فعالية التدريس باستخدام اللغة الإنجليزية فقط في تنمية مهارة التحدث لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية :دراسة تجريبية في مدرسة خطوة ثقة الدولية، طرابلس

عبد الرحمن علي اللافي*

كلية الآداب ، جامعة الزاوية ، ليبيا

Email:abedalrhman119966@gmail.com

الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء فعالية التدريس باستخدام اللغة الإنجليزية فقط في تنمية مهارة التحدث لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مدرسة تراست ستيب الدولية في طرابلس .اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج التجريبي باستخدام تصميم الاختبار القبلي والبعدي لقياس أثر الاستخدام الحصري للغة الإنجليزية داخل الصف على الأداء الشفهي للمتعلمين .تكونت عينة الدراسة من 20 طالبًا تلقوا تعليمهم باستخدام اللغة الإنجليزية فقط لمدة ثلاثة أشهر متتالية .تم جمع البيانات من خلال اختبار محادثة طُبّق قبل التجربة وبعدها، وتم تقييم أداء الطلبة باستخدام مقياس تحليلي شمل الطلاقة، والدقة اللغوية، والنطق، واستخدام المفردات .أظهرت النتائج تحسنًا ملحوظًا في مهارة التحدث لدى الطلبة، لا سيما في الطلاقة والثقة أثناء التحدث .وتناقش الدراسة الدلالات التربوية لهذه النتائج وتقدم توصيات للمعلمين والمؤسسات التعليمية.

The Effectiveness of English-Only Instruction on EFL Learners' Speaking Skill: An Experimental Study at Trust Step International School, Tripoli

*Abdulrahman Ali Allafi

MA holder in Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, University of Zawia

Abstract:

This study examines the effectiveness of English-only instruction in enhancing the speaking skills of EFL learners. The research was conducted at

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Trust Step International School in Tripoli and employed an experimental pre-test/post-test design to evaluate the impact of exclusive English use on students' oral performance. A sample of 20 EFL students participated in a three-month instructional intervention delivered entirely in English. Data were collected through standardized speaking tests administered before and after the intervention and evaluated using an analytic speaking rubric measuring fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The results demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in overall speaking performance, with notable gains in fluency, confidence, and communicative effectiveness. These findings highlight the pedagogical value of English-only instruction in promoting active language use and improving oral proficiency. The study also discusses practical implications, implementation challenges, and provides recommendations for teachers, school administrators, and educational institutions seeking to enhance speaking instruction in EFL contexts. Keywords: English-only instruction, Speaking skill development, EFL learners, Oral proficiency, Fluency and accuracy, English as a Foreign Language.

1.1 Introduction

Teaching English as a second or foreign language has long been subject to debate about the role of learners' first language (L1) in the classroom. While some educators support the strategic use of L1 to facilitate comprehension and reduce learner anxiety (Cook, 2001), others argue that maximum exposure to the target language is essential for successful language acquisition and communicative competence (Krashen, 1985; Harmer, 2015). In EFL contexts such as Libya, where learners have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, the instructional language used by teachers plays a critical role in promoting language development. This study examines the effectiveness of an English-only instructional approach in an EFL classroom at Trust Step International School in Tripoli. By adopting an experimental design, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on whether exclusive use of English enhances students' language proficiency.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the researcher's teaching experience in EFL classrooms, it has been observed that many teachers frequently use students' first language (Arabic)

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to explain lessons, give instructions, and manage classroom interaction. Although this practice helps students understand lesson content more quickly, it reduces their opportunities to hear and use English during class time. As a result, many students show weakness in speaking skills, lack confidence when communicating in English, and rely heavily on their native language instead of using the target language. This limited exposure to English may negatively affect the development of their oral proficiency. Furthermore, there is a lack of experimental studies in the Libyan EFL context, particularly at Trust Step International School in Tripoli, that examine whether using English-only instruction can effectively improve students' speaking performance. Therefore, this study attempts to address this problem by investigating the effectiveness of English-only instruction in developing EFL learners' speaking skills.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it contributes experimental evidence to the ongoing debate on English-only instruction in EFL settings. The findings are expected to benefit EFL teachers, curriculum designers, and school administrators by providing insights into effective classroom language policies, particularly in international school contexts in Libya.

1.4 Research Questions

This study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. Does English-only instruction significantly improve EFL students' English proficiency?
2. Which language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) show the greatest improvement after English-only instruction?

1.5 Aim of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of English-only classroom instruction in developing EFL learners' speaking skills at Trust Step International School. More specifically, the study aims to examine the extent to which sustained exposure to English-only instruction over three months improves students' oral performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary use. By adopting an experimental pre-test/post-test design, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the

impact of exclusive target-language use on learners' speaking development in an EFL school context.

2.1 Teaching English as a Second Language

Teaching English as a second or foreign language focuses on developing learners' communicative competence through exposure, interaction, and meaningful use of the language. According to Richards (2006), effective ESL/EFL instruction emphasizes authentic input, learner interaction, and communicative practice. In EFL contexts, the classroom often represents the primary source of English exposure, increasing the importance of instructional language choices.

2.2 English-Only Instruction in the Classroom

English-only instruction refers to the practice of using the target language exclusively for teaching, classroom management, and interaction. Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis supports this approach, emphasizing that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level. Similarly, Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis highlights the importance of meaningful interaction in the target language.

2.3 Advantages of English-Only Instruction

Research suggests several advantages of English-only instruction. It increases students' exposure to the target language, promotes thinking in English, and improves listening and speaking fluency (Ellis, 2008). Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009) argue that English-only classrooms encourage authentic communication and reduce dependency on L1 translation. Additionally, sustained exposure helps learners develop pragmatic competence and pronunciation accuracy.

2.4 Disadvantages and Challenges of English-Only Instruction

Despite its benefits, English-only instruction presents challenges. Beginners may experience anxiety, frustration, and reduced comprehension (Macaro, 2001). Overuse of English without scaffolding may lead to misunderstanding of complex grammatical concepts. Teachers must therefore employ strategies such as visual aids, gestures, simplified language, and repetition to maintain comprehensibility.

2.5 Empirical Studies on English-Only Instruction

Several studies have examined the effects of English-only instruction. Levine (2011) found that students in English-only classrooms demonstrated higher oral proficiency compared to those in bilingual classrooms. Similarly, Littlewood and Yu (2011) reported positive learner attitudes toward increased English use, though they emphasized the need for flexible implementation based on learners' proficiency levels.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted an experimental pre-test/post-test design to examine the effect of English-only instruction on EFL learners' speaking skill. This design is appropriate as it allows for measuring changes in learners' speaking performance before and after the instructional intervention, thereby enabling a clearer assessment of the effectiveness of the treatment.

3.2 Context of the Study

The study was conducted at Trust Step International School in Tripoli, Libya. The school follows an international curriculum and places strong emphasis on English language instruction. English is taught as a core subject, and students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, making the school a suitable context for examining the impact of English-only instruction.

3.3 Participants

The participants consisted of 20 EFL students enrolled at Trust Step International School. The students were of similar age range and comparable English proficiency levels. Convenience sampling was used due to accessibility and the exploratory nature of the study. All participants received the same instructional treatment during the research period.

3.4 Instructional Treatment

The instructional treatment lasted for three consecutive months. During this period, English was used exclusively as the medium of instruction for teaching, classroom management, instructions, feedback, and interaction. No use of the learners' first language was permitted. To support comprehension and reduce anxiety, the teacher employed scaffolding strategies such as visual aids, gestures, repetition, simplified input, modeling, pair work, and

communicative speaking activities including role-plays, discussions, and picture descriptions.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a speaking test administered as both a pre-test and a post-test. The speaking test consisted of three tasks: a short personal interview, a picture description task, and a guided discussion. Students' performance was assessed using an analytic speaking rubric covering four components: fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Each component was rated on a five-point scale.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

To enhance validity, the speaking test tasks were aligned with the instructional objectives and learners' proficiency level. The speaking rubric was adapted from established speaking assessment criteria commonly used in EFL contexts. To improve reliability, consistent scoring procedures were followed, and the same rubric was used for both the pre-test and post-test.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration. Students and their parents were informed about the purpose of the study, and participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and all collected data were used solely for academic research purposes without any negative impact on participants.

4. Findings

This section presents the results of the pre-test and post-test speaking assessments. The findings focus exclusively on students' speaking skill, measured through four key components: fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to compare students' performance before and after the three-month English-only instructional period.
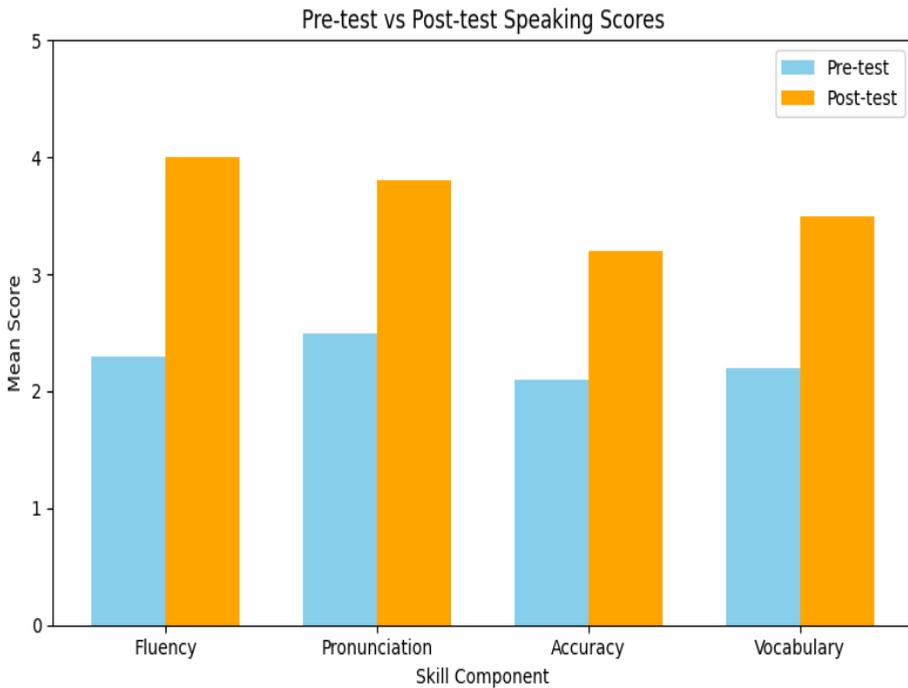
4.1 Overall Speaking Performance

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Speaking Scores (Number of participants=20)

Skill Component	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Improvement (Mean)
Fluency	2.3 (0.5)	4.0 (0.4)	+1.7

Pronunciation	2.5 (0.6)	3.8 (0.5)	+1.3
Accuracy	2.1 (0.7)	3.2 (0.6)	+1.1
Vocabulary	2.2 (0.6)	3.5 (0.5)	+1.3
Overall	2.3 (0.6)	3.6 (0.5)	+1.3

Note: Scores are based on a 5-point speaking rubric (1 = very weak, 5 = excellent).

4.2 Fluency

Fluency demonstrated the highest level of improvement, with an increase of 1.7 points over the three-month period. After sustained exposure to English-only instruction, students were able to speak more confidently and with noticeably fewer pauses. Many learners reported feeling more comfortable thinking and communicating directly in English, rather than relying on translation from their first language. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that immersion environments significantly enhance oral fluency

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(Krashen, 1985; Long, 1996). While the pre-test data indicated frequent hesitation and heavy dependence on L1 translation, these behaviors were largely absent in the post-test, reflecting a clear development in spontaneous speech production.

4.3 Pronunciation

Pronunciation also showed considerable improvement, increasing by 1.3 points. This progress can be attributed to continuous teacher modeling and repeated opportunities for oral practice throughout the intervention. As students were consistently exposed to spoken English, they became more aware of English phonemes, stress patterns, and intonation. These results support the findings of Ellis (2008) and Jenkins (2000), who emphasize the importance of frequent and meaningful oral practice in enhancing pronunciation accuracy among EFL learners.

4.4 Accuracy

Accuracy experienced moderate improvement, with a gain of 1.1 points. Although English-only instruction increased learners' exposure to correct grammatical forms, errors persisted, particularly in the production of complex sentence structures. This suggests that while immersion supports overall language development, grammatical accuracy may require more focused and explicit instruction alongside oral practice. This finding aligns with Macaro's (2001) argument that immersion alone may not be sufficient for achieving high levels of grammatical accuracy.

4.5 Vocabulary

Vocabulary usage improved by 1.3 points, indicating a noticeable expansion in learners' lexical repertoire. During the post-test, students demonstrated the ability to use a wider range of words and expressions, especially when discussing familiar topics. Regular interaction in English, combined with task-based speaking activities, played a key role in facilitating vocabulary acquisition. This finding is supported by Nation (2001) and Richards and Rodgers (2014), who highlight the effectiveness of meaningful communication and task-based learning in developing vocabulary knowledge.

4.6 Overall Speaking Skill

Overall speaking performance showed a substantial improvement, with mean scores increasing from 2.3 in the pre-test to 3.6 in the post-test. The results indicate that fluency benefitted most from English-only immersion, while pronunciation and vocabulary developed through continuous exposure and practice. Accuracy also improved, though to a lesser extent, suggesting the need for supplementary explicit instruction. These findings are in line with previous studies on immersion-based instruction, which report that oral skills—particularly fluency and pronunciation—tend to develop more rapidly than grammatical accuracy (Marx & Moss, 2011; Pica, 1994).

4.7 Additional Observations

In addition to measurable gains in speaking performance, several classroom observations were noted. At the beginning of the intervention, many students exhibited anxiety and hesitation when required to use English exclusively; however, they adapted relatively quickly to the instructional approach. Pair and group activities proved especially effective in encouraging participation among hesitant learners. Furthermore, informal social interaction in English, such as short classroom dialogues and spontaneous discussions, contributed positively to students' confidence and overall speaking development.

4.8 Summary of Findings

The findings demonstrate that English-only instruction had a positive effect on EFL learners' speaking skill. After three months of exclusive English use in the classroom, students were able to express themselves more fluently, pronounce words more accurately, and use a wider range of vocabulary with fewer hesitations. These results suggest that increased exposure to and interaction in English can significantly enhance learners' oral performance.

5.Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that English-only instruction had a positive impact on EFL learners' speaking skill at Trust Step International School. The most notable improvement was observed in fluency, suggesting that sustained exposure to English and increased opportunities for oral interaction encouraged learners to speak more confidently and with fewer hesitations. This finding supports Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of comprehensible input in language acquisition, as well as Long's

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(1996) Interaction Hypothesis, which highlights the importance of meaningful interaction in developing oral proficiency.

Pronunciation also showed considerable improvement, which may be attributed to continuous exposure to spoken English and frequent modeling by the teacher. Regular listening to authentic English input and repeated oral practice likely helped students internalize correct pronunciation patterns. This result aligns with Ellis (2008), who argues that oral practice and exposure are central to phonological development.

Accuracy and vocabulary demonstrated moderate gains. While English-only instruction provided increased exposure to grammatical structures and lexical items, the findings suggest that accuracy and vocabulary development may require more focused and explicit instructional support. This supports Macaro's (2001) view that English-only instruction is most effective when combined with appropriate scaffolding and pedagogical strategies. Overall, the findings indicate that English-only instruction can create a supportive environment for developing speaking skills, particularly fluency and pronunciation. However, initial learner anxiety was observed during the early stages of the intervention, highlighting the importance of gradual implementation and learner support. These findings reinforce the view that English-only instruction should be applied flexibly and pedagogically rather than rigidly.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of English-only instruction in EFL classrooms.

6.1 Recommendations for Teachers

1. EFL teachers are encouraged to adopt English-only instruction gradually, particularly with lower-level learners, to reduce anxiety and build confidence.
2. Teachers should incorporate a variety of communicative speaking activities, such as role-plays, discussions, and pair work, to maximize students' opportunities for oral interaction.
3. Scaffolding strategies, including visual aids, gestures, modeling, and repetition, should be consistently used to support comprehension in English-only classrooms.

4. Teachers should provide regular feedback on students' speaking performance, focusing on fluency, pronunciation, and appropriate vocabulary use.

6.2 Recommendations for Schools and Institutions

1. Schools should provide professional development opportunities to train teachers in effective English-only instructional strategies.
2. Institutions are encouraged to create supportive language policies that promote increased English use while allowing flexibility based on learners' needs.
3. Adequate classroom resources, such as audio-visual materials and speaking-focused learning tools, should be made available to support oral language development

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