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# Exploring Motivational Dynamics: The Role of Oral Activities in Improving Arab Students' Learning of English

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**Abstract.** This study explores the impact of oral activities on Arab students' motivation to enhance their English language skills, underscoring the pivotal role of teachers in cultivating enthusiasm for learning. Using a descriptive/explanatory case study design, the research assesses the current state of English language instruction in Arab schools, with a specific focus on Saudi Arabia. Diverse strategies and methods are proposed to boost student motivation and alleviate anxiety in language learning, advocating for communicative language instruction, learner-centric environments and innovative assessment approaches. The study introduces a real-life eclectic technique to bridge the gap between teaching, assessment and real-world application. Despite time constraints, teacher training and policy support are deemed essential for effective integration. The research recommends a comprehensive approach to enhance motivation and proficiency in English, aiming for a more impactful learning experience in Arab schools. To address generalizability, the study proposes solutions applicable to the majority of Arab classrooms, while acknowledging the need to consider unique characteristics and variations within each educational system for broader applicability. The study also suggests directions for future research.

**Keywords:** Learners' motivation; motivational dynamics; speaking activities; communicative proficiency; oral evaluation

## 1. Introduction

Language learners' motivation has emerged as a focal point of concern for educators worldwide, and with particular emphasis on students in the Arab world (Elashhab, 2020). In many schools and universities, teachers, curriculum developers, and administrators grapple with the persistent challenge of students

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exhibiting suboptimal performance in language learning due to motivational deficits (Albeshri, 2021). While English language instructors demonstrate proficiency in employing effective teaching methodologies within their classrooms, a notable gap is in terms of explicit directives, guidelines and the requisite skills and training to inspire and sustain student motivation. Moreover, these educators often encounter a dearth of logistical support from decision-makers regarding strategies to address motivational issues among students and avenues for appropriate support (Hennebry-Leung & Xiao, 2023).

Motivation constitutes a pivotal and indispensable facet in the pedagogical domain (Brewer & Burgess, 2005; Bureau et al, 2022; Steinmayr et al, 2019; Toste et al, 2020). In the context of acquiring a new language, the learner's intrinsic desire and imperative need to master the language is instrumental for successful learning outcomes. Specifically, within the realm of English language acquisition, students who manifest high levels of motivation and commitment to learning exhibit markedly enhanced proficiency and accelerated language production compared to their less motivated counterparts (Bao & Liu, 2021; Cook, 2001). Essentially, the nexus between motivation and learning is pronounced, with advancements in the latter contingent upon an individual's fervent desire and motivation to engage in the learning process (Ellis, 1994). Consequently, the overarching significance of motivation as a determinant factor in the broader spectrum of learning, particularly in the realm of languages, is incontrovertible.

The exploration of students' motivation stands as a significant central point within the research milieu of second language learning and teaching (Simmons & Page, 2010). Researchers hailing from diverse fields, specializations, and national backgrounds have delved into the intricacies of students' motivation and attitudes across varied contexts, encompassing ESL, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and English as an Additional Language (Ahmed et al., 2015; Alshenqeeti, 2018).

The available literature on educational approaches that focus on motivation is somewhat restricted. Various inquiries have scrutinized the efficacy of motivational strategies within educational settings. Dörnyei and Csizér (1998), Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), and Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) conducted surveys among EFL teachers and students to ascertain the relative significance of motivational approaches in motivating students. In her research, Howard (2023), focused on the significance of incorporating motivation strategies for teaching (TMS) in the context of Second Language Acquisition in the United Arab Emirates. Following the definition of motivation and the introduction of different TMS frameworks, Howard determined that there is a significant correlation between teachers' employment of motivational strategies and the students' demonstrated interest in actively participating with the language within the classroom setting. She highlighted the essential role of intrinsic motivation as a crucial factor for EFL learners, emphasizing that practitioners can seemingly cultivate intrinsic motivation through the implementation of TMSs.

Moskovsky et al. (2009, 2013) substantiated the positive influence of motivational approaches in EFL classrooms through compelling evidence. Notably, the study demonstrated that the implementation of motivational strategies resulted in favorable shifts in student motivation. Alrabai (2014) investigated the

motivational practices of EFL teachers and examined the corresponding beliefs of students regarding motivation in language classrooms in his research. The study discerned infrequent use of motivational techniques in English language classes in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, it underscored the neglect of pivotal elements in students' motivation, such as mitigating language anxiety and fostering learner autonomy, within teachers' instructional practices.

## **2. Research Design**

In this paper, we used a combination of descriptive and explanatory case study research design. Descriptive case studies aim to provide a detailed and accurate account of a specific event, group or situation. Explanatory case studies attempt to go beyond description to explore possible causes, mechanisms, or reasons behind the situation under examination (Gerring, 2017; Merriam, & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2009). In examining the motivation of Arab students to learn English, our primary focus is on teachers and students in the educational system of Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the specific population consists of Saudi students and teachers. While the potential for generalizability extends to other Arab countries, it is essential to recognize that each country harbors its own distinct characteristics, issues, realities and challenges.

This paper seeks to analyze and address key inquiries related to English language learning:

- Which teaching methods have Arab students experienced, which of these methods have shown success, and how can they be improved with innovative approaches?
- What skills are crucial for teachers to possess in order to motivate their students to learn the English language?
- What communicative exercises and activities can be implemented to enhance the teaching and evaluation of oral skills?
- What recommendations can be offered to teachers to foster increased motivation among students for learning the English language?

In the following sections, this paper attempts to address these questions, focusing on the context of Arab countries with a specific emphasis on Saudi Arabia.

## **3. Contextual Framework of the Study**

The inception of English language education in the Arabian Peninsula dates back to early twentieth century, when it was first introduced in middle and high schools (Al-Shammary, 1984; Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017). Presently, the English language curriculum is generally integrated into the educational system, commencing from the first grade of elementary school, and extending through grade 12 in secondary education (Ahmed, 2020; Al Mukhallafi, 2019). The Saudi Ministry of Education (KSA MoE) has implemented a program to teach English starting from the first grade of primary school in the initial semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. This initiative aims to enhance educational outcomes, fostering the early development of students to equip them for the future and align with the objectives of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 (KSA MoE 2021).

At the tertiary level, students are mandated to undergo a preparatory stage, encompassing several units of English instruction, as a prerequisite to specializations in national universities and technical colleges. Moreover, mastery of English is compulsory for the completion of higher education in specific disciplines such as information technology, sciences and medicine, where English typically serves as the primary medium of instruction (Jendli & AlBarakati, 2019; Troudi & Jendli, 2011).

Despite its formal institutionalization, English occupies a somewhat peripheral role in Saudi Arabian society, for instance, largely overshadowed by the prevalent use of the native Arabic language in daily activities (Al-Maini, 2006). In contrast to some neighboring nations in the Arabian Gulf, the societal preeminence of Arabic has contributed to a paucity of opportunities for English language use beyond the confines of the educational setting (Al-Otaibi, 2004).

Several Gulf Arab governments have progressively acknowledged the pivotal role of the English language, mandating its inclusion as a compulsory subject in both schools and universities, and instigating comprehensive transformations in the English language curriculum (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Despite these concerted efforts, the actual proficiency levels attained in English language acquisition fall short of anticipated benchmarks. A notable deficiency is in that a sizable proportion of Arab students exhibit limitations in their ability to effectively communicate in English, possessing only rudimentary productive skills.

According to Mitchell and Alfuraih (2017), there are two primary factors contributing to the suboptimal English language proficiency among students in Saudi Arabia. First, notwithstanding the assignment of homework by teachers, a considerable number of students fail to complete these tasks. Second, there is a perceived need for an expanded allocation of English language classes, with the majority of surveyed teachers advocating for exposure to English instruction in the early years. The study also discerns potential inadequacies in teachers' competencies, underscoring the necessity for targeted skill enhancement initiatives to enhance their pedagogical skills (p. 323). Notably, the survey respondents express a collective sentiment that additional English proficiency classes, coupled with the requisite assessment and testing associated with such training, are imperative for their professional advancement (p. 324).

The various obstacles collectively contribute to the observed lack of motivation among Arab students when it comes to learning English. Consequently, it becomes crucial to provide language teachers with proper training and guidance on incorporating motivational strategies into their everyday teaching methodologies (Alrabai, 2014).

The instructional methods and teaching strategies used by educators play a pivotal role in motivating students. Certain English language instructors prioritize the instruction of reading and writing skills over speaking and listening skills in their classrooms. Therefore, there is a clear imperative for an increased focus on improving speaking and listening skills at all educational levels.

The majority of English curricula and local textbooks inadequately address the cultivation and evaluation of oral communication competence. Even when such activities are included in textbooks, teachers and instructors often require additional support to effectively integrate them into their classrooms (Alsulami, 2021). Consequently, despite the willingness of some English language educators to adopt contemporary communicative teaching and assessment methodologies, including the assessment of oral competence, a deficiency in appropriate training impedes their implementation.

#### **4. English Language Education**

The present state of English language instruction and acquisition in many Arab public schools, and in Saudi Arabia specifically, is illustrated by the observations presented in this section.

English is presented as a passive subject rather than an active one. The English language classroom lacks substantial opportunities for interaction. Students engage in oral communication solely in response to teacher-directed questions related to assigned textbook readings and when completing grammar tasks upon the teacher's request, if any (Alsowat, 2012).

In addition, oral communication proficiency assessment constitutes a small part of the overall course grade, with the majority allocated to paper-based exams. Given the absence of a formal oral examination, instructors often need to devise methods for assigning oral communication grades. Some teachers employ criteria such as sporadic class participation, engagement in group activities and performance in pair work to evaluate oral skills. Frequently, the oral grade serves as a remedial measure or a way to salvage a student's lower scores in written exams.

Furthermore, the curriculum in public schools is standardized for all students, with textbooks being authorized and made available by the MoE. Although teachers have the flexibility to include extra materials, constraints such as limited time and opportunities, coupled with the necessity to cover the prescribed curriculum from the textbook, often hinder the incorporation of additional resources. These textbooks generally rarely encourage oral interaction and lack activities and exercises dedicated to practicing or evaluating oral skills. In fact, the content covered in secondary school English classes tends to lack a communicative approach, as the primary emphasis is placed on preparing students for midterm and final examinations, which predominantly evaluate their ability to memorize information.

English teachers' training and preparation often lean toward a more traditional approach, reinforcing students' preconceptions about learning EFL. Nevertheless, there has been a noticeable change in recent years, marked by heightened endeavors to enhance the professional development of English teachers in the sphere of communicative teaching methods. These initiatives manifest as workshops conducted within conferences hosted by local EFL organizations, which play an active role in the region. Additionally, professional development is fostered through lectures and seminars conducted in partnership with national universities.

The culmination of these factors in public high schools usually leads to widespread low confidence among students regarding their communicative abilities when students complete their high school education (Getie & Popescu, 2020). Additionally, there is a general lack of motivation to learn spoken English, with a notable inclination toward memorizing English content in a non-communicative manner. A substantial number of students face difficulties in grasping and reproducing English sounds, often revealing interference from their native language, i.e. Arabic, when attempting to speak English. This interference is prominently reflected in their pronunciation, indicative of limited practice and use of the English language. Furthermore, certain students face challenges in articulating their thoughts and opinions with creativity in English, placing them in an unfavorable position within university environments.

Therefore, students are predominantly exposed to grammar rules, some vocabulary and mainly written information, lacking important exposure to real-life communicative scenarios. One of the assumptions guiding English education presupposes that an understanding of the structure of written language will facilitate the production or comprehension of spoken language (de Jong & Harper, 2005). This approach overlooks essential language acquisition principles, negating the necessity for a consciously constructed process to transform knowledge of English grammar rules into active communicative proficiency (Gilfert & Croker, 1999; Hoque, 2017). Consequently, secondary school graduates typically have inadequate communicative skills, limited exposure to communicative techniques and insufficient understanding of how to enhance communication proficiency.

Hence, the prolonged use of traditional teaching methods centered on grammar translation has played a role in shaping students' preferences for learning. Despite being ineffective, these preferences have become deeply ingrained, impacting their views on adequate teaching, and learning approaches (Çiftci, 2021; Gamage, 2020; Horwitz, 1985, 1988). Consequently, students often start university or new workplaces with limited oral skills and an increased perception of this weakness. This hampers their motivation and impedes any progress. As per Finch and Taeduck (2002), the convictions that students hold regarding the nature of language acquisition might pose a significant obstacle, potentially influencing their attitudes and behaviors toward language learning.

## **5. Communicative Proficiency**

This word encompasses the multifaceted skills necessary for proficient language use. Actually, effective language proficiency involves not only how to organize knowledge, but also how to handle knowledge logically. Communicative competence refers to a person's ability to use a language efficiently and correctly in real communication. It goes beyond mere grammatical and lexical knowledge and includes the skills needed to comprehend and produce meaningful and contextually appropriate messages. Communicative competence involves not only linguistic proficiency but also an understanding of the social and cultural aspects of language use. This concept considers the ability to interpret and use language in various situations, taking into account factors such as context, purpose and the expectations of the communicative act. In essence, communicative competence encompasses both the knowledge of the language

and the ability to use that knowledge in a socially and culturally appropriate manner for effective communication.

## **6. Communicative Language Instruction**

The approach to language teaching centered around communication has risen to prominence and assumed a leading role in the past two decades. Defining the concept of communicative proficiency has been a subject of research exploration. As per Babayev (2023) communicative language teaching is grounded in the principle that language is a means of communication. The primary objective in the classroom is to cultivate learners' communicative proficiency. Consequently, students are prompted to speak in English while interacting during class.

In essence, communicative proficiency encompasses a spectrum of skills crucial for effective language use. Grammatical competence involves the practical application of grammar rules in written and verbal contexts. Sociolinguistic proficiency revolves around understanding the norms of language conventions, encompassing aspects such as navigating conversation discourse, 'taking turns,' and employing appropriate language in diverse situational contexts. Additionally, strategic competence plays a pivotal role, encompassing the proficiency to employ suitable spoken and unspoken communication strategies. This multifaceted approach to communicative ability acknowledges the nuanced interplay of grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies in achieving effective communication (Babayev, 2023).

Within the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework, the paramount emphasis is placed on conveying meaning. To foster improved communication among learners, the approach advocates a tolerance for errors, coupled with limited overt teaching of language rules. Pair and group activities are favored within CLT, aiming to optimize each student's interaction time with peers. The methodology incorporates information exchange activities, critical thinking tasks, and role-playing, primarily executed during pair and group work (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

Another characteristic of CLT is its personalized approach. Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) underscore the unique attributes of each student, encompassing individual interests, learning styles, needs and goals. In light of this, it is advised that teachers endeavor to create instructional materials that align with the demonstrated needs and interests of their students. This learner-centric perspective aims to enhance engagement and effectiveness in language learning within the CLT framework.

Within the CLT approach, there is a notable emphasis on incorporating authentic materials into language instruction (Alharbi, 2022). The approach also encourages offering students opportunities to address authentic communicative requirements in realistic settings. The intention is to help learners in cultivating strategies to understand language as it is naturally used in its natural context (Canale & Swain, 1980).

## **7. Embracing Communicative Oral Exercises and Activities**

Examining speaking skills has emerged as a crucial aspect in language testing, particularly as speaking ability has gained prominence in language instruction, notably with the rise of communicative language techniques (Hartley & Spring,

1999; Nakamura, 1993). According to Bostwick and Gakuen (1995), evaluation serves as a tool to enhance lessons and empower learners to be in charge of their own educational process. This objective is achievable when assessment methods are communicative and authentic.

Evaluation methods can be categorized along a spectrum, ranging from traditional to more communicative approaches. The common assessment method of using paper-based tests typically involves rote memorization and strict rule application, and often yields one unequivocally right answer. The benefits of this assessment include student familiarity, explicit and relatively easy grading, and straightforward interpretation of results. However, its drawbacks include a competitive grading atmosphere among students and a lack of consideration for real communicative ability.

On the other hand, communicative assessment involves conversations and dialogues between teachers and students, conducted either at the end of each class or solely at the end of the semester. This regular evaluation offers a momentary glimpse into the student's oral communication skills. The benefits of the approach include students using their speaking skills in a genuine context, fostering their communication abilities and creating a stronger teacher-student bond. Nevertheless, the disadvantages include the time-consuming nature of individual interviews and the difficulty of quantifying results (Gilfert & Croker, 1999).

In fact, communicative oral assessment goes beyond testing students' knowledge of rules; it focuses on their ability to apply these rules in real-life situations. The aim of communicative oral assessment is to recreate authentic scenarios where students can demonstrate their communicative abilities as realistically as possible. This approach prioritizes appropriateness over the mere formation of grammatically correct sentences, emphasizing the understanding of the speaker's communicative intent. Recognizing the significance of context, both the authenticity of the task and the genuineness of the context are deemed crucial. During oral assessments, teachers should strive to mirror the interactional characteristics of everyday speech and evaluate the application of pragmatic skills (Khaleghi et al., 2020).

By adopting this approach of cultivating communication methods through dialogue, evaluation becomes adaptable to a teacher's unique teaching style and context. Rather than being norm-based, where groups are evaluated in comparison to each other along a bell curve, the assessment should be criterion-based. This involves comparing each student to a pre-established standard, fostering motivation, and encouraging students to strive for improvement to meet that standard (Salamondra, 2021).

While some skeptical researchers continue to criticize the theoretical foundation of communicative oral assessment, language teachers are increasingly recognizing its positive benefits. This innovative form of assessment aids teachers in developing communicative classroom proficiency and bridges the gap between teaching, assessment and actual application. Communicative tests, being valuable instruments, contribute to developing important components of the curriculum and to examining future needs by striving to reflect realistic situations. This type of assessment may prove beneficial as students can finally perceive the link



between the actual lesson and realistic scenarios, fostering increased motivation to apply English skills beyond the classroom (Khaleghi et al., 2020).

Proposing a different approach, Sánchez-Élez et al (2013) advocate for students to actively participate in creating their own tests. This innovative method, as the authors argue, becomes an effective means to tap into diverse student perceptions, fostering collaborative learning and building upon the collective knowledge of the group. The suggested process involves students, guided by the teacher, generating questions for the test. The main idea is to make the student feel part of the evaluation process by including students' questions in the evaluation exams. Subsequently, in pairs, they engage in questioning each other during class, and later, with new partners, they revisit these questions to solidify their understanding. Evaluation, whether conducted by peers or the teacher, encompasses assessing the accuracy of answers and the suitability and precision of their language (Shaaban, 2001).

Although these suggestions appear reasonable and potentially valuable, implementing these ideas may pose challenges contingent upon the social and academic contexts in which they are applied. In order to include students in such an important procedure, the students should acquire skills such as critical thinking, decision-making and maturity, elements that may not always be available when needed.

## **8. Innovative Oral Exercises and Assessment Approaches**

Establishing clear guidelines is essential for the effective management of an oral-based classroom activity. Teachers should be able to deliver instructions promptly and interrupt activities when necessary to provide clarification. Maintaining a native-like tone while speaking is crucial as it helps students acclimate to an appropriate speaking level, fostering a natural imitation of the teacher's vocal tone.

In oral activities, a significant percentage of students may be speaking simultaneously, necessitating teachers to be mindful of the overall noise level. Before engaging in any oral activity, it is imperative to teach students the relevant processes, including forming groups and arranging furniture in ways that would be conducive to conversation.

A proficient teacher assigns specific names to each instruction and ensures that routines are pre-taught to the students. Depending on the students' English proficiency and age, the teaching and explanation of routines may span an hour or extend over a couple of sessions. This foundational training in formation routines is an investment that significantly contributes to the success of oral activities. Properly trained students in formation routines lead to more successful outcomes in oral activities.

*Reading aloud:* Using reading as a method for assessing pronunciation can be effective, especially if students are given a brief period to review the text beforehand. Texts that are typically read aloud in real-life situations tend to yield better results. Hughes (1989) cautioned about employing this method for evaluating speaking proficiency, emphasizing the importance of the teacher being

vigilant about the distinctions and interference between "reading" and "speaking." It is crucial to note that this activity lacks interaction.

*Story retelling:* This oral exercise involves a certain level of creativity. After silently reading a story, telling it again can be both engaging and developmental for the student. The focus is primarily on speaking rather than the accuracy of the summary. It is worth noting that, similar to other speaking activities, there is limited interaction in this process.

*Visual aids:* Incorporating visual aids in speaking interactions can be advantageous, particularly in the initial phases of language learning (Pierce & O'Malley, 1992). In this scenario, a student might be prompted to select pictures to discuss, with the teacher guiding the process by posing questions that require the use of relevant vocabulary. Additionally, diverse types of pictures can serve distinct purposes:

- *Describing pictures:* Single pictures, photographs and posters can be employed for straightforward descriptions by students. It is essential for students to exercise describing pictures of items, people and events before facing such a test. Encouraging the learners to imagine and make educated guesses about the content of the picture is beneficial.
- *Comparing pictures:* Engaging students in the description of two closely related images can be a captivating activity. Each student is assigned a picture and encouraged to discuss it, revealing the distinctions between the two images without either student having sight of the other picture. This activity not only stimulates formal descriptions but also initiates conversational dynamics (Felder & Brent, 2005; Heaton, 1990).

Other methods of using pictures as visual prompts for oral assessment include picture sequences, where students narrate a story, and pictures featuring speech bubbles, prompting students to infer what the individuals in the image might be saying. These interactive activities for oral assessment provide valuable information for the student while engaging with the teacher.

*Role-playing:* This casual exercise merges oral expression with physical engagement. Students, irrespective of age, experience a sense of ease and motivation when evaluated through this method, particularly if the activity fosters collaborative learning and is perceived as an enjoyable learning experience. Role-playing can serve as an enjoyable form of informal assessment, proving effective within a curriculum based on content (Wandira & Efendi, 2023).

*Individual consultations:* Engaging in student-teacher conferences, using well-structured interviews, serves as a valuable informal approach to evaluating a student's language learning journey. These conferences and interviews create a platform for personalized interactions, allowing the teacher to gain insights into a student's communication proficiency, emotional and social well-being, attention span, attitudes, learning speed, strengths and limitations (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Smith, 1996). It is essential to ensure that the conference maintains a supportive environment and avoids adopting an interrogative tone.

Focused observations enhance the effectiveness of individual conferences, whether conducted within the classroom environment, such as during cooperative learning groups, or beyond the class setting, such as in the school courtyard. To that end, Gomez et al. (1996) devised an observational tool tailored for evaluating learners' communication skills in authentic language contexts. This instrument emphasizes seven key language abilities: comprehensibility to others; furnishing essential information for the listener; minimal hesitations; eagerness to engage in conversations; spontaneous utterances; precision (in grammar; usage; and vocabulary); and the development of topics.

*Oral presentations* play a crucial role in the assessment of students' oral performance, offering a comprehensive overview of their abilities. Additionally, presentations provide valuable insights into students' interests, work habits and organizational skills. The scope of presentations encompasses various meaningful activities, such as reading poems, plays and dialogues.

*Memory games* constitute another innovative method which is highly effective when the teacher adeptly elevates and expands them to a more advanced level. A commonly known oral activity involves the class forming a circle to collectively craft a story. The teacher initiates the narrative with an opening line, such as "*Last night we went to the park.*" Subsequently, each student, starting from the right, echoes the teacher's statement and contributes an additional sentence, e.g., "*Last night I went to the park. I met my friend,*" thus, creating a collaborative storytelling experience. This activity serves as a valuable drill, particularly for reinforcing a specific verb tense. To enhance the challenge, the teacher provides corrections, asking subsequent students to avoid errors in their contributions. This prompts all students to listen attentively and commit each sentence to memory. The complexity of the activity can be further heightened based on the class's proficiency level. For instance, if students are familiar with the past tense but commonly make pronoun errors, the teacher can introduce the challenge of modifying pronouns with each repeated sentence. This additional layer of complexity ensures a more engaging and demanding experience tailored to the class's language proficiency.

*Self-assessment* is another effective approach, where students actively participate in evaluating their own linguistic abilities, identifying weaknesses and strengths and tracking improvements. Despite initial reservations, self-assessment, particularly through oral reports, can yield accurate judgments and contribute to a holistic understanding of students' language proficiency (McNamara & Deane, 1995).

*The real-life eclectic technique (RLET)* is a synthesis of various assessment methods designed to enhance and evaluate students' oral communication skills. This tool incorporates elements of play-acting, imitating and demonstration skills, striking a balance between the communicative approach and more traditional methods. Particularly suited to the learning styles of Arab students, who have been exposed to traditional assessment approaches, the *RLET* is expected to resonate with their familiarity with such formats. Its less formal nature, reliance on real-life situations and emphasis on communicative competence make it an engaging and informative experience for students.

The *RLET* involves the enactment of realistic conversations, where actors remake events from everyday life. In contrast to the language lab, *RLET* uses authentic conversations of fluent speakers in the target language. This method provides students with exposure to real-life language samples, particularly in situations where complete language immersion is not feasible, as is often the case in local contexts. Students engage in rehearsals of these interaction scenarios by speaking together with tape recordings, using transcription as a tool for memory. Following Hopper's (1993) perspective, the performers strive to imitate the vocalizations, pauses and emphases found in the recordings, fostering an enhanced understanding of detail and nuance in their own daily interactions. Following a sufficient period of rehearsal (typically once a week, spanning 2 to 4 weeks) using audio-recordings and transcripts, students systematically progress to recreating the same conversation without the transcript and subsequently without the recording (over an additional 3 weeks). The subsequent phase involves assessing students' oral abilities during the activity. The *RLET* functions as a valuable instructional tool for the second language, employing drills, training and meticulous consideration of pronunciation and grammar. Concurrently, the central aim of *RLET* is to enhance communicative competence, using its interactive approach and real-life situational context.

Numerous oral activities and assessment techniques mentioned earlier can be seamlessly incorporated into daily classroom instruction, offering a holistic understanding of students' capabilities, improvement and accomplishment. In contrast to conventional tests that offer only scores and numbers, these communicative oral techniques aim to capture a narrative for each student. As expressed by Huerta-Macias (1995), the main goal of assessment is to provide the knowledge needed to reflect upon, discuss, and support a student's experience during the learning process.

## **9. Time Constraints**

A significant challenge faced by schoolteachers is the scarcity of time in the classroom, considering the extensive curriculum they must cover within a given academic year. The sheer length of a textbook and the volume of material to be taught and learned pose substantial obstacles, often resulting in a lack or even the absence of oral evaluation opportunities.

To accord due importance to oral activities in schools, it is imperative to adjust the curriculum, potentially by reallocating time or removing certain components. The instruction and evaluation of oral competence are inherently time-intensive, possibly constituting the most time-consuming aspect among all language skills. Given this reality, it might be impractical to anticipate teachers conducting extensive oral assessments while also adhering to the mandated curriculum. Decision-makers should consider this aspect attentively and explore the possibility of reorganizing priorities within the components of the curriculum.

## **10. Teachers' Professional Development**

If there is a decision to reintegrate speaking activities and evaluation into the core of English language teaching, educators must acquire the right skills to develop and administer these activities. These skills encompass knowledge of how to observe, interpret, and document learners' language use, how to design classroom

oral tests and assessment tasks, how to analyze test results, ways to offer analytical advice to learners, and evaluate the quality of assessment tasks, how to assess learners' language performances based on rating scales, and how to write reports for program administrators. It is nevertheless impractical to anticipate that teachers will acquire all these skills, considering that evaluation of speaking skills is not always regarded as an important element of teachers' professional development programs (Ortega-Auquilla et al, 2022).

To address this challenge, strategies have been suggested, emphasizing the importance of equipping teachers with the skills required for effective assessment implementation (Kerckhoff & Cloud, 2020). Ensuring that teachers have opportunities for targeted professional development is crucial in this regard. While some needs can be met through formal degree courses or workshops, practical experience gained in the field, specifically in developing and using assessment tools, is essential to complement theoretical knowledge.

Enhancing assessment expertise and elevating the standard of oral assessment can be achieved through collaborative test development projects (Shohamy, 1992). Involving professional testers working in tandem provides an avenue for teachers to contribute to the development of specific techniques and tools. This collaboration helps align assessment content with contemporary teaching practices, thereby enhancing the potential benefits of assessments for student learning (Kerckhoff & Cloud, 2020).

## **11. Required Support from Policy Makers**

To promote the integration of speaking activities and evaluations into teaching practices, it is crucial to allocate sufficient time and address logistical considerations for their effective implementation by teachers. Yet, there is a necessity to persuade policymakers and program administrators about the time investment needed for successful oral assessment, especially when emphasizing the cultivation of essential communicative skills. An effective strategy involves conducting pilot tests over an extended duration, thoroughly documenting teachers' assessment-related tasks and the associated time commitment. This analysis would shed light on the substantial time requirements of oral assessment, leading to essential adjustments, potentially involving reductions in other curriculum components.

Furthermore, for the effective integration of English oral competence into the educational curricula of certain Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, significant institutional support is crucial. Enhancing language abilities involves dedicating specific time for students, encouraging regular practice of oral communication skills, and consistently evaluating their proficiency. This comprehensive strategy ensures that high school graduates are well-prepared for university studies. It aims to instill confidence in students' communication skills, foster motivation for English communication, deepen their awareness of pronunciation nuances, and empower them to express thoughts and opinions with creativity.

## 12. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provided a critical examination of the current landscape of English speaking activities and evaluation as a source of motivation in Arab schools. It illuminated the conditions under which oral assessment is conducted, elucidated relevant terms and definitions, and scrutinized existing oral assessment activities employed or recommended for use in Arab educational settings. The study proposed communicative techniques for oral assessment, synthesizing effective elicitation methods to enhance learners' motivation, alleviate language anxiety and instill practical English language skills. Additionally, it delved into pertinent issues surrounding the design and administration of oral assessments, including time constraints and the crucial need for institutional support.

The research suggests that language educators ought to pay more attention to their students' motivation through the adoption of skilled and innovative teaching and evaluative methods in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to consider factors affecting students' motivation and anxiety. Providing learners with a certain level of control over their learning conditions and engaging them in decisions related to class activities and oral assessments is advised. Teachers are urged to be supportive facilitators, avoiding a controlling and authoritative stance.

When students perceive their English language instructors as vibrant and enthusiastic, it sparks a contagious enthusiasm, motivating and energizing the students. Beyond possessing expertise and effective language teaching skills, teachers should embody consideration and dedication, focusing not only on academic progress but also on personal development and self-worth. This approach fosters a sense of care among students, further motivating them to engage in learning. English language educators are encouraged to continuously innovate and introduce motivational teaching activities, immersing students deeply in the subject matter. Breaking away from the confines of prescribed curricula and traditional teaching and assessment methods, teachers should embrace a diverse range of communicative and motivational approaches in their teaching practices.

Finally, this study asserts that students' insufficient motivation to improve English language proficiency can be addressed through the implementation of diverse solutions, as exemplified by the suggested activities. While these interventions are generally applicable in the majority of Arab classrooms, adaptations may be necessary based on students' varying English proficiency levels. It is crucial to acknowledge idiosyncratic characteristics of individual teachers and educational systems. Consideration should be given to modifications of the proposed activities and solutions should be contemplated to enhance students' motivation in advancing their English language skills.

Future research in this area could build upon the findings of the current study and explore additional strategies to address students' motivation to improve English language proficiency. A key aspect to investigate is the long-term impact of the suggested interventions. Conducting longitudinal studies would help assess

whether the observed motivation gains in the short term have been sustained over time.

Another important avenue for research involves delving into the cultural context and its influence on students' motivation to learn English. Understanding how cultural nuances shape motivation can aid in tailoring interventions to specific cultural contexts within the Arab region.

Teacher training and professional development programs also warrant investigation. Researchers could explore the role of these initiatives in enhancing educators' ability to implement motivational strategies effectively. Moreover, studying the correlation between teacher motivation and student motivation, as well as the influence of teacher characteristics on the success of interventions, could provide valuable insights.

The integration of technology-based solutions is another promising area for future research. Assessing the effectiveness of incorporating educational apps, online platforms, or virtual reality to enhance students' motivation and engagement in learning English could provide valuable insights.

Lastly, comparative studies across different educational systems and institutions within the Arab world could offer insights into the impact of varying educational approaches and policies on students' motivation to improve their English language skills.

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