

## **The Effect of Practicing Online English Lessons with the Native Speakers Using Cambly Website on Developing First Intermediate Stage EFL Students' Speaking Fluency in Iraq**

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### **Abstract:**

The study explores what is the effectiveness of practicing online English lessons with the native speakers Using Cambly Website, as a computer communication tool, and its impact on developing speaking fluency among first intermediate EFL students in Iraq. Fifty EFL students were selected randomly at Dar Al-Ilm intermediate School for Boys in the second half of 2023/2024 academic year. Sample was divided into two groups, a control, and an experimental. Each group consisted of 25 students equally. The participants of the experimental group taught speaking skills using Cambly to make communicate with native speakers for a period of 6-week. While the students of the control group were taught speaking through traditional methods. It was found that the experimental group students got higher scores than the control group students. Thus, online lessons with natives helped students developing speaking ability.

**Keywords:** (Cambly, educational technology, online communication, and speaking).

## Introduction

Language is a tool for communication and connection in daily human interaction between individuals and society. In order to be able to use language suitably and effectively to build good communication with others, there are four skills that must be learned and mastered in language learning (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Chaney, (1998 as cited in Pranata, et. al. 2023), defined speaking as the ability of communicating verbally or non-verbally, giving meanings, and sharing ideas. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, speaking is one of the four basic skills in the English language. Speaking is saying words orally to communicate as in speaking, making requests, and giving speeches. It is an expression of oneself, opinions, and a way to express ideas and opinions, and a means of communication with others (Al-Abdali, 2024a). It is difficult to reach a level of proficiency in speaking when learning a second language (L2). That is because the less EFL students expose with native speakers.

Therefore, there must be a direct communication with native speaker from time to time to crystalize the fluency of foreign learners. According to Nowrozi (2011), Alharbi (2015), Yen, Hou, & Chang (2015) as cited in Alshammary (2020), the absence of communicating with the natives can result in deficiencies in language learning.

Native speakers are people who speak a specific language as their mother tongue. In other words, a native speaker refers to a native language speaker. Native speakers are often identified as foreigners who use the

English language (Al-Abdali, 2024, b). However, native speakers are not only individuals who use the English language. Native speakers who use the English language are those who live in England, Australia, the United States, New Zealand, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. People born and living in these countries will certainly speak English as their primary language.

According to Brown (2004), there are several criteria for mastering speaking:

- 1) Fluency: which are features that give speech natural qualities, including the use of pauses, rhythm, intonation, stress, speaking rate, turn taking, and interpretation.
- 2) Rules: these are a set of grammatical rules for the language. This set of rules is generally known as grammar.
- 3) Pronunciation. This is the way in which a word or language is pronounced. It is very important in speaking that people understand what we said.
- 4) Comprehension. It is the act or ability to understand something.

It can be said that computer-mediated communication (CMC) is a kind of technology that enable users communicating audio-visually, through text chat, or verbally (Al-Fahadawi and Al-Abdali, 2024; Naji and Al-Abdali, 2024).

As for the types of CMC, CMC tools can be used on line or off line which help users communicating freely even though no internet available (Beatty, 2010).

### **Study Questions**

The current study seeks to answer the following question:

1. What is the Effect of Practicing Online English Lessons with the Native Speakers Using Cambly Website on Developing First Intermediate Stage EFL Students' Speaking Fluency in Iraq?

### **Previous Studies**

#### **1. The Role of Social Media in Language Learning**

Several theories emphasize the importance of social communication in the language learning process.

a. "Hymes (1972) communicative competence theory. This theory stresses on the "speech act rules" that does not pay more attention to learning, instead, it focuses on learning language within its context. As producing syntactically good sentences may not appropriate in some contexts. Thus, focus must be paid on using language in context."

b. "The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1978). This theory emphasizes the social communication with others. It pays more attention to the assistance of others as they are members of society. In other words,

foreign learners need someone who is very skilled in that language to help them learning a language. Thus, it is a kind of social communication.”

Krashen (1982) stated that teaching speaking could not be done directly. Instead, exposing language learners to slightly more advance input than their current proficiency level may improve their proficiency.

Therefore, using Computer–Mediated Communication is a powerful method for teaching languages authentically. As CMC enables learners to learn and practice language in context. This is exactly in line with Vygotsky’s theory that focuses on helping others to learn a language. Thus, CMC is regarded as a tool to help learners to learn and practice a language.

## **2. CMC and Speaking**

Babni, (2019) investigates developing writing skills and performance among Moroccan university students using CMC tools. It was found that CMC tool effected positively on students' writing skills and linguistic performance. Previous work showed that CMC is considered as effective tools and features in the language learning process (Al–Fahadawi, and Al–Abdali, 2023).

### **Study Sample**

Fifty EFL male EFL students in the local government schools in Ramadi city were selected randomly to perform as a study sample. The study sample was randomly selected from Dar Al–Ilm intermediate school for boys from the first intermediate stage, their ages ranging between 13–14

years. The participants have similar cultural and educational backgrounds. Due to Iraqi cultural standards, students in secondary levels study in separate schools for males and females. Therefore, the researcher cannot conduct research in female schools (and vice versa).

### **Data Collection Tools**

Pre-post testes were used to measure students' proficiency before and after conducting the experiment. In addition, the researcher used a proficiency test know the proficiency level of students. The researcher adopted the proficiency test that was used by Alfulaih (2017, cited in Alshammary, 2020). The test consisted of seven questions.

The criteria of evaluating speaking are five, they are; "grammar, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension." To evaluate speaking, a model of speaking which was used by Harris (1969, cited in Alshammary, 2020) was used in this study. 20 points for each criteria, totaling a maximum of 100 points for the entire test. The researcher used Cambly website as a tool to communicate with the native speakers.

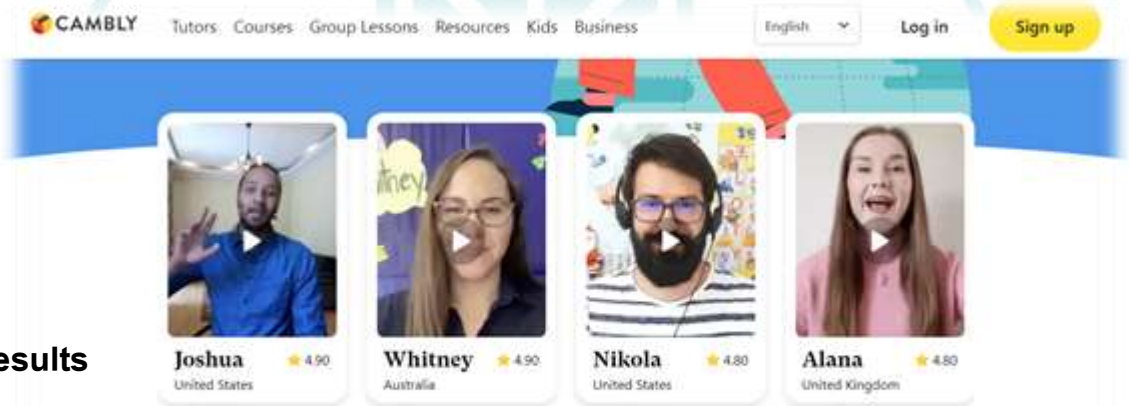
### **Cambly Website**

Cambly website is an educational website that aims at offering online lessons for foreign and second language learners. Thus, it can be defined "A business established in 2013, focusing on helping English language learners practice speaking skills with qualified teachers from their native language (or similar)" (Al-Ghammas, 2020).

Image (1), Cambly Home Page.



Image (2), Native Speakers on Cambly



## Results

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Before evaluating and comparing the average scores of participants in the pretest and posttest, the researcher created descriptive statistics for both

groups using SPSS version 22. Through Table (1), it can be noticed that the average scores of all indicators for the control group did not generally improve and there was no improvement in the scores of the control group in the posttest. The score of the first indicator changed from 51.10 to 56.90, the second indicator from 50.28 to 56.78, the third indicator from 57.26 to 60.12, the fourth indicator from 55.32 to 59.44, and the last indicator from 59.17 to 61.78.

**Table (1) Pretest and posttest scores for students in the control group.**

Speaking indicator	Mean Scores	Mean Scores
	Pre-test	Post-test
Pronunciation	51.10	56.90
Grammar	50.28	56.78
Fluency	57.26	60.12
Vocabulary	55.32	59.44
Comprehension	59.17	61.78

Statistical differences between the average scores of the pretest and posttest for the experimental groups were analyzed. There were statistically significant differences in the mean scores; the researcher may attributed the improvement of the mean scores to the use of Cambly website. Table (2) shows the average scores of all indicators for the experimental group, where it can be noticed that the scores of the students in the experimental



group were significantly increased in the posttest. The score of the first indicator changed from 45.20 to 80.11, the second indicator from 56.57 to 82.48, the third indicator from 61.18 to 83.77, the fourth indicator from 59.25 to 85.37, and the last indicator from 60.23 to 92.16.

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**Table (2) Experimental group Pre-posttests scores**

## Discussion

Results showed, students in the experimental group achieved very high grades in the five speaking criteria (grammar, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension). This progress is attributed to the impact of practicing English language lessons that the experimental group students engaged in online with native speakers using the Cambly website, leading to the development of fluency in speaking English as a foreign language among first intermediate school students in Iraq.

The results of the current study align with Yen et al. (2015) study who used two tools, they are, offline (Facebook) tool and online (Skype) tool. Their study concluded that CMC tools significantly improved the efficiency of English language students in speaking.

In the same context, many studies explored the effectiveness of direct online communicative lessons with native speakers on the second and foreign language improvement. CMC is one of these tools which investigated by Yeh and Lai (2019). The researchers explored if online lessons via CMC may develop students' speaking proficiency or not? After analyzing the data, it was found that online lessons via CMC provide effective tools and advantages in the language learning process (Al-Fahadawi, and Al-Abdali, 2023).

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that online lessons with native speakers using the Cambly website have a great effect on English language learners' speaking proficiency in Iraq. Three main results were obtained at the end of the study. Firstly, Cambly had a significant impact regarding students' speaking proficiency. Secondly, participants showed positive attitudes towards using CMC tools for practicing speaking in a second language. Thirdly, participants believed that Cambly has numerous benefits and features, i.e., comfortable and pressure-free environment, positively impacting motivation, and reducing anxiety, and providing opportunities and a better experience for practicing speaking skill.

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#### **Internet Resource:**

[https://www.cambly.com/english?lang=en&utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=OT\\_C\\_GG\\_SRCH\\_AW\\_WEB\\_MAY20\\_international\\_cambly\\_brandname&utm\\_content=428256424547&utm\\_term=e\\_cambly&device=c&devicemodel=&gad\\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwrlxBhBbEiwACEqDJY5fTtwoGVt9-A7iqaV](https://www.cambly.com/english?lang=en&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=OT_C_GG_SRCH_AW_WEB_MAY20_international_cambly_brandname&utm_content=428256424547&utm_term=e_cambly&device=c&devicemodel=&gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwrlxBhBbEiwACEqDJY5fTtwoGVt9-A7iqaV)

[haw5galJriltCJwXW34dGG6qD65a0Xr2ShoCWOYQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.cambly.com/english?lang=en&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=OT_C_GG_SRCH_AW_WEB_MAY20_international_cambly_brandname&utm_content=428256424547&utm_term=e_cambly&device=c&devicemodel=&gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwrlxBhBbEiwACEqDJY5fTtwoGVt9-A7iqaV)