

**The Effectiveness of a Program Based on Imaginative  
Education on Developing EFL students' Oral Fluency  
in the Preparatory Stage in Public Schools**

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This research is a study on the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) with its focus on the effectiveness of a program based on imaginative education on developing EFL students' oral fluency. The researcher begins with a review of literature and some previous studies about imaginative education and oral fluency.

The researcher compiled some cognitive tools describing imaginative education and prepared a list of oral fluency components. The sample of the study consisted of forty students at the first grade of preparatory school at Hanout preparatory school, Gharbia Governorate.

The study followed the experimental approach, and four instruments were manipulated to fulfill the purpose of the study. An interview with interested teachers to use imagination in ELT, a pre/post-test to measure the students' oral performance.

Then, a questionnaire about the imaginative program, and a rubric to measure fluency. The scores were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The main results of the study revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the students in the pre and post application of the oral fluency test as a total score in favor of the post application.

This shows the effectiveness of the program based on imaginative education in developing EFL students' oral fluency.

**Keywords:** Imaginative education, Oral fluency

## Introduction

Despite the importance of English, many learners face many challenges while learning it. Li (2003) holds that speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of the English learners. They are still incompetent to communicate orally in English even though they might be able to read Shakespeare's works in original writing after years of study at school. Liu (2009) stated that learners in non-speaking countries encountered many difficulties. First, the English language materials provided to the learners weren't conducted with real-life experiences. That's because traditional teaching focused on memorization and recalling information. Thus, the learners weren't motivated or even interested in what they learn. Second, the only chance for the learners to practice English takes place inside their classrooms to the extent that most of the time they aren't provided with the opportunity to use the target language.

Students are familiar with their first language, their mother tongue, as they use it every day. Baker and Westrup (2003) add that when people speak their first language, they tend to use it fluently and confidently. Their focus is to communicate their intended message. On the other hand, they find it difficult to speak a foreign language as they have little exposure to the oral-oral approach. Hanane (2016) states that EFL learners' mother tongue influences their speech production as they tend to think in Arabic. Also, exams, which have played an important role in nationwide English

studies, and teachers, who put too much emphasis on vocabulary, idiomatic usage and structure, are partially responsible for oral inability. To speed up oral improvement, oral tests need to be extended and, in this way, can teachers alter their attention to practicing fluency.

As for socio-cultural factors, the literature found that gender, age, culture, teacher traits, and classroom climate significantly impacted students' tendency to participate actively in language classrooms (Loftin et al., 2010; Mustapha et al., 2010; Weaver & Qi, 2005). Anxiety, self-esteem, shyness, fear of making mistakes, and willingness to participate were also regarded among the affective factors (Effiong, 2016; Patil, 2008; Savaşçı, 2014; Trent, 2009). Concerning the cognitive factors, not being able to formulate thoughts and organize ideas was reported to impact student participation in oral activities (Loftin et al., 2010; Rocca, 2010). Other factors that might impact classroom participation involve class size (Loftin et al., 2010; Weaver & Qi, 2005), lack of language proficiency and experience in speaking English (Loftin et al., 2010), language competence (Kayı-Aydar, 2019), and classroom topics (Mustapha et al., 2010; Sixsmith et al., 2006). There is a growing recognition of benefits of classroom participation in the literature since L2 learners' engagement in interactional opportunities in classes contributes to their awareness of focus on form (Abdullah et al., 2012; Nunan, 1991; Wang & Castro, 2010). Besides, much of the literature has underpinned that

student's active participation is of vital importance since it helps the learner develop in terms of various aspects. Research, in general, demonstrates that L2 learners who actively participate in in-class learning opportunities are characterized by their increased academic success (Liu, 2005; Tatar, 2005; Weaver & Qi, 2005), developed critical thinking skills (Jones, 2008), adapted to a more satisfying learning process (Majid et al., 2010), and improved language proficiency (Tsou, 2005). Although there are numerous benefits of participation in learning, classroom participation still seems to be a critical problem particularly in EFL contexts where most students are not likely to participate and the minority of the classes tend to do so repeatedly and dominate the discussion (Susak, 2016).

There is a wide gap between what the ways teachers use in teaching and their impact on the learners' oral performance. In Egypt and many Arab countries, learners have little exposure towards English inside and outside classrooms. Some teachers even try to use their mother tongue in order to facilitate the target language for students. In turn, learners find it easier and less embarrassing to use their mother tongue like their teachers to express their thoughts and ideas. This, undoubtedly, hinders oral fluency.

Focusing on the oral aspect of the language, many researchers have attempted to define fluency. "Fluency refers to speaking at a good pace without pausing or hesitating..." (Handly&

Wang,2018, p,5). Acosta (2017) states that hesitations and pauses hinder communication and interaction as they cause the listener to misunderstand the message. Fluency represents the ability to speak or read quickly, accurately and without undue hesitation, then automatic execution of certain aspects of L2 performance such as pronunciation, grammatical processing and word recognition would, by definition, promote fluency. (Skehan, 1998).

Skehan (1996) also stressed that fluency should be separate from meaning conveyed by sentences because it reflects the learner's ability to cope with real communicative events.

“fluency means speaking with ease and without thinking about possible errors” (Baker & Westrup, 2003 p. 90). In this case it is different from accuracy which makes the learner stop more often and think about rules or grammatical mistakes. According to Rizvi (2005), fluency makes a distinctive speech. It is figured by the natural flow of words and lack of unwanted pauses and repetitions. A fluent speaker is able to use appropriate words and expressions to formulate meaningful sentences and utterances. By thinking imaginatively, engaging in an imagination-based curriculum and an environment full of cognitive tools designed to ignite imagination, the learner could find ways for better understanding and find speaking easy and attainable.

According to Gatbonton and Segalowitz, (2005), oral fluency is characterized by “automatic, smooth, and rapid language use” (p.

327). These are some of the many components of oral fluency. Benwell (2009) describes pronunciation as an essential component of oral fluency. For Pineda, (2017) other components of fluency include: speed and length of speech. Pineda also mentions that a fluent speaker can create coherent and comprehensible sentences that are semantically and grammatically correct.

Fluency is extremely important for many reasons. Madhok (2018) contends that oral fluency increases self-confidence and self-esteem, which are both essential to successful communication.

Madhok adds that a speaker who lacks self-confidence is regularly hesitant and uncertain about how to act while having a discussion which may cause the listener to get irritated and unwilling to interact. Moreover, oral fluency enables speakers to have a phone call, a face to face conversation (Madhok, 2018). According to Talouki (2015), oral fluency enables learners to carry on business or casual conversations.

As noted above, as long as oral fluency is crucial and important, I have tried hard to investigate a new alternative to develop learners' oral fluency. I have adopted imaginative education as a basic tool for teaching and learning.

“The development of English language instruction has been rapid in modern times. It was subject to changes and controversies. One of these changes is that what works well in a situation, or for a teacher or student, may not work for another, this way,



imagination comes to more engagement and better learning” (Egan 2011).

One of the main objectives of teaching English as a foreign language in Egypt is to develop students' skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). When we look at the product of our teaching, we have to pay attention to fluency. Oral fluency is a critical skill and can be improved through Imaginative Education which is a big term nowadays and attracted a lot of attention.

Imaginative Education is a way of teaching and learning that is based on engaging learners' imaginations. Imagination is the ability to think of what might be possible.

(Claudia Ruitenber, 2011)

Some researchers have been troubled with the question of *what imagination is and where it is to be located*. For example, Kieran Egan (1992) as well as Keiich Takaya (2004) claim that imagination is found in the flexible human mind. Similarly, Egan (2005) argues that the ability to imagine has a significant role when humans are involved in innovation. Other researchers such as Michiel van Ejik and Wolf-Michael Roth (2013) emphasize that through imagination and novelization, humans find new ways of acting in the world.

Fairy tales, storytelling, rhymes, rhythm, narration, metaphor, jokes, games, puzzles..... etc, are creative tools that can enhance

imagination and in turn develop oral fluency for students from an imaginative point of view.

Imaginative education is based on the constructivism theory and Socio-cultural theories of **Lev Vygostky** and the Cultural Recapitulation Theory and the cognitive tools or thinking tools of **Kieran Egan** (2015).

Constructivism refers to the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves. Each learner constructs meaning individually as he or she learns. It says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences.

When we encounter something new, we have to reconcile it with our previous ideas and experience, maybe changing what we believe or maybe discarding the new information as irrelevant.

This is the status quo of education nowadays for most of us, especially in teaching a second language. An innovative method, the imaginative education method, can add a lot of techniques and activities that can make teaching and learning more effective and sustainable.

“Imaginative Education is a teaching and learning method that involves the imagination of learners. Imagination is the ability to think about what may be possible, in a way that is not tightly constrained by the actual or taken-for-granted

It is the "REACHING OUT" feature of the mind, enabling us to go beyond what we have mastered so far. Without a human imagination, no culture will look like it is today, and no learner will be able to participate in and contribute to this culture. Because there are many models of education, many of which are very disappointing when put into practice. Many ideas about education rely on storage and retrieval concepts. The main challenge for learners is to store as much information as they can, and then to retrieve that information when needed. Education is sometimes seen as a banking process, where the main challenge of the learner is to gradually accumulate knowledge and skills.

Most of us may be familiar with schools and teachers who work according to banking or grouping models. Some children even succeed in performing well in tests of this type of learning. However, many do not succeed, and even successful testers find that much of that stored or compiled knowledge has a short and temporary time: it quickly disappears from memory. It has also been widely recognized that knowledge of this kind is often difficult to apply to new situations.

Imaginative education tries to address both of these problems, by generating flexible and lasting understandings related to students' passion. To achieve this, the imaginative teacher seeks to form and build the content in a way that helps the learners understand their world.

It presents an alternative vision of what education could and should be. It suggests that almost any topic can be made meaningful for students at almost any age or stage of development, but that requires a deep rethinking of teaching and learning. In order for teachers to be able to use this model, they have to develop the ability to construct and reconstruct meaning along with their students. Teachers who have taught in this way have observed that this model can change the whole environment. It can change what they teach, how they reach and the way they think about the process of Education.

"Instead of conceiving of Imaginative Education as a simple linear journey, or a jigsaw puzzle, where we can focus on one piece at a time, it is perhaps better to picture Imaginative Education as a hologram. If a hologram is broken into pieces, each piece can contain an image of the whole".

Taken from a piece written by Claudia Ruitenber and edited by Mark Fettes (2014).

## **Review of Literature and Previous Studies**

### **Oral fluency in EFL:**

Improving spoken fluency is considered one of the most challenging steps for students (Santos & Barcelos, 2018) because learning this skill involves cognitive and external factors such as emotions, motivation, and methodologies used by the teacher (Brown, 2015; Mota et al., 2014).

A qualitative study conducted by Santos et al. (2020) found that learners from the Los Ríos province present some negative emotions that might hinder their class participation, such as fear, lack of confidence, or shyness; consequently, they are not able to practice their oral skills. Other aspects that affect Ecuadorian learners to improve their fluency are the lack of opportunities to use the language outside the classroom, the lack of vocabulary, and how English is taught (Haboud, 2009).

Briones and Ramírez (2011) pointed out that the classes are still substantially teacher-centered, and some teachers only consider the students with high levels resulting in no development of the language competence by the lower-level students.

Researchers (Asri&Muhtar, 2013; Moheidat&Baniabdelrahman, 2011; Molina &Briesmaster, 2017) have shown two useful techniques that might improve students' speaking fluency. The first one is called 4/3/2, repeating the same speech three different times in different durations. It is expected that they start their spoken practice within four minutes and the third practice lasts two minutes. The second technique is self-assessment. This includes students not only assessing their work but also reflecting on their learning.

The definition of speaking is hard to find because many scholars define it differently (Howarth, 2001; Luoma, 2004). Howarth (2001) defined speaking as an exchange of utterances among

people, which involves an authentic communication of ideas, information, or feelings. So speaking is considered cooperation between two or more individuals in shared time. Luoma (2004) described speaking as producing, receiving, and exchanging information. Additionally, she said that this skill is spontaneous and predictable since the meaning depends on the context, participants, and purpose. For that reason, developing this skill can be difficult for students. Organizing what to say is not an easy task (Sánchez, 2019), resulting in pressure on the students, which may increase their anxiety to speak (Akkakoson, 2016). What is similar in all these definitions is the importance of this skill to language learners because students evaluate their success on how they improved their speaking (Juhana, 2012). Speaking is labeled a challenging skill to assess because people may focus on multiple factors and characteristics (Fulcher, 2003), such as fluency; for that reason, some researchers considered it less tangible to evaluate (Isaacs, 2016).

Teachers face problems when assessing their students' speaking due to the forms it may have a) monolog, b) paired conversation, c) group discussion (Fan & Yan, 2020), and the different conditions it presents: it may be planned or spontaneous (Carter & McCarthy, 2015).

Then, a diversity of assessment strategies has been adopted by teachers, such as oral portfolios (Cronenberg, 2020), speaking scales and scoring (Hughes, 2011), and technological tools

(Sánchez, 2019) to help them in this process. In order to reduce the before mentioned problems, it is advisable to choose measurement tools such as rubrics which may make the scores more reliable (Bachman & Palmer, 1989).

The term fluency is connected to communication. Lennon (2000) defined fluency as "the rapid, smooth, accurate, lucid, and efficient translation of thought or communicative intention into language (p. 26)". So, fluency does not entail only speed but also social interaction. Fillmore (1979) postulated that fluency might be characterized by four different dimensions:

- a- talk with not many pauses in a specific range of time;
- b- talk with cohesion and coherence;
- c- adapt the speech to different contexts, and
- d- be creative in the language and create diverse situations.

Students misunderstand the concept of fluency because they think it is the ability to speak fast, so when they learn a language and speak rapidly, they think they are fluent in that language (Browne & Fulcher, 2017). Indeed, fluency is associated with speed, but not only this aspect needs to be considered. It is also related to rate; hesitations; repetitions; and corrections.

Research on second language fluency has been growing lately (Ginther et al., 2010; Lennon, 2000; Luoma, 2004); consequently, techniques to measure students' oral fluency have also appeared

and developed. The most common aspects of speaking fluency measured by the studies are:

First, rate, the number of syllables spoken by a minute. The bigger the number of syllables, the higher the fluency (Ginther et al., 2010).

Second, hesitation, relates to the number of pauses done in a determined time (Riggenbach, 1991). These pauses may be due to a lack of vocabulary, time to reformulate the sentence, or just distraction (Park, 2016).

**There are two types of pauses:**

Silent pauses (Riggenbach, 1991), pauses with no articulations (Park, 2016), **which their length can categorize:**

- a- Micro pause – 0.2 second of silence,
- b- Hesitation – 0.3 to 0.4 second of silence and
- c- Unfilled pause– 0.5 second or greater of silence (Riggenbach, 1991).

And filled pause, pauses with articulations such as 'Uhm,' 'er,' and 'mm.

Third, repair, repetition of the same speech to make corrections because the speaker said something that is judged inappropriate, wrong, or irrelevant (Schegloff, 2007).

Fluency is not an easy aspect to define but “the narrowest definitions only include a few features, typically pausing,



hesitations and speech rate, whereas the broadest uses are virtually synonymous with ‘speaking proficiency’” (Luoma, 2009, p. 88)

Ellis (2003) asserts that “tasks that (1) provide contextual support; (2) have familiar or involving topics; (3) pose a single demand; (4) are closed; and (5) have a clear inherent structure are likely to promote fluency” (p. 127).

Teachers should instruct their students to know the procedures of a speaking activity in order to acquire the natural pace of the procedure and, after doing this; the learners’ fluency can be promoted (Harmer, 2001).

Gob and Burns (2012) argue that both beginning and advanced learners should aim to be fluent throughout the learning acquisition process.

De Jong (2016) points out that fluent speakers need to translate their thoughts rapidly into intelligible sounds. This rapid translation requires the speaker to go through three stages: constructing a meaningful message, formulating how to say it, and rapidly producing timely comprehensible messages. If the speaker gets stuck at any of these stages, he or she isn’t fluent.

Moreover, De Jong (2016) states that if the speakers’ speech is not coherent, it lacks fluency. Segura Alonso (2015) confirms that fluency requires a lot of exposure, practice, encouragement, and correction. Learners need to use the target language appropriately to respond to and communicate in different situations.

Richards and Schmidt (2002) define fluency as “the features which give a speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including the native-like use of pausing, rhythm, stress, intonation, the rate of speaking, and the use of interjections and interruptions” (Richard and Schmidt also add that fluency is used to refer to proficiency in communication **which includes:**

- 1- The ability to produce written and/or spoken language with ease.
- 2- The ability to speak with a good not necessarily perfect command of intonation, vocabulary, and grammar.
- 3- The ability to communicate ideas effectively.
- 4- The ability to produce continuous speech without causing comprehension difficulties or a breakdown of communication (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p. 204).

As stated by Tumova (2002), fluency refers to the learners’ ability to use the language easily and freely to express their thoughts and ideas regardless of the mistakes they make. Students should be encouraged to talk and express themselves as this reinforces their self-confidence as well as their self-esteem.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (2003) defines fluency as “the ability of the speakers to communicate their ideas fast without unnecessary stopping or too much thinking”.

While oral accuracy focuses producing grammatically correct sentences, oral fluency focuses on communication (Davis & Pearse, 2014; Richards and Schmidt, 2002; Srivastava, 2014).

The Council of Europe (2001) points out that fluent speakers use the language structures accurately, however, their main focus is meaning not form.

For Srivastava (2014), fluency also refers to the learners' ability to communicate without pauses. It should be noted that speakers should try to focus on the message to be conveyed instead of concentrating on grammatical rules.

**Levels of fluency:**

According to Segalowitz (2010), there are three levels of fluency. These three levels are cognitive fluency, utterance fluency, and perceived fluency. Cognitive fluency refers to the speaker's ability to be fluent as a result of being mentally well-prepared. It also refers to the speaker's ability to organize and plan their speeches. It is the ability to find words, phrases, and sentences in L2 and construct meaning easily. Consequently, speakers need to be well-prepared. Utterance fluency has to do with the smoothness of speech. It refers to the speaker's ability to speak smoothly and fast. Perceived fluency has to do with how the listener perceives the speaker's utterances or the impression that the speaker makes on the listener. It refers to the speaker's comprehensibility and how well s/he can be understood by others.

**Components of oral fluency:**

Colby (2013) clarifies that oral fluency consists of two major components. These two components are the delivery of words and

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the appropriate use of words in different contexts to convey different ideas. For Cobly, proper use of grammar structures, word order, and multiple tense verbs are all indicators of oral fluency.

For Devries (2017), fluency includes four major components; comprehension, rate, automaticity, and expression. Automaticity refers to the rapid and smooth production of utterances without unnecessary hesitations and pauses. Fluency components also include automatic, smooth, and rapid language use (Gatbonton&Segallowitz, 2005).

Walpole and Mckenna (2017) mentioned vocabulary, background knowledge and knowledge about sentence structures as three other components of fluency.

According to Segalowitz (2007)," access fluidity makes an important component of oral fluency, and it refers to the ability to connect "words and expressions to their meaning" (p. 182).

Stockdale (2009) assumes that "if a speaker pauses appropriately, talks at a reasonable rate, and forms sentences clearly, they are likely to be perceived as more fluent than a speaker who does not" (p. 2).

Moreover, Pineda (2017) mentioned speed and length of speech as well as creating comprehensible and coherent ideas that are expressed through semantically and grammatically correct sentences as all components of oral fluency.

Brown (2001) explains that fluency and accuracy can't be separated as they complete each other. If teachers emphasize fluency with no reference to grammar, learners will produce language that can hardly be understood. On the other hand, if teachers focus only on grammar, they will tend to concentrate on producing well-structured sentences, however, their language will lack its natural flow.

Richards and Rogers (2001) argue that learners can enhance their linguistic competence while struggling to communicate several ideas, and not through memorizing different grammatical patterns. Richards and Schmidt (2002) claim that EFL oral fluency refers to the learner's ability to give a well-organized comprehensible speech without unnecessarily mastering intonation, vocabulary, and grammar.

### **Factors affecting oral fluency:**

Nation (2013) states that teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) occurs when English is not normally used for communication purposes by the learners outside the classroom. Thus, **it is characterized by the following three main characteristics:**

- 1- The English language is a compulsory subject, so learners are not highly motivated or interested in achieving progress.
- 2- The only chance for the learners to use and practice the English language is inside the classroom.

3- Although language learning should be purposeful, learners learn English because of its importance as an international language and not because of their urgent need to use it for communication purposes. Therefore, the learning purpose is ambiguous for them.

De Jong (2016) marks silent pauses, filled pauses, and repetitions as measures of disfluency. In addition, Richards and Renandya (2002) clarify what affects EFL learners' oral fluency **as follows:**

- Age is considered as one of the reasons for success or failure in L2 learning. Children learning a second language through natural exposure seem to obtain higher proficiency than adult learners.
- Aural medium plays a crucial role in learning a second language.

As listening comes first then speaking, “speaking feeds on listening” (p. 205). In any social interaction, a person can be both a listener and a speaker. S/he listens carefully to the other person, then s/he responds or reacts.

- Socio-cultural factors affect foreign language learning and teaching. It is important for a person in order to speak a language to know how to speak it in different social contexts and how to pick up nonverbal cues.
- Affective factors towards the target language affects the learner's level of progress. People often feel a lot of anxiety about talking in public.

**Teaching oral fluency:**

Susikaran (2015) explains that teaching speaking is overlooked, and English teachers only teach speaking through repetition and memorization. Baker and Westrup (2003) observe that, in some classrooms, speaking is only limited to the students' ability to repeat sentences or dialogues. While asserting the importance of repetition as one way of practicing a new language, Baker and Westrup (2003) also emphasize the importance of practicing real-life communication. This means that students should talk about their lives, experiences, ideas, and news. Correia (2016) points out that the main focus of school books, worksheets, and quizzes is grammar instruction with little or no emphasis on oral fluency.

**Activities to develop oral fluency:**

The ultimate goal of any language learning process is for the learner to be able to use this language to communicate with others. Therefore, fluency is an essential factor and assessing it regularly is a must. Underhill (2006) suggests several techniques that both learners and teachers can use to assess oral fluency. They include: using pictures, discussion/conversation, interviews, oral report, and role-play.

**Using pictures:**

Learners may describe or compare pictures to increase their oral fluency. A sequence of related pictures can be shown to students so that they can tell a story out of them.

**Discussion/Conversation:**

Two students can carry out a conversation. They can talk about specific topics. They start discussing, negotiating and interacting. Discussions are commonly used to develop the learners' oral fluency. They may listen to a passage or read one. Then, they can discuss it in pairs or in groups trying to find several solutions to the provided problems. (Segura Alonso, 2015)

**Interview:**

The interview is a common oral testing technique. Although it has a predetermined structure, both the interviewer and the learner have the freedom to say whatever they want. They exchange questions and answers. The interviewer can raise a new topic or ask some more questions related to the same topic.

**Oral report:**

The oral report is an authentic technique in which the learners should be ready to give presentations. They can make use of the visual aids available in their classrooms such as the whiteboard, the overhead projector or the flipchart. They can also read from their notes. Moreover, learners should be well-prepared to answer any questions.

**Role-play:**

For this technique, learners take certain roles. They need to act and interact with one another. This way, they can also practice several grammar rules gradually. They can narrate a story using the simple



past tense or even talk about future plans using the simple future. It is also helpful in using and memorizing new vocabulary.

### **Foundations of imaginative education**

Many people believe that the imagination plays an important role in education. In the most extreme cases, there are people like educational philosopher **Mary Warnock** and critical pedagogue **Henri Giroux** who believe that the imagination is the most important factor in learning.

Warnock goes as far to claim that: “The cultivation of imagination...should be the chief aim of education” (Imagination 7).

In a similar vein, Giroux declares that: “The task of deepening and expanding the imagination may be one of the most important pedagogical elements at work in any classroom” (Education and the Crisis of Public Values 62).

According to **Vygotsky’ theory** (1991,2004), “imagination is the internalization of children’s play. It develops as the children develop their speech through social interaction with adults”.

Imaginative Education, or **IE**, reconceives education as the process whereby human beings acquire as fully as possible the major symbolic tools invented or discovered in human cultures (Jillian Judson &**Kieran Egan**, 2001).

There are two main foundations for Imaginative Education.

The first is the **cultural recapitulation theory** that highlights the use of the thinking tools or cognitive tools (or mental devices that help us think and do things effectively) that were invented and developed by our ancestors for making sense of the world and acting more effectively within it using stories, metaphors and binary opposites. It is best described in **Kieran Egan's** the educated Mind: (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

The second foundation is associated with the **socio-cultural theories** of the Russian psychologist, **Lev Vygotsky**. The theory of imaginative education is based on five distinctive kinds of understanding that enable people to make sense of the world in different ways. The purpose if imaginative education is to enable each student to develop these kinds of understanding while they are learning any subject.

The IE approach to engaging students' imaginations in learning is developed from three distinct sources, which, when brought together, offer a distinctive approach to the practice of education. It is distinct from both the traditionalist and progressivist methods that have dominated so much teaching practice during the previous century. IE is truly a new, 21st-century approach, although it draws some of its inspiration from old, even very old, resources.

### **Visualizing imagination:**

Mind is a very powerful tool. Being a strong platform for imagination, human mind acts as a tool to transform our ideas into

reality. We can consciously make our imaginations come true by working on certain aspects of our thinking process.

When you are bogged down by real time issues, you will not be able to focus in day dreaming or constructive imagination. Address your current problems by finding out creative solutions to the same.

- Imagine what you want to achieve as frequently as possible. The more you imagine about a thing, the clearer the picture becomes.
- Learn to imagine what you want to happen in reality. This technique is called **Visualization**. As you master this technique, you will feel positive towards achieving what you see in your imagination.
- Exhibit consistency in visualizing the same thoughts again and again till they become the reality.
- Ensure that your visualization gets stronger every passing day since even an iota of doubt about the possibility will push you away from your end goal.
- Take into account your positive attributes/work ethic and base your imagination on the same. This will make the present and the future complement each other in a mutually cohesive manner.

- Interact with your subconscious as frequently as possible. Such open interactions will emphasize your priorities to your subconscious which will automatically pull you towards your goal.
- Practice **Transcendental meditation** for the same.
- During the process of imagination or visualization, never get bogged down looking at the challenges that obstruct your way. Your faith in your dreams will help you surmount all challenges which might have appeared impossible at one point of time.
- Avoid getting afraid of crossing limits and doing things that you have not ventured out to so far. Remember, travelling that extra mile might require you to cross borders.
- Visualize again and again increasing your focus on the minute things that fill your mental picture. **Feel it through all your senses** so you know you are already there.
- **Unleash the child in you freely** without any inhibitions since your mental world is out of all criticisms. This will inject high level of confidence in you to imagine what you really want to achieve without any compromise or withdrawal.

### **Literature Review: Imagination in Education:**

What exactly is imagination? How do theorists define it? My intention is to construct an amalgamation or mixture of

“imagination” derived from the literature that explores and describes imagination, to use as a base line conception for my research study. Dewey (1934) said “all conscious experience has of necessity some degree of imagination” (p. 272).

He describes experience as a matter of perception that becomes conscious when meaning derived from prior experience is used to make meaning of present circumstances.

“Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather, the conscious adjustment of the new and the old is imagination” (Dewey, 1934, p.272). In this conception imagination is an intentional conscious act of the mind to use meaning derived from past experience to make sense of the present. The new construction of meaning in the present transforms or reconstructs the past meanings.

Dewey’s (1934) conception of imagination sounds like the meaning of learning; “a conscious adjustment of the new and the old” (p. 272). He contends that when meanings derived from prior experiences enter into present interactions there is imagination.

If this is so, it would be imperative for a teacher to invite the students’ subjective materials – meaning and knowledge gleaned from their past experience - when attempting to elicit their students’ imaginations in the process of learning.

Sutton-Smith (1988) claims “The imagination is relative, multiple, differentiated, contrary and power oriented...there is no single function that can be called the faculty of imagination” (p.18). Imagination has been seen as fanciful and irrational, not rooted in reality. This impression of imagination is still held by people today. Being “imaginative” is used to describe children who are different, as a complimentary quality – “She is imaginative”.

Maxine Greene (1988) advocated for the educational value of imagination saying, “To learn is to become different, to see more, to gain a new perspective. Imagination is to choose against things as they are” (p.49).

Sutton-Smith (1988) describes the subversiveness of imagination: “it is after all the playground of the subjective, the domain where the opposites and the alternatives can be faced or feted” (p.27).

### **The Value of Imagination to Learning:**

Vygotsky theorized the relationship between creativity and imagination.

He denoted that the imagination serves as an imperative impetus of all human creative activity. The fact that this human creative behavior “makes the human being a creature oriented toward the future, creating the future and thus altering his own present” (1930/2004, p. 9).

Ideally, education is valued for these same reasons, to transform ones' environment and self, to evolve and grow, to change the self

in response to present encounters with new conceptions, and to effect ones future possibilities and the future of society. Eisner (2002) says, “inventive scholarship depends on imagination.

In schools we tend to emphasize facticity, correctness, and concreteness” (p. 198).

Maxine Greene suggests the arts and imagination “release students, allowing them room for feelings and intuitions that are repressed in every other quarter of life—crowded out” (Fowler, 1996). Vygotsky argued that if human activity were limited to reproduction of the old, then the human being would be a creature oriented only to the past and would only be able to adapt to the future to the extent that it reproduced the past.

Egan (1992) says the conception of imagination as being the capacity to think of things as possibly being so (Greene, 1996) does not conflict with rational thought, that it enhances rational thought, “The ability to hold alternative conceptions in the mind and assess their adequacy or appropriateness would seem a necessary component of any sophisticated rational activity” (p. 42).

### **Imagination in EFL:**

It seems generally agreed that imagination is a good thing and that it ought to be stimulated and developed in education. When talking with students, teachers, educational administrators, or professors of education about good teachers, it is common to hear teachers

commended as "imaginative". The kinds of things they do in class are frequently - to use Barrow's (1990) joint criteria for imaginativeness - unusual and effective. Such teachers show a flexibility of mind that enables them to present a subject in a new and engaging way, a way that enables students to understand it better and also to take pleasure from the learning.

Mary Warnock, in her study of imagination (1976), asserted that "the cultivation of imagination...should be the chief aim of education" (p. 9), and that "we have a duty to educate the imagination above all else" (p. 10). We might reasonably feel wary of such bold claims. Though perhaps we need to say first, "It depends what you mean by 'imagination'".

According to Kieran (2016), "Imagination lies at a kind of crux where perception, memory, idea generation, emotion, metaphor, and no doubt other labeled features of our lives, intersect and interact".

"Some of the images we experience seem "echoes" of what we have perceived, though we can change them, combine them, manipulate them to become like nothing we have ever perceived". Education in early childhood [Egan, 1988], The development of rationality and imagination, ages 8 to 15 (Egan, 1990), and Egan wrote, "children can learn the conventions and rules best if they are encouraged to play with them and recognize their contingency" (p. 68). Vygotsky proposed that as children grow up, play develops into imagination. "[W]e can say that imagination ... is play



without action,” Vygotsky stated, believing play to be critical because it is a step toward the more developed adolescent imagination.

According to Vygotsky (1997), imagination is critical because it is the driving force behind human invention and creation. Students’ imaginations can be activated by rousing their emotions. In fact, Vygotsky placed great importance on emotion in learning. Vygotsky believed that one of the jobs of an educator is to teach students to feel deeply about the educational content. He wrote about the education of emotions, and he thought emotion was as important as thinking. According to Vygotsky, emotions are reactions and, like any reaction, they can be conditioned and trained. Children are initially egocentric in their emotions, primarily being concerned about their own feelings. As the child develops, these feelings become associated with a circle of friends and family such that if there is a threat to someone they care for, the child will feel their own sort of emotional pain as well. Vygotsky believed that one of the roles of the teacher is to broaden the reach of a child’s feelings. Instead of a self-centered feeling, the teacher should aim for students to feel deeply about things further removed than themselves or their family so they will develop new relationships between themselves and the world. Vygotsky thought teachers should evoke powerful feelings in their students, believing that real emotional responses like pain, love, and joy affect behavior and can improve students’ memories.

**The cognitive tools:**

We might also think of cognitive tools as those things that enable our brains to do cultural work. They perform for us like mental prostheses. When applied to educational practice, imaginative education and its forms of understanding are unique in the ways it uses feelings and images, metaphors and jokes, rhyme and rhythm, stories and wonder, heroes and the exotic, hopes, fears, and passions, hobbies and collecting, and much else in engaging the imaginations of both teachers and learners. In short, it provides a specific set of warrants and methods for engaging the imagination (Egan, 1997, 2011).

Following a look at some of the main cognitive tools that shape how we make sense of the world (kinds of understanding) we will then show how these can be employed to teach in ways that will encourage imaginative engagement with curriculum content. We will focus mainly on the first three kinds of understanding, as these are the ones most relevant to education during the school years.

**The body's toolkit:**

The first tool we have available for understanding the world is our body. If you have a body – you might want to check this now – you will have a set of sense-making and learning tools available to you; these are tools that remain with you for the rest of your life – though they change somewhat over time.

*Senses:* The inescapable elements of our body's toolkit are our senses – oursight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell, which we value more or less in that order. These senses are stimulated in our earliest years, and babies take a particular delight in games that combine a number of them: plops, clicks, and squeaks that create, then follow, patterns that involve sight, touch, and taste. Our senses are necessary for our initial understanding of the world and allow us to perceive and deal with a certain range and scale of the phenomena of our environments.

*Emotions:* A central feature of our bodies' meaning-making toolkit is its emotional nature. These emotions will persist and develop as the most basic orientors and organizers of our cognition throughout our lives. The way in which we respond to the physical and social world around us depends, importantly, on our emotions: from an early age we experience profound emotional patterns such as expectation and frustration, or satisfaction, of the expectation.

Indeed, the way we interpret events, including our later ability to critically analyze them, will always be shot through with emotions. Delight, distress, elation, horror, satisfaction, anger, compassion, or fear constitute elements of the underlying matrix that shape our responses, and thus even rationality itself. If we recognize the foundational development of our bodies' emotional core, we will be less likely to see cognition, and cognitive tools, as somehow separate from our emotional lives; however, sophisticated our

thinking becomes it will always be oriented and shaped by the emotions of the body within which it occurs.

***Pattern and Musicality:*** Stephen Mithen's *The Singing Neanderthals* (2006) has helped to show how profoundly we are musical animals. Our musicality seems a central feature of our body's toolkit, perhaps, as Mithen suggests, from early in our evolution as modern humans. We look for meaning in patterns from our earliest years, even when what we see, hear, or touch may be quite random. We begin to construct that uniquely human kind of meaning on the back of these patterned regularities our senses deliver to us. There is, of course, a huge amount of recent research showing the importance of pattern recognition in infants' learning, in language learning and visual recognition of their world (see, for example, Kirchoff and Schimmel, 2005; and the multitude of studies from the Stanford University center for Infant studies: <http://www-psych.stanford.edu/~babylab/index.html>).

***Humor:*** Another prominent component of our bodies' toolkit is humor. While educators have typically neglected humor, or treated it as some relatively casual frill, the presence of humor in our earliest interactions suggests that its stimulation and development might be profoundly important to us, and consequently should be considered as a constituent of any adequate program of education. It is useful to remember that humor, in many of its forms, is commonly based on incongruity. Ability to deal easily and pleasurably with incongruity contributes to flexibility of mind,

which is an important component of an educated person. Humor is important for many things, not least the delight it can give to experience, but it has a distinctive educational importance in its contribution to flexible, imaginative, and creative thinking.

Our bodily sense of humor becomes evident in such early activities as the mutual sticking out of tongues, tickling, the hiding and revealing of peek-a-boo, and other forms of pretend that so delight babies and elicit laughter. All our behaviors seems accessible to a sense of humor, both to enrich the experience itself and to recognize it as parts of contexts that we can also transcend. There is a range of research now available showing a number of dimensions of learning that are aided by humour (for a good summary of this material, and further support, see Garner, 2005; see also Garner, 2006).

Many other learning tools of the body could be explored (Egan, 1997). But these few will suffice to suggest how we might see the body as providing a set of important “tools” whose development can properly be seen as appropriate for an educational program. Their value to all learning throughout our lives is, we trust, evident. The children in front of us in schools, as long as they have brought their bodies with them, will have prominently available for learning their senses, their emotions, their patterning, and their humor. We would obviously be foolish to ignore these most basic learning tools, and yet, looking at typical classrooms we can see they are rarely used (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). They are

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not prominent either in the texts for teachers (Houston et al, 1990). And yet, they are foundational to imaginatively grasping the world.

### **The toolkit of language:**

When we become fluent users of an oral language, we acquire a further toolkit for sense-making and learning. All people who can use an oral language, or some other form of language, such as signing, will have the following tools available in varying degrees.

***Story form:*** One implication of being an oral language-user is a responsiveness to stories. All oral cultures that we know of have developed and used stories. Shaped by logical and psychological constraint, the invention of language seems to imply the inevitable development of stories.

But what are stories? How are they distinguishable from other narratives? If we say, “He shot Tom,” you will likely have no particular or precise response (unless, perhaps, your name is Tom). If we elaborate this narrative and add that “he” is a handsome, well-groomed young man who loves his grandmother, and that Tom is generally scruffy, bearded, picks his nose in public, and uses foul language in front of children, you may begin to feel glad that he shot Tom--given the conventions of fiction today. But if the narrative is extended further, telling you that “he” and the grandmother are leaders of a drug-pushing operation who specialize in selling to kids outside schools, and also that Tom, despite his unprepossessing exterior, has a heart of gold and is

taking terrible risks to stop the grandmother's and her grandson's nefarious operations . . . Well, you will properly begin to feel sorry that he shot Tom. When we know securely how to feel about "He shot Tom" we know we have reached the end of the story.

Stories, then, are narratives that fix our emotional orientation to the elements that make them up. No other narrative form can do this. We ascribe affective meaning to events, and to people, and to our own lives, by plotting them into provisional or partial stories. The reason we might reasonably consider the story as the most important social invention is that they orient the emotions of their hearers to their contents. We can, of course, make sense of our experience in a number of other modalities, but to whatever degree our emotional orientation is involved, then the plotting of events into partial or provisional or overarching stories will be involved. We are creatures who understand an important dimension of our experience and our world in story shapes (Kermode, 1966).

***Binary opposites:*** Forming and mediating between binary opposites also seems to be another development of the kinds of sense-making we employ prior to language development. Fairy tales such as *Cinderella*, *Hansel and Gretel* or *Jack the Giant Killer* are all built on top of powerful, abstract, binary oppositions such as security and anxiety, pleasure and pain, expectation and satisfaction, happiness and sadness, and so on. Bettelheim analyses the "manner in which [children] can bring some order

into [their] world by dividing everything into opposites” (1976, p. 74; see also Propp, 1985, Zipes, 1991.)

**Jokes:** In much the same way as physical rhythm transforms into our language, so too do our earliest bodily games and humor give birth to jokes; the physical fun of peek-a-boo becomes the fun of the concocted language of riddles, puns and other forms of jokes. Maybe you know when cooks are mean? “When they beats eggs and whip cream.” Jokes such as these, which typically delight young children, rely greatly on incongruity. They also make visible features of language that might otherwise be taken merely as behaviors. That is, the child has to recognize that while whipping and beating are often expressions of meanness, they are not so in the case of cooks in their kitchens. The humor comes from recognizing the different meanings of the same words in special contexts. So we learn to see language as an object, not merely as a behavior. This develops “meta-cognition” which is crucial to the development of flexible and creative language use (Herriman, 1986).

**Images:** Like humor, the array of images available to our minds, while somewhat limited in our early years, is suddenly enriched immensely by the acquisition of language. We seem unable to fail to form images as we hear events described in words, and a range of the effects of stories depends, to a great extent, upon listeners’ ability to form images in their minds. These can be so intense initially that most people seem able to recall with surprising clarity



the images they formed when listening to stories in their early years (Cowan, 1998). The ability to call up precise and rich images is a unique feature of our minds and is clearly connected with the development of the imagination.

Bringing the imagination to the fore in thinking about education raises the question of the role of affective images in teaching. We have inherited ideas and practices of education that give pride of place to the content and to concepts and seem to have neglected or forgotten that the affective image is crucial in communicating meaning and significance. We are not suggesting that we need more visual illustration of materials, but rather that the teacher be more hospitable to the mental images evoked by any topic. In planning teaching, to draw a principle from this observation, we should dwell not just on the concepts that are important, but give at least equal time to reflecting on the images that are a part of it. It is the images that can vividly carry the concepts most richly to the students' understanding.

***Mystery and puzzles:*** We are more familiar with puzzles, and how they can engage students' imaginations if we choose our puzzle well. What state in the U.S.A. is named after Julius Caesar? This is a good puzzle for most people, in that it has an answer, and it pulls together two well known areas of knowledge that nevertheless seem quite alien. The answer is New Jersey, because the word "Jersey" was transformed through centuries from the name of some islands that used to be called Caesar's Islands, or

*Insulae Caesareae*. *Caesareae* gradually changed over the centuries and the Jersey Islands are thus, really, Caesar's Islands, and New Jersey is properly New Caesar. The sense of mystery is less commonly used in teaching, but is perhaps even more powerfully engaging if used well. It is an important tool in developing an engagement with knowledge that is beyond students' everyday environment. It creates an attractive sense of how much that is fascinating remains to be discovered. All the subjects of the curriculum have mysteries attached to them, and part of our job in making curriculum content known to students is to give them an image of richer and deeper understanding that is there to draw their minds into the adventure of learning.

**Context of the problem:**

As it is clear that English is important for our students, we have to pay more attention to the oral aspect in our teaching. Most teachers habitually and traditionally teach the exam. For many of them repeating many times after the teacher, reading out aloud, translating directly, writing the homework twice or more are the most common ways to get the best results.

They concentrate on reading and memorizing words every time students come to school. In this way, English is trapped in just some sheets of paper. Students always listen to teachers and repeat. They don't get any chance to speak a word inside or outside the classroom. Also, Parents are satisfied that their sons are clever to get the full mark.

Oral fluency is not given due attention in Egyptian schools in spite of its importance and relevance. Students are in bad need to use the target language in communicating and expressing their ideas, feelings, attitudes, viewpoints and themselves in relaxing way. Learners become embarrassed and frustrated or even unwilling to learn when they observe no progress in their oral performance. So there is an urgent desire to develop learners' oral fluency.

Any look at our students' oral performance urges us to undertake a new strategy to overcome this issue. Some students have regular pauses and stops to retrieve the information and communicate with their teachers. If we, as teachers, made use of these pauses and helped students to imagine and prepared an imaginative environment, content, materials; something promising might happen.

It's no doubt that we can improve oral fluency; but with some factors or criteria: namely the cognitive tools\_ the basics of imaginative education.

In a study conducted by Hwang, Wa, and Su (2008), it was emphasized that traditional teaching along with its insufficient resources led to the fact that teachers only gave their students the material presented in the textbooks with special attention given to reading and writing and almost no focus on listening and speaking. Moreover, EFL learners didn't practice the English language. Segura Alonso (2015) conducted a study on 150 students who

included 55 males and 95 females. It aimed at determining the students' listening and speaking levels and their attitudes towards them. It also aimed at figuring out how much these language components were actually practiced in the classrooms. About 70% assured that they didn't speak English during English classes. While 27% revealed that they were unable to communicate in English. Also, 73% of the students were able to communicate with difficulties. Kellem (2009) claims that when it comes to oral fluency, one challenge facing most learners is the limited amount of time they spend actually using English and it is not used outside the classroom.

Brown (2001) argues that learners should be able to find, identify, manipulate and evaluate information and knowledge, to integrate this knowledge in their work and life, to solve problems and to communicate this knowledge to others. If learning is closely related to learners' lives and interests, they will find it interesting and useful for them.

To make education useful and more engaging, it's better to undertake and adapt imaginative education as an innovative approach to teaching and learning.

Imaginative engagement, as Dewey (1998) has argued, is central to human thought (see ch1.), and more recently, Egan's (1997, 1999, 2005) work stressed the role of imagination as a prerequisite for adequate thinking and learning. As he pointed out, "Engaging

the imagination isn't a sugar-coated adjunct to learning; it is the very heart of learning" (Egan, 2005, P.36).

Egan's work, in fact, has clearly pointed to the reconceptualization of education as a process whereby students recapitulate the various kinds of understanding, as these have appeared in our cultural history. Inherent in these forms of understanding is the central role of the imagination.

**Statement of the problem:**

Undoubtedly, almost all EFL learners are weak in their oral performance in the classroom and in oral-oral short discussions. I have noted a lot of reasons for this weakness. At the same time, it is suggested that Imaginative Education in both teaching and learning is an attractive strategy or a wide approach to develop oral fluency in English as a target language.

**Study Questions:**

**In order to investigate the problem, this study is attempting to answer this basic question:**

**The main question:**

How can a program based on imaginative education be built to develop oral fluency for middle school students

**From this main question, the following questions branch out:**

- 1- What are the appropriate oral fluency skills for first year middle school students?

- 2- What is the picture of the proposed program based on imaginative education in developing oral fluency for first year middle school students?
- 3- What is the effectiveness of the proposed program based on imaginative education in developing oral fluency for first year middle school students?

**Hypotheses of the study:**

**The study tested the following hypotheses:**

**Research hypotheses:**

**The research attempted to verify the validity of the current hypotheses:**

- 1- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the students of the research group in the pre and post applications of the oral fluency test as a total score in favor of the post application.
- 2- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the students of the research group in the pre and post applications of oral fluency test as sub-skills separately, in favor of the post application.
- 3- The students of the research group are generally satisfied with the proposed program based on imaginative education in developing their oral fluency.

**Aims of the study:**

**This study aims to:**

- 1- Build a program based on imaginative education to develop EFL students' oral fluency.
- 2- Make use of the cognitive tools of imaginative education as an alternative to shape the content in a story and engage students in imaginative activities.
- 3- Go deeper inside the students' feelings and emotions that can trigger their thinking and help them participate in classroom activities.

**Significance of the study:**

**This study is going to be significant to :**

- **EFL teachers:** the study is going to spotlight imaginative teaching so that teachers can give due care to its importance for better outcomes concerning oral fluency.
- **EFL learners:** through this innovative approach, learners will be able to express themselves simply and freely in the target language.
- **EFL researchers:** the study will provide them with rich elaborations and explanations for further studies.
- **EFL Planners:** the study is expected to help them to shape the curricula with view to imagination; imaginative-shaped content.

**Objectives of the study:**

I wanted this study to investigate and demonstrate the impact of using an imaginative education program on developing students' oral fluency to help them speak freely and smoothly.

**My research is summarized as follows:**

- 1- Imagination has to be taken into account these days as a teaching and learning approach.
- 2- Students find it easy to use their imagination and become active speakers each according to their individual abilities.
- 3- Planning a lesson should not be away from imagination.
- 4- Students should be given enough time to imagine and find for themselves by taking much time thinking and imagining through imaginative activities
- 5- To solve the problem of inability to speak, Imaginative teaching is the proposed and supposed way to teach .

The formula says that imagination is the ability to form mental images and engage in mental thinking and mental activity.

So, what is the effect of using imagination as an essential tool for speaking in our classrooms?

**Before answering this question, we should try to answer these questions:**

- 1- Do we think as teachers of our students in a way that reaches the deepest emotional depths?



- 2- What is the impact of imagination and emotional engagement as a means to reach the horizons of students?
- 3- Can students speak directly as long as teachers speak with them?
- 4- What is the gap between language and the inability to communicate and talk?
- 5- What is the current status of the imaginative approach? Is it relevant or irrelevant?
- 6- Why are most of the documentaries, horror films, motion pictures, and historical films based on imagination?
- 7- How can teachers emotionally engage students in the lesson in order to come up with speaking?
- 8- What are the emotional activities needed for imagination?
- 9- Do students think and imagine the same way?

**Limitations:****1) This study is limited -a class of about forty students with low or zero level of oral fluency.**

- Forty students in the first grade of preparatory school.
- Hanout prep school, Zifta city, Gharbia Governorate.
- Two months including 16 sessions, 24 hours.

**2) Some imaginative activities to help students to talk inside and outside the school:****Imaginative activities include:**

- Storytelling and contemplation
-

- Daydreaming in the classroom.
- Emotional dreams in the classroom.
- Oral communication as an imaginative tool.
- Stimulate imagination through dance and movement.
- Binary opposites, metaphor and puzzles.
- Drama Connections for imaginative Activity.
- Video games, poems and rhymes.
- Complete a story or a tale after emotional involvement in storytelling.

### **3) Some oral fluency components, namely:**

- Meaning making.
- Smoothness or flow of speech.
- Comprehensibility.
- Pronunciation and self-confidence.
- Accuracy and language control

#### **Definition of terms:**

##### **Oral fluency:**

According to Skolverket (2011), “oral fluency is concerned with a natural flow and the student being able to speak without interruptions or hesitations; oral production with fluency is easy to follow”.

According to Benwell (2009), oral fluency is “the ability to speak a foreign language easily and effectively, combined with the

ability to effortlessly understand others who use this spoken language”

In the present study, oral fluency refers to the students’ ability to gradually produce and construct, from short to long, meaningful utterances easily and confidently.

### **Imaginative Education:**

According to Vygotsky’ theory (1991,2004), “imagination is the internalization of children’s play. It develops as the children develop their speech through social interaction with adults”.

‘Imaginative Education, or IE, reconceives education as the process whereby human beings acquire as fully as possible the major symbolic tools invented or discovered in human cultures’ Jillian Judson & Kieran Egan (2001).

In the present study, imaginative education refers to the ability of the teacher to shape the lesson in an imaginative way, focusing on the emotional aspect of the learners, using the required and appropriate cognitive tools to help students reproduce meaningful utterances to reach fluency.

### **Instruments:**

#### **These are the instruments used in this study:**

- 1- Oral interviews with teachers.
- 2- Pre/post oral fluency test.

- 3- A questionnaire about imaginative education and oral fluency.
- 4- An oral fluency rubric.

### **The imaginative education program:**

The imaginative education program aims at developing EFL students' oral fluency through using the imaginative education cognitive tools.

### **The objectives of the program:**

#### **By the end of this program, students will be able to:**

- 1- Speak English smoothly with fewer pauses and hesitations.
- 2- Become able to construct meaningful sentences alone and clearly.
- 3- Use comprehensive messages that convey their meanings.
- 4- Use correct pronunciation while speaking and focus on that to avoid fossilized errors that many students don't care about.
- 5- Speak orally in a confident way using accurate phrases and sentences.

### **Content and duration of the program:**

The program was divided into 16 sessions and lasted for two months during the school semester. The session was about 40 minutes, two sessions a week. The first session of the program was an orientation session at which the researcher drew an outline about how the program would work. The learners had an overall idea about the program, its importance and what they were

supposed to do or become fluent speakers. It was asserted that imaginative tools and activities should be employed and applied during the program. The learners were motivated and wanted to give immediate responses to show their progress.

**Strategies and techniques:**

The main strategy used during sessions was active learning. Students were active participants in the classroom. They opened their eyes and were engaged in contemplating activities, shaping the lesson in daydreaming, asking and answering questions. They listened to the story, imagined unreal situations, thought about the imaginative content, and participated orally, step by step towards oral fluency. The researcher identifies and studied the students' needs and emotions and worked upon them. He shaped the content in a story form, making use of the tools that widen their imaginations, including, binary opposites, metaphoric language, rhymes and play,....etc. The students reacted easily and smoothly, making up short meaningful messages. At first, they were hesitant, but, by the end of the program, they were able to speak confidently and easily. This simplification from the researcher made the students repeat and imitate the way their teacher imagined, so they loved the idea of imaginative education. Students also shared their thoughts and imagined pictures and the class was like a bee hive, each one has a role to imagine out of the box with the help of the teacher. Imagination gave the students the chance to be independent in thinking and imagining. Students were also asked to

search for binary opposites in the subject under discussion. some students were asked to make up rhyme and find puzzles. Others searched for concepts and gave definitions. The whole class was imaginatively engaged in imaginative activities and were able to speak fluently.

**Participants:**

The researcher worked with 1 class of 40 EFL students with a very low fluency level who participated in the program hoping to feel and master fluency, inside and outside the classroom. I helped them to get acquainted and become familiar with the stated fluency program and its objectives. Fortunately, all of them were interested and eager to participate. In fact, the lack of self-confidence affected the way they speak in class.

**Research Design:**

The researcher used a mixed research design to be more credible and show validity. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used variably throughout the research to measure and analyze the results, performance, progress and fluency.

The researcher applied the research on one group with a pre and posttest so that he could be aware of the level of fluency before and after the research. At first, the researcher tried to measure the level of fluency before applying the imaginative education program. At the end, the researcher tries to measure the

effectiveness of an imaginative teaching program on developing EFL students' oral fluency.

The researcher used surveys and interviews to show how the participants were truly interested to participate and then became able to master fluency according to their level of understanding and knowledge.

### **Validity and reliability of the oral fluency test:**

#### **Pilot study:**

The test was applied to an exploratory sample consisting of (40) students from class 1D at the preparatory school of Hanout, at Zifta administration, Gharbia governorate

#### **a) Determine the test time:**

The test time was calculated through the survey sample, by recording the time it took for each student to answer the test, then calculating the average time for the whole sample, and thus the test time was found.

#### **b) Internal consistency calculation:**

**The internal consistency of the test was calculated by:**

##### **– Internal dimensional consistency test:**

To ensure the internal consistency of the sub-skills of the oral fluency test, correlation coefficients were calculated between the score of each sub-skill and the total score of the test.

**The following table shows the correlation coefficients:**

**Table (1) The values of the correlation coefficients between the score of each component of the oral fluency test and the total score of the test**

| <b>SUB SKILL</b>            | <b>Correlation</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Smoothness and simplicity   | 0.71**             |
| Meaning construction        | 0.73**             |
| Comprehensibility of speech | 0.75**             |
| Pronunciation               | 0.79**             |
| Accuracy and correction     | 0.75**             |

To ensure the internal consistency of the items of the oral fluency test, correlation coefficients were calculated between the score of each item and the total score of the test.

**The following table shows the correlation coefficients:**

**Table (2) The values of the correlation coefficients between the score of each term and the total score of the oral fluency test**

| <b>Item</b> | <b>Correlation</b> |
|-------------|--------------------|
| 1           | 0.71**             |
| 2           | 0.73**             |
| 3           | 0.75**             |
| 4           | 0.79**             |
| 5           | 0.75**             |



**c) Calculating the reliability of the overall test:****– Alpha-Cronbach coefficient:**

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for the test and its value was 0.94, which is an acceptable and high value and generally indicates the accuracy and stability of the test as a means of measurement and therefore it can be relied upon.

**By correcting another debugger:**

The test was re-corrected with another corrector, and the correlation coefficient was calculated between the scores of the two corrections. It was found that the correlation coefficient is equal to (0.984), which is a high value indicating a very strong correlation, which confirms the accuracy and stability of the test and its reliability as a means of measurement

**Calculating the internal consistency of a satisfaction questionnaire:**

To ensure the internal consistency of the satisfaction questionnaire, correlation coefficients were calculated between the score of each item and the total score of the questionnaire. The following table shows the correlation coefficients:

**Table (3) The values of the correlation coefficients between the score of each item and the total score of the satisfaction questionnaire**

| Item | Correlation |
|------|-------------|
| 1    | 0.69**      |
| 2    | 0.71**      |
| 3    | 0.66**      |
| 4    | 0.63**      |
| 5    | 0.68**      |
| 6    | 0.70**      |
| 7    | 0.68**      |
| 8    | 0.64**      |
| 9    | 0.65**      |
| 10   | 0.61**      |
| 11   | 0.69**      |

**Results of the Study**

**Table (4) The results of the t-test indicate the difference between the mean scores of the students of the research group in the pre and post applications of the oral fluency test as a total score, where (n = 44), (degrees of freedom = 43**

| Performance | mean |      | Std. Deviation |      | T- test value | Sig. | Effect size ( $\eta^2$ ) |
|-------------|------|------|----------------|------|---------------|------|--------------------------|
|             | pre  | post | Pre            | post |               |      |                          |

|                               |       |       |       |      |        |       |       |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|--------|-------|-------|
| Overall score of Oral Fluency | 19.23 | 47.95 | 10.72 | 4.24 | 16.272 | 0.000 | 0.892 |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|--------|-------|-------|

**Table (5) The results of the t-test indicate the difference between the mean scores of the students of the research group in the pre and post applications of oral fluency as sub-skills, where (n = 44), (degrees of freedom = 43)**

| Sub-skills                  | mean |      | Std. Deviation |      | T- test value | Sig.  | Effect size ( $\eta^2$ ) |
|-----------------------------|------|------|----------------|------|---------------|-------|--------------------------|
|                             | pre  | post | pre            | post |               |       |                          |
| Smoothness and simplicity   | 3.34 | 8.32 | 2.28           | 0.74 | 14.370        | 0.000 | 0.866                    |
| Meaning construction        | 6.41 | 16.2 | 4.27           | 2.81 | 11.785        | 0.000 | 0.813                    |
| Comprehensibility of speech | 3.98 | 9.89 | 2.66           | 1.51 | 13.988        | 0.000 | 0.859                    |
| Pronunciation               | 1.55 | 4.05 | 1.13           | 0.71 | 12.905        | 0.000 | 0.839                    |
| Accuracy and correction     | 3.95 | 9.5  | 2.61           | 1.92 | 10.735        | 0.000 | 0.783                    |

**Table (7) The results of applying the measure of satisfaction with the use of the proposed program based on imaginative education in developing oral fluency skills, where n = 40 students**

| item | SA |       | A  |      | N |      | D |   | SD |   | Mean | Percent (R II) | الاتجاه العام للفقرة |
|------|----|-------|----|------|---|------|---|---|----|---|------|----------------|----------------------|
|      | N  | %     | N  | %    | N | %    | N | % | N  | % |      |                |                      |
| 1    | 32 | 80.0  | 0  | 0    | 8 | 20.0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 4.6  | 92             | ST. Agree            |
| 2    | 23 | 57.5  | 17 | 42.5 | 0 | 0    | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 4.58 | 91.6           | ST. Agree            |
| 3    | 40 | 100.0 |    |      | 0 | 0    | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 5    | 100            | ST. Agree            |
| 4    | 33 | 82.5  | 7  | 17.5 | 0 | 0    | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 4.83 | 96.6           | ST. Agree            |
| 5    | 24 | 60.0  | 16 | 40.0 | 0 | 0    | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 4.6  | 92             | ST. Agree            |
| 6    | 18 | 45.0  | 16 | 40.0 | 6 | 15.0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 4.3  | 86             | ST. Agree            |
| 7    | 25 | 62.5  | 12 | 30.0 | 3 | 7.5  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 4.55 | 91             | ST. Agree            |

|   |        |      |   |          |         |          |         |   |         |   |      |      |                  |
|---|--------|------|---|----------|---------|----------|---------|---|---------|---|------|------|------------------|
| 8   | 2<br>5 | 62.5 | 2 | 5.0      | 1<br>3  | 32.<br>5 | 0.<br>0 | 0 | 0.<br>0 | 0 | 4.3  | 86   | ST.<br>Agr<br>ee |
| 9   | 3<br>2 | 80.0 | 8 | 20.<br>0 | 0.<br>0 | 0        | 0.<br>0 | 0 | 0.<br>0 | 0 | 4.8  | 96   | ST.<br>Agr<br>ee |
| 10  | 3<br>3 | 82.5 | 7 | 17.<br>5 | 0.<br>0 | 0        | 0.<br>0 | 0 | 0.<br>0 | 0 | 4.83 | 96.6 | ST.<br>Agr<br>ee |
| 11  | 3<br>1 | 77.5 | 9 | 22.<br>5 | 0.<br>0 | 0        | 0.<br>0 | 0 | 0.<br>0 | 0 | 4.78 | 95.6 | ST.<br>Agr<br>ee |
| The general direction of the questionnaire as a whole |        |      |   |          |         |          |         |   |         |   | 4.69 | 93.8 | ST.<br>Agr<br>ee |

### The results of the study:

#### The study came to the following results:

- There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean scores of the study participants on the pre and post oral fluency test in terms of the development of smoothness of utterances“ in favor of the posttest scores.
- There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean scores of the study participants in the pre and post oral fluency test in terms of the development of meaning construction“ in favor of the posttest scores.

- There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean scores of the study participants in the pre and post oral fluency test in terms of the development of comprehensibility of speech“ in favor of the posttest scores.
- There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean scores of the study participants in the pre and post oral fluency test in terms of the development of pronunciation“ in favor of the posttest scores.
- There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean scores of the study participants in the pre and post oral fluency test in terms of the development of accuracy“ in favor of the posttest scores.
- There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean scores of the study participants in the pre and post oral fluency test in terms of the development of their oral fluency as a whole in favor of the posttest scores.

**Conclusions:****From the study results, it can be concluded that:**

- 1- Using imaginative education in improving oral fluency is effective. This is clear through the learner's gradual development and the posttest.
- 2- This effectiveness lies in the nature and validity of imaginative education with its components.

- 3- Imaginative education should be implemented in classrooms because it focuses on engaging the students through contemplating and daydreaming using stories, plays, drama, puzzles, metaphoric language,....etc.
- 4- By implementing imaginative education, teachers can provide a fair and enjoyable environment for planting common attitudes towards the English language as a second language. Oral communication can be put into place and practice in this fertile soil of feelings, deep emotions, empathy and sympathy; neither apathy nor indifference.
- 5- Teachers, who are like parents, read about imaginative education and get the most benefit for themselves, then pass this knowledge on to their ss. This link builds rapport and affability inside and outside the classroom.

**Recommendations and suggestions:****The researcher concluded theses recommendations:**

- 1- Teachers should give due care to oral fluency as a crucial component towards mastering a language.
- 2- More space should be given to practicing fluency in the class first, then outside.
- 3- Furnishing the class imaginatively should be put into consideration from the teacher to create a relaxing atmosphere for the students to enjoy learning and imaginative teaching.

- 4- Imaginative education activities should be implemented and teachers should be trained to use them
- 5- There should be a lot of encouragement from teachers to their students to enjoy speaking with each other through an imaginative play
- 6- Parents and caretakers should pay more attention to the importance of the communicative teaching approach in ELT.
- 7- Schools can try to use imaginative posters about certain topics to enhance imagination.
- 8- The imaginative education program is a new trend in teaching and learning. Depending on its effectiveness and validity, universities and teaching methodology should implement this approach in ELT.

**Suggestions for further research:**

- 1- Applying imaginative education on all levels of education.
- 2- Putting into consideration the students' needs and desires as a starting point to any language acquisition.
- 3- Mastering any skill needs much practice and further readings from various resources.
- 4- Encouraging teachers to undertake the imaginative approach in teaching.

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