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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY EFL STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN LEARNING AND TEACHING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS

MASTER PROJECT

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all materials and results that are not original to this study.

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ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY EFL

STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS

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The current study investigated the problems of EFL students toward learning the English speaking skills. This study aimed at investigating the problems that face EFL students in learning the English speaking skills. Moreover, it is aimed at identifying the problems that face EFL instructors in teaching the English speaking. The study concentrates on three main research questions: what are the problems faced by students in learning the English speaking skills? What are the problems that EFL instructors are confronted with when teaching the English speaking skills? What are the speaking strategies used by the EFL instructors in teaching the English speaking skills? The results of the study revealed that there were a number of hindrances that diminish the learners from mastering the English speaking skill adequately; some of which is related to lack of opportunities to practice using the language either inside or outside the speaking classes. Other encumbrances are expressed in terms of affective problems, and linguistic problems. As for the second and the third research questions of the study, the results clarified that the instructors come across different problems that hinder their way from teaching the English speaking skill appropriately. These problems are expressed in terms of the scarcity of the teaching material inside the college, the large

number of the students compared with the shortage of time given to the speaking lectures and the learners' low level of proficiency.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL ……………….. English as a foreign language

ESP ……………….. English for specific purposes

CLT ……………….. Communicative Language Teaching

ESL ……………….. English as a Second Language

L2 ……………….... Target Language, 2nd Language

L1 …………..….. Mother Tongue, 1st Language

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Based on the history of foreign language teaching and learning speaking has always been considered an essential skill to be mastered compared with the other language skills. In addition, many language learners consider the speaking ability as the measure of knowing a language. In consequence, they define fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. Besides, most of the learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) regard speaking as a paramount skill to be acquired; hence, they evaluate their progress in terms of their accomplishments in this skill. (Ansari, 2012). However, by reviewing the related literature, it is still reasonable to say that the EFL learners in general and the Arab EFL learners in particular face everlasting problems in learning this salient skill effectively such as the lack of vocabulary knowledge, high level of anxiety and lack of self-confidence when speaking.

Moreover, Ulas (2008) considered speaking as the most common and important mean of providing communication among human beings. Success in life is matched to the language learners' ability to succeed in learning the speaking skills. Therefore, it could be stated here that the effectiveness of the learner's communication is measured by his/her ability to master the speaking skill. Generally, nowadays most schools and universities focus on developing the oral communication skills (listening and speaking) of the students because at a large number of workplaces, employers are looking for applicants who are proficient in English speaking and listening skills. (Kulawanit et al.2005 cited in Janudom & Wasanasomsithi, 2009).

Consequently, the aim of the present study is to determine the problems of learning English speaking skills encountered by EFL students at the university of Al-Zawia. Moreover, it seeks to identify the problems that hinder EFL Libyan instructors under investigation from teaching English speaking skill as well as identifying the strategies used by them.

Shumin, (2002) stated that self-steam, empathy, anxiety and emotions are considered as the affective factors which determine the learner's success or failure in learning a second or foreign language. Shumin also referred to emotional influences that may affect the learners mastering of the English speaking skill; they mainly include apprehension of making errors and lack of motivation. Furthermore, Shumin argues that when learners speak a foreign language in front of native speakers, they feel anxious. They try to avoid committing mistakes that results in being tongue-tied and they find no words to say. Additionally, the learners fail to speak because they always focus on the way by which their listeners judge them. This is supported by Jianing (2007) who accounts for the same matter stating that EFL students seek to avoid the mockery of the others; they try not to speak in front of the class. This way, the learners would not be able to improve or eliminate the feeling of being afraid when they speak English.

Supporting the above opinion, Tseng (2012) stated that there are many studies that support the idea that language anxiety is considered as the main source of the learners' apprehension of committing errors as well as the negative comments of the learners' peers. Moreover, Tseng concluded that the fear of making mistakes prevents some learners from expressing themselves adequately when they speak in front of the others.

As for the strategies that can be used by the teachers when teaching speaking, Ladousse (1987) cited in Afana (2012) stated that role-play has a great impact on students' performance

which is considered as an educational technique used in teaching language. Using this technique creates a good atmosphere in the classroom and brings entertainments and animation that provoke the creativity of the learners.

Further, role play is defined as a creative, dramatic teaching strategy in which participants are assigned roles to act out in a given situation. It reinforces learners to imagine themselves in real situations; so that it develops learners' thinking of L2 and prepares them to communicate and interact in different social contexts that they may be exposed into their real life (Andryani, 2012).

Another strategy that can be used when teaching speaking is drama. Drama is a kind of activity that is based on the word of "let's pretend"; i.e. it requires learners to imagine themselves in different social contexts with the purpose of developing their communication skills and in order to prepare them for the authentic social interaction. (Susan Holden, 1982 cited in Zyoud, 2011).

Dougill (1987) and Taylor (2000) stated that drama prepares learners to engage in real life situations since it teaches the language depending on creating realistic situations inside the classroom. Additionally, it enables language teachers to teach the language in an active, communicative and contextualized way. Besides, it reinforces the learners' self-confidence and maintains their motivation since it creates a classroom atmosphere that is full of fun and entertainment. Therefore, using drama techniques engage feelings and attention and enrich the learners' experience of using the language. All these views seem to confirm the benefits of drama in the enhancement of students' speaking abilities.

Significance of the study

The significance of the present study derives from the fact that it seeks to determine the problems and difficulties encountered students when speaking. Moreover, Latha and Ramesh (2012) emphasized the importance and necessity of examining the factors affecting the oral communication and the components underlying speaking proficiency.

Limitation of the study

As a limitation in this study, I have no data on my study and all the data that I used were second recourses. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the time period and the small participant size will denote that the findings of this study cannot be generalized. Finally, the psychological impact on the participants is not integrated in the study which is very important in such these studies.

Statement of the problem

This study will be conducted to explore the perceptions of EFL learners concerning their difficulties in using CLT (communicative language teaching) method and the perceptions of EFL teachers concerning their students' difficulties of using CLT. Considering the significance of CLT method in EFL (English as a foreign language) programs, it is vital to realize and use the most appropriate and effective educational teaching method and providing better materials that facilitate learners' ability to master this particular method.

Johnson (as cited in Basta, 2011) argued that not all the learners have the tendency and willingness to deal with the process of learning via cooperation and through social learning environment based on interaction. The difficulties in using CLT method in EFL classes are not only among secondary and high school students only but also among institutions and colleges? as well. They cannot engage and talk in second language. The reason behind this is perhaps the fact that the teaching method in Iraq heavily relies on old and classical methods

instead of focusing on language use and functions to develop student's elements? to engage with each others in the environment. There is a lack of chance for students to practice their amount of knowledge that is learnt in class and outside the classroom. Ahmed and Rao (2013) stated that the differences between ESL and EFL are one of the factors that lead to bias in adopting the CLT approach in non native environment.

Aim of the study

The purpose of this study is to identify the problems faced by students when learning English speaking skills as well as EFL instructors' problems.

Research Questions

1. What are the problems faced by students in learning the English speaking skills?

2. What are the problems that EFL instructors are confronted with when teaching the English speaking skills?

3. What are the speaking strategies used by the EFL instructors in teaching the English speaking skills?

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the related literature concerning the English speaking skills. It includes definitions, importance, problems and difficulties that EFL learners face; and then it concludes with some of the useful strategies of teaching the English speaking skill.

Definition of speaking

Speaking is defined as the process in which a speaker interacts with other people to convey his/her thoughts, attitudes or points of view towards certain issues. Therefore, speaking is considered as one of the essential language skills in which the speakers are required to improve certain elements including the communicative competence, pronunciation (i.e. intonation, stress, and pitch), grammar, vocabulary, fluency, accuracy, comprehension and gesture in order to be considered as successful communicators. (Khamkhien, 2010; Jondeya, 2011).

Thornbury and Slade (2006, p. 5) define speaking as a multifaceted construct; they further indicate that speaking is a complex skill since it is widely spread in our daily language usage. Moreover, Bashir et al., 2011 defined speaking as a productive skill which is very complicated when compared with other skills. They go on saying that it is a process where the speaker seeks to covey the intended message orally, through the words of mouth and it is not only uttering words through mouth (as cited in Afana, 2012).

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Jondeya (2011) states that speaking is more than using the right sounds in the right patterns of rhythm and intonation, but also includes choosing the right words and inflections in the right order to convey the intended message.

In the same context, Channey (1998) cited in Rahimy and Safarpour (2012) and Afana (2012) describes speaking as a social activity or it is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts. According to them, it encompasses communication, functional, interaction and message strategy and receptive and evaluative skills. These skills involve the speakers' ability to converse in the target language in order to communicate with others and it includes accuracy, fluency and comprehensibility.

Briefly, AqlistyNia (2011) limited the speaking skill to three interactive social processes that are used to construct meaning; they are producing, receiving, and processing information.

Based on the previous definitions, the researcher could define the speaking skill as the process of sharing other people's knowledge, interests, attitudes, opinions or ideas and having the ability to speak a language with high accuracy, fluency besides comprehending the spoken language used by others which are the important aspects of the process of speaking.

Based on what has concisely been stated, speaking is considered as the most significant skill because it shows the ability of a speaker in conversing and communicating with others using the target language.

The importance of speaking skill

Speaking is considered as the most important skill that many language learners would like to master. Therefore, many EFL teachers aim to enable their students to communicate in English naturally. In order to do this, teachers are required to provide their students with satisfactory input to be proficient speakers of English. However, some other EFL teachers consider teaching speaking as a waste of time. Additionally, they do not use exciting activities to practice speaking which results in bad performance. This result was proved by Chi (2011) who conducted a project with the purpose of offering some guidance to enhance students' practice of speaking skills. The guidance was a lesson from a small-scale project applied to first and second-year students at NhaTrang Teachers Training College during the academic years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. In his project, the teacher was asked to direct the students, evaluate their abilities, form and reform groups, identify common mistakes students made, choose or design speaking activities and communicative games, collect frequent feedback from students, and make timely adjustments as needed, whereas the students were engaged in identifying their own problems, setting their goals for practice, and working in groups.

Similarly, Nazara (2011) conducted a study to investigate the perceptions of the students of the English Teaching Study Program of FKIP-UKI Jakarta on their English speaking skill development. To achieve this purpose Nazara used two methods of data collection which were a questionnaire and a focused semi structured interview. The data was collected during the academic year 2010/2011. The respondents were 40 students randomly selected from the fifth and the seventh semester students. The results of his study revealed that all of his respondents viewed speaking as an important skill and they were willing to deal with the necessities to master it. Thus, Nazara realized that along the history of foreign language teaching and learning, speaking has always occupied the fundamental purpose for

many language teachers and learners to be accomplished. Clear evidence is that the main topic of most of language teaching researches and conferences is approaches and methods for teaching speaking. Additionally, it has been observed during the last recent years that many of audios, videos and English course books that focus on enabling the EFL learners to master the speaking skill are continuously published.

At present, it is noticed that the majority of language learners learn English to be able to communicate due to the strong position of English that became a language for international communication, which is considered as a target to get better jobs and to be able to work in multinational companies. (Crystal, 1997)

Khamkhien (2010) supported the above opinion by saying that speaking is the most important skill of all the four language skills. It shows the learners' actual ability in using the language. In addition, he stated that mastering the English speaking skill has become an essential demand in every country, because in the world of globalization era, English has increasingly become the medium in every domain of communication, both in local and global contexts. Thus, teaching and learning English should be for communicative purposes in order to meet the demands of global economics and to cope with the growing local, national and international demands for English skills.

Another importance is highlighted by Ur (1996) who described the importance of the speaking skill by saying that people who know a language are called speakers of that language which reflects the involvement of all other kinds of knowing in the speaking skill.

Ur (ibid) confirmed that speaking mastery illustrates that the speaker possesses precise knowledge of language. For more clarification, Janudom and Wasanasomsithi (2009) stated that language is not only taught and learned, but it is so intertwined with our daily

interactions; therefore, learners are required to master the English speaking skill because people measure the mastery of the language in terms of the speaker's ability to speak fluently. Besides, Lawtie (2004) asserted that the success of learning is measured by the learner's accomplishments in the English speaking skill i.e. the learner's ability to start a conversation in the target language. This could be supported by Rahimy and Safarpour (2012) who mentioned that many language learners described the development of the conversational competence as their urgent objective when answering needs analysis survey.

Putting this in mind, in foreign language teaching and learning, the speaking skill is considered as the most essential skill for its distinguishing role in communication. Besides, it is the most difficult skill, (Aungwatanakun, 1994 cited in Oradee, 2012).

Problems and difficulties of learning the English speaking skill

It has been asserted several times that there are factors that impede learning and developing the English speaking skill of the Arab EFL learners. For example, Ansari (2012) mentioned the problems that hinder Umm-Al Quara University learners from mastering the English language in Saudi Arabia where English is used as a foreign language. He attributed the difficulties faced by his subjects to both 'social' and 'cultural' backgrounds of the students. He described the insufficient knowledge, 'even basic', of English of the learners, in spite of being taught English in schools, as the most important reason that hinders learning the English speaking skill.

Similarly, Oradee (2012) conducted a study with the purpose of investigating the effect of teaching the English speaking skill using three communicative activities (Discussion, Problem-Solving, and Role- Playing) and identifying the students' attitude towards learning English speaking skill using the mentioned activities. The sample group of

his study consisted of 49 students at a secondary school in UdonThani, Thailand, where English is taught as a foreign language. The design of his research was mixed method design (i.e. qualitative and quantitative). The research instruments were 8 lesson plans, an English speaking ability test and an attitude questionnaire. Oradee attributed the difficulties facing EFL learners when speaking to their lack of exposure to authentic English language environments where they can communicate and practice their language. He further stated that the learners' lack of exposure to the cultures of the native English speakers as another obstacle to learning the English speaking skill.

What is more, Masda (2012) conducted a qualitative research with the purpose of motivating students' speaking skill through simulation in English for specific purposes (ESP) at University of Technology, Thailand. He employed two data collection methods: classroom observation and questionnaire. Although his methods of data collection and the subjects under investigation were different from those used by Oradee (2012), he also found out similar results as he attributed the problems that face many language teachers when they teach speaking to the fact that most of the students are not enthusiastic to speak due to their lack of vocabulary. This lack, according to him, results in lack of confidence to speak in front of the class.

The same results have been found in the Arabic context by Rababah (2003) who conducted a research with the purpose of presenting the communication problems of Arab university students majoring in English. The researcher noted that his subjects often have lack of some vocabulary or language items that they need to get their meaning across, especially, when they are engaged in authentic situations.

In addition, Biyaem (1997) cited in Somdee & Suppasetseree (2012) described the effect of the students' mother tongue as another obstacle that hinders the students from

speaking to their instructors. She confirmed that most of EFL learners are not fluent enough because they have no opportunity to use English in their daily lives.

Some empirical studies such as Gan, (2012), Latha and Ramesh, (2012) and Aljumah, (2011) have examined ESL and EFL university students' concerns and difficulties that they face while participating in oral classroom activities. They reported different factors that affect the learners' speaking skill; these factors are learner inhibition, lack of subject matter, lack of proper vocabulary, lack of confidence and lack of motivation.

In his study on the EFL Indonesian students at State Islamic University Jakarta, Astuti (2011) investigated the factors behind the lack of the English speaking performance in spite of having good English competence (Grammar and vocabulary). In his case study, the researcher used two questionnaires to collect the required data , one questionnaire included the internal factors (such as English competence, motivation, anxiety, confidence), and the other one included external factors such as the environment. He concluded that the EFL learners are taught English using the grammar translation method in which the teaching process focuses on teaching the English grammar dominantly. Besides, their teachers concentrate on answering the reading passages grammatically correct. Therefore, the learners consider leaning English as a step to pass their English exams and score high marks instead of improving the speaking skills. As a result, most of them feel bashful, insecure and anxious to speak in English and they worry to make mistakes in speaking though they know the English Grammar and vocabulary.

Moreover, Khamkhien (2010) attributed the learners' inability to master the English speaking and listening skills to the fact that most of the teachers who teach English are not native speakers of English. Consequently, the language used is not natural which in consequence generates failure of real interaction in the language classroom. What is more,

Kanoksilapatham (2007) cited in Khamkhien (2010) mentioned that most of EFL teachers have lack of knowledge of designing speaking activities during practice as they are not familiar with the aural-oral method of communicative language teaching (CLT). For this reason, they find difficulties in selecting materials and activities that would match the learners' speaking ability and content.

Another problem was found out by Soureshjani and Riahipour (2012) who studied the perspectives of two groups who are basically involved in the teaching and learning processes namely, language teachers and learners at Islamic Azad University in Iranian context where English is used as a foreign language like many Arab countries. The study was with the purpose of exploring their views about the factors which may negatively affect the speaking performance of language learners. They acknowledged that lack of facilities and the use of inappropriate equipment and materials such as CDs, DVDs inside the classroom are considered as one of the factors that frustrate the students to learn the English speaking skill. In other words, when the materials and equipment used in classes are not related to the intended context such as the students' needs, the topic to be taught and learned, etc. students may feel that they are wasting their time. Therefore, it is important for EFL teachers to focus on the above mentioned factors to motivate their students to speak much more effectively.

Strategies in teaching English speaking skill

It has been approved by some researchers such as (Graves, 2008; Rahimy and Safarpour, 2012, and Nadeem 2013) that EFL instructors should encourage their students to speak in the classroom, especially, if the language is taught in a foreign language context where students do not have opportunity to speak in English; such as in Libya, where the English language is a foreign language.

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Sachar (2006 cited in Afana 2012:15) defines strategy or technique saying that it is an indicator of the way in which time, space and presence can interact and probably be formed in order to create different kinds of meanings in drama.

By reviewing the related literature, the researcher observed some of the effective strategies and different activities that might help EFL instructors in teaching English speaking. They are as follows:

drama

In a pioneering point of view, (Asher 1982; Solé 1987) cited in Afana (2012: 65) shed light on teaching by means of drama techniques. They affirmed that language learning happens in a particular sequence. This sequence starts with silent period and moves towards understanding and finally speaking. Therefore, any foreign language teaching strategy should develop comprehension before making the student speak. Solé (1987) determines that comprehension should be developed through body movements and hours of exposure to the target language. Thus, following this idea, the starting point of any adequate instruction of EFL instruction should focus on creating the feeling of reality through a drama technique and a mood of relaxation.

Drama is a kind of activity that is based on the word of "let's pretend"; i.e. it requires learners to imagine themselves in different social contexts with the purpose of developing their communication skills and in order to prepare them for the authentic social interaction. (Susan Holden, 1982 cited in Zyoud, 2011).

Many researchers acknowledged the benefits of drama techniques in developing the speaking skill; these techniques play an important role in enhancing students' speaking skill since they actively involve learners in the learning process. This activity is communicative as

it encourages learners to communicate using the target language in real life situations. (Morrow, 1981 cited by Sam, 1990)

Another study conducted by Afana (2012) on Palestinian students investigates the impact of using educational drama intervention. The study sought to determine the extent to which educational drama intervention creates opportunities for students to promote their speaking skills. The intervention was designed to maximize speaking skills by employing three strategies of educational drama; they are role play, simulation and hot seating. In order to answer the research questions of the study, Afana adopted an experimental approach. The sample of the study consisted of 60 female students who were divided into two groups. The first group represented the controlled group of 30 students; whereas the second group represented the experimental one of 30 students. It is worth mentioning that she supports the view that learning language through drama develops the learners' speaking skill. She stated that learning depends on a play so that the learners will be encouraged to listen and read their lines, then repeat them more and more until they become memorable which, in turn, increases their fluency. Additionally, Makita (1995 cited in zyoud 2011) pointed out that one of the most beneficial features of the dramatic and role-playing activities is that it enables the instructors to create pleasurable classroom environment that stimulates the learners to partake actively in the learning process and encourages them to learn the target language which results in developing the speaking skill.

Reeve (2006 cited in Afana 2012: 62) claims that drama is a process for engaging in learning both emotionally and cognitively. He said "When engagement is characterized by the full range of on-task behavior, positive emotion, invested cognition, and personal voice, it functions as the engine for learning and development".

Desiatova (2009) asserted that drama is a suitable strategy that could enable learners to overcome their shyness and strengthen their self-confidence. Desiatova attributed this to the fact that when the instructor gives the learners different roles, they become able to break away from their daily behaviors and conceal behind another personality resulting in building a new character who can express his or her ideas and speak the language fluently. Moreover, it makes learning everlasting by turning situations and ideas memorable since learning the language relies on giving the learners direct experience in using the language inside the classroom. He also confirmed that the purpose of using drama inside the classroom is to teach linguistic and non-linguistic features. For example, teachers can use topics from other subjects: the students can act out scenes from history, or they can work on ideas and issues that run through the curriculum.

Briefly, drama is credited with the ability to empower students and gives them ownership and control over their own learning. It encourages learners to learn language such as guessing the meaning of the unknown words in a context. It enables them to take risks with language and experience through the reactions between thought and action. Drama activities also enable the learners to communicate using the target language by all meanings such as expressing their thoughts, negotiating, making choice, solving problems, using non-verbal expressions such as body movements and facial expression and becoming more socialized. Apart from that, it is worth mentioning that teaching through drama, enables language teachers to create realistic situations inside the classroom so that students could link the language they are learning to the world around. Furthermore, it helps the teachers to balance between the four language skills since a class will address, practice and integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Generally, many researchers such as Afana (2012) divided the drama techniques into different types such as role play and information gap. However, role-play is the most common which is explained as follows:

role play

Ladousse (1987) cited in Afana (2012) stated that role-play is an educational technique used in teaching language. Using this technique creates a good atmosphere in the classroom and brings entertainments and animation that provoke the creativity of the learners.

Zyoud (2011:7) defined the role playing saying that "role-play is thus an activity which requires a person to take on a role that is real or imaginary. It involves spontaneous interaction of participants as they attempt to complete a task".

According to Graves (2008), the role playing activity is like an experiment in which the learner is asked to act as if he or she is a particular person in a certain situation. By using the role play strategy, EFL instructors should try to create a classroom environment where students can engage in authentic activities and real-life communication that in turn promote speaking. In other words, instructors should bring situations from real life into the classroom. In role play activities, EFL instructors should give a variety of social roles to their students in various social contexts such as who they are and what they think or feel. Therefore, the instructor can tell the student, "You are David; you go to the doctor and tell him what happened last night", (Harmer, 1984 cited in Rahimy and Safarpour, 2012).

Assuming that role-play is an essential element in drama, Heathcote (1984 cited in Zyoud, 2011) concurs that role taking is so flexible that when applied in education, it will suit all personalities and teaching circumstances. Additionally, according to Zyoud (2011), the role-play activity is one of the drama elements that can fit most of the teaching

circumstances. It is worth mentioning that ideas for role-play that instructors use inside the classroom can be obtained from books or from the situations that the teacher or learner exposes in their real lives. The next step that the instructor should follow is that she should give the learners an idea about the way of which they should develop the played roles. However, it is important to take into consideration the learners' level of language proficiency when using and applying role-play activities in the FL classroom. (Zyoud, 2011).

information gap

According to Watamni & Gholami (2012) the Information Gap is a kind of structured output activities. These are like completing a task by providing missing information, conveying telephone message, and expressing an opinion. It sets up practicing on specific items of language. It is more like drills than real communication. In other words, it is a type of activity through which the students are required to use the language to exchange some information and get their meanings across. It takes the students' attention away from the form and directs it towards meaning. In other words, it makes students accomplish a task through using the language while concentrating on meaning rather than structure of the language.

Sari (2008) cited in Afana (2012) mentioned that the aim of using information gap method is to create corporative environment that helps the students to work in groups and pairs. Neu and Reeser (1997 cited in Jondeya 2011) supported that by saying that in an information gap activity; one student has certain information that must be shared with others in order to solve a problem, gather information or make decisions such as in the Key English Test (KET) exam. Moreover, Watamni & Gholami (2012) stated that information gap activities are those in which students exchange information in order to complete a required task.

In a practical research, Jondeya (2011) conducted a study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of using information gap on developing the Palestinians' speaking skills in Gaza. To achieve this aim, the researcher adopted the experimental approach. The sample consisted of 70 female students equally divided into 35 students for the experimental group and 35 students for the controlled one. The sample was randomly chosen during the academic year 2010-2011. The researcher designed speaking activities that were based on information gap concept and were used in teaching the experimental group, whereas the ordinary method was used in teaching the controlled group. An oral speaking test was designed and validated to be used as a pre and post test for the two groups. The researcher explained the activity saying that in the information gap activity, two students or more can work together where each has some parts of the answers to some kind of a problem or a question. In consequence, they have to share and explain their parts of the information to their partner in order to find out the answer for a question or solving certain problem.

With respect to the significance of using the information gap technique, Ur (1996) cited in Watamni & Gholami (2012) pointed out that using activities and tasks based on the information gap principle would result in stimulating the students to learn the language. In addition, it would encourage the learners to participate in the learning process since it facilitates the students' interaction in speaking activities and encourages learners to work in groups so that they feel more comfortable than speaking in front of the whole class. This is supported by Karimi (2010) who ensured that using information gap activities leads to improve EFL learners' speaking skill due to increasing the degree of learning the language, particularly, when they learn new words by using information-gap tasks in the classroom. In other words, these activities push the learners to negotiate, using the new learned words, the

meaning of their utterances in order to complete the given tasks that result in improving their speaking skill.

Moreover, Hess (2001) stated that information gap activities could help the learners to give a comprehensive feedback. This is because of the fact that they would try to express their different opinions and negotiate meaning with their classmates in order to convince them and vice versa. In consequence, the learners could learn a language using their own learning style through discussions and negotiations.

Chapter III

Methodology

This chapter gives an account of the research methodology used to consolidate the various arguments and assumptions related to the subject matter of the present study. It explains the research instruments utilized in the study, participants as well as the procedures followed to carry out this study.

Procedures & data collection

The procedures that were used to collect the data in this study were based on the secondary sources. The data in this study collected from many different sources (such as internet sources, EBESCO database, books and articles from NEU library. I have selected some articles relating to my topic and I read them in order to answer my research questions. I did not have any participants in my study because I used secondary sources and therefore, the data were provided by other researchers.

Chapter IV

Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the current study.

Problems faced by students in learning the English speaking skills

A study conducted by Rababah (2003) to explore the problems that face EFL students when speaking in Saudi Arabia affirms that, the EFL students of English extremely have lack the opportunity due to the input-poor environment where they do not have enough opportunity to practice the target language.

Another study carried by Tseng (2012) who investigated the causes of language anxiety of Chinese learners where English is used as a foreign. He based his study on a review of related literature to discover this issue. He avowed that language anxiety for immeasurable number of learners is considered as the main source of the fear of making mistakes and also the main cause behind generating the mock of the learner's classmates.

Khan (2011) carried out a diagnostic study on the difficulties in learning English language that Saudi Arabia learners encounter at King Abdul-Aziz University Community College. He stated that pronunciation is the most difficult factor that prevent students to master English speaking. Moreover, he added that English does not have more individual consonant sounds than most languages. However there are some sounds that exist in English but do not exist in other language like the interdentals, /θ/ and /ð/ (the sounds written with th). He further added that there are some sounds which are difficult to be pronounced by the speaker of other languages, for example, Saudis are not able to differentiate between the pronunciation of /sh/ and /ch/ as in sheep and cheap respectively.

Another study conducted by Abu El-Enein's (2011) about students' difficulties on speaking skill shown that there are major and serious difficulties encountering Al Aqsa English majors in giving the academic oral presentation in class; these difficulties are inaccurate pronunciation, lack of vocabulary, structures, discourse markers, grammar accuracy, fluency, oral proficiency, communicative competence and oral speaking activities.

Furthermore, Soureshjani and Riahipour (2012) studied the demotivating factors on English speaking skill, which face Iranian learners. The results showed that the content and topic of conversation that the students asked to discuss can be one of discouraging factors that make the students disinclined to speak. They further mentioned that when the topics used and argued in the class are of no interest to the students they would become more unwilling to focus and speak on.

Some studies referred that to the students' anxiety which prevent them from speaking in classroom. However, this opinion is supported by Cutrone (2001) who investigated the causes of Japanese learners' language anxiety, he used the same method of data collection of the present study which is questionnaire, the researcher found out the teacher's demeanor and attitude may be one of the greatest factors in shaping Japanese learners' attitude. Teachers showing a negative or disappointed reaction to learners' behavior can also cause language anxiety. The students under investigation also described the kindness, friendliness, a good sense of humor, and stability as some of the behaviors that they desire in an English teacher.

Regarding to the teaching materials that used in the classrooms, Mezrigui (2012) claims that the deficiency of the appropriate teaching materials that are necessary for achieving communicative activities is considered as one of the most important obstacles that hinder teaching the English speaking skill adequately and, as a result, it prevents the students from mastering this skill. These findings were also supported by Soureshjani and Riahipour

(2012) who affirmed that learners considered lack of facilities or even using inappropriate equipment which do not match the intended text such as the topic to be learned or their needs as one of the strongest factors that diminish their motivation towards speaking.

Problems that EFL instructors are confronted with when teaching the English speaking skills

In the same study that conducted by Soureshjani and Riahipour (2012), researchers recommended that EFL instructors should use the materials and equipments that are suitable for the topic of conversation and the students' needs so they can play a chief role in making students to be motivated and energetic to speak much more effectively. However, another problem mentioned by the instructors was the time given for the speaking courses and the large number of the students in each class. This problem was affirmed by nine instructors; they mentioned this problem as one of the major difficulties that they face while teaching English speaking skill.

This confirms that the above two mentioned issues are very integrated. In other words, if the time allowed for the speaking courses is short and the number of the learners is very big, then the result will be hindering the learners from mastering this skill. Moreover, it will be difficult for each one of them to get a chance to practice the language and it will be hard for the instructors to check the work of all the students during a particular activity whether they work individually, in pairs or even in groups. This will also result in unwillingness for the weak and shy students to take part in the learning activities.

This view was supported by Khamkhien (2011) who reported that most of his participants referred to the given class hours for speaking English as inappropriate. He further mentioned that this obstacle is behind his participants' inhibitions, which could hinder their

pathway to success in mastering English speaking skill. Thus, it seems that this time allocation compared with the large number of the students is not sufficient for every student to get a chance to practice speaking English.

The last obstacle mentioned by the instructors, was the students' low level of proficiency. This obstacle was reported by eight instructors out of ten, they asserted that this problem diminish them from teaching the English speaking skill adequately. They also affirmed that the majority of the students are in very low levels, which makes their job difficult to be done.

This impediment cause (low level) was supported by Mezrigui (2012), who maintained that the students' low level of proficiency is one of the causes that makes it difficult for the teacher to teach the language communicatively. He attributed this to the fact that the modern teaching methodology that develops the learners' communicative competence makes the learning process learner-centered one. This means that the teacher is no longer the sole source of knowledge and the learner is no longer a mere passive recipient, but rather a really active agent contributing to the success of the learning process. These methods require students whose language proficiency level is good or at least acceptable in order to achieve the various learning objectives. However, most of the instructors affirmed that in many classes, the students who have a good command of English represent a very small percentage. As a result, it will be difficult for them to develop the students' English speaking skills. Therefore, they will be forced to be the controllers of the teaching process without giving a chance for them to interact.

In another study conducted by Tseng (2012) supported that most of EFL learners feel anxious whenever they are asked to speak English and he attributed this nervousness to the limited exposure to the target language in their home countries. This point of view has also

been proved by other researchers such as Rababah (2003) and Huang (2010) who also investigated the problems that face the EFL learners in mastering the English speaking skill and both of them concluded that the limited exposure to English is considered as a serious obstacle in the development of learners' communicative competence.

Speaking strategies used by the EFL instructors in teaching the English speaking skills

Moving into the third research question of this study, which addresses the learning strategies used by EFL instructors in teaching the English speaking, Masda (2012) noticed that the EFL instructors do not have an idea about the learning strategies that is; in turn, reflected on the students' level of the speaking skill which is very low. However, they try to develop the learners' speaking skill basing on other factors such as developing their psychological side. This point of view has been recorded by six instructors out of ten; they further explained that they create a comfortable classroom atmosphere in which the learners are encouraged to speak. In addition, they provide them with positive feedback whenever they make mistake.

He added that, there is another demonstrated strategy used by the instructors which is suggesting topics for the learners, and then they ask the low level learners to work with the high level ones. This was mentioned by only three instructors. The students were asked to choose one of these topics to talk about. The researcher stated that this way is useless since it does not give the chance for the low level students to speak because the instructors just ask the good students to speak in front of the class, whereas the low level students would be reluctant to speak because of the fear of making mistakes.

Other instructors stated that they ask the learners to collect information about a suggested topic and then they are asked to prepare it at home. After that they are asked to

bring it in the following lecture to read the notes they have written about the given topic. As a result of following this traditional way, the researcher of the current study believes that following this way will not develop the learner to interact using the language outside the classroom. This is because of the fact that teaching the language communicatively is characterized by using techniques that create negotiation inside the classrooms which in turn likely to enable the learners to develop all the language aspects.

Finally, the most striking information is that seven instructors out of ten asserted that they do not have any idea about the speaking strategies, which makes it difficult for the learners to master the English speaking.

Chapter V

Conclusion and Recommendation

This chapter summarizes the study findings and then, provides a number of recommendations.

Relying on the secondary resourses used for this study, the findings of the present study have revealed that the problems that prevent the EFL students from mastering the English speaking skill are related to a number of issues.

First of all, lack of exposure to English outside the classroom, leads to limited practice of the language .This as a result is considered as one of the most common sources of difficulties that hinders the students from mastering the English speaking skill.

Moreover, the study of Ansari (2012) showed that the examined subjects have only two speaking lectures per week which is insufficient for them to be exposed to the target language, especially if we take into account that some of students do not have any opportunities to be exposed to or practice the language outside the classroom.

There is also affective impediment that prevents the students from speaking the language adequately; one remarkable affective encumbrance is apprehension of errors, which is itself the result of particular factors. Many students prefer to keep silent in class and are reluctant to participate in any speaking activities. This is because it is an embarrassing situation for them to be corrected or overcorrected by the instructor or even by their fellow students. This apprehension of errors is also a result of the instructors' negative feedback. High percentage has been reported by the learners who confirmed that they feel anxious when

they speak because their instructors always criticize their performance whenever they make mistakes.

Moreover, lack of subject matter is considered as one of the obstacles that prevent the EFL students from speaking inside the classroom. It's showed that some of the students – though their level of proficiency is satisfactory – have no intention of participating in oral activities, simply because they are not interested in the topic of conversation or because they have no background about it.

Another obstructive factor is related to the large classes. Teaching large groups of students presents a real challenge for the instructors in the communicative classroom. It is too difficult for him / her to give everybody a chance to take part in all teaching and learning activities, or to check and evaluate all of their work. The instructors of the present study reported that the large number of the students compared with the shortage of time given to the speaking lectures forms one of the obstacles in teaching the English speaking skill.

Regarding the third research question that addresses the speaking strategies used by EFL instructors in teaching the English speaking skill, strikingly, the results of all the resources that I have read illustrated that most of the instructors do not use effective teaching strategies as they asserted that they do not have idea about any of the valuable teaching techniques used for teaching the English speaking. Rather, they emphasized that the only thing they do to develop the learners' speaking skill is to divide the learners into groups and ask the low level learners to work with the high level ones and then they have to choose one of them in order to speak in front of the whole class. This way of teaching English speaking skill does not give a chance for the low level learners to develop their English speaking since most of them will be reluctant to speak because they have lack of self-confidence.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should help their students and motivate them to be more educated to pass the psychological barrier and overcome their fears of being passive students.

2. Teachers should encourage the students; particularly, when they make mistakes, reminding them of the fact that we should learn from our mistakes.

3. It is crucial for the instructors to integrate authentic materials in teaching the English speaking such as audio visual component. These materials have been proved by many researchers as helpful tools that can create a good learning environment. What is more, it is responsible for enriching both linguistic and cultural information.

4. The instructors are advised to repeat or rephrase what they say to enhance the students' vocabulary by exposing them to different words and phrases.

5. The instructors should move around the classroom to ensure that all students are on the right way and to see whether they need their help while they work in pairs or groups.

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