

A Program Based on Communicative Language Teaching and Project-Based Learning to Develop Experimental Secondary School Students' EFL Critical Writing, Persuasive Speaking and Collaborative Thinking.

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed to develop the EFL critical writing performance, persuasive speaking, and collaborative learning of experimental secondary stage students through a program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning. To achieve this aim, sixty second-year EFL experimental secondary stage students from Al-Lewaa Formal Secondary School, Al-Agouza Directorate, Giza Governorate, Egypt, were assigned into two groups: thirty students for the experimental group and thirty for the control group. The researcher administered a pre- and a post-test for the purpose of data collecting and analysis. The researcher measured the EFL critical writing and persuasive speaking performance level by designing an EFL critical writing and persuasive speaking test before and after the treatment. A scale was designed to measure the effect of the suggested program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning on the students' collaborative learning. The instruments were administered before and after the treatment. Finally, the results of the study showed that the suggested program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning has a positive effect on developing the EFL critical writing and persuasive speaking performance of formal secondary stage students and on their collaborative thinking..

Keywords: Communicative language teaching, project-based learning, critical writing, persuasive speaking, collaborative thinking.

INTRODUCTION

Both writing and speaking play important roles in expressing one's thoughts and ideas. In the modern world, these skills serve as dual engines of active communication, providing learners the ability to negotiate and navigate ideas and influence the world. The relationship between both skills is harmonious: Critical writing presents the peer-reviewed proofs and evidence and the logical frame. Speaking provides the voice and the call to act. It is essential to use engaging and effective ways to develop these two crucial skills in order to enable the learners to communicate actively with others. In this study, the researcher integrated communicative language teaching with project-based learning to achieve positive results in developing critical writing and persuasive speaking skills.

Critical writing

In his study, (Ataç, 2015) reported that critical writing does not necessarily mean writing about a certain topic negatively; it is simply making sure that you have considered all aspects of the argument. For example, in your reading you may discover different authors with varied opinions and views. It is then the job of a critical writer to take into consideration all of these aspects in their writing to show their awareness of all the sides related to that topic. In addition to information analysis and evaluation, critical writing includes individuals expressing their own ideas, arguments, and analyses in written forms. Hence, it requires meticulous consideration and careful organization of assumptions and arguments, logical structures, justified reasons, and efficient communication of viewpoints (Barnet & Bedau, 1993). Moreover, (Tekin & Aydoğdu, 2024) declare that critical writing stands as a crucial and essential skill for learners, enabling them to articulate their thoughts effectively in formal settings such as assignments and exams. Critical writing helps generate new ideas and a bigger understanding of complex subjects through interacting with available information and criticizing it. Instead of being a mere description of the

subject, it demands a careful analysis of underlying presumptions, arguments against and in favor of these presumptions, and implications for larger society (Graff & Birkenstein, 2014).

Persuasive speaking

Speaking is considered a standard of a person's mastery and understanding of a language (Santoso et al., 2018). Persuasive speaking, yet, remains challenging for non-native English speakers because of problems in organizing and outlining their own thoughts (Lee & Liang, 2012) and communication apprehension (Bastida & Yapo, 2019).

McGeough et al, (2025) declared that language is considered a crucial part of how we think and perceive the world. Its power to affect what we think, feel, and act influences almost all parts of our lives. McGeough continues to emphasize that the words we use influence our personal actions and preferences in so many ways we may not even recognize. Because of this, marketers trying to sell us services and products or politicians trying to earn our support in the elections often carefully choose words designed to make us think and act as they want us to. Persuasion has a pivotal role in almost every aspect where people have to cooperate with each other. Part of sharing—whether a workplace, a home, or a community— is navigating various and sometimes competing desires and needs. *Which idea should we focus on? Where should we go for dinner? Should our city build a new school?* When navigating these questions, we frequently turn to persuasion.

Communicative language teaching

In his study, (Richards, 2006) talked about the rise of the communicative language approach in the 1970s, a reaction to traditional language teaching approaches already began and soon spread worldwide as older approaches such as Situational Language Teaching and Audiolingualism became too old. The grammar -being the center of language learning and teaching- was questioned since it was debated that language ability included much more than just grammatical competence. While grammatical competence was important to produce grammatically correct sentences, the attention was shifted to skills and knowledge necessary to use grammar and other aspects of language properly for various communicative purposes and needs, such as making suggestions, making requests, giving advice, and describing needs and wishes. *Communicative competence* was needed in order to use language communicatively. This was a wider concept than that of grammatical competence, including knowing what to say and how to say it properly based on the context and the situation, other participants, and their intentions and roles.

Richards & Rodgers,(2014) reported that at the level of language theory, Communicative language teaching has a rich theoretical base. Some of the characteristics of this communicative view of language are that:

1. Language is a system for expressing meaning.
2. The main function of language is to facilitate communication and interaction.
3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4. The main aspects of language are not just its grammatical and structural frames, but categories of functional and communicative meaning.

Project-based learning

Kokotsaki et al.,(2016) defined Project-based learning (PBL) is an active learner-centered form of instruction that has many characteristics such as learners' autonomy, communication, constructive investigations, collaboration, goal-setting, and reflection within real-world tasks. It has been explored in various contexts and in multiple phases of schooling, from primary stage to higher education. (Cocco, 2006) also confirmed that project-based learning (PBL) is a learner-centered form of instruction that includes three main constructivist features: context-specific learning, learners engage actively in the process of learning, and they achieve their goals through social engagement and interactions and the sharing of understanding and knowledge.

Condliffe, (Condliffe, 2017) assured that implementing PBL is sometimes challenging. It requires that instructors modify their roles from directors to facilitators of learning and that they allow ambiguity and more movement and noise in the classroom. Teachers should adopt new management skills in the classroom and learn how to encourage their students in learning, using technology when appropriate. Moreover, they must believe that the students are able to learn through this approach. Considering these challenges, professional development -- continuous support and initial training -- is crucial to the successful implementation of project-based learning.

Context of the Problem

As a teacher of English, the researcher observed that EFL experimental secondary school students showed poor performance in EFL critical writing, persuasive speaking and collaborative thinking. The researcher conducted a pilot study with a chosen group of EFL students in order to check the performance of EFL secondary school learners in EFL critical writing, persuasive speaking and collaborative thinking.

Statement of the problem

Secondary school students showed poor performance in EFL critical writing, persuasive speaking and collaborative thinking. The current study attempts to use a program based on integrating communicative language teaching approach and project-based learning to develop EFL critical writing, persuasive speaking and collaborative thinking of secondary school students.

The study questions

The current study aimed to answer the following main question:

What is the effect of a program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning on developing EFL critical writing, persuasive speaking and collaborative thinking of experimental secondary school students?

This main question can be subdivided into the following sub-questions:

What are the necessary critical writing skills required for EFL experimental secondary school students?

To what extent do secondary school students master critical writing performance?

What are the necessary persuasive speaking skills required for EFL experimental secondary school students?

To what extent do secondary school students master persuasive speaking performance?

What are the collaborative thinking dimensions of EFL formal experimental secondary school students?

What are the features of a program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning that can develop EFL critical writing, persuasive speaking performance and collaborative thinking of experimental secondary school students?

What is the effect of the program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning on developing the EFL critical writing performance of experimental secondary school students?

What is the effect of program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning on developing the EFL persuasive speaking of experimental secondary school students?

What is the effect of program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning on developing the EFL collaborative thinking of experimental secondary school students?

Hypotheses of the study

The current study would test the following hypotheses:

There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental and control groups in the post EFL critical writing test results, in favour of the experimental group ones.

There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental and control groups in the post EFL speaking test results, in favour of the experimental group ones.

There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental and control groups in the post EFL collaborative thinking results, in favour of the experimental group ones.

There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group in the pre-post EFL critical writing skills test results favouring the post-administration results.

There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group in the pre-post EFL persuasive speaking skills test results favouring the post-administration results.

There is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group in the pre-post EFL collaborative thinking skills test results favouring the post-administration results.

The program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning has a large positive effect on developing the EFL critical writing performance of the experimental group.

The program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning has a large positive effect on developing the EFL persuasive speaking performance of the experimental group.

The program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning has a large positive effect on developing the collaborative thinking dimensions of the experimental group.

Study design

The descriptive analytical method was used to identify critical writing and persuasive speaking performance level and collaborative thinking of formal secondary stage students and the quasi-experimental to apply the program based on integrating communicative language teaching approach and project-based learning.

Participants of the study

Participants of the study were selected from Al-Lewaa Formal Secondary School at Al-Agouza, Giza. The participants were assigned to an experimental group and a control group. The treatment group was taught according to the suggested program and the control group was taught through the regular method.

Verifying the Hypotheses of the Study

The first hypothesis:

It was hypothesized that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the control group and the experimental group in the post-EFL critical writing skills test results favoring the experimental group. To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used the independent sample t-test to compare the mean score of the control group with the mean score of the experimental group.

Table (1) comparing both groups post-results in EFL critical writing performance

Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig
Total	Experimental	30	23.27	2.20	21.466	58	0.05
	Control	30	13.63	1.10			

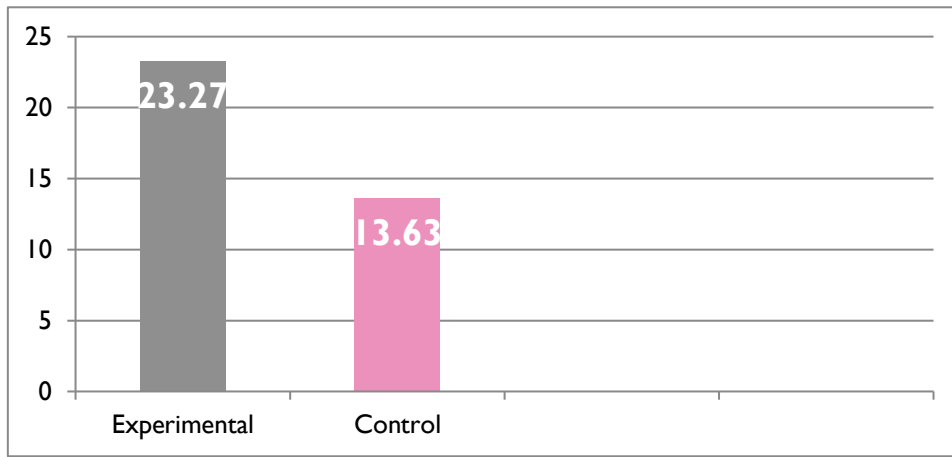


Figure (1) comparing both groups post-results in EFL critical writing performance

Table (1) and figure (1) show that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the control group and the mean score of the experimental group in favor of the experimental group.

The second hypothesis:

It was hypothesized that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the control group and the experimental group in the post-EFL persuasive speaking skills test results favoring the experimental group results. To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used the independent sample t-test to compare the mean score of the control group with the mean score of the experimental group.

Table (2) comparing both groups post-results in EFL persuasive speaking performance

Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig
Total	Experimental	30	24.0	1.144	36.775	58	0.05
	Control	30	12.80	1.214			

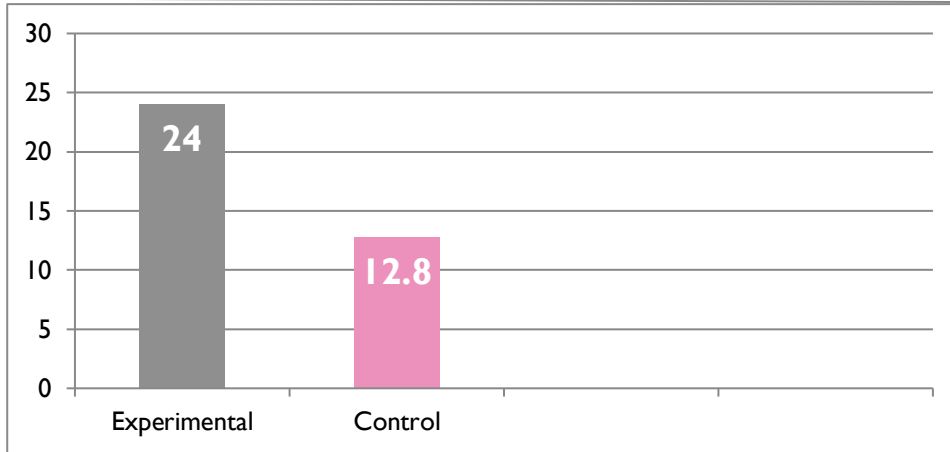


Figure (2) comparing both groups post-results in EFL persuasive speaking performance

It is evident from table (2) and figure (2) that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the control group and the mean score of the experimental group, favoring the experimental group.

The third hypothesis:

It was hypothesized that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the control group and the experimental group in the post-EFL collaborative thinking skills test results favoring the experimental group. To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used the independent sample t-test to compare the mean score of the control group with the mean score of the experimental group.

Table (3) comparing both groups post-results in EFL collaborative thinking performance

Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	sig
Total	Experimental	30	2.650	0.600	5.332	58	0.05
	control	30	1.700	0.810			

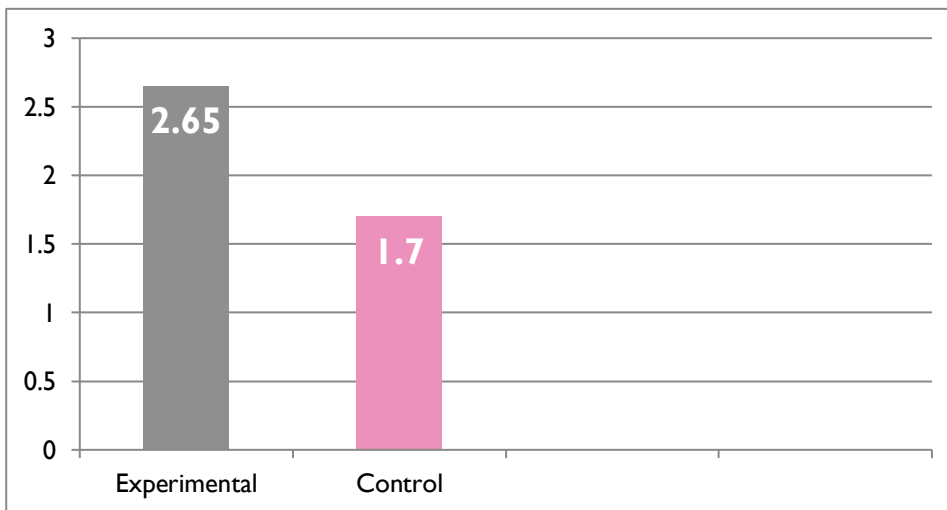


Figure (3) comparing both groups post-results in EFL collaborative thinking performance

Table (3) and figure (3) show that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the control group and the mean score of the experimental group in favor of the experimental group.

The fourth hypothesis:

It was hypothesized that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group in

the pre-post EFL critical writing skills test results, favoring the post-administration results. To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used the independent sample t-test to compare the mean score of the experimental group in the pre- and post-administration of the critical writing test results.

Table (4) comparing the pre- to post-results in EFL critical writing performance of the experimental group

Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig
Total	Pre	30	13.37	1.19	30661	29	0.05
	Post	30	23.27	2.20			

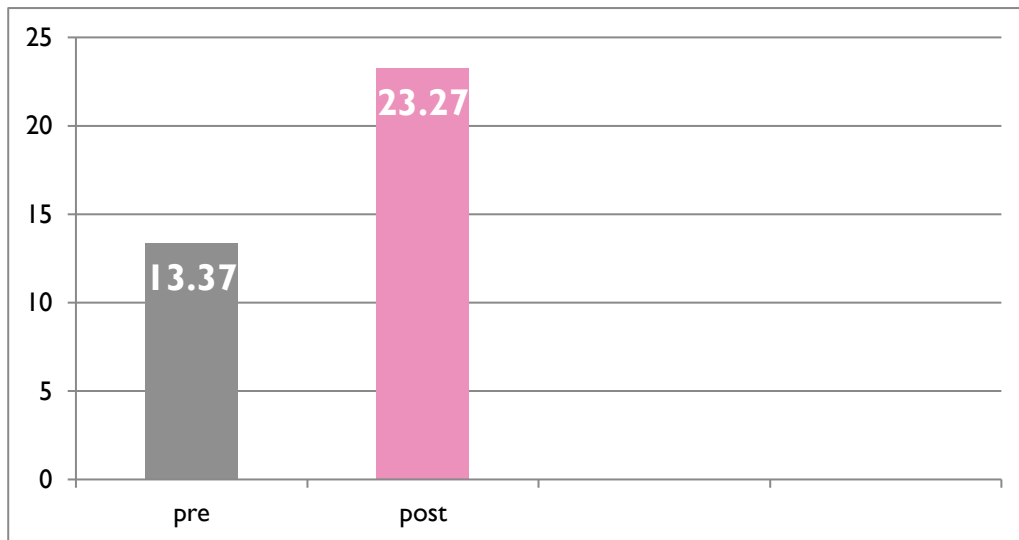


Figure (4) comparing the pre- to post-results in EFL critical writing performance of the experimental group

It is evident from table 4 that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group in the pre- and post-administration of the critical writing test results, favoring the post-administration results.

The fifth hypothesis:

It was hypothesized that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group in the pre-post EFL persuasive speaking skills test results, favoring the post-administration results. To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used the independent sample t-test to compare the mean score of the experimental group in the pre- and post-administration of the persuasive speaking test results.

Table (5) comparing the pre- to post-results in EFL persuasive speaking performance of the experimental group

Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig
Total	Pre	30	12.80	1.58	61.55	29	0.05
	Post	30	24.00	1.14			

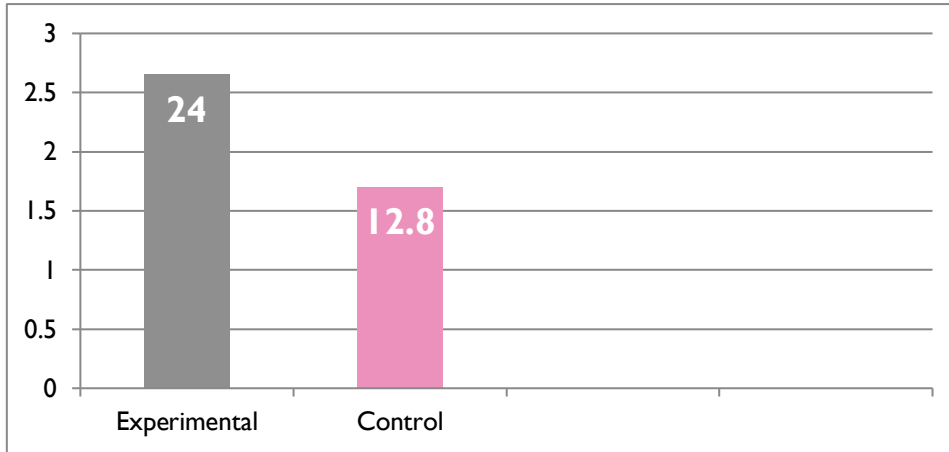


Figure (5) comparing the pre- to post-results in EFL persuasive speaking performance of the experimental group

It is evident from table 5 that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group in the pre- and post-administration of the critical writing test results, favoring the post-administration results.

The sixth hypothesis:

It was hypothesized that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group in the pre-post EFL collaborative thinking skills test results, favoring the post-administration results. To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used the independent sample t-test to compare the mean score of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of the collaborative thinking test results.

Table (6) comparing the pre- to post-results in EFL collaborative thinking performance of the experimental group

Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig
Total	Pre	30	1.72	0.81	5.41	29	0.05
	Post	30	2.65	0.61			

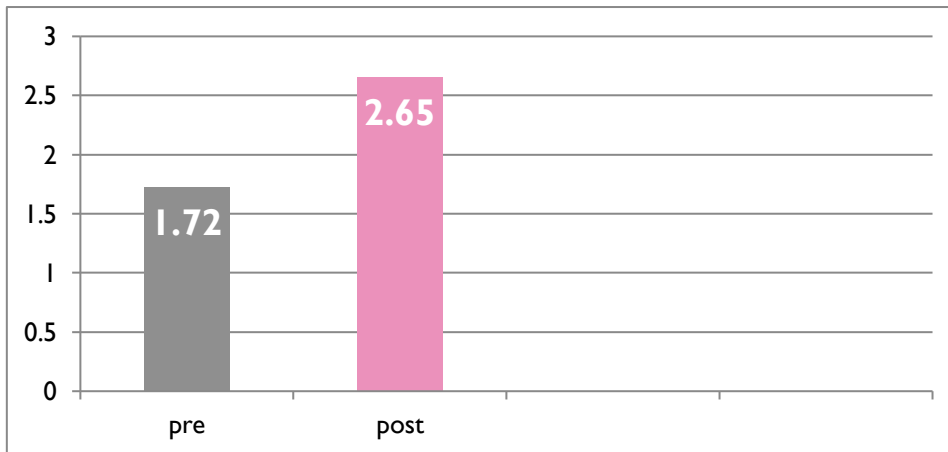


Figure (6) comparing the pre- to post-results in EFL collaborative thinking performance of the experimental group.

It is evident from table (6) and figure (6) that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group in the pre- and post-administration of the collaborative thinking test results, favoring the post-administration results.

Study results:

Results of the pre- and post-EFL critical writing, persuasive speaking, and collaborative thinking tests proved that the program based on integrating communicative language teaching and project-based learning has positive effects on EFL secondary school students' performance in EFL critical writing, persuasive speaking, and collaborative thinking. This

conclusion was reached through the big difference between the mean score of the control group that received traditional teaching methods and the experimental group that was taught via the suggested program.

Recommendations:

In light of the current study, the researcher proposes the following recommendations:

Critical writing and persuasive speaking should be given greater importance and emphasis as acts of communication. Students should be provided with chances to share and discuss their writings and conversations with teachers or peers.

EFL teachers are recommended to use the suggested program based on communicative language teaching and project-based learning after being trained to use it.

It would be beneficial for EFL teachers to be aware of the different aspects and benefits of the suggested program-based on communicative language teaching and project based learning in providing an enjoyable and attractive environment for teaching critical writing and persuasive speaking to EFL secondary school students and developing their critical thinking performance.

It would be beneficial for EFL teachers to participate in the training courses, which enable them to be more familiar and effective with new strategies in teaching critical writing and persuasive speaking of EFL secondary school students and developing students' collaborative thinking.

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