

Strategies Employed by Successful Non-English Majors in Enhancing Their Speaking Proficiency: Experiences of Students at Seiyun High Model School

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Abstract

The researcher observed that some English-major undergraduates cannot speak English fluently and accurately. Yet, some non-English major students, even at the secondary education level, can acquire a good competence in English. The current study takes place at Hadhramout (the valley), which is one of the governorates of Yemen, an Arab country. This study hence aims to identify the strategies leading to the success of non-English majors in acquiring proficiency in speaking English as a foreign language, reflecting the experiences of Seiyun High Model School students. The study sample includes 11 non-English major students who are members of the English Club of Seiyun High Model School. Selection of the participants is done based on their level of proficiency in speaking English. The data are collected via focus group interview, and content analysis is used as a method for data analysis. The study reveals that non-English majors, based on the opinions of the students of Seiyun High Model School, adopt several successful strategies enabling them to achieve proficiency in spoken English. These strategies include highlighting the role of listening exposure, consistent practice, motivation, effective learning techniques, and confidence-building. The study also revealed that grammar is important in casual speech, yet it is important in formal settings, and that traditional education often focuses on grammar at the expense of aural and oral communication.

Keywords: speaking proficiency, strategies, non-English majors, successful English speakers, English as a foreign language (EFL)

Introduction

In this section, the significance of the research problem is identified. The relevant literature is reviewed. Additionally, the overall benefits derived from the research findings are also outlined.

Significance of the research problem

This study aims to find out strategies that help non-English majors in EFL contexts to speak English fluently. Recently, the researcher has noticed that a number of non-English majors, namely, Seiyun High Model School students, speak English more proficiently than some English majors. The researcher observed that some English major undergraduates do not have the ability to speak English fluently and accurately,

yet some other students of lower educational levels, even in secondary education, though a rare case, are able to acquire good competence in English even though it is not their major. This unexpected phenomenon prompted an investigation into the strategies that led to their success.

It seems that this problem occurs in other EFL contexts. For instance, in Indonesia, the English major students at the university in South Sumatra encountered problems with speaking performance; more than half of the participants did not do well in a speaking test (Jaya, Petrus & Pitaloka, 2022). Practically, a significant number of BA English majors at the English departments of Seiyun University based in Hadhramout, Yemen, fail to speak English in comparison to some non-English major learners. This idea is established by Ali and Tevfik (2020), who reported that a limited number of foreign language learners can communicate well in English and perceive themselves as competent speakers. Hence, the current study tries to investigate why some non-English major learners were able to successfully speak English and uncover the secrets behind their achievement.

The researcher, as a lecturer in the departments of English at Seiyun University, Yemen, has observed insufficient practice opportunities in these departments due to the unavailability of friendly and high motivational conditions. Speaking skills as a course are only taught twice in the whole English Language Program. The remaining courses of the program are more knowledge-driven than skill-related courses. Yemen is a monolingual country in which almost all Yemeni people speak only Arabic, yet English is studied at schools as a foreign language. Most students at Yemeni schools study English reluctantly as they see no immediate benefit from learning it. In Yemen, speaking skills in schools are either neglected or traditionally taught in a way that does not encourage students to produce the language. For example, teachers change speaking lessons into reading lessons by asking students to read the conversation from the textbook; this activity is more of reading practice than speaking practice. Despite these limitations, non-English majors appear to find alternative pathways to develop their English-speaking skills, which this study aims to uncover.

Failing to master speaking skills is an issue that appears to be prevalent among some English majors in many EFL contexts. Syahfutra, Wibowo, Ardiya and Febtiningsih (2019) have demonstrated that Indonesian students in the English Department struggled with their speaking skills due to shyness, limited vocabulary, and the learning environment. Therefore, the students highlighted the importance of implementing more effective language acquisition strategies to enhance speech proficiency. Accordingly, the present study may suggest some effective strategies for students who wish to improve their speaking skills by themselves.

The idea of studying this topic came after the researcher met by chance three Yemeni people from Hadhramout Governorate with good English-speaking fluency, yet they did not major in English, namely a taxi driver, an airport worker, and an oil company worker. The taxi driver, who is a secondary school graduate, asserted that he acquired English from tourists who frequently visited hotels in Seiyun City, Yemen. He expressed his surprise that his brother, who is an English major, is much weaker in English due to his refusal to practice the language. The strategy that the taxi driver used is supported by Umar and Suparman (2018), who confirmed that tourism has a significant contribution to enhancing English-speaking motivation. The Yemeni airport worker, on the other hand, has the chance to travel to different countries for business,

like China. This opportunity worked as an incentive for him to improve his speaking skills. Here the nature of his occupation drives him to become a good speaker. The oil company worker confirmed that his job by nature requires him to communicate with English-speaking people. Based on these three situations, the researcher concludes that it doesn't require a learner to be specialized in English to improve their English-speaking performance and that there are strategies that EFL learners employ to learn and improve their English-speaking skills.

It seems that when teachers of English try to restrict speaking practice only in classrooms, students struggle to speak it well. As proven by Nazara (2011), the time for practicing speaking in classes is not sufficient to help students develop their English-speaking skills. In their study on demotivating factors in speaking skills, Heidari and Riahipour (2012) asserted that both students and teachers identified the classroom as one of the most discouraging factors. Hindrances for students to speak English in classrooms, according to Juhana (2023), are attributed to various psychological factors such as fear of mistakes, shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation. These factors develop due to the students' fear of being laughed at by their classmates and friends. Furthermore, Leong and Ahmadi (2017) and Littlewood (2007) indicated that a language classroom can inhibit students. In other words, when students try to speak English in the classroom, they feel anxious about making mistakes and fearful of their classmates' criticism. It is recommended by Nazara (ibid) that the classroom environment should be friendly and encouraging as one of the solutions for overcoming classroom hindrances. Issues such as classroom environment, anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and motivation, as proved above, are some of the factors that discourage learners from speaking English. However, the current study, which investigates the factors that assist learners in speaking English successfully, may prove that successful English speakers do not experience any of the aforementioned discouraging factors.

In EFL contexts, most of the studies that have been done on speaking skills targeted English majors; researchers could hardly investigate the speaking skills of non-English majors. The current study chooses the latter as a research topic, considering that speaking is a skill that does not need a specialized person to be able to master. The observation and reality may prove that many of the EFL proficient speakers did not study English formally, but they were able to acquire it. They have simply picked up while fulfilling non-linguistic tasks wherein English is required to achieve that task successfully.

Many previous studies focused on the demotivational factors of learning or speaking English as a foreign language (Ali & Pathan, 2017; Ghadirzadeh, Hashtroudi & Shokri, 2012; Meshkat & Ebrahimi, 2019; Pratiwi, 2019; Unal & Yelken, 2016). In their study, Tuyen and Phuong (2021) identified the factors that cause reticence in the English-speaking performance of non-English major students. The occurrence of such factors in EFL contexts is something obvious because most EFL students, especially non-English majors, feel no direct need for learning or speaking English as none around them speak it. The current study looks at the bright side of the matter, which is the motivational factors and strategies that help non-English majors to speak English successfully. Therefore, rather than lamenting the challenges of EFL contexts, this study aims to explore the successful experiences of proficient non-English majors. The findings could be applied in practical settings, such as in educational programs or self-directed learning strategies for EFL learners. That is because non-English major

learners probably improve their English-speaking proficiency away from the classroom using self-directed strategies that fit their preferences.

Literature Review

This section offers a comprehensive exploration of the strategies used for the development of speaking skills among EFL non-English majors.

Strategies for the development of speaking skills

Ali and Tefvik (2020) investigate the strategies that help people become fluent English speakers. The results showed that strategies like personal practice, teacher quality, living abroad, cultural context, and using technology outside of class are important for improving English speaking skills. Some of the strategies or factors contributing to students' gain of English proficiency, as concluded by Phuong and Tran (2019), included students' learning autonomy, motivation, attitude, and strategies. Dincer and Daryemez (2020) provided two types of strategies for speaking enhancement: 1) contextual strategies, including self-practice, teacher factor, experience abroad, context, and out-of-class technology use, and 2) affective strategies, including motivation and anxiety. More details about these factors or strategies are presented in the following sections.

Among these strategies or factors, motivation and psychological influences play a particularly pivotal role in the success of speaking English and other language skills. According to Ahsan, Asgher and Hussain (2020), shyness and lack of confidence tend to diminish as speaking ability improves, and vice versa. Anxiety in English speaking stemmed from a lack of confidence and nervousness. Anxiety, often fueled by a lack of confidence, significantly impedes EFL learners' ability to speak fluently. Speaking anxiety, for instance, has a significant influence on someone's ability to speak a foreign language (Noerila & Puspitaloka, 2022). Students with more confidence and more self-esteem make better improvements in speaking the language, while learners who are self-conscious score not much progress. Wahyuni (2022) confirmed that psychological aspects such as motivation have a developmental impact on EFL learners' speaking skills. Al-Mahrooqi (2012) revealed that lacking motivation in English learning is among the major factors leading to students' low English language proficiency.

Several other strategies are applied by successful EFL learners to improve their ability to speak English, including watching movies using English subtitles, app learning, playing conversations while watching movies, self-talk, learning community, and practicing with others by voice chatting on WhatsApp (Mbani, Komaruddin, Mashuri & Rofiqoh, 2023). As presented before, Syahfutra et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of implementing more effective strategies to enhance speech proficiency. Every learner could have his ways or strategies to improve their speech and language in general. Whatever strategy for speaking a language a person adopts; it will be fruitful and lead to progress.

The influence of extracurricular activities, such as English clubs and online resources, on the speaking proficiency of a language cannot be ignored. The establishment of English clubs provides a good opportunity to create a productive environment for the development of students' speaking skills. Students, as revealed by Hamad (2013), strongly recommended the activation of English clubs within colleges.

They have realized that restricting English practice to the classroom may demotivate them from speaking it.

Opportunities should be created for learners to develop their speaking skills beyond school and classrooms. One opportunity is the correct use of technology available at the hands of the students. Proper utilization of technology could provide students with diverse opportunities to enhance their speaking skills in a low-anxiety environment. Dincer and Dariyemez (2020) suggested that language acquisition should extend beyond the classroom boundaries with an emphasis on technology-enhanced extracurricular exercises in EFL contexts. Living in the era of smart technology and artificial intelligence is a privilege for learners to improve themselves independently, away from the classroom.

It is assumed that learners who engage themselves in doing activities they like or feel they need, such as watching TV shows or doing a particular job, and these activities have English as an essential element to achieve them properly, would be able to unconsciously pick up English. In a YouTube video, Krashen (2017) gave an example of a kid called Paul who acquired a new language only by watching one of his favorite TV cartoons, and that kid, while watching the TV cartoon, had no intention of acquiring the language. What he was concerned about was enjoying the events of the cartoons. On the other hand, the students who try to speak English consciously in the classroom, even if they have practiced it orally with their teachers or classmates, will not be able to speak it naturally.

Teachers' role in motivating English language learners

Teachers should assist students in enhancing their English-speaking skills. Similarly, Juhana (2023) highlighted the need for teachers to motivate students towards the same goal. What students want from their teachers is motivation, guidance, and encouragement. EFL learners would probably prefer a stress-free environment where the teachers' authority is absent. Teachers' role in motivating students could help them overcome psychological barriers and communicate fearlessly in English (Juhana 2023). However, when motivation comes from the students themselves, they progress more quickly. When students feel the necessity to speak English and understand its importance in real life, they will begin to work on this skill. Therefore, the real role of teachers is to raise awareness among students and allow motivation to develop intrinsically within the students themselves. This ultimately leads to the understanding that speaking English is not just a classroom activity plagued with challenges, but rather a daily habit for expressing one's needs in life.

Objective

This study tries to identify the strategies that successful non-English majors use to develop their speaking proficiency in English as a foreign language.

Methodology

Sample

Purposive sampling is used in the current study. In purposive sampling, the participants are selected "on purpose" because they have characteristics that better match the objective(s) of the research (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters & Walker, 2020). The sample of the present study is chosen subjectively because the nature of this study requires the selection of successful English speakers. The sample includes 10 non-English major students selected purposively from the Seiyun Model Secondary School for Boys, and they are all Yemeni and belong to an English club organized by their school. The English club activities are actively organized on Tuesdays for one hour, during which students are given the chance to freely practice English among themselves. Some of the activities are organized in the form of visits to organizations that use English as a language of communication, such as the English departments in the colleges. For some activities, native speakers of English are invited to the English club to give the English club members a space to hear natural English and practice it with the natives.

The students of Seiyun High Model School were selected because they can speak English fluently. The researcher frequently observes them speaking English, as their English club usually arranges visits to our English department so that they can communicate in English with the professors as well as the students. The researcher and many others have been surprised by their excellent speaking competence. All target groups are successful English speakers, and they at least reach Level B2 (Upper Intermediate) of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The participant as "B2 speakers can communicate with reasonable fluency and accuracy in a variety of social and professional contexts." British Council. (n.d.). This level is used here as an indication of success in speaking skills, taking into consideration the EFL context where the learners learn or acquire English with no direct interaction with the native speakers of English or English-speaking communities.

Research instrument: Focus group interview

According to Lederman (1990), this technique involves the use of in-depth group interviews in which participants are selected because they are purposive, although not necessarily representative, sampling of a specific population" (p. 117). Focus group interviews are used as a method for collecting the qualitative data of the study. Focus groups typically involve 8 to 12 people and are used to gather insights about group dynamics and shared opinions on a particular topic (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). 11 students are interviewed through a focus group session to collect the research data.

Data collection procedures

The focus group interview is held with the participants to share their experiences and talk about the strategies that enabled them to become good English speakers. Four questions are mainly asked during the focus group discussion to elicit answers from the participants: (1) How did you become a good English speaker? Or what did you do to improve your speaking abilities? (2) What techniques or strategies did you use to help you speak English? and (4) What motivates you to speak English?

The interview was a semi-structured interview where these four questions were not the only questions asked.

The focus group interview is conducted on Tuesday, 7 May 2024. The researcher is interested to know why and how the participants become proficient speakers of English, yet they are not specialized in English. According to the results of focus group interviews, multiple factors and strategies are unveiled by the participants (Table 1). The researcher has arranged a meeting with the English club members who are selected as a target group for the study. The focus group interview has been recorded and later transcribed to extract the strategies used and factors that contribute to English speaking improvement.

The focus group interview in this study is implemented based on Lederman's (1990) four elements: "(1) an introduction that provides the purpose, ground rules, and parameters; (2) an icebreaker or warm-up set of questions (3) a series of questions designed to elicit all the necessary information on the issues to be addressed; and (4) a summary or closing section (p. 122)."

Data analysis

Effective Strategies for EFL Non-English Majors to Improve Speaking

To achieve the objective of this study, which is about the strategies employed by students in acquiring proficiency in English speaking. The participants, who are non-English majors, are asked some related questions during the focus group interviews. The focus-group discussions are recorded and later transcribed to find out the key factors or strategies that non-English majors use to help them develop their communication abilities in English.

Data analysis of the focus group interviews with students at Seiyun High Model School revealed eight themes underlying the strategies that successful non-English majors employed to enhance their speaking proficiency. Direct quotes from participants are included to illustrate these themes. The results of the studies are supported by established theories of second language acquisition (SLA) and offer insights for pedagogical reform.

Table 1

Strategies Employed by Non-English Major Students to Enhance Their Speaking Proficiency

Categories	Strategies
Listening Exposure	- Listening to native speakers - Watching movies
Practice	- Listening to songs and news - Speaking with teachers - Practicing English daily
Motivation to Learn	- Learning English for: - Movies - exams (TOEFL) - career opportunities - global communication.

Table 1 (*Continued*)

Categories	Strategies
Thinking in English	- Translating thoughts into English - Internalizing English in daily life situations
Learning Techniques	- subtitles - online searches - apps (Duolingo) - structured course
Confidence	- overcoming shyness - gaining confidence - feeling more comfortable with native speakers.
Grammar in Speaking	- Mixed opinion - important for formal settings but not necessary for casual speaking.
Role of School Education	Schools focused too much on grammar and lacked speaking practice.

The above table presents various strategies or factors contributing to English speaking proficiency among non-English majors of the Seiyun High Model school placed under eight categories. We can categorize these factors into four main themes: listening exposure, practice, motivation to learn, thinking in English, learning techniques, confidence, grammar in speaking, and the role of school education.

Listening Exposure

Students highly valued the listening exposure factors, listening to native speakers, watching movies, and listening to songs, and news. This aligns with Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition occurs through exposure to comprehensible input. The high percentage of listening supports Ellis's (2005) assertion that input-based learning is crucial for second language acquisition.

All interviewees emphasized that the crucial contributing factor to their speaking performance is listening. One of them clarified this point by saying "I put headphones in my ears and listen to English reports or news even if I do not understand anything; I just listen." He further explained that "this way helped me a lot and improved my language very, very well." Krashen (2017) supported this idea by commenting that "when children start to speak, it is not the beginning of their language acquisition." The ability to speak comes after a long time of listening. To conclude, a great factor of success in speaking a language is to constantly listen intensively and extensively. Learners should listen to English media even if they do not understand English yet. Therefore, listening is one of the key factors that play a great role in improving speaking performance (Doff, 1998; Shumin, 1997), and it is considered to be the foundational skill for the effective acquisition of speaking proficiency (Eissa, 2019). Some participants stated that they listen more than they speak, but they emphasize the importance of both listening and speaking skills. This goes in line with Areta and Purwanti (2021), who revealed that listening ability can contribute to learners' speaking performance and that communication needs a combination of speaking and listening together.

Some highlighted the role of listening-first approaches, as stated by one of them, "Listening allows you to speak... you get the pronunciation right." Exposure to media, particularly films, was critical. One participant stated, "Movies are a big help." This finding goes in line with the Input Hypothesis. Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis is reflected in participants' emphasis on listening to native media before speaking. This contrasts with primary schools' grammar-centric approach, which lacked communicative practice (Savignon, 2002). Seiyun Model Secondary School's success supports task-based learning models (Ellis, 2003), where authentic input and interaction drive proficiency.

All the Seiyun Model Secondary School students confirmed that watching movies and TV series is the way they develop their English-speaking ability. Enjoying English-language media and listening to native speakers represent forms of informal language exposure, which Krashen (1985) argues is crucial for language acquisition through his Input Hypothesis. These activities provide comprehensible input in authentic contexts, potentially leading to more natural language acquisition. However, one of the secondary school participants commented that some western movies contain indecent content and bad language, which contradicts the teachings of Islam. He suggested animated movies as a substitution for western movies, as the former has less harmful content. Watching movies worked as a motivation to improve English. We could conclude based on these answers that watching videos to understand and enjoy their content is one of the effective ways of improving speaking skills. Teachers can make use of this strategy by giving students tasks. For instance, they can ask them to watch videos of their choices and give them some activities related to these videos to do. Content-Based Instruction (CBI) as a teaching approach would be very helpful here in engaging learners in highly motivating content or subject matter (Anthony, 2018), such as history, math, culture, favorite footballers, movies, or any topic that the learners themselves select. The aim of CBI, as stated by Stryker and Leaver (1997), is to prepare autonomous learners who can continue the learning process outside the classroom.

Practice

Participants emphasized the importance of consistent practice and active engagement with teachers and peers. For example, one noted, "You have to speak every time with your teacher... Don't feel shy." Another emphasized regular speaking practice with teachers and peers, even when challenging, by saying, "Speak regularly with teachers and practice consistently, even if it's difficult."

Doing as much practice as possible and speaking with whoever you can is one of the solutions to speed up speaking English. As mentioned before, Dincer & Dariyemez (2020) proved that self-practice is one of the factors for speaking enhancement. This fact was confirmed by one student, who stated that he tries to always speak English with students and teachers of English in their school. Learners should start speaking and communicating with others in English as soon as possible. So, getting over the hump of speaking English even with errors is a big step towards success. A person with such courage must have several good qualities, such as fearlessness in speaking English, disregard for mistakes, motivation, etc. It could be stated here that lack of practice can delay students' progress in their speaking performance. Experience and observation prove that free practice of speaking skills, where students can speak English without looking at the textbook, is hardly practiced at Yemeni schools. The

same problem occurs in other Arab EFL contexts, such as Jordan, where poor speaking skills are a major issue for university students since they do not receive enough practice with the language (Khasawneh, 2023).

The fact that all the target groups of the current study are joining English clubs, where students come together solely to engage themselves in speaking activities, suggests the importance of language engagement and social interaction in language learning. Jambi (2022) proved that English Club in an Indonesian Islamic senior high school improved students' speaking skills, increasing vocabulary, self-confidence, and fluency while preparing them for debate and speech competitions. Additionally, involvement in the English Club, as found by Majaliwa, Kwizera, Mateso, Twahirwa, & Ujwiga (2024), accounts for the excellence in English speaking performance, highlighting its substantial impact on improving secondary school student's speaking abilities.

This aligns with Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of interaction in facilitating language acquisition. The English club has allowed its members to have friends who share the same interest in improving and practicing their English-speaking skills. This supports the sociocultural theory of language learning proposed by Vygotsky (1978), which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development and language acquisition.

From this result, we can clearly understand that the availability of the environment for using English and direct interaction with friends in English is essential for enhancing speaking skills. English clubs are forms of environments created by secondary school peers with the help of their teachers, as they are not able to travel to real environments. Kondo (2018) revealed that the environment, peers, teacher, and related technology all played a role in students' English-speaking performance. The Seiyun Model Secondary School students ascribed their improvement in English speaking to their English club, in which they meet weekly and practice English either among themselves or by visiting or inviting people who speak English, including native speakers who come to Yemen to study Sharia in some Islamic institutes. In this situation, the school created a productive and working environment for students to communicate in English. As the English proverb states, 'Where there is a will, there is a way.' If students are sincere in learning a language, they will easily create an environment that can enhance their learning.

Environment is the main reason that helps learners to be good speakers. It becomes clear that one of the solutions to speed learning is to cut out Arabic socialization and socialize with friends who are keen to speak in English. It is well-established that a friendly and cooperative environment can enhance learners' oral performance (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). One respondent stated that many school students fail to speak English though they study it for a longer period of time due to the demotivating environment surrounding them. Long (1981) suggested that it is not what the learner hears but how they interact that matters. Learners who just spend time listening to or watching media may not be able to successfully acquire speaking skills, as there is no real interaction between them and the people they listen to. A supportive environment is one of the crucial factors for non-English major college students in Indonesia to successfully communicate in English (Fatimah, Adiprima & Abdullah, 2023).

Motivation to Learn

All the participants' motivation to learn English demonstrates the significance of learner autonomy, as Benson (2013) argues that successful language acquisition requires autonomous learning. This is further supported by the high self-motivation, which is consistent with Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System theory, which emphasizes the importance of motivation in language learning. According to one of the respondents, self-study and increased motivation are the only ways for learners who are genuinely interested in learning a language to succeed. A person who wants to speak English must not be embarrassed to use the language in public or fear making mistakes. According to Leong and Ahmadi's (2017) paper, "Students who have higher motivation and lower anxiety can speak easily and effectively." These findings are consistent with that finding. One student expressed his opinion that English is a very simple language that can be learned through independent study. Another student said that although he struggled with English last year, he improved greatly this year through independent study and drive. We can say that students who begin learning English in their way may find that it is one of the easiest languages to learn and that having a positive attitude toward the language will help them learn and speak it fluently. Another student in secondary school claimed that he was able to communicate in English because he had studied it during his leisure time. For him, learning English is therefore a pastime. People engage in activities they enjoy when they have free time. In this instance, the student enjoys learning English and gets enthusiastic about it, which is why he typically spends his leisure time honing his skills in it.

Motivations include both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic factors are illustrated by the non-English majors' desire to enjoy media (such as movies and global content) and pursue personal growth (e.g., "accepting the challenge to stand out"). Conversely, the extrinsic factors represent the incentives these non-English majors have for preparing for exams (such as TOEFL and university admissions) and for aspiring to distinguished careers (in global communication and business). The participants attribute English-speaking success to their desire to understand the world around them and to prepare themselves for things like university exams or the TOEFL. Some participants framed English as a personal challenge, with one stating, "Accepting the challenge to stand out." This finding supports Gardner's (1985) integrative-instrumental framework, which explains participants' dual focus on global connectivity (integrative) and exams (instrumental). Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System further contextualizes their drive to become "global citizens" while meeting academic demands. In support of this finding, Shi, Harrison and Henry (2017) prove that non-native English-speaking students attribute their persistence and success to internal and external factors.

Thinking in English

Thinking in English is one of the cognitive immersion techniques that help students improve their fluency. Reflecting on the ideas of self-regulated learning, one participant highlighted mental practice, saying, "Thinking in English while walking or commuting helps" (Zimmerman, 2002). Additionally mentioned were structured resources like educational series (like "English Speech with Subtitles").

Learning Techniques

Most students realize the importance of using English learning series and apps. Many non-English majors stated that they are following English learning programs such as 'Effortless English,' using mobile apps for learning English such as Duolingo. These answers display that English speaking can be developed through media individually and away from the class, by installing some English learning apps and downloading videos from the web or watching videos online. These results are supported by Hwang, Rahimi and Fathi (2024), who found out that mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has a greater influence on improving learners' speaking performance than face-to-face instruction. Most of the techniques mentioned above are done outside the classroom, and this supports the idea that classrooms cannot assist much in improving learners' speaking performance due to several problems, including inhibition, lack of motivation, low participation, and use of the mother tongue (Tuan & Mai, 2015). Using a range of learning strategies is part of the holistic approach that successful learners typically take to learning (Zha & Liu, 2023; Rahman, 2018). Students utilized technology effectively, employing apps (like Duolingo), social media, and online resources that facilitate self-directed learning. One of the participants described, "I search everything in English online... even medical terms."

Confidence

Confidence plays a significant role. This aligns with Horwitz, Horwitz, and Copes (1986), who suggested that confidence is crucial for language learning success. Almost all students confirmed that they feel confident in speaking English. One of them said that he feels more confident speaking to native speakers than to non-native speakers because, as he said, native speakers are very supportive. There is evidence that watching videos has a good impact on increasing interest, motivation, and self-confidence in speaking English (Qomaria & Zaim, 2021). In another similar study, online videos helped students to build their confidence and reduce their speaking anxiety (Kew, Hashemi, Quvanch, Angelov, Al-dheleai, Tajik & Koh, 2023). The use of video improved students' speaking ability while making learning more enjoyable. Other studies emphasized the positive impact of using videos on English speaking performance (Minh, 2023; Rastari, Putra & Suwastini, 2023; Widyanawan & Hartati, 2016)."

The non-English majors stated that they initially felt anxiety, but with practice and supportive environments, they were able to overcome their anxiety. A participant admitted, "In the beginning, I was afraid to speak," mirroring Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Anxiety theory. Confidence is gained through interactions with native speakers. Confidence grew through supportive environments, aligning with Swain's (1995) emphasis on collaborative output. These results underscore the need for safe spaces to practice speaking without fear of judgment. Minh and Nam (2021) concluded that a supportive classroom environment that encourages participation and reduces intimidation is essential for these learners.

Grammar in Speaking

Grammar was deemed less critical for casual conversations but vital in formal/academic settings and viewed as context-dependent. One participant argued, “Grammar isn’t important for everyday talk but vital in formal settings,” while another noted, “It comes naturally over time.” The contextual view of grammar supports VanPatten’s (2017) argument that implicit acquisition suffices for communicative fluency and explicit instruction is secondary for it. However, participants acknowledged grammar’s role in formal settings, advocating a balanced pedagogy prioritizing communication while addressing grammar in academic contexts (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

Role of School Education

Formal instruction methods, namely traditional English courses and grammar study, receive less emphasis. It's worth noting that while avoiding grammar study is mentioned, it's not a universally adopted strategy. Similarly, formal English courses are not dismissed entirely, suggesting that a balanced approach incorporating both traditional and modern learning methods might be beneficial. However, around half of the respondents confirmed that many school students fail to speak English because many schools do not teach how to speak English; students just learn grammar at school. Concentration on grammar creates fear of mistakes and inhibition to speak English in public. The respondents also certified that primary schools have no role in improving their English speaking.

Primary schools were criticized for fostering disinterest through grammar-heavy, exam-focused instruction. One stated, “They taught English as a subject to memorize, not for communication.” Poor resources (e.g., “unclear cassettes”) and teacher-centered methods exacerbated this issue. Primary schools’ failure to adopt Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Savignon, 2002) stifled intrinsic motivation, a gap non-English majors addressed through media integration and practice. Overemphasis on exams and rote memorization created negative attitudes, highlighting the need for curriculum reforms prioritizing speaking and listening.

In conclusion, the research findings highlight that effective English language acquisition among non-English majors is driven by extensive listening exposure to native speakers through media, consistent speaking practice, and strong motivation linked to personal and professional goals. Thinking in English and utilizing diverse learning techniques, such as subtitles, language apps, and structured courses, further enhance fluency. Confidence-building plays a crucial role in overcoming speaking anxiety, while grammar is viewed as essential for formal settings but less critical in casual conversations. Additionally, traditional school education often emphasizes grammar at the expense of practical speaking skills, underscoring the need for a more communicative approach. This study hence aims to identify the strategies leading to the success of non-English majors in acquiring proficiency in speaking English as a foreign language.

Benefits obtained from research results

The findings that have been discussed provide several significant insights that can significantly enhance English language training for non-majors. One of the main advantages mentioned is the possibility of better curriculum design. By combining practical speaking exercises with grammar instruction, schools can create a more balanced approach and close the current gap in students' oral communication abilities. Additionally, learning can be made more effective and engaging by combining different listening exposures, such as news, songs, and movies. Instead of depending solely on direct translation, teachers are urged to use activities that encourage internalization of the language to foster an environment where students think in English. While daily English practice and interaction with native speakers are crucial for improving fluency, the incorporation of apps, subtitles, and online resources can further support a variety of learning styles.

Furthermore, improving student motivation is crucial, and this can be achieved by tailoring lessons to align with students' interests in movies, exams, careers, and global communication. Highlighting the real-world benefits of English proficiency not only boosts engagement but also sustains long-term motivation. Additionally, building confidence and reducing anxiety in students is fundamental to their learning process. Schools can implement activities designed to boost confidence, such as role-playing and interactive discussions, while fostering peer conversations and offering supportive feedback can help students overcome shyness, ultimately leading to improved spoken English skills. Lastly, practical applications for English learning are essential; structured courses combined with self-learning opportunities through apps and subtitles offer a more comprehensive educational approach, while chances to interact with native speakers, such as through online language exchanges, can significantly enhance students' real-world communication skills.

These insights suggest that shifting from a grammar-heavy approach to a more interactive and practical learning experience can significantly benefit non-English majors in mastering the language. Schools, teachers, and policymakers can use these findings to design more effective English programs.

Recommendations

This section provides recommendations regarding how English-speaking skills should be developed by other non-English majors or educational contexts such as schools and policymakers.

Teachers and before them, policymakers should take insights from the findings of the research to ease the way for other students to develop their speaking fluency in English by following the steps of the successful non-English majors and adopting the strategies and factors that help them to succeed in speaking skills. Some of the pedagogical actions include integrating authentic media (e.g., films, podcasts) for contextualized input and promoting technology-assisted learning (e.g., Duolingo, YouTube). Practice could be made easier by designing low-anxiety environments (e.g., peer groups, native speaker exchanges). Primary curricula should be reformed to prioritize communication over grammar drills. Additionally, educators and language programs might consider incorporating elements that cater to both types of motivation to enhance speaking skill development among non-English majors.

Teachers should not confine the teaching of English to the classroom, and they should create many opportunities for students to be in contact with English outside the classroom because English speaking can be mastered better outside the classroom. English teachers at school and English professors in the English department should encourage students to improve their English outside the classroom by giving them assignments where they can use media and technology to listen to English and record themselves practicing speaking English individually or chorally. Teachers should increase the desire and interest of their students in learning English and help them realize the need for English in their present and future lives. Students will excel in English speaking if they can develop an interest in themselves towards learning and speaking English.

As for non-English majors, the study recommends that they should use the different techniques available in this era of technology, which leaves no excuse for learners not to develop their English proficiency. Learners should strive to establish a flourishing environment for themselves to practice English, and this is possible provided that the learners have the sincerity to make it true.

Some recommendations should be presented to the Ministry of Education, such as studying the efficiency of teaching some school subjects in English, such as science subjects, for Yemeni students to be good at English. Awareness should be raised by the Ministry of Education English among learners that they need not become satisfied with the English that they learn in the classroom; they must develop their speaking skills by themselves. This must happen because most of the English that is taught at college is about language, e.g., phonology and phonetics, and syntax, and it does not focus on how learners can improve their language skills.

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