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**Exploring Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards Students'
Self-Selected Topics in Improving their Speaking Skill**

**The Case Study of Third Year License Students of English at Mohammed
Seddik Ben Yahia University - Jijel -**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of a Master
Degree in Didactics of English

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DICATION

I dedicate this work to those who supported me along the path.

*This work is dedicated to **my beloved parents**, who have been my source of inspiration and gave strength when I thought of giving up and who continually provide their moral, emotional and financial support.*

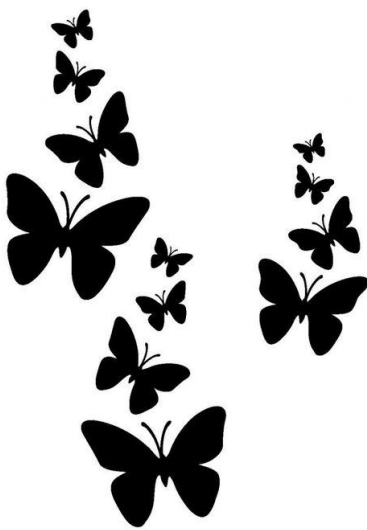
May ALLAH protect them and keep them always by my side.

*To my brother **Karim**, my sister **Feriel**, her husband **AbdDayam**, and to her little angels **Amir** and **Mahdi***

*and lastly, big thanks to my best friend **Ibtisem**, Maria, Rania and my partner **Feriel**. To all my*

friends and family ...I love you all.

Meryem



DEDICATION

First, I want to thank Allah, my Creator for giving me strength and faith to finish this work,

This work is dedicated to:

The soul of my grandmother, may Allah have mercy upon her and accept her into heaven.

my adorable father and tender mother, my source of success and happiness;

who have supported me in my entire life and without them I would not be who I am.

my dear brothers Mokhtar and Imad for their love and emotional support

and who helped me in every possible way in this work,

all the members of my family especially, my aunt Souhyla

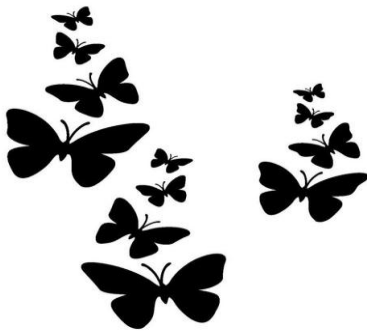
my darling partner and lovely friend Meriem for her collaboration

all my friends with whom I shared the university life with its lights and shadow.

my closest friends: Nedjla, Meriem and Narimen.

Finally, to all those who believed in me and who are proud for my succe

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List of Abbreviations and Symbols

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

LMD: License Master Doctorate

N: Number

P: Page

Q: Question

#: Percentage

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Abstract

The present study aims to explore the influence of students' self-selected topics on improving their speaking skill. It is mainly concerned with finding whether the opportunity of topic self-selection has anything to do with the students' speaking quality. The basic hypothesis adopted in this dissertation is whether allowing students to self-select their topics has a positive influence on improving their speaking performance. In order to achieve the aim of the present study, the research methodology adopted is descriptive. Two questionnaires were administered; The first questionnaire was distributed to a sample of sixty (60) third year LMD students, while the second one was given to ten (10) teachers who teach oral expression in the department of English, at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia university- Jijel. The results obtained revealed that students' self-selection of topics has a great influence on improving their speaking skill. On the light of those results, the hypothesis was confirmed and thus students need to be granted with the opportunity to select their preferable topics to ameliorate their performance and exercise speaking fluently anywhere and at any time.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, students' self-selected topics, teachers' assigned topics and the speaking skill.

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1. Background of the Study

Learning a language involves skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, but speaking is said to be the most effective, i.e., learning speaking means learning a language. Therefore, speaking has occupied a special position through the history of language teaching and learning. Accordingly, researchers in the field of education; (Krashen, 1983; Harmer, 1998, Harris, 1974) highlight some of the techniques that help learners develop and strengthen this skill. One of them is topic selection. The relationship between self-selection and student speaking skill has been discussed in earlier studies. For instance, Green, Christopher, and Lam (1997) argued that topic selection leads students to become more fluent. Topic selection was not only related to the speaking skill, it has a strong significant correlation with the writing skill, as Leblanc and Fujieda (2012), believed that topic selection by students has a remarkable influence since it increases the degree of lexical variation.

2. Statement of the Problem

Speaking has become a desirable skill for English foreign language learners to be acquired. Although they have been studying English for many years, they are still incapable to speak fluently. i.e., learners have a lot of problems in dealing with different situations when speaking the foreign language. Therefore, EFL teachers try all the time to make their students talk as much as possible. However, Students find themselves in a very difficult position when their teachers ought them to work on a given topic; they feel unsatisfied and stressed because of being unfamiliar with that topic or not interested in. Therefore, teachers may make students feel free to self-select their topics. Thus the question to be raised here is whether this opportunity will motivate students to speak and consequently develop their speaking skill, or not.

3. Aim of the Study

The main aim of the present study is to explore the influence of students' self-selected topics on improving their oral speaking skill. This will be from two perspectives: students' angle, i.e., the influence of self-selected topics on speaking according to students' point of view, and teachers' angle, in the sense of exploring that influence on the basis of teachers' opinions.

4. Research Questions and Hypothesis

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

- Does self-selection of topics in speaking tasks influence the oral production of students?
- What are the students' attitudes towards the influence of self-selected topics on their speaking?
- What are the teachers' attitudes towards the influence of self-selected topics on their students' speaking skill?

To answer these questions, it is hypothesized that: allowing students self-select their own topics will have a positive effect on their oral production, i.e., it will improve their speaking performance.

5. Means of Research

To achieve the aim of this study, questionnaires are the most adequate measurement tool to be used. On the one hand, a questionnaire will be submitted to third year LMD students in the department of English at Mohammad Seddik Ban Yahia university of Jijel, and on the other hand, another questionnaire is directed to ten teachers of oral expression in the same department.

6. Structure of the Dissertation

The current dissertation is divided into three main chapters; the first two chapters are devoted for the theoretical part, whereas the third one is for the empirical phase of the work.

Chapter one is set to bring some insights about the speaking skill including its definition, its components as well as its importance for EFL learners. Moreover, it also refers to some approaches and methods in teaching the speaking skill. By the end it tackles some barriers that hinder learners from mastering this skill.

Chapter two gives an overview about the concept of self-selection. It provides a better understanding of this concept, its relation with the speaking skill. Also, it highlights its relationship with motivation as well as some techniques for selecting appropriate topics. This chapter ends up by some positive effects of students' opportunity of self-selection

Chapter three is devoted for the practical part. It specifies the methodology of this research work, namely the population, sample and tools, as well as it includes data analysis, in the sense that it contains a detailed analysis of learners' and teachers' questionnaires.

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Chapter One: The Speaking Skill

Introduction

Learning a foreign language effectively is usually associated with mastering the four basic skills that permit learners to comprehend and use language in a meaningful way. Many scholars claim that there is a strong relation between these skills and ignoring this relation means ignoring the richness of language. i.e., none of these skills is complete without the other since they reinforce each other. These language skills are often acquired in the order of listening, speaking, reading, and writing at the last stage. Many researchers such as Bygate(1997), Branson, Liao, argue that speaking is the most useful skill since communication becomes increasingly important in today's life.

Speaking is a productive skill that most language learners need to improve and perfect because they regard it the most important one among other language skills. However learners can face different problems and difficulties that prevent them from mastering this skill.

This chapter will tackle the most important difficulties about the speaking skill, which are as follows: what speaking is, the components of speaking, the importance of speaking skill for EFL learners, teaching speaking, approaches and methods in teaching the speaking skill and by the end barriers that hinder speaking or make it difficult.

1.1. Definition of Speaking Skill

According to Burns and Joyce (1997), speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. In other words, it is an act which consists of producing verbal utterances to process information, express thoughts and feelings, and convey meaning to others. It is considered the most difficult skill for foreign language learners since it occurs in real communication with real people and entails spontaneous responses that cannot be revised as in the writing skill. Furthermore, Tarigan (1985) adds that speaking is the ability to articulate and produce sounds, words, utterances, in order to show thoughts, ideas, and feelings.

Chaney (1998) points out that speaking is “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts” (p. 13). i.e., it is a process of constructing senses and delivering information either by the use of speech or non-verbal cues, such as, facial expressions, body movements and gestures. Thus, taking into consideration how meaning is affected depending on the situation where the speech is delivered is of a great importance. Therefore, speaking is the most significant skill that people need to master because it is the most efficient feature that helps them in all areas of their life.

1.2. Components of the (“Speaking

Speaking skill involves some important components through which speech can be measured whether it is good or bad. Harris (1974, p.75) states that the basic components that are involved in speaking are the following:

1.2.1. Pronunciation

Pronunciation is one of the vital elements in speaking because it is the foremost notable issue that individuals notice; when a non-native speaker starts talking. According to

Morley (1991), "Intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence (p.488)." That is, good pronunciation is an important part of good communication because articulating words incorrectly can cause major misunderstandings among speakers.

Pennington and Richards (1986, p.20) highlight three sorts of pronunciation features. The first one is the segmental feature, which refers to the individual sound of words (e.g., vowels, consonants, aspiration). Voice setting is the second pronunciation feature; that refers to the habits individuals form when uttering words as the pronunciation differs from one place to another. Pronunciation also involves prosodic feature which occurs as a result of combining sounds in connected speech. All these features are an integral part of pronunciation. To sum up, pronunciation is useful in conveying correct meanings. Thus, it is very useful for mastering the speaking skill.

1.2.2. Grammar

Grammar is extremely needed for individuals to convey meaning, thoughts; and ideas effectively in a way that people find easy to understand. Thus, having knowledge about the basics of grammar is necessary because it makes people sound more educated, and professional.

According to Nelson (2001) grammar is the study of the combination of words to construct correct sentences. Additionally, Batko (2004), states that grammar is the fundamental structure of language that includes the proper forms of words, as well as the correct construction of sentences. Therefore, studying the grammatical system of a language is very useful. It helps to understand how language works because the more people are aware of how it works, the better they will be able to use language more properly and accurately.

1.2.3. Vocabulary

The third important component of speaking is vocabulary. Harris (1974) defines vocabulary as the choice of words that are convenient with content. It means, it is important to take into account the formality to the social context while choosing words. Wilkins (1972) claims that “while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (p.111). In other words, vocabulary is the core of any language and without it learners can neither understand others when they speak nor disseminate their own ideas. Zhihong (2000) further argues that having a sufficient knowledge of vocabulary enables people to communicate relatively better than those with alimited vocabulary. Moreover, Decarrico (2001) states that vocabulary is one of the most important sub-skills to develop during learning any language. That is, rich vocabulary gives learners the ability to understand what others are saying as well as expressing their own ideas easily and clearly.

Vocabulary is organized into two types: receptive and expressive vocabulary. The former refers to words that are understood in the context through listening or reading. While the latter, consists of words that are retrieved from memory.

1.2.4. Fluency

Fluency is necessary for the successful use of a foreign language. Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985) has defined fluency as “the features which give speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions” (p.108). It is the smoothness that enables speakers to speak easily and effectively as it makes them feel at ease while speaking. Further, Brown (1997) points out that when a person talks freely

without hesitation and without spending time to think about what he is going to say, is a fluent speaker.

Many learners think that a fluent speaker, who can speak efficiently without pauses, is able to integrate with native speakers even if he makes many grammatical errors. So, they concentrate more on fluency to increase their progress in using the language in a more comfortable way to become fluent speakers since fluency is one of the factors that determines the success of a foreign language learner.

1.2.5. Comprehension

Another imperative speaking sub-skill is comprehension. It is the ability to decode meaning of words and phrases from a spoken language in a correct way. By having good comprehension, the speaking skill would be easier to develop. In other words, being an active participant in a conversation requires effective comprehension skills because the ability to speak increases more and more, when the ability to listen with understanding improves. So, comprehension is the base of successful speaking. Rost (2009) states that comprehension is one of the essential elements that creates successful communication. That is to say, it is the key element that makes sense of spoken language.

1.3. Importance of Speaking Skill for English Foreign Language Learners

Speaking is a significant aspect for communication; it is intensely intertwined with the human life. Learning to speak a foreign language becomes very beneficial in today's world. As Frost says in his quote "I am a writer of books in retrospect. I talk in order to understand; I teach in order to learn it is obvious that speaking with people is the best way to have a better understanding". It means that learners who are capable of discussing and interacting with others can have comprehensible thinking which leads to successful learning.

Celce. Murcia (2001, 103.) states that the majority of people believe that being able to speak a language is sufficient since speaking is regarded the most essential tool of communication. Clark and Clark (1977) also declare that speaking is an integral part in learning any language. It links people together for example through asking questions and getting responses to achieve common goals. Additionally, Ur (2000, 12.) mention that speaking is the essential skill to be focused on since effective speakers of a language are considered as the ones who know language better. Therefore, speaking skill is fundamental for EFL to convey their ideas with clarity and express their positions in convincing manner and this is a golden key that leads to successful learning.

1.4. Methods and Approaches in Teaching the Speaking Skill

The field of foreign language teaching has known frequent changes in terms of methods and approaches over years. Many methods to teaching speaking have appeared and old methods that do not add any advantage to the teaching of foreign languages have disappeared with the pass of time. The most common ones are: grammar translation method, direct method, audio lingual method, audio visual approach, communicative approach, total physical response, silent way, suggestopedia, natural approach, and eclectic approach.

1.4.1. The Grammar Translation Method

The grammar translation method was the first method for teaching English as a foreign language. It was mainly concerned with teaching grammar rules, vocabulary and making use of translation; without taking into consideration the perfection of spoken language.

According to Neilson (2003) the grammar translation method has totally neglected the oralskills which are listening and speaking and the whole focus was made on accuracy rather than fluency. Using this method enables learners to understand and communicate in

the target language. Ignoring the encouragement of student's communicative competence leads to the rejection of this method.

1.4.2. The Direct Method

As a reaction to the weaknesses of the grammar translation method, the direct method appears. This method considers speaking a primary goal. The use of translation is completely excluded in the sense that all classroom instructions are conducted in the target language. This is with the purpose to make students able to use language spontaneously in realistic everyday situations.

According to Saver (1860), language should be learned naturally, i.e., the way children learn their mother tongue through interaction. In other words., a direct association with the target language should be made without any reference to the other languages. It emphasizes more developing the speaking and listening comprehension and this is through the inductive teaching of grammar and vocabulary. This method requires either teachers who are native speakers or those who are native like speakers, i.e., proficient teachers who are fluent speakers.

1.4.3. The Audio Lingual Method

The audio lingual method was initially used in 1950s and 1960s, as a way of teaching second war armies the spoken language of their allies, or enemies, and it is still in use today. This method is based on Skinner's Behaviourism theory which assumes that people learn through habit formation. This habit formation relies mainly on drills and observable stimulus-response behaviours. If these behaviours are correct, they require positive feedback to be reinforced, while if they are negative they require negative feedback to be weakened.

The audio lingual method starts with teaching oral discourse before analysing the grammatical structures. The teacher exposes his students to listen to a native speaker model for example a dialogue, and then he uses repetition and drills to teach correct forms and pronunciation of the target language. Using this method make students' attitudes positive towards learning a foreign language.

1.4.4. The Audio Visual Approach

It is generally admitted that the level of students' comprehension differs from one student to another. Some students can easily comprehend without the use of any concrete material while others are mainly dependent upon the use of these materials. Thus, many teachers find it difficult to convey meaningful input for their students in an effective way.

The audio visual approach facilitates the process of teaching and gives vividness to the learning situation. Through the use of picture stimulus; and audio devices the spoken language becomes easy to understand and the learners' motivation increases. That is to say, the use of audio visual aids in teaching speaking provides students with a good learning facilities that makes their learning process easier.

1.4.5. The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach is an approach that emphasizes the importance of language functions rather than focusing on structures. Thus, the structure and linguistic competence are part of communicative competence. Since the communicative approach is based on the view that a successful learning of foreign languages comes from learning the use of the language and communicating real meanings, it emphasizes the realistic interaction among students by exposing them to the real life situations that need communication. According to Hymes (1972), teachers should provide students with the opportunity to be involved in

an atmosphere of interaction all the time. Littlewood(1981) further claims that learners should learn both the structure and communication in real situations, i.e., they learn with situations that they encounter in their real life.

The basic objective of this approach is to develop and improve the students' knowledge and skills with the purpose to make communication successful and effective. In other words, it seeks to engage students in meaningful communication through the use of language instead of studying it, and this eventually facilitates the learning process.

1.4.6. The Total Physical Response

The total Physical Response is a language teaching method that is developed by the American professor of psychology, James Asher. It worked from the premise that language is better enhanced through its association with physical actions. Illustrating the meaning of words by using gestures, facial expressions and body movements may reinforce the listening comprehension as well as the speaking skill.

The total physical response method is mainly associated with the trace theory in psychology. Richard and Rodgers (2001) state that "the more often or the intensively a memory connection is traced, the stronger the memory association will be and the more likely it will be recalled" (p. 73). So, the use of physical actions makes things easy to be recalled. However, it is fairly problematic to apply this method either in large classes, or for advanced learners. Moreover, it does not give the opportunity for learners to express their ideas in a creative way because it focuses mainly on comprehension input rather than oral production.

1.4.7. The Silent Way

The silent Way is a language teaching method that was founded by Gattegno in the early 1970s. It emphasizes the learners' centredness and teacher's silence. It means that the learner is the one who produces language while the teacher is silent for most of the time and his role is to supervise and monitor his learners. Earl (1986) affirms that the students' talk should dominate the class while teachers should be as silent as possible even when students make mistakes to give them the possibility to correct their mistakes by their own.

This method aims to facilitate the process of learning by giving students the opportunity to discover and create new items rather than repeating things that have been taught. As Franklin states his famous words which say: tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn. Therefore, the students' creativity and interaction with physical objects may facilitate their recall. However it has a negative side that makes students too distant from the teacher and this makes the process of learning difficult.

1.4.8. Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia is a teaching method that was initiated by the psychotherapist Lozanov in the 1970's; it is mainly used in learning foreign languages. Lozanov (1970) claims that making students comfortable and confident may lower the affective filter, i.e., it decreases classroom anxiety and allows students to learn language in a very limited time as well as it helps them to avoid boredom and fear.

Therefore, providing students with physical surroundings such as the use of relaxing music, yoga exercises and art, are factors that make the process of learning more effective. On the other hand, suggestopedia has also some weaknesses. It cannot be used with large groups of students because it is difficult for the teacher to control it and involve all the students in the lesson. Besides that, it is not easy for students who cannot learn in noisy classes.

1.4.9. The Natural Approach

The natural approach is a foreign language teaching method that aims to teach language in a more naturalistic way. Terrell and Krashen claim in their book, *The Natural Approach*, (1983), that the focus should be on comprehensible input rather than grammatical correctness. That is, there is no need for the use of conscious grammar rules, but all that is needed is for using language in communicative situations.

Terrell (1991) further argues that in the natural approach the process of learning goes through three important stages which are fairly regulated: comprehension, early speech and speech emergence stage. In the first stage learners are exposed directly to the target language in order to develop their listening skill; and absorb the language before speaking it. In the next stage learners tend to develop their expressive skills using single word responses and a very simple language. In the speech emergence stage which is the last one the level of students' proficiency starts to increase and here students can express themselves effectively without any difficulties.

1.4.10. The Eclectic Approach

Eclectic Approach is a conceptual approach which does not belong to any recognized method but, it takes the most adequate strategies from diverse methods and overcomes its weaknesses depending on the aim of lessons and students' needs. The teachers here try to hold the students' attention, push them to demonstrate their knowledge without boredom or fear, as well as try to involve them as far as possible in different kinds of activities.

Rivers (1981) states that "Eclectic approach is the most effective approach as the teacher enjoys the freedom to absorb the best techniques of all the well known methods and

approaches".i.e., giving teachers this freedom of selection can help them to provide meaningful and effective input that fits the needs of their learners. In addition, Crombie (1985) sees the eclectic approach as the best method to use especially for teachers who cannot be limited by only a single approach. Moreover, it offers them the chance to combine the most suitable and effective techniques from multiple approaches.

1.5. Teaching Speaking

Making students able to communicate effectively is the primary goal of any foreign language teacher. The effectiveness of teaching may greatly influence the learners' acquisition of a foreign language. It means, teachers have a big role to play in the classroom in order to make their students able to speak and communicate successfully. Therefore, taking into consideration how a language should be taught is of a great significance.

1.5.1. Oral Expression Activities

Communicative language teaching is mainly based on interaction and exposure to real life situations. Since developing a skill needs an extensive practice; teachers provide students with occasions to communicate with each other using the target language through the use of some important activities that can help them develop and their speaking skill.

In other words, foreign language teachers should create a good classroom atmosphere where students are exposed to real life communication and this is through the use of various meaningful activities that are selected for many reasons. Some of these commonly used activities are the following:

1.5.1.1. Classroom Presentations

A class Presentation is an interesting activity that gives students the opportunity to express and share their ideas in front of their colleagues and teachers. Teachers can ask his students to do a presentation about a topic that they find relevant and interesting with limitation of time.

Thornbury (2005) points out that students' presentations in front of a large group, is the best way to hone their speaking skill. This type of activities encourages students to incorporate more and more in the class as it increases their self-esteem.

1.5.1.2. Dialogues

Dialogues are one of the most prominent types of communicative interactive activities. Their use in the classroom helps teachers to promote an active participation among students as well as it enables them to practise their oral skill through the exchange of information and ideas.

The teacher role here is to motivate students to express their ideas and sometimes may help them to get these ideas more clear. By using this activity, the participation increases among students and this leads to the development of oral proficiency.

1.5.1.3. Debate

A debate is an interesting form of oral expression activities. In this activity the teacher tries to create a supportive atmosphere in the classroom through dividing the class into pairs; or groups to exchange their points of view affirmatively; or negatively. It means there is one affirmative side that opens a constructive speech; and defends his arguments.

On the other hand, a negative side is present to refute the affirmative side's arguments. The main objective of this activity is to engage all the students to share their opinions and express themselves succinctly through persuasive arguments in more active way. So, they eventually develop their speaking performance.

1.5.1.4. Role Plays

Role Plays have an important part in teaching, particularly the speaking skill. It improves students' creativity and gives them the opportunity to act in different social roles using the target language. Hassan (2007) indicates that the use of role play activities permits students to interact with different persons and receive extra information about various concepts that have been questionable for them.

Additionally, (Jeffries, 2007; Mooradian, 2008) assume that the role play is not only effective for the students' improvement of speaking skill, it helps also in the development of their critical thinking. Harmer (1998) adds also that "role play is more than just play acting: it offers chances for rehearsal and engagement that some other activities fail to give" (p.94). That is to say, it is not just a matter of performing scenes and acts whereas it is considered as the best activity that provides students with the opportunity to be involved in real communication and to practice their language.

1.5.1.5. Problem Solving Activities

In problem solving activities, students have to work together through exchanging ideas and opinions, then analyzing them to agree upon a common decision. Littlewood (1990) states that "problem solving activity is a type of communicative activities that have been designed to provide opportunities for learners to produce a language that they have recently learned" (p.10).

Applying this type of activities in teaching speaking helps teachers to create a cooperative and dynamic classroom which increases the students' interest and motivation to learn and share their acquired knowledge with each other. According to Dickson (1981) the use of problem solving activities encourages students to produce new utterances and express their own ideas instead of repeating what they have been told. i.e., it promotes creativity rather than repetition and helps the students to celebrate their knowledge in spoken language.

1.5.1.6. Communicative Games

Communicative games are one of the communicative activities that are assumed to be able to involve students in speaking without fear. Applying these games in teaching help teachers to involve as much students as possible in classroom participation and decrease the level of timidity among students. Wright et al., (2006) assume that games are activities that allow students to interact without any difficulty. Their self-confidence may increase automatically and this has a significant impact on enhancing speaking skill.

Moreover, communicative games help students to decrease the level of anxiety and involve them in active learning, i.e., using communicative games motivates students to be creative and active. Further, Wallace (1987) claims that communicative games give positive impact towards classroom atmosphere that increase focus on the importance of motivation and effective environment in the classroom.

1.5.2. Principles for Teaching Speaking

Teaching how to speak a language effectively is one of the most essential and vital skills teachers transmit to their students. There are several key principles that have been intended as guideline for teachers to prepare their students to deal with real life communication situations.

Providing topics of significance to the students is an important principle that increases students' motivation and enthusiasm to engage in any speaking activity. Teachers should create a rich atmosphere that encourages natural interaction between students by using only the target language, and should not correct students' grammatical mistakes very often because the focus should be on fluency rather than accuracy. This encourages students to express their own opinions and ideas confidently without fear or hesitation. Teachers should also provide their students with enough opportunities to talk and practice their speaking in the classroom and to provide them with an accurate feedback that helps in the improvement of speaking skills.

1.6. Causes of Speaking Difficulties in Classroom.

Speaking a language effectively is a crucial goal of any foreign language learner. However, students generally are confronted with many difficulties that hinder them from expressing themselves since English is not their native language. These difficulties come from a lack of interest in the topic, lack of preparation, lack of motivation, lack of time, or fear of making mistakes.

1.6.1. Lack of Interest in the Topic

It is obvious that the students' lack of interest in the topic has a great impact on their speaking performance. Giving uninterested topics prevents students from being actively involved in the classroom, and reduces their motivation to invest their time and expend their effort in vain since they have nothing of value to share.

Whelan (1997) states that engagement with the content leads to a higher level of learning. In the same line of thought, Rivers (1968, 192.) declares that choosing uncongenial topics to students can contribute to create inhibition and problem of participation. That is to say,

the more students are passionate about the topic the more their engagement in classroom oral participation is seen.

1.6.2. Lack of Preparation

Many scholars estimate that 50% of all mistakes in speaking occur as a result of the lack of preparation. Students' preparation of how they supposed to deliver their knowledge is a necessary device to take into consideration. This preparation gives them the chance to develop their ability to present their knowledge to others, in a clearly structured way. This reduces the level of mistakes.

1.6.3. Lack of Motivation

Motivation plays a big role in language learning. According to Brophy (1998, 3.) it is a concept that directs, energizes and persists students behaviour. That is to say, it is the motor that pushes students to invest more effort to reach their aims. Mastering the speaking skill of a language requires a high level of motivation from both students and teachers.

However many teachers neglect this aspect and do not motivate their students to engage more in the classroom participation and this can stop them from practicing their speaking. Donough (2007, 2.) asserts that in order to have a motivated class, teachers should create a supportive and challenging classroom atmosphere where students perform better. In other words, motivation is the best solution that helps students to overcome speaking difficulties and lack of it, can insecure classroom environment.

1.6.4. Lack of Self Confidence and Fear of Making Mistakes

Lack of self confidence and fear of making mistakes is another fundamental obstacle that prevent students from developing their speaking skill. Many students hesitate when they come to speak in front of others even if they have enough knowledge about the

topic they are talking about and this is due to their lack of self-confidence. Krashen (2002) states that, students who have a high self-confidence are more likely to learn. In other words, self-confidence intensifies students' motivation and willingness to celebrate their capacities and this can make their learning process more effective and enjoyable.

The lack of self-confidence leads to many other psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes. This fear is regarded as the enemy of students since it does not provide them with the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and this is the biggest failure because mistakes provide students with valuable feedback by which they can construct their success and achieve their goals. Ur (2000, 111.) asserts also that shyness, fear of criticism, and fear of making mistakes suppresses and inhibits students' thinking and creativity and thus, stops them from speaking and participating in the classroom.

1.6.5. Limited Time

Limited time is a great hindrance to a number of students who want to improve their speaking. They often have a limited amount of time when they come to speak and this disables them to express their ideas clearly, or even to learn from their mistakes.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter we have focused on some important issues of teaching the speaking skill. The development of this skill is linked to many necessary conditions. It requires teachers to make active use of foreign language through promoting productivity and providing more opportunities for classroom communication. Also, they have to select from a wide range of methods the most adequate strategies and techniques and try to overcome the barriers that make speaking difficult for students. From what have been mentioned above,

one can conclude that the teacher is the one who plays the primary role to create the best conditions for learning and speaking a language effectively.

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Chapter Two: Topic Selection in Speaking

Introduction

Providing students with the opportunity to express their interests and preferences inside the classroom is a form of student-centered learning. i.e., student-centered approach promotes the idea that students are expected to be active participants and responsible decision makers of their own learning. This shift from teachers' centeredness to learners' centeredness has been due to the development witnessed in the field of education in the current century. It means that the role of teachers changes from a providers of information to facilitators. So if the teachers' goal is to raise students' motivation and participation. A key strategy for this is to give them freedom, more voice and choice in the classroom. This can be achieved through affording students the opportunity to choose their preferable topic to talk about.

Relatively, this chapter seeks to explain the concept of self-selection, and its relation to the speaking skill, moving also to its relation with motivation. Moreover, it contrasts students' self-selected topics with teachers' assigned topics as well as it introduces some characteristics of an appropriate speaking topic. Finally, this chapter ends up with the positive effects of students' self-selected topics on improving their speaking skill.

2.1. The Concepts of Self-Selection, Topic and Interest

6.1.1. The Concept of Self-Selection

In language teaching and learning, self-selection is considered as an important factor that can have a remarkable influence on the students' learning process (Moss and Hendershot, 2002). It has been of a great interest for many scholars who link it to the process of decision-making as well as interest, in the sense that, learners has the right to

choose and decide about their learning approaches and methods, learning materials and learning evaluation. This will be in relation to their weaknesses that need to be overcome.

This idea of self-selection is supported by Kragler (2000), in which he states that "self-selection allows students more latitude to be deeply involved with the learning process" (p. 4). i.e., the more students are free in their learning process, the more they show much enthusiasm, eagerness and joy, and more engagement and readiness to fulfill an instructive aim. This statement can be generalized to include students' freedom to tackle a topic of their interest in a specific task, whatever it is, an oral presentation, a discussion, a debate or any other oral productive task.

6.1.2. The Concept of Topic

According to Oxford dictionary, a topic is the subject of any distinct portion of a discourse, or argument, or literary composition; also, the general or main subject of the whole; a matter treated of; a subject, as of conversation or of thought; a matter; a point; a head. It refers to the main theme of a conversation or language textbooks chapters in which the student is exposed to a wide range of grammar and vocabulary items.

A clarification of the term topic was introduced by Hidi and McLaren (1988). They have defined a topic as a "coherent knowledge domain of subject matter" (p. 4). It means that a topic is a set of coherent related ideas in a specific domain

6.1.3. The Concept of Interest

When students choose a topic to work on, it means that they are deeply interested in. They are curious and patient to learn more about. According to Dewey (1913, p.17), it can be defined as "being engaged, engrossed, or entirely taken up with an activity, object, or topic". So it is quite obvious the fact that students learn better when they are interested in

the subject matter. i.e., self-selection and interest are just like driving forces that pushes the student to success and to develop new skills and abilities. Likewise, Krapp, Hidi and Renninger (1992) relate the term interest to the student's psychological state as well as his personality and even the classroom environment. That is to say, students differ; each one has his personality, his own interest and his own way of thinking and culture. Those aspects really affect the choice of a student since everyone belongs to a different milieu.

Previous studies have categorized interest into personal/individual and situational interest. As its name indicates, the first type, i.e., personal interest is defined as "a person's relatively enduring predisposition to reengage particular content over time" or "a relatively enduring preference for certain topics, subject areas, or activities" Schiefele (1992, p.152) as cited in Hidi and Renninger, (2006, p.113), in the sense that it is strongly related to a person's personality and his psychological state (Ainley et al, 2002). That is to say, a person is born with a desire and a tendency to learn more about some specific favorite domains and always devotes his time to learn more about them.

Individual interest develops slowly over time and tends to be long lasting and accompanied with positive effects. For instance, one may find a student who participates and always look for opportunities to share his ideas concerning certain topics or domains that are of his interest, and in the same time he is trying to broaden his knowledge and gain extra information for instance; some students are interested in nature, others in history and other ones in sports. Some students love working with others while some prefer to work on their own.

The second type is the situational one. Students' choice and interest is positively or negatively affected by the surrounding environment, familial and social factors as well as

the student's emotions and feelings. Situational interest may last for a short period of time and it is easily changed (Krapp et al, 1992). In other words, the situational interest is changeable and partially under the control of the teacher. This type of interest can be increased by offering students choices, promoting autonomy and creating a supportive classroom atmosphere.

2.2. Teachers'-Assigned Topics Versus Students' Self-Selected Topics

The issue of topic selection has been a center of interest for many scholars in the field of education. Teachers are confused about whether they give their students more choice and freedom to select their own topics, or limit their liberty by assigning topics for oral tasks.

2.2.1. Teachers-Assigned Topics

According to Jones (1998), giving much choice to students can be "confusing, annoying, and even debilitating" (p. 340). In the sense that, students may waste a lot of time finding and picking up a suitable topic to talk about; they will feel anxious and confused. Consequently, they cannot decide on a topic because they face several shelves of options, then it would be better for them to work on a teachers' assigned topic.

Moreover, if students have the freedom to select topics, they are just going to choose the easiest one and do not bother themselves to look for a topic of importance or a topic that require much effort. Sometimes students make inappropriate decisions and talk about topics that have nothing to do with our norms and culture. Students are not qualified to choose since they do not take it this opportunity seriously. So it is better for teachers to assigned topics for them in order to avoid all of those problems.

2.2.2. Students' Self-Selected Topics

Different scholars like Li (2012) and Bonyadi(2014)agreed with the idea that student's oral presentations should be based on self-selected topics.Self-selection can be considered as a mode or a strategy that helpslearners to foster theirautonomy, compared with the traditional way of learning in which the teacher is considered as the knowledge giver and the one responsible for the learning process. Nowadays, focusis no more on teachers but rather on learners who should take in charge their learning by selecting topics that fit their needs and wants.

According to Silva (1998) who supports the idea of student's self-selection, it "seems reasonable to me to suggest that students often dislike taking college composition classes, because they are usually compelled to do so, and forcing topics on them could well compound the problem, adding insult to injury" i.e., students who are forced to learn via inappropriately designed materials will feel that it is useless doing the activities and that is better to be passive learners. When a teacher assigns a topic, he spends hours to agree on it, but when he comes to deliver it, he may face a big problem which is apathy. Maybe this isbecause the students dislike it. It does not seem to have any personal relevance or itdoes not reflecttheir needs. Thus, the teacher will besurprised by his student's unenthusisiam and apathetic. So he will notice a poor level in their performance and increase in their dislike to talk. So the teacher can combat this apathy by simply giving a chance tostudents to choose whatever they want to talk about as a topic.

Over and above that, when all students are working on the same topic at the same time, they are more likely to view each other as competitors and ask themselves who is better by comparing and judging their answers with each other, so they are no longer

focusing on the task at hand, but instead they are paying attention to everyone else. Students' selection opens the door to creativity and diversity because each student tackles a different topic. This allows them to relax and focus on their works. Although there will be a kind of competition but it can be considered as positive and healthy because it makes the classroom environment more positive, collaborative as well as more supporting. As a result, students are more likely to feel comfort and joy.

2.3. Self-Selection and the Speaking Skill

The concept of self-selection in language teaching has been discussed in teaching reading and writing skills, in rare cases, few scholars (River, 1968 ; Thornbury, 2005) have dealt with the issue of topic selection in relation with speaking despite the fact that speaking is considered as the most important, productive, significant and complex skill and "many if not most foreign language learners are interested in learning to speak" (Ur Penny, 1996).

Different studies were conducted by some scholars including Ellis (1990) who emphasized on the importance of topic selection in improving student's oral production as well as Bonzo (2008) and Wolf (2013), who investigated the effect of both variables: students' selection and teachers' assigned topics and the result obtained indicated the effectiveness of student selection in improving their speaking performance. Relatively, Kang (2005) found that students feel more secure when they talk about a topic of their choice and that will lead the students' willingness to communicate. i.e., willingness to communicate refers to "the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so" (MacIntyre, Dornyei, Clément, and Noels 1998, p. 546). Therefore, topic selection is of a vital importance when it comes to speaking or communication in the classroom.

6.2. The Relationship between Self-Selection and Motivation

Students' interest in a topic holds so much power, according to Perks (2010), "One of the biggest frustrations that many teachers wrestle with, in the classroom, is a lack of motivation among students" (p. 4). That is to say, motivation is a key component of the learning process because students who are not motivated will not learn effectively. i.e., students internalize learning when they are motivated and interested, so teachers always seek to increase it in various ways.

One way to motivate students is to let them exercise control from time to time and give them the opportunity to make choices about what they learn according to their preferences. The teacher should create an atmosphere filled with support, i.e., classroom setting need to be "autonomy supportive" (Grambell, 2015). As a result, students will feel a sense of responsibility. They show real emotions towards the topic and work with a great motivation and concentration. Working with students and supporting them is critical and can only happen by getting to know them. So the first step is learning what their interests are. By getting to know one's students, teachers are able to encourage motivation to want to speak.

However, Perks (2010, p.3) suggests different choices that may increase the level of motivation in the classroom, he says that is useful to use what is called "4WH" framework. This framework encourages teachers to ask who, what, when, where, and how questions. In the sense that, teachers may ask themselves questions like: how can I engage my students and involve them to speak more during a discussion session? Or is it beneficial to let them select their topics as well as partners to work with?

In case of team work, giving students the freedom to choose their partners will boost their motivation, help promote a strong feeling of relaxation and learning become more

meaningful (Deci and Ryan, 2002), so teachers should take this into consideration when making group work.

When activities require from student to practice specific skills, student appreciate being free to select the topic in which they can work with according to their prior knowledge or experiences, so students' selection of learning activities results in better performance than teachers' assigned ones (Cosden et al., 1995).

When students are restricted with time to accomplish a certain task, most of them will not do it in a good way and they will not feel enjoyed fulfilling their work. In other words, time limits decrease students' productivity because they become so focused on the time they forget the task.

Different activities do not need to be completed in the same way. Teachers should give their students the opportunity to find other ways. Students could work in many different places not only on their desks. They could be working in the library, at the back of the room, in the corridor or in the lab using computers....etc. It might sound simple but it leaves a positive impact on student's performance when they work on their favorite places. That is to say, students will be innovative persons in which they can solve problems in different ways and in different situations (Perk, 2010).

2.5. Characteristics of an Appropriate Topic

A topic is a general theme or subject that one discusses or writes about sometimes it is hard for EFL students to come up with a suitable topic to deal with. So being able to decide on the appropriate topic is an important skill for any student. When choosing a topic, one should consider different points (Galko, 2001), namely: interestedness, appropriateness to audience needs and interests.

2.5.1. Interestedness

Students have to make sure that a given topic is interesting for them, because if they are not excited about their choice, or they are not satisfied with it, then how can they expect anyone else to like it. It is better for them to talk about topics that they are knowledgeable about; topics with which they have expertise or experience about it. Because it is not logical to pick up a topic that you are not expert on so you cannot give credibility to your speech performance. Also students should pick up topics that are not obscure, then it may be difficult for them to find information about it. Students need to pick up topics that are passionate about because it makes it easier and enjoyable for them to talk about.

2.5.2. Appropriateness to Audience Needs and Interests

The more a speaker knows the audience, the more the speech can focus on audience needs and concerns (everyday public speaking, Mark V, Redmond-Denise V Rchota, p. 33). When students know more about audience and their expectations, they will be able to tailor their talk to make it more interesting. Consequently, the audience will be engaged and satisfied, and the student will willingly accept their applause at the end. Connecting with audience is a key part of persuading them, they need to understand why this topic is important.

It is also important to know the level of knowledge they have about the chosen topic, avoid using ambiguous, vague and empty words. Moreover, students have to take into consideration the audience's psychologies and their cultural diversity, that is to say, what mood the audience is in and their attitudes and feelings towards that topic because people think differently; students should not stereotype the audience thinking that they are all the same. So knowing about the other's culture may help to decrease anxiety when

communication takes place. That is why some teachers ask their students to avoid talking about specific topics because sometimes it creates conflicts in the classroom for instance; religious ones.(Galko, 2001, p. 17).

A topic should be significant. It should share information that actually will have an impact on the audience. The topic should be fresh and timely. i.e., it should be new and if it is not, the student will lose their attention because they already know a lot about. Furthermore, a good topic should be open to debate, consequently they will capture, spark the audience interest and involve them to be part of the speech, exchange opinions and ideas and create a vital atmosphere in the classroom.

In general, a good topic should be clear enough by using simple language so that the audience can easily understand it. It should be important, relevant and provide benefits for them. They should come away feeling that their question was answered, they learned something new, or they discover something interesting. i.e., a good, clear, specific topic helps the student and the audience.

2.6. Positive Effects of Students' Self-Selection

Topic selection has been considered one of the most important factors that can have a positive influence on the learning process as well as developing language skills (Graham, 1982). The use of self-selection strategy in speaking has significant positive effects on student's oral production.

First, when students are familiar with the topic and have sufficient background about it, they can organize and develop their ideas appropriately. Grass and Varonis (1984) agree that topic familiarity has a great influence on learner's oral output. Also, there will be diversity in topics, so they can produce more fluent discourse. Not only this; discussing familiar topics will predispose all learners to negotiate more and to be active speakers. In

the same vein, Lange (2000) also endorses the idea that topic familiarity has an important influence on student's talk; the more he is familiar with it, the more he can produce accurate sentences.

Second, compared to teacher-assigned topics which limit student's freedom, self-selected topic allows the student to explore and express their ideas, thoughts and beliefs freely. Li (2012) argues that self-selection of topics is considered as one of the most important factors that lead to self-regulated learning. This is because the concept of self-selection is all about the idea that "Learners understanding of their own ability, interests, and beliefs in the possibility of reaching their goals" (p. 44). That is to say, self-selection allows them to value their decision making ability, makes them feel that their opinions really matter and give them confidence and a feeling of ownership. He also states that when students are granted with the choice of selecting their own topics they can "regain the chance to practice the critical thinking and scope with the multiple answers for controversial issues" (p. 54). It means that self-selection fosters their capacity to choose appropriate topics and come up with new ideas, selecting the best ones and modifying them if necessary. Furthermore, students will be more creative, good guessers and open minded i.e., they accept criticism as well as respect and value the others' opinions. From the point of view of students, self-selection has great positive perceptions from students.

Wolf (2013) carried out a study analyzing perceptions of EFL students on textbook-assigned and self-selected discussion topics. The researcher found that students have positive perceptions of topics they have knowledge about and more interested in discussing their own topics.

Last and as stated by Bonyadi and Ziamalpur (2014), self-selected topics "Let them think freely and experience a sense of democratic classroom atmosphere" (p. 369). It means

involving students on a regular basis and in appropriate ways in shared decision making increases their responsibility for helping to make the classroom a good place to learn. Giving the students a voice in the classroom gives them the willingness to take risks and make learning more exciting and enjoyable.

Conclusion

To sum up, a desire among many oral expression teachers is to empower student's talk inside the classroom while monitoring an oral task. Some teachers exaggerate and over control their students and neglect their say, thinking that when granting student with the opportunity to select their preferable topics, it means that they take one of the teachers' main responsibility or authority. This assumption is wrong. Teachers and students should work collaboratively and share responsibility together because they both have the same goal, the same purpose which is prompting the quality of teaching as well as enhancing student's academic achievement. Thus, this technique "self-selection" has proven its effectiveness in the field of language teaching and learning. So, if choice is such a great opportunity, then it is better for teachers to take into consideration for the best students' achievements.

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Chapter Three:Field Work

Introduction

After discussing the related literature items of both variables, self-selection of topics and the speaking skill in EFL classrooms, this chapter sheds light on the empirical phase of this research work. It introduces a full description of the methodology of the study in terms of population, participants, research instruments, and the statistical package used when analyzing the collected data.

3.1. Research Methodology

The current research attempts to explore the influence of students' self-selected topics on improving their speaking skill. This research adopts a purely quantitative approach. The quantitative data were collected by means of two questionnaires administered to sixty third year students of English and 10 teachers of oral expression. In term of definitions, Bhat (2019) stated that "quantitative research is defined as a systematic investigation of phenomena by gathering quantifiable data and performing statistical, mathematical, or computational technique". In other words, the quantitative approach investigates phenomena through measurement and statistics.

3.1.1. Population and Sampling

Among a population of one hundred eighty (180) students of third year LMD students of English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel, during the academic year 2018/2019, sixty (60) participants have been randomly selected. The choice of the sample was based on the idea that third year students are major enough to be allowed to self-select their own learning materials in order to master the speaking skill and to perform well during an oral task.

Besides, teachers who participated in this research work were also selected randomly from the English department. They were 10 teachers who experienced teaching the oral expression module. We choose to work with those teachers since they can provide us with the substantial answers about the quality of students' oral production when they work on a chosen topic or on an assigned one, and also to provide us with the strategies that they use to make students interact and communicate more.

3.1.2. Research Tools

Research tools are the different ways a researcher uses to collect data for his or her investigation such as classroom observations, questionnaires, interviews, think aloud protocols, etc., As long as our research is concerned, the most suitable method is the descriptive one. Therefore, data were collected through the use of questionnaire which is the mostly common used method to collect data as well as attitudes and opinions from a large group of participants (Mackey and Gass, 2005). According to Nunan (1992: 231) "a questionnaire is an instrument for the collection of data, usually in written form consisting of open and/or closed questions and other probes requiring a response from the subject". Through using questionnaires, students can collect a large amount of data in a fairly short time (Brown, 1988, p. 3) and it is considered as the less expensive and easiest method comparing with the other ones, since the participants have enough time to think and answer in a reliable way (Kothari, 2004). The two questionnaires used in this study aim at finding whether students' oral production is better when they choose topics by themselves or when the topic is assigned by the teacher. Rather they will be better when the topic is assigned by teachers.

3.1.2.1. The Students' Questionnaire

3.1.2.1.1. Description of the Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire consists of 21 questions; they are a mixture of closed questions (in which students are about to choose yes or no answers, or to tick the suitable answer among various choices), or open questions in which the respondents are not restricted to a set of responses, they are free to answer whatever they feel right by expressing their reflections and thoughts.

All those questions are arranged under three sections: the first section (from Q1 to Q4); it is foremost concerned with the student's views and attitudes toward speaking rank comparing to the other skills. Also, it seeks to identify some issues that hinder students from speaking and participating. The second section (from Q5 to Q20) targeting student's perceptions about whether the opportunity of topic selection would effectively enhance their oral production. Also those questions are put to know if they prefer to select their own speech topics or to be restricted to their teachers' assigned ones. Moreover students are invited to give their feelings when teachers oblige them to work on a specific topic. The last section which includes only just one question to the respondents to add any comments or to suggest anything that have a relation to the theme (Q 21).

3.1.2.1.2. Administration of the students' questionnaire

This questionnaire was designed for the purpose of seeking students' opinions and views concerning the effect of students' self-selected topics on their oral production. As previously mentioned, this questionnaire was administered to sixty (60) EFL third year license students. It has been delivered to different groups in order to raise the point of randomization and all the copies were returned back in the same day. The questions were clear enough and put according to the main key points in the theoretical chapters.

3.1.2.1.3. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

This section provides the statistical analysis of data collected from the research tool stated above. That information is illustrated by graphs (figures) and tables for a better understanding.

Section One: The Speaking Skill

Q 01: Do you agree with the view that to learn a language you have to speak it?

Table 01

The Relationship between the Speaking Skill and the Academic Achievement

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	60	100%
Disagree	00	00%
Total	60	100%

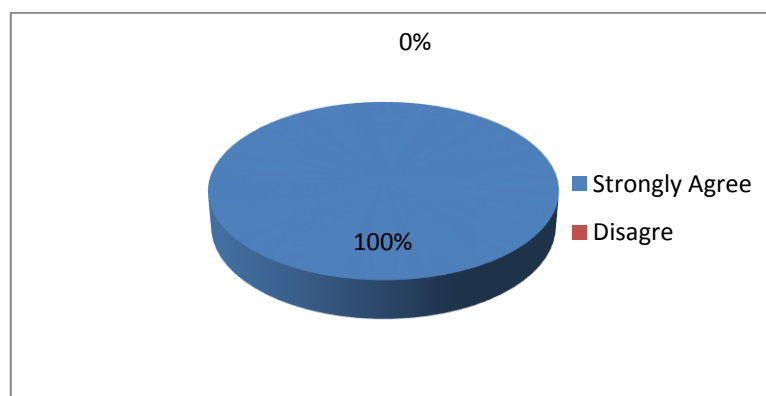


Figure 01. The relationship between the speaking skill and the academic achievement.

From the results obtained, all the learners (60) agreed that speaking can effectively prompt to learn any foreign language. So, it is clear that the students do care about ameliorating their speaking performance by practicing speaking more and more.

Q 02: How important is, in your opinion, speaking in learning English in comparison to other skills (Listening, Reading and Writing)?

Table 02

The Importance of Speaking in Learning a Language Compared to Other Skills

	Frequency	Percentage
About 15% (of importance)	1	1.66%
About 25% (of importance)	5	8%
About 50% (of importance)	27	45%
About 75% (of importance)	27	45%
Total	60	100%

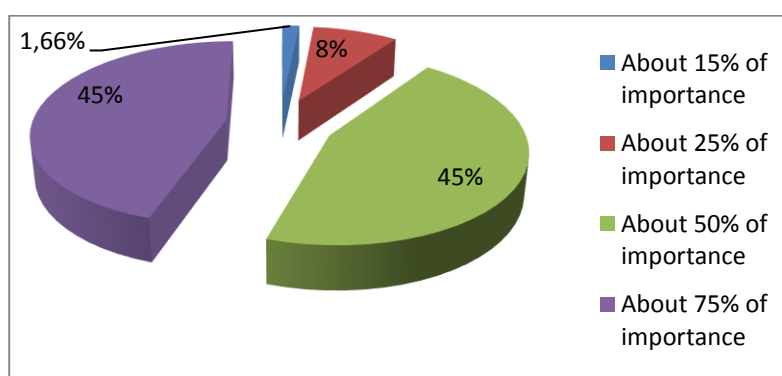


Figure 02. The importance of speaking in learning a language comparing to other skills.

Regarding students answers, it is clear that the speaking skill have a special rank in comparison to other skills. The majority of participants affirmed that speaking is an important skill to be acquired. Most students (45%) said that speaking has an importance of 50%, the same proportion of learners(45%) attributed to learning speaking the percentage of 75% of importance compared to the other skills (writing, listening and reading). Whereas few students (8%) viewed that speaking does not have much importance 25% and only few learners (1.66%) considered its importance to just 15%,in the sense that, they give priority to other skills. From the results obtained, students showed a great attachment to the speaking skill since it is considered the window of language and the most commonly used one in different fields of life.

Q 03: How often do you engage to speak in the classroom?

Table 03

Classroom Participation

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Never	2	3.34%
Rarely	26	43.33%
Often	30	50%
Always	2	3.33%
Total	60	100%

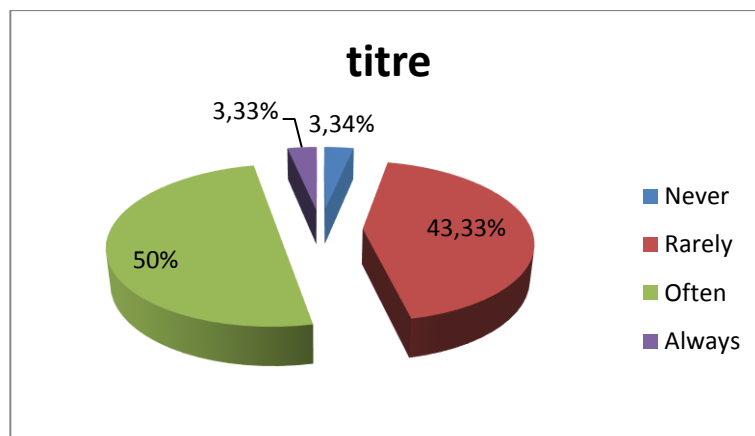


Figure 3. Classroom participation

The answers tabulated above reveals that the majority of students do not engage to speak in the classroom. Relatively, more than half of the participants 66.66% tend to remain silent and rarely speak and interact with others. In the same vein, 3.34% of learners stated that they do not say a word during the session. The results shows also that 26, 67% and 3.33% of students often and always participate and mark their presence but it still a small percentage. So, we can notice that there are hidden reasons behind student avoidance to speak.

Q 04: What hinders you from speaking in the classroom?

Table 04

Student's Most Speaking Trammels

Options	Frequency	Percentage
The topic is not interesting	22	36.76%
Not prepared	12	20%
The teacher does not motivate you	10	16.67%
Lack of self Confidence and fear of making mistakes	13	21.36%
Limited time	2	3.34%
Other	1	1.60%
Total	60	100%

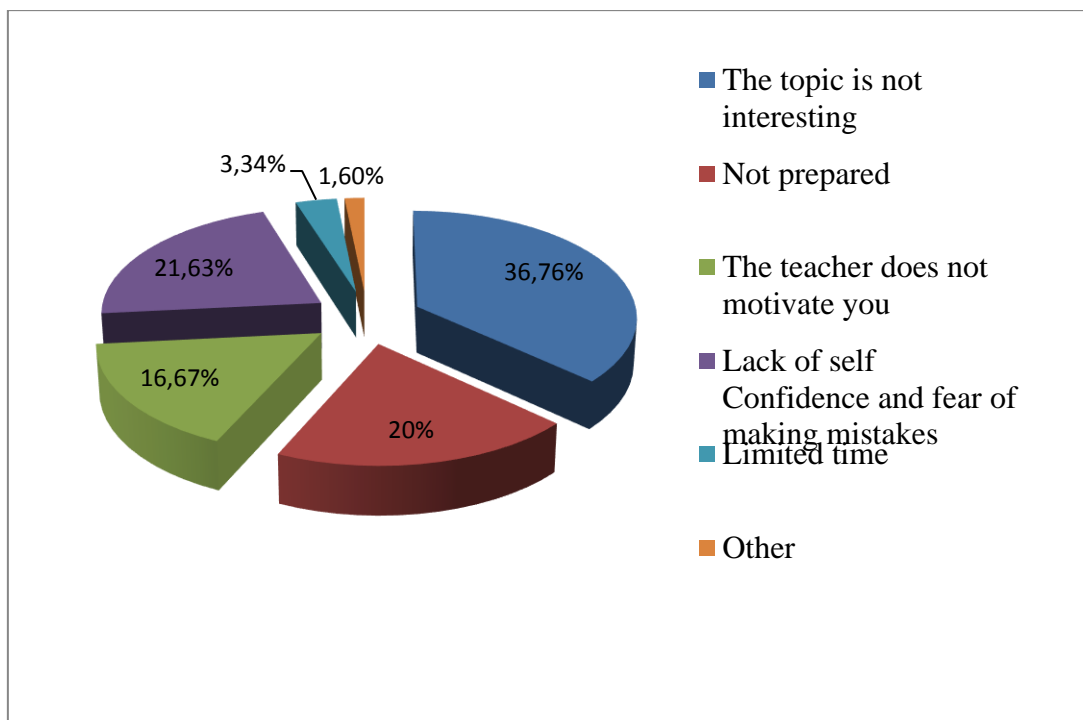


Figure 04. Students' most speaking trammels.

This question is in accordance with the precedent question, it was asked to fix the major problems that hinder students from practicing speaking. As you can notice, 36.76% of students asserted that the uninterestingness of the topic is the potential cause that keeps students away from practicing speaking. The second problem is a lack of preparation with a percentage of 20%. However, 16.67% of the participants indicated that the teachers' way of teaching also affect their willingness to communicate. Some of them 21.63% affirmed that the lack of self-confidence and the fear of making mistakes is the biggest fear that prevents their abilities to speak and that their classmates make fun of them. So they tend to keep quite rather than losing their self-respect. The last option is the limited time with 3.34%. Finally, only one student stated that the mood can push students to talk or to remain silent.

Q 05: How often does your teacher engage you in decision making about speaking tasks?

Table 05

The Frequency of Student's Engagement in Decision Making

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Always	5	8.34%
Often	18	30%
Very often	11	18.33%
Rarely	21	35%
Never	5	8.33%
Total	60	100%

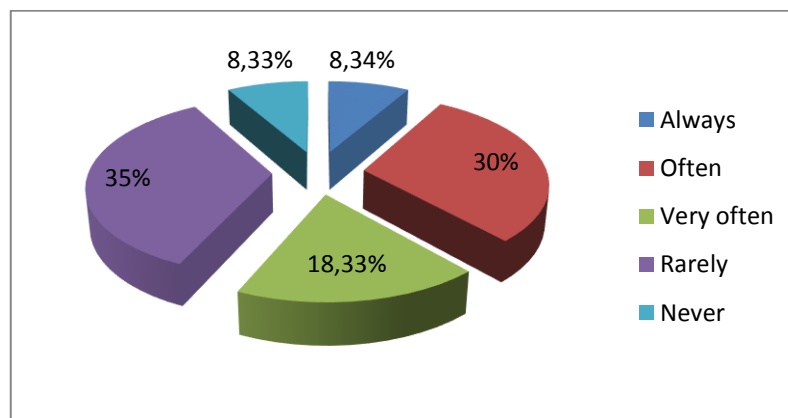


Figure 05. The frequency of student's engagement in decision making.

It is obvious from the table above that 35% of students rarely have the opportunity to self-select their speaking tasks; however, about 30% of students admitted that they often share the decision with their teachers about the tasks. Besides to 18.33% of students who claimed that their teachers provide them with this opportunity very often. 8, 34% of students said that they always have this chance of self-selection as well. While about 8.33% stated that

they never had the chance to decide about anything that is related to classroom management. This means that the majority of teachers give their students more freedom to select their own topics.

Q 06: have you ever been permitted to select a topic of your choice in a speaking task?

Table 06

The Opportunity of Choice in Speaking Tasks

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	48	80%
No	12	20%
Total	60	100%

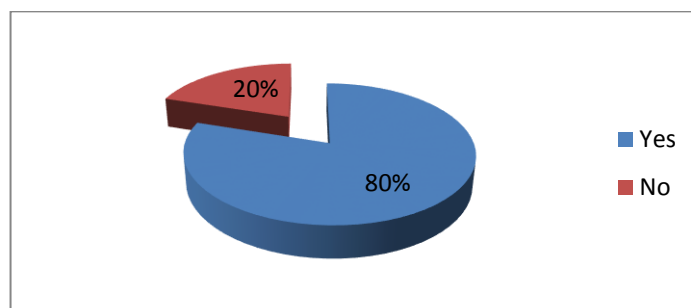


Figure 06. The opportunity of choice in speaking tasks.

The results obtained denote that the majority of students 80% have been granted with the opportunity of topic selection, whereas a small proportion of 20% have not been allowed to do so. This means that teachers do value the opinion of their students and let them be a part of the learning process.

Q 07: what was your reaction toward having this opportunity of self-selection?

Table 07

Student's Attitudes towards the Opportunity of Self-Selection

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfied	44	73%
Unsatisfied	1	2%
Neutral	15	25%
Total	60	100%

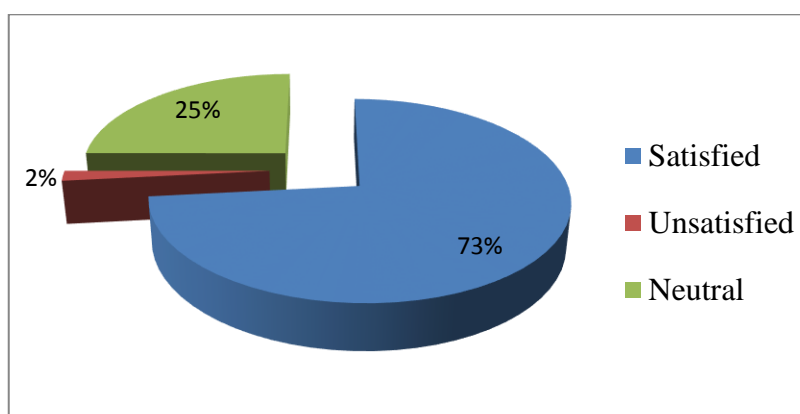


Figure 07. Student's attitudes towards the opportunity of self-selection.

Regarding the dominant answers, one can notice that the highest percentage 73% reflects the students' satisfaction about having this opportunity. However, only 2% of the whole respondents were not satisfied with this opportunity, whereas 25% were neutral, they are neither satisfied nor unsatisfied with it.

Q 08: In case of topic selection, are you for?

Table 08

Student's Tendency towards Teacher Assigned Topics or Self-Selected Ones

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Teacher assigned topic	12	20%
Self -selected topic	48	80%
Total	60	100%

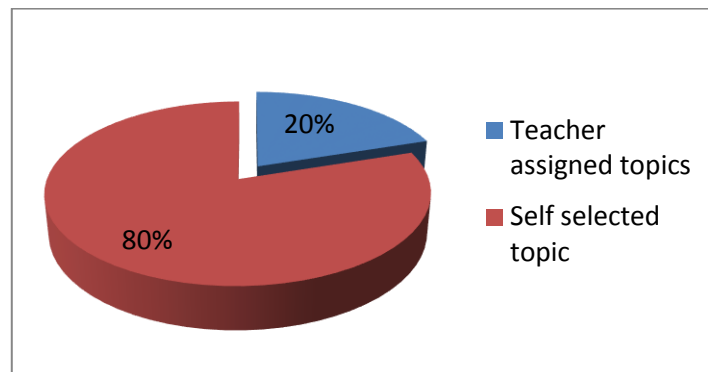


Figure 08. Student's tendency towards teacher assigned topics or self-selected ones.

According to the results demonstrated in the figure above, it seems that nearly all the students 80% preferred to work on a topic of their own choice and not being bounded with the teacher choice. However, others about 20% said that they enjoy working on an assigned topic, which means that students like to exercise freedom concerning the learning tasks.

Q 09: how do you feel when your teacher asks you to work on an assigned topic?

Table 09

Student's feelings while Working on an Assigned Topic

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Anxious	39	65%
Unsatisfied	18	30%
Neutral	03	5%
Total	60	100%

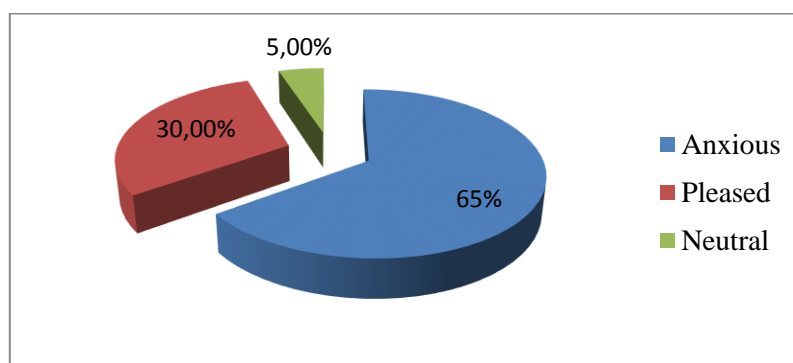


Figure 09. Student's feelings while working on an assigned topic.

The figure above shows that 65% of learners feel anxious when they talk about an assigned topic .i.e., students do not tend to talk when they are restricted to the teacher choice. Moreover, 30% of the learners feel pleased and happy to work on assigned topics. So it will disrupt the pace of conversation since the students think about the word before it comes out of his mouth.

Q10: Do you feel less motivated when talking about a topic assigned by you teachers?

Table 10

Students' Attitudes towards Talking about Teachers' Assigned topic

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	54	90%
No	6	10%
Total	60	100%

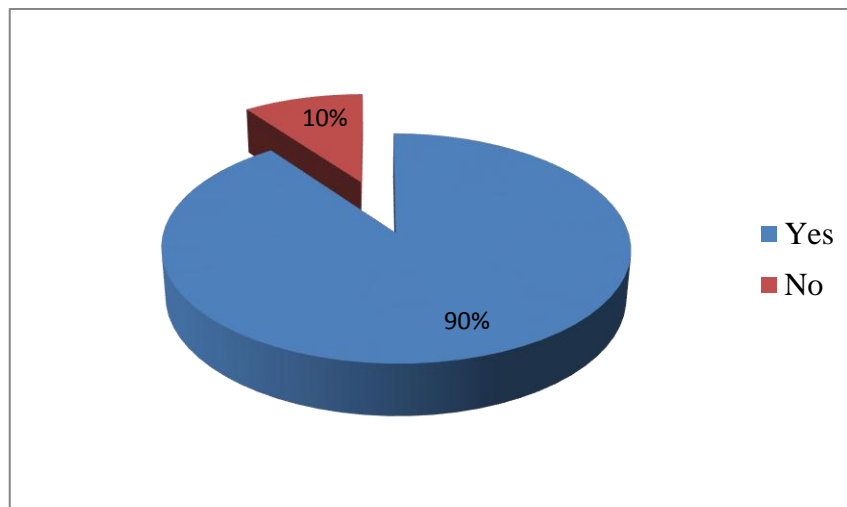


Figure 10. Students' attitudes towards talking about teachers' assigned topics.

According to students' responses, 90% said that when they are imposed to talk about topics assigned by their teachers, they remain silent the majority of cases and this is due to the lack of motivation, while 10% of them replied that teacher's assigned topics cannot lower their motivation.

Q11: Do you feel motivated when talking about a topic you do not have enough knowledge about?

Table 11

Students' Attitudes when Talking about Topics not having enough Knowledge about

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	60	100%
No	00	00%
Total	60	100%

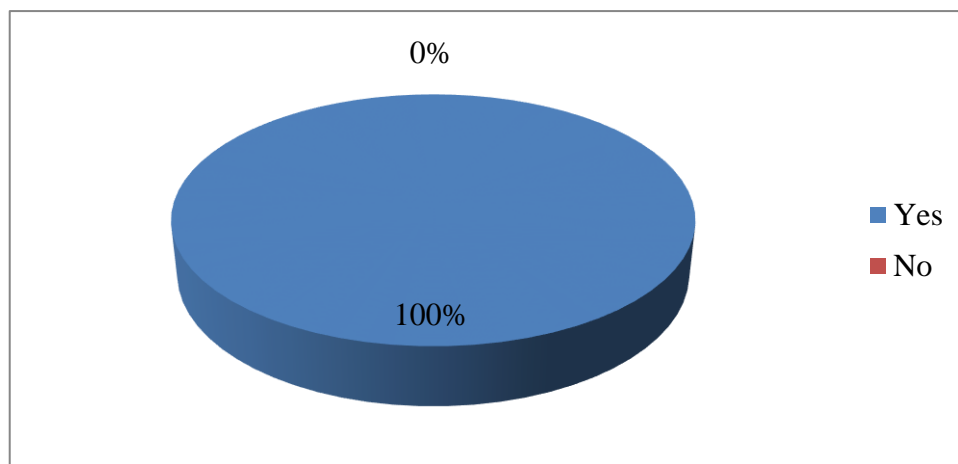


Figure 11. Students' attitudes when talking about topics that they do not have enough knowledge about.

In the same line of thought, we wanted to know whether students are motivated when talking about topics they do not have enough knowledge about; we found that the total of respondents 100% validates this view. This means that students learn better when they are

engaged to talk about topics they are familiar with, through expressing, sharing and discussing ideas with others.

Q12: Do you feel motivated when talking about a topic of your choice?

Table 12

Students' Attitudes when Talking about Topics of their Choice

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	60	100%
No	0	0%
Total	60	100%

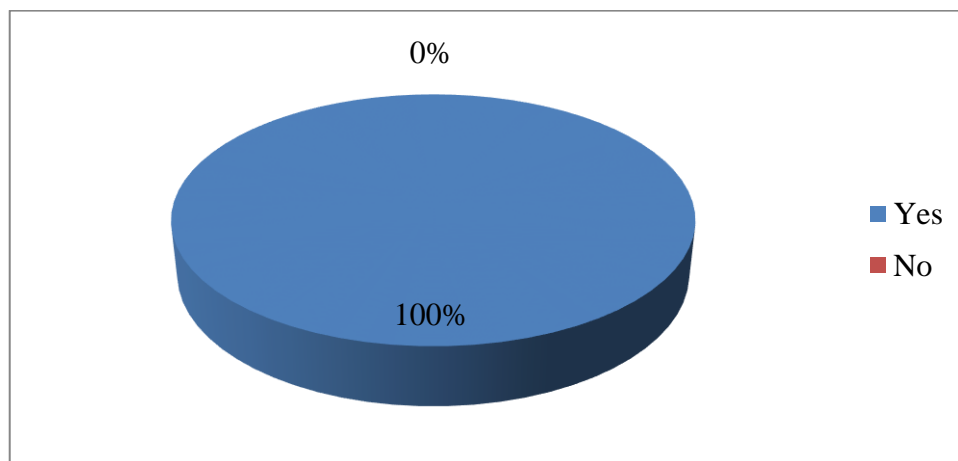


Figure 12. Students' attitudes when talking about topics of their choice.

The aim of this question is to determine the students' feelings when talking about topics of their own choice. The whole proportion of students (100%), They feel all motivated when tackling a self selected topic.

Q13: What motivates you more?

Table 13

Students' Sources of Motivation

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Choosing your own topic	33	55%
Being restricted	27	45%
Total	60	100%

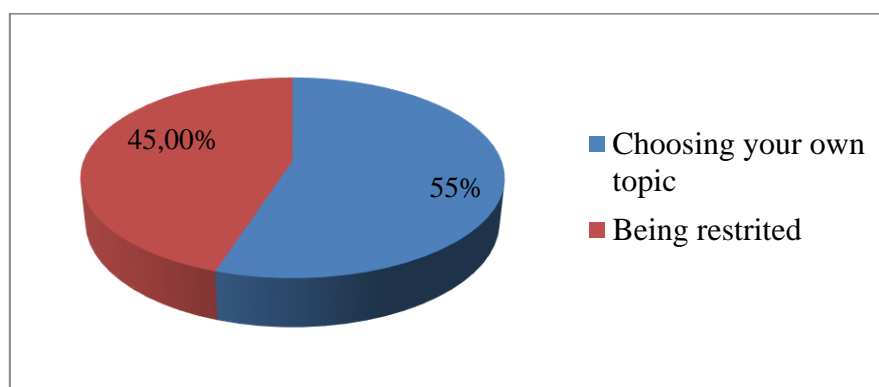


Figure 13. Students' sources of motivation.

This question aims to determine what motivates students more. 55% claimed that providing them with the opportunity to choose their own topic increases their level of motivation and inspiration, whereas 45% said that being restricted by teachers motivates them more. This means that most students feel more motivated when they talk about a topic of their choice and that will lead the students' to be more active and enthusiastic.

Q14: When your teacher allows you to choose your own topic, does it means?

Table 14

Teachers' Reasons for Giving Students the Freedom to Choose their Topics

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Your choice really matter	24	40%
Your teacher trust your capacity	13	21.66%
You teacher want you to feel at ease	23	38.34
Total	60	100%

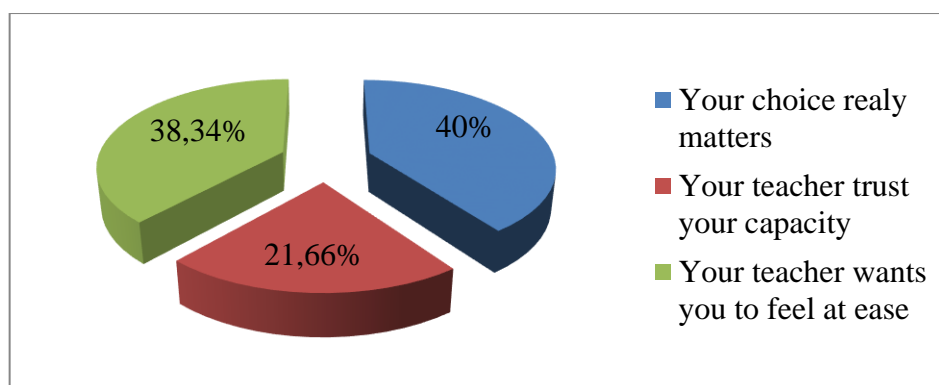


Figure 14. Teachers' reasons for giving students the freedom to choose their topics.

Figure 14 shows that 40% of the students believed that the act of allowing them to choose a topic they want to talk about means that their choice really matters, while 21.66% said that because the teacher trust their capacities, and other 38.34% affirmed that this is with the purpose of making them feel at ease and lower their affective filter.

Q15: Do you find it difficult to choose an appropriate topic to talk about?

Table 15

Students' Opinions about the Easiness or Difficulty of Choosing Appropriate Topics

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	39	65%
No	21	35%
Total	60	100%

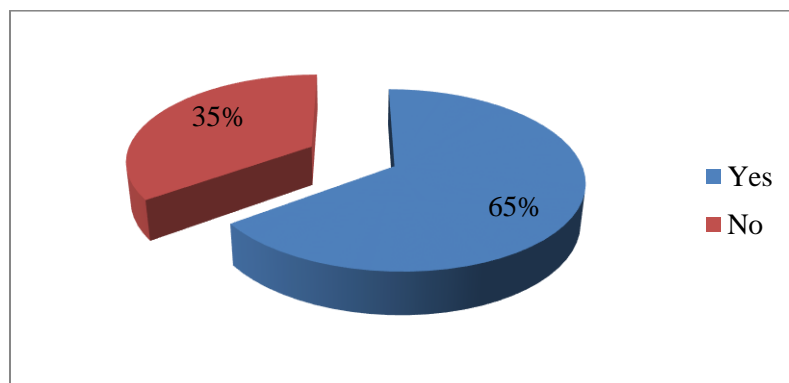


Figure 15. Students' opinions about the easiness or difficulty of choosing appropriate topics.

Concerning the difficulty of choosing an appropriate topic, 65% of the total respondents claimed that they find it difficult to decide on an appropriate topic to talk about, against 35% who said that there is no difficulty to find an appropriate topic. This means that sometimes it is hard for students to come up with a suitable topic to deal with.

Q16: On which basis do you choose your topic?

Table 16

The Students' Focus Point in Choosing their Topics

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Talking about topics that interest you	30	50%
Talking about topics you have knowledge about	19	32%
Talking about topics that are common for all	11	18.34%
Total	60	100%

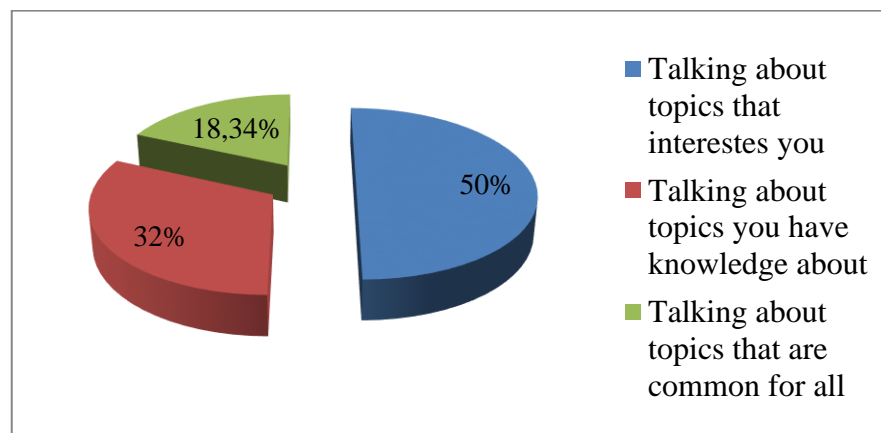


Figure 16. The students' focus point in choosing their topics

This question investigates the way how students choose their topics, 50% of students said that they select topics according to their interest, 32% of them said they talk about topics that they have enough knowledge about and another 18,34% of them said they focus on topics that are common for both students and teachers. From this perspective, it is obvious that

allowing students to select topics according to their choice has a great impact on their speaking performance.

Q17: Do you agree that teacher assigned topics suppress and inhibit your thinking and creativity?

Table 17

Students' Opinion about Teacher Assigned Topics

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	12	20%
Agree	32	53.33%
Disagree	11	18.33%
Strongly disagree	5	8.34%
Total	60	100%

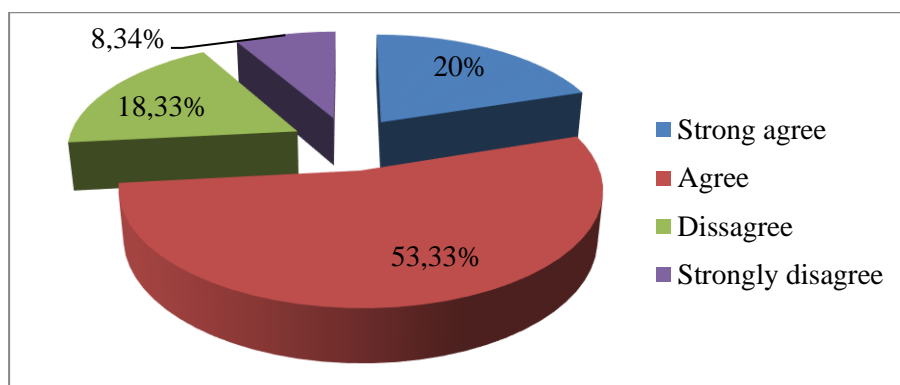


Figure 17. Students' opinion about teacher assigned topics.

Further we asked students if they agree with those who say that teacher assigned topics inhibit the students' creativity, we found that 20% strongly agreed with them, a numerical majority of 53.33% agreed and claimed that assigned topics suppress their thinking and creativity, 18.33% of them disagreed and other 8.34% strongly disagree with them.

Q18: Do you agree that the opportunity of self-selection leads you to be more enthusiastic and thus creative?

Table 18

Students' Opinion about the Opportunity of self-selection

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	24	40%
Agree	31	51.67%
Disagree	3	5%
Strongly disagree	2	3.33%
Total	60	100%

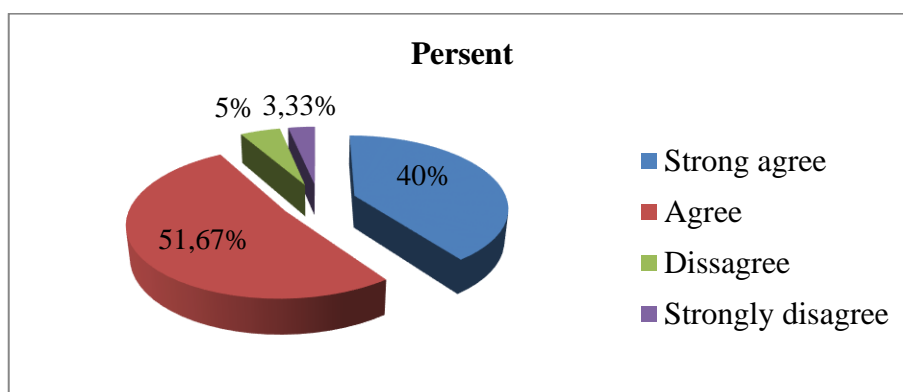


Figure 18. Students' opinion about the opportunity of self-selection.

From this question, we wanted to figure out whether students agree that self-selection lead to enthusiasm and creativity or not, 40% of the students strongly agreed, and 51,67% agreed. Therefore, we deduce that most of the students believe that if teachers provide them with this opportunity, they will be more enthusiastic and creative, while only 5% disagreed with this view and the rest 3.33% tick strongly disagreed.

Q19: Do you agree that you get better scores in your speaking assessment when topics are self- selected rather than teacher assigned?

Table 19

Students' Comparison of Self-Selected Topics and Assigned Topics

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	29	48%
Agree	30	50%
Disagree	1	1.66%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	60	100%

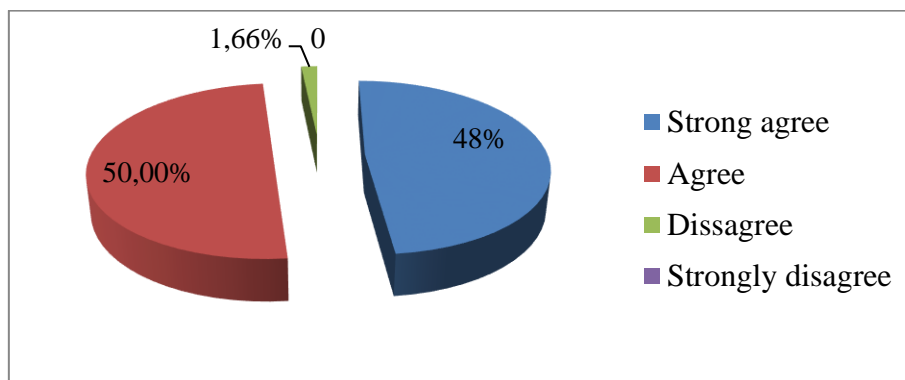


Figure 19. Students' comparison of self-selected topics and assigned topics.

In answering the above question, 48% of students said they strongly agree that self-selected topics help them to get better scores in their speaking assessment in comparison with teacher assigned topics. Half of the sample agrees with this view too and only 1.66 claimed that they can get better scores when the topics are assigned by teachers. This means that the large proportion of students favor self- selected topics while only a few

number of them prefer to work on assigned topics and this is due to their different way of thinking.

Q20: Do you think that the opportunity of self-selected topics enhances your speaking performance?

Table 20

Enhancing Speaking Performance through Self-Selected Topics

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	59	98.34%
No	1	1.66%
Total	60	100%

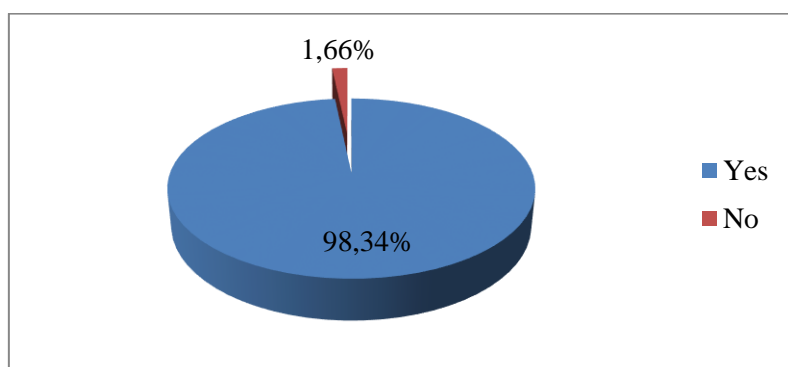


Figure 20. Enhancing speaking performance through self- selected topics.

In the last question we notice that the big majority of students asserted that self-selected topics is the most effective solution for enhancing the students' speaking performance. From another point of view, only 1.66% of the students said the opposite.

Discussion of the Results

All in all, based on the analysis of the students' questionnaire, the results reveal that the majority of students gave a great importance to the speaking skill and considered it as a key to learning any foreign language. Accordingly, students claimed that they encounter a

lot of obstacles that hinders them from practicing speaking. So they need the help of their teacher to overcome those problems. Moreover, it was not surprising that the majority of them had highly positive attitudes toward having the opportunity to self-select their topics which they have enough knowledge about, and they are extremely interested in. It was also found that providing EFL students with self-selected topics did have statistically significant effects on their oral production since this opportunity boost their motivation and leads them to be more enthusiastic and creative. The results of the study unveiled the usefulness of topic selection. Consequently, our hypothesis is totally confirmed from the angle of students' perspectives.

3.1.2.2. The Teachers' Questionnaire

3.1.2.2.1. Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire

This questionnaire contains fifteen(15) questions varied of closed questions, which seeks from teachers to choose a " yes" or " no" answers, or to pick up the suitable answer from a variety of choices, or open ended questions in which they are free to express their points of view.

The questions are divided into two main sections. The first one is concerned with the speaking skill (from Q1 to Q5). On the one hand, this section seeks to gather information about teacher's opinions concerning their students' proficiency level in speaking alongside with the problems that hinder them from practicing speaking. Also, it aims at answering the question of how can teachers' helps their students get over their fear of speaking. On the other hand, section two (from Q6 to Q15) attempts to investigate the teachers' view about giving students the opportunity to be a part of the learning process, i.e., sharing the responsibility with teachers about the speaking task by selecting freely

their own topics. Moreover, teachers were asked to give their opinions whether the freedom to select a topic enhance the students' speaking performance.

3.1.2.2.2. Administration of the Teachers' Questionnaire

For the present study, again another or a second questionnaire was handed out to ten (10) teachers of oral expression at the department of English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia- Jijel.. This questionnaire intended to investigate the teachers' attitudes towards students' self-selected topics as a strategy to enhance the learners' speaking skill.

3.1.2.2.3. Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire

Q1: How long have you been teaching oral expression?

Table 21

Teachers' Experience in Teaching Oral Expression Module

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	6	60%
From 5 to 10 years	2	20%
More than 10 years	2	20%
Total	10	100%

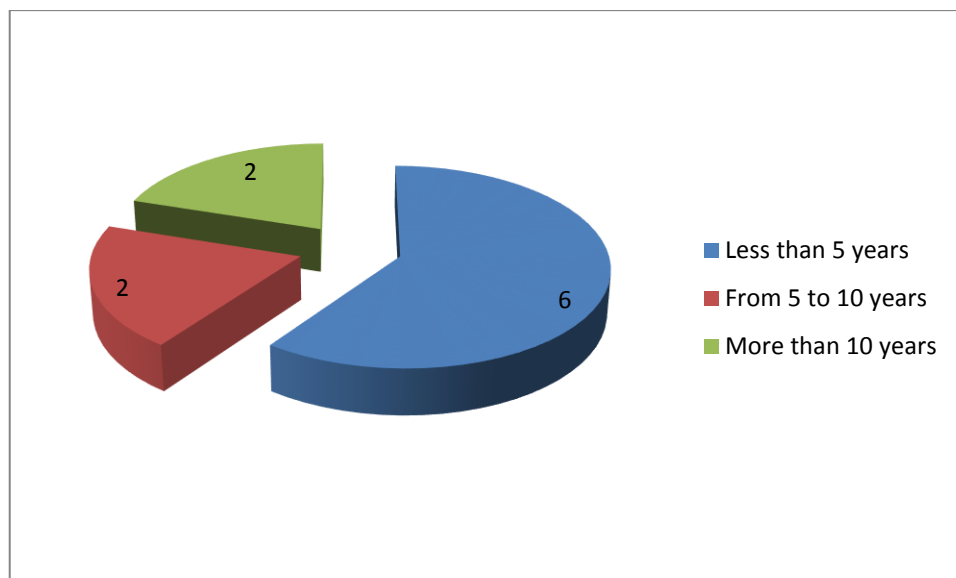


Figure 21. Teachers' Experience in Teaching Oral Expression Module.

One can notice from the table above, that six teachers experience teaching oral expression module from one to 5 years, whereas four teachers spend teaching it from five to ten year and they admit that they enjoy teaching this module.

Q2: How do you consider your students' level of speaking skill?

Table 22

Teachers' Opinions about Students' Level in Speaking

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Very good	0	00%
Good	3	30%
Average	2	20%
Low	5	50%
Very low	0	0%
Total	10	100%

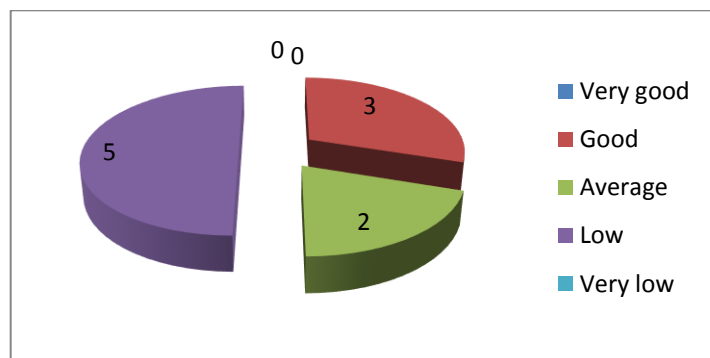


Figure 22. Teachers' attitudes toward students' speaking level.

According to the results obtained from the table, we notice that students' level in speaking unfortunately is confined between average with 20%, good with a percentage of 30%, and low with 50%. So it is clear that EFL students need to work hard on developing their abilities in speaking to reach a high level of proficiency.

Q3:In your opinion, what hinders students from speaking in the classroom?

Table 23

Teachers' Perceptions about Students' Most Speaking Trammels

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Not prepared	1	10%
The topic is not interesting	5	50%
Students are not motivated	1	10%
Fear of making mistakes	3	30%
Limited time	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Total	10	100%

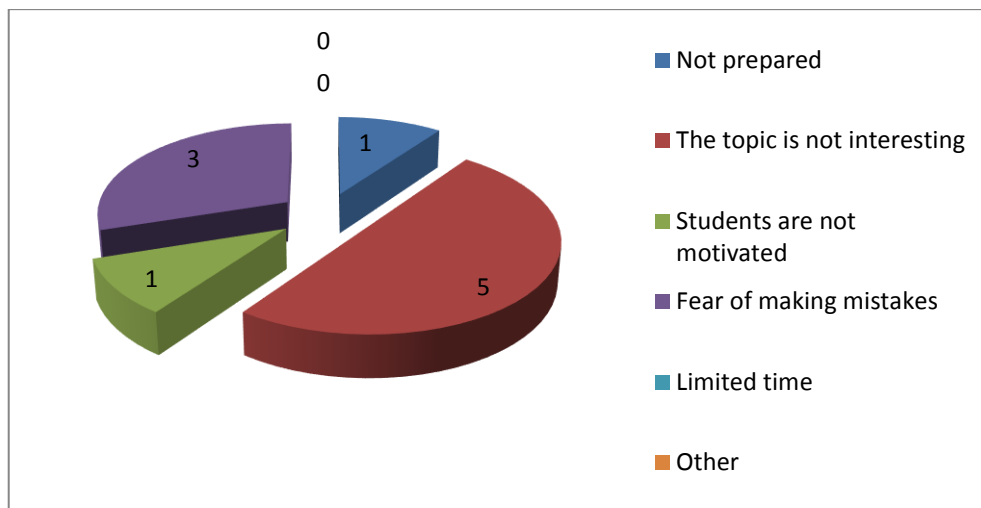


Figure 23. Teachers' perceptions about students' most speaking trammels.

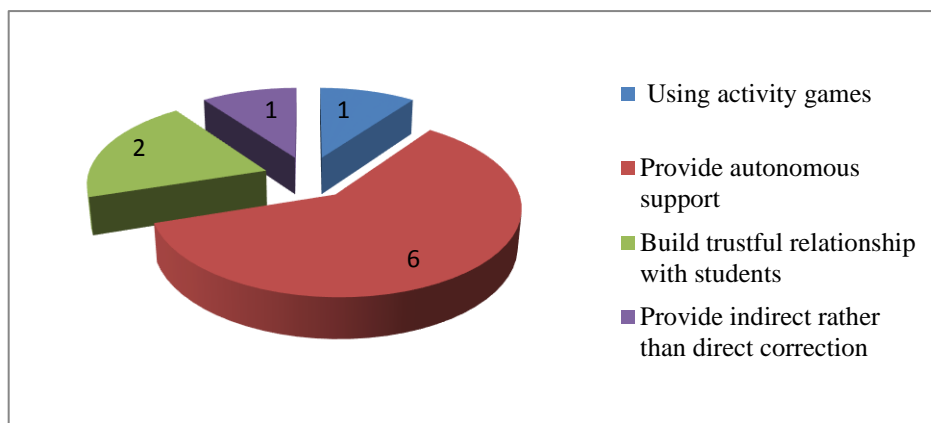
Concerning this question, half of teachers (50%) turn their attention toward the problem of the uninterestingness in a topic believing that is the prime cause that hinders them to speak, whereas others (30%) attribute their unwillingness to participate in speaking task refers to the fear of making mistakes and the lack of self-confidence. The rest of them, relate the students' weaknesses in speaking to the lack of preparation (10%) and the same proportion to the low level of motivation and encouragement.

Q4: How can you help students get over their fear of speaking?

Table 24

Teaching Tips to Get Students Talk More

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Using activity games	1	10%
Provide autonomous support	6	60%
Build trustful relationship with students	2	20%
Provide indirect rather than direct correction	1	10%
Total	60	100%



*Figure 24.*Teaching Tips to Get Students Talk More.

Based on the results gained, the majority of teachers (60%) tend to give their students autonomous support i.e., students engage more in speaking tasks when they do activities that interest them and that provide them spontaneous pleasure or enjoyment, whereas 20% believed that building a strong relationship with their students can reduce their anxiety and fear to talk. The last options were activity games and providing indirect rather than direct correction with a percentage of 10%.

Q5: Which of the following activities do you mostly use?

Table 25

Teachers' Techniques in the Classroom

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Class presentations	5	50%
Dialogues	00	00%
Debates	1	10%
Role plays	3	30%
Problem solving activities	00	00%
Communicative games	1	10%
Total	60	100%

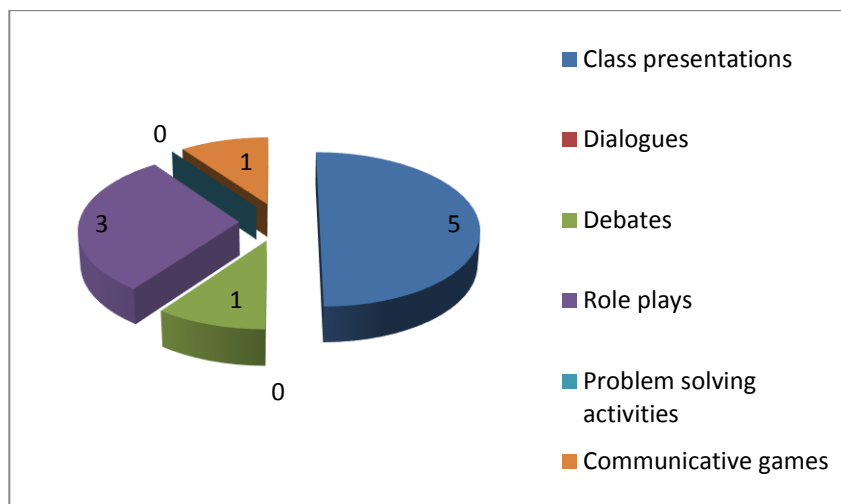


Figure 25. Teachers' techniques in the classroom.

Different teaching and learning activities can be adapted and used in a range of classroom situations. According to teachers' answers, 50% of the teachers prefer the classroom presentation because it helps in building the students' personality and

strengthen their self-confidence, while 30% of them like to use role plays. Along with being a fun activity, it also helps in developing the students' creativity and to become risk takers. Yet, few teachers 10% chose debates and the same for communicative games 10%.

Q6: How often do you engage students in decision making concerning speaking tasks?

Table 26

Students' Frequency of Involvement in Decision Making

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Always	00	00%
Often	00	00%
Very often	6	60%
Rarely	3	30%
Never	1	10%
Total	60	100%

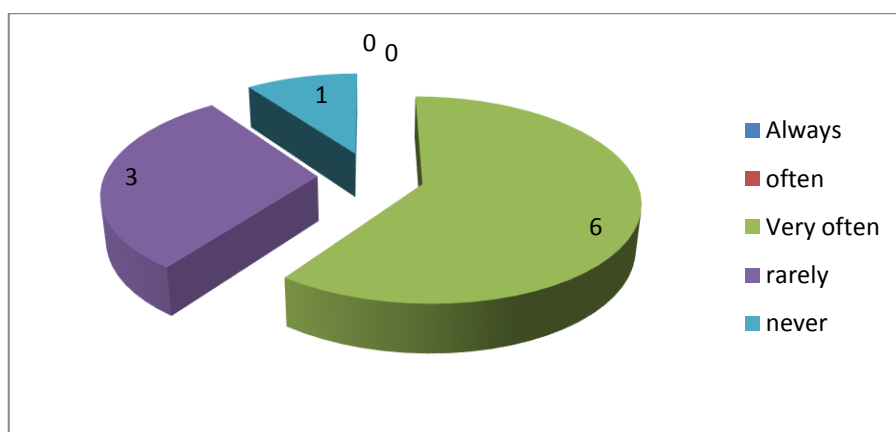


Figure 26. Students' involvement frequency in decision making.

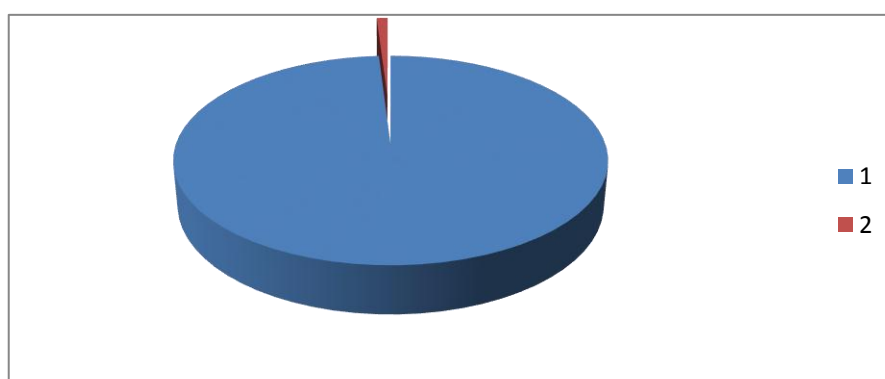
The above table reveals that a high proportion of teachers (60%) very often engage their student in the decisions concerning the learning tasks, in contrary with some of them who do not let students to decide about anything (10%) and some do rarely give them the opportunity to show their opinions (30%). From these proportions, it is clear that the majority of teachers tend to involve their students in decision making, because they believe that this act has a great impact on rising students' participation during speaking tasks.

Q7: Have you ever permitted your students to select a topic of their own choice in a speaking task?

Table 27

The The Permission of Students' Self-Selection of Topics in Speaking Tasks.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	6	60%
No	4	40%
Total	10	100%



*Figure 27.*The permission of students' self-selection of topics in speaking tasks.

We can notice that the highest percentage of teachers (60%) claimed that they used to give students the freedom to choose a topic of their own in speaking tasks. The least percentage (40%) of teachers said that they have never provided their students with this opportunity. This means that generally teachers are used to provide this opportunity of self-selection to students.

Q8: Do you think that students succeed to select topics of their own?

Table 28

Teachers' Opinions towards Students' Ability to Select Appropriate Topics

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	7	70%
No	3	30%
Total	10	100%

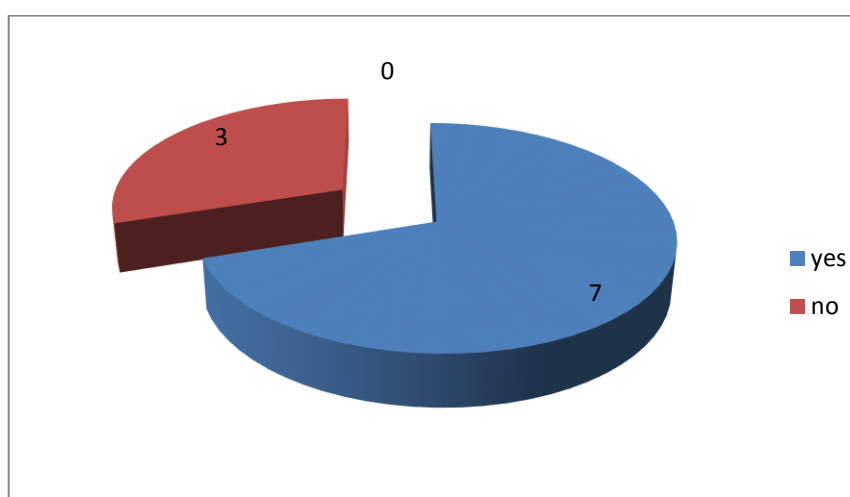


Figure 28. Teachers' opinions towards students' ability to select appropriate topics.

The aim of this question is to figure out the teachers' opinion towards students' aptitude in selecting appropriate topics to talk about. We notice that the majority of teachers (70%)

stated that students are capable to choose appropriate topics. However, 30% said that students are not qualified enough to select topics by their own. In the sense that, students may waste a lot of time finding an adequate topic to talk about and this makes them feel confused. So it would be better for them to work on topics that are assigned by their teachers.

Q9: What do you prefer as a teacher?

Table 29

Teachers' Preference for Topics Selection

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Allowing students to select their own topics	6	60%
Assigning topics for them	4	40%
Total	10	100%

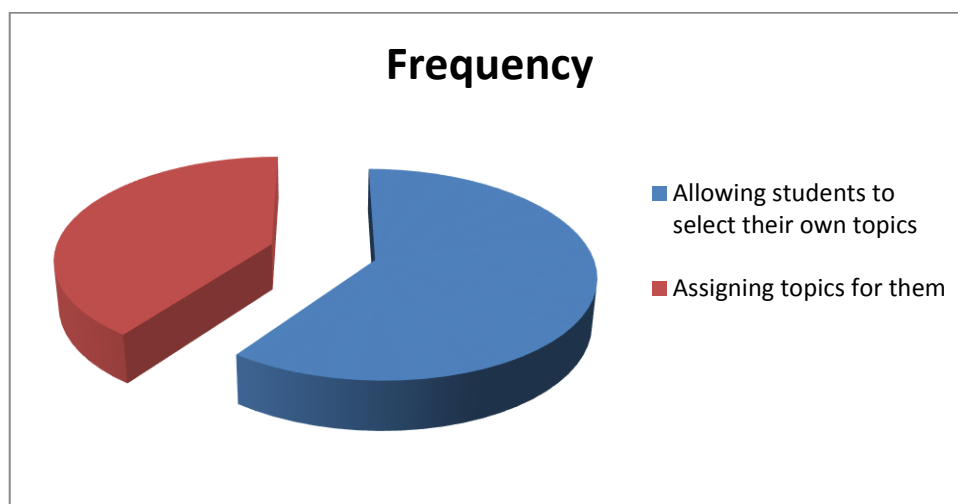


Figure 29. Teachers' preference for topics selection.

As shown in the figure above, 60% of the teachers preferred to give their students the permission to select the topics that they want to talk about, whereas 40% of them preferred to assign topics for them. It depends on the teacher personality, some teachers trust their students' capacity to select appropriate topics, while others do not.

Q10: From your point of view, what do students prefer?

Table 30

Teachers' Views about Students' Preference for Topics selection

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Allowing students to select their own topics	6	60%
Assigning topics for them	4	40%
Total	10	100%

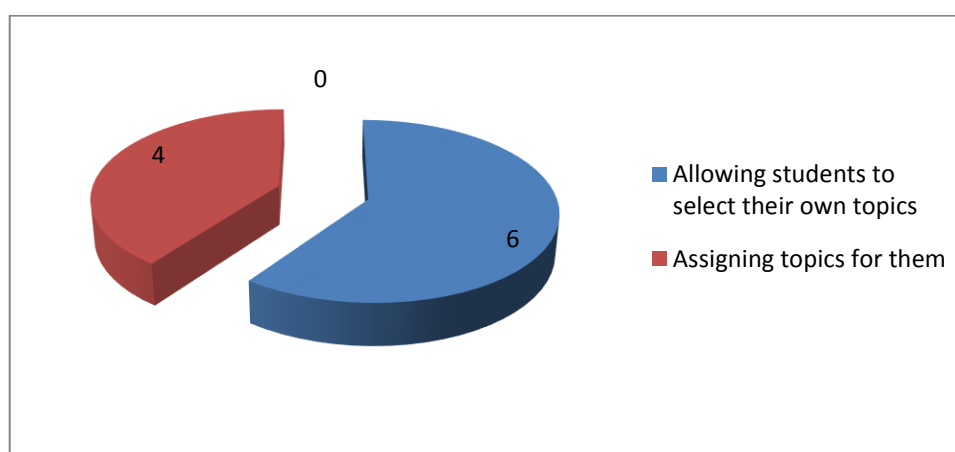


Figure 30. Teachers' views about students' preference for topics selection.

The answer tabulated above indicates that 60% of the teachers thought that their students prefer self-selected topics rather than assigned topics. In Contrary to the remaining teachers (40%) who said that students favor topics that are assigned by their teachers.

Q11: How often do you let students choose topics of their interest?

Table 31

Frequency of Students' Self-Selection of Topics

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Always	00	00%
Often	2	20%
Very often	5	50%
Rarely	3	30%
Never	1	10%
Total	60	100%

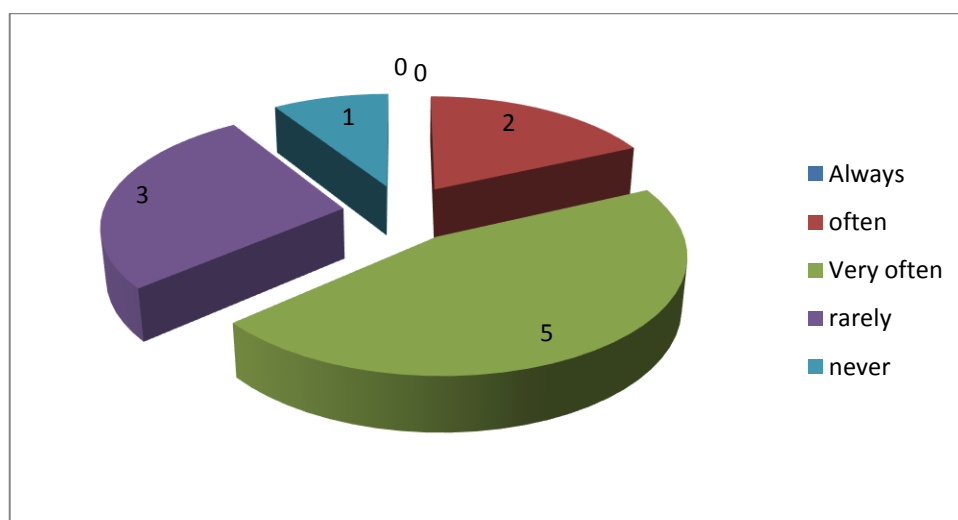


Figure 31. Frequency of students' self- selection of topics.

Teachers, when asked about the frequency of providing students with the opportunity to choose topics of their concern, (50%) of them said very often they provide their students with this opportunity. Others (20%) said often, and (30%) of the teachers rarely do it.

Q12: How do students feel when you ask them to work on an assigned topic?

Table 32

Teachers' Views of Students' Feeling in Case of Assigned Topic

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Anxious	5	50%
Unsatisfied	30	30%
Neutral	2	20%
Total	60	100%

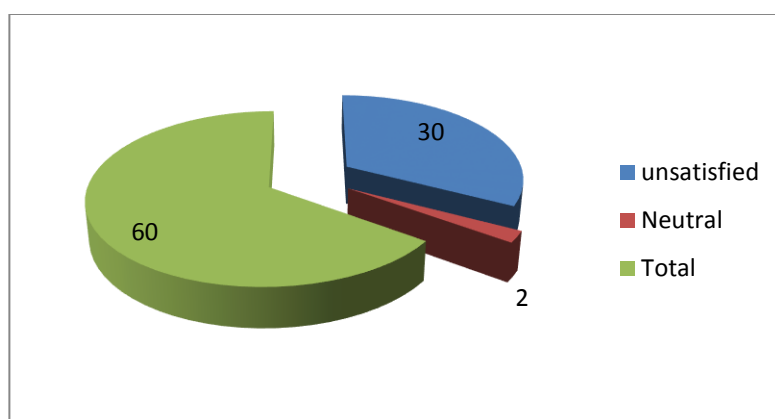


Figure 32. Teachers' views of students feeling in case of assigned topic.

The aim of this question is to determine the students' feeling when working on assigned topics. 50% of teachers claimed that students feel anxious and fearful. Other 30% said that they feel pleased, and only 20% said that assigned topics for students' feeling is neutral.

Q13: What is your students' reaction towards having the opportunity of self-selection?

Table 33

Teachers' Perception of Students' Reaction towards Having the Opportunity of Self-Selection

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfied	5	50%
unsatisfied	30	30%
Neutral	2	20%
Total	60	100%

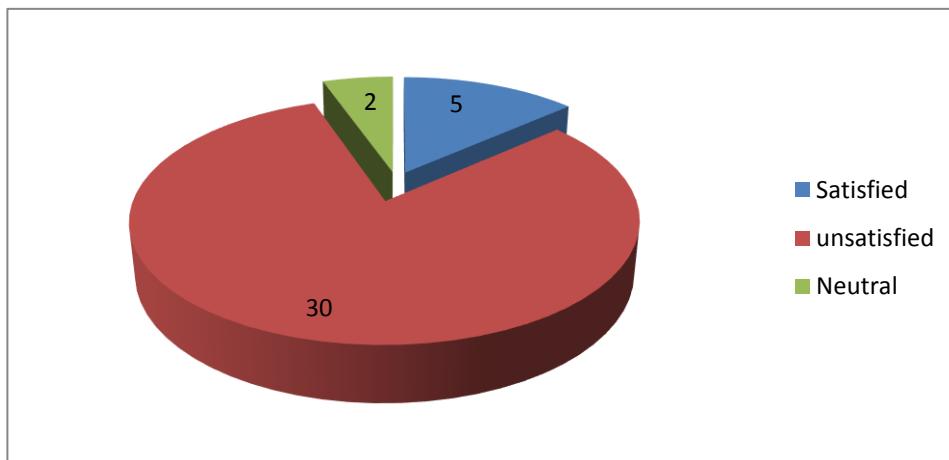


Figure 33. Teachers' perception of students' reaction towards having the opportunity of self- selection.

Right after the above question, we wanted to know the students' reaction towards having the opportunity of self-selection. (70%) of the total respondents said that self-selection oftentimes makes students confident and satisfied. Others (30%) affirmed that their students' feeling is neutral.

Q14: Do you think that when assigning a topic, you are inhibiting and suppressing your students' thinking and creativity?

Table 34: *Teachers Opinion about Assigned Topics*

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	3	30%
Agree	6	60%
Disagree	1	10%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	10	100%

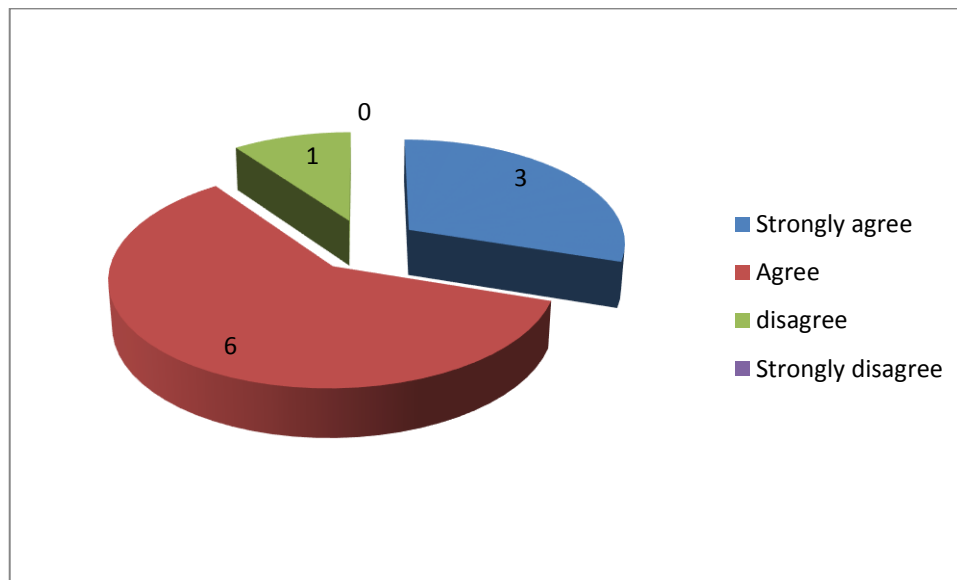


Figure 34. Teachers' opinion about assigned topics.

We notice from the results shown in figure 14 that 30% of the teachers strongly agreed that the act of assigning topics for students inhibit and suppress their thinking and creativity; 60% of them agreed likewise with this view. While only a numerical minority of remaining

teachers (10%) supposed that assigning topics do not suppress students' desire and enthusiasm. interpret

Q15: Do you agree that the opportunity of self-selection enhances the students' speaking performance?

Table 35

Teachers' Opinion about Enhancing Students' Speaking through Self-Selection

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	4	40%
Agree	6	60%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	10	100

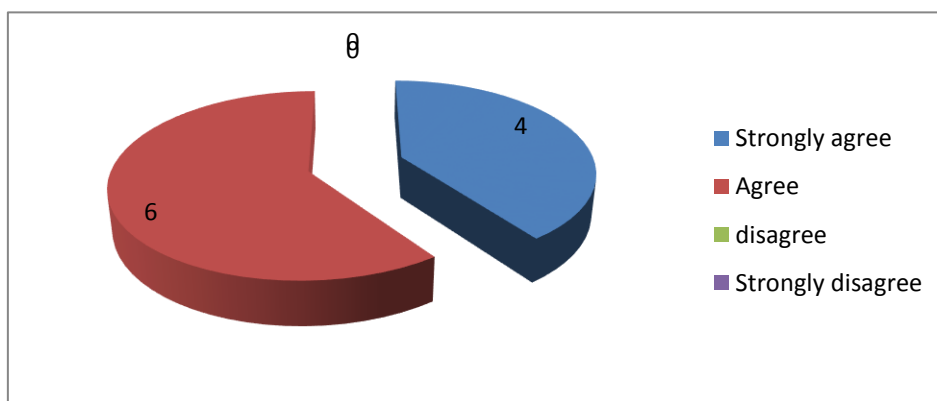


Figure 35. Teachers opinion about enhancing students speaking through self -selection.

In answers to the last question, it is shown that 40% of teachers strongly agreed that speaking can be strengthened through the use of students' self-selection of topics. In the same direction, 60% of teachers agree with this view.

Discussion of the Results

The different answers that our participants (teachers) gave in this questionnaire do reveal some facts on teachers' attitudes toward teaching speaking. For teaching speaking approximately all teachers consider students' self-selection of topics as the most effective strategy to use in order to get students overcome their speaking classroom obstacles and to build a high self-esteem and thus, to improve their oral proficiency through the consecutive practice and involvement in the speaking tasks. All the answers in the majority of tables indicate that there is a strong association between students' self-selection of topics and their level of speaking proficiency.

From what we have mentioned above, including discussion of the results obtained from the students' questionnaire, we can conclude that both the students' and teachers' questionnaires results are quite similar and lead to the same conclusion in that they confirm the significant influence of self-selected topics on enhancing the speaking skill. In other words our research hypothesis is supported.

Limitations of the Study

When conducting this study the researchers encountered a number of limitations which are stated as follows:

- ✓ The first limitation was the lack of relevant and original resources at the library of University, and even most electronic books were not available for free.

- ✓ The second limitation concerned the duration provided to conduct this study; it was very limited and challenging because of strike at university.
- ✓ The third one was the unwillingness of some students and teachers to help and cooperate in completing the questionnaires. They did not respond to all questions, especially when they were asked to justify, for instance; (Q4).

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to elicit teachers' and students' opinion about the effect of students' self-selection of topics on improving the speaking skill. In this perspective, two questionnaires were analyzed, interpreted and compared. The final results led to conclude that there is no difference between the results obtained from the students' and teachers' questionnaires, which helps us to arrive to the same deduction, that students' self-selection of topics has a great and positive impact on improving the students' speaking performance.

Pedagogical Implications.

For the present piece of research work, we propose the following recommendations in order to help both teachers and students enhance the speaking skill:

For Teachers

- ✓ Teachers are approved to give opportunities to their students to select their own learning materials.
- ✓ Teachers should provide a rich environment that contains collaborative work and showing patience and understanding to students.
- ✓ Teacher ought to involve their students in decision making concerning speaking tasks.
- ✓ As far as this research is concerned, teachers should provide big support to students and increase their level of autonomy.

- ✓ The teacher should give assigned topics which have a relationship with the students' needs and preferences i.e., topics that can stimulate their student in speaking so that they become eager to speak, in other words, selecting challenging topics and activities.
- ✓ Teachers should let students continue talking despite making mistakes and let the correction till the end, otherwise there will be a breakdown in communication.

For Students

- ✓ Students should be creative in finding their own ways to develop their speaking skill.
- ✓ Students should exploit every single opportunity to practice English and let the fear of talking aside.

Suggestions for Further Research

There are a number of additional areas for further development and implications for the work undertaken in this thesis. For example, these include the use of an experimental or an observational study instead of using questionnaires. This would give more reliable and significant result. Besides, this study may be conducted on a large population so that may take a comprehensive understanding of different opinions.

General Conclusion

This piece of research work has covered a new mode of teaching that impacts students' level of oral expression achievement. This mode is students' self-selection of topics. In this research, it is hypothesized that allowing students to self-select their own topics has a positive effect on improving their oral production.

The present dissertation is subdivided into three chapters, the first and second chapters review the literature . The first one is devoted to the skill of speaking. The second chapter represents a review of students' self-selection of topics and the third one is the practical part of the study.

In this research, we adopted one kind of means of research, a students' and teachers' questionnaire and this with the purpose to find out whether students and teachers give importance to students self-selection of topics during their speaking learning process or not.

After analyzing the students and teachers questionnaires, we found that there is a positive relationship between these two variables. So, the obtained results confirmed our hypothesis. From that reason, teachers should provide more opportunities for their students to select their own topics according to their choices, and this is with the purpose of increasing the students' level of oral production in a meaningful way. To sum up, this method is useful for both students and teachers, since it makes the teaching learning process easier for them and helps them to obtain their goals.

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STUDENTS' SELF SELECTION AND THE SPEAKING SKILL

APPENDICES

Appendix I :Students' Questionnaire.

Appendix II :Teachers' Questionnaire.

STUDENTS' SELF SELECTION AND THE SPEAKING SKILL

Appendix I

The Students' Questionnaire

Dear participants,

We would be very grateful if you accept answering the following questionnaire, which is an attempt to gather information about the influence of self-selected topics on students' speaking performance. Please answer sincerely to guarantee the success and the validity of this study. Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Section One: The Speaking Skill

1) Do you agree with the view that to learn a language you have to speak it?

Strongly agree

Disagree

2) In your opinion, (how much) what rate of importance can be given to speaking in learning English as a foreign language in contrast with other skills (Listening, Reading, and Writing)?

a. About 15% (of importance).

b. About 25% (of importance).

c. 50% (of importance).

d. 75% (of importance).

3) How often do you engage to speak in the classroom?

a. Never

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b. Rarely

c. Often

d. Always

4) What hinders you from speaking in the classroom?

a. The topic is not interesting.

b. Not prepared.

c. The teacher does not motivate you.

d. Fear of making mistakes.

e. Limited time.

f. Others

If others, please state them.

.....

.....

Section Two: Self-selected Topics.

5) How often does your teacher engage you in decision making about speaking tasks?

Always Often Very often rarely Never

6) Have you ever been permitted to select a topic of your choice in a speaking task?

a- Yes b- No

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7) What was your reaction towards having this opportunity of self-selection?

a- Satisfied

b- Unsatisfied

c- Neutral

8) In case of topic selection, are you for?

a. Teacher assigned topics

b. Self-selected topics

9) How do you feel when your teacher asks you to work on an assigned topic?

a- Anxious

b- Pleased

c- Neutral

10) Do you feel less motivated when talking about a topic assigned by your teacher?

a- Yes b. No

11) Do you feel less motivated when talking about a topic you do not have enough knowledge about?

a- Yes b. No

12) Do you feel motivated when talking about a topic of your choice?

a- Yes b. No

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13) What motivates you more?

a- Choosing your own topic

b- Being not restricted

14) When your teacher allows you to choose your own topic, does it means?

a. Your choice really matters

b. Your teacher trusts your capacity

c. Your teacher wants you to feel at ease

d. Others

- If others, statethey please.

.....
.....
.....
.....

15) Do you find it difficult to choose an appropriate topic to talk about?

a- Yes

b- No

16) On which basis do you choose your topic?

a-Talking about topics that interest you.

b- Talking about topics you have knowledge about.

c - Talking about topics that are common for all.

STUDENTS' SELF SELECTION AND THE SPEAKING SKILL

17) Do you agree that teacher-assigned topics suppress and inhibit your thinking and creativity?

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

18) Do you agree that the opportunity of self-selection leads you to be more enthusiastic and thus creative?

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

19) Do you agree that you get better scores in your speaking assessment when topics are self-selected rather than teacher-assigned?

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

20) Do you think that the opportunity of self-selected topics enhance your speaking performance?

a- Yes No

• If yes, how?

a- Help you get rid of fear.

b- Motivate you to speak freely.

Thank you for your collaboration

Appendix II

The Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is designed to gather information about the effect of students' self-selected topics on the EFL speaking skill. You are kindly requested to fulfill it. Your answers are of a great value. In advance,thankyou for your collaboration.

Section one: The Speaking Skill

1) How long have you been teaching oral expression?

.....
.....
.....

2) How do you consider your students' level of the speaking skill?

- a. Very good b. Good c. Average d. Low e. Very low

3) In your opinion, what hinders students from speaking in the classroom?

- a. Not prepared.
- b. The topic is not interesting.
- c. Students are not motivated.
- d. Fear of making mistakes.
- e. Limited time.
- f. Others

STUDENTS' SELF SELECTION AND THE SPEAKING SKILL

- If others, please state them.

.....
.....

4) How can you help students get over their fear of speaking?

Using activity games

Provide autonomous support

Build a trustful relationship with them

Provide indirect rather than direct correction

Others

5) Which of the following activities do you mostly use?

a. Class presentations

b. Dialogues

c. Debates

d. Role plays

e. Problem solving activities

f. Communicative games

Section Two: Self-Selected Topics

6) How often do you engage students in decision making concerning speaking tasks?

Always

Often

Very often

Rarely

Never

7) Have you ever permitted your students to select a topic of their own choice in a speaking task?

a- Yes b- No

STUDENTS' SELF SELECTION AND THE SPEAKING SKILL

8) Do you think that students succeed to select topics of their own?

Yes

No

If no, say why?

.....
.....

9) What do you prefer as a teacher?

a. Allowing student to select their own topics

b. Assigning topics for them

Say why?

.....
.....
.....

10) From your point of view, what do students prefer?

a. Allowing student to select their own topics

b. Assigning topics for them

Say why?

.....
.....
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11) How often do you let students choose topics of their interest?

STUDENTS' SELF SELECTION AND THE SPEAKING SKILL

Always Often Very often Rarely Never

12) How do students feel when you ask them to work on an assigned topic?

a- Anxious

b- Pleased

c- Neutral

13) What is your students' reaction towards having the opportunity of self-selection?

a- Satisfied

b- Unsatisfied

c- Neutral

14) Do you think that when assigning a topic, you are inhibiting and suppressing your student's thinking and creativity?

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

15) Do you agree that the opportunity of self-selection enhance students' speaking performance?

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Thanks for your collaboration

Résumé

STUDENTS' SELF SELECTION AND THE SPEAKING SKILL

Le but de cette étude est de découvrir l'effet des sujets choisis par les étudiants sur leurs compétences verbales. Cette étude vise principalement à déterminer si l'opportunité de l'auto sélection du sujet est liée à la qualité de l'expression orale des étudiants. Par conséquent, l'hypothèse adoptée si les étudiants choisissaient leurs propres sujets, cela aurait un impact positif pour améliorer leurs performances dans le discours. Afin d'atteindre l'objectif souhaité, la méthodologie de recherche adoptée est basée sur la description à partir de deux questionnaires adressés à soixante (60) étudiants du Département de langue anglaise en troisième année L. M. D, tandis que le deuxième questionnaire a été distribué à (10) dix professeurs de l'unité d'expression orale du même Département à l'Université Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahya - Jijel. Les résultats obtenus indiquent que l'auto-sélection des sujets a un effet positif sur l'amélioration de l'expression orale des étudiants. À la lumière de ces résultats, l'hypothèse a été confirmée et, par conséquent, les étudiants doivent avoir la possibilité de choisir leurs matières préférées pour améliorer leurs compétences et parler couramment à tout moment.

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الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو اكتشاف تأثير اختيارات الطلبة للمواضيع على مهاراتهم الكلامية. تهتم هذه الدراسة اساسا بمعرفة ما اذا كانت فرصة الاختيار الذاتي للموضوع لها علاقة بجودة التعبير الشفوي للطلاب. لذا فالفرضية المتبناة ما إذا كان السماح للطلاب باختيار مواضيعهم بأنفسهم لتأثير إيجابي على تحسين أدائهم في الكلام. من أجل تحقيق الهدف المنشود فان منهجية البحث المعتمدة هي وصفية اعتمادا على استبيانين الاول موجه لستين (60) طالب بقسم اللغة الانجليزية سنة الثالثة ال. ام. دي بينما تم توزيع الاستبيان الثاني على (10) عشرة اساتذة يدرسون وحدة التعبير الشفوي بنفس القسم في جامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى- جيجل-. تكشف النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها عن ان الاختيار الذاتي للمواضيع له اثر ايجابي على تحسين التعبير الشفوي للطلاب. فعلى ضوء هذه النتائج تم تأكيد الفرضية المطروحة و بالتالي الطلاب هم في حاجة الى فرصة اختيار المواضيع المفضلة لديهم لتحسين مهاراتهم و التحدث بطلاقة في اي وقت و في اي زمان .