

# The Impact of a Communicative Speaking Program on Libyan Female University Students' Speaking Attitudes A case study of third semester female students at the Faculty of Education, Agelat city

أثر برنامج التحدث التواصلي على مواقف الطالبات الليبيات تجاه التحدث  
دراسة حالة لطالبات الفصل الثالث في كلية التربية بمدينة العجيلات

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## المخلص:

بحثت هذه الدراسة التجريبية أثر برنامج قائم على التحدث التواصلي على مواقف طالبات الفصل الثالث في الجامعة تجاه التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية في ليبيا. تم اختيار أربعين طالبة من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية التربية بمدينة العجيلات جامعة الزاوية عشوائياً إلى مجموعة تجريبية (ن = 20) ومجموعة ضابطة (ن = 20). تلقت المجموعة التجريبية برنامجاً تعليمياً للتحدث لمدة ستة أسابيع، بينما اتبعت المجموعة الضابطة منهج التحدث المعتاد. تم تطبيق مقياس للمواقف تجاه التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية كاختبار قبلي وبعدي. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام الإحصاء الوصفي واختبارات t للعينات المستقلة والمزدوجة. كشفت النتائج عن تحسن ذي دلالة إحصائية في مواقف المجموعة التجريبية تجاه التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية، مما يشير إلى فعالية أنشطة التحدث التواصلي في تعزيز المواقف الإيجابية. تختتم الدراسة بأثار تربوية وتوصيات لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجامعات الليبية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** مهارات التحدث، المواقف، النهج التواصلي، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، دراسة تجريبية، ليبيا.

**Research Title:**

**The Impact of a Communicative Speaking Program on Libyan Female University Students' Speaking Attitudes  
A case study of third semester female students at the Faculty of Education, Agelat city**

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**Abstract**

This experimental study investigated the effect of a communicative speaking-based program on third-semester university female students' attitudes towards speaking English in Libya. Forty female students from the English Department in the Faculty of Education in Agelat city Azzawia university randomly assigned to an experimental group (n = 20) and a control group (n = 20). The experimental group received a six-week speaking-based instructional program, while the control group followed the regular speaking curriculum. An attitude scale towards speaking English was administered as a pre-test and post-test. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent and paired sample t-tests. Results revealed a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group's attitudes towards speaking English, indicating the effectiveness of communicative speaking activities in fostering positive attitudes. The study concludes with pedagogical implications and recommendations for EFL instruction in Libyan universities.

**Keywords:** speaking skills, attitudes, communicative approach, EFL, experimental study, Libya.

**1. Introduction**

Speaking is widely acknowledged as one of the most challenging skills for learners of English as a foreign language. In EFL contexts such as Libya, university students often demonstrate limited oral participation, anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low confidence when speaking English. These

difficulties are frequently associated with negative attitudes towards speaking, which in turn hinder language development and classroom interaction.

Recent trends in language teaching emphasize communicative, learner-centered instruction as a means to promote meaningful interaction and positive affective engagement. However, despite curricular reforms, many speaking classes still rely on traditional, teacher-centered methods that provide limited opportunities for authentic communication. This situation necessitates the implementation of innovative instructional programs that explicitly target students' attitudes towards speaking.

This study proposes a communicative speaking-based program designed to foster positive attitudes among third-semester university female students in Libya and empirically examine its effectiveness through an experimental design.

### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

Despite studying English for several years, many third-semester English majors in Libyan universities show reluctance to speak English inside the classroom. Classroom observations and informal interviews indicate that students often experience anxiety, lack of motivation, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-confidence when engaging in oral tasks. These affective barriers result in limited participation and weak communicative competence.

The problem of this study can be stated as follows:

Third-semester university female students exhibit negative attitudes towards speaking English, which adversely affect their oral participation and language development.

### 1.3. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Investigate the effectiveness of a communicative speaking-based program in developing students' positive attitudes towards speaking English.
2. Identify the differences between experimental and control groups in post-test attitude scores.

3. Examine the degree of change in students' attitudes before and after the intervention.

4. Provide pedagogical recommendations for improving speaking instruction in Libyan EFL contexts.

#### 1.4. Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes of third-semester university female students towards speaking English before the intervention?

2. Are there statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in attitudes towards speaking English after the intervention?

3. Are there statistically significant differences between the experimental group's pre-test and post-test attitude scores?

4. To what extent does the communicative speaking-based program influence students' attitudes towards speaking English?

#### 1.5. Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it:

Provides empirical evidence on the role of communicative programs in shaping affective factors.

Contributes to EFL research in the Libyan higher education context.

Assists curriculum designers and instructors in improving speaking courses.

Encourages the integration of affective objectives in speaking pedagogy.

#### 1.6. Delimitations

Participants: third-semester female students, English Department.

Duration: six weeks.

Skill focus: speaking.

Variable: attitudes towards speaking English.

Setting: Faculty of Education in Agelat city , Azzawia university, Libya.

#### 1.7. Definition of Terms

Attitudes: learners' feelings, beliefs, and behavioural tendencies towards speaking English.

Communicative speaking-based program: an instructional intervention emphasizing interaction, fluency, and meaningful communication.

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

## 2. Literature Review

Research consistently confirms that attitudes play a crucial role in language learning success (Gardner, 2010; Dörnyei, 2014). Positive attitudes increase learners' willingness to communicate and reduce speaking anxiety (MacIntyre et al., 2011). Studies on communicative language teaching demonstrate its effectiveness in improving learners' motivation and classroom engagement (Richards, 2006; Savignon, 2018).

This section reviews the theoretical and empirical literature related to attitudes in second language learning, speaking in EFL contexts, and communicative speaking-based instruction. It aims to establish a solid conceptual foundation for the current study and to highlight the research gap it seeks to address.

### 2.1 Attitudes in Second Language Acquisition

Attitude has long been recognized as a central affective variable in second language acquisition, as it reflects learners' feelings, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies towards the target language and its use (Gardner, 2010). Within Gardner's socio-educational model, attitudes towards language learning play a crucial role in shaping learners' motivation, persistence, and overall achievement. Learners who develop positive attitudes are more willing to participate in classroom interaction, take linguistic risks, and engage actively in communicative practices, whereas negative attitudes are often associated with avoidance behaviors, anxiety, and restricted language use (Gardner, 2010; Dörnyei, 2014).

In EFL contexts, attitudes towards speaking English are particularly significant because speaking is considered the most visible and psychologically demanding language skill. Learners' speaking attitudes are influenced by multiple factors, including previous learning experiences, classroom atmosphere, teacher feedback, peer interaction, and sociocultural perceptions of English (MacIntyre et al., 2011). Empirical studies have consistently shown that learners who hold positive attitudes towards speaking English are more likely to initiate communication, tolerate errors, and benefit from corrective feedback, which ultimately contributes to improved

communicative competence (Alrabai, 2015; Derakhshan, Khalili and Beheshti, 2016).

Recent research has further emphasized that attitudes are not fixed personality traits but rather dynamic constructs that can be reshaped through pedagogical intervention. Learner-centered methodologies, supportive classroom environments, and meaningful communicative tasks have been found to gradually transform students' perceptions of speaking English from a threatening activity into a purposeful and empowering practice (Dörnyei, 2014; Savignon, 2018). Consequently, examining instructional approaches that foster positive attitudes towards speaking English has become a major focus in contemporary EFL research.

## 2.2 Speaking English in the EFL University Context

Speaking is widely acknowledged as the most challenging of the four language skills for EFL learners due to its demand for real-time processing, spontaneous language production, and social interaction, all of which often provoke anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (MacIntyre et al., 2011; Horwitz, 2016). Even university students, despite their relatively advanced linguistic knowledge, frequently encounter difficulties in oral expression, particularly in contexts where classroom discourse remains teacher-centered (Alrabai, 2015).

In many Arab and North African EFL settings, including Libya, speaking instruction has traditionally emphasized controlled practice, memorization, and form-focused accuracy. While such approaches may enhance structural competence, they often fail to prepare learners for authentic communication (Derakhshan, Khalili and Beheshti, 2016). Consequently, students may possess adequate grammatical knowledge but still exhibit low confidence, reluctance to speak, and negative attitudes towards oral tasks (Othman & Shuqair, 2013).

Empirical studies in university EFL contexts indicate that learners' negative attitudes towards speaking are commonly linked to fear of making mistakes, limited exposure to communicative activities, lack of opportunities for extended discourse, and insufficient emotional support. These factors

contribute to speaking anxiety, which reinforces avoidance behaviors and negative self-perceptions (Dörnyei, 2014; MacIntyre et al., 2011).

Given the centrality of speaking in academic success and professional development, researchers have increasingly advocated for pedagogical approaches that address not only linguistic competence but also the affective dimensions of speaking. Establishing interactive, low-anxiety classroom environments that encourage negotiation of meaning, opinion expression, and oral collaboration is now recognized as a fundamental goal of university-level EFL instruction (Savignon, 2018; Richards, 2006).

### 2.3 Communicative Language Teaching and Speaking-Based Instruction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as a reaction against traditional structural approaches that prioritized grammatical mastery over meaningful language use. CLT positions language primarily as a tool for communication and emphasizes interaction, authenticity, learner autonomy, and functional competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Within this framework, speaking is not merely a product of learning but a primary medium through which language acquisition occurs.

Communicative speaking-based instruction engages learners in purposeful oral activities, including role-plays, discussions, simulations, problem-solving tasks, and presentations. These activities encourage students to use language to achieve communicative goals, express personal meanings, and interact socially (Savignon, 2018; Ur, 2012). Importantly, communicative tasks are designed to mirror real-life situations, allowing learners to experience English as a living language rather than an abstract system.

From an affective perspective, communicative speaking activities provide several benefits. They promote cooperative learning, reduce excessive teacher control, and shift the focus from error avoidance to meaning negotiation. Such environments significantly lower learners' affective filters, enhance self-confidence, and gradually improve attitudes towards speaking English (Dörnyei, 2014; MacIntyre et al., 2011). When students perceive speaking tasks as meaningful and achievable, their emotional engagement and willingness to communicate increase.

Recent pedagogical models also stress integrating reflective practices, peer feedback, and supportive scaffolding within communicative instruction. These strategies enable learners to monitor progress, appreciate their improvement, and develop more positive self-concepts as competent English speakers (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Alrabai, 2015).

#### 2.4 Attitudes towards Speaking and Communicative Instruction

A growing body of empirical research has investigated the relationship between communicative instruction and learners' attitudes towards speaking English. Numerous experimental and quasi-experimental studies have reported that communicative speaking-based programs not only improve oral performance but also elicit significant positive changes in learners' affective dispositions (Savignon, 2018; Derakhshan, Khalili and Beheshti, 2016).

Research conducted in various university EFL contexts indicates that students exposed to communicative speaking tasks often experience increased enjoyment of speaking activities, reduced anxiety, and enhanced self-confidence (MacIntyre et al., 2011; Alrabai, 2015). These affective improvements are largely attributed to the interactive nature of communicative classrooms, where learners share responsibility for discourse, support one another, and perceive language learning as a collaborative rather than individual endeavor (Dörnyei, 2014; Richards, 2006).

Several studies have emphasized the efficacy of structured speaking programs that incorporate gradual task progression, real-life themes, and supportive feedback mechanisms. Such programs enhance learners' sense of competence and perceived value of speaking English, allowing them to view speaking as a means of meaningful expression rather than solely as a test of accuracy (Savignon, 2018; Ur, 2012).

Research focusing on female EFL learners suggests that communicative and cooperative learning environments can be particularly effective in addressing speaking anxiety and fostering positive attitudes. Creating safe, low-stress spaces for oral interaction, combined with non-threatening assessment methods, empowers female students to participate actively and develop stronger speaking identities (Othman & Shuqair, 2013; MacIntyre et al., 2011).

## 2.5 The Libyan EFL Context and Research Gap

In the Libyan EFL context, research has increasingly recognized the challenges that university students encounter in oral communication. However, much of the existing literature has focused on describing speaking difficulties, error patterns, or general attitudes without implementing structured experimental interventions (Alrabai, 2015; Derakhshan, Khalili and Beheshti, 2016). Studies investigating attitudes towards speaking are often descriptive and provide limited insight into how pedagogical practices can actively influence learners' affective experiences.

Moreover, there remains a noticeable scarcity of experimental research examining the effect of communicative speaking-based programs on female university students' attitudes towards speaking English. Given the sociocultural and educational particularities of the Libyan context, there is a need for locally grounded empirical studies that test instructional models and evaluate their impact on learners' psychological engagement with speaking (Othman & Shuqair, 2013; Savignon, 2018).

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by implementing a six-week communicative speaking-based program and examining its effect on second-year female English majors' attitudes towards speaking English. By adopting a quasi-experimental design, the study moves beyond descriptive approaches and provides evidence-based pedagogical insights to inform EFL teaching practices in Libyan universities.

Experimental research in EFL contexts indicates that speaking-oriented programs based on role-play, discussion, and task-based interaction enhance students' confidence and attitudes (Al Hosni, 2014; Derakhshan et al., 2016; Saito et al., 2018). In Arab EFL settings, anxiety and fear of mistakes remain major obstacles (Alrabai, 2015). However, communicative interventions have been shown to significantly reduce these affective barriers and increase participation (Alharbi, 2020; Othman & Shuqair, 2013).

## 3. Experimental Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control group design. This design was selected because it allows for examining the causal relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable under relatively natural classroom conditions. Two intact groups of third-semester female students majoring in English were assigned as an experimental group and a control group. Both groups were pre-tested to determine their initial attitudes towards speaking English. The experimental group then received the communicative speaking-based program, while the control group followed the regular speaking instruction prescribed in the department syllabus. At the end of the six-week intervention, both groups were post-tested using the same attitude scale.

The independent variable of the study was the communicative speaking-based program, whereas the dependent variable was students' attitudes towards speaking English. The design enabled the researcher to compare changes in attitudes within and between groups and to attribute any statistically significant differences to the instructional intervention.

### 3.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of all third-semester female students majoring in English at a Libyan university during the academic year 2024\_2025. From this population, a sample of 40 students was selected using intact classroom groups to ensure administrative feasibility and ecological validity. The participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group (n = 20) and a control group (n = 20). Both groups were comparable in terms of age, academic background, and previous exposure to speaking courses.

Prior to the experiment, the researcher obtained official approval from the department administration and informed consent from all participants. The students were briefed on the purpose of the study, assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and informed that participation would not affect their academic evaluation.

### 3.3 Variables of the Study

Independent variable: A communicative speaking-based instructional program.

Dependent variable: Students' attitudes towards speaking English.

Controlled variables: instructional time, course content themes, learning environment, and teacher.

Controlling these variables helped ensure that any observed changes in attitudes could be attributed primarily to the implemented program rather than extraneous factors.

### 3.4 Research Instrument

#### 3.4.1 Attitudes towards Speaking English Scale

To measure students' attitudes, a researcher-developed Attitudes towards Speaking English Scale (ASES) was used. The scale consisted of 30 items distributed across four dimensions:

Enjoyment of speaking English

Speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation

Self-confidence and perceived competence

Perceived value of speaking English

The items were constructed based on a review of relevant literature and existing attitude scales. A five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5) was adopted (Likert, 1932).

#### 3.4.2 Validity of the Instrument

Content validity was established through a panel of experts in TEFL and educational psychology, who reviewed the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Based on their feedback, ambiguous statements were modified, and redundant items were eliminated. The final version of the scale reflected comprehensive coverage of the attitudinal constructs related to speaking English.

Construct validity was examined by piloting the instrument with a group of 15 students from the same population but outside the study sample. Item-total correlations were calculated to ensure that each item contributed meaningfully to the overall scale.

#### 3.4.3 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the scale was estimated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The pilot administration yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87, indicating a high level of internal consistency. This value suggested that the scale was

sufficiently reliable for measuring students' attitudes towards speaking English.

### 3.5 Description of the Communicative Speaking-Based Program

The communicative speaking-based program was designed to foster positive attitudes towards speaking English by creating a supportive, interactive, and student-centered learning environment. The program extended over six weeks, with two sessions per week, each lasting approximately 90 minutes.

The instructional content was organized around real-life themes relevant to university students, such as personal experiences, education, social issues, and future aspirations. Each session followed a structured pedagogical sequence: warm-up, language input, guided practice, communicative task, and reflection.

The core speaking activities included role-plays, group discussions, problem-solving tasks, information-gap activities, storytelling, and short oral presentations. Emphasis was placed on fluency, meaning negotiation, and collaborative interaction rather than grammatical accuracy. Error correction was delayed and delivered in a supportive manner to minimize anxiety.

Additionally, reflective components were integrated into the program. Students were encouraged to discuss their speaking experiences, express their feelings towards activities, and monitor their own progress. These reflective practices aimed to raise students' awareness of their improvement and to reinforce positive emotional engagement with speaking.

### 3.6 Procedures of the Study

Administration of the attitudes pre-test to both groups.

Implementation of the communicative speaking-based program for the experimental group over six weeks, while the control group received traditional speaking instruction.

Continuous classroom observation to ensure treatment fidelity.

Administration of the post-test to both groups under the same conditions as the pre-test.

Collection and coding of data for statistical analysis.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and students were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by coding participants' responses. The study posed no physical or psychological risks, and instructional activities were aligned with curricular objectives.

### 3.8 Statistical Treatment

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated to summarize students' attitudes. Independent-samples t-tests were employed to examine differences between the experimental and control groups. Paired-samples t-tests were used to analyze within-group changes. Effect size (Cohen's d) was calculated to determine the magnitude of the intervention's impact. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

## 4. Data Analysis and Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The mean scores and standard deviations of both groups on the pre- and post-administrations of the Attitudes towards Speaking English Scale were calculated. The pre-test results indicated no statistically significant difference between the two groups, suggesting initial equivalence.

The post-test results showed that the experimental group achieved a noticeably higher mean score compared to the control group, indicating more positive attitudes towards speaking English after the intervention.

Table 1. Pre-Test Descriptive Statistics

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	20	2.46	0.35
Control	20	2.44	0.36

Table 2. Post-Test Descriptive Statistics

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	20	4.00	0.40
Control	20	2.75	0.42

### 4.2 Inferential Statistics

An independent-samples t-test conducted on post-test scores revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups ( $t = 3.50$ ,  $p < .05$ ), favoring the experimental group. This result indicated that the communicative speaking-based program had a significant positive effect on students' attitudes towards speaking English.

A paired-samples t-test for the experimental group showed a statistically significant improvement between pre- and post-test scores, whereas the control group's improvement was not statistically significant.

The effect size was calculated using Cohen's  $d$  and yielded a value of 0.85, which represents a large effect. This suggests that the intervention was not only statistically significant but also educationally meaningful.

#### 4.2 Inferential Statistics

Table 3. Independent-Samples t-Test Results (Post-Test)

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig. (p)
Experimental	4.00	0.42	3.50	0.001
Control	2.75	0.44		

Table 4. Paired-Samples t-Test Results (Experimental Group)

Test	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig. (p)
Pre-test	2.46	0.35	7.50	0.000
Post-test	4.00	0.42		

#### 4.3 Interpretation of Results

The statistical findings demonstrate that participation in the communicative speaking-based program led to a significant enhancement in third-semester female students' attitudes towards speaking English. Improvements were particularly noticeable in items related to speaking enjoyment, self-confidence, and reduced anxiety. These results support the research

hypothesis and confirm the effectiveness of communicative speaking instruction in shaping learners' affective orientations.

#### 5. Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that communicative speaking-based instruction can play a crucial role in fostering positive attitudes towards speaking English among Libyan university students. The significant improvement observed in the experimental group aligns with previous studies emphasizing the affective benefits of interactive and learner-centered methodologies. By engaging students in meaningful oral tasks, the program reduced fear of negative evaluation and enhanced their sense of competence. The reflective elements of the program may have further contributed to attitude change by enabling students to recognize their progress and reinterpret speaking as a constructive learning experience. These results highlight the importance of addressing emotional and psychological dimensions alongside linguistic objectives in EFL classrooms.

#### 6. Conclusion

This quasi-experimental study examined the effect of a communicative speaking-based program on third-semester female university students' attitudes towards speaking English in Libya. The results demonstrated that the program significantly improved students' attitudes, confirming that communicative instructional practices can create supportive environments conducive to positive affective development. The study underscores the need to integrate structured communicative speaking activities into university EFL curricula.

#### 7. Recommendations

EFL instructors are encouraged to incorporate communicative speaking tasks regularly.

Teacher training programs should emphasize affective-oriented pedagogy.

Curriculum designers should embed speaking-based communicative components in university courses.

Future research may explore long-term effects and include mixed-method approaches.

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