

THE IMPORTANCE OF BRAIN BASED LEARNING IN DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILL OF EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract: The present study aimed at investigating the effect of brain-based learning (BBL) on developing some EFL speaking skills of students. Speaking is an essential pillar to building up the communication and interaction competencies of foreign language learners. It is the second skill to be acquired after listening. EFL Learners should acquire speaking skills not only so they can pass the exam but also for public use in the outside world. This article is based on improving speaking skill of students through brain based learning.

Key words: Brain-based learning (BBL), speaking skill, principles, approach, paralinguistic and prosodic features.

Speaking is a tool for social interaction and reflects students' ability to express themselves accurately and fluently. Al-ma'shy (2011) stated that EFL speaking is the most commonly used skill in class because it is used as part of the teaching of other skills such as listening, reading and writing. As a result, teaching speaking skills should be considered an essential part of English language programs in schools since it is vital as a means of developing classroom interaction. In the same vein, (Afshar & Rahimi, 2014) emphasized that speaking as one of the macro skills must be given special attention and instruction in the context of English as a foreign language. Likewise, Sanaa (2013) assured that English speaking skill is a major sign of students' success among EFL learners. Despite the importance of EFL speaking skills, reluctance to participate freely in oral activities is clearly observed in students' behaviors (Cheng, 2000). Speaking

problems are classified by many researchers into linguistic and affective (Humaera, 2015; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). The linguistic problems that might prevent students from sharing in conversations include grammar mistake, lack of vocabulary, mispronunciation and mechanics related problems such as fluency and accuracy. The second category is the affective factors including absence of motivation, absence of self-confidence, in addition to anxiety and shyness. Thus, speaking a foreign language appears to be difficult, challenging, and stressful for the learners. Brain-based learning has been built on a dozen of principles stemming from neuroscience and cognitive research. The technique was then used as an instructional approach to enhance instructors' ability to teach and accelerate students' learning of expressive as well as receptive language skills of EFL students (Lombardi, 2008). According to (Jensen (2000) brain-based learning is learning in accordance with the way the brain is naturally designed to learn. Jensen (2008) added that brain-based learning is a set of principles and a base of knowledge and skills upon which we can make better decisions about the instruction as well as learning processes. The BBL technique has a dual focus: (i) it encourages teachers to adapt their teaching methods to the learning modes of all students, and (ii) it seeks to create a challenging yet safe emotional climate in the classroom (Connell, 2009). Brain-based learning proved to be effective for developing various areas in EFL context such as the retention of English language knowledge, academic achievement, critical reading (McNamee, 2011), reading comprehension, writing, and oral fluency (Duman, 2010; Willis, 2008). Jackson (2003) assured that brain-based learning strategies can yield significant and measurable benefits in terms of student performance outcomes. Oradee (2012) added that brain-based teaching improves learners' speaking skills such as fluency and accuracy while they were doing their pair work activities or working in groups in a comfortable atmosphere where students are not afraid to speak and enjoy communicating with their classmates as well as the teacher. Yagcioglu (2014) utilized websites that provide brain-based activities to improve his students' ability to pronounce the new words, speak English fluently and write paragraphs and compositions. According to Connell (2009) the most important

aspect of BBL is that it combines research-based academic interventions and applied aspects of emotional learning. If the students have been introduced to the power of emotional intelligence (EI), they likely would be able to effectively handle anxieties, shyness, anger, fear and the stresses of learning difficulties. Being a teacher of English, the researcher has noticed that the sufficient interest was not given to EFL speaking skills despite their great importance. Teachers concentrate only on repetition drills and ignore developing communication among students. Many researchers reported the poor proficiency of EFL speaking skills in the context of the Arab countries, especially in Egypt (Abdelmageed & El-Naggar, 2018; Eissa, 2019; Etomy, 2015; Ghany & Latif, 2012; Torkey, 2006). They confirmed that EFL students in secondary stage schools as well as university students in Egypt face a lot of difficulties while speaking. The researcher also conducted a pilot study in which a speaking test was administered to the EFL first-year secondary school students. The results of the pilot study disclosed that the level of the students was low, and they were inefficient as EFL speakers. The present study aims to investigate whether brain-based learning would improve EFL first-year secondary school students' speaking skills. Unlike written language, spoken language involves paralinguistic and prosodic features. These features include voice qualities, speed, loudness, facial and bodily gestures, intonation, correct pronunciation of sounds, stress, rhythm, and pausing (Widiati & Cahyono, 2006). Bygate (1987) indicated that spoken language is more spontaneous, chaotic, and disorderly form. It may be informal, short and clear sentence, whereas writing is more ordered and coherent structures. Sanaa (2013) conceived that speaking proficiency is influenced by four components of competence; (i) grammatical competence, (ii) discourse competence, (iii) sociocultural competence, and (iv) strategic competence. Brown (2002) indicated that activities which focus only on limited language structures through simple repetition drills, substitution drills, and slot substitution drills only tax students' short-term memories, with no hope of improving communicative ability. Pardede (2011) reported that speaking skill can be improved through communicative activities which motivate the students and intensify the

relationship between the teacher and the students and among the students as well so creating a supportive environment for language learning. The activities that can enhance speaking skills are free discussion, task-based instruction, a jigsaw puzzle, games, problem-solving, dramatization, role-play, group work, pair work and oral reading. In conclusion, the BBL instructional strategies utilized in this work improved Egyptian secondary school students' speaking skills namely accuracy, pragmatic and fluency. On the contrary, the control group students (taught through the traditional method prescribed in their teacher's guide) couldn't achieve a significant improvement like the experimental group students (taught through BBL). According to (Salem, 2017), the instruction methods adopted by the Ministry of Education in Egypt, produce mute students. Indeed, BBL has been globally applied in many countries such as USA, UK, Germany, Holland, Turkey and Finland (Connell, 2009). Such efficient approach facilitate and accelerate learning, thus it should be adopted in the Egyptian schools, not only to teach speaking, but other language skills as well. It was highlighted that creating a friendly caring and belonging classroom environment and the centeredness of the learner is deemed important.

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