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Title of the thesis: The Effectiveness of a Task- Based Instruction program in developing the English Language Speaking Skills of Secondary Stage Students.

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Abstract

Communicative tasks are defined as activities in which meaning is primary, there is a goal which needs to be worked toward, there is a real world relationship and the interaction among students is the means for achieving the task outcome. However, it was assumed that adopting communicative tasks alone is not adequate as it leads the learner to prioritize meaning and neglect focus on form either to achieve accuracy or precision in speaking. Hence, the cognitive approach focuses on how tasks are implemented to maximize chances of focus on form. The cognitive approach 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. The present study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of tackling communicative tasks in the light of the cognitive approach principles throughout a proposed program in developing the speaking skills of 1st year secondary students. The study adopted the quasi- experimental pretest-posttest control group design. A group of 76 first year secondary students were randomly selected from one of Cairo governmental 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). Students of the experimental group received training through the suggested program; while students in the control group received regular instruction. To determine the most important speaking skills to be developed throughout the program, a checklist was designed and approved by a jury of subject matter specialists. Based on these speaking skills, a speaking proficiency test was developed and used as a pre-post test. A task- based program was developed by the researcher based on the cognitive approach principles to develop the experimental group's speaking skills. The program was taught over a period of three months. By the end of the treatment, a post- test was administered to both the experimental and control groups to find out the effectiveness of the program in developing the experimental group students' identified speaking skills. Most of the study results provided support for the hypotheses. It was concluded that the program designed according to task- based instruction proved to be effective in improving first year secondary students' speaking skills. It was

recommnded that EFL teachers should adopt task-based instruction in teaching speaking to their students. Thus, speaking sub- skills can be taught in the context of communicative speaking tasks, taking into consideration the implications of the cognitive approach to language learning .*Key words:* The cognitive approach, speaking skills, task based instruction, TEFL, the communicative approach