



## Challenges of English Foreign Language Learners in Speaking Skill

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to determine the speaking challenges that University of Ajdabiya English language learners encounter and the reasons behind these challenges. To gauge the speaking challenges faced by English language learners in the second, third, and fourth semesters, the researcher employed a questionnaire divided into two linguistic and psychological categories and given to 67 students. The study aimed to determine the challenges that University of Ajdabiya students faced during their second, third, and fourth semesters. It also covered the hunt for potential fixes and suggestions to deal with these issues. The findings indicated that students had some difficulty communicating for a variety of reasons, and psychological factors including shyness, worry, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes were the primary cause.

تحديات متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مهارة التحدث

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### الكلمات المفتاحية:

تحديات التحدث  
العوامل اللغوية  
العوامل النفسية

### الملخص

هدف هذه الدراسة هو تحديد التحديات التي يواجهها متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة أجدابيا في مهارة التحدث، والأسباب الكامنة وراء هذه التحديات. ولقياس الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في الفصول الدراسية الثاني والثالث والرابع، استخدم الباحث استبياناً مقسماً إلى فتنين: اللغوية والنفسية، وقدم إلى 67 طالباً. هدفت الدراسة إلى تحديد التحديات التي يواجهها طلاب جامعة أجدابيا خلال الفصول الدراسية الثاني والثالث والرابع، بالإضافة إلى البحث عن حلول محتملة واقتراحات لمعالجة هذه المشكلات. أظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب يواجهون بعض الصعوبات في التواصل لأسباب متعددة، وكانت العوامل النفسية مثل الخجل، والقلق، وانعدام الثقة بالنفس، والخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء هي الأسباب الرئيسية لهذه التحديات.

### 1. Introduction

English is used widely in all these fields of commerce, science, politics, education, and media as the dominant global language (Crystal, 2003). With globalization yields in the communication and economic relations, English language is among the most wanted languages for academic and professional purposes (Kachru, 2006). Many national curricula around the world include this as a core subject, aiming at the mastery of the four key language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening (Richards, 2008). One of these skills, which is often regarded as the most important in learning a foreign language, is speaking (Nunan, 1991). The spoken English proficiency is a key indicator of language learning success as it indicate that the student can successfully communicate in real world scenarios. However, even if English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners do well in other aspects of the language (Bygate, 2001), many struggle to develop speaking proficiency through years of formal education. In classroom discussions, classroom debates, as well as public speaking, a number of students do not speak; or they speak excessively. Ask them to present on a given topic and some

feel comfortable about doing so because they use pre prepared material, not putting themselves in a position to participate in spontaneous meaningful conversations (Harmer 2007).

Language acquisition and communicative competence is dominated by speaking. According to Oller and Eilers (2002), speaking is the principle way by which children learn language and the dominant mode of communication in adult life. Florez (1999) states that for language learners, active speaking practice is essential to fortifying the fluency and accuracy with which they can communicate easily. Additionally, research suggests that having competence in oral communication can help students to achieve other language skills like talking, writing, and hearing. For illustration, Hiltferty (2005) demonstrated that good speaking skills facilitate good reading comprehension. Similarly, Trachsel and Severino (2004) proved that speaking abilities lead to improved writing and Regina (1997) found such a correlation between speaking and listening comprehension. Therefore, although it is important, talking in English continues to be one of the hardest things for EFL students to learn (Ur, 1996). There

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have been identified several key barriers incubated to effective speaking, and classified into linguistic, psychological, and environmental factors (Brown, 2007). One difficulty in speaking fluently is inadequate vocabulary and poor grammar (Goh & Burns, 2012). It is obvious that as far as conversations go, many students cannot come up with appropriate words and this hinders their ability to express their ideas well (Nation, 2001). Also, learners have pronunciation problems that interfere with their oral communication since they typically cannot be heard properly (Burns, 2017). Meetings show that people who are not phonologically aware – or are not aware of stress, intonation and rhythm – are generally behind in achieving natural ability (Barker and Murphy 2011). As a result, it typically results in hesitation, self-correction, and loss of confidence when working on speaking tasks (Thornbury, 2005).

Psychological factors also play a very important factor in the speaking performance of EFL learners. According to Nunan (1999), anxiety, fear of making mistakes and fear of saying the wrong thing are severe psychological hindrances to oral communication. Because of the fear of laugh, ridicule, or judgment from their classmates, many students are hesitant to speak in English. Standing on the same ground, Rababah (2005) verifies that not only the personal struggles encountered by the learners influence speaking problems but it also depends on the curriculum, teaching strategies, and the learning environment as a whole. As an example, students who cannot find the right words quickly may experience anxiety and be inclined to withdraw from the conversations. Moreover, students are not motivated and do not have the exposure to real life speaking, and this discourages the students from willingness to engage in English conversation (Dörnyei, 2005).

While speaking in English is essential, many students find it difficult to speak fluently while facing barriers from inside and outside. Common barriers mentioned by Ur (1996) include: no ideas, restricted number of participants, and overuse of the first language (L1). On the other hand, some students find it difficult because of ineffective teaching that does not prioritize oral practice (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). These challenges have to be addressed by identifying what makes students unable to speak and then coming up with strategies targeted at improving their speaking abilities. This study will identify, analyse and suggest solutions to the speaking challenges English language learners at Ajdabiya University face. Educators can help make students more proficient at speaking in English, and feeling more confident about their use of English, by knowing about and addressing both psychological and linguistic barriers.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

There are many students in the English department who struggle with speaking and verbal communication. There are many students who hesitates and do not always speak out in class discussions, speeches, or participatory activities for too long or with clarity. This points out the underlying issues that obstruct their speaking proficiency. To counter these challenges, it is imperative that there is a complete probe into the linguistic and psychological sources of such difficulties, aiming to use suitable approaches to make learners proficient at expressing confidently and efficiently.

### 1.2 Research Questions

The following questions were intended to be addressed by the study:

1. What are the linguistic and psychological challenges that affect the speaking proficiency of second-, third-, and fourth-semester EFL students at Ajdabiya University?
2. What effective strategies can be implemented to overcome these speaking challenges and improve students' oral communication skills?

### 1.3 Aims of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain:

1. The speaking challenges faced by students as perceived by Ajdabiya University's English Department students.
2. To provide answers and recommendations for these speaking skill issues that students face.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

Speaking, a critical element in second language acquisition (Bygate, 2001; Nunan, 1991) is one aspect that second language

learners are challenged time to time in order to have a full grip on it. Richards (2008) suggested that speaking proficiency is not a language competence but also an important part of the communication skills. If you understand what the particular problems that students face, then you can really help them improve their speaking ability and overcome these problems (Brown, 2007; Harmer, 2007).

In addition, this research also seeks to discover what students feel is the challenge they faced in spoken English which can be used in designing the interventions to help the students become competent and confident in their oral communication. This research also aims to investigate students' view on factors hindering their speaking proficiency, be it due to linguistic, psychological, or environmental barriers to enable the development of targeted solutions for helping students to progress in their learning.

### 1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The challenges that students face when speaking English are the main subject of this study. It is only available to English Department students in their second, third, and fourth semesters.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 The Importance of Speaking in Language Development

Different experts have given us various definitions of speaking and they all emphasize that speaking is a way of language learning, as a productive skill. Siahaan (2022) views speaking as a productive skill, i.e. the making of language during speaking. Interpersonal communication medium is spoken language which is a means of transmission of the speaker's words shaped into sound which are understood and take meaning to the listener. Through mastery of the constituent parts of language a speaker is able to produce clear and effective speech which audiences then have the ability to understand the message being conveyed.

Fulcher (2022) defines speech as another mode of communication technique, which is used in the conveying of message through verbal interaction. As Egan (1990) puts it, speaking is undoubtedly the most important of the four language skills to learn the second language. Meaning is constructed in an interactive process, in which production and reception of information goes on (Brown, 2007). According to Harris (1974) speaking is the encoding process by which an individual communicates his/her thought, feelings, and ideas by means of speaking and having some cardinal point to deliver his message to another person. Spoken word comprises the idea, the thought, the emotion one wants the word to carry or convey to others. According to Byrne (1984), speaking is a two way process between the speaker and the listener and this needs productive and receptive skills for effective communication. According to Tram (2020), in this process the speaker has to use appropriate language for the listener to decode the intended message.

Speaking plays a crucial role in the improvement of communication in the linguistic context while learning a second, or foreign language. As Bailey and Savage (1994) highlight, many language learners, in particular, language learners in second and foreign language contexts, prefer speaking skills to successfully communicate in authentic situations. Amongst the four language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, speaking is viewed as one of the most difficult to learn another or a second language (Sari, 2017). The reason for this difficulty lies in linguistic complexity, psychological barriers as well as real-time interaction.

### 2.2 EFL speaking challenges (difficulties)

Linguistic and Psychological Challenges in Speaking

Fitriani et al. (2015) classified speaking challenges into two primary categories: linguistic and psychological challenges.

#### 1. Linguistic Challenges

Speaking has its own linguistic challenges such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, comprehension, and fluency. Student observations in interaction showed that vocabulary was a major hindrance to many learners. Limited vocabulary led to students repeating their words and failing to express their thoughts. It was also obvious that there were grammatical errors which included incorrect tenses, which made it difficult to communicate properly. According to Goh & Burns (2012) there are a number of competencies associated with effective speaking, including those of linguistic competency those the authors define as including four core areas of knowledge namely discourse, lexical resources, grammar, and

phonology. To speak any language, you need a solid understanding of the grammar and how to build sentences as it helps one to construct sentences and make clear communication.

Additionally, phonological awareness is very important for spoken language proficiency. For example, English speakers have to know how to make words appropriately intonated, stressed and in the right rhythm, but also have to know that the way words are stressed and sound patterns are important in meaning (Burns, 2017). Barker and Murphy (2011) indicate that the EFL and ESL teachers should possess good knowledge of phonology, pronunciation, and the specificities of the non-native English pronunciation.

## 2. Psychological Challenges

Crucial barriers to effective communication include psychological challenges like fear of making mistakes, shyness, anxiety, low motivation, and lack of confidence. The first thing that often causes students to get anxious when speaking in English is making a mistake. For example, another student was not willing to speak in a speaking activity and was visibly nervous as he was uncertain about what to say. Other students too mirrored nervousness as they stammered or went silent when they were required to speak in English. Compounded were these issues by the lack of confidence. Trying to speak in English, many students looked ashamed and their willingness to talk diminished even more. As for shyness, some students were too afraid to communicate at all because they feared they might be judged. Anxiety, lack of motivation as well as low self-confidence play a psychological role in a learner inability to effectively speak (Burns, 2017). Results of Spada and Lightbown (2010) research show that foreign language learning can be severely resisted through these emotional barriers such as anxiety, tension. Such obstacles are psychological so it is very difficult for the learners to express himself/herself freely and therefore affects learners' speaking proficiency (Purwati et al., 2023).

## Empirical review on Speaking Challenges in EFL Contexts

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students have been the subject of several studies that probe into the linguistic and psychological barriers that they face while studying. For example, Dil (2009) discussed the communication barriers of the Turkish EFL learners in the English language courses. But the study singled out two major issues: fear and lack of confidence in English. It was concluded that the sources of anxiety and hesitation stemmed from a fear that their mistakes will be critically judged by others, most specifically peers. Furthermore, students who rated their English skills as "poor" were more nervous and less willing to talk in the classroom than were those who rated themselves as very good, good, or OK (Al Hosni, 2014). EFL students' comprehension and application of speaking and listening techniques were investigated by Zhang and Goh (2006). There was a distinction between understanding and communication techniques, as well as use focused and force focused learning strategies (Alaraj, 2017). Similarly, other studies in the Middle East have also explored a similar predicament. As per Al Hosni (2014), one of the study was been done on the young Omani EFL learners and the findings were the linguistic challenges, that is the use of mother tongue, inhibition and improper teaching ways ↗ image; being high obstacles in achieving speaking proficiency. In their study Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal (2014) have investigated speaking problems that Jordanian EFL students in six public universities were facing. They used a mixed method involving interviews with 64 people and with 566 students. The difficulties with speaking (revealed by the study) were explained by (the way) the native language, large class sizes, and time constraints played into the picture. Comptres, Keong et al. (2015) also looked into the speaking challenges made by Iraqi EFL undergraduates at Garmiya university and their problems include low confidence, pronunciation problem, less vocabulary, lack of practice.

Alzahrani (2018) investigated the causes of poor English-speaking skills among Najran University English Department students with an emphasis on how gender caused poor perceptions among its students. A study of 59 students showed that the main causes of a poor speaking skill included teaching and learning environment shortcoming and personal challenges. In fact, in relation to these challenges, gender differences did not significantly impact the perceptions of students (Alsiddig, 2020).

Talking about speaking skills challenges amongst Sudanese EFL under graduates, Abdulrahman Alsiddig and Ibrahim Alsafi Abdaldfi( 2020) conducted the study in Sudan. There were lots of internal challenges as students did not want to learn and external factors like large class sizes had a big effect on the speaking abilities of the students found in the study. Based on Nuraini's (2016) further classification of speaking problem into internal and external problems, it is emphasized that an effort to motivate students to learn a language and the classroom management must be done in order to enhance speaking practice.

According to Pathan et al. (2014) the biggest challenges encountered by Libyan EFL students are lexical, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse issues. AlNakhleh (2016) also found that limited opportunities for independent speaking practice and the lack of interaction amongst students in the classroom hindered language acquisition.

Gan Zhengdong (2012) conducted a study in a tertiary teacher training institution to discover the problems ESL students have in improving their oral English proficiency. It was shown to relate to sociocultural, institutional and interpersonal factors that magnified speaking problems. Challenges were identified as a lack of emphasis on language improvement in the curriculum and insufficient speaking opportunities outside the classroom. It was essential for teacher training programs to contain a more rigorous component on language improvement (Al Nakhalah, 2016). More recent studies have looked at other instances where EFL learners have faced challenges in developing speaking proficiency, namely linguistic and psychological barriers. The anxiety and fear of making mistakes remain a big problem even today, especially in nonnative settings where there is no chance to expose herself to make mistakes in real life. Studies of digital learning tools, whether AI-driven language tutors or virtual reality simulations, find that technology-enhanced instruction can improve pronunciation and fluency by providing real-time feedback and engaging in immersive practice (Yudhiantara & Nasir, 2019). Also, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been gaining attention because of its ability to help students develop oral proficiency. It forces students to engage in meaningful conversations that are true to real-life communication incidents (Ellis, 2020). This research also shows peer collaboration and group discussions ease speaking anxiety while promoting confidence in speaking and spontaneity in language use (Liao, 2021). This reinforces the need for innovative and learner-centered approaches to overcoming speaking challenges in EFL contexts and offers a rich repository of insight for educators and curriculum designers..

## 3. Methodology

In order to shed light on speaking difficulties and provide answers, this study was carried out among second, third, and fourth semester students at Ajdabiya University's Faculty of Arts, Department of English Language. This study was quantitative in nature and used a questionnaire to compare the findings and increase the study's dependability.

### 3.1. Data Collection and Analysis

#### 3.1.1 Introduction

The research techniques employed for this study are presented in this part. Additionally, it explains the research methodology, research topic, and demographic characteristics of the target group, including gender, age, and academic year or semester. The purpose of this study is to explore the speaking comprehension difficulties of second, third and fourth semester students. The data collection will provide insight into students' perspectives and answer research questions, provide further explanations of the shortcomings of English students at Ajdabiya University, suggest ways to address these issues, and provide the department with the researchers' findings that may improve the distribution of the English department's course materials.

#### 3.2 Research Design

This is a quantitative approach to research – we use objective measurements with statistical treatment of data collected through structured questionnaires. An appropriate sampling strategy was designed in order to have participants from Ajdabiya University's second, third and fourth semester EFL students.

A stratified random sampling method was used in which students were stratified according to semester so as to guarantee

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representation across competency levels. The study included 67 students, with different genders and academic backgrounds represented in the study. Feasibility, accessibility and the need for enough data to analyze statistically were used to determine sample size.

It consisted of a printed questionnaire which covered linguistic and psychological barriers that prevented students from improving their speaking proficiency. The responses were made using a three-point Likert scale ("agree", "undecided", or "disagree"). The collected data consisted of students' responses, which were entered in SPSS Statistics and were analyzed using percentage-based descriptive statistics for interpretation. This study aims to increase the reliability and generalizability of their findings to the EFL student population at Ajdabiya University by ensuring a structured and representative sample.

### 3.3 Sample of the Study

A total of 67 students participated in this study. The participants were in the second, third and fourth semesters. They were selected from Ajdabiya University, Faculty of arts, Department of English Language. Most of them were female (95.5%), with majority of (11.9%) for second semester students, and (35.8%) for third semester students, for the fourth semester (52.2).

**Table (1): Distribution of the students according to their Gender**

| Gender |           |         |
|--------|-----------|---------|
|        | Frequency | Percent |
| Male   | 3         | 4.5%    |
| Female | 64        | 95.5%   |
| Total  | 67        | 100%    |

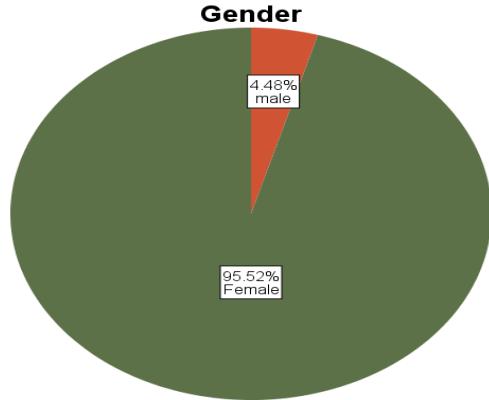


Figure (1) shows that out of 67 students, 64 (95.5%) students were female, and 3 (4.5%) were male.

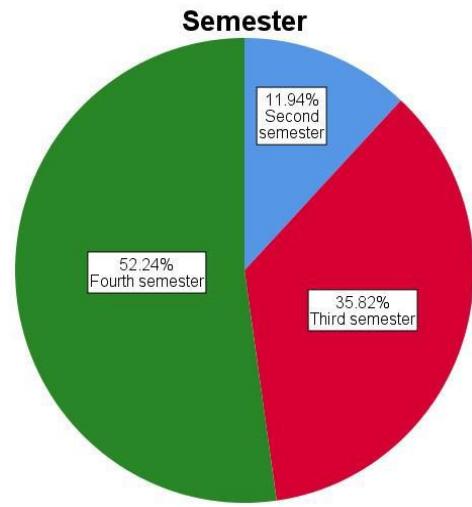
**Table (2) : Distribution of students according to their Semester**

| Semester        |           |         |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|
|                 | Frequency | Percent |
| Second semester | 8         | %11.9   |
| Third semester  | 24        | %35.8   |
| Fourth semester | 35        | %52.2   |
| Total           | 67        | 100%    |

**Table (4) Distribution of the students according to (Semester and Age)**

|          |                               |                   | Semester * Age |                 |                |                 |        |
|----------|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|--------|
|          |                               |                   | Age            | Second semester | Third semester | Fourth semester | Total  |
| Semester | From 18 to less than 20 years | Count             | 5              | 22              | 19             | 46              | 46     |
|          |                               | % within Semester | 10.9%          | 47.8%           | 41.3%          | 100.0%          | 100.0% |
|          | From 20 to less than 22 years | Count             | 3              | 1               | 9              | 13              | 13     |
|          |                               | % within Semester | 23.1%          | 7.7%            | 69.2%          | 100.0%          | 100.0% |
|          | From 22 years and above       | Count             | 0              | 1               | 7              | 8               | 8      |
|          |                               | % within Semester | 0.0%           | 12.5%           | 87.5%          | 100.0%          | 100.0% |
|          | Total                         | Count             | 8              | 24              | 35             | 67              | 67     |
|          |                               | % within Semester | 11.9%          | 35.8%           | 52.2%          | 100.0%          | 100.0% |

The table indicates that (11.9%) of the students are studying in the second semester, of which 10.9% are aged between 18 and fewer than 20 years, and (23.1%) are aged between 20 and fewer than 22 years. The table also shows that 35.8% of the students are studying in the third semester, with (48.8%) aged between 18 and fewer than 20



The figure (1) shows that the vast majority of the students Semester were Fourth semester (52.2%), while the Third semester is (35.8%), and the Second semester is (11.9%).

**Table (3) : Distribution of students according to their Age**

| Age                           |           |         |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|
|                               | Frequency | Percent |
| From 18 to less than 20 years | 46        | 68.7%   |
| From 20 to less than 22 years | 13        | 19.4%   |
| From 22 years and above       | 8         | 11.9%   |
| Total                         | 67        | 100%    |

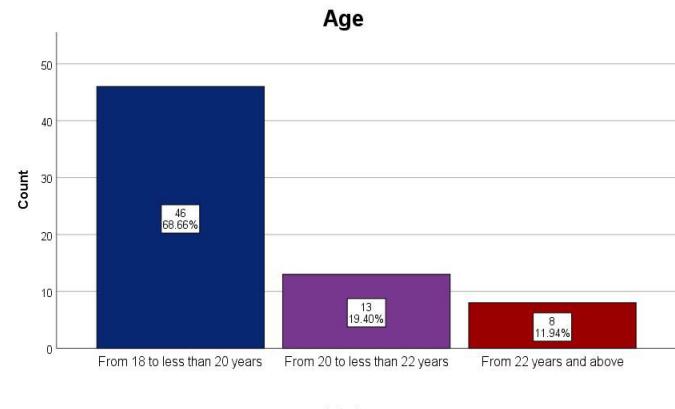


Figure (1) shows that, 46 (68.7%) of the students were aged from 18 to less than 20 years, and 13 (19.4%) of the students were aged from 20 to less than 22 years. and 8 (11.9%) of the students were from 22 years and above.

**Table (5 ) Distribution of the students according to (Gender and Age)**

|        |        |                 | Gender * Age |                 |                |        |
|--------|--------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------|
|        |        |                 | Age          | Second semester | Third semester | Total  |
| Gender | Male   | Count           | 5            | 22              | 19             | 46     |
|        |        | % within Gender | 10.9%        | 47.8%           | 41.3%          | 100.0% |
|        | Female | Count           | 3            | 1               | 9              | 13     |
|        |        | % within Gender | 23.1%        | 7.7%            | 69.2%          | 100.0% |
|        | Total  | Count           | 0            | 1               | 7              | 8      |
|        |        | % within Gender | 0.0%         | 12.5%           | 87.5%          | 100.0% |
|        | Gender | Count           | 8            | 24              | 35             | 67     |
|        |        | % within Gender | 11.9%        | 35.8%           | 52.2%          | 100.0% |

years, (7.7%) aged between 20 and fewer than 22 years, and (12.5%) aged 22 years and older. Furthermore, the results indicate that 52.2% are studying in the fourth semester, with (41.3%) aged between 18 and fewer than 20 years, (69.2%) aged between 20 and fewer than 22 years, and 87.5%) aged 22 years and older)

|        |        |                   | Second semester | Third semester | Fourth semester |        |
|--------|--------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|--------|
| Gender | male   | Count             | 1               | 1              | 1               | 3      |
|        |        | % within Semester | 33.3%           | 33.3%          | 33.3%           | 100.0% |
|        | Female | Count             | 7               | 23             | 34              | 64     |
|        |        | % within Semester | 10.9%           | 35.9%          | 53.1%           | 100.0% |
| Total  |        | Count             | 8               | 24             | 35              | 67     |
|        |        | % within Semester | 11.9%           | 35.8%          | 52.2%           | 100.0% |

The table indicates that (11.9%) of the students are studying in the second semester, among which (33.3%) are male and (10.9%) are female. The table also shows that (35.8%) of the students are studying in the third semester, with (33.3%) male and (35.9%) female. Additionally, the results indicate that (52.2%) are studying in the fourth semester, among which (33.3%) are male and (53.1%) are female.

### 3.4 Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to measure participants' perceptions, attitudes, or opinions on speaking difficulties. The questionnaire consisted of a series of statements with response options on a three-point Likert scale: 'Agree,' 'Undecided,' and 'Disagree.' The three-point scale was chosen to reduce ambiguity in responses and to provide participants with a straightforward way to express agreement, neutrality, or disagreement with the statements."

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed through IBM SPSS Statistics 28 to guarantee accuracy and reliability. Before statistical analysis, thorough data cleaning was done to clear inconsistencies and missing responses. Frequency distributions were used to describe such occurrences (i.e., which responses occurred), percentages were used to say how many students had the psychological or linguistic speaking challenge and mean scores, together with standard deviations (whose values reside within a normal curve), were used to describe the central tendency and variability in the responses (i.e., what was the average and how much variation in the response scores). They were chosen because they worked well to summarise large datasets and reveal patterns in students' responses to provide a clearer picture of the major barriers to speaking proficiency. The use of descriptive statistics allowed a structured approach to visualizing trends for linguistic and psychological challenges experienced by students. Further, response distributions also allowed identifying problem areas to make recommendations targeted to improve students' speaking skills.

### 3.6 The Analysis of the Questionnaire

Frequencies and percentages were used for each item of the questionnaire and the results are shown as follows:

**Table (1) : linguistics aspects.**

|    | Question   | Agree       | undecided   | Dis agree   |
|----|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1  | It is difficult for me to remember new vocabulary                                    | 38<br>56.7% | 19<br>28.4% | 10<br>14.9% |
| 2  | I find it difficult to speak English because of my limited vocabulary mastery        | 34<br>50.7% | 14<br>20.9% | 19<br>28.4% |
| 3  | I have lack vocabulary in certain fields   | 42<br>62.7% | 12<br>17.9% | 13<br>19.4% |
| 4  | I have a habit of using mother tongue when speaking to avoid misunderstanding.       | 22<br>32.8% | 17<br>25.4% | 28<br>41.8% |
| 5  | It is difficult for me to arrange word by word into a sentence when speaking English | 19<br>28.4% | 20<br>29.9% | 28<br>41.8% |
| 6  | It is difficult for me to speak in complete sentences with correct grammar           | 23<br>34.3% | 24<br>35.8% | 20<br>29.9% |
| 7  | I do not focus on grammar when speaking  | 14<br>20.9% | 24<br>%35.8 | 29<br>43.3% |
| 8  | I have difficulty responding to speakers with various accents.                       | 31<br>46.3% | 11<br>16.4% | 25<br>37.3% |
| 9  | I get ashamed to speak in English because I do not have a good pronunciation.        | 17<br>25.4% | 16<br>23.9% | 34<br>50.7% |
| 10 |  | 19          | 15          | 33          |

|    |  |       |       |       |
|----|--|-------|-------|-------|
|    | I always forget to pronounce the final sound of each word example students, he's and walked      | 28.4% | 22.4% | 49.3% |
| 11 | It is difficult for me to pronounce unfamiliar words   | 30    | 23    | 14    |
|    |  | 44.8% | 34.3% | 20.9% |
| 12 | I find it difficult to pronounce some words correctly for example f(ship), tʃ(lunch), and θ(the) | 19    | 11    | 37    |
|    |  | 28.4% | 16.4% | 55.2% |
| 13 | I want to have good pronunciation as good as a native speaker but I find it difficult            | 37    | 18    | 12    |
|    |  | 55.2% | 26.9% | 17.9% |

From the previous table, it can be observed that approximately 56.7% of the students find it difficult to remember new vocabulary, and 50.7% struggle with speaking English due to limited vocabulary proficiency. Additionally, 62.7% experience a lack of vocabulary in certain areas. The results also indicate that 41.8% of the students do not use their native language when speaking to avoid misunderstandings. Furthermore, 41.8% find it somewhat difficult to arrange words sequentially in a sentence when speaking English, while 35.8% have difficulty speaking in complete sentences with correct grammar. In contrast, 43.3% do not struggle to focus on grammar while speaking, and 46.3% find it challenging to respond to people who speak with different accents.

Moreover, 50.7% do not feel embarrassed about speaking English because they believe they do not have good pronunciation. Also, 49.3% do not have trouble remembering the final sounds of words, such as "students," "he's," and "walked." Meanwhile, 44.8% have difficulty pronouncing unfamiliar words, while 55.2% do not find it hard to pronounce certain words correctly, such as f(ship), tʃ(lunch), and θ(the). Lastly, 55.2% wish to master pronunciation like native speakers, but they find it challenging.

**Table (2) : Psychological aspects**

| Question  | Agree       | undecided   | Dis agree   |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| I get nervous and worried when I speak to others  | 33<br>%49.3 | 9<br>%13.4  | 25<br>%37.3 |
|   |             |             |             |
| I feel worried that I will keep repeating my words from the beginning while I am                  | 16<br>%23.9 | 28<br>%41.8 | 23<br>%34.3 |
|   |             |             |             |
| I am afraid of being the center of attention when I speak in front of the class                   | 29<br>%43.3 | 14<br>%20.9 | 24<br>%35.8 |
|   |             |             |             |
| I am afraid of making mistakes while I am speaking  | 33<br>%49.3 | 14<br>%20.9 | 20<br>%29.9 |
|   |             |             |             |
| I am lazy to practice speaking English because there is no reason for me to speak                 | 20<br>%29.9 | 19<br>%28.4 | 28<br>%41.8 |
|   |             |             |             |
| I do not practice much because I have fewer opportunities to speak                                | 31<br>%46.3 | 18<br>%26.9 | 18<br>%26.9 |
|   |             |             |             |
| I have no partner to practice speaking with   | 37<br>%55.2 | 10<br>%14.9 | 20<br>%29.9 |
|   |             |             |             |
| I feel more confused when practicing speaking with friends who have lower English proficiency     | 18<br>%26.9 | 14<br>%20.9 | 35<br>%52.2 |
|   |             |             |             |
| I have less confidence to speak English because I think my friends will laugh at me when I speak. | 15<br>%22.4 | 11<br>%16.4 | 41<br>%61.2 |
|   |             |             |             |
| I feel less confident speaking in English than in Arabic.   | 28<br>%41.8 | 18<br>%26.9 | 21<br>%31.3 |
|   |             |             |             |
| I lose my self-confidence when someone asks me to repeat my words                                 | 19<br>%28.4 | 14<br>%20.9 | 34<br>%50.7 |
|   |             |             |             |
| I do not feel confident starting speaking by myself if someone does not ask me                    | 25<br>%37.3 | 11<br>%16.4 | 31<br>%46.3 |
|   |             |             |             |
|   | 19          | 20          | 28          |

|   |       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|
| I lose my confidence when I speak with friends who have higher English proficiency    | %28.4 | %29.9 | %41.8 |
| I feel ashamed and anxious when I speak because I do not have fluent English ability. | 26    | 17    | 24    |
|   | %38.8 | %25.4 | %35.8 |

From the previous table, it is noted that 49.3% of the students feel tense and anxious when speaking with others, and 41.8% are somewhat concerned about repeating words from the beginning during conversations. Additionally, 43.3% fear being the center of attention when speaking in front of the class. The results also show that 49.3% are afraid of making mistakes while speaking.

Furthermore, 41.8% are not lazy in practicing speaking English, but the results indicate that 46.3% do not practice speaking much due to having few opportunities to do so. Moreover, 55.2% do not have a partner to practice speaking with. On the other hand, 52.2% do not feel awkward when practicing speaking with friends who have a low level of English proficiency, while 61.2% are confident in speaking English and do not believe that their friends will mock them when they talk.

However, 41.8% feel less confident speaking English compared to Arabic, and 50.7% do not lose confidence when asked to repeat their words. Additionally, 46.3% do not feel confident enough to begin speaking spontaneously, and 41.8% do not lose confidence when speaking with friends who have a higher level of English proficiency. Lastly, 38.8% feel shy and anxious when speaking because they do not possess fluency in English.

#### 4. Findings

The average percentage of psychological issues was 20.70%, which was greater than the 19.53% rate of linguistic issues. Based on the information gathered from the researcher's questionnaire, this suggests that psychological issues were the most common issue with the speaking performance of the second, third, and fourth semesters in the English department. Anxiety was the most prevalent psychological issue (21.27%), suggesting that anxiety significantly affects pupils' speaking ability. Although students may seem ready and have a lot of ideas, they cannot express them if they are nervous. The grammatical problem had the biggest impact (22.16%) among the linguistic components, indicating that it hinders students' 26 verbal communication skills. With 20.19%, the vocabulary problem came next; the pronunciation problem came next, with 16.25%.

The results show that 50.7% of students feel ashamed when speaking English due to their bad pronunciation, and 49.3% of students struggle to pronounce words' final consonants. In conclusion, it can be argued that students in the English department's second, third, and fourth semesters largely deal with psychological problems like anxiety and low self-esteem in addition to language difficulties like grammar and pronunciation. Therefore, training programs that increase students' self-esteem and receive psychological support must be prioritized in addition to rigorous instruction to develop language proficiency.

#### 5. Conclusion

Speech is essential to language learning as it gives students the opportunity to actively communicate and share ideas while showing off their language skill. If students don't develop speaking skills, they will struggle to gain access to meaningful conversations and effective communication. Speaking is not only important for daily conversation, but necessary for the academic and professional success. It acts as foundation of language acquisition and is used as a means for learners to reinforce their underlying knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Despite its significance, many students struggle to speak, a problem encompassing fear of being judged, small of a vocabulary, slowdown the pronunciation, and feeling unsuccessful. They cannot express themselves clearly and fluently because of these barriers.

The main objective of this study is to analyse the factors behind teaching and learning speaking and propose means for dealing with such problems. More specifically, it will examine the linguistic and psychological aspects that hinder students to master good speaking skills. Some of the most common difficulties that a student would face in the English Language Department at Ajdabiya University are the lack of ability to choose the correct words, the ability to

pronounce correctly and the forming for good grammatical sentences. When asked to speak in English, they experience the same anxiety and nervousness and it makes them more reluctant to speak in the discussions. Moreover, students often lack exposure to real world conversations that can hamper their fluency from expressing ideas and adapting themselves to situations. One is also many of these students struggle to understand and use colloquial expressions and idiomatic language, thus making it difficult for them to carry out natural conversation.

Teachers have an important contribution in helping students bypass these barriers. Educators can foster confidence and fluency by adopting more effective teaching strategies and adapting speaking materials. It could include conversations on real life, engaging group discussions, and engaging activities that are interactive and initiated participatory speaking. For my part, teachers would do well to teach students how to improve their speaking through the use of practical tools, including vocabulary expansion exercises, pronunciation drills and grammar practice in a supportive, nonjudgmental setting. Additionally, it is crucial for students to receive ample chances for practice both inside as well as outside the school, to develop to fluency and to feel at ease with English in various environments. It will help them to master conversational techniques, reduce anxiety and be in a condition to overcome their speaking difficulty and develop such actions for communication in academic as well as real-life situations.

#### Limitations

Despite its merits, one caveat to this study is the fact that a few limitations need to be noted. A limitation of the sample is the number of students (67), which is sufficient to ascertain general trends but perhaps does not cover the full diversity of experiences of the broader student body. A larger sample will give more statistically robust findings and further generalizability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, the study relied on self-reported data from questionnaires, and students might have responded with socially desirable answers instead of providing the true reflections of their experiences (Dörnyei, 2007). Namely, it lacks qualitative data like interviews or open-ended responses, which could have provided more insight into students' struggle to achieve speaking proficiency (Mackey & Gass 2016). The lack of investigation into external factors like teaching methods, curriculum structure, and exposure to English outside the classroom may have influenced students' speaking performance (Richards & Renandya, 2002). While such limitations should be considered, the study provides a solid basis for studying EFL speaking challenges. It outlines potential future research based on wider research, e.g. quantitative research alongside mixed methods.

#### 6. Recommendations

##### Practice Speaking in Real-Life Contexts

Improved spoken fluency requires practice, and practice means engaging in real life conversations. Look for times to discuss English in normal, social situations, including study groups or gatherings at locations in the community. Through authentic environments learners practice and improve ability to think and respond quickly in conversation (Richards, 2008). Real life conversations enable students to apply their learning of what they mastered in structured lessons and it boosts confidence and communication skills.

##### Utilize Interactive Language Platforms

Language exchange platforms that are online can be a priceless resource for developing speaking skills. Among the platforms are Duolingo, Babbel and HelloTalk, which connect learners with native speakers and other learners for conversation practice (Vesselinov & Grego, 2012). With these apps, the interaction and feedback are guided and learners learn to speak more fluently, learning more vocabulary and accent by their interactive conversations with real users.

##### Focus on Pronunciation and Intonation

Clear communication depends on accurate pronunciation and appropriate intonation. Pronunciation exercises should be incorporated into learning routine of the learners by working on hard sounds, stress patterns and sentence intonation (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Listening to the native speakers and trying to mimic their speech patterns can be practiced regularly as the regular practice can minimize the chances of getting misunderstandings and overall effectiveness of verbal communication.

## Embrace Error Correction and Feedback

It is critical for learners to regard mistakes as natural in the language learning process. For example, if one is looking for improvement, they can actively seek feedback from peers, teachers or language partners. It is essential for progress in spoken English to make any progress that error correction, both self-directed and external (Ellis, 2009). In order to increase confidence and speaking proficiency, you can develop a supportive environment with learners who are not threatened by being embarrassed when they make mistakes and not penalized for mistakes.

## Set Short-Term Speaking Goals

Achievable goals for speaking will increase motivation and will result in measurable progress. For example, a learner might hope to start a conversation in English every day or have a 5-minute discussion every week about a chosen topic. These goals aid learners in breaking down the challenge of enhancing speaking into manageable assignments and furnish a experience of attainment when they achieve every aim (Dörnyei, 2005). Practice is the secret formula, the result of which is to become more consistent and more goal oriented, the result being increased confidence and faster, accelerated skill development.

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