



## Arab EFL University learners' perceptions of the factors hindering them to speak English fluently

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### APA Citation:

Zrekat, Y., & Sohbani, Y.A. (2022). Arab EFL University learners' perceptions of the factors hindering them to speak English fluently. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18(1), 775-790. Doi: 10.52462/jlls.219

Submission Date:03/10/2021

Acceptance Date:03/12/2021

### Abstract

Low English proficiency among EFL learners refers to two main factors and these are internal and external factors. Internal factors such as not confident when using English, negative attitudes and anxiety, while the external factors like the lack of opportunities to use English language whether in or outside the classroom. The current study attempts to explore the factors that might hinder the Arab Open University EFL students who were asked to fill out a questionnaire and 59 responded. Using a descriptive analysis, it was found that the major factors which might hinder these learners to speak fluently are mainly (I) practical constraints (The huge number of students inside the classroom reduce the chance of speaking.), (ii) pedagogy and syllabus (Discussions are missing in the classroom. No use of the audio means, and focusing on arts courses, (iii) practice (Lack of practicing speaking in the classroom and a few chances for practicing and applying English in and outside the classroom), (iv) linguistic insufficiency, namely, linguistic gap between students and lack of knowledge of the English rules and vocabulary, and (v) affective factors related to anxiety, attitudes and motivation in particular students being shy and embarrassed and they are not encouraged to speak in English.

*Keywords:* Speaking; Factors; Classroom; Learners; English

## 1. Introduction

Knowing a language is associated with the ability to speak it as speech is considered essential of human communication (Lazaraton, 2001). Nunan (2001) argues when a person asks someone, "Do you know another language?", he/she generally means "Can you speak the language?" (p. 225). In this context, Zhang (2009) argues that the main motive behind learning a new language is the ability to communicate with others. Richard (2008) adds that most learners frequently evaluate the effectiveness of the English course they study as well as their success in English language learning on the basis of their improvement in speaking proficiency.

More, Richards and Renandya's (2002) argue that people around the globe study English in order to enhance their proficiency level. Academically, speaking can be considered a very important factor that helps or hinders learners at the English department with regard to their effective class participation. Learners, for example, may be considerably informant in their academic courses, however, they may

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fail to appropriately communicate it. Dooley (2006) points out that international students in Australia cannot participate and ask questions in the class because they are weak in speaking and listening.

Speaking is also important in the era of globalization. Effective aural and oral communication has been realized. Being able to speak English fluently can make it easy for a person to get a well-paid job and become successful in his/her work due to the fact that expressing /conveying one's immediate innovative ideas/thought is done via such a skill.

After more than ten years of studying English at schools and universities, English graduate students in the Arab World in general and in Saudi Arabia in particular are often unable to effectively communicate in English, a phenomenon that leads many concerned parties such as educators, stick holders to question the efficiency of the English program at the universities. This problem has attracted the attention of the researcher to investigate it. Pedagogically speaking, understanding the factors which stand as obstacles for Saudis' English language learners to speak in English in or outside the classroom is very important and it needs to be thoroughly delved into.

This paper mainly focuses on the problem of students' insufficient ability to speak English though they have spent four years in the English department. Therefore, the present study aims at exploring reasons that have contributed to such a problem and then classifying them into appropriate factors and reasons.

## **2. Literature Review**

Speech differs from writing in terms of skills, structures, and conventions (Burns & Joyce, 1997; Carter & McCarthy, 1995). For McDonough & Shaw (1993), speaking is the knowledge of linguistics that enables the speaker to orally communicate and express him/herself.

According to Brown and Yule (1991), there are three functions for speaking and these are talk as interaction, transaction and performance. Harmer (2001) points out that to be able to speak fluently, speakers need to master the function of the language and its features as well as the ability to process the information in this particular language.

Cunningham (1999) argues that in speaking learners are required to have linguistic competence and sociolinguistic competence. The former is related to their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, whereas the later refers to their ability to understand when, why and in what ways to produce the language. Similarly, Richards and Schmidt (2002) state that an effective speech act should involve a combination of four competencies, i.e., grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Speaking also involves paralinguistic features such as facial expressions, eye-contact, body language, pauses, and pitch variation which affect conversational flow (Thornbury, 2005).

Channey (1998) states that speaking concerns with the process of building verbal and nonverbal phonetic symbols in different contexts. Byrne (1998) also states that speaking speaker and listener interaction and this interaction consists of productive skill and receptive skill which makes it two-way process. Similarly, Nunan (2003) and Chastain (1998) point out that speaking is a productive skill which consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning. According to Bygate (1987), there are two types of speaking skills. They are 1) lower level motor skills that are related to the pronunciation and production of speech, and 2) the decisions and strategies used in communicating ideas and information. This might have led Hinkel (2005) to consider speaking as "the most complex and difficult skill to master" (p. 485). Similarly, Pathan, Aldersi, & Alsout (2014) and Lukitasari (2003) say that mastering speaking skill is not an easy task especially for Arab EFL students because of the mother tongue interference difficulty.

Difficulties can be due to many factors that make language users not to adequately able to orally communicate. These factors can be related to psychological factors like anxiety, attitudes and motivation; linguistic difficulties, e.g. lack of sufficient vocabulary and grammar. There are factors negatively affect the development of speaking such as, the lack of exposure to the target language and culture (Shumin, 2002), the lack of opportunities for learners to speak in L2 (Zrekat et al 2016 and Brown, 2008) and the examination-oriented teaching and learning process which emphasize more grammar and written language than the development of oral communicative skills (Li, 2007).

After reviewing a number of studies, Murray (2002) points out that it is generally acknowledged that both cognitive and affective components are important for the development of second language acquisition and many studies, conducted on the affective factors, have focused on classroom anxiety.

A number of papers which dealt with anxiety attributed much significance to foreign language classrooms anxiety, in particular speaking in the foreign language (e.g. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; Cohen and Norst, 1989; Young, 1990; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991, 1994; MacIntyre, 1995). Horwitz et al., (1986) identified three types of foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Those who have communication apprehension can for example be shy when they communicate with other and face difficulties to speak. Horwitz et al., (1986) conclude that the menacing feature of learning a foreign language is oral communication in the target language. Similarly, Brantemier (2005) reports that of all language skills, speaking causes the most anxiety. This type of anxiety is studied by Koch & Terrel, 1991; Young, 1991; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991. It is also called communication anxiety, which is the main component of foreign language anxiety. MacIntyre (1995) points out that apprehension's impacts aren't restricted to issues that arise when speaking; they affect the entire language acquisition method."

Arnold (2000) stated that the greatest anxiety generating dexterity found in several studies is speaking (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991). That in part stems due to a lack of faith in our ability to grasp the language overall, but if this were the only element at play, all talents would suffer correspondingly. Speaking thus, is set apart from other skills because of its collective nature, which in turn sets discomfort that comes with revealing our linguistic flaws publicly.

In addition to anxiety, there are other factors that can influence learners' proficiency such as language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990), aptitude, students' personalities, pedagogy, attitudes and motivation.

A number of educators (Al-Sohbani, 2015; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985; Oxford & Shearin (1994); Richards & Schmidt, 2002; De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor, 2005) state that attitudes and motivation represent the factors that prominently affect students' performance of English language learning since they play a prominent role in the success of English language learning.

Motivation plays a significant role in sustaining learning and in provoking learners to try to take risk and speak whenever they have opportunities. Motivation is the impulse to persevere in a monotonous learning course (*Routledge Encyclopedia*, 2000, p. 425). Nunan (2003) states that motivation is vital because it may diminish students' apprehension to talk in English. According to McIntyre and Noels (1996), encouraged students were able to acquire and employ supplementary learning techniques than learners who were less enthusiastic. According to Schumann (1986), if learners are highly motivated, they can be provoked to interact with native speakers of the target language. This, however, is not applicable in Saudi Arabia situation nor in most Arab countries as native English speakers are rarely available.

Practice in and outside the classroom is considered one of the factors that may enhance or hinder a person to be able to speak adequately. This can be achieved only through real interactions. Because English is taught as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, learners do not get the opportunity to

experience the language being spoken in communal settings, and thus subsides their will to practice speaking altogether.

Zhang (2009) states that learners studying a foreign language partake in limited access to speaking English in a non-academic setting. In this context, Krashen (1985) argues, for FL learners, stating that teachers' or classmates' conversation is the only source of information; both do not communicate L2 fluently". Rababah (2005) who investigated the communication problems facing English majors in Arab Universities stated that the weakness of EFL learners is due to insufficiency of unit curricula and education approaches, the student's dearth of desire and the absence of a language setting.

Linguistic background can also be factors should be taken into account. Students lack of vocabulary and grammar use may hinder students to speak, as they may be afraid of making mistakes. Lack of vocabulary can make it difficult for students to comprehend and produce language. Vocabulary is among the linguistic components of language, which according to Mahripah (2014), affect EFL learners' speaking skill. Smith (2011) considers vocabulary the basic element for speaking or conversational skill. In the study of Ballard (1996) cited in JIN Yan-hua (2007), it was found that students could not participate in the English discussion due to inadequate vocabulary.

Rabah (2005) in describing the difficulties Jordanian face in using English for communication, he states that in their genuine conversational circumstances, they frequently lack the essential terminology to communicate effective sense. Hence, they are unable to maintain the conversation for a comprehensive amount of time. Erikson's study (2009) found that the most obstacles students encountered in practicing speaking English were their limitation in vocabulary and grammar. Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2014) conducted study on speaking English difficulties faced by Jordanian EFL undergraduates. It was revealed that classroom size and limited time to learn and practice their English were among the major problems for the learners to maximize their English speaking ability.

Keong, Ali & Hameed (2015, cited in Alzahrani, 2019) investigated speaking competence of Iraqi EFL undergraduates of Garmiyah University by employing a mixed-method study, survey and interviews as their research instruments. It was found that participants faced some challenges in relation to their vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. It was also revealed that the lack of English speaking practice, the tendency of mixing the language, and the absence of speaking activity in the course program as main reasons leading to ELL students' speaking difficulties.

In their study, Cao and Philp (2006) have revealed that students perceive four major factors as having an impact on their willingness to communicate: scope of the size, poise, acquaintance with speaker and their input. Overall students deliberate all dialectal competency, knowledge of the material in L2 and cultural influences as other factors. Cao (2009), in a subsequent study, mentions topic, task type (pair, group and team work), interlocutor and teacher as factors influencing learners' willingness to communicate in classrooms.

Thus and based on the above discussion, the study aims at investigating the factors/reasons that contribute to the inadequacy in oral communication skills among Saudi EFL undergraduate students. Therefore, the following research questions have been generated.

### **3. Research Questions**

The purpose of this research is to discover a response or answers to the succeeding question:

1. What are the factors that contribute to oral communication inadequacy of Saudi EFL university students?

1. What are the major reasons that highly contribute to hindering students to speak English fluently?

#### 4. Statement of the Problem

The low level of proficiency in speaking English among Saudi university students currently becomes of the main concerns among educators, policymakers and stakeholders in Saudi Arabia. This concern has raised because of the inadequacy Saudi students have in the English speaking skills despite of the years they spend studying English language. This will lead to reflect negatively on students' competency towards learning English language and lower the quality of the higher education and its graduates, which will in turn results in difficulties to find jobs as most of the jobs nowadays requires English proficiency especially in the oral communication. In this regard, Zrekat (2021) states that having a high level of English skills in general is essential for graduate students in finding jobs and increase their ability to develop themselves whether in the theoretical or the practical life. Students' weakness and their low level of proficiency can be due to many factors/ reasons and these are internal and external ones. Internal factors such as lack of confidence, anxiety and negative attitude towards learning the target language. On the other hand, the external factors are many such as the inability to use English language whether inside or outside classrooms. The current study is investigating these issues in order to help educators and policymakers in the educational sector in providing data that can enlighten them and can be in a high value to overcome such issues.

#### 5. Methods

##### 5.1. Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 74 Saudi students (females =48; males =26) from the English department, level four in Arab Open University. Fifty-nine (59) students appropriately completed this instrument and gave it back. The subjects's ages extended from 22 to 24 years. They established ten years of English training at school and university. They were well versed that answers to the questionnaire would be kept private, and used solely for study motive. Upon the completion of the questionnaires, they results were possessed for evaluation.

##### 5.2. Instrument

The data of this study was gathered through an instrument which underwent a four-stage process. The first stage was observing students during seven semesters which led to prepare and use an open questionnaire to allow participants to express themselves in means that are not pre-determined by the person analysing. (Hannan, 2007, p. 1). The researcher asked 30 students to answer the open-ended question to write the reasons and difficulties that affect their speaking proficiency. Based on the responses gathered from this questionnaire a closed-item questionnaire was developed. The first draft consisted of 31 items. Then, it was given to four members of the English department at Arab Open University, whose experience in English language teaching and research methodology is remarkable to ensure face and content validity. Finally, guided by the experts' comments and notes, a final draft was developed. It consisted of two parts. The first part collects subjective data, such as gender and age. The second part draws the scope on individual insights like aspects that affected them to obtain scarce articulation in oral settings, and it contains twenty-two items. Participants answered through a four-point scale ranging from: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree* and *strongly disagree*.

##### 5.3. Data Analysis

Simple descriptive statistical analyses of percentages and means were used to analyse the data.

## 6. Results and Discussion

As indicate earlier, the purpose of the present study is to explore the factors, which may contribute to oral communication inadequacy among Saudi EFL university students. The responses of the participants on the questionnaire were calculated by simple descriptive statistics (frequency accounts, percentages and means). Five major factors highlighting various reasons emerged. That is, according to the students who took part in this study, each component is a set that comprises an assembly of causes that negatively contributed to their inadequate speaking proficiency. The following are the results and discussion of these factors and reasons.

The qualitative analytical techniques resulted in the identification of five primary elements emphasizing distinct explanations. To put it another way, each component is a set that contains a collection of reasons, and conferring to the participants, have negatively contributed to their inadequate speaking proficiency. The following are the results and discussion of these factors and reasons.

### 6.1. Practical Constraints

As shown in Table 1, the participants' responses seem to suggest that practical constraints as the first major factor which affect teaching and learning speaking in the English department, Arab Open University. It obtained the highest average mean score (3.36). Three reasons (i.e. items, 4, 7 and 9) related to this factor were assigned. All of them received quite high agreement responses from the majority of the participants. A total average mean score of agreement (M= 3.36) was recorded for these reasons. Item 4 (The absence of the modern means such as labs.), of the total number of respondents, 37.29 % strongly agreed and 45.76 % agreed with a mean score of 3.17. Item 7 (The huge number of students inside the class reduce the chance of speaking.) and item, 9 (There is no special library for English language.) also received considerable high mean scores of agreement, 3.54 and 3.36. As shown in Table 1, sixty two point-seventy one percent (62.71%) of the participants strongly agreed, 30.50 % agreed and 50.85 % strongly agreed and 38.98% agreed, respectively. This result leads one to say that students in Saudi Arabia, namely in Arab Open University believe that laboratories can play an important role in developing their speaking which could indicate their awareness of the relationship between listening and speaking. Such response can be due to the belief of learners, influenced by their instructors' complaints about not having laboratories, that laboratories play a prominent role in giving learners more opportunities to practice listening; and the strong reason that has led them to say so can be their awareness of the lack of opportunities to practice speaking and listening in crowded classrooms. In addition, the lack of special library for English could make the situation more difficult for such learners to compensate what is not done in the classroom. This result is consistent with Afshar and Asakereh (2016) who found that lack of facilities in language laboratories and over-crowded classes were among the reasons negatively affected learners' speaking skills.

**Table 1.** Frequency Accounts, Percentages and means of Participants' Responses Related to Practical Constraints

Statements	SA	A	D	S	Me
		%	%	D	an
	%			%	
4 The absence of the modern means	37.	45.	13.	3.	3.1

	such as labs.	29	76	56	39	7
7	The huge number of students inside the class reduce the chance of speaking.	62. 71	30. 50	5.0 8	1. 69	3.5 4
9	There is no special library for English language.	50. 85	38. 98	5.0 9	5. 09	3.3 6
	Total average mean					3.3 6

SA= strongly agree, A=agree, D= disagree, SD= strongly disagree

## 6.2. Pedagogy and Syllabus

As shown in Table 2, teaching methods and material used in speaking courses were found to be the second major factors which affect students' speaking proficiency. It obtained the second highest average mean score (3.32). Four reasons (i.e. items, 3, 8, 12 and 19) related to this factor were assigned. Item 19 (No use of the audio means.) obtained a highest mean score, 3.64. Of the total participants, 64.40% strongly agreed and 35.59 % agreed and only 21.8 % disagreed with this statement. Item 3 (Spoken courses are not adequate to prepare students to speak fluently.) ranked the sixth with a mean score of 3.25. Forty two point thirty seven percent (42.37%) of the participants strongly agreed and 40.68% agreed with this statement, indicating that they are unsatisfied with the syllabus of the speaking skills courses. A similar mean score (3.23) of agreement was recorded for item 8 (Discussions are missing in the classroom.) Of the total number of respondents, 35.59% strongly agreed and 54.24% agreed, revealing the inappropriate pedagogy in teaching speaking. Focusing on arts courses, item 12 (Focusing on arts courses, which depend on memorization.) also found to be a reason that negatively affect learners' speaking English. It scores a mean of 3.17. Sixty-six point- ten percent (66.10%) of these learners strongly agreed and 28.81% agreed.

This result shows how the teaching methods followed by instructors and the inadequacy of speaking courses in terms of content, number of courses and time allotted to them within the study plan compared to the courses of literature which are too many. These literature courses, based on the researcher experience, for such learners are mostly useless for their immediate need to use English mainly they only memorize them for exams. This result partly agrees with Afshar and Asakereh (2016) who conducted found that a study on Iranian EFL freshmen and seniors and found that insufficient speaking courses in the BA program and instructors' inappropriate language teaching were among the factors behind learners' speaking skills problems.

**Table 2.** Percentages and means of participants' responses related to pedagogy and syllabus

	Statements	SA	A	D	S	Me D an
		%	%	%	%	
3	Spoken courses are not adequate to prepare students to speak fluently.	42. 37	40. 68	16.9 5	0	3.2 5
8	Discussions are missing in the classroom.	35. 59	54. 24	8.47	0	3.2 3
1 2	Focusing on arts courses which depend on memorization.	66. 10	28. 81	3.39	1 .69	3.1 7
1 9	No use of the audio means.	64. 40	35. 59	0	0	3.6 4

Total average mean	3.3 2
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SA= strongly agree, A=agree, D= disagree, SD= strongly disagree

### 6.3. Practice

Speaking cannot be improved unless learners are involved in adequate practice). As seen in Table 3, this factor scored the third rank of mean (3.21) revealing that the participants in this study generally say that there is lack of practicing speaking; it is only practiced in class room and not good enough. Four reasons (items 20, 17, 10 & 22) are related to this factors. Item 20 (Lack of practicing speaking among the students in the class.) obtained one of the highest mean score, 3.58. Of the total participants, 59.32% strongly agreed and 38.98% agreed and only 1.69% disagreed with this statement. Similarity, item 22 (There are a few chances for practicing and applying English in and outside the classroom.) scored quite a high mean score (3.44) and a remarkable agreement by the respondents (44.07% strongly agreed and 55.93% agreed). Item 10 related to inadequate practice of English (English is only practiced in the classrooms and for a short time.) scored a mean of 3.12 and agreed by 77.97% of the students participated in the study. Item 17 (Listening skill is neglected (not practiced), with a mean score of 2.71. Thirty three point ninety percent (33.90%) of the participants strongly agreed and 54.24% agreed with this reason. As mentioned earlier in Section 4. 1, laboratories play undeniable role in giving learners more opportunities to practice listening; and the strong reason that has led them to say so is the lack of opportunities to practice speaking and listening, indicating learners' awareness of the important relationship of such oral skills which studies (e.g. Feyten,1991; Bozorgian, 2012) have already reported on one hand, and can be stemmed from the crowded classrooms that do not allow practicing both skills, on the other.

This result is similar to Senel's (2012) who investigated the oral communication problems among Turkish EFL students and found that inadequate practice of English inside and outside the class as one of the factors affecting negatively learners' speaking skills. And it is also in line with Hojat and Afghari (2013) and Afshar and Asakereh (2016) whose respondents blamed such a factor, i.e., lack of extensive speaking practice opportunities.

**Table 3.** Frequency Accounts, Percentages and means of Participants' Responses Related to Practice

	Statements	SA %	A %	D %	SD %	Mean
20	Lack of practicing speaking among the students in the class.	59.32	38.98	1.69	0	<b>3.58</b>
17	Listening skill is neglected (not practiced).	33.90	54.24	6.78	5.09	2.71
10	English is only practiced in the classrooms and for a short time,	40.68	37.29	15.25	6.78	<b>3.12</b>
22	There are a few chances for practicing and applying English in and outside the classroom.	44.07	55.93	0	0	<b>3.44</b>
	Total average mean					<b>3.21</b>

SA= strongly agree, A=agree, D= disagree, SD= strongly disagree

### 6.4. Linguistic insufficiency

This section discusses the underlying linguistic elements affecting learners speaking in English. These elements include vocabulary, grammar and the linguistic gap between students. As shown in Table 4, this factor scored a mean of 2.89, showing that the participants in this study feel that their



linguistic background namely knowledge of grammar rules and vocabulary affect their speaking proficiency. Three reasons (items 15, 2 & 14) related to this variable. Item 15 (Lack of knowledge of the English rules.) scored a mean of 3.07. Of the total participants, 27.12% strongly agreed and 55.93% agreed and only 16.95 % disagreed with this statement. This result indicates learners' wrong belief influenced by traditional pedagogy which used to focus on grammar believing that to be good at a language one must know grammar rules. A similar mean score (3.03) of agreement was recorded for item 2 (The linguistic and knowledge gap between students.), twenty eight point-eighty one percent (28.81%) of the participants strongly agreed and 62.71% agreed with this reason, indicating that linguistic and knowledge discrepancy can negatively hinder interaction between such learners and may lead to the avoidance of speaking inside and outside classrooms. Item 14 (Lack of lexical background.) which is related to the insufficient vocabulary, scored the lowest mean (2.56) with 59.32% agreement and 40. 67% of disagreement by the respondents. Discourse abilities, according to Hojat and Afghari (2013), are affected by a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic aspects such as syntax, lexis, and practical variables. Al Hosni (2014) found three major problems, including linguistic difficulties which faced Omani EFL young learners' speaking ability. Similarly, in the study of Keong, Ali & Hameed (2015, mentioned earlier), Iraqi students reported linguistic competences, i.e., vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, as the most challenging factors which hamper their speaking ability.

**Table 4.** Frequency Accounts, Percentages and means of Participants' Responses Related to Linguistic problem

Statements		SA	A	D	SD	Mea n
		%	%	%	%	
14	Lack of lexical background.	11.86	47.46	25.42	15.25	<b>2.56</b>
2	The linguistic and knowledge gap between students.	28.81	62.71	8.47	0	3.03
15	Lack of knowledge of the English rules.	27.12	55.93	13.56	3.39	3.07
Total average mean						2.89

SA= strongly agree, A=agree, D= disagree, SD= strongly disagree

## 6.5. Affective factors

### 6.5.1. Anxiety

Psychological matters such as fear of making errors, apprehension, and reluctance according to Schwartz and Thornbury (2005), are typical barriers to students communicating verbally in public settings. In reference with Koichi Sato (2003), learners lack verbal fluency due to their distress of making dialectal inaccuracies. As seen in Table 5, fear, shyness, embracement and hesitation (Items 5, 6 & 18) were found to be reasons that influence students negatively to speak or participate in speaking. Item 5 (Fear of making mistakes when they speak.) obtained mean scores of 3.19. Of the total participants, 30.50% strongly agreed and 57.63% agreed and only 11.86% disagreed with this reason, indicating that such learners are inhibited to speak because they are afraid of committing mistakes. What is called “Saving face”, Learners do not want to embarrass themselves by making mistakes prevents them from speaking (See Cohen & Norst, 1989, Zhu, 2003, Liu, 2005).

Item 6 (Shyness and embracement dominate students when they converse in English.) scored a mean of 3.203. Of the total participants, 64.40% strongly agreed and 35.59 % agreed and only 21.8 % disagreed with this item of the major factors which affect students' speaking proficiency. Similarly, item 18 (Shyness and hesitation to use English as a new language.) 88.33% of students. This result

agrees with Al Nakhalah' study (2016) which has found that fear and shyness as reasons encountering students of English at Al Quds Open University in speaking. Therefore, according to Gebhard (2000), .it is important to pay attention to this issue in order to help learners involve effectively in speaking performance in the classroom.

**Table 5.** Frequency Accounts, Percentages and means of Participants' Responses Related to Anxiety

Statements	SA	A	D	S D	Me an
	%	%	%	%	
: Fear of making mistakes when they speak.	30. 50	57. 63	11.86	0	<b>3.1 9</b>
( Shyness and embracement dominate students when they converse in English.	28. 81	62. 71	8.47	0	3.2 0
: Shyness and hesitation to use English as a new 8 language.	11. 86	47. 46	25.42	15 .25	2.5 6
Total average mean					2.9 8

SA= strongly agree, A=agree, D= disagree, SD= strongly disagree

#### 6.5.2. Attitudes and Motivation

The influence of outlooks and motivation in second language acquisition has been extensively researched. Because of the strong association between attitude and motivation, L2 scholars have researched them together, suggesting a direct connection where approach affected motivation and motivation inclined L2 growth, writes Kumaravadivelu (2006). Motivation is determined by the learner's sentiments toward the L2, its speakers and values, the communal and applied benefit of using the L2, and their identifiable language and ethos (Siegel 2003).

These variables have scored a total average mean of 2.27. As shown in Table 6, environment, learners' motivation, the importance of English and attitudes of both learners and people towards English (Items 21, 13, 16, 11 & 1) revealed to be reasons influencing students negatively to speak or participate in speaking. Items 21(Students are discouraged of speaking because of their environment, both on a public and domestic level). The surrounding environment inside or outside the house does not encourage learners to speak.) has scored a mean of 3.10. Of the total participants, 42.37% strongly agreed and 44.07% agreed and only 13.55 % disagreed with this item, indicating the important role of the surrounding environment in motivating or demotivating learners to use English, namely, speaking. Item 13 (Students only study to get the degree rather than to acquire language skills.), which is obviously related to extrinsic or instrumental motivation. Although this item has scored medium mean (2.64) and 59.32% of agreement with 40.67% disagreement, is still have a quite remarkable indication that learners' motivation has its role in their speaking proficiency. Similarly, item,16 (English is considered difficult for learners.) indicates negative attitudes towards English which influence learners directly or indirectly not to try more to work in improving their English.

**Table 6.** Frequency Accounts, Percentages and means of Participants' Responses Related to Attitudes and Motivation

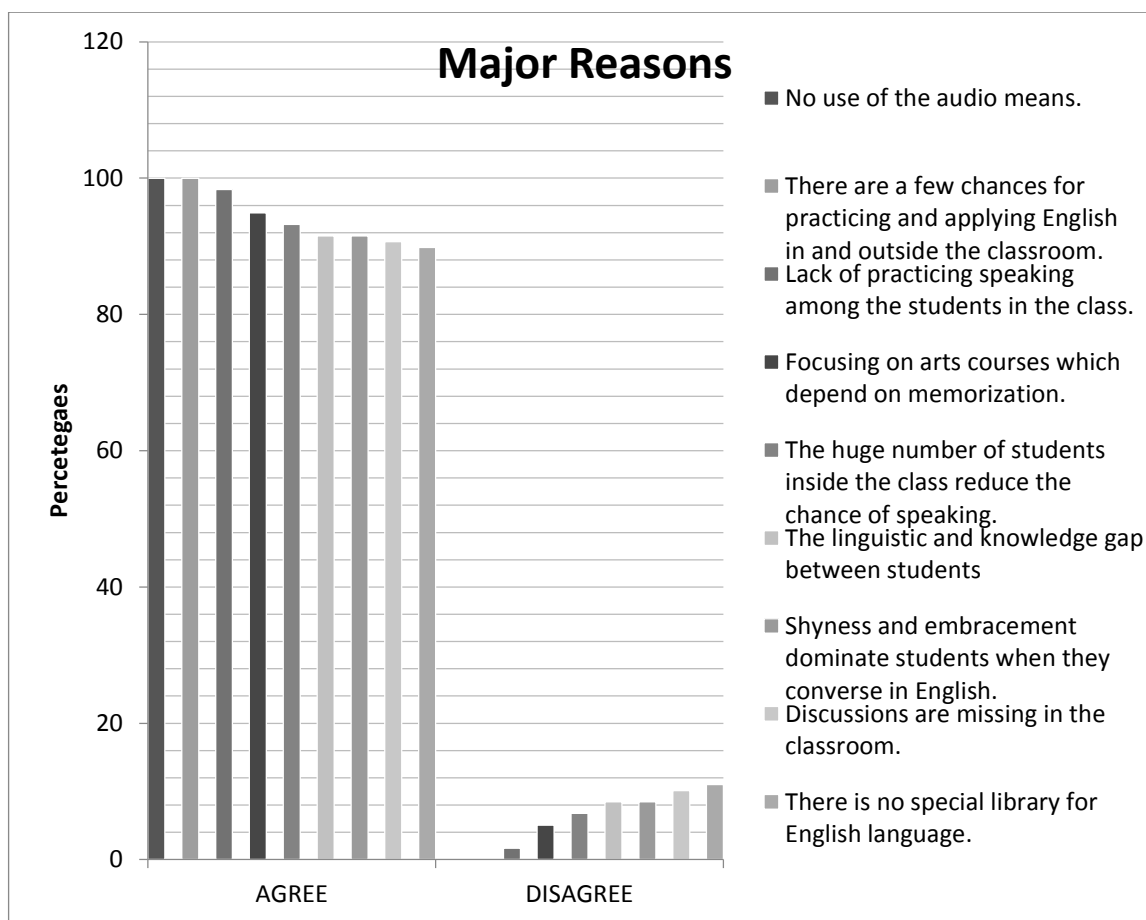
Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
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		%	%	%	%	
21	The surrounding environment inside or outside the house does not encourage learners to speak.	42.37	44.07	11.86	1.69	3.10
13	Students only study to get the degree rather than to acquire language skills.	20.34	38.98	25.42	15.25	2.64
11	Learners and people only consider English as a secondary course.	1.69	22.03	49.15	27.12	1.98
1	The negative attitudes of the society to the person who speaks English.	11.86	11.86	45.76	30.51	1.12
16	English is considered difficult for learners.	18.64	27.12	33.90	20.34	2.27
	Total average mean					2.22

SA= strongly agree, A=agree, D= disagree, SD= strongly disagree

#### 6. 6. Reasons highly Affecting learners' Speaking

As presented and discussed above, out of 22 reasons, 8 reasons scored high percentages. As shown in Figure 1, the majority of the participants (99.99%) agreed that the absence of using the audio means and the lack of chances for practicing and applying English in and outside the classroom as the first reasons that makes their speaking not good enough. Similarly, most of the participants, 98.31% strongly agreed or agreed that the heavy focus on art courses which depends largely on memorization make them not really practice spoken English, followed by the crowded classroom, which according to 93.21% of the participants, reduce the chance of practicing speaking. This is true because there are more than 70 students in one room. Further, ninety-one point fifty-two percent (91.52%) strongly agreed or agreed that the linguistic and knowledge gap between students who feel shy and embarrassed during speaking has also contributed to their poor fluency in speaking too. Lack of discussion in the classroom and lack of relevant resources for English also have scored high agreement, i.e. 90.69% and 89.8 %, respectively.



**Figure 1.** Reasons Affecting Students' Speaking

As shown, the major reasons are related to pedagogy, practice, syllabus, affecting factors and practical constraints.

## 7. Conclusion

In this study, the major factors explored that have according to the participants contributed to their poor fluency in speaking. The measureable studies aided in the cataloguing of those components into proper patterns for which there are specific causes. Furthermore, calculable analysis aided in determining the degree of seriousness of individual issues. The results revealed five main factors: 1) practical constraints (crowded classroom, lack of modern means and special library), 2) inadequate pedagogy and syllabus, 3) lack of practice, 4) linguistic problems, and 5) affective factors related to anxiety, attitudes and motivation. That is, lack of appropriate teaching atmosphere, methodology and materials, lexical knowledge insufficiency; inadequate knowledge of grammar are the main problems. These results call for major challenges point to the dire need for re-systematic reforms of the pedagogy, syllabus, and the class sizes in Saudi universities.

## Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank the Arab Open University in Saudi Arabia for supporting this research paper.

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