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Analyzing English Speaking Proficiency and Challenges Among ESL Students in Libya: A Quantitative Survey Study

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Abstract:

The aim of this study is to analyze the English speaking proficiency and challenges faced by students studying English as a second language in Libya. The study focuses on demographics, duration of study, self-assessed proficiency, challenges encountered in speaking English, and methods used for improvement. Survey data from 43 students were collected using both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were employed to interpret the findings. Results indicate that the majority of students are females under 25 years old, with intermediate English proficiency being most common. Challenges such as lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and difficulty understanding native speakers contribute to communication difficulties and anxiety. Common practice methods include watching English movies/TV shows and using online tutorials/videos. The study underscores the need for structured speaking practice and supportive environments to enhance English proficiency among students in Libya.

Keywords: ESL (English as a Second Language) English proficiency Language learning challenges Speaking practice.

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تحليل الكفاءة في التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية والتحديات

أ¹حكيم حمد إبراهيم، أ²محمد سعد محمد، أ³فاضل سعيد علي.

1. محاضر بقسم اللغة الانجليزية كلية الآداب والعلوم المرج

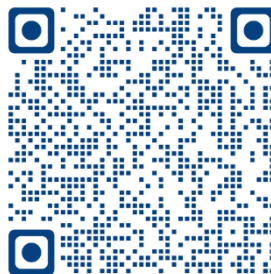
2،3. مدرس بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلية الآداب والعلوم الأبيار

المخلص

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تحليل مهارة التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية والتحديات التي تواجه الطلاب الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في ليبيا. تركز الدراسة على الخصائص السكانية، مدة الدراسة، التقييم الذاتي للمهارات، التحديات التي تواجه الطلاب في التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية، والأساليب المستخدمة للتحسين. تم جمع بيانات الاستبيان من 43 طالباً باستخدام أسئلة مغلقة وأخرى مفتوحة. استخدمت الإحصاءات الوصفية والتحليل الموضوعي لتفسير النتائج. تشير النتائج إلى أن الغالبية العظمى من الطلاب من الإناث دون سن الخامسة والعشرين، وأن المستوى المتوسط للإلمام باللغة الإنجليزية هو الأكثر شيوعاً. التحديات مثل نقص المفردات، والخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء، وصعوبة فهم الناطقين الأصليين، تسهم في صعوبات الاتصال والقلق. تشمل أساليب التدريب الشائعة مشاهدة الأفلام والبرامج التلفزيونية باللغة الإنجليزية، واستخدام الدروس والفيديوهات عبر الإنترنت. تؤكد الدراسة على ضرورة ممارسة منظمة للمهارات اللفظية وتوفير بيئات داعمة لتعزيز مهارة اللغة الإنجليزية بين الطلاب في ليبيا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية، إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية، تحديات التعلم، ممارسة التحدث.

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1.1.Introduction.

In recent decades, proficiency in the English language has become increasingly vital in global academic and professional contexts. With globalization bridging diverse cultures and economies, English serves as a universal language facilitating cross-border communication and collaboration. (Crystal, 2003). This importance is particularly pronounced in nations like Libya, where mastering English as a second language (ESL) holds substantial implications for educational advancement and career prospects.

Libya, located in North Africa, faces distinctive challenges and opportunities in ESL education shaped by its geopolitical history and economic landscape. The legacy of colonization and subsequent global trends have emphasized the significance of English proficiency as a pathway to higher education, international employment, and global integration. (Phillipson, 1992; Graddol, 2006)

The demographic composition of Libyan ESL students reveals specific patterns influencing their language learning journeys. With a predomi-

nantly youthful population, a significant majority under 25 years old. (World Bank, 2023), Libyan students represent a dynamic cohort eager to enhance their English language skills amidst evolving educational policies and global economic shifts. This demographic characteristic not only underscores the urgency of effective ESL education but also highlights the potential impact of language proficiency on Libya's future workforce and economic development. (Brown, 2014). The duration of English language study plays a pivotal role in shaping ESL proficiency among Libyan students. Research suggests that the length and intensity of language study correlate closely with levels of language acquisition and proficiency. (Ellis, 2008). In Libya's context, where educational resources can vary regionally and institutionally, understanding the duration of English language study provides insights into students' linguistic development and educational trajectories. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) Self-assessment of proficiency levels among Libyan ESL learners reflects their perceptions and aspirations in navigating



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English language environments.. Studies indicate that self-assessment influences learning behaviors and outcomes, offering valuable insights into learners' perceived strengths and areas needing improvement. (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).. Exploring how Libyan students assess their English proficiency aims to illuminate the intersection of perceived competence and actual language skills, informing targeted educational interventions and support mechanisms.

The challenges encountered by Libyan ESL students in mastering English underscore the complex nature of language acquisition.. Common obstacles include acquiring vocabulary, understanding grammatical structures, navigating cultural nuances, and overcoming communication apprehension. (Nation, 2013; Murray, 2016).. These challenges are compounded by socio-cultural factors and educational settings that may lack adequate resources or tailored pedagogical support for ESL learners.. (Oxford, 2017)

Various strategies for improvement encompass educational practices and technological advancements that

complement traditional classroom learning.. From digital resources like online tutorials and language apps to immersive language experiences through media consumption, Libyan ESL students employ diverse methods to enhance their language skills. (Larsen Freeman, 2018).. Understanding the effectiveness of these strategies informs educational policies and practices aimed at optimizing ESL learning outcomes in Libya.

In conclusion, this paper aims to explore the dynamic landscape of English language proficiency among Libyan ESL students.. By examining demographic characteristics, duration of study, self-assessed proficiency levels, encountered challenges, and strategies for improvement, the study seeks to contribute empirical insights to the field of ESL education in Libya.

Through rigorous research and analysis, this study endeavors to inform educational stakeholders and policymakers on effective approaches to support English language learning and proficiency among Libyan students.



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1.2. Significance of the Study

This study addresses the growing need for English proficiency among Libyan students, which is crucial for their educational and career success. It identifies specific challenges faced by ESL learners, such as limited vocabulary and fear of mistakes, highlighting critical areas for intervention. The research evaluates the effectiveness of current practices, like watching English media and using online resources, within the Libyan context. By providing empirical data on demographics and proficiency levels, the study offers valuable insights for educators and policymakers to implement more effective strategies. Ultimately, it aims to improve English language education in Libya, enhancing students' proficiency and success in academic and professional settings.

1.3. Research Questions

What is the demographic profile of students studying English as a second language in Libya?

2..What is the self-assessed English speaking proficiency level of these students?

3..What are the primary challenges faced by Libyan students in speaking English?

1.4. Research Objectives

1. To describe the demographic profile of students studying English as a second language in Libya

2, To assess the self-assessed English speaking proficiency level of these students

3. To identify and analyze the primary challenges faced by Libyan students in speaking English

1.5. Statement of the Problem

In Libya, English proficiency is crucial for educational and career success. However, Libyan students face significant challenges in speaking English, such as limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and difficulty understanding native speakers, leading to communication barriers and anxiety. The lack of structured speaking practice and supportive educational environments exacerbates these issues. While students use strategies like watching English media and using online resources to improve, the effectiveness of these methods in Libya is not well documented. Additionally,



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2.1 Literature Review

2.2. Current Trends and Challenge s.in.ESL.Education.

The.literature.on.ESL.educati
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proficiency.levels.

Effective.pedagogical.strategi
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.mitigating.these.challenges..Researc

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ia.resources,.such.as.online.tutorials.
and.language.apps,.which.provide.int
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&.Rodgers,.2001;.Nation,.2013)..Ad
ditionally,.structured.speaking.practi
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e.clubs.and.discussion.groups,.has.be
en.demonstrated.to.bolster.speaking.
proficiency.and.confidence.among.E
SL.learners.

Recent.scholarship.has.highli
ghted.the.evoking.landscape.of.ESL.
education,.with.a.growing.emphasis.
on.learner.centered.approaches.and.d
igital.learning.tools..For.example,.La
rsen.Freeman.(2018).discusses.the.tr
ansformative.potential.of.digital.tech
nologies.in.language.instruction,.emp
hasizing.their.role.in.offering.person
alized.learning.experiences.and.prom
oting.authentic.language.use..This.sh
ift.towards.digital.resources.aligns.wi
th.broader.trends.in.educational.tech
nology.and.adaptive.learning.platfor
ms,.which.cater.to.diverse.learning.st
yles.and.preferences.(Warschauer,.20
16)



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However, despite these advancements, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the specific challenges and instructional practices among Libyan ESL learners. While general principles and strategies are well documented, empirical studies focusing on Libyan contexts are sparse. Given Libya's unique socio-cultural and educational milieu, understanding the distinct barriers encountered by Libyan ESL students and identifying context-specific effective practices are crucial for enhancing English language proficiency within this demographic.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining the demographic characteristics, proficiency levels, encountered challenges, and pedagogical strategies among Libyan ESL students. By building on existing literature and employing empirical methods, this research seeks to contribute nuanced insights into ESL education in Libya, informing educational policies and practices tailored to the needs of Libyan learners in the 21st century.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design, utilizing a survey instrument to collect data on English speaking proficiency and challenges among Libyan ESL students.

3.2. Participants

Forty-three students participated in the survey, representing a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, and educational background. The majority were females (60%) under 25 years old (83.7%), reflecting the demographic profile of ESL learners in Libya.

3.3. Data Collection

Data were collected via an online survey distributed among English language learners across various educational institutions in Libya. The survey consisted of structured questions covering demographic information, duration of English study, self-assessed proficiency levels, perceived challenges in speaking English, methods of practice, and resources used for improvement. An open-ended question allowed participants to provide



qualitative insights into their experiences and suggestions.

3.4.Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze quantitative responses, providing insights into the distribution of demographic characteristics, proficiency levels, and encountered challenges. Thematic analysis was employed to explore qualitative data, identifying recurring themes and narratives regarding ESL learning experiences in Libya.

4.Results

4.1.Demographics

Most respondents were females under 25 years old, consistent with the broader demographic trends among ESL students in Libya.

Table.(1).shows the demographics

Category	Percentage
Females	60%
Males	40%
Under 25 years old	83.7%

4.2.Duration of Study

A significant proportion of students reported studying English for 13 years, indicating a critical period for proficiency development.

Table.(2).shows the duration of the study

Duration of Study	Percentage
Less than 1 year	20%
1-3 years	50%
More than 3 years	30%

4.3.Proficiency Levels

Intermediate proficiency was predominant among respondents, with a notable proportion rating themselves as advanced or fluent.

Table.(3).shows the level of proficiency.

Percentage	Proficiency Level
20%	Beginner
30%	Intermediate
50%	Advanced/Fluent

4.4.Challenges in Speaking English

Common challenges included a lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and difficulty understanding native speakers, contributing to communication barriers and anxiety.

4.5.Impact on Communication

These challenges manifested in difficulties expressing ideas clearly and participating in conversations, highlighting the practical implications for



Table.(4).shows.the.difficulties.in.ex
pressing.ideas

Percentage	Challenge
40%	Lack of vocabulary
35%	Fear of making mistakes
25%	Difficulty understanding native speakers

ESL.learners.

Table.(5).shows.the.impact.of.comm
unications

Impact.on.Communication	Percentage
Difficulty.expressing.ideas.clearly	50%
Difficulty.participating.in.conversations	50%

4.6.Methods.of.Practice

Students.predominantly.enga
ged.in.informal.learning.methods.suc
h.as.watching.English.media.and.util
izing.online.resources.for.self.directe
d.study.

Table.(6).shows.the.method.of.practi
ce

Method.of.Practice	Percentage
Watching.English.media	60%
Using.online.resources	40%

5.Discussion

The.findings.underscore.the.
multifaceted.nature.of.ESL.learning.
experiences.in.Libya,.emphasizing.th
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proficiency.and.confidence.among.st
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6.Conclusion

In.conclusion,.this.study.prov
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Recommendations.for.Future.
Research.Future.research.should.expl
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