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**Exploring the EFL Pupils' Speaking Difficulties Faced with Learning
English at Primary Level**

The case of fourth grade primary school at Kaci Mouhand Seroual School at Bejaia

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in Linguistics at the University of Bejaia.

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Abstract

The present study investigates the obstacles faced by primary school pupils in speaking English, some reasons behind them, and suggests strategies to overcome these difficulties. In order to reach the aim of this research, a descriptive design is employed which focuses on classroom observations, and a semi-structured interview as data collection tools. The participants are fourth grade pupils in Kaci Mouhand Serouel primary school at Bejaia, and four English language teachers from different primary schools in the city of Bejaia. The classroom observation was conducted with a group of learners aged between nine and ten years old during seven sessions. The semi-structured interview was designed for the teachers of English. The results obtained from the study reveal that the majority of primary school pupils encounter difficulties in speaking mainly in pronunciation, grammar structure, and limited vocabulary. In addition, the results indicate that psychological factors (anxiety and shyness), social factors (limited exposure to English, and background knowledge), linguistic factors (mother tongue influence), and pedagogical factors (teaching methods and techniques) are some of the reasons behind the pupils' speaking difficulties.

Key words: *English language, young pupils, primary school educations, speaking difficulties, reasons of speaking difficulties.*

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to my lovely persons, to my dearest father who always guides me, and supports me, to my beloved mother who has shaped my life with love and unwavering support, to my amazing little brother Yanis who encourages, and gives the strength during all the process.

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Dedication

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List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

CBLT: Competency-Based Language Teaching

CA: Communicative Approach

APA: American Psychological Association

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1. Background of the study

In the last few years, English has emerged as the preeminent language for international communication. According to Crystal (2003), English is spoken by more people around the world than any other language and is regularly described as a truly ‘global’ language. With the rising need for the English language in the third world as a linguistic means of interchange and a tool to maintain international relationships, its presence in real context cannot be undervalued. Hence, with globalization and the increasing importance of this language, there has been a growing emphasis on the English language in the Algerian education in recent decades. The Algerian government has recognized the significance of English language proficiency for international communication, economic development, and educational advancement. As a result, various initiatives have been implemented to promote the teaching and learning of English from the middle level across the country since the independence of Algeria in 1962, (Brooker, 2018).

Towards undergone significant development and transformation over the years, these initiatives included curriculum reforms, teacher-training programs, and the introduction of the English language to primary schools in 2022. English is typically introduced as a second foreign language in Algerian schools, its curriculum usually focuses on developing basic language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with an increasing emphasis on communicative competence and oral performance. In this regard, the focus on enhancing communicative competencies shows the essential role of speaking as a prior language skill in the pupils’ language learning process.

Moreover, Scrivener (2005) stated that there is no point in knowing a lot about language if we cannot use it. This, supports the modern linguistic principles which claim that oral language is considered as the basic form of any language. However, learning two foreign languages simultaneously can be complicated according to our own experience with pupils’ supporting courses for the English language, especially in the Algerian context where they are learning French and English in addition to Arabic and Tamazight. Therefore, pupils consider it as a challenge despite their cognitive capacities and their young age. The majority of them may have difficulties in improving speaking skills in the target language, especially as a new subject. Therefore, adding another language to the learners’ program in primary school means making them deal with difficulties in the English language in addition to the three other languages separately. Particularly in speaking sessions, it is hard for pupils to express

themselves orally and it is a hard mission for teachers too who are meant to make them interact.

2. Statement of the Problem

English is currently taught in Algerian primary schools after years of debates and investigation. Since learning begins at this stage, adding a second foreign language could negatively affect pupils' learning of both the new language and other languages. Based on our own experience with pupils' supporting courses for the English language, we observed that studying English as a second foreign language in addition to French in primary school may present challenges with various abilities including the language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Many researchers found that most of the language learners encounter challenges in the speaking skill due to many factors. According to Al Hosni (2014), learners face linguistic challenges, language barriers, and inhibitions in speaking skills. They struggle with vocabulary and grammatical structures, forming coherent sentences, and resorting to their mother tongue. Additionally, fear of making mistakes in front of peers also leads to avoid oral communication. Thus, this study is an investigation to explore the different difficulties faced by Algerian primary school pupils in the speaking skills. In addition, to identify the reasons behind them, and suggesting strategies to overcome these difficulties.

3. Research Questions

- 1- What are the difficulties EFL pupils face when speaking the English language?
- 2- What are some of the reasons behind these difficulties?
- 3- How can these difficulties be overcome?

4. The Significance of the Study

Based on our observation, pupils in Algerian primary schools face difficulties in learning the English language, most notably in speaking skills, due to many reasons. This study is conducted to explore the different difficulties and obstacles that pupils in primary schools in Algeria encounter in developing their speaking skill. The results of the study may contribute in finding some strategies that help both teachers and learners to overcome these difficulties. As for the syllabus designers, this work can be beneficial and helpful to develop an appropriate syllabus for primary school pupils.

5. The aim of the study

This research aims at exploring the different difficulties that primary school pupils face in the speaking skill. Besides, it aims at identifying some factors and reasons behind these difficulties, in addition to suggest strategies to overcome these difficulties.

6. The participants

The participants of the research are fourth year pupils of Kaci Mouhand primary school and a group of teachers of English in primary schools. As a sample, using the selective sampling technique, we have chosen one group of learners aged between nine and ten years old and four primary school teachers of English from Bejaia.

7. Research Design, Methodology, and Procedures

The study is descriptive since it aims to describe and explore pupils' difficulties in the speaking skill, following a qualitative method design. The participants are a primary school group consisting of thirty-one pupils aged between nine and ten years old, and four English teachers from different primary schools in Bejaia city. Data collection for the study involves observations and interviews with the participants. Observation took place in the class for seven sessions to determine the difficulties and errors of children, and a semi-structured interview is conducted with four English language teachers, aimed at knowing their opinions about pupils' difficulties in speaking.

8. Research Instruments

For the objective of gathering data for the study, we used a descriptive design using qualitative tools. The research uses an observation grid for fourth-grade primary school learners to observe their speaking. As well as a semi-structured interview with English language teachers to determine the factors affecting the speaking competence and provide solutions to overcome speaking difficulties.

9. The structure of the work

The work starts with a general introduction that gives an overview for the readers and ends with a general conclusion, and contains two main chapters. The first chapter reports theoretical background about the variables. It consists of three sections, the first section focuses on the English language. The second section deals with teaching/learning the speaking skill in the EFL context. Furthermore, the final part is devoted to the speaking skill,

and a review of related previous studies. In addition, the second chapter deals with the practical part of the research. It consists of three sections, the first one is a description of the methodology, and the second section focuses on the analysis of the data, and the discussion of the findings and results, whereas, the third section deals with the implications, limitations and suggestions for further research.

Chapter one: Theoretical Background

Introduction

In this chapter, the researchers attempt to review the important studies that have been done on foreign languages in Algeria, the teaching and learning process, and the speaking skill. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the English language and its importance, including its status in Algeria. The second section deals with teaching/learning definition, its importance, teaching speaking skill methods, approaches, techniques, and learning styles. Furthermore, the final part is devoted to the definition of the speaking skill, its importance, aspects, and affecting factors.

Section one: English language

1.1. Definition of language

Language refers to a system of communication used by people to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. It includes the use of words, sentences, and symbols. Burling et al. (1993, p. 25) argued, that “human beings use at least two fundamentally different forms of communication. One includes language and some other closely related signals, the other most of our nonverbal communication.” Accordingly, language includes spoken and written words as well as non-verbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions...etc. Therefore, it is a way for people to understand what others say or want to say. Furthermore, language refers to human beings because it facilitates communication, knowledge acquisition, and cultural understanding.

Moreover, people around the world do not use the same language, so they need to learn different languages to facilitate communication between them. Thus, a foreign language is described as a language native to a different region than the one where the speakers or learners are located (Kioko 2018). Therefore, a foreign language is the non-native language of a specific community or speaker. It is a language that is spoken in different countries, and is

not used in person's daily life. Learning a foreign language needs the study of its semantics, phonology, morphology, and syntax.

On the other hand, the most dominant language in the world is English, which is the common medium for communication, cultural exchange, and even knowledge exchange. English is usually the language of interaction in scientific conferences, universities, and all over the world (Xue & Zuo, 2013). In addition, Rindal (2014, p.1) claimed that "the concept English represents various dimensions: for instance, English is the name of a European people, and it is also the language as spoken by people in that country (as well as in several other countries, depending on the definition of other concepts such as speaker and language)". Thus, English is a widely used language and serves as a means of communication in the world. Its influence extends to many fields such as science, business, and technology, making it an essential language in today's connected world.

1.2. The importance of the English language

Language has a great importance it is the basic tool of communication, knowledge exchange, and cultural relations. It plays an important role in the acquisition of knowledge, access to information, education. Thus, Welch et al. (2008, p.357) claimed, that "we have exposed the pervasive and dynamic influence of language on the whole knowledge transfer system, acting as a powerful reconfiguration". Therefore, language plays an important role in human life as it expresses the cultural perspectives, and traditions. Additionally, it is important to contribute to intercultural communication, allowing an appreciation of cultural differences. Furthermore, according to Hubáčková (2017) understanding other cultures, various ways of life, and intercultural communication are all built upon a foundation of knowledge in foreign languages. Therefore, foreign languages allow a person to communicate and understand people from different cultures. Mastering a foreign language will provide many different opportunities, such as integrating with different cultures, opening various opportunities to participate in a multilingual world. In addition, Nishanthi (2018, p. 871) highlights, that "in today's global world, the importance of English cannot be denied and ignored since English is the greatest common language spoken universally". Thus, English is important for effective communication and is a popular tool for international business, educational and cultural exchanges.

1.3. English language Policy in Algeria

1.3.1. Language planning and Policy

In sociolinguistics, language planning is a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure, or acquisition of languages or language varieties within a speech community. According to Cooper (1989, p.8) language planning is "the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community". More precisely, language planning involves the establishment of language regulators, such as formal or informal agencies, committees, societies or academies to design or develop new structures to meet contemporary needs (Lehmann, 1983). In few words, according to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) language policy is set of ideas, regulations, instructions and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in a particular society.

1.3.2. English policy in Algeria

The historical context of the Algerian sociolinguistic situation is the main cause of several changes in language planning and policy in general. Thus, with colonialism, which imposed French as a second language and with Arabisation after independence, the English language has been added to the linguistic system in Algeria due to globalization. According to Belallem (2012, p. 2-3), "English was developed within the Algerian educational system for political reasons." He added, that English was taught from the second year of middle school and more English language departments opened their doors in different universities, as was the design and publication of Algerian-made English language teaching textbooks and learning materials. Furthermore, as it has been stated by Belmihoub (2012, p. 21), "people have started to give more importance to foreign languages, especially French and English. The global status of English enables it to gain power in Algeria in addition to the relations developed between Algeria and the United States." This means that globalization significantly affected the Algerian government policy. In this context, English tends to gain more power and importance in Algeria thanks to its global status compared to French, whose status in the world continues to decline. However, Mami (2013, p. 912) states, "As a matter of fact, English has been defined as a second foreign language at the beginning of the 1990s, and as a first foreign language after the 2000's reform, to gain the status of the language of science and technology used in lifelong learning in recent years". Meliani (2000, p. 27) adds, "As a first step, the Algerian government launched various cultural and academic programs with

different countries to promote the status of English in a competitive linguistic environment.” Recently, after trying to consolidate this language, English was implemented in 3rd-year primary school to be taught. Furthermore, starting from November 2022, the Algerian government started to introduce English as a medium of instruction in higher education and scientific research.

Section two: Teaching and Learning the Speaking Skill in EFL context

2.1. Definition of learning and teaching a foreign language

Foreign language teaching and learning refers to the process of achieving proficiency in a language that is not one's native language or mother tongue. Learning a foreign language involves acquiring and learning vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and communication skills through various activities. Therefore, Phillips (2007, p. 266) argued, that “educators and scholars talk about foreign language education in terms of communicative competencies, proficiencies, cross-cultural experiences, and multiple literacies.” While, Khuziakhmetov, et al. (2019, p.1044) claim, “the organization of knowledge in the course of studying a foreign language is carried out within the framework of teaching students productive social interaction in a foreign environment”. Thus, foreign language teaching includes guiding and facilitating the learning process of learners, that is, using effective methods, techniques and strategies and creating appropriate learning situations, and environments, to help them develop foreign language skills. Ultimately, foreign language learning and teaching is about facilitating effective communication and cultural engagement in non-native languages.

2.2. The importance of teaching and learning a foreign language

In today's world, it is important for people to learn a foreign language in order to have effective communication, understand different cultures, and have access to different opportunities. Thus, Wagaba (2011, p.98) argued, that “since learning a foreign language implies learning about people and their cultures, language teaching and learning can be considered one way of acquiring valuable, transferable skills and knowledge that can be used in creating knowledge networks.” Therefore, teaching and learning a foreign language is an important part of one's education. According to Xue & Zuo (2013), being able to speak and

understand another language that is different from the mother tongue, helps to overcome problems and build relationships with others. It also helps to develop people's cultural awareness and comprehension, as it allows for understanding and respecting different traditions, customs, and even points of view. Foreign language teaching and learning create various opportunities such as facilitating traveling and getting different jobs. In addition, Jasim (2021, p.1) claims, that "Learning a second language provides several advantages, and it can be beneficial for people and society." Therefore, teaching and learning a foreign language is essential to communicate effectively with others, being aware of their culture, and facilitates many job opportunities.

2.3. Methods and approaches of teaching the speaking skills in EFL context

Within the general area of methodology, people talk about approaches, methods, techniques, procedures and models, all of which go into the practice of English teaching. These terms, though somewhat vague, are different (Harmer, 2007).

2.3.1. Definition of approach and method

According to Harmer (2007)

"people use the term approach to refer to theories about the nature of language and language learning which are the source of the way things are done in the classroom and which provide the reasons for doing them. An approach describes how language is used and how its constituent parts interlock; it offers a model of language competence. An approach describes how people acquire their knowledge of the language and makes statements about the conditions which will promote successful language learning". (p.62).

Therefore, Harmer (2007) defines the method as the practical realization of an approach. The originators of a method have arrived at decisions about types of activities, roles of teachers and learners, the kinds of material, which will be helpful, and some model of syllabus organization.

2.3.2. Methods of teaching the speaking skills in EFL context

There are several and different methods in language teaching, but each method emphasizes on using a specific skill among the four skills (writing, reading, listening, and speaking). To improve the speaking skill, teachers can use these three methods: the direct method, the audio-lingual method and the silent way.

2.3.2.1. Direct method

At the end of the nineties, the direct method arrived as the product of a reform movement that was reacting, to the restrictions of Grammar-translation (Harmer, 2007).

According to Harmer (2007)

“direct method was abandoned in favour of the teacher and the students speaking together, relating the grammatical forms they were studying to objects and pictures, etc., in order to establish their meaning. The sentence was still the main object of interest, and accuracy was all-important. Crucially, it was considered vitally important that only the target language should be used in the classroom.” (p.63).

In general, teaching focuses on the development of oral skills.

Characteristic of the direct method

- Teaching concepts and vocabulary through pantomiming, real-life objects and other visual materials (Harmer 2007).
- Teaching grammar by using an inductive approach (i.e. having learners find out rules through the presentation of adequate linguistic forms in the target language) (Harmer 2007).
- The centrality of spoken language (including a native-like pronunciation) (Harmer 2007).
- Focus on question–answer patterns (Harmer 2007).

2.3.2.2. Audio-lingual method

It is a method used in teaching foreign languages that prioritizes speaking and listening over reading and writing, and encourages the banning of the mother tongue in the classroom. According to Reimann (2018), the audio-lingual method is based on Skinner’s behaviour theory, in which he argues that certain traits of living things, in this case humans, could be trained through a system of reinforcement. The correct use of a trait would receive positive feedback, while the incorrect use of that trait would receive negative feedback. Therefore, when it comes to the application of this theory in the classroom, the teacher would present the correct model of a sentence, and the students would have to repeat it (Reimann, 2018). The teacher would then continue by presenting new words for the students to sample in the same structure. In the audio-lingual method, there is no explicit grammar instruction

because everything is simply memorized in form. Therefore, the idea is for the students to practice the particular construct until they can use it spontaneously (Reimann, 2018).

2.3.2.3. The Silent way

The Silent Way is a language-teaching approach developed by Caleb Gattegno that makes extensive use of silence as a teaching method. Gattegno (1972) introduced the method in 1963, in his book “Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: The Silent Way”. The method emphasizes learner autonomy and active student participation. According to Gattegno (1972), silence is used as a tool to achieve this goal. The teacher uses a mixture of silence and gestures to focus students' attention, to elicit responses from them, and to encourage them to correct their own errors. Pronunciation is seen as fundamental to the method; with a great deal of time spent on it each lesson. The Silent Way uses a structural syllabus and concentrates on teaching a small number of functional and versatile words (Gattegno, 1972). Translation and rote repetition are avoided, and the language is usually practiced in meaningful contexts. Evaluation is done by observation, and the teacher may never set a formal test (Gattegno, 1972).

The Silent Way was conceived as a special case of Gattegno's broader educational principles, which he had developed to solve general problems in learning, and which he had previously applied to the teaching of mathematics and of spelling in the mother tongue (Gattegno, 1972).

The principles of the Silent Way

- Teachers should concentrate on how students learn, not on how to teach (Gattegno, 1972).
- Imitation and drill are not the primary means by which students learn (Gattegno, 1972).
- Learning consists of trial and error, deliberate experimentation, suspending judgment, and revising conclusions (Gattegno, 1972).
- In learning, learners draw on everything that they already know, especially their native language (Gattegno, 1972).
- The teacher must not interfere with the learning process (Gattegno, 1972).

The general goal of the Silent Way is to help beginning-level students gain basic fluency in the target language, with the ultimate aim being near-native language proficiency and good pronunciation. An important part of this ability is being able to use the language for

self-expression; students should be able to express their thoughts, feelings, and needs in the target language.

2.3.3. Approaches of teaching speaking skills in EFL context

Among all the language-teaching approaches, we selected these following approaches which concern the speaking skill. Communicative language teaching (CLT) and Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT).

2.3.3.1. Communicative language teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT), or the communicative approach (CA), is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. The rise of CLT in the 1970s and early 1980s was partly in response to the lack of success with traditional language teaching methods (Rambe, 2017). According to CLT, the goal of language education is the ability to communicate in the target language. This is in contrast to previous views in which grammatical competence was commonly given top priority (Rambe, 2017). CLT also positions the teacher as a facilitator, rather than an instructor. Furthermore, the approach is a non-methodical system that does not use a textbook series to teach the target language but works on developing sound oral and verbal skills prior to reading and writing. Hence, Harmer (2007, p.69) states, “One of the things that CLT embraces within its family is the concept of how language is used”. Harmer (2007) added that,

“The concern was with spoken functions as much as with written grammar, and notions of when and how it was appropriate to say certain things were of primary importance. Thus, communicative language teachers taught people to invite and apologize, to agree and disagree, alongside making sure they could use the past perfect of the second conditional”. (p.69)

In addition, major strand of CLT centres around the essential belief that if students are involved in meaning-focused communicative tasks, then language learning will take care of itself and that plentiful exposure to language in use and plenty of opportunities to use it are vitally important for a student's development of knowledge and skill (Rambe, 2017). According to (Harmer, 2007) in CLT, activities typically involve students in real or realistic communication, where the successful achievement of the communicative task they are performing is at least as important as the accuracy of their language use. Thus, role-play and simulation have become very popular in CLT. For example, students might simulate a

television program or a scene at an airport - or they might put together the simulated front page of a newspaper (Harmer, 2007). Moreover, it includes many interactive activities such as, role-plays, interviews, games and surveys that are completed in pairs or small groups, requiring debate, negotiation, and compromise (Harmer, 2007).

2.3.3.2. Competency-Based Language Teaching

Competency-Based Language Teaching is the application of the principles of Competency-Based Education to language teaching. It focuses more on the outputs rather than the inputs. Therefore, it is a performance-based instruction with which the goal is to address what the learners are expected to do with the language (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), competency-based language teaching (CBLT) focuses on outcomes of learning. CBLT addresses what the learners are expected to do rather than what they are expected to learn about. This approach originates from Competency-based education (CBE), an educational movement emerging in the United States in the 1970s (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Moreover, CBLT advocates defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of knowledge, skills, and behaviors students should possess at the end of a course of study. They add that standards are important to CBLT. Competency-based language teaching lies within behavioural tradition and competencies have a strong resemblance to performance objectives in that it focuses on what learners should be able to do. However, one difference between competencies and performance objectives is the level of generality. That is, objectives are more specific than competencies (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

2.4. Techniques for teaching the speaking skills

Techniques for teaching the speaking skill are the specific procedures or activities used by teachers to help learners develop and improve their oral communication skills. These techniques are designed to create effective learning situations that help develop speaking fluency, accuracy, and self-confidence. Thus, Brown (2001) states principles to design techniques for teaching the speaking skills. Therefore, based on these principles, the major speaking techniques that are used by teachers to develop and enhance learners' communication abilities are:

2.4.1. Role-plays

In EFL classrooms, role-play is an important technique used to improve and enhance language learning and oral communication skills. Through it, learners have the opportunity to play different roles and simulate real life conversations and interactions. It develops active participation, fluency and accuracy in the use of the target language by learners. In addition, role-plays provide an active and dynamic learning experience, environment, and allow learners to improve their speaking (Liu & Ding, 2009).

2.3.2. Language games

According to Yaccob and Yunus (2019), language games are activities used in language teaching to master the speaking skill. It allows learners to practice communication in a fun manner, focusing on different aspects such as pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, etc. Language games are designed to make both teaching and learning enjoyable.

2.4.3. Group work

Group work or cooperative work in teaching speaking refers to activities and tasks that make learners work together in small groups to practice and develop their speaking abilities. It provides different opportunities for the learners to engage in interactions, participate in conversations, and collaborate with each other to learn from each other with the use of the target language (Kasim, 2015).

2.4.4. Model and repeat

The teacher can use either his or her own voice or native speakers' audio-recordings to practice the target language's structure, pronunciation, and intonation. This will encourage learners to repeat it to practice fluency and accuracy (Kuliahana and Marzuki, 2020).

2.4.5. Discussions and debates

Invite learners to engage in discussions and debates on different topics that they are familiar with, motivates them to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions. This will help them improve their ability to communicate effectively (Astati, 2019).

2.4.6. Error correction

According to (Gumbaridze, 2013), the error correction technique is very important in teaching the speaking skills. It involves correcting or restating the learner's errors in the

correct form. It is important to provide feedback indirectly, this makes the learner aware of their errors and encourages self-correction in other spoken activities

2.5. Learning styles

Learning styles refer to individual preferences in acquiring, learning, and processing information. Thus, Pashler et al. (2008, p. 105) state that “the term learning styles refers to the view that different people learn information in different way”. In other words, it is how each person receives, understands, and retains his knowledge. The concept of learning styles suggests that people have different favourite ways to learn and understand new information. These preferences may vary between people, and understanding the subject matter can help teachers change their teaching strategies to meet the needs of their learners. Moreover, there are four main common learning styles including visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic.

2.5.1. Visual learners

According to Philominraj et al. (2017), visual learners are people who prefer to learn and understand information using visual aids. They use images, diagrams, charts, graphs, and other visual presentations to learn and retain new concepts. Visual learners prefer to see presented information rather than verbal explanations or written text.

Characteristics of visual learners

- They like to learn using visual materials (Philominraj et al., 2017).
- They remember things better when they can see them (Philominraj et al., 2017).
- They may have difficulty in learning only through listening and reading (Philominraj et al., 2017).
- They use color and visual elements to express their ideas (Philominraj et al., 2017).
- Illustrations and examples they see help them learn more easily (Philominraj et al., 2017).

2.5.2. Auditory learners

These individuals like to learn by listening and hearing new concepts. They learn best when information is presented orally, such as through lectures, discussions, or audio-recordings. They have the ability to remember what they have heard, and they enjoy working with tasks that contain verbal communication and oral presentations (Masela and Subekti, 2021).

Characteristics of auditory learners

- They prefer to learn through listening to the input (Masela and Subekti, 2021).
- They learn and understand the information better when it is oral (Masela and Subekti, 2021).
- Verbal explanations help them to learn better than the written ones (Masela and Subekti, 2021).
- They like learning through oral presentations, group activities (Masela and Subekti, 2021).

2.5.3. Reading/ writing learners

They are people who like to learn by reading and writing. They understand and remember information better when it is written down. They enjoy reading books, taking notes, and doing writing activities. They know how to organize knowledge and ideas and express themselves through written communication (Pashler et al., 2008).

Characteristics of reading/ writing learners

- They prefer learning through reading and writing (Pashler et al., 2008).
- They understand the information better when it is written (Pashler et al., 2008).
- They like reading books, journals, articles and written materials (Pashler et al., 2008).
- They express themselves and their ideas through writing (Pashler et al., 2008).
- They develop their vocabulary through reading (Pashler et al., 2008).

2.5.4. Kinesthetic learners

According to Rujani (2019), kinesthetic learners are the type of people who like to learn by doing. They learn and understand best when they use their senses in the learning process. They need to be physically active and enjoy activities such as role-playing, experiments, demonstrations, and other interactive activities to have a better understanding of the information, they are generally found in scientific classes.

Characteristics of kinesthetic learners

- They enjoy learning by physical movements (Rujani, 2019).
- They understand the information when they can engage their senses like in chemical experiences (Rujani, 2019).

- They have difficulties in understanding through theoretical lectures (Rujani, 2019).
- They can move on while learning (Rujani, 2019).

Section three: The Speaking Skill

3.1. Definition of the speaking skill

Mastering any second or a foreign language requires the ability to use it fluently and spontaneously, that is why speaking is considered the most important language skill. Shalaby and Badr (2024, p. 139) stated that, "the ability to speak effectively is a crucial skill that enables individuals to communicate their thoughts and ideas, enhance communications, and facilitate participation in various aspects of life ". In other words, speaking is the ability to express ideas orally in order to satisfy the urge to interact with other individuals. Brown (2004, p.140) also defined speaking as "the product of creative constructions of linguistic strings. It means that speaking is the use of a set of linguistic systems such as lexis and semantics."

Moreover, speaking is the active use of language to convey meaning, and spoken language serves as a medium for young language learners to encounter, comprehend, practice, and acquire new languages (Al Hosni, 2014). Thus, speaking is a means of acquiring, comprehending, and using a new language. According to Diaab (2016, p.3), " speaking places a great demand on students who believe that foreign language learners are judged by how good they are at speaking the language, and thus worry about performing in public". In addition, speaking is sharing information, emotions or ideas between two persons and sharing meaningful speech through expressing or, more based on, a specific context (Thornbury 2005). Furthermore, speaking is the process of producing meaning and sharing it by using verbal and nonverbal communication in different situations (Chaney, 1998).

According to these definitions, speaking is a process or an act of producing and sharing meaningful speech through expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a specific context using verbal and nonverbal communication. In foreign language learning, speaking is among the four essential needed skills to learn and master a language, so it is important for

learners to develop this skill in order to enhance their oral production and have effective communication.

3.2. The Importance of the speaking skill

EFL learners need to enhance and improve their communicative skills, mainly speaking. Thus, Qureshi, et al. (2020, p. 6020) declared, that "people cannot survive without communication. They need to express their thoughts, views and opinion and this need can be fulfilled through language". In other terms, it is found that speaking is the most important skill among all the languages, because learners can have discussions with others; express their feelings, ideas, and information with correct spoken language. In addition, teachers of foreign languages are in need to create an appropriate learning situation and extend their confidence in speaking skills because of their importance (Leonita et al., 2023). Moreover, Dilobar (2022, p.34) claimed, that "they need to learn communication skills in order to fulfill their ambitions, desires, and goals". In view of this, speaking helps learners to communicate effectively, gain fluency and accuracy, and be exposed to academic and professional opportunities.

At the same time, researchers observed that the speaking skill plays an important role in the class. Thus, the speaking skill has a positive impact on academic achievement, they help learners learn and acquire the language, express their ideas, and have meaningful conversations. It also helps the learners to build their vocabulary, understand grammar, and improve their comprehension.

3.3. Aspects of the speaking skill

Effective communication relies on the mastery of some aspects of speaking so, Brown (2001) states some aspects of oral performance that can help learners assess their speaking, which are vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and accuracy.

3.3.1. Vocabulary

Learning a second or a foreign language requires the use of a variety of words to achieve effective communication. This refers to "vocabulary". Vocabulary is important when communicating in a second language. Without a range of vocabulary used, the learner cannot transmit a comprehensible message or piece of information. In other words, having an adequate repertoire in a target language helps learners to express themselves correctly, organize their thoughts and ideas, and even understand and respond to the spoken language.

Thus, learning vocabulary becomes an essential part of second language learning according to many EFL teachers and researchers, as it is a central aim for learners to develop their oral production and communication in the target language (Ishtiaq et al., 2018). Therefore, teachers of EFL classes focus on teaching new words, to help learners improve their spoken language in dialogues, conversations or even oral presentations, and using them in different contexts and situations. In addition, Alqahtani (2015, p.21) argued that "vocabulary learning is an essential part of foreign language learning as the meanings of new words are very often emphasized, whether in books or in classrooms. It is also central to language teaching and is of paramount importance to a language learner."

3.3.2. Pronunciation

Harmer (2009, p.248) defines pronunciation as "the way a certain sound or sounds are produced. Unlike ARTICULATION which refers to the actual production of speech sounds in the mouth, pronunciation stresses more the way sounds are perceived by the hearer, and often relates the spoken word to its written form". According to Richards, J. C., and Richard S (2010, p. 469), "pronunciation is the way a certain sound or sounds are produced. Unlike articulation, which refers to the actual production of speech sounds in the mouth, pronunciation stresses more the way sounds are perceived by the hearer". In other words, pronunciation is how learners produce the language sounds correctly, to be understood by the hearer, so teaching pronunciation to EFL learners is important because it raises their awareness about the different sounds that exist and how they are pronounced.

3.3.3. Grammar

Grammar and speaking are interrelated aspects, because having good grammar knowledge helps learners attain effective and successful oral communication. It makes learners aware of the tenses to use, how to use them to avoid an incomprehensible message or misunderstanding. Zam et al. (2021, p.) argued, that "grammar as one component of accuracy besides vocabulary and pronunciation in the speaking skill should not be neglected because without grammar the speech produced will be inaccurate". In other words, grammar is an important aspect of the speaking skill because, without well-structured and complete sentences, the message, idea, or information cannot be understood.

3.3.4. Fluency and Accuracy

Learning a second or a foreign language means learning to use it fluently and accurately, according to Harmer (2009, p.142), " a distinction is often made between accuracy

and fluency". That is there is a difference between these two concepts. Nunan (2015, p.54) claimed that, "accuracy refers to the extent to which the learners' speech is grammatically acceptable, with clear, intelligible pronunciation and an appropriate choice of vocabulary". In other words, accuracy means that foreign language beginners need to use and speak it with its correct grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation without pauses or hesitation; otherwise, they will not have accuracy in their oral production. Nunan (2015, p.54) defines fluency as "the extent to which the learner can speak at an acceptable speed with few false starts and hesitations".

According to the definitions given above, accuracy refers to the capacity to communicate in a language without errors in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary...etc. Whereas, fluency refers to the ability to express oneself orally without hesitation, stress, or frequent pauses. Thus, accuracy and fluency are closely related, and it is not possible for foreign language learners to possess only one of them in order to claim mastery of the language.

3.4. Factors affecting the speaking skill

In any foreign language learning situation, learners are affected by some factors that determine the effective and less effective impact on their learning process. Therefore, Tuan & Mai, (2015) stated that the factors that result from performance conditions such as time constraints, preparation, performance standards, and level of support, in addition to, affective factors like motivation, confidence, and anxiety as well as listening skills, and feedback during speaking activities can all have an impact on students' speaking performance. Based on this idea, the factors influencing pupils' oral performance can be divided into four categories: psychological factors, social factors, pedagogical factors, and linguistic factors.

3.4.1. Psychological factors

According to Thornbury (2005), the most frequent psychological barriers preventing students from speaking are shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, and fear of making mistakes.

3.4.1.1. Anxiety

The feeling of anxiety is a habitual phenomenon in EFL classes. However, the degree differs from one learner to another. In fact, anxiety is a complex phenomenon; it is a human feeling of fear, worry, and nervousness (Belegdair, 2015). Thus, most people experience

anxiety in work, in education, and in any life situation. In particular, anxiety is widespread among learners of foreign languages, negative feelings of apprehension learners experience during exams, presentations, and public speeches make them waste their energy and lose their concentration when performing tasks. According to Horwitz, et al. (1986, p.125), "anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system". Moreover, in psychology, anxiety is a psychosomatic concept generally defined as a condition of anxiety and fear as well as a vague apprehension usually linked to an object or phenomenon (Scovel, 1978). Besides, according to Heron, (2005) anxiety is one of the negative, influential affective elements that prevents learners from mastering the speaking skill. It causes feelings of nervousness and fear, which may lead to poor oral performance.

3.4.1.1.1. Types of anxiety

Psychologists have distinguished three different types of anxiety: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. For Scovel, (1978), trait anxiety is a relatively unwavering and enduring personality-specific quality with a tendency to be anxious most of the time. This means it becomes a part of the individual's personality. On the other hand, anxiety refers to a fleeting state or a reaction to a specific anxiety-provoking stimulus (Horwitz, 2001). While, Ellis (1994) explains that situation-specific anxiety refers to the insistent and multi-dimensional nature of some anxieties that can be provoked by an explicit type of state or stimulus such as speaking before an audience in public, certain interactive exams, and classroom participation.

3.4 .1.2. Motivation

According to Anjomshoa and Sadighi (2015), motivation is a complex human construct that has long posed difficulties for those who attempt to understand and explain it. Furthermore, Gardner (1985, p.10) defines motivation as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language." In addition, Brown (1987) believes that motivation is an inner feeling that guides the person to do a particular action. However, in psychology, motivation refers to the choice of people making objectives they will achieve or avoid and the effort made to realize them (Keller, 1983).

3.4.1.3. Self-esteem

Self-esteem can be defined as a feeling that describes the individual's opinion about himself/ herself. Therefore, this psychological factor plays an important role in the learner's oral performance, because without self-esteem the learner will face difficulties in expressing himself orally especially in the presence of the audience. For instance, according to Coopersmith, (1967) self-esteem is all about the assessment that a person makes and typically holds about oneself. It conveys an attitude of acceptance or disapproval and shows how much a person thinks they are capable, important, successful, and worthwhile. In other words, self-esteem is a person's assessment of their own deservingness, which is reflected in their attitudes toward themselves. Similarly as claimed by Yao (2023, p.1) that, "self-esteem refers to individuals' feelings of their worth of living in the world that impacts their psychological functioning."

3.4.2. Social factors

According to the American Psychological Association, social factors are the characteristics and variables of individuals that affect thought or behaviour in social contexts and influence outcomes or specific actions.

3.4.2.1. Attitudes towards the target language

According to Seven (2020, p.68), "attitude is one's set to react in a given way in a particular situation. It is relatively permanent and wider than interest. It limits and channels motives. It is a habitual response to identical and near-identical total situations. Attitude is not only a readiness for new experiences; it also creates the contours of the new experience and sets boundaries". Thus, as a social factor, attitude plays an essential role that cannot be undervalued in the language learning process (Cakici 2007). According to Cakici (2007), learning can be enhanced by learners who have good attitudes toward a language and the community's culture; however, negative attitudes hinder language learning. According to Gardner, (1985) rather than students' enthusiasm for studying a foreign language or the individuals who speak the target language, learners' attitudes toward learning the target language should be more important in achieving a high grade in target language competency. Likewise, attitude is a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behaviour (Baker, 1992).

3.3.2.2 .Age impact

The age of the learner is one of the most important factors affecting the foreign language learning process. According to Collier (1988), a successful language learning depends on the age of the learner. Indeed, some adolescents or adults who start to learn a second language would fail to achieve language fluency, while children who are exposed to a second language at an early age seem to be proficient like native speakers (Lenneberg, 1967). Similarly, people who begin learning a second language in childhood may generally achieve a higher level of proficiency than those who begin later (Singleton and Ryan, 2004).

3.4.2.3. The effect of multilingualism

Multilingualism is defined by Tucker (1999) as the use of more than one language by an individual or group of speakers. Thus, Kaushanskaya (2009) claims that people who speak more than one language have been reported to be better at language learning when compared to monolinguals. This means that multilingualism cannot be considered a negative factor. Furthermore, research conducted by Hofer and Jessner (2016) showed that early multilingual education had a significant positive effect. The children in the multilingual education program outperformed those who were exposed to traditional education. In other words, learning more than two languages simultaneously does not make a learner face a particular difficulty.

3.4.3. Linguistic factors

Linguistic factors refer to the cognitive abilities that learners possess about a particular language, which affect their learning process and development. In particular, speaking fluently is not simply a matter of developing speaking skills and strategies, but it involves a number of factors including affective factors, cognitive factors, performance factors, and linguistic factors (Thornbury 2005).

3.4.3.1. Background knowledge

Background knowledge or prior knowledge is the amount of information that we have about something or a specific subject. In foreign language learning, prior knowledge refers to the previous knowledge that we already have about the target language system and its components: phonology, semantics, syntax...etc. Thus, Wetzels et al. (2011) found that prior knowledge activation improved achievement on learning tasks that were related to the activated prior knowledge. The investigators proposed that prior knowledge activation serve a 'stage-setting function'. The activated prior knowledge 'set the stage' for new learning and

therefore improved the learning of new information that was related to the activated knowledge.

3.4.3.2. Mother tongue interference

Language interference is the influence that the learner's L1 exerts over the acquisition of L2 Ellis (1997). According to Wong (1987), even if a non-native speaker's vocabulary and grammar are excellent, but their pronunciation is below a certain threshold, they still cannot communicate effectively. In other word, the effect of the mother tongue cannot be neglected. Moreover, as it is stated by Ellis (1997), if the structures of the two languages differ noticeably, one would expect a relatively high frequency of errors in learning the second language, thus showing interference from the L1 to the L2.

3.4.3.3. Listening ability

According to Krashen and Terrell (1983), "reception" can only occur when people understand the message in the "target language". This means that learners cannot produce meaningful spoken language without listening and understanding the question for example. Therefore, learners can only improve their speaking skill if they develop their listening skill, learners must understand what is being said to them in order to have a successful dialogue, for instance when students speak, other students respond through the listening process (Doff, 1998). In addition, Shumin (1997) believes that the speaker has the role of both listener and speaker. We can conclude that students cannot respond if they do not understand what is being said to them. That is why the speaking is very closely related to listening.

3.4.4. Pedagogical factors

According to Bishop and Starkey (2006, p. 119), "pedagogy is to the art, science or profession of teaching." This means that pedagogy tends to identify the process and the way of teaching, including methods, approaches, techniques and strategies that a teacher uses and which makes each teacher's pedagogy different from the other. From this previous explanation, we can say that pedagogical factors are all about teaching and learning strategies.

3.4.4.1. Teaching strategy

According to Rao (2019) EFL teachers are considered as the most important factor that helps students enhance the essential skills for oral communication in English. He added that teachers should apply different techniques to encourage students to use language without fear of making mistakes. However, Westwood (2008) defines teaching methods as a set of

principles used by teachers to help students learn, these methods are determined partly by the subject being taught and partly by the nature of the learner. For a particular teaching method to be appropriate and effective, it must take into account the learner, the nature of the subject, and the type of learning it intends to provide.

3.4.4.2. Learning strategy

Paudel (2019, p.87) stated, that “learning strategy is a person's approach to learning and using information for boosting up personal efficiency and ability in language use.” Thus, learning strategies involve knowing how to develop a plan for studying for a test, monitoring understanding of the content, clarifying the materials, and evaluating work (Sawyer et al, 1992). This means that this type of self-regulated learning is the key to successful learning and includes the development of such strategies as goal setting, self-instruction, and self-monitoring. Furthermore, language learning strategies is a term that refers to actions that language learners consciously take to help them learn or use language more effectively (Rose, 2015).

3.5. Literature review:

The results of numerous earlier investigations conducted by other researchers as well as other works that are relevant to our study will be presented and summarized in the current section. This section contains a review of the research on the key factors, which are the challenges involved in teaching the English language and the speaking skills in an EFL context.

A recent research was conducted by Khider (2023), where she investigated primary school pupils' engagement in learning English as a foreign language. From the results of this study, the author focused on explaining the significance of acknowledging the individual differences among learners (psychological, social and linguistic capacities) and shed light on the various roles and challenges that teachers typically faced when instructing young learners. Thus, as an important pedagogical factor that influences the EFL young learners, teachers play an essential role on identifying the quality and the efficacy of methods, strategies and techniques they use in order to achieve a better performance by pupils in classrooms.

A similar research conducted by Harzallah (2023) in investigating the problems and challenges of teaching English in Algerian primary school. The results showed that both teachers and learners face difficulties and challenges to deal with the English language as a

new experience in Algeria. Primary English language teachers encountered various challenges and difficulties, such as the early age of pupils, limited experience, lack of training opportunities and the absence of sufficient training opportunities such as : workshops, seminars, or professional development programs focused on English language teaching .Similarly with learners , they also encounter obstacles and challenges to improve the four language skills due to the complexity of the English language, differences between English and the learner's native language in vocabulary and pronunciation and the developmental stage of young learners.

Chettibi and Kennar (2022) conducted a research in which they investigated the Algerian primary school pupils' problems in learning English in the private schools. They found that the majority of primary school pupils are encountering different difficulties in the process of learning the English language in private schools. Due to the less contact and use of the English language in the Algerian society. Besides, pupils have problems with the four language skills since they are more familiar with learning the French language in public primary schools.

Additionally, another study led by Harroug (2022) concluded that the development of the English speaking skills in a foreign language context is a challenging task and a complex process, especially in Algeria. This can be attributed to the restriction of language practice in an educational setting since English speaking does not happen much outside the classroom environment. Moreover, EFL students have few opportunities in terms of having access to native speakers and to the target language's authentic context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this theoretical chapter aims to demonstrate the importance of English as a globalized language in the world generally, and in Algeria in particular. It also defines some linguistic aspects and concepts related to teaching and learning English in the Algerian context, in addition to a specific focus on the pupils' speaking skill. Furthermore, it involves some previous studies related to the research variables.

Chapter two: Research Design, Analysis and Discussion of the results

Introduction

This study is descriptive because it aims at exploring the speaking difficulties faced by Algerian primary schools' pupils, some factors behind them, and strategies to overcome these difficulties. This chapter consists of two sections. The first section describes the methods, instruments, and population and sample for the data collection. The second section is about the data analysis, interpretation and discussion of the results.

Section one: Methodology research design

1.1. Research methodology

This descriptive study involves the use of qualitative method, since it aims to describe children's difficulties in speaking skills. Participants are a primary school group aged between nine and ten years old and four English teachers from different primary schools in Bejaia city. Data collection for the study involves an observation grid and an interview with the participants. The observation took place for seven sessions to determine the difficulties and errors of children during their learning process, with an interview conducted with four different English language teachers, about children's difficulties in oral performance, the reasons behind them, and strategies to overcome these difficulties.

1.2. Participants

The participants of this study are the pupils of fourth grade primary school and the English language teachers. Using a selective sampling technique in order to focus on specific characteristics that are related to our research questions. The sample consists of a selected fourth year group in Kaci Mouhand Seroual School in Bejaia city. That includes learners aged between nine to ten years old, and four teachers from different primary schools.

1.3. Instruments

For the aim of gathering data, two different tools are used. Observation grid is used to note and identify the speaking difficulties that children encounter during English session. Furthermore, an interview was conducted with four primary school English language teachers in order to identify some reasons behind these difficulties in speaking skill, and suggest strategies to overcome them.

1.3.1. Pupils' observation

Pleşan (2021, p. 1) states that, "observation is one of the most widely used research methods in the social sciences." Thus, observation is a method used to watch or pay attention to something or someone in order to gather information.

Moreover, observation grid is a tool used to collect and organize information during the process of observation (Pleşan 2021). The one that is used in this research consists of structure table with different categories that are relevant to the observation that were adapted from Al Hosni (2014) work which presented the speaking skill problems and challenges. It helps to make the researchers focus on specific aspects and variables of interest.

1.3.2. Semi-structured interview

The popular research method to collect data used in social sciences is the semi-structured interview (Ruslin, et. al. (2022). A semi-structured interview is a data collection tool where the questions are asked in order to gather qualitative data for the research. Seven questions were designed by the researchers and validated by the supervisor, were asked to the English language teachers aiming to determine the speaking difficulties faced by primary school pupils, some reasons behind them, and strategies to overcome these difficulties.

1.4. Data analysis procedures

After collecting data from pupils' observation, and the semi-structured interview the gathered data need to be analysed. The researchers opted for the thematic analysis by organizing and categorizing the data into themes.

The observation grid was analysed based on a qualitative procedure using thematic analysis. The researchers provided an observation grid with a different categories; then, they were classified into themes.

Similarly, the semi-structured interview was analysed using the same data procedure. The teachers' semi-structured interview questions were summarized into different themes.

Section two: Data Analysis and Discussion of the results

2.1. The analysis of the Observation Grid

This part aims at presenting and analysing the seven classroom observation sessions that took place from the 8th of January until the 1st of February 2024 in the fourth year group of Kaci Mouhand Seroual primary school. These sessions are conducted to observe the main difficulties that pupils encounter in speaking the English language in the classroom, focusing on different aspects and varieties of interest (appendix 01). Main themes are selected to do the analysis which is: limited vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency in speaking, and participation and listening comprehension. We opt for a thematic analysis to analyse the results gathered during the seven sessions.

To put the learners at ease and help us accomplish our goal of monitoring their genuine and spontaneous behaviour, the teacher introduced us to them simply by our names at the beginning of our observation.

Theme 1: Limited Vocabulary

From the seven different lectures, we notice that pupils cannot answer the teacher's questions using only English words. In most of times they switch to Arabic, French, and mother tongue (Kabyle) to express themselves because they do not have enough vocabulary. They rarely use the correct words in the right context. For example, when the teacher asked them to play roles and speak, they just used random words they already studied and memorized such as "yes", "no", "school", "book", etc. However, they sometimes forget even the familiar words; therefore the teacher starts each session with a revision of previously covered material before introducing new content. As she explains this method helps to solidify knowledge and make it easier to recall in the future. It also provides an opportunity to address any misunderstandings or gaps in knowledge before progressing to more advanced topics, ensuring a stronger foundation for learning.

Theme 2: Grammar

As well as for grammar, pupils cannot produce complete sentences, at most they express themselves with one or two words. And even when the teacher asks them to repeat after her, they do not recognize the elements of the sentence (structure); verb, noun, article, preposition...etc in both writing and speaking. For instance, when the teacher prepares dictation activities on the board and asks them to write a particular sentence, they use the Arabic structure (verb before subject) instead of (subject before verb) for example; “goes Selma” instead of “Selma goes”. Similarly with the “s” of the present simple, they usually ignore it, for example they say “she play” instead of “she plays”. Besides, we cannot neglect the spelling issues when it comes to dictation, pupils write as they hear (like in Arabic and French), for example: “mi” instead of “me”, “kar” instead of “car”, “it” instead of “eat”. Therefore, the teacher makes sure to check what they are writing and she corrects them individually one by one. This means the learners write as they pronounce and speak.

Theme 3: Pronunciation

In fact, concerning pronunciation, we have noticed that pupils struggle in pronouncing new words or sounds and they mostly resort to the French pronunciation unconsciously, but when it comes to the words they already studied we observed that it is easy for the majority of them to remember the right pronunciation because the teacher is keen to make them revise and practice with repetition during every lecture. However, in reading sessions they need the help of teacher to pronounce correctly, they cannot do it by themselves in most of times except two or three excellent ones. In addition, they do not often make difference when pronouncing the final “es”: /s/, /z/, or /iz/, similarly with the final “ed”: /d/, /t/, /id/.

Theme 4: Fluency in speaking

Nevertheless, when expressing themselves orally, pupils are not able to speak fluently, they often make frequent pauses and fillers such as: umm...ah ..., gestures and body language to explain. Moreover, they face difficulties in organizing their thoughts and ideas to form meaningful sentences, questions or answers, so they mostly use the mother tongue (Kabyle or Arabic) to complete their speech despite the fact that their teacher prevent them, but she tries to correct them in funny ways or asks one of the pupils to correct his classmates as a method.

Theme 5: participation and listening comprehension

At this point, we notice how affective elements such as: confidence, anxiety, shyness, motivation....etc, can influence pupils' oral performance. Comparing to other tasks that require writing, listening and reading skills, the speaking tasks seem to be complicated for young learners. The majority of them do not participate, they seem less confident and embarrassed because they fear making mistakes especially in front of their classmates and they feel anxious when answering; they mostly hesitate . Indeed, to make pupils enjoy speaking, the teacher makes them play roles and games such as: guessing, and puzzles as techniques in order to motivate them and create a kind of competition between them, this is the case when she asks them who can play that particular role, in the beginning only two pupils raised their hands but suddenly the others joined them. As another remark, even when they understand the general idea of the teacher's instructions, they cannot answer using only English, this makes them anxious, but the teacher tries to manage the situation by explaining and using both gestures and other familiar languages.

In general, most of the pupils like the English language, and it is remarkable. They love discovering and knowing more, for example they try to interact between them using English in the classroom. In other words, pupils make efforts to learn and the language. Hence, both the learners and the teacher work on improving this process.

2.2. The analysis of the teachers' semi-structured interview

This section aims at analysing the teachers' interview answers using thematic analysis, aiming to know the pupils' speaking difficulties, the reasons behind them, in addition to suggest strategies to overcome these difficulties. Three themes are derived from the seven questions.

Theme 1: The Effect of Introducing English into Primary Schools

This theme is concerned with Q1 and Q3 of the interview that was conducted with the primary school teachers of English. The questions were about how introducing the English language affects the pupils' learning process.

At first, the four teachers agree that introducing the English is not an obstacle since pupils are flexible learners, and their age allows them to learn and receive maximum of information. However, the teachers claim that introducing English is confusing for pupils,

because they are supposed to learn four languages at the same time; therefore, they need to reconcile learning these multiple languages (Arabic, Tamazight, French and English), as teacher 2 said *“introducing multiple languages to a young pupil can be beneficial for his cognitive development, but it is also important to insure that pupils have a strong foundation in their native language.”*

Consequently, all of the teachers affirm that both of teachers and pupils encounter challenges and different difficulties in their teaching and learning process. Including limited time which is not sufficient to deal with all the language aspects, learners have a less exposure to English language, and lack of material. This is explained by teacher 1 *“the most of pupils are kinesthetic and visual learners, so they need technological resources.”* In addition to what they said, teachers find it hard and difficult to know the effective techniques that suit all the pupils' differences.

Theme 2: Pupils' Speaking Difficulties and the Reasons behind Them.

This theme is derived from Q2, which is about the common difficulties that teachers notes when their pupils speak, and Q6, which is about the reasons behind them.

According to teachers' answers, most of the pupils face difficulties in speaking. Accordingly, teacher 3 claims that *“speaking skill is the hardest skill to teach and learn.”* They added *“yes, they have difficulties in speaking, especially in vocabulary, pronunciation, shyness, anxiety, and grammar.”* Hence, they explained that the majority of pupils feel shy and embraced due to the fear of making mistakes. Additionally, teacher 1 confirmed that most of the pupils struggle with pronunciation because of the effect of linguistic factors like the influence of the mother tongue, and the similar alphabetic system with French and Tamazight languages. Moreover, the teachers argued that the pupils have obstacles when it comes to vocabulary and grammar (words, sentence structure, etc) because of the limited exposure to the English language outside the classroom, and their background knowledge. Teacher 2 added that *“pedagogical factors such as level of the teachers, and large complicated curriculum cause difficulties in the pupils learning process.”*

Theme 3: Teaching Learning Procedures to Improve the Speaking Skills

The theme is related to Q4 which is about the common techniques and methods used by teachers to enhance speaking, and Q5 which shows the measures teachers use to overcome

pupils obstacles in speaking, in addition to Q7 that deals with the strategies that learners can use to improve their speaking skills.

Based on teachers answers for Q4 which is about teaching speaking techniques and methods, teachers said that they use role plays, conversations, dialogues, games (word searching, puzzles...), and pictures since most of pupils are visual learners, and songs are the common effective techniques to improve and enhance pupils' speaking skills. Teacher 4 affirmed that *“group work can be beneficial also if the teacher is good in classroom management, but the best technique to teach speaking skills and make it enjoyable is role play.”* In addition, as a response to Q5 teachers, to overcome these difficulties suggest using repetition as the most effective way, in addition to creating a supportive and encouraging classroom environment, focusing on communication using visual aids, and real life examples. They also suggested to make learning fun and enjoyable by breaking down the complex concepts.

For the Q7, the teachers agreed that practicing English language outside is good and the best strategy for learners either to love and enjoy the language or to enhance and develop the speaking skills. This can be reached by using the target language with classmates or family members, using songs and cartoons to improve vocabulary, and making sure to repeat, a strategy that helps in memorizing. Teacher 3 confirms this by saying *“pupils should find a partner to practice the language in real life situation.”*

2.3. Discussion of the Results

This following part is devoted to the discussion of the main results and findings collected throughout our study.

1. First research question

Concerning the first question which investigates the different speaking difficulties faced by primary school pupils, the qualitative data obtained through the classroom observations and teachers' semi-structured interview demonstrate that the majority of the pupils encounter challenges and obstacles in their speaking skill.

Indeed, most of them struggle in pronunciation; for instance they tend to use the French articulation to produce English sounds, moreover, they do not often make difference when pronouncing the final “es”: /s/, /z/, or /iz/, similarly with the final “ed”: /d/, /t/, /id/.

However, they memorize fast and easily the sounds or words they already know (familiar words), rather than the new ones. Another point, pupils spell the words as they hear the sounds for example; they write “kat” instead of “cat”. Furthermore, when expressing themselves orally, pupils are not able to speak fluently. They often make frequent pauses and fillers such as: umm...ah ..., gestures and body language to explain, and they interact without organizing their thoughts and ideas. In addition, young learners do not have enough and sufficient vocabulary to interact, speak and answer to the teacher’s questions or instructions. They often switch to the mother tongue or Arabic and French to transmit their ideas.

Concerning the grammar, they still cannot distinguish between the Arabic and the English structure, between sentence elements (verbs, nouns...), for example; “goes Selma” instead of “Selma goes”. And they are not able to produce or form complete sentences, at most they express themselves with one or two words. On the other side, the pupils’ fear of making mistakes, shyness and anxiety are considered as another obstacle for improving their oral performance and decrease their motivation. The results of a study conducted by Harzallah (2023) in investigating the problems and challenges of teaching English in Algerian primary school, illustrate similar findings which concluded that learners, encounter obstacles and challenges to improve the four language skills of language due to the complexity of the English language, differences between English and the learner's native language in the term of vocabulary and pronunciation and the developmental stage of young learners.

2. Second research question

Regarding the second question, which is about some reasons that affect pupils’ speaking skill. Our results identified that the pupils’ speaking difficulties are related to some different factors which are psychological, linguistic, social, and pedagogical aspects. As for shyness, anxiety, motivation, and lack of self-confidence these are caused due to the fear of making mistakes and speaking incorrectly make them feel embarrassed in front of their teacher and classmates. These results are in line with the findings of Mooneeb, et al (2020) who demonstrate that most of ESL students believe that speaking English can be difficult due to psychological factors.

Moreover, pupils struggle with pronunciation due to the effect of linguistic factors like the influence of the mother tongue, and the similar alphabetic system with French and Tamazight languages. Likewise they face obstacles when it comes to vocabulary and grammar

because of the limited background knowledge of the target language. In addition, limited exposure to the English language and the multilingual status of the society are the main reasons behind their poor oral performance. In other words they are not in contact with English language in real life. In this context, Chettibi and Kennar's (2022) results indicated that the majority of primary school pupils are encountering different difficulties during learning the English language because there is less contact and use of the English language in the Algerian society.

Besides, pupils have problems with the four language skills since they are more familiar with learning the French language in public primary schools. Furthermore, pedagogical factors such as the teachers' training, the methods they use to teach speaking, and large complicated curriculum can lead to speaking difficulties in pupils learning process in addition to the limited time and large size classes. A previous study conducted by Khider (2023) identified the same results as ours, where pedagogical factors such as teachers' methods, strategies, and techniques they use with pupils in classrooms, can influence EFL young learners.

3. Third research question

Concerning the third question, which is about recommending strategies to overcome pupils' speaking difficulties while learning English. Our interview results have identified some solutions for teachers to enhance pupils' oral performance. Including, creating a supportive environment, encouraging regular practice, focusing on functional language, building pupils 'confidence gradually, encouraging self-correction, and peer feedback to promote active learning. In addition to offering additional resources, such as podcasts, or language exchange programs, to supplement classroom learning and encourage independent practice. These results are in line with the findings of Hakime and Abbassi (2020) in which they illustrate that visual, verbal, and error correction are the recommended methods to use in order to enhance the speaking skill. In addition to the use of techniques such as; language games, role plays, dialogues, and repetition can be beneficial for learners to improve the speaking skill.

To summarize, the research aims have been successfully achieved by giving answers to the research questions. It can be said that pupils encounter different difficulties in speaking

skills due to multiple factors, which are considered as a barrier preventing pupils to improve and enhance their speaking skills.

Section three: Recommendations, Limitations and Suggestions for Further Researches

Overcoming speaking difficulties in English learning requires a combination of targeted strategies and consistent practice. Implementing these as solutions consistently and adapting them to suit individual learning styles and needs, pupils can gradually overcome their speaking difficulties and become more confident and proficient in using English.

3.1. Pedagogical recommendations

This current research explores the common difficulties that pupils encounter in the speaking skills and the reasons behind them. The findings of the present study, would hopefully help English language teachers find solutions and appropriate strategies to overcome the pupils' difficulties. Based on the analysis and discussion section, the following pedagogical recommendations are drawn:

- Create a classroom environment where students feel comfortable and confident to speak without fear.
- Encourage a positive attitude towards mistakes, viewing them as opportunities for learning.
- Design activities such as role-playing, debates, group discussions that require active participation and speaking.
- Use group activities using English as a medium of communication to build pupils' confidence.
- Give clear instructions for speaking tasks to ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them.
- Provide pupils with examples of effective speaking from media, such as dialogues, etc.
- Teachers motivate learners for the use of reading and listening materials to enhance vocabulary and comprehension, which can indirectly improve speaking skills.
- Organize classroom performances, such as oral presentations, to give students opportunities to speak in front of an audience.
- Using rewards to motivate pupils for making effort and improvement.

- Provide opportunities for students to talk about their personal experiences, hobbies, and interests.

3.2. Limitations and suggestions for further researches

During the process of conducting this research we faced a number of challenges and obstacles. First, finding resources (books, articles...) that are related to learning English in Algerian primary schools was hard and difficult to find, since it was introduced only during the last year. Second, since the primary school teachers teach in more than one school according to Algerian educational system, it was challenging to schedule an interview the teachers.

Furthermore, because of time constraints, we chose to use qualitative methods for data collection and observed only one class. Therefore, there results could not be generalised to all Algerian primary school pupils. In order to generalize the findings, it can be advised that future research could be conducted using both qualitative and quantitative data collection.

General conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the obstacles pupils encounter in developing their speaking abilities and to pinpoint some elements that influence their oral performance. This research work therefore underwent two steps in order to meet its goal. The theoretical phase seeks to provide a conceptual and theoretical framework about the relevant aspects of the subject matter. The goal of the second chapter, which is the practical phase, was to gather teachers' opinions regarding the subject under analysis and to observe pupils perform orally in order to respond to the research questions.

The theoretical chapter reported the related aspects to the challenges and hindrances that Serouel school pupils encounter in the English speaking skill. Therefore, we divided this chapter into three sections. The first section deals with English language importance and its status in Algeria. Whereas, the second section intended to define and shed light on several aspects regarding teaching and learning the speaking skills in the EFL context which involves the main methods, approaches and techniques that teacher use to enhance learners speaking skills. The last section, addresses the speaking skill generally, the difficulties faced by young learners to improve their oral performance and the factors affecting them. The theoretical part ended with mentioning some previous studies aligning with our investigation results.

The practical part which concerns the second chapter, deals with the research design used in our investigation. It deals with research methodology and the research tools used, namely, a semi-structured interview conducted with four teachers to know about their opinions concerning this issue, in addition to the classroom observation which clearly demonstrated significant results about pupils' speaking difficulties in English.

From the findings, we concluded that improving the pupils' speaking skills is a hard task for the learners who face multiple difficulties in pronunciation such as pronouncing using French sounds. In addition to the limited English vocabulary. Concerning grammar; the pupils use the Arabic structure to form sentences. As well as for their poor interaction because of the fear of making errors.

More importantly, all of these difficulties were the consequences of several psychological factors such as anxiety, lack of motivation and confidence. Besides, we recorded some social factors like pupils' attitudes towards the target language, their young age. For the linguistic factors we can state the mother tongue interference and the pupils'

background knowledge. Concerning the pedagogical factors, they involve the teaching and the learning strategies.

Indeed, from the data collected through the interview, teachers suggested some techniques and solutions to overcome those obstacles in order to enhance the learners' oral performance. They proposed some recommendations according to their experiences in primary school teaching, such as focusing on motivating pupils, making learning fun, using repetition as the most effective way.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Classroom Observation Grid

Classroom observation: Speaking Difficulties Faced by Pupils in English Language Learning.

Observer:

Observation date:

School:

Level:

Lesson:

Item	Description and remarks
Pronunciation	
Vocabulary	
Grammar	
Fluency and accuracy	
Self-confidence and participation	
Listening comprehension	

Appendix 2

Teachers' semi-structured interview

1. According to the pupils' outcomes, do you think that introducing English in addition to French, Tamazight and Arabic, is an obstacle?

.....

2. Do you observe specific difficulties in speaking English? If yes, can you identify them?

.....

3. You have been teaching English in primary school for two years, what do you think are the common difficulties children face in the process of learning?

.....

4. Do you have specific methods or techniques to teach speaking skill for pupils?

.....

5. As a teacher, how do you deal with these difficulties and what do you think are the suitable measures to overcome them?

.....

6. As a teacher, what do you think are the reasons causing these difficulties?

.....

7. What do you think are the best strategies that learners must use for an effective learning and for improving the oral skills?

.....

Résumé

Cette recherche examine les difficultés auxquelles les élèves du primaire sont confrontés face à la compétence orale en anglais et trouver quelques facteurs influençant cette compétence. Afin d'atteindre l'objectif de cette recherche, une méthode descriptive est conçue en utilisant des observations en classe et une interview avec des enseignants d'Anglais pour collecter les données. Les participants sont des élèves de la 4ème année de l'école primaire Kaci Mouhand – Seroual -, et quatre enseignants d'anglais de différentes écoles primaires de la ville de Bejaia. Les observations en classe ont été menées dans une classe de 31 apprenants âgés de 9 à 10 ans durant les sept séances, et l'interview a été conçue pour les enseignants. Les résultats obtenus ont révélé que la majorité des élèves du primaire rencontrent des difficultés pour parler en anglais, principalement au niveau de la prononciation, de la grammaire, et de vocabulaire. De plus, les résultats indiquent que les facteurs psychologiques (anxiété et timidité), les facteurs sociaux (exposition limitée à l'anglais et connaissances de base), les facteurs linguistiques (influence de la langue maternelle) et les facteurs pédagogiques (méthodes et techniques d'enseignement) font partie des raisons qui empêchent les élèves de s'exprimer oralement.

Mots clés : langue anglaise, élèves, enseignants du primaire, difficultés d'expression orale, facteurs des difficultés d'expression.

ملخص

تسعى هذه الدراسة في البحث عن الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلاب المدارس الابتدائية في المهارات الشفوية خلال تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية وإيجاد بعض العوامل المؤثرة عليها. ولتحقيق هدف هذا البحث، تم تصميم المنهج الوصفي باستخدام الملاحظات الصفية والمقابلة مع معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لجمع البيانات. المشاركون هم تلاميذ السنة الرابعة من المدرسة الابتدائية الشهيد قاسي محند - السورول - وأربعة مدرسين للغة الإنجليزية من مختلف المدارس الابتدائية في مدينة بجاية. تم إجراء الملاحظات الصفية على فصل مكون من 31 متعلمًا تتراوح أعمارهم بين 9 إلى 10 سنوات على مدى سبع جلسات، وتم تصميم المقابلة للمعلمين. وأظهرت النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها أن أغلبية تلاميذ المدرسة الابتدائية يعانون من صعوبات في التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية، خاصة من حيث النطق والتركييب النحوي ونقص المفردات. علاوة على ذلك، تشير النتائج إلى أن العوامل النفسية (القلق والخجل)، والعوامل الاجتماعية (التعرض المحدود للغة الإنجليزية والمعرفة الأساسية)، والعوامل اللغوية (تأثير اللغة الأم)، والعوامل التربوية (أساليب وتقنيات التدريس) هي من الأسباب التي تعرقل التلاميذ من التعبير الشفوي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية، التلاميذ، معلمو المرحلة الابتدائية، صعوبات التعبير الشفهي، عوامل صعوبات التعبير الشفوي.