The Effect of the Second Generation Curriculum of English on Learners' Interpersonal Communicative Skills
A field study at Abbad Mohamed Middle School in the State of Relizane

أثر مناهج الجيل الثاني للغة الإنـجليزية على المهارة التواصلية الشخصية للمتعلمين
دراسة ميدانية بمدرسة عباد محمد الإعدادية بولاية غليزان

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Article info:	Abstract
	The implementation of the second generation curriculum of English as a foreign language in the Algerian context –at the level of middle school- had very promising objectives in terms of emphasising values, competencies and adopting a communicative teaching approach. One of the main objectives of the curriculum, as stated by the Algerian Ministry of Education, is to enhance learners' communicative and conversational skills. Thus, drawing on the importance of interpersonal communication, this paper aims at examining the effectiveness of the second generation curriculum on the learners' interpersonal skills. In this respect, a quantitative approach was used to investigate the issue among 30 middle school learners studying in the third grade through an Interpersonal Communication Skills Inventory that focuses on 4 key communication areas; sending clear messages, active listening, giving and receiving feedback and handling emotional interactions). The results obtained from the collected data revealed that learners' interpersonal level of communication is low and in need for improvement. In the light of the results, some recommendations were suggested to enhance learners' interpersonal skills.

الكلمات المفتاحية:	ملخص
	كان لتطبيق منهج الجيل الثاني للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجزائر - على مستوى التعليم المتوسط - أهداف واعدة للغاية من حيث التأكيد على القيم والكفاءات و تبني نهج التدريس التواصلي. من ضمن الأهداف الاساسية للمنهج وفقا لوزارة التربية والتعليم الجزائرية، هو تعزيز مهارات التواصل والحوار لدى المتعلمين. بالاعتماد على أهمية التواصل بين الأشخاص، تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى فحص فعالية منهج الجيل الثاني على مهارات المتعلمين التواصلية. في هذا الصدد، تم استخدام نهج كمي للتحقيق في القضية بين 30 متعلم في الطور المتوسط و الذين يدرسون في الصف الثالث باستعمال سلم جرد مهارات التواصل بين الأشخاص الذي يركز على 4 مجالات اتصال رئيسية؛ إرسال رسائل واضحة, الاستماع النشط, إعطاء وتلقي الملاحظات والتعامل مع التفاعلات العاطفية. كشفت النتائج المتحصل عليها من خلال البيانات التي تم جمعها أن مستوى التواصل الشخصي للمتعلمين ضعيف ويحتاج إلى التطوير. في ضوء النتائج، تُقترح بعض التوصيات لتعزيز مهارات المتعلمين في التعامل مع الآخرين.

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1. Introduction

In the past few decades, the Algerian educational system has witnessed many reforms aiming at providing a high quality education and coping with the globalized world. The last considerable reform was that of 2003 that emphasized the Competency Based Approach that was referred to as the First Generation Curriculum. However, the latter was under constant reviewing and critics until the school year of 2016-2017 when a new program was introduced to the Algerian pupils at the level of the middle school that is the Second Generation Curriculum. In the light of globalization, policy makers have given much importance to teaching languages, especially English. Hence, a new curriculum was designed to promote communication at the first place and to deepen universal values. Unfortunately, the Algerian learner is still facing many difficulties and challenges in speaking, mainly when it comes to interpersonal communication. For this reason the present paper investigates the effectiveness of the Second Generation Curriculum on the learner's interpersonal skills -face to face interactions- using a quantitative approach. To achieve the aim of the study, an Interpersonal Communication Skills Inventory was handed to 30 pupils in the third grade middle school. The inventory focused on 4 different areas of communication: fluent speaking, active listening, giving and receiving feedback and handling emotional interactions. Findings unveiled a major deficiency in interpersonal communication. Therefore, reconsidering the objectives of the new program in Algeria is an urgent need.

2. The Status of English at the Algerian Middle School

Education in Algeria is free and compulsory to all children from the age of six to the age of fifteen. The Algerian Ministry of Education has emphasized teaching languages and made it at the core of the educational system of the country. Moreover, the Algerian linguistic frame is very rich with the number of languages taught in schools and used in different contexts whether academic or non-academic. For (Amziane, 2015) the Algerian Educational system has witnessed three considerable changes accompanied with a set of revisions at different levels between the

period of 1962 and 2000. In 2003, an educational reform was introduced to the Algerian school and a new approach of teaching was adopted. In this reform, more importance was given to English as a foreign language because Algeria as any other country in the world recognizes the necessity for teaching this language not merely for educational purposes but also for economic and political reasons, as well. Table 01 illustrates the status of English in the period between independence until 2003.

Table 01

years	1st foreign language	2nd foreign language	Total
1962	Intermediate Cycle (4year) Secondary Cycle (3years)		7 years
1962-1975		Intermediate Cycle (2year) Secondary Cycle(3 years)	5 years
1975-1993		Intermediate Cycle (2 years) -Secondary Cycle (3 years)	5 years
1993-2003		Intermediate Cycle (3 years) Secondary Cycle (3 years)	6 years
2003		Intermediate Cycle (4 years) Secondary Cycle (3 years)	7 years

Source: (Benmati, 2008)

When examining the status of a language, one should trace back the linguistic background of the learner from early stages. Starting with primary school, children at the age of five receive a free and a compulsory education that lasts for 6 years (i.e. the first year is considered a pre-school step) with 2 languages that are Arabic as the country's first official language then, they start studying French as the first foreign language in

the third grade. In some schools, children may have the option of studying Amazigh language after it has been approved by the Algerian government to be the second national language of the country.

In the middle school stage, pupils spend four years studying different subjects, mainly in Arabic. At this level, English is introduced to learners as a foreign language starting from the first year in middle school. In the first 2 years, children receive a course of 3 hours per-week with a coefficient of 1. Moving to the third and the fourth year, the number of hours is increased to 4 and the coefficient of English becomes 2. English at the middle school is considered one of the main 4 subjects namely: Arabic, mathematics, French and English.

Noticeably, the Algerian government is making efforts to promote and encourage the English language in the Algerian school. Differing from the period before the reforms, the ministry is paying a lot of attention to the ongoing professional teacher training through seminars, study days and conferences. Also, the government is offering travel facilities for EFL teachers who are interested in exchange programs and scholarships with countries in which English is their first language.

3. Interpersonal Communication in the Light of the New Curriculum

Despite the fact that many animals and plants species communicate through noises, signals, dances, or even smells; human communication is much more complex than this, as it stands at the core of our lives as human beings and has different objectives.

In fact, people communicate on a daily basis to establish relationships, express emotions, and share their knowledge to the world. The ability to effectively manage this process that consists of several components defines the success of human beings at different levels starting from personal to professional lives.

3.1 Defining Communication

According to Garnett et al. (2008), communication is the act of expressing intention by the addresser that leads to understanding by the addressee. The previous definition brings to light the purposive nature of communication that is always directed toward a goal.

As communication is indispensible part of language, it brings people together and helps them reach a shared understanding of the delivered message. As (Jarvis & Salomone, 1988) elucidate, communication may be regarded as a combination of purposive acts and intents. It is also functional and designed to bring about some effect - some change- on the environment of hearers and speakers. Besides,   Communication can be studied from different angles. One may look at its types, strategies, objectives, barriers, means, forms...etc. It is not limited to one field of study or another.

3.2 Forms of Communication

Human communication as it is a very complicated process with many involved elements may take many forms; it varies from intrapersonal to interpersonal, public, group and mass communication. This distinction is based on the several models communication may take to function between people, in different contexts and for different purposes (i.e. sender, receiver, message, and channel).

3.2.1 Intrapersonal Communication

It is the kind of communication that occurs within oneself; it is a sort of reflective thinking. In intrapersonal communication both the sender and the receiver are the person himself. According to Ehondor (2017) the word intrapersonal implies within-individual, while communication in simple terms is the act of conveying information. It happens as a response to a stimulus which can be internal like the conversation that runs in one's mind when he feels thirsty and looks for water, or external as a reaction to someone speaking and the impression a person can have. It uses the language of thoughts or self-talks to interpret messages, respond to others, or process a feeling; for example pain, joy, excitement...etc.

3.2.2 Public Communication

The term public communication refers to delivering a message to a wide audience by an individual or a group in the purpose of entertaining like stand-up comedy, informing like lecturing or persuading like marketing. It focuses more on the sender rather than the receiver and it involves a more general sphere as it

is used interchangeably with public speaking that is a very valuable skill only few people master and others have to work on developing it. (Rice & Atkins, 2009) defines public communication as a purposive attempt to influence a large audience within a specific time period. It has different scopes; it is widely used in political field, education, campaigns, commerce, religion...etc.

3.2.3 Group Communication

Group communication shares some similarities with public communication as they both occur within groups. The difference lies in the fact that communicating in groups involves less number of people and gives more opportunity for sharing, exchanging and collaborating. For (McLean, 2004), It is a dynamic process where a small number of people engage in a conversation. It is often considered by most of people to be frustrating when dealing with a group of individuals having distinct personalities and communicative styles. Yet it is inevitable part of any human's life to work in a group whether in an educational context or at work; everyone will have to communicate in group at some point of his life.

3.2.4 Mass Communication

Whenever we speak about mass communication, technology is at the centre of the process. In this form of communication the channel is electronic; it can be newspaper, television, social media, radio or another electronic means that creates a mass transmission of information. According to (McLean, 2005) mass communication is sending a message to a large number of people without having the ability to limit that message to a specific audience. In this form of communication, the personal connection is missing since the receiver is sometimes unknown which makes it different from the other forms where there is always a certain amount of personal interaction even in the case of intrapersonal communication.

3.2.5 Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is generally defined as the exchange of information between people that involves more than words alone because it is mostly done face to face which adds other elements to the equation such as non-verbal messages to convey feelings and emotions (Hargie, 1997). The process of communication occurs on a daily basis among different people but the level of effectiveness and success of this process is measured by the interpersonal skills. According to (Barakat, 2007) interpersonal skills are those essential skills needed in building and sustaining relationships with others and dealing with them. Likewise, (Angeles, 2012) refers to interpersonal skills as the ability to relate and interact effectively with others. Seemingly, being a successful communicator depends on five key components

• A good level of intrapersonal communication or the ability to understand one's self.

• A good listening ability or what it is referred to as active listening.

• Sending clear messages to the receiver using the appropriate verbal and non-verbal language to avoid confusion.

• The ability to deal with other people's feelings and emotions.

• Giving and receiving feedback.(Bienvenue, 1971)

3.2.5.1 Interpersonal Communication Styles

Every individual has his own way of interacting with the world. Our style of communication refers to the manner we communicate with others; it is in fact the answer to "how" we exchange our ideas with others and how we also react to them rather than "what" we use to convey the message.

According to Bocar (2017), in communication people tend to be passive, assertive or aggressive. As the word aggressive shows, this style is for people who are close-minded and unwilling to make any compromises or efforts to create a mutual ground with others. They rather impose their ideas and beliefs and poorly manage to establish relationships because they are often intimidating and people avoid interacting with them since they dominate most of the speech. They tend to bully and criticise others based on their own values. On the other hand, people with passive style are very submissive. They are always afraid of what others may think of them. So, they tend to speak less and hesitate when making decisions. They often avoid conflicts and hide their feelings which

make them easy to be broken emotionally. Passive communicators are more exposed to psychological issues as depression and anger stemmed from their suppressed feelings.

Coming to the assertive style, it is the most desired way to communicate among people. It is much more stable and healthier. Assertive people are likely to accept others, build rapports easier, achieve personal goals and cope comfortably in different situations with different people. It is considered as the most effective communication style. It displays self-confidence, security, and appreciation to others and consequently helps the communicator gain trust and positive reception.

3.3 Teaching Interpersonal Communication Skills

Constant change in today's society requires a person who is flexible enough to adapt to the modern social needs. Thus, teachers need to encourage their learners to attain constructive social behaviors that could lift up the entire community and help schools focus on other educational concerns. Communication is a key skill for every learner to master and the classroom atmosphere relies heavily on the type of communication taking place within it. When it comes to acquiring the communicative skills, schools need to expand their roles to help young learners be prepared for future challenges they may face outside its walls.

Teaching learners Interpersonal skills such as active listening, empathy or self-awareness can help them thrive both academically and socially. (Chessman, 2003) reports that students' communication and interpersonal skills could have important implications on students' performance. These attributes may sculpt and define their success in life and affirm their ability of projecting interest towards others and building-up positive relationships. According to (Lazo, 2019), people with effective and efficient interpersonal communication among their peers have an edge over the others because such a communication paves way for developing strong relationships. Those skills are equally important both for teachers and learners since establishing a common ground between the two is a fundamental component for a good and lasting relationship as they share common interest, i.e.

learning.

Teaching is not a mere delivery of planned lessons or the conveyance of information; it also entails communication as an essential part of the target language; because one of the main aims of teaching a foreign language is to help learners acquire the necessary communicative ability which depends not only on language skills but also on understanding of social habits and expectations. Introducing interpersonal skills as a process mediated by communication in EFL classrooms is thus a critical task for any teacher. Those skills vary in their definition, hierarchical organisation and scope from one researcher to another; may include: caring, empathy, active listening, responsibility, leadership, flexibility, the ability to work in a team, mediation, adaptability, decision making, understanding nonverbal communication...etc.

In order to bridge the gap between the language skills and the interpersonal ones, EFL teachers need to actively engage their students and stimulate their intellectual and emotional development through a variety of classroom activities that arouse their interest in language and make them think of connections across different situations while studying English. For (Lazo, 2019), individuals with excellent interpersonal skills rise to the top of their personal growth. Yet, the inclusion of interpersonal skills in teaching the foreign language is not always an easy mission since it revolves around three main aspects: syllabus design, teacher's training and material selection.

The Algerian EFL learner is now required more than ever to improve his/her communicative skills in order to fit in the globalized world we all live in. To this prospect, the new educational reforms were introduced to ensure that more focus will be given to communication as confirmed by THE LAW OF ORIENTATION, 04-08 January 23rd, 2008 mentioned in the "1st Year Teachers' Guide" that emphasized three core values to be taught within the new curriculum and they are as follows:

National Identity: He can speak about his name, nationality, language, religion, flag, national currency, etc.

National Conscience: He can speak about historic and religious events and be proud of them.

Citizenship: He will be responsible, honest, and respectful.

Openness to the World: He can learn about others' cultures and markers of identity.

The words "speak about" are used twice above to show the importance of the aural-oral skills (i.e. speaking and listening). Hence, one can say that interpersonal skills are at the center of the revised curriculum and policy makers are paying more attention to improve those skills for the Algerian learner. The same decree recognizes the necessity of providing learners with the linguistic tools essential for an efficient communication and to be aware of the changes and challenges of today's society.

Despite of the efforts devoted by the Ministry of Education to promote communication skills and integrate communicative activities and tasks both of the teacher and the learner are still struggling to overcome the difficulties they face in the classroom concerning the lack of teaching materials, overcrowded classes and many other obstacles that may stand in the face of achieving the final objectives of the curriculum.

4. Results and Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the second generation curriculum on developing interpersonal skills. To this respect, a quantitative approach was used. Referring to the above mentioned components of a successful communication by (Bienvenue, 1971), the latter has created a scale to measure interpersonal skills by tracking particular patterns and tendencies of communication in daily interactions in a 54-item scale called the Interpersonal Communication Skills Inventory or ICSI. The problem with the original scale is that it is devoted to an older age group (above 18 years old) which is not suitable for this study. For this reason, an adapted version of the scale by (Learning Dynamics, 2002) was used for being more appropriate with school children. The simplified version is composed of 40 questions divided into 4 sections measuring 4 areas of interpersonal skills (i.e. sending clear messages,

active listening, giving and receiving feedback, and handling emotional interactions).

To achieve the purpose of the study, 30 middle school learners studying in the third grade were selected by using a purposive sampling strategy to fit the desired profile of participants. In this research, 2 variables were under scope: the second generation curriculum of English as being the independent variable and the learners' interpersonal skills as the dependent one. Concerning the data collection, participants were introduced first to an intrapersonal course that was designed to raise learners' self-awareness. The course was focusing on areas such as identifying their type of intelligence, type of personality and learning style in order to make them aware of the importance of the intrapersonal communication and to prepare them to take the interpersonal test. Data were presented in tables displaying the mean score and its descriptive equivalent as shown in the table below.

Table 2

Descriptive Table of Mean Scores

Mean Score	Interpretation
Scores in the 1 > 15 range	Areas of communication skills that need improvement
Scores in the 16 >21	Areas of communication skills that need more consistent attention
Scores in the 22 > 30	Areas of strength or potential strength

Source: Learning Dynamics, 2002

Participants were asked to fill in with their profile information mentioning their sex and age.

Table 3

Profile of Respondents

Percentage	Profile
Sex:	
• Male	46.66
• Female	53.33
Age:	
• 13	66.66
• 14	20
• 15	10
• 16	3.33

Table 03 indicates that most of the learners are at their early adolescence stage that is 13 years old with 66.66% of the participants while 20% are 14, 10% are 15 and only 3.33% are 16 which means that 33.33% had problems of either failing to pass the school year once before or not being able to access school at the legal age.

Concerning learners' sex, the same table shows a percentage of 53.33% of females in comparison to 46.66% of males which implies close numbers and an equal distribution of girls and boys in classrooms.

Table 4

Learners' Level of Communication Skills

Area	Mean Score	Equivalent
Sending clear messages	13.53	Areas of communication skills that need improvement
Active listening	12	Areas of communication skills that need improvement
Giving and receiving feedback	14.1	Areas of communication skills that need improvement
Handling emotional interactions	12.2	Areas of communication skills that need improvement

Table 04 outlines the results obtained from learners' tests. As for the first interpersonal skill, that is sending clear messages (i.e. word-choice, flow of ideas, using the appropriate body language and tone of voice…etc.) the mean score was 13.53 which is slightly less than 15. This implies that learners need improvements in this area. Moving to the second interpersonal skill that is active listening which includes paying attention to what other people say and the ability to predict their words and feelings; learners' score was 12 which indicates a need for improvement, too. Concerning the third skill that is giving and receiving feedback, learners' score was 14.1. The section of feedback includes constructive criticism, using compliments, and defending one's ideas and views. The score of this section implies also that this area of communication needs improvement. The last

section is about handling emotional interactions or in other words respecting other people's feelings and self-regulation. In this area, learners' score was 12.2 which means that they need improvement as Table 02 indicates.

Overall, we can generally say that the Algerian learners' level of interpersonal communication skills is low and under expectation. Thus, more attention and work should be devoted to improving and developing general interpersonal skills to help learners reach the final educational objectives set by the ministry of education.

5. Conclusion

In order to ensure effective communication, it is necessary to adhere to the development of interpersonal skills. Given the results obtained from this study that indicates a clear deficiency in those skills, it is worth giving some thoughts to improve communication in the classroom and make interpersonal teaching a standard practice. Besides, communication among young people is now slowly decreasing, due to technology, to a point where children have troubles even initiating a face to face conversation. They are also developing an inability to read social cues and have empathy toward others. Therefore, it is time to seek strategies to improve learners' social interactions and help them master language skills more effectively; in an attempt to establish productive and fruitful relationships inside and outside the classroom which hopefully will lead to better results concerning language achievement.

This study also brings to light the fact that the second generation curriculum is still lacking revision in order to accord sufficient attention to teaching interpersonal skills as a priority by integrating more communicative activities and assessing learners interpersonal communication to diagnose their problems and help them in the areas they feel most insecure. Moreover, it is recommended to add more contact hours of English to relieve the pressure on teachers who are constantly worried about not being able to finish the overloaded syllabus that does not allow sufficient time for practice and improvement.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

-List of Annexes

Annex 1

Scoring Key

Question	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom
01	0	1	3
02	0	1	3
03	3	1	0
04	0	1	3
05	0	1	3
06	3	1	0
07	3	1	0
08	3	1	0
09	3	1	0
10	3	1	0
11	0	1	3
12	3	1	0
13	0	1	3
14	0	1	3
15	3	1	0
16	3	1	0
17	0	1	3
18	0	1	3
19	3	1	0
20	0	1	3
21	0	1	3
22	3	1	0
23	3	1	0
24	3	1	0
25	0	1	3
26	0	1	3
27	0	1	3
28	0	1	3
29	0	1	3
30	3	1	0
31	0	1	3
32	0	1	3
33	0	1	3
34	3	1	0
35	3	1	0
36	0	1	3
37	3	1	0
38	3	1	0
39	0	1	3
40	0	1	3

Source: Learning Dynamics, 2002

Annex 2

Total scores

Section 1 Score: Sending clear messages	Section 2 Score: Listening	Section 3 Score: Giving/receiving feedback	Section 3 Score: Handling emotional interactions
30	30	30	30
29	29	29	29
28	28	28	28
27	27	27	27
26	26	26	26
25	25	25	25
24	24	24	24
23	23	23	23
22	22	22	22
21	21	21	21
20	20	20	20
19	19	19	19
18	18	18	18
17	17	17	17
16	16	16	16
15	15	15	15
14	14	14	14
13	13	13	13
12	12	12	12
11	11	11	11
10	10	10	10
09	09	09	09
08	08	08	08
07	07	07	07
06	06	06	06
05	05	05	05
04	04	04	04
03	03	03	03
02	02	02	02
01	01	01	01

Source: Learning Dynamics, 2002

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