- 1- *Follow spoken grammatical rules correctly* (such as subject/verb agreement, word order within utterances, and correct use of tenses, articles and voice).
- 2- *Use a relevant, adequate and appropriate range of vocabulary and collocations.*
- 3- *Demonstrate intelligible pronunciation* including correct use of the sound system, intonation, stress patterns and sounds assimilation.
- 4- *Structure discourse coherently by structuring it according to norms of its genre, and cohesively* by using references as well as discourse markers (logical, additive, temporal and casual connectors) correctly.
- 5- *Interact and managing conversation effectively to keep it going through:*
  - ❖ Encouraging the speaker to continue speaking
  - ❖ Showing understanding.
  - ❖ Taking turns adequately
- 6- *Express a range of functions effectively and appropriately according to the register and context.*
- 7- *Speak fluently adopting a reasonable rate of speech.*

## • Content of the program:

The speaking skills subsumed under grammatical, discourse and pragmatic competences as well as fluency were taught throughout nine units comprising twenty seven lessons. Each unit focused on a particular main function or a certain spoken genre. These particular functions were selected because they were considered to be appropriate for first year secondary students as they are the main functions focused upon in the Ministry objectives and the teacher's guide. The functions were also judged to be appropriate by jury members.

Although each unit focused on a particular function, many sub- functions occurred during the course of each unit.

### **The units included were as follows:**

**Unit 1:** Exchanging personal information

**Unit 2:** Giving directions

**Unit 3:** Talking about the future

**Unit 4:** Giving advice and making suggestions

**Unit 5:** Narrating and telling stories.

**Unit 6:** Expressing opinions and agreeing/ disagreeing with others' opinions.

**Unit 7:** Describing people, houses and pictures.

**Unit 8:** Social English (Apologizing, expressing illness and making offers).

**Unit 9:** Making requests and asking for permission.

**Objectives of each speaking lesson:**

As the proposed program aimed at developing the specified EFL speaking skills among first year secondary students, each lesson focused on almost all the skills, as it was hard to separate the speaking skills being closely integrated. However, pre and post task activities helped to shed light on specific skills in each lesson. For activities used to develop each skill, see appendix (D).

**Communicative tasks included in the units:**

Each unit consisted of two, three or sometimes four lessons; each including one communicative task addressing the lesson main function/genre. Tasks in every unit were arranged in order of difficulty, which was determined, by their linguistic complexity, and cognitive requirements. This means that the pedagogic sequence followed took learners through similar tasks at different levels of difficulty in terms of the operations they contain.

To conform to the definition of communicative tasks, the following was taken into account when selecting tasks:

- 1 Each student held a different portion of the information which had to be exchanged in order to reach the task outcome.
- 2 Students had the same or different goals.
- 3 Students had a real need to communicate together.

The tasks, to a great extent, were representative of potential situations in which the learners could find themselves in and required them to accomplish a communicative purpose by using the target language functions (speech acts). In

addition, the tasks used to practice social English were based on real authentic situations rather than artificial dialogues. In these tasks, differences in registers were highlighted. These included direct and indirect/ polite and less polite forms of expressing each function

Throughout the lessons, students were required to perform the following tasks:

- Describe and find the difference between two identical pictures.
- Discuss ideas/views/opinions through opinion-gap tasks
- Solve problems and find the solutions for given situations.
- Conduct interviews to obtain information from each other.
- Exchange information throughout information gap tasks.
- Give directions to their peers using maps.
- Narrate stories to their peers guided or not guided by pictures.
- Role play situations to practice social/ interactional functions.

Students' output after performing the task was the peer/ group decision recorded in the form of statements, solution to a problem, choices among alternatives, or arguments formulated in order to persuade the members of the other group(s).

In addition, each lesson included some supplementary listening materials to which students were exposed before doing the task. Thus, all the listening materials were selected according to the students' level and according to the content or spoken genre tackled by each task. Table (5) indicates each unit lessons, type of tasks included, supplementary listening materials and skills developed in all lessons.

**Table (5)**  
**Program units/lessons, type of tasks, supplementary listening texts, and speaking skills developed in all lessons**

The program Units	Lessons in each unit	Task type	Supplementary listening texts	Speaking skills developed in all units
1.Exchanging personal information	a. Expressing hobbies & personal details	Interview	1-What do you like? 2-Something in common	1-Using intelligible pronunciation
	b. Expressing habits and routines	interview	_____	
	c.Presenting autobiographical detail	Information gap	Life stories	
2-Giving directions	a. Lost in Newtown	Role play	Where is the school?	2-Following grammatical rules
	b. Town plan	Role play + information gap	Places to Go	
	c. Telling the way	Information gap	-Where is the bank? -Scottish National gallery	
3-Expressing future intentions, plans and predictions	a. Expressing future plans	Information gap	What are your plans?	3.Using relevant, vocabulary
	b. Predicting the future	Opinion gap	Life in 2050	
	c. Expressing fixed arrangements	Information gap + reasoning gap	A day out	
4-Giving advice and making suggestions	a. Making suggestions	role play + problem solving	What shall we do?	4.Organizing discourse coherently and cohesively
	b. One day in Alexandria	Problem solving + opinion gap	Plan a day out	
	c. Giving advice	Role play task	-What are the rules? -What is the matter?	5.Interacting and managing conversation effectively.
	d. Giving advice about traveling to Egypt	Role play + problem solving	-Around the world -Holidays in January	
5-Narrating and telling stories.	a. Talking about past events	Information gap	-On holiday -What a day	6.Expressing functions effectively.
	b. Telling a story from pictures	Jigsaw	Lost in the desert	
	c. Narrating a personal story	Information gap	Memories	
6-Expressing opinions	a. Giving opinion about a place	Role play + opinion gap	Egypt	7.Speaking fluently
	b. TV : good or bad	Opinion gap task	Rules and freedom	
	c. Who deserves the money?	Ranking problem solving +	Banning smoking	

7-Describing people, housed and pictures	a. Describing physical appearance	Role play + Problem solving	Characters
	b. Describing Houses	Information Gap	Does the apartment have a view?
	c. Describing scenes	Jigsaw task (comparing pictures)	In the picture
	d. Describing peoples' personality	Information Gap	-What's Jean like? -A great girl - My brother
8-Social English	a. Expressing illness	Role play + information gap	-I haven't seen you for days
	b. Apologizing	Role play	I've lost the record
	c. Making offers	Role play + problem solving	Social matters
9-Making requests and asking for permission.	a. Making Requests	Role play	-You've saved my life -Ask for a favor
	b. Asking for permission	Role play + problem solving	_____

*While selecting the listening texts, the researcher took into account the following criteria:*

- a. They were relevant to students' background knowledge and culture.
- b. They were authentic representing real life spoken discourse and including natural characteristics of spoken discourse such as (fillers, hesitation markers, fixed expressions, ellipsis, vague language...etc).
- c. They could lend themselves to analysis and close examination as a means of raising student's awareness of different aspects of spoken discourse. See appendix (F) for the names of the teachers who approved the listening texts.

- **The program validity:**

Sample lessons from the program were given to 10 EFL specialists who approved it and suggested some modifications (See Appendix (E) for names of the jury who approved the proposed program, criteria for judging the program validity and the program lessons). The panel of jury approved the program as a valid one and suggested the following:

1. Giving students more practice on the speaking skills and allocating more time to teaching the program.

2. Decreasing the activities practiced at the pre-task stage and limiting them to either one or two activities.
3. Applying the formative evaluation at the end of each unit instead of each lesson unless for lessons addressing distinct genres.

- **Piloting the program:**

After designing the program and modifying it according to the panel of jury suggestions, a small pilot study was carried out. Therefore, 30 students were randomly selected from one first year secondary class in Saraya El Kobba secondary school for Girls. One lesson from each unit was taught to the students. The pilot study aimed at:

- ◆ Determining the time taken by the students to do the tasks and practice the different activities.
- ◆ Determining to what extent the students enjoyed the tasks, the supplementary listening texts and activities included in the program.
- ◆ Making sure that the program content and activities were suitable to students' linguistic proficiency level.
- ◆ Experimenting the activities and instructional means used in the program.

**Results of the pilot study were as follows:**

- ❖ It became evident that each lesson required from two to three periods (100 minutes-150 minutes).
- ❖ There were indications that students enjoyed the speaking tasks very much and were very enthusiastic about the activities used, as they felt that they were achieving a specific result. The program activities allowed students, also, to work properly in pairs or in groups, which render them very interested and motivated.
- ❖ There was an indication that the program content and activities were suitable to students' linguistic proficiency level.
- ❖ It became apparent through experimentation that with respect to self/peer evaluation, it was hard for students to focus on observing all skills at once. Therefore, students were divided into groups and each group had to concentrate on a certain area. This gave students a sense of competition as they looked for mistakes and commented on spoken performance, which

increased their motivation.

- ❖ Students preferred to listen to the listening texts in segments because they couldn't concentrate on the listening text as a whole.

### •Duration and experimentation of the program:

The program consisting of 9 units and comprising 27 speaking lessons was taught in seven periods per week over a period of eleven weeks (approximately three months). It took seventy-four classroom periods (fifty minutes each). The first classroom period was an introductory one aiming at introducing students to the program, its aim, and the activities they were going to do.

The experimentation of the program started on the 3rd of October 2005 till the 25th of December 2005. The time allocated for each activity was also determined as indicated in appendix (F).

### The proposed teaching strategy:

The teaching strategy adopted in this study was designed in the light of task based instruction- the integration between communicative tasks and the cognitive approach. According to this teaching strategy, each speaking lesson was divided into three main phases: Pre-task phase, during task phase and post- task phase. These phases could be explained in detail as follows:

#### I- Pre-task stage:

For each task, more than one pre-task activity was used to get students well prepared for the task. For instance, teaching before the task was accompanied by planning so that students could benefit from the information they had to learn. Consciousness raising activities were sometimes accompanied by planning or teaching. The harder the task, the more consciousness raising activities and planning were provided. The pre- task activities were as follows:

#### **Planning:**

**To plan for the task, students had to think and write notes about the following:**

- Problems their listeners might have, and how they could be solved.

- How to help the listener understand the organization of speech, i.e., the order of the events in narrative accounts.
- Ways to make sure the listener won't get lost and ways to show understanding.
- Grammar, vocabulary and collocations needed to do the task. (students were asked to draw a small table to identify word collocations).
- Ways for avoiding difficulties and solving problems with grammar and vocabulary.

The teacher, according to the task, provided guidelines to the points the students had to focus on while planning. She gave them some examples to help them be more focused. The questions to be answered during planning varied according to each task objectives and requirements. Moreover, students playing different roles in a role play task were given different points to focus upon during planning. Students were asked to write brief notes about points to be planned before each task.

### **Teaching:**

Before the task, the teacher directly taught students the speech genre they were going to be involved in through some of the following techniques:

- ◆ Presenting and analyzing the genre with the students.
- ◆ Analyzing and teaching lexico-grammatical forms such as tense patterns or vocabulary appropriate to different stages of the genre.
- ◆ Presenting specific language patterns and lexical phrases to express speech functions (e.g. giving opinions, providing comments...etc) relevant to the genre. This included identifying :
  - How the appropriate realization and level of directness of any speech act is highly sensitive to the socio-cultural contexts.
  - Cross cultural differences by comparing speech acts in the target language with speech acts in Arabic and examining questions such as:
    - ❖ What speech acts were appropriate to a particular situation?
    - ❖ How were these speech acts realized?
    - ❖ In which language were they more direct?

## **Consciousness raising:**

In this technique, students were asked to listen carefully to a recorded text and read its tapescript. The listening text resembled the task students were expected to engage in or addressing at least the same genre. Then, students were exposed to a number of activities based on discovery learning whereby observation and exploration formed a base for imitation and learning. Thus, a rich repertoire of spoken discourse elements was provided and the operation of pragmatic (sociolinguistics) factors was taken into account as well.

To provide students with adequate guidance, before these consciousness raising activities, the teacher explained the function of punctuation marks used in the tapescript and how it reflected spoken discourse. For instance, the three full stops indicated a pause longer than one second...etc. Students were then asked to analyze the text guided by "observation tasks" which aimed at encouraging them to become sensitive to particular features of spoken conversations.

Both teaching and consciousness raising were used to raise students' awareness as well as to teach them certain points closely related to the speaking skills identified in the current study. The most important elements focused were as follows:

### **☞ Grammatical competence:**

#### **\* Grammar:**

Beside common grammatical rules triggered by the task (prepositions, tenses, adjectives and adverbs), attention was also paid to some grammatical elements characterizing spoken language such as:

- Ellipsis:** Students were asked to identify ellipsis in the spoken text involving the omission of personal subjects, the omission of auxiliary verbs or of both the pronoun and the auxiliary verb.
- Tag questions:** Students were asked to extract tag questions used to seek confirmation, or express various emotions such as surprise, horror or disbelief.

- **Structures characterizing spoken discourse:** Students' attention was drawn to structures that distinguish spoken and written discourse. (Incomplete sentences "utterances", contractions, fronting and so on).

✱ **Vocabulary:**

Although students were not directly taught vocabulary before the task, words/collocations relevant to the task were elicited from students during planning and consciousness raising activities. Other words occurred during the course of interaction and were focused on at the post task stage.

Moreover, students' awareness was drawn to special characteristics of vocabulary use relevant to the spoken discourse such as (fixed expressions, words characterizing spoken discourse, and vague language).

✱ **Pronunciation:**

Students' attention was drawn to different characteristics of spoken discourse pronunciation, such as: reduced forms, connected speech, stress patterns and intonation.

The teacher either highlighted the pronunciation characteristics or elicited it from the students. Students were asked to add pronunciation markings to the conversation and phrases by circling stressed syllables, drawing intonation contours, connecting linked words, drawing a line through reduced vowels and so forth.

☞ **Discourse Competence:**

Students' consciousness was directed to how each spoken genre is structured in certain ways, so that it can easily be followed by listeners. In transactional discourse, each genre (expository, narrative or descriptive) has its own organization and structure that students learned adequately. For example, in narrative texts, students had to analyze the text to the following elements (abstract, orientation, remarkable events, reaction and evaluation). As for interactional discourse, students learned how to follow typical ordered sequences of turns and how each turn is linked to the previous turn as well as the next one.

Furthermore, students were asked to identify the discourse markers used whether those marking a transition point within a sentence, between sentences or

between turns. Discourse markers included also those marking transition at the macro level of the conversation such as: now, but, anyway, well, by the way...etc. Intonational features accompanied different discourse organizations were also highlighted.

Furthermore, Students' attention was drawn to pronouns and demonstratives referents used to achieve cohesion.

**Students were also taught how to keep a conversation going through:**

- ❖ Showing understanding using the following expression (Yeah, I see, right)
- ❖ Encouraging the speaker to continue speaking through backchannelling (ah ha, mm, that is true, exactly); asking further questions about the subject; providing further comments and showing interest.
- ❖ Checking understanding with phrases such as "you know what I mean, all right? you see?".

☞ **Pragmatic Competence:**

Students received explicit meta-pragmatic information about the realization of different functions and the social factors that might affect their use. Furthermore, politeness strategies were stressed such as: apologizing ( I'm terribly sorry to put you out, but could you close the window? ), using the past tense ( I was wondering if) and using modal verbs ( may , can ,might...etc).

Students' awareness of the differences between various realizations of the same speech act was raised though the following strategies:

- ☐ Asking students to arrange utterances exhibiting varied speech act strategies according to the dimension of directness/ indirectness and relating their classification to the concept of politeness.
- ☐ Helping student make connections between forms and functions realized.
- ☐ Requiring students to match the utterances to the appropriate social context.

☞ **Fluency:**

Students' attention was drawn to the importance of using filled pauses instead of silence to increase fluency; hence they were asked to extract these fillers by

themselves from the text. Moreover, native language speakers' rate of speech was analyzed in terms of how it can affect pronunciation or use of lexical phrases

## **II- During the task:**

The activities included under each phase were as follows:

### **1- Doing the task:**

At this phase, the teacher's role was to circulate within the class and help learners formulate what they want to say, but not to intrude. The students participated in the task and the focus was on communicating meaning.

Although the teacher worked as a facilitator most of the time at this stage, she helped students to cope with specific problems as they came up as follows:

- She provided clarification for the students so they won't lose the thread of what was going on.
- She prevented digression or native language use.
- She ensured that all students had a chance to participate in the task.

At this stage also, one of the students was assigned for each peer/ group to observe her peers' performance and write some comments concerning problems in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, organization of discourse, and appropriateness of response in a checklist provided by the teacher.

Moreover, students' performance during performing the task was recorded by the teacher. Practically, not all the students could be recorded, so in each lesson one or two pairs/ groups were recorded for subsequent analysis. Moreover, the teacher walked around to gather common observations about each group to be handled later on with the whole class at the post-task stage.

### **2- Planning for reporting:**

Students had to express the tangible output they had reached together and plan for the presentation of their results. During the planning period, the teacher was available to answer any questions concerning vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation. Moreover, the students were provided with many resources such as grammar books and dictionaries. Students were also given special roles such as writer of notes, user

of the dictionary, and presenter. The emphasis was on clarity, organization and accuracy as appropriate for a public presentation.

### **3- Reporting:**

In the report phase, one or more pairs/ groups (but not necessarily all) made a report to the other class members telling them what they had achieved. This was a kind of public performance which heightened attention to form and accuracy as it was well-planned, and which also constituted the validating activity for the previous planning.

At this stage, the teacher also clarified the purpose of the report indicating what kind of information students were going to listen to in each others' reports and what they would do with the information provided. For example, in problem solving tasks, the teacher asked the rest of students to compare and list strategies of solving the problem, evaluate solutions, vote on the best solution or recommend one solution.

After each presentation, the listeners (other students) were invited to ask questions to the speaker and/or make comments. The teacher commented on the content of the reports, rephrased but gave no public correction.

### **III-Post task stage:**

The post task stage constituted of two phases: altering attention balance and reflection and consolidation.

#### **1- Altering attentional balance:**

The aim of this phase was to:

- ❖ Encourage students to formulate their own judgments wherever possible.
- ❖ Help students be constructive by mentioning good as well as bad things about their performance, and always make concrete suggestions for improvement.
- ❖ Focus on a few things of interest to everyone and dealing with individual problems as well.

**The activities used were as follows:**

#### **a. Self/ peer Evaluation:**

Students were asked to conduct self/peer evaluation of the tapes recorded during the task through using evaluation sheets that included the identified speaking

skills. In addition, the observer assigned during the task was asked to give a general feedback about her group's performance.

During listening to the recorded tape, the teacher helped students in the process of transcribing the text but without aiming at hundred percent accuracy. Moreover, hesitation and false starts were considered perfectly natural. Not all the recording was analyzed but students were asked to use just an extract of it to prepare and work through. First, the teacher played a short extract from the tape the students were working on and gave them some examples on the blackboard about the characteristics to look for.

Students were asked to reflect upon, discuss, and suggest alternative realizations of their own and their peers' mistakes. The teacher asked each group to focus on one area during listening. For instance, some students focused on pronunciation, others focused on discourse and so on. The teacher used this activity to bring out positive features of the students' performance she noticed as well. The self evaluation checklist is as follows:

**Table (6)**

**The self –evaluation checklist**

<b>Areas of focus</b>	<b>Student 1</b>	<b>Student 2</b>	<b>Errors</b>	<b>Correction</b>
<b>Pronunciation</b> ❖ Was pronunciation intelligible? ❖ Were stress, intonation, sounds...etc used properly?				
<b>Grammar</b> ❖ Were grammatical rules followed correctly? (tenses, nouns and adjectives)				
<b>Vocabulary</b> ❖ Were correct words used? ❖ Were words used together appropriately (collocations and expressions)?				
<b>Discourse Competence:</b> ❖ Were grammatical and lexical references used appropriately? ❖ Was the discourse organized appropriately? ❖ Were utterances linked together appropriately using connectors like "and", "but" and "because", on the other hand....etc?				
<b>- During interaction did the speakers:</b> ❖ Show understanding through backchanneling (mm, yeah, right)? ❖ Encourage the speaker to continue speaking through showing interest and asking more questions? ❖ Respond coherently to their interlocutor's turns?				
<b>Pragmatic competence:</b> ❖ Were appropriate phrases used to express task functions? ❖ Did the speaker use politeness strategies? (modal verbs, past simple, getting a pre-agreement...etc)?				
<b>Fluency:</b> ❖ Did the speech flow or hesitate? ❖ Was the rate of speech acceptable?				

Concerning pronunciation, as most students were not familiar with phonetic symbols, a simple straightforward method was used to compare the mispronounced word with a more familiar word consisting of the same sound. For example:

**NO**

Heerd

Wiz

**YES**

heard/ word/ bird

with/ the / then

**-For putting the stress on the wrong syllable, underlining was used:**

Comfortable

comfortable

Both the wrong and the right pronunciations were written on the board to help students understand.

A short time was given to feedback so that students had the opportunity to formulate their own judgments about the performance they listened to. The teacher tried to elicit what the students picked up from listening to the tape by asking them to describe the spoken performance and provide clear feedback.

Moreover, due to the limited time of the lesson, pairs or groups who were recorded were given their tapes to listen to again at home and re-evaluate it using the evaluation criteria determined before thus focusing more deeply on points of strength and weakness. The teacher then discussed with students their comments individually.

### **b. Public performance:**

Students were asked, after they had completed a task, in the privacy of their own group, to repeat their performance publicly in front of the rest of the class, (who themselves were doing the same task), and the teacher. In this way, a concern with form and analysis was infiltrated into the task work without the teacher's intervention and error correction during the task. This was done especially with tasks that lent themselves to repetition of performance such as the task of "giving direction" and role-play tasks.

After this, the teacher ran a feedback session with all the class based on the notes she took during performing the task through the following steps:

- ❖ The teacher divided the class into groups, each focusing on a certain speaking skill.
- ❖ The teacher asked one student from each group to write her group's comments on the board under headings signaling the speaking skills.

- ❖ The teacher asked students to decide whether the utterances written were correct or not and whether they were appropriate or not in their social context.
- ❖ The teacher asked students to work out a range of appropriate alternatives or expressions for the wrong ones. She asked students also to use expressions, which were correct, but inappropriate, in a more appropriate context.
- ❖ The teacher asked students to decide whether certain pronunciations were correct or not and work out the correct pronunciation.

Moreover, students were sometimes asked to compare their performance to native language speakers doing the same task or to the listening text they were exposed to at the pre-task stage.

## **2- Reflection and consolidation:**

### **This phase aimed at helping students:**

- ◆ identify, observe and consolidate language development.
- ◆ classify (either structurally or semantically) and search for patterns
- ◆ hypothesize, check and practice correct forms

The activities at this stage were based on students' errors in the previous stage. They were designed and taught in a separate lesson. Therefore, the selection of one activity or another depended on the purpose of reflection, the nature of the task, and students' frequent errors during the task. The following activities were practiced at this stage:

### **↗ Corpus driven exercises (searching for patterns):**

Basically, as the focus with respect to grammar, vocabulary, functions and discourse markers was on lexical phrases rather than on isolated words, students were exposed to some real samples extracted from the spoken language corpus, namely, Cobuild English Usage (1998) to help them understand characteristics of spoken language and how phrases are used and combined together. Another alternative, when the internet was available at school or at home, was to ask students to extract the concordances of some selected words or phrases. Sometimes, the concordances were printed by the teacher to be used later in class. The words/phrases selected were actually used or required throughout the task, so students were already familiar with their meaning.

**The main sites students were referred to were:**

A- [http://132.208.224.131/concordancers/concord\\_e.html](http://132.208.224.131/concordancers/concord_e.html)

B- <http://www.staff.amu.edu.pl/~sipkadan/lingo.htm>

C- <http://www.edict.com.hk/concordance/WWWConcappE.htm>

D- <http://pie.usna.edu/simplesearch.html>

**Students were asked to do the following:**

- ❖ Identify the word or phrase that preceded or followed a highlighted word.
- ❖ Make notes on any repeated patterns of grammar or vocabulary choice.
- ❖ Make notes on the meaning without using a dictionary and group the meanings together according to provided classifications.

Students did the analysis individually or in pairs. Students were also allowed to ask more questions and to investigate other features they noticed.

Actually, each lesson or task triggered certain words or phrases as the points of focus. Students were also encouraged to look for more words in the language corpora on the internet at home or at school.

↗ **Language Practice:**

Beside the previous activities, at the post task stage, students were asked to do some language practice activities. Basically, all the activities were performed individually, in pairs or groups as team competition or teacher led session with the whole class. The main language practice activities were as follows:

♣ **Repetition:**

Repetition of useful phrases or dialogue reading was done by individuals, students in pairs, or with the whole class in chorus. The repetition began slowly and then built up speed.

♣ **Listen and Complete:**

Teams or pairs wrote a list of useful phrase or sentences. One learner said half or a little more of each item; or the teacher said a part of phrase and stopped somewhere and asked students to complete.

♣ **Grammar/ vocabulary and pronunciation activities:**

Grammar points and vocabulary related to the task or which occurred to cause problems to the students were practiced through activities that directed students to

focus on accuracy. Grammar and vocabulary activities were practiced orally in a communicative context rather than in a written way to ensure that the students would be able to use these rules in their spoken performance. The activities included: fill in the gap, matching, and classification....etc.

Pronunciation exercises which focused on stress and intonation were mostly provided at the post task stage. Besides, each exercise was tied to the task so it was fully contextualized.

♣ **Rearranging parts of a conversation into the right order.**

To help students understand the discoursal characteristics of spoken language, they were asked to rearrange a text relying on discourse devices employed to begin, terminate or change the topic of the conversation as well as on the structure of the genre itself (narrative, descriptive...etc).

♣ **Activities focusing on cohesion.**

To help students master the use of discourse markers, students were given a group of utterances to be filled in by correct discourse markers to realize cohesiveness such as those associated with conversation maintenance, phrases used to connect utterances or fill in pauses to sound more fluent.

♣ **Controlled variation:**

This was introduced to the students with the help of simple substitution drills, which demonstrated that some lexical phrases learned previously are patterns with open slots (ex: in my opinion....., the best thing to do is.....). The goal was to have learners segment and introduce new patterns of their own.

♣ **Practicing Exchange structures:**

Through these activities, students learned expected sets of successive utterances; ex: a summon is usually followed by a response, a closing is followed by a parting, an assertion by acceptance or disagreement. Practicing these structures placed emphasis on conversation as discourse thus focusing on both discourse and pragmatic competence. To practice these structures, students were asked to determine expected response of some questions or some statements and then repeat them in pairs.

### ♣ **Practicing indirect speech acts**

To help students learn which forms are socially appropriate for which context, thus improve their pragmatic competence, they were asked to do some matching activities, classify or correct the mistakes, which shed light on politeness and indirectness strategies used with each speech act. It also included practicing various language functions such as expressing politeness, requesting, and questioning.

Moreover, due to the limited time of the lesson, students were given some activities as homework, as these activities could be practiced individually, and the teacher used to give her feedback later on. These included:

- Corpus driven activities.
- Self evaluation of the tapes recorded in class.

### **Instructional aids and equipment:**

The following aids were used during implementing the program:

- 1- the blackboard
- 2- Cassette tapes including all the listening materials listened to during the tasks as well as blank tapes to record students' performance during the task.
- 3- Student's dictionary "Longman" and the grammar book "English grammar in use, the intermediate level".
- 4- Some handouts used throughout the task:
  - A. Tapescripts of the listening texts used either prior to doing the task or after the task.
  - B. Sheets including the task to be performed by each student working in pairs or groups and role-play cards acted as well.
  - C. The self/ peer evaluation checklist designed by the researcher to be used at the "Altering the attention balance" stage.
  - D. The worksheets including the activities to be done before the task or those focusing on practicing speaking skills after doing the task (planning sheets, fill in the gap sheets, consciousness raising questions sheets, pronunciation activities, matching exercises, reordering activities, controlled practice...etc).

E. Maps, pictures and other graphs relevant to some tasks such as "giving directions" and "describing"

### **Evaluation:**

The evaluation system employed in the program was composed of both formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation was conducted for assessing learner's gradual progress in speaking and providing necessary feedback on their overall speaking performance.

During formative evaluation, students' speaking was evaluated by the researcher herself throughout the implementation of the proposed program. After each unit or lesson, formative evaluation exercises of students' speaking skills were used. The evaluation exercises made use of practicing- individually or in pairs- some situations similar to the task they were engaged in and provided them with further individual feedback with respect to the skills identified. Moreover, formative evaluation was partly based on self -evaluation at the post-task stage in the light of the checklist agreed upon by students at the beginning of the program.

The second type of evaluation was summative. This was conducted at the end of the program implementation. It included the administration of the speaking posttest. The major purpose of this type of evaluation was to measure the achievement of the intended goals at the end of the program application. It also aimed at investigating the effectiveness of the proposed program in developing first year secondary stage students' speaking sub-skills.

## Statistical Analysis and Results

The main purpose of this study was to develop the necessary speaking skills for first year secondary students through the use of a suggested program designed in the light of task- based instruction and the cognitive approach principles. The results of this study are presented by relating them to the study hypotheses.

To control variables prior to implementing the treatment, the results of the pre-test were subjected to statistical treatment to find whether there were statistically significant differences between the control and the experimental groups in terms of speaking. Therefore, a t-test for independent groups was used to compare the two groups in terms of overall speaking proficiency and speaking subskills.

The following two tables show that there were no statistically significant differences between the control and experimental groups on the pre- test in overall speaking.

**Table (7)**  
**T- test results of the pre- test comparing the control and experimental groups mean scores in overall speaking**

Group	N	M	S.D.	D. F.	T-value	Significance level
<b>Control</b>	38	13	4	74	1.2	.216 (Not sign. at 0.01)
<b>Experimental</b>	38	14	3.7			

As shown in table (7), t- value is (1.2) which is not statistically significant at 0.01. Thus, it can be concluded that the two groups were almost at the same level of performance in speaking and therefore any variance between the two groups that may occur after the implementation of the program will be attributed to it.

In the same way, independent samples t- tests for the differences between the experimental and control groups on the pre- test were conducted with respect to speaking skills competencies (i.e. linguistic, discourse, pragmatic competence), fluency as well as with respect to each speaking sub-skill. This was done to make sure that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on the pre- test whether in speaking skills competencies or in each speaking sub-skill. See table (8).

**Table (8)**

**T-tests results of the pre- test comparing the control and experimental groups in speaking skills competencies and in each speaking sub-skill**

Speaking competencies/Skills	Experimental Group Pre-test		Control Group Pre-test		DF	T -value	Significance Level
	M	S.D	M	S.D			
<b>Grammatical competence</b>	6.6	1.5	6.2	1.8	74	1.1	.29 (Not Sig. at 0.01 Level)
<i>1-following grammatical rule correctly</i>	2.2	0.55	2.1	0.54	74	0.6	.55 ( Not Sig at 0.01 Level)
<i>2. using intelligible pronunciation</i>	2.3	0.54	2.1	0.65	74	1.3	.20 ( Not Sig at 0.01 Level)
<i>3. using a relevant and appropriate range of words</i>	2	.53	1.9	.60	74	1.13	.26 ( Not Sig at 0.01 Level)
<b>Discourse competence</b>	3.9	1.1	3.5	1.1	74	1.33	.19 ( Not Sig at 0.01 Level)
<i>4. Organizing discourse coherently and cohesively</i>	1.9	.60	1.8	.63	74	1.3	.21 ( Not Sig. at 0.01 Level)
<i>5. Managing the conversation effectively</i>	1.9	.52	1.7	.57	74	1.33	.19 ( Not Sig. at 0.01 Level)
<b>6. Pragmatic competence</b>	1.8	.55	1.7	.53	74	.87	.38 ( Not Sig. at 0.01 Level)
<b>7. Speaking fluently adopting a natural rate of speed.</b>	2	.62	1.7	.71	74	1.6	.09 (Not Sig. at 0.01 Level)

The above two tables show that there were no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the pre- test whether in main speaking competencies or in any speaking sub-skill. This means that the two groups were approximately at the same level of speaking proficiency at the beginning of the experiment. It can be also noticed from the above two tables that the mean scores of both groups were low.

### **Results related to the study hypotheses:**

Before presenting the study results related to each hypothesis, it is important to refer to the previously mentioned fact that there are two sets of hypotheses. The first set includes those hypotheses concerned with the comparison between the control and experimental groups on the post-test. As for the second set, it includes

those hypotheses focusing on the pre/ post speaking performance of the experimental group with respect to each variable.

**(a) Hypotheses concerned with the comparison between the experimental and control groups on the post- test:**

**Hypothesis One:**

*There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group exposed to the suggested task-based instruction program, and the control group receiving regular instruction on the post-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the experimental group.*

In order to verify the validity of this hypothesis, t- tests for independent samples were used to compare the mean scores of the two groups on the post- test. The results of the t- tests proved to be statistically consistent with the hypothesis. See table (9).

**Table (9)**

**T- test results of the post- test comparing the control and experimental groups mean scores in overall speaking**

Group	N	M	S.D.	D.F.	t value	Significance Level	Effect Size
Control	38	28.78	4	74	13.1	(.000) Significant at 0.01 Level	3.04
Experimental	38	15.8	4.5				Large

The above table shows that the estimated t value (13.1) was statistically significant at 0.01 level. Thus, it can be safely said that there were statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups on the post- test in overall speaking in favour of the experimental group. So, the first hypothesis was confirmed. Moreover, in order to make sure that the results obtained from the t- tests are reliable and to measure the effectiveness of the proposed program on students' speaking skills, the effect size of the proposed program on students' speaking skills was calculated according to the following formula suggested by Dunlap (1994):

$$d = \frac{2t}{\sqrt{d.f.}}$$

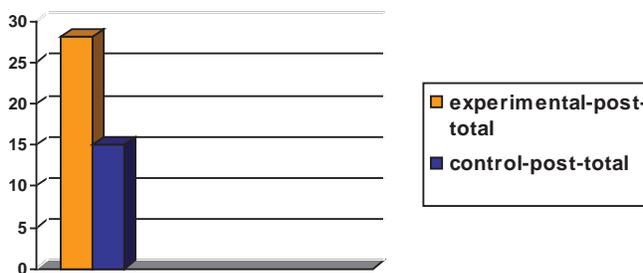
Where d = the calculated effect size, t = the estimated t value and  $\sqrt{d.f.}$  = the square root of degrees of freedom.

**The referential framework for identifying the effect size of t- values is as follows:**

**Table (10)**  
**The referential framework for identifying the effect size of t-values**

Effect size ( d value)	Interpretation
From 0.2 till less than 0.5	Small
From 0.5 till less than 0.8	Medium
0.8 or more	Large

As shown in table (9), the calculated effect size value of the proposed program on students' overall speaking was (3.04). Therefore, it can be inferred that the proposed program had a large effect on the experimental group students' overall speaking performance on the post- test as compared to that of the control group students receiving regular instruction. This improvement can be illustrated in the following figure:



**Figure (4)**  
***The mean scores of the control and experimental groups in overall speaking proficiency.***

Considering the different genres throughout which speaking was measured and comparing the experimental and control groups in these different genres, table (11) presents the results.

**Table (11)**  
**T- test results of the post- test comparing the control and experimental groups**  
**in overall speaking in different genres**

Speaking genres	Exp Group Post-test mean	Cont. Group Post- test mean	T- value	Significance	Effect size
<b>1-Exchanging personal information</b>	29.2	15	11	Sign. at 0.01	2.5
<b>2-Expressing future intentions</b>	29	16	12.2	Sign. at 0.01	2.8
<b>3-Giving directions</b>	29	16	10.8	Sign. at 0.01	2.5
<b>4-Giving advice &amp; making suggestions</b>	30	14	11	Significant at 0.01 Level	
<b>5-Narrating a story</b>	29	13	13.3	Sign at 0.01 1	2.5
<b>6-Discussing opinion</b>	29	14	11	Sign. at 0.01	2.5
<b>7- describing</b>	29	14	13	Sign. at 0.01	3.1
<b>8. interacting in social situations</b>	26	14	12.25	Sign. at 0.01	2.9

Table (11) supports the hypothesis as it shows that there were statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the control and the experimental groups on the post- test in overall speaking in each genre/ macro function in favor of the experimental group.

Moreover, the effect size values show that the largest effect size was in terms of the "description" genre. The effect sizes for all other genres were almost equal.

### **Hypothesis Two:**

*There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the post- test in each speaking sub-skill (grammatical, discourse, pragmatic competence and fluency) in favour of the experimental group.*

T- tests for independent samples were conducted in order to compare the post- test mean scores of the experimental and control groups in overall grammatical, discourse, pragmatic competence and their sub- skills as well as in fluency. The results of the t- tests proved to be statistically consistent with the above stated hypothesis. Therefore, the second hypothesis was supported. Tables (12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18) show this statistical significance.

**Table (12)**

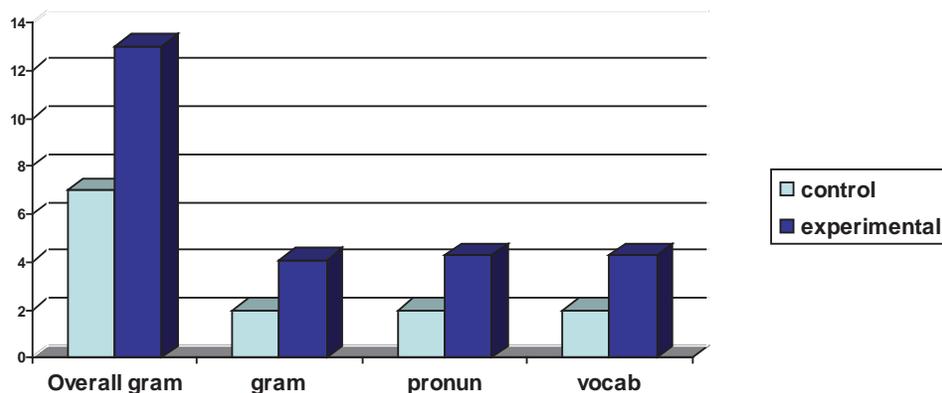
**T- test results of the post- test comparing the control and experimental groups mean scores in overall grammatical competence and its subskills**

	Experimental Group Post-test		Control Group Post-test		T value	Significance Level	Effect Size
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.			
<b>Overall Grammatical competence</b>	13	1.6	7	1.9	12.9	Significant at 0.01 Level	3 large
<b>1. Following grammatical rules correctly</b>	4.1	0.57	2.4	0.61	11.8	Significant at 0.01 Level	2.7 large
<b>2- Using intelligible pronunciation</b>	4.3	.61	2.5	.68	11.8	Significant at 0.01 Level	2.7 Large
<b>3. Using adequate range of vocabulary</b>	4.3	0.57	2.3	0.67	13.4	Significant at 0.01 Level	3.2 large

Table (12) shows that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups on the post-test in overall grammatical competence ( $t$  value = 12.9) in favour of the experimental group. In addition, the effect size value (3) shown in the above table reveals that the proposed program had a large effect on the experimental group students' overall grammatical competence on the post- test as compared to that of the control group receiving regular instruction.

The above table shows, also, that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups on the post- test in each grammatical competence sub- skill in favour of the experimental group, since the estimated  $t$ - values were (11.8) for both grammar and pronunciation, and (13.4) for vocabulary. Furthermore, the effect size values (2.7) for grammar and pronunciation and (3.2) for vocabulary reveal that the proposed program had a large effect on the experimental group students' grammatical competence skills on the post- test as compared to those of the control group receiving regular instruction.

This improvement can be illustrated by the following figure:



**Figure (5)**

*The mean scores of the control and experimental groups in overall grammatical competence and its subskills.*

Considering the different genres/ macro functions throughout which speaking was measured, the experimental and control groups were compared in these genres as follows.

**Table (13)**

**T- test results of the post- test comparing the control and experimental groups in overall grammatical competence and its subskills in all genres**

Linguistic competence Sub-Skills	Overall grammatical competence		Grammar		Pronunciation		Vocabulary	
	T value	Effect size	T value	Effect size	T value	Effect size	T value	Effect size
1-Exchanging personal information	9.8 (Sig. at 0.01)	2.3	7.4 (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	1.6	9.1 (Sig at 0.01)	2.1	9.2 (Sig. at 0.01)	2.1
2-Expressing future intentions	11.8	2.7	9.2	2.1	9.5	2.2	10.8	2.5
3-Giving directions	10.4	2.4	9.6	2.23	8.7	2	10.1	2.3
4-Giving advice & making suggestions	10.3	2.3	8.3	1.9	9.3	2.16	10.2	2.4
5-Narrating a story	11.5	2.7	8.3	1.9	10.4	2.4	10.8	2.5
6-Discussing opinion	10.9	2.5	8.7	2	8.8	2	10.5	2.4
7- Describing	12.6	2.9	8.9	2.1	10.9	2.5	11.1	2.6
8. Interacting in social situations	11.9	2.8	10.8	2.5	10.2	2.4	10.3	2.4

Table (13) confirms the above results as it shows that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the control and the

experimental groups on the post- test in grammatical competence and its sub-skills in each genre in favor of the experimental group.

Moreover, the effect size values were large for all genres/ macro functions. The largest effect size with respect to overall grammatical competence was in the "description" genre (2.9). The smallest effect size was for "exchanging personal information" and "giving advice" genre (2.3). The largest effect size with respect to "grammar" was in the genre of "interacting in social situations" (2.5). As far as pronunciation is concerned, the largest effect size was in the genre of "description" (2.5). As for vocabulary, the largest effect size was in the "description genre"(2.6), the smallest effect size was in the genre of "exchanging personal information" (2.1).

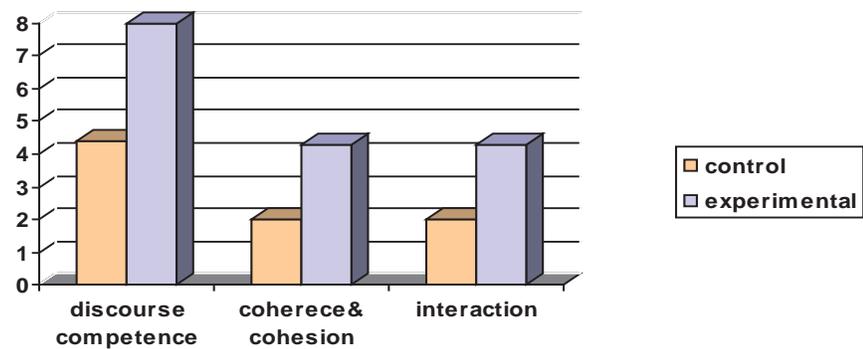
Moreover, a t- test for independent samples was used to compare the mean scores of both the experimental and control groups on the post- test in overall discourse competence and its subskills and it revealed statistically significant differences at 0.01 level. See table (14).

**Table (14)**  
**T- test results of the post- test comparing the control and experimental groups mean scores in overall discourse competence and its subskills**

skills	Experimental Group Post- test		Control Group Post- test		D.F.	T value	Significance Level	Effect Size
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.				
<b>Overall discourse competence</b>	8	1.2	4.1	1.4	74	12.2	Significant at 0.01 Level	2.8
<b>1. Organizing discourse coherently</b>	4.2	.69	2.2	.78	74	11.6	Significant at 0.01 Level	2.7
<b>2. Managing the conversation effectively</b>	4.2	.68	2.2	.73	74	12.3	Significant at 0.01 Level	2.9

Table (14) shows that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups on the post- test in overall discourse competence (t value = 12.2) in favour of the experimental group. In addition, the effect size value (2.8) shown in the above table reveals that the proposed program had a large effect on the experimental group students' overall discourse competence on the post- test as compared to that of the control group.

As for discourse competence subskills, the above table shows that the estimated t- values were (11.6) and (12.3), for both discourse competence sub- skills respectively: organizing discourse coherently, and managing the conversation effectively. These estimated t-values were statistically significant at 0.01 level in favour of the experimental group. Moreover, the effect size values (2.7) and (2.9) shown in the table reveal that the proposed program had a large effect on the experimental group students on both discourse competence sub- skills as compared to those of the control group. This improvement can be illustrated in the following figure:



**Figure (6)**  
***The mean scores of the control and experimental groups in overall discourse competence and its subskills.***

To examine the difference in students' performance in discourse competence and its subskills in terms of different genres/ macro functions, t- test for independent samples was calculated to compare the experimental and control groups as follows:

**Table (15)**

**T- test results of the post- test comparing the control and experimental groups in overall discourse competence and its subskills in different genres/functions**

Discourse competence Sub-Skills	Overall Discourse competence		Organizing discourse		managing conversation effectively	
	T value	Effect size	T value	Effect size	T value	Effect size
<b>1-Exchanging personal information</b>	<b>9.9</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.3	<b>9.5</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.2	<b>8.5</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	1.9
<b>2-Expressing future intentions</b>	<b>10.2</b> (Sig.t at 0.01)	2.4	<b>10</b>	2.3	<b>9.2</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	2.1
<b>3-Giving directions</b>	<b>9.7</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	2.3	<b>9.7</b>	2.3	<b>8.5</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	1.9
<b>4-Giving advice &amp; making suggestions</b>	<b>11.1</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	2.6	<b>9.2</b>	2.1	<b>10.9</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	2.5
<b>5-Narrating a story</b>	<b>13.2</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	3.1	<b>11.2</b>	2.6	<b>13.5</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	3.1
<b>6-Discussing opinions</b>	<b>9.5</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	2.52	<b>9</b>	2.1	<b>8.6</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	2
<b>7- Describing</b>	<b>10.8</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	2.5	<b>9.6</b>	2.2	<b>10.1</b> (Sig/ 0.01)	2.3
<b>8. interacting in social situations</b>	<b>10.5 (sig.)</b>	2.4	<b>10.5</b>	2.4		

Table (15) confirms that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups on the post-test in overall discourse competence and its subskills in all speaking genres in favor of the experimental group.

Moreover, the effect size values were large for all genres/tasks. The largest effect size was in the skill of "managing conversation effectively" in the narration task (3.1). The effect sizes for all other genres were almost equal. The smallest effect size was in the skill of "managing conversation effectively" while exchanging personal information or giving directions (1.9).

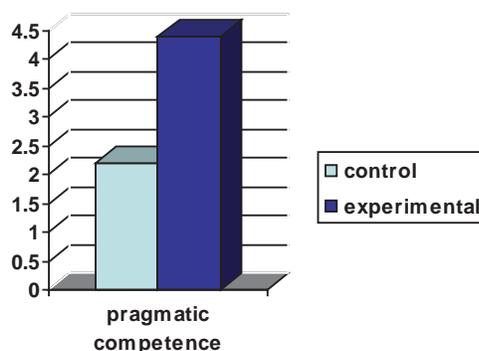
Besides, a t- test for independent samples was conducted to compare the mean scores of both the experimental and control groups on the post- test in pragmatic competence, which includes only one skill, and it revealed statistically significant differences at 0.01 level. See table (16).

**Table (16)**

**T- test results of the post- test comparing the control and experimental groups' mean scores in pragmatic competence**

Group	N	M	S.D.	D.F.	T value	Significance Level	Effect Size
Control	38	2.2	0.60	74	14.1	Significant at 0.01 Level	3.3 Large
Experimental	38	4.3	0.64				

Table (16) shows that there is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups on the post-test in overall pragmatic competence (t value = 14.1) in favour of the experimental group. Furthermore, the effect size value (3.3) shown in the above table reveals that the proposed program had a very large effect on the experimental group students' pragmatic competence on the post- test as compared to that of the control group. This significant difference can be clarified by the following figure.



**Figure (7)**  
*The control and experimental groups' mean scores in pragmatic competence*

In addition, a t- test for independent samples was conducted to compare the mean scores of both the experimental and control groups on the post- test in fluency and it revealed statistically significant differences at 0.01 level. See table (17).

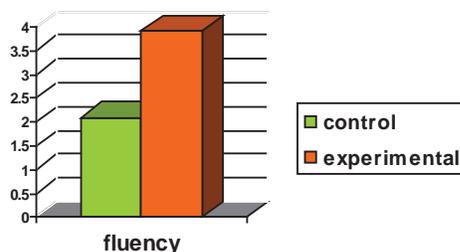
**Table (17)**

**T- test results of the post- test comparing the control and experimental groups in fluency**

Group	N	M	S.D.	D.F.	T value	Significance Level	Effect Size
Control	38	2.1	0.69	74	11.2	Significant at 0.01 Level	2.6 Large
Experimental	38	3.9	0.69				

Table (17) shows that the estimated t- values (11.2) was statistically significant at 0.01 level in favour of the experimental group. Moreover, the estimated effect size value (2.6) reveals that the program had a large effect on the experimental group students' fluency as compared to the fluency of the control group.

This improvement in fluency can be illustrated in the following figure:



**Figure (8)**  
*The control and experimental groups' mean scores in terms of fluency.*

To examine the difference in students' performance in both pragmatic competence and fluency with respect to various genres/ tasks, t- test for independent samples was calculated and it revealed statistically significant differences at 0.01 level. See table (18).

**Table (18)**  
**T- test results of the post- test comparing the control and experimental groups in pragmatic competence and fluency in different genres**

Skills	Pragmatic competence		Fluency	
	T value	Effect size	T value	Effect size
<b>Speaking genres</b>				
<b>1-Exchanging personal information</b>	<b>10</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.3	<b>9.6</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.2
<b>2-Expressing future intentions</b>	<b>11.5</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.6	<b>9.8</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.3
<b>3-Giving directions</b>	<b>10.5</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.4	<b>7.9</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	1.8
<b>4-Giving advice &amp; making suggestions</b>	<b>9.8</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.3	<b>9</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2
<b>5-Narrating a story</b>	<b>13.9</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	3.2	<b>9.9</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.3
<b>6-Discussing opinions</b>	<b>10.4</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.4	<b>9.6</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.2
<b>7- Describing</b>	<b>12.6</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.9	<b>8.7</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2
<b>8. Interacting in social situations</b>	<b>9.4</b>	2.1	<b>9.6</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	2.2

Table (18) confirms that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups on the post-test in both pragmatic competence and fluency in each genre/task in favor of the experimental group,

Moreover, the effect sizes for all other genres were large. The largest effect size for pragmatic competence was in the genre of narration (3.2). The smallest effect size was in social situations (2.1). On the other hand, the largest effect size for the skill of fluency was in "expressing future intention" and "narration"(2.3), the smallest effect size was in "giving directions" (1.8).

**(b) Hypotheses focusing on the comparison between the pre/ post test speaking performance of the experimental group:**

**Hypothesis Three:**

*There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group on the speaking pretest and post- test in overall speaking in favour of the post- test scores.*

To determine the relative extent of change fostered by the implementation of the proposed program from the pre- test to the post- test for the experimental group, t- tests for paired samples were used. These t- tests aimed at comparing the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre- test and the post- test in overall speaking performance. See table (19).

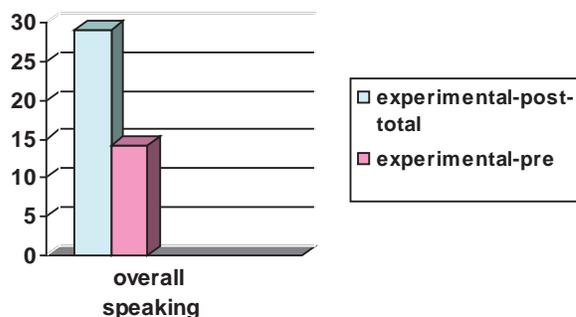
**Table (19)  
T- test results comparing the pre- test vs. post- test means for the experimental group in overall speaking**

Test	N	M	S.D.	D.F.	T value	Significance Level	Effect Size
Pre- test	38	14.1	3.7	37	33.04	Significant at 0.01 Level	10.8
Post- test		29	4				Very Large

Table (19) indicates that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level in overall speaking between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre test and the post- test in favour of the post- test scores since the estimated t- values was (33.04). Thus, it can be safely said that the t- test results proved to be statistically consistent with the hypothesis. In other words, the third hypothesis was confirmed. In addition, the estimated effect size value (10.8) shown in the above

table indicates that the program had a very large effect on the experimental group students' overall speaking performance on the post- test as compared to their overall speaking on the pre- test.

This improvement can be illustrated in the following figure:



**Figure (9)**  
*The experimental group's mean scores on the pre-test and post-test in overall speaking proficiency*

Considering the different genres of the test, t- test for paired samples was calculated to examine the differences between the students' performance on the pre test and post-test with respect to speaking genres/macro functions. See table (20).

**Table (20)**  
**T- test results of the post- test comparing the experimental group mean scores on the pre test& post test in overall speaking in different genres**

Speaking genres	Exp. G Post-test mean	Cont. Post-test mean	T value	Significance Level	Effect size
1-Exchanging personal information	29.11	14.6	24.3	Significant at 0.01 Level	7.9
2-Expressing future intentions	29	13.7	22.3	Significant at 0.01 Level	7.3
3-Giving directions	29.4	13.9	25.5	Significant at 0.01 Level	8.3
4-Giving advice & making suggestions	29.2	15.3	23.6	Significant at 0.01 Level	7.7
5-Narrating a story	29.3	13.7	23.1	Significant at 0.01 Level	7.5
6-Discussing opinion	28.3	13.3	22.2	Significant at 0.01 Level	7.5
7- Describing	29.11	14.7	28.3	Sig. at 0.01 level	9.1
8. Interacting in social situations	25.9	13.1	25.6	Significant at 0.01 Level	8.3

Table (20) confirms the above results as it shows that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental

group on the pre-test and the post- test in overall speaking in each genre in favor of the post test.

Moreover, the effect size values for all genres were large. The largest effect size was in terms of the "description" genre (9.1). The effect sizes for all other genres were almost equal. The smallest effect size was in "expressing future intention" genre (7.3).

#### **Hypothesis Four:**

*There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group on the speaking pretest and post- test in each speaking sub-skill (grammatical, discourse and pragmatic competence) as well as in fluency in favour of the post- test scores.*

In order to verify the validity of this hypothesis, t- tests for paired samples were used. The t-test results proved that there were statistically significant differences between the pre- posttests mean scores of the experimental group in overall linguistic, discourse, and pragmatic competence as well as in fluency. In other words, the results of the t- tests proved to be statistically consistent with the above stated hypothesis. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was accepted. The following tables show this statistical significance.

**Table (21)**

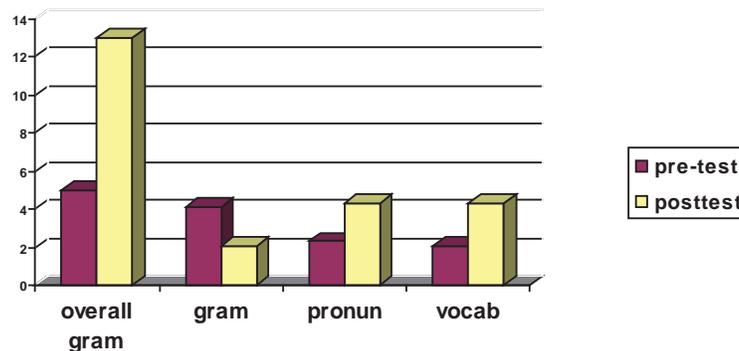
**T- test results comparing the pre- test vs. post- test means for the experimental group in overall grammatical competence and its sub-skills**

Grammatical competence Sub-Skills	Experimental Group Pre- test		Experimental Group Post- test		D.F.	T value	Significance Level	Effect Size
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.				
<b>Overall grammatical competence</b>	6.5	1.5	12.6	1.6	37	33.45	Sig. at 0.01 Level	10.8
<b>Grammar</b>	2.1	.54	4.1	.56	37	30.3	Sig. at 0.01 Level	9.9
<b>pronunciation</b>	2.3	.54	4.3	.60	37	25.3	Sig. at 0.01 Level	8.2
<b>vocabulary</b>	2.1	.53	4.3	.56	37	28.6	Sig. at 0.01 Level	9.3

Table (21) shows that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest and the post-

test in overall grammatical competence ( $t$  value = 33.45) in favour of the post- test scores. In addition, the effect size value (10.8) shown in the above table reveals that the proposed program had a large effect on experimental group students' overall grammatical competence as shown in their performance on the post- test and as compared to their overall grammatical competence on the pre- test.

Furthermore, the above table indicates that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest and- post- test in favour of the post- test in grammatical competence subskills, since the estimated  $t$ - values were (30.3) for the first sub- skill, (25.3) for the second sub- skill and (28.6) for the third one. Furthermore, the calculated effect size values were (9.9), (8.2) and (9.3) for the first, second and third grammatical competence sub-skills respectively. This reveals that the proposed program had a large effect on the experimental group students' grammatical competence sub- skills on the post- test as compared to the pre- test. This improvement can be illustrated by the following figure:



**Figure (10)**

***The experimental group's mean scores on the pretest and posttest in overall grammatical competence and its subskills.***

To examine the statistically significant differences in students' performance in grammatical competence and its subskills in terms of different genres/ macro functions,  $t$ - test for paired samples was calculated to compare the experimental group mean scores on the pre- test and the posttest. See tables (22) and (23)

**Table (22)**

**T- test results comparing the pre- test vs. the post- test mean scores for the experimental group in overall grammatical competence and its subskills in different genres**

Grammatical Skills Genres	Overall grammatical competence		Grammar		Pronunciation		Vocabulary	
	T value	Effect size	T value	Effect size	T value	Effect size	T-value	Effect size
1-Exchanging personal information	<b>20.9</b>	6.5	<b>14.2</b> (Sig./ 0.01 Level)	4.6	<b>14.3</b> (Sig)	4.6	15.7 (sig)	5.7
2-Expressing future intentions	<b>20.1</b>	6.6	<b>12.9</b>	4.22	<b>16.4</b>	5.3	<b>18.4</b>	6
3-Giving directions	<b>24</b>	7.8	<b>19.7</b>	6.4	<b>15.5</b>	5.1	<b>16.3</b>	5.3
4-Giving advice & suggestions	<b>18.7</b>	6.1	<b>14.4</b>	4.7	<b>14.1</b>	4.6	<b>16.1</b>	5.2
5-Narrating a story	<b>21.6</b>	6.8	<b>14.2</b>	4.5	<b>14.3</b>	4.5	<b>17.5</b>	5.7
6-Discussing opinion	<b>18.9</b>	6	<b>14.2</b>	4.5	<b>13.5</b>	4.3	<b>15</b>	4.8
7- Describing	<b>24</b>	7.6	<b>16.6</b>	5.3	<b>20.8</b>	6.7	<b>13.5</b>	4.3
8. Social situations	<b>18.8</b>	6.1	<b>13.9</b>	4.5	<b>13.6</b>	4.4	<b>16.2</b>	4.3

Table (22) confirms the above results as it shows that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest and the post- test in overall grammatical competence and its sub-skills in each genre in favor of the posttest.

Moreover, all the effect sizes were very large. The largest effect size in overall grammatical competence was in terms of "giving directions" genre (7.8). In particular, the largest effect size on grammar occurred in the genre of "giving directions" (6.4). As for pronunciation, the largest effect size occurred in the genre of "description"(6.7). As far as vocabulary is concerned, the largest effect size was in "expressing future intentions"(6).

In addition, to determine the relative extent of change fostered by the implementation of the proposed program from the pre- test till the post- test for the experimental group in overall discourse competence as well as in its sub-skills, a t- test for paired samples was used. The following table shows the existence of statistically significant differences at 0.01 level.

**Table (23)**

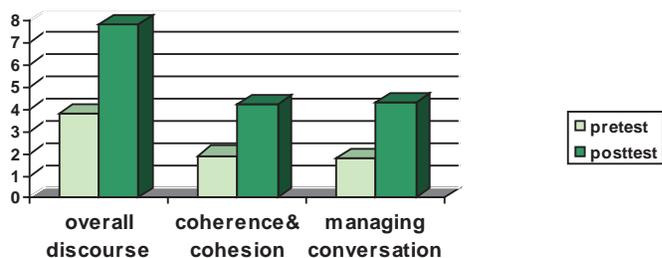
**T- test results comparing the pre- test vs. the post- test mean scores for the experimental group in overall discourse competence and its subskills.**

Skills	Exp. Group Pre-test		Exp. Group Post- test		D.F.	T value	Significance Level	Effect Size
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.				
Overall discourse competence	3.8	1.1	7.8	1.2	37	26.7	Significant at 0.01 Level	8.7 Very Large
1. <i>Organizing discourse coherently and cohesively</i>	1.9	0.60	4.2	0.69	37	26.7	Sig / 0.01 Level	8.7 Very Large
2. <i>Managing conversation effectively</i>	1.8	0.52	4.2	0.68	37	27.3	Sig./ 0.01 Level	8.9 Very Large

Table (23) shows that there is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest and the post test in favour of the post- test in overall discourse competence (t value =26. 7). In addition, the effect size value (8.7) reveals that the proposed program had a very large effect on the experimental group students’ overall discourse competence as compared to their overall discourse competence on the pre- test.

The above table shows that the estimated t- values: (26.7), and (27.3) for the above discourse competence sub- skills were statistically significant at 0.01 level in favour of the post- test. Moreover, the effect size values (8.7) and (8.9) for the first and second sub- skills respectively reveals that the proposed program had a very large effect on nearly all the experimental group students’ discourse competence sub- skills on the post- test as compared to the pre- test.

This improvement can be illustrated by the following figure:



**Figure (11)**

***The mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest vs. the posttest in overall discourse competence and its subskills.***

To examine the difference in the experimental group students' performance on the pretest and the posttest in overall discourse competence and its subskills in terms of different genres/ macro functions, a t- test for paired samples was calculated. See table (24).

**Table (24)**  
**T- test results comparing the experimental group on the pretest and the posttest in overall discourse competence and its subskills in different genres/functions.**

Discourse competence Sub-Skills	Overall Discourse competence		Organizing discourse and coherently cohesively		Managing the conversation effectively and communicatively	
	T value	Effect size	T value	Effect size	T value	Effect size
<b>Speaking genres</b>						
<b>1-Exchanging personal information</b>	<b>20.1</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	6.5	<b>17.5</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	5.7	<b>14.1</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	4.6
<b>2-Expressing future intentions</b>	<b>17.2</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	5.6	<b>18.3</b>	6	<b>13.3</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	4.3
<b>3-Giving directions</b>	<b>20</b> (Sig at 0.01)	6.5	<b>19.5</b>	6.3	<b>16</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	5.2
<b>4-Giving advice &amp; making suggestions</b>	<b>17.4</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	5.7	<b>13.7</b>	4.5	<b>14.1</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	4.6
<b>5-Narrating a story</b>	<b>17.3</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	5.7	<b>14.3</b>	4.7	<b>17.4</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	5.7
<b>6-Discussing opinions</b>	<b>16.7</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	5.4	<b>14.7</b>	4.8	<b>14.6</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	4.78
<b>7- Describing</b>	<b>22.1</b> (Sig. at 0.01)	7.5	<b>16.9</b>	5.5	<b>18.4</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	6
<b>8. interacting in social situations</b>	<b>21.2</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	6.9			<b>21.2</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	6.9

The results give further support to the hypotheses as there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest and the post- test in discourse competence and its subskills with regard to speaking genres/ macro-function in favor of the posttest.

Moreover, the effect size values were large for all genres. The largest effect size for overall discourse competence was in the "description genre" (7.5). In particular, the largest effect size for the first skill was in "giving directions

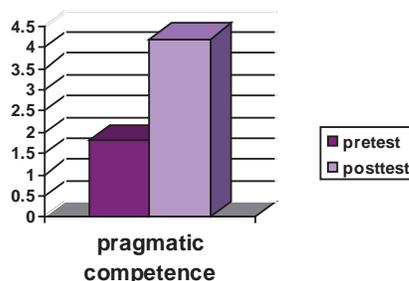
genre"(6.3). The largest effect size for the second skill was in "social interactions" genres (6.9).

In addition, a paired samples t- test was performed and it revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the pretest and the- post- test mean scores of the experimental group in pragmatic competence including one skill in favour of the post- test. See table (25).

**Table (25)**  
**T- test results comparing the pre- test vs. the post- test mean scores for the experimental group in pragmatic competence.**

Test	N	M	S.D.	D.F.	T value	Significance Level	Effect Size
Pre- test	38	1.8	0.54	37	29.7	Significant at 0.01 Level	9.7
Post- test		4.2	0.60				Very Large

According to the previous table, the estimated t- value (29.7) shows that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level in pragmatic competence between the pretest and the post test mean scores of the experimental group students in favour of the post- test scores. Moreover, the estimated effect size value (9.7) indicates that the proposed program had a very large effect on experimental group students' pragmatic competence. This significant difference can be illustrated by the following figure:



**Figure (12)**  
***The means of the experimental group on the pretest and the posttest in pragmatic competence***

To examine the difference in the experimental group students' performance on the pretest and the posttest in pragmatic competence in terms of different genres/macro functions, a t -test for paired samples was calculated. See table (26).

**Table (26)**  
**T- test results comparing the experimental group on the pretest and the posttest in pragmatic competence in different genres/functions.**

Speaking genres	Pragmatic competence		
	Mean	T value	Effect size
<b>1-Exchanging personal information</b>	Pre: 1.8	<b>15.2</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	4.9 (large)
	Post:4.2		
<b>2-Expressing future intentions</b>	Pre: 1.7	<b>18.2</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	5.9 (large)
	Post:4.2		
<b>3-Giving directions</b>	Pre: 1.9	<b>15.5</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	5.1 (large)
	Post:4.5		
<b>4-Giving advice &amp; making suggestions</b>	Pre: 2	<b>16.2</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	5.3 (large)
	Post:4.2		
<b>5-Narrating a story</b>	Pre: 1.7	<b>19.7</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	6.4 (large)
	Post: 4.4		
<b>6-Discussing opinions</b>	Pre: 1.4	<b>17.2</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	5.6 (large)
	Post:4		
<b>7- Describing</b>	Pre: 1.8	<b>19.3</b> (Sig at 0.01 Level)	6.3 (large)
	Post:4.3		
<b>8. Interacting in social situations</b>	Pre: 2.3	<b>17</b> (Sig at 0.01 Level)	5.5 (large)
	Post: 4.4		

The results reveal that there are statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest and the posttest in pragmatic competence in all genres in favor of the posttest. Moreover, the effect size values indicate that the largest effect was for the "narration" task (6.4). The effect size values for all other genres were very large too indicating the effectiveness of the program.

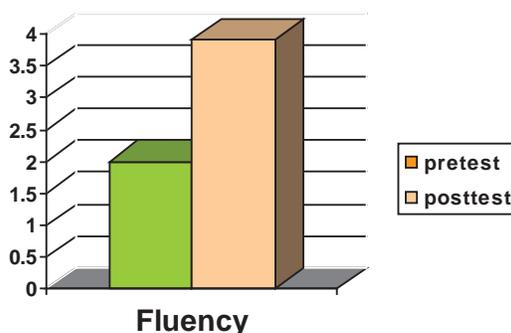
Besides, to determine the relative extent of change fostered by implementation of the proposed program from the pre- test till the post- test for the experimental group in fluency, a t- test for paired samples was used. The following table shows the existence of statistically significant differences:

**Table (27)**

**T- test results comparing the experimental group mean scores on the pretest and posttest in fluency**

Test	N	M	S.D.	D.F.	T value	Significance Level	Effect Size
Pre- test	38	2	0.62	37	25.7	Significant at 0.01 Level	8.4
Post- test		3.9	0.69				Very Large

Table (27) shows that there is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the pre- posttest mean scores of the experimental group in fluency (t-value = 25.7) in favour of the post- test scores. In addition, the estimated effect size value (8.4) shown in the above table shows that the proposed task-based program had a very large effect on experimental group students' fluency. This significant difference can be illustrated by the following figure:



**Figure (13)**

***The experimental group's mean scores on the pre and posttest in fluency***

To examine the difference in the experimental group students' performance on the pretest and the posttest in fluency in terms of different genres, t-test for paired samples was calculated. See table (28):

**Table (28)**

**T- test results comparing the experimental group mean scores on the pretest and the posttest in fluency in different genres/ macro functions.**

Speaking genres	Fluency		
	Mean	T value	Effect size
1-Exchanging personal information	Pre: 1.9	<b>17.8</b> (Sig. t at 0.01 Level)	5.8
	Post: 4		
2-Expressing future intentions	Pre: 1.9	<b>13.2</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	4.3
	Post: 3.9		
3-Giving directions	Pre: 1.9	<b>15.3</b> (Significant at 0.01)	5
	Post: 3.7		
4-Giving advice & making suggestions	Pre: 2.1	<b>15.3</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	5
	Post: 3.9		
5-Narrating a story	Pre: 2.1	<b>13.6</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	4.4
	Post: 3.9		
6-Discussing opinions	Pre: 1.9	<b>13.2</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	4.3
	Post: 3.8		
7- Describing	Pre: 2	<b>14.1</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	4.6
	Post: 3.8		
8. Interacting in social situations	Pre: 2	<b>17.3</b> (Sig. at 0.01 Level)	5.7
	Post: 4		

The above table shows that there were statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest and the post- test in the skill of fluency in each genre in favor of the posttest.

Moreover, the largest effect size for fluency was in "exchanging personal information"(5.8). The effect sizes for all other genres were very large too indicating the effectiveness of the program. However, although there were statistically significant differences, the mean scores of the post test were not very high.

To sum up, all the four hypotheses of the study were supported by the results. The experimental group out-performed the control group on the post- test in overall speaking performance as well as in every speaking sub- skill. Furthermore, the experimental group achieved tangible progress in their speaking after the implementation of the program as compared to their speaking performance before the program application. Hence, these positive findings proved the effectiveness of the proposed program in developing first year secondary students' overall speaking performance and speaking sub- skills as well.

## Discussion of the Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides discussion of the study results. Then, based on the study results, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further studies are presented.

### **Discussion of the results:**

In the light of the significant results of the study, it can be concluded that the program proved to be effective in enhancing the experimental group students' speaking skill in general and speaking sub-skills in particular. This was clear in the support gained for the four hypotheses of the study.

First, there were statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group exposed to the suggested task-based program, and the control group receiving regular instruction on the post-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the experimental group. The analysis of the t-test revealed that  $t= 13.1$ . Therefore, the program contributed to the students' development in terms of overall speaking proficiency. This development was apparent in all speaking genres students were exposed to.

Second, there were statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group, and the control group on the post-test in all speaking sub-skills. Evidently, this development was apparent in all speaking genres students were exposed to.

Third, there were statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the speaking pre-test and post-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the post-test scores, since  $t=33$ . So the third hypothesis was supported. The significant differences included all speaking genres.

Fourth, there were statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the speaking pre-test and post-test in all speaking sub-skills in favor of the post-test scores. The significant differences included all speaking genres included in the test.

In the following section, the results of the study are discussed in detail in terms of the five main independent variables: overall speaking ability, grammatical competence, discourse competence, pragmatic competence and fluency.

### **Overall speaking performance:**

The results of the study emphasized that task based instruction (TBI) was effective in enhancing the experimental group students' overall speaking performance. Students' progress might be due to a number of factors.

The communicative tasks which were presented to students throughout nine units were effective. Every unit addressed a different genre or speaking macro-function, which was either transactional or interactional. This ensured that the speaking proficiency the students acquired was highly contextualized as they learned the norms and principles underlying each genre and adopted these norms in their speech in turn. Besides, students were trained to deal with tasks of different levels of difficulty which enhanced their confidence to speak spontaneously and fluently as shown in their posttest performance.

Moreover, the teaching strategy -which was mainly based on the cognitive approach- was also effective. It engaged students in cycles of analysis (focus on form) and synthesis (actual communication) through three stages (pre, during and post task). Thus, the strategy throughout its activities helped students practice many processes and cognitive strategies that might have contributed to the improvement of their speaking skills.

More specifically, the strategy encouraged students to plan at the three levels of speaking: conceptualization, formulation (pre-task planning) and articulation (online planning). Pre-task planning enabled students to produce more fluent and complex as well as denser language. It also helped them handle communicative pressures during the task, which enhanced their performance. On- line planning was also effective as it triggered students to focus on accuracy as they thought of the required structures while they were speaking. Both kinds of planning (pre and online) might have become more automatic as students got used to them with the progress of program.

The teaching strategy also raised students' awareness of spoken language features and encouraged them to analyze the spoken discourse to infer inductively its characteristics. This helped them adopt a discovery approach to learning speaking through forming and testing hypotheses about spoken language rules. The authentic listening materials were also very motivating and effective as they offered students a good opportunity to see how native language speakers perform in real-life situations and how speaking skills were manifested in their performance. Students reported that they enjoyed the consciousness raising activities as they felt more responsible for their learning.

Furthermore, the direct instruction at the pre-task stage helped to create interest in doing the task and activated topic related vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, discourse and pragmatic skills. This increased students' motivation, involvement, and willingness to practice speaking and do the required activities.

During performing the task, students were given the chance to utilize the instruction they were exposed to and the planning they did to perform a real task without the teacher's intervention thus employing all the learned speaking skills fluently and spontaneously.

After performing the task, the planning for reporting phase helped students rethink their performance and focus on form and accuracy in terms of grammar, pronunciation, and other skills. This was done throughout group discussion with the teacher working as a facilitator who did not intervene yet provoked students to guide each other to use accurate language. This increased their involvement, sense of ownership and willingness to practice speaking.

Another important factor, in the teaching strategy, was giving students the chance to perform publicly in front of their peers. Not only were the students required to present the final task results, but they were required also to repeat the whole task performance publicly at the post task stage. Eventually, this public performance heightened students' attention to accuracy in terms of all speaking skills, deepened their ability to reflect on these skills, helped them overcome their fear of public speaking and hence increased their proficiency. Students enjoyed talking in front of their peers, making presentations and expressing their

viewpoints. Some students were reluctant to participate at the beginning of the experiment but after sometimes they began to get used to presentations and even shy students were willing to participate.

In addition, the task-based teaching strategy developed the students' ability to monitor their performance through evaluating their own or their peers' oral production. This led students to recognize general patterns of errors they made in spontaneous speech and locate where and why there were communication breakdowns or difficulties, thus learn, restructure their language and change their performance. This process of self-monitoring might have become a cognitive strategy used automatically even during real time speaking which fostered students' speaking skills. Eventually, students' awareness of the criteria according to which their speaking was evaluated made them work hard to meet these criteria and hence identify their points of strength and weakness precisely and comprehensively. Using these evaluation criteria also increased students' autonomy and sense of responsibility for their own learning.

The reflection and consolidation stage at the end of each task encouraged students to use the task and its performance as input to help in the process of handling the shortcomings in their underlying interlanguage system. Such post-task increased the chance that pattern identification was more likely to be integrated into the learner's interlanguage system. Accordingly, it helped students build confidence with their learning. At this stage, students were encouraged to be active, autonomous learners as they were provoked to discover rules by themselves via a set of activities aiming at analyzing spoken discourse. They were also triggered to practice the speaking skills learned in a more conscious deliberate manner. These activities stressed students' common points of weakness in terms of speaking sub-skills, and remedied them. Consequently, students' overall speaking as well as speaking sub-skills improved.

It goes without saying that supportive feedback students received throughout the task cycle helped them greatly improve their speaking. This feedback started at the during- the task stage by helping students report the results of the task to each other. Then, this feedback occurred again at the post task stage as the teacher and

students provided useful comments to each other after they self-evaluated themselves and their peers. Noticeably, the feedback students received throughout the task cycle was based on the integration of self-correction, interactive peer correction and supplementary teacher intervention. This feedback did not only focus on the weak aspects of speaking performance, but they also highlighted the strong aspects, thus helping students improve their speaking and increase their self-confidence and motivation at the same time.

### **Factors enhancing the speaking sub-skills:**

#### ***A. Factors that might have helped the experimental group students progress in grammatical competence:***

##### **1. Following grammatical rules correctly:**

Before the program, students commented that their impression about the grammar they could use during speaking was negative. Most of them had difficulties with finding proper grammatical expressions, and this affected their speech. The most problematic areas in grammar were the use of the present simple tense to express routines and feelings. Moreover, students committed many errors in the use of irregular forms of past simple tense and subject-verb agreement.

On the posttest, the results show that students used more correct structures. The students, also, used grammatically more complex utterances, i.e. "There was an increase in the number of subordinate clauses".

This progress can be attributed to different factors at the pre-task stage, the during- task stage and the post task stage. Among the major factors that might have affected students' performance at the pre-task stage was engaging learners in discourse analysis activities. Discourse analysis was practiced via authentic listening texts that were closely related to the genre students were required to communicate in. Throughout these texts and accompanying activities, students could: (a) see how grammatical rules are applied correctly by native speakers in real time speech, (b) identify the relation between the grammatical rules adopted and the spoken functions realized and (c) understand how when we speak, we use lexical phrases

that are learned and retrieved as units rather than combining words each time we speak.

Besides, both consciousness raising activities and teaching drew students' attention to some special characteristic of spoken grammar, which distinguishes it from written grammar such as: ellipsis, tag questions, contractions, and short incomplete sentences called "utterances".

Requiring the students also to plan for the upcoming task by determining the grammar needed in terms of tenses, word order, and structure of complex utterances was very effective. It helped draw their attention to form and accuracy rather than focusing solely on fluency.

During the task, students could use easily the grammatical structures learned before the task. Given adequate time, students could plan online in terms of grammar, for their own oral performance. At the report stage, books available to which students resorted to plan, draft and redraft their oral presentation- and the teacher, who was always ready to answer questions related to grammar when necessary, enabled students to improve their grammar during speaking. These resources encouraged students to become autonomous active participants in their learning. Furthermore, the group observation sheet applied during the task, helped students pay attention to their spontaneous grammatical errors that was hardly perceived in deliberate production.

The self- evaluation checklist, used at "altering the attention phase" enabled students also to self- correct the grammatical mistakes they made spontaneously during speaking. Students discovered their grammatical errors by themselves and this helped them to learn the correct rules easily and effectively. Furthermore, the teacher's feedback through the use of previously agreed upon criteria helped students integrate the correct more complex structures in their existing language system.

Besides, the consolidation and reflection phase remedied students' common errors and various opportunities were provided to practice and focus deeply on the speaking skills.

Students' progress in speaking genres might be due to the specific activities that were geared towards every genre and that addressed the grammatical points relevant to such genre. For instance, the present simple tense was stressed to help students "express and inquire about personal information" "describe personality and appearance" or "talk about daily routines. Similarly, modal verbs were tackled deeply to help students sound more polite in all "social every day encounters".

## **2- Using vocabulary appropriately and adequately:**

The analysis revealed that the task- based instruction group achieved higher standard of proficiency than the regular instruction group in terms of using adequate and appropriate vocabulary during speaking.

On the posttest, the students could use a greater variety of vocabulary which shows that they had a wider range of vocabulary items. In addition, words used were more appropriate to context. Students also improved in their use of collocations (grammatical or lexical) to communicate their meaning. See Appendix (D)

This progress can be attributed to different factors; among them was raising students' awareness of ready-made lexical phrases through exposing them to real samples of spoken language at the pre-task stage. The listening texts used helped students improve their use of words and word collocations as they enabled them to (a) identify vocabulary and word chunks that are more appropriate to the genre, (b) extract word collocations and understand that words are combined together according to certain conventional rules and (c) acquire a range of vocabulary related to the speaking genres and topics they had to tackle.

Teaching and consciousness raising activities, at the pre-task stage, also helped draw students' attention to important words related to the task to be performed. Most of the teaching was done inductively through encouraging students to elicit words appropriate to different stages of the genre. Students were always taught how to deal with expressions as a whole and look for words that precede or follow each vocabulary item. Besides, both consciousness raising strategy and teaching drew students' attention to some special characteristic of spoken vocabulary such as: vague language and words that are only used in the spoken discourse (i.e. "pretty

big" instead of "very big"). Students' attention was drawn also to the importance of choosing words appropriate to the social context.

Requiring the students also to plan for the upcoming task might have been effective in improving students' vocabulary. Before doing the task students had to determine the words and words collocations needed to do the task. This helped to draw their attention to how to select words appropriate to the task to be done. Furthermore, planning helped students identify some strategies they can use if they couldn't find the appropriate word such as "circumlocution" that led to a greater lexical variety in the students' responses. Planning was mainly teacher guided with the teacher acting as a helper and elicitor of appropriate words and word collocations.

During the task, the students could test their ability to use the words they learned before the task in real time. During this stage, students negotiated meaning which helped them employ various strategies to ask for clarification or explain difficult words. After doing the task, the English- English dictionaries available to which students resorted to plan, draft and redraft their oral presentation- and the teacher provided help with correct word collocation. This means that the vocabulary supplied was in response to perceived students' needs. In this way, students learned vocabulary indirectly as a part of their emphasis on clarity, and accuracy for a public presentation. In addition, these resources encouraged students to become autonomous active participants in their learning of words usage. Furthermore, the group observation sheet used at this stage, helped students pay attention to their spontaneous vocabulary errors.

The self- evaluation checklist, used at "altering the attention balance phase" also enabled students to self- correct the words used in their spoken performance, and consequently improve the use of vocabulary in actual speaking performance afterwards. Students discovered their errors by themselves and this helped them learn easily and effectively. Besides, the post task activities remedied students' errors and provided them with the chance to practice word collocations and use.

With respect to different genres, the analysis revealed that there were statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group in all

genres/macro functions students were exposed to. This might be due to specific activities that were geared toward every genre. For instance, in "describing people" task, words such as "cheerful" "ambitious" "outgoing" "sociable" were the starting point of work and analysis.

### **3. Demonstrating intelligible pronunciation:**

On the pretest, most of the experimental group students' common errors were mostly related to the use of stress patterns and intonation. Besides, some errors related to the use of vowel sounds were identified. Students were not also very aware that separate words could be linked or assimilated together in pronunciation.

On the posttest, it was noticed that students' pronunciation of English sounds- consonants and vowels- improved and students were better able to articulate English sounds. Furthermore, improvements in intonation and stress patterns were noticed. It goes without saying that the study results as well as qualitative observation revealed that the progress achieved in pronunciation was not so deep like other skills. It occurred more in stress and intonation rather than the sound system. This may be due to the fact that pronunciation especially that related to sounds is a skill that requires a long time to be developed. In addition, pronunciation is largely affected by training in the early years of learning the foreign language and this effect can't be altered by training received later on.

However, the progress realized in pronunciation can be attributed to different factors. Among them was exposing students to authentic samples of spoken language including all authentic and natural features characterizing everyday language (hesitancy, pauses, recasting and so on). The texts presented to students were spoken at a normal rate of speech including real intonation, rhythm, tones and so on. Throughout consciousness raising exercises, students noticed the characteristics of the speech stream and the sound system. Students' attention was also drawn to how sounds are linked in spoken language and how sounds change, as the result of the influence of neighboring sounds (assimilation).

Requiring the students also to plan through determining how they could pronounce different expressions and how they would vary pronunciation according to their purpose and feelings was vital. It helped raise students' awareness and drew

their attention to accuracy of pronunciation and thus facilitated the use of different pronunciation features during real online spoken performance.

During the task, the students tested their hypotheses about pronunciation in real situations. After the task, the students resorted to the teacher to help them plan, in terms of correct pronunciation, their oral presentations of the task results. Most of the time, students were encouraged to refer to the dictionary to look for correct pronunciation. Furthermore, the observation of performance during the task helped students pay attention to their spontaneous on- the spot pronunciation errors.

The self- evaluation conducted at "altering attention balance" stage after the task, enabled students also to discover their errors by themselves and hence learn correct pronunciation effectively. In addition, students were allowed to discuss, and suggest alternative realizations of their own and their peers' pronunciation errors. This enhanced their learning and ability to identify and correct errors and hence fostered their pronunciation. Besides, the post task stage included many activities, in which students' common pronunciation errors during the task, including those resulting from the interference of the mother language were remedied.

With respect to different genres, the focus points of pronunciation were derived from the content of each task. Therefore, students could learn a lot about the pronunciation rules that differed according to the genre, intention of the speaker, and relation between the speaker and listener. In particular, the pronunciation rules addressed in each genre were different and specific. For instance, pronunciation of "question tags" was stressed to help students "express and inquire about personal information", rising intonation to express interest during "exchanging personal information" tasks, and to show politeness in tasks including "asking for permission" or "making requests".

***B. Factors that might have helped the experimental group students' progress in overall discourse competence and its sub- skills:***

**1- Structuring discourse coherently and cohesively:**

Before the program, students' spoken performance was almost characterized by use of incoherent discourse lacking appropriate logical sequence. It was full of fragmentary utterances with no references and no use of cohesive devices.

On the posttest, students' spoken discourse was generally more coherent with clear, logical organization. It contained enough details, appropriate cohesive devices, references, and inter-sentential connectors.

This progress can be attributed to some factors, among them was engaging students in discourse analysis activities that promoted their organizational skills. The authentic samples, students were exposed to, helped them indirectly improve the organization of their speaking as they could recognize how native speakers (a) organize discourse through following certain routines so that listeners can easily follow the sequence of what is said, (b) use grammatical and lexical references appropriately to refer to people and objects so listeners can keep track of them, (c) provide enough supporting details, reasons and examples to support the main idea or to justify their opinions, (d) summarize the main idea given in speech and finally (e) move smoothly from one idea to another through the use of adequate discourse markers signaling cohesion either at the macro level (between main ideas) or at the micro level (within utterances).

Throughout teaching, students could notice discourse markers including those signaling the introduction of a topic, a shift to a new topic and a summary of the topic. Throughout planning, also, students got used to think of the overall organization of their speech before doing the task, which became more automatic with the progress of the program and hence enhanced their spoken performance overall structure.

During the task, students could employ what they had noticed about the organization of spoken discourse spontaneously and fluently in actual situations. Although consciousness raising could not fully guarantee error-free performance in terms of cohesion and coherence, it at least helped students improve the organization of speaking during performance. This was enhanced by the planning executed to present task output which helped students refocus on discourse by thinking of how to present their speech to others in an adequately organized manner.

At the post task stage, students' attention was drawn deliberately to discourse when they repeated their performance in front of their peers. Hence, students became again conscious of what they had to take into account to provide a well-

organized speech. Furthermore, discussions between the students and the teacher, after listening to recorded spontaneous performance, helped students recognize how to start their speech, provide adequate supporting details, provide a comment of their own and move smoothly from one idea to another through the use of adequate discourse markers and references. The self-evaluation checklist helped students also self-revise and become more aware of the gaps in the organization of their performance especially when they compared it to a model authentic performance.

With respect to different genres, discourse competence instruction was genre-specific. Each genre (expository, narrative or descriptive) has its own organization that students learned well through analyzing and discussing its predictable sequential stages and then attempted to use it in their speaking. This accounted for the improvement noticed with respect to various genres.

## **2. Interacting and managing the conversation effectively:**

Students' progress on the posttest can be attributed to a number of factors as follows:

First, analyzing the provided authentic listening tapescripts, before participating in the task, encouraged students to notice particular features of conversations and turn taking strategies. In particular, consciousness raising activities helped students see how native speakers (a) keep conversation going, (b) manage turn-taking in conversation, (c) relate his/her turn to that of the interlocutor and (d) encourage others to speak through showing interest, asking further questions, backchanneling and commenting.

Through teaching, also, students learned the meaning and the use of conversational discourse markers such as (well, now, anyway...etc) used to maintain conversational coherence, thus, employing these markers in their speaking as well. Furthermore, instruction given to students helped them organize, notice and understand the way the content of their conversation is conveyed. This included presenting the conversation typical sequence for performing various routines and explaining how each turn is linked to the previous one and inviting the next one. Students were also given instruction about how to keep the conversation going.

Planning for the task enabled students to get used to think consciously of the overall conversation organization as well as the turns every interlocutor had to take. This planning might have become more fast and spontaneous with the progress of the program.

During the task stage, which was mainly interactive, students employed the learned interactional strategies and started to test hypotheses about how the conversation took place in actual situations. Within the course of interaction, they attempted also to try out some phrases noticed before to keep the conversation with their peers going and to check their peers' understanding.

At the post task stage, analyzing students' spontaneous performance, helped them reflect upon their conversational skills through finding out why their conversations usually stopped or why it was hard for them to signal their turns or finish the conversation. They could also analyze deeply the shortage of their use of backchanneling techniques. This means that students could self-revise their interactional efficiency, thus depending on themselves as far as possible and improving their interactional competence simultaneously.

Furthermore, activities presented at the "reflection and consolidation stage" were effective as students practiced many strategies related to conversation management.

***C. Factors that might have helped experimental group students progress in pragmatic competence:***

On the pre-test, it was clear that the experimental group students had problems with the use of appropriate expressions in each situation. Most of them used some memorized expressions without considering the situation or role-relationships. They were almost unaware of polite strategies to be used in each situation. They mentioned also that the use of polite expressions was very difficult for them.

On the posttest, students became able to fulfill a wide range of functions to satisfy the goal of the task. They attempted to consider register and demonstrate appropriate response. This may be due to the fact that pragmatic competence was focused on throughout the whole task cycle.

Firstly, the awareness-raising phase helped students indirectly improve their functional ability as it sensitized them to context-based variation in language use. It helped learners become familiar with the range of pragmatic devices in the target language as well. It also encouraged them to become sensitive to purpose, context and register in which language is used and how this can affect the use of certain structures. In particular, it helped students notice (a) how language forms are used to express different functions, (b) how, in a certain given situations, some forms are considered appropriate while others are not according to the setting, relationships between speakers and the topic, (c) how native speakers vary their language to sound more appropriate and (d) how they show politeness and respect to people who have higher status.

Secondly, teaching was considered a reflective phase which included discussion about pragmatic features. At this phase, students learned more about how to use appropriate forms to achieve certain purposes and how to vary language according to the situation, the participants and so on. This was done both explicitly and indirectly through activities focusing on description, explanation, and discussion of different functions.

During planning, students got used to think not only of vocabulary or grammar they needed in the task but of how to use appropriate expressions to satisfy their purpose on the one hand, and cope with the social context on the other hand.

During the task stage, students were engaged in an experimental phase as they took part in real role-play conversations including the target pragmatic features. Given adequate time to do the task, students were triggered to plan on line to function appropriately and consider the situation characteristics.

At the post task stage, students engaged in an introspective phase as they thought of their own and their peers' conversations and identified gaps resulting mostly from pragmatic transfer from L1. This necessitated a comparison of the expressions used in English and those used in Arabic. Through task repetition also, students could depend on themselves as far as possible to evaluate their use of appropriate phrases and utterances to express task functions. They could decide whether the utterances used were appropriate or not in the context in which they

occurred and hence worked out a range of appropriate alternatives. Self and peer evaluation was very effective as students competed together to look for mistakes and comment on their peers' performance.

Furthermore, activities presented after the students finished the task were crucial in that domain. At this phase, students' common errors in using appropriate expressions were discussed and remedied through various activities.

With respect to different genres, students were engaged in different communicative tasks representing various contexts and thus adopting a variety of different social roles and speech events. Such tasks provided opportunities to practice a wide range of pragmatic and sociolinguistic skills. For each social situation, students were taught the specific characteristics or conversation routines that constitute it. To perform the act of apologizing, for instance, they learned appropriate expressions they can use to acknowledge responsibility, offer repair and give an explanation or excuse in a proper way.

#### **D. Specific factors that might have helped experimental group students progress in fluency:**

On the pre-test, students' speech delivery was slow and utterances were characterized by frequent pauses and hesitations that impeded communication and strained the listener. Sometimes, delivery became so slow that only few words were produced.

Noticeably, on the posttest, students could express themselves fluently and smoothly with few pauses and hesitation. This indicated that the experimental group students achieved progress in their fluency after the program application. The highest effect size was in students' performance in "exchanging personal information" task. This may be due to the fact that this function was closely related to students' every day life and was practiced more than other functions in class.

Actually, the progress realized in fluency can be attributed to many factors that occurred at the pre-task stage, during task stage or post task stage.

At the pre-task stage, students were encouraged, via teaching, to use prefabricated and lexical language in an automatic way, which was better than structuring each utterance form scratch and hence slowing the rate of speech. These

phrases required less thinking and planning on the part of the learner because they were used as wholes. In addition, exposing students to authentic samples of spoken language helped them identify lexical phrases (poly words, phrasal constraints or sentence builders) used by native speakers to express ideas. These encouraged them to use such phrases to express structures they were not yet able to construct creatively which eased frustration and promoted fluency.

Furthermore, providing learners with adequate time to plan in advance helped them think of the content and meaning to be conveyed and this resulted in greater fluency during actual task performance. It also helped them handle communicative strains and pressures thus increasing their speech and decreasing total pausing time.

During the task, students were highly motivated to speak as they could practice risk taking without being afraid of mistakes. They indulged in real situations and employed all their linguistic, discourse and pragmatic repertoire in real time without hesitation or interruption by the teacher. In other words, the results of the analysis that the students were exposed to at the pre-task stage was reintegrated in their fluent performance. Students were not asked to conform to the use of certain structures but use whatever language they had which helped them achieve more fluency and use cutting edge language structures. Moreover, giving students adequate not too much time to do the task, trained them to plan for their speech on-line to convey their message as fast as possible without undue pauses or long periods of thinking.

At the post task stage, the self-evaluation activity helped students monitor their speech rate, their hesitation and their pauses.

Finally, activities presented at the "reflection and consolidation stage" after the students finished the task was very effective in that domain.

## Conclusions:

*Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions can be made:*

1. The present study provides evidence for the effectiveness of using communicative interactive tasks in developing first year secondary students' speaking skills. These tasks can increase their motivation and positive attitudes towards learning to speak. Moreover, they help them take risks. As a result, students' ability to speak fluently and correctly increases. This is consistent with the results of other studies which proved the effectiveness of communicative tasks in developing speaking skills such as the studies of Nation (1991), Newton (1996), O'brein (1996), Bygate (1999), Dinapoli (2000), Myers (2000), and Shehadeh (2001).
2. There is an indication that integrating both the cognitive approach strategies and task based instruction can foster students' speaking proficiency. This is consistent with the results of other studies such as the studies of Foster and Skehan (1996a), Bejarano (1997), Mehnert (1998), Skehan & Foster (1997), Ortega, (1999), Foster & Skehan (1999), Fangyuan (2001), Lynch (2001), and Yuan & Ellis (2003), Eslami-Rasekh (2004), Sayer (2005) and Nakatani (2005).
3. The key to sustained progress in speaking proficiency is balanced development in the different areas of language performance accuracy, fluency and complexity. This balance will lead to a situation in which progress in one area would be accompanied by development in others. So complexity (acquiring new rules and restructuring the language system in terms of speaking skills) would be accompanied by the development of control over the newly acquired skills and the integration of these skills into fluent performance (Skehen, 1998).
4. To achieve this balance in terms of speaking both "analyzability and "accessibility" have to be developed. Analyzability helps the learner rely more on rule based system to produce language thus enables him to be more

- flexible, while accessibility is a memory based system which enables the learner to keep up with ongoing discourse using ready made lexical language.
5. Triggering students to focus on form- whether in terms of language, discourse or functions- before or after the task enables language development to proceed without decreasing the naturalness of the communication that tasks can generate. It engages them in a process of discourse analysis which promotes their reflection ability and thus enhances their speaking subskills effectively. This is supported by Dornyei & Thurrell, (1994), Aston (1995), Celce-Murcia (1997) and Skehan (2002).
  6. Providing FL learners with explicit instruction before the task does not only foster their understanding of spoken discourse characteristics, but it helps them to use these characteristics and their underlying skills in actual performance. It enables them to understand and prepare themselves well to the task and hence fosters their spoken performance. This is consistent with the results of other studies such as Slade & Gardner (1993), Kubota (1995), House (1996), and Bejarano (1997).
  7. Using raising awareness activities before engaging students in communicative tasks helps improve their grammatical, discourse and pragmatic competences, as it shows them how the spoken interaction takes place in real life situations. This is supported by Fotos and Ellis (1991), Green and Hecht (1992), Fotos (1993), Kubota (1995), House (1996), Basturkmen (2002), and Sayer (2005).
  8. Helping students to plan before speaking and interacting orally proved to be effective in enhancing students' speaking performance in terms of all speaking skills. It can lead FL learners to produce more developed speech. It helps also to ensure that any change occurring in the language system can be drawn upon during oral language use and production. This is consistent with the results of other studies such as Crookes (1989), Foster and Skehan (1996a), Skehan & Foster (1997), Mehnert (1998), Ortega, (1999), Foster & Skehan (1999), Fangyuan (2001) and Yuan & Ellis (2003).

- 9.** Self/ peer-evaluation after performing tasks, enables students to direct and control their own learning as they pay more attention to their points of strength and weakness and hence motivate them to become more willing to self-correct and rebuild their underlying language system. This encourages students to be more involved in planning and organize their future learning. This is supported by Rutherford (1989), Katchen (1991), Legutke and Thomas (1993), Schneider (2001), and Lynch (2001). This self –evaluation process proved to be most effective when learners are aware of the criteria according to which their performance can be evaluated. This is supported by Willis (1993), Skehan (1998), Lynch (2001) and Basturkmen (2002).
- 10.** There is evidence that exposing students to authentic texts via spoken language corpus driven materials, online or printed, helps to raise their consciousness and encourages them to draw insights especially about the lexical phrases and expressions used in authentic rather than artificial spoken discourse. It enables them to identify language features, which can enhance their pragmatic and discourse competence as well as their fluency. This is consistent with the results of other studies such as Riggenbach (1990), Doughty (1991), Sun (2000), Guillot, (2002) and Hughes (2002).
- 11.** There is evidence that providing supportive feedback throughout task cycle is highly effective. Through this feedback, students’ strengths in speaking can be highlighted and appreciated and possible suggestions for improvement can be offered throughout in a way that helps students develop their speaking and gain clearer insights of others’ expectations. This is supported by Riggenbach (1990), Scarcella & Oxford (1994), Skehan (2002), Myers (2000) and Furuta (2002).
- 12.** The change in the teacher’s role from an authoritarian to a discussion organizer, a facilitator and a language adviser allows students to share more responsibilities for their learning, express themselves freely and become the centre of the learning process.
- 13.** Public oral performance after performing task proved effective in helping students realize both accuracy and complexity in terms of all speaking skills

without interfering with their fluency during the task. This is consistent with the study of Skehan and Foster (1997).

14. Delaying language practice and drills until the students complete the task encourages them to engage in the task spontaneously and helps them gain a feeling of working in an authentic situation without imposing any particular structures on them. Yet, it ensures that whatever is accomplished during a task can be processed more deeply. This is was supported by Skehan (2002).

### **Recommendations:**

*In the light of the present study results, the following recommendations are made:*

1. The present program can be adopted for teaching speaking to students at the secondary stage and other stages taking into consideration students' age, needs, interests and linguistic proficiency levels.
2. Speaking instruction should be given more attention in our EFL classes. More time and efforts should be exerted to develop this main skill and its sub-skills.
3. Students should be offered enough opportunities to practice speaking on a daily basis for authentic purposes (i.e., to describe, narrate, apologize, invite, congratulate and so on.) in our EFL classes.
4. Student- teachers and teachers should be aware of the speaking skills necessary for students at each stage so that they can develop and evaluate these skills properly. In addition, students should be aware of the criteria according to which their speaking is evaluated in order to work hard to meet these criteria.
5. EFL teachers should focus equally on the different speaking sub- skills, thus paying more attention to the discourse competence including conversation management and discourse organization as well as to pragmatic competence and fluency beside their usual focus on grammar and vocabulary.
6. Teaching speaking should be grounded in an adequate theory- "the cognitive approach"- to develop its skills adequately.
7. Teachers are recommended to adopt task-based instruction in teaching speaking to their students. Thus, speaking sub- skills can be taught in the context

of the speaking tasks taking into consideration that students should focus on the accuracy in the initial stage of the task (pre-task stage) and then focus on fluency and spontaneous speaking during performing the task, then reflect and acquire more skills at the post-task stage.

- 8.** Students should be able to plan for their spoken performance in advance to lower the burden on their cognitive ability during speaking. Moreover, they should be offered enough comprehensible input through pre-task activities and especially through listening to authentic texts, thus raise their consciousness of the relevant skills as well as the rules and features of the spoken language discourse.
- 9.** Enough post- task activities aiming at helping students acquire new skills and test hypotheses about spoken language should be presented to intermediate EFL students so that they can restructure their underlying language system in a way that helps them integrate spoken discourse rules and skills later on in their real time performance.
- 10.** Students should become the center of the learning process and should share more responsibilities in their learning of speaking skills. Hence, they should be offered opportunities to self evaluate their oral performance. In this way, they can become more independent and more involved in learning speaking. This entails a necessary change in the teacher's role from an authority figure to a facilitator, discussion organizer, helper and language adviser.
- 11.** Students' speaking performance should be encouraged and appreciated through public performance. This can be done in different ways to increase students' motivation and awareness of the sense of audience and purpose. Among these ways are (a) allowing some students to repeat the task in front of the rest of the class, (b) requiring students to report the task output and results and (c) comparing students' performance to native language speakers' performance and discussing points of strength and weakness.
- 12.** Supportive feedback should be offered throughout the task cycle, not only to help students identify their weaknesses in speaking and ways of overcoming them

but also to encourage their strengths and consequently increase their motivation and involvement in speaking.

### **Suggestions for further studies:**

*In the light of the present study results, the following studies can be suggested:*

1. Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of other task-based programs in developing Egyptian EFL students' speaking skills (grammatical, pragmatic and discourse competencies) as well as their fluency.

2. While the present study provided support to the effectiveness of the proposed task based instruction program in developing first year secondary students' speaking, further research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of similar programs in developing students' listening, writing and reading skills.

3. Further research is needed to compare the relative efficacy of using task based instruction to address different speaking genres.

4. Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of other task based instruction programs in the preparatory and university stages.

5. Other studies are needed to investigate the effectiveness of applying a similar program over a longer period of time on students' skills especially on pronunciation and fluency.

6. Other studies are needed to investigate deeply the effectiveness of applying a similar program on different speaking genres (descriptive, narrative, expository and so on).

7. Further research is needed to compare different cognitive approach strategies in terms of their effectiveness in developing EFL students' speaking skills.

8. Further research is needed to explore how task based instruction can be adaptable to take account of individual differences so different pedagogical alternatives are available which reflect such differences.

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