
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The problems of Fluency in Spoken English among EFL Learners in Sudanese Universities

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the problems and challenges which is usually experienced by English learners in the Sudanese university when trying to speak English. It also checks the problems that students face when learning the English language in Sudanese universities and try to find remedies to this problem. The research uses a questionnaire, interviews, and descriptive methods in the collection of data about fluency in the English language in universities in, the Sudan University of Khartoum as an example. The data was then statistically analyzed using the SPSS program. The results showed that there are various problems that hinder English learning in the universities and among them include: under-qualified teachers, unsuitable teaching materials, and the methods used in teaching are also poor. The other problem is the psychological factor that makes student lack motivation while learning English. The study also contains ways in which these problems can be handled so as to bring efficiency in learning and teaching English in Sudanese universities.

KEYWORDS

Fluency; Spoken English; EFL Learners; Sudanese Universities

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1. Introduction

Language plays a very important role in human life as it is one of the necessities of social life, and it is individuals' means to express their needs. Nowadays, English occupies an important status as one of the most widespread languages in the world and one of the main ways of human communication. Hence, learning English has become increasingly important and popular in Sudan. As a result, it has been given great significance in institutions, schools, universities, and colleges.

Speaking is a crucial skill in foreign language learning and teaching. It is the means through which students can communicate with others to express their ideas, opinions, information, and hopes or to attain certain goals. When speaking English, many English students face difficulties. Alonso (2018) has stated that the focus on speaking skills in a second language is inherently challenging, as it concerns one of the skills within second language data that is most difficult to capture. Compared to receptive skills and written production, it is possibly the most difficult skill to teach, the most difficult skill to assess, and the most difficult skill to investigate". (105)

In general, non-native learners of English encounter major problems in speaking. This problem has been discussed by many researchers such as Akasha (2013), Kardwish (2016); Alnakhalah (2016); Al-Sobhi Preece (2018). It has been reported that Saudi EFL learners face many difficulties from many angles in practicing speaking skills. The first difficulty refers to the instructors who deal with the learners, some other refers to the psychological factors which affect the learners when they are speaking, and others refer to the environment and others to learners themselves as the researchers have found some learners are afraid to make a mistake during the speaking process and others feel shy. Speaking as a productive language skill is a crucial element in learning a foreign

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language context.

However, the researcher noticed during his career and teaching the course of EFL Learning and Teaching Strategies and other language skills courses at the First Common Year College in King Saud University that ESL students face problems in expressing their ideas effectively. In most cases, and when they want to participate, they use Arabic in English classes. This issue is also recognized by the researcher's colleagues. Nevertheless, the main reason for this problem hasn't been scientifically identified since the start of the Preparatory program at KSU.

Furthermore, many researchers and teachers from different second language countries studied that case, and therefore many resolutions and scientific suggestions were added and published to the journal. For example, another researcher named Mohamed Elsayed Abdalla – Elhadi Nasr Elhadi Mustafa additionally gave an outline of the education and learning communicated in English in Sudan. He said that the way toward learning the English Language in Sudan had given distinctive partners consistent cerebral pains, disregarding the colossal endeavors which have been made. He said that a few understudies neglect to talk in English because of the accompanying reasons; instructors from the schools and colleges said that the majority of the encouraging material utilized isn't useful to the understudies since they disregard both the part of language abilities which are talking and tuning in (Ali et al., 2015). The researcher likewise said that the strategies utilized as a part of the education are terrible, and, in this way, they declined the issue of individuals not being able to use the English dialect.

The study also is an attempt to identify those reasons which are associated with the student's problems and challenges in speaking English. Language instructors must understand students' speaking difficulties in English and instruct effective speaking strategies to help students solve their speaking difficulties and improve their speaking ability. The results showed that there are various problems that hinder fluency of English learning in the universities and among them include: under-qualified teachers, unsuitable teaching materials, and the methods used in teaching are also poor. The other problem is the psychological factor which makes the student to lack motivation while learning English. The study also contains ways in which these problems can be handled so as to bring efficiency in learning and teaching English in Sudanese.

2. Methodology

This research paper focuses, for the most part, on the distinctive issues which influence English among understudies studying English inside Sudanese Universities. This is, for the most part, because many people inside the nation can't impart easily utilize this dialect. We accordingly draw in with the diverse partners inside the nation, for example, the understudies, addresses, and other non-instructing staffs, to help us comprehend and to help in managing this issue which has been there inside the nation throughout recent decades. As we probably are aware, one outstanding issue has been the absence of experienced educators. It influences the understudies' capacity to gain oral abilities adversely as the instructors themselves do not have the learning the fundamental standards of educating English.

The research used a questionnaire, interviews, and descriptive methods in the collection of data about fluency in the English language in universities in, the Sudan University of Khartoum as an example. The data was then statistically analyzed using the SPSS program. The research focused on finalist students of the English language. Three universities were selected. One was private and the others were governmental universities. 95 finalist students (40 Male-45 Female), and 20 instructors of English language specialization were selected from three universities (University of Khartoum, Omdurman Ahlia University and Alzaiem Alazhari University). The study used non-random sampling techniques to select the two samples of the study therefore, two questionnaires were designed for the assessment.

3-Findings and Discussion

The major results showed that 47% of students showed to study English because they like it. Besides, 47.3% of the students preferred to master speaking skills and only 3.1% of them preferred reading skills. On the other hand, 52.6% of the students did not have the desire to learn English Speaking skill, because they used to study Arabic at their previous level of education. The students were asked about their personal problems that limit their ability to speak in English, the results showed that 77% of students avoid embarrassment when they speak, 84.2% of students admitted that most of the methods used in teaching speaking skills were not attractive. The students and instructors had the same opinion about extraordinarily little time allotted for teaching speaking skills compared to other skills. It was found that many of the English instructors use the communicative method and discussion and few of them use other methods like role play and storytelling. Results showed that only 50% of instructors who teach English got training in teaching English speaking.

The researcher used the descriptive analytical method to analyze data. According to the teachers, questionnaire, the researcher has produced the following results:

- 1- About (76.9%) of the teachers agree that 'Most students cannot speak English fluently because of interference of mother tongue'.
- 2- Most of the teachers (91.3%) agree that 'Most students cannot speak English fluently because of lack of vocabulary and shortage of ideas'.
- 3- About (84.9%) of the teachers agree that 'when students speak English, they find difficulty in expressing their ideas'.
- 4- More than (91.3%) of the teachers strongly have supported and agree that 'lack of sufficient vocabulary affects negatively on oral communication O. C. '.
- 5- About (78.3%) of the teachers agree that 'Deterioration of English language at university attributed to lack of training on oral communication'.
- 6- (78.3%) of the teachers agree that 'students are reluctant to speak because they are afraid of making mistakes'.
- 7- About (80.9%) of the teachers agree that 'students feel shy and embarrassed when they try to speak English'.
- 8- Most of the teachers (69.5%) agree that 'of the four skills, speaking is the most difficult for my students because of shyness'.
- 9- More than (67.4%) of the teachers (Always and usually) that 'I observe when students try to speak English; they confuse the Arabic order of words with those of English'.
- 10- About (80.5%) of the teachers think that 'students speak English slowly because first they think in Arabic then they try to translate'.
- 11- More than (41.3%) of the teachers think that 'I let the students have an English class outside the classroom with such activities as a class picnic or a party'.
- 12- About (93.5%) of the teachers (Fair, poor) that 'How do you estimate your student's average ability to interrupt politely in order to speak to keep a conversation going, to ask for something that is not clear and to repair conversation failure'.

The study revealed that there are problems and challenges in learning and teaching speaking skills in Sudanese universities. The study recommended that teachers should pay great attention to teaching speaking by providing students with adequate exposure to the language and with adequate motivation to communicate. Finally, this study explores one of the least studied areas in EFL research. Oral ability is key to effective communication which is a gateway to greater cooperation between people from divergent cultural backgrounds for better cross-cultural understanding.

4. Conclusion

This research aimed at investigating the problems and challenges which are usually experienced by English learners in the Sudanese university when trying to speak English. It also highlighted the problems that students face when learning the English language in Sudanese universities and try to find remedies to this problem. Overall, the importance of English as a major foreign language of international communication is becoming increasingly recognized. Learning English helps a person to have a closer look at the native speaker's culture and experiences lying beyond his/her mother tongue. Many people all over the world have a powerful desire to learn and speak English because it has become a technical and world language. Therefore, according to the personal experience of the researcher in teaching English at all levels in Sudan, the students who are majoring in English at different universities, the students face real problems which may obstruct their fluency in spoken English.

This study has some limitations. Firstly, it only covers oral communication. i.e. although there are written, visual, and audio-visual communication; the study will focus on oral communication. Secondly, concerning the delimitation of the research, the study will be narrowed and bounded in the sense that it will not cover the phonological aspects of the oral communication of Sudanese EFL learners.

This research will open chances for further research and will pave the way for the coming researchers to develop their research on fluency. The Study recommended that:

- 1- The students should know that there are syntax differences between the English language and other languages.
- 2- Teachers of the English language should be given sufficient training in how to teach oral communication and other activities.

- 3- Encouraging forming English societies at the university level.
- 4- Using English laboratories at universities.
- 5- Teachers of the English language must consider the difficulties and problems that face students in speaking English fluently and try to solve them.
- 6- Students should be given more time to practice English and their teachers should encourage and involve them in oral communication in and out of the classroom.
- 7- Teachers of the English language must be spoken in English only in the classroom and the students must be exposed to materials recorded by native speakers of English.
- 8- Teachers must be trained to achieve their job professionally and accurately.

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