Problems Face Students of Benghazi university in Speaking English

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Abstract

The main theme of the research is going to be about the difficulties faced by English department students when attempting to speak in a foreign language (English in this case). How they overcome these problems when speaking. The data was collected in terms of questionnaires and interviews answered by ten randomly selected students, also personal experience of teaching students to speak. The results of this research demonstrated the challenges students will find out and why their speech is being restrained by many elements as lack of confidence, not enough practice, less motivation and so on, in an attempt by the researcher will to list some steps to help them enhance their speech and overcome these problems.

ملخص بالعربي

الموضوع الرئيسي للبحث سيكون حول الصعوبات التي يواجها الطلاب عند محاولتهم التحدث بلغه اجنبيه. وكيف يتغلبون على هذه المشاكل عند التحدث. وتم جمع البيانات من خلال الاستبيانات والمقابلات التي أجاب عليها الطلاب، إضافة الى تجربة شخصية لتعليم الطلاب التحدث. أظهرت نتائج هذا البحث ان الطلاب سيكتشفون سبب تقييد كلامهم وافتقارهم الى الثقة وسيحاولون سرد بعض الخطوات التي تساعدهم على تحسين كلامهم

Introduction

This study aims to explore the problems the students of Benghazi university face while attempting to speak English.

English as a language has a different position when it is compared to other languages, as it is viewed as a bridge in communication due to its international preference. English is a very well-known language as if it is not the first language of any country it will definitely be the second. (Pandey, 2021)

In other words, it is a worldwide language, in order for an individual to survive in a society the least to be done is to learn, understand, and speak English. As most of the students with no actual early knowledge and practice of a language, struggle to speak fluently. Although, students in Libya as other countries are exposed to the language since early years in their education for about twelve schooling years, they clearly face serious problems when it comes to speaking. (Pandey, 2021)

Students obviously have a problem when it comes to speaking, as English language students start to figure out their anxiety of speaking in class at the university. When they have reached this stage of education, as speaking is taught individually in class separately they have to actually speak in front of their colleagues which will raise some issues effecting their performance.

Second Language Acquisition

Ellis (1997:3) defined second language (L2) acquisition as “the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom".

There is a difference in the terminology of learning or acquiring a language as whether this language is a second language or a foreign language. A language learned in a country where it is spoken naturally it is considered a second language (SL), while if learned in a country not considered as an official language it is a foreign language(FL). (James B. Wold, 2006).

Cook (2002) notes that "L2 users are not necessarily the same as L2 learners. Language users are exploiting whatever linguistic resources they have for real-life purposes. Language learners are acquiring a system for later use"

In Libya English is common and the most shared language after Arabic, in other words it is the second language in the society of Libyan people.

The Difficulties of Speaking in a Second Language

When people interact in an another language they often face some obstacles as limited learning environments, thinking in another language, mother tongue use, hesitation, lack of confidence, anxiety,

inhibition- fear to commit errors, losing face, criticism, shyness, grammar, pronunciation, poor vocabulary and other reasons, lack of motivation, here we will look at some of these obstacles (Dalem, 2017).

Limited Learning Environments

The learning process starts in class but is supposed to be applied and practiced outside the classroom environment. The students are forced to communicate and interact in class under the supervision of the teacher with certain instructions. The absence of this environment outside class with no teacher, instructions or colleagues to interact with, the performance of the learner is limited and suppressed as there is no guidance, context or others that use the language properly.

Aleksandrzak, M (2011) stated that in class the space for interacting may also be limited in two senses as the time and the number of students available as the teacher is unable to provide each student equal time for participation which effects their practice of the language leading to a slower progress of speaking or even preventing them to be able to express themselves in the second language.

Another way students are not able to interact properly might be due to the domination of other learners having a higher level of proficiency, guiding the class discussion and participating in a more decent and relaxed sense, giving other students the feeling that they are not good enough to participate. As well-known practice is the key for progress and perfection especially if the learning process has got

anything to do with language "a language is best learned through using it, rather than learned and then used" (Thornbury 2007: 119).

Anxiety, Shyness and Fear to Commit Mistakes.

Learners of a second language could possibly master or obtain a high level of competence in the skills of the language while speaking might cause a problem as when learners come to a point in class where they have to speak in front of others they suffer what is called a "mental block" both teachers and learners are aware of this situation, as they experience a case of stress, anxiety, and shyness which prevents or impedes their learning or speaking development. Learners are afraid of the teacher's judgement as well as their colleague's criticism. Anxiety experienced in this situation as associated with learning a language is different from any other kind of anxiety. many recent approaches to teaching suggested other methods as communicative learning and suggestopedia as they emphasis group and pair work and reduce self-work and individual participation which expose the learner's weaknesses as well as stresses him to produce when he is unable. (Tanveer, M. 2007)

The Influence of Mother Tongue

The lack of understanding and ability to communicate or convey a message may push learners to use their first language to be able to fill in the gap missing in their second language. The habit of speaking naturally also effects the usage of the first language in class. Krashen (1981) has quoted that "syntactic errors in adult performance" also

has an impact on the production of the second language due to first language usage.

Mother tongue interference may prevent the learner to acquire second language in a fluent and decent way, to actually be able to express themselves freely in the second language without showing any sign of the first language. (Jahan Khan 2016). Learners could experience two types of influence when learning a new language, might be either positive transfer or negative transfer. A positive transfer is when the learner figures a technique to master the rules of his first language, he then will apply the same strategy to learn the second language rules and acquire the language in a similar manner especially if the first language and the second language are similar in vocabulary, grammatical or phonological system, in this case transfer is much easier for learners, achieving a larger amount of acquisition. While negative transfer occurs when languages do not have much in common or the learner's attitude towards the language prevents him from facilitating the process of learning a language not benefiting from the similarities between both languages. (Schmid, 2013).

Lack of Motivation

Putri, A (2016) resulted from his study that motivation is an essential factor in any process in life, especially when it is involved in the learning process. Learners will open up elicit, receive and produce in a proper manner that enables acquisition of a language.

A learner being able and willing to participate, ask questions, discuss, listen, experiment and except correction all relies on the

amount of motivation received from the teacher and less judgement attitude. The efficient amount of encouragement provided by the teacher allows the learner to learn and produce the language.

Carlton (2003) points out that if some characteristics are not present, prove there is lack of motivation as in **persistence**, the ability of the learner to stay and bear a task or activity for a long period of time, while an unmotivated learner cannot resist to practice or participate in something in such a state which results in not learning or producing. The **choice of tasks** contributes or demotivates the learner in the sense when he is not able to succeed in a certain task he will not be able to challenge himself and choose a challenging task that would get more out of him, instead they would choose an easy task to be able to succeed. These characteristics are true for young and adult learners.

Poor Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the base for language whether it is spoken, written, heard, or read, as it is the first unit used to build a sentence to convey a certain message. In speaking in particular words should be present immediately to be produced and that's what makes it challenging to master. Huwari, I (2019) in his study conducted that students under investigation suffered shortness of vocabulary leading to lack in confidence enabling student to speak in class. Students expressed that their vocabulary was insufficient to a level that they were not able to argue or discuss any topic which reduced their contribution in class.

Findings

A questionnaire was filled in by ten English language department students at Benghazi university to collect data of their overall idea of learning the language and how their speech has been effected in a good or bad way, also how they think of their specialty and the main aim to study English as a second language.

Students mostly have experienced the language while studying and come to the conclusion that it is meant to be learnt for interaction, which is the main purpose and not just study the language for the sake of education as to receive a certificate at the end of the course.

The students also want to experience a native like interaction to practice the language they are attending to master, a component they mainly lack in their society and educational system. Surprisingly students under study long for a higher level or certificate in English after finishing their courses in the future.

Nearly half of the students under research have specialized in English and learned to talk to use it as an occupation, mainly for financial purposes. Most of them decided to learn English out of their own desire and not due to the effect of family and friends.

These statistics and percentages were arrived at by calculating a ratio and proportioning the results to the total number as seen in the coming text.

Although there is a small percentage (%30) of the students that were told or forced to learn the language by family or friends, and

that has affected their learning process as they are not really happy or comfortable about the experience.

When it comes to the point to actually using the language (%50) of the students actually use the language and speak with others, and are happy to do so, finding minimum discomfort while speaking regardless of their level and proficiency.

While the other %50 of students don't use the language and are tired of learning how to speak in English, this sample of students are the same students that were forced to learn the language by family and friends.

Most of the students think that the experience of learning the language turned out to be a wonderful experience, and are happy about their choice. Which is an excellent attitude towards the language to help them carry on learning and achieve better.

When it comes to the students and how they think of the opportunities in class and their space to speak nearly more than (%50) of them feel deprived of their right and time to speak and practice this skill in class.

Other students say that the class environment is motivating despite their space to actually interact properly. %70 of the students despite the other factors noticed that their English has improved one way or another with the integration of other skills from other classes.

Some students find that their personality aids them to learn a language and use it, other students have a gift of being able to pick up

a language and acquiring the vital elements of the language to interact with others easily.

At last but not least the main element in the learning process which is the teacher's personality also affects the students, as %40 of the students are surely affected by the teacher's personality, while %30 of the students don't feel so, and are not affected by the teacher's personality, and another %30 are only sometimes affected by the teacher.

The students were interviewed and asked about the difficulties that prevent them of speaking and what they exactly face in class. As the main focus were on the negative side and elements that did not help to improve their speaking. The main phrases stated by students are;

Through the student's replies and own words, it is clear that there are students that experience dilemmas in learning the language.

we felt shy when asked to stand in front of the whole class and speak,
we were afraid to make mistakes and be criticized by the teacher or other students, we struggled with lack of vocabulary,
we don't have enough time to practice in class,
we are tempted to speak as other students dominate the class and the teachers attention,
we are unable to interact outside the class among other students as it feels weird and most of us are used to speak in Arabic outside classes.
Nobody in our surrounding at home know the language, which prevents us from practicing the language.

We don't have enough listening tracks to listen to in class.

We feel like the teacher expects us to speak freely, while we can't.

The students mainly struggle and suffer due to these factors unfortunately some of the students were unable to express themselves properly in English and had to speak in their mother tongue language (Arabic) to be understood. This may display the main problem as the students were unable to express their feelings and concern of the dilemma discussed in the target language (English). Problems as A. hesitation in speaking according to interviews by students was mainly due to:

1. poor vocabulary.
2. lack of awareness of structure (grammar sequence and patterns).
3. Week, shy, unconfident personality.
4. Fear of criticism from both (teacher and student).
5. Not enough practice in class, outside class, and at home.
6. Teachers high expectations of students.
7. The domination of other students in class.
8. Not enough listening exposure in class.

Conclusion

The researcher used a qualitative case study to understand the difficulties of speaking English faced by students at the university of Benghazi, while the difficulties were stated, steps were listed in an attempt to try to overcome these problems and improve student's speech. The **Participants** at the faculty of language, all sharing the same mother tongue and were third semester students while their

English level was nearly the same, they answered a questionnaire and were interviewed by the researcher, the study results were also based on previous observation during teaching by the teacher whom were interviewed by the researcher to gather as much data concerning the students under investigation.

The researcher, noticed that the students face certain difficulties learning the language. Difficulties which differ from one learner to another according to many factors, such as personality, different learning styles, aptitude, motivation and attitude. All these factors influence the language learning proficiency especially here in Libya where they are not exposed to English unless it is in a classroom setting.

Recommendations

The researcher has implied steps for students and teachers to apply together to overcome speaking difficulties:

1. Enrich vocabulary to be able to express, either by vocabulary in class or self-reading.

2. Practice speaking with colleagues every day conversations outside class even for a certain amount of time, create a situation and record yourself speaking on your own to get used to the language fluency.

3. Teachers should give enough listening tracks in class and for homework to listen to, exposing the students to different situations and vocabulary.

4. Teachers should not criticize students too much, or expect them to do very well, or know something above their level.

5. Students need to let go of the urge of perfection and except failure.

6. Students should not be discouraged when a conversation does not go well, and be able to work out a closure.

7. Students need to control the speed and layout of the conversation.

8. The teacher should control the class interaction equally among students despite their level of proficiency.

Mainly students should work on their weak points and improve their speech, teachers are also responsible for students' proficiency and improvement during the course to organize the class time and participation among students to provide them with a decent time of practice.

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