

An Investigation to Some Speaking Skill Difficulties Encountered by Students of English Department at Faculty of Education, Misurata University



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ABSTRACT: This study deals with some difficulties which sometimes encounter students of English during speaking the target language. This paper discusses some of these problems and focuses the light on the main causes of students weakness in this skill. A questionnaire was conducted to gather some information about this issue. Fifty students majored in English language at Faculty of Education, Misurata University shared in conducting this study during the Academic Year 2018/19. The data was analyzed by excel program. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the students always feel worried about committing mistakes during speaking activities and they agreed that the material used for teaching skill do not suite their desires. They also blame their teachers for not encouraging them to do more practice outside the classes. The study recommended some items to be adopted during dealing with this skill to avoid committing many problems by the student.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Studying English as a foreign language demands students keen on trying to write and speak it fluently accurately. Speaking seems to be the most important one among the four language skills (Ur,1996). Speaking a foreign language is a difficult task. To speak the target language you need to be accustomed with its grammar, vocabulary, phonology and some semantic issues. Of course these language elements are related. According to Tatham and Morton (2006:273), many people report that they can understand speech which presented in front of them by others but they cannot represent themselves easily by using the foreign language.

1.2 Statement of the problem:

The majority of the English Department students at Faculty of Education face many problems during speaking English because of different kinds of difficulties.

1.3 Significance of the study:

This study gets its significance from the fact that there are many difficulties encountered by English majored students during dealing with using speaking skill of the target language.

1.4 Aim of the study:

This paper aims at investigating some problems which sometimes encounter the students of English in the speaking activities. An attempt will be done to answer the following questions:

- 1 Do students of English Department speak English well or not?
- 2 What are the main difficulties which may get in the way during speaking English by the students?

1.5 Hypotheses of the study

It is hypothesized that students of English Department at Faculty of Education speak English fluently, but they sometimes have some difficulties which hinder them to do that easily. This problem is due to the affect of different factors such as lack of vocabulary, lack of grammatical and phonetic elements, lack of opportunity to use English outside the classes, students being worried when they speak English and the techniques used by the teacher for teaching the speaking skill.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The definition of anxiety and classification:

Anxiety can appear in every person's life. Early in the nineteenth century, Freud (1836, cited in Spielberger, 1983) the pioneer who firstly proposed that anxiety was a kind of unpleasant feeling associated with experience, physiology, and behaviors. Later in

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the twentieth century, psychologists described anxiety as “a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object” (Hilgard, Atkinson & Atkinson, 1971, cited in Scovel, 1978: 134). Anxiety has been classified into three types: “state anxiety, trait anxiety and situation-specific anxiety” (Ellis, 2008: 691). Spiel Berger (1983) defined state anxiety as an experience of apprehension at particular time in a particular situation. Scovel (1978) stated that trait anxiety is a long-lasting tendency to feel anxious. Situation-specific anxiety only occurs in a certain situation (Ellis, 2008). Some psychologists added that “achievement anxiety and facilitative-debilitative anxiety” from other perspectives as well (Horwitz, 2010: 154).

Numerous empirical studies have shown that anxiety exists in almost every aspect of second /foreign language learning (cf. Hilleson, 1996, et al., 1986 Jackson, 2002, Kitano, 2001, Phillips, 1992, Price, 1991, Young, 1991). Speaking publicly in the target languages has been found to be particularly anxiety provoking, even for learners who feel little stress in other aspects of language learning (Horwitz, 1995, Macintyre & Gardner: 1989). The speech of anxious students is often accompanied by blushing, trembling hands, a pounding heart, and headaches (Cohen & Norst, 1989). Anxious students are less likely to volunteer answers or participate in oral classroom activities (Ely, 1986). Some students with high levels of language anxiety may even have a mental block (Tobias, 1979). They also display avoidance behaviors such as skipping classes and postponing their homework (Argaman & Abu-Rabia, 2002).

2. The sources of listening anxiety:

There are various sources and factors that cause students' learning anxiety. Horwitz and Cope (1986:127) proposed three sources of language learning anxiety, “communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation”. Communication apprehension refers to people who are too shy to communicate. People who suffer from test anxiety feel afraid of failure. Fear of negative evaluation means people try to avoid any situations of being evaluated by other people. Besides, based on the analysis of learners' diaries, Bailey (1983) found that peer pressure could be considered as another very important factor to cause anxiety in learning, which happened after the comparison with high-proficiency students' in classes. Teachers can also be a source of anxiety as their questions often put students in an embarrassing situation when they fail to answer exactly (Ellis & Rathbone, 1987).

3. Language learning strategies:

Listening can be considered as a prerequisite issue for oral proficiency. Speaking does not constitute communication unless what is said is comprehended by others. In our daily life, listening is used far more than someone reads, and five times more than anyone writes (Rivers, 1981). Understanding how learners apprehend the meaning of what is said in front of them will contribute to develop teaching methods as well as to enhance learners' listening skills. Proposed six groups of language learning strategies that can be applied to the four language skills. These groups of strategies are divided into broad categories: direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies include cognitive strategies which are highly helpful for understanding and recalling the language material, memory-related strategies which enable learners to connect one language item or concept with another, and compensation strategies that help learners to overcome knowledge gaps and continue to communicate naturally. Indirect strategies consist of metacognitive strategies which help learners in regulating and managing the learning process overall, affective strategies which help learners to develop the self-confidence and perseverance necessary for learners to involve actively in language learning, and social strategies which help in increasing interaction and understanding the target culture (Oxford, 1990). The direct strategies function effectively when they are backed up by the indirect strategies (ibid). Alternative categories have been suggested by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), that the types of strategy learners use vary depending on the learner's different factors, such as degree of awareness, stage of learning, age, gender, ethnicity, learning style, personality traits, motivation, purpose for learning a language. Of all the variables, learner's language proficiency is received considerable attention by numerous studies and is considered one of the primary ones which most affect the relationship between learner's strategy use and their success in mastering a second and foreign language (Rubin, 1987). Most studies indicate that students at a higher proficiency level have a tendency to use various strategies more efficiently than those at a lower level (Green & Oxford, 1995, Lan & Oxford, 2003, Oxford, 1993).

4. Language learning anxiety

Until the years of 1980s learner's anxiety has been known as one of the most important affective variables which influence foreign language learning. Foreign language anxiety had been considered as a very complex construct that can be defined in a number of ways before. Horwitz, and Cope (1986) proposed a specified theory about second language learning anxiety. They claimed that foreign language anxiety is composed of not only other anxieties such as communication, apprehension, and social evaluative anxiety, but a complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning process (ibid, 1986). More recently proposed a specific definition to language anxiety as the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically related to second language contexts, including listening and learning in language learning. A number of studies have had an attempt to investigate the effect of anxiety on foreign language learning. The cognitive psychologists have also tried to examine the anxiety effect based on an information processing model and found that foreign language learning is interfered by a high level of anxiety (cf. Gardner & Macintyre, 1991, Madsen, Brown & Jones, 1991).

CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSES

The results revealed through the questionnaire analysis are as follows:

1- Did you get listening enough activities during secondary school study.

Table (1)

Type of answer	Percentage (%)
Yes	34%
No	66%

As shown in the given table, most of the participants about (66%) said that they didn't get enough listening activities during secondary school time, which caused the main problem for them, On the other hand only(34%) of them said Yes for this point

2- My lecturers clarify the topic before dealing with listening activities.

Table (2)

Type of answer	Percentage (%)
Always	34
Sometimes	50%
Rarely	16%
Never	0%

This table indicates that many of the students about (50%) admitted that their lecturers clarified the topic from time to time before dealing with listening activities which is the highest percentage, whereas some of them about (34%) said always. However, there were few students about (16%) said rarely, whereas one of them (0%) said never.

3- When the speaker pronounces words differently I find it difficult to understand.

Table (3)

Type of answer	Percentage(%)
Always	67%
Sometimes	17%
Rarely	10%
Never	6%

The presented items are connected with the quality of the language used by the speakers it is clear that many students always faced a difficulty in understanding if the dialect is unfamiliar for them about (67%) of them. Furthermore, as (17%) supported this point of view by saying sometimes and (10%) said rarely, while (6%) said never.

4- EFL students in general have poor listening activities.

Table (4)

Type of answer	Percentage(%)
Always	33%
Sometimes	40%
Rarely	27%
Never	0%

This table indicates that most of the students about (40%) said that they sometimes had lack of listening skill activities which is the highest percentage, and (33%) said always. While only (27%) said rarely, and none of the participants (0%) said never

5- Speed can be considered as the main problem of understanding spoken language.

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Table (5)

Type of answer	Percentage (%)
Always	30%
Sometimes	33%
Rarely	24%
Never	13%

This table shows that about (33%) said sometimes faced this difficulty which is the main problem, and (30%) said always. In contrast the percentage of (24%) of respondents said rarely, and only (13%) said never.

6- Grammatical items weakness makes me confused during listening activities.

Table (6)

Type of answer	Percentage(%)
Always	57%
Sometimes	17%
Rarely	26%
Never	0%

Most of the students about (57%) said that the grammatical items always caused problem for them in this skill. While (17%) of them agreed that sometimes they faced this problem. However, few of the students (26%) said rarely. and None of them said never.

7- It is difficult to summarize the main idea of the topic when I listen

Table (7)

Type of answer	Percentage(%)
Always	57%
Sometimes	27%
Rarely	10%
Never	6%

Most of the participant (57%) agreed that they found it difficult to summarize the main idea of the topic during listening. and some of the them about (27%) said sometimes. On the other hand (10%) of the participant said rarely and only (6%) said never they encountered this problem

8- I get nervous if the listening passage is read just once during listening exams.

Table (8)

Type of answer	Percentage (%)
Always	50%
Sometimes	40%
Rarely	0%
Never	10%

This table shows that (50%) of the students always got lack when they had listened to the passage only one time during doing listening tests, and (40%) said sometimes, while only (10%) said rarely but none of them (0%) said never.

Findings:

According to what had been presented above, it can be said that,

1. Most of the participants about 67% said that they didn't get enough listening activities during secondary school time which caused the major problem for them because they were not familiar to this issue.
2. Many students 50% admitted that their lectures did not clarify the topic in front of them before starting with listening activities.
3. Many students faced a difficulty in understanding the speech because of the different dialect used by the speakers in front of them 66%.
4. The majority of the participants about 33% agreed that the speed can be considered as a main problem of understanding spoken language.
5. About 50% of the students thought that the grammatical items weakness always made them confused during dealing with listening activities which hinder their understanding the lesson.

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6. These issues made most of the students about 57% agreed that they found it difficult to summarize the main idea of the topic during listening activities.

7. About 50% of the students said that they always felt nervous during dealing with the test of listening skill which in turn caused the anxiety.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4-1 Conclusion

Language learners are often overwhelmed by too much anxiety in the process of learning foreign languages. Since listening skill is one of the essential skills which should be mastered and used for communication used in real life situation. Anxiety is one of the important factor that hinder students' listening capacity and performance in EFL classrooms, therefore, it should be paid much attention by both teachers and students. This study has discussed some factors which may cause listeners' anxiety in listening, such as teachers and students' factors teaching procedure...etc. Of course there are many other factors under different conditions which cannot be completely discussed here.

According to the results of the study it can be concluded that the EFL English students major at Faculty of Education suffer from listening anxiety during dealing with listening skill activities which caused general weakness and lack in mastering the presented activities in front of them. It showed that the defect is due to teachers' techniques used for teaching listening skill and other factors.

4-2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- 1- since listening skill activities are very important in language teaching process, it is necessary to lay stress on the suitable techniques used for this issue.
- 2- The listening skill should be considered from early stages of education.
- 3- Students of English major should try to practice their language specially in this skill whenever get chance.
- 4- A great amount of vocabulary and special expressions should be taken into account by the students.
- 5- The students should be aware of many grammatical issues used in language communications.
- 6- The students need to listen to different language varieties used by native speakers in order to be accustomed with the high speed use of the target

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