Speaking Problems and Difficulties that Encounter Hospitality and Tourism Students at Al- Shomokh Higher Institute for Science and Technology/ Tripoli

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ملخص البحث:

الهدف الأساسي من هذه الدراسة هو التعرف على الأسباب الجوهرية للصعوبات التي تواجه طلبة السنة الأولى في قسم السياحة والضيافة بالمعهد العالي للتقنية في التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية وإيجاد الحلول المناسبة لهذه المشكلة . تألفت عينة الدراسة من 20 طالبا من طلبة الفصل الأول وتم توزيع استبيان يحتوى 20 سؤال والغرض من هذا الاستبيان كشف صعوبات المحادثة التي تواجه الطلبة وتحديد نقاط القوة والضعف لديهم. للإجابة عن أسئلة الدراسة استخرجت النسب المئوية والمتوسطات الحسابية ولقد أسفرت نتائج الدراسة على ان هنالك صعوبات في المحادثة (ضعف عام في المهارات الأساسية للاتصال وهى الاستماع، والتحدث، القراءة والكتابة) وقدم الباحثون عدة توصيات من أهمها تشجيع الطلبة على تحسين القدرة اللغوية للتحدث بطلاقة في اللغة الإنجليزية وتنمية مهارة التحدث لديهم وتحفيزهم على التواصل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مشاكل التحدث، مشاكل لغوية.

Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to find out the speaking problems and difficulties encountered by the first semester students at Higher Technical Institute. In this study, a questionnaire was distributed to 20 students (17 female students and 3 male students) from Hospitality and Tourism Department. The results reveal that most of students face problems and difficulties in speaking due to some reasons like lack in

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vocabulary, poor grammar, and knowledge, and those problems are belonged to linguistic problems. From the questionnaire findings, the majority of the participants about 45% of them are willing to improve their speaking skills by giving them a chance to use English. The results show that 40% of students consider the lack of vocabulary as the major difficulty in oral English language interaction. More than 70% of the participants preferred learning strategies (activities like role play, games, pair work) as compared to passive learning. Inconclusion, linguistic problem is the most dominate problems faced by the first semester students at Higher Technical Institute.

Key words: speaking problems, linguistic problems.

1.Introduction :

In learning English, there are four skills should be mastered: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Speaking is one of the skills that need to be enabled by students in order to communicate with others. This skill plays an important role in facilitating learners to acquire English. Furthermore, it enables the students to express themselves effectively and to communicate with others successfully. According to Mc Donough and Shaw (2002: 126) " In many contexts, speaking is often the skill upon which a person is judge at face value. In other words, people may often form judgments about our speaking rather than from any of the other language skills".

Four skills are important to learn, but the difficult one is speaking skillbecause it is complex skill to acquire. All those skills are supported by some components like vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency; therefore, four skills are equally essential to be developed. As Harmer suggests " one skill cannot be performed without another. It is impossible to speak in a conversation if you do not listen as well as, and people seldom write without reading".

However, Speaking seems to be the most important skills of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) because people who know a language are usually referred to as speakers of that language (Ur, 1996). Although learning to speak requests a lot of practice and awareness, this skill is ignored by many teachers in EFL classrooms especially in Libyan Context. Consequently, the students do not get any chance inside or outside the classroom to speak

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English. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the problems that faced by students in speaking skill. Furthermore, this study conducted to find out the main causes these problems and best ways to overcome these problems in order to help students to master this skill.

Aims of the Study:

This study aims to :

1- Examine the problems that faced by students in speaking skill.
2- Identify the main causes of problems that the first semester had in English speaking skills.
3- Find out the best way to solve these problems in order to help students to master this skill.

Questions of the Study:

1- What are the problems and difficulties that encountered by students in speaking?
2- What are the causes of the problems in learning speaking?
3- What are the solutions for students' problems in speaking?

Limitation of the Study :

1) The participants in this study were limited to first semester students only. They were asked to participate by answering questions about their English problems in speaking and the reasons of those problems.
2) The data collected from the questionnaire was dependent on their honesty of the participants and their ability to respond.
3) The results of this study revealed that the students faced many problems related to speaking skills such as poor speaking ability, lack of enough words or vocabulary, grammatical knowledge and pronunciation.

Literature Review:
Definition of the speaking skill :

There are many definitions of the speaking offered by different scholars. According to Richard and Renandy (2002: 204) state that effective oral communication requires the ability to use the language appropriately in social interaction that involves not only verbal

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communication. Thus, speaking is focusing on communication to obtain specific objectives to get information.

In addition to that it has been described as a process between speaker and listener when someone speaks, he or she sends information to another person. Chaney (1998: 13), for example, defines speaking as " the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbalsymbols in a variety of context.

Furthermore, speaking is the oral communication skill which is composed by creating verbal and non-verbal systematic utterance spoken to transfer the meaning as Florez (1999) has defined speaking as "an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing; receiving and processing information."

The Importance of Speaking:

The significance of speaking is implying with the integration of the other language skills for example learners' vocabulary and grammar which should be developed by speaking. On the other hand, speaking skill helps the students to express their feeling, opinions, emotions. By speaking we can transmit the massage through the words. Although learning to speak requests a lot of practice and awareness, this skill is ignored by teachers in classroom. Consequently, the students do not get any chance inside or outside the classroom to speak English.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that in the traditional methods, the speaking skill was ignored in the classrooms where the emphasis was on reading and writing skills. For example, in The Grammar-Translation method, reading and writing were the important skills and speaking and listening skills did not receive that great significance.

For language development, the four skills are equally important in order to master the langauge. As Peregoy and Boyle (2001) state, "Listening, speaking, reading and writing also occur naturally together in learning events in school at all great levels, even though traditionally they were taught separately".

Linguistics Problems:

There are some linguistics problems that influence the learners' speaking skills, such as poor in grammar, lack of vocabulary and

pronunciation. According to Richards (2008) who claims there are some typical learner' problems in speaking. Those problems are:

a. lack of vocabulary needed to talk

b. poor in grammar

c. poor in pronunciation.

a. Vocabulary:

Vocabulary is an individual word or a listing of words which have specific meaning. Kamil and Hiebert (2005) state that generally, vocabulary is the knowledge of meanings of words. The words come in at least two forms; oral and print. Oral vocabulary is the set of words for which we know the meanings when we speak or read orally. While print vocabulary consists of those words for which the meaning is known when we write or read silently.

b. Grammar:

Grammar is the branch of linguistic that deals with syntax and morphology, so that it may be considered a bit boring to study correct grammar. If learners do not know the rules of grammar, they will never be able to communicate using English effectively. According to Celce - murcia (2001) grammar become difficult because learners do not learn structures one in a time. Even the learners appear to have mastered a particular structure; it is not uncommon to find backsliding occurring with the introduction of new form to the learners inter language. For example, the learner who has mastered the third singular person marker on the present tense verb is likely to over-generalize the rule and apply it to newly emerging modal verb. Thus, this contributes to produce errors such as "she cans speak English". These errors may appear when the students speak since they have not mastered the English grammar.

c. Pronunciation:

English has become a language which connects people all over the world. The second or foreign language learners are also demanded to speak English naturally like native speaker. According to Hinkel (2005: 491) a second language learner needs to master the individual characteristic of the sound of a new language. Furthermore, it will be good for the students to be able to speak naturally.

Teachers' roles:

Many researchers have indicated that the teachers in EFL classroom play a vital role. For example, Harmer (2001) claimed that teachers' roles change according to the nature of classroom lesson's stages and activities. Furthermore, He said that the roles of controller and facilitator are the main roles. Moreover, he has classified certain distinct roles which are identified as follows:

1. Controller:

The teacher is the main responsible in the teaching and learning processes to encourage learners to practice classroom activities easily and provide them with enough opportunities to be involved so, Classroom interaction should be teacher-learner interaction. Harmer (2001) points out that the controller teacher is the one who transmits the knowledge from himself to his learners.

2. Facilitator :

The professional role of teachers involves serving as facilitators to support students in enhancing their existing skills and fostering a creative and positive learning environment. According to Nath and Cohen (2007: 289), when teachers adopt the role of facilitators, they can create independent opportunities for students to collaborate, design, and engage in creative activities. This approach encourages students to actively participate in class, develop their skills, and fosters a supportive learning environment. Facilitating teachers also provide a structured and enriching learning environment, stepping in to assist students when they encounter challenges or have questions. In essence, the facilitator role of professional teachers goes beyond creating opportunities for students; it also involves assisting them when they face difficulties or encounter obstacles. (Ibid).

Methodology :
Participants :

The participants of this study were first semester students from Hospitality and Tourism Department of Higher Technical Institute. The total number of students was twenty, most of them were (85%) females and (15 %) were males. They were selected randomly and their ages were from 17 –20. All of them are Libyan.

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Instruments of Study :

The instrument of the study was a questionnaire which was used to collect data from students about speaking problems and the causes of these problems. The questionnaire consists of 20 multiple – choice items. these items were adapted from (Omari, 2016).

This questionnaire was distributed randomly to the participants They were asked also to participate by answering questions about their English problems in speaking and the reasons of those problems. Twenty copies were distributed in March (2018) to first semester students from Hospitality and Tourism Department of Higher Technical Institute.

Results of the Questionnaire:

The first question deals with learning preferences among the language skills.

Figure (1) shows the students' preferences in language skills learning. The results reveal that nine students (45%) prefer listening and speaking while eight students (40%) prefer grammar and vocabulary. There are only two students (15%) prefer reading and writing skills.
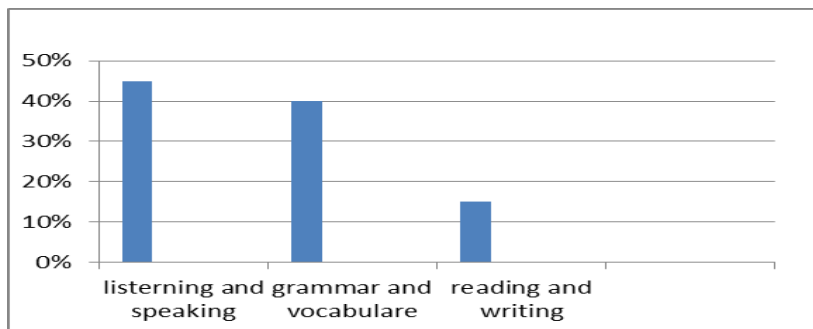
Figure (1) Classification of language skills

In question two students were asked if their English lessons focus mainly on improving their skills.

As showing in figure (2), the majority of students (55%) confirmed that the current lessons focused on improving their grammar and vocabulary while six students (30%) responded that their reading and writing skills improved by current syllabus and only two students

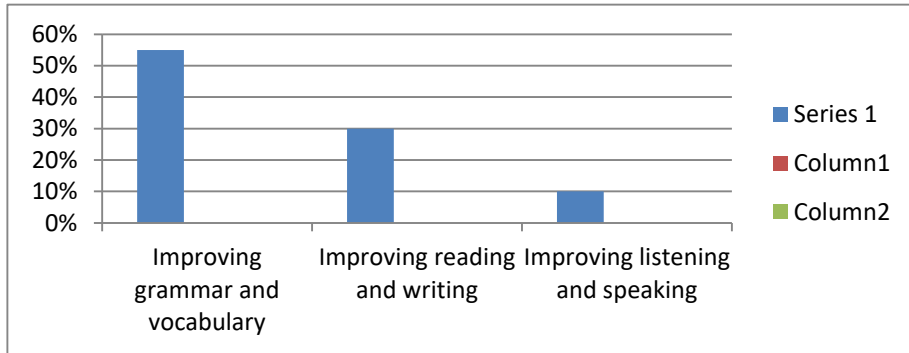(10%) answered listening and speaking skills were improved by current lessons.

Figure (2) Skills Improvement by the English Syllabus

The emphasis in question three is on listening comprehension and how many times they need to listen and understand

Figure 3 illustrates that eight students (40%) replied that they need to listen three times whereas four students (20%) answered that they need to listen more than three times and only three students (15%) replied that need to listen just once.
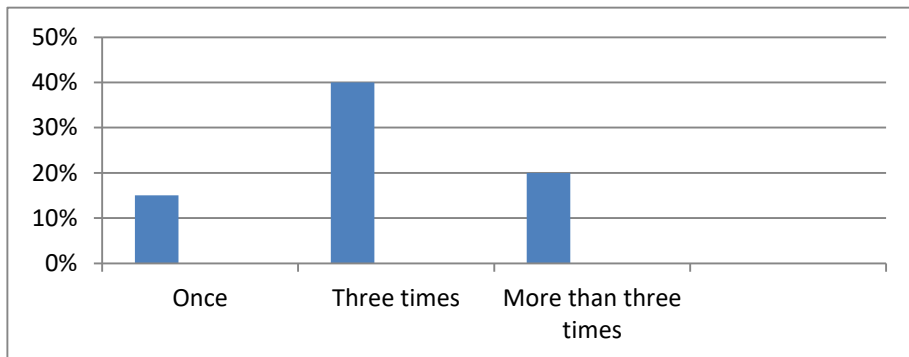

Figure (3) Students Listening Comprehension

In question four students were asked if they face some difficulties when they are listening to spoken English.

In Figure 4, one of the students (5%) replied " Do nothing" while eleven students (55%) replied that they try to listen without focusing

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on small details. five students (25%) asked for "teachers' explanation'' whereas two students (10%) ask for "to listen again" when their teachers were talking to them, and only one student (5%) tried to make guess what he/she was listening to.
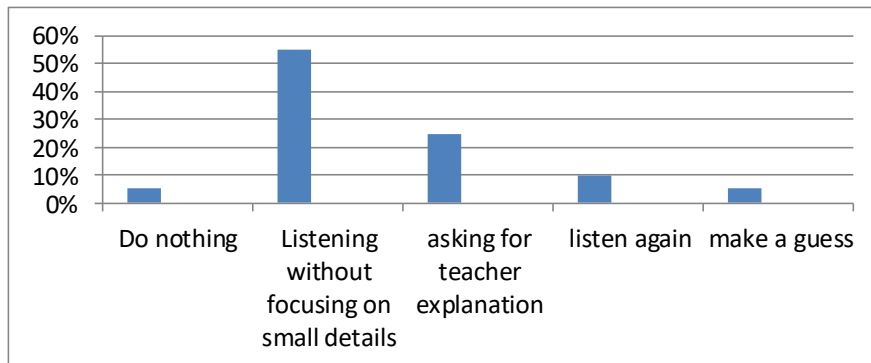
Figure (4) listening strategies

Question five was designed to know students' ability and how often they answered question in English.

Responses to this question show that none of the students have chosen item (a) which was "never" nine students (45%) reported "sometimes" seven students (35%) answered "rarely" while two students (10%) said "very often" and two students (10%) said always. As seen in figure 5.
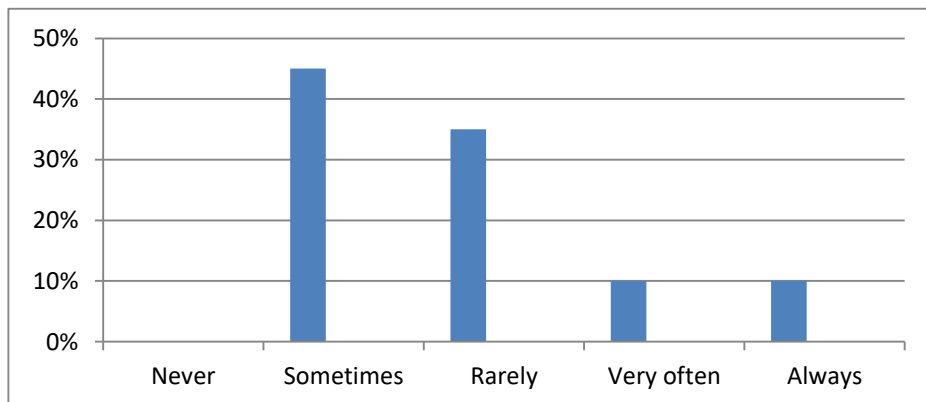
Figure (5) students' ability

The emphasis in question six is on students' competences in speaking skills and students were asked to recall details of spoken conversation in English.

Responses to this question demonstrated that none of students (0%) have chosen item (a) which was " never" while eleven students (55%) said "sometimes" , six students (30%) replied "rarely" two students (10%) said "always " and one students (5%) said "very often". As seen in figure 6.
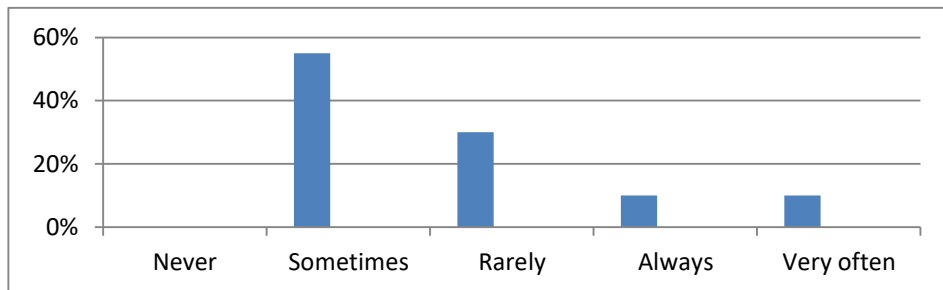

Figure (6) speaking competence

Question seven students were asked if they can give the whole idea of spoken conversation in English.

According to the responses, two students (10%) replied "never" whereas four students (20%) said "rarely", twelve students (60%) said "sometimes". None of the students have chosen the item "d" which was "very often" and two students (10%) replied always. As seen in figure 7.
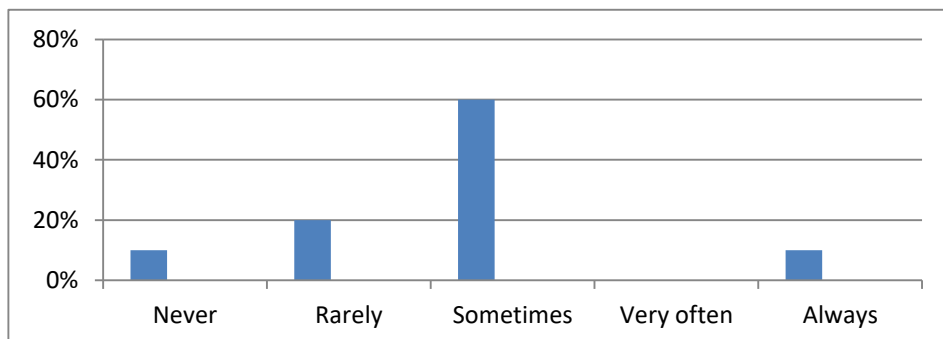
Figure (7) speaking ability

In question eight students were asked if they can use their previous background knowledge to respond to a conversation.

Explicitly, it can be seen that two students (10%) replied "never", one student (5%) replied "rarely" whereas nine students (45%) replied "sometimes", three students (15%) replied "very often" and five students (25%) replied "always". As seen in figure 8.
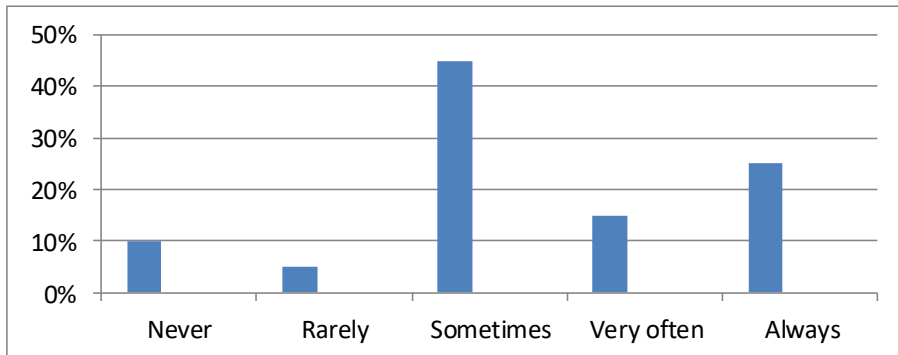

Figure (8) students' background knowledge

The aim of this question is determining the strategies used by the students when they facing difficulties in speaking English

Responses to this question show that seven students (35%) said "reformulate, two students (10%) said "using synonyms, seven students (35%)" using mother tongue" and four students (20%) "avoid to interact orally". As seen in figure 9.
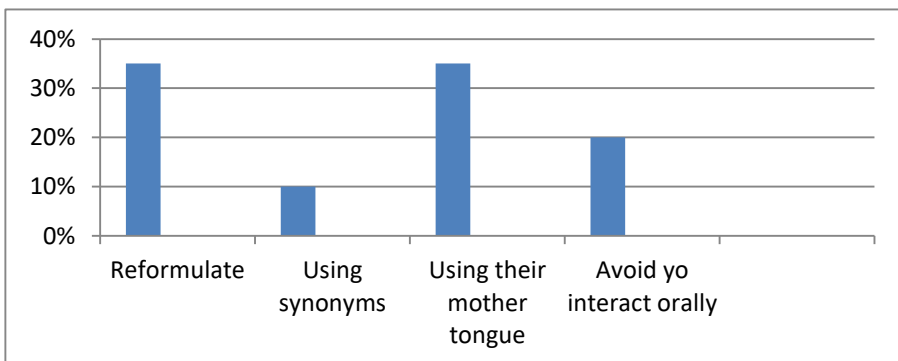

Figure (9) speaking strategies

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In question ten students were asked if they have difficulties in an oral interaction in English.

The Answers to this question showed that eight students (40%) referred to lack of vocabulary, six students (30%) considered grammar mistakes, five students (25%) said pronunciation mistakes and one students (5%) said lack of opportunities. As seen in figure 10.
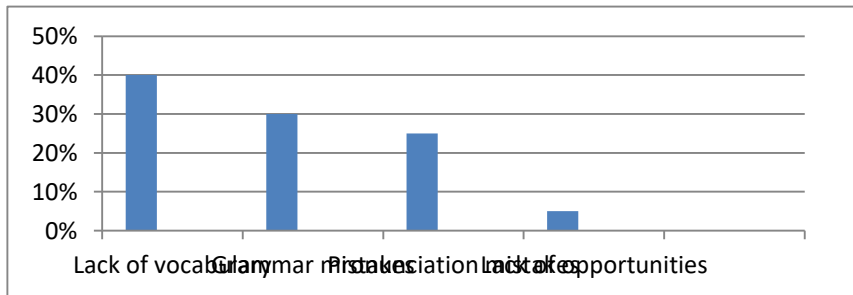
Figure (10) speaking problems

This question intended to find out students preferred learning strategies.

Only one student did not answer, four students (20%) said passive role with little activities in classroom, fifteen students (75%) preferred activities for learning styles. As seen in figure 11.
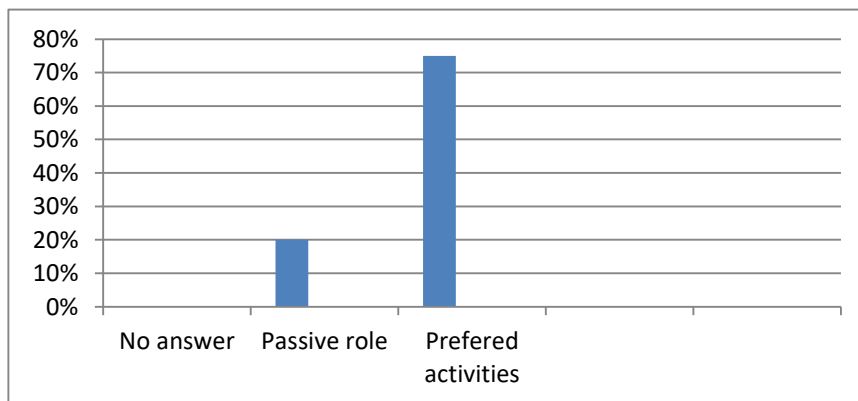

Figure (11) Teaching Method

In question twelve students were asked how they prefer to do learning activities in the classroom.

Only one student did not answer this question, one student (5%) replied "alone" while eighteen students (90%) preferred pair or group work interaction pattern. As seen in figure 12.
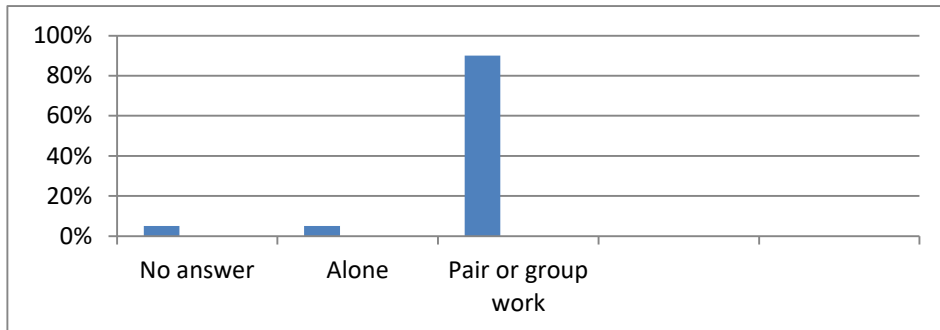

Figure (12) classroom interaction patterns

In question thirteen students were asked what kinds of role do they like their teacher to have

Three students (15%) replied their teacher should adopt a new way in teaching, three students (15%) disagree that their teacher should abandon his traditional role and fourteen students (70%) agree with the new way in teaching. As seen in figure 13.
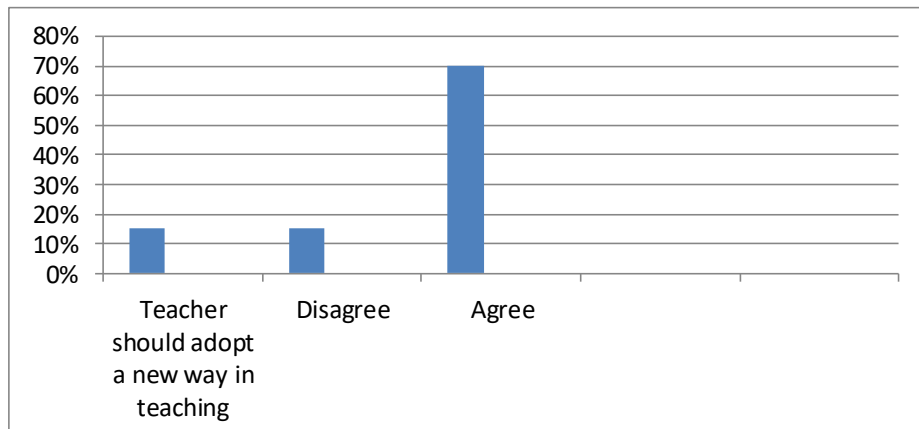

Figure (13) teachers' role

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In question fourteen the students were asked if speaking skill evaluation can help them improving their speaking performance.
Twelve students (60%) said Yes, eight students (40%) said they do not know while nobody said No. As seen in figure 14.
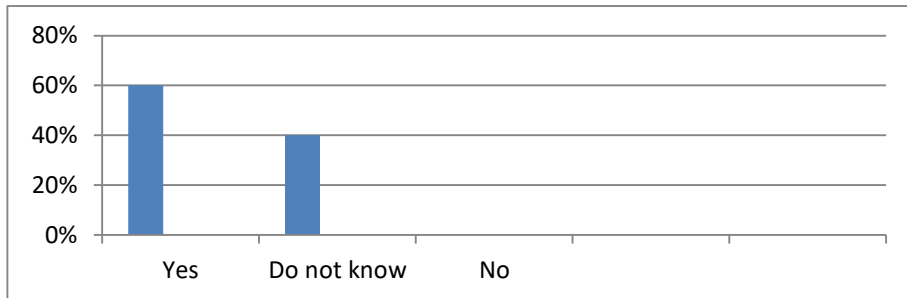

Figure (14) students Attitudes towards the evaluation of speaking skill

In question fifteen students were asked if their teacher encourage them to speak in the classroom.
One of the students did not answer at all, two students (10%) said "rarely" six students (30%) said "sometimes", three students (15%) said 'very often", and seven students (35%) replied 'always" as shown in figure (15)
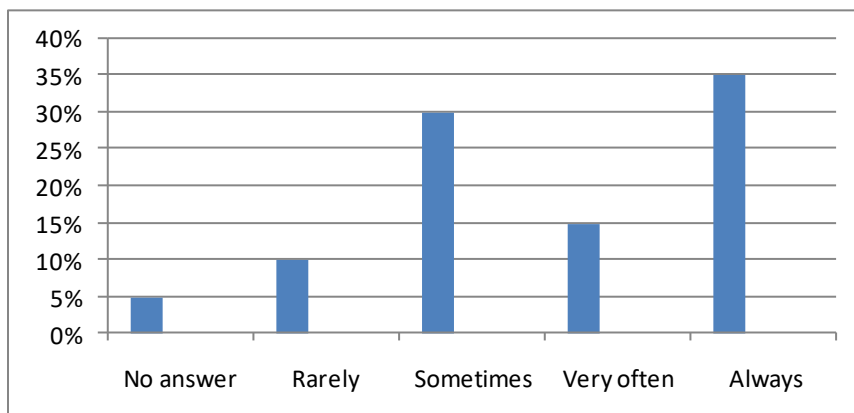

Figure (15) Teaching Method

**In question sixteen students were asked if their teacher makes
sure that each one of them speaks in classroom**
Two students (10%) have chosen "never" , three students (15%) said
"rarely" , seven students (35%) replied "sometimes" while three
students (15%) replied "very often" and five students (25%) said
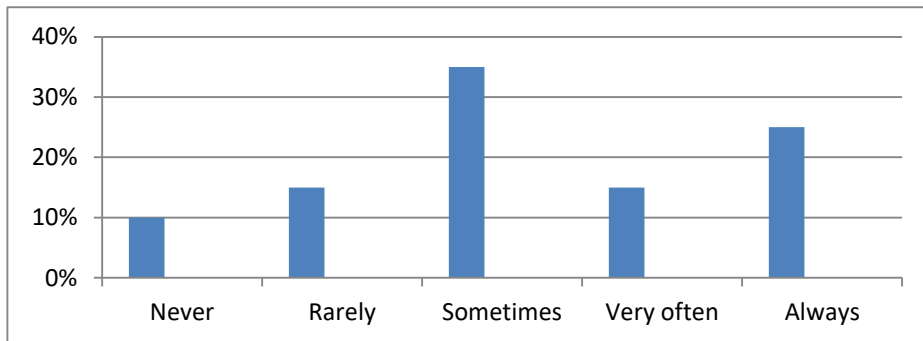"always" as shown in figure (16)

Figure (16) teaching approaches

**In question seventeen students were asked if their teacher arrange
the class in pairs/ groups during speaking activities.**
Responses to this question demonstrated that two students (10%) said
"never" , one students (5%) said "rarely", seven students (35%) said
"sometimes" ,three students (15%) said "very often" while seven
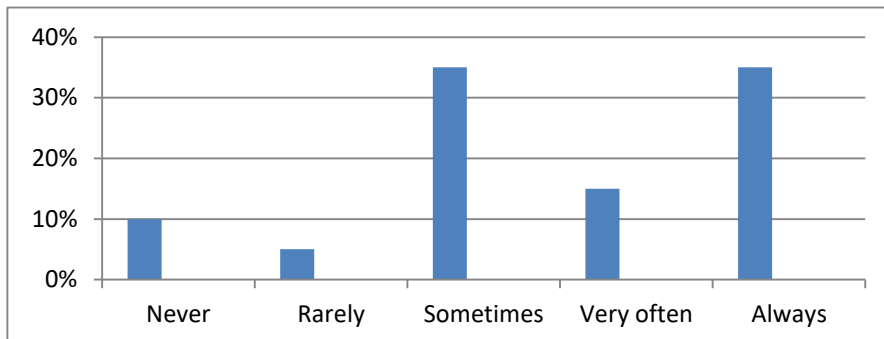students (35%) said "always as illustrated in figure (17)

Figure (17): arranging the class in pairs/ groups during speaking activities

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In question eighteen students were asked if their teacher encourage them to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contextual clues.

Four students (20%) said "never" only one students (5%) said "rarely" , ten students (50%) said "sometimes" , only one students (5%) said "very often" , and four students (20%) said "always" as shown in figure (18)
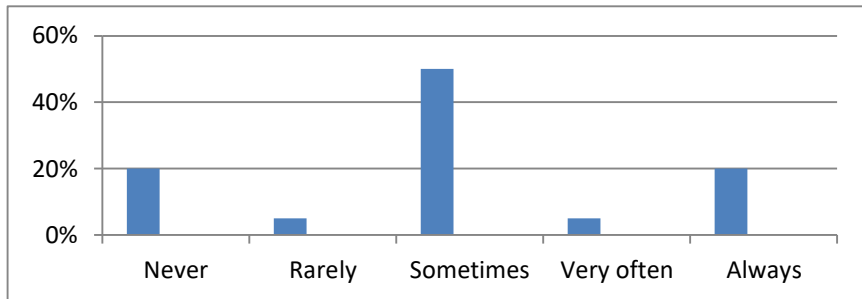

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igure 18: encouraging the students to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contextual clues

In question nineteen students were asked if their teacher taught them how to get information quickly from the conversation

Three students (15%) replied "never", three students (15%) said "rarely", seven students (35%) answered 'sometimes" three students (15%) said "very often", and four students (20%) replied always. As seen in figure 19.
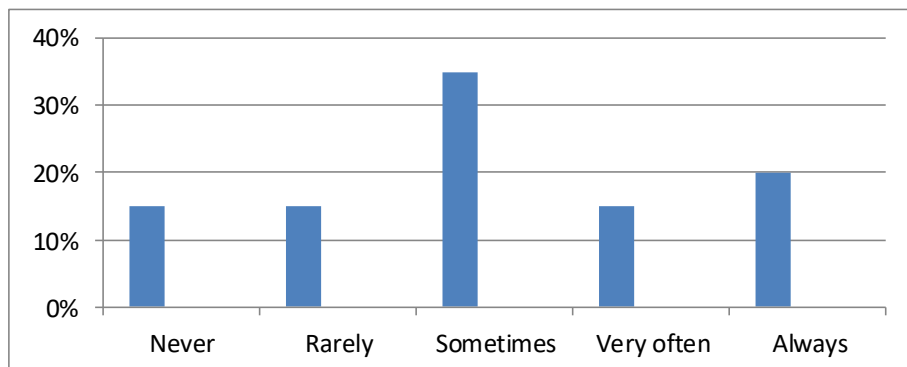

Figure (19) Teaching strategies

In question twenty students were asked if their teacher pointed out their problems regarding speaking skills.

None of students have chosen the item (a) which was "never" , two students (10%) said "rarely" six students (30%) said "sometimes" two students (10%) replied "very often" and ten students (50%) said "always as shown in figure (20)
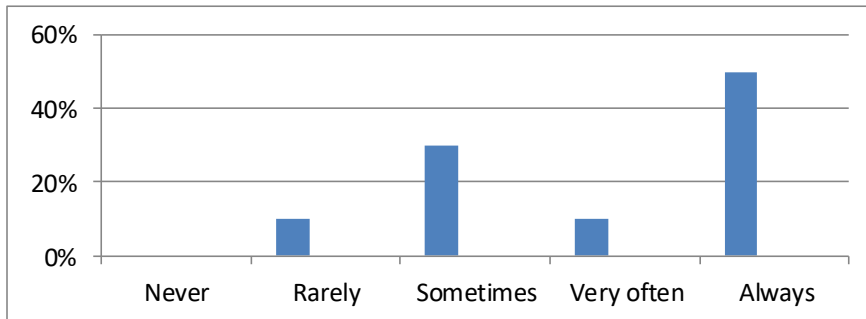

Figure 20: pointing out students' problems regarding speaking skills.

Discussion:

The investigation of the results has revealed the following findings:

1) The participants (45%) preferred listening and speaking among language skills. This indicates that the highest percentage of students agree on that listening and speaking were the most important skills to their learning. The second important skills were grammar and vocabulary with a (40%) whereas reading and writing skills were less important with a percentage of (15%).

Based on the answer of question which was dealing with English syllabus, the majority of students (55%) confirmed that English lessons focused mainly on improving grammar and vocabulary. According to the analysis of the question dealing with listening comprehension the most of students (40%) need to listen twice times in order to understand the oral speech.

The results show that (55%) of students found some difficulties when they were listening to spoken English. This indicates that they tried to listen without focusing on small details, and they might not be aware of listening strategies that they used in order to overcome their lack comprehension in an oral interaction.

The results of question number 5,6,and 7 showed that the most of students were not able to use the target language in oral interaction. This indicates that the percentage of students who couldn't use the target language was very high. This also indicates that the students were not able to understand and communicate in English .

In order to overcome students' difficulties in speaking they referred to use of the mother tongue and reformulated the utterance. However, the results of data analysis emphasized the main problems or difficulties in oral English language interaction lack of vocabulary as the major difficulty (40%) whereas (30%) of students considered that they lack grammar mistakes.

On the other hand, more than (70%) of students preferred activities like role play, games and pair work in the classroom. This shows that students preferred their active role in the classroom by participating in a lot of learning activities. Furthermore, the result reveals that the majority of students (90%) preferred to do learning activities in the classroom (pair or group work) this indicates that the students prefer working in groups.

Students' attitudes to the traditional role of their teacher (70%) agreed with adopt new way in his or her teaching. This indicates teacher as facilitator and guide.

Responses to the adoption of evaluation of speaking skills (60%) agreed that speaking skills can help them to improve their speaking performance. Based on the answers of the questions dealing with teaching methods, the results showed that the most of the students (35%) said that their teachers encouraged them to speak in the classroom. (35%) confirmed that their teacher makes sure that each one in the classroom spoke in the target language and also their teacher arranges the class in pairs / groups during activities. This indicated that students were satisfied with both their teacher and classroom environment.

The results showed that most dominate speaking problems faced by first semester is lack of vocabulary and grammar. Another problem faced by first semester is lack of comprehension in an oral interaction, using of the mother tongue and they were not able to understand and communicate in English. Therefore, the students had problems in

communicating and sharing their ideas and thoughts orally inside the classroom, they are not able to express themselves.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The main concern of this study was to examine the major problems encountered by the first semester students in their speaking skill and suggest some solutions to these problems. Also, the study is concerned with the difficulties that the students encounter when dealing with speaking skills in classroom.

According to the findings of students' questionnaire there were many problems that the first semester had with English speaking skill. They are as follows:

- Problems in communicating and sharing their ideas and thoughts orally inside the classroom.
- Lack of vocabulary, grammar and poor pronunciation.
- Using the mother tongue inside and outside the classroom.
- Lack of opportunities to use target language.
- Lack of comprehension in an oral interaction.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

- Teachers should encourage the students to speak the target language both inside and outside the classroom through the preparation of speaking skills tasks
- Teachers should choose interesting tasks and activities to motivate students.
- Teachers should give their learners more opportunities to speak English through using some speaking tasks that help them to speak.
- Students should work in laboratory for at least an hour three times a week.
- Students share their thoughts and opinions with their classmates in order to practice speaking.
- All high technical institutes in Libya should be provided with modern English language laboratories with technical and professional assistants for helping teachers to operate laboratories.

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