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Editors:

Dr. Ahmed Rhif (Tunisia)

Dr. Nadia Nuseir (Libya)

International Centre for Innovation & Development  
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# Using Discussion Boards to Bridge the Communication Gap for Educational Purposes

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**Abstract**— Many classrooms utilize discussion boards to aid the teaching and learning process. This research paper examines the use of the discussion board academically and on a social scale. It is a case study analysing the incorporation of two Viber discussion boards amongst two professional development courses designed for pre-service and in-service teachers of Libyan schools. The aim is to use the discussion board as a means of exchanging ideas, requesting explanations, and inquiring information from trainees and their instructors. The data collected is analyzed qualitatively using content analysis, then coded into three initial coding schemes. A questionnaire was also distributed amongst the members of the discussion boards. The findings bring to light that utilizing discussion boards as a method of collaboration enhances the communication process amongst the participants and strengthens the educational process. It furthermore displayed the crucial role an instructor plays in a discussion board.

**Keywords**—discussion groups, participants, communicate, educational process aid, Viber, case study

## I. ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

### A. Introduction

Collaborative learning techniques are ways that instructors can upgrade the traditional methods of teaching and learning and turn them into interactive environments where students and teachers can cooperate interchangeably and share ideas with one another. Collaborative learning environments can occur both in-class and online, so long as they occupies students in conversations with one another. Classrooms in Libya lack both types of these collaborative learning environments.

Though many students of educational courses are familiar with social media platforms for conventional uses, very few of them use them for educational purposes. Social media platforms can be utilized for discussion forums and transformed into collaborative online environments. Bernard states that “in order for collaborative online learning to take place successfully, it is crucial that the learner feels part of a learning community where his/her contributions add to a common knowledge pool and where a community spirit is fostered through social interactions” (Bernard, 2000, p.262). This research attempts to investigate the educational learning community a Viber discussion board can create and its ability to involve participants in constructive discussions.

### B. Study Background

Classrooms in Libya are very traditional and lack creative approaches to problem-solving. Aloreibi and Carey claim that, in Libya, “teachers predominantly use the Grammar Translation Method and teacher-centered

pedagogy” all occurring in the classroom (2017). There are no opportunities for students to deviate or think in independent and original ways. This stunts the students’ progress and performance when it comes to language learning. Research carried by Abidin displays that “participants in his study showed a negative attitude [towards learning English] and it was proposed that the reason of such a negative attitude might have been a reaction to the instructional and traditional techniques used by some of the [Libyan] English language teachers” (Abidin, 2012). The classrooms are lacking innovative practices to liven up the learning process.

With the integration of collaborative teaching and learning techniques, one can create an interactive educational environment. This is possible with the use of day-to-day social media platforms, ones that have the pedagogical suitability to be turned into educational tools; tools that can encourage active, social, engaging, and independent learning.

### C. Problem Statement

Most educational courses in Libya rely on attendance in the classroom, since the communication and discussions between the students and teacher occur only inside the classroom. The learning process then becomes a classroom-centered one, and is only beneficial at that point in time. The communication ends when the students leave. The availability of day-to-day social media platforms that can easily be converted into great educational tools, such as Viber, would allow students and teachers to interact through virtual discussion groups. Therefore, the study focuses on bridging the communication gap by the use of discussion boards in educational courses. It investigates whether teachers and students can be actively involved in a convenient online discussion platform.

### D. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate the educational effectiveness of discussion boards in educational settings. It also explores discussion boards’ ability to maximize the interaction between members of the classroom, and the role of the teacher in those discussion boards.

### E. Significance of the Study

The study of discussion board as an educational tool can be a learning guideline in improving the responsive collaboration between members of any classroom at all times, rather than just inside the classroom itself. Another great importance is the involvement of the learners in a collaborative and reflective learning environment resulting in effective learning. Research into the utilization of

interactive collaborative methods will redound to the benefit of schools and educational institutes considering bringing their approaches and techniques up to date.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Introduction

This section will include some general facts about discussion boards classified into two parts. First, it will give a brief about the definitions, the types of discussion boards used in educational areas, some advantages and disadvantages of discussion boards, impact of discussion boards on the communication that occurs in the class, and it will observe the transition from traditional classroom learning to online learning. Second, it will reflect on previous studies that are linked to this topic.

#### 1) Definitions

Discussion Boards are virtual platforms that provide a learning environment where each participant has the ability to post statements and respond to the statements of other participants, generating a discussion. According to the webpage, *whatis.com*, discussion boards are defined as a “general term for any online 'bulletin boards' where you can leave and expect to see responses to messages you have left” (2011). Discussion boards allow instructors to set up asynchronous exchanges of views amongst students and allow students to take part in different conversations arranged by the instructors. Discussion boards are a tool easy to master and can be accessed using several varying online websites.

There can be many topics and subjects presented on an online discussion board. Hazari states that "within a discussion there can be several topics being debated simultaneously and when students make their initial post, other students can reply to a post by having the discussion appear indented under the main post thus making it possible to reference original responses." (Hazari, 2004, p. 352) Special software programs make it possible to have this feature of referencing particular posts made in a discussion board. Due to this advanced systematization, any instructor with a well-executed pedagogical plan can set up a discussion board that would effectively involve students in constructive interaction online, leading to a powerful learning process.

### B. Types

When launching discussion boards, the main facet that needs to be put into consideration is interaction. Moore defines interaction in distance education into three types: learner-content, learner-instruction, and learner-learner (1989). Some discussion boards allow students to respond to other students' posts, while some only allow students to contribute to content posted by the teacher, other discussion boards give the chance to get involved in lively

discussions amongst the whole class with a lesser strict pedagogical agenda.

### C. Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages and disadvantages of discussion boards are synopsized in (Table 1) below. There are several benefits to discussion boards, proving that they are pedagogically sound. “Creating collaborative and cooperative settings for learners provides many advantages,” Oliver states, he also adds: “as learners collaborate they articulate their ideas and thinking and this contributes in large ways to developing their understanding” (Oliver, 2000). Discussion boards are very impactful to the communication in the classroom, allowing it to traverse beyond the point of the class itself.

**Table 1** Discussion Board Advantages and Disadvantages

Purpose	Discussion Boards
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information is available to everyone</li> <li>• Feedback given is permanent (can be reflected on)</li> <li>• Practical place for group work and feedback</li> <li>• Interaction can be: teacher-student, student-student, student-teacher, or content-student</li> <li>• Discussion is clear</li> <li>• Posts are well-articulated</li> <li>• Accessible at any time</li> <li>• Teacher becomes one of the group</li> <li>• Multiple topics all at once</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No body language</li> <li>• Dependent on students access to see posts</li> <li>• Good expertise on how to use discussion board</li> <li>• The substructure must be straightforward and unambiguous</li> <li>• Students must know what is required from them</li> <li>• No one-on-one interaction, posts are visible to everyone</li> </ul>

### D. Traditional vs. Online

Due to the ever-developing world, the education system is constantly changing. Formerly, classrooms relied on blackboards, classic lectures, and the orthodox face-to-face interaction between the students and the teacher, and the students themselves. As the education system advanced, teachers started looking for ways to make the learning process more creative. Learning became collaborative, by having the students become involved in group projects and working together. The introduction of technology has effectively changed the way in which educators teach their students. They started using teaching aids such as audio



tapes, slide shows, and videos. It was widely accepted since it help aid in the learning process in a professional manner. Thereafter, the digital age gave way to an web-enabled virtual method of learning. Online education represented an asynchronous style of learning, allowing the students to access their courses and classes at any point in time, and at any place. "Online learning offers participants opportunities to explore information rather than asking them to accept what the teacher determines should be learnt" (Salmon, 2000 p.39) Education was taking a shift from being the traditional teacher-centered in lecture settings to being an explorative learning process. In addition, many classrooms were becoming hybrid, integrating traditional methods with modernized ones, allowing students to partake in vis-à-vis meetings with their instructors and fellow students, then later giving them a chance to engage in online discussions and tasks.

#### E. Communication Maximization

In a learning environment where one can comfortably post at any time, in any place, and in an equitable way, most of the students will participate leading to extensive discussions. Discussion boards allow students to thoroughly think of the posts as well, occasionally causing a lively debate. All are indications that when an educator uses a discussion board, the communication in the class is amplified. The teachers also slightly lose their status and become one of the gang members of the discussion board which is succeeded by greater freedom and likeliness to express thoughts and ideas freely.

Discussion boards alleviate some of the tension of participating in the class. Lewis, Treves and Shaindlin found student comments to be "more opinionated and questioning, openly inviting exchange and healthy confrontation" (1997; p.98). Students were engaging in more talks with other, and felt an urge to reflect and give feedback to other students' posts. The communication is healthy and educational.

#### F. Previous Studies Related to the Topic

##### I. Pedagogical Effectiveness

In the article, *Computer-Mediated Scholarly Discussion Groups*, written by Zane Berge and co-authored by Mauri Collins, it is expressed that the academic use of discussion boards in the classroom leads to deepened dialogues and enriched learning (1995). Students given the chance to discuss educational topics outside the classroom, and at their convenience, engage in more lively exchanges of views articulating their opinions in depth. In discussion boards, students are capable of seeing and responding to other students' posts, sequentially motivating students to become more involved in the discussion boards. In a another study carried by Zane Berge assessing teachers' attitudes towards online educational discussion boards, it is deduced that "learning through discussion, respect for multiple perspectives, and valuing the exploration and reflection of one's own and others' experiences can lead to unpredictable outcomes" (1997). Bringing students together in academic communities develops creativity and maintains a free-flowing contribution of views resulting in the obtainment of knowledge toward a common goal.

##### II. Communication Maximization

In his famous book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire states that "only through communication can human life hold meaning. [A] teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students' thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students." He adds that authentic thinking is solely achieved through communication (1970). Communication is crucial in any on-site, online, or any hybrid course. It is the sole contributor to beneficial teaching and learning. Discussion boards aim to reconstruct the communication in the classroom in online virtual groups by having students interact with one another in an academic context.

Zane Berge states in another state of the art article *Electronic Discussion Groups* that discussion boards "often serve as powerful tools in the retrieval and exchanging of information, bringing together persons with similar interests regardless of geographic distance or the time constraints" (1994). Discussion boards create that scholarly community that gives way to interaction in the classroom beyond the classroom. A requirement for any form of successful educational interaction is effective communication, which is a prerequisite for healthy discussion boards.

##### III. Teacher's Role in Discussion Boards

In *When to jump In: The role of the instructor in online discussion forums*, Mazzolini and Maddison discuss the teacher's role in scholarly discussion boards, and claim after analyzing over 40,000 posts on educational discussion groups, that teacher's role in a discussion boards affects the participants engagement in many ways, and that teachers take on interchangeable responsibilities of asking questions and answering questions, thus playing a crucial part in the livelihood of the board (2007). In another study, Cher Ping Lim lists the roles of teachers in charge of discussion boards is the following: "setting meaningful tasks; guiding participants in the 'technicalities' of online discussion; participating actively in discussions by answering queries, providing feedback and posing conflicting views to elicit thinking/reflection; keeping the discussion focused; drawing conclusions and providing content expertise; and recommending resources for extension of learning" (2003). Much like the classroom, discussion boards are in need of a facilitator that will ensure effectual learning.

##### IV. Viber Discussion Boards

Viber is an application allowing people to communicate individually and in groups that can be easily installed in any cell phone. Hossein Behravan examined Viber's ability to withstand as an academic asset, and after conducting a study on 151 students of an Iranian University, he inferred "Viber usage had many positive social effects on the students' identities and relationships in the virtual as well as the real world." He further states that Viber encouraged students to initiate several scientific and scholastic groups (2016).

There have been other discussion boards launched by instructors through the social media platform. A study aiming to discover whether a Viber discussion group helped students of a particular university enhance their vocabulary concluded that "university teachers can use [Viber] in a controlled manner, to help their students improve their

vocabulary skills” (Derma, 2017). Findings from another research indicate that “students ... viewed that their online discussion and collaboration on writing in Viber groups ... had assisted them greatly in their writing tasks” (Challob, 2016). It is evident that Viber can be strategically utilized and transformed into an educational tool.

#### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### A. Introduction

Methodology is defined as “a vision for what research is and how it should be conducted,” (Potter, 1996). This research is analyzing two discussion boards content and coding it using the qualitative research method. Strauss and Corbin define the qualitative research approach as “any kind of research that produces findings that are not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (1990). Data collected in this research is interpreted subjectively.

##### B. Research Design

Data for this case study consists of students added to different Viber discussion boards launched at different times and in different groups over the course of one year. The interactions amongst the members of the groups started as soon as the board launched. Data was retrieved from the board itself, and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Findings were then coded into three different schemes.

##### C. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is to identify the quality of a discussion board utilized in two educational courses for pre-service and in-service teachers, along with its effects on them. The participants of the study compromise Libyan teachers enrolled for professional development TKT and TOEFL courses.

##### D. Study Sample

The study sample of the research consists of 40 in-service teachers taking a TOEFL professional development course, and 120 pre-service and in-service teachers taking a TKT professional development course. The participants were all added to two separate discussion boards on Viber administered by their instructors. There was a very slight difference in the course requirements administered to both groups, so interaction should be similar in context.

##### E. Data Collection

A sample of 400 different posts were gathered from the two discussion boards containing posts made by students and instructors. Content was then read and analyzed.

##### F. Data Analysis

This study utilizes a content analysis method. When using this method, the researcher would analyze a bulk of content and then highlight key concepts, which would then derive codes. Codes are then classified into main themes. (2005).

##### G. Results and Discussion

In this research, the posts were thematically coded into three different themes:

- a) *Pedagogical Value*
- b) *Interactivity*

##### c) *Instructor’s Value*

Discussion boards allow users to share ideas and materials with one another, make announcements, ask questions, reflect on previous information, and finally improve their scholastic achievements. With the proper use of a Viber discussion board, participants feel more encouraged to interact with other learners, the instructors, and can access information given by other students to enhance the learning process. Teachers, on the other hand, play an encouraging and motivational part in the platform. It is up to instructors to create the infrastructure that is at the heart of every discussion board.

Some sample coded data along with their themes are included in (Table 2) below.

**Table 2** *Sample Coded Data*

Themes	Coded Data
<b>Pedagogical Value (Education)</b>	TKT Student 23: “How can I develop my Vocabulary?”  TOEFL Student 18: “Hi Miss —, these r my answers: passages 1, 2,&3: 1 d 2 d 3 a 4 d 5 c 6 c 7 b 8 d”
<b>Interactivity (Communication)</b>	TKT Student 65: “Good evening everyone. Is class at 2 or 3 tomorrow?”  TKT Student 43: “thanks a bunch!”  TOEFL Student 32: “Hi everybody, i want ask you. If there is any problem in the roads to the center”
<b>Instructor’s Value (Teacher)</b>	TKT Instructor 2: “Attached is Unit 21 Answer Key. Please review your work.”  TOEFL Instructor 1: “Attached is the course calendar. You will have an exam on March 21st. We will still have some skills yet to be finished but it will be a good way to track your progress.”

\*Extracted from Viber Discussion Boards

#### V. CONCLUSION

Viber can be used to launch effective discussion boards that engage students and teachers in conversations, discussions, and other types of exchanges in an academic setting.

Viber’s discussion boards are pedagogically effective and communicative. In addition, findings show that the teacher’s role is crucial in Viber discussion boards.

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# The Role of Facebook in Teaching (ESP) Writing to Aviation Students

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**Abstract**— Social media has been given almost no or less attention in teaching writing for Arab learners of English in the light of educational technology. Thus, this research aimed at investigating; the role of social media (Facebook) in improving students' writing skill; the relationship between learners' use of social media and their writing proficiency; and the EFL students' perceptions on the effectiveness of Facebook. This study employed experimental design. Participants were two classes at the technical college of civil aviation & meteorology. Writing test and a questionnaire were used for data collection. The findings indicated the use of social media did significantly improve the students' writing skill. This study suggested that the students' writing skill can be improved by use of the social media, i.e. (Facebook)

**Keywords**— Social media, Facebook, ESP, EFL, Aviation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social media are computer-assisted programs that allow people to communicate, post comments, share ideas, exchange ideas, and share images or videos from the real world communities via the internet. Social media is also a communication channel mediated through the internet dedicated to interact, share content, and collaboration-based society. It has become of a great value in people's lives as a social network and has changed the way people interact, live, work, and acquire knowledge and learning through the internet (Kaplan & Michael, 2010 ; Aichner& Jacob, 2015)

Today, the number of Internet users in Libya went up to 3,800,000 users in 2018, which is equivalent to 58.7% of the Libyan population who use social media. The total population was 6,470,956 in January 2018. That is more than half of the country population are internet users; and approximately 3,500,000 are Facebook subscribers in January 2018. And the internet growth between 2000 and 2017 was 37,900 %. They get access to the internet via a mobile devices & other computer mediated programs according to (internet world stats; internet users statistics for Africa, December 13, 2017). The Libyan internet users between 2000 and 2018 can be seen in table 1 below.

TABLE I. THE NUMBER OF THE LIBYAN INTERNET USERS AND FACEBOOK SUBSCRIBERS

Libya 2018 POPULATION AND INTERNET USERS STATISTICS						
Libya	Population (2018 Est.)	Internet Users 31-Dec-2000	Internet Users 31-Dec-2017	Penetration (% Population)	Internet Growth % 2000 - 2017	Facebook subscribers 31-Dec-2017
Libya	6,470,956	10,000	3,800,000	58.7 %	37,900 %	3,500,000

NOTES: (1) Africa Internet Statistics were updated in December 31, 2017. (2) Africa Facebook subscribers are estimated in December 31, 2017.

The growth in the number of internet users in Libya reached 37, 900 percent (per year) to 3,500,000 million users in 2017. It is based on data provided by the internet world stats. Overall, the internet penetration in Libya at the end of 2017 was about 58.7 % of the total population of the country citizens. The Libyan internet users were estimated at 10,000 at the end of 2000 and 3,800,000 million by 2018 according to the internet world stats report.

The most popular social media used by Internet users in Libya is Facebook; it is on the top list amongst other social media such as Twitter, and Wechat, Whatsapp and Viber. As we all know that social media have made big changes in the way people live, work interact and acquire knowledge and learning in the world. However, the use of social media in the field of education and training has seen less improvement in the Libyan ministry of education, and teachers as an important language teaching technology in schools and universities.

However, based on the information of the final examination results obtained from the study & exam department of the ESP students in the technical college of civil aviation and meteorology in Libya for the academic years (2016-2017-2018) on writing courses, the mean scores of students' achievement were in the average of good category around (65-68%) that can be seen in table 2 below:

2. THE STUDENTS' WRITING ACHIEVEMENT ON FINAL EXAMINATIONS OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL DEPARTMENT

No	Semester	Mean Score		
No	academic year	2016	2017	2018
1	2nd Semester	65.34	66.07	64.12
2	4th Semester	68.01	64.33	66.38
3	6th Semester	67.03	69.05	68.08

Air traffic control Department, 2018.

The data shows that the mean scores of students' achievement in writing which were in the average category of good and there was no significant improvement in their academic semesters during these years. This could be attributed to fact that language instructors who teach writing might have used some traditional aviation writing books which are beyond the students' level of competence to understand and write a well-written text.

Some research studies indicated that the use of the internet and social media are effective to increase the students' achievement such in listening, speaking, writing and (Kaplan & Michael, 2010) & Aichner & Jacob, 2015). However, those studies have not yet investigated in depth the implementation of social media for teaching writing, especially in the ESP Arab context. Therefore, the researcher intends to conduct a research on "The role of social media Facebook in teaching writing" to ESP aviation students at the technical college of civil aviation & meteorology.

The results of this study will hopefully add some theoretical insights to the current literature review on Information and communication Technology (ICT) in language teaching and learning especially the use of social media (Facebook) in the teaching and learning of writing.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Social Media

Social media is defined as a set of Internet-computer programs that allow the user to the create and exchange a generated content. It is an internet-based tool that allows people to create, share, or exchange information, ideas, images, and videos in virtual communication and networking (Kaplan & Michael, 2010). Furthermore, social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platform through which individuals and communities post share, create, discuss, and modify users' comments. Social media, according to Murthy & Dhiraj, (2013), have been broadly defined to refer to 'the much relatively inexpensive and widely accessible electronic tools that enable anyone to publish and access information, collaborate on a common effort, or build relationships. Social media have been perceived by language teachers as an alternative approach for EFL teaching and writing. Therefore, it can be said that online learning refers to the learning environment that utilizes internet technology to enable a virtual learning session. Warnock (2009) stated that the first reason to teach writing online is that the environment can be purely textual. Students will have a rich, guided learning environment where they can express themselves to the outside audience with their written comments and posts. Moreover, Melor (2007) pointed out

that social interaction technologies have great benefits for lifelong education environments. The social interaction can help to enhance the skills such as the ability to search, to evaluate, to interact meaningfully with tools, and so on. Hence, social networking media like Facebook can be used as the platform to teach ESL writing and to strengthen relationships among teachers and between teachers and students.

B. Writing & social media

Writing means to create a letter from a spoken sound or reproduce a written text from a spoken message into written language. It involves some stages and processes for the writer to go through to organize, formulate and develop ideas on the paper so that readers can understand the writers' sent message. In addition, Imeldi, (2001) stresses that the writing skill requires accuracy and proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and vocabulary.

Khroma (1988) adds that writing is a series of activities in which the author expresses some ideas in his mind and then into a paper moving from one word to another to become a sentence, a sentence to paragraph and from paragraph to an essay. Similarly, on the same statement, Ghaith (2002) explained that writing is a complete process which allows the writer /author to express thoughts and ideas and make them visible and concrete.

Jacob et al (1981) point out that there are five components in writing. They are content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. Content is unity. This means that every sentence contributes to one principle, and one unifying thought. Organization in writing concerned with coherence, order or importance, general to specific, specific to general, chronological order and spatial pattern. Vocabulary is one of the requirements of good writing as it depends on the effective use of words. Language use in writing involves the correct usage of grammar with reference to grammaticality and accuracy. Mechanics includes the capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. mechanics is very important since it leads the reader to understand or recognize immediately what the author means when he moves from one idea to another.

O'Malley & Pierce (1996) pointed out that the writing assessment should assess not only the mechanical aspects of writing and grammar but also to evaluate all other components too in order to determine some of the processes involved in writing. They also added that the writing process consists of three stages , that is pre-writing, drafting and post-writing.

Some previous research studies on the use of social media in writing indicated that those media will motivate and help the students to be successful in learning. For instance, a study by Solomon (2011) on SMS texting and its potential impacts on students' written communication skills showed that SMS text messaging function could develop the tendency among students to adopt non-standard uses and contracted forms of English words in their class work, examinations and research reports especially in an academic environment.

Lajuan & Roger(2011) carried out a research study entitled the use of social networking tool Twitter to improve college students' business writing skills. This study found

that the students' writing skill can be improved by use of the social media tool, Twitter.

Ru-Chu (2013) also conducted a research study on the effect of using Facebook to assist English for business communication course instruction. The findings of this study indicated that incorporating Facebook in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course can effectively assist college students in learning business communication English.

Another study by Simpson (2012) assessed the effectiveness of using Facebook as an ESL instruction method in South Korea indicated that Facebook is similar to other modern tools of language instruction in that instructors must familiarize themselves with the program in order to be able to employ it correctly. As Yu (2013) maintained that as social networking sites become popular, they provide great opportunities for language learners to practice their target language. Very few studies focused on the integration of Facebook into an EFL college students especially in the ESP writing context.

### C. Facebook and Writing

Some studies have revealed that language learners are engaged in a good deal of writing even in this era of ICT such as in Twitter, yahoo text messages and, of course, Facebook. Also, students approve of these types of informal writing as communication and do not seem interested in the writing tasks that are given inside classrooms. Inside classrooms, students are still unable to see the connection between the writing learned in the classroom and the meaningful communicative use outside in the real life. Yancey, K. (2009) believes that Facebook, and specifically Facebook groups, have the opportunity to enhance students' writing skills by being the link between academic writing in formal classroom and outside communication outside in the real life.

Facebook group creates a space where comments are posted and shared among all other peers, to be subject to interactive and reactive feedback in a form of criticism or praise. This, in turn, creates a meaningful learning environment when the members of Facebook group have the potential to generate ideas that are shared by, commented upon through the feedback given by peers.

Facebook groups provide a wide range of opportunities for students to practice and improve their writing skills. Some studies indicated that students feel sometimes that they have to respond to their peers' comments or opinions posted, thus are actively posting and commenting on the application. They make use of every chance to practice their writing skills. Students also discover new sentence or writing structures by reading the comments and posts from their peers. These studies have revealed that writing skills are very much emphasized in the Facebook group participation and thus has a high potential of enhancing and improving students' writing skills. A study by Kabilan et al (2010) investigated if Facebook can be a useful and meaningful learning environment and if that it could enhance language learning in English. Their findings revealed that, in terms of affective factors, students' confidence, motivation and attitudes improved significantly when using Facebook.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. Participants

The participants of the study were the sixth-semester students of air traffic control department in academic year 2018. It had two classes with the number of the population that was 60 students. Since the number of population was large, the researcher used a simple random sampling technique. Thus, one class was randomly assigned as the experimental group and was given Facebook activity sessions, and the other class was assigned randomly for the control group using only writing course book in hard copies. The number of the sample for every group was 30 students. So, the total number of the participants in this research was 60 students.

### B. The Instrument of the Research

This research employed two data collection tools based on the research purpose investigated; they were writing test (pretest, posttest), and questionnaire. The writing test which was given to the two groups (control group & experimental group) to investigate the relationship between the students writing test scores and social media (Facebook). The students' writing tests were evaluated in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. The researcher also used a questionnaire which was only given to the targeted experimental group to obtain some data on the students' perceptions on the effectiveness of using Facebook.

### C. Procedures

#### 1) Pretest

In the first meeting session, the researcher administered a pre-test to both control & experimental group in order to know the students' writing skill and to find out their scores prior the Facebook activity sessions. The pretest proceeded for 1 hour and 30 minutes as in the following steps: 1) The researcher then distributed a test and asked the students to write a descriptive text related to a given topic, 2) The researcher marked the students' writing tests, and 3) The researcher directly compared the writing test scores between the two groups to see if there were some differences in the students' writing test scores.

#### 2) Procedure (Facebook activity).

The procedures of using Facebook activities were conducted in 8 sessions only for the experimental group. Each session lasted for two hours divided into 60 minutes for theories and practice by the peers, and 60 minutes for practicing via Facebook for the experimental group only. The procedures were only conducted by the experimental group as follows: 1) The researcher introduced the Facebook activity to the experimental students and told them how to sign in to the application group; 2) The researcher showed students how to sign into the application, and 3) The researcher explained how to create and sign into the group chat. Furthermore, prior the Facebook activity sessions, the researcher conducted some procedures with the experimental group students which were as follows: 1) The researcher introduced the writing material that will be learned by the students 2) The researcher gave students the motivation before the learning process in each meeting; 3) The researcher explained to the students each topic of writing; 4) The researcher distributed the writing materials to the

students; 5) the researcher asked students to write a descriptive text about a given topic; 6) The researcher gave students the opportunities to comment on their peers' writing, and 7) The researcher collected the students papers and corrected the students' mistakes in writing. 8) the researcher gave students feedback on their writing. 9) the researcher created a Facebook group called (Aviation English) to provide students a space where they were in control of the content and the direction of the learning materials. 10) the researcher and students started the Facebook activity sessions on Facebook.

**(Writing materials)**

Unlike experimental group, the control group students were only taught the writing course book. Besides the teaching materials used by the control students inside the classroom, the researcher explained that the writing process should include the following stages. These are pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing as follows:

1. Pre-writing. In this activity, the teachers ask the students to write recount text. The students have to collect the information in order to make them easy to write. Then they write the ideas that are related to a given topic in the teaching material given by the teacher.

2. Drafting. The students are asked to write their ideas that they have got in the previous stage. The students may not worry about the grammatical form, In this stage, they just write rough draft that can be developed in the next stage.

3. Revising. The students are asked to check the rough draft. They have to fix their writing before they hand in their assignments. Before handing in their writing papers to the researcher, the students have the opportunity to give comments to their friends' writing. In this stage, the students are supposed to give a score and comment on their peers.

4. Editing. In this stage, the students can edit their writing depend on their friends suggestions and corrections given in their writing materials about the content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics in their writing.

**3) Posttest**

After introducing Facebook activities, the posttest was given to the EFL students (control group + experimental group who were given the same test in the pretest in order to find out the students' writing improvement. The procedures are: 1) the researcher gave both groups the same posttest after doing the Facebook activity in order to find out the students' writing test scores, 2) The researcher directly rated the students' test scores, and 3) the researcher analyzed the data by looking at the test scores on the pretest and posttest and then compared the results by using some statistical analyses.

**IV. THE FINDINGS**

**A. Pretest**

Based on the quantitative data which were gained from experimentation between experimental group using ( writing course book and using Facebook) and control group (using only writing course book), and also the data from questionnaire can be described as follows:

**1) Improvement of Students' Writing Skill through Facebook**

The data on the frequency and percentage of the students' writing skill through Facebook in pre-test can be seen in the following tables.

3. THE FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF THE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL IN PRETEST

Category	Range of score	Experimental Group		Control Group	
		F	%	F	%
Excellent	85-100	0	0	0	0
Very good	75-84	7	21.9	4	12.5
Good	65-74	4	12.5	5	15.6
Pass	55-64	13	40.6	14	43.8
Weak	45-54	6	25.0	7	28.1
Very weak	35-44	0	0	0	0
Total		30	100	30	100

Table 3 shows that most of the students' writing skill in both experimental and control group were categorized as pass at the beginning where 6 students (25.0%) in experimental and 7 students (28.1%) in control group were in the weak category, and no one of both groups was in the very poor category. 13 student (40.6%) in experimental and 14 students (43.8%) in control group were in pass category, 4 students (12.5%) in experimental group and 5 students (15.6%) in the good category, 7 students (21.9%) in experimental and 4 students (12.5%) in control group were in the very good category. The result on the table shows that most of the students have the same level of writing skill as pass or average before applying the social media for both experimental and control group.

However, after the Facebook activity, the posttest scores for the experimental and control groups can be seen in the table 4 below:

4. THE FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF THE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL IN POSTTEST

Category	Range of score	Experimental Group		Control Group	
		F	%	F	%
Excellent	85-100	0	0	0	0
Very good	75-84	12	37.5	10	31.2
Good	65-74	9	28.1	7	18.7
Pass	55-64	3	9.3	4	12.5
Weak	45-54	6	18.7	9	28.1
Very weak	35-44	0	0	0	0
Total		30	100	30	100

The table (4) above shows that the students' writing proficiency in both of the experimental and control group has improved. In the experimental group, the test scores of the students tend to spread from pass to very good category. There were 12 students (37.5%) in the very good category, 9 students (28.1%) were in good category, 3 students (9.3%) were in pass category, and 6 students (18.7) were in weak category, and there were no students in the very weak

category. Unlike the experimental group, the control group students' scores also were spread dominantly from pass to very good category and no one of the students was categorized as excellent. There were 10 students (31.2%) who were categorized as very good, 7 students (18.7%) were categorized as good, 9 students (28.1%) were categorized as weak, 4 students (12.5%) were in pass category, and no students were categorized as very weak. The mean scores of both groups can be seen in the table below:

5. THE MEAN SCORE AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF THE STUDENTS' WRITING IN PRETEST AND POSTTEST

Writing Component	Experimental Group				Control Group			
	Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
	Mean score	Std. D	Mean Score	Std. D	Mean Score	Std. D	Mean Score	Std. D
Content	30.63	10.14	45.66	80.59	29.06	8.56	35.81	16.11
Organization	46.20	8.25	62.91	8.02	46.66	08.59	56.25	9.75
Vocabulary	63.13	10.9	79.69	7.39	61.35	9.75	66.56	9.70
Language use	62.91	8.02	76.31	8.40	63.13	10.90	70.23	9.06
Mechanics	42.50	15.3	60.13	11.23	40.63	16.02	49.25	9.75

Table 5 indicates that there were the differences in the mean scores and standard deviation in students' writing achievement. The distribution scores for experimental and control group in posttest show the difference from the pretest. The data revealed the lack of students' knowledge of content (30.63 < 45.66), mechanics (42.50 < 60.13), and organization (46.20 < 62.91) in experimental group. Likewise, control students lack the knowledge of content (29.06 < 35.81), mechanics (40.63 < 49.25), and organization (46.66 < 56.25) in control group pretest score. This study proved in the experimental group, the improvement of each component of the writing skill in the posttest went up by 20% after introducing the Facebook activity. However, as for the control group, there was an improvement by only 10 % in the students' writing score in the posttest. Therefore, the main scores between the pretest and posttest for the experimental group did show a significant improvement of their writing skill. Also, the average change between pretest and posttest scores for each group indicated that introducing Facebook activities produced a greater change (gain) to the experimental group than to the control situation.

**B. Questionnaire**

The respondents of this research consisted of 30 students of the experimental groups completing their bachelor's degree in Civil Aviation at the technical college of civil aviation & meteorology). The students' perceptions were measured through a questionnaire comprising 10 close-ended items. Respondents were required to participate in a Facebook group created by the researcher. Exploring the students' perceptions on the effectiveness of Facebook for teaching writing was the purpose of this instrument. After adding the students in the Facebook group created for this research called 'aviation English' , they were required to participate and to respond to a 10-item questionnaire distributed after one month of participation in the on

Facebook group already created. Finally, the questionnaire was administered by the respondents in hard copies.

*1) Construction of the Questionnaire*

The 10 items in the questionnaire were constructed based on the purpose of this study. The items in the questionnaire have been collected in such a way so as to address the 2 controversial issues in writing, and these are the process of writing and the challenges and the affective domain of students. The questionnaire consisted of 10 closed-ended items with a 4-level Likert Scale of 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'.

*a) Students' Writing Process*

1. Brainstorming on FB group is helpful to organize my thoughts before I start writing.
2. Reading the other students' comments on the FB group, I learn new vocabulary
3. Reducing spelling errors through the spell-check feature is helpful for writing
4. Posting Ideas or opinions by my peers helps get a better idea before writing
5. Participating in FB group discussion makes it easier to complete my essays

Items 1-3 in this section explores some issues of the writing process, including the organization of ideas, vocabulary building and spelling. The next two items 4-5 explore if Facebook group provides students with the content knowledge for writing tasks.

*b) Students' Challenges & Affective Domains*

6. I will start reading materials before sharing them.
7. I get distracted by other features of Facebook.
8. I get comfortable posting my ideas or opinions.
9. I get encouraged when friends "like" my or comments.
10. I prefer discussing topics on FB group instead of classroom.

*2) Analysis of the questionnaire*

Items 1-5 in Section A of the questionnaire were chosen to explore the EFL students' perceptions of Facebook groups in improving writing. For the purpose of analyzing this instruments, the findings were recollected into two categories: Cumulative Disagree to refer to the cumulative data percentage of students' choice of 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree' and the other Cumulative Agree to refer to the cumulative data percentage of 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' as can be seen in Table 1 below:



6. STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE FACEBOOK GROUPS IN IMPROVING WRITING

No	Item	Cumulative Disagree (%)	Cumulative Agree (%)
1.	Brainstorming is helpful to organize my thoughts before I start writing	11.09	88.1
2	Reading the other students' comments on the FB group, I learn new vocabulary	16.7	83.3
3	Reducing spelling errors through the spell-check feature is helpful for writing	09.5	90.5
4	Posting Ideas or opinions by my peers helps get a better idea before writing	4.8	95.2
5	Participating in FB group discussion makes it easier to complete my essays	11.9	88.1

From Table 6, it indicates that over 88% of respondents generally agree that the Facebook group helps in their writing process. The data in this table also provides answers to the research purpose on assessing the students' perceptions on Facebook and whether or not it can assist the students writing process. It can be seen that brainstorming process is helpful to organize their thoughts before they start writing, and that 83.3% of the students agree that reading other students' comments will help them to learn new vocabulary in the group, 90,5% of the students agree that reducing spelling errors through the spell-check feature can help in their writing process, 95.2% of the students agree that posting ideas by their peers helps them to get a better idea before writing, and 88.1% of the students agree that participating in the Facebook group discussion makes it easier to complete their essays.

Item 6 and item 7 in table 2 were constructed to see the challenges that students might face when they participate in Facebook groups for discussion on writing. The last three close-ended items 7-8-9 in table of the questionnaire seek investigate what influences the affective domain of the students in terms of writing. Item 8 investigates whether or not students get comfortable when posting their ideas or opinions on Facebook. Item 9 investigates whether the 'like' feature on Facebook will make respondents get encouraged, when friends 'like' their comments. The last item (10) is to see their choice of preference, whether they prefer discussing on Facebook group or inside the classroom.

7. ILLUSTRATES THE CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE FOR THOSE WHO DISAGREE AND AGREE TO THE STATEMENT.

No	Item	Cumulative Disagree (%)	Cumulative Agree (%)
1.	I will start reading materials before sharing them	9.5	90.5
2.	I get distracted by other features of Facebook	14.3	85.7
3.	I get comfortable posting my ideas or opinions	7.1	92.9

4.	I get encouraged when friends "like" my or comments	2.4	97.6
5.	I prefer discussing topics on FB group instead of classroom.	45.2	54.8

It can be said from the table above that 90.5% of the students agree that they will read the materials they find before sharing them on FB group. This is a very positive response and could strengthen the reason why FB groups should be incorporated by teachers in the teaching of writing in language classrooms. However, 85.7% of the respondents agree to that they get distracted by other features of Facebook. Because of the distractions, students might end up spending more time on other features and not fully focusing on their actual task on Facebook group for the purpose of writing.

The cumulative percentages of the students agreeing to item 8 and 9 are significantly higher when compared to item 10. Item 8 shows that 92.9% of the users agree that they get comfortable when posting their ideas and opinions on Facebook group, and 97.6% get encouraged when friends like their posts. However, in terms of preference, only 54.8% of the students agree that they prefer discussing issues or topics on Facebook group instead of a classroom.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of quantitative data indicated that the use of social media, such as Facebook can improve students' achievement in writing and that there is a significant relationship between learners' use of social media (Facebook) and their writing proficiency based on the students writing scores in the experimental group. However, some EFL students were found to have low achievement in three of the writing components such content, mechanics and organization. This low achievement in writing can be seen from the data which shows the lack of students' knowledge of content (30.63 < 45.66), mechanics (42.50 < 60.13), and organization (46.20 < 62.91) in experimental group, and also content (29.06 < 35.81), mechanics (40.63 < 49.25), and organization (46.66 < 56.25) in control group pretest score.

It can therefore be inferred that these findings indicate the use of social media in teaching is always successful and that there is a strong relationship between social media and students' writing achievement. This study is in line with Long Van Nguyen (2010) who stated that the advantages of using social media in teaching, indeed, created an enjoyable, entertaining social learning environment which gives pleasure to the students. Those advantages made the students more interested in joining the writing class and as a result influenced their performance positively. Therefore, in conducting future research or teaching and learning process through the social media it is recommended for teachers and researchers should bear in mind many aspects of online learning such internet connection, the novelty of the social media. Besides, the teacher should pay special attention to the students' awareness in using technology. To sum up, based on the findings, the researcher argues that social media such as Facebook should be incorporated in English for specific purposes to EFL students.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the results, the researcher found that; A) The use of social media such Facebook did significantly improve the students' writing skill. B) Facebook group did help EFL aviation students in their writing, especially in the brainstorming process before writing. C) Students' perceptions on the effectiveness of using Facebook in teaching writing were found to be positive. Also, based on the study findings above, the researcher offers some suggestions for the college language teachers, lecturers, and further researchers as follows: A). The college should provide adequate internet connection on the campus that will assist language teachers and students to conduct e-learning sessions via social media. B). language teachers should focus on developing the students' mastery of vocabulary and grammar, be creative and innovative to use social media to avoid students' boredom. C) language teachers and researchers who carry out teaching and learning via social media should raise the students' awareness of the importance of Facebook in learning writing.

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# Relationship among Sociolinguistic Theories

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## **Abstract:**

**In this study, the researcher spotlights the attention on the study of relationship that binds the sociolinguistic theories through detailed observation and testing of each theory after giving a vivid description to them, then elaborating the role they play in communication either in establishing it or the other way around based on variables that are given.**

## **I. Introduction**

When it comes to communication, Sociolinguistics plays a huge role in studying, and establishing a proper communication among people even those with different cultural backgrounds. It even studies the means of a good communication, as well as the signs of an ongoing desired communication. It also studies and clarifies the signs of an unwanted communication based on certain subconscious reflexes. In another aspect it even connects the different usages of language and traces it back to the roots of that individual using the language, and categorizes the social class of that individual based on the use of their language. "Sociolinguistics is that part of linguistics which is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon. It investigates the field of language and society and has close connections with the social sciences, especially social psychology, anthropology, human geography and sociology." Peter Trudgill (2000) Sociolinguistics has many communication theories that are studied thoroughly and applied in real life applications; however some of them are more of a logical concept rather than being theories needed to be applied. Sociolinguistics is not a narrow field as some may think, as Meyerhof (2006) has stated "Can be confusing if you are coming new to the field."

## **II. Literature review**

A research was conducted under the name of "The Virtual Speech Community: Social Network and Language Variation" by J.C Paolillo, which spot the lights on the different uses of language on the platform of social media, and how language is uttered based on the needs of expression among those individuals. J.C Paolillo stated that "*both popular wisdom and professional scholars in a range of academic disciplines make a diversity of productions on how the internet will shape our lives and our languages.*" it expressed the number of expressions and informal usage of terms

discussed which proves that the inference theory plays a huge role in establishing communication. Another study under the name of "Politeness theory and computer-mediated communication: a sociolinguistic approach" by D A. Morand this conceptual paper studied how politeness theory by P.Brown and S.Levinson can contribute to the study of role relations in computer-mediated communication. The theory of politeness basically states how to form your meaning into words that show respect and no harshness upon the receiver's perception. This study discusses how recognition of the central role of face-to-face work in social interaction can enhance understanding of why and where emotions might occur while practicing of this theory that builds its own continuous communication in the form of the politeness.

## **III. Aim of study:**

In this research a study of four sociolinguistic theories is to be conducted and explained, as well as tested in experiments made by the researcher himself on subjects that their names are replaced with alphabetic letters to preserve confidentiality. These testes were done in order to establish the relation that brings these theories in a communicational tie, as a matter of fact, these theories were studied previously each on its own individually by the researcher during the course of three continued semesters in Theoretical Linguistics curriculum by lecturers in The University Of Tripoli, and that is the source of most of the information on sociolinguistic theories that is mentioned in this research. These sociolinguistic theories each one of them has its feature, moreover they are all connected in a way that makes communication valid, and also to make a disconnection of communication when it is needed

### **1. Theory one in study:**

**The Communication Accommodation theory (CAT)** is a sociolinguistic theory developed by Howard Giles, that states that some of communication habits among people with close related bounds may be passed among these people to make a special communication model that could result in the single understanding of that group, and that group only i.e. this theory studied the joint communication of a closely related people (friends, families, classmates) and observed that any group with such relation may pick up the communication habits of a person among the group (usually

the person with the most influencing personality) and make it the standard unified communication model for them.

### 1-A- Theory testing:

Subject (A) in this theory is a 22 years old Libyan white male from an upper middle social class with low social communication skills. Subject (A) socially interacted with subject (B) an extroverted variable with a similar description to subject (A)'s qualities. In less than 19 days of continuous expose to subject (B)'s communication habits subject (A) has demonstrated a rapid change in behavior to come in unite with the habits of subject (B) such as the abbreviations preceded by useless adverbs and intentional grammar mistakes for example the expressions "like literally OMG" and "You is a boss" which proves the validity of CAT theory in such circumstances.

### 2. Theory two in study:

The inference is the second theory in this study. It is explained that the inference theory is basically the referring back into previously mentioned information, however when it comes to theoretical frame the inference is taking an expression figuratively and make a reference to the meaning that is meant by it rather than taking the expression literally i.e. it is the understanding of a hidden meaning from a surface expression. Inference usually occurs among friends or classmates.

#### 2-A- Theory testing:

Subject (C) and (D) are in their early twenties both Libyan males from an upper middle social class. They interact with each other on daily basis, and share a close bond which makes it inevitable for them to have secrets as well as secret language with secret expressions to protect their privacy. it was noticed that they have developed surface expressions with hidden meaning an example of that, whenever both subjects (C) and (D) are in a public and speaking out loud in a private matter one of them uses the expression (كاف واور) which is the combination of the Arabic letters (KAF and WAW) and that is a meaningless surface structure, however it has an effective hidden meaning of the Arabic Libyan dialectic word (كسرة وذن) (KASRAT WODEN) which is an expression literally means (ear breaking) composed from the first letter in KASRAT which is K (KAF in Arabic) and first letter from the word WODEN which is W (WAW in Arabic) figuratively this expressions means eavesdropping or someone is overhearing the conversation. It is used as a warning between both subjects, and that where inference comes in act of proving the validity of the theory and inserts it into the text after your paper is styled.

### 3. Theory three in study:

**Prestige and style shifting** is a combination of two joint sociolinguistic theories. **Prestige** is the respect of differences in language dialect and, the individual's attempts to use the standard language whenever these dialects come in crossed paths. Style shifting on the other hand is the process of changing the usual used language and shifting it to what helps the surroundings to build communication with you. Prestige style shifting is divided into two: **Overt and Covert**.

Overt is the style shifting of your language to what comes into a match point with your surroundings to build and preserve communication. A covert is the opposite of overt. Covert is the maintaining of the language no matter how much it differs from the surroundings. It is said that Covert people do not style shift to express group solidity

### 3-A- Theory testing:

*Subject (E) is a typical Libyan female in her early twenties from a middle social class who have lived her childhood in an English language speaking country which made her acquire the English language and used it more than Arabic. She continued on behaving in such matter even after her returning to her home country a non-English speaking country. It is noticed that there is a lack of communication with the surroundings, due to the covert prestige of subject (E), however this prestige is a result of a communication divergence from subject (E)'s side towards her surroundings, and one of the reasons is that she is continuously being criticized by those same surroundings with the accusation that she is only showing off her middle class foreign language in front of people of whom do not have strong command of that language. Subject (E) feels proud of her language, and she is expressing group solidarity, on the other hand subject (F) is as the same condition as subject (E) with the difference of gender. Subject (F) has struggled with the same mentality and criticism as subject (E), and due to the low social skills the subject has decided to step down and style shift into the overt prestige, and is a result of a psychological factor that is out of this research's boundaries, nevertheless a style shift was made into the overt prestige, and a change was made onto the language of subject (F) to match the surroundings, and also to keep the communication on an ongoing state. The contrast situations of subject (E) and subject (F) proves the validity of both of the prestige shifts between covert and overt within different circumstances*

### 4. Theory four in study:

**Code Mixing** is a sociolinguistic theory developed by Carol Meyers-scotten that particularly studies multi-lingual individuals and their transition among these languages they have acquired i.e. the usage of two or more languages during the same continuant speech, and the mix of both language structures in one sentence

#### 4. A- Theory testing:

Subject (G) is a Libyan bi-lingual male in his early twenties speaking both Arabic, and English, but with the excessive usage of the latter. It is noticed that the subject has demonstrated a funny way of mixing between the two languages especially in present continuous, where he uses an Arabic Libyan dialectic word and adds the suffix (ing) in the end of the stem to make it sound like English present continuous but with an Arabic word which is grammatically does not exist in the Arabic Language. An example for the subject's code mixing is the usage of the Arabic Libyan dialectic word (بيهدرز) which means to chit chat (YAHDRIZ), but with the insertion of (ing) to the stem to become (بيهدرزينج) or (YAHDRIZING) which turns

#### IV. Relationship between theories

##### 1. Relationship between theory one and theory two:

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and The Inference theory are closely related, and can co-exist in harmony. It is explained that CAT is the adaption of communication habits from a single person or a group of people with the attention of the subcategories of this theory, and which are Convergence and Divergence. The first means the continuous of communication and the latter means the disconnection of communication deliberately from one side of the communicators. Coming to talk about the relation between this theory and the Inference theory which is already explained as the previous reference made to a deep meaning of language use or a situation.

Subject (A) in an ongoing communication with subject (C) as the first subject is expressing signs of agreeing to the second subject's speech as well as reflecting signs of interest in the communication, so subject (C) picks up these signs and make an inference to a previous knowledge of human communication skills that explain the desire of subject (A) to keep the communication going and does not want to divert from it. In this sense it is established that the inference was made based on the prior knowledge of subject (C)'s with human communication skills. The second situation is between subject (B) and subject (D) where the same scenario has happened but subject (B) has shown no signs of interest in subject (D)'s speech neither expressed signs of agreeing, as matter of fact subject (B) did not like the approach of subject (D), and has expressed a divergence style of communication such as body language movements that has expressed an image where subject (B) is bothered, as well as the usage of short expressions as well as the excessive usage of the sound "hmmmm" whenever subject (D) states a point. In this state an inference was instantly made by subject (D) to encounter the realization of subject (B)'s desire to not have the communication continue any further for factors could be physically ,emotionally, or even psychological. Non-language related.

A different aspect of the CAT theory is looking at communication between two closely related people or more (family, friends, or classmates) that have developed a special language or one has adopted the unique usage of the other person's language or the special morphology usage. With the inference of these communicative individuals the understanding is established, due to this adaption; however the communication is only built among these communicative groups. It is a method of facilitating private communication to keep the outsiders from actually understanding the context.

##### 2. Relationship between theory one and theory four:

CAT theory from the perspective of adapting to a closely related individual has a significant relationship with the Code Mixing theory which is already explained as the mixture of two languages' structure in a continuant speech with the already given example. The CAT plays a huge role in such communication with the association of Code Mixing in the sense of an individual with an effecting personality interacts on daily basis with one individual or a group of individuals

with the same Multi-lingual structure background. The adapting occurs by other individuals to the same method of mixing two or more languages in the same speech, so it becomes a special way of commination among the group.

##### 3. Relationship between theory two and theory three:

Inference and prestige have a relationship when it comes to the covert prestige only, as it indicates the strong refusal to overt in order to match the surroundings. An individual from the surroundings that are of a covert subject would infer to the covert behavior as the very same refusal of communication that is previously explained, on the other hand another individual may make the inference as the expression of group solidarity by the covert subject as has been previously elaborated.

##### 4. Relationship between theory two and theory four:

Inference and Code mixing are closely related, because Inference plays a huge role in the understanding of Code mixing. It takes some inference the skills to understand that unique mixture of two or more language structures with different grammar insertions into words that are not from the same language as the grammar rule that is inserted, as well as sounds and morphemes. If an individual has no inference skills, it would be challenging for them to understand the structure with the meaning that is associated to that structure. It is worth to mention that individuals who suffer from autism or a number of specific syndromes will not be able to understand the meaning of that mixed structure due to their low inferring skills, so inference has a valid role that it plays to establish communication among code mixing individuals.

#### V. Conclusion:

In conclusion, the relationship among sociolinguistic theories is valid as well as noticeable, and it is in the researcher opinion based on observation and detailed study as well as experience in everyday social practices that sociolinguistic theories craft the bases of communication, and if studied practically then we can achieve and open ways to all sorts of directive communication, due to the role these theories play genuinely in either making or breaking communication among individuals

The preferred spelling of the word "acknowledgment" in America is without an "e" after the "g". Avoid the stilted expression "one of us (R. B. G.) thanks ...". Instead, try "R. B. G. thanks...".Put sponsor acknowledgments in the unnumbered footnote on the first page.

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# *Teachers' Beliefs and Practices about Integrating the Critical Thinking Skills in Libyan EFL Public High schools: the Literacy or the Challenge*

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**Abstract** This study tries to investigate whether Libyan as a foreign language (EFL) teachers integrate critical thinking skills in their classrooms, and this study argues that many EFL Libyan teachers have no idea about the meaning and the ways of using these skills in their classes. Data are collected through three qualitative methods: observing 10 EFL Libyan teachers in different public high schools and interviewing 5 EFL teachers. Also, the Libyan curriculum of high schools “English for Libya was analyzed qualitatively whether it provides opportunities for integrating critical thinking skills or not. The finding stated that most teachers participated in this study do not understand the meaning of critical thinking skills and they give more priority to grammar rules and vocabulary through asking their students to memorize them for exams.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this study, there is much focus on the definitions of critical thinking skills, their positive effect on improving the English language skills and the challenges encountered by Libyan EFL teachers in using them in their classes. Critical thinking skills can be represented by the first “No” said by a baby to tell his/her parents that “I am here and I have an opinion”. Hence, for students in particular, critical thinking skills improve them

to positively participate in building their societies. If teachers ask their students to simply memorize the information they receive in the class without giving them any chance to discuss or debate about this information, there will be “copy-pasted” minds. Thus, the question here is why do we have teachers then? Integrating critical thinking skills is very necessary specifically in language classes where students are required to be exposed to a foreign culture and respect as only a different culture not a rude one.

## II. STUDY BACKGROUND

In Libya, the English as a foreign (EFL) language policy has been given special attention by the Ministry of Education in recent years. That is, Libyan students started to learn English at grade 1 in primary schools in 2018. For high schools, the English curriculum is classified into two sections, the scientific and the literary one. Additionally, this syllabus has been revised and improved many times.

However, for the teaching methods used by Libyan EFL teachers to teach English at high schools, most of them are traditional. That is to say, it is argued that they do not care much about integrating new skills such as critical thinking. In other words, Arabic language is the dominant language in the classroom interaction, especially when teachers explaining the meaning of new words as students often write the Arabic equivalent of the English words to help them memorise the meaning. Also, there is no assessment of student's mistakes neither in oral

performance nor in written performance. Moreover, for the assessment of pronunciation, there are no tests for speaking or listening skills. Finally, teachers do not use English to communicate with their student in the classroom.

### III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims at:

1. Exploring better possible teaching methods and strategies which can provide good opportunities for Libya high school students to use their critical thinking skills
2. Trying to avoid using the old traditional teaching methods such as translating to Arabic which can prevent students from using their critical thinking skills
3. Integrating more critical thinking skills at high schools when learning English language.

### IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do Libyan as a foreign language (EFL) teachers use any critical thinking skills?
2. What are the Libyan teachers perceptions of critical thinking skills?
3. Do Libyan teachers introduce their students to critical thinking skills?
4. How can EFL Libyan teachers use critical thinking skills?

### V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the field of language teaching and learning many educators as well as researchers base their arguments and suggestions on second language acquisition theories (SLAT). For this research, as the purpose of this work is to increase the awareness of Libyan EFL teachers towards the importance of integrating the critical thinking skills in their classrooms, the skill acquisition theory can confirm the significant role of critical thinking skills in improving the English language skills of Libyan EFL students. According to Taie (2014), this theory provides the potential opportunities for teachers to implement both explicit and implicit learning in SLA. Also, this theory highlights the role of practice, engagement and performance for students in order for them to get improved in language skills particularly the productive skills. More importantly, it entails the utilization of declarative knowledge followed by procedural knowledge.

According to Richards & Schmidt (2010), "declarative knowledge is conscious knowledge of facts, concepts or ideas that can be stored as propositions. And procedural knowledge refers to unconscious knowledge of how an activity is done".

### VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical thinking skills have been differently defined, for example, according to Elder and Paul(1994) state," critical thinking skills are defined as the ability of individuals to take charge of their own thinking and develop appropriate criteria and standards for analyzing their own thinking" . Moreover, as Norris (1992) states, "critical thinking skills aims at achieving understanding, and evaluating different perspectives, and solving problems. For the challenges encountered by Libyan EFL teachers in the integration of critical thinking skills, Pathan and et al (2010) stated that the difficulties faced teaching English across Libyan schools are consistent; these are motivation, large classroom, low achievement rates, insufficient time to teach curriculum, and teacher training. Teachers of English in secondary schools are only Libyan and their level of proficiency in the English language may not always give confidence in encouraging and motivating the students as they tend to focus on explaining the declarative knowledge such as grammar rules and vocabulary asking their students only to memorize instead of practicing them. Critical thinking skills have positive effects on the language teaching process.

They have been introduced and they have gained a special attention in many foreign language teaching (FLT) settings so that nowadays enhancing critical thinking skills of students is considered one of the foreign language teachers tasks at schools . The manipulation of critical thinking skills into the FLT classrooms is very important to improve the performance of EFL students to the English language skills for several reasons. First, if students can take charge of their own thinking, they can monitor and evaluated their own ways of learning more successfully. Second, critical thinking skills expand the learning experience of the students and makes the language more meaningful for them. Third, critical



thinking skills have a high degree of correlation with the students achievements. Different studies have confirmed that the role of critical thinking in improving EFL writing performance, language proficiency and oral communication skills. Students may become proficient language users if they have motivation and are taught the ways of displaying critical thinking skills in foreign language usage. Which signifies that the students must have reflection on their production of ideas and they may critically support those ideas with logical details .Educators have emphasized the importance of developing higher-order thinking skills in foreign language classrooms (Chamot,1995 Al-Arishi and et al 1991).Students who have developed critical thinking skills are capable of doing activities of which other students may not be capable .

#### VII. RESULTS

This study revealed that there is a misunderstanding of critical thinking skills meaning by Libyan EFL teachers. Also, Teachers focus more on teaching The grammar rules, vocabulary and memorization of the syllabus. Additionally, teachers are more concerned with students' grades rather than their performance.

On the other hand, the Libyan curriculum of English provide many chances of using these critical thinking skills such as reflecting on the reading passages by sharing students' experience.Much research is required to clearly investigate the teaching methods used by Libyan teachers.

This study recommends offering more training programs to improve teachers' teaching methods, particularly integrating

critical thinking skills which can help in improving students' levels of English skills.

#### VIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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# Effects of Morphological Levels on Understanding Meaning of Words in English

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**Abstract:** Most ELLs associate English word meanings to their morphological levels, which some times works as an aid and other times causes confusion and misunderstanding meanings of words. Thus, this paper is trying to shed some lights on how morphological levels of English words influence on ELLs' understanding of these words. This paper is conducted to find out how ELLs get meanings of words that have more than one morpheme or words that have one morpheme in a form of two morphemes. The methodology of this paper is based on getting data from primary and secondary resources. For the primary resources, the researcher interviewed ten ELLs to find out how these ELLs associate meanings of words to these words morphological levels. As for the secondary resources, the researcher searched through books, journals, articles, Websites, and papers about topics related. The researcher obtained findings, the most important of which is that ELLs encounter difficulties in understanding meanings of words based to their morphological levels and process. The researcher provides some recommendations regarding role of morphological level in understanding meanings of words in English.

**Keywords:** *Morphological level; word meaning; morpheme; constituent.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

It is a matter of fact that English is labelled as a morphophonemic language, in which morphemes and meaning affect the sound and spelling of words. For instance, learners can deduce the morphological family and meaning of a word to get other morphological structures that differ in sound and spelling. For example, the morphological family of the word "society" is "social", "socialize", "socially", "unsocial", "socialized", "socializes", and so on. In this regard, Anderson and Nagy (1993) estimated the number of word families in English with almost 88,500, and this number is multiplied by the average of three due to derivational and inflectional aspects. As this might be an aid to

learners, it might cause misunderstanding and confusion. Hence, Anderson and Nagy (1993) argue that "students will be able to transfer the understanding they have of base words to unlock the meanings of unfamiliar derivatives and compounds. In many cases transfer is easy; in many other cases transfer is impossible" (p. 4).

This, of course, indicates that ELLs start learning English through understanding meanings of words based to their morphological processes and structures. For example, they understand the meaning of "globe" and later they derive other words based to several morphological processes, such as "global", "globalize", "globalizes", "globalist", "globalization", "globalized", and so on. While applying morphological processes in capturing the meanings of words, ELLs might commit errors and misunderstand meanings of words.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A lot of research and studies have emphasized the importance of grammar in learning and teaching English as either foreign or second language. Yet, the emphasis has been on the syntactic level. So, in this part of the study, the researcher is focusing on the other level of grammar, which is morphology. This study is directed to highlight the significance of morphological level in understanding word meaning in English.

### A. Morphological Levels

Aronoff and Fudeman (2011) see that it is significant that we distinction between derivation and inflection as this distinction helps learners identify meaning and function of words. While derivational morphology changes meaning and class of words, inflectional morphology changes structure and mood of the word. Similarly, O'Grady and Guzman (1996) argue that meanings of words can be captured from their

morphological structures and forms. People can guess the meaning of a word through applying several rules regarding derivational and inflectional processes. Words with derivational morphological relationships have orthographic and semantic relationships. For example, there is a semantic, orthographic relationships between “act”, “react”, “reaction”, and “reactional”.

In its wider sense, morphology indicates the study of the internal structure of words. Morphological processes include derivation, which is concerned with word formation either meaning or class, and inflection, which is concerned with tense, gender, and number. Derivational process generates new words either different in meaning such as “happy” and “unhappy” or different in class such as “happy” and “happiness”. Whereas inflectional process generates change in tense such as “listen” and “listened”, change in gender such as “listen” and “listens”, and number such as “boy” and “boys”.

Whereas Matthews (1991) believes that derivational affixations take place closer to the root morpheme than the inflectional affixations do, Katamba(1993) believes that the function of derivational affixations wonders morphologists about the legitimacy of setting a distinction between derivation and inflection. Though the distinction is clear-cut in some aspects and forms, it is unclear in others. In some cases, morphologists have no agreement about the categorization of word analyses whether they are inflectional or derivational. For example, the word “speak” might work as a verb or a noun, so “speaks” might work as inflectional or derivational.

In his attempt to distinguish between derivational and inflectional processes, Matthews (1991) argues that “derivational morphology as well as word-formation are usually two faces of the same coin. In the former, it is not only to centre upon the grammatical processes of derivation, but also the creative derivation of new words that follow existing patterns” (p. 61).

Similar to Matthews, Haspelmath(2002) argues that the distinction between derivation and inflection might be shown in that “inflection is relevant to the syntax; derivation is not relevant to the syntax” (p. 70). Derivation, in fact, is relevant to meaning and class. Thus, derivation is cross-linguistically overspread and makes confusion to language learners. Derivational process in English are derived from

different languages, such as Latin, Greek, Italian, French, Arabic, Urdu, and many others. So, it is not easy to deduce meaning or decompose the root of words to get meanings.

O’Gray, Dobrovolsky, and Katamba (1996) discuss that derivational processes lead to forming independent words that are imprinted in speaker’s mind and later uses them spontaneously without sometime even knowing their derivational processes. Sometimes, a user of a language fail to determine the root of the morphological items; for instance, the word “work” functions as a noun and a verb at the same time.

### *B. Word Meaning and Morphological Level*

Words are complicated symbols with several meanings, various sounds, and multiple orthographical shapes. For instance, the word “minute” has different meanings based to its pronunciation. It might mean “60seconds” or “tiny” based to how it is pronounced, yet it has the same orthographical shape. Meanings and functions of words, however, can be captured through the decomposition of words into their components (morphemes) and internal structure (morphology). In some other cases, word morphemes have no semantic relationship though they have orthographic relationship. For example, there is no semantic relationship of the morpheme “duce” in words, such as “introduce”, “produce”, “induce”, “deduce”, “reduce”, “transduce”, “conduce”, “traduce”, “seduce”, “adduce”, and “educate”.

It is a matter of fact that people use language for various functions, amongst of which is to communicate with each other in various social contexts. They, for example, use language to express their needs and desires, share beliefs and thoughts, express feelings and emotions, and other social activities. It is worth mentioning that as people use language as a way of communication, they also use it as a way of miscommunication. In this regard, Omar (2012) believes that “though people use words to clarify and explain their ideas and expressions through meaningful utterances, they, sometimes, tend to make their words unclear and vague to audience” (p. 32). Andrews (1993), also, argues that “one of the most basic reasons human beings bother to communicate with each other is to impart some kind of meaning” (p. 10).

The discussion above reveals that it is meaning that gives words power, and we cannot divorce a word from its meaning because as Omar (2018) argues “it seems impossible for the symbol to give the same meaning in a new context and situation. The reason is that words and phrases cannot bring the same pictures to people’s minds” (p. 382). For example, when someone says “I read an interesting book yesterday,” the meaning is unclear as each has a different image of the book read yesterday. Some may have the image of a comic book, others may have the image of a book in a specific area, and so on.

So, people give meaning to a word based to how they think and believe, which means that people understand the superficial meaning of words. In fact, people understand meaning of a word only when they understand how the sender of the word thinks and believes. Elbow (Cited in Omar, 2012, p. 330) emphasizes that “words cannot contain meaning. Only people have meaning. Words can only have meaning attributed to them by people. The listener can never get any meaning out of a word that he didn’t put in”.

In general, a word has mainly five levels: phonological (sound system), morphological (internal structure of a word), syntactic (structure of a word in a sentence), semantic (meaning of a word in context), and pragmatics (how people use a word in various contexts). It is worth mentioning that meaning of a word is captured according to how people see these levels in a specific context because meaning, as Andrews (1993) clarifies, “is not something to be received, extracted, caught, or gotten from a symbol, a word, or a page, but is what people assign or ascribe to the symbol or the word” (p. 154).

When we talk about the morphological level of a word, we mainly talk about dividing a word into two parts: Root and Affixes. In this vein, Aitchison(2003) defines a morpheme as “one phonological form. But frequently it has a number of variants known as allomorphs. Allomorphs may vary considerably. Totally dissimilar forms may be allomorphs of the same morpheme. Cats, dogs, horses, sheep, oxen, geese all contain the English plural morpheme” (p. 62).

However, dividing English words into their morphological levels most often causes confusion and misunderstanding of word

meanings for almost English language learners (ELLs). For example, most ELLs think that the two-morpheme word “unhappy” is equivalent to “sad,” because “un” means “not”, and “dislike” is equivalent to “hate” as “dis” means “do not”. In fact, in English the word “unhappy” is not equivalent to “sad” as one might be neutral, neither happy nor sad. Similarly, someone might dislike something, yet he does not hate it.

In addition to having confusion and misunderstanding of words in their morphological levels, most ELLs base their understanding to meanings of English words on understanding the morphological levels of these words. For example, most ELLs think that the word “discover” comprises of two morphemes: “dis,” which means “do not” and “cover,” which means “hide” or “conceal.” So, when something is not hidden or concealed, it is seen by others or revealed. There might be some relationship in the semantic features between the word “discover” and “not hide,” but syntactically the word “discover” is a one-morpheme word. So, there is no morphological relationship between “dis” and “cover”.

### *C. Importance of Morphological Level in Learning English*

We have already seen above that a word has five levels. As a word is what constitutes language, language itself has five levels. It is a fact that for learners to use language well, they need to be acquainted with words with their five levels. Of course, learners start learning a foreign language through learning sounds (phonology), vocabulary (morphology), and rules (syntax). Later, they get meanings of words (semantics) and use language in communicative situations (pragmatics). In this regard, Seidenberg and Gonnerman(2000) argue that

Language users have a remarkable ability to create, produce and comprehend complex words. Words such as undercut and bakery appear to be composed of units, traditionally called morphemes, that recombine in rule-like ways to form other words, such as underline and cannery. However, morphological systems are quasiregular: they are systematic and productive but admit many seemingly irregular forms. Thus, bakery is related to bake and cannery to can but what is the groce in grocery? (p. 353)

Nagy and Hiebert (2010) believe that morphological knowledge is indispensable in learning foreign languages as it assists learners to remember and use words more effectively. Two aspects of learners' knowledge have a great impact on how learners understand meanings of words. These two aspects are: (1) familiarity with words, which indicates the learners' prior knowledge about this knowledge in various contexts. Familiarity sometimes requires learners to associate words with graphics or any other visual aids. (2) complexity of words, which indicates the rate of difficulty learners encounter to capture the meaning of a word.

Regarding the importance of morphology in learning foreign languages, Aronoff and Fudeman (2011) emphasize that "a major way in which morphologists investigate words, their internal structure, and how they are formed is through the identification and study of morphemes, often defined as the smallest linguistic pieces with a grammatical function" (p. 2), which indicates that a morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of language. A morpheme is considered core for learners to compose and decompose words that have more than one constituent.

Nevertheless, studies and research reveal that most ELLs encounter difficulties and commit morphological errors regarding word formation, namely derivation. It is a matter of fact that each language has its own system of word formation. For example, the infix system is common in words such as walad (boy) awlad (boys), bent (girl) banat (girls), rajal (man) rejal (men), and many others. Whereas, the infix system is rare, if not found, in English language, which has just prefix and suffix systems only.

Zughoul (2002) tested the interlanguage syntax of (25) Arab learners of English from seven Arab countries, having intensive English course at the University of Texas, Austin. He found out that these learners committed errors in inflectional and derivational morphological levels. Politzer and Ramirez (1973) conducted a study regarding the errors committed in the five levels of language by ELLs. They found out that the most commonly used errors committed by Mexican-American students are in the morphological level, namely derivation. Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) concluded in their study that most students commit errors in morphological level, namely prefixes. For example, the participants of the study use "in" instead of "un"

in words such as "kind" and "necessary", so they have words as "inkind" and "innecessary".

### III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study has been conducted based on secondary and primary resources. The secondary resources include literature review, in which the researcher uses books, journals, and online resources relevant to the topic of the study. Primary resources include observation and interviewing ten participants to find out the importance of morphological level in understanding or misunderstanding meanings of words in English.

#### A. Problem of the Study

Morphological level is as significant as other levels of linguistics: phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Yet the focus is on the other four levels at expense of the morphological level. Hence, the researcher sees that there is a gap in investigating the role of morphological level in understanding or misunderstanding meanings of words in English.

#### B. Participants of the Study

The participants of this study are ten learners of English. The participants are selected to fulfil the objectives of this study. The participants have already taken a class of Linguistics, in which morphology is studied thoroughly. The researcher has selected the participant randomly, and they have been willing to participate in this study through answering the questions prepared by the researcher.

#### C. Importance of the Study

In spite of the fact that many studies and research have been conducted for studying grammar issues relevant to learning and teaching EFL in Libya, rare, if not, studies and research have been conducted to study morphological level. Hence, the researcher sees that there is a huge gap in this level of grammar. This study is directed to identify the role of derivational and inflectional levels in understanding meanings of words. The study aims at shedding light on the significance of morphological level in teaching and learning English.

#### D. Questions of the Study

To achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher has set a main question followed with other sub-questions. The main question of this

study is: What is the effect of morphological analysis on understanding meanings of words in English?

This main question is followed with other sub-questions as:

What are challenges learners encounter in understanding meanings of words based to their derivation and inflection?

How do morphological analysis affect on learners' understanding meanings of words?

#### IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

After analyzing the data of the study gathered from the participants' interviews regarding morphological level and understanding meanings of words, the researcher has reached the following findings.

- Inflectional and derivational processes cause problems to ELLs, namely when decomposing words into their morphological structures. The participants give examples of the confusion that they always encounter when they compose words into their morphological structures. For example, Ali said, "I always understand words in a different way because I analyze the word based to morphology structure". This problem is encountered by all the participants. I gave the participants the word "understand" and asked them to analyze it. Asma, Salem, and Noura analyzed "understand" as a word with two morphemes: "under" and "stand", basing on their image to the morphological analysis to words.

- The data analysis reveals that the participants associate meanings of English words to how they understand morphological levels of these words. For example, Nour and Shad believe that the word "breakfast" is a combination of two morphemes "break" and "fast." They think that "breakfast" means "to break the fast because of sleeping and not eating for long time at night." Salem, Naji, and Rania believe that the word "breakfast" is a combination of "break", which means rest, and "fast", which means quick. So, they think that "breakfast" is a short rest.

- The analysis shows that the participants use words as representations to the lexicon systematically, not base to their psychometric analyses. So, all the participants think that the word "thanksgiving" is a four-morpheme word "thank", "s", "give", and "ing", so they understand the meaning of this word based to

their decomposing this word into four morphemes.

- The analysis reveals that the participants encounter difficulties in the derivational affixes stemming from Latin and Greek due to their ignorance to Latin and Greek. Thus, they most of times use "un", which means "not" or "opposite" in English with positive adjectives to make them negative. Thus, they say "unperfect" to mean "imperfect", "undirect" to mean "indirect", "uncorrect" to mean "incorrect" and so on.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings obtained, the researcher is presenting some of the recommendations that might help ELLs understand meanings words based to their morphological processes and levels. These recommendations are:

- As most of morphological levels have Greek or Latin roots, it is recommended that teachers teach Latin and Greek affixes and encourage ELLs use them in various contexts. For example, "photo" in Greek means "light", and "graph" means "drawing". So, ELLs understand that the word "photography" means "drawing with light". They get used to understanding any word that contains such morphemes.

- Teachers ought to encourage ELLs to use morphemes in various contexts and understand meanings of words accordingly.

- Teachers ought to motivate ELLs construct words with multi-morphemic levels and deconstruct unfamiliar words.

- Teachers need to assess ELLs' knowledge and performance of words based to their morphological analysis and functions of words in various contexts till learners become knowledgeable of the derivational system of words.

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# Speaking Difficulties That Encounter Undergraduate Students of English Language Department

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**Abstract**—English as a Second Language has been taught in Libya since primary school. At the English Literature Department in the University Of Benghazi, it has been observed that most of the students are not good at speaking English before they graduated. This research investigates speaking difficulties students face and the factors affecting their speaking performance and finding ways to overcome those difficulties. The subjects of the study were (50) students randomly selected from different semesters and (10) randomly selected English lecturers. The research methodologies were questionnaires and class observations during study sessions. The findings show that students spoke very little or nothing in their speaking class because of the lack of motivation to use English to express themselves. They have a habit of translating into Arabic before they speak in English. Recommendations to encourage students include mind maps to generate ideas and speaking English more frequently, so students improve their communication skills.

**Keywords**—English Language, Speaking, Students, Teachers, Difficulties, communication.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In general, The ability to speak in a foreign language is at the very heart of what it means to be able to use a foreign language. Our personality, our self-image, our knowledge of the world and our ability to reason and express our thoughts are all reflected in our spoken performance in a foreign language. Being able to speak to friends, colleagues, visitors and even strangers, in their language or in a language which both speakers can understand, is surely the goal of very many learners. Yet speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and competence in speaking takes a long time to develop. To speak in a foreign language learners must master the sound system of the language, have almost instant access to appropriate vocabulary and be able to put words together intelligibly with minimal hesitation. In addition, they must also listen and understand carefully what is being said to them, and be able to respond appropriately to maintain amicable relations or to achieve their communicative goals.

## II. RESAERCH PROPOSAL

Speaking is defined operationally in this study as the secondary stage students' ability to express themselves orally, coherently, fluently and appropriately in a given meaningful context to serve both transactional and interactional purposes using correct pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and adopting the pragmatic and discourse rules of the spoken language. In other words they are required to show mastery of the following sub competencies/skills:

- i. Linguistic competence by using intelligible pronunciation.
- ii. Following grammatical rules accurately by using relevant, adequate and appropriate range of vocabulary.
- iii. Speech competence by structuring speech coherently and cohesively, Managing conversation and interacting effectively to keep the conversation going.
- iv. Pragmatic competence by expressing a range of functions effectively and appropriately according to the context and register.
- v. Fluency: by demonstrating a reasonable rate of speech.

At The English Literature Department in the University Of Benghazi, we observed, although most of the students are studying to complete eight semesters to get Bachelor Degree in English literature, they are not good at speaking English. They can pass exams easily but they find it difficult to use English to communicate. So, to define the problem first and then to help those students improve their speaking skills, it is necessary to find ways to overcome their difficulties. Moreover, the teachers need to know the factors that affect their students' speaking performance so that they can deal with these factors to help the students improve their speaking performance.

## III. STUDY PROBLEM

The researcher is rising the following three issues suggested as the current study addresses:-

1. What are the speaking problems that the students encounter when they learn to speak English?
2. What are the factors that affect their speaking performance?
3. What are the proposed practical solutions to overcome speaking difficulties?

## IV. STUDY METHODOLOGY

The research instruments employed to collect data for this study were by using questionnaires and class observation techniques.

- a. The questionnaires were designed, prepared and delivered to both (10) teachers of English literature department and (50) students from the stated department. The teachers' questionnaires consisted of (10) closed-questions designed in English and two



sections .The students' questions consisted of (20) closed-questions designed in English and three sections .

- b. Together with questionnaires, the researcher used class observation to see how the teachers carried out speaking lessons, how the students performed and what problems the students really encountered in speaking lessons. The class observation has mostly taken place during teaching in the period of the English literature department at the university of Benghazi (about six semesters).

### V. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

#### a. Data analysis procedure.

The quantitative data derived from the questionnaires were analyzed using Excel program. In order to answer the two research questions, the descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages were used. The qualitative data were derived from the class observation. What happened in every class observed were described in detail. The researcher also discussed the strong and weak points of these classes.

#### b. Questionnaire results:-

1. **Results Of Teachers' Questionnaires.**About (8) questions the teachers had been asked to explore their opinions on what are the factors that affect their speaking performance and speaking problems. The results show that:

- i. Figure 1 shows the majority of teachers (90%) agreed that the listeners (students) were patient, understanding, sympathetic and supportive under the performance conditions in speaking class. (70%) of teachers agreed that the students were not given plenty of time to perform a speaking task. (60%) of teachers viewed students prepared for a task before it performed. (40%) do not view the students have the pressure to perform well in speaking class.

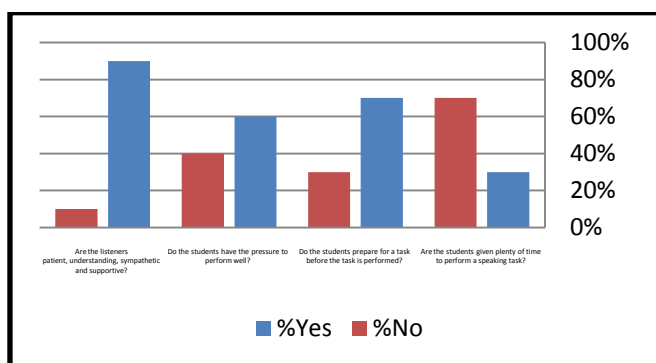


Fig.1The Performance Conditions In Speaking Class

- ii. Teachers differed from viewing students in the speaking class, where (50%) viewed students motivated, (30%) anxious and (20%) confident as shown in figure 2.

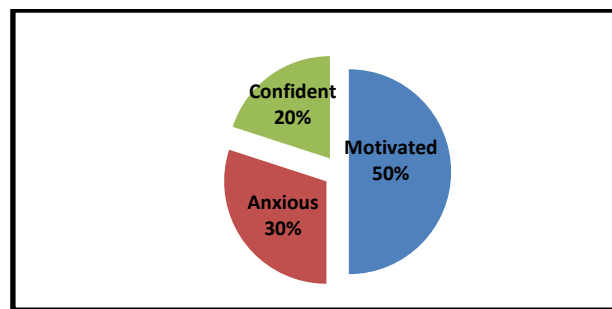


Fig.2 Teachers' Opinion About Students in speaking class

- iii. Teachers evaluated the listening skills of the students were ranged in average (50%), good (45%), and only (10%) viewed students as very good. None of teachers evaluated students as bad or very bad as represented in figure 3.

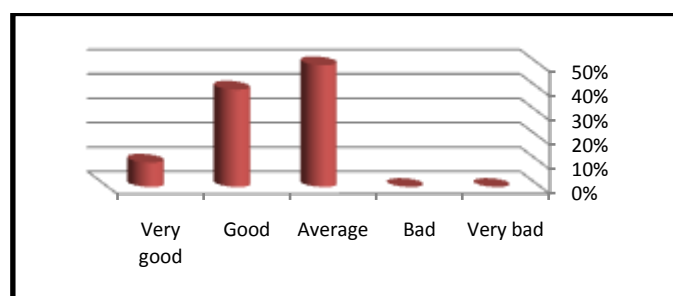


Fig.3 Evaluation Of Students' Listening Skills

- iv. When teachers asked about their reactions when the students make mistakes during oral work, (60%) they answered they keep quiet, smile and encourage them to go on their task and If students cannot think of what to say, they may prompt them forwards. Others (40%) they answered they may stop them and correct their mistakes, and watch, listen and write down points to give students feedback afterwards. None of teachers answered they get annoyed when students keep making mistakes as shown in figure 4.

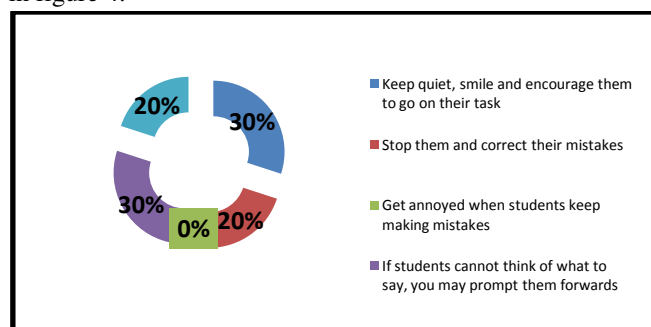


Fig.4 Teachers' reactions when the students make mistakes during oral work

- v. When teachers asked their opinions about the factors affecting students' speaking performance, (30%) viewed that listening ability is the major factor, whereas (60%)

distributed equally their views between Topical knowledge, time allowed to perform a speaking task, and confidence. Only (10%) viewed that speaking performance could be affected by the motivation to speak as illustrated in figure 5.

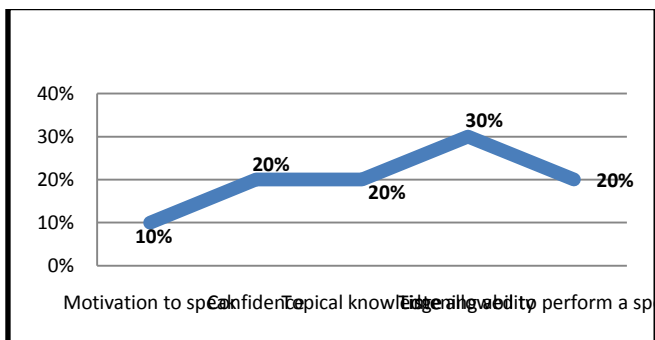


Fig.5 factors affecting your students' speaking performance

i. When teachers asked their opinions about which speaking problems do students encounter in the class, (50%) they mentioned student are worried about making mistakes when they performed speaking, while only (10%) of teachers viewed that students preferred to use Arabic language to express themselves as seen in figure 6 and figure 7 is shown the student's suffering from difficulty to speak English.

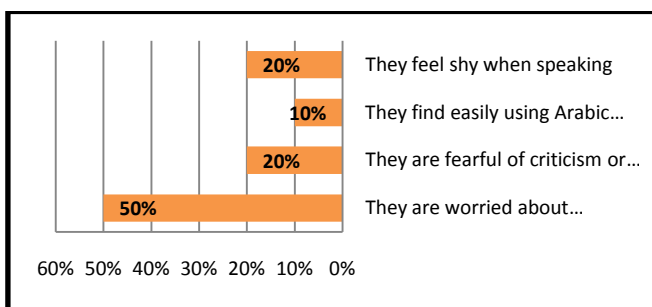


Fig.6. Which speaking problems do your students encounter

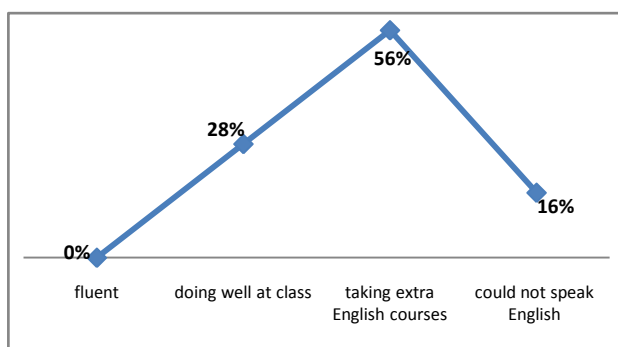


Fig.7 Students Suffer Difficulties In Speaking English

## 2. Results Of Students' Questionnaires:-

a. Factors Affecting Students' Speaking Performance And Difficulties as illustrated in figure 11.:-

ii. More than (50%) of the students, are taking extra English courses outside the university to consolidate their skills.

iii. about (76%) of the students, are shown that the necessity of speaking English to their future career as seen in figure 8.

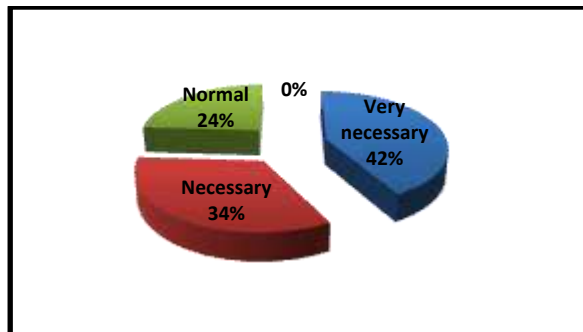


Fig.8 The necessity of speaking skills to your future career

iv. students more than (70%) expressed they have pressure to perform well in the class as shown in figure 9

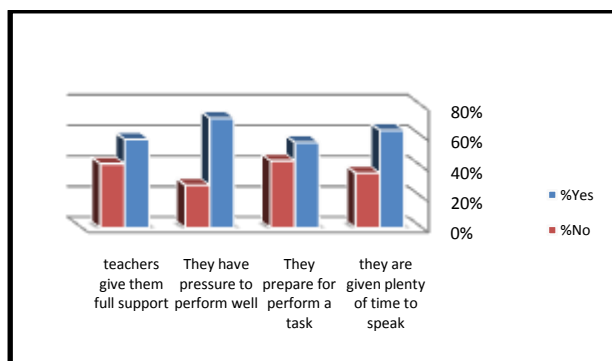


Fig.9 Student's Opinion about their performance conditions in speaking class?

v. The majority of students agreed that the grammatical rules and finding suitable vocabularies are the core difficulties of speaking English as shown in figure 10..

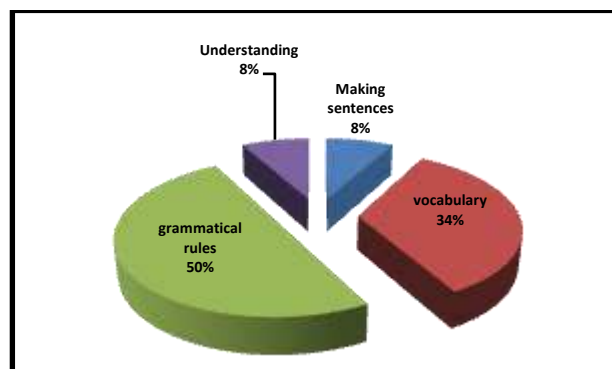


Fig. 10 The biggest problem students face when they speak English

vi. More than (50%) of the students evaluated their listening skills as Good, whereas only (26%) evaluated themselves as Excellent.



Fig.11 How do students evaluate their listening skills?

vii. More than (50%) of the students found sometimes teachers correct their mistakes while they performing speaking, whereas only (6%) answered Always and (18%) answered Never and (24%) answered Rarely. See figure 12.

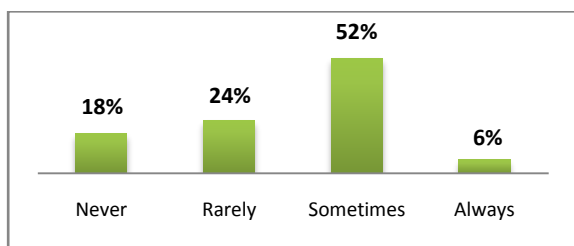


Fig.12 How often do the teachers correct students' mistakes while they are performing speaking?

b. Students' opinions to improve speaking skills:-

i. The majority of the students viewed that work in pairs and group at University and perform speaking with native speakers is the best way to improve speaking English skills as seen in figure 13.

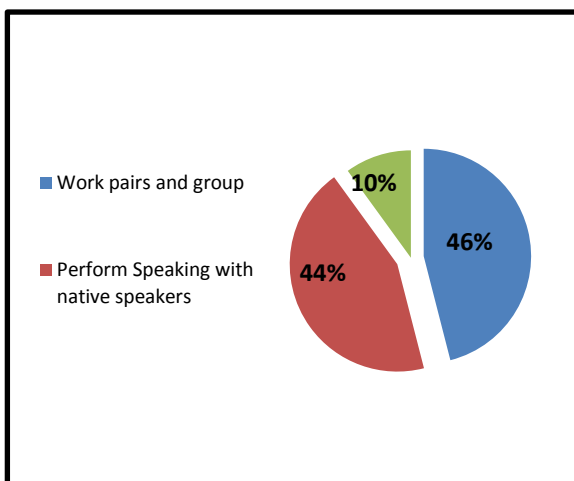


Fig.13 The activities which may help students in speaking English

ii. Figure 16 show the majority of the students viewed that to improve speaking skills, performing speaking

should be start from the first semester and continues to the last semester as shown in figure 14.

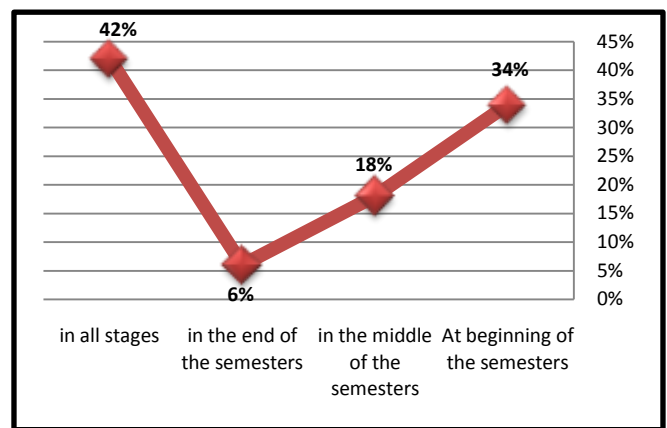


Fig.14 Students think practicing speaking skills when should start

iii. More than (40%) of the students viewed that listening to different conversations is one of the best activities to improve performing speaking skills as shown in figure 15.

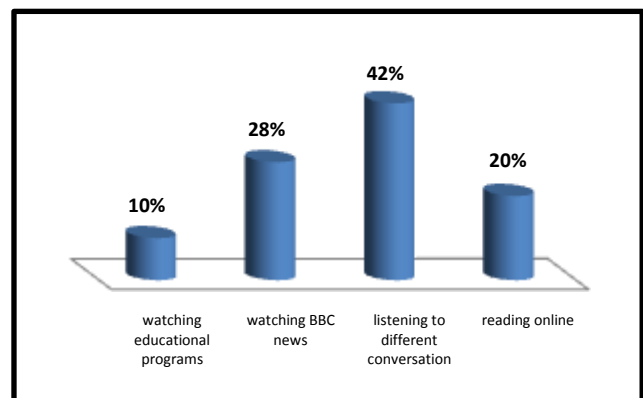


Fig.15 The best ways to develop speaking English language

iv. More than (50%) of the students thought they will have the ability in speaking English fluently if practicing speaking at the university's lab, taking extra English language courses at private institutions, and having chance to study abroad the postgraduate.

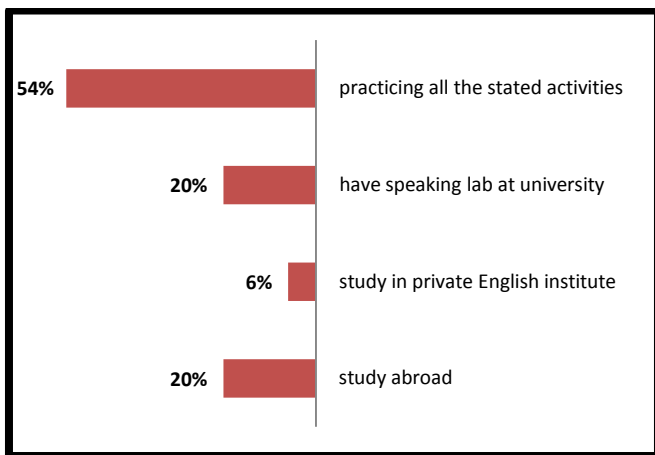


Fig.16 Students think they will have the ability in speaking English fluently if they

- v. The majority of the students thought the teacher would give motivation in speaking skills if they help them to work in pairs/groups, help students improve listening skills, and help students watching education program during class/lab as shown in figure 17..

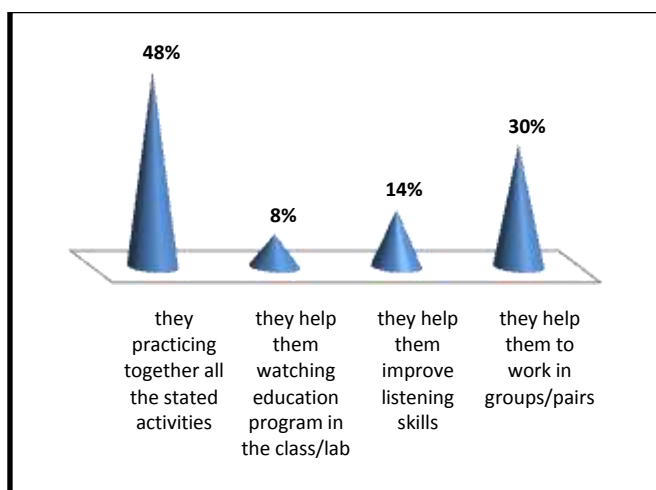


Fig.17 Students think teachers would give motivation to perform speaking English

- c. **Observation results.** Class observations were carried out during study time to see how students really performed and what problems they had in speaking classes. The following problems are the most common ones in the classes observed:-

- The students were not given enough time to prepare for a speaking task before the task was performed and to perform their task.
- When the students were asked to work in groups, not all of them were eager to contribute their opinions in English. Some of them participated actively but the others spoke very little or not at all.
- They tended to use Arabic when they discussed in groups.

- While the students were making performances, the other students in class did not listen attentively. They even chatted with the people next to them when their classmates were speaking.
- Most of the students looked very nervous when they spoke in front of the class. Sometimes, they did not know what to say and kept silent.
- They read what they had written on a piece of paper. They did not remember the structures and vocabulary to speak naturally.
- Whenever the students made mistakes, the teacher stopped them and corrected the mistakes.
- The students had to do a lot of things in a short period of the class's session. They were always in a hurry because they were given limited time for every task.

## VI CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, this study aimed to investigate the problems that the students, at The English Literature Department in the University Of Benghazi, experienced in speaking lessons and the factors affecting their speaking performance.

In brief, the findings from the questionnaires delivered to both the teachers and the students showed that when the students learn speaking, they encountered many problems. According to the teachers, the most common speaking problem was that the students spoke very little or nothing in speaking classes. Most of the teachers said that the students could not think of anything to say. Moreover, they often used Arabic and they had no or little motivation to express themselves. The results from student questionnaire were nearly the same as from the teacher questionnaire. The students reported that they spoke very little or nothing in speaking class. Most of the time, they could not think of anything to say so they used Arabic. A significant number of students also claimed that they were fearful of criticism or losing face. They had no motivation to use English to express themselves.

The results of the study concluded that the students faced many problems such as:-

- they spoke English very little or not at all;
- they could not think of anything to say or express themselves well;
- they used Arabic instead of English when they discuss in groups or in pairs;
- their participation in class or lab was low or uneven;
- they had little motivation to express themselves;
- they were fearful of criticism or losing face;
- they had a habit of translate the information in the textbook into Arabic before they speak; and

- h. they looked at their textbook when they speak.

The results also show that there were many factors affecting students speaking performance as follow:

- i. topical knowledge;
- ii. listening ability;
- iii. motivation to speak;
- iv. teachers' feedback during speaking activities;
- v. confidence;
- vi. pressure to perform well; and
- vii. time for preparation.

## 2. Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, some recommendations were made for both the teachers and the students at The English Literature Department in the University Of Benghazi.

### As for the teachers, it is highly recommend to:

- Improve the performance conditions by giving students enough time to prepare for a speaking task;
- Teaching students how to use mind map to generate ideas and giving students chance to perform their tasks;
- Help students overcome inhibition and shyness by having friendly, helpful and cooperative behaviors to make them feel comfortable when speaking in the class;
- encourage students not to worry about making mistakes and giving them clear instructions and sufficient guidance;
- personalize and simplify the topics in the textbook to make them easier, more interesting and relevant to their lives;
- Include excessively tests and exams in speaking skills in order to motivate students to learn and getting improve;
- Give students more opportunities to speak English in class and lab by using some speaking activities that require students to speak;
- create an English speaking environment by encouraging the students to work in pairs or in group and use English in the classroom and in the lab to make it a habit;
- letting them watching films or videos in English and open discussion about the contents of these media; and
- use English in the classroom frequently so that the students have more exposure to the language.

As for the Students, it is highly recommend to:

- understand the importance of speaking skills. Their awareness of their studies may result in their motivation for learning.
- practice speaking English outside the classroom more often by doing the speaking tasks in the textbook at home with their classmates, joining speaking community where they can use English to communicate, and speaking on their own in front of a mirror.
- use English instead of Arabic to make it a habit either in the class or outside.
- Remember they are still students, so do not fear to make mistakes and learn from mistakes.
- Make sure students have informal learning courses by watching different conversations (Movies, Talk Show, News, etc.) on daily basis. This activity is very helpful to improve the listening capability and then consolidate speaking skills.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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# The challenges which face students of English at the Faculty of Education Janzour in learning speaking skills

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**Abstract** - This study aims to identify the difficulties that encounter university students at the Faculty of Education-Janzour in learning speaking skills, and to explore the efforts made by students to overcome the difficulties. Learning to speak includes how learners practise producing the utterances in a social context. It concerns the performance rather than learning only the structure of the language. Despite the increasing emphasis on the importance of teaching and learning speaking skills, in general, little research has directly addressed the issue of the challenges that encounter students when learning oral communication.

## **i. Introduction**

Speaking can be defined as a skill that functions for different purposes. For example, people communicate to each other to describe or criticise things or even to ask for something. Accordingly, speaking can be a conversation or engaging in a discussion to express opinions or thoughts (see Richards & Renandya, 2002). Learning to speak includes how learners practise producing the utterances in a social context. It concerns the performance rather than learning only the structure of the language. Both fluency and accuracy are important goals when considering oral communication. Teachers need to organise activities in pairs or groups so that students find opportunities to speak as much as possible. In this study for collecting data a students' questionnaire consists 20 statements was designed to explore and identify students'

perceptions about the challenges they face in learning speaking skills. The research sample comprises 50 male and female students from third semester at the faculty of Education-Janzour. The findings of the study revealed that psychological problems are the most dominant problems faced by the participants, followed by some linguistic problems. The findings also revealed that students use various efforts to cope with the difficulties they face in learning speaking skills.

## **1. Literature Review**

### **1. a. Definition of Speaking Skills**

Speaking skill is the skill that gives us the ability to communicate effectively. It is the ability to speak in a range of different genres and situations. Hence, we can say, it is how the speaker is able to use a range of conversational and conversational repair strategies, besides managing how to function the exchanges (Harmer's 2007, p.343). McDonough & Shaw, (2000) defined speaking as the ability to use the correct sounds and structures of the L2 and the ability to share the general knowledge of the interaction between the speaker and the listener in order for meaning to be clear between the interlocutors. Thus speaking skill is a vitally important method of communication because the ability to speak skillfully provides the speaker with several distinct advantages. It can reflect thoughts, opinions, and feelings when he/ she is capable

to put words together in a meaningful way. Sauvignon, (1997, p.10) argued that oral communication does not only concern language learners, but it is an important concern for all people's daily lives. People begin to communicate at birth by interacting with those who are around them and get into negotiation to fulfil their needs. People develop their communication strategies automatically through their interaction experience with others. They also learn to use many features of communication such as intonation, gestures and facial expression in order to convey their message. Therefore, it is a continuous process of expression, understanding, and negotiation of meaning. Oral communication is a process concerned largely with communicating ideas and feelings. It is the tool which people use in their social interactions. The importance of oral communication is that it involves enabling someone else to understand what we want to tell him or her.

### **1. b. Speaking Difficulties**

Students can have various difficulties and problems in learning English language because they are exposed to a limited amount of the language which is fixed by classroom hours and lessons preparation. Yule (2006) indicates that the process of second language exposure is accomplished in a conscious, instructed and controlled manner and there is no such effort to encourage learners to practise the language and be engaged in face-to-face interactions. Also, a high priority is given to writing whereas oral skills are disregarded (Harmer, 2007). How to learn a second or foreign language has been a controversial topic and has had great debate among researchers and theorists. For example, in recent years, language learning is influenced by the socio-cultural approach in which a great emphasis has been placed on social interaction with talk playing the greatest role in the development of knowledge and the process of learning. The theory developed by the psychologist Vygotsky (1978), has contributed to the current understanding of classroom interaction, where students are encouraged to interact with the

others around them such as, their peers or teachers in the classroom.

By engaging in such activities, students can gain more success with the help of people that are more knowledgeable rather than on their own (Vygotsky, 1978). Both fluency and accuracy are important goals in communicative language courses. Fluency is seen as the primary aim in language teaching (Brown, 2007, p.324), and it can be achieved by giving a chance for the speaker to process the language smoothly without bothering about errors, which might be committed while producing the language. According to Yule (2006) knowing a language involves more than knowing what form it takes, one needs to be able to produce and understand utterances which are appropriate to the context that they are made for. Therefore, teachers are required to help students apply the language knowledge as it is pointless knowing a lot about a language if you cannot use it (Scrivener, 2011, p.213). Brown, (2000) found that learners learn well when they are involved in situations that require employing the knowledge of language for various purposes. Most theoretical viewpoints consider that learning a language occurs when learners speak it (Mitchell et al., 2013, p.123).

### **2. Rational of the Study**

The current study aims to identify the problems that encounter students of English at the Faculty of Education-Janzour, University of Tripoli in learning speaking skills. It also intended to investigate the efforts and strategies that students employed to cope with the difficulties they face. The researchers attempt to find possible answers to the following questions:

- 1- What are the difficulties that face students of English at the Faculty of Education-Janzour in learning speaking skills?
- 2- What efforts do they make to overcome the difficulties?

### 3. Methodology

Many considerations may influence the sample selection in social research such as the accessibility for the researcher, and the “judgement that the person has extensive knowledge about the episode, event or situation of interest and how typical the case is of a category of individuals” (Kumar, 2014, p. 228). These issues were considered by the researchers in the study in hand.

Sample selection for the current study was students who are studying English language. They have been studying English for six years. The students are 50 Libyan EFL university students at the Faculty of Education-Janzour, University of Tripoli. All the students who participated in this study have to study eight semesters in order to be graduated as EFL school teachers. The students were clearly informed that it was their right to refuse or withdraw at any time. They were not asked to write their names because it has no relevance to the outcome of this study. In addition, the students were encouraged to answer the questionnaire as honestly as possible.

### 4. Instrument for collecting data

The questionnaire was used in the current study as a tool for data collection because it has probably been the most commonly used data collection tool in social research. Questionnaire is used in this research to help the researchers save time because they can be easily distributed and is easy to analyse. “The main use of the questionnaire in classroom research is to obtain quantitative responses to specific predetermined questions” (Hopkins, 2008, p.118). In addition, questionnaire enables researchers to receive responses without having to talk to every respondent (Willman, 2011). A questionnaire composed of 20 close-ended questions was constructed and administered among fifty Libyan EFL students randomly selected from third semester. All the items were put in four-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”, “Agree” which measures the degree to which students agree with those items.

### 5. Results and Discussion

The answers to the questionnaire questions regarding the statements that relating to the views that the students held under the category of the difficulties which encounter them in learning speaking skills, revealed various responses. Regarding item, no 1 ‘I prefer to speak in Arabic when I work in oral activities in English classes’, less than a half 41% of the students reported that they prefer to speak in Arabic during English classes. For statement, 2 the results of the questionnaire showed that 70% of the students find it difficult when their teacher corrects them while they are speaking. A high percentage 95% of the students reported that they feel shy when they commit mistakes, whereas 53% of them feel afraid of making errors when communicating in English language. The responses of the students for statement 5 showed that 68% of them do not find chance to practise the language. It is noticed from the table above that a high percentage of the students 82% reported that they fear of mispronouncing English words; while, 60% of them believe that their classmates will underestimate them when they communicate in English. With regard to the importance of speaking skills 67% of the students consider it very necessary for successful learner. For statement 9 it is worth mentioning that very few students only 15% of them do not feel motivated to speak in English language. On the other hand, 73% of the students acknowledged that their vocabulary levels in English are not good.

### 6. Efforts to Overcome Speaking Difficulties

To determine the efforts implemented by the students to cope with the challenges they face when they want to communicate using English language, descriptive statistics have been calculated based on the number of students who answered each statement. The questionnaire responses showed that only 30% of the students practise English language with friends. The findings of the questionnaire also revealed that 78% of the students sit with their classmate to get support when they speak. It was ascertained that 68% of the students look up at



the dictionary for words to cope with their difficulties in learning speaking while, 70% of the students try to memorize the vocabulary, and 65% watch TV channels. With reference to statement 6 ‘I read conversation books’ as shown in the above table, 70% of the students asserted that they read conversation books. They also admitted that they ask their friends for any difficult words with 40% and 50% of them listen to English conversation cassettes respectively. The responses to the questionnaire also revealed that 86% of the students try to be brave and produce the language and 60% of them try to avoid participating in classroom activities.

**7. The highest % for students’ responses to difficulties in speaking**

The most dominant problem faced by the students is determined by seeing the highest percentage of each problem from the data which has been tabulated. Based on the research findings on students’ responses to the questionnaire, the researchers concluded that the most main three problems faced by the students are illustrated in the following figure (1):

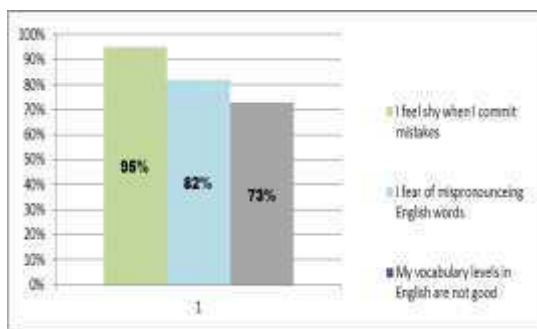


Figure (1) the three highest dominate problem faced in learning speaking skills

As shown in the above Table (1) and Fig.(1), the most three main problems that encounter students of the study in hand are feeling shy when they commit mistakes, fear of mispronouncing English words, and their lack of vocabulary levels with the rates of 95%, 82% and 73%, respectively.

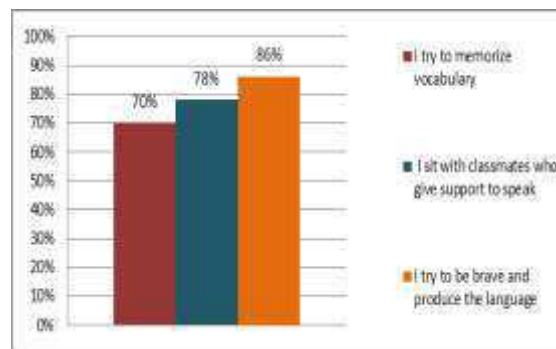


Figure (2) the three- frequently used efforts to cope with the difficulties in learning speaking skills

**8. Conclusion and Recommendation**

The primary focus of this study was to identify the challenges Libyan English language students at the Faculty of Education- Janzour, University of Tripoli face in learning speaking skills. It was also intended to raise awareness to the authorities and stakeholders such as students, teachers and decision makers of the importance of speaking skills in particular. Data was collected using questionnaires to evaluate the perceptions and views of students and what efforts and strategies students employ to overcome the difficulties while learning speaking skills. Based on the results, it was found that the most frequently difficult problems students encounter in learning speaking skills, were psychological problems it was clear that feeling shy when students commit mistakes was at the top of the percentages. On the other hand, the least frequent problem amongst the students was being not motivated to speak the language. The results of the questionnaire showed that students effort some techniques to overcome the problems they face in learning speaking skills. The highest percentage for the efforts to cope with the speaking challenge was trying to be brave and produce the language.

It can be concluded that the results gained from this study cannot be generalised because of the small numbers of the volunteering students. Consequently, this study suggests further areas of research related to the issue of difficulties in learning speaking skills

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