

Impact of the Interviews on the Students' Speaking Skills

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Abstract—This study was conducted to explore the potential benefits of interview activities in improving the speaking skills of EFL students. As EFL students often require additional support to improve their speaking skills, the authors adopted a quasi-experimental approach involving pre-and post-tests to analyze the effectiveness of this intervention. Participants were divided into two groups - an experimental and a control group - with the former undergoing a pre-test, treatment session, and post-test. At the same time, the latter only received pre- and post-tests. The study evaluated various speaking skills, including fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension. The results indicated that the intervention positively impacted the experimental group's speaking skills, with their improvement significantly higher than that of the control group. The interview technique effectively enhanced EFL students' speaking skills, enabling them to participate more actively in learning activities and boosting their confidence when communicating in English. The research findings provide encouraging possibilities for individuals who aim to improve their oral communication abilities, paving the way for them to achieve greater academic and professional success. With these insights, learners can confidently sharpen their speaking skills and effectively communicate their ideas, opinions, and perspectives, which can positively impact their personal growth and career advancement.

Index Terms—interview activities, EFL students, speaking skills

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Study Background

The significance of English as a language cannot be overstated, as it has become the most widely spoken language globally. It is the primary language of various fields, including scientific research, medical studies, and monetary transactions. Most importantly, it has become the go-to language for international communication (Ali, 2022). Therefore, it is imperative that those in Iraq who are learning English make it a priority to improve their speaking skills, as this would enable them to engage effectively with individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

For several years now, the Iraqi government has been providing financial aid to support the English language education of students across all levels of education, from elementary to university. However, despite these efforts, progress in improving students' speaking skills has been slow and inadequate, with little overall improvement noted (Al Hamdany, 2018). In response, the government initiated a program in 2011 to refine and enhance English language teaching strategies and methods in schools and universities throughout Iraq. This program, which received partial funding from UNESCO and was implemented across various levels of learning, is geared towards improving student proficiency in the English language (Avci & Doghonadze, 2017). Given the current state of affairs, the government must take more substantial and decisive measures to expedite the progress of English language education in Iraq.

Developing proficiency in English speaking is a complex task for EFL learners, as it requires mastery of several essential components. These include proper pronunciation, a solid grasp of grammar, a broad vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Additionally, speaking fluently requires the speaker to use words and phrases easily, with little conscious thought, when producing sentences in real-life communication. Furthermore, linguistic and general knowledge must be activated to effectively produce the message (Kuśnierek, 2015). Therefore, to enhance the English-speaking skills of language learners, it is necessary to comprehend the obstacles they face and employ various strategies

(Rao, 2019). To facilitate effective and comprehensive instruction of speaking skills, lecturers must employ various instructional strategies and techniques (G, 2019).

B. Problem Statement

Effective communication is a complex process that involves various skills, one of which is speaking. It is widely acknowledged that speakers who can convey their messages with conviction and passion are more likely to establish a connection with their audience and leave a lasting impression (Puspitorini, 2018). However, in Iraq, students face significant challenges when mastering speaking skills, making it difficult to communicate with people from other countries. Despite investing considerable time and effort in learning English, Iraqi students still need help to speak the language fluently and appropriately (Ugla, 2021). The primary reason behind this issue is the teaching method used in Iraq, which relies heavily on grammar-translation. This approach prioritizes teaching the grammatical rules and translating them from one language to another rather than focusing on developing students' speaking skills (Naeem & Saad, 2020). As a result, students often need more confidence and the ability to communicate effectively in English, which can hinder their personal and professional growth. To address this issue, there is a pressing need for new teaching methods that prioritize the development of students' speaking skills. Teachers in Iraq must incorporate new approaches and techniques that enable students to practice speaking and build their confidence in language use. By doing so, students can communicate more effectively with people from different countries and cultures, enhancing their social and professional opportunities.

The research in question primarily focuses on exploring the effects of interview activities on the speaking skills of English as a foreign language (EFL) students. Given that these students often require assistance honing their speaking skills, the study seeks to shed light on the potential benefits of interview-based communication. Quynh and Van (2021) noted that a back-and-forth exchange of questions and responses characterizes interviews. During an interview, the interviewer poses questions, actively listens to the responses, and provides their answers. Both parties then evaluate the information exchanged in light of their preexisting knowledge. This dynamic can foster a more engaging, meaningful, and stimulating communication experience.

It is worth noting that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for employing interviews as a valuable tool in language learning. This theory posits that learning is most effectively facilitated through social interaction and knowledge-sharing among individuals (Nunan, 1999). Interviews, therefore, present a highly conducive learning environment for students as they are encouraged to engage with one another in an immersive, interactive setting. Through the power of interviews, EFL students can develop their speaking skills in a highly effective and enjoyable manner, leading to a more comprehensive understanding and mastery of the English language.

C. Study Objective

To examine the impact of the interviews on the students' speaking skills.

D. Significance of the Study

This research aims to evaluate the impact of interview activities on students' speaking proficiency. If the results turn out to be positive, these activities can be used as an effective guide for students to enhance their English speaking skills. It is noteworthy that various scholars, such as (Fattah & Saidalvi, 2019), have emphasized the importance of teaching communicative activities to promote students' fluency and effectiveness in English speaking. The researchers anticipate that the findings of this study will be of great value to curriculum developers, English educators, course designers, and educational institutions that support students who struggle with speaking difficulties. By utilizing these outcomes, these stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to overcome these challenges and assist students in realizing their full potential in English communication.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

When teaching speaking, teachers must provide interesting topics, techniques, and methods to engage students. One effective technique for teaching speaking is the interview. Teachers can select themes for students to use as interview questions, which allows them to gain knowledge from others and develop their social skills outside of the classroom (G, 2019). According to Quynh and Van (2021), interviews are an incredibly effective means of communication that stimulates cognitive processes in the brain and leads to more engaging and substantial conversations. Interviewers create an atmosphere that fosters communication by asking pertinent questions, providing thoughtful answers, and actively listening. Additionally, the interview technique increases students' confidence, improves their fluency, and provides valuable practice for specific lessons (Wulandari, 2017). Ultimately, the teaching and learning process should be engaging to improve students' speaking skills in the classroom.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory provides a strong foundation for utilizing interviews as a valuable tool in language learning. This theory, emerging in psychology, examines society's contributions to individual development and has gained popularity since the 1990s, particularly in educational settings (Cherry, 2022). According to Vygotsky, learning occurs in a social context, where expertise is shared through social interaction. In this view, language is essential, providing us with a means to make sense of the world, categorize our experiences, and share them with others (SÄLJÖ,

2009). Vygotsky believed that language acquisition could occur in a social context that fosters the development of communicative competence (Nunan, 1999).

Mastering speaking is an essential skill for language learners. It involves a complex process of sending and receiving messages through verbal and nonverbal symbols like gestures and facial expressions (Lahmar & Bouhania, 2019). Undoubtedly, it is the most challenging skill to conquer when learning English (Sandra, 2022). One speaks to express opinions, persuade others, provide information, or give instructions and get things done, such as describing something or someone, complaining about others' behaviour, and requesting and providing services (Umiyati, 2017). Leong and Ahmadi (2017) assert that speaking in front of an audience is one of the most critical skills to cultivate and improve through effective communication. Given that it requires a lot of practice and exposure, it is one of the most difficult skills for students to master. Proficiency in spoken language, whether in formal or informal settings, indicates effective communication skills (Garcés, 2021). However, students can significantly enhance their speaking skills with the proper technique.

Various studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of interview techniques in improving students' speaking skills. Notably, Listriyana's (2018) study on "Teaching Speaking Skill through Interview to the Eighth Grade Students of SMP PGRI 9 Denpasar" showed a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after each cycle, with positive responses from students towards the interview activities. Similarly, Tria and Supardi's (2015) study on "Improving Students' Speaking Skills through Interview Technique" demonstrated the effectiveness of the interview technique in enhancing speaking skills, as evidenced by increased scores after each cycle. Permanasari's (2014) research titled "Improving Students' Speaking Ability through the Three Steps Interview Technique" further supported the success of the interview method in improving students' speaking skills, with noticeable improvements in post-test scores after each cycle. This current quasi-experimental study also utilized interview techniques to enhance students' speaking skills, specifically focusing on intensive speaking within a limited language area. Altogether, these studies provide compelling evidence for the effectiveness of interview techniques in improving students' speaking skills, which could positively impact their academic and professional objectives.

III. METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

When researching, there are numerous factors to consider when selecting the most suitable method. These factors encompass the topic of the study, the research questions, and the study's objectives. In order to arrive at a well-informed decision, the researcher must analyse the research problem, scrutinize the literature, and determine whether a quantitative or qualitative approach is better suited to the study (Creswell, 2012). A quasi-experimental technique was utilized in our case, with the authors focusing on pre-and post-tests. To implement this technique, two experimental and control groups were required. The experimental group received a pre-test, a treatment session, and a post-test, while the control group only received a pre-and post-test. The assessment process considered fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension. Treatment was administered over twelve weeks.

Participants

Our research on the effects of interview activities on the development of students' speaking skills involved a meticulously planned experiment with two groups of 40 participants. We selected all second-stage students admitted to the College of Basic Education at the University of Sumer for the academic year 2022-2023 to participate in our study. Our aim was to gather accurate and comprehensive data on how interview activities impact students' oral communication abilities.

Collection of Experimental Data

In order to assess the speaking level of the two groups, a pre-test will be allocated. The pre-test will consist of an oral assessment of 20 points for both groups. Various free-assigned topics from daily life and experiences will be discussed and recorded during the assessment. The test will focus on five criteria to evaluate the students' speaking skills: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Each of these criteria will be scored on a scale ranging from 0 to 4 points.

After completing the pre-test, the experimental group will begin its treatment, which will last 12 weeks and include weekly sessions. The teaching material used will be standard textbooks to help the students develop their speaking skills. The experimental group will be divided into several groups, consisting of four students each. Each group will be labelled A-B and C-D, respectively, and the teacher will assign a topic to each group. During the session, student A will interview student B, and student C will interview student D. The roles will then be reversed, and each member will share a summary of what they learned during the interview. This technique will allow students to practice speaking skills both inside and outside the class and socialize with their peers.

After completing the 12-week treatment, both groups will undergo a post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of the experimental group's interview technique. The post-test will be the same as the pre-test, consisting of an oral assessment. The scores will be divided into the same five criteria: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The post-test will determine whether the students' speaking skills have improved after exposure to the interview technique.

Validity and Reliability of the Tests

Reliability and validity are crucial evaluation criteria for assessing the quality of research. They determine the precision and consistency of a particular approach's measurement. Therefore, it is paramount to consider reliability and validity during research planning, method organization, and result write-up, especially in quantitative research. These criteria must be revised to avoid various forms of research bias that can devastate the results (Middleton, 2023). To ensure high content validity, the authors will evaluate students' speaking skills using tests and create the speaking test topic based on the college's curriculum and English book. The authors will use a speaking rubric to grade students' speaking ability scores to determine the speaking test's reliability. Additionally, to determine the pre-and post-test speaking tests' results, the authors will invite two raters with qualifications that include a TOEFL score of at least 500 and at least five years of experience teaching English to evaluate the students' speaking tests in the experimental and control groups. After completing this phase, the authors will approach them to enlist their help in assessing the students' speaking skills.

Analysis of Experimental Data

This research study will determine the effectiveness of interviews in enhancing students' speaking skills. It will involve two groups of students, one serving as the treatment group and the other as the control group. Data will be collected on the speaking abilities of both groups prior to and after the evaluation to determine their mean and standard deviation scores. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences will be utilized to compare their speaking abilities before and after being taught how to interview. The statistical difference between the means will be determined by computing the mean scores and standard deviation. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of interviews on speaking skills and offer critical insights into how they can be used to improve these skills.

IV. FINDINGS

Two evaluators assessed the students' speaking skills, covering various aspects such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The evaluation was carried out in the pre-test and post-test trials for the control and experiment groups. Upon analyzing the descriptive statistics, it is evident that the mean post-test scores for both the control and experiment groups were higher than their respective mean pre-test scores. Specifically, the control group had a mean pre-test score of 5.9500, which increased to 7.800 in the post-test. Similarly, the experiment group had a mean pre-test score of 6.100, which increased to 9.900 in the post-test. This observation indicates that the intervention implemented positively impacted the students in the experimental group, as their score improvement was significantly higher compared to that of the control group.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	Control Pre-test	5.9500	20	5.53910	1.23858
	Control Post-test	7.8000	20	5.14628	1.15074
Experiment	Experiment Pre-test	6.1000	20	3.30709	.73949
	Experiment Post-test	9.9000	20	5.15956	1.15371

TABLE 2
GROUP STATISTICS

		Group 1	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	Experiment		20	6.1000	3.30709	.73949
	Control		20	5.9500	5.53910	1.23858

TABLE 3
GROUP STATISTICS

		Group 1	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	Experiment		20	9.9000	5.15956	1.15371
	Control		20	7.8000	5.14628	1.15074

The paired sample correlations between the pre-test and post-test showed a higher degree of correspondence for the pre-test and post-test in the control group than the experiment group, indicating that some level of difference exists in the students speaking skills in the experiment group (pre-test and post-test).

TABLE 4
PAIRED SAMPLES CORRELATIONS

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Control	Control Pre-test & Control Post-test	20	.808	.000
Experiment	Experiment Pre-test & Experiment Post-test	20	.321	.167

The paired sample test for the pre-test and post-test in the control group showed a lesser difference of -1.8500 compared to the difference in the pre-test and post-test of the experiment group (-3.800). These results showed that the

post-test for the experiment group was significantly different from the control group, even though there was a significant difference between the control and experimental groups.

TABLE 5
PAIRED SAMPLES TEST

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Control	Control Pre-test Control Post-test	-1.85000	3.3289	.74436	-3.40797	-.29203	-2.485	19	0.022
Experiment	Experiment Pre-test Experiment Post-test	-3.80000	5.1565	1.15303	-6.21332	-1.38668	-3.296	19	0.004

One of the assumptions of the t-test is the homogeneity of the variance in the two groups which are meant to be compared. It can be deduced from Levene’s test for equality of variance that there is no difference in the variance of the control and experiment speaking skills. Hence the result from the t-test analysis is validated. From the results, it can be observed that the mean of speaking skills for the control group (5.9500) is significantly different from the experimental group (9.900) of the students, and the t-test for equality of mean showed a significant difference of p-value < 0.05). It can be concluded that the intervention of speaking skills in the experimental group is very effective compared to the control group.

TABLE 6
GROUP STATISTICS

	Trial	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Speaking Skill	Control	20	5.9500	5.53910	1.23858
	Experiment	20	9.9000	5.15956	1.15371

TABLE 7
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Speaking Skill	Equal variances assumed	.030	.862	-2.334	38	.025	-3.9500	1.69267	-7.37663	-.52337
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.334	37.81	.025	-3.9500	1.69267	-7.37720	-.52280

V. DISCUSSION

The findings from the research on students' speaking skills have yielded promising results for the experimental group. The intervention that was implemented had a significant impact on the improvement of their speaking skills. These results provide strong evidence to support the hypothesis that the experimental group performed better than the control group. The scores collected during this study effectively measured the difference in the attainment of speaking skills between the two groups. Moreover, they were instrumental in determining the significant difference in performance between the experimental and control groups. The positive outcomes of this study suggest that interview activities can be a useful tool for students to enhance their English speaking proficiency. This research provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of instructional methods that can help students improve their speaking skills, ultimately leading to better academic and career opportunities.

VI. CONCLUSION

In Iraq, English is considered a foreign language, and learners often require assistance since it is not commonly used in their day-to-day conversations or something they are naturally familiar with. The significance of instructors in creating a dynamic learning environment for teaching speaking cannot be understated. Their role is crucial in aiding learners to develop and improve their English speaking skills. The interview technique is one of the basic and effective speaking-learning techniques instructors use. It is a form of communication that uses questions and responses to interact. By stimulating the cognitive processes in the brain, it is an excellent way to learn how to speak effectively. Research findings and discussions show that the interview technique improves students' speaking skills, as evidenced by improved scores. The students improved their speaking abilities by actively participating in the practice sessions where they interviewed their friends and shared their opinions on various topics. In conclusion, the interview technique is an effective way to improve students' speaking skills. It provides a platform for students to engage in active learning,

enhancing their communication skills and boosting their confidence when speaking English. By creating a dynamic environment for teaching speaking subjects, instructors can help their students overcome language barriers and communicate effectively in English.

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