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**An Exploration into the Linguistic Difficulties and its Effects on  
EFL Learners' Speaking Production.**

The Case of Second Year LMD Students of English at Biskra University.

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the requirements for  
Master Degree in Science of Language

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## **ABSTRACT**

Foreign language learners generally face difficulties to use the foreign language to express their thoughts effectively; therefore, they completely avoid talking in order not to be embarrassed. This research attempts to explore the sources of EFL students' difficulties in oral expression courses at the English Department, University of Biskra. Throughout this study, we hypothesize that students do not participate in oral courses due to linguistic problems. For example, the lack of vocabulary, mispronunciation and grammatical mistakes; moreover, there are other pedagogical problems such as shortage of time, overcrowded classes, lack of interest in the subject or poor listening practice. The research work analyses the case of second year students at the Department of English, University of Biskra; and teachers of the oral expression courses. The research method adopted in this study is a descriptive one. It involves two variables: affective factors as the presumed independent variable and foreign language speaking as the presumed dependent variable, and to identify their relationship. The data obtained from research tools indicate that there are some factors that affect the students' participation in oral expression courses. Lastly, we propose some effective techniques and activities that EFL students need to use in order to overcome these obstacles.

## DEDICATION

*In the Name of ALLAH, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, All the Praise is due to ALLAH alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds.*

*I dedicate this modest work to my dearest and wonderful parents, who bring me to this life, who have raised me to be the person I am today. You have been with me every step of the way, through good and bad. Thank you for all the unconditional love, guidance, and support that you have always given me, I love you!*

*To my lovely sisters, Fatima and Hadda.*

*To my dearest brothers, Adel, Brahim and Rida.*

*To my dearest nephews, Aboudi and Djabour.*

*To my lovely niece, Shahed.*

*To my closet friends, Biba, Zina, Nounou, and Douja.*

*To all my friends with whom I shared the university life with its lights and shadows.*

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*Special gratitude is due to all those extraordinary People who have stood by me in very hard moments.*

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language.

**TL:** Target language

**FL:** Foreign Language

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**General**

**Introduction**

## **Introduction**

One main concern of language learning is the communication process which is performed through speech. Speaking is a crucial part in the EFL classroom context which needs much practice to master this skill. In traditional teaching English, teachers often give more interest to the structural aspects of the language, and neglect the speaking skill. Teaching speaking in a non-English speaking country like Algeria represents a real challenge to EFL teachers since English is typologically different from the Arabic language; therefore, they encounter many problems in making students respond orally in the target language.

At the university, oral expression courses are mainly scheduled to improve the students' oral performance because they can serve as a suitable space for practicing pronunciation, and language articulation with all its phonetic and phonological aspects. During oral expression sessions, teachers use different activities and strategies to empower learners' speech, brush up their English and enhance their pronunciation. However, they still face some students' hindrances. Many students do not participate in oral expression sessions and do not show any proof of progress; which indicates that there are some problems in the acquisition of the speaking skill.

The present study sheds some light on what hinders the students from participating in oral sessions. Taking the second year EFL students in the English Department at Biskra University as a sample case, the focus will eventually be on the linguistic factors in order to identify the difficulties that learners face and to help them overcome these weaknesses and improve their speaking skill.

## **Statement of the problem**

One main objective that EFL teachers would like to achieve is making their students more fluent and participates easily during the classroom activities without any constraints. However, they may face some challenges on reaching these goals. Learners usually face obstacles in speaking English in the classroom which is considered to be an

important opportunity for them to practice the target language. Furthermore, those obstacles are directly related to particular reasons like the linguistic, cognitive aspects, and so on. Therefore, we notice that it is worth examining the factors behind learners' weaknesses in the speaking skill and try to find solutions for developing their speaking performance.

### **Significance of the study**

In our research, we intend to spotlight some difficulties that EFL learners face in oral expression sessions. The work represents a good opportunity to determine the constraints that affect the learners' oral skill and try to suggest possible remedies that teachers may adopt to treat these problems radically. In our dissertation, the concern is to try to end this issue eventually, to help foreign language learners basically overcome these problems.

### **Aims of the study**

Our aims in conducting this dissertation are:

1. To analyse the importance of the speaking skill in foreign language learning.
2. To examine the difficulties that prevent students' participation in EFL classes.
3. To suggest some recommendations and a wide range of classroom oral activities that may encourage those students to be active participants during the oral sessions.

### **Research Questions**

Today, teachers' focus is shifted from the writing skill to the speaking skill in foreign language classes, because success is shown through the speaking proficiency. The oral expression course is the most effective session for improving oral performance where the students have opportunities to practice the target language. However, sometimes students feel constrained and show tremendous weaknesses that hinder their oral participation.

In this work, we will explore some factors which affect EFL learners' participation in oral expression. Hence, through this study we try to answer the following questions:

1. What are the difficulties that prevent students' participation in the oral expression course?
2. What is the teacher's role to restrain such problems?

### **Hypotheses**

In the present dissertation, we suggest that students face many obstacles which discourage their participation in the oral expression course due to the following hypotheses:

1. Students are unfamiliar with certain topics and do not have a wide variety of vocabulary.
2. Students are afraid of making grammatical mistakes and mis-pronunciations.
3. Students resort to use their native language instead of the foreign language because of their poor vocabulary in FL.
4. The allotment of time doesn't offer opportunities to students to express themselves in very crowded classes.

### **Research Methodology**

In order to confirm or invalidate our hypotheses and to conduct the investigation required for our dissertation and to reach the objectives of our research, we have decided to rely on the descriptive method. We believe that the D.M will enable us to identify the different problems that hinder learners' participation , to determine some effective strategies that may overcome this issue and increase their participation, and to investigate the issue and to answer the questions above. Subsequently, we will administer a questionnaire to a sample of learners selected randomly that is composed of sixty second year LMD students of English at Biskra University . An interview will also

be conducted with five teachers of oral expression who will provide opportunities to clarify questions of our research and obtain more information due to their interaction with English students and their observation of learners' speaking performance .

### **Limitation of the Study**

The present dissertation is limited in time and population. The investigation deals with the linguistic difficulties that face second year LMD English students at Biskra University in oral expression during the academic year 2015-2016.

## **Review of Literature**

Speaking is a crucial part of foreign language learning/teaching process and studies in foreign language learning have confirmed the necessity of students' oral participation in the classroom. However, getting students involved orally in the TL (Target language) is certainly, the most considerable challenge that EFL teachers encounter.

According to the Oxford Dictionary of current English (2009), speaking means the action of conveying information or expressing one's thoughts and feelings in spoken language. Actually, speaking is the most widely used form of communication, either in everyday life or in classroom settings, and as maintained by Chaney et al. (1998: 13), it is "The process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts." Speaking is the basic tool for communicating, thinking, and learning in general, and learning a language in particular. It is through speaking, students learn concepts, vocabulary, and structures of the English language. Furthermore, speech is a vehicle to link individuals in society, and a medium of communication between human beings.

It is of dynamic importance that foreign language learners develop their oral skills in a confident and flexible way, since speaking is generally accomplished through interaction with other speakers. Thus, speaking is the productive aural/oral skill, consists primarily of constructing meaningful verbal utterances (Florez, 1999). Similarly, Luoma (2004) shows the significance of speaking skills that constitute the main qualification in the teaching/learning process; and therefore, EFL learners should adapt themselves to develop their oral language proficiency.

Speaking, as an active or productive skill, deserves more interest in both first and foreign language teaching because it reflects people's thoughts and personalities. In fact, we judge people according to their proficiency in speaking. In addition, speaking is a skill whereby others are recognized from what they say and how they think, so it demands a

particular attention, more than for the other language skills. For many people, the ability to speak English, for instance, is very important. It has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills. For this reason we usually ask the question “Do you speak English?” to foreign language learners rather than “Do you write in English”. The question shows the importance of the speaking skill because its mastery implies competence in the other skills (Ur, 2000).

The English language plays a crucial role nowadays, since it is considered as a global language. For this reason it is taught as a second language or foreign language in virtually all countries. The aim is mostly to acquire the speaking skill which is viewed as one of the difficult skills to develop for the majority of EFL students who are incompetent in expressing themselves orally in English. As Luoma (2004:01) argues: “Speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and competence on speaking takes a long time to develop”. Consequently, during the speaking classes, EFL learners stumble upon many problems that hinder their learning process. Among these difficulties, we can mention the pronunciation level, lack of vocabulary, weaknesses in grammar and the use of the mother tongue.

According to Thornbury (2005:11) “being skilful assumes having some kind of knowledge base [...] Knowledge that is relevant to speaking can be categorized either as knowledge of features of language (linguistic knowledge) or knowledge that is independent of language (extra linguistic knowledge)”. He emphasizes the linguistic knowledge which plays an essential role in the speaking skill. If any part of this knowledge is lacking, students will face difficulties within their speaking improvement. These problems are due to lack of vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar mistakes. Thornbury (2005) also assumes that speaking represents a real challenge to most EFL learners, and as such needs to be developed and practised.

In sum, EFL learners need to improve their ability to produce grammatically correct, logically connected sentences and comprehensible pronunciation that are appropriate to particular contexts.

## Section One

### General Overview of Speaking Skill

#### Introduction

The fundamental concern of the language is the communication process that is commonly performed through speech. Therefore, the most suitable session for the students to practice their speaking skills is the Oral Expression course. Speaking is generally perceived as the major language proficiency that most of EFL learners aim to develop more than any other skill. Teachers provide different tasks and activities in order to involve their learners in classroom interaction as well as to grant them the opportunities to speak. Unfortunately, when EFL learners speak in English, they usually encounter different linguistic problems that obviously hamper their speech.

Accordingly, this section presents a general background of the speaking skills: definition of speaking, its importance, nature, functions, characteristics, the purpose behind speaking, its relationship with other skills and teaching speaking.

#### 1. Definition of Speaking

English language proficiency depends on mastering both productive and receptive skills. The speaking skill has an important status in academic settings, as stated by Nunan (1991, p.39): “To most people, mastering the art of speaking is the single most important factor of learning a second or foreign language and success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the language.”

Although the speaking concept is quite common to everybody; it is not easy to give the exact definition of speaking. As an attempt to explain this notion, a number of researchers define it as:

- Bygate (1987: 1) views that: “Speaking skill is the ability in using oral language to explore ideas, intentions, thoughts and feelings to other people as a way to make the message clearly delivered and well understood by the hearer.” That is to say speaking is an active mechanism of constructing meaning, it comprises producing, receiving, and processing systematic verbal utterances. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, the participants, their shared experiences, the physical environment and the purposes for speaking.
- Hedge (2000: 261) argued that speaking is “Skill by which they are judged while first impressions are being formed”. Thus, speaking is a vital skill that demands more attention like other language skills since it reflects people’s ideas and attitudes.

- Chaney and Burk (1998: 13) points out: “speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts.” This indicates that speaking is the most widely used form of communication in different contexts either in real life or in classroom situations. Furthermore, Speaking is the basic medium for thinking, communicating and learning. It is the process through which students learn concepts, vocabulary, and structures of the English language. Moreover, speaking is a vehicle which link individuals with each others in order to fulfil their interaction needs.

It is noticeable that the notion of speaking has no exact definition and each researcher interprets it according to his/her own perspective, purpose and interest. In addition, researches are still limitless to formulate a precised definition of speaking.

## **2. The Importance of Speaking**

Nowadays, English has become an interactional language and widely used in various fields such as : science, technology, education, medicine, advanced studies, banking, engineering, business etc.... Therefore, the importance of spoken English takes a great standing among the other languages and it is being taught and learned as a second language all over the world.

The ability to speak English is very important since it has often been considered as the most demanding skill for mastering the other four skills, as stated by Ur (2000: 12) “of all the four skills, speaking seems institutively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as ‘speaker’ of the language, as if speaking included all other kind of knowing”.

Many EFL learners put more focus and give priority to the speaking skill because they believe that mastery of this skill implies proficiency in all the others. Moreover, we usually ask foreign language learners the question “Do you speak English?” rather than “Do you write in English?” This shows that knowing a language depends on the ability to speak that language. Celce-Murcia (2001: 103) argues that for most people “the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language since speech is the most basic means of human communication.”

Speaking ability must be skilled in the four language skills. Thus, students can improve their writing, vocabulary and grammar through speaking. Furthermore, a good speaker requires a good listener in order to develop his/her oral-aural skill. In fact, speaking is an important process of sending and receiving messages either inside or

outside the classroom. Producing meaningful structured sentences enables students to express their ideas and provides them with many advantages such as:

- Comprehensible students' speech can attract teachers' attention and make the idea easily understood because clear speaking entails clarity in thinking.
- Students who frequently practice speaking with their classmates, they develop self-confidence.
- Speaking skills help EFL students to succeed in their career and to improve their personal life.
- Through speaking, students communicate their thoughts with others.
- Being orally skillful provide learners with more opportunities of getting good jobs in international companies in the future. As supported by Baker and Westrup (2003: 5) "a student who can speak English well may have greater chance for further education, of finding employment and gaining promotion."
- Speaking skills reflect learners' personality and activate their intelligence.
- Speech is a basic tool for displaying several language functions as requesting, explaining, informing, telling stories etc.

Thus, the main objective of teaching speaking is to improve the learners' communicative competence by helping them to reach the "four purposes for learning" according to Bailey (2002: 117):

"1. ACCES: To gain access to information and resources" so that they "can orient themselves in the world."

"2.VOICE: To express ideas and opinions with the confidence they will be heard and taken into account."

"3. ACTION: To solve problems and make decisions without having to rely on others to mediate the world for them."

"4. BRIDGE TO THE FURURE: Learning to learn" so that they can be prepared to keep up with the world as it changes."

(Capitalization is originally found in the text.)

### **3. Characteristics of Speaking Performance**

Recently, planning activities for EFL learners have been relying on fluency and accuracy based tasks. Since the communicative approach is concerned with both of them, learners should improve their communicative competence through classroom

activities and should also know the correct manipulation of the language system. As Brown (2001: 2) states: “It is now very clear that fluency and accuracy are both important goals to pursue in CLT”.

### **3.1. Fluency**

Fluency is the main feature of speaking performance and it is the primary objective of teaching speaking skills. Hughes (2002: 113) defines fluency as “the learner's ability to speak in reasonable, intelligible and accurate way without too much hesitation in order not to break down the communication because listeners will lose interest”. In order to accomplish this objective, EFL learners should be trained to use the language in a flexible manner. Furthermore, Hedge (2000: 54) argues that: “The term fluency relates to the production and it is normally reserved for speech. It is the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation”.

Accordingly, we deduce that both Hughes and Hedge Tricia strongly support the idea that fluency refers to the ability to speak coherently and quickly through the effective linking of speech units, clear pronunciation of sounds, and appropriate use of stress and intonation in order to avoid communication's break downs.

Most EFL learners seek to be fluent speaker and think that their level of fluency totally depends on the speaking rate, that is why they always attempt to speak fast without pauses. According to Thornbury (2005), speed and pausing are important factors in fluency since all speakers need to pause or take breath from time to time even among native speakers in order to let the interlocutors catch up what they said. On the other hand, repeated pauses are considered as indicators of speaking weakness. Therefore, Thornbury suggests what he calls "production strategies" which the speakers use in such cases as tricks to repair and fill the pauses. The mostly used pause fillers are “uh, um, er, erm”, "vagueness expression" such as “I mean, sort of”, also repetition of one word is another tool for filling pauses.

### **3.2. Accuracy**

Most EFL teachers focus more on accuracy in their teaching process because students often want to be more fluent in foreign language than accurate. Students should not neglect the correctness of language form while speaking i.e. they should pay attention mainly to grammatical structure, vocabulary and pronunciation. As a matter of fact, performing inaccurate speech will cause misunderstanding and losing interest of the

interlocutors. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005: 139) define accuracy as referring “to how well the target language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language.” Consequently, completeness and correctness of language forms are required for speaking proficiency.

### **3.2.1. Grammar**

Grammatical accuracy is the learner's ability of using appropriate grammatical structure which involves the length, the complexity of the utterances, and well structured subordinating clauses (Hughes, 2002).

Thornbury (2005) lists the following characteristics of spoken grammar:

- Clause is the basic unit of construction.
- Clauses are usually added (co-ordination).
- Head+ body+ tail construction.
- Direct speech favored.
- A lot of ellipsis.
- Many question tags.
- Performance effects (hesitation, repeats, false starts, incompleteness, syntactic blends).

### **3.2.2. Vocabulary**

Accuracy in the level of vocabulary requires appropriate selection of words and expressions which must be used in the right context when someone speaks. Often, students cannot express themselves because they do not have the appropriate vocabulary, or they use synonyms which do not have the same meaning and vary from one context to another. Therefore, to perform well formed utterances, speakers should know all word classes (Harmer, 2001).

### **3.2.3. Pronunciation**

Thornbury (op cit: 24) argues that "the lowest level of knowledge speaker draw on is the pronunciation". Thus, accurate speaking depends on the awareness of the phonological rules of the language i.e. sounds ‘articulations, stress, intonation, pitch...etc. Moreover, knowing these components help EFL learners to speak effectively and to achieve better understanding during speaking. However, accuracy is not achieved unless speakers produce correct and understandable pronunciation as stated by Redmond and Vrchota (2007: 104) : “It is imperative that you use the correct word in the correct

instance and with the correct pronunciation .Pronunciation means to say words in ways that are generally accepted or understood.”

#### **4. The speaking sub-skills**

The speaking skill has its own sub-skills as the other language skills. Brown (1994: 272) suggested a taxonomy of sub-skills which is listed according to the form and the function of language. The former involves smaller units of language such as phonemes, morphemes, words, collocation, and phrasal units. The latter refers to the larger elements including discourse, function, fluency, style, nonverbal communication, style :

##### **Micro skills**

- Produce chunks of language of different length.
- Orally produce difference among English phonemes and allophonic variants.
- Produce English stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure and intonation contours.
- Produce reduced forms of words and phrases.
- Use an adequate number of lexical units (words) to accomplish pragmatic purpose.
- Produce fluent speech at different rates of delivery.
- Monitor one’s own oral production and use various strategic devices pauses, fillers, self-corrections, backtracking to enhance the clarity of the message.
- Use grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc), systems (e.g. tense agreement, pluralisation), word order, pattern, rules and elliptical forms.
- Produce speech in natural constituents, in appropriate phrases, pause groups, breath groups and sentences.
- Express a particular meaning in different grammatical form.
- Use cohesive devices in spoken discourse.

##### **Macro skills**

- Accomplish appropriately communicative functions according to situations, participants and goals.
- Use appropriate register, implicature, pragmatic conventions and other sociolinguistic features in face to face conversations.
- Convey links and connections between events and communicate such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization and exemplification.
- Use facial features, kinesics, body language and other nonverbal cues along with verbal

language to convey meanings.

- Develop and use a battery of speaking strategies, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, providing a context for interpreting the meaning of words, appealing for help, and accurately assessing how well your interlocutor is understanding you .

Furthermore, many researchers regard speaking as a real challenge to most EFL learners, and require to be practised and developed. In the same line of thought, Thornbury (2005: 4) states that: “Speaking is interactive and requires the ability to cooperate in the management of speaking turns. It also typically takes place in real time for detailed planning. In these circumstances, spoken fluency requires the capacity to marshal a store of memorized lexical chunks.”

Consequently, if teachers do not provide their students with enough opportunities to speak in the classroom they may de-motivate and make them lose their attention. However, if learners are involved in appropriate activities, they will be more motivated and the English language classroom will be a vibrant and in an active situation.

## **Section Two**

### **Techniques and Strategies Enhancing EFL Students' Participation**

#### **Introduction**

Many authors have pointed that students must require practical solutions in order to respond to speaking problems. Thus, the ideal way to overcome these difficulties of communication is through communicative strategies. In this section, we shed lights on oral communication strategies, achievement strategies, reduction strategies and, lastly ; we will explain the role of teachers in improving students 'speaking capacities.

#### **1. Oral Communicative Strategies**

The ultimate objective of second language learning is to master the speaking skills, i.e. to be able to interact appropriately and effectively in the target language. However, learners may find themselves constrained and lack the suitable words when they wish to communicate something during a conversation. Hence, the appropriate way that can EFL teachers adopt to help them overcome these unexpected problems is promoting their strategic competence or communicative strategies. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005: 170) define communicative strategies as “Speakers-oriented; that is they are used by learners to compensate for lack of L2 knowledge or their inability to access the L2 knowledge they have.” Such strategies help learners to behave successfully where there are problems of expression and communication to avoid conversations' breakdowns. Several researches have been conducted in this field, namely Bygate (1987) describes two main types of communicative strategies: achievement strategies and reduction strategies, both of them include several sub-categories which are stated as follows:

##### **1.1. Achievement Strategies:**

To transmit a message without changing or losing it, EFL learners often tend to use such strategies to compensate for language gap through using words or phrase as a substitute for the missing structure. Achievement strategies comprise the following sub strategies:

###### **1.1.1. Guessing Strategies**

It is also called the “conscious transfer” strategies (K. Johnson & H. Johnson, 1999: 67). They are commonly used strategies where the speaker may replace words that he does not know with others hoping that the listener will be able to understand them. There are different types of guessing strategies as follows:

➤ **Freignizing**

The learner can “foreignize” (Mariani, 1994) his mother tongue word and pronounce it as if it belongs to the target language. For instance a Frenchman who speaks English may foreignizes French word like ‘maneuver’ as it is an English word to transmit his speech to an English interlocutor.

➤ **Borrowing**

The speaker might also borrows words from his mother tongue using different ways of mother-tongue transfer such as “Language switch” without any modification hoping that the listener will understand them. For example, Bialystok maintains that an English speaker says “il ya deux candles sure le chemenee” (cited in Bygate, 1987: 44).

➤ **Literal Translation**

The speaker might use this kind of guessing strategies by translating words from his mother tongue and saying them in order to cope with speaking difficulties. For example: a Portuguese speaker may translate “festa” from his mother tongue and says “feast” instead of “party” or “holiday”.

➤ **Coining**

A last guessing strategy that can be used by the speaker is coining new words. He may create a word in the second language even if it does not exist in the target language. This coined word is based on his background knowledge about the second language and the speaker says it to enable the listener to recognize his message. For example, Torone suggests “airball instead of ballon” (cited in Bygate, 1987: 42).

### **1.1.2. Paraphrasing Strategies**

In these strategies, the learner looks for an alternative way to express his intended ideas when he lacks “resources” in the target language (Bygate, 2003: 44). These mainly involve :

➤ **Substitution Strategy**

Here the speaker might replace the missing word with a lexical substitution such as its synonym or antonym or a broader word “hyperonyme” as an alternative one to the correct expression.

➤ **Circomlucution**

If the speaker applies the substitution strategy and uses a general word this word sometimes may be ambiguous for the listener who cannot discover the intended concept. This forces the speaker to use this strategy by combining some sort of description, explanation or definition instead of looking for just one target language word to convey his intended meaning and make it clearer for the listener. For example, a mixing of beige and brown: light brown.

### **1.1.3. Co-operative Strategies**

They are also described as an “appeal for assistance” (M. Johnson & H. Johnson, 1999: 68) which are used when the speaker asks for help the other interlocutors to provide him with the target grammatical structure through the indication of the items in the mother tongue .

### **1.2. Reduction Strategies**

If the speakers fail to compensate by using achievement strategies, they can succeed in reduction strategies in solving their speaking problems. In these strategies, learners shorten their communicative sequence or abandon what they want to say; and substitute their messages by other ones where they can speak without difficulty in order to regulate the intended message according to their knowledge. In using this kind of strategies, the learners might sacrifice or lose a part of their communicative objectives in which he will try Avoidance Strategies (Faerch & Kasper, 2004: 52); the learner can use one of the two possible strategies. These include topic avoidance through avoiding various problems related with his lack of vocabulary, or message abandonment because of the difficult grammatical structures which he does not master (M. Johnson & H. Johnson, 1999: 67). Hence, he may avoid a part of the message because of the lack of vocabulary which leads him to change the subject and talk about something else or simply keep silent. In this strategy also, the speaker may reduce his message brightly without avoiding saying it. For example; a woman may say that she ate a pleasant meal instead of attempting to say that she liked the meal and failed to mention its name.

As pointed out by Hedge (2000), teachers should be aware how to promote those strategies and mainly achievement strategies in the learners through careful selection of effective activities that may contribute in developing their oral productions. Moreover, they should show positive attitudes towards the use of communicative strategies in order to encourage learners to succeed in dealing with communication troubles.

## **2. Teachers' roles**

EFL learners aim to master the English language; however, they often face various obstacles that hamper their language progress because many of them do not initiate and engage in classroom activities. These are left to the decision and choice of the teacher. Consequently, the teacher has a very crucial role and responsibility in creating motivating and interesting conditions within the classroom. Often he resorts to self-adopt by changing his role in order to facilitate the learning process and help learners to overcome these obstacles.

Hedge (2000: 26) suggests some important roles the teachers can play:

As controller in eliciting nationality words; as assessor of accuracy as students try to pronounce the words; as corrector of pronunciation; as organizer in giving instructions of the pair work, initiating it, monitoring it, and organizing feedback; as promoter while students are working together and as resource if students need help with words and structures during the pairwork.

According to Harmer (2001), teachers' roles are changed fluently according to the nature of classroom lesson's stages and activities. Harmer thinks that the roles of controller and facilitator are the main roles. Moreover, he has classified certain distinct roles which are identified as follows:

### **2.1. Controller**

Classroom interaction should be teacher-learner interaction. The teacher is the main responsible in the teaching and learning processes to encourage learners to practice classroom activities easily and provide them with enough opportunities to be involved so that they will not lose the desire to learn. Harmer (2001) points out that the controller teacher is the one who transmits the knowledge from himself to his learners. Moreover, controller teachers do different activities in just few stages of the lesson. They take the role, tell students things, organize drills, and read aloud. According to Harmer (op cit: 58) "When teachers act as controller they are in charge of the class and of the activity taking place in a way that is substantially different from a situation where student are working on their own in groups".

## 2.2. Organizer

The role of the teacher as organizer is the most important and difficult role that can be performed by the teacher. In fact, organizing learners to do different activities leads to success of learners' performance and achievement.

Harmer (op cit: 58) states that “one of the most important roles that teachers have to perform is that organizing students to do various activities”. Organizer is the role by which teachers are set up to organize pair/ group work, give instruction for the students to interact perfectly, and stop the lesson when time is over. In addition, in this role they need to spend much time to engage all students and ensure their participation. Once the teacher involves the students in the interaction, he can stop speaking and give them the floor to interact with each other.

In the process of organizing an activity the teacher has to clearly inform the learners about the subject of the activity, giving them precise instructions and the procedures they should follow in this activity. For instance, to divide the learners in pairs or groups and prepare suitable and positive feedback. In addition, it is recommended that teachers examine their learners' understanding of the instructions before starting the activity.

Harmer (op cit: 59) summarizes the role of organizer teacher as follow: “engage instruct {demonstrate} initiate organize feedback”, he also allocates to each one a different stage of an activity.

### ➤ **The attractive stage (engage)**

It is an introductory stage to the activity, the organizer (teacher) needs to involve, engage, and get the interest and attention of the learners by discussing with them the familiar topic or by familiarizing them with the new one.

### ➤ **The instruction stage (instruct and demonstrate)**

In this stage, the organizer deals with the division of the learners (pairs or groups), he gives all the needed instructions; as what should be done... etc, and organizes a concise and precise demonstration for better understanding, finally he should check whether they grasp the instructions or not.

➤ **The initiation stage (initiate)**

During this stage, the teacher (organizer) delimits the time in which the activity should be resolved for the learners (the time to start the activity and its time-limit), learners begin doing the activity without any intervention of the teacher expect for reminding them of instructions or time.

➤ **The feedback stage (organize feedback)**

This is the final stage when the activity is finished; the teacher gives the organized feedback (some comments on the oral activity or on the ways the students have proceeded in).

### **2.3. Assessor**

This is the most crucial role because of learners' reactions when they feel that they are unfairly judged through criticism or having poor grades contrarily to their classmates, and these behaviours will disturb the learning process. For this reason, the teacher must be sensitive to the students' possible reactions by acknowledging the mistakes without embarrassing the learners. He should also inform learner about his parameters of assessment and success in order to enable him to self-evaluate accordingly. Harmer (2001: 60) asserts that:

When we act as assessors (whether in the matter of 'instant' correction or more drawn-out grade giving) we must always be sensitive to the students' possible reactions. A bad grade is a bad grade, however it is communicated. But it can be made far more acceptable if it is given with sensitivity and support.

The assessment of the student's level is one of the most expected tasks from the teacher because effective teachers must know how to assess their learner's development. The students then can have a clear image about their levels and what they need to focus on. The teacher should show the students their strengths and weaknesses by offering corrections or praises. As Harmer (op cit: 59) says "this is where we have to act as assessor, offering feedback and correction and grading students in various ways."

Consequently, the role of an assessor according to Harmer (op cit: 59) can be manifested in :

- Giving feedback to the learners (their performance).
- Correcting them.
- Grading them (telling if learners pass to the next level or not).

## **2. 4. Prompter**

During the classroom activities, sometimes learners cannot find the right words when they speak whether with their classmates or with the teacher. The role of the teacher here, in order to create independent learners, is to support the learners to think creatively and to work things out for themselves. Thus, encouraging learners to participate when they are in 'lost for word' or inspiring them with ideas when they lack creativity are the main criteria of the prompter role. Furthermore, a good prompter should be sensitive, careful, and encouraging as stated by Harmer (op cit: 60) :

When we prompt we need to do it sensitively and encouragingly but, above all, with discretion. If we are too adamant we risk taking initiative away from the student. If, in the other hand, we are too retiring, we may nit supply the right amount of encouragement.

## **2. 5. Participant**

Traditionally, the role of the teachers was only limited in correcting mistakes and providing feedbacks, standing back from the tasks. However, they can participate and be a part of the activities without dominating the whole proceeding. The role of participant is an enjoyable role for most learners since they will have the opportunity to practice and share the language with their teachers and as a result the enhancement of learning atmosphere (Harmer, 2001).

## **2. 6. Resource**

The role of the teacher here is acting as an available resource to answer students' questions when they are in need of help during the activity. For example, they may ask for how to pronounce or write or they want to know the meaning of a given word ...etc). Therefore, the teacher should be able to give the required information. According to Harmer (2001) when offering answers to learners' questions, teachers should guide and help them. But at the same time they should refuse to spoon-feed their students in order to make them more independent in their learning.

## **2. 7. Tutor**

This role is widely recognized among the other roles because it combines both prompter and resource roles. It is performed when teachers engage their students in an

individual or group work. Harmer (2001) indicates that its difficulty arises when the teacher acts as a tutor in a very large group; however, working in small groups or in pairs will help the teacher to offer the guidance easily. In fact, it is difficult to be a tutor of a very large group because when students work in small groups or in pairs, teachers can easily offer the guidance and can go round the class. Likewise learners can have a real opportunity to feel encouraged and helped by the tutor and have an intimate relationship with their teacher.

## **2. 8. Observer or investigator**

The teacher needs to adopt the role of observer of the classroom interaction, like observing the success of activities, techniques, procedures, and evaluation of learners' behavior. These observations can be reported through notes with respect to the students' actual performances in the FL. Harmer (op cit: 62) points out that "when observing students we should be careful not to be intrusive by hanging on their every word, by getting too close to them, or by officiously writing things down all the time". This will help teachers not only to give them an individual feedback but also to evaluate success of the students' development in the speaking skills. If failure occurs, the teacher can make some changes in the future as Harmer (op cit: 62) says that "teachers do not only observe students in order to give feedback. They also watch in order to judge the success of the different materials and activities that they take into lessons so that they can, if necessary, make changes in the future."

## **2. 9. Corrector**

The teacher provides the correct pronunciation, form, or meaning and ; therefore, the student will be able to the same mistakes in classroom interaction. Hedge (2000: 26) identifies the role of the teacher ".....as corrector of pronunciation.....". Moreover, the grammatical errors and the mis-use of lexical items have to be corrected.

In addition to these roles, Littlewood (1981: 92) summarizes the teachers' variety of roles in the following:

- As general overseer of his students' learning, he must aim to coordinate the activities so that they form a coherent progression, leading towards greater communicative ability.
- As classroom manager, he is responsible for grouping activities into 'lesson' and for ensuring that these are satisfactorily organized at the practical level.

- In many activities, he may perform the familiar role of language instructor: he will present new language, exercise direct control over the learners' performance, evaluate and correct it, and so on.
- In others, he will not intervene after initiating the proceedings, but will let learning take place through independent activity.
- He may also move about the classroom in order to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of the learners, as a basis for planning future learning activities.
- He will sometimes wish to participate in an activity as 'co-communicator' with the learners. In this role, he can stimulate and present new language, without taking the main initiative for learning away from the learners themselves.

On the whole, the discussion of the different roles and responsibilities in the classroom context indicates that the teacher's choice to transmute one of them is related to the objectives that should be accomplished by the learners. The teachers should be aware of how to carry out those roles and how they can be performed so that he will be able to change and switch roles with great ease (Harmer, 2001). Choosing the role according to the situation and acting as a model for the students will encourage them and will create a warm and positive atmosphere for the learning process. In the second language classroom context, teachers should train their learners to use the different strategies that can help them overcome difficult situations. Thus, teachers should improve learners' speaking production by arranging their teaching around particular objectives and learners' needs which may result with significant development of learners' achievement.

## **Section Three**

### **Communicative Activities as Methods to Enhance Speaking Skills**

#### **Introduction**

Nowadays, the main objective of teaching a foreign/second language is to enhance learners' communication ability. Successful EFL teacher should adopt various speaking activities and strategies regularly in order to motivate and involve learners in an effective learning-teaching process. Therefore, many activities known as the communicative activities have been conducted by many methodologists such as Littlewood and Harmer...etc. The aim of the use of communicative activity in the class according to Scrivener (2005: 152) is “to get learners to use the language they are learning to interact in realistic and meaningful ways, usually involving exchanges of information or opinion.”

There are many oral expression activities that can be exerted inside the classroom and help learners to develop their speaking skills. These activities are conducted to give students much opportunity to participate within classroom situation, defeat their problems and to stimulate their interest. Teachers have to choose the most suitable tasks that cope with their learners' needs among a wide range of communicative activities as described below:

#### **1. Discussions and debates**

Among the effective activities that foster the speaking process are debates and discussions. During this kind of activities, the teacher has to set up a particular topic with a planned objective in which learners are expected to talk and share their interests, opinions, and experiences spontaneously in order to arrive at a conclusion, sharing ideas about an event, or find solution in their discussion groups.

The discussions can fail, learners can be “reluctant to give an opinion in front of the whole class” (Harmer, 2001: 272) because of low motivation and low self-confidence thereby breakdown of conversation. However, such problems can be solved, and one of the possible solutions is “the buzz groups” as named by Harmer. The teacher has to divide the class into small groups, organize quick discussion between the group members to allow them think together, then they are asked to report their ideas in front of the whole class. This requirement leads to a comfortable atmosphere for full participation of learners, because when students are organized in groups, they will

exchange ideas, propose suggestions, give remedies or even ask each other about a word or expression in their target language. Celce-Murcia (2001: 106) state that “students will be more involved with and motivated to participate in discussion if they are allowed to select discussion topics and evaluate their peers’ performance” .

Moreover, the teacher should limit the objective of the discussion before starting it, and in order to fulfil the intended objectives he has to set up his role to a co-communicator, possibly a prompter or guide, so that to enable learners the possibility of managing and sustaining, by themselves, the stream of conversation (Brown, 2000). Teachers also should be careful in planning and setting up a discussion activity. First of all, the topic must be interesting, easy to negotiate, and touching their real-life situations. Celce-Murcia (2001: 106) stated that "students need to be clear about what they are to discuss, why they are discussing it, and what outcomes are expected". Second, well grouping or pairing students is a step for a successful discussion, and finally students should be reminded that each one should participate and have a specific responsibility in the discussion in order to make all the students use the target language.

An example of discussion task is to divide learners into groups to agree/disagree discussions concerning a debatable issue such as “people learn best when they read vs. people learn best when they travel” or relate to an article, pictures or photographs. Then, each group works on their topic for a given time, and expresses their opinions to the class. The group members should have equal opportunity to speak. At the end, the class decides on the winning group who defended the idea in the most excellent way. Besides, Thornbury (2005: 102) suggests five discussion formats: “discussion cards, warm up discussion, balloon debate, pyramid (or consensus) debate, and panel discussion.” This activity allows learners to speak, negotiate meaning between them and also it promotes their critical thinking and decision making. They learn how to propose, suggest, compare, and defend their ideas. Douglas Brown (2004) suggests that discussion is one of the best ways that help in eliciting the students’ abilities such as:

- topic nomination, maintenance, and termination,
- attention getting, interrupting, floor holding, control
- clarify, questioning, paraphrasing,
- comprehension signals (nodding, “uh-huh”, “hmm”, etc.);
- negotiating meaning;
- intonating pattern for pragmatic effect;

- kinesics, eye contact, body language; and
- politeness, formality, and other sociolinguistic factors.

Finally, according to Hedge (2000: 277), discussion (debate) presents certain advantages and benefits:

- It helps and motivates students to use the foreign language. (English in our case) to hold conversations and dialogues for a long time.
- It provides students with opportunities to practice the strategies required in interpersonal communication.
- It is the most successful activity to memorize information since the students are involved in it.

## **2. Role Play**

Role play is a very important pedagogical activity in developing students' oral proficiency. Harmer (1989: 92) points out: "role play activities are those where students are asked to imagine they are in different situations and act accordingly". In the role play there are purposes the students must accomplish in which they pretend that they are in an imaginary setting as if they are outside the classroom in various social contexts and imitate the others. We use the term 'role play' to refer to the set of activities in which students take an imaginative leap out of the limitations of the classroom, providing a useful spring board for real life language use ( Thornbury, 2005).

Harmer (2001: 274) states that "students 'simulate' (such as a business meeting, an encounter in an aero-plane cabin, or an interview) a real-life encounter as if they were doing so in the real world, either as themselves or taking on the role of a character different from themselves". Therefore, the role play is an enjoyable activity since it gives opportunities for students to elicit their aptitudes to become more creative. Moreover, it helps them reduce their fears in front of the whole class and build up their self confidence because usually it is performed in pairs or groups. Furthermore, role play activity allows the students to develop different socio-cultural speech acts that are appropriate to the context, for example, when requesting, apologizing, complaining, thanking... etc.

Consequently, the success of the role play depends on the selection of the topics from the students' interest and the teacher's motivation as Hedge (2000: 280) argues that "it will depend on the willingness and motivation of the students to change the

personae". Thus, teachers should take into consideration motivation and willingness of learners to play the role by keeping the situation simple in order to help them feel easy to perform the role and to pretend to be someone else ; otherwise, the role play activity may fail.

### 3. Information Gap

It is another effective communicative activity in EFL classes. According to Hedge (op cit: 281), information gap activity is performed in a pair or group work in which one learner possess the information that the other learners do not have. The learners are expected to discover the missing information (gap) and to share it, in that way the communication can be achieved to reach the desired goals. It usually comprises two complementary worksheets (a and b) that include a picture or a written form of the missing information. The main aims of the information-gap tasks are to share information since these information are solely known by one part of the group. However, the other part needs to ask questions to complete the gap and solve the problem. In spite of this, information gap activity has a major drawback can hinder its effectiveness which is the missing of the performance of real-life context. The reason is that it supports language acquisition but do not involve students in conversation strategies as role-play and discussion do (Hedge, 2000).

Here is an example of the information gap activity (Thornbury, 2005):



**Figure 1:** Information gap activity

In this example, students work in pairs, each student has a picture different from his partner's. They are supposed to find similarities and differences between two pictures. It is an effective task because everyone has the opportunity to speak in the target language.

#### **4. Storytelling**

Here learners are supposed to tell their classmates what they have heard or read before. This activity encourages their creative thinking and speaking ability. The stories can be as a means of communication between the students and a way to know each other. It develops their oral performance through narration. According to Douglas Brown (2004), the main objectives from retelling a stories is to produce a number of oral discourse (communication sequences and relationships of events, stress and emphasis patterns, “expression” in the case of dramatic story), fluency, and interaction with the hearer. According to Thornbury (2005), storytelling takes many forms among them we can find:

##### **4.1. Guess the lie**

In this activity, students are exposed to guess the lie from three short personal anecdotes. Then, they have opportunity to ask a limited number of questions after the story. It is useful if the teachers prepare this activity in advance. (Figure 2 on page 31 represents an example for this kind of activity).

##### **4.2. Insert the word**

In this activity, the teacher gives his students a card with an unusual word or expression which has been kept as ‘secret’. Then, students take turns telling each other an anecdote that involves the secret items. At the end of each telling, the other students have to guess the word or the expression.

##### **4.3. Chain story**

In this activity, students are asked to build a story from a chain of events they create, i.e. they take turns to compose a series that tell a story at a given signal from the teacher. Therefore, students change role where they add ideas to the contribution of their classmates, so that they will end up with a whole and complete story.

Here is an example of the story telling activities (Thornbury, 2005):

**Anecdote** Think about a lucky or an unlucky experience you have had. You are going to tell your partner about it. Choose from the list below the things you want to talk about. Think about what you will say and what language you will need.

**1**

Was it a lucky or unlucky experience?       What were you doing?

When did it happen?       What happened?

Where were you?       Why was it lucky (or unlucky)?

Who were you with?       How did you feel afterwards?

**2** **4 MAKING CONVERSATION**

**The first time**

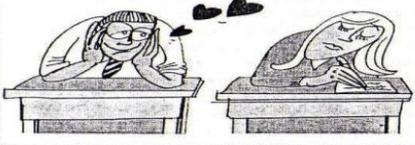
In pairs, A choose two 'first times'. Tell B about what happened. B listen and ask for more information. Swap roles.

A *I'm going to tell you about the first time I drove a car. I was staying in the country with my uncle and he had an old Renault 4...*

B *How old were you?*

**The first time I...**

bought a record or CD  
went to a live concert  
smoked a cigarette  
fell in love  
travelled by plane  
went abroad  
drove a car  
saw a lot of snow  
earned some money  
had to go to hospital



**3**

**prepare your story**

**5 Think!** You're going to tell a partner about a good or bad shopping experience. Read the checklist.

**checklist**

- Use the questions in the framework to help organize your story.
- Use a dictionary or ask your teacher to help you with new words.
- Make notes, but don't write the full story.
- When you've finished, practise telling the story to yourself. This will help your confidence.

**tell your story**

**6 Work** with a partner. Tell each other your stories. At the end, make sure you understand each other's stories. Use the phrases in the **natural English** box if necessary.

**asking for clarification**

I didn't understand the bit about ...  
Could you explain the bit about ... again?  
I'm sorry but I didn't understand what/ why/ when/ how ...

**7 You're** now going to tell your partner's story. Tell it as if it's your **own** story. You may need to make small changes to sound realistic. Your partner should correct any factual mistakes you make.

**8 Work** with a **new** partner. Tell the two stories, without saying which one is yours. Your new partner can ask you questions. At the end, they have to decide which was your story, and why.

**Figure 2: Story telling activities**

In summation, effective teachers should promote learners' speaking skills through the use of some activities and techniques. Therefore, they will prepare the students for real-life communication contexts, and encourage their aptitudes to produce fluent, correct, appropriate, logical and connected utterances.

## **Conclusion**

Speaking is regarded as one of the most important language skills and; consequently it occupy a significant place in any SL design. It is necessary that teachers provide learners with effective oral activities through the adoption of various techniques and procedures to promote students' oral production. Accordingly, learners would be able to make an accurate and correct use of the target language in both grammar and pronunciation. Therefore, fluency and accuracy are two basic aspects of language that must be developed in the classroom. Teaching speaking is then very important in foreign languages teaching because it plays a major role in providing students with more opportunities to communicate in the target language. However, there are many factors that may hinder successful spoken performance, they can be devided into two types namely the linguistic, the psychological, and socio-cultural factors.

## **Introduction**

Many students relate language mastery to the ability to speak that target language. Consequently, if they do not have the opportunity to speak the TL, they may soon feel de-motivated and not interested in learning it. However, if the speaking activities are managed effectively, the English language will be learned easily and dynamically in a positive academic environment.

Speaking is the active manipulation of language to express meaning, the spoken form in EFL learner's classroom acts as the major source of language learning. Nevertheless, speaking difficulties act as primary challenges to successful foreign language communication and learning. EFL learners, no matter how much are their knowledge about the English language, yet face many speaking problems. To develop the analysis of oral communication difficulties in an EFL situation, researchers first need to recognize the real nature of those difficulties and the conditions in which 'difficulties' are constructed.

This chapter aims to investigate the speaking difficulties that are encountered by EFL students, precisely in the linguistic domain such as lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding of grammatical pattern, and incorrect pronunciation that constitute students' barriers to speak in EFL classes. Consequently, this chapter is divided into three sections: the first section is entitled linguistic factors that represent students' barriers to speak in EFL classes. In the other hand, the second section deals with teaching speaking skills to EFL students, and the last one is about assessing speaking performance.

## **Section One**

### **EFL Students' Speaking Difficulties**

#### **Introduction**

Speaking is regarded as one of the most difficult skill to master for the majority of EFL students who are still incompetent to communicate orally in English. As Loama (2004:01) states: "Speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and competence on speaking takes a long time to develop ". So, during the oral classes, learners encounter many obstacles that hinder their learning process of such a difficult skill.

According to Thornbury (2005), being skillful requires having some kind of speaking knowledge that can be categorized either as knowledge of features of the language (linguistic knowledge) or knowledge that is independent of language (extralinguistic knowledge). It is valuable to notice that the linguistic knowledge plays a basic role in speaking skills. Students may find obstacles within their speaking development if any feature of language is lacking or not performed well. These problems are due to lack of vocabulary, mispronunciation, grammatical mistakes, the use of the mother tongue, in addition to poor listening practice and many other external factors.

#### **1.Linguistic barriers**

##### **1.1.Lack of vocabulary**

The knowledge of vocabulary is the prior requirement that the students should have about the language they want to speak. However, they face difficulty because their vocabulary is limited, so they are unable to communicate effectively in the target language. Students find themselves uncomfortable when they intend to express their ideas in a clear manner. It is due to the lack of vocabulary and limited knowledge.

To reach oral proficiency, students require to select words appropriately while they are speaking, and manipulate these words accurately. Thornbury (2005:22) argues that "spoken language also has a relatively high proportion of words and expression". Therefore, learning any foreign languages requires a great knowledge of its vocabulary. The situation in our EFL classes is that many students often find some problems when they try to express themselves because they struggle to find the necessary vocabulary item which carries trying to get the appropriate meaning; this reflects their limited vocabulary repertoire. Hence, this inadequate vocabulary affects the rate of their

participation in oral activities and make them unable to share their ideas with others in a comfortable manner.

## **1.2. Pronunciation mistakes**

They are defined by Kelly (2000: 11) as: “A consideration of learners’ pronunciation errors and of how these can inhibit successful communication is a useful basis on which to assess why it is important to deal with pronunciation in the classroom.”

Besides the learners’ problems in vocabulary, there is a noticeable problem which is mispronunciation of words, which leads to problems in reception or comprehension of an utterance’s meaning. Actually, students may fail to produce an effective oral communication because of their pronunciation mistakes. Instead of conveying certain meaning, they convey others, so they do not feel at ease when speaking in front of their classmates and; consequently, reduce their oral participation.

Pronunciation is the most significant skill in foreign language learning since it helps EFL learner to be more competent in communication. Furthermore, the level of pronunciation proficiency represents the main criteria that EFL students can be judged on and assessed. Hence, they must practice the correct pronunciation forms and be aware of the various rules of sounds as stress, intonation ...etc. Morley (1991: 488) emphasizes the importance of pronunciation in speaking proficiency: “intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communication competence ”.

Although many EFL learners studied grammar for many years, they are unable to speak like native speakers due to their improper pronunciation of the sounds of words which cause misunderstanding and ineffective communication. Therefore, mispronunciation is a serious problem to overcome that non-native English speakers face when they try to reach a high level of fluency. In addition, mispronounced speech reflects students’ poor experience with supra-segmental features English sounds, such as rhythms, intonation and word stress, this is due to student’s lack of listening to native speakers or to teacher’s mispronunciation as non-native speaker. In addition, the inadequate official sessions for practicing pronunciation make students unconscious about their mispronunciation mistakes. Moreover, the intermixture of the American and British accents leads learners to be confused with their pronunciations. So, pronunciation mistakes are one of the main factors that hinder the students’ freedom in classroom interaction.

**1.3. Grammar mistakes:** Grammar is an essential element of a language, According to Harmer (2001: 12) grammar is defined as:

The grammar of a language is the description of the ways in which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences in that language if grammar rules are too carelessly violated, communication may suffer [...], creating a good grammar rule is extremely difficult. Linguists investigating Native-speaker speech ..., over the years, devised various different systems To describe how the language works.

It is also defined as “the way a language manipulates and combines words (or bits of words) in order to form longer units of meaning” (Ur : 4). Students must care about any sound they produce when speaking the target language (TL), hence, they face difficulties in combining words correctly; for example the misuse of tenses when the student says “I’ am boring”, instead of saying, “I’m bored”. It is a serious problem since making such grammatical mistakes may change the whole meaning, this is similar to producing pronouns, singular and plural forms appropriately. Consequently, it is difficult for students to speak in the target language and this creates very embarrassing situations. The result is that they keep their ideas for themselves because they cannot speak out the information accurately.

One of the most important aspects of being skillful in oral production is possessing grammar knowledge; therefore, EFL learners must acquire this knowledge in order to improve their oral proficiency. Therefore, many students are unable to produce correct grammatical forms of sentences; this is due to the unawareness of rules and instructions such as: the mixture between tenses, the mis-use of modifiers, the use of double negatives in the same sentence, the production of fragment sentences. Therefore, inappropriate grammar leads to misunderstanding in communication.

Moreover, EFL learners often prefer to keep silent rather than producing ungrammatical structures because they are afraid of being ridiculed in front their teachers and classmates. As Davies and Pearse (2000: 82) argue:

“Many people do not like speaking in front of large groups of people. This is especially true in a foreign language, because we may worry about producing utterances with many errors or oddities in them”

Therefore, a grammatical mistake is one of the linguistic obstacles that prevent EFL learners’ participation.

## **1.4. The use of the mother tongue**

It is obvious that EFL learners often use the mother tongue inside and outside classrooms because they are less exposed to the target language and feel demotivated to communicate. Students tend to borrow words from their native language when they fail in expressing their thoughts in the foreign language due to the lack of vocabulary in this language. According to Baker and Westrup (2003: 12): “Barriers to learning can occur if students knowingly or unknowingly transfer the cultural rules from their mother tongue to a foreign language”. Therefore, the use of mother tongue lessens the students’ speaking capacity and leads to breakdown of communication in the classroom. In addition, they will find it difficult to use the target language accurately if they keep on borrowing words from their native language which is caused by the lack of foreign language vocabulary.

In addition, when poor speaking competence is reported, one tends to blame the students for having low ability or making insufficient effort for learning. Nevertheless, there are other important external factors in the academic settings that should be taken into consideration. We can mention the attitude of the teachers and students toward the subject, teachers' inappropriate teaching methods, overcrowded classes and the insufficient class time allocated for teaching speaking.

## **2. Pedagogical barriers**

### **2.1. Poor listening practice:**

Although many students know all the rules of the English language, they find many difficulties when they are try to interact with each other. These are due to misunderstanding of the other speakers. Listening comprehension has a significant role in helping students to understand the different functions of English language and to contribute easily to any discussion and conversation.

Listening skill is very important for speaking because they are interrelated and interdependent. Anderson and Lynch show the significant relationship of speaking and listening skills (1988: 15) “A carefully prepared L2 utterance is only a useful aid to communicate if the speaker can deal effectively with replies he receives. For the L2 learner in conversation, he needs to be skilled as both speaker and listener.” Hence, poor listening practice is a serious obstacle that faces the students and which may lead to a poor speaking ability.

## **2.2.Lack of interest in subject:**

The learners' interest to practise the speaking skills is a very critical factor. Students who have strong interest give a great attention to improve their speaking skills. In foreign language classroom, discussed subjects are the main stimulation for students to speak freely and confidently. Thornbury (2005: 25) agrees that "Familiarity with the topic: the greater the familiarity, the easier the speaking task... Feeling towards the topic and/ or the participants: generally, if you are well disposed to the topic you are talking about, and/ or the other participants, the easier it is likely to be".

Effective EFL participants have a positive attitude toward the subject and the teacher since he is their guide. They manage to participate in the classroom activities that are typically interactive. However, many students remain silent because they have no idea about the topic or adopt a negative attitude toward the topic .

In order to increase learners' interest, EFL teachers should be aware that routine activities are one of the main causes that lead to the failure in teaching process because they make the students bored and lose their interest. This is strongly supported by Brown (1994: 48): "Routine activities in learning can make the students bored. As the result, their motivation and participation in learning will decrease".

Therefore, non-interesting topics is another important factor that stops students from participating. Besides, teachers should apply the appropriate teaching techniques that increase learners' interest in the learning process.

## **2.3. None motivating atmosphere:**

Ur (1991) confirmed that various studies such as Gardner and Lamber (1972), have found that motivation is very strongly related to language learning achievement. A motivated learner is one who is willing to exploit his effort in learning activities to develop his competence. Learner's motivation makes teaching and learning infinitely more pleasant and easier as well as more productive.

Non motivating classroom atmosphere for the EFL learners also hinder students' participation and prevent their speaking development. Teachers are the main source for creating a relaxed atmosphere for the learners in order to give them the opportunity to express themselves. Davies et al. (2000: 82) state some implications for effective teaching : "Try to create a relaxed atmosphere in your classes so that most learners are not frightened of speaking in front of the class. And do as many speaking

activities as possible in pairs and groups, so that the learners can speak English without the rest of the class listening”.

Motivating atmosphere is an important factor for teaching and learning in foreign language. Littlewood (1981) asserts that the developing communicative skills can only be realized if the learners have motivation and opportunity to express their own personality and to relate with their classmates and teachers.

As a result, students really require motivating atmosphere that encourages and gives them a sense of security and value as individuals. Moreover, EFL teachers have to enhance the speaking skills of their learners by creating a warm atmosphere for English practice within the academic settings; since in the local context, the classroom remains the only place to make the learners involved in speaking English.

#### **2.4. Large classes:**

Large classes are often regarded as one of the major challenges for both teaching and learning processes. In overcrowded classes, EFL students have less opportunities to speak since teachers face many difficulties in managing the classroom. Large classes limit both student opportunities to talk and teacher's interventions to provide feedback (Murcia Celce, 2001). Oral expression session aims are to increase the students' participation and to improve their speaking proficiency; however, large classes prevent EFL learners from having an equivalent chance of participation during the session. Additionally, large classes prevent students from speaking especially when they are asked for more clarification by their teachers; because they are afraid of showing that they do not understand. Thus, large classes *limit or even compromise* the students' participation.

#### **2.4. Time allocated:**

Insufficient time allocated is another obstacle for both students and teachers. This prevents teachers from giving greater opportunity for their students to participate in classroom activities. As a result, students react inappropriately because they believe that teachers are not fair with them. Therefore, teachers are also constrained by both time limitation and large classes since they have neither adequate time nor the space to realize their aims. Consequently, time allocation can represent a barrier to students' participation.

**Conclusion:**

As a conclusion to this section, one can deduce that the speaking skill is a complex and difficult component of EFL learning. Students often encounter many difficulties during the lesson of oral expression and do not participate because of some principal factors that we have discussed in details mainly the linguistic barriers and non motivating atmosphere. In fact, teachers should take in consideration that in communication students should be aware of the linguistic factors which can either improve or hinder the speaking skill. Consequently, teachers should be conscious of these problems and eventually try to solve them especially with regard to the provision of appropriate time and the promotion of students' performance.

## Section Two

### Teaching speaking skills to EFL students

#### Introduction

Although speaking is important, the English language has been taught for many years through various traditional methods like drilling or memorizing dialogues. In contrast, today's main goal of teaching speaking is to develop students' oral skill in order enable them to express their thoughts fluently and effectively in accordance with the appropriate social and cultural communicative rules. In fact, mastering speaking skills basically depends on the teaching/learning process as cited by Richards (2008: 19): "The mastery of speaking skills in English is of priority for many second or foreign language learners."

#### 1. Teaching Speaking Skills :

It is widely viewed by many linguists and EFL teachers, communicative language teaching is the best approach that increases the students' opportunity of interacting with each other in the target language and create more vibrant and dynamic English language classrooms. According to Nunan (2003), teaching speaking means to teach ESL/EFL learners to:

- Produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns.
- Use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language.
- Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter.
- Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence.
- Use language as a means of expressing values and judgments.
- Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses and this leads to fluency.

In short, EFL teachers should engage students in real-life communicative situations, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that improve speaking skills as Thornbury (2005: 95) says: "Speaking tasks should have some relation to real-life language use". This can be achieved when the right activities are taught appropriately and students are motivated to collaborate in groups to complete a given task.

## 2. Principles for teaching speaking:

Bailey (2007: 54) stated the main guiding principles for teaching speaking skills according to EFL classroom context as follows :

- Be aware of the differences between second language and foreign language learning contexts : EFL teachers should recognize that learning speaking skills is very difficult for students in foreign language context since they do not have enough opportunities to use the target language outside the classroom. In opposition, the status of a second language within the learners' speech community.
- Give students practice with both fluency and accuracy : Accuracy is the extent to which students' speech matches what people actually say when they use the target language. Fluency is the extent to which speakers use the language quickly and confidently, with few hesitations or unnatural pauses, false starts, word searches, etc. In foreign language lessons, EFL teachers must give students adequate opportunities to develop both their fluency and accuracy and they should avoid constant correction of their learners' oral errors. Lastly, teachers should realize that making mistakes is a natural part of learning a new language.
- Provide opportunities for students to talk by using group work or pair work, and limiting teacher talk : EFL teachers should encourage their learners to speak the target language. For example, they can use pair work and group work activities in order to increase the amount of time that learners have to speak in the target language during the lesson. Furthermore, when the teacher does not participate in the conversation, learners can take on diverse speaking roles (such as posing questions or offering clarification) that are normally filled by the teacher.
- Plan speaking tasks that involve negotiation for meaning : Research implies that learners make progress by communicating in the target language since interaction necessarily involves trying to understand and to be understood. This process is called negotiating for meaning which involves asking for clarification, repetition, or explanations during conversations in order to check the learner's understanding.
- Design classroom activities that involve guidance and practice in both transactional and interactional speaking: Interactional speech involves communicating with someone for social purposes, i.e. establishing and maintaining social relationships. However, transactional speech is communicating to get something done, for example, the exchange of goods and services. Therefore, speaking activities inside the classroom need to embody both interactional and transactional purposes.

To increase the EFL learners' ability to communicate in the target language, Brown (1994: 110) suggests several key principles that should be taken into account for teaching speaking skills:

- Focus on both fluency and accuracy depending on the underlined objectives ;
- Provide intrinsically motivating techniques;
- Encourage the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts;
- Provide appropriate feedback and correction;
- Capitalize on the natural link between speaking and listening;
- Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication;
- Encourage the development of speaking strategies.

### **3. Goals and Techniques for Teaching Speaking : ( unknown source)**

The major goal of teaching speaking skills is to achieve communicative efficiency. EFL Learners should be able to make themselves understood, also they should try to avoid confusion in the message due to wrong pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, and to observe the social and cultural rules that apply in each communication situation.

To help students develop communicative efficiency in speaking, EFL teachers can use a balanced activities approach that includes language input, structured output, and communicative output.

- Language input is manifested in the form of teacher talk, listening activities, reading passages, and the language heard and read outside of class. It provides learners the material they need to begin producing language themselves.
- Structured output focuses on correct form. In structured output, students may have options for responses, but all of the options require them to use the language item that the teacher has recently presented.
- In communicative output, the learners' main purpose is to accomplish a task, such as obtaining information, developing a travel plan, or creating a video. To complete the task, they may use the language that the teacher has just introduced, but they also may rely on their prior knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and communication strategies. The criterion of success in communicative output activities is whether the learner gets the message across.
- In a balanced activities approach, the teacher uses a various activities from these different categories of input and output. EFL Learners benefit from this variety because it is more motivating, and it is also more likely to create an effective language Learning.

#### **4. Implications for teaching speaking**

Regarding the EFL context in Algeria and the limited opportunities to use the target language at the University, the effective method of developing speaking skills is to incorporate some appropriate principles to achieve this goal. As a matter of fact, teaching speaking skills represents a crucial concern among EFL teachers and didacticians. And thus, confidence, creativity of topics, and increasing opportunities to practise speaking are key components of improving speaking skills. Thus, to overcome the common problems (described in section 1) that the EFL teachers and learners encounter, Ur (1991: 121) has presented the following suggestions:

- Use group work: this increases the sheer amount of learner talk going on in a limited period of time and also lowers the inhibitions of learners who are unwilling to speak in front of the full class.
- Base the activity on easy language: oral activities should suite learners' level, so that they can speak fluently with the minimum of hesitation.
- Make a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate the interest of the learners: On the whole, the clearer the purpose of the discussion the more motivated participants will be. In the same line of thought, Lightbrown (1999) asserted that students do not assimilate everything they are taught, yet, they learn what they are interested in.
- Give some instruction or training in discussion skills: If the task is based on group discussion then include instructions about participation when introducing it.
- Keep students speaking the target language

Thus, EFL teachers have to expose their learners to the TL through participating in oral activities and increase their interests in authentic situations. Obviously, learners cannot succeed in the TL unless they become competent to manipulate it as Nunan (1991:39) stated "success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language." Success should be realized in both the classroom settings and real-life situation as Davies et al. (2000: 99) pointed out: "Real success in English teaching and learning is when the learners can actually communicate in English inside and outside the classroom"

## **Conclusion**

In summation, teaching speaking is an essential part of foreign language learning. Moreover, communicating clearly and efficiently in the target language is the key to EFL learners' success in their studies. Therefore, it is important that language teachers pay great attention to teaching speaking through the implementation of suitable techniques which enable learners to communicate effectively in authentic situations and the avoidance of any memorization processes.

## Section Three

### Assessing Speaking Performance

#### **Introduction:**

Recent studies have shown the importance of assessment in language teaching and learning curricula that can lead to gathering data about learners' performance, and discovering weaknesses. Likewise, teachers will be able to treat such problems and ; therefore, enable learners to achieve better proficiency.

Besides, it has been widely considered that speaking in second or foreign language is the most difficult skill to assess. This is due to the difficult correspondence between the testing goals and the appropriate tasks for assessment. Speaking as a basic structure for testing is similarly divided into various criteria with highly diverse applications. A learner's speaking ability is usually assessed during a face-to-face interaction, in real time, between an interlocutor and a candidate. The assessor has to make immediate judgments about a range of features of speech (e.g., pronunciation, accuracy, fluency) that all fall into the structure of speaking but largely require cautious test designs and measures. Moreover, the nature of the interaction, the sorts of tasks that are presented to the examinee, the questions asked will have an effect on the performance.

Accordingly, assessing speaking is not an impossible task, but it is difficult (Luoma, 2004). Speaking in a second language has been considered the most difficult among the four skills since it is a productive skill that requires a complex process of constructing meaning (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). It is also the most complex skill because of the simultaneous monitoring and planning of utterances. This process requires speakers to make decisions about why, how and when to communicate depending on the cultural and social context in which the speaking act occurs (Burns & Seidlhofer, 2002).

#### **1. Defining the Notion of Assessment**

Assessment is a paramount element in the learning- teaching process; hence there are several definitions of assessment. It is regarded as a process of collecting data from different sources in order to recognize what learners know, understand, and what they can do with their knowledge in executing real life tasks. (Huba & Freed, 2000). According to Erwin (1991), assessment is a systematic approach for making decisions about learners' development. This means that assessment is a process of observing , measuring, and analysing learning abilities in order to promote student's learning through planned activities. A more explicit definition of assessment is provided by Douglas Brown, who argues that teaching and assessment are interrelated items. In brief,

assessment is the gathering of information about the student's ability to perform various learning tasks Brown (2003: 4).

## **2. Types of Assessment**

Types of assessments of foreign languages are varied in terms of perceptions and rationales for assessments, in addition to contrasting views on the functions of assessments. Assessment is typically divided into formative and summative sorts for the purpose of respecting different objectives for assessment practices.

### **➤ Formative assessment**

It is an ongoing process in which teachers continually verify or modify their classroom activities. This type of assessment is usually carried out through a whole course or project. It should not necessarily be used for grading purposes. A common form of formative assessment is diagnostic assessment which measures a pupil's existing knowledge and skills so as to establish an appropriate program of learning.

According to Brown (2004), formative assessment is practised for the purpose of evaluating students in the process of forming their competences and helping them to continue that development process. Thus, it is an invaluable tool to help develop the learners' speaking skills. Moreover, Davison et al. (2009) assert that there are two key-functions of formative evaluation, namely forming and informing, which bring advantages to the teachers and the learners respectively.

### **➤ Summative assessment**

The second type is the summative assessment which is used at the end of a unit or a semester to verify what each student has attained and learnt. It is commonly carried out at the end of a course or project for the purpose of assigning students a course grade. Therefore, summative assessment is evaluative.

## **3. Characteristics of assessment**

There are three criteria of a satisfactory test of speaking that has to be taken into consideration. These criteria are: validity, reliability and practicality. (Sarosdy, Bencze, and Vadnay, 2000)

### 3.1. Validity

Validity is defined by Henning (cited in Alderson, Clapham & Wall, 1995: 89) as follows:

Validity in general refers to the appropriateness of a given test or any of its component parts as a measure of what is purported to measure. A test is said to be valid to the extent that it measures what is supposed to measure. It follows that the term valid when used to describe a test should usually be accompanied by the preposition for. Any test then may be valid for some purposed but not for others.

This implies that a test may be described as valid if it tests what is supposed to test, but if a test goes beyond the learners' background knowledge, then its validity is not demonstrated.

### 3.2. Reliability

It refers to the consistent measurement from time to time or place to place. It means that a test is reliable if it achieves a standard scoring from occasion to occasion. Reliability consists of two types of scores: intra-rater reliability and inter-rater reliability. The former is achieved if the same scorer gives the same test the same scores in two different occasions. The latter refers to the similarity of scores between different examiners. (Sarosdy, et al., 2000)

### 3.3. Practicality

Practicality refers to the effectiveness of the necessary tools: the time needed for administering the test, that is how easy to score the test, how simple it is and to what extent the test is easy to administer. (Sarosdy et al., 2000)

## 4. Categories of the speaking ability:

There are four categories proposed by Thornburg (2005: 127) which are used for the purpose to test the students' speaking ability: grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation, and interactive communication. They are described as follows:

- **Grammar and Vocabulary:** on this scale, the students get marks for the accurate and appropriate use of syntactic forms and vocabulary to meet the task requirements.
- **Discourse Management:** on this scale, examiners look for evidence of the students' ability to express ideas and opinions in coherent and connected speech. In this term, the learners must be able to construct sentences and produce utterances in order to convey information and to express or justify opinions.

- **Pronunciation:** this term refers to the students' ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfil the task requirements such as, the production of individual sounds, the appropriate linking of words, and the use of stress and intonation to convey the intended meaning.
- **Interactive Communication:** this term refers to the students' ability to interact with the interlocutor and the other students by initiating and responding appropriately at the required speed and rhythm in order to fulfil the task requirement including the ability to use functional language and strategies to perform interaction.

Based on these descriptions, speaking constitutes a dynamic interaction between interlocutors. The speakers must be competent to produce fluent speech at various rates of delivery an appropriate vocabulary. Likewise, they must also be competent to use appropriate pronunciation, grammatical rules, and communicate their opinions effectively.

## 5. Benefits of speaking assessment

Since the importance of the speaking ability has become more significant in language teaching, assessing speaking skills now represents one of the most important issue in language assessment. Speaking is a productive skill that can obviously be empirically observed. Luoma (2004) ensured that speaking skills are central part of the language teaching curriculum, and this makes them an important object of assessment as well.

Generally, assessment is a purposeful process which is used to support and develop students' learning. Each assessment is implemented within its own educational context in order to accomplish a particular objective. It is very useful and important to evaluate students' performance, in order to examine the students 'mistakes as Luoma states (2004: 19) "Normal speech contains a fair number of slips and errors." In fact, speaking assessment is an effective tool for both teachers to assess the students in order to know how effective their teaching is, and students to be aware of their areas of their strengths and weaknesses. Assessment can both adjust the learning and teaching process and it can contribute in improving students 'oral performance. Also, it provides information about students' achievements which serve as indicators for any readjustments in the teaching and learning activities. Evidently, the satisfaction of learners' needs leads necessarily to higher-quality learning outcomes.

Furthermore, language assessment focuses basically on the learner and represents a precise feedback to both the teacher and the learners since it reveals the quality of learning and the effectiveness of the teaching. As a result, assessment is implemented to indicate to the teacher whether there are gaps between what the learners know and what the teacher expects them to have

understood. Thus, assessment permits re-organization not just a provision of information. It opens doors to strategic change and helps measure progress. It can lead EFL learners to increase their motivation and foster a desire for learning and; eventually, they will have a clearer vision of what is expected from them.

Besides, classroom assessment can provide opportunities for teachers to directly observe and test learners' linguistic performance. As McNamara (1996) claims that the assessment of linguistic performance can make direct inference of an individual's ability to use language appropriately or correctly in different situations. Moreover, Brown (2000) argued that performance assessment contributes to improving content validity since students actually perform the target language use.

In accordance with Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence model, we can state that speaking by its nature needs to be assessed on the basis of social context, interaction, communication, and integrated skills. All these elements can be provided in the classroom context involving peers and a teacher. In the same line of thought, discrepancy between the test taker's grammatical competence and communicative competence is manifested by Savignon (1991). While involving interaction with peers or a teacher, students can notice the gap between their linguistic competence and the real use of language. As a result, it allows learners to know the correct use of language they have learned in a various real life situations. Additionally, classroom assessment can be considered as a powerful factor that has positive effects on enhancing learning motivation as proved y many researchers like Crooks (1988).

Lastly, classroom assessment is beneficial to reducing any student's anxiety associated with test taking. Underhill (1987) points out that classroom assessment has a positive effect because it reduces test anxiety. He also asserts that students are usually able to demonstrate better performance and proficiency when the teacher assesses them in the familiar classroom than they can demonstrate in standardized tests. Hence, assessment does not only measure progress but also offers strategic changes and leads to increased self-awareness.

On the whole, we can advance that classroom speaking assessment is an excellent indicator for teachers and researchers involved in the evaluation of the different kinds of speaking skills. The continuing and expanding use of oral assessment as part of a carefully designed of assessment types provides significant opportunities for student engagement as well as opportunities for enhanced judgments about student achievement. While oral assessment raises many challenges, it also offers considerable rewards for both teachers and students. It is worth for EFL teachers in to continue and even extend their use of oral assessment in order develop this critical aspect of their role as educators.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, we have focused throughout this chapter on the fact that teaching the speaking skill is very challenging for students in EFL context. They have very few opportunities to use the target language during the classroom sessions, that's why there are many difficulties which hinder the progress in their studies. We have also reviewed the relevant literature for speaking difficulties and teaching speaking. In addition, we have analysed the reliability and usefulness of classroom speaking assessment that teachers should adopt as a tool to develop the oral communication.

## **Introduction**

The present chapter is designed to obtain valuable information through the analysis of the EFL students' speaking difficulties in oral expression course, the reasons behind these difficulties, and the possible techniques they can use to successfully accomplish their oral linguistic tasks. The primary objectives of this chapter are to determine the factors behind students' low achievement in speaking production, and to investigate their attitudes and perspectives towards learning the speaking skills. We will also analyse the related content and techniques of teaching the speaking skills in order to confirm or reject our initial research hypotheses. Since EFL teachers and students are the basic variables of this research, their opinions are very important to test our hypothesis; therefore, questionnaires and interview are the most appropriate tools for this investigation. Hence, a questionnaire has been administered to 60 students of second year LMD English, and the interview has been submitted to 06 teachers of the oral expression course of second year level at the Biskra University of the academic year 2015 -2016. The students' questionnaire aims at analysing how some factors can really affect their speaking performance. However, the teachers' interview was conducted to gather further information about the linguistic factors that hinder students from speaking; and the causes as well as the solutions to overcome these difficulties. The objectives are stated at the beginning of the questionnaire and interview, then a detailed description and analysis are presented.

### **1. Teachers' interview**

#### **1.1. Description of teachers' interview**

The target population of the interview is teachers of oral expression to second year LMD students at the Department of English at the University of Biskra. They were asked to present the most common issues that students face while dealing with speaking skills. The interview is indeed a tool to investigate the difficulties faced by students when speaking and; eventually to suggest some possible recommendations to improve students speaking production. The teachers' interview comprises (16) questions which were divided into three main sections :

**Section One:** The first section aims at collecting information that concern the oral expression course as an appropriate context to promote speaking production. It consists of four questions: the first question (Q1) seeks information about the teachers' experience, i.e. they are asked to give the number of years they have been teaching English. The three last questions are about the oral expression course in general

**Section Two:** This section deals with the exploration of the common difficulties faced by EFL students during the oral expression course. Here, the teachers can observe these difficulties easily because of their direct interaction with the students. It consists of eight questions.

**Section Three:** This section aims at determining the different activities and techniques that teachers need to undertake in order to encourage the students during the lesson and make them active participants in the classroom. It consists of five questions.

## **1.2. Data collection and analysis of teachers' interview:**

This part presents the findings of the interview that was administered to second year EFL teachers of the oral expression course.

### **Section One: Oral Expression Course**

#### **1. How many years have you been teaching oral expression?**

Here, teachers are asked to give in numbers the length of their teaching experience. Their experience is ranged from form 1 to 12 years. Our objective is to compare different attitudes of teachers who have a long experience to those who have not ;because experience is a very crucial requirement in teaching. The results indicate that 2 of the population have an experience of 10 years whereas one teacher has an experience of only one year. Moreover, 2 teachers have been teaching for 7 years. The remaining teacher has a 12 years experience. This data show that the majority of the population has an experience superior to 7 years.

#### **2. Do you follow any particular program in teaching speaking?**

- a. Yes      b. No

Five teachers state that they do follow a particular program in teaching speaking. They want to reach their goals through the use of a particular program in teaching the oral expression course. However, one teacher states that he does not follow any particular program. He starts his lesson spontaneously and he gives the students the opportunity to choose free topics that they want to discuss.

#### **3. If 'yes', what are your objectives behind this program?**

This question aimed at determining the objectives that the teachers want to achieve when teaching the speaking skills. These aims are summarized as follows:

- To help our students communicate in the foreign language

- To help them surpass their anxiety and learning difficulties and enable them to become self confident
- To encourage students develop their speaking skills
- To enrich their vocabulary
- To develop the students' communicative competence
- To enable the students express themselves in various situations
- To correct their pronunciation errors
- To develop their view point building through the mastery of the language functions
- To develop other skills like listening and reading

#### **4. What are the sequential steps ( methodology) do you often undertake for teaching speaking?**

This question seeks information about the sequential steps that teachers generally undertake when they intend to make their students speak in the TL. Two of the informants assumed that speaking should be preceded by a careful listening to a particular passage. And three of them highlighted the oral drills: listening-repeating; listening- asking questions. Whereas, a warm-up presentation of the topic as a preliminary phase was preferred before oral production by two of the respondents. Only one of them suggests that students could improve their abilities of speaking only through interaction among learners (role playing in pairs, or in groups as opposed to mechanical pattern drills).

#### **5. How do you evaluate your students' level of oral skills?**

When teachers were asked about their learners' oral proficiency; the majority (4) stated that their students have average level due to many reasons. However, only two indicated that their students' level is good. None of them chose the two other options (excellent and low). The data that have been gathered indicate that either students are not motivated to speak or they may have some problems that lessen their level and handle its improvement. Generally, their level is at least above the average.

### **Section Two: EFL Students' Participation Difficulties**

#### **Do all of your students speak during the oral expression course?**

The aim behind this question is to indicate whether teachers are aware that their students have difficulties in speaking. All teachers confirm the fact that their students face crucial problems in speaking. They pointed out that the majority of students hesitate to express themselves orally even if they know the answer; and they cannot speak in the classroom even if

they are required to answer individually. All teachers state that the majority of students do not speak during the course. There are few students who participate in the oral course and the others keep silent or say just few words. These answers indicate that there are some factors that hamper them from speaking in the oral expression course.

**6. If it is 'no', based on your observation, what are the difficulties that hamper students from speaking?**

This question aimed at exploring the main factors behind the speaking difficulties of the students that might hinder them when speaking in English. In fact, the results show that 04 of the teachers hold that these difficulties are due to the lack of the students' interests in the topic. Also, they do not care to recall the words and the grammar structures because they are anxious about making pronunciation and grammatical mistakes. Thus, students have difficulties in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation at all levels i.e., sound, stress and intonation.. two (02) of the respondents, considered poor listening practice to be the major reason behind these difficulties.

**Others, specify?**

Other suggestions were presented by three respondents. One proposes that the main reasons behind the speaking difficulties are that firstly; our students have little opportunity to practice speaking due to the time constraints and the focus being on written rather the spoken language. The second confirms that it is due to the lack of speaking strategies and teacher's dominance in speaking; in addition to shyness and fear of the teacher's reaction and the classmates' prejudgments. The last one confirms that students' learning styles may constraint their oral performance; for example some students do prefer writing rather than speaking. In addition, the degree of complexity and the type of the activity proposed may affect their speaking, i.e. there are some activities that motivate the students to speak while others do not.

**7. What are the mistakes in which majority of students fail when they speak( grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, pronunciation...)?**

It is pointed out by four teachers that most of the students find difficulties in pronunciation; and this can be justified in terms of the differences between the mother tongue and the target language. However, a teacher argues that lack of the exact word (vocabulary) while they try to express their ideas is the most recurring problem. And, if they find the appropriate word they mispronounce it because of the mother tongue interference. One teacher

thinks that students usually face more difficulties in using correct verb forms (grammar), wrong choice of words, i.e. using words out of the context; in addition to sentence construction.

### **8. Do you try to create a motivating classroom atmosphere?**

All teachers state that they efforts to create a motivating classroom atmosphere. They always try to make the students feel comfortable and speak without any constraints. The type of atmosphere can act as a supportive or a hindrance factor to the students' participation in the oral expression course.

#### **If 'yes', say why?**

In this question the teachers are asked to provide the reasons behind the creation of a motivating classroom atmosphere. They provide the following reasons:

- To reduce students' anxiety and to create a supportive learning environment.
- To encourage the students' participation and increase their interest in the lecture.
- Make students feel at ease, comfortable and have more self- confidence to interact with their teacher and classmates.

### **9. How many students do you have per-group?**

Teachers state that the number of students is between 30 to 65 students per- group.

### **10. Do you think that the students' number is appropriate for accomplishing your objective?**

- a. Yes      b. No**

#### **why?**

All teachers consider that the students' number creates over-crowded classes which may hinder the teaching/learning process. Teachers cannot give an equal chance to each student to participate during the oral expression course; since this requires a small number of students to reach the intended objectives. It is also confirmed that a huge number of learners in a class prevents them to speak confidently (they are shy to have all these gazes on them when they want to say something). Also, noise prevents the good use of listening materials. Furthermore, one teacher suggests that a students' number between 10 to 15 would be better in order to pay attention to every student and give each one enough time to practice.

## **11. How do you evaluate the time allotted to the oral expression lecture?**

**a. Enough**

**b. Not enough**

**Why?**

Teachers are asked to evaluate the time allocated to the oral expression lecture. Two teachers state that the time is enough to achieve the intended goals. Whereas, four teachers advance that the time allotted is not enough at all. They believe that it is impossible to give every student sufficient time to speak and; then correct her/his mistakes because of the shortage of time. Since the local classes are generally large and the time allotted to learn English (two sessions per-week) is limited, it is widely acknowledged by EFL teachers of oral expression course that it is impossible to give a chance to all the students to speak English in the classroom and to realize all the objectives. The result indicates that time can be considered as another factor that hinders students' participation and prevents the teachers from fulfilling the programmed tasks. Therefore, practicing speaking requires much time because students have to do many kinds of oral activities to improve their pronunciation, enrich their vocabulary and develop their communicative competence.

## **Section Three: Oral Expression Activities and Techniques**

### **12. How do you increase your students' participation?**

Within EFL classroom settings, the most appropriate technique that all oral expression teachers (06) adopt is using group and pairs work. Teachers do prefer this type of techniques because they think that students feel at ease together and can exchange information. Four teachers chose adopting interesting topics because they lead the students to participate more in the classroom activities. On the other hand, none of the teachers chose the option 'allowing the use of mother tongue' as a technique to increase the students' participation.

**Others**

The teachers believe that there are other ways that can motivate the students to speak during the oral expression course such as:

- Using authentic material ( songs, speeches, debates).
- Using audio-visual aids.
- Oral presentation (individually).

- Using role play
- Rewarding and positive feedback.

**13. What are the speaking activities that you concentrate on in order to create an effective participation?**

This question is asked in order to identify the most used activities by the teacher to create an effective participation. There are many ways for teaching the speaking skill. We have suggested six options to the teachers. All of the teachers (6) focus on debates and discussions to create a successful participation and to build students' confidence. On the other hand, four (4) teachers prefer role play as an activity to motivate learners to speak, other three (3) teachers focus on dialogues and storytelling based activities. Other two (2) teachers chose information gap activity. Only one (01) teacher ticked off the option of "problem solving activity" as the appropriate activity to promote their motivation to participate without any difficulties.

**Others**

Teachers were also asked to suggest other activities which they preferred to adopt within the oral expression course:

- Monologue
- Classroom tasks and oral presentation ( research paper)
- Quizzes
- Language games
- Reading activities (loudly)

In sum, teachers use various activities and techniques in accordance to learners' needs.

**14. What is the most preferred tasks for testing your students' speaking ability?**

This question aims to elicit information about the tasks that can be useful for testing students' speaking abilities. Five teachers agree that the stated suggestions are usually recommended and considered them as effective measurements and tools to test the students' speaking skills. Whereas, two of them have opted for the interview and dialogue tasks.

**15. How do you assess your students' speaking skills (state the main points you rely on to fulfil successful speaking assessment)?**

This question attempts to indicate how EFL teachers can assess the speaking skills of their students. They suggest that they assess various aspects of the spoken language. Therefore, the results reveal that three of the respondents assess the oral performance of their students through questions related to the topic; and four of them assess their students' speaking skills in terms of grammar mistakes. Four of them evaluate the students' pronunciation, fluency and cohesion mistakes; whereas three of them assess the vocabulary. Accordingly, it can be noticed that accuracy comes in the first rank, because students are still unable to perform orally the correct form of utterances to express their ideas in a coherent and meaningful manner. However, fluency is related to the natural use of the target language which can be developed only by active participation.

**16. Could you suggest some recommendations for EFL students to overcome the speaking difficulties?**

This question was designed to obtain ideas about the potential remedies for low achievements of speaking skills. The informants suggest different strategies to help their students overcome their speaking difficulties. The following are the main propositions:

- Insist on using a dictionary.
- Extensive reading of novels and short stories in order to learn new vocabulary that will be eventually used in their conversations and writings.
- Listening to native speakers (tapes, conversations to discover different styles of pronunciation).
- Students have to rely on themselves ( be autonomous) and practise the TL outside the class because of the restricted time of classroom sessions.
- They can use internet to download videos and songs to become more acquainted with authentic pronunciation and appropriate use of vocabulary.
- Outloud reading is also effective in showing correct use of vocabulary in context. The fact that it is done outloud gives the chance to the learner to be conscious of his mispronunciations and make the necessary corrections.
- Practise a lot with classmates inside and outside the classroom.
- Taking risks through speaking in front of public as well as overcoming fear of making mistakes.
- Working in groups.
- Insist on reading and possibly memorizing many words, then they can try to use them in various conversations.

- Advising them to feel free and speak fluently because fluency in the FL should precede accuracy.
- Try to connect all the skills together.

## **2. Students' questionnaire**

### **2.1. Description of Students' questionnaire**

The whole questionnaire deals with the different factors that affect the students' oral production. The introductory paragraph explains the objectives of the questionnaire and gives instructions to the students about the procedure they should follow.

This questionnaire is designed for second year English students at the Department of Biskra University of the academic year 2015-2016. The sample represents 60 students from three groups. They have been chosen randomly to investigate the linguistic factors that affect their participation in the oral expression course. This questionnaire involves two types of questions: "closed" and "open-ended" questions. Closed questions require the students to answer by "Yes" or "No" or to tick up the right answers from a number of options; and the open-ended questions which require them to offer their personal opinions about some subjects and justify their choices. The whole questionnaire is composed of (19) questions which are classified in a logical way under (04) sections, each of them deals with a particular aspect:

**Section one:** It is dedicated to obtain students' background information " gender, age, and why did they choose to study English. It contains 03 questions.

**Section two:** It deals with the speaking skill as a significant element in this research. Therefore, this section contains 07 questions.

**Section three:** It deals with the oral expression course as the main element to investigate the EFL students 'participation. This section seeks information about the students' amount of participation and aims to find out the problems that hinder their participation during the oral expression course. It contains 07 questions.

**Section four:** This section analyses the different useful techniques that the students prefer to work with. Moreover, it aims to identify the activities that are the most enjoyable for the EFL students during the oral expression course. It contains 03 questions.

## 2.2. Data collection and analysis of students' questionnaires:

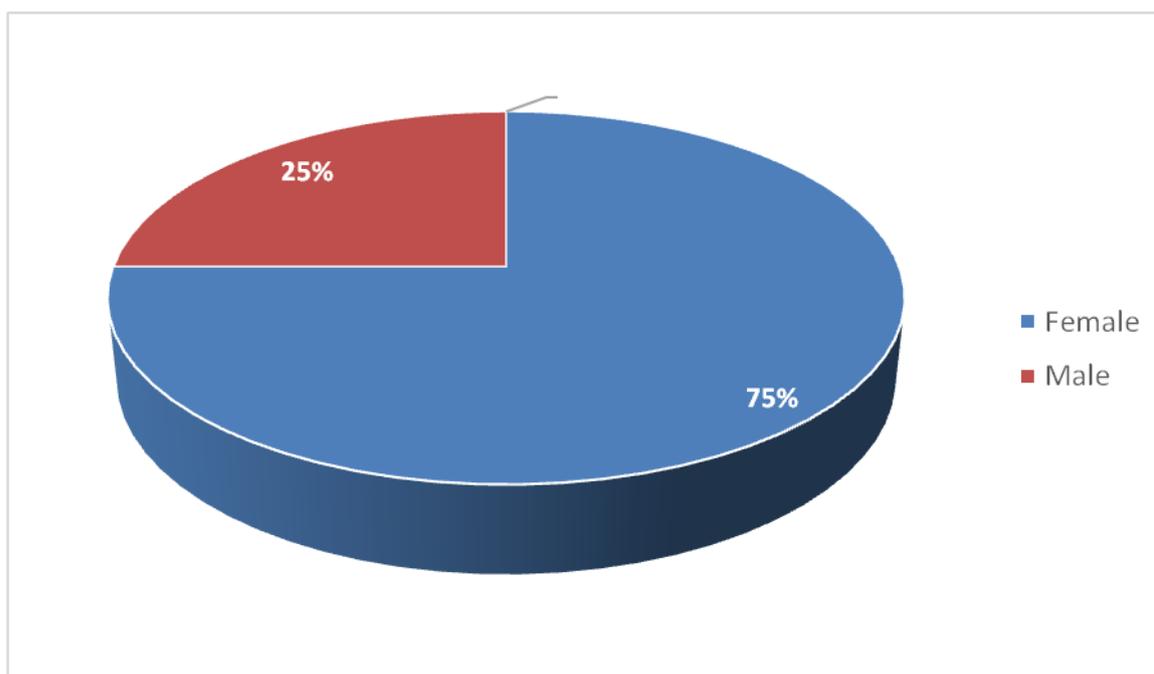
### Section One: Background information

The present section investigates the background information of the students.

#### 1. Gender

Sex	Number	Percentage
Female	45	75%
Male	15	25%
Total	60	100%

**Table1:**Students'gender



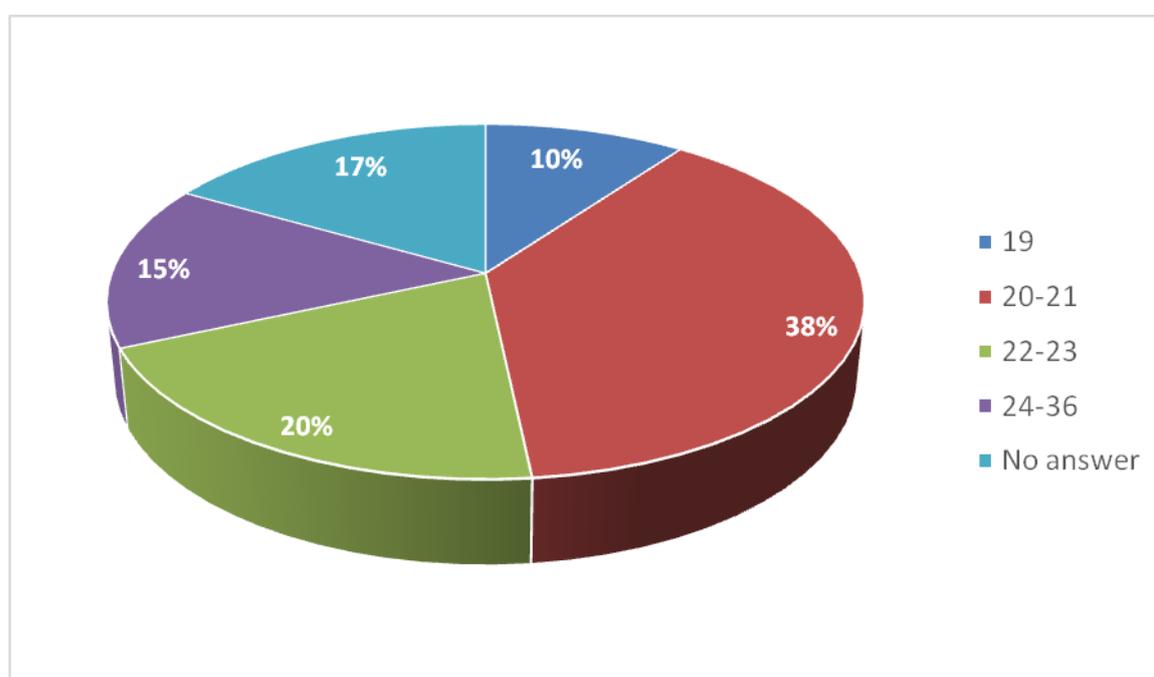
**Figure1:**Students'gender

The results show that the sample is composed of the two sexes: 45 females and 15 males; so that this research embodied all the population to collect various data.

## 2. Age

Age	Number	Percentages
19	6	10%
20-21	23	38,33%
22-23	12	20%
24-36	9	15%
No answers	10	16,67%
Total number	60	100%

**Table2:** Students' age



**Figure2:** Students' Age.

The results indicate that the ages of the students are varying from 19 to 36 years old. It shows that the majority (38,33 %) is 20 to 21 that attends the school and never failed. The second category (20%) represents the students who might repeat one or two years that are 22 to 23. The percentage (10 %) represents the youngest students who went to school very early (19), whereas, (15%) represents the aged students who may be

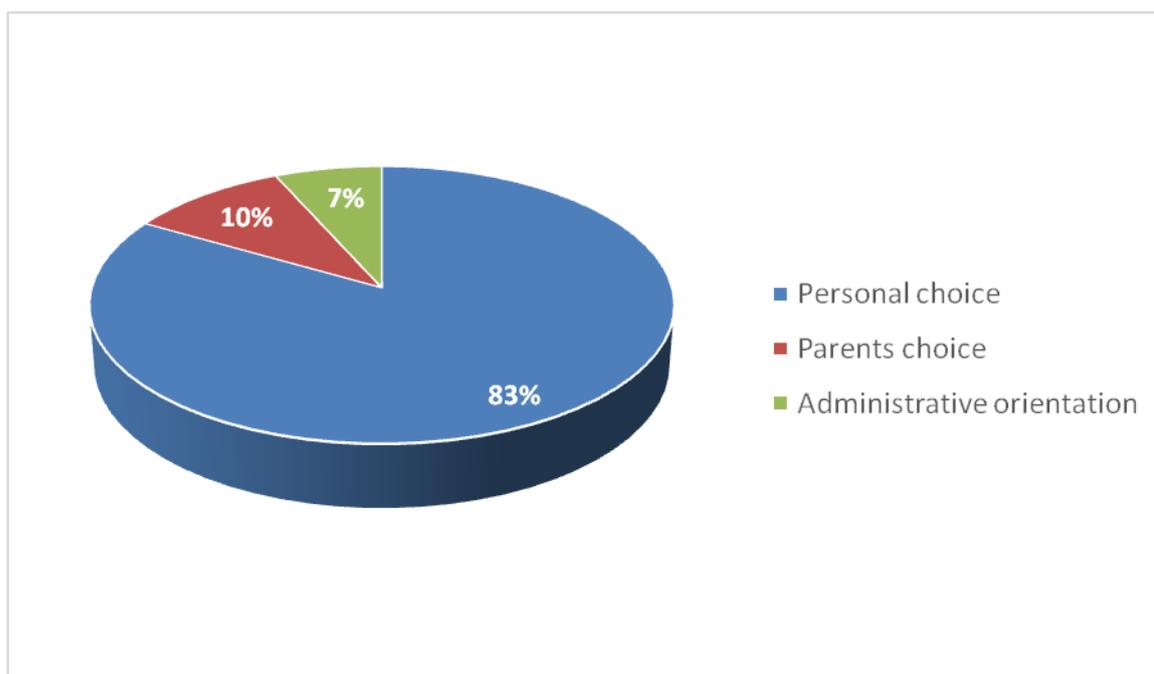
repeat more than twice, changed their field of study or study English as additional diploma (24 to 36). Finally, ten students (16,67%) do not give their age.

### 3. Why did you choose to study English?

- a. Personal choice
- b. Parents choice
- c. Administrative orientation

Options	Responses	Percentages
Personal choice	50	83,33%
Parents choice	6	10%
Administrative orientation	4	6,67%
Total	60	100%

**Table3:** Reasons behind studying English



**Figure 3:** Reasons behind studying English

We have asked this question to perceive the learners' willingness to study English. These results represent the main reason that leads the students to choose studying English. A quick glance at the table above reveals that the majority of the students are not obliged to study English, i.e. it was their personal choice, this indicates

that they that they are willing to learn this language. However, some students (10%) have chosen English because it was the decision of their parents. In the other hand, only 3 students (6.67%) study English since it was an administrative orientation, this could be due to their obtained grades that did not give them the opportunity to study another branch that they want instead of learning the English.

**If it was your choice, would you please present the reasons?**

This question is asked in order to have an idea about the reasons that lead learners to study English language and to assess its importance. From the results we can notice that the majority of the students responded that English is an international language that enable them to communicate. A great number of them stated that they have chosen it because they will need it in their future studies, job, and travelling. However, a small number mentioned that they just like it.

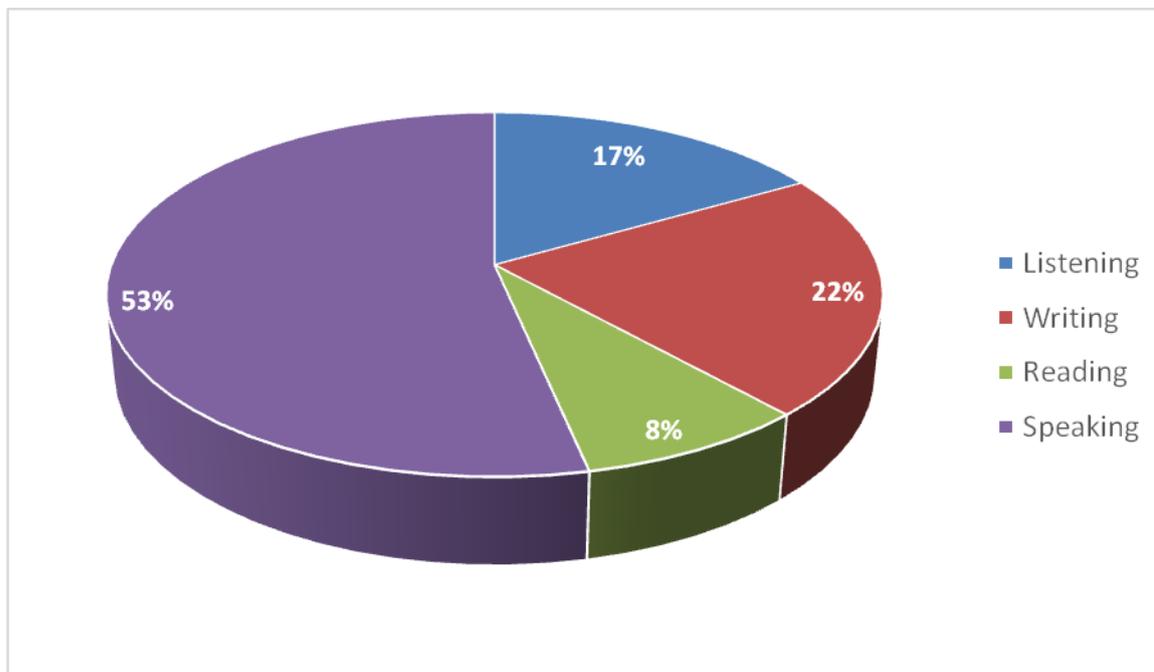
**Section Two: Speaking skill**

**4. Which of the following skills do you prefer to develop?**

- a. Listening
- b. Speaking
- c. Writing
- d. Reading

Options	Answer	Percentages
Listening	10	16,67%
Writing	13	21,67%
Reading	5	8,33%
Speaking	32	53,33%
Total	60	100%

**Table4:** Skills that students prefer to develop



**Figure 4:** Skills that students prefer to develop

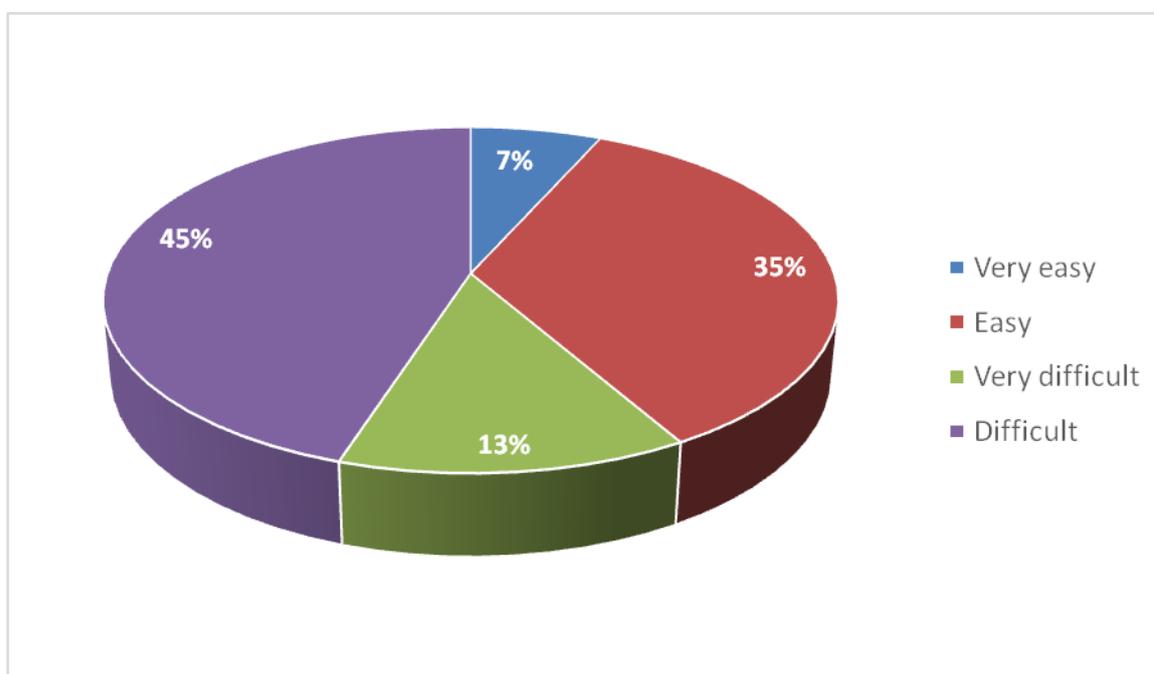
This question is designed to know the most important skill. Also, we have asked this question in order to recognize whether the students are aware of the importance of speaking skills to be developed in parallel with the other integrative skills. The results show that most of students (56, 32%) choose speaking. This indicates that more than the half of percentage is about speaking skill which reveals that speaking is the most preferable skill for the students to be developed. Then, writing comes in the second place (20, 69%), however listening presents(12,64%). Finally, reading is classified as the last skill to be developed. This table shows the interest of the students in developing the productive skills (speaking and writing) especially speaking rather than developing the receptive ones. Importantly, these results exhibit the high classification of speaking skill in comparison with the other skills(listening, reading and writing) since all the students regardless their level of proficiency, they show a positive point of view by emphasizing their significant need of speaking English in many fields for future use since English is the world language Which helps them to communicate with each other as well as with people from other countries, also because mastering a given target language is a good investment to have further chances as studying or working abroad, It can also help them to foster all the aspects of the language which involve pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar structure.

**5. Speaking English is :**

- a. Very easy
- b. Easy
- c. Very difficult
- d. Difficult

Options	Responses	Percentages
Very easy	4	6,67%
Easy	21	35%
Very difficult	8	13,33%
Difficult	27	45%
Total	60	100%

**Table5:** Students' attitude toward speaking English



**Figure5:** Students' attitude toward speaking English

This question is asked in order to be aware of the different point of views of the students on speaking English. The table presents that (45%) of the student's response that speaking English is a difficult; whereas (35%) views that it is easy to speak English.

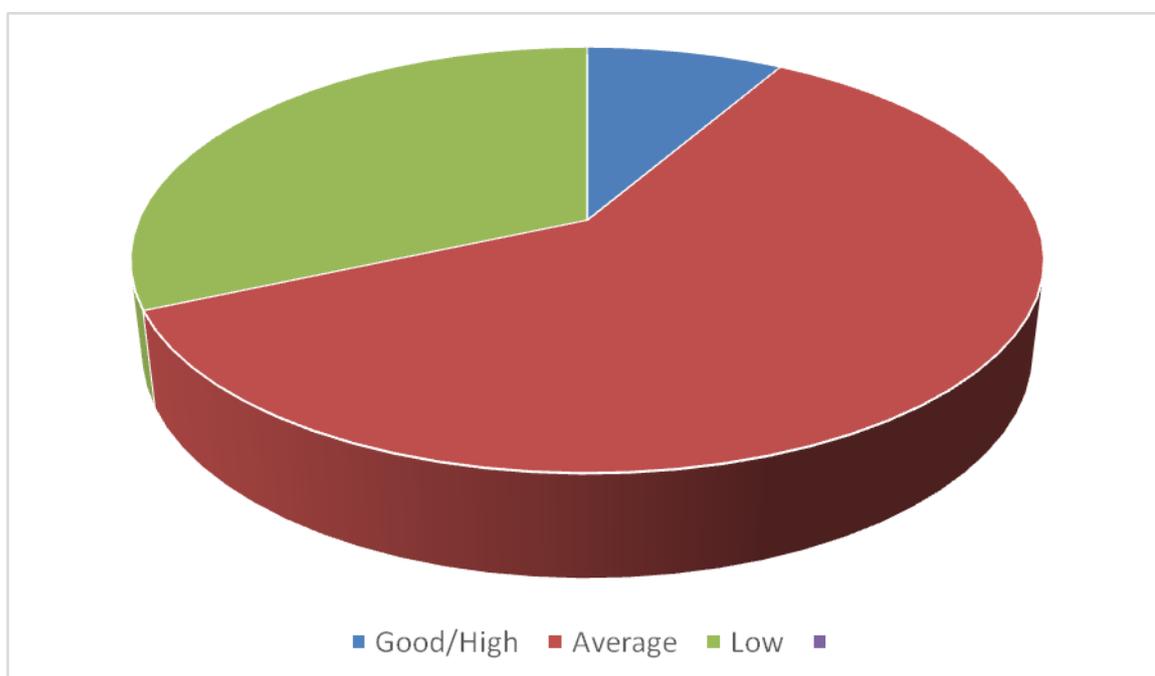
However, eight students (18,33%) consider speaking English as a very difficult task. In the other hand, only 4 students from the whole sample (6,67%) say that it is very easy to speak English.

**6. How do you evaluate your speaking level?**

- a. Good or High
- b. Average
- c. Low

Options	Responses	Percentages
Good or high	5	8.33%
Average	36	60%
Low	19	31,67%
Total	60	100%

**Table6:** Students ‘evaluation on speaking ability



**Figure 6:** Students’ evaluation on speaking level

This question aims to evaluate the students' speaking level. Most of them (60%) present an average level. Whereas, (31, 67%) answer that they have a low level, and only six students (8.33%) say that they have a good or high level in speaking.

**7. How many hours do you study oral expression per week?**

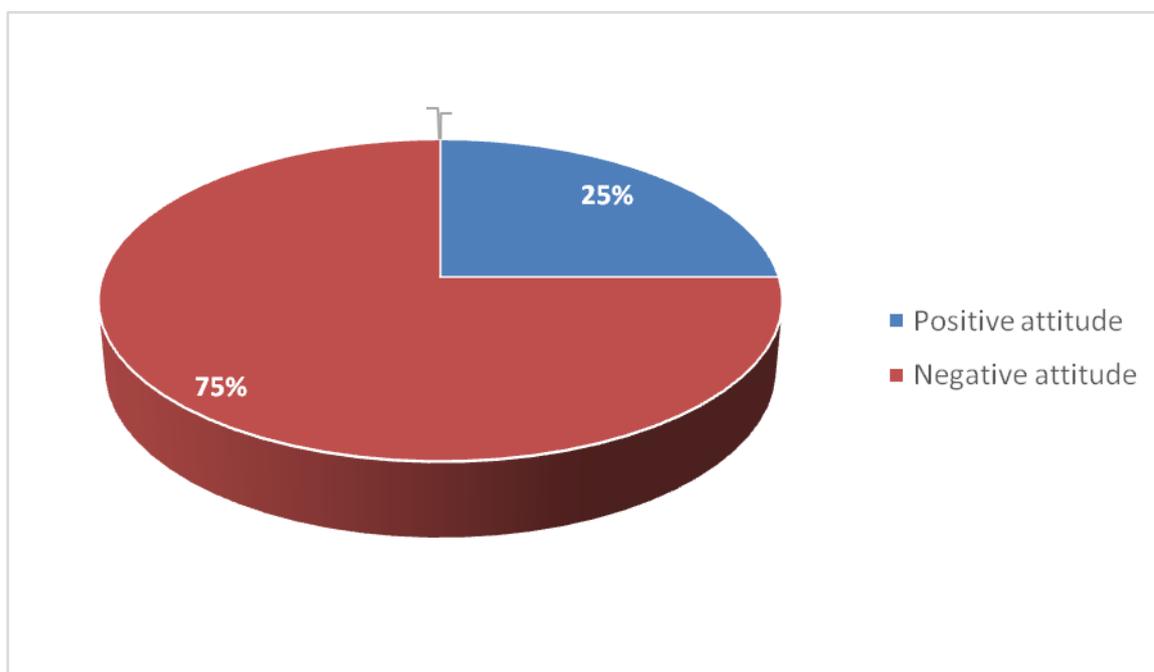
Students have only two oral expression sessions per week which means 3 hours.

**8. Do you think the amount of time allotted to oral expression course is enough?**

- a. Yes.
- b. No, more time is needed.

Learners' Attitudes	Frequency	Percentage
Positive attitude	15	25%
Negative attitude	45	75%
Total	60	100%

**Table 7:** Learners' attitude towards the time devoted to oral Expression Lessons



**Figure 7:** Learners' attitude towards the time devoted to oral Expression Lessons

The results show that the majority of the students (75%) mention that the amount of time allotted to oral expression is not enough and this may be due to their feeling that

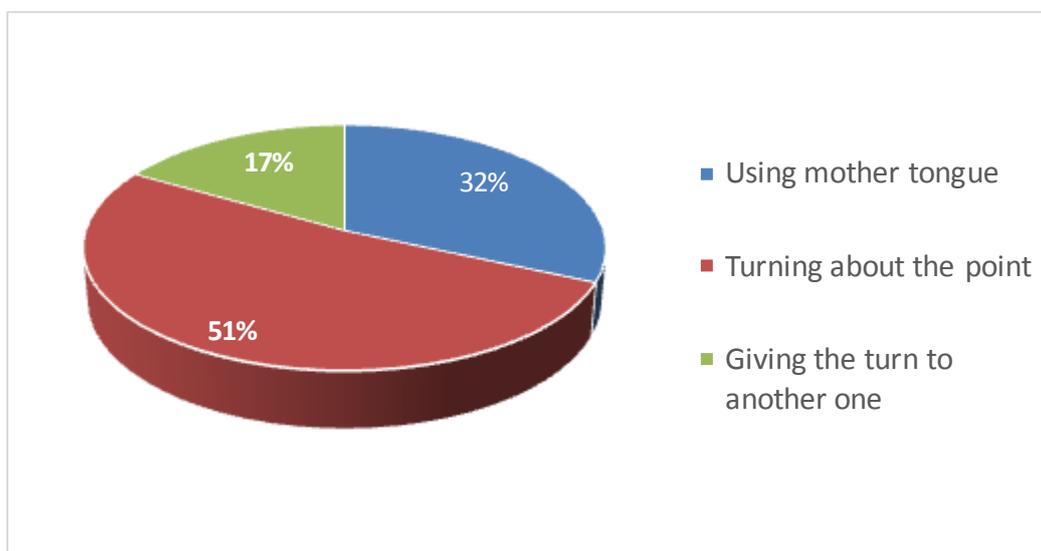
speaking skill is underestimated, and it should have more attention, while (25%) of the learners think that this amount of time (3 hours per week) is enough.

**9. You want to convey a certain message during your turn of speaking, and you find a difficulty to get to the point?**

- a. You use your mother language instead.
- b. You keep turning about the point.
- c. You give your turn to another one.

The Compensatory Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Using mother tongue	19	31,67%
Turning about the point	31	51,66%
Giving the turn to another one	10	16,67%
Total	60	100%

**Table 8:** The Compensatory Strategies Used by the Learners When Facing Oral Difficulties.



**Figure 8:** The Compensatory Strategies Used by the Learners When Facing Oral Difficulties.

This question aims to perceive the different compensatory strategies that can be used. Approximately a half (51, 66%) of the students keeps turning about the point when they face a difficulty to convey their intended message. While, (31, 67%) of the learners

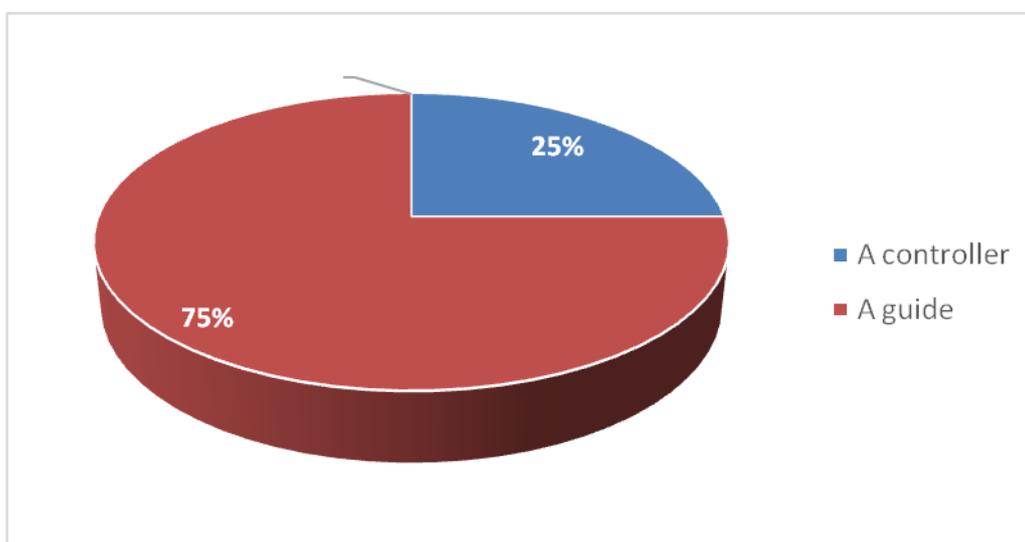
use their mother tongue and (16,67%) of the learners give their turn to another one. According to these results, and as stated in section two (1) within the first chapter, we can notice that the majority of the students use the achievement strategies (paraphrasing, guessing strategy through interfering of the mother language) whereas others use reduction strategies; such as giving their turn to another student or keeping silent.

**10. How can you describe the teacher’s role in the classroom?**

- a. Controller.
- b. Guide (organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, observer).
- c. Both.

Options	subjects	Percentage
A controller	15	25%
A guide	45	75%
Total	60	100

**Table 9 :** The students’ description for their teachers



**Figure 9:** The students’ description for their teachers

This question aims to confirm the role that should be adopted by the teacher in the classroom when practicing speaking. In EFL class, teachers should be guides or facilitators in order to create smoothness and progress of communication for their students. Not controllers who create nothing, just anxiety and inhibition in the classroom. From the results recorded in the table, we can notice that (75%) of the

participants describes their teacher as a guide, whereas (25%) of the participants opt to describe their teacher as a controller (dominant). The majority of students confirm that their teacher plays both roles of controller and guide interchangeably as it should be fulfilled. This result goes hand in hand with the point discussed in the section two (2) within the first chapter.

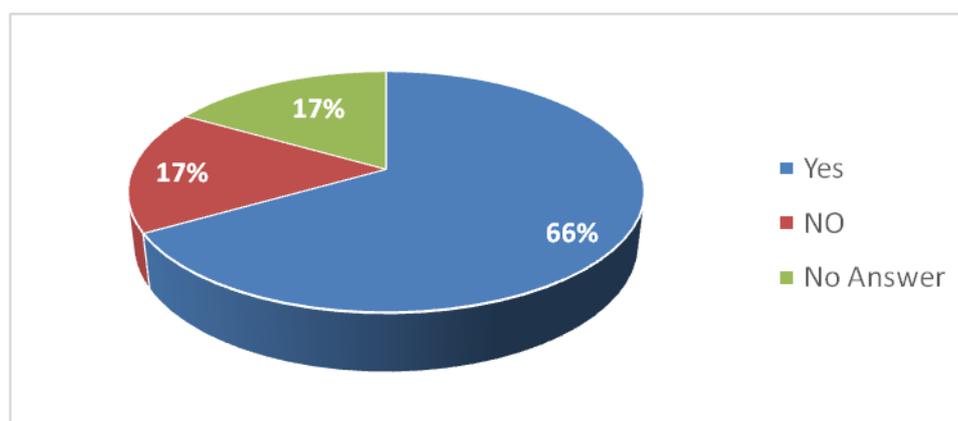
### Section Three: EFL Students' Participation Difficulties in Oral Expression Course

#### 11. Do you like the oral expression course?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Options	Responses	Percentages
Yes	40	66,67%
NO	10	16,67%
No Answer	10	16,67%
Total	60	100%

**Table 10 :** Students' attitude toward Oral Expression course



**Figure 10:** Students' attitude toward Oral Expression course

The majority of the participants (66,67%) state that they like to attend oral expression course. This percentage indicates that they may be motivated to participate effectively and to learn well. The second percentage (16,67%) indicates the answers of the students who do not like oral expression course. The last one represents 10 students

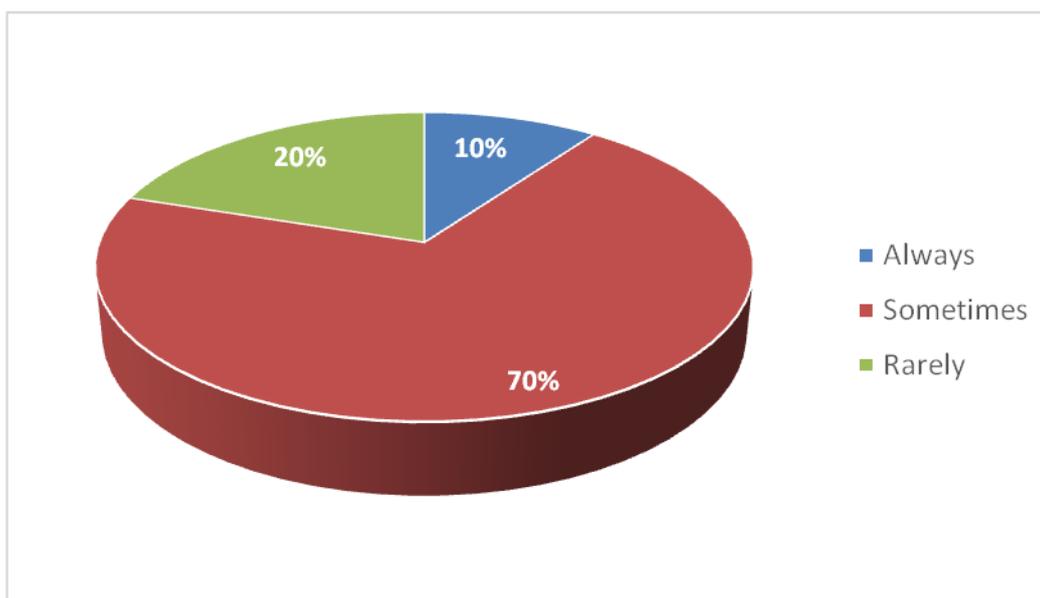
(16, 67%) who do not answer. This means that they do not have any feeling of like or dislike toward the oral section.

**12. How often do you participate in the oral expression course ?**

- a. Always
- b. Sometimes
- c. Rarely

Options	Responses	Percentages
Always	6	10%
Sometimes	42	70%
Rarely	12	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 11 :** Frequency of students’ participation in oral expression course



**Figure 11:** Frequency of Students’ participation in oral expression course

This question aims at measuring the students’ participation during the oral expression course. The result shows that most of the students (70%) respond with ‘sometimes’. However, 20% from the total percentage indicate that they rarely participate in oral course that is a sign of lack of interest and/or they are facing some problems that hinder their participation. However, only six respondents replied they always speak and

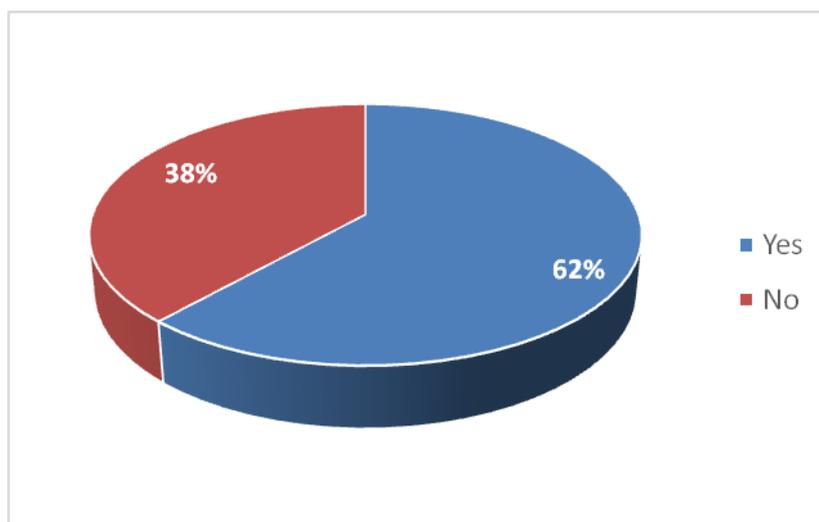
participate during the lesson.

**13. Are you afraid of participating in the oral expression course?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

Options	Responses	Percentages
Yes	37	61,67
No	23	38,33
Total	60	100

**Table 12:** Students' attitudes towards oral participation



**Figure 12:** Students' attitudes towards oral participation

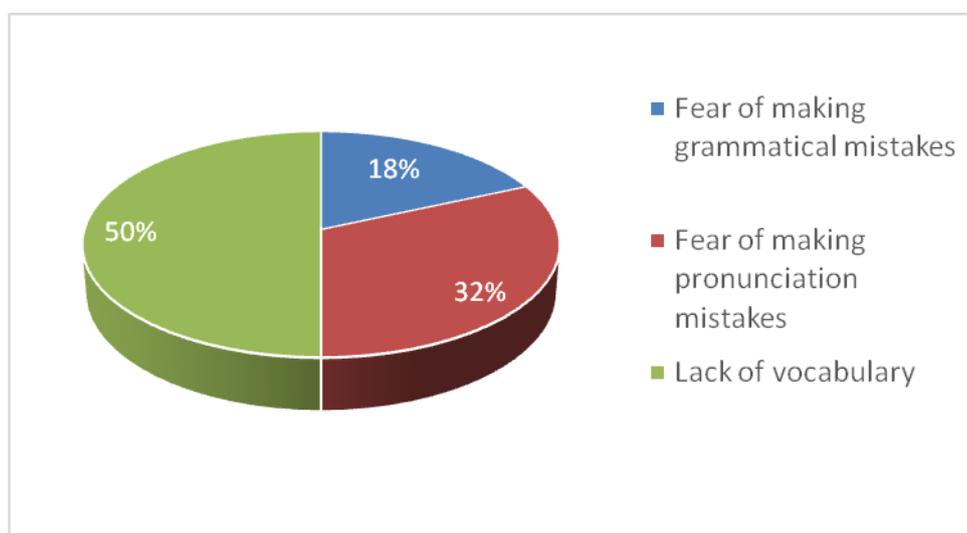
Through this question, we intend to determine whether the students feel afraid about speaking and participation during the oral course. Therefore, we find the following results which demonstrate that (38, 33%) of the students are not afraid. They consider themselves able to participate. By contrast, (61, 67%) shows that the majority are afraid and uncomfortable they participate. This might be due to of several reasons: linguistic problems and other problems. We propose the following question in order to offer the possible answers.

**If yes, is it because**

- a. Fear of making grammatical mistakes
- b. Fear of making pronunciation mistakes
- c. Lack of vocabulary

Reasons	Responses	Percentages
Fear of making grammatical mistakes	11	18,33%
Fear of making pronunciation mistakes	19	31,67%
Lack of vocabulary	30	50%
Total	60	100%

**Table 13 :** Linguistic barriers



**Figure 13:** Linguistic barriers

This question aims to highlight some linguistic problems that hinder the students' participation. The results show that approximately half of the participants (50%) do not participate due to the lack of vocabulary. And (31,67%) responded that they do not participate because they are afraid from making pronunciation mistakes; whereas, the rest of the percentage (18,33%) asserted that they are afraid from making grammatical mistakes.

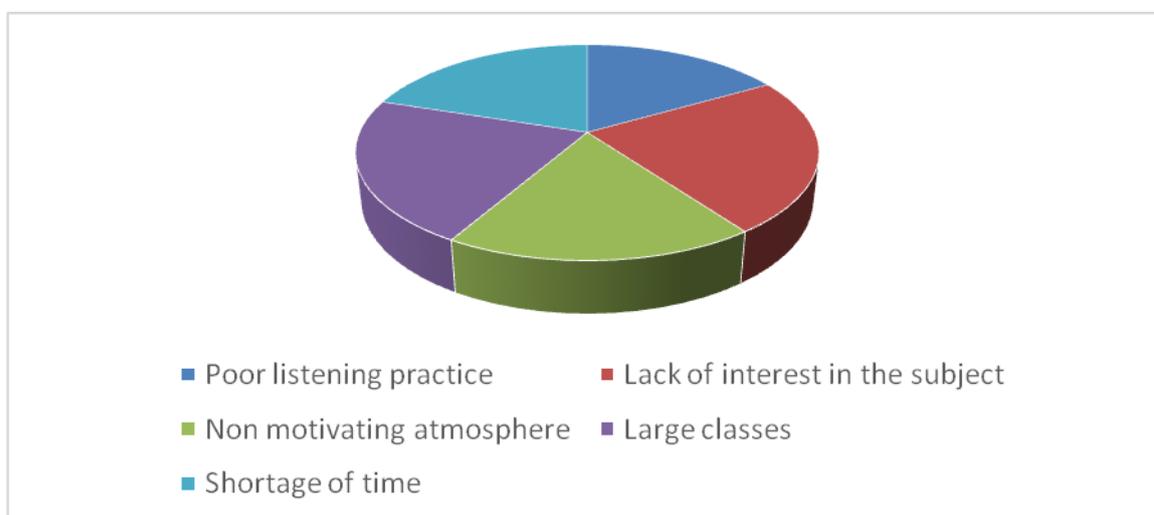
**Or you do not participate because of**

- a. Poor listening practice (misunderstanding the other speakers)

- b. Lack of interest in the subject
- c. Non motivating atmosphere
- d. Large classes
- e. Shortage of time

Options	Response	Percentages
Poor listening practice	10	16,67%
Lack of interest in the subject	14	23,33%
Non motivating atmosphere	11	18,33%
Large classes	13	21,67%
Shortage of time	12	20%
Total	60	100%

**Table14:** Other barriers



**Figure14:** Other barriers

The options aim to discuss why the students do not participate in the classroom, and they are provided with a list of possibilities from which they are asked to choose the appropriate option that fit their situation. Ten students (16,67%) do not participate because of poor listening practice (misunderstanding the other speakers), fourteen (23,33%) are because of the uninteresting topic that is discussed in the classroom .Whereas (18,33%) has indicated that they are afraid due to the non motivating atmosphere, and the rest of the sample (21,67%) indicate that large classes and (20%) say that shortage of time do not allow them to participate and decrease their opportunities to speak during the oral expression course. These results do not only demonstrate the answers of the students who are afraid about participation, but also the

answers of the students who say that they are not afraid about participation. This means that both students who do participate and do not participate face the same problems.

**14. In your opinion, what are the most useful strategies that you can use to overcome your speaking difficulties?**

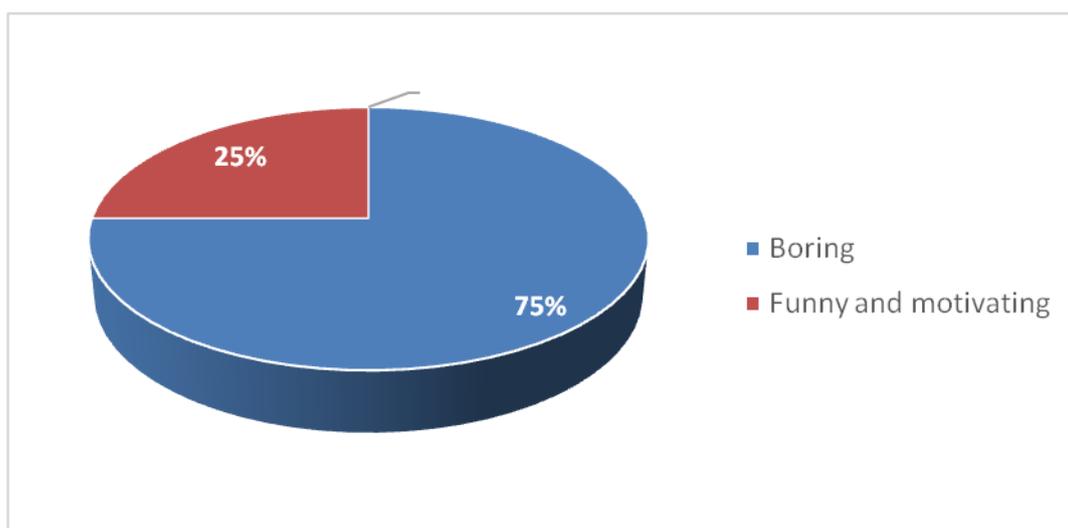
This question aims to explore the possible strategies that can be used by the students to overcome their speaking difficulties. The participants responded that they focus on reading books, novels, newspapers, talking with native speakers, and listening to music and disusing with their classmates and teachers, recording their speaking to be aware of their pronunciation mistakes and doing research, expressing themselves to build up high self-confidence, using dictionaries to ameliorate their pronunciation and enrich their vocabulary.

**15. What type of atmosphere does your teacher create in the oral session?**

- a. Boring
- b. Funny and motivating

Options	Subject	Percentages
Boring	45	75%
Funny and motivating	15	25%
Total	60	100

**Table 15 :** The class’s atmosphere.



**Figure 15:** The class’s atmosphere

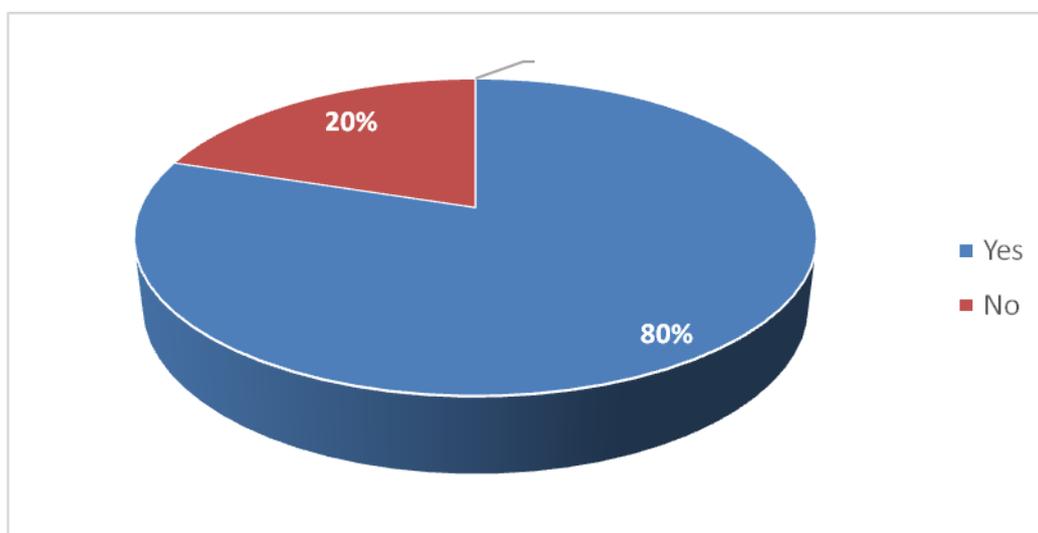
Some students (25%) found the atmosphere in oral expression funny and motivating. This can be considered as helping factor for learning process. We expect that they affirmed so because of the relationship that exists between them, their classmates and their teachers. Then, the other students (75%) stated that the general atmosphere of the classroom is boring. This can be a discouraged factor for the students to their participation during the lesson.

**16. Do you use your mother tongue inside the classroom ?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

Option	Responses	Percentages
Yes	48	80%
No	12	20%
Total	60	100%

**Table 16 :** Mother tongue use.



**Figure16:** Mother tongue use

For the purpose to know whether the EFL students use their mother tongue (Arabic language) inside the classroom, the results showed high tendency towards the use of the mother tongue for the majority of the students (80%) who affirmed that they

use English and their mother tongue (Arabic) depending on their abilities or inabilities to participate. In the other hand, about 20% of them prefer using only the target language (English) in spite of making mistakes.

The students are asked to provide some suggestions to elicit the various reasons behind their use or disuse of mother tongue. These reasons can be listed as follows:

**a. Justification of mother tongue use inside classroom:**

- The use of mother tongue is the easiest and more comfortable way to the students than English.
- They can understand each other and exchange their ideas quickly.
- They feel shy and not motivated to speak in English.
- Students are lacking to the vocabulary in English language.
- They are anxious of making pronunciation mistakes and being criticized.
- They have low level in English.

**b. Justification of students who do not use the mother tongue inside the classroom:**

- They do not use their mother tongue because they believe that the oral expression course gives them the opportunity to practice the target language, so they have to profit from this chance.
- They have to speak English even though they make mistakes and try to correct them through time.
- Students aim to speak and learn English as much as good.

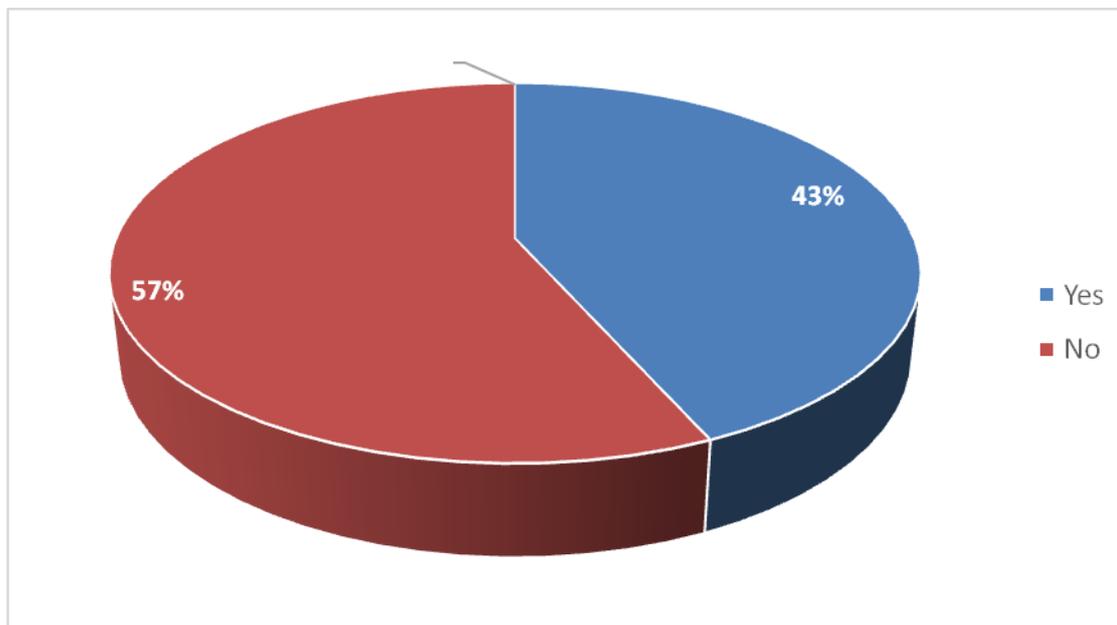
**17. Do you develop your English outside the classroom (Reading books/listening to news, watching films, interaction with friends) ?**

- a. Yes, I do
- b. No, I do not

**If yes, write down how please**

Option	Responses	Percentages
Yes	26	43,33%
No	34	56,67%
Total	60	100%

**Table 17:** Students' practice of English outside the classroom



**Figure17:** Students' practice of English outside the classroom

The results obtained denote that (56,67%) from the sample state that they do not develop their speaking in English outside the classroom because English is not their mother tongue and their surroundings do not speak it, Whereas, the remaining number (43,33%) of the informants state that they were in touch with English outside the classroom and this through; watching TV such as movies, documentaries, programs, cartoons and series, ...etc, listening to music and radio programs as declared by all students, using the internet as well as playing games or communicating with native speakers through E-mail, chat, blogs...etc, or mainly browsing researches, studies or e-books, reading books, magazines, dictionaries to learn new words...etc (all in English language).

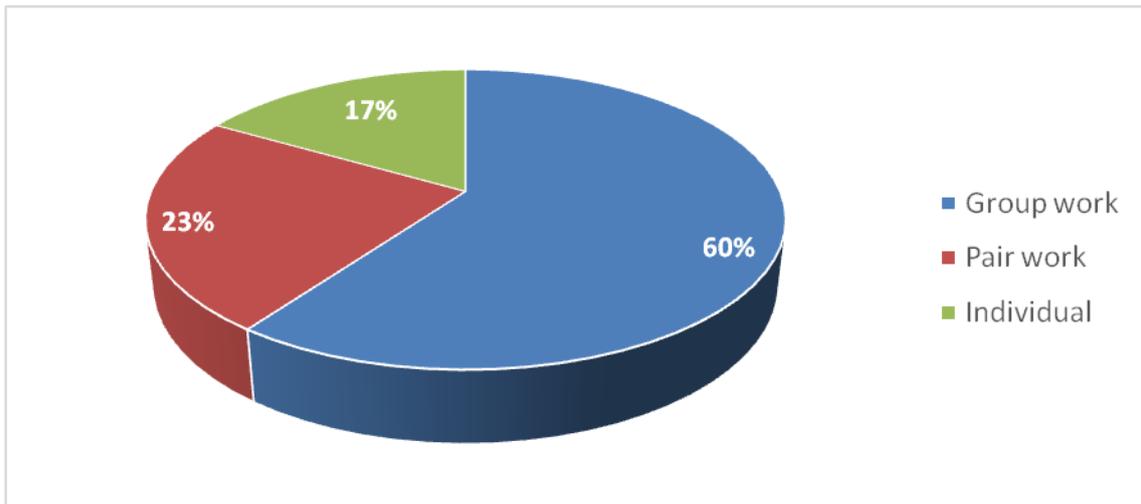
#### **Section Four: Oral Expression Activities and Techniques**

##### **18. What classroom techniques do you mostly prefer?**

- a. Group work
- b. Pair work
- c. Individual

Option	Responses	Percentages
Group work	36	60%
Pair work	14	23,33%
Individual	10	16,67%
Total	60	100%

**Table18:**Techniques students prefer more to use



**Figure 18:** Techniques students prefer more to use

From the above table, it is noticed that more than half of the students (60%) prefer working in groups. Whereas, (23,33%) of the students prefer working in pairs, and (16,67%) of the sample indicate that the most preferable for them is individual work.

**Because?**

**a. Here are the reasons stated by the students who prefer working in groups :**

- To exchange opinions between each other.
- Working in groups is more motivated and enjoyable.
- Share their thoughts and ideas.
- To be more sociable with their classmates.
- Make the activities easier.

**b. The different reasons of the students who opt working in pairs:**

- Learn from each other.
- Help each other and exchange information.
- Feel at ease to work with their friends.
- Concentrate more in the work.

**c. The justification of the students who prefer working individually:**

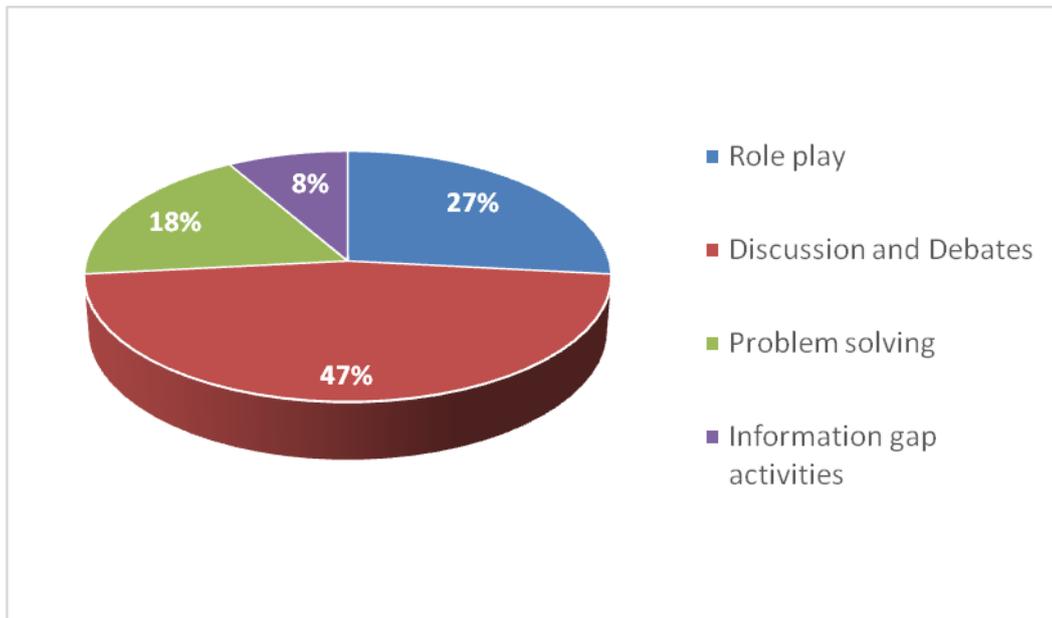
- To check his /her own level in oral course.
- To work seriously.
- To choose whatever they want.
- Anxious students make problems for them.
- Individual works make them feel at ease.

**19. What are the activities that motivate you to participate?**

- a. Role play
- b. Discussion and Debates
- c. Problem solving
- d. Information gap activities

<b>Options</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Role play	15	26,67%
Discussion and Debates	29	46,67%
Problem solving	11	18,33%
Information gap activities	5	8,33%
Total	60	100%

**Table19** : Activities motivate the students' participation



**Figure 19:** Activities motivate the students' participation

This question is intended to know the classroom activities that motivate the students' participation. The results recorded in the table show that each student has his own preferable activity during oral expression class. In the first place comes discussion and debates activity with (46,67%) that is considered as a significant way to speak more since they are talking about various topics. Moreover, (26,67%) declared that role play is the best activity for them, whereas, (18,33%) prefers problem solving activity. On the other hand, the rest of participants (8,33%) opt information gap activity as the most favourite activity for them. It is noticeable that the students do not choose only the stated activities but also they restate other kinds of activities as the following answers.

### **Other activities?**

The students mention other preferable activities that motivate them to participate which are: telling stories ,songs, dialogue, monologues, poems, idioms, telling jocks, describing pictures, voice chat, riddle, individual performance.

### **20. Could you please provide some suggestions that the teacher can use to help you to ameliorate your speaking level in English?**

The last question aims to elicit information from the students about their suggestions concerning what they expect from their teachers to use in order to help them improving their oral English level. Their answers encompass that their English teachers can help them through: giving the opportunity for each one to participate, trying to speak

only in English, respecting the students' level, giving them interesting topics to be discussed to improve their vocabulary and pronunciation, using attractive methods and exercises to make them more motivated, being comprehensive and patient, explaining difficult items in Arabic, providing more oral practice, and making more efforts to explain oral activities, presenting a various range of activities, making jokes, communicating with them, giving positive feedback and encouragement, creating friendly and funny environment.

### **3. General observations**

The results of the questionnaires that have been administered to second year students and teachers of the oral expression course confirm our research hypotheses. As a matter of fact, the outcomes indicate that EFL students face many difficulties that hinder their participation in the classroom. All of the students recognize the significant role of speaking skill and consider it as a major element in the oral expression course that should be developed. Moreover, the majority of students prefer and enjoy the course of oral expression because they are not obliged to follow any restricted instructions as in the other courses.

Most of the students whether they apprehend or not classroom participation face the same problems which vary from the linguistic obstacles to the pedagogical problems. They affirm that the lack of vocabulary represents a remarkable problem along with grammar and pronunciation mistakes. Besides, teachers play a significant role in enhancing students' participation through the type of atmosphere they create and the opportunities they give. Moreover, the reliance on the mother tongue within the classroom can cause problems for the students. In addition, we have demonstrated that pair and group activities constitute appropriate solutions to their problems in enhancing their amount of speaking and building up their confidence. On the other hand, tasks like role play, discussion and debates, problem solving activity and information gap activities contribute in the elimination of speaking difficulties of the EFL students.

From another perspective, we can advance that the time allocated and the students' number aggravate participation problems for both teachers and students. Therefore, teachers are prevented from achieving their programmed objectives and unable to give satisfactory opportunity to their students during the lesson. However, they try hard to use effective techniques and strategies that enhance the students' participation.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter is concerned with some reliable data about the students' participation difficulties and the teachers' perception of these problems. We also study certain effective techniques and activities that enhance learners' participation and overcome speaking difficulties during the oral expression class. The information was gathered through the submission of a questionnaire to second year English students at Biskra University. In addition, an interview has been organized with six teachers of oral expression of second year at the same University.

On the whole, the analysis of the results of both the questionnaire and the interview indicate a number of interesting observations. When we try to understand students' problems to speak in the classroom, we found that they are confronted with linguistic factors that prevent them from using the oral English. Moreover, the data collected from the questionnaire and the interview prove and confirm our hypothesis about the students' participation difficulties. It means that EFL students face many problems that prevent them from improving their speaking skills and participate in classroom activities. The proposed solutions state the different activities and techniques to solve these problems and to increase their participation.

## **Suggestions and Recommendations**

In an attempt to contribute in the solution of students' speaking problems, we present some useful suggestions and recommendations.

### **1. For teachers**

- ✓ Teachers should create a relaxed environment in the classroom in order to encourage students' participation.
- ✓ They should choose interesting tasks and activities to motivate students.
- ✓ A special emphasis should be put on collaborative work, authentic materials, and shared knowledge.
- ✓ Teachers should reduce their speaking time in the classroom and increase students' oral contributions.
- ✓ Indicate positive feedback when commenting on a student's response like saying "your presentation was really great", "it was a good job".
- ✓ Teachers should improve the students' self-confidence.
- ✓ EFL Teachers should encourage the students to speak the target language both inside and outside the classroom through the preparation of speaking skills tasks
- ✓ They should be aware how to behave with psychological variables (problems of motivation, shyness, and misbehaviour).
- ✓ Teachers must not correct students' pronunciation mistakes very often while they are speaking because overcorrection will hamper their speech.

### **2. For Students**

Students also play an important role in the classroom because without them, there is no learning process. So, they need to:

- ✓ Follow the instructions that the teacher suggests in the classroom.
- ✓ Ask the teacher for some clarifications such as the repetition of the difficult points.
- ✓ Develop their own speaking strategies through listening to native speakers and taking notes.
- ✓ Practice the speaking skill outside the classroom.
- ✓ Be able and ready to answer the teachers' questions.
- ✓ Do activities out of the walls of University to enhance their level in speaking production.

- ✓ Share their thoughts and opinions with their classmates in order to practice speaking.
- ✓ Ask their teacher to guide them when they are confused about certain task (extra activities).
- ✓ Do home assignments that can help them ameliorate their pronunciation, master further grammatical structures and enrich their vocabulary.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

Our research work is mainly based on exploring the linguistic difficulties that affect the EFL students' speaking production in oral expression courses. Our main purposes are to detect the obstacles that second year LMD students face during the oral expression sessions and; then, to propose some alternative recommendations that can be used by the EFL teachers and their learners to achieve a successful teaching/learning process and to eliminate these problems. To answer the research questions, we have adopted the descriptive method.

The structure of the research work is divided into two principle parts: the first part is constituted of two chapters; the first chapter provides a general overview about speaking skills. The second chapter analyses some problems that face EFL students' participation in the oral expression courses precisely the linguistic and the pedagogical difficulties. The second part of this study is a field investigation. In this part, we analyze the data gathered with a questionnaire that submitted to students of second year at the English Department of Biskra University and interviews of teachers of the oral expression course. The outcomes of the questionnaire and interviews confirm our hypotheses stipulate that students confront linguistic and pedagogical barriers due to the nature and context of the teaching process.

To conclude, one may say that speaking is a complex skill which is difficult to teach. We hope that much more future research will be conducted on how to faster the teaching and learning of the English language with a specific focus on speaking.

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## Teachers' Interview

*Dear teachers,*

The present interview attempts to focus on your teaching experience of speaking skills. This dissertation deals with the linguistic factors influencing EFL students' oral skills.

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions by putting a tick (✓) on the appropriate box and specify your comment whenever necessary. Your answers are very important for the validity of the present research work.

*Thank you very much in advance.  
Researcher*

### Section One: Oral Expression Course

1. How many years have you been teaching oral expression?

..... Years

2. Do you follow any particular program in teaching speaking?

a. Yes

b. No

If 'yes', what are your objectives behind this program?

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

3. What are the sequential steps(methodology) do you often undertake for teaching oral expression?

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

**4. How do you evaluate your students' level of oral skills ?**

- a. Excellent
- b. Good
- c. Average
- d. Low

**Section Two: EFL Students' Participation Difficulties**

**5. Do all of your students speak during the oral expression course?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**6. If it is 'no', based on your observation, what are the difficulties that hamper students from speaking? (You can choose more than one)**

- a. Fear of making grammatical mistakes
- b. Fear of making pronunciation mistakes
- c. Poor vocabulary
- d. The subject is not interesting
- e. The use of mother tongue
- f. Poor listening practice
- g. None motivating atmosphere

**Others, specify,.....**

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

**7. What are the mistakes in which majority of students fail when they speak (grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, pronunciation... )?**

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

**8. Do you try to create a motivating classroom atmosphere?**

a. Yes

b. No

**If yes, say why? .....**

.....

.....

.....

**9. How many students do you have per-group?**

..... Students Per-group

**10. Do you think that students' number is appropriate for accomplishing your objectives?**

a. Yes

b. No

**Why ?.....**

.....

.....

.....

**11. How do you evaluate the time allotted to the oral expression lecture?**

a. Enough

b. Not enough

**Why ?.....**

.....

.....

.....

### Section Three: Oral Expression Activities and Techniques

**12. How do you increase your students' participation?**

- a. Group and pairs work
- b. Choose interesting topics
- c. Allow using mother tongue

Others.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**13. What are the speaking activities that you concentrate on in order to create an effective participation?**

- a. Role-plays
- b. Discussion and debates
- c. Problem solving
- d. Dialogue/ Conversation
- e. Information gap activity
- f. Story telling based activities

Others.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**14. What is the most preferred tasks for testing your students' speaking ability?**

- a. Dialogue
- b. Interview
- c. Report on something read
- d. Picture analysis and interpretation
- e. Summary
- f. Story reconstruction

**15. How do you assess your students' speaking skills (state the main points you rely on to fulfil successful speaking assessment)?**

- a. Pronunciation
- b. Fluency, cohesion mistakes
- c. Asking /answering questions related to the topic
- d. Vocabulary
- e. Grammar mistakes

**16.** Could you suggest some recommendations for EFL students to overcome speaking difficulties?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**MOHAMED KHIDER UNIVERSITY OF BISKRA  
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
ENGLISH BRANCH**

**Dear students,**

We would like to ask you some questions concerning linguistic difficulties and their effects on learners 'speaking production. We have observed that learners face many difficulties in expressing themselves in the target language. Certainly, your answers will be very important for the validity of our research work.

You are kindly requested to answer the following questionnaire. So, please, tick the appropriate box (✓) and make full statements whenever necessary.

*Thank you very much in advance.*

*Your colleague: Aleb Selma*

**Section One: Background Information**

**1. Sex:**

a. Male

b. Female

**2. Age: .....**

**3. Why did you choose to study English?**

a. Personal choice

b. Parents choice

c. Administrative orientation

**If it was your choice, would you please present the reasons.**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Section Two: Speaking Skill

4. Which of the following skills do you prefer to develop?

- a. Listening
- b. Speaking
- c. Writing
- d. Reading

5. Speaking English is

- a. Very easy
- b. Easy
- c. Very difficult
- d. Difficult

6. How do you evaluate your speaking level?

- a. Good or high
- b. Average
- c. Low

7. How many hours do you study oral expression per week?

.....hours.

8. Do you think that the amount of time allotted to oral expression is enough?

- a. Yes
- b. No, more time is needed

9. You want to convey a certain message during your turn of speaking, and you find difficulties to get to the point?

- a. You use your mother language instead
- b. You keep turning about the point
- c. You give your turn to another student

10. How can you describe the teacher's role in the classroom?

- a. Controller
- b. Guide (organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, observer)
- c. Both

### Section Three: EFL Students' Participation Difficulties in Oral Expression Course

11. Do you like oral expression course?

a. Yes

b. No

12. How often do you participate in the oral expression course?

a. Always

b. Sometimes

c. Rarely

13. Are you afraid of participating in the oral expression course?

a. Yes

b. No

If yes, is it because

a. Fear of making grammatical mistakes

b. Fear of making pronunciation mistakes

c. Lack of vocabulary

Or you do not participate because of

a. Poor listening practice (misunderstanding the other speakers)

b. Lack of interest in the subject

c. Non motivating atmosphere

d. Large classes

e. Shortage of time

14. In your opinion, what are the most useful strategies that you can use to overcome your speaking difficulties?

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

15. What type of atmosphere does your teacher create in the oral

sessions?

a. Boring

b. Funny and motivating

**16. Do you use your mother tongue inside the classroom?**

a. Yes

b. No

Why?.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**17. Do you develop your English outside the classroom (reading books/listening to news, watching films, interaction with friends)?**

a. Yes, I do

b. No, I do not

**If yes, write down how please:**

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

### **Section Four: Oral Expression Activities and Techniques**

**18. What classroom techniques do you mostly prefer?**

a. Group work

b. Pair works

c. Individual

Because.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**19. What are the activities that motivate you to participate?**

- a. Role play
- b. Discussion and Debates
- c. Problem solving
- d. Information gap activities

**Others**.....  
.....  
.....

**20. Could you please provide some suggestions that the teacher can use to help you to ameliorate your speaking level in English?**

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

## الملخص

يواجه متعلمو اللغات الأجنبية صعوبات في التعبير عن أفكارهم بصورة فعالة لذلك يتجنبون التواصل بها حتى لا يشعرون بالإحراج. تحاول هذه الدراسة أن تكتشف مواطن الصعوبة لدى المتعلمين أثناء دروس التعبير الشفوي في قسم اللغة الانجليزية لجامعة بسكرة. وقد افترضنا خلال إجرائنا لهذه الدراسة أن الطلبة لا يشاركون في دروس التعبير الشفوي نظرا لما يواجهونه من مشاكل لغوية كنقص المفردات ' عدم نطقها بشكل صحيح ' بالإضافة إلى أخطاء القواعد. زيادة على هذا توجد هناك مشاكل بيداغوجية كاحتفاظ الأقسام و نقص الحجم الساعي بالإضافة إلى افتقاد مواضيع التعبير الشفوي ما يثير الاهتمام لدى المتعلمين. ولقد تمت دراسة عينة من طلبة السنة الثانية قسم انجليزية جامعة بسكرة بالإضافة إلى أساتذتهم. وقد تم اعتماد أسلوب الوصف في هذه الدراسة والذي يظم متغيرين:العوامل المؤثرة كمتغير افتراضي مستقل وتحديث اللغة الأجنبية كمتغير افتراضي غير مستقل والعلاقة بينهما.وقد نصت النتائج المتحصل عليها على أن هناك عاملين يؤثران على مشاركة الطلبة في التعبير الشفوي.أخيرا نقترح بعض التقنيات و النشاطات الناجعة التي يمكن أن تساعد طلاب اللغات الأجنبية في تخطي الحواجز التي تعيقهم في اكتساب هذه اللغة.