Challenges Faced by Libyan Students from Non-English Majors in Speaking English

Hetham M Alfaitori Alajaili[1]*, Yusawinur Barella[2]

[1]*College Of Medical Technology, Derna, Libya*
[2]*Tanjungpura University, Indonesia*

* Corresponding Author. E-mail: [1]***helfaitouri@cmtd.edu.ly***

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis permasalahan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa Non Bahasa Inggris dalam keterampilan berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris di the College of Medical Technology, Derna, Libya. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah survei dan wawancara terhadap sampel mahasiswa yang representatif.Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada beberapa permasalahan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa terkait keterampilan berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris, yang mencakup masalah linguistik dan non linguistik. Pada masalah linguistik, banyak mahasiswa merasa kurang penguasaan kosakata, pengucapan yang kurang tepat, dan tata bahasa. Pada masalah Non linguitik, ditemukan masalah pada rendahnya motivasi dan kebiasaan serta masalah bahasa Ibu. Salah satu cara yang efektif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris adalah dengan rutin berlatih berbicara dengan orang lain. *Hal ini dapat dilakukan dengan* mencari teman-teman atau kelompok belajar bahasa Inggris untuk berdiskusi, berdebat, atau berdialog secara aktif dalam bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, menonton film-film atau acara televisi dalam bahasa Inggris dengan subtitle kemudian mencoba mengulangi atau menirukan dialognya juga merupakan cara yang baik untuk melatih pengucapan dan memperluas kosakata*.

Kata Kunci: *Keterampilan Berbicara dalam Bahasa Inggris, Faktor Kendala, Mahasiswa Non Bahasa Inggris*

Abstract

The aim of this research is to analyze the problems faced by non-English speaking students in speaking skills in English at the College of Medical Technology, Derna, Libya. The research methodology used includes surveys and interviews with a representative sample of students. The research findings indicate that there are several problems faced by students regarding speaking skills in English, which encompass linguistic and non-linguistic issues. In terms of linguistic issues, many students feel a lack of vocabulary mastery, inaccurate pronunciation, and grammar. In terms of non-linguistic issues, problems related to low motivation, habits, and mother tongue were found. Therefore, this research highlights the challenges faced by non-English speaking students in developing their speaking skills in English. These challenges include linguistic issues such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, as well as non-linguistic issues such as motivation, habits, and the influence of the mother tongue. By addressing these challenges, appropriate interventions

can be implemented to improve the speaking skills of non-English speaking students at the College of Medical Technology, Derna, Libya. One effective way to improve speaking skills in English is by regularly practicing speaking with others. This can be done by finding friends or English learning groups to actively discuss, debate, or engage in dialogue in English. Additionally, watching English movies or TV shows with subtitles and then attempting to repeat or mimic the dialogue is also a good way to practice pronunciation and expand vocabulary.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a fascinating and essential aspect of human existence. It is not only a means of communication but also a powerful tool for expressing thoughts, emotions, and ideas [1], [2]. From the moment we are born, we are immersed in a world of language, learning and adapting to the sounds, words, and structures that shape our ability to interact with others. Language serves as a vehicle for sharing knowledge, transmitting cultural values, and connecting with people from different backgrounds [3]. It is through language that we are able to understand and express ourselves, to engage with the world around us, and to connect with others on a deep and meaningful level [4]. In this ever-evolving global society, the importance of language cannot be understated, as it enables us to navigate through the complexities of our personal, academic, and professional lives.

Language is a fundamental aspect of communication and plays a crucial role in the lives of students [5]. It serves as a tool for expressing ideas, thoughts, and emotions, enabling individuals to connect and interact with others effectively[6]. Proficiency in language is essential for academic success, as it is the medium through which students acquire knowledge, participate in classroom discussions, and showcase their understanding. Additionally, language skills are highly sought after in the professional world, as they enhance employability and open doors to global opportunities. Not only does language provide a means of expression, but it also promotes cultural understanding and tolerance, allowing students to appreciate diverse perspectives and engage in meaningful cross-cultural exchanges.

English is recognized globally as the primary language of international communication across various domains such as business, politics, science, academia, and entertainment[7]. It is estimated that around 1.5 billion people speak English, making it the most widely spoken language in the world. Its widespread use and acceptance as the language of communication have made English an essential tool for international trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange[8]. Moreover, the growth of the internet and social media has further increased the significance of English, as it has become the dominant language in the digital world. As a result, proficiency in English has become a fundamental skill for anyone seeking to engage in the global arena, be it for personal, academic, or professional purposes. The status of English as an international language reflects its versatility and adaptability to diverse contexts, making it a valuable asset for anyone who wishes to succeed in a globalized world[9].

English holds a significant position among the subjects taught in Libya, playing a crucial role in the education system [10]. As Libya continues to expand its ties with

the global community, proficiency in English has become increasingly important for its citizens [11]. English is taught from an early age, providing students with a solid foundation that they can build upon as they progress through their academic journey. English language skills are highly valued in various fields, including business, tourism, and international diplomacy. Proficiency in English opens doors to global opportunities, allowing Libyan students to further their education abroad, access a wider range of academic resources, and interact with people from diverse backgrounds [12]. Additionally, the study of English literature and language promotes critical thinking, creativity, and cultural appreciation, broadening students' horizons and nurturing their intellectual growth. As Libya continues to strive for global engagement, English remains a vital subject that equips students with the tools to succeed in an interconnected world.

The four skills of English language learning – reading, writing, listening, and speaking are interconnected and essential for effective communication [13]. Reading skills enable learners to comprehend and analyse written texts, expanding their vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. Writing skills allow students to express their ideas clearly, develop critical thinking, and enhance their overall language proficiency. Listening skills enable learners to understand spoken language, develop their comprehension abilities, and adapt to different accents and speech patterns. Speaking skills play a vital role in oral communication, enabling learners to express themselves fluently, engage in conversations, and build confidence in their ability to interact in English. Mastering all four skills is crucial for effective communication in English, empowering learners to connect and thrive in various personal, academic, and professional settings [14].

English language learning can be classified into two main aspects: receptive and productive [15]. The receptive aspect encompasses listening and reading skills, where learners comprehend and understand English through various materials such as conversations, lectures, articles, and books [16]. These skills focus on comprehension, extracting information, and understanding the meaning conveyed. On the other hand, the productive aspect comprises speaking and writing skills, where learners actively produce and express themselves in English[17]. These skills emphasize generating meaningful content, organizing thoughts, and effectively conveying ideas to others. Both aspects are interconnected, as the receptive aspect provides input for the productive aspect, while the productive aspect reinforces and enhances understanding gained through the receptive aspect. A balanced approach towards developing both receptive and productive skills is essential for effective English language communication and proficiency.

Learning English at the university level in Libya provides students with a comprehensive and immersive language learning experience. English language programs in Libyan universities offer a structured curriculum that covers all major language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Through interactive classroom activities, engaging language labs, and access to extensive language resources, students have ample opportunities to practice and enhance their English proficiency. Moreover, universities in Libya emphasize the practical application of English in various fields, equipping students with the language skills necessary for their future careers. With a focus on academic writing, presentation skills, and intercultural communication, English language learning

at the university level in Libya prepares students to confidently engage and succeed in the global community.

Non-English students often face difficulties when it comes to speaking English [14], [18], [19]. The challenges may arise due to a lack of exposure to English-speaking environments, limited practice opportunities, pronunciation issues, or a lack of confidence. These students may struggle with understanding and using English vocabulary, grammar, and idiomatic expressions. Additionally, they may feel self-conscious about making mistakes or fear being misunderstood when communicating in English.

This study examines the difficulties faced by students from non-English departments when speaking English, explores the reasons behind these challenges, and seeks to identify the strategies employed by non-English majoring students to resolve their speaking difficulties in English.

METHOD

The study was conducted by the researcher at College of Medical Technology, Derna, Libya, using a combination of questionnaires and interviews. A total of 80 first-semester students filled out the questionnaire, while 8 students were interviewed as part of the research process. The researcher employed a mix of closed-ended questions, which allowed for simple yes/no responses, and open-ended questions where participants were encouraged to provide their own sentences or answers. Open-ended questions were used to avoid providing predetermined answers. Additionally, the researcher followed certain steps to collect the data. The data collection process involved several steps. Initially, the researcher created the questionnaire sheet and subsequently distributed it to the students, requesting them to complete it online. The final step in this process was collecting the completed questionnaire sheets. For the interview portion, a set of eight questions was prepared. The data collection procedure for the interview consisted of the researcher developing the questions, conducting the interview online, and finally preparing a script summarizing the interview.

Data Analysis.

In this study, the researchers employed qualitative descriptive analysis techniques. The initial step involved collecting the data, which was achieved by converting all raw data into written transcripts. Subsequently, the raw data was organized into thematic groups and further discussed. The data presented in the report was extensive, and thorough notation was required. To streamline the data, the researchers summarized and identified key points, focusing on relevant aspects and searching for patterns and themes. Following the data reduction process, the information was visually presented using abbreviations, charts, correlations, and narrative prose. This display of data facilitated comprehension of the research findings and aided in planning future work based on the achieved progress.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The findings from both the questionnaires and interviews revealed that the first students of College of Medical Technology, Derna, Libya, class of 2023/2024, encountered difficulties in speaking English. These difficulties were categorized into two types: linguistic problems and non-linguistic problems.

The linguistic problem

The linguistic problem stands out as the first type of difficulty faced in speaking. These challenges originate from issues related to language itself, encompassing

aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and sentence structure. Students may struggle to find the right words, construct coherent sentences, and articulate them accurately. Pronunciation errors, grammatical mistakes, and limited vocabulary further contribute to the linguistic hurdles experienced in oral communication. Overcoming these linguistic challenges requires focused practice, language acquisition strategies, and ample exposure to native speakers. Linguistics, as the scientific study of language, analyzes all facets of language, considering factors such as cognition, society, culture, psychology, environment, biology, literature, grammar, paleography, and structure.

Challenges in Articulating Words Correctly

Articulating Words Correctly or pronunciation emerges as one of the hurdles frequently faced when speaking English. It involves the proper articulation of sounds, stresses, intonation patterns, and rhythm to ensure effective communication. Students learning English often encounter challenges in accurately reproducing unfamiliar sounds and correctly pronouncing words [20]. Difficulties may arise from differences in phonetic systems between their native language and English, leading to mispronunciations and misunderstandings.

Based on the findings of interviews conducted by researchers, a number of students expressed the sentiment that they found pronouncing numerous English words to be challenging. Students hardly ever utilize English in daily conversation. Arabic is consistently the primary language that they rely on for communication. A student said, "نطقي الذي في تكون العربية إلى بعض الأحيان يبدو غريباً" (My pronunciation sounds not good). Another student added, "انا دائما اتكلم باللغه العربيه في حياتي اليوميه مما

يجعل نطقي للغه الانجليزيه صعب" (I always use Arabic in my daily life, which makes it difficult for me to pronounce correctly)

Table 1 Pronunciation Difficulty

Statement	Answer		Total
	Yes	No	
I struggle with pronouncing English words when speaking.	70	10	80

Insufficient command of vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the collection of words and phrases that a person knows and understands in a particular language [21]. It encompasses the vast array of terms that enable individuals to communicate effectively and express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions. A strong vocabulary allows for accurate and nuanced expression, enhancing both oral and written communication skills[22]. It includes not only common words but also specialized terminology specific to various fields of study or professions [23]. Students who have a limited grasp of vocabulary often state that their knowledge is limited to the fundamental words they acquired during their previous schooling[24]. Students at the College of Medical Technology, Derna, Libya, stated that their vocabulary mastery could be much higher. One of the contributing factors is that the students have yet to receive English language education in secondary school, making English a very new thing for them.

Table 2 Insufficient command of vocabulary

Statement	Answer		Total
	Yes	No	
I have a broad knowledge of vocabulary	12	68	80

in English			
I consistently evade using challenging words when conversing in English.	75	5	80

Insufficient understanding of grammar rules.

In this research, a significant majority of first-semester students at the College of Medical Technology, Derna, Libya, for the academic year 2022/2023 needed to improve their grasp of English grammar. There is a belief among certain individuals that when it comes to speaking, the use of proper grammar is optional for conveying one's intended message.

Table 3 Insufficient understanding of grammar rules

Statement	Answer		Total
	Yes	No	
I frequently commit errors in grammar when communicating in English	80	0	80

Non-linguistic problems

Non-linguistic problems refer to issues that arise during communication that are not directly related to language or grammar [25]. These problems can occur due to various factors such as cultural differences, body language, tone of voice, or even technical difficulties. Unlike linguistic problems, which involve errors or misunderstandings in language usage, non-linguistic problems involve challenges in conveying and understanding messages beyond the words being spoken. These problems can impact effective communication and require individuals to be aware of and adapt to different non-verbal cues and contextual factors to ensure successful interaction.

Anxiety

Language anxiety refers to the feeling of unease, nervousness, or discomfort that individuals experience when using a foreign language. It often stems from the fear of making mistakes, being judged by others, or not being able to convey thoughts accurately. Language anxiety can impede language learning and hinder effective communication, as it affects one's confidence and ability to freely express oneself. It may manifest in various ways, such as difficulty speaking fluently, avoidance of language practice, or even physical symptoms like sweating or increased heart rate. The findings of this research suggest that virtually all first-semester students enrolled in the College of Medical Technology in Derna, Libya for the 2022/2023 academic year experience feelings of anxiety whenever they are required to communicate in English.

Table 4 Anxiety

Statement	Answer		Total
	Yes	No	
I always feel nervous whenever I am asked to speak English	80	0	80

Low Motivation

A significant number of first-semester students at the College of Medical Technology in Derna, Libya have acknowledged the high significance of English in today's world. They recognize that having a strong command of English will facilitate keeping pace with current trends, not only in speaking but also in various other areas. However, despite this awareness, there are still some students in the College of Medical Technology in

Derna, Libya who lack the motivation to deeply enhance their English skills, particularly in speaking. Their mindset stems from the belief that since Arabic is predominantly spoken in the country, learning English may be deemed useless.

Table 5 Low Motivation

Statement	Answer		Total
I lack the motivation to further improve my English speaking skills.	Yes	No	
	14	66	80

Mother tongue

Based on interview data, nearly all of the students in their first semester at the College of Medical Technology in Derna, Libya, are not familiar with using English in their daily lives. This lack of exposure hinders their English language learning, particularly in speaking. They are accustomed to using Arabic for their everyday communication. Furthermore, the absence of an English-speaking environment adds to the challenges they encounter. Consequently, they have limited opportunities to engage in English conversation outside of the classroom.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the English speaking proficiency of first semester students at the College of Medical Technology in Derna, Libya is low and requires improvement. A majority of students face numerous difficulties when speaking English, which can be categorized as either linguistic or non-linguistic problems. Linguistic problems commonly encountered include a lack of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, while non-linguistic or psychological problems include anxiety. Various factors contribute to these problems, including low motivation, reliance on native language habits, and

limited practice opportunities. To address the English speaking issue, several solutions have been identified. Regularly practicing speaking with others is a highly effective method for enhancing English speaking skills. To achieve this, students can seek out friends or join English learning groups to actively engage in discussions, debates, or dialogues in English. Moreover, watching English movies or TV shows with subtitles and making an effort to imitate or reproduce the dialogue provides an excellent opportunity to practice pronunciation and enrich vocabulary.

In light of the conclusion, the following suggestions are put forward: 1) Students should dedicate themselves to studying diligently and engage in more practice to enhance their English speaking abilities, as it is the crucial factor for improvement; 2) Students should discard any feelings of embarrassment when expressing themselves or initiating conversations in English; 3) Students should not fear making mistakes while speaking in English, as mistakes serve as valuable learning experiences; 4) To enhance their speaking skills, students have the option of enrolling in specialized training programs or participate in English language programs organized by student organizations focused on English.

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