

Effectiveness of Action-Oriented-Approach in Developing First Preparatory-Stage Students' English Grammatical Skills in the Spoken Language

A Research in Curriculum & EFL Instruction

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2024

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Abstract

The current study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of the Action-Oriented Approach in developing first preparatory-stage students' English grammatical skills in the Spoken Language. Sixty first-year preparatory stage students were randomly chosen from a Governmental Language School in Cairo Governate, in the school year 2022- 2023. (30 students for the experimental and 30 students for the control group). The main method used is the Quasi-Experimental Design of a pre/post-test and an analytical rubric. The experimental group was exposed to the AOA for two months while the control group received regular instruction. The results of the study approved that there was a statistically significant difference at 0.05 level between the mean scores of the experimental and the control group students in the post-administration of the test, in favor of the experimental group in overall grammatical skills of Spoken Language as well as in each grammatical skill separately. Consequently, it was recommended that the Action-Oriented Approach must be used in developing the first preparatory-stage students' grammatical skills in the Spoken Language. It was also recommended to investigate its effectiveness in developing pitch speech skills and farewell speech skills. Keywords: Action-Oriented Approach (AOA), English Grammatical Skills in Spoken Language.

الملخص باللغة العربية

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى دراسة فاعلية النهج الموجه نحو العمل في تطوير المهارات النحوية للغة الانجليزية المنطوقة لدى تلاميذ الصف الأول الإعدادي. تم اختيار ستين تلميذاً من الصف الأول الإعدادي بشكلٍ عشوائي من إحدى المدراس التجريبية من محافظة القاهرة في العام الدراسي ٢٠٢٢-٢٠٢٣. (٣٠ تلميذاً للمجموعة التجريبية، و٣٠ تلميذاً للمجموعة الضابطة). وقد تم استخدام التصميم شبه التجريبي للاختبار القبلي/بعدي. كما تم تدريس المهارات النحوية للغة المنطوقة للمجموعة التجريبية باستخدام النهج الموجه نحو العمل لمدة شهرين بينما تم تدريس المجموعة الضابطة بالطريقة المعتادة. وأثبتت نتائج الدراسة عن وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية عند مستوى دلالة ٠.٠٥ بين متوسطات درجات المجموعة التجريبية والضابطة في الاختبار البعدي، لصالح المجموعة التجريبية في المهارات النحوية للغة المنطوقة بشكلٍ عام وفي كل مهارة على حدة. وفي ضوء هذه النتائج توصي الدراسة باستخدام النهج الموجه نحو العمل في تنمية المهارات النحوية للغة المنطوقة لتلاميذ الصف الأول الإعدادي، كما توصي باستخدامها لتنمية مهارات التحدث التسويقية ومهارات خطاب الوداع.

Introduction

The contemporary global world requirements add many new obstacles for people to develop different skills in different domains to be part of the modern unified community. Knowing the English language, developing communicative skills, improving grammatical skills, and evolving near-native accents are all essential requirements of today's society. Bogantes and Miranda (2021) expressed that English in today's world is considered Lingua Franca, which means the language of understanding common global communication. So, English learners must maintain their identity to be the key to reaching global society. Therefore, the need for modern teaching methods that match these recent changes increases. The Action-Oriented Approach demands connecting the educational systems and societies by preparing learners to be plurilingual and pluricultural.

As communication between people from different countries increased, the necessity for a common language increased, too. This communication cannot be just written because most people's contact is done through speaking. As a result, corpus researchers took as a duty the process of observing, noting, and gathering the rules people use through speaking especially in English. Darmawan et al (2020) state that the most important skill of the four language skills, that plays a great role in global communication is speaking.

The research problem is identified in that the first-stage preparatory students suffer from weaknesses in using grammatical skills in spoken language. Thus, the current study attempts to use the Action-Oriented Approach in developing first preparatory-stage students' English grammatical skills in the spoken language.

The current study aims at examining the effectiveness of using the Action-Oriented Approach in developing first preparatory-stage students' English grammatical skills in the spoken language.

The current research answers the following questions:

- What are the English grammatical skills in spoken language which suit first-preparatory-stage students?
- What is the effectiveness of using AOA in developing first-preparatory-stage students' grammatical skills in spoken language?

The current research focuses on the following hypothesis:

- There isn't a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the controlled group students in the pre-administration of the Spoken English Grammatical Skills test.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the controlled group students in the post-administration of the overall English grammatical skills in the spoken-language test.

The significance of the research could be summarized as:

- Developing the first preparatory-stage students' English grammatical skills in spoken language.
- Shedding light on the importance of AOA and the CEFR-CV to be part of the educational system.
- Expanding the final educational goals to include preparing students to be social agents to be able to interact with people from different cultures.

The delimitations of the Study could be summarized as:

- The English grammatical skills in spoken language were identified based on their appropriateness with the first preparatory-stage students.

- Sixty first-year preparatory stage students were randomly chosen from a Governmental Language School in Cairo Governate, in the school year 2022– 2023. (30 students for the experimental and 30 students for the control group).

The main terms used in the research are defined as follows:

The Action–Oriented Approach

The Council of Europe (2020) defines the new AOA as seeing learners as "social agents", and the teaching–learning process as directed by actions, and learners' needs. The Action–Oriented Approach makes an important development in the four language skills as they are not seen as the core of the teaching–learning process. Instead, it focuses on reception, production, interaction, and mediation as the four language activities for learners to practice their communicative language competence. The Council of Europe (2020) states that AOA sees learners as social agents and language as a vehicle of communication not just as a studied subject. AOA is considered as a guideline for students to move from beginning level to professional level with the help of their teachers and more progressing students.

The Grammatical Skills in Spoken Language

Bakka (2018) defines grammatical skills in spoken language as descriptive rules that explain the way grammatical rules work in society based on the local situational contexts and more broadly the global situational contexts. Paterson et al (2020) see them as "the elements of natural conversation that have always existed but have always been excluded from the traditional grammar syllabus." They cannot be considered the same as slang language because they have unique features that control the way it is used. (p.6) The grammatical skills of spoken language are skills that don't follow the rules of standard written grammar as they are controlled by the spoken language. What native speakers say is correct even if it doesn't follow the standard grammatical rules.

Review of Literature and Related Studies:

The Action-Oriented Approach

The action-oriented approach (AOA) is mentioned for the first time in the common European framework of reference for languages (CEFR) (2001) and its Companion Volume (2020). The Action-Oriented Approach sees learners as social agents and involves them in the learning process to deal with otherness (environment) and develop competencies. The final goal of The Action-Oriented Approach is to develop social agents able to use and deal with English rather than just communicate. (Acar, 2020a)

According to Mattheoudakis et al. (2021), at the beginning of the 21st century, many political developments happened in Europe which led to the necessity of developing a new educational system considering the multilingual and multicultural needs. Therefore, the Council of Europe was established in 1949 to support European identity and unity and to establish democratic citizenship.

This new educational view started when Van Ek (1975) published the first Threshold Level document 'The Threshold Level for Modern Language Learning by Adults' for the Council of Europe". Hence the first development of the Threshold Level Document resulted in the appearance of CEFR (2001) and its companion volume (2018). The appearance of CEFR introduced a conversion from the communicative approach to the Action-Oriented Approach (AOA).

The AOA is derived from the works of Dewey, Decroly, and Freinet. Freinet's principles lead to increasing students' motivation and autonomy while Dewey's works support democracy and communication. (Oppl, 2017; Ulrich, 2016) So, AOA is based on projects, autonomy, and learners' interests. It has flexibility in application. Learners share their own points of view in the teaching-learning process, work together and introduce final projects.

The first step is to identify which activity the teaching-learning process aims to focus on. Each activity represents both comprehension and expression sides. (Beacco et al, 2016) Then, teachers should know why their students want to learn this language and tame the scenarios to

their students' ambitions. These activities are used in domains learners choose according to their objectives of acquiring a language. These domains are public, personal, educational, and occupational. The four activities are formulated into certain real-life tasks that can be simple or complex depending on the conditions. (Council of Europe, 2020)

Now, teachers are to choose from the CEFR descriptors and build teacher-checklist and students-checklist. The next step is to break the chosen scenario into realistic tasks and to ask questions such as Who does what? AOA encompasses two types of assessment: Formative and Summative Assessments. The former is used during the application of the scenario to assess each learner's progress. The summative Assessment is done at the end of the process to assess its effectiveness.

The Grammar of Spoken Language

Askhatova (2020) sees the grammar of spoken language as the structure that helps learners to use expressive vocabulary to form proper sentences. So, they can overcome the challenges like speaking anxiety and then produce spontaneous speech. The grammar of spoken language is the unique model of grammar that breaks the strict model of structural grammatical sentences by adding more flexibility. Paterson et al (2020) tried to collect and summarize the main skills of the grammar of Spoken Language in an easy way to learn. Some of the skills mentioned are Asking short questions for everyday conversations, Using common structures in spoken English, Modifying meaning with different adverbs, and Naming skills in spoken English.

Asking short questions for everyday conversations is the first skill mentioned in chapter one. Native speakers tend to use just the end part of questions or ask questions with prepositions to shorten their speech. This skill helps to make speech smoother and faster. Shortened form of questions is usually used in different situations to ask about food, news, messages, and chances. Questions with prepositions are used in situations related to making suggestions about food, drink, and leisure activities. They are also used to ask about others' conditions.

Using Common Structures in Spoken English is the second skill mentioned in chapter two. This skill refers to some short structures and

word patterns used again and again in spoken language. These structures are considered the springboard for native sentences. Native speakers use these structures to make their speech less direct or to convey different meanings like giving advice. These structures include I don't know, I think, I don't think, etc.

Modifying Meaning with Different Adverbs is the third skill mentioned in chapter three. This skill is used by native speakers to show different attitudes in different situations. Many adverbs are used by native speakers to soften their language when having different opinions than their listeners, or when wanting someone to do something for them. These adverbs can convey different meanings such as surprising, apologizing, approval, or clarifying the importance of something.

Naming Skills in Spoken English is the fourth skill mentioned in chapter four. Native speakers use three main ways to address people, their first name, titles like Mr., or general words like guys. The choice of the way to be used is concentrated on what is acceptable in different social circles, and societies. They use this skill to address people from different jobs, to show respect, to be friendly, or to express different feelings such as love, hate, anger, etc.

The Relationship between the AOA and the grammatical skills in spoken language

The CEFR-CV sees learners as social agents and language as a vehicle of communication rather than a subject to be studied. (Council of Europe, 2020) Because of the CEFR-CV flexibility, it can be used in many different areas of education. The new approach of AOA means to develop students' competencies in diverse areas, foster their autonomy, and prepare them to be democratic citizens. This can be done via the transition from developing communicators of the communicative approach to developing social agents of AOA. (Acar, 2021)

Students are to be able to live, work, and interact with English native speakers. Thus, they need to know about the grammar natives use in their daily conversations otherwise their language may seem bookish and classical. AOA represents a shifting point from linear fashion syllabuses based on pre-determined notions, and structures towards real-life oriented syllabuses based on real-life tasks, students-

needs analysis, and purposely selected notions. (Council of Europe, 2018)

During the last decades, language teaching approaches developed a lot till the appearance of the Action-Oriented Approach which focuses on teaching language skills, especially speaking. AOA, based on the CEFR-CV principles, focuses on preparing learners to be social agents which means to be able not only to communicate and transfer information but also to interact with English natives and to use the English language in real-life fields not just in the educational ones. Consequently, AOA is connected to the grammatical skills in spoken language because learning the grammar natives use in their spoken language will ease the process of speaking in a near-native way and then interacting with natives.

Research Problem

The problem of the current research was identified as the weakness of first preparatory-stage students' English grammar of Spoken Language skills. The existence of the problem was emphasized through the following steps:

The Pilot Study

To prove the existence of the problem, the researcher conducted a grammar of spoken-language test for a group of first preparatory-stage students (30 students) in the school year 2021-2022. The results of the test showed that 27 students got less than the average score on grammatical skills in the spoken-language test.

The experience of the researcher

Considering the researcher's experience as an English teacher, it was observed that the first preparatory-stage students face difficulty in using the grammatical skills in spoken language and their speech is bookish and far from the native way of speaking. This is obvious from their performance in class and from the lack of attention given to their grammatical skills in the English spoken language.

The Previous Studies

Many previous studies proved the existence of the problem of the research. Wahyuningsih and Afandi, 2020, in their research aimed at identifying the main reasons for students' deficiency in speaking skills at the State Islamic Institute of Kudus. The researchers used a descriptive qualitative approach to collect data through semi-structured interviews, observation, and focus group discussions. The sample of the research consisted of 30 students, and 4 lecturers in the speaking courses. The analysis of data revealed that the main problems faced by students at the Department of English language education were students' lack of vocabulary, lack of knowledge of the grammar used to speak, and lack of authentic materials used by students inside and outside classes. Moreover, the English Curriculum wasn't mended to suit the teaching and practices of speaking skills.

The researchers assured the necessity to develop the English curriculum to enrich students' knowledge of Spoken English by giving them a chance to know more vocabulary and grammar of speaking. Students should also be allowed to use English authentically inside and outside classes. The English curriculum must be integrated with social media and technology to develop students' culture, experience, and knowledge of the English native society.

In research by Semakdji, 2015, titled the place of the grammatical skills in spoken language in the teaching and learning of speaking the case of second-year students at the University of Constantine. The researcher tested how many grammatical skills in spoken language are used by students to develop their natural speech. The researcher also focused on the worth of teaching the grammatical skills in spoken language from professors' points of view and if they merge the grammatical skills in spoken language in their teaching.

The sample of the research consisted of 68 students divided into a control group and an experimental group with an average of 34 students each. The sample of professors consisted of 41 profs, at the Department of Letters and English, University of Constantine. The researcher used a pre-post-test control experimental group design with students and a Teachers' Questionnaire with the professors.

The findings of the research revealed that most students aren't aware of the grammatical skills in spoken language aspects. However, teaching

grammatical skills in spoken language has a positive impact on developing students' natural conversation. The findings of the questionnaire revealed that half of the professors based on standard grammar in teaching conversations, despite their awareness of the importance of integrating grammar of the spoken language.

Method and variables of the study

Design of the Study

The main method used is the Quasi-Experimental Design of a pre/post-test and an analytical rubric. Two groups were randomly chosen for the experimentation of the study (30 for the experimental group and 30 for the control group).

Variables of the Study

- The independent variable: using the Action-Oriented Approach.
- The dependent variable: developing first preparatory-stage students' grammatical skills in the spoken language.

Participants of the Study

Sixty first-year preparatory stage students were randomly chosen from Al-Mustakbal Distinctive Governmental Language School, in Cairo Governate, in the school year 2022- 2023. (30 students for the experimental and 30 students for the control group). Their ages range from 13 to 14 years old. The 1st preparatory stage has four English periods per week which gives the researcher enough time to do the experiment. The t-test revealed that there is no statistically significant difference at the level of significance (0.05) between responses for students of the experimental group and control group in pre-application to the total test of the grammatical skills in spoken language.

Research Instruments

The English Grammatical Skills in Spoken Language Checklist

The checklist was designed by the researcher to determine the English grammatical skills in spoken language that suits the 1st preparatory-stage students' English level. The checklist is designed by

the researcher based on the Handbook of Spoken Grammar, by Paterson et al, 2020, and on the CEFR (2020) descriptors.

The Aim of the Checklist

The English grammatical–skills–in–spoken–language checklist was designed by the researcher to determine the main skills appropriate for the 1st preparatory–stage students.

The Construction of the Checklist

The checklist consists of the following skills:

- Asking Short Questions for Everyday Conversations Skill.
- Using Common Structures in Spoken English Skill.
- Modifying Meaning with Different Adverbs Skill.
- Naming Skills in Spoken English Skill.

Validity of the checklist

The checklist was submitted to the panel of jury specialized in the field of teaching English as a foreign language to determine the degree of importance and appropriateness of the chosen English grammatical skills for 1st preparatory–stage students. The jury members approved the checklist after doing the following modifications:

- Modifying the name of the skills to Asking Short Questions for Everyday Conversations, Using common structures in spoken English, Modifying meaning with different adverbs, and Naming skills in spoken English.
- Modifying the statements of some skills by deleting some parts that describe the minimum acceptable performance.

English Grammatical Skills in Spoken Language Test

The Purpose of the Test

The test aims at measuring the 1st preparatory–stage students' English grammatical skills in spoken language.

The Description of the Test

The test includes four questions for each grammatical skill.

Piloting the Test

Thirty students were randomly chosen for the 1st preparatory-stage students at Al-Mustakbal Distinctive Governmental Language School, in Cairo Governate. They didn't belong to the two groups of the study and were excluded from the experiment.

Timing the Test

It was determined that ten minutes is sufficient time for students to answer the test. The following formula was used to calculate the estimated time.

$$\text{Test Time} = \frac{\text{The time taken by the pilot students to do the test}}$$

The total number of the students

$$\text{Test Time: } 300 \div 30 = 10 \text{ minutes}$$

Test Instructions

The test was submitted to the control and the experimental groups in the same conditions, and it was conducted individually. The administration approval was taken, and the place preparation was considered before applying for the test.

Test Reliability

The researcher used this method to calculate the reliability of the test by applying it to a sample of (30) students. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the value of the Cronbach's Alpha for the overall test was (0.839). This value indicates that the test has an appropriate degree of reliability.

The reliability coefficient of the test was also calculated using the split-half method, the scores in the test were divided into two halves, and then the simple correlation coefficients (Pearson) were extracted between the scores of the two halves and then corrected using the equation (Spearman-Brown). The value of reliability using Pearson's

coefficient = 0.723 and the value of reliability coefficient after correction (Spearman–Brown) = 0.889. These values indicate that the test has an appropriate degree of reliability.

Test Validity

The test was submitted to the panel of jury specialized in teaching English as a foreign language to evaluate the statements of the test. The panel of jury evaluated the appropriateness of the test to develop students' grammatical skills in spoken language and how much the test matches students' levels. The members of the jury approved the validity of the test, but they suggested some modifications:

- The test is long for the first preparatory–stage students, so, it needs to be shorter.
- The test must be divided into different parts, not different topics.
- It must be clarified more that students need to answer the questions orally.

Pre–Testing

The experimental and the control groups were assessed to the same test under the same conditions before the administration of the English Grammatical Skills in Spoken–language test to determine students' level at the grammatical skills.

Post–Testing

The same test was administrated to examine the effectiveness of the proposed Action–Oriented Approach in developing first preparatory–stage students' English grammatical skills in the spoken language.

Sessions Based on the Action–Oriented Approach

Sessions Aim and description.

- The aim of the suggested framework is to develop the 1st preparatory–stage students' English grammatical skills in spoken language by using the AOA.

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- The suggested units were applied on experimental group students in the first semester of the school year (2022–2023).
- The suggested framework includes: the students' English book, teachers' guide, AOA scenario, teacher-oriented checklist to monitor students' progress, students-oriented assessing cards for assessing themselves and their partners.
- The AOA scenario controls the teaching–learning process by setting the last goals students are trying to reach. Students' success in using the English grammatical skills in spoken language by acting out the scenario represents the last goal of the process.
- Procedures of the process
- Randomly choosing 60 1st preparatory–stage students and dividing them equally into experimental and control groups, 30 students each.
- Pre-administration of the English grammatical skills in spoken–language test to prove their equivalence in the English grammatical skills in spoken language so that any progress in the experimental group skills will be due to the applying of AOA.
- Teaching the English grammatical skills in spoken language to the experimental group by using the AOA and the control group by using the regular instructional method.
- Post-administration of the test on both the experimental and the control groups.
- Collecting and analyzing the obtained data.
- Presenting and discussing the results of the study.
- Introducing recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted by using the statistical package for social science (SPSS). Both descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and t-test were used in data analysis. The t-test was used to calculate the differences in the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the English grammatical skills in spoken language.

The Study Results

Verifying the Hypothesis of the research

The First Hypothesis. There isn't a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the controlled group students in the pre-administration of the English grammatical skills in spoken-language test.

Table (1)

Variables	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig
Total Skills	Experimental Group	30	33.60	5.117	58	0.023	0.982
	Control Group	30	33.63	5.974			

The previous table showed the value of (t) for the significance of the difference between the average scores of the experimental group and control group students in Total skills of the English grammatical skills in spoken-language test, which reached (0.023) and the significance level is (0.982) which is greater than the level of significance (0.05); Thus, there is no statistically significant difference at the level of significance (0.05) between responses for students of experimental group and control group in pre- application to total test of the English grammatical skills in spoken language.

The Second Hypothesis. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the controlled group students in the post-administration of the overall English grammatical skills in the spoken-language test.

To test the validity of this hypothesis, the (t) test was employed on two independent groups the experimental students' group and the control students' group in the post-test to total skills of the Spoken English Grammatical Skills test. The results are shown in the following table (2):

Table (2)

the value of the "t" test and the level of significance for the difference between the experimental group and control group in the post-test of the Spoken English Grammatical Skills test.

Variable		Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig
Spoken English Grammatical Skills	Total of skills	Experimental Group	30	91.10	4.428	58	41.805	0.000
		Control Group	30	34.67	5.921			

To verify the second hypothesis, the researcher compared statistically the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups on the post administrations of the overall English grammatical skills in spoken-language test. The "t" value was (41.805) and the significance level is (0.000) which is lower than the level of significance (0.05); thus, there is a statistically significant difference at the level of significance (0.05) between responses for students of the experimental group and control group in post- application to total skills of the English grammatical skills in spoken-language test in favor of the experimental group.

Discussion of the Results

The results of the study show the positive effect of the Action-Oriented Approach in developing the 1st preparatory-stage students' English grammatical skills in spoken language. This positive effect clearly appeared in the differences between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the pre/post administration of the English grammatical skills in spoken-language test. There is no

statistically significant difference at the level of significance (0.05) between responses for students of the experimental and the control groups in pre-application to the total test while there is a statistically significant difference at the level of significance (0.05) between their responses in the total test. The current study proves the effectiveness of the AOA in making students' speaking more natural and smoother. The AOA scenario helps students to practice their speaking skills in like-natural situations. By depending on the rules of the grammar of the spoken language, students can develop their speaking and they are also more confident and less hesitant.

What helps in the success of the current study is the cooperation of the school administration and English teachers. They help and guide the researcher to complete the experiment. In addition, students were so active and shared their opinions about how to make the sessions more active and enjoyable.

Recommendations

Regarding the current study results, the following recommendations are suggested:

Investigating the AOA effectiveness in developing pitch speech skills.

Assessing the AOA impact on developing farewell speech skills.

Questioning AOA effectiveness in developing students' writing skills.

Suggesting using the AOA and the CEFR principles in teaching younger pupils.

Using the AOA scenario in developing students' critical thinking skills.

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