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**Suggested Program Based on Self-learning for Developing English
Teachers' Oral Communication Skills in the Primary Stage**

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of M.A. in Education
(TEFL)

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental study aims to investigate the effect of using a suggested program based on self-learning for developing oral communication skills for primary stage teachers in Egypt. The participants of the study consisted of 30 language schools' teachers in the primary stage. The experiment lasted for nearly two months in the second semester of the school year 2016/2017. The instruments of the study were an observation checklist for determining the teachers' oral communication skills and a checklist of the oral communication skills before the proposed program based on self-learning. Reliability and validity of the instruments were verified. The findings of the study revealed that the suggested self-learning program had a positive effect on EFL teachers' oral communication skills, they speak confidently with no distracting hesitations, with correct inflections. Based on the findings, a set of recommendations and suggestions for further research are highlighted

Key words: self-learning, oral communication, EFL teachers, professional development.

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Chapter One

Background of the Problem

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Introduction

Language is a tool for people to use in order to communicate with each other. People encode sounds made up of sets of components. Language for communication to take place, this requires three interrelated parts: sender, receiver, and a means of transmission. Responding to the growing need to learn English, English has become a more universal language than before. English has recently taught as a foreign language and it has introduced at the primary stage. The primary stage teachers require more than having a degree of education in order to recognize their pupils' needs and getting the class involved in the learning process.

With the notion in mind that language is not a goal, but a tool, it has been suggested that the main purpose of language learning is to enhance teachers' willingness to communicate in the target language (Chen, 2013, p. 46). For many EFL teachers, oral communication apprehension is one of the most anxiety producing factors because of the lack of interaction in the classroom. Most teachers face oral English challenges due to having little oral English training. Meanwhile, with the development of the Egyptian education and globalization, EFL teachers are in the need to develop their oral communicative competence so that they can face both academic and career requirements.

Teaching experts call on the professional development to enable teachers to use a variety of skills in order to reach to a wide range of learners. Omar (2014) mentioned three interrelated functions of language as: ideational function, which helps people gain experience; interpersonal function, which helps people interact with each other and shape their attitudes; and textual function, which helps people, use words in coherent contexts (p.43). Oral communication skills are the most important skills for EFL teachers in the

primary stage to develop. That requires recognizing the new trends of teaching approaches Ahmed (2017). Most EFL teachers in Egypt are trying to develop their oral communicative competence. Some of them are forced to focus on written tests, causing them to ignore oral English. Therefore, some of them become passive teachers in their oral English development.

The notion of continuing education and lifelong learning is an important activity for self-development in the information age. In this era, higher education is regarded primarily as an agent for professional development, economic development, skills acquisition, and global competitiveness (Murray, 2015). After years of intensive studies in EFL, EFL teachers' lack of oral communication skills has been identified as a common problem among Egyptian teachers. They indeed have limited opportunity to engage in oral communication classrooms. According to Song (2008, p.13) teacher-dominant, one-way classroom communication patterns and passive EFL learning styles are common factors shared by the learners. Expressing opinions in classroom is considered an intention to challenge the teacher's knowledge and show their knowledge to the teacher and the class.

Research in oral communication suggests that those teachers who develop their oral communication skills (listening, speaking, paraphrasing, etc.) help improve their overall learning in other academic areas. Wong (2015, p.3) explained that teachers often have a decision making cycle throughout teaching. Teaching using oral communication skills in foreign language context is not an easy task, especially for the teacher who has heavy burden to choose the suitable method of teaching oral activities. The ability of English teachers to communicate naturally in English is one of the long term goals that teachers would like to achieve in class. There is a gap between what English teachers teach at school and how the language is used in everyday life. Therefore, due attention should be paid to oral communication skills.

The aim of teaching English at the primary stage is to help pupils use the foreign language skills and oral communication skills in particular. According to the directives of the Ministry of Education (2016-2017), the objectives of teaching English in the learning cycles, especially in primary stage, were intended to involve the pupils in practicing language inside and outside the classrooms. This direction would be successful by well prepared, qualified and trained teachers to prepare them for their real life learning situations. In spite of the importance of oral communication skills learning in the professional development process, many teachers could find oral communication skills as a problem.

Several studies (Armstrong, 2010; Collins, 2006; Loyens, Magda, & Rikers, 2008; Greveson & Spencer 2005) have indicated that the use of self- learning greatly improves teachers' idea of personal responsibility for learning that can impact lives. A loosely organized series of events constitute the process of self-directed learning, which is a natural part of the psychological and social development that defines adulthood (Murray, 2015, p. 32). Thus, self-learning is an attractive and complex concept that emphasizes teachers' capacity, the potential for behavior change, and self-evaluation. Learning is a personal process since; teachers must take ownership of what they should learn, when they should learn, and how they should learn.

One of the most frequent tools of communication used is oral language, which is employed by primary stage teachers. The nature of language teaching problems today have brought to focus the need for better means of translating ideas, feelings and understanding through face to face contacts with others in real life situations. Skilled teachers spend much time seeking out the needs of the pupils for success in some of oral communication skills depending on the effectiveness of speech. In addition, Brinkerhoff (2014, p. 29) mentioned

that teachers quality play an important role in their pupils' achievement outcomes.

Context of the problem

The researcher observed the problems the teachers face through her work as a teacher of English in primary stage. It becomes evident to the researcher that most of primary stage teachers find it is easy to warm up their pupils for the lesson in Arabic and making a presentation for the new lesson in Arabic too. Some of them could not encourage pupils to speak in English or raise questions based on speaking. Therefore, most teachers do not achieve the expected level of oral communication. From all that preceding, it becomes clear that improving oral communication skills is not an easy process as it needs a lot of effort. Therefore; there is a need for effective ways for enhancing the oral communication skills among primary stage teachers.

The previous study of Al Maghrebi (2014) focused on enhancing oral communication reducing anxiety among EFL learners using authentic assessment. The findings of the study revealed the integrating authentic assessment into EFL classrooms can enhance oral communication and reduce anxiety among FL learners. Omar (2014) showed that teaching and learning English is still unsatisfactory, and teachers encounter challenges in teaching English in schools. The result is that teachers know about English, but they lack the use of English in communicative situations with native English speakers. Alrowayeh (2017) found that there were factors which related to teachers that affect oral communication in EFL classroom. Hadeef (2016) mentioned that learning how to communicate needs intensive practice which is consider the main obstacle for teachers since requires appropriate conditions. Ali (2016) found that limited English proficiency for EFL teachers is the most important challenges that provide the traditional foundations of the field. Ragab (2010) highlighted that there are risks contributing to a deficit view of the learner,

particularly in English-speaking contexts. Ahmed (2017) mentioned that oral communication has been generally undervalued and misinterpreted as involving only drills and memorization of dialogues. Thus, EFL classrooms have lack of motivation and interest towards language and lack of opportunity to use the language inside the classroom. Ali (2010) stressed that although oral communication is a very important skill of the foreign language learning, communicative competence is completely neglected. Although communication should be a prim goal of English instruction programs in faculties of Education, this affects and influences the learning of the four skills.

These studies attributed the problem to many factors: some are related to the teachers themselves; these include teachers' limited background knowledge, lack of motivation to get professional development. it is easy for many teachers to use traditional ways for teaching and they find it is an extra effort to use new approaches for teaching, etc. Other factors are related to the pupils, as they suffer from negative evaluation in the classroom, lack of motivation to try to communicate orally in English.

Statement of the problem

Despite all the serious changes that were carried out by the Ministry of Education in the field of teaching English in Egypt, the outcome is unable to meet the goal of successful oral communication. Some EFL teachers continue to show weak abilities in oral communication.

Thus, the present study tries to investigate the effect of using a program based on self-learning on developing oral communication skills.

Research questions

This study attempted to answer the following main question:

"What is the effectiveness of the suggested program based on self-learning in developing oral communication skills for the language schools' teachers in primary stage in Egypt?"