

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED EL BACHIR EL IBRAHIMI

BORDJ BOU-ARRERIDJ

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTEMENT OF LETTERS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES



END OF STUDIES' DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Master's Degree

Specialty: Didactics

Theme

**An Exploration of the Common Difficulties and Factors
Encountered by EFL Learners in Speaking**

**The Case of Second Year EFL Students at the University
of BBA**

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Academic year: 2021/2022

Declaration

We hereby solemnly declare that the work we are going to present in this dissertation

An Exploration of the Common Difficulties and Factors Encountered by EFL Learners in Speaking: The case of Second Year EFL Students at the University of BBA

is our own to the limits of our knowledge, has not been submitted before to any other institution or university or degree and all sources that we have used and quoted from have been indicated by means of complete references. This work is to be carried out and completed at Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi University BBA, Algeria.

Date: 20/06/2022

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

فَالسُّبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَمَلْنَا
إِنَّا كُنَّا نَتَّبِعُكَ الْعِلْمُ الْحَكِيمُ

They (angels) said: “Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise.”

Quran 2:32 Surah al-Baqarah

وَقُلْ
رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

And say (in prayer), “My Lord, increase my knowledge.”

Quran 20:114 Surah Ta-Ha

Dedication

I dedicate this work to

My father from whom I inherited the love of reading, writing and creativity

My wonderful mother from whom I learned steady patience, tremendous persistence and striving towards approaching perfection in any work I do

My dear loving brothers Mohamed El Amine, Mohamed Ikkal and Mohamed El Mohtadi

My exceptional teachers Ms. Moussaoui and Mr. Benhamimid who have left an unforgettable trace in my academic life in particular and in my life in general and they made me the student I am today due to their support and the high expectations they set to me

My aunt Souad who constantly encourages me

My friend and partner in this work Kenane Nadjat with whom I enjoyed working

My friend Tiet Louisa who was by my side every time I needed help

Benmahmoud Lamia

Dedication

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful. All thanks and praises to Allah for the countless blessings and bounties he has given me.

I dedicate the present work to

The dearest people who enlighten my life with prayer, care , support, encouragement and endless love .To my sympathetic father who scarified and worked hard to provide me with better conditions , To my beloved mother who taught me morals and the value of education .

Mom and Dad, I am so grateful to you for everything you do.

The source of my strength, my lovely siblings without whom I would not be able to achieve any success in my life. Thank you Allah for giving me this gift.

The soul of my grandparents and my uncle, May Allah be Merciful to them.

All my family and relatives.

The honest teacher Mr. Benhamimid who showed me that life is not restricted in the society we are living in, but there is another life full of learning and reading regardless of what other people are doing in their lives. Most importantly, it is for worshipping Allah .He taught me to keep learning until the last breath.

The wonderful women Mrs. Daoudi who always recommends me to trust in Allah and work hard to reach my goals and aspirations.

The supportive teacher Mr. Habitouche who continually encourages me.

All my teachers without exception.

My persevering partner Benmahmoud Lamia with whom I lived sweet moments.

I am so proud for being my friend.

My friends: Barket Zieneb, Tiet Louiza and Benmahmoud Lamia again, thank you for being by my side throughout the university years

All my friends and classmates

All those who seek wisdom wherever it is.

Kenane Nadjjet

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, our deep gratitude and praise go to Allah the Almighty for giving us strength, health and patience in all stages of our lives. Alhamdulillah who always chooses the best for us. Oh Allah! We can never thank you enough!

Prayers and greetings to our prophet Muhammad peace be upon him and all of his family and followers. Without him, the world would remain in ignorance and darkness.

“No one walks alone, and when you are walking on the journey of life ...you

have to stop to thank those that joined you, walked beside

you, and helped you along the way.”

David H, Hooker

We owe a huge debt of gratitude and million thanks to our well informed, modest, kind and exceptional supervisor Mr. Benhamimid for his time, assistance, understanding, patience, encouragement, support, enthusiasm, inspiration and high expectations. Without his constant correction, valuable comments, guidance, suggestions, advice, and attention to small details, we would not have done such a work.

Our sincere appreciation and gratefulness go to the jury members: Mr. Benraghda and Mr. Habitouche who devoted their time and effort to correct and evaluate this work.

Many thanks to all our teachers and everyone helped us in our scholar journey.

Special thanks to the following teachers: Miss Bechami, Miss Saidani and Mr. Azzi for their collaboration in the distribution of the questionnaire.

We offer our profound gratitude to all second year English students for their cooperation.

Extreme appreciation goes also to all our colleagues who helped us both those from in and outside our university.

Abstract

The endeavor of this study is to explore the common difficulties encountered by EFL students in speaking as well as the factors behind those difficulties. In order to realize these objectives and to evaluate the validity of the hypotheses, a field work was carried out in the Department of English at the University of Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi for the academic year 2021-2022. The quantitative method was adopted, and the data was collected through submitting a questionnaire to all second year students (males and females). After that, 86 participants were randomly picked out of 215 with a percentage of 40%. The analysis of the collected data revealed the following results: Second year English students encounter linguistic and psychological difficulties. The former include grammar confusion, lack of vocabulary, pronunciation problems, first language interference and the difficulty to balance accuracy and fluency. The latter refer to fear of making mistakes, shyness, lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, anxiety and inhibition. However, the factors that contribute to the aforementioned difficulties are: lack of motivation and interest, irrelevance of topics to students' life, lack of activities devoted to speaking and lack of equipments and audio-visual aids, over-crowded classes and limited time, lack of exposure to English, lack of listening and speaking practice and excessive mother tongue use. These results confirm the hypotheses. Eventually, some recommendations and suggestions are provided for students, teachers, administrators and curriculum designers in attempt to help overcoming these problems.

List of Abbreviations

BBA: Bordj Bou-Arreidj

GA: General American (pronunciation)

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

L3: Third Language

Q: Question

RP: The Received Pronunciation

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Introduction

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Introduction

The need to learn English has massively increased especially in the last decades due to the status of English as an international language. Successful language learning requires the integration of the four language skills: Listening, speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, it is better for EFL learners to master all of them, because they are interrelated and cannot be learned independently. However, the speaking skill may need a special attention. As a matter of fact, the main purpose behind learning a second or foreign language is to be able to speak it fluently and accurately. In this sense, Scrivener (2005) stated that “there is no point knowing a lot about language if you can’t use it” (P.146). That is to say, having the ability to make conversations in different situations with full proficiency and fluency is generally the evidence of success in language learning. Yet, developing a strong speaking skill can be considered a very demanding and challenging task to EFL learners. In fact, many students seem to face several difficulties regarding this issue. These difficulties include linguistic and psychological constraints in addition to other environmental and pedagogical factors as well as learners’ related ones.

1. Background of the Study

Speaking has gained the lion’s share in EFL research owing to its significance and because of its real influence on students’ language learning. A considerable number of researchers have tackled this skill from multiple aspects. However, the present work is only concerned with research that had dealt with speaking difficulties. According to Thornbury (2002), the obstacles that face EFL learners in speaking are generally due to lack of knowledge, lack of skills and the existence of affective (psychological) related difficulties. Lack of knowledge has to do with language aspects which enable production, but learners do not know yet. Lack of skills implies that learners’ knowledge is not yet enough to permit automaticity and fluency. Affective related difficulties include, for example, lack of confidence or self-consciousness. Speaking production goes through three phases of language processing (Bygate, 2004). The first phase is related to the conceptualization of the message content; the second one is for the selection of the suitable linguistic formulation for the message, and the third phase is the actual articulation of the message. Many problems can intervene during these phases in a second language learning setting (Bygate, 2004). At the conceptualization phase, for instance, the learners may tend to think in their first language which makes it more difficult to choose the appropriate linguistic formulation in the subsequent phase, because the conceptualization and the linguistic formulation belong to

different languages and do not fit together. Bygate (2004) pointed out that problems in the linguistic formulation involve the selection of the wrong words as well while mispronunciation occurs in the third phase. The present research took the division above as a principle to classify difficulties and factors; any problem intervenes during one or more of those phases is considered a difficulty, and problems which precede these phases are seen as factors. For example, both anxiety and lack of motivation are psychological constraints, but anxiety is present at the exact moment of speaking and causes disruption at the level of the three phases while lack of motivation starts before speaking, therefore, anxiety is regarded as a difficulty and lack of motivation is considered a factor. In order to get a comprehensive overview of what has been researched about the topic until the current moment, eight relevant studies which had dealt with the same variables were selected. The variables are: Speaking as the dependent variable, and difficulties and factors as the independent variables. This is a very important step to decide where to start and which gaps need to be filled, because “Research is greatly strengthened by placing your new information in the context of what is already known about the issue” (Laws et al., 2003, p.213). The selected studies were different in terms of focus and classification of difficulties and factors. However, the present study has its own principle of classification. Furthermore, it includes more items under each category of difficulties or factors. Most importantly, it is distinguished from others, because it has the advantage of looking for dominant problems and factors at each category. This helps teachers and students to place more emphasis and effort on most dominant obstacles when trying to solve the problem. A close reading of the previous studies’ results revealed the following: The linguistic difficulties which are frequently encountered by EFL learners in speaking are: incorrect application of grammatical rules, poor vocabulary, poor pronunciation, lack of fluency and mother tongue interference (Benouioua & Djellal, 2018; Chaouchi & Bahlouli, 2022; Saouli, 2019). As for the psychological difficulties, they include: Inhibition, loss of self-confidence during speaking, anxiety, low self-esteem, fear of making mistakes, shyness and fear of negative feedback (Alhosni, 2014; Belegdair, 2015; Chaouchi & Bahlouli, 2022; Erlina, 2019; Saouli, 2019; Yahi & Lamrour, 2018). The factors that have a contribution to those difficulties are varied including, limited exposure to spoken English in and outside classroom, excessive use of L1, lack of relevance of tackled topics to students’ daily communicative needs, over-crowded classes, limited time, lack of facilities such as laboratories and audio-visual aids, lack of speaking practice, insufficient grammatical usage practice, low motivation, lack of time allocated to oral expression sessions, lack of interaction inside the classroom, lack of authentic materials and lack of motivating or supporting environment (Alhosni, 2014; Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2013; Belegdair, 2015; Benouioua &

Djellal, 2018; Chaouchi & Bahlouli, 2022; Erlina, 2019; Saouli, 2019; Yahy & Lamrou, 2018). To conclude, these studies together with the review of literature help shaping the backbone of the present research which will be carried out at the university of Bordj Bou Arreridj for the academic year 2021-2022, and with its own data collection tool, it attempts to identify the difficulties that encounter second year EFL students in speaking as well as factors contributing to the existence of these difficulties.

2. Statement of the Problem

The complexity of speaking makes EFL learners struggle when they come to perform this task. This problem appears to be common among Algerian EFL students whereby they tend to face difficulties in speaking English fluently despite the fact that they have spent a great deal of time learning grammar and vocabulary through seven years at middle and secondary schools before in addition to their university learning experience. Considering the context of the University of Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi, this can be particularly seen in the case of second year EFL students. There must be a combination of obstacles that encounter them at various levels such as, linguistic barriers, psychological difficulties, environmentally and pedagogically related constraints and factors related to learners themselves. These difficulties have a serious impact on students' language learning process and on their overall academic, employment and social achievements. Hence, it was more than a necessity to conduct a research regarding this issue.

3. Significance of the Study

This study is valuable to EFL students, EFL teachers and EFL curriculum designers in many ways. For students, it offers them an opportunity to express their views about their own speaking problems. In addition, the detailed explanation of these problems in this research can raise their awareness towards the target issue and help them discover where their responsibility lies in order to take action and try to enhance their speaking abilities autonomously. For teachers, after taking these obstacles into consideration, they become more able to understand their students' problems in speaking. Besides that, it is possible that they make modifications on their instructions and teaching methodologies in order to place more emphasis on language areas in which students are commonly weak. For curriculum designers, the results of this study can draw the attention of persons in charge of curriculum design to think of modifications in terms of content, activities devoted to speaking, and authentic materials.

4. Research Aims

This research attempts to help solving a practical problem through diagnosing its causes from multiple dimensions. Therefore, its aims are:

- To identify and define the common speaking difficulties encountered by second year EFL students at the University of Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi.
- To find out the factors and circumstances contributing to the existence of these difficulties.

5. Research Questions

In harmony with the research aims, the research questions are:

- What are the common speaking difficulties encountered by second year EFL students at the University of Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi?
- What are the factors that contribute to the existence of these difficulties?

6. Research Hypotheses

In response to the aforementioned questions, it can be hypothesized that:

- Second year EFL students at the university of BBA encounter many speaking difficulties both at the linguistic and psychological levels.
- There are several factors which contribute to these difficulties including, environmental and pedagogical factors as well as learner related ones.

7. Research Methodology Design

The methodological framework is necessary in any research for answering the research questions and validating the hypotheses. The present study seeks to explore EFL learners' common speaking difficulties. The quantitative method will be adopted, and data will be collected through submitting a questionnaire to all second year English students (males and females) in the Department of English at the University of Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi in Bordj Bou Arreridj for the academic year 2021-2022. After that, and utilizing number-code principle, 86 responses will be picked out of 215 representing 40% as the sample of this study.

8. Scope of the Study

This study sheds light on the common difficulties encountered by EFL learners in speaking in which the focus is on both the difficulties and the factors causing them taking second year English students at the university of Bordj Bou Arreridj for the academic year 2021-2022 as a case. Therefore, the findings of this research will be limited only to the mentioned sample and concerned only with the context of the University of BBA.

9. Structure of the Dissertation

The present work starts with a general introduction, followed by the theoretical part and the investigation part, and it ends with a general conclusion. The general Introduction provides the skeleton of the dissertation. It presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, the research aims, questions, hypotheses and methodology design in addition to the scope of the study. The theoretical part represents a review of literature, and it is divided into three sections. The first section offers a general overview of the speaking skill, namely, its definition, importance, its basic aspects and the related learning theories to language learning in general and their application to speaking. The second section diagnoses both linguistic and psychological speaking problems. The third section examines the factors behind those problems. The investigation part comprises two sections. The first one is concerned with research methodology design whereby it justifies the choice of research approach, data collection tool and sample in addition to a description of the questionnaire and its administration. The second section analyzes and interprets the data in details. It also offers a general discussion. Finally, a general conclusion comes accompanied by research limitations and a set of recommendations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER ONE:

EFL LEARNERS' COMMON SPEAKING DIFFICULTIES AND FACTORS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THEM

Introduction

1.1. Section One: General Overview of Speaking Skill

1.2. Section Two: Speaking Difficulties

1.3. Section Three: Factors Contributing to Speaking Difficulties

Conclusion

Introduction

Speaking is a very familiar task that people do not usually question how they learn to speak their first language. However, speaking a foreign language can be challenging (Thornbury, 2002). The task of speaking is considered as one of the most complex human behaviors, because it involves active interactions of different mental, articulatory and social processes (Goh, 2009, as cited in Renandya & Widodo, 2016). The difficulty of speaking lies in the fact that it is challenged by time limitation and pressure, because the speaker does not have time to plan and organize the message (Bygate, 2010). It is not surprising, then, that many EFL learners stumble upon many problems when they try to speak. This issue is discussed throughout this chapter in three sections. Section one offers an overview of speaking skill, namely, its definition, importance and aspects. Section two is mainly about linguistically and psychologically related difficulties. Finally, the third section describes the factors that contribute in one way or another to the existence of speaking difficulties including, learner related factors and some environmental and pedagogical ones as well. It is important to note that “foreign language” and “second language” are used interchangeably in this chapter.

1.1. Section One: General Overview of Speaking Skill

Introduction

It is necessary to provide a general summary of speaking and its basic elements (or sub-skills) beforehand in order to oil the path for the reader to understand the subsequent account of explanation about speaking problems. This section starts with defining speaking and signifying its importance followed by the description of the main aspects of speaking (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) in addition to proficiency elements (accuracy and fluency). The section ends with a presentation of the learning theories which are related to language learning in general and speaking in particular.

1.1.1. Definition of Speaking

Speaking is defined in several ways. A very simple and literal definition of the word “speak” according to Marriam-webster dictionary is “to utter words or articulate sounds with the ordinary voice.” A more deep explanation provided by the same source implies that it is the oral expression of thoughts, opinions and feelings. Bygate (1987) added that it is the use of oral language to explore ideas, intentions, thoughts and feelings. Chaney and Burk (1998)

defined it as a process in which verbal and non-verbal symbols are used to build and share meaning in different contexts. In short, speaking is a process of constructing meaning in order to convey information or express ideas and feelings using the oral language, and it is one of the essential language skills that language learners need to master.

1.1.2. The Importance of Speaking

As already mentioned, speaking is generally considered as the most important language skill, because the main aim of language learning is communication, and speaking is the direct medium for communication (He, 2018). For this reason, achieving speaking proficiency is necessary. Nunan (1991) believed that the primary goal of language learning to the majority of learners is to master speaking, and success is mirrored in the ability to converse using the target language. Likewise, Ur (2000) and Celce-Murcia (2001) considered that knowing a language and speaking that language are almost synonymous. In essence, the significance of speaking cannot be underestimated.

1.1.3. Aspects of Speaking

1.1.3.1. Grammar

Grammar is one of the language's aspects that a learner has to know in order to be able to produce utterances. Thornbury (2002) defined it as a description of the rules which govern the formation of sentences in a given language. Before moving on, it should be pointed out that the grammar of the spoken language is different from that of the written one. After all, "speech is not spoken writing" (Bygate, 2010, P.10). Compared with written grammar, the spoken one is limited to some extent. It is simpler. Some sentences are incomplete, and contracted forms are more common than full forms (Harmer, 2001; Renandya & Widodo, 2016; Thornbury, 2002). Coming back to the topic of this paragraph, grammar is paramount for speaking, because it helps making sense and understanding how language works (Crystal, 2011; Edge, 1999). In addition, the patterns and rules of grammar help generating new sentences (Thornbury, 2002). Most importantly, language learning does not only have to do with producing well-formed sentences. This makes students uninterested, because they feel grammar is irrelevant to their lives (Hall et al., 2012). Hence, learning grammatical structures in relation to their use is better. This means students should use grammar to perform functions and express themselves (Harmer, 2001; Thornbury, 2002). There has been an orientation of reducing grammar focus due to the current demands of English communication which became no longer restricted to grammar and vocabulary knowledge. In response to this, Heip (2000), a

Vietnamese teacher who learned English and French via different methods, did not deny that the above claim is generally true. Nonetheless, according to his experience, he surprisingly learned English more successfully than French even though the former was taught through a traditional grammar and vocabulary focused method, and the latter was taught according to a modern communicative approach. He added that students still expect to study some grammar and vocabulary, because it can be confusing to them to be asked to speak while they do not know the rules that help them form their sentences. Overall, it is not easy to neglect grammar completely in language learning. Most importantly, it should be taught in a meaningful context instead of isolated sentences (Augustien, 1998, as cited in Renandya & Widodo, 2016).

1.1.3.2. Vocabulary

Another essential aspect required for speaking is vocabulary. Plag (2002) emphasized on the importance of knowing the words of a language in order to be able to speak it. The chances to learn vocabulary increase with repetition. However, it does not have to do with memorization, but it has to do with the number of times a word is encountered and/or retrieved during practice (Thornbury, 2007). One common mistake that beginner learners usually do when learning vocabulary is translating meaning of words into their first language. Vocabulary learning is not a simple matter of matching up words in the target language to their equivalents in the native one (Allen, 1983). Another point worthy of consideration is that vocabulary learning is not related to the number of words or phrases a learner knows. Learning effective vocabulary means to focus on the most frequently used words and sets of words (Thornbury, 2002; Troike, 2006). Furthermore, to sound more fluent, learners need to learn chunks such as, collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, sentence frames, social formulas and discourse markers (Thornbury, 2002). All in all, vocabulary knowledge is fundamental for the mastery of speaking.

1.1.3.3. Pronunciation

With reference to the third aspect, pronunciation, it is generally given a low priority in language teaching in spite of its significance (Hewings, 2004; Roach, 2012). Moreover, it is important for both speaking and listening (Hancock, 2003). Pronunciation is part of broader theoretical concepts “phonetics and phonology”, and it is related to the practical sides of how sounds are actually pronounced (Szyszka, 2017). There are three areas of pronunciation which are sounds, stress and intonation. Sounds are different from the written letters. There are cases where the same spellings are pronounced differently and other cases where different spellings

may have the same pronunciation. Stress can be either in individual words or in sentences, and it indicates where the emphasis is placed. Two words or two sentences which are stressed differently will have different meanings. Stress can sometimes change the class of a word: Import as a verb and import as a noun, for example, are classified according to stress placement. Together, pitch and intonation serve to give certain meanings through changing the level and the raising and lowering of the voice (Harmer, 2001; Scrivener, 2011). Teaching or learning English pronunciation encounters the issue of which model of pronunciation to choose. The Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA) are generally the dominant models, and GA gained more popularity due to the economic and political status of the United States in addition to its wide use in media and internet resources. However, the choice of model should normally be related to learners' needs and context (Szyzka, 2017). On the other hand, Roach (2012) explained that "To claim this mixes up **models** with **goals**: the model chosen is BBC (RP) (for example), but the goal is normally to develop the learner's pronunciation sufficiently to permit effective communication with native speakers" (p.06). So, the goal is not training learners to speak with a perfect RP accent. Yet, not all English learners need English to communicate with native speakers. In fact, the majority of them need it as a lingua franca whereby they communicate with people from different backgrounds. One major reason to consider the importance of pronunciation is that it interferes with communication. Pronunciation errors may cause misunderstanding. An example of that is the pronunciation of the word "soup" as "soap". Such a mistake changes the meaning completely (Kelly, 2001; Madsen, 1983). Appropriateness of intonation has also a significant effect on meaning. The several ways of intonation in which a phrase such as "yes, please"; for example, is articulated serve totally different functions and purposes. Ultimately, as long as pronunciation interferes with communication, it is important.

1.1.4. Aspects of Speaking Proficiency

1.1.4.1. Accuracy

Accuracy is concerned with the accordance of the produced language with the norms of that language (Skehan, 1996, as cited in Ellis, 2015). Therefore, it means to produce a language in which errors are absent (Dressman & Sadler, 2020). Moreover, accuracy in language does not only have to do with correctness of grammatical structures, but it also requires the appropriateness of pronunciation and vocabulary. Native speakers have the natural intuition and sense of what is grammatically accurate or proper, and this is the norm to which non-native speakers' performance is measured (Kramsch, 1998). Yet, it should be

realized that accuracy in speaking a second language develops gradually and takes time (Richards et al, 1997). Hence, errors are expected in early stages of language learning, and they are part of the learning process. To restate, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary are all crucial aspects of language accuracy, and this latter develops gradually through long time practice.

1.1.4.2. Fluency

Fluency is the skill of speaking with automaticity, flexibility and ease. Many learners assume that it means to speak very fast, and they exert efforts to talk without stop. On one hand, this leads them to commit many errors. On the other hand, fluency never meets with making effort, because spontaneity is the core feature of fluency. Above all, it does not necessarily have to do with speed. Pausing sometimes is even as important as speed. It is also possible that some learners are careful speakers of their mother tongue, and this does not mean they are not fluent in their L1. The lack of speed which is considered as an indicator of poor fluency is the one that occurs due to L1 translation habit and pressure to be accurate during speaking (Chaudhary, 2009; Thornbury, 2002). Hedge (2000) and Hughes (2002) agreed that the most important is to avoid strain, inappropriate slowness and too much hesitation in order not to break down communication. According to Brown (2003), fluent students are those whose speech is "...smooth and effortless, closely approximating that of a native speaker..." (P.149) while students with poor fluency share the following traits: They cease and hesitate too much, most of their sentences are fragment and they lack a natural speech flow. However, learners' fluency should not be evaluated against a highly competent L1 speaker model (Tavakoli & Wright, 2020). Automaticity in speech production increases gradually. In this regard, Harmer (2001) suggested role play, information gap and discussion as activities which can help learners practice spontaneous speaking and develop fluency. On the whole, fluency is a momentous element of language proficiency, and it takes time to be developed.

1.1.5. Learning to Speak a Foreign Language

Skills are best learned by doing. Speaking is not an exception. It is not enough to study it or just do exercises and drills (Stryker and Leaver, 1977, as cited in Al-jamal & Al-jamal, 2013). This is why practice is very important to master speaking. Moreover, constructivist theorists emphasized that learners need to construct their knowledge in a meaningful context depending on their personal experiences. Al-jamal and Al-jamal (2013) stated that the necessary competencies to construct for speaking skill are: Linguistic competence (Chomsky,

1965), sociolinguistic competence (Hymes, 1972) , and functional competence (Lambert & Gillespie, 1994). According to the theory of constructivism, experience is the best teacher of knowledge. Examples of the applications of this principle in language teaching include inquiry, discovery and problem-based strategies. This can be clearly illustrated in the communicative approach of language teaching whereby the focus is on topics which relate to learners' everyday life applications and interests. In addition, Vygotsky (1978) paid special attention to the role of social interactions in constructing the learner's knowledge and skills in his theory of social constructivism. For him, the learner learns the material at hand better when there is collaboration with teachers, peers and other knowledgeable people (McCain, 2013). The application of this theory to speaking can be through discussions, group work, debates and peer assistance techniques. The utilization of discussions in EFL classrooms helps exchanging and sharing ideas, and it increases opportunities of the oral practice in the target language. It should be pointed out that not all learners learn skills the same way. This is because they have different learning styles and intelligences. In this sense, Gardner (1983) came up with the theory of multiple intelligences. With reference to speaking, a variety of options are available for each type of intelligence. The communicative approach and cooperative learning are suitable for learners with interpersonal intelligence (Lin, 2005, as cited in Solmundardottir, 2008). On the other hand, discussions and debates are good options for linguistically intelligent students. For those who have logical-mathematical intelligence, the teacher can use crossword, word order activities, categorizing, problem-solving and critical thinking activities. Creating posters, making mind maps, charts and creating slide shows are suitable for students who own special intelligence. For bodily-kinesthetic intelligent learners, the teacher can utilize role plays, field trips and various language games involving movement. Musically intelligent students may find poetry, creating songs, rhythms and audio presentations enjoyable activities. Interpersonally intelligent learners may prefer interviews and paired activities, whereas, those who have intrapersonal intelligence tend to prefer diaries, research activities and exploration of personal interests (Kennedy, 2005, as cited in Solmundardottir, 2008). Social and psychological components also have a crucial role in learning the skill of speaking. Humanistic and self-theories emphasized this fact. Maslow (1970) and Rogers (1983) believed that the supportive environment, climate and conditions are necessary because they motivate learners. Furthermore, self-perceptions determine success. This is related to self-theories which feed into the concept of self-efficacy. Famous supporters of these theories are Rotter (1966), Weiner (1974), Bandura (1977, 1995) and Dweck (1999). At the heart of self-efficacy concept is the idea that success is determined by persons' attitudes and beliefs in their capabilities. Thus, the biggest obstacle to learning is the

fixed negative belief system (Stewart, Chapter 01). In addition, Stern (1983) and Brown (1994, as cited in Al-jamal and Al-jamal, 2013) stressed on the significant role of affective constituents, because they are as important as the cognitive components to learn a foreign language. To conclude, the correct understanding of the aforementioned theories and their right application in learning and teaching English can help avoiding many difficulties that encounter students in learning the speaking skill.

Conclusion

In a few words, speaking is the direct medium through which thoughts, opinions and feelings can be expressed orally. For this reason, it is considered as the most important language skill. It has three main aspects which are grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Other crucial elements related to proficiency include accuracy and fluency. Learning to speak a foreign language can be easier if the related learning theories are taken into consideration.

1.2. Section Two: Speaking Difficulties

Introduction

There are several obstacles that encounter EFL learners in speaking. Lack of knowledge about language aspects that enable production is a major one. This is especially seen in grammar confusion, lack of vocabulary, pronunciation problems and first language interference. Accordingly, students' linguistic skills are not yet enough to permit automaticity (Thornbury, 2002). Nonetheless, speaking difficulties are not only attributed to learners' poor English background, but their psychological side also plays a role in raising the complexity of the situation. This appears clearly in students' fear of making mistakes, shyness, lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, anxiety and inhibition. Therefore, it is important to tackle the impact of both linguistic and psychological problems.

1.2.1. Linguistic Difficulties

1.2.1.1. Grammar Confusion

There are some English grammatical rules which are confusing particularly for beginner learners. It is true that the grammar of the spoken language is simpler to some extent than that of the written one, but tenses, for instance, are necessary for spoken language as well, and they are generally the most complicated grammatical area to students, especially when these tenses do not have equivalents in students' first language. Irregular verbs' past forms and

participles are also confusing. Some students may face difficulty in understanding the grammar of phrasal verbs. Others might use prepositions incorrectly. Forgetting the final 's' with third singular pronouns is also a very common mistake. Mixing up pronouns is another problem. Jones (2021) gave the example of confusing between "Me" and "I". For instance, a student may say: "Me and Mike went to the store." While it should be "Mike and I went to the store." However, the sentence "My mom met my dad and me at the store." is correct, because "me" in this sentence is an object not a subject. Another example of confusion is the difficulty to relate language functions to each other or to relate the functions to grammatical structures. In other words, it is difficult to organize a one-to-one match between form and function. There are even cases where one form serves many quite different functions (Edge, 1999; Thornbury, 2002). In summary, the confusing rules of grammar are one of the linguistic difficulties that affect the speaking task negatively.

1.2.1.2. Lack of Vocabulary

The vocabulary of L1 is acquired incidentally from the large amounts of language input children are exposed to constantly. However, when it comes to L2 vocabulary learning, the process is not equally simple (Takac, 2008). Lack of vocabulary is largely attributed to the lack of the target language input. Vocabulary learning problems include L1 translation habit, lack of focus on frequent words and phrases, confusing words that overlap in meaning such as "do" and "make" and the difficulty to learn word combinations such as, collocations, metaphors and idioms (Thornbury, 2007; Troike, 2006). Another factor that leads to lack of vocabulary learning is the absence of real necessity. Most learners do not feel a real need to learn vocabulary, because they already can name items and communicate using the vocabulary of their L1 (Allen, 1983). To conclude, learners should exert additional efforts, because it is impossible to create the same conditions in which the necessary vocabulary of the mother tongue was learned (Allen, 1983).

1.2.1.3. Pronunciation Problems

It can be a demoralizing experience to learners who are good at vocabulary and grammar to not be able to communicate effectively due to their pronunciation problems (Hewings, 2004). There are many pronunciation problems that face EFL learners. Lack of correspondence between letters and sounds in English is the major one (Hancock, 2003; Kelly, 2001). When learners come across the word "tough" for the first time, for example, they find it literally tough to pronounce, because the combination "gh" can be pronounced in many different ways. Another problem is the differences between the pronunciation of

English and the pronunciation of Learners' L1. It is specifically difficult to recognize sounds that do not exist in their L1. For instance, it is challenging for a learner whose L1 has only five vowels or fewer to deal with the 20 vowels of British English (Dale & Poms, 2005; Hewings, 2004). Linkage of sounds that occurs due to the speed of speaking and which native speakers make smoothly, automatically and unconsciously can be very tough on learners. Some sounds may change; others may be missed out, and in some cases extra sounds are inserted. Learners also face challenges to make the appropriate word stress, sentence stress and intonation (Hewings, 2004; Kenworthy, 1988). Other factors include anxiety and L1 pronunciation habits. Anxiety places pressure and tension on the muscles responsible for articulation of sounds (Szyszka, 2017). The habits of L1 are also difficult to get rid of completely (O'Connor, 1998), and they are demonstrated in the "foreign accent" that characterizes the pronunciation of many EFL learners who generally feel unsatisfied about it (Dale & Poms, 2005; Troike, 2006). However, a native-like pronunciation should not be necessarily the goal of pronunciation learning. A foreign accent becomes a problem only when it hinders effective communication or leads to misunderstanding. Hence, what really matters is intelligibility (Kenworthy, 1988). As a conclusion, pronunciation may be one of the most difficult language aspects to learn, and achieving progress in L2 pronunciation depends largely on the effort made by the learner (Kenworthy, 1988).

1.2.1.4. First Language Interference

First language interference is one of the commonly encountered obstacles in L2 learning in general, and in speaking in particular. L1 interference can be defined in many ways. It is a temporary situation whereby learners mix two languages and face difficulty in separating them out (Baker & Jones, 1998). Burrige and Stebbins (2019) also defined it as a kind of unconscious influence of L1 on L2 while speaking (It occurs in writing as well, but the focus of this paragraph is on speaking). First language interference is demonstrated in L1 transfer whereby some L1 forms are introduced into the learner's language system (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009). This makes the learner's sentences syntactically incorrect, and in the best situations the word order sounds weird (Dirksen, 2015). Transfer occurs basically due to students' reliance on their previous L1 knowledge, because in many cases they learn the target language depending on the mother tongue. As a result, they tend to formulate their utterances first in the L1, and then they translate them into the L2 (Thornbury, 2002; Troike, 2006). There are two basic types of transfer: Positive and negative. Positive is when the use of an L1 structure is appropriate in L2 (Troike, 2006). For instance, English learners whose first language is French do not generally make the error of repeating pronouns in relative clauses;

e.g. “The man whom I spoke to him is a millionaire.” Such an error is more likely to be made by Arabic learners of English, because unlike English and French, Arabic allows resumptive pronouns in relative clauses (Ellis, 2003, P.51). Negative transfer occurs when the use of an L1 structure is considered incorrect in L2 (Troike, 2006). For example, a French learner whose L1 is English may say: “je suis douze” which is parallel to “I am twelve” in English, whereas, the correct expression should be “j’ai douze ans” (Mitchell et al., 2013, P.16). Interference errors could be decreased through direct thinking in the target language instead of thinking in L1. After all, to learn a new language means to learn a new way of thinking; not a way to translate thinking (Brown, 2001, 2007). It should be pointed out that interference does not only appear on the syntactic level. There are other types of interference that touch the semantic and pronunciation levels (Appel & Muysken, 2005). Any difference between the speech of a monolingual and a bilingual is referred to as interference (Grosjean, 1982; Spolsky & Lee, 1998; Troike, 2006). In other words, “There can be interference in all aspects of a language, from the sound system (having an ‘accent’) to conversational rules (interrupting or saying ‘please’ in the wrong way)” (Spolsky & Lee, 1998, P.49). Another point worthy of consideration is the interference that occurs during L3 learning whereby three languages come in contact. The interactions among the different languages’ systems in the learner’s mind cause additional complexity (Herdina & Jessner, 2002; Jessner, 2006, 2008, as cited in Dornyei et al., 2015). To conclude, the different types of L1 interference are problematic, but they (except for pronunciation) generally become less likely to occur after the learners become more familiar with the target language as they reduce the use of L1 translation habit.

1.2.1.5. The Difficulty to Balance Accuracy and Fluency

It seems that there is a trade-off between fluency and accuracy. Perhaps this is one of the top complex and controversial topics in language learning. To be accurate and fluent at the same time requires a focus on both forms and meanings. It is a task that places heavy demand on the student’s attention, especially for the fact that speaking has to be immediate with no time for preparation (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009; Thornbury, 2002). Celce-Murcia (1996) claimed that “When fluency breaks down, it is generally related to a problem with accuracy” (P.423). Many objections are likely to be raised against such a claim, because it is not always clear which factor is responsible for lack of fluency. In fact, over worrying about accuracy generally leads to lack of fluency. There are times when some learners’ knowledge of grammar is even greater than that of some native speakers, and their vocabularies are extensive; nevertheless, they cannot achieve fluency due to the pressure of focusing on

accuracy (Thornbury, 2002). Furthermore, language performance data cannot be considered as a real reflection of competence. Thus, in many cases lack of fluency is due to complications of processing, planning pressure and anxiety (Gotz, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2013; Richards & Renandya, 2002). The point is that lack of fluency is not necessarily due to lack of accuracy. Moreover, many fluent users of English do not know the rules anyway, and they sometimes make grammatical errors (Young, 2008). Hymes (1972, as cited in Baker, 2001) had a different direction, and he focused upon communicative competence rather than accuracy or fluency. According to him, effective language means effective communication rather than accuracy or fluency. In the view of Hymes (1972, as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 1999), communicative competence leads naturally to the acquisition of both knowledge of language and the ability to use it. Actually, the trade-off between fluency and accuracy is manifested in many other related controversies which are the issue of error correction during speaking activities and the different methodologies of language teaching.

One manifestation of the conflict between fluency and accuracy is the question as to whether teachers should correct learners' errors during speaking activities or not. Without error correction, the student will become confident in using the new language, nevertheless, there will be a problem with language accuracy (Florez, 1998; Scarcella & Oxford, 1994, as cited in Torky, 2006). Many teachers and some learners do not like tolerance with errors, and they think it is a risk to ignore learners' errors, because this may affect their linguistic development negatively (Thornbury, 2002). Other teachers believe that learners should not be interrupted to correct errors, especially during fluency practice, because this disrupts effective communication and learning, and it creates a stressful atmosphere whereby students feel tested all the time and become, as a result, inhibited and frustrated (Baker, 2011; Davies & Pearse, 2000). Before moving on, a distinction between "errors" and "mistakes" should be made. The former are due to the learner's lack of L2 knowledge, and the latter occur because the student has not yet mastered certain language forms (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009). However, both terms are used interchangeably in this paragraph, because the focus is on situations in which learners produce incorrect language forms in general regardless of the reason to which they refer. The decision of error correction is crucial because the feedback that learners receive from others has a fundamental effect on their language learning. Whether to deal with an error, when to deal with it and how to correct it hinge on a number of considerations, such as the type of error and the situation in which it is made (Brown, 2001; Edge, 1999; Scrivener, 2011). It should be pointed out that making mistakes is part of language learning process. Correcting students' mistakes is important, but the teacher should be careful not to make students feel humiliated or unconfident (Harmer, 2001). Teachers' constant correction of

errors even during activities which are meaning-focused interrupts learners and forces their attention to accuracy. Yet, many teachers cannot simply let errors go, even in fluency activities” (Thornbury, 2002). Conversely, it could be argued that error correction does not necessarily discourage learners from speaking; it all depends on the manner in which errors are corrected. The teacher can use a gentle correction, for example, by reformulating what the student has said (Harmer, 2007; Yamaguchi, 2009). As a final comment, the mediation that can be drawn is that teachers can correct errors during any kind of activities on the condition that they do not discourage learners, and the conversational flow is not threatened (Edge, 1999; Harmer, 2001).

The conflict between fluency and accuracy is also about which one should precede the other during language learning. Different responses to this question resulted in two fundamental different teaching methodologies. The differences were mainly a matter of direction and focus. There is the methodology that takes accuracy as the starting point of language teaching, and the kind of speaking achieved is close to a sort of manipulation of grammar structures (Thornbury, 2002). The intention in this methodology is to equip the learners with the needed knowledge to make them ready to communicate at the end, i.e. accuracy is a medium to achieve fluency. This methodology focuses heavily on grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing activities. Apart from listening, it seems that real communication and speaking activities are excluded! The risk that is probable with such methodology is when the original intention (learning to speak and communicate using the target language) is forgotten; when strict accuracy itself becomes the goal and the natural purpose of language learning becomes marginalized. Now, because the previous grammar, vocabulary and paragraph organization focused instruction did not seem to yield the desired results, Alwright (1979) and his colleagues tried to make a shift, and they turned their attention to involving students in situations where they have to communicate and solve problems using the target language based on the assumption that: “...language learning will take care of itself...” (Alwright, 1979, as cited in Harmer, 2007, p.52) The question raised is whether language learning will really take care of itself. When the goal is successful communication, learners simply avoid saying what is above their speaking skills, thus, their language will never develop. Learners become over-reliant on communication and discourse strategies to make up for their insufficient knowledge of the language system and for their lack of fluency (Thornbury, 2002; Yamaguchi, 2009). Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988) added that “...a communicative approach can lead to the development of a broken, ungrammatical, pidginized form of the language beyond which students can never really progress. Such students are said to have “fossilized” in their acquisition of the language.” (p.02). Even worse,

Yamaguchi (2009) stated that weak grammar, vocabulary and phonology make the learners incessantly monitoring their speech what leads to lack of automaticity, and hence, lack of fluency. The former are aspects of accuracy, therefore, how would fluency be developed if these aspects were not developed? The problem is that learners keep using communication strategies permanently, because as long as they are able to communicate successfully, they feel no need to develop natural and correct use of language what leads to fossilization, and they end up gaining neither accuracy nor fluency! It should be clear from the foregoing account of explanation that both methodologies have benefits and disadvantages, and each one has its own risks. Reaching a balance between the two methodologies is quite trick, and this topic has always been controversial. A suitable comment to such situation is that of Edge (1999, pp.77-78): “The only serious answer to the question, ‘How do you teach English? is ‘It depends’This kind of decision is central to methodology: you decide to do one thing rather than another: you gain something and you lose something.” However, Brown (2001) stated that later both accuracy and fluency became essential concerns in communicative language teaching. Yamaguchi (2009) also believed that “It is not that accuracy or fluency but accuracy and fluency...Accuracy and fluency are not contradictory but rather like two pillars that support the spiral stairs toward communicative competence.” To his mind, both accuracy and fluency are necessary for successful communication. Learners’ speaking skill should be developed on both levels through combining accuracy-oriented approach and fluency-oriented approach into communication-oriented tasks, i.e. accuracy elements should be added to communicative elements. To conclude, Yamaguchi (2009) encouraged the implementation of repetition, error correction and real communication framework factors to modify speaking tasks in order to develop both accuracy and fluency. However, it soon became apparent that the question still remains as to how instructors introduce repetition in real communicative work.

1.2.2. Psychological Difficulties

1.2.2.1. Fear of Making Mistakes

Fear of making mistakes is a psychological problem that inhibits learners from speaking the target language. Due to this latter, they cannot express their ideas and thoughts during the classroom discussion. Students are afraid of losing face and they are worried of seeming foolish in front of their classmates (He & Chen, 2010; Kurtus, 2019; Tarnaveer, 2007). In this respect, Juhana (2012) told that most of EFL learners are afraid of making mistakes because either they have low English abilities or they are worried about being laughed at by their

friends. In the same context, Qureshi et al. (2020) claimed that the fear of making mistakes is related to negative feedback which students may receive from their teachers and classmates. In this case, students may think that if they fail in pronouncing words, building utterances, or in representing the appropriate vocabulary, they will be mocked by their friends and receive negative comments from their teachers (Fauzen, 2016). Hence, students focus their attention on how others will see them (Ariyanti, 2016; Kurtus, 2019). All of this makes students unable to participate in the speaking activity. Consequently, they incline to stop speaking in order to avoid the mockery of their peers and the harsh feedback of their teachers. According to Brown (2007), students' silence during speaking tasks is a kind of self-defense by which they try to protect themselves against the threat of criticism in front of other people. To sum up, it is important to say that teachers should encourage students to speak in front of the public and change their perspective toward mistakes. This could be achieved by convincing them that committing mistakes is an inevitable part in foreign language learning and the progress in their speaking development is basically up to the correction of their own mistakes as stated by Sousa (2001, p.59, as cited in Haidara, 2016) "people learn from their mistakes. So, they should think of them as useful and positive"

1.2.2.2. Shyness

Shyness is a common issue among EFL students. It is the feeling of discomfort that the students experience during the learning process, especially when they come to speak in front of their classmates and teachers. It is considered as a block to their speaking skill development. In this respect, Pratiwi (2021) argued that talking in front of public is one of the most prevailed phobias that students come across, in which this feeling leads to the blankness and causes forgetfulness to them where they will have nothing to say. Accordingly, the feeling of shyness can contribute to the failure of learners in the speaking performance. This latter influences negatively their oral production. Perhaps, students have good English abilities and enough knowledge about the discussed topic, but they are unable to employ their full linguistic repertoire during the classroom discussion. However, some learners feel shy naturally while speaking due to lack of self-confidence (Robby, 2010). Besides that, Saurik (2011, as cited in Juhana, 2012) stated that the fear of making mistakes makes learners feel shy; they think that if they commit mistakes, they will be embarrassed by their colleagues. In some cases, learners find themselves too shy because they feel that they have bad pronunciation and poor vocabulary baggage whereby they think that they cannot continue the conversation (Stein, 2007). Consequently, the feeling of shyness lessens students' speaking performance either those who have good English level or those who have inferior linguistic

abilities. Therefore, teachers should create a relaxed and safe learning atmosphere in order to encourage them to speak English freely without any pressure or fear.

1.2.2.3. Lack of self-confidence

Generally, EFL learners aim to develop their language skills to achieve success in their performance, especially in speaking. But the effective communication and language fluency require from them to believe and trust in their abilities. Indeed, self-confidence plays a great role in the learning process; it can affect students' speaking performance in particular and their academic achievements in general either positively or negatively. According to Brown (2001), self-confidence is one of the most important factors which influence learning. However, lack of self-confidence is a psychological problem that leads learners to keep silent instead of taking risks and expressing their ideas in speaking activities. This reluctance certainly reduces their chances in enhancing their speaking abilities. Tsui (1999, as cited in Pratiwi, 2021) claimed that "students who lack confidence about themselves and their abilities in English essentially suffer from communication apprehension" (P.11), i.e. lack of self-confidence can create difficulties to learners, such as shyness, stress and hesitation. Students may lose their self-confidence when they feel either that their speech is not understood by others, or that they are unable to understand others' speech (Pratiwi, 2021). In fact, the main reason behind students' lack of confidence is the low level of their English abilities. Many of them feel that their English is not good, and they think that they cannot speak in English effectively (He & Chen, 2010). Lack of self-confidence is also the result of the lack of support and positive comments from teachers because their encouragement plays an important role in raising student's self-confidence, which in turn, increases their motivation (Brown, 2001). Consequently, low self-confidence eradicates students' willingness to participate in the discussions. So, they fail to develop their speaking level. On the contrary, high self-confidence makes the learners highly motivated to engage in speaking tasks, then, they will do their best to be fluent and good English speakers. As a conclusion, it is worthy to mention that the teacher duty is not limited to building the students' linguistic competence, but goes beyond to focusing on making them more confident and not afraid of committing mistakes, or being criticized by others, an idea that was confirmed by Cole et al. (2007) who said that "confidence was as important as competence in speaking and listening...confidence and competence go hand in hand and increasing your learners' confidence will help them to develop their skills" (p.20).

1.2.2.4. Low Self-esteem

Self-esteem is another psychological component that affects the learners' speaking performance. Self-esteem refers to students' beliefs about themselves which change over time because of circumstances and experiences (Qureshi et al., 2020). To simplify, it is the personal judgment that is expressed in individuals' attitudes toward themselves (Coppersmith, 1967, as cited in Brown, 2007). Since the feeling of worthiness that students hold about themselves and their capabilities is expressed in their attitudes, it automatically affects their achievements. In this regard, Brown (2007) stated that cognitive or affective activities cannot be successful without enough degree of self-esteem. This implies that self-esteem has a great impact on the various aspects of learners' life, particularly in their foreign language learning in which their success in speaking performance is basically coming from themselves; students who believe in their capabilities to accomplish the speaking task are usually highly motivated to speak English. This view is supported by Ariyanti (2016) who argued that learners with good self-esteem are more likely to speak fluently, because the issue of making mistakes is the last thing they think about. However, it has been confirmed that the biggest obstacle to success and achievement is lack of self-esteem rather than lack of competence and talent (Branden, 1985). Indeed, the poor spoken performance of students is not always the result of cognitive and linguistic factors, because if students regard themselves incompetent and without importance, it surely reflects on their performance negatively and vice versa. In this context, Tracy (2011) said that "the more you like yourself, the better you do at everything you put your mind to" (p.69). Hence, students who highly believe in their abilities are the most likely ones who will perform brilliantly in speaking. In short, self-esteem determines the success of students in the oral production. So, they need to appreciate themselves and trust their abilities.

1.2.2.5. Anxiety

In EFL classes, many students find themselves stressed and uncomfortable when they come to speak in front of an audience. This is often ascribed to Anxiety which is "the personal feeling of apprehension, worry, tension, and nervousness connected with the nervous system" (Spielberger, 1983, p.01, as stated in Brown, 2007). It means that the feeling of anxiety can appear in nervousness, fear, apprehension, and uneasiness. Actually, anxiety is a big hindrance encountered by the learners in foreign language learning in general and in the speaking area in particular. It influences their speaking performance negatively in terms of the quality of their oral production and the level of fluency (Horwitz, 1991, as cited in Tiono & Tylvia, 2007). In other words, students who are anxious and fearful cannot study well, and

they fail to speak fluently as well (Virginia et al., 2020). Thus, anxiety effects are demonstrated in students' forgetfulness of words, errors commission and concentration loss; all these result in tying the tongues of students (Latha, 2012; ElShami et al., 2020). However, students' anxiety is attributed to many factors. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), there are three reasons behind students' anxiety. They are: Communication apprehension which is the result of learners' low ability of communication in the second language; their low ability makes them anxious and demoralized. The second reason is test anxiety; it refers to students' fear of testing. The last reason relates to the fear of being evaluated by others. Anxiety may also increase when students compare themselves with others in which they think that their peers are more proficient. Consequently, they tend to remain silent and keep their ideas and thoughts to themselves instead of taking the risk of failure. Therefore, teachers need to exert many efforts to decrease their students' tension in EFL classrooms. In addition, they should focus their attention on learners' weaknesses and strengths to create suitable teaching methods and strategies for all students as well as to minimize the degree of anxiety (Harmer, 2007).

1.2.2.6. Inhibition

EFL learners need to express their ideas and views or ask questions about something for further understanding, but due to the fact that speaking requires from them to be directly exposed to the audience, they experience several negative feelings which affect their oral production and may even lead them to inhibition. In this sense, Bowman et al. (1989) argued that in speaking course, teachers usually ask their learners to express themselves in front of their colleagues, which makes them stressed during performing the speaking tasks. The stress in turn hinders them. Yet, stress and anxiety are not the only psychological constraints that inhibit students. Shyness, worry of committing mistakes and fear of being criticized by others also obstruct learners' speaking process. Ur (2009) said that "learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in foreign language in the classroom, worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts" (p.121). In point of fact, most of the negative feelings that students come across during speaking mainly result from the feeling of having poor English background or the lack of speaking practice. Therefore, they tend to stop speaking totally or lose words and keep repeating the same utterances, which is called hesitation. It refers to the pauses that students make for a period of time. It occurs when they find difficulty in structuring the sentences grammatically or in choosing the appropriate vocabulary. In this case, students start speaking, but they cannot continue. They stop it by saying, mm...Uh...Mm...uh...and think to plan their message either cognitively or verbally (Benouioua & Djellal, 2018). Furthermore, lack

of self-confidence can make students struggle with hesitation and inhibition, especially during spontaneous speaking. In brief, inhibition and hesitation are among the main issues that lead learners to fail in speaking tasks.

Conclusion

To conclude, speaking difficulties can be divided into two types: Linguistic and psychological. The linguistic barriers are attributed to learners' lack of knowledge about the language's aspects which are essential for production. The inadequacy of students' linguistic background leads to lack of skill and automaticity (Thornbury, 2002). The psychological difficulties intervene during the speaking process and add more complexity. Due to this latter, students tend to avoid participation in speaking tasks and their fear of speaking grows overtime.

1.3. Section Three: Factors Contributing to Speaking Difficulties

Introduction

In addition to the previously mentioned speaking difficulties, there are some factors that have a role in increasing the difficulty of learning speaking. These factors include learner-related factors (lack of interest and intrinsic motivation, lack of autonomy, lack of listening and speaking practice) and other environmental factors as well (lack of extrinsic motivation, lack of authentic materials, inadequacy of facilities and audio-visual aids, large classes and limited time, excessive mother tongue use) in addition to the pedagogical ones (curriculum problems, for example).

1.3.1. Lack of motivation

Motivation plays an important role in teaching and learning speaking. The term of motivation is widely discussed by researchers and educators in the field of second and foreign language learning. Most of them considered it as one of the most crucial factors which determines students' success or failure. Motivation can be defined as a force that propels the person to make many efforts for completing a task to reach a certain goal (Harmer, 2007). Regarding the kinds of motivation, it is divided into several types; each type has different influence on learning and its sustainment. Most importantly, it has two major types: Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the inner energy that pushes learners to

perform the task for its own sake without the influence of external factors in which students engage in the activity because it is enjoyable and interesting, not because they wait an external reward (Edward & Deci 1975, as cited in Brown, 2007). In the same sense, Brown (2007) stated that students who are intrinsically motivated persevere to achieve their own needs and goals whereby they are rewarded and stimulated by themselves. So, they focus on completing the task to feel happy and satisfied. In Point of fact, learners' needs and desires are not the only internal factors which affect their willingness of learning, their attitudes toward the target language, its speakers and the learning context also influence their motivation (Mitchell et al., 2013). In addition, Brown (2007) claimed that motivation is a collection of certain attitudes. Certainly, Students who have positive beliefs and attitudes are noticeably motivated to learn and speak the foreign language (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2013), while negative attitudes decrease motivation (Brown, 2007). Moreover, learners' natural curiosity drives them to discover things around them. It increases their desires and needs to learn and acquire new knowledge, or experience new things. This has an influence on their intrinsic motivation and academic performance (Hong-Keung et al, 2012). Hence, students' needs, desires, curiosity, interests and their attitudes are the main sources of their intrinsic motivation. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is related to the external driving forces that push students to learn or speak the foreign language even those who are not interested. Harmer (2007) viewed that extrinsic motivation evolves from external factors like the necessity to pass an exam or the desire to travel abroad or get a job. Similarly, Brown (2007) believed that students who are extrinsically motivated persist to achieve goals in order to gain rewards from others such as, high grade, praise, positive feedback or to avoid punishments; they perform speaking task because they anticipate a reward or they aim to avoid negative outcomes. Actually, there are several environmental factors that influence learner's motivation including the effect of teachers, classmates, parents and society in general. All of these variables impact their motivation, which in turn, affects their oral production. Generally speaking, the lack of motivation on both levels (intrinsic and extrinsic) is one of the most influential factors that impede learners' participation in speaking activities. Students who lack motivation do not perceive a pressing need for learning or speaking English. Absolutely, learners can only develop their speaking abilities if they are motivated and given opportunities to express themselves or contact with people, because motivation controls students' decision to be or not to be involved in the speaking activities (Al Hosni, 2014). Besides, Dorneiy (2001) said that, without motivation, even the most intelligent learners are unlikely to persist long enough to acquire any truly useful language, while those who are strongly motivated, either intrinsically or extrinsically, make massive efforts to achieve better outcomes in the target language.

Learners' lack of motivation is mainly caused by numerous factors. Legend et al. (2010) pointed out that the lower level of motivation is probably the result of limited Background and negative past experiences, low self-esteem, pressure, low expectation in the class, and the lack of encouragement from families. In the same line, Nunan (1999, as cited Juhana 2012) explained that students are unmotivated because of uninspiring teaching, boredom, lack of authentic materials and students' insufficient knowledge about the instructional program goals. In fact, teachers have a significant role in motivating students in the classroom. Nunan (1999) held that motivation is the product of effective teaching; students may not be enthusiastic to take part in the classroom discussion because of uninspiring teaching methodologies which make the teaching process boring. In other words, teachers who use non-authentic materials are unable to attract students' interest. In this respect, Baker & Westrup (2003) asserted that learners need to practice their language in situations which embody their real life inside the classroom. In addition, students become unmotivated when they do not have enough information about the topics suggested by their teachers. Therefore, creating a motivating atmosphere stands as a big challenge to teachers, they often find it difficult to increase and maintain motivation in EFL classes. In response to this issue, Ihsan (2016) said that "one of the more complicated problems of second language learning and teaching has been to define and apply is the construct of motivation in the classroom" (p.31). Although teachers may work hard to make the classroom motivating, lack of motivation still hinder both teachers and students. Nonetheless, teachers have to pursue in motivating students. They need to find the ways that ensure sufficient motivation to all learners (Quereshi et al., 2020). As a conclusion, students' lack of enthusiasm during speaking tasks is not only related to the educational context, but to students themselves and their social environment as well.

1.3.2. Lack of Interest and Metacognitive Skills

"I believe that those who choose languages as their obsession never really feel depression" (Lomb, 2008, p.183). Interest is crucial for language learning. The more interested learners are, the more willingness they will have to spend time developing their speaking abilities. Interest is a state of cognitive and effective engagement with high attention and concentration, and the seeking for knowledge about the topic of interest becomes independent and sustained (Duchesne & McMaugh, 2016). It is closely related to intrinsic motivation whereby there is no need for rewards or external factors, but being involved in the task itself is rewarding, and it brings enjoyment, excitement, challenge, curiosity, and relevance of learning (Kember, 2016; Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000; Woolfolk, 2016). Yet, there are cases where some

students do not show such a degree of interest, and this is related to different reasons. The first one can refer to the absence of need, especially when the language does not relate to learners' outside interests. The second reason has to do with classroom courses and topics. If those topics were not relevant to everyday applications, learners would lose motivation even if they were originally interested in language learning in general. The focus on reading and writing activities instead of authentic communication makes language learning less interesting and may cause failure. Meaning and emotional involvement are necessary for effective learning. After all, the normal functions of language are talking about interests and establishing relationships (Baker, 2011; Edge, 1999; Kember, 2016). A final point to consider is students' need for help and guidance, because in some cases, even if they are interested, their motivation decreases when they face difficulties in language learning and do not know how to handle them. Such a situation happens due to learners' lack of metacognitive skills. Teachers can play a role in the mediation of the interaction between motivation and metacognition and help their students sustain their interest in language learning (Ushioda, 2011, as cited in Lasagabaster et al., 2014). In short, developing speaking requires both will and skill.

1.3.3. Lack of Autonomy

Having enough degree of interest fosters learners' autonomy. When they are interested, they will know their needs and what is best for them, thus, they can have control over learning management, cognitive processes and learning content (Harmer, 2001; Murray et al., 2011). Many students are inclined to avoid taking responsibility for their own learning. Nevertheless, autonomy in language learning is vital. Per Cotteral (1995, as cited in Harmer, 2007), the high complexity and variation of language in addition to time limitation make it impossible to teach learners all the knowledge they need in a classroom. Language learners, particularly, cannot simply depend on their teachers. They should take responsibility and study the language on their own. Learning and practicing speaking, specifically, require a high degree of autonomy, because it needs long periods of exposure to the language and a considerable amount of practice. To conclude, autonomy is mandatory for language learning and for speaking mastery.

1.3.4. Lack of Listening Practice

As previously mentioned, learners should try to be exposed to the target language as much as possible. Exposure to the language in the classroom is very limited, and the environment outside the classroom is dominated by the learners' first language (Chang, 2009, as cited in Renandya & Widodo, 2016). For example, Algerian students' chances to hear English in their

environment are too rare if nonexistent, because English is not generally important in the Algerian society. Hence, the only available substitution is constant and extensive listening. Since there is not enough time to do that in the classroom, learners are ought to exert their own efforts and spend time listening to English. Teachers can only offer guidance to help them with this task (Chang, 2009, as cited in Renandya & Widodo, 2016). Actually, exposure to the language can be through reading written words as well, but people usually acquire the language by listening (Harmer, 2001; Renandya & Widodo, 2016). To develop the speaking skill, listening is a better option for many reasons. Firstly, learning pronunciation is integrated in the listening practice. Secondly, repeated listening helps students build familiarity with the speed of the spoken language and the pronunciation of the connected speech. It also helps learners develop vocabulary, fluency and proficiency unconsciously and with less effort compared to reading. Thus, learners become capable to process spoken language with more ease. Currently, it has become easier for students to access to listening materials due to the technological developments. You Tube, for example, offers many choices for listening (Wilson, 2008). In fact, watching videos has additional benefits, because learners can better understand the meaning from the context and with the help of visual elements, actors' facial expressions, gestures and body language. There are plenty examples of listening resources. They include, for instance, "...advertisements, conversations, descriptions, directions, discussions, drama, films, instructions, interviews, lectures, talks, stories, telephone calls and songs" (Edge, 1999, p.105). Dialogues and conversations are specifically beneficial to learners in the sense that they provide models of real life interactions. Learners can also acquire some discourse markers, e.g. you know, yeah, and right (Bilbrough, 2007). All in all, listening is very necessary for speaking improvement.

1.3.5. lack of Speaking Practice

The advantages of listening would be limited if they were not accompanied by immediate and constant speaking practice. This latter helps to automatize the skill and to act without much effort, because speaking is like other skills (playing musical instruments, for example.), the more practice is done; the more skill is gained (Thornbury, 2002). The problem with speaking practice, however, is that it requires at least two people. After all, people learn languages with and for others (Ortega, 2013). In this sense, Thornbury (2002) gave examples of some speaking activities that can be done individually, e.g. taping diaries and audio or video conferencing (although this latter requires a reliable internet access). Nevertheless, some students can be reluctant to speak outside the classroom. In many cases, they do not recognize English as a way of self-expression, but rather they tend to treat it as a subject or a

course, and that drives them away from the real objective behind language learning (Edge, 1999). Another reason could be that students prefer to express themselves in their native language instead of English simply because it is easier and more comfortable than struggling with a language that they have not mastered yet (Harmer, 2001). In closing, avoiding speaking in the target language does not help learning. The only way to overcome fear of speaking and gain confidence is constant speaking practice.

1.3.6. Over-use of Mother Tongue

Students who share the same mother tongue commonly have a tendency to use it inside the foreign language classes (Ur, 2009). Actually, there are some reasons that lead them to use their native language. Firstly, the inability to speak the target language and the lack of vocabulary about the topics tackled by teachers makes them switch into their mother tongue. Secondly, mother tongue use is a natural inclination for students. If the teachers do not oblige them to speak in the target language, they will utilize their first language to express their ideas easily. Moreover, if teachers repeatedly use students' mother tongue, they will, in turn, use it comfortably in the classroom (Harmer, 2007). But they run the risk of obstructing their speaking development. In this regard, Chaouchi and Bahlouli (2022) asserted that the overuse of mother tongue during the course and the lack of the target language practice in and outside the class impede students' speaking progress. Therefore, all forms of mother tongue use should be avoided. Learners should maximize their usage to the foreign language as much as possible. Using their native language is more comfortable and less stressing when they communicate, but they will not have opportunities to practice the target language. Consequently, they will not be able to speak it fluently and accurately.

1.3.7. Large and Heterogeneous Classes

Large and heterogeneous classes are among the main factors that create problems for both teachers and students. In large classes, there are students with mixed abilities, different learning styles, and may even have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These differences pose various problems for EFL teachers; they face difficulties in terms of preparing the suitable materials, encouraging all students' participation, and following their improvement (Ur, 2009). As a matter of fact, large classes reduce both students' opportunities to speak and teachers' opportunities to provide evaluation and correction (Celce-Marcia, 2001). The large number of students generally prevents some members from participation in the classroom discussion whereby the well-versed students dominate the class; they may even take up the full time of discussion, whereas the less skillful students keep silent or speak only

few words (Ur, 2009). They avoid speaking in front of large groups because they are afraid of making many errors in their utterances (Davies & pearse, 2000). In spite of that, teachers do not have opportunities to help them, because they cannot access to all students. This latter also cannot see and hear their teachers well. Accordingly, teachers find difficulty to keep all students' interested and attentive throughout their learning process (Baker & westrup, 2000). Furthermore, they cannot control and maintain the discipline in the classroom (Ur, 2009). Besides, the huge number of students and the limited time devoted to speaking always prevent teachers from giving the students equal chances to speak and improve their speaking. Therefore, it is worthy to say that large classes influence negatively students speaking, but it does not mean that teachers cannot overcome this problem. Harmer (2007) argued that large classes are not the selection of any teacher; it really makes the teaching process more difficult, nevertheless, they can adapt with the situation through applying innovative and creative techniques and strategies in order to turn it into a kind of success.

1.3.8. Curriculum Problems

It is mentioned in the literature that the curriculum for teaching English can contribute to the existence of students' speaking difficulties. The English curriculum designers generally focus more on designing reading and writing tasks than the speaking ones. Al Hosni (2014) confirmed that English textbooks do not include enough activities to teach speaking particularly. Since reading and writing are included in the exam, teachers always give priority to them in addition to grammar and vocabulary. They tackle speaking only when it is integrated into reading and writing. Hence, speaking becomes almost neglected. Many teachers think they cannot integrate it owing to the limited time. Due to this fact, they emphasize the coverage of the textbook content. Regarding the content, it also lessens students' opportunities to engage in communication. The lack of topics' relevance to students' daily lives makes learners unexcited to speak, because it is difficult for them to converse on a topic which they do not have sufficient information about (Baker & Westrup, 2003). In this sense, Bouherar (2021) gave the example of English teaching in Algeria whereby more attention is paid to western cultural aspects rather than learners' home culture. Tailley and Hui-Ling (2014) suggested that the curriculum should normally be designed on the basis of co-existence of both national and international cultures. It is true that teachers sometimes are obliged to follow the course book, but they can adapt the topics to respond to students' daily life needs (Baker & Westrup, 2003). In a few words, the content of curriculum is supposed to engage the students in practical and authentic English speaking situations and should encourage them to participate actively in real communication (Tailley & Hui-Ling, 2014).

1.3.9. Lack of Audio-visual Aids and Facilities

The development of educational technologies led to the evolution of new teaching methods and strategies. The fact that makes the application of these methods and strategies in EFL classes a necessity to enhance the quality of teaching and learning as well as to help students in overcoming their speaking problems. But their application requires from teachers the integration of audio-visual aids such as videos, dialogues, plays, stories, and power points slides (Benmoumene, 2019). Audio-visual aids refer to the means and devices that can be used to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning in which learners can understand and grasp the information through the senses of hearing and vision (Kwegyiriba et al., 2022). However, the use of audiovisual materials creates several situations and activities which give students opportunities to be exposed to the foreign language through seeing its real use (Bahloul & Chaouchi, 2022; Benmoumene, 2019). They help learners to improve their speaking abilities because these aids show them how the native speakers use the language they are learning. So, they will be able to pronounce correctly as well as to use the vocabulary in the appropriate context. In the same line, River (1981, as cited in Farhi, 2013) added that the use of audiovisual aids provide situations whereby students can understand the culture of native speakers. Although the aforementioned means are very significant in foreign language classes, many teachers still use the old tools due to its insufficient availability. Chaouchi and Bahlouli (2022) asserted that there are inadequate materials and equipments in language laboratories such as lack of audiovisual aids, video projectors, computers, and pronunciation checkers. They considered this lack as one of the main factors that contributes in the existence of EFL students speaking difficulties. In other words, Kouicem (2019) stated that teachers who pointed out to this constraint saw that the insufficient availability of language laboratories prevent English language from gaining the desired status. He noticed that despite the rapid technological development, students still rely on traditional equipments to practice their English. This is the case of Algerian students at university, or secondary and middle schools. Thus, the lack of audiovisual materials means that learners will not have chances to be exposed to English spoken by its native speakers as well as they find themselves not interested and motivated because of routine and monotonous teaching. Truly, teachers cannot do anything without books; they are essential tools in the teaching and learning process, but the audio means are also significant. Although Learners read and learn the sounds symbols of words from their books, they sometimes remain unsure about their pronunciation correctness. For instance, in the word “owe”, students cannot know the accurate pronunciation without hearing. Due to this latter, learners study English for years without enough exposure to it.

This is the reason why learners seek access to the native speakers from other sources in order to learn and listen to the language such as films (Alsalihi, 2020). Normally, foreign language classes or language laboratories in particular are equipped with sufficient and efficient facilities and devices to foster students speaking skill development. However, both school's administrators and teachers play a crucial role in this concern. Therefore, the institutions and their administrators should provide the adequate facilities and equipments in order to help the instructors in developing a positive learning environment. Teacher also should stimulate their students to benefit from social media platforms through listening and watching the content of English language such as videos, films and broadcasts whereby they can enrich their vocabulary and ameliorate their pronunciation. So, they will improve their speaking skill (Alrasheedi, 2020). To sum up, it is worthy to say that the provision of audiovisual means and facilities in EFL classes is a necessity, but it does not mean that students rely solely on what is introduced by their teachers. They should rather be autonomous in their learning of course through using technological devices to learn English language performed in its natural use by native speakers.

Conclusion

Reflecting on all what has been said previously, it can be concluded that students' speaking problems are due to a complex triple combination. This latter involves linguistic barriers, psychological constraints and factors which are environmental, pedagogical or related to learners themselves. All of these function as a closed circle in which students become increasingly afraid to speak. On one hand, they are reluctant to practice speaking owing to their insufficient skills. On the other hand, these skills cannot be developed without practice. Hence, the key to break the closed circle and overcome fear of speaking is to keep constant practice, and the speaking abilities will be automatically developed.

CHAPTER TWO:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND

FINDINGS

2.1. Section One: Research Methodology

Introduction

2.1.1. Research Method

2.1.2. Research Instrument

2.1.3. Sampling and Population

2.1.4. Data Collection

2.1.5. Description of the Questionnaire

2.1.6. Ethical Considerations

Conclusion

2.2. Section Two: Results and Discussion

Introduction

2.2.1. Analysis of the Questionnaire

2.2.2. General Discussion

Conclusion

2.1. Section One: Research Methodology

Introduction

The present section is concerned with the research design and methodology. It describes and justifies the selected research approach, the research instrument and the selection of participants. It also provides a detailed description of the questionnaire and how the data was collected in addition to ethical conventions of research conduct which are respected in the current study.

2.1.1. Research Method

The quantitative method was selected as a way to collect data, and the descriptive analysis was the way of analyzing the obtained data.

2.1.2. Research Instrument

The questionnaire was adopted as an instrument to collect the needed data. According to Brown (2001), a questionnaire is "...any written tool that contains a series of questions and statements which the respondents answer either by using their own words or choosing answers from those they are provided with." (p.73). In fact, the questionnaire is commonly used in EFL studies. In this research, it was selected for the following reasons:

- It covers a large number of participants.
- It takes less time to gather data.
- It can provide both quantitative and qualitative data.
- It gives the participants more privacy due to the absence of face to face interaction between the participants and the researchers (Kumar, 2011). So, it would be more possible to obtain honest and objective answers.

2.1.3. Sampling and Population

The study took place in the Department of English at the University of Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimy for the academic year 2021-2022. The research population included all second year EFL students (males and females) with a number of 215. All of them answered the questionnaires (except for absent students). After that, a representing sample was randomly selected as follows: All the questionnaires were codified with numbers, then 86

numbers were randomly picked out of 215 with a percentage of 40% to ensure randomness and that each individual from the research population would have an equal chance to be selected without any bias or interference. The choice of such sample was due to the fact that second year LMD students have longer experience with speaking difficulties. Besides, they have adequate language to answer the questions and provide detailed information concerning this issue.

2.1.4. Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed in a printed form to all second year EFL students in their classrooms in the Department of English at the University of BBA on May 17th-22nd during the second semester for the academic year 2021-2022. It took nearly 10 to 15 minutes of students' time to be completed. All the questionnaires were given back, and the students were very helpful and cooperative.

2.1.5. Description of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed on the light of the study objectives and the research problem. It can be described in terms of its content, which types of questions it included and its length.

2.1.5.1. Content

The questionnaire starts with an introduction in which the participants were kindly invited to take part in this research. Then, they were informed about the title of the study and its aim. The respondents were also assured that their answers will be kept anonymous, and the way of answering the questions was clarified.

The questionnaire consists of 16 questions divided into four sections. Section one (Q1-Q4) intends to gather background information about the target sample including, gender, age, major selection and their English level. Section two (Q5-Q7) seeks to explore students' perceptions about the importance of speaking skill, their speaking level and which aspects are necessary to achieve proficiency in speaking. Section three (Q8-Q13) deals with speaking difficulties including, both linguistic and psychological ones. Section Four (Q14-16) is designed to investigate the factors behind learners' speaking problems. It also aims to know the most favorite motivating activity to students. At the end, they were invited to provide their comments and suggestions regarding the target issue.

2.1.5.2. Types of Questions

The questionnaire involves two types of questions. First, close-ended questions (also known as structured questions) include Yes/No and multiple choices questions. Most of the questions are closed ended, because they help to obtain more data and clear information which are easy to be codified, entered, classified and analyzed. Moreover, they are easier to be answered and require short time. Second, only two questions are open-ended (unstructured). The respondents usually avoid answering such questions which are time consuming and require mental effort. In addition, they are difficult to be classified and analyzed. Nevertheless, it was necessary to include them in order to give the participants the chance to express their ideas, feelings and opinions freely. Besides, they are useful for exploratory studies in which various dimensions and facets of the problem are examined. More importantly, this type of questions helps to tackle the issue in more depth and to get a broader understanding.

1.2.5.3. Length of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is average in length with 16 questions. This aims to keep the respondents' enthusiasm, because long questionnaires require long time and more mental effort to be answered which may lead them to give up and leave the rest of questions blank. Thus, except for background information questions, the focus was centered on including only core questions which are related to the research problem and have partial contribution to the realization of the research objectives. In addition, the questions are logically ordered, well sequenced, clear, short and direct to the point, because well-constructed and accurate questionnaires ensure positive and objective responses.

1.2.6. Ethical Considerations

This research met ethical conventions of research conduct in the following ways:

- It was a theory-based and did not include any type of experiments. Thus, it was perfectly safe and did not pose any risks on participants.
- It was conducted in a manner that meets socially accepted standards.
- It did not tackle any sensitive topics.
- Participation was voluntary; there was no obligation to take part.
- Any information that would identify individuals or very small groups was not included.

Conclusion

All in all, this section has clearly explained the methodology design of the research in terms of its method and data collection tool, the sample and types of questions. It also has fully justified the selection of each aspect mentioned above. Therefore, the subsequent section will be mainly concerned with data analysis and the discussion of results.

2.2. Results and Discussion

Introduction

This section is devoted to data analysis and the discussion of results in order to answer the research questions as well as to evaluate the validity of the hypotheses. This will be achieved through the following steps: Firstly, the collected data will be analyzed manually and presented in the form of tables. Secondly, these tables will be analyzed quantitatively through a statistical reading and qualitatively through the discussion and the interpretation of these statistics in order to turn numbers into meaningful results. Finally, a general discussion will be provided to summarize and recapitulate the previous interpretations and results as well as to compare them with the findings of similar studies.

2.2.1. Analysis of the Questionnaire

Section One: Background Information

Q1: Gender

Table 1

Students' Gender Distribution

Choices	Number	Percentage %
Male	23	26.74%
Female	63	73.25%
Total	86	100%

From Table 1, it is observable that female students (63) with a rate of (73.25%) are approximately three times the number of males (23) with an average of (26.74%).

Discussion & Interpretation: These results may refer to the fact that female students have higher tendency to study human sciences and languages than male ones.

Q2: Age

Table 2

Students' Age Distribution

Choices	Number	Percentage %
18-30 years	80	93.02%
Over 30 years	06	06.97%
Total	86	100%

The data gained from Table 2 show plainly that 80 students with the highest percentage (93.02%) are between 18 and 30 years old, whereas, only few students (06) with the lowest percentage (06.97%) are over 30 years.

Discussion & interpretation: The result above is quite obvious, because it is natural that young students are more likely to join university than the old learners.

Q3: You joined the English branch at university due to:

Table 3

Students' Choice to Study English

Choices	Number	Percentage %
A personal choice	74	86.04%
Parents' choice	04	04.65%
Administrative orientation	08	09.30%
Total	86	100%

The purpose of this question was to know whether students are motivated and interested in learning English or not, because this has a direct effect on their ability to develop the skill of speaking.

As illustrated in Table 3, the majority of respondents (86.04%) which represent 74 students joined the English branch due to their personal choice, while (09.30%) representing eight students were oriented to this field by the administration. However, the minority of students (04) with a percentage of (04.65%) chose to satisfy their parents' desire and pursue their studies in this major.

Discussion & Interpretation: From students' answers, it could be concluded that there is a huge number of students who are personally interested in learning English. In addition, it could be touched that the majority of students' parents are more aware, and they do not oblige them to study a field they do not like.

Q4: How do you evaluate your level in English?

Table 4

Students' Own Perceptions about their English Level

Choices	Number	Percentage %
Very good	10	11.62%
Good	49	56.97%
Average	25	29.06%
Weak	02	02.32%
Total	86	100%

The aim behind asking this question was to know students' beliefs about their level in English. If the level of most students was good, their difficulties with speaking would be largely attributed to the psychological side. On the other hand, if the level of most students was average or weak, the difficulties would refer to their lack of linguistic and cognitive competencies.

According to the findings demonstrated above, only two students (02.32%) saw that their level is weak. Ten respondents (11.62%) affirmed that they are very good at English, and 25 students (29.06%) claimed they are average. However, 49 students (56.97%) assumed that their level is good.

Discussion & Interpretation: Based on students' own answers, it can be said that more than half of them are good at English which indicates that they generally have an adequate background in English. So, their speaking problems may be largely attributed to their psychological difficulties.

Section Two: Speaking Skill

Q5: Do you believe that speaking is an important skill in language learning?

Table 5

Students' Opinions about the Importance of Speaking Skill in Language Learning

Choices	Number	Percentage %
Yes	84	97.67%
No	02	02.32%
Total	86	100%

This question was addressed to explore how students perceive the importance of speaking in language learning. The more they realize its importance, the more they will work on developing it.

The data above reveal that the highest rate with 97.67% representing 84 students believes that speaking is a crucial skill in language learning. Contrariwise, two students took an opposite position and answered with no.

Discussion & interpretation: From the results, it is noticeable that students are conscious and fully aware of the role and the significance of speaking in language learning.

Q6: How do you assess your level in speaking?

Table 6

Students' Own Perceptions about their Speaking Level

Choices	Number	Percentage %
High	12	13.95%
Above average	33	38.37%
Average	36	41.86%
Low	05	05.81%
Total	86	100%

This question was asked in order to investigate students' abilities in speaking from their own views. If most students reported that their levels in speaking are average or low, it would be clear that they indeed suffer from many speaking difficulties.

Table 6 illustrates that five students (05.81%) are not satisfied with their speaking level whereby they considered it low. On the other hand, only 12 students (13.95%) thought that their abilities are high. 33 students (38.37%) reported that their level is above average, while most students 36 (41.86%) stated that they have average speaking abilities.

Discussion & Interpretation: A considerable number of students have low or average speaking level. This means that they probably find the speaking task difficult.

Q7: In your opinion, a high speaking level requires the mastery of:

Table 7

Students' opinions about the Necessary Aspects for Speaking Mastery

Choices	Number	Percentage %
Grammar	03	03.37%
Vocabulary	18	20.22%
Pronunciation	07	07.86%
All of them	61	68.53%
Total	89	100%

This question was directed to students in order to get their points of view concerning which aspect(s) is/are more important for the mastery of speaking. If they focused on one aspect at the expense of the rest, this would be a part of the problem, and it would explain why they face linguistic difficulties, because all the aspects are intertwined and equally crucial to develop the speaking skill.

The answers tabulated above reveal that most students (61) with a rate of (68.53%) asserted that all the aspects are paramount to be a proficient speaker of English, while 18 informants (20.22%) argued that vocabulary is more necessary, and seven students (07.86%) pointed out that pronunciation is also an essential aspect, whereas, the rest (03.37%) held that grammar is far meaningful.

Discussion & Interpretation: The analysis demonstrates that a large number of students are aware that the aforementioned aspects are interrelated and are equally significant for attaining a high speaking level.

Section Three: Speaking Difficulties

Q8: Do you find speaking English difficult?

Table 8

The Difficulty of Speaking Task to Students

Choices	Number	Percentage %
Yes	11	12.79%
To some extent	42	48.83%
No	33	38.37%
Total	86	100%

The goal of this question was to know whether students consider speaking English as a difficult task or not, and based on that, it could be deduced to what extent the problem under investigation is widespread.

It is obvious from Table 8 that nearly half of students (48.83%) find speaking English difficult to some extent, and 11 participants (12.79%) do not find it easy. In contrast, the remaining students (38.37%) do not regard speaking as a problematic task.

Discussion & Interpretation: Since most students stated that they find speaking difficult, it can be understood, therefore, that they face several difficulties when speaking.

Q9: What are the most frequent linguistic difficulties you encounter during speaking?

Table 9

Common Linguistic Difficulties

Choices	Number	Percentage %
Grammar Confusion	27	22.50%
Lack of Vocabulary	45	37.50%
Pronunciation Problems	22	18.33%
Thinking in L1	22	18.33%
None of them	04	03.33%
Total	120	100%

This question was designed in attempt to explore the common linguistic problems faced by students. It also aimed to order these problems according to their degree of dominance.

In this question, learners could tick more than one choice. Based on their answers, the linguistic barriers that impede them can be ordered in terms of dominance as follows: Lack of vocabulary ranked first with a rate of (37.50%), whereas, grammar confusion came in the second class with an average of (22.50%). Pronunciation problems and thinking in the first language got the last rank with the same percentage (18.33%). However, four students (03.33%) stated that they do not encounter any linguistic problems.

Discussion & Interpretation: The results from the previous analysis denote that the major obstacle that hampers students' oral production is lack of vocabulary which indicates that these learners generally have poor English lexical background.

Q10: When you speak, you try to focus on:

Table 10

Students' Focus on Accuracy and/or Fluency during Speaking

Choices	Number	Percentage %
Accuracy	07	08.13%
Fluency	14	16.27%
Both of them	65	75.58%
Total	86	100%

This question was posed to check whether students attempt to control both fluency and accuracy while speaking, or they can only focus on one aspect.

Brief definitions of both terms were provided in order to avoid the possibility of leaving the answer boxes blank due to the incomprehension of the question.

As demonstrated in Table 10, the highest rate (75.58%) representing 65 students claimed that they emphasize both accuracy and fluency. Conversely, 40 respondents (16.24%) stated that they focus on fluency, and only seven learners (08.13%) direct their full attention to accuracy.

Discussion & Interpretation: From the above analysis, it could be inferred that a great number of participants try to manage their utterances in terms of both accuracy and fluency. On the other hand, the remaining learners can only concentrate on one aspect either accuracy or fluency.

Q11: Does the focus on accuracy make you lose fluency and speak uncomfortably?

Table 11

The Difficulty to Balance Accuracy and Fluency during Speaking

Choices	Number	Percentage %
Yes	48	55.81%
No	38	44.18%
Total	86	100%

The aim of this question was to detect whether students who focus on accuracy fail to keep fluency or not.

It can be noticed from Table 11 that more than half of students (48) with a rate of (55.81%) opted for yes, while 38 participants (44.18%) declared that they do not face such problem.

Discussion and Interpretation: This result may suggest that many students struggle to make a balance between fluency and accuracy. If they paid their attention to the correctness of the language, they would not be capable to speak smoothly and spontaneously.

Q12: If your teacher corrected your mistakes while speaking, would you feel annoyed?

Table 12

Students' Negative Attitudes towards Error correction during Speaking

Choice	Number	Percentages %
Yes	25	29.06%
No	61	70.73%
Total	86	100%

This question aimed at exploring students' feelings about teachers' correction to their mistakes during speaking, because it is possible that some students tend to force their attention to accuracy due to their teachers' constant correction to their mistakes during speaking, hence, they would probably lose fluency.

(Note: The words "Mistakes" and "Errors" are used interchangeably to refer to situations in which students produce incorrect language forms regardless of the reasons being lack of mastery of language forms or gaps in the learners' language knowledge.)

As shown in Table 12, the minority of learners (29.06%) do feel annoyed when their teachers interrupt them to correct their errors. By contrast, the majority of them (70.93%) confirmed that the interruption does not really present a problem to them.

Students who opted for "Yes" were asked to explain why, and they provided different answers as presented in the table in the next page.

Table 13

Students' Explanations for their Discomfort with Error Correction while Speaking

No Explanation	05 Participants
Explanations (20 Participants) (In some cases, the same comment was provided by many students)	Students prefer to be corrected at the end of speaking, because teacher's interruption leads to: - losing ideas and attention - feeling uncomfortable and stressed - feeling shy and confused - feeling that all their utterances were wrong - receiving negative comments and mockery from their classmates - losing self-confidence

Q13: What are the most frequent psychological difficulties you encounter during speaking?

Table 14

Common Psychological Difficulties

Choices	Number	Percentage %
Fear of making mistakes	46	27.71%
Anxiety	25	15.06%
Inhibition/hesitation	18	10.84%
Lack of self-confidence	14	08.43%
Shyness	49	29.51%
Low self-esteem	12	07.22%
None of them	02	01.20%
Total	166	100%

The first intention behind this question was to diagnose the psychological difficulties that learners usually suffer from when they try to speak. The second intention was to arrange these difficulties from the most dominant one to the least.

This question allows students to tick more than one option.

From the findings, it is noticeable that shyness occupied the first rank with a rate of (29.51%). Fear of making mistakes came in the second position with a percentage of (27.71%), whereas, anxiety earned the third status with an average of (15.06%). Inhibition/hesitation followed in the fourth class with a percentage of (10.84%). On the other hand, lack of self-confidence obtained the fifth grade with a rate of (08.43%). However, low self-esteem ranked the last with (07.22%). Only two students (1.20%) confirmed that they do not encounter any kind of the already mentioned psychological difficulties.

Discussion and Interpretation: It is indicated that the major influencing psychological hindrance is shyness. This may refer to the fact that the greater number of participants is females (73.25%) who naturally tend to be shy. Besides, fear of making mistakes got approximately the same percentage (27.71%) as shyness (29.51%). Perhaps, students avoid speaking due to their worry of being criticized and laughed at by others.

Section Four: Factors Contributing to Speaking Difficulties

Q14: According to you, what are the factors that have a relation to speaking difficulties?

Table 15

Factors Contributing to Speaking Difficulties

Choices	Number	Percentage%
Lack of motivation	30	09.58%
Lack of interest	29	09.26%
Irrelevance of tackled topics to students' life	11	03.51%
Lack of activities devoted to speaking	48	15.33%
Lack of facilities and audio-visual aids	23	07.34%
Large classes and limited time	24	07.66%
Lack of exposure to English	19	06.07%
Lack of listening practice	42	13.41%
Lack of speaking practice	57	18.21%
Over-use of mother tongue	30	09.58%
Total	313	100%

This question was mainly asked to explore the factors that contribute in a way or another to speaking difficulties. Besides, it planned to sort these factors according to the degree of their dominance.

In this question, ten rating options were provided, and the findings above revealed that the highest percentage (18.21%) went to “lack of speaking practice”, then “lack of activities devoted to speaking” came at the second rank with (15.33%). At the third place came “lack of listening practice” with a rate of (13.41%). “Lack of motivation” and “over-use of mother tongue” ranked fourth with the same percentage (09.58%). “Lack of interest” with a rate of (09.26%) gained the fifth position. With very approximate percentages “large classes and limited time” (07.66%) and “lack of facilities and audio-visual aids” (07.34%) got the sixth and seventh classes respectively. In the eighth place came “lack of exposure to English” with a rate of (06.07%) and the lower percentage (03.51%) went to “irrelevance of topics to students' life”.

Discussion and Interpretation: Students' answers indicated that their speaking difficulties are largely ascribed to their poor speaking practice. It basically results from the lack of activities devoted to speaking. Learners do not have sufficient opportunities to practice, especially in large classes whereby the skillful classmates dominate the class and take most of the time which is already limited.

Q15: Among the following, what are the most motivating speaking activities to you?

Table 16

Students' Most Motivating Speaking Activities

Choices	Number	Percentage %
Dialogues	46	22.43%
Interviewing	23	11.21%
Discussions	68	33.17%
Role plays	21	10.24%
Information gap	16	07.80%
Games	31	15.12%
Total	205	100%

The objective of this question was to discover students' most favorite speaking activity so that teachers focus on implementing it frequently to create a motivating atmosphere in which learners' participation rises accordingly.

As for which activity is the most motivating and exciting in students' opinions, the answers were varied whereby the respondents opted for more than one activity. However, the discussion activity was ticked 68 times with a rate of (33.17%) which indicates that it is preferred by the vast majority of students. Dialogues also gained a considerable percentage (22.43%), while many learners enjoy games (15.12%). At the same time, some of them were interested in interviewing (11.21%). Others liked role plays (10.24%), whereas, the rest of respondents liked better information gap activities (07.80%).

Discussion and Interpretation: The findings indicate that the discussion activity is massively preferable by students due to the fact that they can talk about different interesting topics in which they express their ideas and views freely and interactively, but it does not mean that teachers should solely focus on this activity. As a matter of fact, it is better to adopt a variety of activities to break the routine and change the mood in order to sustain motivation.

Q16. At the end of the questionnaire, learners were welcomed to provide their comments and suggestions in regard to the target issue.

The objective of this question was to offer the students an opportunity to express their views and ideas about their own speaking difficulties as well as to obtain some propositions which may help overcoming these problems.

From students' answers, it has been found that only 21 students out of 86 gave their comments and suggestions. These responses are presented in the next page table.

Table 17*Students' Comments and Suggestions*

No response	65 participants
<p data-bbox="284 432 561 517">Students' comments 06 participants</p> <p data-bbox="225 595 689 846">(There were times where the same comment was stated by more than one participant. There were also some irrelevant comments which are not mentioned here).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="715 432 1434 573">- The silent nature of students usually makes them reluctant to speak not only in the foreign language, but also in their first language. <li data-bbox="715 595 1434 680">- The attention of audience leads to the fear of speaking. <li data-bbox="715 703 1434 788">- Students lose enthusiasm to speak when they are disregarded by their classmates.
<p data-bbox="284 981 584 1066">Students' Suggestions 15 participants</p> <p data-bbox="264 1144 636 1285">(In some cases, the same suggestion was proposed by many students).</p>	<p data-bbox="715 981 1434 1066">In order to improve the speaking skill, the students suggested to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="715 1088 1434 1232">- create a speaking corner whereby they meet together with their teachers at least once a week and discuss other topics apart from the learning content. <li data-bbox="715 1310 1434 1395">- accept making mistakes as a part of the learning process. <li data-bbox="715 1417 1102 1456">- speak slowly to avoid errors. <li data-bbox="715 1478 1050 1516">- listen to native speakers. <li data-bbox="715 1538 1257 1576">- accompany listening along with reading. <li data-bbox="715 1599 1294 1637">- allocate more sessions to practice speaking. <li data-bbox="715 1659 1434 1744">- give enough time to each student to finish expressing his/her ideas.

2.2.2. General Discussion

This paragraph is mainly devoted to discuss the upshots obtained from the students' answers through which the present work seeks to answer the research questions and to test to what extent the assumed hypotheses were valid as well as to compare the findings of the present study with those of similar studies and to make a link between the theoretical part and the obtained results. Based upon the already done analysis of students' questionnaire, the following results can be drawn: Regarding the first research question, the common speaking difficulties that second year EFL students at the university of BBA encounter are linguistically and psychologically related. On one hand, they suffer from grammar confusion, lack of vocabulary, pronunciation problems, first language interference and the difficulty to balance accuracy and fluency. Similar findings were reported by Chaouchi and Bahlouli (2022) and Alhosni (2014). Chaouchi and Bahlouli's (2022) study concluded that the linguistic difficulties include lack of vocabulary, thinking in Arabic when speaking English and pronunciation problems, whereas, Alhosni (2014) asserted that students do not find the suitable vocabulary items in English due to their insufficient linguistic repertoire. On the other hand, the results showed that learners struggle with fear of making mistakes, shyness, lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, anxiety and inhibition/hesitation. In the same context, Sato (2003, as cited in Qureshi, 2013) believed that the psychological difficulties are closely linked to the inner state of students, particularly, at the moment of speaking performance. Many other studies confirmed that the psychological difficulties include lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, shyness, fear of making mistakes, anxiety and hesitation (Ariyanti, 2016; Chaouchi & Bahlouli, 2022; Haidara, 2014; Juhana, 2012; Pratiwi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2013). It should be pointed out that the linguistic difficulties can lead to the psychological ones and vice versa. For instance, students' insufficient grammatical knowledge and their lack of vocabulary may lead to lack of self-confidence and anxiety, whereas, anxiety can cause pronunciation mistakes even if those students have acceptable pronunciation skills. This refers to the pressure and tension that anxiety places on the muscles responsible for the articulation of sounds (Szyszka, 2017). According to Ariyanti (2016), the psychological difficulties themselves are interrelated. For example, the feeling of shyness, anxiety and lack of self-confidence can be attributed to the fear of making mistakes. Moreover, Haidara (2014) held that lack of self-confidence is owing to students' pronunciation problems, lack of grammar mastery and lack of fluency, thus, it is related to their fear of making mistakes. Alhosni (2014) also stated that inhibition is due to students' fear of making mistakes. For Juhana (2012), shyness is the result of students' shy nature, while lack of self-confidence and anxiety refer to students' fear of criticism due to their insufficient linguistic competence which makes them

unable to express their ideas in the target language. However, Haidara (2014) found that lack of self-confidence and hesitation occur when students talk to persons who have superior speaking abilities than theirs such as teachers and native speakers. The findings support the first hypothesis which assumed that the learners face many speaking difficulties both at the linguistic and psychological levels. In respect to the second research question, the main factors that have a contribution to these difficulties for second year EFL students at the university of BBA are lack of motivation and interest, irrelevance of the tackled topics to everyday life applications, lack of activities devoted to speaking, lack of facilities and audio-visual aids, over-crowded classes and insufficient time, lack of exposure to English, lack of listening and speaking practice and excessive mother tongue use. These results are supported by other researchers. Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2013) found that the crucial obstacles are the insufficient speaking courses, over-crowded classes, lack of motivation, limited exposure to spoken English, using Arabic excessively in class and time constraints. Chaouchi and Bahlouli (2022) shared similar results with Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2013), and they added irrelevance of discussed topics to students' life and lack of facilities and laboratories as other significant factors. Alhosni (2014) also mentioned mother tongue use and curriculum problems whereby speaking is almost neglected and the focus is on reading and writing skills. The results reinforce the second hypothesis which stated that there are several factors behind these difficulties including environmental and pedagogical factors as well as learner related ones. Furthermore, the findings showed that the most dominant linguistic difficulty is lack of vocabulary. This latter can be attributed to the lack of the target language input, L1 translation habit, lack of focus on frequent words and phrases, and the difficulty of learning word combinations such as, collocations, metaphors, phrasal verbs and idioms. Additionally, the results indicated that shyness is the most dominant difficulty at the psychological level. This feeling leads to blankness, forgetfulness of words, commission of errors and loss of concentration. In such a situation, students become tongue-tied and, therefore, they tend to avoid talking so as not to go through the same experience. However, according to the findings, fear of making mistakes ranked the second just after shyness with a very approximate percentage. Shyness could gain the first position only because the majority of participants were females (73.25%) who are naturally shy. It is highly possible that if the sample contained males and females equally, fear of making mistakes would occupy the first rank. The results of Qureshi et al. (2013) and Pratiwi (2021) also confirmed that fear of making mistake is the most prevalent psychological difficulty. Above all, it was mentioned previously that fear of making mistakes is the source of most of the psychological difficulties encountered by students in speaking, hence, it should not be surprising that fear of making

mistake is the dominant speaking difficulty at the psychological level. Brown (2007) explained that language learners are afraid of making mistakes, and their tendency to be silent is a kind of self-defense whereby they try to protect themselves against the threat of criticism in front of other people. Whereas, Qureshi et al. (2013) believed that fear of making mistakes is directly linked to lack of self-confidence and anxiety, and that students are afraid of being mocked at by their peers, worried of receiving harsh feedback from their teachers or being criticized. Concerning the factors that contribute to speaking difficulties, the outcomes demonstrated that lack of speaking practice is the dominant factor which has the most negative effect on students' speaking development. Since the time devoted to speaking inside the classroom is very limited, the only way students can ameliorate their speaking abilities depends largely on the efforts they make to practice outside the classroom. However, many of them are reluctant to apply this, because it is easier for them to express their ideas in their first language. Even those who are willing to practice do not find the motivating and supporting environment. Regardless of the reason behind students' lack of practice, the consequence is that they cannot develop their speaking level, and they remain afraid of talking in the target language. From what has been discussed, it can be said that English teachers at the university of BBA became better able to understand their students' problems in speaking as well as to realize the most dominant encountered difficulties so that they place more emphasis on them. Besides, they should use a variety of motivating activities that can help to engage students in the speaking tasks due to the fact that students have different learning styles and different intelligences according to Gardener's (1983) theory. It is also worth mentioning that teachers need to focus more on discussion, because the results revealed that it is learners' most favorite activity. In addition, learning is more likely to occur when there is interaction and collaboration with teachers and peers (McCain, 2013). Vygotsky (1978) asserted this idea in his theory of social constructivism. The utilization of discussions in EFL classrooms helps exchanging and sharing ideas, and it increases opportunities of the oral practice in the target language. However, the topics of discussions should be related to learners' interests and their everyday life applications. This is in line with the theory of constructivism in which the focus is on helping learners to construct their knowledge and skills in a meaningful context depending on their personal experiences. As for students, they should become aware that they need to exert individual efforts instead of relying completely on their teachers; i.e. they have to take action and enhance their speaking abilities autonomously. Constant speaking practice is their responsibility, and it is very important because skills are best learned by doing. To sum up, the obtained results have clearly answered the research questions, and the hypotheses were confirmed.

Conclusion

The ultimate aim behind designing this section was to analyze and discuss the collected data in relation to the research objectives, questions and hypotheses. In this regard, the findings were in line with the hypotheses, and they revealed that second year EFL students indeed suffer from many linguistic and psychological difficulties. There is a set of contributing factors to these difficulties such as, lack of listening and speaking practice, lack of motivation and interest, insufficient speaking activities, and over-crowded classes. The results of the present study are also supported by the results of other studies (Alhosni, 2014; Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2013; Ariyanti, 2016; Chaouchi & Bahlouli, 2022; Haidara, 2014; Juhana, 2012; Pratiwi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2013) From the foregoing account, it can be said that the aim of the present section has been fully realized.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

Research Limitations

Pedagogical Recommendations

General Conclusion

The speaking skill is extremely vital, and it is excessively used comparing to the rest of language skills. As a matter of fact, "...the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language" (Celce-Murcia, 2001, P.103). For this reason, it became the fundamental concern of most EFL learners whereby they exert huge efforts to reach the level of proficiency. Yet, speaking is a very complex skill to be mastered. Accordingly, they often encounter numerous difficulties and struggle when they come to speak. This was the main motive behind conducting the current research at the University of BBA in order to help solving this problem via exploring the common speaking difficulties faced by second year EFL students as well as finding the factors behind those difficulties. These aims could be realized through the revision of the existed body of research represented in the first chapter in addition to the conduct of field work demonstrated in the practical part. The theoretical part comprises three sections. The first section provided a general overview of speaking skill. The second section shade light on the linguistic and psychological problems which are frequently encountered by EFL learners. The last section dealt with factors contributing to those problems. The investigation part aimed at answering the research questions as well as testing the validity of the hypotheses. Therefore, the quantitative method was adopted to gather the needed data through administrating a questionnaire to the target participants. The participants were randomly selected with a percentage of 40% representing 86 students out of 215 using number-code principle. The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, and the findings revealed that the common speaking obstacles encountered by second year EFL students are linguistically and psychologically related. The linguistic ones are: Grammar confusion, lack of vocabulary, Pronunciation problems, first language interference and the difficulty to balance accuracy and fluency. The psychological constraints include fear of making mistakes, anxiety, inhibition/hesitation, lack of self-confidence, shyness and low self-esteem. In addition, the obtained results indicated that the factors which contribute to speaking difficulties are environmentally, pedagogically and learner related. They include lack of motivation and interest, lack of listening and speaking practice, inadequacy of activities devoted to speaking, and lack of a supporting environment. It has been also found that the most dominant linguistic difficulty is lack of vocabulary. On the other hand, the major psychological hindrance is shyness. However, the chief contributor to these difficulties is lack of speaking practice. The aforementioned outcomes confirmed the research hypotheses and strengthened the theoretical part, and they came in line with the previous studies (Alhosni, 2014; Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2013; Ariyanti, 2016; Belegdair, 2015; Benouioua & Djellal,

2018; Chaouchi & Bahlouli, 2022; Erlina, 2019; Haidara, 2014; Juhana, 2012; Pratiwi, 2021; Saouli, 2019; Yahi & Lamrour, 2018). Hopefully, the present work could contribute to the existed body of research and could help in the improvement of students' speaking skill by providing new insights which can be applied either by teachers or students or cooperatively. One last word must be said, although the present study could diagnose students' speaking problems as well as factors behind them, it remains open for further research to cover other dimensions such as the remedial solutions and strategies to overcome those problems.

Research Limitations

Throughout conducting this study, it encountered many constraints. The main constraint was time limitation. Due to this latter, only the questionnaire was adopted as a data collection tool despite the fact that the present research requires the implementation of other instruments such as, interviews, observation and speaking test. If the interview and observation were adopted, they would yield extra results and provide external views. The speaking test would also offer a credible measurement of students' speaking level, because their own assumptions cannot be totally valid. Moreover, the questionnaire was administrated in a period when second year students were anxious and stressed due to the pressure of quizzes, assignments and project works. So, they could not answer comfortably. Furthermore, the results of this study remain limited to the selected sample, and they may change with the change of the sample.

Pedagogical Recommendations

The present work's extreme attempt is to help solving students' problems in speaking, hence and based upon the research findings and the theoretical part, the following recommendations are suggested:

For Students

- Create speaking corners and clubs, and meet with teachers and classmates at least once a week to talk about different topics in order to develop and sharpen speaking skills. Ask for the permission of the administration, and select students who will be responsible for the organization of place, time and topics. Ask also for teachers' advice.
- Try to be massively exposed to English through listening to native speakers and watching films, news and T.V shows, especially with English subtitles. Use YouTube whereby there are plenty of choices.
- Practice speaking in and outside classroom regularly. For outside practice, it can be done through discussions with friends or via social media.
- Join speech communities and speaking groups, and engage in discussions.
- Make use of social media and internet resources to develop speaking.
- Work on mastering more grammatical structures. Ask for teachers' help and use YouTube or books.
- Try to enrich vocabulary by accompanying reading along with listening.
- Learn new words in their context. Try to learn whole expressions instead of isolated words.
- Focus on expressions which are frequently and actually used in real life interactions. These expressions often occur in conversations and stories.
- Make effort to enhance pronunciation. For example, listen to conversations and stop to act out what has been heard, listen again, stop and act out. Do it regularly until reaching a satisfactory level of pronunciation.
- Ask for teachers' help and guidance concerning the selection of resources and strategies to develop speaking.

- Do not be afraid of making mistakes because they are an inevitable part in the learning process.

For teachers

- Create a relaxed, positive and motivating environment to encourage students' engagement and participation through using audio-visual aids, varying topics and inviting guests, for example.
- Establish a friendly relationship with the students.
- Implement group and pair work and use some humor to reduce anxiety and pressure.
- Focus on topics which students like and are related to their everyday life interests, routines and applications.
- Vary activities and strategies to change mood and sustain motivation as well as to break the routine.
- Provide positive feedback when correcting students' mistakes. For example, formulate the students' answers and they will understand what the mistake was.
- Help students by suggesting good instructional videos and advise them how to make use of You Tube channels and other internet resources to the benefit of speaking skill development.
- Assign speaking tasks for out classroom practice. An example task is to record a video for a discussion between friends.
- Give all students equal chances and enough time to speak and interact in class.
- Give the students the opportunity to choose topics and activities from time to time.
- Encourage students to speak and participate in classroom discussions. This could be done by selecting topics which university students commonly like to discuss. The sense of humor and the friendly relationship between the teacher and the students can also help.
- Take into consideration students' different preferences, needs and learning styles when designing activities and preparing materials.
- Encourage students to speak frequently in order to increase their familiarity with the foreign language.

- Advise students to believe in their abilities and capacities and not to compare themselves with their classmates.
- Focus on developing students' speaking skills and competencies rather than the coverage of content.

For administrators

- Divide students into smaller groups and avoid overcrowded classes.
- Allocate more time for oral expression sessions.
- Give students the permission to create speaking corners and clubs and provide the needed support.
- Provide sufficient language learning laboratories, audio-visual aids and facilities.
- Organize conferences and seminars in which both local and foreign personalities are invited in order to offer opportunities to students to engage in real discussions and to be exposed to these linguistic models.

For middle and secondary school curriculum designers

Most of students' speaking difficulties and weaknesses are traced back to their previous seven years-experiences in middle and secondary schools, therefore, the following recommendations are provided to persons who are in charge of curriculum design:

- Integrate speaking tasks and activities side to side with reading and writing.
- Focus on designing a practical curriculum which develops a few abilities, skills, and competencies rather than a curriculum which covers too much content.
- Avoid the over focus on western culture representations in textbooks at the expense of national culture ones.
- Focus on topics which are related to learners' real needs, interests, routines and everyday life applications.

While working on this dissertation which explored the common difficulties encountered by EFL learners in speaking, many interesting details came in the way, and they deserve more discussion and can stand as research topics on their own. They can be used as fertile ground for further research by the subsequent master students at the University of Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi or at other universities. Hence, the following topics are suggested:

- An Exploration of the Common Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers in Teaching Speaking
- An Exploration of the Common Problems Encountered by EFL learners in Pronunciation
- The Effect of Pronunciation Mistakes on Students Self-confidence during Speaking
- The Impact of Listening in Enhancing EFL learners Pronunciation
- Effective Teaching Strategies and Techniques to Enrich Students Vocabulary
- An Investigation of Students Psychological Difficulties during Speaking Presentations
- The Role of Classroom Discussion in Enhancing Students Speaking Skill
- The Effect of Watching Films on Developing EFL Learners Speaking Skill
- The Effect of Social Media on Enhancing EFL Learners Speaking Skill
- The Role of Learners' Autonomy in Language Learning

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APPENDICES

UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED EL BACHIR EL IBRAHIMI, BBA
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to fill in this questionnaire which is part of a research for a Master Dissertation entitled “An Exploration of the Common Difficulties and Factors Encountered by EFL Learners in Speaking”. This exploratory study attempts to help solving EFL students’ problems in speaking and takes second year students as a case.

Your answers will be of a great help to this research, and they will be surely kept anonymous.

Please tick () the appropriate box (es) or write information when necessary.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and the time devoted to answer the questions.

Section One: Background Information

1- Gender: Male Female

2- Age: 18-30 years Over 30 years

3- You joined the English branch at university due to:

a personal choice parents’ choice administrative orientation

4- How do you evaluate your level in English?

Very good Good Average Weak

Section Two: Speaking Skill

5- Do you believe that speaking is an important skill in language learning?

Yes No

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6- How do you assess your level in speaking?

- High Above average Average Low

7- In your Opinion, a high speaking level requires the mastery of:

- Grammar Vocabulary Pronunciation All of them

Section Three: Speaking Difficulties

8- Do you find speaking English difficult?

- Yes To some extent No

9- What are the most frequent linguistic difficulties you encounter during speaking?

- Grammar confusion Lack of vocabulary Pronunciation problems
 Thinking in the first language None of them

10- When you speak, you try to focus on:

- Accuracy Fluency Both of them

(Accuracy is the correct use of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation)

(Fluency is the ability to speak smoothly and spontaneously without hesitation)

11- Does the focus on accuracy make you lose fluency and speak uncomfortably?

- Yes No

12- If your teacher corrected your mistakes while speaking, would you feel annoyed?

- Yes No

If yes, explain why

.....
.....
.....

13- What are the most frequent psychological difficulties you encounter during speaking?

- Fear of making mistakes Anxiety Inhibition / hesitation Shyness
 Lack of self-confidence Low self-esteem None of them

Section Four: Factors Contributing to Speaking Difficulties

14- According to you, what are the factors that have a relation to speaking difficulties?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of motivation | <input type="checkbox"/> Large classes & limited time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of interest | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of exposure to English |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irrelevant topics to your everyday life | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor listening practice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of activities devoted to speaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor speaking practice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of facilities and audiovisual aids | <input type="checkbox"/> Over-use of mother tongue |

15- Among the following, what are the most motivating speaking activities to you?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dialogues | <input type="checkbox"/> Interviewing | <input type="checkbox"/> Discussions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Role plays | <input type="checkbox"/> Information gap | <input type="checkbox"/> Games |

16- If you have any comments about speaking difficulties or suggestions to overcome the problem, you are welcomed to provide them here

.....

.....

.....

.....

Figures

Figure 1

Students' Gender Distribution

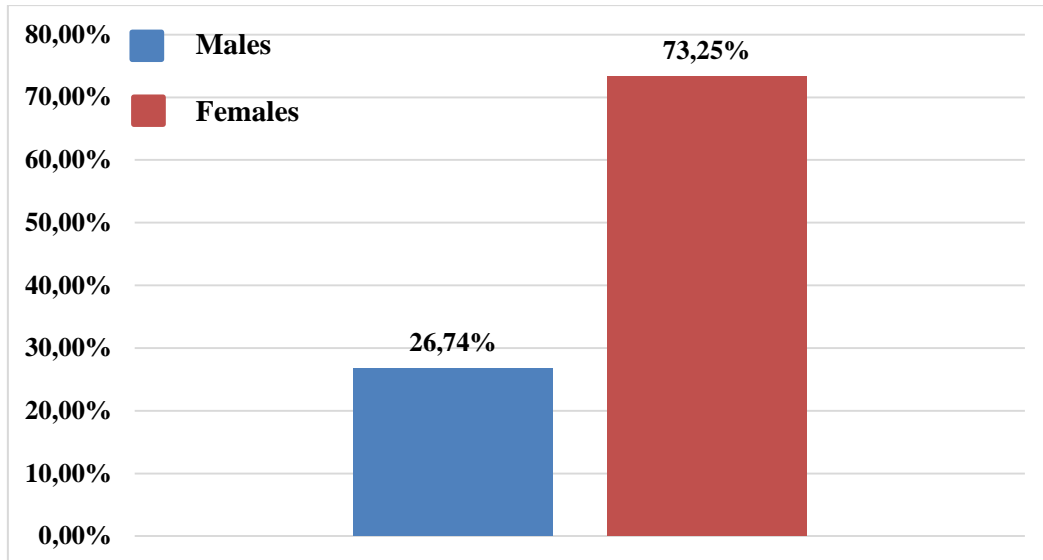


Figure 2

Students' Age Distribution

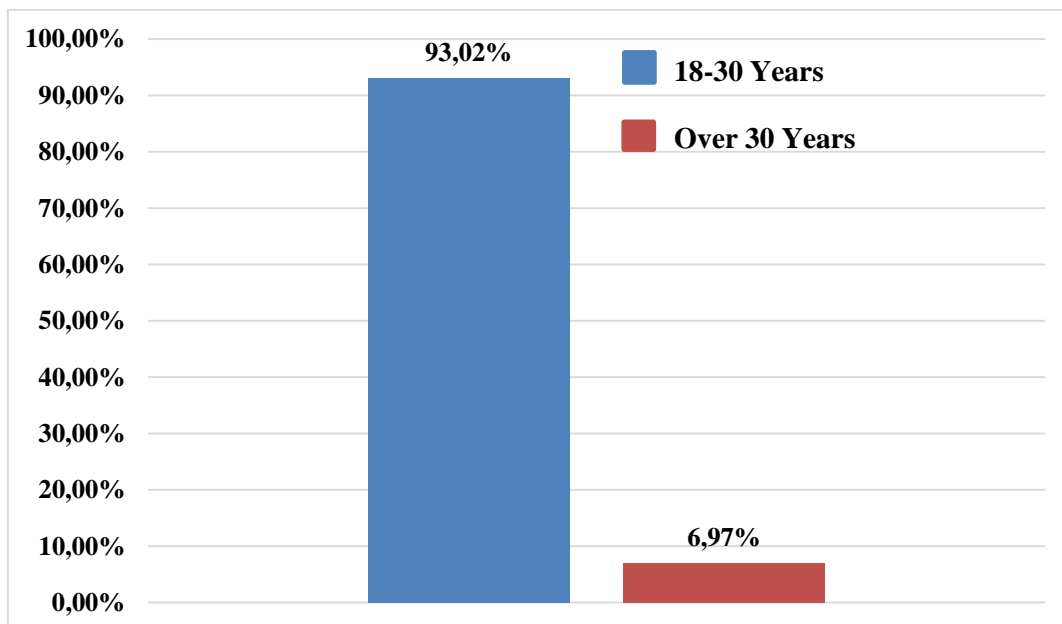


Figure 3

Students' Choice to Study English

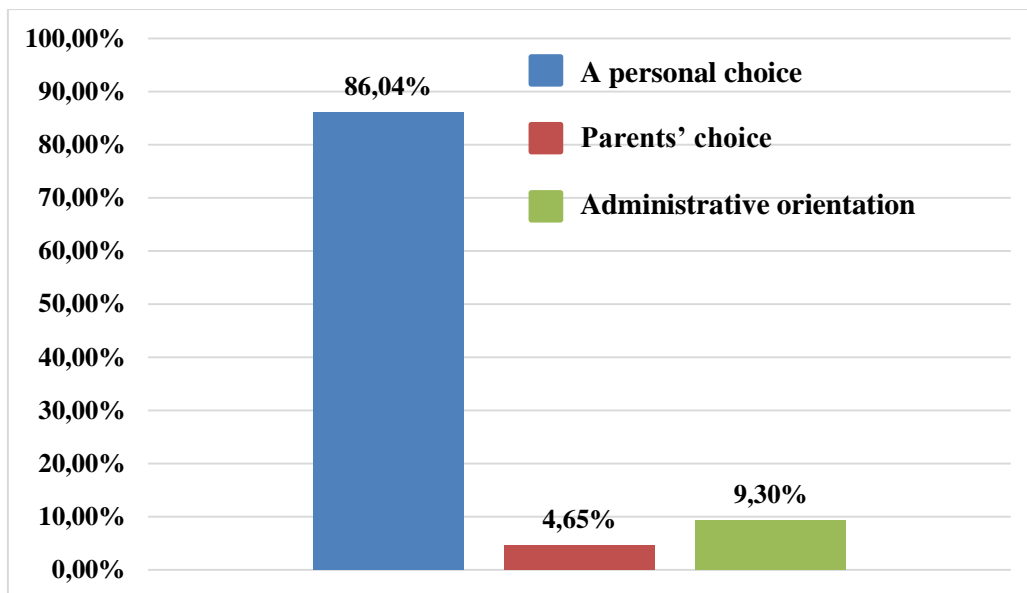


Figure 4

Students' Own Perceptions about their English Level

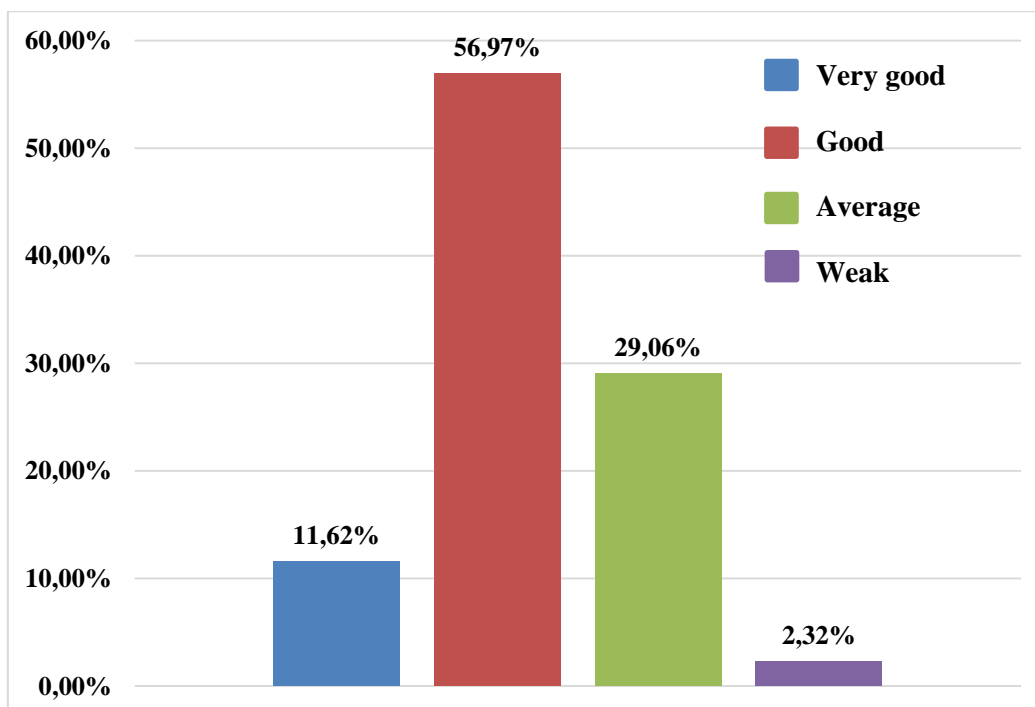


Figure 5

Students' Opinions about the Importance of Speaking Skill in Language Learning

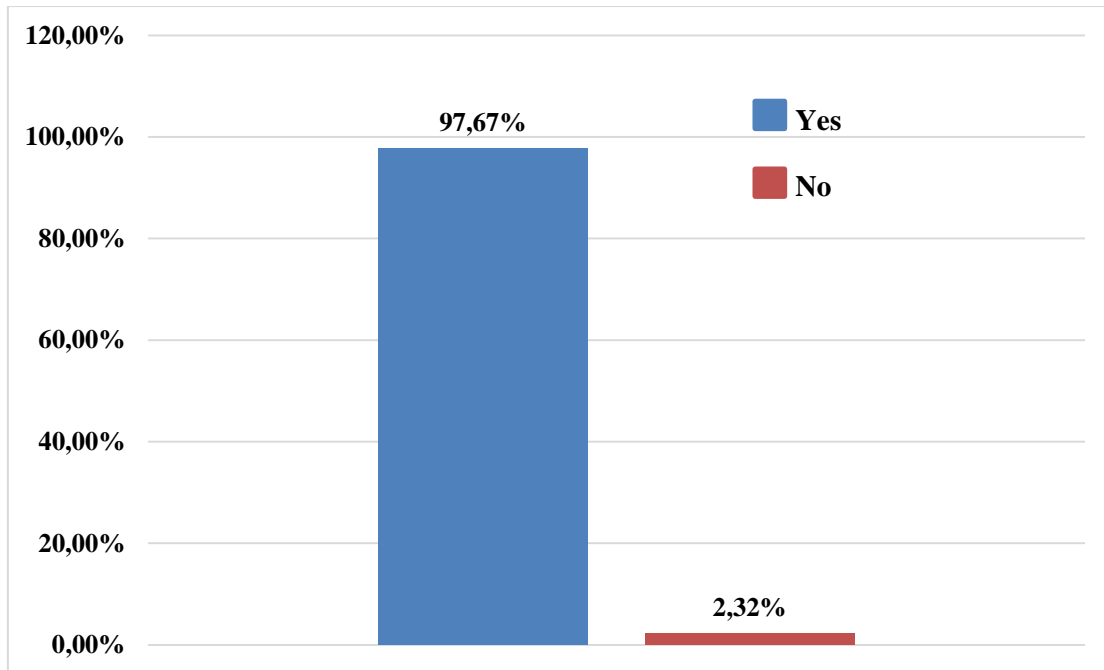


Figure 6

Students' Own Perceptions about their Speaking Level

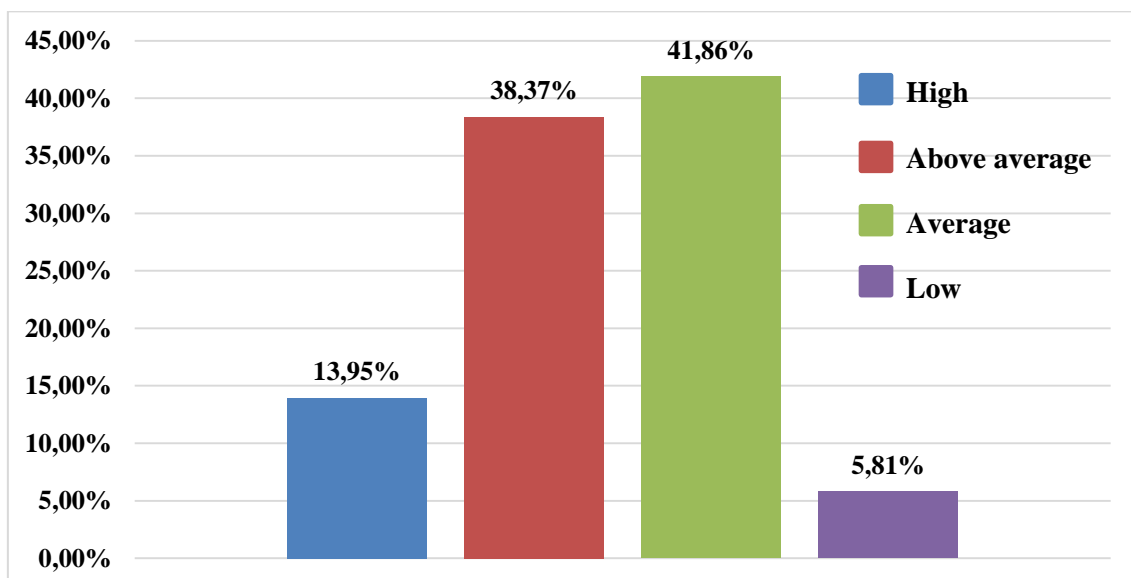


Figure 7

Students' Opinions about the necessary Aspects for Speaking Mastery

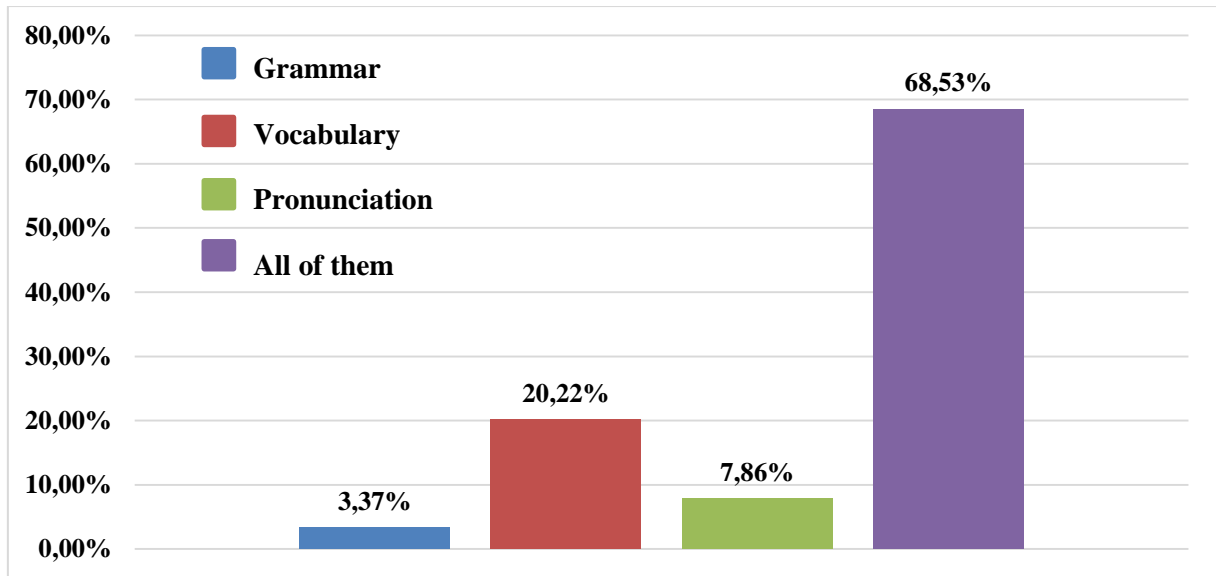


Figure 8

The Difficulty of Speaking Task to Students

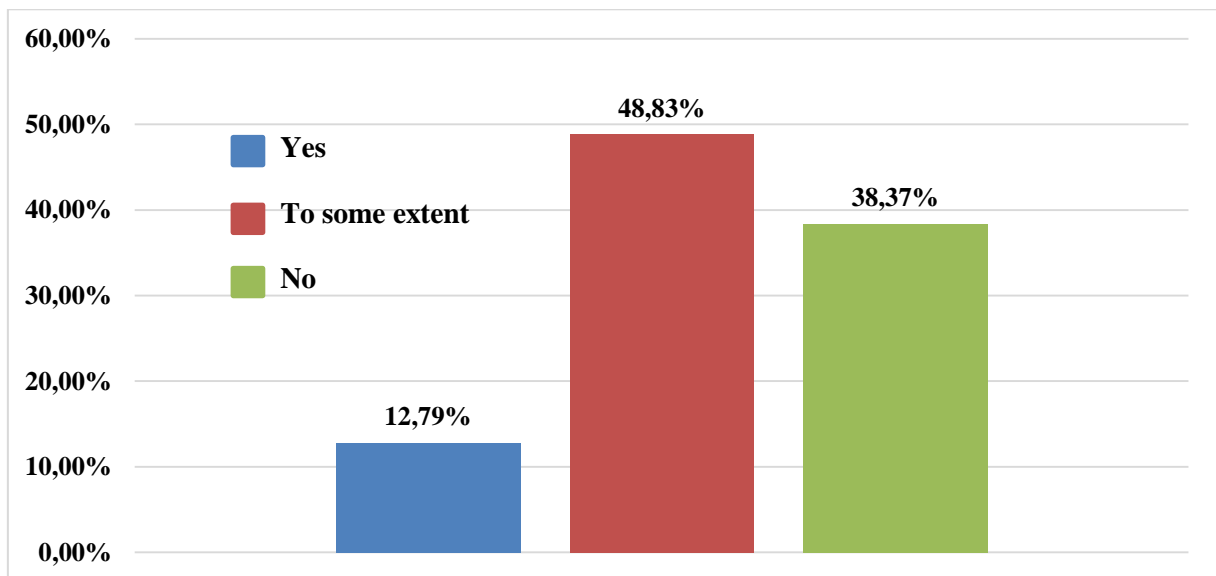


Figure 9

Common Linguistic Difficulties

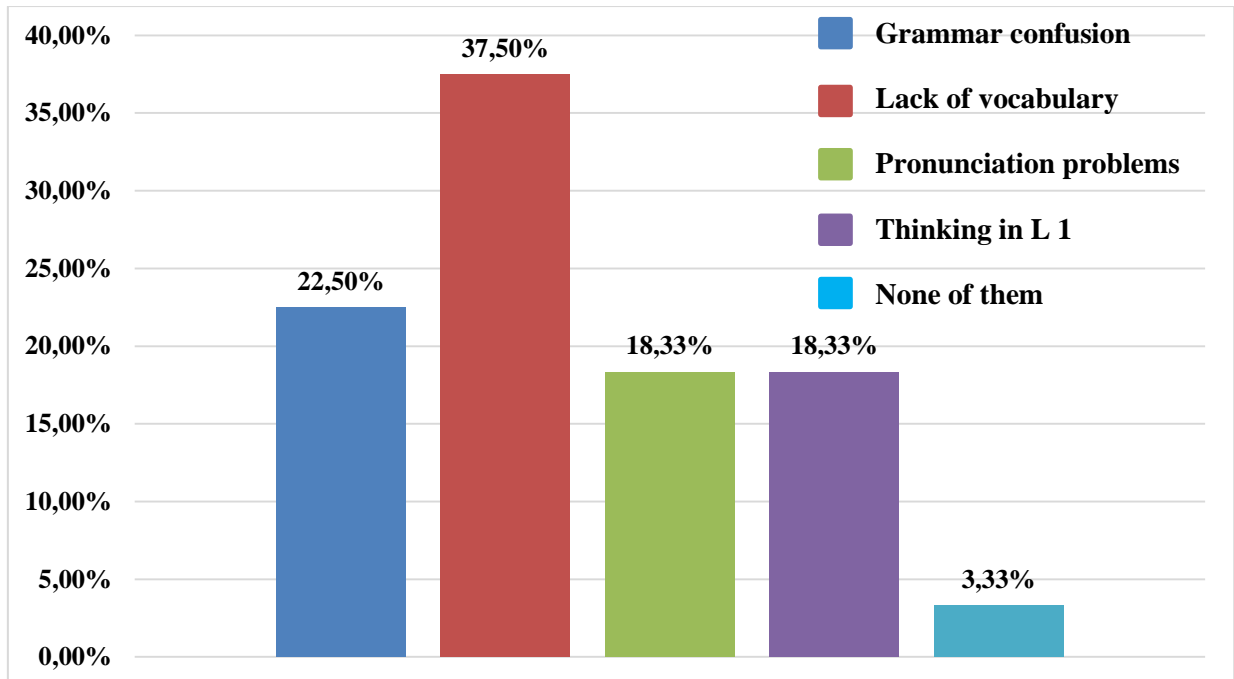


Figure 10

Students' Focus on Accuracy and/or Fluency during Speaking

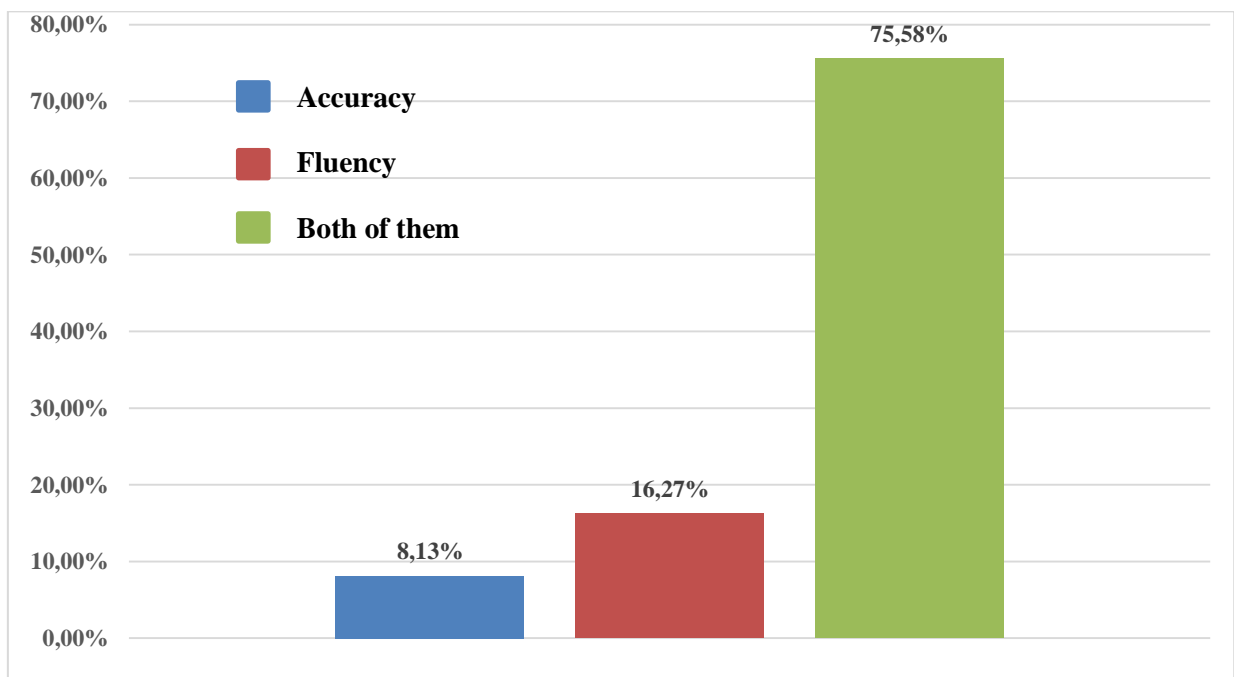


Figure 11

The Difficulty to Balance Accuracy and Fluency during Speaking

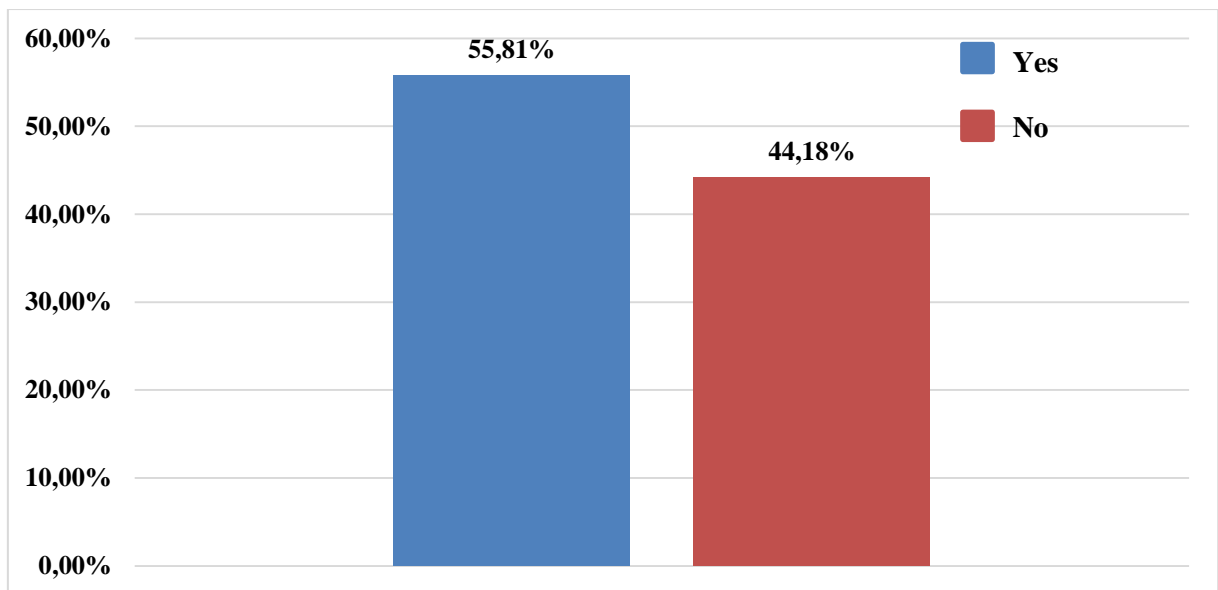


Figure 12

Students' Negative Attitudes towards Error Correction during Speaking

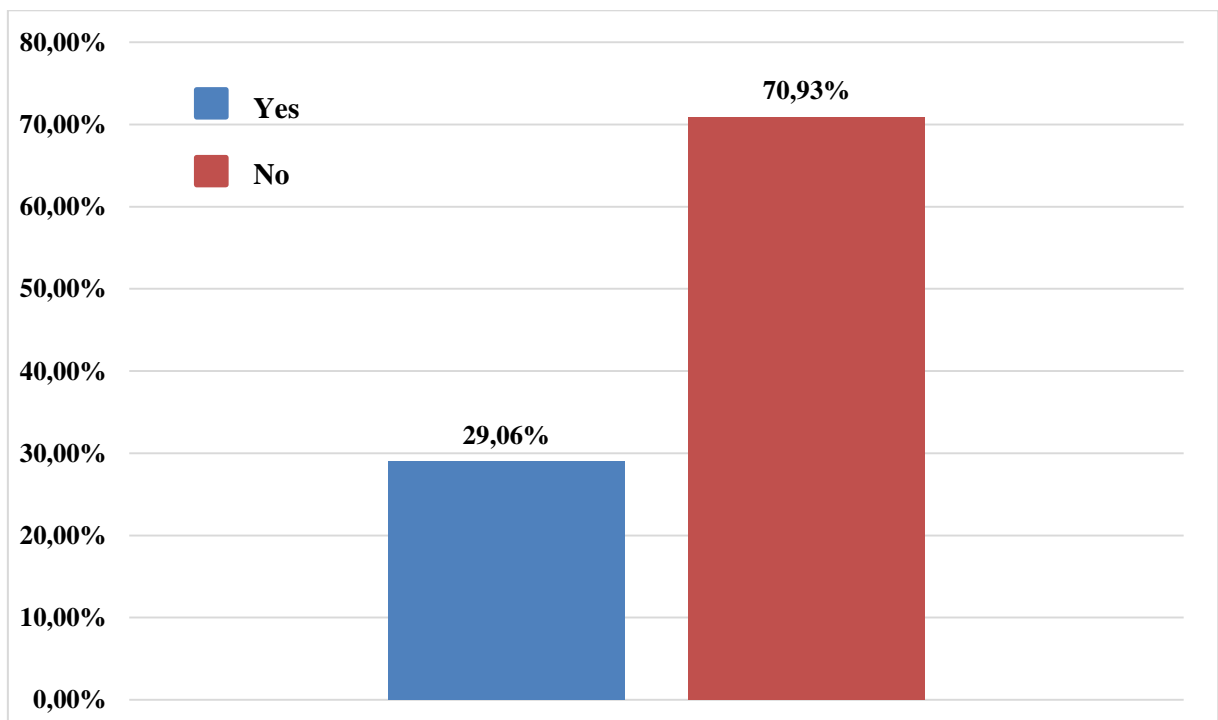


Figure 13

Common Psychological Difficulties

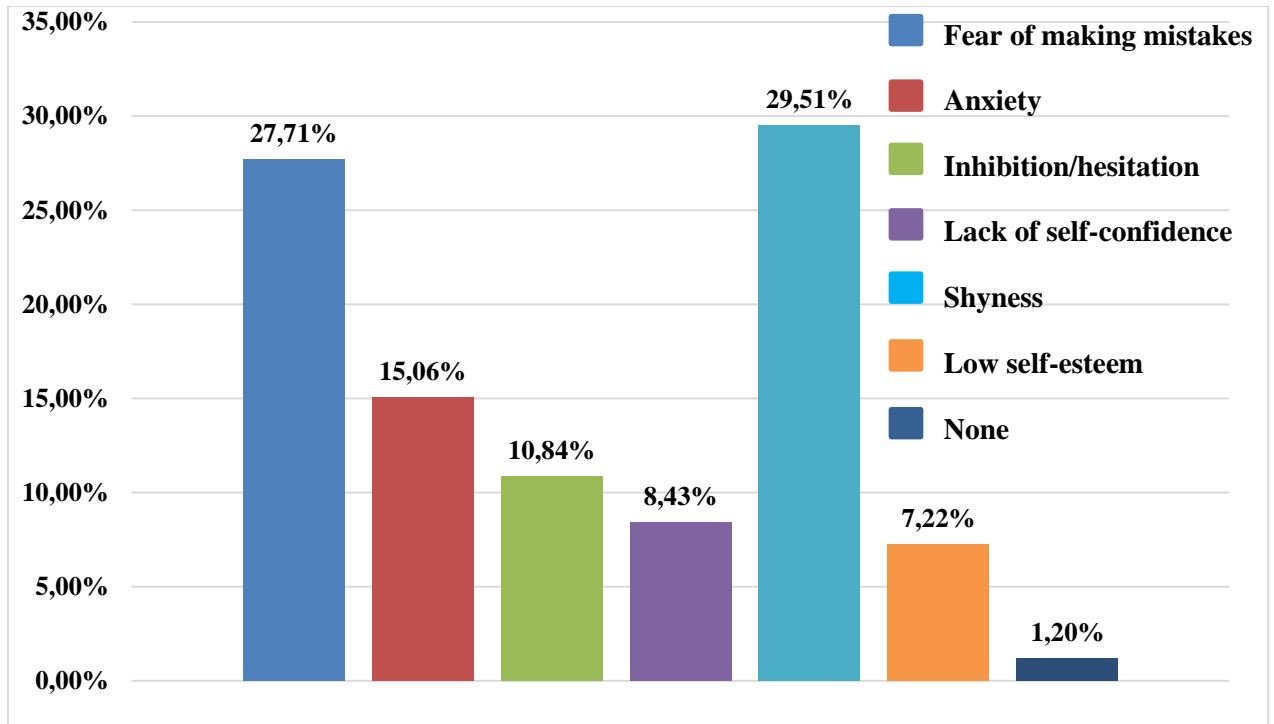
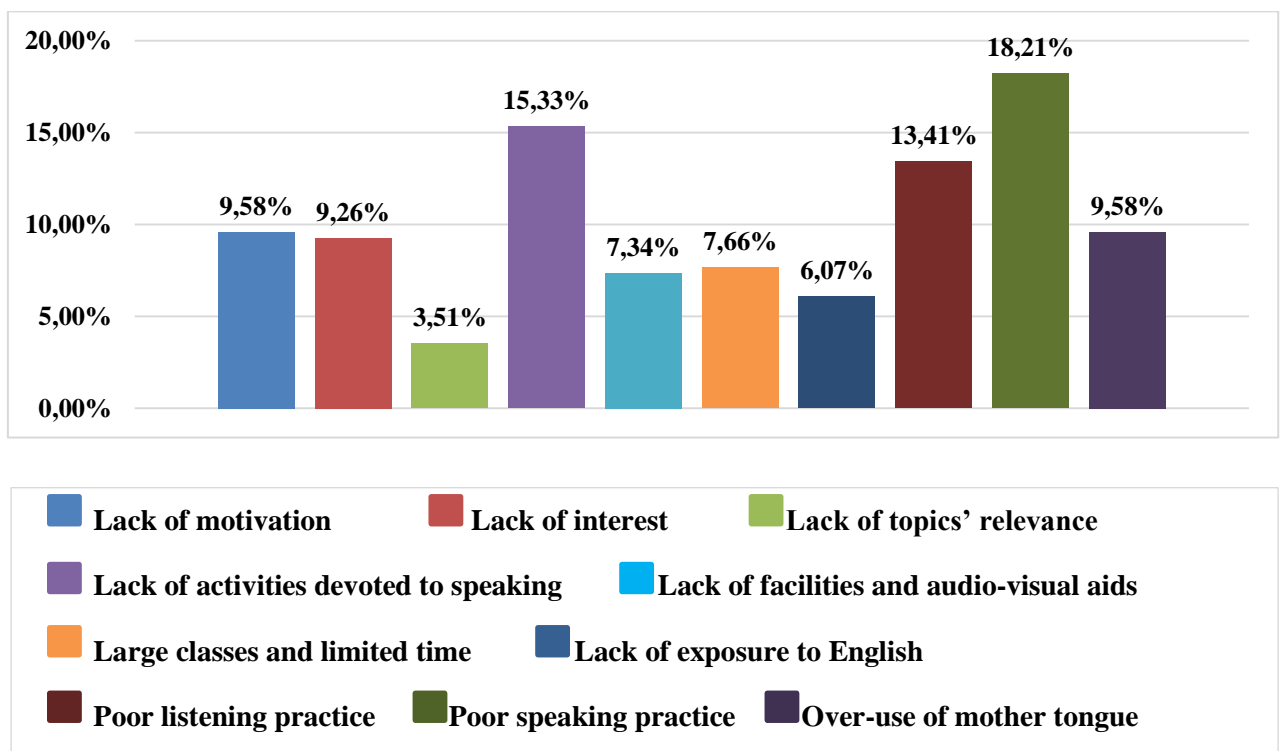


Figure 14

Factors Contributing to Speaking Difficulties



Résumé

Le but de cette étude est d'explorer les difficultés communes rencontrées par les étudiants EFL en parole ainsi que les facteurs à l'origine de ces difficultés. Afin de réaliser ces objectifs et d'évaluer la validité des hypothèses, un travail de terrain a été effectué au département d'Anglais à l'Université de Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi pour l'année scolaire 2021-2022. La méthode quantitative a été adoptée et les données ont été recueillies en soumettant un questionnaire à tous les étudiants de deuxième année d'Anglais (étudiants et étudiantes). Depuis, 86 participants ont été choisis au hasard parmi 215 avec un pourcentage de 40%. L'analyse des données recueillies a révélé les résultats suivants: Les étudiants de deuxième année d'Anglais rencontrent des difficultés linguistiques et psychologiques. Les premiers comprennent la complexité grammaticale, le manque de vocabulaire, les problèmes de prononciation, l'interférence de la langue première et la difficulté d'équilibrer précision et fluidité. Les derniers se réfèrent à la peur de faire des erreurs, timidité, manque de confiance en soi, manque d'estime de soi, anxiété et inhibition. Toutefois, les facteurs qui contribuent aux difficultés susmentionnées sont : manque de motivation et d'intrépidité, manque de pertinence des sujets dans la vie des étudiants, manque d'activités consacrées à la parole, inadéquation des équipements et des aides audiovisuelles, classes surpeuplées et temps limité, manque d'exposition à la langue Anglaise, manque de pratique d'écoute et de pratique orale et usage excessif de la langue maternelle.. Ces résultats confirment les hypothèses. Enfin, quelques recommandations et propositions sont offertes aux étudiants, enseignants, administrateurs, et concepteurs de programmes d'études pour aider à résoudre ces problèmes.

الملخص

يتمثل مسعى هذه الدراسة في استطلاع الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل شائع في مهارة التحدث إلى جانب معرفة العوامل الكامنة وراء هذه الصعوبات. و لتحقيق هذه الأهداف تم الاضطلاع بعمل ميداني في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد البشير الإبراهيمي للعام الدراسي 2021-2022. و قد اعتمد المنهج الكمي في هذا البحث وتم جمع البيانات من خلال تقديم استبيان إلى جميع طلاب السنة الثانية ذكورا و إناثا. تلى ذلك اختيار 86 مشاركا بشكل عشوائي من أصل 215 بنسبة 40 بالمئة. و كشف تحليل المعطيات عن النتائج التالية: يواجه طلاب السنة الثانية إنجليزية صعوبات لغوية و نفسية في مهارة التحدث. فيما يخص الصعوبات اللغوية فإنها تشمل إلتباس القواعد النحوية و نقص الحصيلة اللغوية و مشاكل النطق و تداخل اللغة الأولى مع الثانية إلى جانب صعوبة تحقيق التوازن بين الدقة اللغوية و الطلاقة. أما الصعوبات النفسية فإنها ترجع إلى الخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء و الخجل و نقص الثقة بالنفس و تدني احترام الذات و التوتر و التثبيط أو التردد. غير أن العوامل التي تسهم في الصعوبات المذكورة آنفا هي: الافتقار إلى الحافز و الإهتمام و عدم أهمية المواضيع المطروحة في حياة الطلاب و نقص الأنشطة المكرسة لمهارة التحدث و الافتقار إلى المعدات و الوسائل السمعية البصرية و ازدحام الفصول الدراسية و قلة الوقت و الافتقار إلى التعرض الكافي للغة الإنجليزية و ضعف ممارسة الاستماع و التحدث و الإفراط في استخدام اللغة الأم. تؤكد النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها أن الفرضيات صحيحة. و في الأخير تم تقديم بعض التوصيات و الاقتراحات للطلاب و الأساتذة و الإداريين و مصممي المناهج الدراسية في محاولة للتغلب على هذه المشاكل.

- تمت بحمد الله -

