The Impact of Social Media Application in Promoting Speaking Skill of Iraqi University learners of English: A Skype-based Study

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of applying social media, specifically, using Skype devices in teaching the speaking skill (Male/Female) as a supportive environment of English language teaching. Moreover, this study seeks to find whether the designed questionnaire enjoys the required validity and reliability. As a case study, the sample of the experiment consists of seventy sophomores major in English at Mustansiriya University in Iraq. The researcher randomly divided the participants into control and experimental cohorts. The two groups submitted to the pretest and posttest. The participants of the study reported their responses to a six-statement designed questionnaire on suitable ways of improving the speaking skill. Statistical data have been collected based on the Likert Scale questionnaire, while the statistical values, such as mean, t-value, standard deviation, and chi-square, have been employed. The normality, confirmatory, validity, and reliability of the questionnaire were measured by using SPSS and LISREL programs. The research findings indicate that there is a significant difference in the speaking achievement between male and female participants who subjected to social media after receiving instructions via Skype devices. Based on these results, the impact of social media on students' achievements in speaking skills urges the need for a rethinking of the traditional method of teaching English. Further, educators should pay more attention to the process of employing social media applications in the educational domain.

Keywords: questionnaire**,** Skype, social media, speaking skill

1. Introduction

It is worth mentioning that the various applications of the English language in non-English speaking countries have raised the curiosity of the people of these countries to exert extra effort in an attempt to master this language. Accordingly, educational institutions employ a variety of syllabi to teach the English language to achieve such mastery and proficiency in this language.

Iraq Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has established many colleges and institutes to teach the English Language. The department of English language, affiliated to the college of arts at Mustansyria university, is one of these institutions specialized in preparing and qualifying teachers of English. Conversation, a subject matter, is used to teach language activities such as listening and speaking skills. The mode of teaching is teacher-centered class. A lack of using technological devices characterizes this process of education.

The new technological developments have created appropriate environments of learning. These developments have come with various facets of technology, which, in turn, become vital motives and incentives in our daily life. Specialists in education do not save any effort to get benefit from and exploit these technological facilities in their educational profession. The possibility of applying social media tools for teaching and learning in the university setting is in hand (Heinze & Reinhardt, 2011, as cited in Wankel, 2011). On the other hand, Sarachan and Reinson (2011) predict that "social media successfully and sustainably integrated will shape the pedagogical terrain of the future" (Sarachan & Reinson, 2011, as cited in Wankel, 2011).

Social media, with all its various purposes and tools, has been playing a tremendous role in shaping the quality and level of the language to be learned. It provides learners with accessible and suitable means of mastering language structurally and semantically. Therefore, educators should utilize social media with its different faces to help their students to reach the intended level of language proficiency. The teacher-centered class approach has become no more than one of the classic teaching methods that focus on the teacher's role in the class rather than the student's participation in shaping the strategy of learning they prefer. As a result, the use of social media necessitates the need for applying this technology in the field of education.

Researchers have given numerous definitions of the concept of social media that may reflect the multiple uses of such widely used technology. Social media enables users" to create, distribute, share and manipulate different types of content, most of them publicly accessible" (Zourou, 2012, p. 8). Veenstra (2014) believes that "the benefits of the new social media – Facebook, Twitter, the ubiquitous cell phone, email, and others are clear: social contacts, re-acquaintance with long lost relatives, security, immediate access to information, efficiency in communication, and more"(p. 40)**.** Additionally, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) consider social media as "a group of internet-based applications that built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 61). Moreover, Skolik (2014) considers social media or social networking as an online service or site that aims to establish personal ties among people. There are two kinds of social media:
   1- Established networks such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Viber, Skype, WhatsApp, and
       others.

2- Do-it-yourself systems in which the software enables users to make private networks (Skolik, 2014).

Speaking skill, among other skills of language learning, is the focus of the educational specialists. To enable language learners to cope with real speaking situations, they began to introduce these facilities in the classroom setting. Because social media applications can provide a variety of these tools, different types of social media applications, for example, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, wikis, and others, have emerged to meet the needs of both teachers and learners. Brown and Lee (2015, p. 242) hold the view that "networking in online environments has become an increasingly popular form of social interaction." Learners of a foreign language are in an actual need to practice that language in a real-life situation in which skills, like listening and speaking, should be used soundly. Therefore, Brown and Lee (2015, p. 314) emphasize that "we now understand that words and sentences carefully and slowly read and pronounced for classroom learners is not the real world." As a result, using social media facilities might be able to provide such a real setting of language use because they enable learners of language to communicate with the native speakers of the target language and then improving and enhancing language learning skills. Therefore, promoting language learning skills is the intended goal of this study, where social media applications might take their role in providing a real-like environment of using foreign language by foreign learners.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to offer an alternative method of teaching English as a foreign language learning (EFL) to the teacher-centered class by applying one of the social media applications (i.e., Skype) to provide more space for teaching and learning language as well. Sarachan and Reinson predict that "social media successfully and sustainably integrated will shape the pedagogical terrain of the future" (Sarachan & Reinson, (2011), as cited in Wankel, 2011). Therefore, the researcher sets his sights the use of Skype in teaching speaking skills that are an integral part of the curriculum designed for English university learners. The ultimate goal is to see the effect of using such a device, i.e., Skype, in promoting the speaking skill of the learners instead of the traditional one. Moreover, the importance of this study lies in the fact that there is no previous study on the use of social media in the educational sector of Iraq.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The primary focus of this study is to what extent social media application promotes the speaking skill of Iraqi sophomores major in English. The secondary goal of the study is to investigate the effects of applying social media on the achievements of students in speaking skills. The third purpose is to identify the participants' opinions on certain practices that might contribute to improving speaking ability. Therefore, the researcher administered a questionnaire to find answers to the inquiries mentioned above.

1.3. Research Questions

This study plans to answer the following questions:

1- Is there any difference in the speaking achievement of male and female participants who subjected to social media?

 2- Does the designed questionnaire enjoy the required validity and reliability?

1.4. Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses offer possible answers to the research questions:

1-There is a significant difference in the speaking achievement of male and female participants who subjected to social media.

2- The designed questionnaire enjoys the required validity and reliability.

1.5. Definitions of Key terms

1.5.1. Questionnaire

Brown (2001) defines the term questionnaire by saying that "questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers"(Brown, 2001, p.6).

1.5.2. Skype

Eaton (2012) reports the following:

Skype is an excellent tool to help teachers build skills using technology. It also
happens to be an effective tool to teach languages, as it incorporates high levels
of verbal interaction between users, or in this case, between teachers and
students. (p. 4)

1.5.3. Social media

As conceived by Tadros (2011), social media defines as " any media that help integrate technology into lives of people for communication"(Tadros, 2011, as cited in Wankel, 2011, p. 84). Furthermore, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) see social media as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 61).

1.5.4. Speaking Skill

Lazaraton (2002) identifies speaking as "the main skill by which a language is acquired, and it is almost certainly so at the beginning level" (Lazaraton, 2002, cited in Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Snow, 2014, p. 106).

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The participants of the study were two sophomores classes major in English at Mustansyria university in Iraq. The participants were both male and female. Their ages ranged from 19 to 23 years. The total number of participants was 70 students. Thirty-six and thirty-four were female and male, respectively. They all spoke the Arabic language as their mother tongue. Sophomores major in English participated in the implementation of the study for specific considerations:

1- Sophomores were able to deal with internet-based instructions.
2- The subject matter allocated for sophomores and included in their curriculum was called (Person to Person by Jack C. Richards, David Bycina, and Ingrid Wisniewska) which focused on communicative speaking and listening skills.
3- The students might be teachers of English in the future. Hence, they might get benefit from this study to apply social media devices in their future classroom activities.

4-They already had English basics that would facilitate the process of carrying out the research.

2.2. Design
The participants randomly divided into two groups, an experimental group, and a control group. The social media application (i.e., Skype) applied to the experimental group to detect the effects of it on one variable, i.e., speaking skill. Skype was chosen because participants were familiar with how to use this social device. Moreover, it enables them to make online interaction, both visually and auditory, and there is no difficulty in the process of installation.

2.3. Material
The subject matter of the study included in the curriculum of sophomores major in English was" Person to Person" communicative speaking and listening skills, student book2. Jack C. Richards, David Bycina, and Ingrid Wisniewska wrote this coursebook. *The coursebook consists of 12 units; meanwhile, the last groups (i.e., 10-12) are review units. Th*e constituent sections of the coursebook comprised items such as Conversations, Give it a try, listen to this, let's talk, Consider this, Pronunciation focus, and Person to Person.

2.4. Instruments
Two sophomore classes majoring in English took part as a case study for implementing the survey. One type has been randomly chosen as an experimental group, whereas the second level was a control group. The researcher administered a pretest and posttest for both pilot and controlling groups.

2.4.1. Skype
The participants of the experimental group installed Skype. Instructions delivered to them via Skype.
2.4.2. Likert Scale
The Likert scale measured the attitudes of the current study participants toward suitable ways of improving and developing the listening and speaking skills of the learners. The Psychologist Rensis Likert develops this scale and named after him. In most cases, the level consists of a 5-point scales ranging from ***strongly agree*** (scored 5), ***agree*** (scored 4), ***undecided*** (scored 3), ***disagree*** (scored 2), and ***strongly disagree*** (scored 1). The sum of the scores of all the items identifies the individual's total score. Hence, the highest likelihood score is the multiplication of the numeric value (5) by the number of items (**5xN**), whereas the lowest possible score is (**1xN**).

2.4.3. Questionnaire
A designed questionnaire was distributed among the participants of the two groups, i.e., experimental and control groups to identify the participants' attitudes on the suitable techniques of improving the speaking ability of learners. The participants of the controlling and experimental groups reported their responses to the survey in two phases, i.e., before and after the experiment. The validity and reliability of the inquiry were measured.

2.5. Procedure
Seventy university students participated in the course of one academic semester in 2019. They were sophomores majoring in English. Randomly, the researcher divided the students into two

groups, i.e., experimental and control groups. Each group consisted of 35 students, 18 females and 17 males. To avoid demotivation, the same instructor took the responsibility of teaching both groups. Both groups had a pretest and posttest based on the subject matter assigned for students from the beginning of the academic year. Both groups studied four units (from unit 4 to the end of unit 8). The experimental group got instructions via Skype device whereas, the control group followed the teacher-centered class in receiving education. It took two months and a half to accomplish the entire study.

The experimental group or Skype-based instruction group had informed that Skype would be used in teaching as a part of the research project. No additional information about the project had been given to them to keep them unaware of the goals of the research so that their recognition of being treated differently would not cause an unwanted impact on the final results of the experiment. The researcher informed the Skype-based instruction group that they would receive two scores added to their final scores to ensure active participation.

The instructor held classes twice a week. The control group received instructions at Mustansiriya university and lasting for at least 45 minutes for each session. The instructor used Skype to teach the testing group participants while they were at their homes. All the participants were connected with their instructor via Skype. In harmony with the participants" willingness, the instructor held two sessions at night per week. Each session lasted for at least two hours due to certain obstacles such as sudden power and internet service outages. Moreover, the female participants refused to be online video conferencing for social considerations. The whole study took eighteen meetings to accomplish the experiment.

For reviewing the opinions of both groups towards suitable ways that might lead to improving the speaking skills of English learners, the participants of the experimental and control group in pre and post phases of the experiment answered a designed questionnaire comprising six statements for speaking ability. Based on (Person to Person Communicative Speaking and Listening Skills) textbook by Richards, Bycina, and Wisniewska (2005), the instructor administered a pretest and posttest for both experimental and control group participants.

2.5.1. Data Analysis

This section includes an analysis of the descriptive statistics of the study. Initially, SPSS is employed to interpret the mentioned above data, which in turn facilitates the process of identifying the mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, and graphs. Therefore, the SPSS and LISREL software were employed to measure the reliability and validity of the speaking skill of the questionnaires (Amini, 2008).

3. Results

As seen in Table 1 below, the mean of male participants in the speaking skill pretest of the experimental group was (18.35), and the standard deviation was (3.15). In contrast, their counterparts of females in the same group were (20.92), and their standard deviation was (2.93). In the post-test phase, the males obtained mean (32.59) with Std. Reached (9.71) whereas, females' mean was (34.94) and achieved Std. (8.38). The mean score of the final pretest mark of male participants was (39.35) and got Std. (5.47) while female participants achieved (42.39) with an

Std. was (5.72). In the final posttest mark, the mean was (64.03) and (69.08) for male and female respectively with Std. (14.58) for males and (15.95) Std. for females.

Table 1.*Pretest and posttest speaking mean scores of male and female*

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest Speaking Mark	Male	34	18.35	3.15
	Female	36	20.92	2.93
Posttest Speaking Mark	Male	34	32.59	9.71
	Female	36	34.94	8.38
Pretest Final Mark	Male	34	39.35	5.47
	Female	36	42.39	5.72
Posttest Final Mark	Male	34	64.03	14.58
	Female	36	69.08	15.95
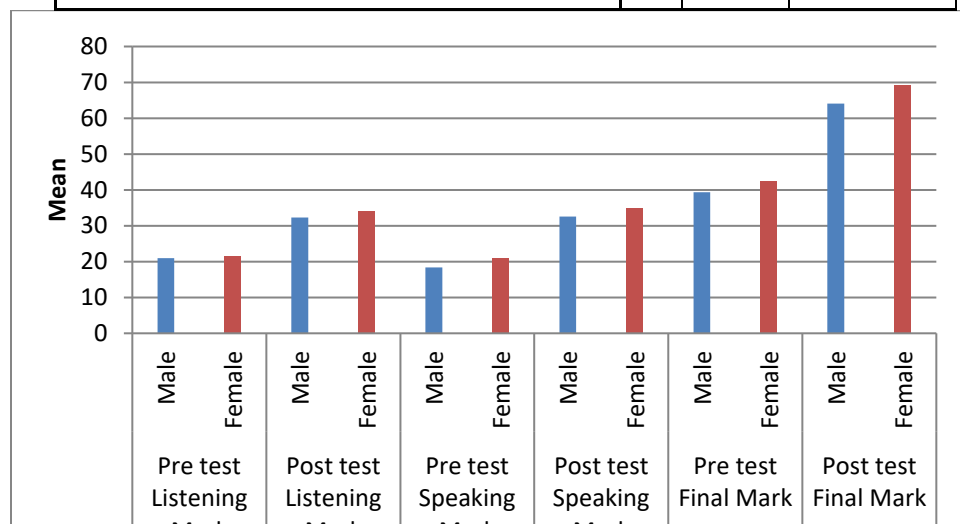
Figure 1 Measures of Males and Females' Means in the Pretest and Posttest of the Speaking Skill

Table 2. *Independent sample t-test for pretest and posttest speaking mean scores of male and female*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper

Pretest Speaking Mark	Equal variances assumed	.534	.467	-3.53	68	**.001***	-2.56	0.73	-4.01	-1.11
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.52	66.868	.001	-2.56	0.73	-4.02	-1.11
Posttest Speaking Mark	Equal variances assumed	.436	.511	-1.09	68	.280	-2.36	2.16	-6.67	1.96
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.08	65.316	.282	-2.36	2.17	-6.70	1.98
Pretest Final Mark	Equal variances assumed	.003	.958	-2.27	68	**.027***	-3.04	1.34	-5.71	-0.36
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.27	67.987	.026	-3.04	1.34	-5.70	-0.37
Posttest Final Mark	Equal variances assumed	.479	.491	-1.38	68	.172	-5.05	3.66	-12.35	2.25
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.39	67.931	.171	-5.05	3.65	-12.33	2.23

*significant at the 0.05 level

According to the above table, there is a considerable difference between the pretest and posttest mark and the pretest final mark variables between male and female students because the level of significance is less than 0.05 (sig <0.05). According to Table 1, it is clear that the average score of girls is higher than that of boys.

There is no considerable difference in other variables because the significant level in them is higher than 0.05 (sig> 0.05).

3.1. The validity of the speaking skill questionnaire
Based on a five-choice Likert scale (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014), this questionnaire has six items (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Not sure; Agree; Strongly Agree). In this study, it includes statements 45.1 through 45.6.

Figures 2 and 3 show the confirmatory factor analysis graphs of the speaking skill questionnaire, the chart of path coefficients, and the values of statistics.
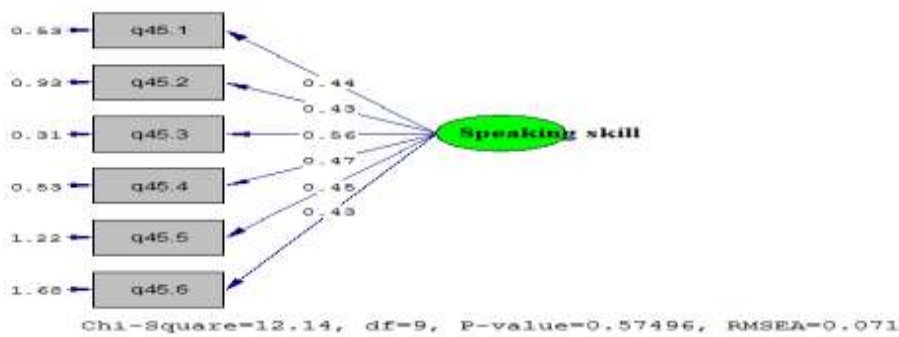
Figure 2. Path Coefficients
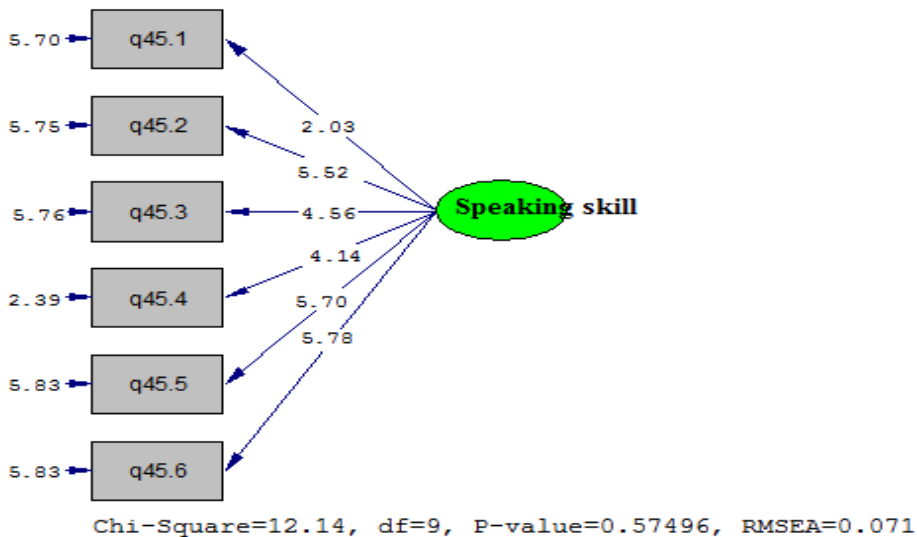
Figure 3. T-value

Table 3 presents the obtained results of the confirmatory factor analysis of the speaking skill questionnaire. As can be seen, the value of (t-value) in all statements is more significant than 1.96. Therefore, the questionnaire items provide a proper structure for measuring the dimensions studied in the research model.

Table 3. *Results of the CFA*

	Questions	Path Coefficients	t-value
	q45.1	0.44	2.03
Speaking skill			
	q45.2	0.43	5.52
	q45.3	0.56	4.56
	q45.4	0.47	4.14
	q45.5	0.45	5.70
	q45.6	0.42	5.78

Also, in Table 4, values for fit indices are shown. The RMSEA value is 0.071, and it is less than 0.08. It indicates that the model is acceptable. Also, the relative chi-square ratio, the chi-square

division on freedom degree (9.12.14), equals to 1.34 is between 1 & 3. NFI, GFI, IFI, CFI, and AGFI indices are also higher than 0.9.

Table 4. *Goodness-of-fit indices*

χ2/DF	RMSEA	NFI	GFI	IFI	CFI	AGFI
1.34	0.071	0.93	0.91	0.92	0.91	0.91

Therefore, the indices are consistent with their interpretive criteria, and confirmatory factor analysis confirms the structure of the speaking skill questionnaire.

4. Conclusion

As far as the speaking achievement of male and female participants who subjected to Skype-based instruction is concerned, the results of the study showed that the mean score of the male students in the speaking skill of the experimental group pretest was (**18.35**) with an **Std. (3.15).** In contrast, their counterparts of females in the same group were (**20.92**) with an Std**. (2.93).** After having done the posttest, the mean of the males in the speaking skill was (**32.59**) accompanied by an Std**. (9.71).** The female participants' mean score was (**34.94**) and have achieved a standard deviation reached (**8.38**). Additionally, in the final pretest mark, the mean of the males was (**39.35**) with an Std. of (**5.47**)**,** whereas the females' mean score was (**42.39**) with an Std. of (**5.72**). The results of the final posttest mark showed that males obtained mean reached about (**64.03**) with an Std. was about (**14.58**). The females' mean was (**69.08**) and achieved Std. (**15.95**). This result confirms the hypothesis, which states that there is a significant difference in the speaking achievement of males and females of the study after having done the posttest.

Moreover, female students' mean was higher than that of males' in speaking skills even in pretest and posttest. This result indicates that females' response to Skype-instruction was higher than that of males.

Based on a Five- choice Likert scale, the validity of the speaking skill questionnaire, which includes six statements, shows that the t-value in all six statements is higher than 1.96, as shown in Table 3. Table 4 shows that the RMSEA is 0.071 less than 0.08, which indicates that the model is acceptable. Additionally, the relative chi-square ratio, the chi-square deviation on freedom degrees (9.12.14), equals 1.34 is between 1 and 3. Indices of NFI (0.93), GFI (0.91), IFI (0.92), CFI (0.91), and AGFI (0.91) are also greater than 0.91. Therefore, the indices are consistent with their interpretive criteria, and confirmatory factor analysis confirms the structure of the Speaking skill questionnaire. Consequently, the designed questionnaire of the speaking skill enjoys the required validity and reliability, and hence, this result comes in line with the second research hypothesis of the study, which states that the designed questionnaire enjoys the required validity and reliability.

Future research is needed to ascertain whether the application of social media in language learning promotes the listening skill and motivation of the learner.

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Appendix A

Table 5. *Final scores obtained by students of the controlling group in the pretest*

Student No.	Gender	Listening Mark 50%	Speaking Mark 50%	Final Mark 100%
Student 1	Male	20	15	35
Student 2	Male	25	23	48
Student 3	Male	26	21	47
Student 4	Male	19	14	33
Student 5	Male	22	17	39
Student 6	Male	20	16	36
Student 7	Male	22	19	41
Student 8	Male	19	15	34
Student 9	Male	20	20	40
Student 10	Male	24	16	40
Student 11	Male	17	13	30
Student 12	Male	19	17	36
Student 13	Male	20	19	39
Student 14	Male	25	25	50
Student 15	Male	23	17	40
Student 16	Male	24	20	44
Student 17	Male	20	19	39
Student 18	Female	22	19	41
Student 19	Female	23	21	44
Student 20	Female	20	20	40
Student 21	Female	25	24	49
Student 22	Female	20	23	43
Student 23	Female	14	16	30
Student 24	Female	21	20	41
Student 25	Female	15	16	31
Student 26	Female	25	25	50
Student 27	Female	25	24	49
Student 28	Female	27	26	53
Student 29	Female	21	19	40
Student 30	Female	20	20	40
Student 31	Female	22	19	41
Student 32	Female	18	18	36
Student 33	Female	26	27	53
Student 34	Female	25	22	47
Student 35	Female	20	20	40

Appendix B

Table 6. *Final scores obtained by students of the experimental group in the pretest*

Student No.	Gender	Listening Mark 50%	Speaking Mark 50%	Final Mark 100%
Student 1	Male	20	17	37
Student 2	Male	24	21	45
Student 3	Male	25	24	49
Student 4	Male	18	17	35
Student 5	Male	18	15	33
Student 6	Male	19	18	37
Student 7	Male	24	20	44
Student 8	Male	20	19	39
Student 9	Male	20	17	37
Student 10	Male	21	19	40
Student 11	Male	18	15	33
Student 12	Male	17	15	32
Student 13	Male	20	15	35
Student 14	Male	26	26	52
Student 15	Male	22	20	42

Student 16	Male	20	21	41
Student 17	Male	17	19	36
Student 18	Female	20	20	40
Student 19	Female	25	21	46
Student 20	Female	22	20	42
Student 21	Female	20	23	43
Student 22	Female	20	21	41
Student 23	Female	18	15	33
Student 24	Female	21	21	42
Student 25	Female	16	14	30
Student 26	Female	24	23	47
Student 27	Female	22	20	42
Student 28	Female	25	25	50
Student 29	Female	20	22	42
Student 30	Female	20	19	39
Student 31	Female	24	21	45
Student 32	Female	24	23	47
Student 33	Female	23	23	46
Student 34	Female	20	22	42
Student 35	Female	20	21	41

Appendix C
Table 7. *Final scores obtained by students of the controlling group in the posttest*

Student No.	Gender	Listening Mark 50%	Speaking Mark 50%	Final Mark 100%
Student 1	Male	30	31	61
Student 2	Male	35	35	70
Student 3	Male	32	30	62
Student 4	Male	22	18	40
Student 5	Male	26	24	50
Student 6	Male	25	20	45
Student 7	Male	26	25	51
Student 8	Male	22	17	39
Student 9	Male	26	25	51
Student 10	Male	30	22	52
Student 11	Male	21	20	41
Student 12	Male	25	25	50
Student 13	Male	26	25	51
Student 14	Male	35	36	71
Student 15	Male	26	24	50
Student 16	Male	33	30	63
Student 17	Male	25	26	51
Student 18	Female	30	28	58
Student 19	Female	30	30	60
Student 20	Female	25	25	50
Student 21	Female	34	30	64
Student 22	Female	32	32	64
Student 23	Female	19	20	39
Student 24	Female	25	25	50
Student 25	Female	18	18	36
Student 26	Female	38	40	78
Student 27	Female	36	34	70
Student 28	Female	39	40	79
Student 29	Female	25	26	51
Student 30	Female	26	26	52
Student 31	Female	27	25	52
Student 32	Female	24	26	50
Student 33	Female	33	35	68

| Student 34 | Female | 32 | 30 | 62 |
| Student 35 | Female | 25 | 25 | 50 |

Appendix D

Table 8. *Final scores obtained by students of the experimental group in the posttest*

Student No.	Gender	Listening Mark 50%	Speaking Mark 50%	Final Mark 100%
Student 1	Male	35	25	60
Student 2	Male	42	40	82
Student 3	Male	41	44	85
Student 4	Male	33	35	68
Student 5	Male	35	37	72
Student 6	Male	36	61	67
Student 7	Male	41	43	84
Student 8	Male	31	34	65
Student 9	Male	40	41	81
Student 10	Male	37	39	76
Student 11	Male	30	30	60
Student 12	Male	35	39	74
Student 13	Male	40	40	80
Student 14	Male	44	46	90
Student 15	Male	35	38	73
Student 16	Male	40	42	82
Student 17	Male	39	41	80
Student 18	Female	40	43	83
Student 19	Female	41	44	85
Student 20	Female	36	39	75
Student 21	Female	43	47	90
Student 22	Female	35	40	75
Student 23	Female	30	32	62
Student 24	Female	43	43	86
Student 25	Female	30	30	60
Student 26	Female	44	44	88
Student 27	Female	44	45	89
Student 28	Female	47	48	95
Student 29	Female	39	40	79
Student 30	Female	40	43	83
Student 31	Female	41	40	81
Student 32	Female	34	35	69
Student 33	Female	45	46	91
Student 34	Female	41	44	85
Student 35	Female	38	40	78