

Employing Effective Communication Skills by Arabic Language Teachers from the Perspective of the Upper Elementary Education Students at Jordan

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Abstract: The study aims at investigating how far Arabic language teacher possess effective communication skills based on the view point of the upper elementary stage students at Jordan. The study sample consists of 613 male and female students at the 9th and 10th grades in Amman's 1st-5th educational directorates chosen according to the simple random sample parameters. To accomplish the goals of the study, the researchers have constructed its instruments which have been applied to the study sample after verification and stability depending on the educational literature and former studies carried out.

Key words: Effective communication, teachers, students, skills, language

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the focal point in man's life and actions as he launches it since his birth through to his death and it is the cycle conjoining generations, societies and populations together for the exchange of experiences.

Having established that man's life is based on communication, it should be an integral part in the educational process that it may proceed smoothly through the right path as Bakken *et al.* (2009) states that communication is the key to learning because what we learn depends on interactions with others.

The importance of communication lies in its being the basic mean through which educational goals seeking the refinement and development of the human being and preparing him to be an effective member in the present and future could be accomplished. Educational communication skills is a flexible process combined of several integrative processes to the end that a meaningful effective education may be pursued. Considering that the teacher is the key element in the success of any educational development process, he needs to possess effective communication skills that may enable him to perform his job efficiently which will in turn directly influence educational by-products. Simsek and Altinkurt (2010) view that one of the main features of an effective class interaction is communication between the student and his teacher.

Communication in language is referred to as the exchange of ideas, views or information. As a term, communication is established by Flanders (1968) as if individuals who share a certain characteristic or are combined by a relationship gather, they tend to

communicate either by verbal or physical instruments in an attempt to exchange ideas or emotions to fulfill adaptation.

As for Bakken, he deems that speaking, writing, facial expressions, body language and touch are the most commonly used skills of communication. Pearce identify the main communication skills as:

Verbal skills: Verbal skills include fluency, reading and writing clearly.

Non-verbal skills: The ability to send and receive non-verbal messages through facial expressions and body gestures.

Listening skills: Listening involves more than only listening to the message. Rather, it encompasses attention, decoding and encoding.

Many instructional specialists consider that class motivating questions play a significant role in teaching as one of the major communication instruments between teacher and students. Questions also raise students' interest in the topic under discussion, introduce them to the new learning topic and motivate them for participation and attention (Morgan and Saxtion, 1991).

Harris (1998) asserts that it is difficult to achieve educational and learning goals without the proper foundations, the most important of which are: Well-grounded preparation of teachers employing proper educational methods and activities and follow-up of the developments and current trends in education, psychology and technology.

Wong and Wong regard employing educational and technological means properly as one of the most

important principles of teaching. On the level of field studies on communication skills for teachers, Simsek and Altinkurt (2010) carried out a study that seeks to identify the viewpoint of high schools teachers on communication skills related to class management. Results showed that most respondents agree that communication skills, such as; effective listening, sending effective messages and effective feedback are basic features for class management. Moreover, a slight difference in forms of communication among teachers is attributed to differences to variables, such as; gender, experience and in favor of female and male teachers with short teaching experience.

On the other hand, Barakat (2010) conducted a study aiming to identify the teacher's efficiency in the skill of raising class questions and how he reacts to their responses as well as the effect of some variables on this efficiency. The study showed statistical differences in teachers' efficiency while raising questions and reacting to the students responses. These differences are attributed to the variables of gender and school type in which a teacher works being in favor of female teachers and high school class, respectively. Results also showed that there are no statistical differences in terms of teachers' efficiency in the skill of raising and responding to prompts. This is due to variables, such as; average, number of preparation courses, years of experience and academic degree.

In another study carried out by Johnson *et al.* (2001), on identifying students views about effective communication skills introduced in a textbook chapter based on effective communication and some educational techniques, results showed that students generally displayed an awareness of the importance of effective communication. Students also showed a general consensus of benefiting from effective listening more than other skills. Students proposed ways to enhance learning methods in class by incorporating communication skills in other chapters in addition to more activities. In light of the above information, this study is distinct for instrument employment that consists of six skills; speaking, listening, reading, writing, question-raising and employing teaching methods. By contrast, the former studies concentrated only on communication skills based on speaking or reading or writing.

Study problem and questions: Communications in educational practices poses a serious challenge for teachers due to the need of possessing certain abilities and several skills on the part of the teacher as to earn a

place and an effective presence for himself which could not be achieved only through possessing knowledge but also by possessing other skills the study sought to identify and investigate their employment by teachers based on the students' views. As such, researchers' educational practices at university were a strong motive to conduct this study as university students show a preference for knowledge over other communication skills which prompted the researchers of this study to stand on the source of the problem at schools, choosing a mature educational level of the higher elementary stage (9th and 10th grades). Hence, the study tries to provide an answer for the following questions:

- How far do the teachers of the Arabic language at higher elementary stage possess effective communication skills from the viewpoint of their students?
- Are there statistical differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ in the teachers' degree of possessing effective communication skills depending on the students views that may be attributable to gender?

The importance of the study: The importance of the study stems from the fact that it looks into the extent of Arabic language teachers possession of effective communication skills at the higher elementary stage from the students perspective. Therefore, the study chose Arabic language teachers specifically because of the importance of this course as the blueprint of most of the courses that a student deals with at school. Similarly, higher elementary stage students (9th and 10th grades) have also been chosen to answer the items that were put forward by the instrument of this study because it is at this stage that the student is capable of reading and understanding the items, being mature enough to recognize the events and stimuli inside the classroom and how to react to and judge them. The study aspires to:

- Help teachers identify the extent to which they possess effective communication skills
- Using this study as a guiding plan to construct teachers-oriented training programs that help enhance their performance

Study determinants:

- This study is restricted to a sample of higher elementary stage male students (9th and 10th grades)
- The study is restricted to the capital schools at Amman educational directorates (1st-5th)

Operational definitions: The terms referred to in the study are explained idiomatically and operationally as:

Effective communication skills: The ability to produce, convey, exchange and perceive information, beliefs and feelings from one person to another (or one group to another) via several channels with a view to influence him or them and thereby elicit the desired response. Operationally, it is measured through the degree of teachers' performing the practices stated in the study scale which involve the following skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing, question-raising and using teaching methods).

Teachers: Teaching Arabic language for the 9th and 10th grades in the capital's educational directorates (1st-5th).

Students: Students of the higher elementary stage (9th and 10th grades) at governmental schools of Amman educational directorates (1st-5th).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To accomplish the goals of this study, the researchers implemented the descriptive survey method based on collecting data with a view to identify the extent to which Arabic language teachers employ effective communication skills for the higher elementary stage from their students' perspective.

The study population: The study population consisted of all students at the 9th and 10th grades in the schools of Amman educational directorates (1st-5th). The students in these schools were 12260 male and female students, of which 6173 male and female students were from the 9th grade and 6087 male and female students were from the 10th grade. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the individuals of the study population.

The study sample: A simple random sample of the study population was chosen at the 5 Amman educational directorates which included 613 male and female students of which 309 male and female students were from the 9th

grade and 304 male and female students were from the 10th grade. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of the individuals of the study sample population.

The research instrument: To achieve the goal of the study and in light of the researchers' knowledge of the former educational studies and literature, the study depended on a 55-item scale distributed on 6 areas; speaking (items 1-9), listening (items 10-18), reading (items 19-27), writing (items 28-36), question-raising (items 37-46) and using teaching methods (items 47-55). According to Likert scale on which the study depended, the answer ranged from 1 point (Rarely), 2 points (Sometimes), 3 points (Often), 4 points (Usually) and 5 points (Always). Based on the values of arithmetic means, the teachers' possession of effective communication skills were divided into three levels; low in which the mean is around 1-2.33, a medium level of 2.34-3.67 and a high level of 3.68-5.00.

The credibility of the study tool: After consulting a number of educational expertise (10 research referees) to detect the reliability and validity of the items put forward to measure the effective communication skills and the convenience of the items to their domain, some items were recommended that they be rephrased but none have been added or omitted to this effect.

The study tool reliability: The study tool's coefficient of internal consistency is ascertained using Cronbach alpha in all the domains of effective communication skills and the reliability coefficient values have been approved as Table 3 shows.

Statistical treatment of data: The researchers used the SPSS for answering the study questions where means, standard deviation and rank were used to answer question No. 1, while the t-test was implemented in the independent sample to answer question 2.

Table 2: Features of the individuals of the study sample

Gender	Grade		Total
	9th	10th	
Males	143	137	280
Females	166	167	333
Total	309	304	613

Table 1: Features of the individuals of the study population

Gender	Grade		Total
	9th	10th	
Males	2850	2740	5590
Females	3323	3347	6670
Total	6173	6087	12260

Table 3: Reliability coefficient values using Cronbach alpha

Effective communication skills	Internal consistency coefficient
Speaking	0.84
Listening	0.83
Reading	0.88
Writing	0.91
Question-raising	0.92
Teaching methods	0.93

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Firstly, question 1 results related to the possession of effective communication skills for Arabic language teachers at the higher stage in Jordan according to the point view of their students.

Answering this question required using means and standard deviations related to possessing effective communication skills of the higher stage in Jordan based on their students' point of view in all areas of communication skills as illustrated in Table 4.

As Table 4 shows, the availability of effective communication skills for Arabic language teachers at the higher elementary stage in Jordan was high with an average of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 0.762. All areas of the study tool scored high with reading in the lead with an average of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 0.811, followed by question-raising at 3.94 average and 0.969 standard deviation. Ranking next was speaking at an average of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 0.764, then the writing skill at an average of 3.89 and 0.949 deviation. These were followed by utilization of teaching methods at 3.86 average and 0.941 deviation and finally, the listening skill at an average of 3.79 while the standard deviation was 0.753. These results are attributable to educational and knowledge-based preparation that teachers receive during their undergraduate study. Moreover, teachers preparation programs while serving reinforce the different aspects of their communication skills.

The results of this study concur with those of Barakat (2010)'s research which showed that teachers displayed a high degree at question-raising and reacting to students replies. The study also concurs with Johnson *et al.* (2001) research study that students were generally aware of communication skills and their important role. The areas of effective communication skills for Arabic language teachers at the higher elementary stage in Jordan have been analyzed as in Table 5.

Table 5 shows that under speaking, the highest skill available was; the teacher speaks clearly at an average of 4.40. As the researchers see it, this result is logical by virtue of specialization and academic field of the study sample as being related to Arabic language. While the lowest degree of a skill available was; maintaining a close distance and eye contact while addressing a student with an average of 3.60. This is because of the crowded classes at governmental schools which rendered the former item difficult to be fulfilled. As regards listening, the highest skill available is: Paying full attention to the participating student at 4.24. This result is natural in the literature of human listening before the educational as to

Table 4: Means, standard deviations, rank and effective communication skills for Arabic language teachers at the higher elementary stage based on the perspective of their students ranked in descending order

No.	Areas of effective communication skills	Mean	SD	Rank	Degree
3	Reading	4.03	0.811	1	High
5	Question-raising	3.95	0.969	2	High
1	Speaking	3.93	0.764	3	High
4	Writing	3.89	0.949	4	High
6	Teaching methods	3.87	0.941	5	High
2	Listening	3.79	0.753	6	High
	Overall	3.91	0.762	-	High
No	Implementation of communication skills	-	-	-	-

listen to the speaker especially at scholastic education, due to the communication channel between the teacher (sender) and the student (receptient). On the other hand, the lowest skill available was; eye contact with the student addressed at 3.28. As formerly mentioned, this is due to the large number of students crowded in classrooms which makes it difficult to deal with students as such.

Table 5 also shows that under reading, the highest skill available was reading the text clearly without mistakes at 4.47. This may be attributed to the nature of the curriculum of the Arabic language which pays reading classes greater attention than other skills of the textbook which causes teachers to direct practice in the classroom to this skill.

On the other hand, the lowest skill available was; training students to appreciate the text and emotional expression through employing expressive words and expressions at an average of 3.77. This may be accountable on the fact that there is little or no emphasis on high thinking skills and the emotional objective while preparing reading classes. It is also because teachers focus solely on the text itself rather than on its meaning, especially if taking into account the accumulative weakness of students in Arabic language which forces the teacher to exert the maximum effort to communicate the basic level of the course.

While under writing, the highest skill available was; paying careful attention to grammar while writing at 4.14. This is related to the nature of Arabic language teachers and their ability to use correct grammatical structures in writing as well as their ability to practice their writing skills when communicating with the students and writing the major points on the board or through a slide show. However, the lowest skill proved to be available was; writing points succinctly without repetition at 3.25. This indicates that the teachers elaborate too much while writing, neither heeding to brevity nor summary, on the basis that this may benefit students more, particularly when there are students who face

Table 5: Analysis of areas of effective communication skills for Arabic language teachers at the higher elementary stage in Jordan

No.	Items	Average	SD	Rank	Availability
2	The teacher speaks clearly	4.40	1.017	1	High
6	His tone is relevant to the topic	4.25	0.995	2	High
7	He uses ample evidence when convincing students of his argument	4.08	1.158	3	High
8	He speaks calmly and pauses to give chance for others to speak	3.98	1.204	4	High
3	He calls students by their names when addressing them	3.90	1.234	5	High
9	He thanks students once they finish their participation	3.77	1.243	6	High
4	He relates the information to the student's reality	3.74	1.143	7	High
1	Smiling while addressing students	3.62	1.208	8	Medium
5	Maintaining a close distance and eye contact when addressing a student	3.60	1.223	9	Medium
Speaking communication skill		3.93	0.764	-	High
13	Paying all his attention to the speaker	4.24	1.048	1	High
10	Listening carefully to his participating students	4.16	0.992	2	High
18	Directing students to listen carefully to their colleges while speaking	4.13	1.095	3	High
15	Waiting until the student finishes before he comments on his participation	3.84	1.198	4	High
16	Inviting the student to continue his speech using encouraging expressions	3.72	1.250	5	High
12	Nodding his head while listening to a student as an indication of his approval	3.66	1.264	6	Medium
17	Listening to the students' learning problems	3.54	1.234	7	Medium
14	Outside disturbance does not hinder his ability to listen to a student	3.50	1.285	8	Medium
11	Using eye contact with the participating student	3.28	1.210	9	Medium
Overall listening skill		3.79	0.753	-	High
20	Reading the text fluently without committing mistakes	4.47	0.908	1	High
22	Reading clearly and loudly	4.30	1.144	2	High
21	Using reading speed relative to the type of text	4.06	1.083	3	High
23	Varying tones while reading according to the text	4.01	1.053	4	High
26	Stressing the main objective of the text while reading	3.95	1.143	5	High
19	Preparing students before reading the text through raising critical thinking questions	3.93	1.130	6	High
25	Organizing the reading material in an interesting way	3.89	1.130	7	High
24	Translating punctuation marks into feelings and emotions not only through the tone but also by facial expressions	3.87	1.126	8	High
27	Training students to appreciate the text and emotional expression through employing expressive words and expressions	3.77	1.237	9	High
Overall reading skill		4.03	0.811	-	High
35	Paying careful attention to grammar while writing	4.14	1.178	1	High
29	Writing the headlines before launching discussion	4.10	1.208	2	High
36	Varying questions types at exams	4.04	1.258	3	High
30	Writing down the main points while explaining the topic	4.01	1.261	4	High
28	Clear and good handwriting	3.99	1.286	5	High
32	Interesting style of writing	3.90	1.311	6	High
34	Exam questions are drafted clearly without ambiguity	3.82	1.346	7	High
33	Written points are explained in a logical order	3.75	1.184	8	High
31	Writing points succinctly without repetition	3.25	1.407	9	Medium
Overall writing skill		3.89	0.949	-	High
38	Questions raised are related to the topic	4.19	1.083	1	High
40	Clear voice while asking questions	4.18	1.090	2	High
39	Clear language while asking a question	4.12	1.199	3	High
37	Raising purposeful questions	4.10	1.162	4	High
41	Assigning a student for answering the question	3.98	1.326	5	High
45	Raised questions spur discussion in the class	3.89	1.326	6	High
44	Commenting on students answers and commending the good answers	3.81	1.290	7	High
46	Questions gradation from easy to difficult	3.77	1.334	8	High
42	Allocating the student enough time to think of the question before answering	3.74	1.284	9	High
43	Varying questions raised, e.g., close-ended and open-ended questions	3.73	1.158	10	High
Overall question-raising skill		3.95	0.969	-	High
50	Teaching methods utilized motivate students and enthusiasm for learning	4.00	1.212	1	High
51	Using the teaching method relative to the topic of discussion	3.98	1.181	2	High
48	Timely use of teaching methods	3.97	1.119	3	High
52	Ensuring students attention while displaying the teaching method	3.97	1.103	4	High
49	Presenting obvious teaching methods in terms of utilization and design	3.91	1.172	5	High
54	Encouraging students to practice activities related to the teaching method	3.88	1.193	6	High
53	Allowing students for participation and discussion while presenting the teaching method	3.84	1.269	7	High
47	Preparing students before using the teaching method	3.75	1.219	8	High
55	Putting away the teaching method after end of discussion	3.50	1.457	9	Medium
Overall teaching methods utilization skill		3.87	0.941	-	High

difficulty on the linguistic level in particular and the knowledge-based level in general. However, such instructive practice will be at the expense of good and distinguished students.

Within the context of discussing the study results, Table 4 also shows that on the level of question-raising skill, the highest skill available was the questions are related to the topic under discussion at 4.19. This

corroborates the teacher's engrossment in the knowledge-based content and commitment to direct instructional considerations in the curriculum, not focusing on thinking and appreciation skills as stated earlier. This is further confirmed by the result that the lowest skill available in this respect was; varying questions raised, e.g., close-ended and open-ended questions at 3.73.

Concerning the utilization of teaching methods, results revealed that the highest skill available was; teaching methods utilized motivate students and their enthusiasm for learning at 4.00 as confirmed by Wong and Wong that utilizing teaching methods properly is considered the most important principle in effective teaching. This is also emphasized by Harris (1998) that it is highly difficult to achieve educational and instruction goals without the existence of relevant bases, the most notable of all is utilizing the proper educational methods and activities.

By contrast, the lowest skill available was; putting away the teaching method after end of discussion at 3.50. The reason is that there is a general tendency for teachers to attach the teaching methods on the classroom walls that students will always benefit from the information they are intended to provide. Another reason may lie in the fact that there is no place assigned to preserve the teaching methods after completion of discussion.

Secondly, results related to the answer of the sencond question; are there statistical differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ in effective communication skills of Arabic language teachers at the higher elementary stage in Jordan on the basis of gender?

To answer this question, means, standard deviation and independent sample t-test were ascertained to investigate gender-based differences in the availability of effective communication skills for Arabic language teachers at the higher elementary stage in Jordan from the perspective of their students as illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6 shows that there are significant differences in the availability of effective communication skills for Arabic language teachers at the higher elementary stage in Jordan form their students' perspective based on gender for the favor of males. However, all t-values ascertained for all skills were not statistically significant at 0.05 which indicates that there are no significant statistical differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ in the availability of effective communication skills for Arabic language teachers at the higer elementary stage in Jordan from the perspective of their students that are based on gender. The researchers attribute this to the same instructional conditions that either male or female students are subject to; the same environment in terms of students numbers, textbooks and academic preparation of teachers.

Table 6: Means, standard deviations and independent sample t-test of gender-based differences in the availability of effective communication skills for Arabic language teachers at the higher elementary stage in Jordan from the perspective of their students

Areas of effective communication skills	Gender	Mean	SD	t-test	df	Significance level
Speaking	Male	3.94	0.744	0.467	611	0.640
	Female	3.91	0.781	-	-	-
Listening	Male	3.80	0.735	0.477	611	0.633
	Female	3.77	0.769	-	-	-
Reading	Male	4.05	0.785	0.694	611	0.488
	Female	4.01	0.832	-	-	-
Writing	Male	3.91	0.927	0.619	611	0.536
	Female	3.87	0.967	-	-	-
Question-raising	Male	3.97	0.947	0.489	611	0.625
	Female	3.94	0.989	-	-	-
Utilizing teaching	Male	3.88	0.922	0.388	611	0.698
	Female	3.85	0.957	-	-	-
Overall communication	Male	3.93	0.737	0.592	611	0.554
	Female	3.89	0.783	-	-	-

CONCLUSION

Results revealed that the degree of possessing effective communication skills for Arabic language teachers based on the viewpoint of their students ranked high. Also, the study found out that there are no statistical differences in the degree of the teachers' possession of these skills in terms of gender. Depending on the formerly stated results, the researchers present a number of relevant recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the results the study yielded, the researchers came up with the following recommendations:

- Prompting Arabic language teachers to activate the listening skill in the classroom
- The need to prepare a room in each school for the design and preservation of teaching methods
- Reducing the number of students in classrooms that the teacher becoms capable of observing the best instructional techniques and varifying them
- Taking into consideration that the course material required should correlate with the period of the school term which permits more emphasis on intellectual and aesthetic aspects of the texts

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