



Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Using Non-Traditional Techniques to Improve Oral Communication Skills

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ABSTRACT:

This study aimed at investigating students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills. To answer the questions of the study, a 41-item questionnaire was used to measure the perceptions of 83 students who studied the course Oral Communication at An-Najah University in the first semester of the academic year 2011/2012. The students were given the opportunity to use a variety of non-traditional techniques and resources for the sake of improving oral communication skills. The results revealed that the total score of the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques was very high. Moreover, the results showed no significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of students' perceptions due to students' level, previous linguistic background and cumulative grade-Average in all domains except the total score.

Key words: Oral communication skills, non-traditional techniques, students perceptions.

المخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استطلاع تصورات الطلبة لفعالية استخدام أساليب غير تقليدية لتحسين مهارات الاتصال الشفوي. للإجابة عن أسئلة الدراسة، تم استخدام استبيان تكون من 41 فقرة وزع على 83 طالبا وطالبة درسوا مساق الاتصال الشفوي في جامعة النجاح الوطنية في الفصل الدراسي الأول من العام الدراسي 2011 / 2012. خلال دراسة هؤلاء الطلبة للمساق، أتيح لهم فرصة استخدام مجموعة متنوعة من التقنيات والأساليب والمصادر التعليمية غير التقليدية بهدف تحسين مهارات الاتصال الشفوي لديهم. أظهرت النتائج أن الدرجة الكلية لتصورات الطلبة لفعالية استخدام الأساليب غير التقليدية كانت مرتفعة جدا. كما أظهرت النتائج عدم وجود وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية عند $\alpha = 0.05$ بين متوسطات تصورات الطلبة تعزى لمستوى الطلبة والخلفية اللغوية السابقة والمعدل والتراكمي في جميع المجالات باستثناء الدرجة الكلية. كلمات مفتاحية: مهارات الاتصال الشفوي، الأساليب غير التقليدية، تصورات الطلبة.

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INTRODUCTION:

Of the four skills in language learning, speaking is considered a major skill of any language. Some linguists, in this regard, define language as nothing but a system of vocal symbols used to communicate ideas and thoughts among the members of a certain social society. This shows that language is mainly an oral activity and writing is considered a secondary system derived from the spoken language. As a result, students who learn English either as a foreign or a second language should be encouraged to speak the language to a certain extent that enables them to communicate with other speakers of the language. Rameriz (2010) proposed that creating good atmospheres and implementing realistic contexts in the classroom should be one of the teacher's top priorities in order to help students overcome their feelings of insecurity and fear when talking and orally interacting with others. Thereby the teacher should enable them to build up their confidence and self-esteem, while at the same time making their learning enjoyable. To produce students who are proficient in a foreign language, educators should ensure that their students participate in a variety of performance-based tasks based upon authentic use of language for communication (Fuller, 2011). Foreign language teachers, then, should design various types of activities that can strengthen the students' oral ability and give the students the opportunity to develop their communication strategies in order to develop communicative

competence as a whole.

The researchers believe that students who study English either as a foreign language or a second language are assumed to be provided with more and more opportunities to practice oral communication skills inside and outside the classroom in natural and meaningful situations through using different types of activities and practices. Contextualization of language, in this regard, has been shown to increase students' motivation, engagement in learning, the amount of information learned, and their self-perception of competence in the target language (Cordova & Lepper, 1996). Based on this assumption, students' perspectives should be investigated and taken into account whenever they are involved in the teaching-learning process, especially at higher education levels since they represent the first beneficiaries of the teaching-learning process. Moreover, university students are to be given more chances to actively participate in selecting some teaching materials which are hoped to suit their needs and interests, especially when talking about learning languages in general and English in particular. Undoubtedly, students nowadays seem to be mature enough and more self-confident to give their own opinions as they are open to various types of technological advancements including computers, the Internet, social networks, YouTubes, and up-to-date mobiles. Accordingly, the aim of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills; moreover,

the study aimed to investigate the effect of students' level, students' linguistic background and their cumulative grade on these attitudes.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

For the purpose of convenience, this section will be divided into two major sections. The first one provides a brief theoretical background about oral communication skills in general and the course oral communication in particular. The second section presents a number of studies that investigated different aspects of oral communication skills including learners' perceptions and the effectiveness of using different types of materials for teaching oral communication skills in different countries and contexts.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND WHAT IS ORAL COMMUNICATION?

Communication is a dynamic interactive process that involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings and values. It is not passive and does not just happen; we actively and consciously engage in communication in order to develop information and understanding required for effective group functioning (Rahman, 2010). Oral communication, on the other hand, is simply seen as information spoken by mouth or it is when one party can hear what the other is saying since the word oral means "with your mouth". To be more specific, we can define oral communication as the ability of a person to interact with others by means of spoken words. Oral communication covers a

wide area, ranging from effective oral presentations, personal discussions, telephone discourse, and informal conversation.

A remarkable discrepancy between the level of students oral communication and their written one was found. These two levels should be developed through degree programs and should contribute to the degree students will be awarded if both competencies are required by employers (Hughes and Large, 1993).

According to the website <http://www.hawaii.edu/gened/oc/oc.htm>, oral communication involves expressing and sharing ideas and information as well as influencing others through verbal and nonverbal symbols. Therefore, instructors who want to improve students' oral communication skills can design assignments that ask students to inform, persuade, reinforce already-existing attitudes or behaviors, entertain or move and influence others' emotions.

Regarding the benefits and availability of various resources for improving oral communication skills, Plyler (2011) believes that the use of authentic materials in foreign language instruction can be accomplished easily due to the wide variety that is easily accessible to teachers, such as stories and proverbs, media and news, art, and television and movies. Culturally authentic materials provide a realistic context for foreign language instruction in which students can learn and practice the target language and that the use of authentic materials in a foreign language classroom provides students with the opportunity to be completely "immersed in cultural meanings, Accordingly, using technol-

ogy-based instruction and particularly the Internet can be an especially engaging and meaningful way to present authentic materials in a foreign language classroom. According to Ramirez (2010), students need to be involved in activities which develop specific listening skills, such as the ability to understand completely the main point of a talk, the ability to identify particular details, and the ability to evaluate critically what is being said (p.12).

Lucas (2011) found that teachers spend less time in teaching students the communication skills they need in their daily conversations although they spend considerable time teaching students how to organize and deliver professional oral presentations, design effective PowerPoint slides, answer interview questions, and communicate effectively in problem-solving teams. Lucas, in this regard, believes that improving oral communication competencies can contribute to students' success across a variety of communication contexts.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ORAL COMMUNICATION COURSE

Oral communication is a course that aims at developing the students' fluency and communicative competence in English through recycling and applying their previous knowledge in real life situations. This course, moreover, is dedicated to provide students with opportunities to communicate freely on every matter. It thus covers various language functions, mainly spoken, such as introducing oneself and others, asking and providing information, agreeing and disagreeing, asking for

and giving directions, advising, apologizing, taking and leaving messages, describing people and places, and making appointments. Therefore, functions are explicated in a variety of topics, themes and situations which are going to be conducted through various types of activities in class and outside. Such activities are hoped to provide students with the opportunity to practice speaking and listening as well. The course consists of regular classroom presentations, formal speaking, practice on individual problems with usage and articulation, authentic classroom interactions and lectures, and effective speaking tasks. Students of this course learn how to participate in class, engage in formal and informal small group discussions on lecture content, and present oral summaries. Furthermore, students are encouraged to develop their own techniques for learning and using new vocabulary in their daily life.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE COURSE

Students who studied the oral communication course were involved in various types of activities including presentations, games, YouTube materials, acting, puzzles, poetry recitation, summaries, jokes, dramatization, improvisation, and PowerPoint presentations. Additionally, the course plan includes different forms of evaluation procedures such as writing exams based on language use activities and situations, in-class participation and oral presentations, oral exam, on-going assessment and fluency-based observation..

As usual, the first lecture began with a course syllabus discussion activity in which students were given a copy of the syllabus. After the initial syllabus discussion, the students were asked to prepare different types of presentations and activities so as to interact with their classmates and the teacher as well. From the beginning, students were motivated to go through the assigned material at home in order to come to class with an idea about what is being raised in class so as to benefit from the course and be very active contributors to class activities. Then they were asked to submit a short report on each activity. The first few classes were devoted to activities like individual oral presentations and practice in class participation and discussion skills. Students were instructed to make a five-minute presentation on a topic of their own choice. They were given minimum instructions. After finishing the initial activities, the teacher devoted one class to explain the rubrics of the oral test which was held in the last three classes. The teacher prepared 35 questions and situations on sheets of paper and students were individually asked to randomly choose only one sheet. The student then was asked to read the question/s aloud in order to answer the question/s in 5-7 minutes.

PREVIOUS PRACTICAL STUDIES

The idea of improving the students' oral skills has attracted the attention of many researchers and educators all over the world especially when talking about the English language as the first international language. Some researchers go

further to examine the perceptions and/or the attitudes of students towards the effectiveness of using various methods and techniques for improving oral communication skills in different disciplines such as accounting, engineering and English as a foreign language.

Waterfield (2011) triangulated a research approach by developing questionnaires, conducting interviews and observing students reactions to communicative tasks/activities in the classroom. The results showed that the students' lack of willingness to communicate stemmed from a deeper lack of confidence in personal language abilities. However, almost 80% of students desired to improve their oral communication (OC) skills but, they were still having trouble in participating in classroom activities. A majority of students felt that the information presented to them in the OC course helped their English language development. This data is evidence that the information provided had a positive impact on this group of students and reinforces the rationale for its inclusion in the final draft of the OC syllabus. The students displayed increased confidence levels while performing tasks such as interviews and giving speeches.

Sidhu et al (2011) investigated students' perspectives on the formative assessment of the School Based Oral English Test (SBOET). The study examined feedback from 2,684 upper secondary ESL students from 45 schools in Malaysia. The data collection process involved the use of questionnaires and focus group interviews. The findings of the study revealed that 55% of

the students held positive opinions of the SBOET, and 45.0% of the students viewed the SBOET negatively. Qualitative data obtained from interview sessions revealed that students who viewed SBOET positively see it as a chance to improve their oral skills as it allowed them to repeat their presentations. In addition, students reported that the SBOET helped them in building their confidence. Further analysis of the findings revealed that there is a significant difference among students of the Average English Proficiency(AEP) as compared to the High and Limited English Proficiency students in terms of the compulsory nature of the test. Further analysis indicated that there is a significant difference on the perceptions based on both proficiency level and their location. The results indicate that HEP and AEP students show a higher level of understanding of the grading system in comparison to the LEP students.

Hairuzila et al (2011).investigated the self-efficacy levels of 169 senior year engineering students at the UTP regarding their ability to communicate in English. A set of questionnaires designed to assess students' levels of self-efficacy was administered. Factor analysis results revealed three underlying constructs for self-efficacy: aptitude, attitude and aspirations. The findings showed that senior engineering students possess high self efficacy beliefs in all three constructs studied. The results also indicated that the students have high perceived self-efficacy in oral communication activities such as group discussions and individual and group oral presentations. These

findings suggested that students enjoy participating in group discussions, doing individual oral presentations and doing group oral presentations.

Ameen (2010) administered a survey to students enrolled in the foundation accounting course at four U.S. universities in 1998 and 2006. The instrument asked students to indicate the level of oral communications required in twenty-four occupations including "accountant" and "tax return preparer". The results indicated that students' perceptions of the oral communications requirements for accountant did not significantly change from 1998 to 2006.

Marr, et al (2011) looked into the effectiveness of a peer-mediated fluency-building intervention for students in classes of second grade referred to as "lower responders ". The study pinpointed that the intervention was statistically significant for students who were provided with supplementary intervention in contrast with students who received typical instruction in their classrooms. Finally, the study showed that the impact of enhanced fluency instruction was obvious along a number of criteria; it also showed a significant relationship between oral reading fluency and comprehension.

Rahman (2010) aimed to apply a task-based approach in teaching oral communication skills through investigating the teaching of oral communication to the students of Engineering and Technology at Indian School of Mines. The paper concluded that the tasks used were well received by the majority of the learners who found this experience to be rewarding, intrinsically in-

teresting, and educationally beneficial. Moreover, it was revealed that students got involved in the task, because the tasks were giving the feeling of real life situation. Their final performances were impressively polished and much improved, that is, the final product was of high level. 70 percent students scored grade 'A'.

Negishi (2010) aimed to examine the characteristics of interaction dynamics in a group oral interaction carried out by Japanese learners of English in addition to explore the relationship between the participants' language development and interactional management functions. The results revealed a more complex, co-constructed, and collaborative nature, with more interactions and negotiation of meaning. Furthermore, it was found that the group oral was an effective format for L2 learners as it provided more opportunities to interact with peers.

Bhattacharyya et al (2010) carried out a study in which survey questionnaires were distributed to 130 final year engineering students at Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS, in Malaysia.. Additionally, semi-structured interview sessions were conducted with selected members from the academic and professional engineering community. The main objective of this study was to investigate students' of the views, beliefs, and perceptions of the participants on presentation and communication skills in technical oral presentations in comparison to statistical data obtained via a quantitative approach . Results revealed interesting facets of the engineers' perceptions of "effective

and impactful" technical oral presentations. Among the findings and themes discussed include "technical competency," "effective delivery skills," "information technology competency," and "cultural awareness."

Ramirez (2010) attempted to understand how Oral Skills Course enhances, throughout the various activities that the teacher provides, the acquisition of oral skills. Furthermore, it facilitates the way by means of which students' participation and interaction in class are influenced by their own motivation. Some of the activities presented by the teacher were vocabulary contests and quizzes, monologues or group oral presentations, debates, discussions, short prepared dialogues, games, puzzles, magazines, songs, articles and poems from authentic sources. Two groups with a total number of forty-five students were observed. The study revealed that students perceived a significant improvement since they reported having advanced in their pronunciation and intonation performance at the end of the course. Furthermore, the majority of the participants perceived an improvement in the different factors related to their oral skills development. The study has also pointed out that using authentic resources in the class triggered students' participation. However, half of the participants believed that learning and improving their oral skills is more important than getting a grade. Noon-ura (2008) aimed at exploring the results of an intervention designed to improve the listening-speaking skills of 28 students with low English proficiency for 60 hours over three weeks.

These students were randomly selected from the lowest group in English ability among the first year students at Thammasat University, Thailand. Three teachers designed a course to help students find English learning more enjoyable, develop a better attitude and get ready to study ESP courses in subsequent years of university. The data was collected from the pre-post tests, pre-post questionnaires, classroom observation, students self reflection, and course evaluation. The findings showed that (1) there is a significant increase in the students' readiness to, and confidence in learning and using English; (2) students rated as 0 or 0+ speakers became better performers as they moved from the former level to levels 1 and 2; (3) based on observations in classrooms, it was obvious that students, in general, showed good rapport with the teachers and with their classmates, and (4) there is a student satisfaction with the course.

Ogasawara (2008) compared the outcomes of an Oral Communication class taught by a native English speaking teacher, with those of a reading class taught by a Japanese teacher of English. The students were first year high school students aged 15 to 16. After videotaping the taught OC class, all teacher and student utterances were transcribed and analyzed. The findings indicated that the student output was similar in both classes and the provision of a native English speaking teacher did not induce a higher quality of English output from students. Furthermore, the process of classroom management provided useful opportunities for language learning

while the dominant role of the teacher contributed to passivity among the student.

Hernandez-Herrero (2005) examined the importance of using different contexts and settings in the classroom in order to help students from the University of Costa Rica when acquiring English oral production skills. The findings revealed that many students found oral presentations helpful to improve their oral production skills because they prepared their assignments and topics more carefully; that is, they felt that facing the whole class required more of them than working in small groups. In addition, even though they felt nervous, oral presentations gave them the opportunity to practice public-speaking techniques, skills which they considered very important for students who plan to teach in the future.

Seong (2005) aimed to provide a tourism English teaching model for the improvement of oral communication skills. In order to test the practicability and effectiveness of the model, an experiment was conducted during a 16 week period. Subjects of the study were 62 sophomore junior students in tourism English. Each group consisted of 31 students. The two groups were examined as equal groups in a final written achievement test as well as with an interview. Experimental group was assigned the PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) model. The results of the study revealed that significant differences were found between the two groups in the speaking ability and that students in the experimental group achieved higher scores than those in the

control group. Students in the experimental group achieved higher scores than those in the control group in the amount and the frequency of teacher's scaffolding and that general English use ability differences between the groups were insignificant in all four areas: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Joughin (2004) carried out a study of students' experience of oral assessment which identified six aspects of oral assessment that figured strongly in students' descriptions of their assessment. The program was offered in an 'open learning' mode. The oral presentations used in this program were short-five minutes of presentation, five minutes of questioning and discussion, and one minute of personal reflection.. Fifteen students in the program were interviewed using a semi-structured format designed to encourage the description of the experience of oral assessment from the student's perspective. The results revealed that not only student perceptions were different to the lecturer's own perceptions but also that students differed from each other in how they perceived the dimensions.

Kuramoto (2002) carried out a research with 71 third- year high school students who were taking the class Oral Communication II. The methods chosen for data collection consisted of self-report questionnaire administered to the students at the beginning and at the end of the second term and immediate feedback collected after each new activity was introduced during the term. The second questionnaire was designed to elicit the students' level of interest in

the activities that had been done in Oral Communication II class during the first term. The results revealed the most notable change in all three classes was the increase in interest in the activities that were undertaken in addition to a notable improvement in attitudes, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation of the classes.

Iwamura (2002) carried out a study in which six sections of Practical English at Korea University participated in chat sessions via CCDL (Cross-Cultural Distance Learning) with students from Waseda University. The overall participants were 533 students. Through CCDL students were able to communicate with peers with whom they do not share any language except English. Therefore, this study aimed to examine some preliminary observations of the benefits of the program and the expectations language teachers can entertain as technology offers us contexts in which to build learning programs where technical facilities can be maximized. Students were encouraged to cull from their personal data topics they enjoyed the most. As a result most students achieved a fluency that allowed them to hear and immediately correct their own errors, to make their classmates laugh at the comic aspects of their experience, and to appreciate how each student created a unique experience with his or her Waseda partner. The visual materials they created added to the effect of their lively presentations. It was observed that many students were having so much fun and learning from each other on various things. The final outcome of such a study revealed

strong enthusiasm and appreciation that students have expressed in their written reports and oral presentations.

Kent (2001) suggested a method to be used by Korean EFL teachers when conducting oral tests. The main objectives of this method were to assess the oral skill level of students in a pre-planned communicative context, as well as testing listening comprehension through question/answer based tasks. Moreover, the method aimed to allow students to expand their use of language, centered on a theme of their own interest, and engage in oral communication on a familiar topic covered by the class syllabus. Students were tested for approximately 10 minutes per pair. Students then engaged in a prepared conversation for around 5 minutes. The results revealed that students felt more comfortable, and relaxed, during the testing process.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Oral communication involves expressing and sharing ideas and information as well as influencing others through verbal and nonverbal symbols. On the other hand, students who study English either as a foreign language or a second language are assumed to be provided with more and more opportunities to practice oral communication inside and outside the classroom in a natural and meaningful way. However, not much has been written about using non-traditional techniques for the purpose of improving oral communication skills in higher education in Palestine, and less has been written about investigating students' perceptions of the topic under

investigation. Consequently, this study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques used by one of the researchers while teaching the course Oral Communication at An-Najah University during the fall semester 2011/2012.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As mentioned earlier, students who study oral communication course should be provided with more and more opportunities to practice oral communication skills inside and outside the classroom in natural and meaningful situations through using non-traditional methods and techniques. Therefore, the major aim of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills. More specifically, the study aimed to explore the effect of students' level, students' Cumulative Grade-Point Average (C.G.P.A) and their previous linguistic background on these perceptions.

QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

The current study addressed the following questions:

- 1- What are the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques for improving their oral communication?
2. Are there any significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to

due to student's Level?

3. Are there any significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques due to Cumulative Grade-Average?

4. Are there any significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques due to previous linguistic background?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was guided by four reasons:

Firstly: it seems significant to investigate the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques as they represent the first beneficiaries of the teaching-learning process. Consequently, it is hoped that the results can provide teachers with more insights into university students' abilities and potentials so as to give them more chances to actively participate in selecting teaching materials that suit their needs and interests especially when talking about learning languages in general and English in particular.

Secondly: there has not been a study that investigated the perceptions of the students who study this course at An-Najah University which means that there is still a necessity to explore the advantages of using non-traditional techniques for the sake of improving oral communication skills. The results of this study, then, can help bridge the gap between theory and practice in terms of teaching oral communication skills and it can add some useful infor-

mation to the growing body of literature in this area. Thirdly: the findings of this study are hoped to be useful for the decision-makers and lecturers at An-Najah University who can benefit from the results to improve the quality of teaching which are currently used to teach this course. In this regard, it is expected that the results of this study help instructors to devote their utmost efforts to design assignments and activities that stimulate students to use the language in meaningful situations to improve their oral communication skills.

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

STUDY DESIGN

The descriptive analytical design was used as it suited the study objectives.

INSTRUMENTS AND MATERIALS

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

To achieve the objectives of the study the researchers designed a 41-item questionnaire whose items were developed by using other similar studies and questionnaires in addition to the researchers' review of literature as well as the researchers' personal experience with teaching oral skills and language use courses. The scores of responses of the examinees to each item were calculated according to the five-point scale, "Likert scale", in which strongly agree = 5 points, agree = 4 points, undecided = 3, disagree = 2 points and strongly disagree = 1 point.

Section one of the questionnaire gathered information regarding students' levels and students' Cumulative Grade-Average and sources of their previous

linguistic background. Section two, on the other hand, was built to measure students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills and therefore it covered six domains : the instructor, the course, students' fluency, students' confidence and participation, advantages of non-traditional techniques and fostering interaction. (Appendix A).

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

To ensure the face validity and content validity of the questionnaire, it was firstly rated by a jury of five experts in the fields of Education, English and Evaluation and Assessment from Al-Quds Open University and An-Najah University to rate each item for clarity and appropriateness in measuring the students' perceptions. The juries suggestions were taken into account and used to modify the questionnaire by omitting, adding, rephrasing items bring the number of items from 62 to 41 in addition to modifying certain items which needed to be rewritten so as to avoid duplications of some items and eliminate duplications as well. The second phase involved administering the questionnaire to a randomly chosen sample of 10 students who took this course so as to rate the questionnaire items for clarity of expression. Their responses and comments were taken into account when the final version of the questionnaire was prepared.

On the other hand, Cronbach Alpha formula was used to find out the reli-

ability of the questionnaire. The reliability values of study domains were (0.73), (0.77), (0.75), (0.73), (0.79) and (0.71) respectively which are high, and suitable for scientific purposes.(See page 18)

MATERIALS: THE NON-TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES

The main objective of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills. Accordingly, one of the researchers who taught the course Oral Communication Skills in the first semester used and encouraged the students to use a variety of non-traditional techniques for the sake of improving their oral skills. Nontraditional techniques involve anything used to present information and materials to the students rather than lecturing or the so-called talk and chalk technique that is practiced without using audio-visual aids and other technological advancements. These non-traditional techniques, thus, included:

1-group oral to practice oral skills and test performance in the oral test at the end of the course.

2-guest speaker's participation. Two students invited two native speakers from Project Hope and interviewed them in front of their classmates who were asked to ask the guests some questions. All students had the chance to listen to the American accent and to practice questioning techniques.

3-individual oral presentations and practice in class participation and dis-

cussion skills: the students were asked to prepare a topic assigned to them and present it in the class. Students made formal oral presentations. Each presentation was followed by a question/answer period, and concluded by the teacher's comment.

4- learning and teaching activities that involve oral communication, including small group discussions, mock interviews, role plays, pair and group oral presentations.

5- debates and Panel discussions (e.g., several students speaking with one another on a topic in front of an audience of peers). The students were engaged in a formal/informal discussion/ debate activity on an assigned topic. This activity is completely student-led, i.e., students play all the roles : observer, group presenter, and participating members).

6- interviews (e.g., mock job interviews, research interviews, interrogations)

7- press conferences and TV Simulation programs.

8- creative performances (e.g., storytelling, performance of literature, oral interpretations or readings, reading poems)

9-oral critiques of others' performances or presentations

10-role-play: Students were asked to make group of three to five students. In the beginning, they were given the situation and asked to come to lecture after preparation. They prepare their role and perform in the class. After this initial activity, they are assigned situations on the spot and they have to perform at the very same time. The teacher listened

to the performances of the students and commented on the individual performances.

11- pair work : Working in pairs provided students with an opportunity to "think aloud" about what they know, and a process for acquiring and reflecting on information. For many students, pair work was a comfortable starting point to practise the skills they will need to participate in larger groups. Such activity helped students build positive relationships, work cooperatively, and participate actively in the classroom.

12- whole-class discussions: By involving the whole class in shared activities, and by teaching students how to be active listeners, to respect each other and to participate without fear, the teacher was able to maximize students' self-confidence and their active participation and minimize students' anxiety.

13-presentations: Presenting in front of a class might be for some students a terrifying experience. Many students, therefore, were hesitant to give presentations in class; they were uncomfortable or nervous and did not clearly understand what an effective presentation looks like. By demonstrating an ineffective presentation, modeling an effective presentation, and facilitating student collaboration, the teacher eased students' stress and clearly defined what an effective presentation is. Therefore, students were introduced to different techniques of presentation by using the Language Lab. YouTube was used to enable the students to watch authentic presentations presented by native and non-native speakers.

14-student presentations included pre-

senting funny sayings and proverbs, Jokes, puzzles, sketches, games, music. For example one of the students' sang two songs in English and then explained them and made the students listen to them using the mobile and then this activity was followed by comments and a whole class discussion. This student played a couple of songs on her guitar as ice breaker. It was awesome and so amazing.

15-students were given more opportunities to use technology in their presentations: some of them used their own mobiles, others their laptops and PowerPoint, video clips, songs, poetry accompanied by musical background, YouTube, 16-the technique of improvised dialogues were used during this course which enabled the students to use the language for communicating naturally with other partners. Even the topics chosen for discussion were interesting and met students' needs and interests, for example, friendship, early marriage, how to win friends, colors as indicators of personality, yes for Palestine, how to live happily, SPEAK YOUR FEELINGS, the difference between somebody you love and somebody you just like, and what do you do when you get angry?

PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLE

The participants in the study were 83 students (77 females and 6 males) selected as a stratified random sample from the whole population according to three categories: level, Cumulative Grade-Average and previous linguistic background. The students were taught

the course by one of the researchers at An-Najah University in the first semester of the academic year 2011/2012. The majority of students major in English language and literature and only 5 students major in Methods of Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the Faculty of Educational Sciences. Table 1 indicates the sample distribution in accordance with the independent variables.

DATA COLLECTION

The data were collected the first semester of the academic year 2011/2012 through a questionnaire which was constructed by the researchers. The questionnaire was given to the students in the last lecture of the course. The total number of the completed questionnaire was 80. Seven questionnaires were excluded because their responses were not consistent. Only 73 questionnaires were analyzed statistically using SPSS. To estimate the students' responses toward the perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills, the researchers used scales, depending on percentage as follows:

*80-100 % is a very high degree.

*70-79.9 % is a high degree.

*60-69.9 % is a moderate degree.

*50-59.9 % is a low degree.

* Less than 60% is a very low degree.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researchers used SPSS V.17 to analyze the data. The following statistics were used:

- 1.Means, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations.
- 2.T-test for Independent samples.
- 3.One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).
- 4- Scheffe Post Hoc test

ceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills. Tables (2-8) show the results. Table 2 shows that the totals score of instructor domain achieved a mean of 4.44 and a percent-

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE ACCORDING TO STUDY INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Variable	Class	Frequency	Percentage %
Level	2- 3rd year	35	47.9
	3- 4th year	38	52.1
Cumulative Grade-Average	less than 70%	9	12.3
	70 -79%	50	68.5
	80% and more	14	19.2
Previous linguistic background	training sessions and courses	29	39.7
	listening to re-recorded materials	18	24.7
	Interaction	5	6.8
	using Internet technologies	21	28.8
Total		73	100%

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To accomplish the purpose of the study, the researchers analyzed the data in accordance with the study questions and the results were as follows:

1-Results Related to the First Question: What are the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques for improving their oral communication? To answer this question, the researchers calculated the means, standard deviations, percentages and levels, for items of students' per-

age of 88.8 which indicates a very high level of effectiveness.

Table 3 shows that the total score of course domain achieved a mean of 4.34 and a percentage of 86.8 which indicates a very high level of effectiveness.. Table 4 shows that the total score of students' fluency achieved a mean of 4.26 and a percentage of 85.2 which indicates a very high level of effectiveness.

Table 5 shows that the total score of students' confidence & participation achieved a mean of 4.37 and a percentage of 87.4 which indicates a very high level of effectiveness

TABLE 2
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, PERCENTAGES AND LEVELS OF
THE ITEMS OF THE INSTRUCTOR DOMAIN

Items	M	SD	Percent- age	Level
The instructor gave me a good chance to promote language use.	4.49	0.58	89.8	Very high
The instructor was able to deal with individual differences effectively.	4.34	0.53	86.8	Very high
By using non-traditional techniques, the instructor was able to make the classroom activity more relevant and real.	4.53	0.65	90.6	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques enabled the instructor to add spice and stimulus to the teaching process.	4.30	0.88	86.0	Very high
The instructor showed genuine interest in his students and their progress.	4.47	0.55	89.4	Very high
The instructor provided situations for students to express themselves.	4.52	0.63	90.4	Very high
The instructor promoted meaningful communication via the language.	4.40	0.72	88.0	Very high
Total score	4.44	0.34	88.8	Very high

TABLE 3
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, PERCENTAGES AND LEVELS OF
THE COURSE DOMAIN

Items	M	SD	Percent- age	Level
The course provided me with different ways to improve my oral skills.	4.51	0.67	90.2	Very high
The course helped me create an interesting learning environment.	4.23	0.70	84.6	Very high

The course helped both the lecturer and students to account for expectations.	4.07	0.63	81.4	Very high
The course emphasized the importance of using fun and laughter to stimulate students to talk.	4.47	0.75	89.4	Very high
The course focused on using dramatization to improve oral skills.	4.27	0.82	85.4	Very high
The course developed my ability to exploit different teaching aids (audio, YouTube blackboard, , video,etc.)	4.44	0.76	88.8	Very high
The course improved my ability to use non-verbal gestures and facial expressions to communicate with others.	4.40	0.79	88.0	Very high
Total score	4.34	0.39	86.8	Very high

TABLE 4
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, PERCENTAGES AND LEVELS
OF THE STUDENTS' FLUENCY DOMAIN

Items	M	SD	Percentage	Level
Using non-traditional techniques helped me speak English to a reasonable degree of fluency.	4.25	0.57	85.0	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques improved my actual correctness of structure and vocabulary.	4.16	0.71	83.2	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques improved adequacy of pronunciation.	4.29	0.61	85.8	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques helped me use my voice to the full.	4.29	0.75	85.8	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques developed my ability to use English for fruitful discussions.	4.26	0.58	85.2	Very high
Now, I can speak more fluently than I was three months ago.	4.33	0.69	86.6	Very high
Now I can manage a successful conversation.	4.25	0.68	85.0	Very high

Using non-traditional techniques stimulated me to ask and comment fluently.	4.27	0.69	85.4	Very high
Total score	4.26	0.40	85.2	Very high

TABLE 5
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, PERCENTAGES AND LEVELS OF
THE STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE & PARTICIPATION DOMAIN

Items	M	SD	Percent-age	Level
Using non-traditional techniques reinforced my self-confidence.	4.34	0.61	86.8	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques reduced the degree of shyness, fear and anxiety among students.	4.45	0.69	89.0	Very high
I felt confident when I was involved in the various activities of the course.	4.47	0.60	89.4	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques enabled students to be more independent and creative in their use of English.	4.41	0.68	88.2	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques allowed the whole class to participate.	4.21	0.90	84.2	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques gave a room for improving discussions.	4.37	0.54	87.4	Very high
Total score	4.37	0.45	87.4	Very high

TABLE 6
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, PERCENTAGES AND LEVELS OF
THE ADVANTAGES OF NON-TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES DOMAIN

Items	M	SD	Percent-age	Level
Using non-traditional techniques involved acting as well as speaking.	4.32	0.62	86.4	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques made learning more enjoyable.	4.52	0.65	90.4	Very high
Non-traditional techniques helped students overcome classroom boredom.	4.40	0.57	88.0	Very high

Non-traditional techniques transferred learning from skill-getting to skill-using.	4.52	0.58	90.4	V e r y high
Using non-traditional techniques made learning more student-centered and less teacher-centered.	4.30	0.74	86.0	V e r y high
Using non-traditional techniques reduced the strain of formality in class.	4.34	0.71	86.8	V e r y high
Using non-traditional techniques met the needs and interests of the students.	4.21	0.82	84.2	V e r y high
Using non-traditional techniques provided a sense of challenge and fun.	4.51	0.60	90.2	V e r y high
Total score	4.39	0.38	87.8	V e r y high

Table 6 shows that the total score of advantages of non-traditional techniques domain achieved a mean of 4.39 and a percentage of 87.8 which indicates a very high level of effectiveness

TABLE 7
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, PERCENTAGES AND LEVELS OF FOSTERING INTERACTION DOMAIN

Items	M	SD	Percent-age	Level
Non-traditional techniques developed my ability to stimulate interaction.	4.41	0.68	88.2	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques offered the possibility of successful communication between the instructor and the students.	4.48	0.56	89.6	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques fostered cooperation with peers.	4.38	0.64	87.6	Very high
Using non-traditional techniques helped me interact with my classmates' feelings and thoughts.	4.51	0.58	90.2	Very high
I liked using role-playing, mock-interviews and classroom debates to interact with my teacher and my classmates.	4.41	0.72	88.2	Very high

Total score	4.44	0.43	88.8	Very high
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Table 7 shows that the total score of fostering interaction domain achieved a mean of 4.44 and a percentage of 88.8 which indicates a very high level of effectiveness. Table 8 summarizes the results of the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills.

TABLE 8
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, PERCENTAGES AND LEVELS OF
THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING NON-TRADITIONAL
TECHNIQUES DOMAINS

Domain	M	SD	Per- cent- age	Level
The instructor	4.44	0.34	88.8	Very high
The course	4.34	0.39	86.8	Very high
Students' Fluency	4.26	0.40	85.2	Very high
Students' confidence & Participation	4.37	0.45	87.4	Very high
Advantages of non-traditional techniques	4.39	0.38	87.8	Very high
Fostering Interaction	4.44	0.43	88.8	Very high
Total score	4.37	0.30	87.4	Very high

As Table 8 reveals, the total score of the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques achieved a mean of 4.37 and a percentage of 87.4 which indicates a very high level of effectiveness. This means that the students in this study felt comfortable and motivated as a result of using different types of activities and resources that enabled them to use the English language to present themselves freely. The researchers believe that such result might be interpreted by the idea that the students in this study assumed full responsibility and remained active to the end of the course which contributed to their ability to improve their communicative competence. Moreover, the

increased interest in class activities and non-traditional techniques shown by the students made teaching more enjoyable and motivated all students even the shy ones to continue trying new ideas and to come to class well-prepared.

This result agrees with Waterfield (2011) who found that the communicative tasks/activities provided in the classroom had a positive impact on this group of students which made the students to display increased confidence levels while performing tasks such as interviews and giving speeches. The result also agrees with Hairuzila et al (2011) who found that the senior students in his study have high perceived self-efficacy in oral communication

activities such as group discussions and individual and group oral presentations. The result also agrees with Marr, et al (2011) who found that oral reading fluency performance for students who received supplemental intervention was statistically significantly better than that for their peers who received only typical classroom instruction.

Furthermore, the result seems to agree with Ramirez (2010) who found that the use of authentic materials and activities such as vocabulary contests, quizzes, monologues or group oral presentations, debates, discussions, short prepared dialogues, games, puzzles, magazines, songs, articles and poems from authentic sources in the class were a trigger for students' participation. The result also agrees with Kuramoto (2002) who found that the most notable change in all three oral classes was the increase in interest in the activities that were undertaken in addition to a notable improvement in attitudes, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation of the classes. Moreover, the result agrees with Iwamura (2002) whose study found strong enthusiasm and appreciation that students have expressed in their written reports and oral presentations after using visual materials, technical facilities and lively presentations in their classes. The result also agrees with Kent (2001) who found that students felt more comfortable, and relaxed during oral tests that allowed students to expand their use of language, centered on a theme of their own interest, and engage in oral communication on a familiar topic covered by the class syllabus. However, the aforementioned

result disagrees with Ameen (2010) who found that students' perceptions of the oral communications requirements for accountants did not significantly change from 1998 to 2006. This might be explained by the fact that Ameen (2010) conducted his study on a different discipline, accentuating, which is completely different from English. The result also seems to disagree with Sidhu, et al (2011) who found that 55% of the students held positive opinions of the School Based Oral English Test (SBOET), and 45.0% of the students viewed SBOET negatively.

2-Results Related to the Second Question: Are there any significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills due to Level."

The researchers used T-test for independent samples to answer this question and Table 9 shows the results.

Table 9 shows that there are no significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills due to Level. This result means that all students' perceptions, regardless of their level, had high level of effectiveness as a result of using various types of activities and non-traditional techniques. It seems that taking part in these activities was so effective in improving student's perceptions of the non-traditional techniques used in this study. Such interpretation seems to go with Rahman (2010) who found the tasks used in his study were well

received by the majority of the learners who found this experience to be rewarding, intrinsically interesting, and educationally beneficial.

This result seems to agree with Waterfield (2011) who found that almost 80% of students in his study desired to improve their OC skills by means of participating in the communicative tasks/activities in the classroom. Such result might be interpreted by saying that all students badly need to improve their oral communication skills that can help them get a job after graduation and to be competent teachers in the future. Such explanation seems to be in line with Hernandez-Herrero (2005) who indicated that oral presentations gave them the opportunity to practice public-speaking techniques, skills which they considered very important for students who plan to teach in the future

On the other hand, the result seems to

disagree with Sidhu et al (2011) who found a significant difference on the students' perspectives on the formative assessment of the School Based Oral English Test (SBOET) based on proficiency level.

3-Results Related to the Third Question: "Are there any significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills due to Cumulative Grade-Average."

The researchers used One Way ANOVA to answer this question . Tables 10 and 11 show the frequencies, means and standard deviations of the degree of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills due to Cumulative Grade-Average and the results of One Way ANOVA test respectively.

TABLE 9
T-TEST FOR INDEPENDENT SAMPLES OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS
DUE TO LEVEL

Domain	Level	Frequen- cy	Mean	S.D	T-value	Sig.*
The in- structor	2- 3rd year	35	4.37	0.37	1.700	0.094
	3- 4th year	38	4.50	0.30		
The course	2- 3rd year	35	4.25	0.42	1.869	0.066
	3- 4th year	38	4.42	0.35		
Students' Fluency	2- 3rd year	35	4.24	0.40	0.461	0.646
	3- 4th year	38	4.28	0.40		

Students' confidence & Participation	2- 3rd year	35	4.33	0.45	0.755	0.453
	3- 4th year	38	4.41	0.44		
Advantages of non-traditional techniques	2- 3rd year	35	4.31	0.35	1.722	0.090
	3- 4th year	38	4.46	0.39		
Fostering Interaction	2- 3rd year	35	4.37	0.48	1.381	0.172
	3- 4th year	38	4.51	0.38		
Total score	2- 3rd year	35	4.31	0.30	1.685	0.096
	3- 4th year	38	4.42	0.29		

- Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$, D.F = 71

TABLE (10)
FREQUENCIES, MEANS, AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS
DUE TO CUMULATIVE GRADE-AVERAGE

Domain	Cumulative Grade-Average	Frequency	Mean	S.D
The instructor	less than 70%	9	4.46	0.37
	70 -79%	50	4.38	0.34
	80% and more	14	4.61	0.24
The course	less than 70%	9	4.37	0.40
	70 -79%	50	4.28	0.40
	80% and more	14	4.55	0.26
Students' Fluency	less than 70%	9	4.33	0.46
	70 -79%	50	4.20	0.41
	80% and more	14	4.45	0.29
Students' confidence & Participation	less than 70%	9	4.44	0.49
	70 -79%	50	4.30	0.43
	80% and more	14	4.60	0.43

Advantages of non-traditional techniques	less than 70%	9	4.36	0.38
	70 -79%	50	4.34	0.40
	80% and more	14	4.57	0.25
Fostering Interaction	less than 70%	9	4.38	0.45
	70 -79%	50	4.41	0.44
	80% and more	14	4.57	0.40
Total score	less than 70%	9	4.39	0.32
	70 -79%	50	4.31	0.30
	80% and more	14	4.55	0.22

TABLE 11
ONE WAY ANOVA TO TEST THE DIFFERENCES OF THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS
DUE TO CUMULATIVE GRADE-AVERAGE

Domain	Source of variation	Sum of Squares	D.F	Mean Squares	F	Sig.*
The instructor	Between groups	0.581	2	0.291	2.671	0.076
	Within groups	7.618	70	0.109		
	Total	8.200	72			
The course	Between groups	0.827	2	0.413	2.854	0.064
	Within groups	10.138	70	0.145		
	Total	10.964	72			
Students' Fluency	Between groups	0.730	2	0.365	2.344	0.103
	Within groups	10.900	70	0.156		
	Total	11.630	72			
Students' confidence & Participation	Between groups	1.004	2	0.502	2.649	0.078
	Within groups	13.262	70	0.189		
	Total	14.266	72			
Advantages of non-traditional techniques	Between groups	0.581	2	0.291	2.113	0.129
	Within groups	9.624	70	0.137		
	Total	10.205	72			

Fostering In- teraction	B e t w e e n groups	0.316	2	0.158	0.833	0.439
	Within groups	13.257	70	0.189		
	Total	13.573	72			
Total score	B e t w e e n groups	0.644	2	0.322	3.807	0.027*
	Within groups	5.917	70	0.085		
	Total	6.560	72			

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

As Table 11 shows, there are no significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills due to Cumulative Grade-Average in all domain except the total score. In order to identify the source of differences in the total score, the researchers used Scheffe Post Hoc test. Table 12 shows the results. Table 12 shows that there are significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of the total score due to Cumulative Grade-Average, between 70-79% and 80% and more in favor of 80% and more. This result means that those students whose Cumulative Grade-Average was over 80% had better and higher perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills. This might be due to the fact that such CGA couldn't be achieved unless the student works harder and harder to improve his

linguistic competence and communicative competence as well. The result of such hard efforts will be higher abilities to examine things better.

This result agrees with Joughin (2004) who found that that not only student perceptions of oral assessment were different to the lecturer's own perceptions but also that students differed from each other in how they perceived the dimensions. This result also seems to agree with Kent (2001) whose study indicated that students felt more comfortable when they were allowed to expand their use of language centered on a theme of their own interest, and engage in oral communication on a familiar topic. The result also agrees with Sidhu. et al (2011) who found a significant difference among students of the Average English Proficiency as compared to the High and Limited English Proficiency students in terms of the compulsory nature of the oral test and oral skills.

TABLE 12
SCHEFFE POST HOC TEST RESULTS TO COMPARE BETWEEN THE MEANS OF THE TOTAL SCORE DUE TO CUMULATIVE GRADE-AVERAGE

Cumulative Grade- Average	less than 70%	70 -79%	80% and more
less than 70%		0.075	-0.166
70 -79%			-0.242*
80% and more			

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

4-Results Related to the Fourth Question: "Are there any significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills due to previous linguistic background." To answer this question, the researchers used One Way ANOVA. Tables 13 and 14 show the frequencies, means and standard deviations of the degree of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills due to previous linguistic background and the results of One Way ANOVA test, respectively.

Table 14 shows that there are no significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills due to previous linguistic background. Such result seems to be surprising and unexpected since previous linguistic background is expected to benefit the student when he/she aims to participate in a student-centered class and not in a teacher-centered class in which teachers assume full responsibility and students remain passive. As shown in the questionnaire (Appendix A), previous linguistic knowledge might come from different sources such as traveling abroad, training sessions and courses, listening to recorded materials, interaction with native and non-native speakers of English and using the Internet technologies. This means that the previous linguistic background had no effect on students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-tradi-

tional techniques to improve oral communication skills. This might be interpreted by the idea that the selection of activities and techniques done by the teacher in an oral communication course is an important factor that influences students' perceptions and their willingness to participate in class where they can feel motivated or unmotivated depending on the activities and topics that the teacher brings to the class.

This result and interpretation as well seem to agree with Waterfield (2011) who found that the majority of the students in his study felt that the information presented to them in the OC course helped their English language development to the extent that the information provided had a positive impact on this group of students and reinforces the rationale for its inclusion in the final draft of the OC syllabus. The result also seems to partially agree with Marr, et al (2011) who found that oral reading fluency performance for students who received supplemental intervention was statistically significantly better than that for their peers who received only typical classroom instruction. This, again, emphasizes the importance of using the communicative activities and non-traditional techniques at the expense of previous linguistic background.

TABLE 13
FREQUENCIES, MEANS, AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS DUE TO PREVIOUS LINGUISTIC
BACKGROUND

Domain	Previous linguistic background	Fre- quency	Mean	S.D
The instructor	training sessions and courses	29	4.42	0.37
	listening to recorded materials	18	4.45	0.31
	Interaction	5	4.43	0.36
	using Internet technologies	21	4.44	0.33
The course	training sessions and courses	29	4.29	0.44
	listening to recorded materials	18	4.30	0.36
	Interaction	5	4.46	0.19
	using Internet technologies	21	4.41	0.39
Students' Flu- ency	training sessions and courses	29	4.25	0.44
	listening to recorded materials	18	4.18	0.28
	Interaction	5	4.40	0.41
	using Internet technologies	21	4.32	0.45
Students' con- fidence & Par- ticipation	training sessions and courses	29	4.32	0.46
	listening to recorded materials	18	4.34	0.41
	Interaction	5	4.60	0.43
	using Internet technologies	21	4.42	0.46
Advantages of non-tradition- al techniques	training sessions and courses	29	4.34	0.41
	listening to recorded materials	18	4.40	0.34
	Interaction	5	4.40	0.42
	using Internet technologies	21	4.45	0.36
Fostering In- teraction	training sessions and courses	29	4.43	0.46
	listening to recorded materials	18	4.37	0.40
	Interaction	5	4.60	0.24
	using Internet technologies	21	4.47	0.47
Total score	training sessions and courses	29	4.34	0.34
	listening to recorded materials	18	4.34	0.25
	Interaction	5	4.47	0.22
	using Internet technologies	21	4.41	0.32

TABLE 14
ONE WAY ANOVA TO TEST THE DIFFERENCES OF THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS DUE TO PREVIOUS LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

Domain	Source of variation	Sum of Squares	D.F	Mean Squares	F	Sig.*
The instructor	Between groups	0.010	3	0.003	0.029	0.993
	Within groups	8.189	69	0.119		
	Total	8.200	72			
The course	Between groups	0.284	3	0.095	0.611	0.610
	Within groups	10.681	69	0.155		
	Total	10.964	72			
Students' Fluency	Between groups	0.296	3	0.099	0.602	0.616
	Within groups	11.334	69	0.164		
	Total	11.630	72			
Students' confidence & Participation	Between groups	0.398	3	0.133	0.660	0.580
	Within groups	13.868	69	0.201		
	Total	14.266	72			
Advantages of non-traditional techniques	Between groups	0.154	3	0.051	0.353	0.787
	Within groups	10.051	69	0.146		
	Total	10.205	72			
Fostering Interaction	Between groups	0.240	3	0.080	0.415	0.743
	Within groups	13.332	69	0.193		
	Total	13.573	72			
Total score	Between groups	0.143	3	0.048	0.514	0.674
	Within groups	6.417	69	0.093		
	Total	6.560	72			

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study aimed at investigating students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills and exploring the effect of students' level, students' previous linguistic background and their Cumulative

Grade-Point Average on these perceptions. The results revealed that the total score of the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques achieved a very high level of effectiveness. Moreover, the results showed no significant differences between the means of students' perceptions due to students' level, previous

linguistic background and Cumulative Grade-Average in all domains except the total score. These results indicated that the majority of students benefited from using non-traditional techniques regardless of their level, previous linguistic background and their cumulative grade-Average. The researchers believe that these results were obtained because the students were given equal opportunities to speak the language and to choose topics and materials that suit their abilities and interests. Such a conclusion augments the results of many researchers Waterfield (2011), Hairuzila et al (2011), Marr et al (2011) and Iwamura (2002). Moreover, the non-traditional techniques and activities used in this study were carefully planned and designed to motivate the students to actively engage in use the language in meaningful and enjoyable contexts rather than simply reorganizing or even memorizing words, sentences or even grammatical rules. Therefore, such techniques might be of great pedagogical implications to be used in the Palestinian context where most learners lack the desired motivation to study English or to speak it. The successful implementation of this approach that utilizes the use of non-traditional techniques and activities requires cooperation between classroom instructors and the students themselves. This cooperation will be of great importance for us as teachers and for them as learners when they increase their participation in class and improve their oral skills, too. The results of this study emphasize the necessity of using action research as an excellent tool to become more aware

of what is really taking place in EFL classes in the Palestinian context. Action research as used by the researchers in this study had the power to increase students' self-confidence on one hand, and motivate students to speak English to improve their oral communication skills on the other hand. Nevertheless, additional research is needed to investigate students' perceptions and attitudes in other universities to try several methods of teaching that best help learners to improve their oral communication skills in general and their communicative competence as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the researchers recommend the following:

1-Oral Communication syllabus should include using non-traditional activities and techniques in teaching English as a foreign language.

2- Teachers of oral communication courses are advised to make learning the language more enjoyable and a favorable experience to increase students' interests and motivation to speak the language.

3-Students should be provided with more and more opportunities to practice oral communication skills inside and outside the classroom and in natural and meaningful situations.

4-Similar studies should be conducted in other Palestinian Higher Educational Institutions to check the efficacy of using non-traditional techniques in EFL teaching.

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APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear student:

This questionnaire was designed to investigate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using non-traditional techniques to improve oral communication skills. Please read the following statements carefully and then answer them according to how each describes your level of agreement with its content. Your answers will be dealt with in complete confidentiality. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Researchers : Dr.Fayez M. Aqel & Dr.Khaled. A . Dweikat

Section (1) : Personal Information

1-Your level: 1- 2nd year () 2- 3rd year () 3- 4th year ()

2-Your Cumulative Grade-Average: 1-less than 70% () 2- 70 -79% ()

3- 80% and more ()

3-Your previous linguistic background was obtained from :

1-travelling abroad () 2-training sessions and courses () 3-listening to recorded materials ()

4-Interaction with native and non-native speakers of English () 5-using Internet technologies ()

Section (2): Read the following statements carefully and check under the column that best represents your level of agreement with each statement.

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Domain A: The instructor						
1-	The instructor gave me a good chance to promote language use.					
2-	The instructor was able to deal with individual differences effectively.					
3-	By using non-traditional techniques, the instructor was able to make the classroom activity more relevant and real.					
4-	Using non-traditional techniques enabled the instructor to add spice and stimulus to the teaching process.					

5-	The instructor showed genuine interest in his students and their progress.					
6-	The instructor provided situations for students to express themselves.					
7-	The instructor promoted meaningful communication via the language.					
Domain B: The Course						
8-	The course provided me with different ways to improve my oral skills.					
9-	The course helped me create an interesting learning environment.					
10-	The course helped both the lecturer and students to account for expectations.					
11-	The course emphasized the importance of using fun and laughter to stimulate students to talk.					
12-	The course focused on using dramatization to improve oral skills.					
13-	The course developed my ability to exploit different teaching aids (audio, YouTube blackboard, , video,etc.)					
14-	The course improved my ability to use non-verbal gestures and facial expressions to communicate with others.					
Domain C : Students' Fluency						
15-	Using non-traditional techniques helped me speak English to a reasonable degree of fluency.					
16-	Using non-traditional techniques improved my actual correctness of structure and vocabulary.					
17-	Using non-traditional techniques improved adequacy of pronunciation.					

18-	Using non-traditional techniques helped me use my voice to the full.					
19-	Using non-traditional techniques developed my ability to use English for fruitful discussions.					
20-	Now, I can speak more fluently than I was three months ago.					
21-	Now I can manage a successful conversation.					
22-	Using non-traditional techniques stimulated me to ask and comment fluently.					
Domain D : Students' confidence & Participation						
23-	Using non-traditional techniques reinforce my self-confidence.					
24-	Using non-traditional techniques reduced the degree of shyness, fear and anxiety among students					
25-	I felt confident when I was involved in the various activities of the course.					
26-	Using non-traditional techniques enabled students to be more independent and creative in their use of English.					
27-	Using non-traditional techniques allowed the whole class to participate.					
28-	Using non-traditional techniques gave a room for improving discussions.					
Domain E :Advantages of non-traditional techniques						
29-	Using non-traditional techniques involved acting as well as speaking.					
30-	Using non-traditional techniques made learning more enjoyable.					
31-	Non-traditional techniques helped students overcome classroom boredom.					

32-	Non-traditional techniques transferred learning from skill-getting to skill-using.					
33-	Using non-traditional techniques made learning more student-centered and less teacher-centered.					
34-	Using non-traditional techniques reduced the strain of formality in class.					
35-	Using non-traditional techniques met the needs and interests of the students.					
36-	Using non-traditional techniques provided a sense of challenge and fun.					
Domain F : Fostering Interaction						
37-	Non-traditional techniques developed my ability to stimulate interaction.					
38-	Using non-traditional techniques offered the possibility of successful communication between the instructor and the students.					
39-	Using non-traditional techniques foster cooperation with peers.					
40-	Using non-traditional techniques helped me interact with my classmates' feelings and thoughts.					
41-	I liked using role-playing, mock-interviews and classroom debates to interact with my teacher and my classmates.					