Speaking challenges

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Abstract: Speaking challenges are more than just technical issues; they profoundly affect individuals' lives, particularly those with communication disorders and language acquisition difficulties. These challenges can take many forms, such as stuttering, speech delays, and trouble articulating words. Such difficulties can hinder social interactions and impact academic success, making it hard for individuals to express themselves and connect with others. Research shows that both our environment and neurological factors contribute significantly to these speaking challenges [18]. Unfortunately, the stigma surrounding speech difficulties can lead to feelings of social anxiety and lower self-esteem, further complicating the lives of those affected [9].

However, hope is on the horizon. Interventions like speech therapy and supportive communication techniques have proven effective in helping individuals overcome these hurdles, leading to better outcomes and improved quality [8]. This abstract aims to shed light on the complex nature of speaking challenges and emphasizes the critical need for early intervention and greater societal empathy to support those facing these difficulties.

Speaking skills are at the heart of language learning and are vital for effective communication in our diverse world. Mastering these skills not only helps people connect with one another but also fosters cognitive growth and cultural understanding. However, many ESL (English as a Second Language) learners face significant hurdles on their path to becoming fluent speakers. Factors like anxiety, limited exposure to English, and not having enough practice can really hold them back.

In the classroom, pressures from life and institutional constraints can sometimes push instructors to rely on outdated teaching methods. This often means focusing on memorization rather than meaningful conversations, which can leave learners with a shallow grasp of how to use the language in real-life situations. As a result, they may struggle to engage in spontaneous conversations or navigate professional environments effectively.

To help learners develop strong speaking skills, it's crucial to adopt a systematic and personalized approach. The first step should involve assessing each learner's current abilities to pinpoint specific areas that need improvement, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, or fluency. Using tools like diagnostic assessments and self-reflection questionnaires can provide valuable insights into their proficiency levels. This initial evaluation allows instructors to craft lessons and activities that cater specifically to each learner's needs.

Pronunciation Accuracy: Utilizing phonetic training and listening exercises can help learners pronounce words more clearly, improving their overall communication [6].

Conversational Techniques: Teaching strategies like turn-taking, active listening, and using conversation markers can significantly enhance how learners interact with others [11].

Mechanics of Speaking: Understanding the rhythm and structure of spoken language, including intonation and stress, is essential for speaking fluently [16].

As learners grow more confident, it's important to gradually introduce more complex speaking tasks.

This scaffolding approach encourages them to express deeper and more nuanced ideas, promoting critical thinking and creativity [17]. Incorporating authentic materials and real-life scenarios into lessons provides them with practical experience, helping them navigate various communication situations more effectively [7].

Ongoing, supportive feedback is essential throughout this learning journey. Constructive criticism helps learners identify their strengths and areas for improvement, while positive reinforcement can boost their motivation and self-confidence [1]. Creating a classroom environment that prioritizes patience, encouragement, and collaboration can significantly enhance learners' confidence in their speaking abilities.

By adopting this holistic approach, we not only improve speaking skills but also empower learners to communicate effectively in a wide range of contexts. This paves the way for their personal and professional success in an increasingly interconnected world.

1.Introduction

In our increasingly connected world, being able to communicate effectively is more important than ever, and for many, proficiency in English opens doors to countless opportunities. Yet, for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, speaking can feel like climbing a steep mountain. The hurdles they face can make it difficult to express themselves clearly and with confidence.

These challenges arise from a mix of factors. Linguistic differences mean that some sounds or structures in English may not exist in their native languages, making pronunciation tricky. Cultural barriers can add another layer of complexity, as certain phrases or idioms may not translate well and can leave learners feeling lost in conversation. On top of this, the psychological pressure to perform well can be overwhelming; many learners worry about making mistakes or being judged, which can stifle their willingness to speak up.

This struggle can lead to frustration and a reluctance to participate in discussions, creating a cycle that can be hard to break. It's essential for both educators and learners to understand these challenges. By doing so, they can create supportive environments that encourage practice and foster growth. With the right strategies in place, ESL learners can navigate these obstacles, ultimately boosting their confidence and ability to communicate effectively in English-speaking settings.

1.1. Statement of the problem:

In today's interconnected world, being able to communicate effectively in English is more important than ever. However, many English as a Second Language (ESL) learners face significant challenges that make it difficult for them to speak confidently and fluently. Speaking skills are vital not only for academic success but also for building social connections, yet numerous barriers can prevent learners from expressing themselves fully.

One of the most pressing issues is the anxiety that often accompanies speaking a second language. Many learners worry about making mistakes, being judged by their peers, or encountering communication breakdowns. This fear can lead to hesitance in participating in speaking activities, making it even harder to practice and improve. Additionally, cultural differences can influence communication styles, which can further affect learners' comfort levels and their willingness to engage in conversations.

Many ESL learners also struggle with limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, which can restrict their ability to convey their thoughts effectively. This challenge is often exacerbated by a lack of opportunities to practice speaking in real-life situations, where they can apply what they've learned. Traditional teaching methods often focus on memorization and grammar rules, overlooking the practical speaking skills that are crucial for language development.

Moreover, not all instructors have the training or resources needed to tackle the specific speaking challenges that their students face. As a result, many learners may find themselves stuck, feeling frustrated and losing confidence in their speaking abilities.

To address these complex challenges, it's essential to understand the various factors that contribute to the speaking difficulties of ESL learners. By identifying these obstacles and exploring effective teaching strategies, educators can create more supportive and engaging learning environments. This approach will help empower learners to improve their speaking skills and communicate more confidently in English, opening doors to new opportunities and connections.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Investigating the speaking challenges faced by ESL learners is important not just for the learners themselves, but for educational institutions, teachers, and society at large. In our increasingly globalized world, effective communication in English has become a vital skill for academic success, career advancement, and social integration. By exploring the specific hurdles that ESL learners encounter in developing their speaking skills, this study aims to provide valuable insights that can inform teaching practices and shape curriculum development.

1. Enhancing Educational Outcomes

This study will help educators gain a clearer understanding of the factors that impede speaking proficiency among ESL learners. By identifying common challenges, such as anxiety, limited vocabulary, and cultural differences, teachers can adapt their instructional strategies to better support a diverse range of students. Implementing effective teaching methods that focus on building confidence and practical speaking skills can lead to improved academic performance and higher engagement in the classroom.

2. Informing Curriculum Development

The insights gained from this research can guide the creation of ESL curricula that prioritize speaking skills. Many current programs tend to focus more on reading and writing, leaving learners feeling unprepared for real-life communication. By emphasizing the importance of speaking and offering evidence-based recommendations for curriculum enhancement, this study can help educators develop a more balanced and comprehensive approach to language instruction.

3. Supporting Teacher Training

Teachers play a vital role in helping students acquire language skills, but many may not have the specialized training needed to effectively address the speaking challenges their students face. This study will identify the professional development needs of teachers, providing them with the strategies and resources necessary to create a supportive learning environment. By enhancing teachers' skills in teaching speaking, we can improve the overall quality of ESL instruction.

4. Promoting Learner Empowerment

By understanding and addressing the speaking challenges faced by ESL learners, we can significantly boost their confidence and belief in their own abilities. When educators implement strategies that encourage practice and offer constructive feedback, learners are more likely to engage actively in speaking activities. This empowerment can foster increased motivation and a positive attitude toward language learning, leading to improved communication skills and personal growth.

5. Contributing to Social Integration

Effective communication is crucial for social integration, especially for immigrants and international students who may struggle to connect with their peers. By tackling speaking challenges, this study can help facilitate smoother social interactions and promote inclusivity within educational environments. This not only benefits the learners but also enriches the overall learning experience for all students, fostering cultural awareness and collaboration.

6. Addressing Global Communication Needs

As English continues to serve as a global lingua franca, the ability to communicate effectively in English is increasingly important across various sectors, including business, healthcare, and education. By focusing on the speaking challenges faced by ESL learners, this study contributes to the broader goal of enhancing global communication. Improved speaking skills among these learners can lead to more effective interactions in diverse professional and social contexts, ultimately benefiting society as a whole.

1.3. Objective of the study

1- To Improve learners' ability to accurately produce English sounds, stress patterns, and intonation through focused practice and feedback.

2- To encourage the acquisition and active use of a broader range of vocabulary, enabling learners to express their thoughts and ideas more effectively in conversation.

3- To foster a supportive environment that reduces anxiety and promotes self-assurance, allowing learners to engage more freely in discussions and practice their speaking skills without fear of making mistakes.

1.4. Hypotheses of the study

1- **Anxiety and Speaking Proficiency** We propose that higher levels of anxiety among ESL learners will lead to lower speaking proficiency. In other words, learners who feel more anxious about speaking English are likely to struggle more with fluency and confidence in their spoken communication.

2- **Vocabulary and Communication Effectiveness** This hypothesis suggests that ESL learners with a limited vocabulary will find it more difficult to express themselves effectively during speaking activities. Essentially, having a richer vocabulary is expected to enhance their speaking skills and enable them to engage in more meaningful conversations.

3- **Impact of Instructional Strategies** We believe that using interactive and communicative teaching strategies will yield better speaking outcomes for ESL learners compared to traditional rote memorization methods. This means that learners who participate in engaging and practical speaking exercises are likely to show greater improvement in their speaking abilities and feel more confident in their communication skills.

1.5. Questions of the study

1- What specific factors contribute to anxiety among ESL learners when they are required to speak in English, and how does this anxiety impact their overall speaking proficiency?

2- How does a limited vocabulary affect an ESL learner's ability to communicate effectively during speaking activities, and what strategies can help expand their vocabulary?

3- In what ways do different instructional strategies influence the speaking skills of ESL learners, and which methods have been found to be most effective in fostering confidence and fluency?

1.6. Methodology

This study aims to assist ESL learners who face many challenges of writing to express themselves in an organizes thoughts and need to improve this specific skill. The researcher employed a statistical analysis and a descriptive approach to conduct this study.

1.7. Tools of data collection

The researcher has used a questionnaire consisting of 15 items for English language teachers who teach English for ESL learners in different English classes.

1.8. The limitations

The researcher prepared this study for English language teachers at Saudi high schools and some university lecturers who teach in the academic year 2025 – 2026.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The ability to communicate effectively in English, particularly through speaking, is a crucial skill for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in academic, professional, and social contexts. While reading, writing, and listening skills are also essential, speaking proficiency often presents a significant hurdle for many learners [5]. This difficulty stems from a complex interplay of linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural factors that impact the acquisition and development of oral communication skills [2].

This literature review explores the multifaceted challenges faced by ESL learners in developing their speaking proficiency, examining the existing research on this topic to identify key areas of concern and potential avenues for effective instruction.

Speaking is not merely the articulation of sounds; it is a dynamic and interactive process involving the construction and negotiation of meaning [3]. It requires learners to simultaneously manage various aspects of language, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and discourse structure [4]. Furthermore, effective speaking involves understanding and responding appropriately to interlocutors, adapting communication strategies, and navigating the social and cultural norms of interaction [12]. For ESL learners, these complexities are compounded by the challenges of learning a new sound system, expanding their vocabulary, mastering grammatical rules, and overcoming the inhibitions often associated with speaking in a second language [10].

This review will delve into the specific linguistic challenges faced by ESL learners, such as pronunciation difficulties stemming from first language interference [13], limited vocabulary knowledge impacting fluency and accuracy [15], and grammatical errors hindering effective communication. It will also explore the cognitive factors that influence speaking development, including memory limitations, processing speed, and the ability to access and retrieve linguistic information. Moreover, the review will examine the significant role of affective factors, such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and motivation, in shaping learners' speaking performance. Finally, the influence of sociocultural factors, including classroom environment, cultural background, and opportunities for interaction, will be considered [14].

By synthesizing the existing research on these various aspects of speaking challenges, this literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge in this field. This understanding is crucial for educators, researchers, and curriculum developers seeking to design effective pedagogical approaches and create supportive learning environments that foster ESL learners' speaking development. The review will conclude by identifying key areas where further research is needed to address the persistent challenges faced by ESL learners in acquiring speaking proficiency.

Speaking English can be particularly challenging for ESL (English as a Second Language) learners due to a variety of general problems.

2.2. Pronunciation Difficulties

Many ESL learners struggle with English sounds that are absent in their native languages, leading to mispronunciations that hinder communication. Mastering the rhythm and intonation of English can also be particularly challenging, affecting intelligibility. Native language intonation patterns can influence pronunciation, causing learners to apply their native stress patterns to English words.

2.3. Language Transfer

ESL learners often carry over phonemes from their native languages, which can lead to mispronunciations. For instance, a Spanish speaker might struggle with the English /v/ sound, which does not exist in Spanish. Additionally, learners may rely on their native vocabulary and grammatical rules, complicating their language acquisition process.

2.4. Phonological Awareness

A lack of familiarity with English phonological rules, such as linking between words and the reduction of unstressed vowels, can hinder fluent, natural-sounding speech. Mispronouncing segmental features (individual sounds) can lead to misunderstandings, while suprasegmental features (intonation, rhythm, and stress) are often overlooked in traditional instruction, yet are crucial for effective communication.

2.5. Orthographic Representation

The irregular spelling of English presents challenges for pronunciation. Learners may struggle with silent letters, vowel combinations, and the multiple sounds of the same letter.

2.6. Exposure and Practice

Limited exposure to native pronunciation and insufficient practice can impede pronunciation skills. Many ESL learners lack access to native speakers or authentic listening materials, which are essential for modeling correct pronunciation.

2.7. Limited Vocabulary and Cognitive Factors

A restricted vocabulary can hinder learners from expressing their thoughts clearly. Factors contributing to limited vocabulary include:

1. **Limited Exposure:** Restricted access to authentic English input.

2. **Quality of Input:** The type of language input can influence vocabulary acquisition.

3. **Working Memory Limitations:** Vocabulary learning requires managing multiple pieces of information.

4. **Curriculum Limitations:** ESL programs may not emphasize vocabulary development adequately.

5. **Assessment Practices:** Traditional assessments may prioritize grammatical accuracy over vocabulary.

2.8. Grammar Challenges

Grammar is foundational for sentence structure and relationships between words. ESL learners often face challenges due to:

1. **Irregularities:** English has irregular verbs, plural forms, and exceptions.

2. **Tenses and Aspects:** The complexity of multiple tenses can be particularly challenging.

3. **Language Transfer:** Applying grammatical rules from their first language can create confusion.

2.9. Cognitive Load and Hesitation

Hesitation and pausing are natural components of communication, but they can be more pronounced in ESL learners due to:

1. **Cognitive Load:** Speaking in a second language requires simultaneous processing, which can exceed working memory capacity.

2. **Language Proficiency:** Limited vocabulary and inconsistent grammar understanding can lead to hesitation.

3. **Fear of Making Mistakes:** Anxiety about speaking in a second language may increase hesitation.

4. **Cultural and Social Factors:** Cultural norms regarding pauses and turn-taking practices can further complicate communication.

2.10. Implications of Hesitation and Pausing

Fluency and Comprehensibility:

Frequent hesitation can disrupt fluency, making speech less coherent and harder to follow. Excessive or poorly timed pauses may challenge listeners' understanding of the speaker's message.

1. **Perceptions of Proficiency:**

Hesitation can influence how learners are perceived, potentially leading listeners to view them as less confident or proficient. This can affect the learner's self-esteem and motivation.

2. **Communication Effectiveness:**

While some pauses are natural and can enhance clarity, excessive hesitation can hinder effective communication, leading to misunderstandings or a breakdown in conversation flow.

Anxiety and Fear of Judgment:

Anxiety and fear of judgment are significant barriers for many ESL learners. These emotional challenges can adversely affect language acquisition and overall academic performance. Understanding these sources is crucial for developing effective educational strategies.

Sources of Anxiety in ESL Learners

1. **Language Proficiency Concerns:**

Self-Perception of Competence: ESL learners often evaluate their skills against native speakers or more proficient peers, leading to feelings of inadequacy and anxiety about participation.

Fear of Mistakes: Concern over making grammatical errors or mispronouncing words can inhibit spontaneous speech.

2.Cultural Differences:

Cultural Norms and Expectations: Different cultures have varying norms regarding communication styles, which can create anxiety for learners trying to navigate new contexts.

Communication Styles: A mismatch in directness versus indirectness in communication can lead to discomfort when expressing themselves.

1.Social Pressures:

Peer Comparison: ESL learners may compare themselves with peers, increasing anxiety, especially in competitive environments.

Fear of Negative Evaluation: Anticipating negative judgment can deter participation in discussions, further isolating learners.

2.13. Implications of Anxiety and Fear of Judgment

Impact on Language Acquisition:

1. **Reduced Participation:**

Anxiety can lead to avoidance behaviors, limiting practice opportunities essential for language development.

2. **Impaired Communication Skills:**

Learners may struggle to articulate their thoughts clearly, resulting in fragmented speech and hindered communication.

Emotional and Psychological Well-Being:

1. **Increased Stress:**

Chronic anxiety can negatively affect mental health, leading to physical symptoms like headaches or fatigue.

2. **Lower Self-Esteem:**

Constant fear of judgment can erode self-confidence, creating a cycle of reluctance to engage in language use.

Academic Performance:

1. **Lower Achievement:**

Anxiety can impair cognitive function, making it difficult to concentrate and perform well, leading to lower academic achievement.

Cultural Differences

Cultural differences significantly influence the experiences of ESL learners, affecting language acquisition and communication styles.

Understanding learners' cultural backgrounds is essential for educators to create inclusive and effective learning environments.

1.Communication Styles:

Different cultures have varying preferences for communication. For example, Western cultures often favor direct communication, while many Asian cultures may value indirectness.

Cultural differences can significantly impact communication in the classroom. Some cultures prefer indirect communication, emphasizing harmony and context, which may lead to misunderstandings in interactions.

Nonverbal Communication

Cultural norms surrounding nonverbal communication, such as eye contact, gestures, and body language, can vary widely. For example, while maintaining eye contact may signify confidence in some cultures, it could be seen as disrespectful in others. ESL learners may require guidance to navigate these differences.

Cultural Norms and Values

1. **Individualism vs. Collectivism:**

   Individualistic cultures prioritize personal achievement, whereas collectivist cultures emphasize group harmony. This distinction can affect participation in group activities and willingness to assert opinions in class.

2. **Power Distance:**

   In cultures with high power distance, authority is viewed hierarchically, leading learners to be more deferential to teachers and less likely to engage in open dialogue. In contrast, low power distance cultures encourage egalitarian interactions, promoting more assertive participation.

Attitudes Toward Education

Cultural backgrounds shape attitudes toward education and learning styles. For instance, some cultures value rote memorization and formal assessments, while others emphasize critical thinking and collaborative learning. These differing approaches can impact ESL learners' engagement and adaptability in Western educational settings.

Expectations of Educators

ESL learners may come from systems with different teacher expectations. In some cultures, teachers are seen as authoritative figures whose knowledge is not questioned, while in others, they serve as facilitators. This can influence how learners interact with instructors and their willingness to ask questions.

Cultural Identity and Integration

1. **Navigating Dual Identities:**

   ESL learners often balance their cultural identity with the need to assimilate into a new culture, which can create stress and confusion, especially in social settings. Support from peers and educators can facilitate this integration.

2. **Cultural Stereotypes and Bias:**

   ESL learners may encounter stereotypes related to their backgrounds, affecting their self-esteem and motivation. Educators should promote a culture of respect and understanding in the classroom.

Implications for Language Learning

1. **Communication Barriers:**

   Cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings, hindering language acquisition and participation in class activities.

2. **Adjustment to Learning Environments:**

   ESL learners may struggle to adapt to new educational norms, leading to anxiety and frustration that impact academic performance.

3. **Social Integration:**

   Cultural differences can hinder the formation of social connections with peers, potentially leading to feelings of isolation.

Contextual Understanding

Contextual understanding is crucial for effective communication and comprehension. It involves interpreting language based on surrounding circumstances, cultural backgrounds, and situational factors.

1. **Enhancing Comprehension:**

   Contextual understanding helps ESL learners grasp intended meanings in spoken and written language. Words can have different meanings based on context, making this skill vital for effective communication. Understanding idiomatic expressions, which often do not translate directly, requires reliance on contextual clues.

Facilitating Vocabulary Acquisition:

Contextual learning aids vocabulary acquisition by providing opportunities to encounter new words in meaningful settings. Research shows that vocabulary learned in context is retained better than isolated vocabulary. Contextual Understanding

Effective communication relies heavily on our ability to read social cues and adjust our language accordingly. For ESL learners, developing a strong sense of contextual understanding is essential. This skill helps them navigate various social situations and tailor their language to fit the audience. For instance, the tone and formality needed in a business meeting differ greatly from those in a casual chat with friends.

Factors Influencing Contextual Understanding

1. **Cultural Background:**

   A learner's cultural background plays a significant role in how they interpret language and engage socially. Some cultures value direct communication, while others might emphasize subtlety and indirectness. ESL learners need to navigate these differences to enhance their understanding of context.

2. **Previous Knowledge and Experience:**

   What learners already know shapes how they interpret new information. ESL learners bring their own linguistic and cultural experiences into the classroom, which can affect their ability to make connections. By scaffolding instruction building on what learners already understand educators can help them grasp contextual nuances more effectively.

3. **Language Proficiency:**

Proficiency in English greatly influences how well learners can understand context. Those with higher proficiency tend to have a broader vocabulary and a better grasp of grammar, making it easier for them to decipher contextual clues. Tailoring instruction to match learners' proficiency levels can significantly enhance their ability to navigate different contexts.

Lack of Practice Opportunities

Practice is vital for language acquisition, especially for ESL learners. Engaging in meaningful conversations boosts fluency and overall language skills. However, many learners encounter barriers that limit their chances to practice English in real-life situations.

Factors Contributing to Lack of Practice Opportunities

1.Limited Access to Native Speakers:

Geographic Isolation: Many ESL learners live in areas where English isn't the primary language, which restricts their interaction with native speakers and exposure to authentic language use.

Social Networks: Often, learners gravitate towards communities where their native language is spoken, which can reduce their chances of practicing English.

2.Educational Environment:

Classroom Dynamics: Traditional classrooms frequently focus on grammar rather than communicative practice, leaving little room for speaking and listening activities.

Class Size and Structure: Large classes can make it difficult to provide personalized interaction, limiting opportunities for meaningful conversations.

3.Cultural Factors:

Fear of Embarrassment: Many learners feel anxious about speaking English due to fears of making mistakes or being judged, which can hold them back from participating in discussions.

Cultural Norms: In some cultures, speaking out in groups is less common, making learners uncomfortable in such settings.

1.Language Proficiency Levels:

Unequal Proficiency: In mixed-proficiency classes, more advanced learners may dominate conversations, leaving less proficient learners with fewer chances to engage.

Perceived Competence: Learners who doubt their abilities may shy away from speaking, creating a cycle of disengagement.

Implications of Limited Practice Opportunities

1.Stunted Language Development:

A lack of practice can stall fluency and comprehension skills. Learners may struggle to process spoken language quickly, leading to communication breakdowns. Additionally, without opportunities to use new vocabulary in context, they may forget words or fail to grasp their nuances.

2.Increased Anxiety and Low Self-Esteem:

Limited practice opportunities can heighten anxiety and lower self-esteem, creating further obstacles to language acquisition.

Fear of Communication

When learners don't get enough practice, it can heighten their anxiety about speaking. This anxiety makes them nervous about future conversations, creating a tough cycle: the more anxious they feel, the less they practice, which leads to lower proficiency.

Confidence Erosion

Without regular practice, learners can start to doubt their language skills. This decline in confidence can make them hesitant to seek out opportunities to speak, which only deepens their struggles.

Social Isolation

Limited practice can also make it hard for learners to connect socially in English-speaking settings. This isolation can lead to feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction, ultimately affecting their overall well-being and motivation to continue learning.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The study is entitled "Speaking Challenges". The following chapter will be devoted to the methodology to investigate the collected data; the researcher has adopted the descriptive method because it has great value in providing facts on which professional judgment can be based. The researcher identified the hypothesis of the study and selected the data instrument which is represented in a questionnaire; first, the data has been collected, second analyzed and discussed.

3.2The Population

This study consists of hundred and fifty candidates' males and females that include university lecturers and teachers from schools in various stages of general education. The subjects were randomly selected, and all are English language teachers in the academic year 2025-2026.

3.3 Sample

The sample of this study is represented by [150] English language lecturers, who teach the English language in different colleges and their experience ranges from (less than 5 and more than 15) years, however, some of them are 'BA' and 'MA.' holders and others have Ph.D. in ELT.

3.4 Questionnaire Validity

Validity is the most important quality to be considered in the development process. Therefore, to ensure the face validity of the questionnaire, certain procedures were conducted and the prepared version of the questionnaire was presented to specialize people, second the questionnaire was modified regarding the word of items and restatement of certain items. Finally, the questionnaire was collected, analyzed, scored, and tabulated.

3.5 The Questionnaire Reliability

The performance of candidates during tests can be influenced by various factors in the testing environment, such as tiredness, anxiety, and lack of attention. As a result, candidates may obtain scores that are inconsistent across different test administrations. For a questionnaire to be considered reliable, it should produce the same scores when administered to the same group of participants at a later time.

3.6 Procedures

To prepare the questionnaire certain procedures were followed. First, the prepared version of the questionnaire was presented to specialized people who have long experience in the field of writing. Second, this questionnaire which consists of fifteen items were designed. Then, it was distributed among English language teachers' lecturers. The questionnaire was constructed through the following steps:

1-The proposed questionnaire was designed first.

2-The questionnaire is presented to expert people to check face validity.

3-The corrections were made according to the recommendations for the final version of the questionnaire.

4-The questionnaire consists of five options for each item, so a respondent has to tick the suitable one.

5-The questionnaire was distributed among [150] lecturers and teachers of English at various stages.

6-Finally, the questionnaire was collected analyzed, and tabulated.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4-1 introduction

The following chapter will be devoted to presenting, analyzing and discussing the results of the collected data using the questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The results of the presented questionnaire will be discussed and interpreted in detail. The following tables are general statistic for English language teachers and lecturers at general schools and some universities in Saudi Arabia.

Gender

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Male	79	0.53
Female	71	0.47
Total	150	100

Figure (1) Gender
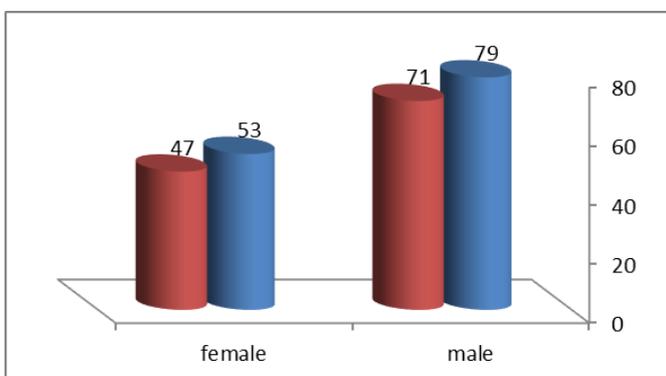
Table (2) Academic Qualifications

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
BA degree	30	20
MA degree	63	42
PhD degree	57	38
Total	150	100

Figure (2) Academic Qualifications
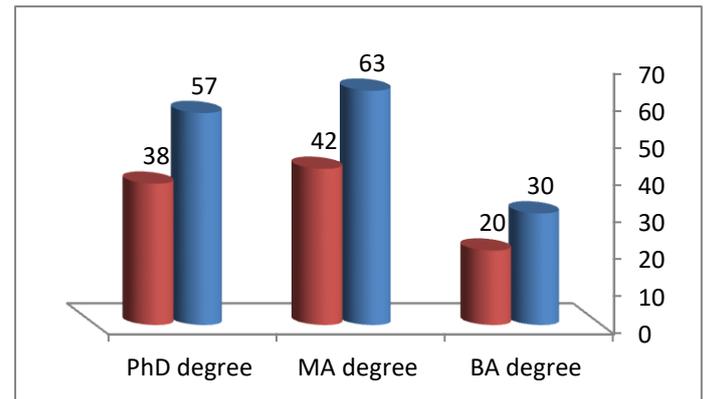
Table (3) Experience

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 year	25	17
More than 5 year	25	17
Less than 15 year	40	26
More than 15 year	60	40
Total	150	100

Figure (3) Experience
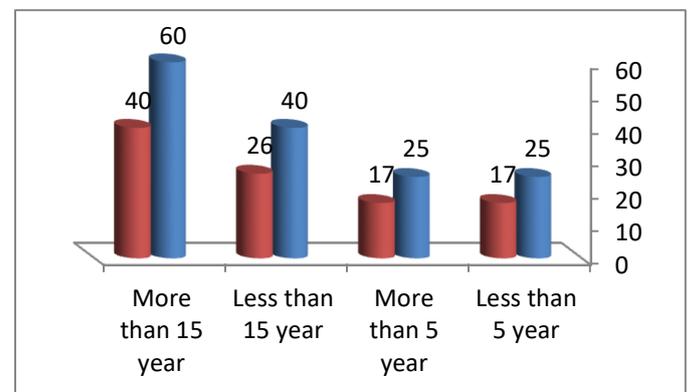
Some ESL learners face difficulty to pronounce words correctly when they speak English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	75	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Agree	55	37.0	37.0	87.0
	Neutral	20	13.0	13.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

large number of ESL learners feel nervous when they asked to speak

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	65	43.0	43.0	43.0
	Agree	65	43.0	43.0	86.0
	Neutral	20	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Expressing their thoughts clearly in English can be a real challenge for ESL learners

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly agree	50	33.0	33.0	33.0
	Agree	55	37.0	37.0	70.0
Valid	Neutral	35	23.0	23.0	93.0
	Disagree	10	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Some ESL learners worry that their vocabulary isn't extensive enough, which makes speaking harder

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly agree	45	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Agree	65	43.0	43.0	73.0
Valid	Neutral	25	17.0	17.0	90.0
	Disagree	15	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Classroom discussion in English can be particularly daunting for ESL learners

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	75	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Agree	60	40.0	40.0	90.0
	Neutral	15	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

The course content is designed to effectively tackle the speaking challenges faced by ESL learners

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly agree	75	50.0	50.0	50.0
Valid	Agree	75	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The speaking activities in the syllabus help ESL learners enhance their speaking skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly agree	70	47.0	47.0	47.0
Valid	Agree	80	53.0	53.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

The syllabus provides a clear structure that helps ESL learners evaluate their speaking performance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	75	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Agree	75	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Since starting the course, many ESL learners have gained more confidence in their speaking abilities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	75	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Agree	75	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

The syllabus equips students to handle similar speaking challenges they may encounter

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	70	47.0	47.0	47.0
	Agree	80	53.0	53.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Instructors foster a supportive environment that encourages practice in speaking skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	75	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Agree	65	43.0	43.0	93.0
	Neutral	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Instructors offer clear explanations and relatable examples that help address speaking challenges

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	75	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Agree	30	20.0	20.0	70.0
	Neutral	30	20.0	20.0	90.0
	22.00	15	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Instructors play a constructive and positive role in boosting ESL learners' speaking performance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	75	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Agree	60	40.0	40.0	90.0
	Neutral	15	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Instructors actively encourage participation and engagement during speaking activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	90	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Agree	35	23.0	23.0	83.0
	Neutral	25	17.0	17.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Instructors tailor lessons to meet the individual speaking needs of their students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	85	57.0	57.0	57.0
	Agree	45	30.0	30.0	87.0
	Neutral	20	13.0	13.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Test Statistics

	Some ESL learners face difficulty to pronounce words correctly when they speak English	large number of ESL learners feel nervous when they asked to speak	Expressing their thoughts clearly in English can be a real challenge for ESL learners	Some ESL learners worry that their vocabulary isn't extensive enough, which makes speaking harder	Classroom discussion in English can be particularly daunting for ESL learners
Chi-Square	7.000[a]	7.000[a]	10.000[b]	12.000[b]	13.000[a]
Df	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 16.2

b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 12.6

Test Statistics

	The course content is designed to effectively tackle the speaking challenges faced by ESL learners	The speaking activities in the syllabus help ESL learners enhance their speaking skills	The syllabus provides a clear structure that helps ESL learners evaluate their speaking performance	Since starting the course, many ESL learners have gained more confidence in their speaking abilities	The syllabus equips students to handle similar speaking challenges they may encounter
Chi-Square	1.000[a]	2.000[a]	3.000[a]	3.000[a]	2.000[a]
Df	1	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 15.0.

Test Statistics

	Instructors foster a supportive environment that encourages practice in speaking skills	Instructors offer clear explanations and relatable examples that help address speaking challenges	Instructors play a constructive and positive role in boosting ESL learners' speaking performance	Instructors actively encourage participation and engagement during speaking activities	Instructors tailor lessons to meet the individual speaking needs of their students
Chi-Square	13.000[a]	15.000[b]	13.000[a]	11.000[a]	11.000[a]
df	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 16.3

b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 12.2

5.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.2 Introduction

Speaking can be a deeply rewarding journey for ESL learners, but it's not without its challenges. For many, the act of verbal communication is about more than just knowing the right words; it's also about having the confidence to express themselves clearly. It's common for learners to feel anxious about making mistakes, which can lead to hesitation in conversations. In those moments, finding the right words can feel overwhelming, especially when faced with unfamiliar topics or new social situations.

Pronunciation and intonation play vital roles in effective speaking, yet they often present unique hurdles for non-native speakers. The subtleties of spoken language, like rhythm and stress, can be tricky to grasp, leaving learners feeling frustrated at times. Plus, navigating idiomatic expressions or colloquialisms can seem like an intricate maze, adding to the complexity of communication.

Listening skills are just as crucial. Engaging in a conversation means not only speaking but also understanding what others are saying. ESL learners may struggle to keep up with fast-paced discussions or different accents, which can make them feel left out or hesitant to participate.

Feedback is a key part of improvement, but receiving constructive criticism can be tough, especially in front of classmates. The journey to discovering one's unique speaking style and voice demands practice, patience, and a willingness to take risks.

Yet, despite these obstacles, there's an incredible sense of satisfaction that comes from successfully sharing thoughts and ideas in a second language. When learners invest time and effort into honing their speaking skills and observe their progress, it becomes a rewarding experience. This feeling of accomplishment ignites motivation and encourages them to keep practicing.

In a recent study, a questionnaire was distributed to fifty English language lecturers at various colleges and schools in Saudi Arabia. The researcher employed different statistical methods to analyze the data and uncover meaningful insights.

5.3 The main findings

1. Anxiety and Fear of Mistakes: For many ESL learners, the thought of speaking up can bring a wave of anxiety. They often worry about being judged or making mistakes, which can hold them back from joining conversations altogether.

2. Limited Vocabulary: When learners have a limited vocabulary, it can feel like their thoughts are trapped. This makes it hard for them to express themselves fully, leading to frustration and a dip in confidence when they try to speak.

3. Pronunciation Difficulties: Pronunciation can be a real hurdle. Many learners struggle to say words correctly, which can lead to misunderstandings and make it tough for others to grasp what they're trying to say.

4. Intonation and Rhythm Issues: Getting the right intonation and rhythm in speech can be tricky for non-native speakers. This sometimes results in a speaking style that feels stiff or unnatural, making it harder to connect with listeners.

5. Listening Comprehension: Keeping up with fast-paced conversations or deciphering different accents can be daunting. This challenge often leaves learners feeling disconnected and unsure of how to respond in discussions.

6. Cultural Nuances: Navigating the cultural nuances of a language can be overwhelming. ESL learners might find themselves puzzled by idiomatic expressions or cultural references, making casual conversations feel like a foreign territory.

7. Lack of Practice Opportunities: Without enough chances to practice speaking in real-life situations, learners can feel stuck. This lack of practice can slow their progress and chip away at their confidence.

8. Feedback Acceptance: While feedback is vital for growth, many learners struggle to accept constructive criticism. This reluctance can hinder their improvement and leave them feeling discouraged.

9. Overthinking During Conversations: In the heat of a conversation, it's common for ESL learners to overthink their responses. This can lead to hesitation and a loss of fluency, making them feel less confident in their speaking abilities.

10. Peer Pressure and Group Dynamics: In group settings, the presence of more fluent speakers can be intimidating. This peer pressure might cause learners to withdraw, limiting their opportunities to practice and engage in conversation.

These insights illustrate the complex and emotional landscape that ESL learners navigate as they work to develop their speaking skills.

5.4 Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:

1. Create a Safe Environment: Foster a classroom or group setting where mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process. Encourage open dialogue and reassure learners that making errors is completely normal.

2. Expand Vocabulary Gradually: Introduce new words and phrases in context. Use engaging activities like word games or storytelling to help learners practice and remember vocabulary without feeling overwhelmed.

3. Focus on Pronunciation Practice: Incorporate regular pronunciation exercises into lessons, using tools like phonetic charts or listening and repeating exercises. Consider using apps or resources that provide feedback on pronunciation.

4. Practice Intonation and Rhythm: Use songs, poetry, or dialogues to help learners grasp natural speech patterns. Encourage them to mimic the intonation and rhythm of native speakers to develop a more fluid speaking style.

5. Enhance Listening Skills: Provide opportunities for learners to listen to diverse accents and fast-paced conversations through podcasts, videos, or interactive listening activities. Discuss what they hear to reinforce comprehension.

6. Introduce Cultural Contexts: Teach cultural references and idiomatic expressions through real-life examples and role-playing. Discuss the significance behind expressions to help learners feel more comfortable in informal conversations.

7. Facilitate Real-Life Practice: Organize speaking clubs, language exchange meetups, or conversation partners to give learners opportunities to practice speaking in real-world contexts, boosting their confidence and fluency.

8. Encourage Constructive Feedback: Teach learners how to give and receive feedback positively. Create structured peer review sessions where they can share insights without feeling judged, promoting a growth mindset.

9. Promote Mindfulness Techniques: Help learners develop strategies to manage overthinking during conversations, such as taking deep breaths or focusing on the main idea they want to convey. Encourage them to listen actively rather than overanalyze their responses.

10. Foster Collaborative Learning: Create mixed-ability groups where more fluent speakers can support their peers. Pairing learners with different skill levels can reduce intimidation and encourage practice in a supportive environment.

By implementing these recommendations, educators and peers can help ESL learners navigate their speaking challenges more effectively, enhancing their confidence and communication skills.

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