Obstacles Facing English Language Students in Speaking at the Faculty of Education in Nalut

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Abstract: This study aims to reveal the factors affecting students at Faculty of Education in Nalut to develop their speaking skills. It used qualitative and quantitative approaches to address this issue. Three assistant professors were interviewed, and 27 students were requested to answer the questionnaire. The results reveal that there are three different interrelated factors negatively impacting students' speaking improvement. These factors are the use of correct grammar, lack of vocabulary and pronunciation as linguistics factors whereas psychological factors are accounted for lack of motivation and anxiety. The external factors were dominated by the lack of practice outside the classroom and problems related to the course of listening and speaking. Students' carelessness also was another major drawback factor that affected their speaking improvement. It is believed that the findings of this study could have a profound impact on the way speaking courses should be taught, and how it can be effective by taking into consideration the factors affecting students' progress in speaking. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers should re-evaluate students' grammatical errors in their speaking to gradually improve speaking teaching methods. Most importantly, teachers should provide a stress-free learning environment to reduce anxiety and enhance motivation. Meanwhile, students should have practical plans to reduce or overcome their psychological issues. If they manage to do that, they will definitely improve their speaking skills resulting in rising self-confidence.

Keywords: Obstacles, Speaking, Learners, Affecting, Factors, Language

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

English language is perceived to be critical as it is spoken all over the world, and its speakers are rapidly increasing. Its importance in all domains cannot be neglected. However, the process of learning this language is challenging to many learners as it requires learning its four skills. These four skills are very important, so all of them should be taught equally. All the four skills are related, and no one skill is more important than another. However, speaking is focused on more due to the fact that it is a way of interaction and communication. "Speaking is the most important skill of the four skills aside from, listening, reading, and writing. Since students have learned a language from the elementary level, teachers should focus on teaching speaking as it is a productive output and without speaking communication, receiving and producing meaning cannot be achieved [25].

One of the most important skills that must be mastered by English language learners is speaking in order to achieve perfect communication. Speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real life situations [11].

In Libya, where English Language is foreign, students study English Language since they are in primary schools, but they are taught English only as a formality. They only need marks to pass their examination, so they memorize the answers without learning the language. Therefore, they tend to forget most of what they leant during the academic year. Consequently, they have low levels of language fluency. In the same vain, students choose English Language as a major and graduate without improving their speaking skills. Their levels of fluency do not change as expected from them. This issue has been a major concern for language teachers and the learners as well. Therefore, this study aims to discover the hindrances that prevent students from speaking English well. From what is mentioned above, the researchers are intended to discover the following:

1) What are the main reasons that make students find speaking difficult?
2) What are the main factors that cause these difficulties in speaking?

1.2. Research Problem

The general problem of the current study is that teaching English as a subject in the curriculum has been inserted to the education system since 1986. Since that time, English language has been taught. Teaching a foreign language is always affected by sociocultural factors. Although students have had this long period of education in English, it seems that they have spent years in schools without learning anything of English language. This problem can be due to many reasons which might be related to teachers, students, environment, and curriculums. As a result of that, most of the undergraduate students at the Faculty of Education in Nalut still find speaking challenging. When they are asked to speak, they prefer to keep silent. That silence or inability to speak might be due to many reasons. Accordingly, the researchers investigated this issue to discover what are the reasons that stand behind it, and why these obstacles have accrued.

1.3. Aims of the Study

The current study is guided by the following questions:
1: What are the reasons that make students at the Faculty of Education in Nalut find speaking challenging and problematic?
2: What are the factors that cause this issue?
It is hypothesized that these factors are fear of making mistakes, stress, anxiety, low self-motivation, fear of speaking in front of others, fear of being laughed at, not having adequate vocabulary to use, lack of sentence structuring skill, making grammar mistakes, carelessness about self- improving in regard to speaking, and classroom environment.

This paper is composed of two sections. The first section, a descriptive one, devoted to the review of related literature. The second section, an empirical one, is composed of two parts devoted to the description of the research methods and procedures employed and the analysis of the results obtained from the teachers' interviews and the students' questionnaire.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will contribute to develop the current situation significantly. It will assist to understand the reasons that make students cannot speak English and develop practical solutions to overcome this issue. Moreover, the study will highlight the factors the cause these reasons, and this may offer sufficient knowledge to teachers to understand the students and apply suitable methods for teaching to develop this ability for all Libyan students. More importantly, it will help the learners to be more independent and confident to learn and speak the language. Finally, this study might open new insights related to English language teaching for further researches.

This research paper has important implications for both English Language learners and teachers. Improving speaking skills is an essential component of students' academic practices and later on in their professional life. Students at the Faculty of Education in Nalut are supposed to be teachers when they graduate; therefore, it is of critical importance that they acquire acceptable level of speaking skill. This is due to the fact that they will need this skill to teach their future students, which is the ultimate purpose of their study at Faculty of Education.

In addition, identifying the major factors that adversely impact students' language fluency has a positive impact on improving students' speaking skills, stimulates their learning, and engages them in their surrounding communities. Improving students' speaking fluency creates new goals for students such as personal development, career development, and academic achievement. It also allows students to utilize material learnt in the classroom to improve societal conditions. Integrating concepts and theories learnt in the classroom with everyday life makes students more capable of highlighting the importance of each lesson and course. For example, material learnt in speaking courses can be applied to benefit the community through variety of tangible services, such as working as translators to familiarize tourists about Nalut City and its customs and traditions. Therefore, helping students improve their language speaking skills by identifying the factors that prevent this improvement is an excellent way for students to apply their course lessons to real-world situations and concurrently benefit the community.

This study also will assist speaking teachers to understand why their students fail to carry on a conversation, and what are factors of this issue. Considering these factors, teachers will help the learners how to overcome them to achieve better speaking results. Those factors then may justify well the choice of this research topic and also give intrinsic reasons why researching this issue could be interesting.

The results of this paper mostly agree with the stated hypothesis. Both are identical in regard to the linguistic factors of lack of vocabulary, grammar structures use.

2. Literature Review

The literature review section firstly defines the main key words of this paper, then focuses on studies that have discussed the main obstacles preventing students from improving their speaking skills namely psychological factors, linguistic factors, and external factors.

Firstly, the key words in this paper are factor, affecting, speaking, and language. A factor is "a condition, fact, or influence that contributes to a result [12]. Affecting is "an influence on someone or something [12]. "Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols in variety context" [10]. Lastly, "Language is a formal system of signs and symptoms by using grammatical regulations of a mixture to talk [12].

Secondly, previous research have indicated that there are many factors resulting in students' in ability to improve their

speaking skills. These factors can be categorized into psychological factors, linguistic factors, and external factors. First of all, psychological factors can play a considerable impact on students' speaking ability. These factors include inhibition, lack of ideas, low participation, using first language, and low self-motivation. Inhibition is a psychological factor that prevents learners from making speech [33]. They are frequently afraid of the speaking power of others, making mistakes in front of their classmates or criticism and losing face while speaking. It is argued that fear of making mistakes becomes one of the main factors of students' reluctance to speak in English in the classroom [24]. In addition, this fear is linked to the issue of correction and negative evaluation. In addition, this is also much influenced by the students' fear of being laughed at by other students or being criticized by the teacher. As a result, students commonly stop participating in the speaking activities [24]. Therefore, it is important for teachers to convince their students that making mistakes is acceptable because students can learn from their mistakes.

In the study which entitled *EFL Learners' Communication Obstacles in Turkey*, the number of the participants were 139 first-year undergraduate non-English majors at Education Faculty of Adiyaman University. The method used to gather the data was a survey. He reported that anxiety and unwillingness during the English speaking process are considered two of the biggest obstacles for EFL learners. Anxiety and unwillingness are caused by the fear of being negatively evaluated when making mistakes, particularly in front of their friends. It also revealed that students who perceive their English as poor feel more anxious and are more unwilling to communicate in English classes than the other students perceiving their English level as very good, good, and OK [18].

In addition, most learners sometimes do not have ideas about unfamiliar or uninteresting speaking topic assigned. Silence or low participation is the preferred way that learners choose when they are uncertain whether what they are going to say is correct. Learners usually prefer to use their first language in generating their ideas and then translate what they think into the target language [30].

Some researchers believe that self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety also have direct impacts on learners' speaking performance. The authors [6] believe that when confident language learners are eager, more enthusiastic, willing to participate in speaking activities, they will obtain more success in learning speaking. Meanwhile, learners who are too shy or under pressure of English speaking skill frequently avoid expressing what they are thinking in English. Another noticeable difficulty is unpleasant learning environment which may make learners uncomfortable to join the speaking activities. Creating stimulating speaking environment provides learners more opportunities to promote their motivation in speaking. Therefore, good psychological state allows learners to use their verbal language more fluently.

In the study entitled *An Investigation into the Challenges EFL Libyan University Students Encounter in English Speaking Classroom*. The study took place at Al-Zawia University [7]. The focus group of the study were eighty eight randomly chosen students. The results revealed that lack of motivation, students' fear of making mistakes, and anxiety are the main factors preventing students from speaking English, and those factors in turn impacted their self-confidence when speaking English [7].

In the study entitled *Investigating Speaking Skills Problems of Pakistani Learners in ESL Context,* the population were from Pakistan. The sample was from four provincial capitals (Sindh, KPK, Punjab, Baluchistan) and one federal capital of Pakistan which is Islamabad. The study participants were a hundred learners from graduate institutes (twenty from each provincial and federal capital). The findings showed that that majority of the ESL students faced psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and anxiety to speak English language fluently [4]. These findings are identical with the results by [27] which stated that under confidence learners cannot speak fluently. The authors [29] also conducted a study in which they analyzed the anxiety problems of L2 learners and found out that anxiety and stress create panic amongst speakers and hence they become reluctant to speak English.

Linguistic factors are the second category. Linguistic factors include lack of the necessary vocabulary and topical knowledge, not being able to arrange ideas logically, grammatical structures and sentence formation skills. All of these factors have impacts on students speaking skill. The learners' limited vocabulary makes it difficult for them to communicate in English. The author [32] in his book, states that native speakers use 2,500 words to cover 95 percent of their needs. A working knowledge of the top 1,500 most common words in English would be beneficial to a learner, while the top 200 most common words will provide a lot of conversational mileage. As a result, when learners lack the vocabulary to even carry on normal and casual conversations in the classroom, they will tend to avoid using L2.

The authors [2] conducted a study in Almergrb university entitled *Speaking Challenges That Encounter 2nd And 3rd Year EFL University Students*. The participants were twenty under-graduate students. They discovered that most students at this level encounter linguistic hurdles to master the speaking skill. These linguistic obstacles were sentence structures, and the usage of the mother tongue in the classroom, which does not help the students to overcome their difficulties.

Finally, external factors, teaching methodology, teachers, and the surrounding environment, also cannot be neglected in regard to affecting students' speaking skills. The teaching method is an external factor that influences learners' attitudes and motivation. If it is engaging and student-centred, it is more likely to reduce anxiety [22], increase self-efficacy, and thus motivate students.

The surrounding environment also sometimes does not support the students towards learning a language. The environment here means the people outside the classroom. Those people may think that students just want to show off

when they speak English in daily conversations. The response that students get makes them lose their self-confidence to improve their speaking. Since the students do not want to be rejected by the people around them, they use their native language to communicate in daily conversations. This makes students unable to use the language outside the classroom, affecting their language fluency [8]. In addition, the author [5] conducted a study on the problems of speaking that encounter English Language students. His study results showed that learners of EFL do not get enough support to practice speaking English from their teachers and their surrounding environment.

Another important factor that has a substantial role in affecting students' speaking skill is the teacher or the lecturer. If lecturers or teachers do not give interesting topics for discussion, students will not be motivated to talk. Similarly, the use traditional teaching methods and not organising interesting class activities will result in speaking problems. When teachers do not instruct students when they are unable to find the appropriate words or structures during their speaking, they will lose their enthusiasm to talk. The same result will occur when students deliver harsh error correction or feedback.

In reviewing the literature, many studies have been conducted to investigate the difficulties and obstacles face students while speaking. However, the issue is still available in almost all the contexts where English is thought as a second or a foreign language.

In a study was done by [23] at Ba Ria-Vung Tau University in Vietnam showed that 65 English major students faced linguistics and non-linguistics problems which hindered them from speaking English. The use of only one method which was a questionnaire in this study might make the obtained result not enough to generalize the findings. Although questionnaire is one of the best methods to collect the data, it is still a descriptive way. The results showed that with regard to linguistic problems, the frequent items most students encounter are mother tongue use, lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, not knowing how to use appropriate words in different contexts, lack of grammar knowledge, and having difficulties making complete sentences to express their opinions, and finding it hard to remember vocabulary.

The author [17] aimed to investigate the Libyan EFL learners' speaking difficulties and the factors underlying this problem. A total number of 125 students, from Sebha University, participated in the study. Questionnaires and interviews were deployed for gathering data. The questionnaires and interviews were designed to elicit information about the participants' learning experience, the way they were taught English and speaking difficulties. The study revealed that Libyan learners face difficulties in oral communication due to linguistic and psychological barriers. The results also showed that insufficient exposure to the target language and frequent use of Arabic, inside and outside the classroom, were the main factors contributing to the Libyan EFL learners' speaking difficulties. Lack of speaking activities and overemphasis on accuracy at the expense of

fluency by the teachers were other contributing factor.

Additionally, In her study [31], *Communication Problems facing Arab learners of English* pointed out that there are many factors that cause difficulties in speaking English among EFL learners. Some of these factors are related to the learners themselves, the teaching strategies, the curriculum, and the environment. For example, many learners lack the necessary vocabulary to get their meaning across, and consequently, they cannot keep the interaction going. Inadequate strategic competence and communication competence can be another reason as well for not being able to keep the interaction going.

These difficulties are also due to the lack of interest in the English Language, poor listening skills, lack of self-confidence, and fear of making mistakes, which can produce anxiety and a sense of linguistic inferiority. Based on that, The author [16] concluded that learners do not only have linguistics problems but also psychological problems that could be seen in grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation, fear of mistakes, shyness and phobia to speak in front of the class, anxiety, tension, and nervousness. Other factors are the lack of confidence, lack of motivation inspired by boring and non-relevant materials and activities. What has been concluded from these studies is that speaking English is still a problematic issue and it is there due to the linguistics and psychological problems and those obstacles are due to many factors concerning student, teacher, and curriculum and the context. Taking into consideration that although the obtained results vary between the studies, it is still related to the three factors affecting students speaking examined in the current study.

3. Methodology

The main aim of this paper is to discover the obstacles facing English Language students at Faculty of Education in Nalut in speaking. This section presents the outline of the methodology applied by the researchers to fulfill the aim of this study. It shows research participants, instruments, and procedures used for data collection and data analysis.

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study are 27 female English Language students at Faculty of Education in Nalut, where the study was conducted. The students aged between 19 and 22. The participants have been studying English for more than eight years. Twelve students were at their first year of study, nine of them were year two students, five students were year three students, and three students were graduating students. All of them have speaking and listening course for four years and experienced speaking activities, delivering presentations, and as well did speaking examinations. Therefore, they were requested to participate in this study.

3.2. Instruments

The researchers employed both qualitative and quantitative

approaches to collect data for this paper. First, the qualitative approach consisted mainly of teachers' interviews because interviews investigate issues in depth and discover how individuals think and feel about a topic, and why they hold certain opinions. Second, the quantitative approach consisted of a questionnaire filled in by the students. The questions of the questionnaire of the study were designed using Likert scale to get information from the participants. Likert scale is a psychometric response scale primarily used in questionnaires to obtain participants' preferences or degree of agreement with a statement or a set of statements [9]. Moreover, the questionnaire was used as it is one of the most common instruments of collecting data on attitudes and opinions from a large group of participants.

3.3. Procedures

3.3.1. The Interview

Along with the questionnaire, the structured interview was employed in this research paper as it is considered to be an effective method of gathering the needed data. "An interview is a specialized form of communication between people for a specific purpose associated with agreed subject matter [3]. The questionnaire is a method that is based on a set of questions that need to be answered by the interviewee. It aims to generate information and data from verbal and non-verbal spoken language [14].

The Interview Design

A structured interview was employed in this study to gather the data and the information needed to investigate the difficulties encountering students when speaking English. The interview consists of six questions related to the teacher, teaching methods, and the curriculum in order to understand the external factors in depth and to highlight the obstacles facing the learners in regard to speaking. Having a structured interview enables the researchers to focus on examining the issue [14].

Three assistant professors of Listening and Speaking Course at Faculty of Education in Nalut were interviewed. Those assistant professors are supposed to help in developing the performance of the learners in speaking. The interviewees were asked to answer six questions and before starting the interview, the researchers sought permission from the respondents to record them in order to facilitate the analysis of the gathered data. The interview took one hour, and the context of the interview was at Faculty of Education in Nalut.

3.3.2. The Questionnaire

The structured questionnaire was involved in this study. The questionnaire questions were designed using Likert scale to get information from the participants. Likert scale is a psychometric response scale primarily used in questionnaires to obtain participants' preferences or degree of agreement with a statement or a set of statements. Moreover, the questionnaire was used as it is one of the most common instruments of collecting data on attitudes and opinions from a large group of participants [9].

The questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first part investigates the linguistics problems faced by the learners, and it contains fourteen questions on the examined area. The second part is about the psychological factors, and it consists of eleven questions. The third part is about the external factors. It consists of seven questions. Finally, an open ended question which aims to gain more information about the topic was provided.) "An open ended question can catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, and honestly [11]. However, it is better to use different methods of collecting the data rather than using many open-ended questions [19]. Therefore, the form of the questionnaire of this study consists of 33 likerat scale questions and just one open ended question.

3.3.3. Study Context

This study took place within the context of Listening and Speaking Course. This course involves teaching speaking and listening. The course aims at teaching students how to speak, exposing them to a formal and informal language, intonation, stress, applying different techniques to maintain the interest and the motivation of the learners. In addition, the students are required to participate in classroom discussions, deliver presentations, and to participate in conversations on different topics. This course aims at raising students' proficiency and fluency in English Language, and it prepares them to be qualified teachers who use English Language to explain lessons and communicate with their learners.

3.4. Study Limitation

As with the majority of studies, the design of the current study is subject to limitations. First, although the research population is not very large, the researchers managed to get thorough insights to the major obstacles facing English Language learners at the Faculty of Education in Nalut that prevent them from improving their speaking skills. Second, there is no male students included in this study to avoid bias because they have not studied at the Faculty of Education in Nalut since 2017. Third, the study needs speaking class observations for both teachers and students to understand the nature of these obstacles in depth to validate the acquired results because the results of this study showed conflicting views between the students and the teachers.

4. Data Analysis

This section introduces the analysis and the results of the collected data from the research participants. The section includes results of the questionnaire and the interviews. The questionnaire data was analysed using Microsoft Excel.

4.1. Students' Questionnaire Analysis

This section presents the analysis of students' questionnaire in regard to linguistics factors, psychological factors, and external factors.
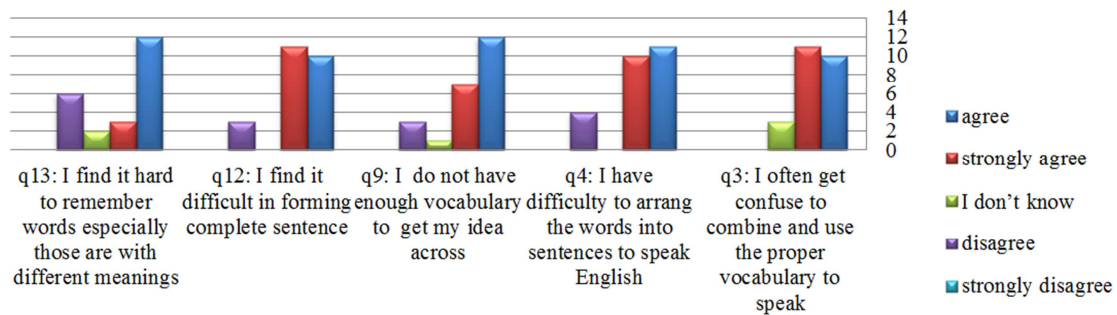
Figure 1. *Vocabulary and Sentence Formation.*

Figure 1 illustrates problems associated with vocabulary and sentence formation. 21 students, making 77.7% of the research population, chose *strongly agree* and *agree* for the choice "I often get confused to combine and use the proper vocabulary to speak." In the same line, 19 students with the percentage of 70.3% chose *strongly agree* and *agree* for the choice "I do not have enough vocabulary to get my idea across." In regard to grammar, 21 learners making the percentage of 77.7% chose *strongly agree* and *agree* for the choice "I find it difficult to form complete sentences." 21 students with the percentage 77.7% chose *strongly agree* and *agree* for the choice "I have difficulty to arrange words into sentences to speak English."

It could be seen that almost all the participants agreed that they encountered problems with the use of vocabulary and how to form complete sentences.
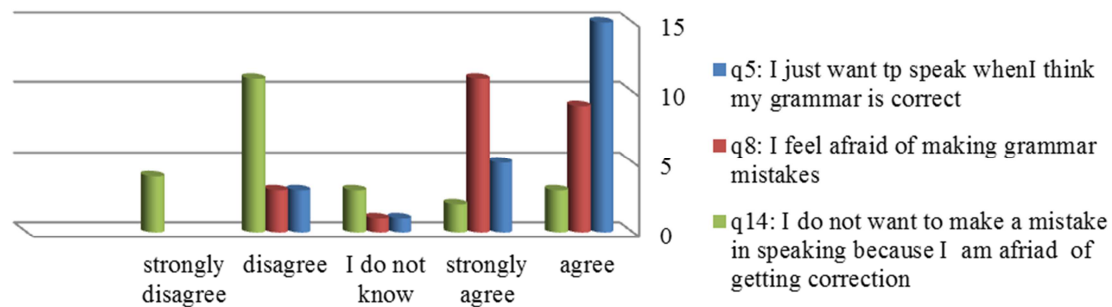

Figure 2. *Grammar Mistakes and Correction.*

Figure 2 demonstrates the relationship between grammar mistakes and correction as a speaking obstacle. 20 students declared that they just want to speak when they think their grammar is correct when they chose *strongly agree* and *agree*, making a percentage of 70%, whereas 15 students, 55.5%, chose *disagree* and *strongly disagree* for the choice "I do not want to make a mistake in speaking because I am afraid of getting correction."

It is obvious that there are conflicting views among the participants. In q5, students agreed that grammar has got a priority in their speech, and they want to speak if their grammar is correct whereas in q14 and q8 they disagreed that they feel afraid to speak because of getting correction.
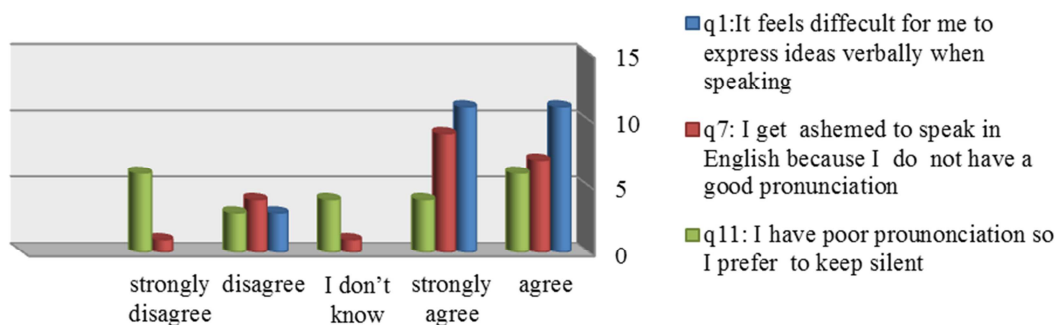

Figure 3. *Pronunciation Problems.*

Figure 3 illustrates that pronunciation could be an obstacle that prevents students from speaking. 11 of the participants showed their strong agreement, and the same number chose *agree* with the statement that *it feels difficult for me to express ideas verbally when speaking* making 81% of the participants whereas 7 of the participants agreed and 4 strongly agreed that having poor pronunciation hinders them to speak, and they do prefer to keep silent. 16 students,

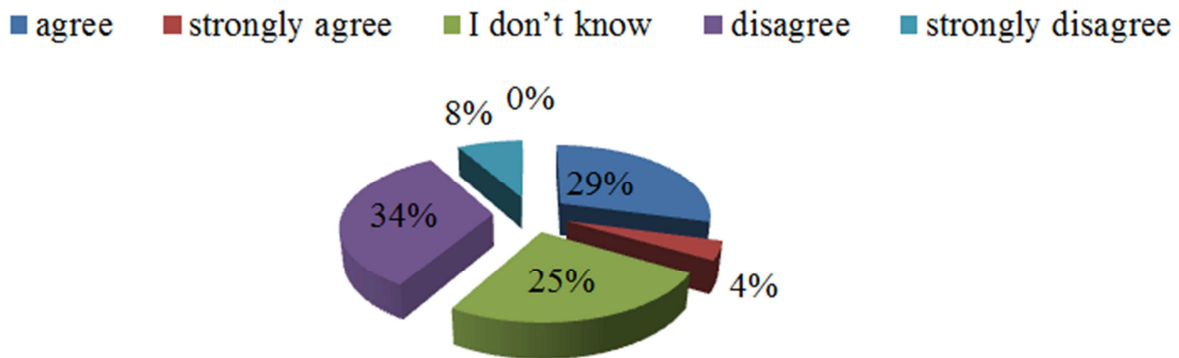making a total of 59.2% indicated that they feel ashamed to speak because they do not have good pronunciation.

Figure 4. Q6: I have a habit of using mother tongue when speaking to avoid misunderstanding.

Figure 4 indicates that the vast majority of the participants making the percentage of 34% *disagree* to use mother tongue when speaking to avoid misunderstanding. On the other hand, 29% of the participant expressed that they do use the mother tongue when speaking to avoid misunderstanding. 25% of the participants chose "I do not know."
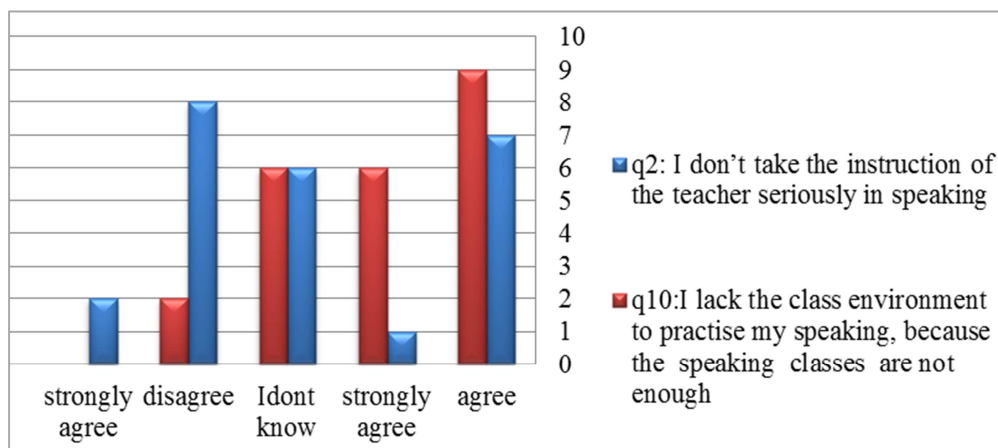

Figure 5. Careness and Class Environment.

Figure 5 shows how participants' careness and the classroom environment affect their speaking skills. 8 participants admitted that they do not take the instructions of the teacher seriously, making the percentage of 29.6%, whereas 37% of the participants showed their disagreement with the same option. In the question 10, 56% between agreeing and strongly agreeing declared that the lack of the class environment effect on the choice of practicing speaking.
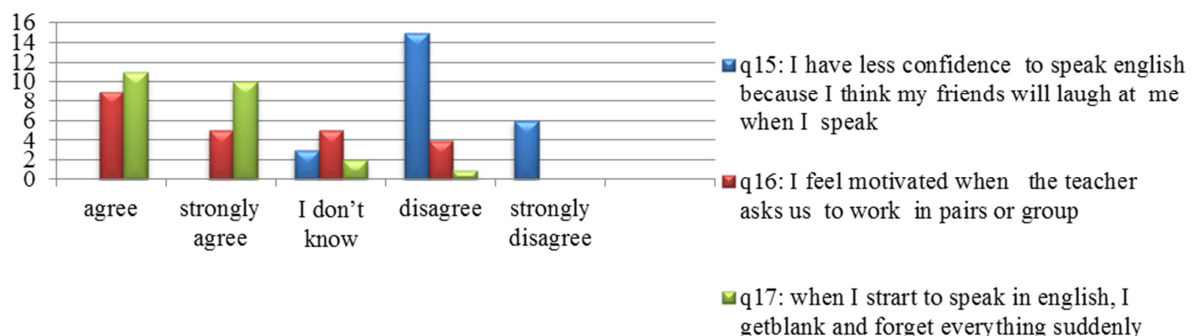

Figure 6. Psychological Factors.

Figure 6 indicates problems regarding confidence and motivation. About 77.7% of the participants showed their disagreement with the question *I have less confidence to speak English because I think my friends will laugh at me when speaking*, whereas almost 52% between agreeing and strong agreeing with the question 16 showing that working in groups or in pairs makes students feel motivated. In question 17, students expressed their agreement and strong agreement making the percentage of 78% declaring that they forget what they want to say when start speaking.

Figure 7 presents the influence of the psychological factors on students' speaking skills. 13 participants indicated that they feel ashamed to speak English because they are not fluent speakers, making a percentage of 48.1%. 11 students *strongly agree* and *agree* that they feel nervous when they speak English with or in front of other people presenting the percentage of 40.7%. In regard to the option *I feel anxious when speaking and end up saying nothing*, 11 students expressed their agreement making 40.7% whereas 6 students, 22.2% showed disagreement.
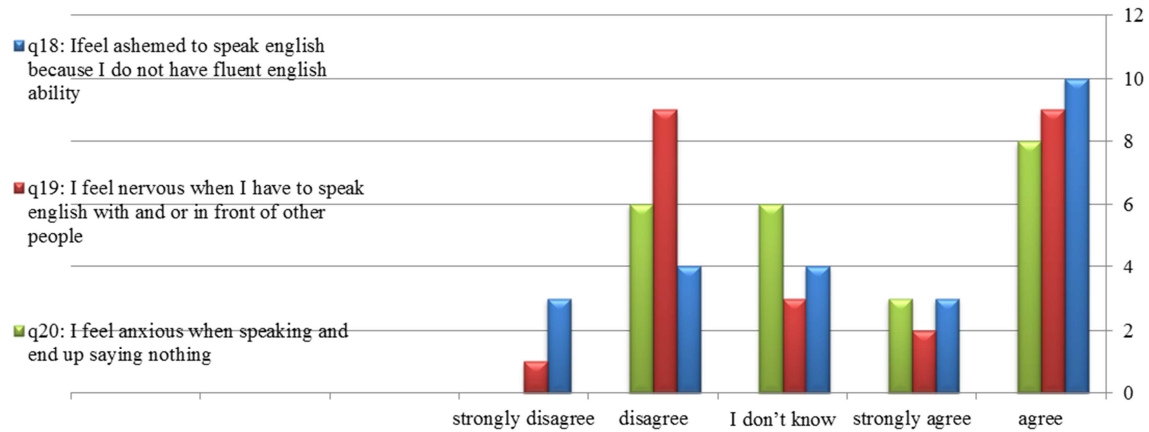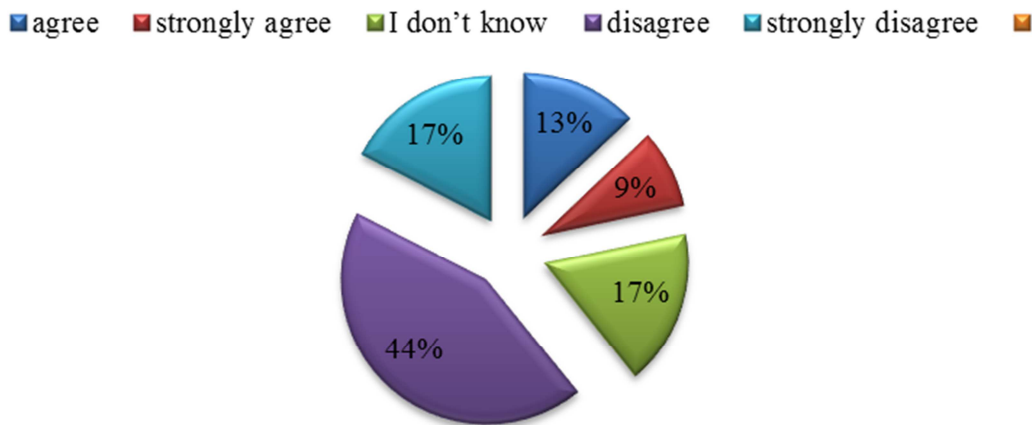

Figure 7. Psychological Factors.

Figure 8. Q21: I do not want to speak English because I am afraid that my partner will not understand what I am saying.

Figure 8 illustrates that the problem is related to misunderstanding in speaking. The vast majority of the participants showed their disagreement making 61% whereas *strongly disagree and I don't know* got the same percentage about 17%. 21% of the students admitted that they do not want to speak English because they are afraid that their partners will not understand what they are saying.
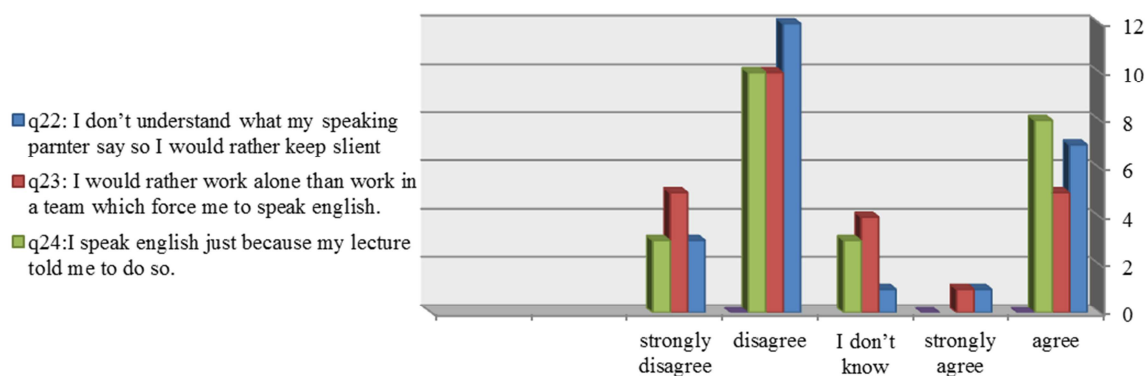

Figure 9. Self-motivation and speaking skill relationship.

Figure 9 presents the relationship between self-motivation and improving speaking skills. 15 students *disagree* and

strongly disagree that they do not understand what their partner says, so they would rather keep silent, whereas question 23 and 24 got the same percentage of disagreement making 37%. "*I speak just because my teacher told me to do so*" was the choice of 8 students while 13 of them between *disagree* and *strongly disagree*. Although 6 students chose "I would rather work alone than work in a team which forces me to speak", 13of them decided that they disagree.

Figure 10 illustrates the student's effort to improve their level in speaking. About 58% of the involved participants showed their agreement and strong agreement with the option that *I do not apply what I have learnt to improve my speaking* whereas 42% of the population expressed their disagreement

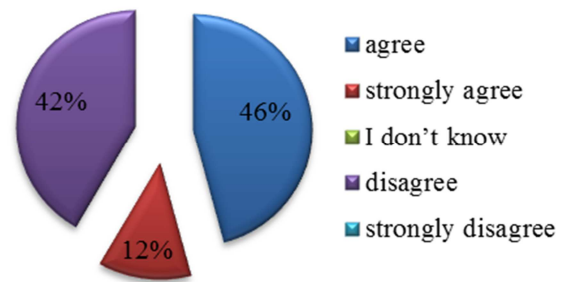that they do not apply what they have learnt to improve their speaking.

Figure 10. *Q25: I don't apply what I have learnt to improve my speaking.*

■q26: the course does not contain enough speaking exercises to improve my speaking

■q28: the teacher uses extra material in speaking classes

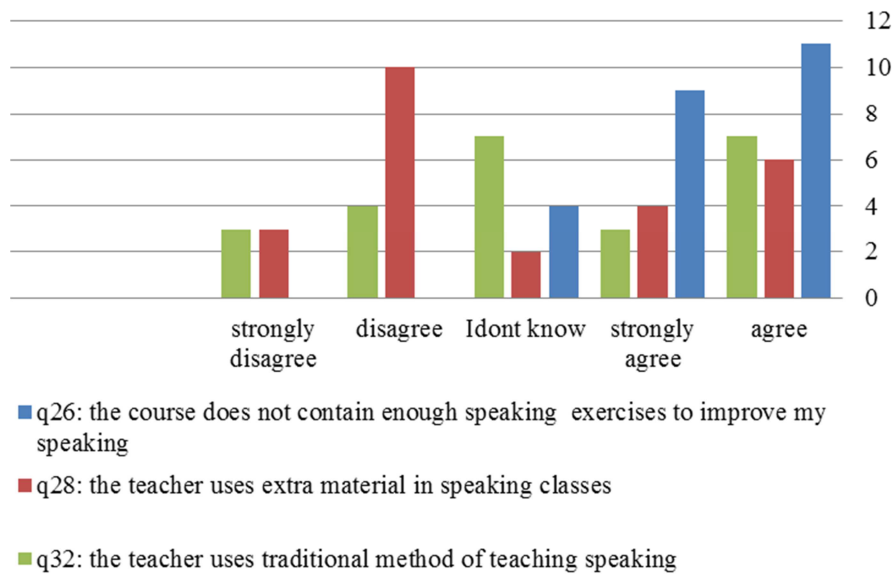■q32: the teacher uses traditional method of teaching speaking

Figure 11. *Teaching materials and methods of teaching.*

Figure 11 indicates how teaching materials and the teaching methods can impact on students' speaking skills. 20 participants admitted that *the course does not contain enough speaking exercises to improve my speaking* making a percentage of 74%. Although 10 students, 37%, agreed that *the teacher uses extra materials in speaking classes*, 13 of them disagreed making the percentage of 48.1%. 10 participants chose *agree* and *strongly agree* for the choice *the*

teacher uses traditional methods of teaching speaking whereas 7 participants expressed their disagreement. However, another 7 students indicated that they do not know whether the teacher uses traditional methods of teaching speaking or not. Similarly, 13 students, 48.1%, chose *disagree* for the option *the teacher uses extra materials in speaking classes* whereas 10 participants, 37%, chose *agree* and *strongly agree*.
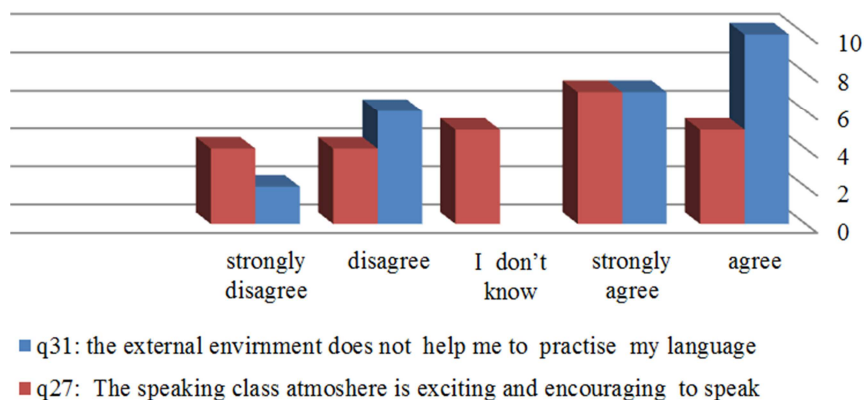

■q31: the external envirnment does not help me to practise my language

■q27: The speaking class atmoshere is exciting and encouraging to speak

Figure 12. *Inside and Outside Class room Environment.*

Figure 12 presents the effects of classroom environment and the environment outside it on students' speaking skills. More than half of the participants, 15 students making the percentage of 55.5%, demonstrated that the external environment does not help them to participate their language whereas 8 of them *disagree* and *strongly disagree*. In regard

to the classroom environment, 11 students, 40.7%, between *agree* and *strongly agree* expressed that the speaking class atmosphere is exciting and encouraging to speak. 6 students indicated that the speaking class atmosphere is not exiting and encouraging to speak. However, 5 participants chose "I do not know" for this question.
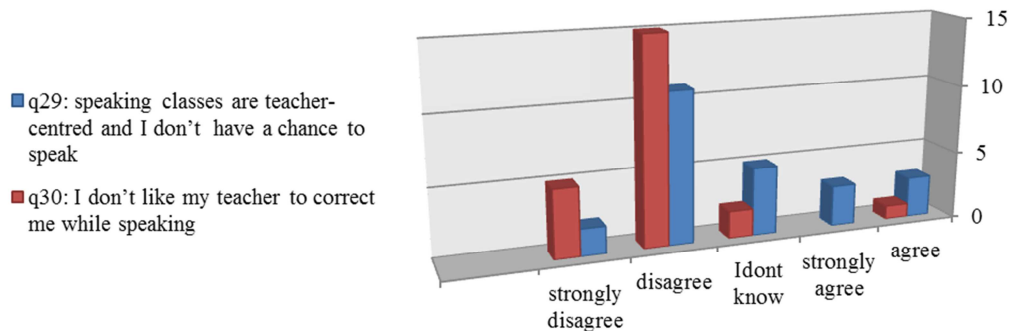

Figure 13. Teacher's impact on students' speaking skill.

Figure 13 shows that the vast majority of the students making 20 participants chose *disagree* and *strongly disagree* for the choice *I do not like my teacher to correct me while speaking* while 13 participants' choice was disagree for the option *speaking classes are teacher-centered, and I do not have a chance to speak* making the percentage of 48.1%.

4.2. Open-Ended Question

The analysis of an open ended question reveals that almost all the participants about 89% said that a fear of making grammar mistakes hinder them from speaking. They pointed out that when they think of grammar, they prefer to keep silent during the lectures whereas the remaining percentage of the participants declared that external environment (outside the class room) has its strong impact on the choice of the use of the first language (mother tongue) instead of the use of English language. Surprisingly, a total percentage about 97% went to confirm that the lack of practice of English inside the classes is considered to be an important reason the makes them find speaking in English difficult.

4.3. Teachers' Interview Analysis

The interview consists of seven questions related to the topic of the research which is what are the obstacles facings students when speaking English. Three teachers were interviewed and the collected data where analysed as the following:

With regards to question one which was *How is student's motivation in speaking English*?, the interviewee one said that students are not motivated to speak English at all, whereas the other two interviewees confirmed that some of the students are well motivated and the others lack the motivation to speak and use the language in their speaking during the class.

However, question two which was *do you think that class room environment has an impact on the performance of the*

learner? the first teacher said that class room environment has not any impact on the performance of the learner if they are motivated and have got a strong desire to learn the language. However, the second interviewee agreed that class room environment has a big impact on the performance of the learners with regards to speaking. She pointed out that if the class room environment is motivating, students will be motivated and this however will raise their desire to participate in a conversation. This was the same view of the third teacher who added that if the class room environment has a sense of friendship between a teacher and their students, of course students will be motivated enough to speak the language. In addition, all the three interviewed teachers stated their strong agreement that the outside environment does not support students to use their language as the surroundings use different language which impacts negatively on the choice of the use of English.

In question three which was *what are the difficulties experienced by students in learning speaking*, teacher one said that the level of the students in general is low to use the language reasoning that student's grammar is very bad, have little amount of vocabulary. She pointed strongly that the weakness in grammar use will not only affect the structure of the sentence but also on the meaning of their speech. The second teacher shared the same view of the first teacher, and she said that grammar use and the lack of suitable vocabulary are the main difficulties that may hinder students in their speaking. She also added that the lack of practice could also make students find speaking difficult as they have not had another chance to use English outside that class stating that the only chance provided to the students to use the language was just during the classes and outside the classes just the use of their mother tongue will domain all the conversations.

Teacher three said that with regards to the use of correct grammar and vocabulary students might be unable to speak in front of others. She added that some students say we get nervous when asking us to speak in front of the other and

some say we forget what we want to say. She also pointed out that the important thing is to get student to use the language as the first goal then she will pay attention to the use of grammar and vocabulary.

Question four which was do you apply specific strategy in teaching speaking? What is that strategy?

The three teachers said that they have always tried to help their students to improve in speaking by using different strategies and techniques. The first interviewee said that after finishing listening, she asks students to remember the some expressions and to write a story using those vocabulary. After that, each student has to stand in front of the class and start telling her story. She also added that students are asked to give an oral presentation on any topic chosen in the class without any prior planning. Moreover, the second teacher said that she always asks students to use the new learnt vocabulary within the class of speaking by using conversations and discussions to get students to use the new expressions. Teacher three said that before speaking, students are exposed to watch a video or to listen to a song related to the topic in order to warm up and to prepare them before the topic given then they will have to understand and to answer some work sheets related to the topic. Finally, they are asked to listen to the lesson and try to work in groups to practice the use of new learnt expressions.

With regards to question five, according to you, is the strategy that you use effective in improving student's speaking skill?

The three teachers agreed that what they use could hopefully help students to improve their speaking if they want to improve. The second teacher highlighted that what she uses affects positively year four students as they are more confident in using the language because they are less grammar and pronunciation mistakes makers. In question six which was *how would you help your students to improve their level of speaking*?, the first teacher answered that she does not know as she has tried always to push the students to use the language verbally, but the students are careless to consider those advices and to take them into actions. The second teacher though that the use of the class discussion provides a very important chance to the students to practice and to use their language whereas teacher three argued that if the students are not motivated themselves towards improving their level, whatever the teacher uses or applies will be useless. She added that giving advice will always help and providing the correction on their mistakes would also help along with getting them to speak by using peer work or group work in the class.

Lastly, in question seven which was according to your experience in teaching speaking, what are the main reasons that hinder students from speaking?

All teachers agreed that the use of correct grammar and vocabulary with the lack of training or practice could strongly affect students' speaking skills. However, teacher one added that outside environment play a negative impact on the use of English, and teacher two highlighted that anxiety and the previous experience with speaking at secondary schools affect negatively on the process of learning the language. She confirmed that if the level of the students at the secondary schools was good, they would have faced less problems in speaking in the high levels of education stating that any language should be thought on a correct way to obtain the desired advantages. Finally, the last interviewee added that self-motivation plays a vital effect on speaking. She explained that if the students are well motivated, they will do their efforts to enhance their level in the language without relying on the teacher as they are in a high level, and that high level of performance is their responsibility.

5. Discussion

Speaking fluently accurate English is the core aim of the course of listening and speaking. To speak means to express an idea, someone's feeling and thoughts orally. However, it could be challenging to master this skill due to the fact that English Language learners face several obstacles preventing them from speaking. This study sought to identify those challenges encountered by English Language students at the Faculty of Education in Nalut. The statistics revealed a number of factors affecting students' speaking skills developments. These factors are linguistics factors, psychological factors, and external factors. The study reaffirmed that lack of practice, the lack of the use of correct grammar and vocabulary adherence to obsolete obstacles among the core factors perpetuating to the poor level of students' fluency. These issues are exacerbated by students problems in coping with the demand of correct grammar and lack of suitable vocabulary and lack of practice and insufficient speaking classes. The study also highlighted a marked student anxiety and nervousness around losing face by speaking incorrect English in front of their classmates, with the impact of the external environment on the choice of practicing speaking along with the course requirements that do not meet the need of the students towards the development of speaking.

The stated aim of the study was to discover the problems facing students when speaking English and to highlight the reasons that generate these obstacles ending up to un ability to speak. The researchers conducted a student questionnaire and an interview with the teachers of English Language Department at the Faculty of Education in Nalut University. The researchers aimed to understand those obstacles in order to overcome these problems which could result in helping students to improve their level of fluency in English. The results obtained from the questionnaire were supported with results obtained from the interview whereas the others were supported by the literature review.

In this section, the researchers elicit accurate results of students' questionnaire and teachers' interviews about the factors that impact students' improvements in speaking which were discussed in order to find answers to the research questions.

With regards to the first part of the questionnaire, the

results showed that students involved in this study encountered problems in regard to speaking due to linguistics factors. Students face difficulties to speak because they lack correct grammar and suitable vocabulary, which was also the result of the interview with the teachers when they were asked what are the main obstacles facing students in speaking. Being able to speak correct grammar and use different vocabulary are the essential abilities which help students to speak because it makes them confident to use the language. Learning English grammar is very difficult for students because most students make tense mistakes or active or passive forms and vocabulary choice. They sometimes use wrong tenses reasoning that they cannot differentiate between the use of the tenses, and this will result in preferring keeping silent and not speaking. This result was also extracted from the open ended question. Almost all the participants agreed that the lack of the knowledge of using correct grammar makes them prefer to keep silent during the lectures. This was supported by the findings of a study done by Khizar [3] at Ba Ria-Vung Tau University in Vietnam which pointed out that many linguistics problems affect negatively on the performance of students in regard to speaking. Those problems namely were lack of vocabulary, lack of correct grammar use, and sentence formation. In addition, in the interview done with the second teacher involved in the current study, she confirmed that lack of grammar and vocabulary are the main barriers experienced among the students which result in inability to speak.

Another result obtained from the questionnaire revealed that pronunciation is considered to be a barrier which hinders students from speaking. When students feel that they are not able to pronounce the word correctly, they might prefer to keep silent or they might think that this wrong pronunciation makes them being laughed at. In the study done by [4], investigated the difficulties encountered by Omani students in their speaking of English, found out that the linguistic domain (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse) were the most serious areas of difficulty. That might be due to many reasons: students might have not yet developed an adequate level in the basic abilities of the language and that probably was because of the curriculum of the subject that does not provide enough opportunities for practicing the pronunciation of the new vocabulary. This resulted in having very few opportunities for students to speak, especially with crowded classes.

With regards to the use of mother tongue to avoid misunderstanding, a large percentage of the participants in the current study disagreed with this idea. That might be because they understand that using their mother tongue will not help them in the process of acquiring a foreign language, or they might think that interfering will affect negatively on learning another language. This however was opposite to the finding of Al-Esaifer [2] in Almergrb university entitled *Speaking Challenges That Encounter 2nd And 3rd Year EFL University Students*. They discovered that the usage of the mother tongue in the classroom was one of the obstacles that does not help the students to overcome their difficulties related to speaking. Moreover, mother tongue could be a barrier which hinder students from speaking.

The next result obtained from the first part of the questionnaire showed that more than half of the students admitted that they do not take the instructions of their teacher seriously which means that they do not care about their learning and improving their language. They also acknowledged that they lack the class environment to practice the language. That was the same result obtained by an open ended question, most of the participants declared that they lack the class environment where they are supposed to have enough practice for the language. This was totally opposite to what the interviewed teachers provided. In the interview, teachers declared that they use different strategies to help students speak. The effect of the class environment could not be neglected as it provides learners with a chance to practice the language. Students who study English as a foreign language usually have limited opportunities to speak English outside the classroom and also limited exposure to English speakers or members of the international community. This might be one reason for teachers to provide more situations and activities for students to strengthen their speaking competence. Supporting that, the results of the study done by Al-Nakhalah [5] on the problems of speaking that encounter English Language students showed that learners of EFL do not get enough support to practice speaking English from their teachers and their surrounding environment.

One interviewed teacher claimed that the class environment does not have an impact on the students if they are self-motivated to learn a new language pointing out to the high effect of motivation on the process of acquiring the language. She believes that if the students are motivated to learn a language, nothing will be a barrier. Supporting that [6] who believe that when students are eager, confident, willing to participate in speaking activities, they will obtain more success in learning speaking.

A result obtained from the first part of the psychological factors revealed that students are confident to speak English, and they are not afraid to be laughed at. Having confidence will simplify the learning. According to Brown [10], the concept of affect encompasses emotions and feelings and the development of affective states entails various personality factors. He believed that personality factors are the intrinsic side of affectivity which increases our success in language learning. However, students declared that they forget what to say when asked to speak, this was one finding of Dalem [16] who confirmed that shyness and phobia to speak in front of the class are among the reasons that hinder students from speaking. Supporting this, Brown (1994) labels speaking as the most challenging skill for students that needed to interact with at least one other speaker, understanding its components or criteria for good speaking and so forth. Therefore, speaking ability is to known as the skill that is difficult enough to learn particularly by English Foreign Language (EFL) students unless they have efforts to overcome it.

Another finding showed that anxiety, nervousness, and

shyness are problems experienced among students. Those obstacles accounted the high percentage making 37% for the shyness, 41% for being nervous when speaking whereas the result obtained for anxiety was spliced between agreeing and disagreeing making 33% for each. Most of studies done on the examined issue [1, 7, 18, 27] confirmed that psychological factors played a vital effect and impacted negatively on speaking concerning anxiety, shyness, losing confidence and willingness. Among all the psychological factors, anxiety and willingness are caused because of being negatively evaluated when making mistakes [18]. This was opposite to the result obtained from question 14 of the questionnaire in the current study where 41% of the participants disagreed that being a afraid of receiving correction on their speaking mistakes hinders them from speaking.

Another finding was that being afraid of working in groups, being misunderstood, and a choice of speaking because of the instruction of the teacher make students prefer to keep silent was faced by disagreement from the participants making 44% of rejection on question 22, 56% between disagreeing and strongly disagreeing on question 23 and 37% on question 24. Group work is designed as any classroom activity in which learners perform collaborative tasks with one or more speakers. It has been considered one of the main changes to the dynamics of classroom interaction wrought by students-centered teaching. Moreover, this speaking activity is able to increase the amount of active speaking and listening undertaken by all the learners in the language class. Furthermore, the students' motivation is improved through group work activities. Group-work activity can allow participants to use the language. The result showed that students were not de-motivated when asked to participate in groups or to speak in front of others which was totally the conflicting obtained result of the study done by Huynh [23] where it was declared that being de-motivated was a result of being a afraid of other students' performance when working in groups. In the same line, one of the findings revealed that fair of making mistakes in front of other students hinders students from speaking [7].

In regards to making effort to improve speaking, about 46% of the participants declared that they do not try to enhance their speaking level which was the one finding of the results obtained by study done by [31] which declared that the obstacles encountered students in speaking due to the learners themselves since the choice of improvement is the option of the learner if they want to be improved. That was also pointed out by the interview result where the second interviewee declared that if the students have a desire to improve, nothing will be a barrier.

Another result concerning teaching materials and teaching method as an obstacle facing students when speaking showed that students agreed that the course does not contain enough speaking classes which was opposite of the result obtained by the interview where almost all the teachers declared that they use different methods of teaching with different exercises in order to give students chances to practice the language. In

[26], the result was similar to the current study which declared that teaching methods could be obstacles which make students have less opportunities to speak. Al-Lawati [4] also claimed that one of the difficulties encountered by Omani students in their speaking of English were vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse, and all were the most serious area of difficulty. That was because of the curriculum that does not provide enough opportunities for learning and practicing new varied vocabulary. In a study conducted by [17] aimed to investigate the Libyan EFL learners' speaking difficulties and the factors underlying this problem revealed that Libyan learners face difficulties in oral communication due to linguistic and psychological barriers reasoning that to insufficient exposure to the target language inside and outside the classroom with the lack of speaking activities and overemphasis on accuracy than fluency by the teachers.

Concerning the inside and outside environment, the results showed that the outside environment does not support the need of the learners to improve their speaking since the language available is their first language which is Arabic. This result was supported by the finding of the open ended question where almost all the participants referred to the lack of practice outside the class. They also pointed out that speaking classes are not teacher-centred and, with regards to the practice, they have a chance to practice inside the class making 65% of the participants. The author [23] in this study highlighted the factors affecting students' interests and progress in speaking stating that lecturers do not give interesting topic for discussion, use traditional teaching method which was opposite to the finding of the current study where student showed their disagreement to the choice that the teacher uses traditional method of teaching and that was supported with the finding of the interview that teachers use different methods of teaching. Another result obtained by [23] was similar to the current study in the effect of the outside environment on speaking and different on the way of considering providing correction could be a barrier, in the current study 41% of the participants declared that they do not have any problems regards providing correction during speaking, and they disagreed with the question says *I don't like my teacher to correct me when speaking*. At the same vein, [5] conducted a study on the problems of speaking that encounter English Language students showed that learners of EFL do not get enough support to practice speaking English from their teachers and their surrounding environment.

6. Conclusion

Since speaking is considered to be of critical importance to students at the Faculty of Education in Nalut because they are supposed to be English Language teachers after graduation, discovering the factors that affect them to develop this skill is critically important and cannot be neglected. Therefore, this study investigated the difficulties in speaking that students at the Faculty of Education in Nalut encounter.

The study results indicate that there are more linguistic factors than psychological factors affecting students'

speaking skills. Most of the participants faced linguistic difficulties with a rather high level while their challenges related to psychological factors were at average level. However, the relationship between these two factors is interrelated. Because of the linguistic factors students have, they encounter psychological factors. In other words, when students do not construct well-formed sentences using appropriate vocabulary, they will feel anxious, fear to be corrected, and will forget what to say.

First, students feel anxious and stressed when they have to find the appropriate words and expressions according to the context, or when they want to translate what they desired to communicate. Similarly, students are reluctant to speak, they do not feel confident enough and felt fear of making mistakes and being exposed to their classmates' comments and teacher correction. Second, the linguistic obstacles that limit their communicative skills are related to pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and limited vocabulary.

Third, another difficulty was related to external factors of the surrounding environment outside the classroom, teachers, classroom environment, materials and teaching methods. All the students confirmed that they do not have opportunities to speak English outside the class because English is a foreign language in Libya, and people do not use it for daily communication purposes. In regard to teachers, although many students, as well as the three teachers, indicated that teachers use variety of activities in classroom, the vast majority of students, on the other hand, expressed that they do not get enough opportunities to practice speaking in classes. In regard to materials applied in classrooms, half of the learners also indicated that teachers do not use extra materials in speaking classes, although the teachers pointed out that they use different kinds of materials in speaking classes such as watching videos, delivering presentations, or telling stories, whereas the other half of the learners indicated that the teachers do not use traditional methods of teaching.

However, this research indicated another issue that the participants had. It is carelessness. More than half of the students indicated that they do not apply what they learn to improve their speaking skills. Another group of students declared that they do not take teachers' instructions into account. Accordingly, it could be reasonable to assume that students do not care to improve their speaking skill because they are not motivated.

Based on the results of the study, some recommendations were proposed to help English Language teachers and learners to improve the listening skill. First, teachers should try to design authentic situations and use real materials to expose the learners to the language. For example, teachers should try to get students involved in Skype chats with students from English speaking countries. This could assist them to learn the language and use their language with native speakers. Secondly, to achieve the goal of communication, students should be encouraged to take part in speaking activities in pairs or groups because they feel more comfortable and natural when talking with their classmates.

Thirdly, teachers should focus on the frequently used grammatical structures for each topic to limit making mistakes. Moreover, guiding students to pronounce new words is also important so that they are able to identify the stress and linking sounds.

Forth, the sample size of the participants plays a critical role in conducting research papers; therefore, it could be of critical importance to include a larger sample size than the one selected for the current study. In addition, including male students would also be required to validate the findings of this study. That is, for this study to be generalised, the focus group should include male students not only female students to avoid bias. There also should be class observations besides the methods used in this study and increase the number of speaking classes.

Overcoming the mentioned issues is the responsibility of both teachers and students. Teachers should enrich speaking classes with more inviting topics for the students and use different strategies that can stimulate their motivation to talk and participate in speaking classes. Therefore, it is time to include students when planning curriculums in general and speaking curriculum in particular. Students also must be self-motivated to improve their language skills. They have to act initiatively and take their teachers' instructions into actions because learning a language is a complicated process that does not rely on students alone or teachers alone. Consequently, it would be recommended that teachers of the English language should integrate speaking with other subjects of the curriculum.

Teachers should be aware that they teach the English Language with imitation, motivation, encouragement of low learners, and focus on the role of pedagogical interference and small groups. Teachers should improve their ability to tackle the pragmatic and culture aspects while teaching the English language.

Learners themselves are responsible for achieving better performance in speaking. Students should handle a big responsibility about their studies and become self-dependent as they are in a level where the teacher has not strongly effect on the individuals' achievement. There must be collaboration between the two parties to achieve satisfying results for both.

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