

**Buzz Groups to Develop EFL Students'
Critical Listening and Reduce their Oral
Communication Apprehension**

By

**Dr. Samah Zakareya Ahmad
Assistance Professor of TEFL
Curriculum and Instruction Dept.
Faculty of Education, Suez University**

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ملخص البحث باللغة العربية :

تناولت الدراسة الحالية أثر مجموعات الطنين علي الاستماع الناقد وقلق التواصل الشفهي لدي طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. كما تناولت الدراسة العلاقة بين الاستماع الناقد وقلق التواصل الشفهي. شاركت في الدراسة ٣٧ طالبة. تم قياس كل من الاستماع الناقد وقلق التواصل الشفهي لدي الطالبات قبل وبعد استخدام جلسات مجموعات الطنين التي استمرت لمدة فصل دراسي كامل، مرة أسبوعيا. أظهر التحليل الإحصائي باستخدام اختبار "ت" لعينتين مترابطتين بين متوسطي درجات مجموعة الدراسة في القياسين القبلي والبعدي حدوث انخفاض دال إحصائيا في قلق التواصل الشفهي بينما لم يحدث نمو للاستماع الناقد بصورة دالة إحصائيا بين الاستماع الناقد وقلق التواصل الشفهي. كما أظهر التحليل الإحصائي وجود علاقة ارتباطية موجبة دالة إحصائيا لذلك خلصت الباحثة إلي أنه يمكن استخدام مجموعات الطنين لخفض قلق التواصل الشفهي لدي طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

مجموعات الطنين، الاستماع الناقد، قلق التواصل الشفهي، طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

Abstract

The present study investigated how buzz group sessions affected EFL students' critical listening and oral communication apprehension. Moreover, the study investigated the relationship between critical listening and oral communication apprehension. Thirty-seven students at Jubail College of Education, IAU University participated in the study. They were pretested in critical listening and oral communication apprehension before and after the implementation of buzz group sessions. Using buzz groups lasted a whole semester once a week. Statistical analysis using paired-samples t-test showed a significant reduction in participants' oral communication apprehension while their critical listening did not significantly improve. Moreover, a positive correlation was found between critical listening and oral communication apprehension. Therefore, it was concluded that the buzz group technique can be used to reduce the oral communication apprehension of EFL students .

Keywords:

buzz groups, critical listening, oral communication apprehension, EFL Students

1.Introduction:

Listening plays an essential role in second language pedagogy (Zeng & Goh, 2018) as it is the main channel for language input and acquisition (Peterson, 2001). Mastering listening skills helps college students at educational, interpersonal, and career levels (Wolvin, 2012) and effective listening skills are usually connected to effective performance at the workplace (Flynn, Välikoski, & Grau, 2008). Listening is an active communication process (Parks, 2019), or as McHugh (2015) believes, "listening is an act of the will" (p. 219). It requires both attention to the source of the sound and need to make sense of the voices heard (Bulut & Ertem, 2018). Therefore, effective listening requires individuals to become critical listeners (Kazu & Demiralp, 2017).

The myriad of opinions and messages human beings receive every day emphasizes the need for possessing the capability to critically analyze what they listen to (Borchers, 2005; Larson, 2005). Critical listening is an effective listening process (Kazu & Demiralp, 2017) as well as an essential element of the critical thinking process (Interpersonal & Corporate Communication Center, 2019). The critical listener does more than hearing. That is, he/she senses; interprets; evaluates; and responds to the claims being made, the arguments being offered, and the analogies and examples being used (Kazu & Demiralp, 2017; Sullivan, 2009). That is why Floyd and Clements (2005) believe that critical listening must occupy a crucial place in teaching effective listening.

Critical listening is important in all stages of life. First, it is important for children because as children learn the language, they learn to think (Sullivan, 2009). At school, it will enable students to comprehend accurately, analyze critically, and evaluate what has been told in class (Kazu & Demiralp, 2017) as well as help them become decision makers and never stop to learn (Arono, 2015). Moreover, it has become an ability required in different professions as many employers need people who possess critical listening ability (Arono, 2014). However, few individuals have critical

listening ability in the society (Arono, 2015) as a limited number of instructors can teach students how to use and develop their critical listening skills (Kazu & Demiralp, 2017).

Employers also require people equipped with effective foreign language oral communication ability (Mitchell, Skinner, & White 2010; Shaharuddin, Nawi, & Mansor, 2015). However, many individuals cannot express themselves orally in the target language (Cristobal & Lasaten, 2018) and it has become common to find many graduates who are apprehensive to speak in English despite their early exposure to the language at school (Aeni, Jabu, Rahman, & Strid, 2017). This might be due to the fact that among all language skills, oral communication is the most demanding (Tanveer, 2007), challenging (Kiliç, Eryilmaz, & Yilmaz Dinç, 2018), and apprehension-causing skill for language learners (Karatas, Alcia, Bademcioglu, & Ergin, 2016). Therefore, there is an increasing acknowledgment that students' inability to develop proper oral communication skills may be caused by a range of fears related to oral communication tasks or situations, referred to as oral communication apprehension (OCA) (Matuszak, 2013).

OCA can be conceived as a general fear or unwillingness to speak or talk to other people in different contexts such as speaking in groups, in meetings, or public speaking (Byrne, Flood, & Shanahan, 2012; Cristobal & Lasaten, 2018). It can be manifested in various symptoms such as: having the feelings of tension, discomfort (Tang, 2016), stress (Bouddage & Elfatih, 2018), anxiety, apprehension, and nervousness (Kiliç et al., 2018). These symptoms also include: freezing up, being in a confused state (Ortega, 2014), sweating, and trembling during speech (Tiono & Sylvia, 2004). Moreover, students with high levels of OCA usually avoid communication situations and prefer to remain silent during classroom discussions (Cristobal & Lasaten, 2018).

Although it is normal for everyone to experience some level of fear or nervousness during oral communication (Lucas, 2012), high levels of OCA can result in debilitating consequences on EFL learners (Arnold, 2007; Byrne et al., 2012; Tang, 2016). OCA can inhibit learners' readiness to communicate (Amiri & Puteh, 2017) which hinders them from being fully engaged in the learning process (Francis & Miller, 2007) as well as in classroom interactions and discussions (Cristobal & Lasaten, 2018). This may lead to compromising their learning potential as well as their whole academic performance (Awan, Azher, Anwar, & Naz, 2010; Azizifar, Faryadian, & Gowhary, 2014; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012) not only in learning English (Toubot, Seng, & Abdullah, 2018) but also in learning other core subjects (Cristobal & Lasaten, 2018), causing learners to fail in achieving their desired goals and to lose motivation (Kiliç et al., 2018). These negative effects can also hinder success in work contexts (Blume, Baldwin, & Ryan, 2013). Due to its detrimental effects, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore OCA among EFL learners (Abu Taha & Abu Rezeq, 2018). Consequently, OCA should be alleviated before attempting to enhance communication skills (Byrne et al., 2012).

As an associate professor of TEFL at Jubail College of Education, IAU University, the researcher has got the opportunity to notice the low level of critical listening as well as the high level of OCA among Saudi EFL students. In order to make sure that her remarks have been correct, she administered a critical listening test and an OCA scale to a group of EFL students. The results confirmed the researcher's remarks. Therefore, she was motivated to investigate the effect of buzz group sessions on EFL students' critical listening and oral communication apprehension.

Review of Literature

Devised by J. Donald Phillips and referred to as the Philips 66 Technique (Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018), buzz groups are short participative sessions

where the instructor quickly and extemporaneously divides a large group into smaller ones (Hurt, 2012) (duos, trios, or more depending on the activity) (Kaur, 2017) without moving students from their seats (Arivananthan, 2015). The instructor then gives each group a discussion-based task (Jones, 2007a) as well as a brief set of rules and asks them to brainstorm for a short period of time (generally no more than five minutes) (Cantillon, 2003). At the end of the time allotted for the discussion, each group reports on the results to the class (Wilson, 2013) or sometimes joins another sub-group in order to share their findings (Aguilar, 2013). The term buzz refers to the noise or buzz of the classroom as students discuss their ideas which is similar to the sound heard around a beehive (Soni, 2004).

Buzz group sessions are mini discussions (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005) established quickly to share opinions, viewpoints or reactions (Ihsan, 2019). However, they are actually different from brainstorming because they generally emphasize problem solving (Buzz Groups, 2015). During these sessions, students in the groups are assigned different roles. For example, one student can be responsible for recording, another for reporting while a third for leading the group (Tuncay, 2013). As for the instructor, he/she may monitor the discussions, drop by and listen or prompt, but not usually participate actively in the discussion (Edmunds & Brown, 2010).

Buzz group sessions can be used when the instructor has groups that are too large for traditional discussion (Wilson, 2013), when discussing complex topics (Buzz Groups, 2015), or when too many students are trying to contribute at once (Newble & Cannon, 2001). They can also be used to help learners defeat some of the reasons why they are hesitant to speak in groups (Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018). Moreover, instructors can use buzz group sessions for many purposes including: recapping on the previous day's lesson (Orr, 2017), reducing the boredom of listening to one way presentation (Soni, 2004), stimulating discussion (Setyawan, 2015),

gathering feedback on a topic (Arivananthan, 2015), and maximizing student participation in the teaching-learning process (Surakarta, 2016). They can also use them for generating common ground (Ricketts & Ricketts, 2010), clarifying doubts by mutual consultation (Soni, 2004), discovering areas in which the group would like more information or further study, and evaluating a lecture/lesson in terms of its value to the participants (Aguilar, 2013). Additionally, buzz group sessions can be used to get students to respond to a course-related question (Arivananthan, 2015), generate ideas, solve a problem, or reach a consensus on ideas about a topic (Teaching Quality & Innovation, 2018).

Buzz group foundations

There are four different theoretical foundations for using buzz groups. The first is the cooperative learning approach which aims to transform classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences (Gillies, 2016) through organizing learners to work in groups in order to achieve a common goal or solve a common problem (Sharan, 2010). The buzz group is a cooperative learning strategy (Muntaha, 2016) as it possesses the five characteristics of cooperative learning identified by Johnson and Johnson (2009). These characteristics are: promotive interaction, positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, appropriate use of social skills, and group processing. While they are buzzing, individuals can exchange ideas drawn from their collective experiences, knowledge, and abilities (Meng, 2000).

Another theoretical basis for buzz groups is the learner-centered approach which places students center stage, giving greater emphasis to the learning processes than to those of teaching (Illera & Escofet, 2009). This approach addresses the learner's intellect, social skills, personal experiences, and personality (Sweat-Guy & Buzzetto-More, 2007) and encourages students to communicate with each other, help each other, and value each other's contributions (Jones, 2007b). Buzz groups are learner-centered

(O'Neill & McMahon, 2005) as they focus on the learners through allowing them to exchange ideas (Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018), draw on their wide collective experiences (Young, 2011), and practice their leadership skills (Ricketts & Ricketts, 2010). Moreover, they are adaptable to the learners' expertise and knowledge (Jeffries, 2014; Puntambekar & Hubscher, 2005).

The third theoretical basis for buzz groups is constructivism where learning is not the receipt of information and students are not passive recipients of knowledge (Piaget, 2013). According to this theory, teachers facilitate learning through monitoring the progress of learners and encouraging them to learn, rather than giving prepackaged answers (Stary & Weichhart, 2012). Buzz groups move the responsibility from the teacher to the small groups to the individual (Hsu & Malkin, 2011). They help students check their own understanding (Jaques, 2003) and process and use new information to solve problems (Cantillon, 2003).

The last foundation for buzz groups is Bandura's Social Learning Theory which proposes that individuals learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling (Bandura, 1977). According to this theory, learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context. Thus, students learn via interaction and communication with others (Bandura, 1986). Buzz groups employ the social nature of learning (Hsu & Malkin, 2011) as the class is divided into small groups, each given a small timed task which involves students talking to each other, creating a hubbub of noise as they work. Their outcomes can then be shared with the whole class through feedback (Race, 2015).

Advantages of buzz groups

The advantages of dividing a large class into buzz groups are varied. First, buzz groups can be introduced into any large group presentation (Jeffries, 2014) making short discussions easy without the difficulty and

waste of time and effort of splitting people up into groups and moving them to different locations (Arivananthan, 2015). Therefore, buzz groups increase group effectiveness (Cragan, Wright, & Kasch, 2009). Second, buzz groups can be used to change the pace, energy, and focus of the learning process (Young, 2011) through providing an opportunity for students to develop confidence and to express themselves without feeling that they are being evaluated (O'Neil, 2005). Third, they can be used as an icebreaker at the beginning of a session as well as to connect one session to the next during a multi-session event (Arivananthan, 2015).

Moreover, buzz group sessions have many advantages for both teachers and students. As for teachers, they help them shift the session out of lecture mode (Arivananthan 2015), involve every student in the discussion process directly (Surakarta, 2016), and overcome the problem of students' resistance to interactivity (Hurt, 2012). In addition, they generate discussion without much effort (Young, 2011), gain some idea of what students know (Jaques, 2003), facilitate diversity of opinions (Myers & Anderson, 2008), and get all the students actively engaged (Exley & Dennick, 2004). According to Ahmad (2018, p. 18), using buzz groups "makes a gymnasium-sized classroom feel like a coffee shop."

As for students, buzz groups promote small-group interactions (Surakarta, 2016) through giving each student a chance to get involved in the discussion and express themselves equally (Wilson, 2013). Another advantage of buzz groups for students is that these sessions increase active and deep learning (Horgan, 2003) as they provide a stimulating change in the locus of attention (Jaques, 2003) as well as a change of pace for participants (Arivananthan 2015). They help students practice their cognitive skills (O'Neil, 2005), increase their recall, and deepen their understanding of the material (Anastas^{٢٠١٠}, ٤). Buzz groups also enable students to discuss any difficulties in understanding the topic that might be too embarrassing to reveal to the whole class (Alinea, 2010).

Buzz group models

Educators suggest different models for using buzz group sessions. For example, Lumsden, Lumsden, and Wiethoff (2009) recommend a four-step model which includes: 1) dividing students quickly into groups of six, 2) giving each group a card with a topic/question to discuss as well as the format for reporting their ideas, 3) allowing the groups to discuss the topic/question for 6 minutes, and 4) asking a student from each group to briefly report the findings reached by his/her group. Another model for buzz group use is introduced by Hamilton (cited in Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018) who assumes that teachers using buzz groups should go through the following steps: 1) dividing the class into small groups of six, 2) explaining the specific topic to be discussed and making sure that all students comprehend it, 3) asking each group to nominate a leader and a writer/recorder, 4) asking students to engage in the discussion for a few minutes, 5) circulating among the groups to monitor the progress occurring in each group, 6) having each group share their ideas, and 7) summarizing the shared ideas and linking them with what comes next. A further model is suggested by Arivananthan (2015). It includes the following nine steps:

1. Participants form groups of either two or three with their immediate neighbors without moving from their seats.
2. The teacher introduces a specific topic to each group to discuss and formulate their ideas in three to five minutes.
3. The teacher asks each group to nominate a presenter to feedback to the class.
4. As each group buzzes, the teacher encourages students to share their views briefly and respond to the comments of others within their group.

5. When time is up, the teacher calls a halt to the discussions and asks each presenter to share his/her group's response to the question to the whole class in only one minute.
6. The teacher gives the groups three to five minutes to discuss the just concluded presentation and come up with one question for the presenter.
7. A representative from each group asks the presenter his/her group's question.
8. The presenter answers the questions.
9. Another presenter proceeds to share the ideas reached by his/her group.

Guidelines for implementing buzz groups

Some guidelines are offered on how to implement buzz group sessions. These guidelines can be classified into guidelines regarding formation of groups, allotted time, topics discussed, and frequency of using buzz group sessions. As for the guidelines regarding formation of the groups, the class should be split arbitrarily into mixed ability (Mawindo, 2004) small groups (Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018) of two to three (Anastas^{٢٠١٠} ؛ Jones, 2007a; Orr, 2017), three to four (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005; Dur, 2013), five to six (Barkley, Cross, Major, 2005), or six to eight students (Ricketts & Ricketts, ^{٢٠١٠}), depending on the activity that will be done (Surakarta, 2016). Students should not be moved from their locations (Arivananthan, 2015) as the teacher can ask them to turn to their neighbors (Jeffries, 2014) in the same row (Hurt, 2012) or to turn around to face those in the row immediately behind or in front of them (Lumsden et al., 2009). As for the time allotted, the teacher can give the groups three (Anastas^{٢٠١٠} ؛ Jeffries, 2014), five (Young, 2011), or six minutes for discussion (Cragan et al., 2009). For large classes, the teacher can keep a lid on the time required for reporting back to class by asking presenters only to share new ideas not

already shared by other groups (Arivananthan, 2015) or by letting one group report one point at a time until all groups have contributed (Mawindo, 2004).

Regarding the topics to be discussed during the buzz session, groups can work on the same topic (Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018) or on different but related topics (Barkley et al., 2005). The topic can also be subdivided so that different groups have different parts of the topic (Jeffries, 2014). In all cases, the topic should be about something all students can discuss (Exley & Dennick, 2004) and it should also be clear (Newble & Cannon, 2001), simple (Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018), and achievable within the time allocated to it (Dennick & Spencer, 2011). The teacher should also explain the topic before the class is divided into groups (Mawindo, 2004). As for the frequency of using buzz groups, educators suggest that they should be used once or twice during a lecture (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005) and not be used every now and then as this can lead to boredom (Soni, 2004). In this context, Ilyas (2015) suggests that buzz groups should not be used only to attract students' attention but also to engage students in thought as well as discussion through asking for a minute of quiet individual reflection before the discussion starts.

Roles of the teacher and students in buzz groups

Teachers and students can play many roles in buzz group sessions. As for the teacher, he/she can play important roles before, during, and after the discussion. Before the discussion, the teacher can present the topic on a PowerPoint slide as well as explain it and make sure that everyone understands what is to be discussed (Young, 2011). During the discussion, the teacher should roam among the groups to support students and monitor their progress (Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018). He/she should also encourage

and help students (Mawindo, 2004), provide assistance if necessary, and give a one-minute warning before the end of the buzz time (Arivananthan, 2015). After the discussion is over, the teacher should manage feedback concisely (Mawindo, 2004), summarize students' ideas (Dennick & Spencer, 2011), and connect the topic discussed with the next topic(s) (Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018).

In addition to discussing the topic posed by the teacher, students in buzz groups can also play different roles such as leader, recorder, and spokesperson (Ricketts & Ricketts, ٢٠١٠). As for the leader, he/she should ensure that all the members in the group stick to the assigned topic (Hurt, 2012). He/she should also encourage all members to participate and not allow a limited number of highly verbal members to dominate the discussion (Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018). In this context, Mawindo (2004) recommends that group leadership roles should be rotated regularly. Another role is that of the recorder. This member will be responsible for taking notes of the discussion (Young, 2011) accurately writing down the key ideas discussed and the conclusions reached (Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018). Another role is that of the reporter or spokesperson. This member reports the comments of the group (Jeffries, 2014; Teaching Quality & Innovation, 2018) to the whole class (Surakarta, 2016). According to Jones (2007b), the appointment of a spokesperson may facilitate the reporting phase.

Due to the promising features of the buzz groups, the researcher attempted to use them to improve the critical listening of Saudi EFL students and reduce their OCA. According to an extensive literature search, some studies investigated the effect of using buzz groups on learners' reading (e.g., Aji, 2012; Budikafa & Lio, 2019; Hapsari & Wijaya, 2019; Milaningrum, 2011; Nuriati, 2015; Sari, 2017), writing (e.g., Larasanti & Marlina, 2019; Nimah, 2015; Pangaribuan & Manik, 2018; Ula, 2019), listening (Muntaha, 2016), and speaking (e.g., Novitasari & Wardhani,

2018; Wardhani, & Novitasari, 2018). However, no previous studies have attempted to examine the effect of buzz groups on critical listening or OCA.

Hypotheses of the study

1. There would be a statistically significant difference in EFL students' critical listening between the pretest and the posttest.
2. There would be a statistically significant difference in EFL students' OCA between the pretest and the posttest.
3. There would be a statistically significant correlation between EFL students' scores in critical listening and OCA.

2. Method

Research design

The research design used in the present study is a one-group pre-posttest design where 37 students at Jubail College of Education, IAU University were pretested in critical listening and OCA before and after the implementation of buzz group sessions. Statistical analysis was used to test the differences between participants' means of scores in critical listening and OCA between the two administrations. Moreover, students' scores in the posttest of critical listening and OCA were correlated to find out the relationship between these two constructs.

Variables

The present study included three variables. One was an independent variable (buzz groups) and two were dependent variables (critical listening & OCA). An operational definition for each is presented below.

• Buzz groups

A buzz group is a short session where learners quickly form small groups without leaving their seats and engage into discussion to find answers to a question posed by the teacher. A representative from each group shares the findings reached in her group to the whole class and answers the questions

posed by other groups. Finally, contributions of all groups are summarized in one report.

- **Critical listening**

Critical listening is an active listening process where EFL students: 1) recognize the central claim of the speaker, 2) guess the speaker's intended meaning, 3) recognize objectivity/bias, 4) recognize tone, 5) distinguish fact from opinion, 6) evaluate the employed evidence, 7) recognize generalization, 8) compare prior knowledge with new information in the text, 9) recognize inconsistencies, and 10) find ambiguity.

- **OCA**

OCA is a general fear, anxiety, or unwillingness to speak or talk to other people in different contexts, such as speaking in groups, speaking in meetings, engaging in interpersonal communication, and public speaking.

Participants

Thirty-seven third-year EFL students at Jubail College of Education, IAU University participated in the present study. Their ages ranged between 19-20 years. They had been learning English for at least 10 years.

Measures

1. A Critical listening test

Literature related to critical listening was reviewed (e. g., Ferrari-Bridgers, Vogel, & Lynch 2017; Thompson, Leintz, Nevers, & Witkowski, 2004; Worthington & Fitch-Hauser, 2018). Based on this review, a list of 17 critical listening skills was created in the form of a scale of importance (very important-important-unimportant). This list was checked by a number of TEFL specialists to decide which critical listening skills are essential for EFL students. The most important ten skills were selected to be included in the test. These skills are previously mentioned in the operational definition of critical listening.

Two oral texts from Lougheed's (2013) guide to the TOEIC test were used as stimulus material for participants. The oral texts were selected based on the content to be interesting and the level to be appropriate for

participants' proficiency level. Each text was followed by 10 multiple-choice questions with four options. Each of the 10 questions measured one of the selected critical listening skills. The total score of the test was 20 points. Criterion validity was achieved by administering the test along with Kazu and Demiralp's (2017) Critical Listening Proficiency Scale to a group of EFL students. Pearson's Coefficient of correlation between students' scores on the devised critical listening test and their scores on the Critical Listening Proficiency Scale was 0.89 (significant at the 0.05 level). For reliability, the test was administered twice, with a two-week interval. Correlation coefficient between the two administrations was 0.82 (significant at the 0.05 level).

2. An OCA scale

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) (McCroskey, 2006) was used to measure participants' OCA. Although several OCA instruments exist, the PRCA-24 was selected because of its wide use and reliable and valid nature. PRCA-24 is a 24-item self-reporting survey that measures the overall construct of OCA as well as four sub-constructs which relate to different communication contexts (group discussion, meetings, interpersonal communication, and public speaking). Each of the four constructs contains six items, three positively and three negatively worded to avoid response bias. A five-interval Likert scale is used which ranges from strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The overall score ranges from 24 to 120.

The researcher administered the scale twice to a pilot group of students (n=34) with a two-week interval. This pilot administration showed that all the items of the scale were understandable to the students. Structure validity (the level of correlation of the score of each construct with the total score of the questionnaire) was found to be 0.82 for group discussion, 0.87 for meetings, 0.91 for interpersonal communication, and 0.89 for public

speaking (all significant at 0.05 level). Test-retest coefficient of correlation was found to be 88 (significant at 0.05 level).

Procedures

Procedures were carried out at Jubail College of Education, IAU University during the second term of the academic year 2018-2019. They included three main phases: pretesting, treatment, and posttesting. In pretesting and posttesting, all participants were administered to both the critical listening test and the OCA scale before and after the treatment, respectively. Concerning the treatment, buzz group sessions were used once a week and its use went through three successive stages: before the buzz, during the buzz, and after the buzz. Below are the steps in each stage. The figure below summarizes these steps.

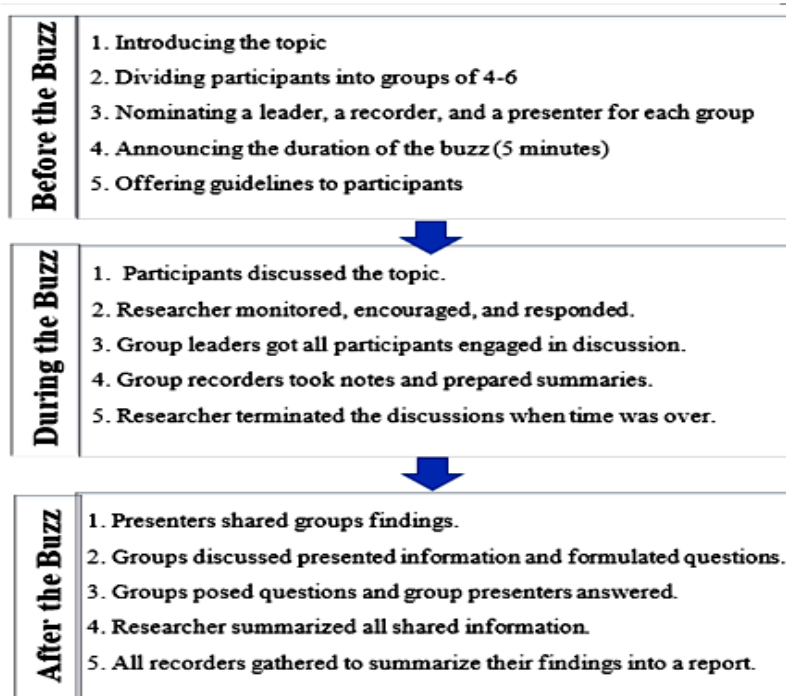


Figure. Procedures of the Buzz Group Technique

Before the buzz

1. The researcher introduced and explained the topic to be discussed by the groups and made sure that everyone understood what was to be discussed through asking for and answering any questions regarding the procedure.
2. The researcher asked participants to turn to those nearest to them to make groups of four to six without moving from their seats.
3. The researcher advised each group to nominate a leader, a recorder, and a presenter.
4. The researcher announced the duration of the discussion as a maximum of five minutes
5. The researcher gave participants the following guidelines:
 - Ensure that you understand the assignment.
 - Keep each other involved in the process
 - Respect and listen to each other
 - Encourage each other to participate and contribute.
 - Recognize that everyone has important ideas and perspectives to contribute.

During the buzz

1. Participants discussed the given topic.
2. As each group buzzed, the researcher circulated, monitored, and encouraged participants to share their views briefly and respond to the comments of others within their group. When necessary, she raised questions to stimulate the discussion or bring the discussion back on track. She warned the participants when there was one or two minutes left. She was also careful not to stay too long at any group so that the members would not direct their questions to her.

3. The group leader made certain that the members of the group became acquainted with each other, led the discussion, and tried to get all the members of the group to participate.
4. The group recorder took notes and prepared summaries to be presented after the buzz was over.
5. When time was over, the researcher ended the discussion.

After the buzz

1. The researcher called the presenter of each group to report to the class the findings reached by her group in only one minute.
2. The researcher gave the groups two minutes to discuss the just concluded presentation and come up with one question for the presenter.
3. A representative from each group asked the presenter her group's question and the presenter answered the questions. Another presenter proceeded to share the ideas reached by her group and the process repeated till all the groups presented their ideas.
4. The researcher acknowledged each group's input, summarized by recapping the main points, and gave feedback.
5. The researcher asked the recorders to get together to summarize their findings into one report on the topic discussed.

Results

Participants' means of scores in the pretest and posttest of critical listening and OCA were compared using paired-samples t-test. As for critical listening, paired-samples t-test showed no statistically significant difference ($t=1.90$, $p>0.05$) between the pretest and posttest. (See Table 1). However, a statistically significant different concerning OCA means of scores appeared in favor of the pretest ($t=15.79$, $p<0.05$) (See Table 2). Moreover, Pearson's Coefficient of correlation showed a statistically significant positive correlation between students' scores in critical listening

and OCA both in the pretest (coefficient of correlation was 0.48) or in the posttest (coefficient of correlation was 0.57).

Table 1. Paired- samples t-test for the difference between the means of scores of the participants in the pretest and posttest of critical listening

Posttest-Pretest	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
	.60	1.91	0.31	1.90	36	0.66

Table 2. Paired- samples t-test for the difference between the means of scores of the participants in the pretest and posttest of OCA

Posttest-Pretest	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
	30.68	11.82	1.94	15.79	36	0.00

Discussion

The first hypothesis of the present study stated that there would be a statistically significant difference in EFL students' critical listening between the pretest and the posttest. In order to test this hypothesis, paired samples t-test was used to compare the means of scores of the participants in the two administrations of the critical listening test. Statistical analysis showed no significant difference ($t=1.90$, $p>0.05$). Therefore, this hypothesis was rejected. A possible explanation for this finding might be the brevity of the experiment. Perhaps one semester was not enough to improve such a complex skill as critical listening.

The second hypothesis of the present study stated that there would be no statistically significant difference in EFL students' OCA between the pretest

and the posttest. In order to test this hypothesis, paired samples t-test was used to compare the means of scores of the participants in the two administrations of the OCA. Statistical analysis showed a significant difference in favor of the pretest ($t=15.79$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, this hypothesis was accepted.

Many explanations can account for this result. First, buzz groups were found to enhance students' confidence (Permata, 2016) as students will learn by themselves, teach each other, and become independent learners. They can use their own knowledge and share their knowledge with their friends. Moreover, buzz groups provided participants with a good opportunity to express their ideas freely within the small group. Some students are weak and may become reluctant to participate in large group discussions and by having these students work in small groups like buzz groups, they will have a better opportunity to express their thoughts and to get a chance to increase their linguistic repertoire (Milaningrum, 2011). They release students' tension and frustration (O'Neil, 2005) and make them more enthusiastic in the class (Ariyani, 2014). They also encourage quiet, shy, or introverted students to participate and contribute since they may feel more comfortable talking in small groups (Arivananthan 2015), especially if they know that another member of the group will report the ideas of the group to the class (Young, 2011). This explanation agrees with Boudreau's (2012) belief that some learners feel safer in a small group while they may be less communicative in a larger group.

Another explanation for the second result of the present study is that buzz group sessions have clear steps and appropriate rules. Therefore, students will not get confused (Milaningrum, 2011). Moreover, buzz group sessions are interesting and enjoyable or as Orr (2017, p. 8) points out, "the sound of a productive buzz in the classroom is far more energizing than a

lone voice speaking in a room of 30." This goes along with Brewer's (1997) contention that buzz groups encourages more efficient discussion.

Finally, the third hypothesis of the present study stated that there would be a statistically significant correlation between EFL students' scores in critical listening and OCA. Pearson's Coefficient of correlation showed a statistically significant positive correlation between students' scores in critical listening and OCA both in the pretest (coefficient of correlation was 0.48) and in the posttest (coefficient of correlation was 0.57). A possible explanation for this result might be the interrelationship between listening ability and oral production ability, proved in different studies (e.g., Celika & Yavuza, 2015; Sadiku, 2015). In this context, Celika and Yavuza (2015) point out that listening and speaking need to be taught simultaneously. Moreover, Sadiku (2015) believes that listening and speaking work in coordination in real life situations. Therefore, integrating them can foster real-life and purposeful communication.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the presented study, it was concluded that the use of buzz group sessions does not improve the critical listening of EFL students. However, it was concluded that buzz group sessions reduce these students' OCA. Moreover, it was concluded that there is a positive relationship between EFL students' critical listening and OCA.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that:

1. buzz group sessions should be used in EFL classes,
2. shy or reluctant EFL students should be provided opportunities to discuss their ideas in small groups,
3. more attention should be given to lowering the level of OCA in EFL classes, and

4. more strategies should be investigated for developing EFL critical listening skills.

Suggestions for Further Research

The researcher suggested conducting more research studies to tackle:

1. using buzz groups for improving EFL speaking skills,
- 2) the effect of buzz groups on EFL learners' engagement in classroom activities, and
- 3) comparing the relative effectiveness of buzz groups and traditional discussion in improving EFL learners' communication skills.

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