

The Difficulties that Face Sudanese University Students in Speaking English Language.

(A Case study of Kosti Locality, White Nile State)

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the problems of speaking English skills among Sudanese university students. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method to analyze the data. The researchers used a questionnaire for collecting data. Twenty-five students were chosen to represent the sample of population of this study. The study tackles the problems that face Sudanese university students when they speak English. The main factors that caused this problem either, psychologically or, linguistically. The study has some findings, the most important ones are: Teachers and students do not pay considerable attention for creating a new style to teach and learn speaking English skills. In addition, teachers do not motivate students to speak English appropriately. The study concluded with some recommendations, one of them is that, practicing speaking English can help students to master speaking skill effectively.

المشكلات التي تواجه الطلاب السودانيين بالجامعات عند تحدثهم باللغة الانجليزية "

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المستخلص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على المشاكل التي تواجه طلاب الجامعات السودانية عند التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية، اتبع الباحثون في هذه الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لتحليل الدراسة. لجمع البيانات استخدم الباحثون الاستبيان لجمع بيانات (25) طالباً ، تناولت الدراسة المشاكل التي تواجه الطلاب عند التحدث باللغة الانجليزية، وأوضحت الدراسة العوامل المسببة لهذه المشاكل سواء كانت نفسية أو لغوية. توصلت الدراسة إلى عدد من النتائج وأهمها أن الطلاب لا يعيرون انتباهاً كما ينبغي عند تعلمهم مهارة التحدث باللغة الانجليزية. بعض المعلمين لا يبتكرون طرق وأساليب جديدة لتدريس المخاطبة باللغة الإنجليزية، أيضاً بعض الاساتذة لم يشحذوا همم الطلاب للتحدث باللغة الانجليزية بطلاقة. توصلت الدراسة إلى عدد من التوصيات التي يمكن أن تساعد الطلاب لإكسابهم مهارة التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية وأهمها ممارسة التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية.

Introduction

Most of English language teachers who have been teaching for longer period observed that when they asked a student to speak in English for very few minutes he or she usually appears hesitant and shy. The reasons are many and different; some of them are: Students take all the situations seriously, grammar rules jump over their naturalness. A.j. Hog (2014:7) threw some light on essential and basic questions *“Do you feel nervous or shy when you try to speak English? Do you still struggle to understand what someone is saying to you despite years of study? Are you embarrassed about your pronunciation or worried you speak too slowly? Are you frustrated that despite all the time you have invested in learning English you still cannot speak it? Despite your goals, is it difficult for you to actually use English in your job, travels, or studies? Do you sometimes feel that you’ll never master spoken English?”*

Statement of the Problem

Many students find difficulties in speaking English at university level. Most of them can't speak English fluently according to certain difficulties that face them. This study is planned to investigate this issue to find out suitable solutions.

Objectives of the Study

In this study, the researchers are going to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out the main reasons of difficulties that face university students in speaking English.
2. To provide suggestions and strategies that may help to overcome and solve these difficulties.
3. To encourage students to enhance their speaking skill.

Questions of the Study

- 1 What are the reasons of difficulties that face university students when they speak English?
- 2 What are the strategies that help students to overcome these difficulties?

3 To what extent does encouragement enhance students to speak English fluently?

Hypotheses of the study

1. There are many difficulties that face students in speaking English language.
2. There are various strategies, which help students to overcome this problem.
3. There are lots of ways to encourage students to speak English fluently.

Significance of the study

Speaking skill is essential for active communication in personal, social, and professional situations. Good speaking skill can help building strong relationships and link with others. As well, it improves career prospects and competent success. The researchers, while they were teaching at university levels, observed that students face some difficulties and problems; they conducted to study in order to participate effectively in searching for appropriate clarifications to such difficulties. Therefore, this study is expected to be important because it highlights the area of difficulties that face university students in the concern of improving speaking skills.

Literature Review and Previous Studies

The Concept of speaking

According to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008), "skill is an ability to do an activity or a job well, especially because you have practiced it" therefore, speaking skill is the ability to communicate effectively and accurately through verbal language. It involves conveying ideas, thoughts, and opinions in a clear and coherent manner, taking into accounts the audience, contexts and purpose of communication.

A.J. Hog (2014:13) Explained "My teaching experiences in different parts of the world convinced me that something is wrong with English education. Everywhere I went, it was the same situation. The students were bored, frustrated, stressed, and nervous. Most students, even after years of studying

English, failed to speak the language fluently. You are not alone, because it's a global problem.

Psychological factors

Many psychological factors affect negatively on speaking English language fluently such as, stress, intonation, and fear of committing mistakes, Shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence and lack of motivation.

Stress

Hadumod Bussmann (1998:1127) pointed out "Stress is a natural physical and emotional response to a perceived threat or pressure. It is a normal part of life and everyone experiences stress at some point. It is also known as personal depression. As you know, words are made up on syllable or syllables. For example, the word (Telephone) is made up of three syllables, (te), (le) and (phone) but only the first syllable (te) is stressed that is to say it is more prominent than (le) and (phone). Some words have alternative accent position.eg. Progress (s) is accented on the first syllable if it is noun.

Stress in English words is both fixed and free. For example, in the word miserable, the stress is on first syllable i.e (mis) whether the word occurs isolation or in connected speech. it shows that the stress is fixed.. Secondary accent is marked with a vertical bar below and in front of the syllable. The primary stress is on the last syllable and the secondary stress is on the first syllable.

Sean Mcpheat (2010: 26) explained, "The same sentence can have multiple meaning depending on which word is emphasized. The emphasis on a particular word implies additional information than what the word say.

Intonation

According to Peter Roach (2000:183) "intonation enables us to express emotions and attitudes as we speak, and this add a special kind of meaning to spoken language, this is often called the attitudinal function of intonation.

Intonation helps to produce the effect of prominence on syllable that need to be perceived as stressed, and in particular. The placing of tonic stress on a particular syllable marks out the word to which it belongs as the most

important in the tone unit. This has been called the accentual function of intonation.

Fear of committing mistakes

Fear of committing mistakes is the main factor of students' reluctance to speak English in the classroom. This fear is linked to 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 speaking activity. It is important for teachers to convince their students that making mistakes is not a wrong or a shame thing, because students can learn from their mistakes.

Shyness

Shyness is a feeling of apprehension, self-consciousness and nervousness in social situations. It is characterized by a fear of being judged, evaluated or rejected by others. In an emotional thing, that many students suffer from at some time when they are required to speak in English classroom. Shyness could be source of problem in students learning activities in the classroom especially in class of speaking. Thus, paying attention to this aspect is also quite important in order to help the students doing their best in speaking performance in classroom as well as out of the classroom.

As mentioned above most of students fail to perform speaking at their best. In addition, their inability to show their ability in speaking is also influenced much by their feeling of shyness.

Possible solution overcomes shyness

In term of possible solutions to overcome shyness, A teacher can create a friendly and open classroom environment, by doing this, his students are hope to feel fine of shyness problem. In addition, students can gradually face their fear and shyness to build confidence. Supporting groups have a great role to overcome these difficulties. In this way, students will not worry of their imperfect pronunciation and grammar. In addition, students must lock open shyness as a thing to overcome and do not fear failure or success. The above solutions to reduce shyness are worth doing. A.J. Hog (2014:49-85)

summarized the rules that help overcoming the problems of shyness and fear as follows: Learn phrases not words, do not study grammar!, learn with your ears, not with your eyes, repetition is the key to spoken mastery you want to learn English and you want to speak it well right now, learn grammar intuitively and unconsciously, Learn real English and trash your textbooks, and learn English with compelling stories.

Knowing culture helps in speaking more fluently

A. J. Hog (2014: 88) pointed out that research has shown that you will learn a language more quickly if you can begin to identify with the culture. For example, according to Dr. Stephen Krashen and contrary to popular belief, even people who learn English as an adult can develop a perfect accent. What holds them back is not some inability to make new sounds, but rather their connection to their home country and its culture.

Anxiety

Anxiety is feeling of tension apprehension and nervousness associated with the situation of learning a foreign language. As well, it a common mental health condition characterized by feelings of worry, fear and nervousness. Anxiety stands as an obstacle to speak English language effectively. Therefore, paying attention to this factor should be taken into consideration. In fact, anxiety plays an important role in speaking English language and it can affect student's performance either positively or negatively. Also, its influences in the quality of oral language production and make them appear less fluent than they really appear. Anxiety can lead to the Lack of confidence and it occurs when students realize that their conversation cannot be understood by their partners while they are speaking. In this situation they would rather keep silent while other do talking showing that the students are lack of response. John Steve (2012) said that: *"the main causes of student confidence is the low ability in speaking English"* In this case many students, think that their English is bad and feel that they can't speak English well. As

well, the other cause of student lack of confidence that deals with the encouragement from the teacher.

McPheat S. (2010: 31) explained “communication style refers to the choices we tend to make when communicating with others. It involves two basic dimensions: the assertiveness level of our communication and the emotiveness level of our communication. We also use different styles depending on with whom we are communicating.

Speaking English like a native speaker

According to Amy Gillett (2004:) one of the keys to speak like a native is the ability to use and understand casual expressions or idioms. American English is full of idioms. You will not learn the expressions in standard texts, but you will hear them in books, newspapers, magazines and TV shows. Idioms add color to language. Master idioms and your speech will be less awkward, less foreign you will also understand more of what you read and hear

A.J. Hog (2014: 51) stated that when we are children, we learn in phrases. We learn in groups of words. Give it to me. Walk across the street. He fell down.

The point is: we learn groups of words, not just one word. Word by word is slow and it doesn't help with grammar. However, when you learn a whole phrase, you are getting extra information. Maybe you do not know it, but you are.

Improving your pronunciation

A.J. Hog (2014: 53) pointed out that Pronunciation is a big worry for many English learners. Learning phrases will help, but there is another exercise you can do to improve even more. One of the greatest challenges with pronunciation is the problem of feeling strange when trying to use a native accent.

Previous Studies:

The first study was prepared by Taufik Hidayah Abdullah (2024). It was entitled as” Difficulties faced by undergraduates in English public speaking at

a Malaysian University”. The objectives of this study are: to explore difficulties and factors that hinder effective public speaking among undergraduate students at a Malaysian University. The study adopted a qualitative method through face to face semi-structured interviews and gathered data from a purposive sample of 44 undergraduate students. The interview data were analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis. The findings showed that undergraduate students face various difficulties concerning English public speaking due to poor language skills in terms of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency. Additionally, the findings revealed several factors that hinder public effective speaking among students including dislike for English, nervousness, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, shyness, eye contact and gender differences. This study offers valuable insights to educators in overcoming English speaking difficulties among undergraduates to enhance learning outcomes.

The second study was conducted by Riham Mohammed AL Fadil (2023). It was entitled as” the problems that face secondary school students in speaking English Language”. The objectives of this study are: To find out the causes of the problem that face secondary school Sudanese students, to provide strategies to overcome such a problem, and to encourage students to enhance their speaking skill. The analytical descriptive approach was used as the methodology of this study. The researcher found out the following results: Psychological factors affect negatively speaking English Language, students have no enough motivation to speak English, and teachers do not give students enough time to practice English language. The researcher recommended that both teachers and students should pay considerable attention to create new styles of teaching and learning English.

The third study was conducted by Sarah Ahmed Al Mustafa (2024). It was entitled as” the impact of fear on achieving oral communication for Sudanese university students”. The objectives of this Study are: to analyze the most strategies that help students reducing fear of speaking English, to identify the causes of fear in speaking process, to investigate reasons behind students’

worry and shyness when they try to speak English. The analytical descriptive approach was used as the methodology of this study. The researcher found out the following results: the social communication strategies enhance students oral communication, incorrect pronunciation causes fear of speaking English, teachers play an important role in putting great confidence on their students. The researcher recommended that students should develop effective communication to enhance speaking skill, teachers should encourage students to increase their English vocabulary, and teachers should help students to make club conversation.

Methodology of the study

The descriptive analytical approach is used as a methodology of this study. The researchers use a questionnaire for university students to collect the required information that answer the questions of this study and light the hypotheses. The study is limited to White Nile University in kosti locality White Nile State, the Academic year 2024 - 2025. A questionnaire was designed and handed to twenty-five students who were chosen randomly from White Nile University students to represent the sample of population.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Hypotheses Discussion

Hypothesis (1): “There are many difficulties that face students in speaking English language”. On the basis of the statistical analysis, It is clear that 72% of the sample members agree that they worry about making mistakes during speaking English language in the classroom, in addition to this, as far as shyness is concerned, 84% of the members of the research sample agree that they feel shy when they try to speak English language in the class room . These percentages stand as evidence that learners face many difficulties when they speak English language in the classroom. These statistical results confirm the hypothesis number one.

Hypothesis (2): “There are various strategies which help students to overcome this problem”. On the basis of the statistical analysis. It is clear that (88%) of the sample members agree that teachers do not practice speaking English

language with them, 84% of the sample members agree that environment does not help them in speaking English. 92% of the sample members agree that they do not have native speakers to practice speaking English with them. These percentages stand as evidence that some teachers do not follow effective approaches and strategies to encourage their students' level of speaking fluently. As well as, teachers are responsible for preparing good environmental educational situations at least the psychological side of the classroom environment. These statistical results confirm the hypothesis number two.

Hypothesis (3): "There are lots of ways to encourage students to speak English fluently". On the basis of the statistical analysis, it is clear that 80% of the sample members agree that when they speak English, they feel disappointment. 64% of the sample members agree that they cannot speak English because their economic side is very bad. (80%) of the members of the research sample agree that they find some difficulties to speak because English language is linguistically very complicated. 94% complained that they have no motivation to express themselves in the classroom. These statistical results confirm the hypothesis number two.

Conclusion

The focus of this study is that it tackles a very important issue, namely, the difficulties that face university students in speaking English language". The main findings of this study are as follows: Psychological factors affect negatively in speaking English language such as fear of criticism, anxiety, nervousness, and shyness. Students have no enough motivation to speak English. Teachers do not practice speaking English they just teach English without focusing on improving students' speaking skills, some teachers do not teach enough pronunciations rules. The researchers have a number of recommendations: Students should be supported to overcome their shyness. Teachers should motivate students to speak English without fear, shyness or hesitation. Teachers should practice speaking English outside and inside the classroom, it is important to speak with native speakers to improve speaking skills.

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