



Speaking Difficulties Among English Language Learners

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صعوبات التحدث لمتعلمي اللغة الانكليزية

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المستخلص

صعوبات التحدث لمتعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية تتألف اللغة الإنكليزية من أربعة مهارات أساسية هي القراءة والكتابة والأصغاء والمحادثة حيث تعتبر مهارة المحادثة من المهارات الشفهية التي يعتمد عليها الكثير من الناس من أجل التواصل مع الآخرين. الذين يتعلمون اللغة الإنكليزية يعطون المزيد من الأهتمام الى مهارة المحادثة لأنها المهارة الأكثر طلباً من المهارات الأخرى حيث أن المحادثة بصورة صحيحة للمتعلمين بحاجة الى الأختيار الصحيح للكلمات و التراكيب اللغوية. يعتبر الشعور بعدم الأرتياح اثناء المحادثة من قبل بعض المتحدثين واحدة من صعوبات التحدث باللغة الإنكليزية حيث تهدف هذه الدراسة الى كشف الأسباب الرئيسية لصعوبات المحادثة بين المتعلمين وتقديم بعض الأساليب التي تقلل من الخوف من المحادثة داخل الصف تم اختيار طلبة المرحلة الأولى في قسم اللغة الإنكليزية-كلية التربية الأساسية في جامعة ديالى للسنة الدراسية ٢٠٢١-٢٠٢٢ كعينة للبحث في مادة (المحادثة بينت نتائج الدراسة بان طلبة المرحلة الأولى لديهم عدد من الصعوبات في مهارة المحادثة مثل الخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء والتقييم السلبي من الآخرين ومحدودية الاتصال باللغة الإنكليزية بالأضافة الى الخجل. قدمت الدراسة بعض المقترحات والتوصيات طبقاً الى أهداف الدراسة. الكلمات المفتاحية : صعوبات التحدث باللغة الإنكليزية

Abstract

Speaking Difficulties Among English Language Learners English language consists of four main skills; reading ,writing ,listening and speaking. Speaking skill is one of the oral skills that can be used by all people for the purpose of communication. Those who learn English language give an interest to speaking because it is the most desired skill among other language skills. In order to speak properly, learners need correct choice of words and structures One of the main difficulties in speaking is stated as a feeling of anxiety in the process of speaking skill by some learners. The main aim of this study is finding out the main reasons of speaking anxiety among learners of English language and providing certain techniques to decrease their anxiety inside the classroom. The sample of the study is chosen to be students of the first year at Department of English –College of Basic Education –First course in the subject of (Conversation) during the academic year 2021-2022 The results of the study reveals that students face a number of difficulties in speaking skill as fear of making mistakes , negative evaluation from others , limits of English contact and shyness .The study submits certain suggestions and recommendations due to the aims of the study. **Keywords:** Speaking difficulties in English language.

1. Introduction

speaking skill is viewed as an indicator of English language proficiency. Speaking fluently by any learner of English language means the ability of communicating with others. This ability needs certain

requirements. Practice is one of the main techniques to improve speaking skill for learners According to the importance of speaking English language as a skill ,many programs and curriculums are devoted to develop this skill among learners . Students of English Department are considered part of those learners. Teachers work hard in order to teach the subject of (conversation) and improve speaking skill. Students may face many factors affect negatively on learning. Even after completing their graduate degree, some of them find difficulty in speaking a little bit of English. Speaking anxiety is one of these difficulties that face students during their language learning. Thus, it is so important to investigate the reasons behind student's anxiety and suggest suitable techniques in order to increase the degree of fluency and decrease the effect of the negative elements on speaking skill. It is essential to examine the reasons of anxiety and point out learning strategies that moderate anxiety among students. Conversation is one of the subjects of language learning for the first year at the Department of English. The suggested textbook consists of a number of different situations in English language. Teachers try to give a chance to students to discuss the main topics orally . The basic aim is to give students time to practice English language in front of their teachers and other students. The time of this subject is three hours per-week. Evaluating students depend on their ability in speaking about the subject matter inside the classroom. This activity cause high anxiety to some of students. Thus, students show weak performance because they are not skilled in using the target language. The study may be valuable to instructors by presenting useful information about the main challenges that face students in speaking skill and suggest suitable techniques for reducing the impact of these factors in language learning. It may help to design effective teaching strategies that lessen language anxiety and create less stressful learning atmosphere. It is fruitful to Students by explaining the main reasons of anxiety and the main strategies to overcome these difficulties. The study is limited to find out the exact reasons of speaking difficulties for first stage students on the subject of (conversation) at the Department of English-College of Basic Education-Diyala University during the academic year 2021-2022. The current study aims to seek the reasons for student's difficulty and explore how they deal with their fear and anxiety of speaking English in class. Furthermore, this study identifies the strategies toward reducing speaking anxiety among students .

2. Literature Review

One of the popular difficulties of students in speaking English is anxiety which is defined as a state of distress (Horwitz et al., 1986). Anxiety is a psychological state leads to pressure, worry, and distress of doing particular things. This situation is happened when students are unable to manage a task in language learning. For example ,it may happen when students are not ready to have an examination or write an essay about unknown topic. Degree of fear is different due to the degree of difficulty of the task. The effect of fear is great among students because it may prevent understanding of the subject matter. Students face fear of failure to do something wrong in front of their classmates. Teachers work hard in order to diminish the effect of anxiety among students. Teaching techniques play a positive role in language learning in general and speaking English in particular. Speaking as a skill is an activity between two persons or more used for communication (Akkakoson, 2016). Speaking Anxiety is stated as a feeling of fear by students. This feeling rises when students think that they are unable to do something . Speaking in English language is one of the situations of student's anxiety. Sometimes ,students are afraid of speaking in front of their classmates and teachers. According to psychologists, there are different types of anxiety. The first one is state anxiety which is defined as a response to a firm and annoying stimulus such as an important test while the second type is characteristic anxiety which is related to the personality of a person which is known as a situation-specific anxiety as a public speaking (Horwitz, 2001). There is a negative relationship between the level of anxiety and achievement of students . High level of anxiety has a relation with the low achievement while the low degree of anxiety has a relation with high level of achievements. Furthermore, the major reasons in speaking anxiety are mistakes in pronunciation or language structure . Anxiety can make language learners become dispirited, lose confidence in their abilities and escape from participating in class activities. The study investigates the reasons of students difficulty in speaking English language in the subject of (Conversation).

3. Speaking Anxiety

Anxiety in the subject of (conversation) means inability to speak English inside the classroom. This difficulty has many disadvantages on students. It may lead to failure in managing language skills because these skills are related to each other (Brown, 2001). Second language Speaking anxiety is the highest commonly cited fears by learners which may adversely affect their performance and capability to speak in the target language especially in speaking English (Mak, 2011). Teachers have an important

role in language learning in general and speaking in specific. Teachers can present the subject to their students in an effective way by using different and interested techniques. These techniques may motivate students and build their self-confidence in language learning. Thus, teachers must be aware and always inspire students to learn and improve their ability. In addition, English language teachers may create a positive classroom learning atmosphere in order to support students to be more excited to learn. Various strategies need to be discovered by teachers to improve students' speaking performance (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Some of students have passive attitude towards speaking and language learning. They keep silent in the classroom and their participation in class activities is very limited. Most of the time, those students think about the negative evaluation of their teachers or peers. The attitude of the students towards speaking skill may play a great role in their achievement in speaking English. If students possess a negative attitude, it may reduce their interest and chance to complete successful learning activities. This kind of passive attitude is regarded as a common problem among students in addition to shyness and self-doubting. Students stressed easily and think that other students may laugh when they are asked to speak English. In order to overcome the problem of speaking anxiety, teachers may make learning context less demanding for students and use appropriate teaching methods that can help learners to minimize their anxiety feeling in second language classroom.

4. Features of Effective Speaking Skill

There are several factors of speaking skill that every English learner can be aware of as follows:

A. Correct Pronunciation Proper pronunciation is considered one of the basic elements of speaking skill. It leads to understanding and presenting language successfully. With suitable pronunciation, students can communicate with others even if they have a limited number of words as vocabularies

B. Linguistic expressions.

The second factor concerning the basic features of speaking correctly is using the right language structure (Purpura, 2004). Understanding speaking depends on the correct choice of the grammatical structure. It consists of a set of rules used for joining parts of the sentence together. Thus, correct use of language structures play a positive role in developing speaking skill.

C. Knowledge of Vocabularies.

The average number of vocabulary has a relation with speaking. Good knowledge play a progressive role in speaking. Students can speak in different topics if they have an accepted number of vocabularies. Vocabulary has an advantage as pronunciation and language structure (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005).

D. Fluency in Speaking.

(Segalowitz, 2010) describes fluency as the ability of speaking communicatively. One of the methods in evaluating students in speaking English language is giving them a chance to speak freely without interruption. The aim of this technique is helping students in speaking fluently. Student's Practice inside the classroom can help them in developing this skill efficiently.

5. Methodology

For collecting data concerning the aims of the study, a questionnaire is submitted to students. It consisted of the expected difficulties of speaking anxiety that may face students in speaking English inside the classroom in the subject of (conversation). Participants are kindly requested to answer the questions of the questionnaire by encircling the correct answer for each question (Appendix No.1). Before the actual collection of information, a pilot study is conducted in order to test the validity of the questionnaire. The participants of the present study are first year students at Diyala University-College of Basic Education –Department of English -First course during the academic year 2021-2022. The number of students are (100) (male and female) participate in the quantitative data process in addition to an interview due to the aims of the study. It is a standard tool for measuring speaking difficulties among students in speaking English as a foreign language (Horwitz, E.K., Horwitz, M.B. and Cope, J. 1986).

6. Data Analysis and Findings

Statistical means are used to find out the exact difficulties face students in speaking skill as follows: -A. Distress of Making Mistakes (85%) Fear of making mistakes is one of the main difficulties in speaking skill. Students have a feeling of anxiety of making mistakes in front of their teachers and classmates. The reason of this difficulty is related to weakness in practice of this activity. Some students think that other students may laugh because of these mistakes. Repetition may give students self-confidence and encourage them in developing this skill and overcoming this difficulty. Teachers have an important role in reducing this difficulty by selecting suitable and

interesting teaching techniques inside the classroom. B. Limitation of English Exposure (75%) The second difficulty of students in speaking English is the limit of time as three hours per week. Some students think that the existing time for practice is short. They have a weak practice because of the limited time and the number of students in the classroom is high. The chance of participating in class activities is very limited. Thus, they have a difficulty in this skill.

C. Negative Evaluation (70%) Some students are afraid of negative evaluation from their teachers. Students are unconfident of their speaking skill in front of teachers and students. There is a number of students who think that they feel anxious when they have to speak without preparation and feel very conscious about speaking in English

D. General Feeling of Anxiety (60%)

There are other reasons of anxiety among students as hesitation or upset inside the classroom. They look uncomfortable as they are speaking English in the attendance of other people. Some students feel that they are unmotivated to speak English

E- Feeling of Shyness (40%) Shyness is considered a difficulty to some students. It has a relation with students personality. It is a psychological problem and needs certain techniques to lessen its effect on students performance. Students need to participate in order to create a kind of self-confidence and motivate them for speaking.

7. Techniques For Reducing Speaking Difficulties

Concerning language learning and teaching, a number of teaching techniques are presented by different approaches and methods to overcome any difficulty in this field. These techniques are offered intentionally to help students in all stages of language learning. Some of the suggested techniques for reducing speaking anxiety can be summarized as follows: A. Using Technology Teachers can get a benefit of technology of media to facilitate language learning. A lot of applications can play a positive role in language learning. It can participate in solving difficulties of speaking anxiety by using them correctly. You Tube is one these applications. It can motivate students and help weak students in language learning. It gives a good chance for improving their speaking skill.

B. Learning Support

Teachers may use some of the behavioral principles concerning language learning. using competition, encouragement, and language games may change the negative situation of weak students into positive (Aicha, 2016). Learners are receivers of knowledge. Gradually, teachers can play different roles as facilitators or motivators and help students to overcome this difficulty.

C. Learning Condition

The atmosphere of the classroom affects on language learning. Teachers and their correct management can help students in developing language skills and enjoy learning. Noisy classrooms which is encircled with many disturbances have a negative impact of learning (Siddig & Alkhoudary, 2018).

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Conclusion Anxiety is one of the difficulties face students in speaking skill. Students are stressful and unconfident because of fear of making mistakes in front of their teacher and peers. The reasons of fear is related to different reasons. Students feel that others may make fun of them in case of making any mistake inside the classroom. Teachers play an important role in reducing this feeling by adopting effective teaching techniques and overcome this difficulty. The study may suggest certain techniques for solving this problem and help student to be active and have self-confidence. These techniques motivate students in order to get rid of feeling of anxiety. Table (1) states The results concerning reasons of difficulties in speaking among students.

Table (1) Reasons of Difficulty In Speaking English Among Students

No.	Sources of Difficulty	Total	Percentage
1.	Anxiety of Making Mistakes	100	85%
2.	Limitation of English Exposure	100	75%
3.	Distress of Negative Evaluation	100	70%
4.	General Feeling of Anxiety	100	60%
5.	Fear of Being in Public and Shyness	100	40%

8.2 Recommendations

Future research may investigate other difficulties of learning English as a foreign language. The role of teachers in language learning may be investigated from different aspects of learning. Further studies may investigate difficulties of other aspects of language as difficulties in reading or writing in certain stages of language learning.

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Appendix No.1(A Questionnaire Submitted To Students)

answer for the following questions:-

1. How long have you been learning English?

(a-Since kindergarten b-since primary stage c- since elementary school grade)

2- How do you feel about your experience of learning English?

(a-Positive b-fun c-useful d- boring e-difficult f- troublesome g-interesting h-confusing i-stressful)

3. what may disturb you the most about learning and speaking English?

(a-Lack of vocabulary b-nervous when required to speak c- grammar d- group task and one person answering e-giving presentation in the class f-speaking in front of many people g-difficulty in producing correct pronunciation h-applying Grammar rules i- looking up words j-learning environment k -thinking about words to say)

4. Do you think learning and speaking English as a foreign language is very difficult?

a-Quite difficult b- not difficult c- not too difficult d-a little bit difficult e- difficult)

5.What kind of difficulties or problems do you feel in the process of speaking?

(a-English Vocabulary b-grammar c-pronunciation d-translation)

6 .What kinds of situations cause stress or anxiety for you?

a-When speaking or giving presentation in English in class or in front of many people. b-when asked to do interviews with English teachers . c-when observed by many people. d- in front of females . e-test or evaluation f-assignments piling up. g- having been explained by the teacher but still do not understand.

7. What happens to you when you are in a stressful situation ?

a-Get nervous b-want to finish quickly c-forget d- mind goes blank e-stammer f-produce cold sweat g-heart racing h- think positively i-try to enjoy j- try to calm down k-take a deep breath l-focus on what (we) will deliver m- just think that nobody is watching n- look at the back of the room

8. What do you think are the reasons of this nervousness or anxiety?

(a-Lack of knowledge in or mastery of English b-afraid of making mistakes c- being in front of many people d-lack of self-esteem psychology e-personality traits f-not used to (habit)

9. In which kind of situations do you not feel anxiety or feel less anxiety while speaking English?

(a-discussion with peers b-playful situations c- when well-prepared d-outdoor learning e- relaxed conversation f-relaxed partner g-calm situation h-being with close friends who will not laugh when I make mistakes i-with favorite teachers

10. Are you afraid of making errors while speaking English?

(a-yes (afraid) b-very afraid c- not afraid)

11.How do you think people will react if you make mistakes?

(a-Laughing b-giving the correct pronunciation or correcting c-commenting d- booing e-mocking f-whispering to others)

12 .How do you think your language teacher plays a role in reducing the feeling of anxiety in the classroom?

(a-If the teacher makes jokes (has good sense of humor) b-provides games c- fun kind-hearted d-not pressuring e- controls in-class situation Friendly f-relaxed and patient g-does not (always) give (heavy) punishment i-forgiving,

13.What would you like to suggest in order to reduce language anxiety ?

a-Learn vocabulary and pronunciation more b-train for mental toughness (for public speaking) c-keep learning d- never be afraid of making mistakes e -use smartphones to learn English, f-be relaxed and no need to rush g-be well-prepared in advance h-don't force yourself to study i- learn anywhere j-provide time for games, k- be brave in trying l- look for something new to learn m-never be afraid of getting mocked or laughed at n-never give up o-believe that everyone can do it p-play games q-listen to music or-use computers/laptops r -watch movies without subtitles s- have support from others (peers, parents and teachers)