



Contents lists available at ASJP (Algerian Scientific Journal Platform)
Academic Review of social and human studies
 journal homepage: www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/PresentationRevue/552



Investigating Some of the Factors Affecting Second Year EFL Students' Speaking Performance at Batna 2 University

دراسة بعض العوامل المؤثرة على أداء التحدث لدى متعلمي السنة الثانية لغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة باتنة 2

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Article info:

Abstract

Article history:

Received : 28-03-2021

Revised : 25-05-2021

Accepted : 02-07-2021

Key words:

Factors

motivation

self-confidence

speaking

vocabulary.

Speaking is an essential skill that should be developed and improved for successful and effective communication. Speaking skill is considered as one of the significantly challenging aspects of language learning. However, most EFL learners encounter various difficulties in speaking the language acceptably and appropriately. Different factors affect those difficulties. Therefore, the current study investigates the most common factors affecting second-year EFL students' speaking performance at Batna 2 University. Data are collected through the use of the students' questionnaire and analysed quantitatively. We administered the questionnaire to (165) students as a sample from the entire population (822). These data are collected and described through tables and graphs. The questionnaire results revealed that many factors negatively affect EFL students' speaking performance, such as lack of motivation, fear of making mistakes, lack of self-confidence, and lack of vocabulary knowledge. The study is supposed to help students enhance their speaking performance by shedding light on the above factors and investigating them. Finally, and based on the research findings, some recommendations are made.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ملخص

التحفيز

الثقة بالنفس

العوامل

الكلام

مفردات.

إن الكلام من المهارات الأساسية التي ينبغي تطويرها و تحسينها من أجل تواصل ناجح و فعال، إذ تعتبر هذه المهارة من أصعب التحديات عند تعلم اللغة؛ و لذلك يجد غالبية متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية صعوبات في الكلام بشكل مقبول و ملائم، هذه الصعوبات هي وليدة العديد من العوامل، وعليه فإن هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى تسليط الضوء على العوامل الشائعة التي تؤثر على مهارة الكلام عند طلبة السنة الثانية لغة إنجليزية جامعة باتنة 2 عند استخدامهم للغة الانجليزية، حيث جمعت المعلومات عن طريق استبيان وزع على 165 طالبا من اصل 822، ليتم تحليل المعلومات باستخدام المنهج الكمي حيث وضعت في مجموعة من الجداول و الرسومات البيانية و تم التوصل من خلال هذه الدراسة إلى اثبات وجود بعض العوامل التي أثرت سلبا على مهارة الكلام لدى طلبة السنة الثانية لغة إنجليزية جامعة باتنة 2 ك: غياب عامل التحفيز، الخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء، انعدام الثقة بالنفس، و كذلك الافتقار إلى المفردات و الكلمات المطلوبة. و من المفترض ان تساعد هذه الدراسة الطلبة على تحسين أدائهم خلال الحصص الشفوية و ذلك بتسليط الضوء على العوامل السالفة ذكرها و تفصيلها. و في الاخير توجيه بعض التوصيات للطلبة على أساس النتائج المتوصل إليها.

1. Introduction

People who know a language referred to as speakers of that language, the reason why speaking seems to be the significant skill among the four skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) Ur(1996). The fundamental objective of teaching a language must be helping learners to use English effectively, accurately in communication Davies&Pearse (2000).

Speaking is a crucial part of learning a language. However, many students face many problems expressing themselves in English because of different factors that impact the students' speaking performance. Therefore, the current study aims to determine the main factors that affect EFL students' speaking performance. The research instrument applied to collect data for this study was a student questionnaire. The studies showed that some significant factors influence EFL students' speaking performance. Some experts in the field proved that EFL students' speaking performance might be affected by different factors. Alhosni (2014) states that EFL students may face several problems developing their speaking performance due to their minimal direct exposure to the target language Shumin (2002). Aleksandrzak (2011) as well believes that insufficient speaking opportunities are a source of speaking performance problems. Hojat&Afghari (2013) state that speaking performance under the effect of several linguistic and non-linguistic factors such as grammar, vocabulary, and affective factors. Moreover, Shumin (2002) states that affective factors can affect EFL students' speaking performance. Moreover, Wang (2014) notes that linguistic and affective factors could affect students' speaking performance.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Speaking is one of the macro skills that are very important in communication. In EFL classrooms, it needs special attention. From our own experiences of teaching English at Batna 2 University, the researcher noticed students' low participation in oral expression classrooms, and most of them lack the required level of speaking skill. Some of the students keep calm and do not participate actively. To sum up, the researcher noticed that most students in the oral expression

classroom failed to participate in group discussions and oral presentations.

Furthermore, students lack basic language knowledge. This lack is maybe due to fear of making mistakes, lack of motivation, lack of grammar, and vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, this study is conducted to investigate some of the factors that affect students' speaking performance.

1.2 Research question

The current study aims at answering the following question:

1- What are the most critical factors that affect EFL students' speaking performance?

1.3 Hypotheses

Based on the above question, we hypothesised that;

1.The factors affecting EFL students' speaking performance are affective related factors, instructors related factors, facility-related factors, and linguistically related factors.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study was to explore some of the factors that affect EFL students' speaking performance negatively. Hoping to provide some practical suggestions to help teachers and students of English at Batna 2 university.

1.5 Significance of the study

1- Introducing some of the factors that influence EFL students' speaking performance in a negative way.

2- Dividing those factors depending on four categories helps researchers get a clear idea about the extinction of those speaking performance factors.

3-The study may initiate researchers to conduct further research on related issues.

1.6 Limitation of the study

Limitation of time: The study was carried out and applied during the academic year 2018/2019

Limitation of place: The study carried out in the department of English at Batna 2 University- Algeria.

Limitation of the subject: The study will deal with and discuss the following issue "Investigating some

of the factors that affecting EFL students' speaking performance.

2. Review of the related literature

In this section, a plain view of the speaking skill is highlighted. At first we define speaking, identify its importance. Then, the characteristics of speaking are displayed, and the main speaking problems encountered by students are outlined. This section ends up by referring to some of the factors affecting students' speaking performance.

2.1 Definition of speaking

Speaking is regarded as the essential skill among the other skills because speaking includes many different kinds of knowledge, and individuals who learn a foreign language are considered as the speakers of that language Ur (1996). According to Chaney (1998), speaking produces and exchanges meaning through verbal and non-verbal symbols in different contexts. Brown (1994) Burns & Joyce (1997) have defined speaking as an interactive process of building sense that contains producing, receiving, and processing information. Bygate (1987) has described speaking as the process of making auditory signals to construct different verbal responses in listeners. It is the combination of sounds in a systematic way to produce meaningful sentences.

2.2- The Importance of speaking

Ulas (2008) highlights the speaking importance by claiming that speaking is a vital element for successful communication within people. It covers a large area among individuals in a given society. Furthermore, Celce-Murcia (2011) argued that speaking is the central core of social communication because speaking a language is similar to a language's knowledge. Efrizal (2012) & Gilakjani (2016) stated that speaking has a significant role in human social life in different places and times. Speaking is the process of sharing ideas and thoughts orally. Therefore, if teachers need to let their students speak in the English language, they should put them in real situations and ask them to speak. Thus, the speakers of the English language have more chances to find jobs. Baker & Westrup (2003) who advocated those

statements, they said that students who are well English speakers could have more opportunities for better education and finding good jobs.

2.3 Characteristics of the speaking skill

Researchers and scholars consider speaking capacity as the central core of learning a language. Both fluency and accuracy play a significant role in communication.

The first characteristic of speaking performance is fluency, and it is the most crucial goal of teachers while teaching speaking skill. Hughes (2002) has defined fluency as the person's capacity to express the ideas, feelings and opinions adequately and meticulously to allow the listener to catch what the speaker wants to say, resulting in successful communication between them. Additionally, Hughes (2000) defined fluency as the production of coherent utterances smoothly and rapidly accurately. In the same context, Bygate (2009) stated that fluency appears primarily on two sides: the pace of delivery and regularity, in other words, a natural amount and the distribution of pauses.

The second characteristic of speaking performance is accuracy. Gower & Phillips & Walter (1995) has defined accuracy as the students' ability to produce correct sentences in terms of correct pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary to be understood. It has been argued that fluency and accuracy are closely related.

Moreover, Burkat (1998) stated that learners must emphasise mainly grammar rules, vocabulary, and pronunciation in teaching speaking. Grammar is how the principles of any language organised. It allows people to express their ideas and thoughts effectively and adequately. It helps to make the speakers' meaning apparent. Thornbury (2005) claimed that gaining accuracy in terms of grammar requires the correct use of structures, the complexity of the sentences, and the well-organised clauses, besides vocabulary, which is the essential communication tool that carries meaning. According to Harmer (2001), forming well-structured utterances and performing well in speaking requires knowledge of word classes. Hence, students must use words and expressions accurately, which means using adequate vocabularies in appropriate contexts.

According to Richards & Renandya (2002) pronunciation refers to the students' correct use of sounds and their features to convey meanings, then their utterances are understandable to realise the intended objective. It involves both segmental and suprasegmental features (intonation, stress placement, timing, rhythm).

2.4 Speaking problems

Ur (1996) has stated four main problems that students face while learning to speak English in the classroom. These problems are inhibition, lack of knowledge, low or uneven participation, and mother tongue use.

Inhibition is the first speaking problem that makes EFL students suffer. Guiora et al (1972) and Ehrman (1996) argued that inhibition appears when students want to speak in the classroom. They are worried about making mistakes and fearful of criticism either by their teacher or their classmates. It has a relation with the language ego, which allows the students to minimise the inhibition that may hinder their learning success (As stated in Brown (2007)).

The second problem is that learners have nothing to say, and they are demotivated to express themselves. Rivers (1968) supported this idea by claiming that the teachers select inappropriate topics for their students or uninteresting ones because they are unwilling to participate in the classroom. Baker & Westrup (2003) also supported this idea by stating that it is tough for learners to express themselves when their teachers ask them to do so because of the lack of thoughts and opinions, the lack of vocabulary and expressions, and using grammar adequately.

The third problem is low participation. It has a relation with the large group size. The significant number of students in the class prevents them from participating. Some of the students dominate the course, whereas others never speak or speak very little.

The last problem connected with the speaking ability, where learners share the same mother tongue and prefer to use it in communication. Little John & Hicks (1999) have stated that students communicate through their mother tongue in contact for avoiding embarrassment in front of their classmates. Harmer

(1991) declared that different reasons lead students to use their mother tongue in the classroom. The first reason was when students facing an unfamiliar topic and asked to talk about it. They will use their mother tongue. The second reason is that the mother tongue use is effortless and easy for students if they do not oblige them to speak English. The final reason refers to teachers' mother tongue use, making the learners feel at ease and comfortable doing so in their speaking classes.

2.5 Factors Affecting Students Speaking Performance

Highlighting the factors that affect students' speaking performance by teachers is a critical task to allow students to overcome their speaking difficulties. According to Tuan & Mai (2015) many factors influence learners' speaking performance, such as performance conditions, affective factors, listening skill and feedback during speaking activities. The first factor connected to performance conditions. Students perform different speaking activities during English courses under various conditions. The latter can influence the students' speaking performance. Nation & Newton (2009) proposed four types of performance conditions: time pressure, planning, quality of performance, and support. The second factor is related to the affective side of students. Oxford (1990) declared that students' affective side is one of the most significant factors in language learning success or failure. Krashen (1982) stated that several affective variables have been related to second language acquisition and have been a matter of research and investigation by many scholars in the last decades. However, most of those researchers investigated the following three factors: anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence.

The third factor is related to listening ability; Doff (1998) states that speaking development has a close relationship with listening skill development. Students must comprehend what is said to them to succeed in their communication. Shumin (2002) has confirmed the ideas of Doff (1998) by claiming that students answer and speak through the listening process. In the speaking process, speakers play the role of both speakers and listeners.

Consequently, speakers will respond if they comprehend what is said. Thus, speaking is closely related to listening. Topical knowledge is the fourth factor that has a significant impact on students' speaking performance, as argued by Bachman & Palmer (1996), defined as the speakers' knowledge of relevant topical information. The latter allows students to apply their knowledge according to the world where they live. The fifth factor is related to feedback during speaking activities. Learners expect their teachers to provide them with the appropriate feedback on their speaking performance. Harmer (1991) argued that teachers' decisions to their students' performance rely on the phases of the lesson, tasks, and the types of mistakes made by students. Harmer (1991) claimed that when teachers correct errors and interrupt conversation whenever there is a problem, they will destroy the speaking activity objective. Baker & Westrup (2003) advocated the above idea by claiming that students will be demotivated and scared of speaking if teachers always correct their mistakes. It argued that teachers should provide positive feedback to their students to motivate and encourage them.

3. Research Methodology

This section gives an outline of research method that was followed in the study. It provides information on the participants, that is, who the participants were and how they were sampled. The instrument that was used for data collection is described, and the procedure that was followed to analyse the data also discussed.

3.1 Population

The population of this study is second-year EFL students' in the English department at Batna 2 University, Algeria, i.e. 822 students.

3.2 Sample of the study

The researcher chose a random sample from the entire population of the study (165) students. In other words, 20% of the whole population.

3.3 Data collection instrument

The research instrument applied to collect data for this study was a student questionnaire. The latter was administered to 165 second year EFL students at Batna 2 University. The questionnaire consisted

of two parts; the first was about demographic information about students' gender. The second part talked about some of the factors that influence students' speaking performance. It includes 17 items, adapted from Irismet (2006), all the statements of the questionnaire were negatively oriented on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). We asked the students to answer by putting a tick according to the scale given.

3.4 Data analysis procedure

This section offers a quantitative study of the factors that affect the students' speaking performance. It is based on data collection from the students' questionnaire.

3.4.1 Quantitative analysis

Data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using the Excel programme. The researcher used percentages in the study.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Results

The following tables summarize all the results and findings; they demonstrate the percentage of informants based on their answers to the questionnaire.

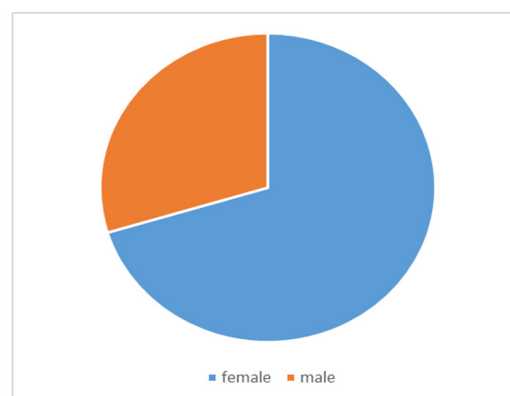
4.1.1 Demographic information

Table 1

The gender of the participants in this study

| Gender \ | Female | Male | Total |
|--------------|--------|-------|-------|
| Number | 116 | 49 | 165 |
| Percentage % | 70,3% | 29,7% | 100% |

Figure 1



Participants' gender

As can be seen from the first table, which described the gender of our participants, we can notice that the majority of them (70,3%) were females, and (29,7%) of them were males. The results showed that most EFL students are females, which indicates that females are more interested in studying foreign languages in our department of English at Batna 2 University.

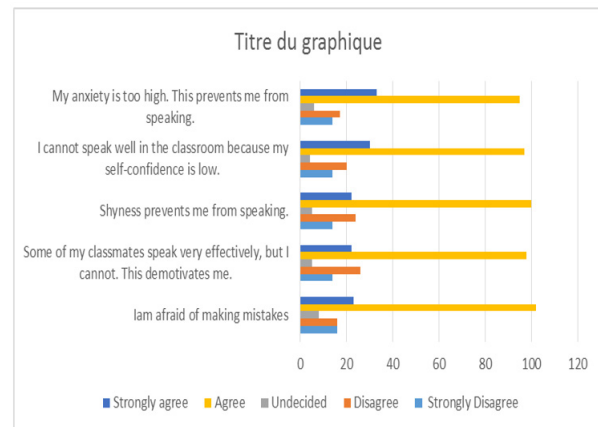
4.1.2 The factors that affect speaking performance among our participants were divided into four main types

Table 2

Affective-related factors

| | Strongly Disagree | | Disagree | | Undecided | | Agree | | Strongly agree | |
|--|-------------------|-------|----------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|--------|
| | N | P% | N | P% | N | P% | N | P% | N | P% |
| I am afraid of making mistakes | 16 | 9,70% | 16 | 9,70% | 8 | 4,85% | 102 | 61,82% | 23 | 13,94% |
| Some of my classmates speak very effectively, but I cannot. This demotivates me. | 14 | 8,48% | 26 | 15,76% | 5 | 3,03% | 98 | 59,39% | 22 | 13,33% |
| Shyness prevents me from speaking. | 14 | 8,48% | 24 | 14,55% | 5 | 3,03% | 100 | 60,61% | 22 | 13,33% |
| I cannot speak well in the classroom because my self-confidence is low. | 14 | 8,48% | 20 | 12,12% | 4 | 2,42% | 97 | 58,79% | 30 | 18,18% |
| My anxiety is too high. This prevents me from speaking. | 14 | 8,48% | 17 | 10,30% | 6 | 3,64% | 95 | 57,58% | 33 | 20,00% |

Figure 2



Affective-related Factors

From the above table, one can notice that most of our participants (61,82%) agreed that they fear making mistakes, and (13,94%) strongly agreed that they fear making mistakes when participating in English speaking courses. Most of them (59,39%) answered that they could not speak very effectively in the same context. Thus, they lose motivation to express themselves; also (13,33%) strongly agreed that they could not talk effectively as their classmates do, this demotivates them to speak. Besides, (60,61%) agreed and (13,33%) strongly agreed that shyness prevents them from speaking during English speaking classes. Besides, (58,79%) of our participants agreed that the loss of self-confidence prevents them from participation in speaking classes, and (18,18%) strongly agreed that they lose confidence. Consequently, they cannot speak well in the classroom. (57,58%) Our respondents agreed that anxiety prevents them from speaking, and (20,00%) of the participants strongly agreed with the above statement.

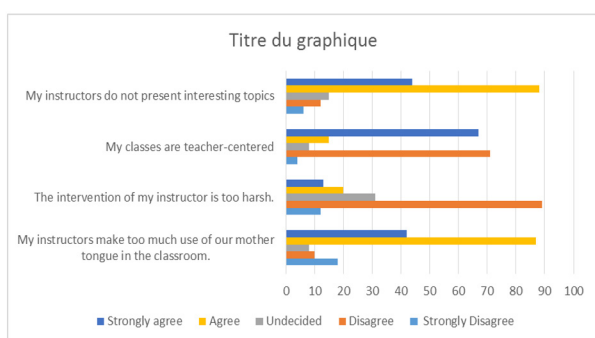
Table 3

Instructor-related factors

| | Strongly Disagree | | Disagree | | Undecided | | Agree | | Strongly agree | |
|---|-------------------|--------|----------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|--------|
| | N | P% | N | P% | N | P% | N | P% | N | P% |
| My instructors make too much use of our mother tongue in the classroom. | 18 | 10,91% | 10 | 6,06% | 8 | 4,85% | 87 | 52,73% | 42 | 25,45% |

| My instructors do not present interesting topics | My classes are teacher-centered | The intervention of my instructor is too harsh. |
|--|---------------------------------|---|
| 6 | 4 | 12 |
| 3,64% | 2,42% | 7,27% |
| 12 | 71 | 89 |
| 7,27% | 43,03% | 53,94% |
| 15 | 8 | 31 |
| 9,09% | 4,85% | 18,79% |
| 88 | 15 | 20 |
| 53,33% | 9,09% | 12,12% |
| 44 | 67 | 13 |
| 26,67% | 40,61% | 7,88% |

Figure 3



Instructor-related factors

When the students asked about their instructors, most of the respondents (52,73%) agreed that their instructors use their mother tongue in the classroom. Besides (25,45%) strongly agreed on this. Whereas (10,91%) of our participants strongly disagreed that their instructors use their mother tongue in the classroom. Regarding the instructors' intervention, most participants (53,94%) disagreed that their instructors' intervention is too harsh when it deals with correcting mistakes. However, (18,79%) of them were neutral in their responses.

When the students asked about the most dominant speaker in the classroom, (43,03%) of the participants disagreed that their speaking classes are teacher-centred, while (40,61%) strongly agreed and (9,09%) agreed that their classes are teacher-centred. Most of the students (53,33%) agreed that their instructors do not present interesting topics during speaking classes. Moreover, (26,67%) strongly agreed

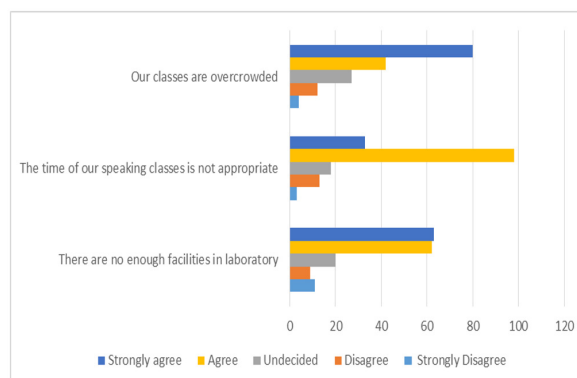
whereas (7,27%) disagreed and (9,09%) undecided.

Table 4

Facility-related factors

| | Strongly Disagree | | | Disagree | | | Undecided | | | Agree | | | Strongly agree | |
|--|-------------------|-------|---|----------|-------|-----------------------------|-----------|--------|--|-------|--------|--|----------------|--------|
| | N | P% | | N | P% | | N | P% | | N | P% | | N | P% |
| There are no enough facilities in laboratory | 11 | 6,67% | The time of our speaking classes is not appropriate | 9 | 5,45% | Our classes are overcrowded | 20 | 12,12% | | 62 | 37,58% | | 63 | 38,18% |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 4 | 2,42% | | 12 | 7,27% | | 27 | 16,36% | | 42 | 25,45% | | 80 | 48,48% |
| | 3 | 1,82% | | 13 | 7,88% | | 18 | 10,91% | | 98 | 59,39% | | 33 | 20,00% |

Figure 4



Facility-related factors

As can be seen from this table (12,12%) from our participants were neutral in their responses. (37,58%) from them agreed and (38,18%) strongly agreed that there are not enough language laboratory facilities. When the students asked about the time allowed to speaking classes, Some of the respondents (16,36%) were neutral in their answers.

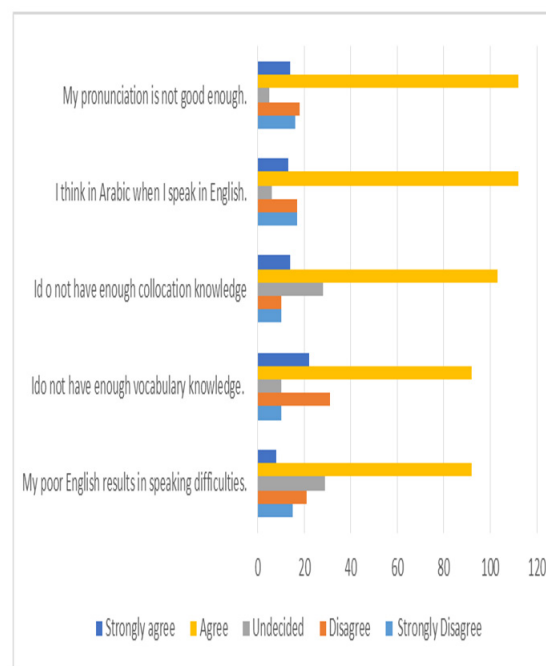
(25,45%) of them agreed and (48,48%) strongly agreed that the time of their speaking classes is inappropriate in addition to the size of English classes. The majority of the participants (59,39%) agreed that their classes are overcrowded, and a significant portion (20,00%) strongly agreed that their classes are overcrowded.

Table 5

Linguistically-related factors

| | Strongly Disagree | | Disagree | | Undecided | | Agree | | Strongly agree | |
|---|-------------------|--------|----------|--------|-----------|--------|-------|--------|----------------|--------|
| | N | P% | N | P% | N | P% | N | P% | N | P% |
| My poor English results in speaking difficulties. | 15 | 9,09% | 21 | 12,73% | 29 | 17,58% | 92 | 55,76% | 8 | 4,85% |
| Ido not have enough vocabulary knowledge. | 10 | 6,06% | 31 | 18,79% | 10 | 6,06% | 92 | 55,76% | 22 | 13,33% |
| Ido not have enough collocation knowledge. | 10 | 6,06% | 10 | 6,06% | 28 | 16,97% | 103 | 62,42% | 14 | 8,48% |
| I think in Arabic when I speak in English. | 17 | 10,30% | 17 | 10,30% | 6 | 3,64% | 112 | 67,88% | 13 | 7,88% |
| My pronunciation is not good enough. | 16 | 9,70% | 18 | 10,91% | 5 | 3,03% | 112 | 67,88% | 14 | 8,48% |

Figure 5



Linguistically-related factors

The majority of our participants (55,76%) agreed that they have poor English, the reason why they cannot speak effectively, (17,58%) undecided about their level in English. Moreover, when the participants asked about their vocabulary knowledge, most of them (55,76%) agreed that they do not have enough vocabulary knowledge, (13,33%) strongly agreed, however (18,79%) of them disagreed. Regarding students' collocation knowledge, a generous portion (62,42%) of our respondents agreed that they do not have enough collocation knowledge. Furthermore, a significant percentage of our participants (67,88%) agreed that they think Arabic when they speak English and (7,88%) strongly agreed. In contrast (10,30%), the respondents disagreed that they think in Arabic when they want to speak English. Regarding students' pronunciation, (67,88%) of the respondents agreed that they have lousy pronunciation, and (8,48%) strongly agreed that their pronunciation is not acceptable to speak effectively in the speaking classes.

4.2 Discussion

The above results indicated that second-year EFL students at Batna 2 University shared several speaking performance difficulties. Specifically, in the case of our

department, it seems that the problem is severe. The students' questionnaire revealed that some essential factors contribute to the speaking difficulties among EFL learners in our department: affective related factors, instructor-related factors, linguistically related factors, and facility-related factors. Some of these factors are related to the learners themselves; being afraid of making mistakes, for instance, was considered an essential factor that leads to EFL students speaking difficulties. Most EFL students in our department regarded psychological factors as crucial reasons preventing them from developing their speaking performance. The findings of the present study are in line with those of Liu (2005) as well as Gregersen&Horwitz (2009), indicating that being afraid of making mistakes was among psychological factors influencing students' speaking performance in their oral classes negatively. The participants' reason to be fearful of making mistakes can be justified by the lack of vocabulary and correct pronunciation with correct grammar and fluency. Scrivener (2011) argued that students could not employ their entire linguistic repertoire in speaking since they might be afraid of being laughed at or sounding ridiculous. Hence, to avoid embarrassment, and the students might be willing to talk. EFL instructor should create a good and safe atmosphere for students to make them involved in class discussions. This condition is discussed by Foss and Reitzel (1988: 446):

“.....the fear of making mistakes may come from a basic belief that one is not worthy unless one is thoroughly competent and adequate in all aspects of life. The fear of being laughed at may come from an unconscious yet the entrenched belief that one must be approved of by every person one encounters.”

(cited in Ghani (2003). Therefore, the fear of becoming a laughing stock in a classroom affects our students' motivational intensity who are already unable to communicate in English. As a result, most students lack motivation, willingness and initiation to practise speaking English while the lesson progresses. This is because of the students' poor general English knowledge, and they do not have background knowledge of grammar, vocabularies, and collocations. Consequently, instead of being laughed

at and committing mistakes, they restrict themselves from speaking due to fear of making mistakes that is the consequence of losing self-confidence.

Additionally, we can understand that students' lack of motivation hinders their ability to express themselves in the English language. The students' questionnaire results also showed that our university students are mainly affected by anxiety, which arouses the feeling that one is incapable of speaking the English language in front of teachers and class fellows. Despite the high motivational intensity reported by our students, they avoid some English speaking occasions because of peers' discouraging behaviour. This situation refers to one of the critical affective related factors involved in second language learning identified by many psychologists and linguists, i.e. anxiety. It turned out to be one of the main reasons for the crippled communication of university students. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1994 b; p. 284, cited in Ghani (2003), language anxiety is the “feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language context including speaking, listening and learning”. The psychologists hypothesised that “the lower the level of anxiety, the better the language acquisition”.

Another factor that leads to students speaking performance difficulties was instructor related factors. EFL students claimed that their speaking classes were inefficient. The questionnaire participants stated that this is due to the techniques, approaches, and teaching methods. The tasks and topics their instructors employ in speaking classes, which seems to stem from the instructors' lack of practical and theoretical knowledge in teaching speaking skills. In the same context, Kayi (2006) believes that although speaking skills play a crucial role in human beings' communication, EFL instructors typically fail to emphasise appropriately on this skill; instead, they primarily focus their attention on repetition, drills, and the memorisation of English conversations. He further suggests that EFL instructors should employ active techniques and activities as simulation, role plays, brainstorming, information gap, storytelling, story completion, and picture description to help EFL students develop reasonable control of spoken

English.

Moreover, our participants indicated that their instructors use the mother tongue. Nevertheless, this can be another factor contributing to speaking performance difficulties, as stated by Littlewood (1981). Because using the mother tongue means sacrificing great opportunities for the use of English. Besides, it tends to devalue the English language as a tool of communication. Another main reason for some teachers to use L1 is vocabulary and grammar. Although their attitudes disagree with L1, this is not reflected in their practice Al-Busaidi (1998). Ferrari&Palladino (2007) indicated that the excessive use of mother tongue during lessons and lack of interaction among learners inside and outside the classroom in a targeted language might impede speaking of the second language. The students' questionnaire results indicate that EFL students believed that their instructors used uninteresting topics for discussion in speaking classes. As a consequence, those EFL instructors must have an idea about their students' interests to provide them with issues that can motivate them to participate in class discussions. As Nunan (1999) claim, exciting topics are necessary for sufficient motivation and help students be active and create a refreshing atmosphere.

Another critical point is that the pedagogical factors refer to the methods and the approaches that teachers adopt when they teach speaking skills that are not suitable to students' level, and the assigned topics are beyond the students' interests and expectations. In addition, the teachers' brutal intervention during the speaking courses, besides their negative feedback, is one of the main reasons that hampered speaking performance among EFL students. Furthermore, our participants claimed that their classes are overcrowded because they have only a few opportunities to participate. Likewise, Byrne (1981) provides that the large classroom size and perhaps the syllabus that discourages adequate attention to the spoken language may impede oral skills development.

The third factor that leads to speaking performance difficulties among our EFL learners was the lack of efficient and sufficient facilities in language laboratories. The participants mentioned that their

laboratories lack the essential equipment and tools such as audio-visual facilities in the questionnaire. Significant research indicates a positive relationship between students' achievement and the quality of university equipment. For instance, the results of Uline&Tschannan-Moran (2008) showed a link between the quality of university facilities and students' achievement. They agreed that the language laboratories should have sufficient and efficient audio-visual equipment such as computers, video projectors, and pronunciation checkers, providing EFL students with authentic materials to expose them to real-life situations. In addition to that, students draw our attention that the time allotted to oral classes is not appropriate and is not enough.

The fourth factor that affects students' speaking performance is linguistically related; the questionnaire results showed that the majority of our participants agreed that they have poor pronunciation. They believed that they did not possess a good command of English pronunciation. Moreover, most EFL students agreed that they think in Arabic when they speak English. Thus, the lack of linguistic knowledge causes speaking performance difficulties within our respondents. In other words, poor grammar, lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation and fluency were among linguistically related factors that lead to speaking performance difficulties within EFL students.

All these factors highly affect speaking performance among our participants. In summary, the students' questionnaire indicated that most of the students believed that different factors affect their speaking performance and cause speaking difficulties for them, and those factors discussed above in details.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusions of the study were presented on this section and it was aimed to answer the research question, thus, the conclusion drawn for this research are as follows:

5.1 Conclusion

The study revealed that the main factors affecting EFL students' speaking performance are affective related factors, instructor related factors, facility-

related factors, linguistically related factors. It shows that most instructors use teacher-centred teaching approaches and strategies, where the students have no opportunities to speak and discuss in English.

Besides, the results revealed that EFL instructors do not provide interesting topics and subjects to motivate students and make them willing to speak. Moreover, language laboratories lack the required facilities and essential equipment such as audio-visual materials, computers, video projectors, and pronunciation checkers to provide students with opportunities to expose accurate English from native speakers. The findings also revealed that fear of making mistakes and negative feedback from speaking teachers are significant factors that negatively affect EFL students' speaking performance and prevent them from talking to avoid embarrassment. In such a case, the instructors should consider making mistakes a natural process of language learning. In addition, the findings indicate that EFL students lack linguistic knowledge because they do not desire to speak.

5.2 Recommendations

1. One of the significant factors that affect the students' speaking performance is that the environment does not support the students to speak English frequently.
2. Instructors should create a comfortable atmosphere by reinforcing the confidence of EFL students. Besides raising general learner motivation and making the English language classroom fun and dynamic, it can happen only by teaching suitable activities correctly, such as drama activities..
3. Instructors should not give harsh feedback to students.
4. Instructors should support all students to speak English during oral classes.
5. Universities should provide the required facilities to language laboratories to improve speaking skills among EFL students and providing suitable speaking materials for better results.
6. To develop the students' accuracy, fluency, and confidence, oral expression teachers, should give the students enough time to speak the target language as much as possible besides creating a comfortable

atmosphere to make students talk without pressure.

7. The findings of the study suggest that program administrators consider sufficient and appropriate time for speaking classes. That is, they are suggested to hold the speaking classes

at appropriate time, when students have sufficient energy and are more willing to take part in class discussions, which seems to be easy to implement.

8. The findings suggest that EFL instructors raise EFL students' awareness of their lack of linguistic knowledge and warn them not to overestimate their linguistic knowledge in speaking.

9. The findings imply that administrators equip language laboratories sufficiently and efficiently in order to accelerate EFL students' speaking skills progress.

10. The results also suggest that EFL instructors mitigate freshmen's phobia about making mistakes and encourage them to consider the phenomenon as a natural process of language learning.

11. The results propose that the university should develop a more effective English speaking environment by inviting more foreigner students to join the learning context, which the EFL learners could have more opportunities to communicate with the English-speaking friends. Therefore, they improve their pronunciation and fluency.

12. The learners should expand their vocabulary size as much as possible to help English speaking.

Conflict of Interest

The author declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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- Appendix

Students' Questionnaire

This survey questionnaire is designed for investigating some of the factors affecting EFL students' speaking performance. Your assistance in completing the following questions is greatly appreciated. Please put a tick(✓) in the box beside the option you choose.

Part 1 Demographic information

1. Gender

Male ☐ Female ☐

Part 2 Factors affect students' speaking performance

For each of the following statements, please answer by putting a tick ✓ in a box according to the following scale

SD(Strongly Disagree), D(Disagree), U(Undecided), A(Agree), SA(Strongly Agree)

| Statement | SD | D | U | A | SA |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| I'm afraid of making mistakes | | | | | |
| Some of my classmates speak very effectively, but I cannot. This demotivates me. | | | | | |
| Shyness prevents me from speaking | | | | | |
| I cannot speak well in the classroom because my self-confidence is low. | | | | | |
| My anxiety is too high. This prevents me from speaking well. | | | | | |
| My instructors make too much use of our mother tongue in the classroom. | | | | | |
| The intervention and error correction of my instructors is too harsh. | | | | | |
| My classes are teacher-centred; therefore, I cannot find the chance to express my ideas and participate in class discussion activities. | | | | | |
| My instructors do not present exciting topics for discussion. | | | | | |
| There are not enough and efficient facilities in the language laboratory. | | | | | |
| The time of our speaking classes is not appropriate. That is, our speaking classes are held at a time when we do not have enough energy to participate effectively in class discussions. | | | | | |
| My poor general English knowledge results in difficulty making questions and directing them to my instructor or classmates. | | | | | |
| I do not have enough vocabulary knowledge. | | | | | |
| I do not have enough knowledge of collocations. | | | | | |
| Our classes are overcrowded. | | | | | |
| I think in Arabic when I speak English, which leads to my lack of fluency and naturalness in speaking. | | | | | |
| My pronunciation is not good enough, which causes difficulty in my communication. | | | | | |

How to cite this article according to the APA method:

CHAOUCHI Nawel and BAHLOUL Amel. (2022), Investigating Some of the Factors Affecting Second Year EFL Students' Speaking Performance at Batna 2 University, academic review of social and human studies, vol 14, number 01, Hassiba Ben Bouali University of Chlef, Algeria, p p : 3-15.