

Factors Behind Fourth Level Students' Weaknesses In Speaking Skills In The Department Of English, Faculty Of Education, Sana'a University And Solutions

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the factors behind the weaknesses in speaking skill among fourth level students in the academic year 2021/2022, English Department, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University and finding out proper solutions to overcome such problem. This study was an analytical study. The study sample consisted of 30 students from level four out of 120. For collecting data, two data collection tools were used (a closed-ended questionnaire, and an interview). The obtained data was analyzed descriptively using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and analytically by wording. Frequencies and percentages were analysed, and the results revealed that there were many factors behind this problem, such factors were as: a lack of practice during their secondary study, low background in English before the university, high fear to speak, and low motivation of students to speak Infront of audience. Additionally, the lack of enough speaking exercises to practice English speaking. Moreover, the study revealed that although teachers encourage students to speak and communicate in English, they do not provide enough opportunities for oral practice, such as oral quizzes, role-play, and debates. The time dedicated to practice these skills is also inadequate. Finally, the results revealed that there was no English language lab available for students to practice, and the huge number of students when practicing this skill was another reason. The study recommendation for solving this problem was to make EFL students exposed to more and more practice of listening and speaking. Besides, spoken course should focus more on speaking, and students should be given much time to practice that.

Keywords: Factors, Weaknesses, Speaking skill.

Introduction

Human beings can never live without communication. They have certain messages they need to express with their partners while they exist on this planet. That is, they need to communicate their wants, desires, sorrows, anger, favorites, dreams, plans, etc. Therefore, in order to communicate with one another about different purposes, they need to find different meanings. Language serves as a medium for thinking and cultural transmission between nations and between generations. It also serves as a channel for interpersonal communication. As a result, many nations place a strong emphasis on teaching people languages other than their native ones. Alzahrani (2019)

English has emerged as the world's most significant foreign language throughout the past three decades, and currently it is the language used for international communication and has a notably prominent position in all fields, including education, business, entertainment, science, and research. It can be said it is the language of the modern era, in which there are speakers of this language all over the world. The truth is that there are more people speaking English as a second or foreign language than there are native English speakers, and it is the primary language of communication in the globe and is not only utilized as an official language in many countries but also has a profound impact on a wide range of cultures worldwide. Therefore, these days, it's critical to understand this language, be proficient in it, and be able to converse in it as it is highly desired in our culture. To help our students deal with life, we have to provide them with such a language. Mazouzi (2013)

English language has become widely used worldwide, and in many regions of the world, speaking English fluently is seen as a desirable goal for both young people and the elderly. That is, speaking seems to be the most crucial foreign language skill among the others since it allows pupils to engage or interact with one another and have purposive communication. Though speaking English is very important be mastered, students in the Department of English at Sana'a University seem to be weak and cannot communicate properly. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the factors behind fourth level students' Weaknesses in Speaking Skills in the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University and finding out proper solutions that may help students in overcoming this problem.

Statement of the problem

Speaking skill is taught to students at first and second levels of BA (four semesters) in the Department of English at Sana'a University, and according to the researcher' experiences as a student and a teacher there, it has been notified that after four years of study, students graduate with weak performance in speaking English. That could be due to the fact that most of teachers focus on teaching students grammar, structures, vocabulary, phonetics, and phonology forgetting to give

attention to the their students` speaking abilities, and do not guide them to use English. In case they do, they do not follow up on their progress until they master speaking English well. Also, the opportunities given to students to practice English inside or outside classes are inadequate, which in turn lead to a poor performance in speaking, and this idea was assured in the study of Qasemi (2020) and Leong Lai-Mei &Ahmadi Seyedeh Masoumeh. (2017). As a result, the current study tries to find the factors behind such weaknesses and proper solutions to overcome them.

Objectives of the study

This study aims to:

- 1- investigate the factors behind fourth level students' Weaknesses in Speaking Skills in the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University.
- 2- find out proper solutions that may help students to overcome this problem.

Questions of the study

This For the purpose of achieving the objectives the study, the following questions should be answered:

- 1-What are the factors behind fourth level students' Weaknesses in Speaking Skills in the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University?
- 2-What are the proper solutions that may help students to overcome such weaknesses?

Significance of the study

This study is significant in the sense that it:

1. helps English teachers to modify and improve the strategies and methodologies used in teaching English speaking skill.
2. helps students to know their weaknesses so that they can work on them and improve their speaking skills.
3. makes curriculum designers be aware of the students points of weaknesses in English speaking skill so that they may focus on these areas when designing the content.
4. adds new theory to teaching speaking skill.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to:

1. **Time limitation:** The study was carried out and applied in the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022.
2. **place limitation:** The study was applied and carried out at Sana'a University, Faculty of Education, Sana'a, Department of English.
3. **Topical limitations:** factors behind fourth level students' weaknesses in speaking skills which included factors related to teachers, and Solutions.

Definitions of Key Terms

Factor: it is defined as one of the things that affects an event, decision, or situation. (www.collinsdictionary.com)

Factor: "An element or a cause that contributes to a result" (source: www.collinsdictionary.com).

In this study, factors are the reasons behind level four students' weaknesses in speaking skill including reasons related to teachers, students, course book and environment that the researcher investigated.

Weaknesses: "The state or quality of being weak; lack of strength, firmness, vigor, or the like; febleness" (source: www.dictionary.com).

According to this study, weakness is defined as the inability of students to speak properly and proficiently.

Speaking: is a productive skill in which students utter words and sentences for specific purposes to convey certain messages using the appropriate grammatical rules, vocabulary and score of formality with the atmosphere of confidence and comfort. Ashour (2014)

According to Haidara (2016), speaking is one of the productive skills that enable us to convey or to express something in a spoken language. It is the ability to interact orally with others by sharing with them someone's point of view and feeling in different situations that take place in real time.

According to the study, Speaking is the action of conveying information or expressing one's thoughts and feelings. It is the ability of the students to produce words and communicate orally with the people around them.

Speaking skill:

Is the ability to speak well, accurately and proficiently. According to Al Nakhlah's (2016) study, speaking ability refers to a student's proficiency in using a language to produce and understand spoken words, pronouncing words correctly, and effectively communicating in various situations while being able to both convey and receive information accurately. Put simply, speaking ability is the capacity to speak well, accurately, and proficiently.

Speaking weaknesses:

Operationally, they are difficulties that the speaker may encounter when communicating with others orally.

Weaknesses in speaking English: operationally, the inability of the students to speak English properly, poor pronunciation of words, and poor oral proficiency in both producing and receiving the language.

Literature Review

This part handles the literature on students' speaking skills. It is divided into two parts; the first part deals with the theoretical literature regarding the topic discussed, including factors and problems affecting speaking skills, while the other one tackles the empirical studies conducted on the same topic.

Review of Theoretical Literature

Speaking is one of the four language skills, along with writing, reading, and listening which allows learners to transfer their thoughts, opinions, feelings, and dreams. Individuals who have knowledge of a particular language are often referred to as 'speakers' of that language. Additionally, Willis (1996) stated that four conditions must be met for effective oral language learning to occur: ample practice opportunities, motivation, exposure to the language, and proper instruction. They also emphasize the importance of creating an encouraging environment where learners feel comfortable when expressing their thoughts and experimenting with the language they have acquired, without feeling intimidated.

Definitions of Speaking:

Although it appears that everyone understands what speaking is, nobody is able to define speaking precisely. Therefore, it has been defined by many people as the following:

Speaking is "a skill by which they [people] are judged while first impressions are being formed," according to Hedge (2000). In other words, as speaking conveys a person's ideas and personality, it is a critical ability that should be given more emphasis in both first and second languages.

Speaking is defined by the Webster New World Dictionary as saying things out loud, communicating by talking, making a request, and giving a speech (Nunan, 1995).

Speaking, in the words of Chaney (1998), is the act of creating and conveying meaning in various circumstances via the use of both verbal and nonverbal symbols.

Speaking was defined by Brown (1994) and Burns and Joyce (1997) as an interactive process of making meaning that includes producing, receiving, and processing information.

As a result, it can be concluded that creating meaning through interactive means involving information processing, production, and reception is what speaking entails. The individuals themselves, their shared experiences, the physical setting, and the intention of the speech all influence the shape and meaning of what is spoken.

The Importance of Speaking:

Speaking is ingrained in human nature before learning to read and write. In any given situation, oral communication with language is far more common among humans than written communication. As most experts agree, speaking appears to be the most significant of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) because it is one of the competencies required to carry out a conversation. Speaking English requires a wide range of important knowledge, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In order to interact with others in an easy and productive manner, learners must possess a sufficient level of English language proficiency.

Wilson (1997) argued that students who possess the ability to articulate their thoughts and ideas in words have a higher likelihood of achieving academic success. He further emphasized that speaking skills do not necessarily have to be taught as a separate subject, but rather, all four language skills can be seamlessly integrated. Many scholars affirmed that individuals who are learning a language aspire to develop proficiency in speaking that language.

According to Efrizal (2012) speaking plays a crucial role in interpersonal interactions, as it serves as the primary means of conveying ideas and messages orally. Speaking occurs in various contexts and on a daily basis. To foster English language communication among students, it is essential to provide opportunities for authentic language use and encourage them to engage in real-life communication.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that in the traditional methods, the speaking skill was ignored in the classrooms where the emphasis was on reading and writing skills. For example, in The Grammar-Translation method, reading and writing were the important skills and speaking and listening skills were not of great significance.

Ur (2000), asserts that among the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, speaking holds the utmost importance as it is crucial for effective communication. The significance of speaking is evident through its integration with the other language skills. Speaking aids learners in enhancing their vocabulary and grammar, which in turn improves their writing abilities. It enables students to express their emotions, ideas, narrate stories, make requests, engage in conversations, discussions, and demonstrate various language functions. Beyond the classroom, speaking skills are of paramount importance. Consequently, individuals proficient in a language have increased opportunities for

employment in different organizations and companies. This viewpoint is supported by Baker and Westrup (2003), who suggest that individuals with strong English-speaking abilities have a higher likelihood of receiving quality education, securing good employment, and experiencing career advancement.

Krashen (1988) conducted a study on the relationship between listening and speaking skills, and he said that when students engage in speaking, it serves as evidence that they have acquired the language. This notion has led some teachers to swiftly transition from teaching speaking to teaching reading and writing.

In the process of learning English, speaking plays a vital role in supporting students' ability to apply the language. The importance of speaking skills extends to the overall success of individuals and becomes evident in everyday activities. Speaking is an interactive process that takes place in real-time situations. It allows individuals to use words and phrases fluently, often without conscious deliberation. Speaking skills also enable individuals to construct meaningful sentences for effective communication, indicating their desire to engage in language use to achieve specific objectives (McDonough & Shaw, 1993).

The Nature of Speaking:

As an important skill in English, many scholars have examined the nature of speaking. According to Byrne (1986), oral communication is a two-way process that requires both the receptive skill of comprehending (or hearing with understanding) and the production skill of speaking. It can involve one or several listeners. For him, oral communication is a process in which the speaker and the listener engage in the production of meaning through the interactive processes of producing, receiving, and processing information. Speaking is therefore a productive skill, while listening is a receptive skill.

Speaking involves paralinguistic cues that impact conversational flow, such as eye contact, expressions, body language, rhythm, pauses, variations in voice quality, and pitch Changes (Thornbury, 2005), making it a multisensory activity as well. It appears that speaking is shaped in large part by culture, having implications on how English is taught and acquired.

Characteristics of Speaking Skill:

According to Mazouzi (2013), speaking has some characteristics that were proposed by different scholars as the following. The first characteristic of speaking is fluency which it is the main aim of teachers in teaching speaking skill. It was defined by Hughes (2002), as the ability of learners to communicate in a way that is understandable without losing the interest of their audience. Similarly, Hedge (2000), stated that it is the capacity to respond coherently by making connections between words and phrases, clearly articulating sounds, and employing emphasis and intonation.

The second characteristic of speaking is accuracy, which means that students should be proficient in the language they are learning. As a result, when teaching, teachers should place a strong emphasis on correctness. When speaking, students should focus on the precision and completeness of the language form, which includes paying close attention to vocabulary, grammatical structures, and pronunciation. (Mazouzi, 2013)

The third characteristic is Grammar which means the learner's use of grammatical structure appropriately by involving length and the complexity of the utterances in addition to the ability of well-structured clauses.

The fourth characteristic is vocabulary which entails selecting the right word for the right situation. Students frequently use terms or expressions that have multiple meanings in different contexts. As a result, students must be proficient in using language and idioms correctly.

The last characteristic of speaking is pronunciation that stated by Thornbury, as is the lowest level of knowledge that students usually focus on. As a result, learners must be proficient in phonological rules and cognizant of the pronunciations of the different sounds in order to speak English correctly. In addition to that, learners have to be aware of pitch, intonation, and stress.

and more efficient.

Speaking Sub-skills:

Speaking has its own subskills, just like any other skill. Brown (2001) lists the following as sub-skills of oral communication:

- Generate linguistic segments of different lengths.
- Generate distinctions between allophonic variations and English phonemes orally.
- The output will include stressed and unstressed words in English, rhythmic structure, and intonational outlines.
- Make abbreviated versions of words and phrases.
- Use enough lexical units, or words, to achieve pragmatic goals.
- Deliver speech smoothly at various speech rates. -Keep an eye on your own speech production and employ a variety of tactical techniques, such as fillers, pauses, self-corrections, and backtracking, to improve the message's clarity.
- Make use of word order, patterns, rules, elliptical forms, grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), and systems (tense, agreement, and pluralization).
- Use many grammatical constructions to convey the same concept.

Employ cohesive strategies when speaking.

-Achieve communication tasks in a way that is appropriate for the circumstances, people involved, and objectives.

- Communicate meanings not only through spoken language but also through nonverbal indicators such as body language, kinesics, and facial features. The subskills of knowing what, how, why, to whom, and when to express something are those that Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) assert that learners must master. Once more, it is the teacher's responsibility to observe how well pupils produce speech in order to assess what information and abilities they already possess and what still needs improvement. Thus, the instructor's job is to design exercises that cover many abilities by giving students real-world experience and preparing them for communication in the actual world.

2.1.1.6 Goals of Teaching Speaking

Bak and Westrup (2003) state that there are a number of reasons why teaching speaking can be advantageous.

First, it allows students to use the new language they are learning to start with. **Second**, spoken instruction helps identify students' strengths and shortcomings while also reinforcing the acquisition of functional language. **Third**, when speech is taught to them, they speak easily and fluently. All of this aids in raising students' communication abilities. It was also mentioned that when people are learning to speak a language, they are concerned mainly with two things; first, knowing what to say- what words and phrases to use at any given moment, in any given situation- and second, being able to say it- able to perform the required actions, the movement necessary, for saying those words and phrases aloud. The motivation for teaching speaking can be in a more limited sense, either for language acquisition or for the goal of communication. Students need to be more adept at responding in a pertinent and socially acceptable way in order to be more productive when speaking.

2.1.1.7 The Notion of Teaching Speaking

According to (Hughes, 2002), there is a methodological distinction between "teaching the spoken form of a language" and "teaching a language through speaking" that should be made when teaching speaking skills. She also emphasizes how little is known about spoken language compared to written language, which may be one of the reasons teachers feel more comfortable utilizing "stable written forms and genres" in their instruction.

In fact, there is a connection between the two ideas; they are rarely separated and are frequently used interchangeably. To be more precise, speaking or writing can be used to teach a language's spoken form. However, if speaking is not practiced, it is not very helpful and will not yield significant outcomes. Thus, teaching speaking includes teaching the spoken form alone provided it is done so through practice.

Many language users believe that speaking is the best indicator of language proficiency, hence teaching speaking is the best way to help students become fluent and communicative, even though doing so requires a great deal of work on the part of both teachers and students. Three primary stages of this procedure should be considered:

Phase 01: Mechanical Practice:

It is the initial stage of learning how to talk and consists of a series of lab exercises. To put it briefly, students are expected to pronounce words correctly and employ the appropriate words in the appropriate order. Through this exercise, students can practice their language skills in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

Phase 02: Meaningful Oral Work:

It is regarded as the phase that comes immediately following the mechanical phase. It imparts social and cultural norms and regulations to learners.

Phase 03: Free Oral Production:

It is regarded as the final stage and includes learners conducting unstructured talks. In other words, students are prepared to stand up and freely express their thoughts at this stage.

2.1.1.8 Speaking problems

According to Ur (1996), teachers may run across a few speaking issues when trying to urge their students to speak in class. These include inhibition, ignorance of the subject, sporadic or low involvement, and the usage of their mother tongue.

Inhibition is the first problem that students frequently face when attempting to speak in a foreign language in the classroom. They worry that they will make mistakes and that they will be criticized.

Second, students frequently complain that they are at a loss for words and lack the drive to communicate. According to Rivers (1968), the students may not have much to say because the teacher selected a subject that is too difficult or about which he is not particularly knowledgeable. Many students find it challenging to reply when their teachers ask them to speak in a foreign language because they may not know how to properly utilize grammar or know what to say or what vocabulary to use (Baker, 2003).

Low or inconsistent participation in speaking classes is another issue. Each student in a large group will have very limited opportunity to speak because only one person can speak at a time so that the others can hear them. Some students have a tendency to speak more than others, while others hardly ever speak at all.

2.1.1.9 Factors that Cause Speaking difficulties to EFL Learners

According to the International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL), Zhang (2009) argued that speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English. According to Ur (1996), there are many factors that cause difficulty in speaking, and they are as follows:

- Inhibition. Students are worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism, or simply shy
- Nothing to say. Students have no motive to express themselves.
- Low or uneven participation. Only one participant can talk at a time because of large classes and the tendency of some learners to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all. .
- Mother-tongue use. Learners who share the same mother tongue tend to use it because it is easier and because learners feel less exposed if they are speaking their mother tongue.

2.2 Previous studies:

In this part of the study, some previous studies relating to this study will be reviewed. These studies were carried out to identify the factors affecting students' speaking performance and students' speaking problems.

Mohammad Nawab Shinwari¹ and Miawalishah Miakhel²(2023)

This study was done to find out the factors behind the weakness in speaking skills of students majoring in English at Shaikh Zayed University. A descriptive method was employed in the study, and it was a type of quantitative and qualitative studies in which number and words were used to express the results. For data collection, a closed-ended questionnaire that consisted of two parts was distributed to students majoring in English at the English department of Shaikh Zayed University at the beginning of 2021 academic year. The total number of participants was (N=60), forty of whom were male, and 20 were female. The age of participants ranged from 20-27 years old. For analyzing data, IBM SPSS Statistics 24th version was used to analyze the collected data; frequency and percentage were presented in tables. The study's findings revealed that fear of making mistakes while speaking, low self-confidence and poor grammar knowledge were the leading factors behind common weaknesses of students' speaking skills.

Ahmad Shah Qasemi (2020)

This study aimed to recognize the problems that students of English department faced when they speak English. It was a case study. The total number of participants were (N=108) undergraduates at English Department of Jawzjan University. Their ages ranged under 20 to 27. A descriptive method was used in this study. The data collection tool was only a questionnaire that was divided into two parts. The findings of the study showed that majority of the students had a positive perception about the importance and necessity of speaking skill. According to the findings, most of the students did not have the opportunity for practicing English speaking out of the class. Moreover, dissimilarity in English education background of the students was another challenge which was recognized in the outcome of the study. Furthermore, the findings showed that most of the students felt motivated and confident in speaking performance, and teachers had a significant role for motivating the students in speaking performance.

Leong Lai-Mei &Ahmadi Seyedeh Masoumeh(2017)

Leong Lai-Mei &Ahmadi Seyedeh Masoumeh (2017) performed a study that examined the factors influencing students' proficiency in spoken English. The elements this study discussed were crucial for helping students improve their speaking abilities. The elements lead to students feeling less at ease and confident in their speaking sessions. The results of this study showed that, despite having adequate language abilities, students with poor self-esteem, high anxiety, and low motivation struggled greatly when it came to speaking. The study showed that students who had higher motivation and lower anxiety could speak easily and effectively. Thus, students should have a friendly and cooperative environment that could help them overcome their difficulties in oral performance, and teachers should give their learners more opportunities to speak English through using some speaking tasks that helped them to speak and urged them to take part in speaking activities. In addition, teachers should know when and how to correct their learners' mistakes so that they are not afraid of making mistakes anymore.

Al Nakhalah (2016)

Al Nakhalah (2016) made a study that purposed for investigating the speaking challenges that Al Quds Open University English language learners face, and the reasons behind these challenges. The sample composed of (14) students from English students who studied English Language at Al Quds Open University in the Branch of Gaza for the academic year

2014/2015. The experimental method was used in this study, and the tool was an interview in which each student underwent such an interview in order to look at speaking issues and their root causes. The findings indicated that some students had trouble speaking for a variety of reasons, including shyness, nervousness, fear of making a mistake, and lack of confidence.

Mazouzi (2013)

Ms. Salima Mazouzi (2013) conducted a study “Analysis of Some Factors Affecting Learners’ Oral Performance A Case Study: 3rd year pupils of Mena’a’s middle school” that identified the importance of speaking skill in learning foreign language, examined the issues of students' speaking in EFL classes, the factors affecting their oral performance, and suggested some recommendations that might enhance students' speaking performance. A descriptive research methodology was used for this investigation. It aimed to characterize two variables and determine the link between them: speaking a foreign language was the hypothesized dependent variable, and affective components were the assumed independent variable. Data were acquired by means of one interview with five students at Nara Middle School and a series of questionnaires given to a sample of twenty-eight students and eight teachers at the middle school. The outcomes demonstrated that students' oral production was impacted by anxiety, a lack of motivation and low self-esteem.

Methodology and Procedures of the Study

This part includes the study procedures, study method, population and sample and data collection tools. It also deals with the development of the study tools, their validity and reliability and the statistical measures used in analyzing the obtained data from the tools.

Type of the Study

A description analytic approach was used to collect data from the sample.

The Study Population

Fourth-year students of the year 2022/2021 and Spoken English teachers in the Department of English at Sana’a University.

The Study Sample

30 students of the fourth-year students, English Department, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University, were chosen randomly out of 120 students. In addition to the students, all teachers of English who taught spoken English in the Department of English were chosen in a nonrandom way of sampling because they were the existed sample.

Sample Procedures:

According to the population and the purpose of the study, the sample was chosen depending on the following criteria:

- 1- Only some students of the fourth level students, Department of English, Faculty of Education, in the academic year 2021/2022 were chosen randomly in a systematic way of sampling, choosing each third student from the list.
- 2- All teachers of English who taught spoken English in the Department of English were chosen in a nonrandom way of sampling because they are the existed sample.

The Study Tools

The Description of the Questionnaire

The final draft of the questionnaire consisted of five domains. The first domain dealt with factors related to the Teachers, with four corresponding items. The second domain encompassed factors related to the Students, with 10 corresponding items. The third domain dealt with factors related to the course books of spoken, with five corresponding items. The fourth domain dealt with factors related to the English language teaching methods and exercises, with ten corresponding items. The last domain had four items that dealt with Factors related to the teaching and learning environment.

The Interview:

In order to fulfill the aims of the study, an interview was conducted with some teachers of spoken English. It consisted of 7 questions focusing on the following 7 domains: 1) the factors behind these weaknesses. 2) The solutions for this problem. 3) Are teachers a cause of this problem or are there any other reasons? 4) Do teachers use suitable methodology to teach speaking? 5) The ways teachers use to teach spoken English. 6) The role of practice in overcoming such problem. 7) The role of environment as a cause of the problem.

Before doing the interview, questions were prepared and submitted to the supervisor, and after they were modified according to his comments and notes. The questions in the first draft of the interview were 12 questions, but they were rejected by the supervisor as not being suitable for the questions and objectives of the study. Then the researcher prepared other 7 questions that were related to the questions of the study.

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire:

To check the validity of the questionnaire items, the first draft was given to three validators specialized in education. The questionnaire was improved and modified according to the validator's comments and notes. The process of validation concluded that:

Items 1 and 2 in the first domain were modified. In the second domain, item 1 was modified, and item 5 was deleted. In the third domain items 1, 2 and 3 were modified. In the fourth domain, items 10 and 9 were modified, and items 1, 2 and 6 were deleted. The items became 10 instead of 13. In the fifth domain, item four was changed.

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was used to calculate the questionnaire items. The following table shows the reliability of the scale and its categories.

Table 3.1 reliability of the questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.757	5

Data Analysis

The data were collected using a close-ended questionnaire, and then they were analyzed quantitatively. Accordingly, they were computed via the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), and statistical methods such as frequencies, percentages, standard deviations and means were used to analyze the data. In addition, the data were also collected from the second tool that was the interview then they were analyzed qualitatively in words. Therefore, the results were described both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Presentation of the results of the close-ended questionnaire

The researcher here presents attitudes and beliefs of the members of the sample regarding each statement of the questionnaire relying on the sample's responses to the given questionnaire. The respondents' reactions towards each category of the questionnaire are presented in form of frequencies and percentage as follows:

Table 4.1 The Factors behind the Weaknesses of Speaking Skill among Level four students related to the teachers.

No	Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Mean		Std. Dev.	
		F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
1.	Teachers encourage us to answer questions orally.	23	77%	4	13%	3	10%	2.63		.669	
2.	Teachers let us use Arabic language during learning English language	6	20%	13	43%	11	37%	1.83		.747	
3.	Teachers only use English language to communicate with us inside class.	12	40%	11	37%	7	23%	2.17		.791	
4.	Teachers only use English language to communicate with us outside the class.	7	23%	8	27%	15	50%	1.73		.828	

The above table gives an idea about the percentage of the factors behind the weaknesses of speaking skill among level four students related to English language teachers who were teaching speaking at Sana'a University. The table shows that 77% of the sample reported that the teachers encourage them to answer questions orally, whereas 13% were neutral. On the other hand, 10% of the sample rejected the idea. Item No- 2 shows that 20% of the sample confirmed that the teachers let students use Arabic language during learning English Language, while 43% of the sample were neutral. On the contrary, 37% of the sample refused the idea completely.

The statement No. 3 shows that 40% of the sample assured that teachers use English language only when they communicate with the students inside the class, while 37% of the same sample assured that they are not sure about it. On the other hand, 23% of the sample rejected this notion. The last item of the first table reveals that 23% of the sample asserted that that teachers use English language only when they communicate with the students outside the class, while 27% were neutral. On the other hand, 50% rejected the same idea.

Table 4.2 the Factors behind the Weaknesses of Speaking Skill among Level four Students related to Students.

No	Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Mean		Std. Dev.	
		F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
1.	I used to practice speaking skills at secondary stage.	8	27%	9	30%	13	43%	1.83		.834	
2.	I speak English language fluently.	8	27%	16	53%	6	20%	2.07		.691	

3.	I can speak fluently, but I fear speaking English language in public.	14	47%	7	23%	9	30%	2.17	.874
4.	My possession of English vocabulary is enough to speak English fluently.	10	33%	9	30%	11	37%	1.97	.850
5.	I only speak English Language inside the lecture- room.	10	33%	9	30%	11	37%	2.03	.809
6.	I can make a phone conversation in English.	14	47%	8	27%	8	27%	2.27	.828
7.	I cannot express my point of view in English without Arabic translation.	12	40%	10	33%	8	27%	2.20	.761
8.	I can make presentation in English language.	22	73%	5	17%	3	10%	2.70	.535
9.	I feel shy to talk in front of my teachers.	12	40%	11	37%	7	23%	2.17	.791
10.	I hesitate to speak in English language because I am afraid of pronouncing the words wrongly.	9	30%	11	37%	10	33%	2.03	.809

The above table gives an idea about the percentages of the factors behind the weaknesses of speaking skill among level four related to students. The table shows that 27% of the sample reported that they practice speaking skill at secondary stage, while 30% of the sample were neutral, and 40% of the sample refused the same idea. Item No- 2 reveals that 27% of the sample confirmed that they speak English language fluently, while 53% of the sample were neutral, but 47% of the sample rejected this notion.

Statement No- 3 indicates that 47% of the sample reported that they can speak English fluently, but they fear speaking English language in public, as where 23% of EFL teachers were neutral. However, 30% of the sample rejected this idea. Item No- 4 reveals that 33% of the sample ensured that they possess enough English vocabulary to speak English Language fluently, while 30% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 37% of the study sample refused this notion. Item No. 5 shows that 33% of the sample asserted they only speak English Language inside the lecture- room, while 30% of the sample were neutral. On the contrary, 37% of the sample refused the same notion. Through item No. 6, we come to know that a part of study sample members that's 47% indicated that they can make a phone conversation in English, as where 27% were neutral. On the other hand, 27% of the sample rejected this idea.

Item No. 7 reveals that 40% of the sample asserted that they can express their point of view in English without Arabic translation, whereas 33% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 27% of the sample refused this idea. Statement No- 8 shows that 73% of the sample ensured that they can make presentation in English language, while 17% were neutral, but 10% of the sample rejected this notion.

Item No. 9 shows that 40% of the sample claimed that they feel shy to talk in front of their teachers and their classmates, whereas 37% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 23% of the sample rejected the idea. The last item of the second table shows that 30% of the study sample claimed that they hesitate to speak in English language because they are afraid of pronouncing the words improperly, while 37% of the sample were neutral. On the contrary, 33% of the sample rejected the same notion.

Table 4.3 Factors behind the Weaknesses of Speaking Skill Among Level four Students Related to the Course books.

No	Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Mean	Std. Dev.
		F	P	F	P	F	P		
1.	All students have textbooks for Speaking classes.	9	30%	7	23%	14	47%	1.90	.845
2.	Our curriculum of Speaking contains enough exercises for speaking skill.	9	30%	6	20%	15	50%	1.80	.887
3.	The exercises in my textbook strengthen my speaking skills.	7	23%	15	50%	8	27%	1.97	.718
4.	There are many exercises in my book to be practiced inside and outside the class.	5	17%	14	47%	11	37%	1.80	.714
5.	There is a need for new courses besides speaking course.	19	63%	8	27%	3	10%	2.40	.770

The above table gives an idea about the percentages of the factors behind the weaknesses of speaking skill among level four related to the course books. The table shows that 30% of the sample reported that all of the learners have textbooks for speaking, while 23% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 47% of the sample refused this idea. Item No- 2 shows that 30% confirmed that learners' curriculum of speaking contains enough exercises for speaking skill, while 20% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 50% of the sample refused this notion. Item No. 3 indicates that 23% of

the sample revealed that the exercises in their textbook strengthen their speaking skills, as where 50% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 27% of the sample rejected this idea. Statement No- 4 reveals that 17% of the sample claimed that there are many exercises in their books to be practiced inside and outside the class, as where 47% of the EL teachers were neutral. On the contrary, 37% of the sample refused this idea. The last item of the third table shows that 63% of the sample claimed that there is a need for new courses besides speaking course, while 27% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 10% of the sample rejected this notion.

Table 4.4 the Factors behind the Weaknesses of Speaking Skill Among Level four Students Related to the English language Teaching Methods and Exercises.

No	Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Mean	Std. Dev.
		F	P	F	P	F	P		
1.	Teachers use different strategies like body language, intonationetc. to teach speaking skills.	22	73%	4	13%	4	13%	2.60	.724
2.	Teachers ask us to make presentation in English language.	21	70%	7	23%	2	7%	2.67	.547
3.	Teachers use debatable topic to encourage discussions inside the class.	11	37%	11	37%	8	27%	2.10	.803
4.	Teachers encourage us to express our point of view in English.	16	53%	8	27%	6	20%	2.37	.765
5.	Teachers don't let us use Arabic language inside the class.	14	47%	11	37%	5	17%	2.33	.711
6.	Teachers make us use role-play to practice speaking skills.	11	37%	4	13%	15	50%	1.93	.907
7.	We have three hours a week for speaking class.	5	17%	8	27%	17	57%	1.63	.765
8.	The time devoted to speaking English language is enough.	5	17%	14	47%	11	37%	1.83	.699
9.	Teachers often use the traditional method which focuses on certain grammar and vocabulary items.	10	33%	10	33%	10	33%	2.03	.809
10.	Teachers don't give us many oral English quizzes.	13	43%	11	37%	6	20%	2.27	.740

The above table gives an idea about the percentages of the sample related to the factors behind the weaknesses of speaking skill among level four related to the English language teaching methods and exercises. In perspective of this table, it is found that 73% of the sample asserted that Teachers use different strategies like body language, intonation, etc. to teach speaking skills, while 13% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 13% of the sample refused this idea. Item No- 2 shows that 70% of the sample claimed that Teachers ask them to make presentation in English language, as where 23% were neutral. On the contrary, 7% of the sample refused the idea. Statement No- 3 indicated that 37% of the sample confirmed that Teachers use debatable topics to encourage discussions inside the class, and the same percentage of the sample that is 37% were neutral. On the other hand, 27% of the sample rejected this notion. Item No- 4, we come to realize that 53% of the sample claimed that Teachers encourage students to express their point of view in English, as where 27% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 20% of the sample refused this notion. Statement No- 5 reveals that 47% of the sample confirmed that Teachers don't let students use Arabic language inside the class, as where 37% of the sample were neutral. On the contrary, 17% of the sample rejected the same idea. Item No- 6 reveals that 37% of the sample asserted Teachers make students use role-play to practice speaking skills, as where 13% of the sample were neutral. On the contrary, 50% of the sample asserted that English teachers have ability of classroom management. Statements No- 7, 17% of the sample confirmed that students have three hours a week for speaking class, while 27% of the sample were neutral. 57% of the sample refused the same idea. Item No- 8, we come to realize that 17% of sample ensured that the time devoted to speaking English language is enough, while 47% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 37% of the sample refused this statement. Statement No- 9, 33% of the sample reported that Teachers often use the traditional method which focuses on certain grammar and vocabulary items, while 33% of the EL teachers were neutral. On the contrary, 33% of the sample rejected this notion. The last statement of the fourth table shows that 43% of the sample confirmed that Teachers don't give students many oral English quizzes, as where 37% of the sample were neutral. On the contrary, 20% asserted that Teachers give students many oral English quizzes.

Table 4.5 Factors behind the Weaknesses of Speaking Skill Among Level four Students Related to the Teaching and learning Environment.

No	Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Mean	Std. Dev.
		F	P	F	P	F	P		
1.	In my class there are few students.	8	27%	3	10%	19	63%	1.63	.890
2.	We listen to a CD as a model for speaking practice.	9	30%	7	23%	14	47%	1.83	.874
3.	We learn speaking in the language lab.	4	13%	5	17%	21	70%	1.43	.728
4.	Department of English has technological facilities that help in teaching speaking skill.	7	23%	4	13%	19	63%	1.63	.890

The above table gives an idea about the percentages of the factors behind the weaknesses of speaking skill among level four related to the teaching and learning environment.

The table shows that 27% of the sample reported that in the class there are few students, while 10% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 63% of the sample refused this idea. Item No- 2 shows that 30% confirmed that students listen to a CD as a model for speaking practice, while 23% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 47% of the sample refused this notion. Item No- 3, it realized that 13% of the sample revealed that they learn speaking in the language lab, as where 17% of the sample were neutral. On the other hand, 70% of the sample rejected this idea. Statement No- 4 which is the last statement of the last table reveals that 23% of the sample members claimed that Department of English has technological facilities that help in teaching speaking skill, as where 13% of the sample were neutral. On the contrary, 63% of the sample refused this idea.

Discussions and Conclusions

This study aims at investigating the Factors behind the Weaknesses in English Speaking Skills among Fourth-Year Students, English Department, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University and finding out proper solutions to overcome them. This chapter presents a summary and discussion of the results of the two questions of the study, illustrates the results in the light of the reviewed literature, and offers some recommendations for further researches.

Discussions related to the Findings of the First Question of the Study

1-What are the factors behind fourth level students' Weaknesses in Speaking Skills in the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University?

In the light of the findings of the study, results expose to view the statistical data and analysis of teachers' point of views in terms of the factors that cause weaknesses in speaking skills.

Results related to the first domain of the questionnaire concerned with the "factors related to teachers affecting students' speaking skills" prove that teachers only use English language to communicate with students inside the class.

Results related to the second domain of the questionnaire concerned with the "factors related to students affecting students' speaking skills" show that: 1. Students were not used to practice speaking skill at secondary school. 2. Students fear speaking English language in public. 3. Lack of enough vocabulary in English that enable them to speak English. 4. They only speak English Language inside the lecture- room. 4. Students can't express their point of view in English without Arabic translation. The same results found by (Dr. Ahmed Maher Mahmoud Al Nakhalah 2016).

Results related to the third domain of the questionnaire concerned with the "factors related to course books affecting students' speaking skills" indicate that 1. Curriculum of speaking does not contain enough exercises for speaking skills. 2. There is a need for new courses besides speaking course. 3. There aren't enough speaking exercises in the text book to be practiced inside and outside the class. The finding of this study can be reasoned by the finding of (Lai-Mei Leong1 &Seyedeh Masoumeh Ahmadi2 2017) study.

Results related to the fourth domain of the questionnaire concerned with the "factors related to English language methods and exercises affecting students' speaking skills" indicate that: 1. No role-play practiced by the students to develop speaking skills. 2. The time devoted to speaking English language is not enough as the students have only three hours a week for speaking class. 3. Teachers don't give students many oral English quizzes. The same results found in (Lai-Mei Leong1 &Seyedeh Masoumeh Ahmadi2 2017)study.

Results related to the fifth domain of the questionnaire concerned with the "factors related to the teaching and learning environment affecting students' speaking skills" shown that: 1. Students don't learn speaking in the language lab. 2. Students rarely listen to a CD as a model for speaking practice. 3. There are more than 100 students in the class. Many studies like (Nisreen BasemYaseen 2018), (Dr. Ahmed Maher Mahmoud Al Nakhalah 2016) studies came out with similar results.

Analyzing the interview:

An interview with the teachers of spoken English was conducted to achieve the two questions and objectives of the study. There were eight questions. Analyzing the data collected from those teachers, the following results were concluded:

- 1- Most of the interviewees said that students have to practice and work on themselves, do a lot of pronunciation practice and listening, and use dictionaries to check the correct pronunciation of words. The number of students should be decreased. That is, each teacher teaches one or two groups as a maximum to give more chance of practice for teachers and students, speaking should be the main content of the book plus phonetics, phonology and those things. Giving them a lot of practice, the test whether med or final should be oral to encourage students practice and focus on how to speak. More exposure to English and more practice, listen to English intensively, practice speaking. Raising the students' awareness of the importance of English. Motivate the students to set their own goals for future. Give students time to practice English in the class, encourage students to use English wherever possible. Guide students with patience towards good sources of English learning.
- 2- Most of the teachers said that the teacher is one cause of the problem in which some of whom use improper methodology to teach; they may not give students enough opportunities to speak. However, others said that though the teacher may be one of the causes, if students are self-motivated; they can search and learn especially today with mass media. One of the interviewees said that students should come to the department equipped with English as the department is not responsible to teach them the skills but to help them find their way to study in English, and students should come with a good background in English and work with it and improve it.
- 3- All the interviewees said that they cannot judge other teachers. But from the students' complains that they are not given enough time to listen, to speak, to practice or study the sound system enough 'it is clear that they don't make students practice speaking. One of the interviewees said that not all teachers use the suitable methods. If the teachers enjoy their job, they can make miracles.
- 4- Most of the teachers when asked about the way they use to teach speaking English, they replied that they focus on speaking, listening and pronunciation. They encourage students to speak, practice in pairs and groups, and individual work activities, use class discussion, debates, presentations, extempore speeches, make their own conversations, and design dialogues. For listening, they make students listen in the class, give students something to listen to outside the class, teach pronunciation, including stress, intonation, etc., give students dictations to reinforce their ability to practice English sounds, and give student oral test. Doing a lot of listening and letting students imitate what they listen to, teaching students how to read phonetics in dictionaries to help them improve their pronunciation, giving them situations with a lot of vocabulary in order to let them practice a lot of words, giving them culture texts, and motivating the students to speak and use English.
- 5- They also said that they make their students practice in pairs, in groups and as a whole class, by doing the exercises of the book and other activities, giving them something to listen to at home and write down what they listen to, and making points after each presentation. Therefore, teacher should use whatever activities he likes to make his students practice and speak.
- 6- Most of the interviewees added to that saying the environment plays a role to some extent, in which students' classmates and people outside the class laugh at them when they try to practice English outside the class. But they said whenever there is a will, there will be a way, and students have to ignore such people and just keep practicing wherever they go.

Conclusion of the Finding of the data collected by the Questionnaire:

The main conclusion of this study domains' results that affect speaking skills at Sana'a University, College of Education, English Department, Level four students are:

1. Students' background of English is weak.
2. Students can't express their point of view in English without Arabic translation.
3. The students fear speaking English language in public.
4. Curriculum of speaking does not contain enough exercises for speaking skills and most of the exercises concentrate on listening more than speaking.
5. Teachers don't use strategies that help the students develop speaking such as: role-play and debates.
6. More time (out of three hours a week) is devoted to practice listening skills rather than speaking skills.
7. Teachers don't teach speaking course in the lab. 8. Students rarely listen to a CD as a model for speaking practice as strategy for learning.
8. Students' number in the class hinders speaking skills.

Findings of the interviews:

1-The reason behind weaknesses in speaking is that students do not practice English well nor do listen to it because they depend on what they study in the classroom.

- 2- The need of new course besides the speaking courses may be a solution to overcome this weakness.
 - 3-Increasing the number of exercises in the current speaking courses is needed.
 - 4- The teachers of speaking skills do not use suitable ways and methods to teach English, and that may be one of the reasons of the student`s weaknesses.
 - 5- The environment plays a role in such weakness.
 - 6- The ways mentioned by teachers in their teaching speaking are the best ways to teach such skill.
- To sum up, teachers do their jobs in best ways, but the reasons behind this problem are that the students are not motivated to learn and practice English, the environment is a hinder and the courses to teach such skill and the time devoted are not enough; accordingly, they need modifications. The most important thing students should do is to practice and listen to English more.

Recommendation:

With reference to the results of the study, the researcher presented the following recommendations:

- 1- Students should be motivated to acquire confidence whenever they make mistakes in language classrooms
- 2- Students should use modern mass media such as Face book, Twitter. WhatsApp to develop their speaking skill.
- 3- English teachers should equip well-training courses at the Faculty of Education, Sana'a University.
- 4- Students should be encouraged to practice English language with native speakers through what way they could.
- 5-The curriculum designers should think about the learners' needs in language learning when they plan to design spoken curricula.
- 6-Teachers should use new technologies to enhance their students' improvement in speaking skills.
- 7-Teachers should offer different opportunities for students to use the language inside and outside the classroom.
- 8- For the enhancement of speaking skill in school environment, teachers should cultivate English communication culture within schools.

Suggestions for further studies:

In the light of the present study results, the following studies can be suggested:

- 1-The students` ability to use English idioms.
- 2-The students' correct use of English intonation and stress.
- 3-The extent to which students use dictionaries in their English learning.
- 4-The methodologies used by teachers to teach spoken English.
- 5- The discouraging environment to the students when they want to practice speaking outside the class.
- 6-Correlation study between the level of the students who studied English in institutes before entering English Department and those who didn't and the effect of that on their proficiency in English language.

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