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Factors that Influence the Lack of English Speaking and Pronunciation Skills of EFL Learners

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Resumen:

Actualmente, adquirir habilidades verbales representa un desafío para la mayoría de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. El inglés como lengua extranjera carece de la enseñanza de pronunciación y del habla, creando una deficiencia en el desempeño oral del idioma. Esta síntesis de investigación tiene como objetivo determinar las causas principales detrás del bajo rendimiento de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en el habla y la pronunciación. Para ello, se seleccionaron y analizaron 20 artículos con enfoques cuantitativo, cualitativo, mixto y fenomenológico, con el fin de identificar los principales factores que afectan las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes. Los resultados revelan que (1) obstáculos lingüísticos y factores psicológicos afectan tanto a las habilidades de habla como a la pronunciación de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera, (2) la enseñanza tiene una mínima importancia dentro de las aulas de inglés, lo que concluye que hay una falta de metodologías acreditables, (3) el entorno de aprendizaje contribuye a los problemas enfrentados por los practicantes de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras claves: Estudiantes. Inglés. Lengua extranjera. Discurso. Pronunciación. Factores. Problemas. Desempeño.

Abstract:

Acquiring oral skills currently appears to be a challenge for most EFL learners. English as a foreign language lacks of teaching pronunciation and speaking, creating a deficiency of accurate oral performance in the target language. This research synthesis is intended to determine the main causes behind EFL learners' lower achievement in speaking and pronunciation performance. For this purpose, 20 research papers with a quantitative, qualitative, mixed-method, and phenomenological approach were selected and analyzed in order to identify the main factors affecting learners' communicative skills. Findings reveal that (1) language barriers and psychological factors affect both: speaking and pronunciation skills of EFL learners, (2) teaching instruction has a minimum importance within English classrooms, concluding that there is a lack of creditable methodologies, (3) learning environment contributes to problems faced by EFL practitioners.

Keywords: EFL. Learners. Speaking. Pronunciation. Factors. Problems. Performance.

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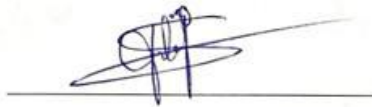
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Dedication

We dedicate our project to ourselves mutually, we are best friends and the motive to stay firm and keep going on during this stage of our lives. A special gratitude to our families, friends, and also our beloved grandparents for always supporting us when no one did.

Introduction

The process of learning English as a foreign language involves the domain of different skills such as writing, listening, reading, and speaking. Among the four macro-skills, speaking is the one that has a crucial impact since it is the main way of communication. The domain of this skill involves an accurate pronunciation of sounds and phonemes. However, speaking along with pronunciation have been targeted as a main problem for students during the process of learning English. Several studies have been conducted in order to know what makes students fail in one of the most important macro skill of English. In this paper, an analysis of different studies is presented in order to know the factors that Influence the lack of English speaking and pronunciation skills of EFL learners

Therefore, the first Chapter presents the background, the problem statement, the rational, the research question that is followed by the analysis and the objectives to achieve at the end of this work. The second Chapter provides general concepts about speaking and pronunciation as well as information about what are some of the problems founded on those two main topics. Chapter III presents specific information about twenty relevant empirical studies analyzed in this paper in order to gather information that will be helpful in the next chapter. Chapter IV presents the description of the methodology used for the writing of this paper. Chapter V has the data analysis which is divided into twelve tables: 1) Publication Dates, 2) Location of the studies, 3) Research Design, 4) Factors affecting speaking skills, 5) Language Barriers, 6) Psychological Factors, 7) Learning environment, 8) Factors affecting pronunciation accuracy, 9) Language Barriers, 10) Phonetic Sounds, 11) Psychological Factors, 12) Teaching instruction. Finally, Chapter VI concludes with the

most relevant findings from the analysis, and some recommendations to improve speaking and pronunciation skills within English courses.

CHAPTER I

Description of the research

1.1 Background

Oradee (2012) affirms that speaking is how human beings orally express themselves, how they feel and how they express their ideas or thoughts. It is one of the most important skills in English learning (Oradee, 2012). Regarding *pronunciation*, the Oxford dictionary defines it as "the way in which a language or a particular word or sound is pronounced" (Oxford, 1999, para.1). Speaking and pronunciation complement each other to create an accurate English oral development.

Some previous studies were carried out to analyze the factors altering the students' speaking and pronunciation performance inside the classroom, especially with English students as a Foreign Language in different countries where speaking and pronunciation skills are indispensable (Ahmed, 2017; Benzies, 2013; Hago, 2015; Riadil, 2020). Abrar et al. (2018) have shown that some factors such as the use of mother tongue, teaching techniques, phonology rules, practical tasks, vocabulary deficiency, and more are the difficulties responsible for the lack of accurate English oral production.

Furthermore, Abrar et al. (2018) found that student teachers face common issues at the moment of speaking in a public environment, such as psychological factors, environmental factors, language barriers, and language practice. Those issues do not allow learners to develop their speaking skills, and therefore they are unable to communicate effectively (Abrar et al., 2018).

Since the purpose of learning a second language is to communicate with others and provide academic or professional opportunities, EFL students must learn it correctly. By

knowing the factors that affect speaking fluency, students could prepare themselves in order to have a good ability in oral performance.

Speaking and pronunciation are important aspects to be developed around EFL students because, as Ruden (2018) explains, "It is always better to know fewer words and pronounce them well than to know a lot of words and pronounce them badly" (p.23). In other words, without a good pronunciation, accurate speaking skills cannot be developed.

1.2 Problem Statement

Improving pronunciation and speaking skills are one of the most important concerns of foreign language learning (Rao, 2019). However, teachers and even students may seem not interested in it. Throughout years, educational institutions have paid more attention to teaching grammar and lexis (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). This happens because we live in a foreign country where a different language cannot be practiced in a real context, so students feel less interested in developing their speaking skills. Regarding this aspect, it is important to emphasize that the ability of speakers of other languages to understand learners who consistently pronounce a group of phonemes incorrectly is severely hampered (Gilakjani & Sabouri 2016). This study has as its main objective to analyze the main factors behind EFL learners' lower achievement in speaking and pronunciation performance.

This research synthesis is intended to analyze the factors influencing the lack of speaking skills and accurate pronunciation of EFL students in order to create awareness and possible solutions to get a good quality in education that would help society as a whole.

1.3 Rationale

Around the world, human beings have the necessity to share what is inside their minds to fulfill their desires, and needs (Rao, 2019). Developing speaking and pronunciation skills are important when people want to express themselves. This research will analyze the factors that influence the lack of speaking and pronunciation skills in students of English as a Foreign Language. With this research synthesis, schools, institutes, teachers, and students could create strategies to be used inside the classroom so that English learners could have a better performance in speaking and pronunciation skills. The research synthesis will deliver information that further our understanding of problems to develop new knowledge and provide relevant evidence for decision-making in future situations or studies. This research will have a big impact in schools, institutes, colleges, and all the institutions that are teaching English as a Foreign Language, since they could use this research to improve their methodologies and strategies. Teachers will have the chance to know what makes students not to speak in class. Besides, this knowledge could help educators to improve the way they teach.

1.4 Research Question

1. What are the main causes behind EFL learners' lower achievement in speaking and pronunciation performance?

1.5 Objectives

1.5.1 General Objective

To determine the main causes behind EFL learners' lower achievement in speaking and pronunciation performance.

1.5.2 Specific Objective

To identify the factors that influence the lower achievement in speaking and pronunciation performance of EFL learners.

CHAPTER II

Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

It is globally known that speaking and pronunciation are the most noticeable skills in the path of learning a language, and thus, the most important ones to take into consideration. However, English as a Foreign Language has been dealing with the management of pronunciation and speaking, but why does it happen? This theoretical framework has been created to analyze Pronunciation and Speaking in depth. It concentrates on the different definitions and perspectives that some researchers have found through many investigations. Likewise, this theoretical framework also determines the difficulties of Speaking and Pronunciation skills that researchers have found within English as a Foreign Language learning.

2.2 English Pronunciation

The most acceptable definition found in a dictionary for the word “pronunciation” has to do with the procedure that different elements of a language (words or sounds) pass through in order to be pronounced (Oxford, 1999). Pronunciation refers to the production of sounds in which the communication is not affected, and it is also defined as the process of how certain sounds are pronounced (Gilakjani, 2016).

Furthermore, listeners could interpret the different sounds due to the way a person pronounces them. It is also important to define that pronunciation plays a significant role since it refers to the ways in which listeners understand the meaning of words and

sentences correctly (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). According to Harmer (2007), pronunciation is related to the way how and where we put stress in words and sentences and how the intonation and pitch serve to express states such as feelings, emotions, and own meaning (Harmer, 2007).

Segments of the consonants and vowels of a language make up pronunciation, together with elements of speech including stress, timing, rhythm, intonation, phrasing, and voice quality. When speakers talk, all of the aforementioned components can interact with one another, which means that difficulties in one component may have an impact on another one and alter how easy or difficult it is to comprehend someone's pronunciation (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

On the other hand, since it equips the students with the necessary skills to completely comprehend and communicate in this language, English pronunciation is a crucial subject. The pupils can prevent linguistic misunderstandings by being aware of the proper English pronunciation (Mena, 2019). Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) say that it is not enough to acquire English grammar and vocabulary knowledge in order to have an accurate way of communication. Nowadays, there is a necessity to comprehend what any speaker says, and what you as a human being want to express (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

2.2.1 English Pronunciation Difficulties

The English language and its teaching deal with some difficulties within pronunciation skills such as accent, stress, intonation, and motivation. Accent could be defined as the auditory features that help to identify the original place that people belong to either in terms of social and regional characteristics (Ahmed, 2017). Besides, the form that

speech takes from different groups of people depending on the place they live or to what social groups they belong, takes the name of “accent” (Birner, 1999).

Moreover, stress is defined as how syllables are pronounced, depending on the length, the variation of tones, and the degree of force. There is always a syllable that possesses more stress than other ones (Ahmed, 2017). A syllable receiving more emphasis than the other syllables in a domain is referred to as being under stress. When words are stressed, this domain is the prosodic word (Hualde, 2012).

Likewise, intonation is defined as the form and the melody of language while the speaking stage is taking place. It talks about how the voice changes in different ways such as the rising and falling of the voice (Ahmed, 2017). Intonation is the term for a range of audible parameters, including duration, intensity, and pitch, which are employed to explain the significance of conversations (Levis, 2012).

Finally, motivation is a factor that influences how people behave, and the goal of motivating employees is to have them act in a way that benefits any institution the most (Tohidi and Jabbari, 2012). Additionally, motivation is the term for the principles that underpin the willingness and volition of behavior. Extrinsic motivation is controlled by reinforcement contingencies, but intrinsic motivation is driven by personal delight, interest, or pleasure (Lai, 2011).

2.3 English Speaking Skills

Many definitions of speaking have been proposed by some experts in language learning during the past decades. Brown (2001) states that when an individual is able to

speak a language, it means that he or she can carry on a conversation with a reasonable understanding (Brown, 2001).

One of the macro skills in English teaching and learning is speaking. In language production, it is important to master some micro skills. Brown (2001) proposes the existence of sixteen important micro speaking skills, some of them being: Producing chunks of language of different lengths, the production of differences among the English phonemes and allophonic variants, production of reduced forms of words and phrases, etc (Brown, 2011). When students learn English, speaking skills are significant to support their ability to communicate with others.

According to McDonough (1993), English speaking skills enable individuals to produce texts for real context communication; in other words, they will use these skills to communicate in English language to get specific information and achieve specific objectives (McDonough. 1993).

2.3.1 English Speaking Skills Difficulties

Many factors can affect students at the moment of learning speaking in an EFL course. Brown (2001) states that there are eight cases in which speaking is difficult: clustering, redundancy, reduced form, performance variable, colloquial language, rate of delivery, stress, rhythm, intonation, and interaction.

Zhang (2009) argues that speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English (Zhang, 2009).

According to Ur (1996), many factors can cause difficulty in speaking skills. He explained four different ones: inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, and mother tongue use or interference (Ur, 1996).

1. Inhibition: Students are shy, dread criticism, and worry about making mistakes.
2. Nothing to say: There is little incentive for students to express themselves.
3. Low participation: Due to enormous class sizes and the propensity of some students to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all, only one participant can speak at a time.
4. Mother-tongue use or interference: Because it is simpler and makes them feel less exposed, language learners frequently speak in their L1.

Other factors that are present among students are related to be the learners themselves, the teaching strategies, the curriculum, and the environment (Rabab'ah, 2005).

2.4 Conclusion

English speaking and pronunciation difficulties are present more than we think. By analyzing aspects from pronunciation problems (accent, stress, intonation, motivation) and aspects from the speaking area (memory limitations, chunking or clustering, repetitions or insertions, reductions, performance variables, slangs or colloquial language, speed at talking, interpretation of elements), we can find exact reasons why the lack of English speaking and pronunciation skills around EFL learners exists and needs to be fixed.

CHAPTER III

Literature review

3.1 Introduction

In this section, we can find a brief summary of some revised literature for the research synthesis “Factors that Influence the Lack of English Speaking and Pronunciation Skills of EFL Learners.” The studies have been classified into different sections, each one of them giving general and specific information about the factors that tend to affect English speaking and pronunciation performance. Those sections are the following: causes behind EFL learners’ lower achievement in speaking and causes behind EFL learners’ lower achievement in pronunciation.

3.2 Causes behind EFL learners’ lower achievement in pronunciation.

Learning languages involve beyond communication, but certainly different skills have been taken into account for acquiring a second language except for pronunciation. As it is noticeable, pronunciation has not received the same consideration when a language is learned. Nevertheless, pronunciation is the best way in which learners can improve their other needed skills, and it is also important in order to have better oral communication and understanding. A person with enough abilities in his speech would be able to reach communicative competences (Gilakjani & Sabouri 2016). Understanding the neglect that pronunciation has received, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) tried to examine Iranian teachers’ positions toward pronunciation and its importance within teaching. Their study was composed of a questionnaire which was applied to 100 Iranian teachers at the Islamic Azad Universities of Guilan Province. As it is explained, this questionnaire was aimed to

understand and explain the reasons why pronunciation is ignored in an EFL classroom. The results show that there is a lack of different resources which interfere with the implementation of teaching pronunciation (Gilakjani & Sabouri 2016). As Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) argue, those resources are the following: “the findings of this study revealed that due to the lack of pronunciation knowledge, institutional resources, insufficiency of suitable pronunciation materials, fear of producing English words incorrectly, training insufficiency of time, and lack of motivation and confidence. (p. 206)

Beyond the neglect of implementing pronunciation as part of English teaching, Pronunciation is seen as the most difficult skill to develop. Apart from the four skills, pronunciation is the one that is in-depth, and thus, it has to be included in the learning process of a second language. According to the actual students' perspectives, Benzies (2013) attempts to determine the present position of pronunciation in the Grado in Lengua y Literatura Inglesa degree. To understand the reason why, a study was carried out in which 222 university students participated (164 were female and 58 were male; the age of students was 18 years). The students were from the University of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. A 51-item survey with multiple-choice options and questions with a Likert scale of 1–5 was given to participants. A few questions required participants to submit entire responses, while others were open-ended (Benzies, 2013). This survey helped to identify the different items that do not help to develop a good pronunciation such as the irregular correspondence between spelling and pronunciation and the impact on the learning process of factors such as age, motivation and amount of exposure to the L2. However, it also demonstrates that apart from those items, students are conscious about the importance of pronunciation, but it is still having a minor role in EFL classroom and, of course, materials (Benzies, 2013).

Even though there is a consciousness about pronunciation in EFL classes, it is important to emphasize the different problems that students face in order to look for potential solutions. Ahmed (2017) tries to find the problems that students face with pronunciation, and thus solutions for them. His research was composed of 35 students and 50 teachers from Sudanese higher secondary schools. A descriptive analytical approach was used to conduct the research that also used the following materials: recording test and questionnaire (Ahmed, 2017). The results show that problems are the reflection of lack of knowledge in teaching, and thus, the mother language has a detrimental impact on the pronunciation process, stress and intonation (Ahmed, 2017). These are thought to be the primary problems with learning pronunciation, and the curriculum may need to be changed significantly to accommodate learning pronunciation (Ahmed, 2017). However, the author recommends that one of the best solutions for avoiding difficulties within learning pronunciation is to look for qualified teachers. Foreign teachers will provide students with better pronunciation as long as they teach pronunciation with the same amount of importance as the other different skills in learning a language (Ahmed, 2017).

Pronunciation is seen as the most difficult skill to acquire in the path of learning a second language so far. It is due to some difficulties that have been found throughout the time; difficulties that are found on pronouncing consonants mostly. Hago and Khan (2015) wanted to investigate some of the problems of English Pronunciation around students when they intend to pronounce English consonants, and thus, to investigate difficulties around the English consonant clusters system (Hago & Khan, 2015). The research was composed of students from El-Ehsan Secondary School in Saudi-African. Hago and Khan (2015) divided the participants of this study into two parts. The first segment consisted of 60 El-Ehsan

Secondary students from three distinct levels, evenly separated by their ages (16 to 18). The second segment consisted of English (EFL or ESL) teachers from the same institution. Questionnaires, classroom observations, and document collections were used to collect all the information and data. The results showed that students have problems when they pronounce eleven consonants sounds specifically. Besides, the results showed that students add a vowel sound in syllables in order to break up English consonant clusters. By examining their native linguistic backgrounds, it is possible to identify the typical pronunciation mistakes made by Arabic Saudi learners of English. This research demonstrates how one's native language affects one's English pronunciation (Hago & Khan, 2015).

In the path of analyzing different problems within acquiring a second language it seems necessary to take into account the students' perspective related to the problems they face when they are learning English language. Nowacka (2013) created a study with two major goals: to evaluate how European students feel about their own English pronunciation, and to present some arguments in favor of or against the use of foreign-accented pronunciation models rather than native ones in phonetic education. The participants who made this study possible were 157 students from different parts of the world such as Italy, Spain, and Poland. This study was composed of a questionnaire that had seven open or closed questions. Besides, the questionnaire was developed at different universities due to the participants in which we can find educational institutions such as the University of Salento, Lecce, in the south of Italy and the University of Vigo, in the northwestern part of Spain, in the Faculty of Translation (Nowacka, 2012). Nowacka (2012) argues that “when it comes to the Polish informants,

the data were gathered in the year 2004. Unlike previous studies of this kind, our research involved subjects from six different tertiary schools (five universities and one college)” (p. 47). The results showed that students have the desire to speak as a native speaker, and thus, to have a good English pronunciation. Students argued that listening authentic English, phonetics instruction, and imitation of English improved their level of pronunciation. The participants have demonstrated that self-study techniques are part of those helpful cognitive strategies in order to develop a good English pronunciation. Nowacka (2012) lists the following techniques: “reading aloud to themselves, imitating authentic speech from films, audio books and the media, and listening to and repeating after a model” (p. 55). Finally, the author emphasizes the fact that this study does not perceive new light on teaching pronunciation, and it is related to old studies that emphasize the desire of learning a certain pronunciation model that, in this case, would be a “foreign accent” (Nowacka, 2012).

There are different difficulties that are necessary to analyze deeply in order to know in which area foreign learners are struggling. The author tried to focus herself on pronunciation problems among Spanish learners. The aim of her study claimed to provide information about some difficulties with the pronunciation of vowels (Benzies, 2013). To analyze what is concerning English pronunciation, a study was carried out in which the participants were ten university students from the University of Santiago de Compostela, Galicia. Benzies (2013) divided participants into two groups: five students in their third year of study (group A) and five students in their final year (group B). Ages of the subjects, all of whom were female, ranged from 20 to 24. The author used as part of her materials the following: a personal interview; a photo-description; and the reading aloud of a text. The

results found in this study showed that there were 209 vowels mistakes in total. Besides, the teaching of sounds should be prioritized at early stages because certain English vowels, particularly the north, palm, schwa, and goat vowels, continue to present many challenges at greater levels of competency (Benzies, 2013).

Since students are the ones who are in contact with the problems related to English pronunciation, it is really important to investigate deeply some opinions in terms of phonology in order to have a better understanding of why pronouncing sounds is so difficult. Sahatsathatsana (2017) claims to find out the elements influencing the students' phonetic learning difficulties, as well as to look at the students' perceptions of difficulties in the subject. The main population to develop this study were 12 English for International Communication students who studied at Kalasin University. Those students were asked to be part of the study because they had finished an English Phonetics course (Sahatsathatsana, 2017). The materials used during this study were a questionnaire and a semi-interview protocol. The results argue that according to the students' opinions, studying phonetics at the segmental level was extremely difficult for them because of certain sounds, particularly [θ], [ð], and [dʒ]. It was also claimed that linking has a significant negative impact on learning phonetics. Besides, the most common problem that students face is related to phonetic ability. It is due to the sound distinction of two languages (English and Thai). Besides, Sahatsathatsana found that factors that are causing problems to foreign students are the following: phonetic ability, native language, prior English pronunciation learning, instruction, and motivation caused the students' problem in phonetics learning (Sahatsathatsana, 2017).

There are a lot of investigations that explain most of the pronunciation problems that occur within L1 language. However, there is a deficiency of studies in terms of ESL or EFL. This study is intended to investigate English pronunciation problems among speakers from Nigeria. In order to develop this study, 60 male native speakers of Hausa who studied in Northern Cyprus were part of the mentioned study case (Keshavarz & Khami, 2017). The instruments used during the study were a demographic questionnaire and a pronunciation test in which Keshavarz and Khami (2017) argue that “the objective of the background questionnaire was to obtain demographic information about the participants including age, gender, ethnicity, place of residence, and more importantly native language background and the amount of exposure to English” (p.63). The authors concluded that speakers present problems when they try to pronounce certain vowels such as (i.e., /ʌ/, /ɔ:/ and /ɜ:/) and consonants (/f/, /v/, /θ/ and /ð/). Besides, they argue that such problems occur due to an interference of mother tongue (Keshavarz & Khami, 2017).

English pronunciation has a lot of phonological distinctions in which foreign learners find trouble with. This research study explored the different difficulties that learners present while they are learning Standard English. In an effort to trace L1 transfer, the qualitative investigation described in this article concentrated on documenting both segmental and suprasegmental locations of inaccuracy (Dost, 2017). This study used 30 male native speakers (between 18 and 19 years old) of Persian who were part of a night school in Iran. Additionally, this study included a reading passage and a list of 70 discrete lexical elements. The words of the reading passage and the terms of the lexical list were chosen so as to cover the areas where errors are most likely to occur, according to the literature. The results show that the L1 has a noticeable effect during the production of

sounds in English. Besides, there were different situations that create errors in English pronunciation such as overgeneralization, defective teaching, and spelling pronunciation (Dost, 2017).

The English language has different areas in which pupils can find easy or hard to manage during the process of learning a second language. However, it is noticeable that for many foreign students, the most difficult part is pronunciation. Due to the complexity of pronunciation, it seems not to be taken into account in English teaching. In order to have a better idea of what concerns English pronunciation, Gilakjani, Namaziandost, and Ziafar (2020) aims to investigate the factors that influence English pronunciation learning. The participants for this study were 50 Iranian EFL learners who were studying English Language Translation in the Islamic Azad Universities of Guilan, Iran (Gilakjani, Namaziandost, & Ziafar, 2020). In order to develop this study, the researchers used a quantitative method in which they used a survey with eight statements that needed the help of two English specialists. Additionally, the questionnaire was not translated into Persian, so it was an English questionnaire. The results show that there are factors that have effects on learners' pronunciation improvement such as pronunciation instruction, attitude, motivation, and error correction. Researchers argue that those factors have to take into account when teachers need to teach pronunciation since they can contribute to an accurate teaching of English pronunciation (Gilakjani, Namaziandost, & Ziafar, 2020).

3.3 Causes behind EFL learners' lower achievement in speaking skills.

Speaking is the most important skill in English among EFL learners. The analysis of factors that influence lower levels of speaking skills among students could help to get a good quality education, and it can help society as a whole. Gutierrez (2018), in his

quantitative study, demonstrates some of the factors that influence the lack of speaking skill. The research is composed by a survey, teacher's interviews, and class observations, which were applied to 26 students and to the teacher in charge, respectively (Gutierrez, 2018). The techniques and instruments to collect data were applied to provide relevant information to the investigation in order to deepen the factors involved in the lack of speaking skill in students of 10th Grade at Salvador Mendieta Cascante School. Gutierrez (2018) states that students inside a classroom have a deficiency of the interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. The state was completely affirmed when the research methodology was applied, and it gave results that explain some of the factors that interfere in the learners speaking skill. The use of mother tongue and the lack of vocabulary creates a limitation in students to speak in class. Besides that, things like the lack of didactic resources and students not having an English background decrease their motivation to participate in speaking activities (Gutierrez, 2018).

Speaking in a foreign language is considered to be a challenging aspect of language learning that demands competence and mastery in learning any foreign language. It is widely known that English is an international language since it has been largely spoken among foreign language speakers, but good English speaking skills are hard to learn when you live in a foreign country where your language may not be quite similar to English. Abrar et al. (2018) conducted a phenomenological study to deepen the understanding of the lived experience of Indonesian EFL student teachers' speaking in an Indonesian public university. With this, they tried to identify the challenges in speaking skills. The authors affirmed that despite having English instruction for many years, many learners' most

challenging language skill is speaking. So, one of the possible reasons is that speaking requires complex skills, not merely conveying ideas verbally. The study contained interviews with open-ended questions applied to 8 participants. Besides, it revealed that EFL learners' inadequate stocks of vocabulary, mother tongue influence, and problems in pronunciation, grammar, and fluency became the stumbling blocks for them to be fluent and eloquent in speaking the language (Abrar et al., 2018).

Students from places where language is so different tend to struggle the most when they want to learn English.

Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020) investigated the prevailing barriers in the development of English speaking skills among students in Bangladesh. Their quantitative research used a questionnaire as a tool to collect information. The questionnaire was responded by 100 students selected randomly from departments of History, Philosophy, International Relations, Archeology, and Bangla; all of them forming part of the Jahangirnagar University. The survey itself contained 13 questions about their speaking performance. The study showed that the undergraduate students have many barriers that make them not achieve correct speaking skills. Aspects such as syllabi mainly focus on reading and writing, the influence of mother tongue, unfavorable environment fear and hesitation while attempting to speak English teachers are the main reason why those students tend to fail at the moment of expressing ideas or feelings in English (Mridha and Muniruzzaman., 2020).

Nowadays there is a need to learn a second language that can help people to grow in private and public sectors in countries where English is not the first language. The study

“Challenges in EFL Speaking Classes in Turkish Context” reveal the reasons of problems that Turkish EFL learners face while they try to develop speaking skills in English (Kara, Demir & Aycan, 2017). Researchers used a mixed method research design, where qualitative and quantitative data was collected. Besides, it was used to get the most real results. The tools used in this study were a questionnaire developed by Yurtsever-Bodur and Arikan (2015) and an interview. The participants were all students enrolled in Giresun University in Turkey. The authors wanted to know social, personal and educational reasons of why students were having speaking skills problems. The results of the study showed that students have difficulty in speaking mainly because of educational and social reasons. Not using the language in social situations or language classes only focused on grammar are the main findings in this study conducted on EFL students in Turkey (Kara, Demir & Aycan, 2017).

EFL students from all around the world tend to have almost the same problems when they try to talk in the foreign language, so Arab students are not the exception. Alzahrani (2019) tried to explain the reasons behind the lack of good speaking skills in Najran University students in her study called “The Reasons behind the Weakness of Speaking English among English Department's Students at Najran University”. Besides that, the study also has a gender focus, which tries to explore the gender differences and how it affects English speaking skills. The study had a quantitative approach and a questionnaire as the tool to gather information. The survey was delivered to 59 students at the English Department of colleges of Science and Arts of Najran University. The study used 30 men and 29 females as participants. The results of the study affirmed that the teaching-learning environment is the main reason why students cannot develop oral skills.

Additionally, English instructors' deficiency and students themselves were targeted as other barriers for not improving speaking abilities. Regarding gender, there was not a difference between male and female responses, which confirm gender as another reason behind lower speaking performance (Alzahrani, 2019).

Perceptions and opinions tend to be a great form to analyze a situation, especially when we are talking about students in EFL environments. Riadil (2020), in his study, demonstrates that language is a crucial component of human nature. People can engage, exchange information, and communicate with one another through learning a language (Riadil, 2020). In his research, he tries to identify why Indonesian EFL learners cannot speak English fluently. The study aimed to understand aspects of social life and social phenomenon based on participant's point of view. Riadil (2020) collected data for his research by giving questionnaires that cover speaking problems in learning a foreign language. The participants were thirty-five students from Tidar University in Magelang. The gathered information revealed that the students' problems were inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, and mother tongue use (Riadil, 2020).

Speaking involves many mechanisms that work together to create a fluent speech, and one of them is known as vocabulary. The knowledge of vocabulary can create a difference at the moment of speaking English as a Foreign Language. Khan et al. (2018) decided to investigate the process of learning vocabulary, and thus, how it affected speaking skills. In their study "The Role of Vocabulary Knowledge in Speaking Development of Saudi EFL Learners", they try to analyze the causes behind lower achievement in speaking performance and to see if it is associated with the vocabulary learning. The quantitative study used an interview and a questionnaire. Those were applied

to 20 EFL teachers and 110 EFL Saudi Students respectively. The results demonstrate that the deficiency of vocabulary is one of the major factors of the students' inability to speak fluently. Besides, it is associated with the lack of speaking abilities at the moment of conversations or when students try to share ideas, feelings, and so on (Khan et al., 2018).

Vocabulary is not the only tool that helps with the development of great oral proficiencies. Communication needs to be adequate and appropriate in every situation, and this may go beyond learning vocabulary and grammar rules correctly. Lexis is an important aspect when we talk about oral production. Sakale and Seffar (2012) point out the importance of lexis in Moroccan learners' speaking production in the study "The Role of Lexis in Developing EFL Learners' Speaking Skill". A mixed design approach was implemented; it implies quantitative/qualitative instruments to collect meaningful data. The instruments are composed of questionnaires and interviews applied to 40 EFL teachers and 200 Moroccan high school students. The study aimed to reveal perceptions of speaking skills and the corresponding high significance of lexis. The results show that according students-teachers' perceptions, the main cause behind their low speaking performance is the nonuse of correct vocabulary and lexis. The significance of lexis is important to students and teachers. The results express how vocabulary and lexis are the major obstacles in English learning process. Besides, vocabulary among other tools are important and significant for supporting speaker's ideas. In fact, there has been little done with the vocabulary knowledge or the lexis learning to develop oral proficiencies (Sakale & Seffar, 2012).

Speaking a Foreign Language is a demanding task that tends to create many feelings around people. Feelings and emotions tend to be forgotten when we talk about learning an

unknown language. Anxiety and nervousness are common problems expressed by students of foreign languages, which creates a negative effect on social communication. Tanveer (2007), in his “Investigation of the factors that cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners in learning speaking skills and the influence it casts on communication in the target language”, decided to investigate why anxiety is a factor that tends to create barriers in communication in EFL classrooms. Tanveer (2007) used a qualitative semi-structured interview to conduct his study. The face-to-face interviews were applied to 20 participants. Those people were 6 ESL/EFL learners, 3 ESL/EFL teachers, and 11 ESL/EFL practitioners. The results affirmed that anxiety becomes a problem when learners try to speak in class. This psychological factor affects the students’ speaking performance. In detail, many learners affirm that they cannot express everything they want due to anxiety problems. The investigation also affirms that anxiety and nervousness tend to be caused by different things in EFL/ESL classrooms such as strict classroom environment, speak in public, fear of making mistakes, self-perceptions, and different abilities (Tanveer, 2007).

On the other hand, Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014), and their study “Speaking anxiety among Turkish EFL learners: The case at a state university” tried to determine the reasons of speaking anxiety in a Turkish context. They collected perceptions of EFL students on how anxiety and psychological factors play an important role in the learning environment. The study had quantitative and qualitative data that was collected through two main methods: interviews and questionnaires. The participants of the study included 383 pre-intermediate students, 225 females and 158 males, of an English preparatory program at a state university. Their ages ranged between 17 and 22, and they were in their first college year. Although they were all learning English in the same preparatory program, these

students were from different departments such as business administration, economics, tourism management, chemistry, physics, and biology. The results in the study affirmed that students present low, moderate, and high levels of speaking anxiety. Even though most students experienced low levels of anxiety, it was demonstrated that speaking is an anxiety provocation. It is due to aspects such as immediate questions or the fear of making mistakes. Definitely, learning a foreign language is a complex task that could create emotional problems, especially in foreign contexts where social cultural factors tend to affect the development of oral skills (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014).

CHAPTER IV

Methodology

According to Bednarek et al. (2018), a research synthesis is “the integration of existing knowledge and research findings pertinent to an issue” (p. 72). This research synthesis conducted a bibliographical research to analyze the reported cases around the lack of accurate English pronunciation and speaking skills of EFL students.

The criteria to develop our research synthesis was based on the following aspects: the articles were empirical in order to have real results. The participants completed different quantitative and qualitative instruments with the purpose of having an overview around EFL student’s barriers. Moreover, the selected articles were focused on EFL students mainly since it was important to analyze the situation from the students’ point of view. Additionally, we found teacher's perceptions in some of the articles mentioned. Only empirical studies from 2000 until 2020 were taken into account since the results need to be as recent as possible. The following 10 key words were used for this study: EFL, pronunciation, speaking, factors, language barriers, instruction, difficulties, learning environment, psychological factors, and performance.

In addition, data was collected from the following online bases: Google Scholar, Researchgate. Journals were also revised and taken into account, they were: *Journal of English Linguistics*, *International journal of social science and humanity*, *International Journal of Education, Language, and Religion*. all of them provides useful information for the development of this research synthesis, *International Journal of English Research*,

International Journal of Research in English Education, International Online Journal of Education and Teaching, Journal of Education, Mahasarakham University,

Finally, the selected articles were classified in different categories according to the needed information in order to meet the established objectives in this research synthesis.

CHAPTER V

Data analysis

5.1 Introduction

For this research synthesis, 20 studies were collected according to the criteria mentioned in the methodology section. Each study is intended to explore the different causes behind EFL learners' lower achievement in terms of pronunciation and speaking skills. These studies were classified and analyzed under the following categories: 1) Publication dates; 2) Location of the Studies; 3) Research Design; 4) Factors affecting speaking skills; and 5) Factors affecting pronunciation accuracy.

5.2 Stage 1

The first stage of this research encompasses the formal characteristics of the 20 studies that were considered for this specific analysis. In the Stage 1, the subcategories are “Publication dates,” “Location of the studies,” and “Research Design”

Table 1.

Publication Dates

Year of Publication	N. of publications	%
2005-2012	3	15%
2013-2017	10	50%
2018-2020	7	35%

N=20

Table 1 helps to understand the phenomena of the research throughout time; besides, it is helpful to know the frequency of studies over the past decades. Most part of

the studies occurred during 2013 and 2017. This can be due to the fact that, in those times, the necessity to learn about what influenced the lack of proficient speaking and accurate pronunciation came to light. In past times, there were not many articles about the topic, and in recent years, the number of empirical studies has decreased. This could have occurred because of the results of previous researches. Since most of the studies tend to agree and have similar results, the necessity of doing research on the same field has decreased.

Table 2

Location of the studies

Continent	Author(s)	No. of studies
Africa	Ahmed (2017); Hago and Khan (2015); Sakale and Seffar (2012);	3
Asia	Abrar et al (2018); Aycan, and Kara (2017); Benzies (2013); Benzies (2017); Dost (2017); Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016); Gilakgani, Namaziandost and Ziafar (2020); Keshavarz and Khami (2017); Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020); Nowacka (2012); Sahatsathatsana (2017); Tanveer (2007).	12
Europe	Alzahrani (2019); Gutierrez (2018); Khan et al. (2018); Öztürk and Gurus (2014) Riadil (2020).	5

N=20

EFL environments exist all over the world, and due to the fact that English has become a lingua franca, it is important to know the location of the studies where usually English is not the mother tongue.

Table 2 represents the location where the studies were conducted. Analyzing the place in which studies were developed, it is evident that three out of five continents were selected to study the different factors that affect the lack of speaking and pronunciation skills. The majority of studies belong to Asia, which could be assumed that there is a large population studying English as a foreign language. Furthermore, there is a consciousness about people dealing with factors that affect their performance; it is due to most of the studies intended to figure out how and which problems impact learners. The fact that English takes an important role in Asian countries is explainable since it is considered a communication tool (Chang, 2011). On the other hand, five studies in Europe and t studies in Africa contribute to the idea that the shortage of accurate pronunciation and speaking performance is around the world. Accordingly, factors affecting the students' performance have become a field to study.

Table 3

Research Design

Research Design	N. of studies	%
Quantitative	9	45%
Qualitative	5	25%
Mixed-Method	5	25%

Phenomenological	1	5%
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Empirical studies were taken into consideration for this research synthesis, since they carry an important influence on the reliability of the results. Therefore, it is important to know the type of design the authors used in their studies.

A quantitative approach is the one that is mostly used since it produces objective data that can be clearly communicated through statistics and numbers; it can be understood and calculated easily. On the other hand, qualitative approaches and mixed-methods represent 25% each one. In a qualitative design, a whole description of one phenomena is explained. Even though qualitative results tend to be complex to analyze or calculate, in this case, it is very useful to perceive the problems in speaking and pronunciation in EFL classrooms. Combining two methodologies is an excellent way to carry out research when you want to explore diverse points of view or perspectives that can build a strong research with solid findings. That is why mixed-methods have a moderate percentage in their research design. Lastly, phenomenological research design was used in one of the twenty studies. The almost nonuse of this research methodology can be due to the fact that, in phenomenological approaches, assumptions tend to be based on experiences. Even though it is a good way to have different perceptions of the participants involved, it can be hard to measure and lead to assumptions on the final results.

5.3 Stage 2

After analyzing the main characteristics of the studies, the second stage of this research synthesis is “Factors affecting speaking skills” and “Factors affecting pronunciation accuracy”. These statements will be analyzed in order to answer the research

question: What are the main causes behind EFL learners' lower achievement in speaking and pronunciation performance?

5.3.1 Factors affecting speaking skills

Table 4.

Factors affecting speaking skills

Factors affecting speaking skills	N. of studies	%
Language barriers	6	60%
Psychological and social factors	5	50%
Learning environment	6	60%

N=10

Table 4 aimed to answer one part of the research question regarding to the factors that influence the lack of speaking skills. As shown in Table 4, components such as language and psychological factors were taken into account since they tend to be common in the different studies that were revised. These components have subtopics and these will be analyzed in the following tables.

Table 5.

Language Barriers

Language Barriers	Author(s)	No. of studies
Mother tongue interference	Abrar et al. (2018); Gutierrez (2018); Mridha and Muniruzzaman, (2020); Riadil (2020).	4
Deficiency of vocabulary	Abrar et al. (2018); Aycan and Kara (2017); Gutierrez (2018); Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020); Sakale and Seffar (2012); Khan et al. (2018).	6

N=6

Language barriers represent the biggest percentage along with another statement in Table 4, and that is why it is the first subtopic to be analyzed. This involves two different factors that are very common among EFL learners at the moment of speaking in class: mother tongue interference and deficiency of vocabulary.

The use of the mother tongue is something that almost all the studies targeted as a main problem in oral production. The interference of it during the process of learning a second language is present and very frequent among EFL students. This is due to the lack

of confidence that students have inside the classroom, so they prefer to rely on their previous knowledge that is their L1.

Besides the interference of the first language in EFL students, another common factor is the lack of vocabulary they receive in their English classes. Studies affirm that students know that they have a limited range of vocabulary, and they point out the fact that they do not know what kind of words to use in different situations (Abrar et al., 2018).

Inadequate vocabulary for different situations, wrong grammar structures, and mispronunciation are some of the factors that form the perception of the students; therefore, teachers have affirmed that those aspects are the origin for not speaking fluently. Students from different countries are not used to talk in foreign languages, and thus, they are thinking in their mother tongue but trying to speak in an unknown language. It is demonstrated how significant language knowledge as lexis and vocabulary are crucial in speaking English. If they are not developed well, it creates a huge barrier in one of the most important English skills: speaking.

Table 6.

Psychological factors

Psychological Factors	Author(s)	No. of studies
Anxiety	Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014); Tanveer (2007); Abrar et al. (2018).	3

Attitude and Inhibitions	Abrar et al. (2018); Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020); Aycan and Kara (2017); Riadil (2020).	4
<hr/> N=6		

Psychological factors such as anxiety or fear to talk represent 50% of the final percentage. The two main statements considered in table 6 are anxiety along with attitude and inhibitions.

Anxiety and attitude problems are actually the third main reason why students do not talk in class. Anxiety is present in the context of speaking English as a foreign language. Students perceived speaking as an anxiety provoking factor in most of the learning process (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014).

Attitude and inhibitions are part of the psychological factors that contribute to students being reluctant at the moment of speaking. Negative attitudes from students at the moment of learning English is a challenging factor in the development of oral skills (Abrar et al., 2018). Fear of speaking in public or to make mistakes creates a lack of confidence in students who try hard in classrooms. Even if it is not the first main reason behind the lack of speaking abilities, it is still something that is present in many classes. Students are afraid of talking in class due to many social reasons like strict teachers or unknown classmates. Mental health and social relationships play an important role in the learning environment,

especially for EFL students who may already have moderate or high levels of anxiety.

(Riadil, 2020).

Table 7

Learning Environment

Factors	Author(s)	N. of Studies
Deficient English program	Abrar et al.(2018); Alzahrani (2019); Gutierrez (2018); Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020).	4
Deficient teachers and methodologies	Alzahrani (2019); Aycan and Kara (2017). Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020); Riadil (2020).	4

N=6

Learning environments have the highest percentage along with language barriers. In the analyzed table, there are two different statements: Deficient English programs and deficient teachers and methodologies.

The learning environment plays an important role in the process of learning a foreign language. Four different studies found that English programs are actually very weak. Syllabi are usually not adequate to the context where students are, and for that reason, they tend not to be motivated in the topics that teachers present (Riadil, 2020).

Topics and materials are not interesting for students, so they feel bored and without motivation to keep going on the course (Aycan & Kara, 2017). Deficiency in material or a good teacher could be inside the fact that learning environments are not as good as they should, but it is not that common since there is only one study that reached that result. Teachers and methodologies are also reasons behind the difficulty in speaking. Teachers who only focus on teaching grammar and other skills of English that they consider more important than speaking can create difficulties in developing this skill. Consequently, students cannot practice and this will lead to a weak performance in speaking (Mridha & Muniruzzaman, 2020).

5.3.2 Factors affecting pronunciation accuracy

Table 8

Factors affecting pronunciation accuracy

Factors affecting pronunciation accuracy	N. of studies	%
Language barriers	6	60%
Psychological factors	3	30%
Teaching instruction	4	40%

Note. N=10 Teaching instruction lays on three studies of a different category.

Table 8 represents the main factors that conduct pronunciation to be one of the aspects in which students are having struggles. Six out of ten studies relate to the fact that learners face problems in common areas considered as “language barriers.” One of the

areas has to do with pronouncing words in the foreign language. Intonation and stress are part of what learners considered the most difficult task (Ahmed, 2017).

On the other hand, the use of mother tongue does not collaborate to the development of an accurate pronunciation, and thus, it affects learners negatively (Ahmed, 2017; Keshavarz & Khamis, 2017)

Another important area is related to the phonetic aspect. Most learners argued that the different pronunciation of vowels and consonants in English represents the most difficult part of learning a second language. Besides, there is a list of common vowels and consonants that are considered complicated to learn. (Benzies, 2013; Dost, 2017; Hago & Khan, 2015; Keshavarz & Khamis 2017; Sahatsathatsana, 2017). Analyzing the studies, it is noticeable that not only language barriers affect an accurate performance in pronunciation.

Learners present psychological factors that could be considered one of the hardest problems to deal with. Two of the studies argue that motivation and attitude play a negative role when pronunciation is the main topic to consider (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Gilakjani, Namaziandost & Ziafar, 2020). However, the wish to speak is still present in some of the practitioners. They argue that having the previous statement in mind, phonetic instruction has become a benefit (Nowacka, 2012). The last important aspect to be considered is teaching instruction. It involves not only the way teachers manage their classes, but also the implements or materials they need for teaching pronunciation as well as possible (Benzies, 2013; Gilakjani & Sabouri 2016; Gilakjani, Namaziandost & Ziafar, 2020; Nowacka, 2012).

Table 9

Language Barriers

Skills of the language	Author(s)	No. of studies
Stress and intonation	Ahmed (2017)	1
Mother Tongue	Ahmed (2017); Keshavarz and Khamis (2017)	2
Phonetics	Benzies (2013); Dost (2017); Hago and Khan (2015); Keshavarz and Khamis (2017); Sahatsathatsana (2017).	5

Note: N=6 Mother tongue is repeated on two studies.

The table above points out what is considered the main difficult task within pronunciation acquisition: stress and intonation. Learners present problems in stressing words and giving the correct intonation to them. This happens because there are sounds that do not exist in the students' mother tongue (Ahmed, 2017). With this in mind, the interference of the mother tongue in EFL pronunciation classes reflect another main cause of deficient pronunciation performance. When learners try to imitate sounds, the knowledge they have from their mother tongue causes a confusion, and thus, it is likely impossible to pronounce phonemes such as /θ/, /ð/, /f/, and /v/ correctly (Keshavarz & Khamis, 2017). Moreover, studies point out that learners around the mentioned continents have problems when they try to pronounce vowels and consonants of the English language. Since English has a large variety of sounds in its alphabet, learners consider phonetics as

the hardest part of learning pronunciation (Benzies, 2013; Dost, 2017; Hago & Khan, 2015; Keshavarz & Khamis, 2017; Sahatsathatsana, 2017).

Table 10

Phonetic Sounds

Phonetics Sounds Problems	Author(s)
Vowels	Benzies (2013); Keshavarz and Khamis (2017) Hago and Khan (2015); Keshavarz and Khamis (2017); Sahatsathatsana (2017).
Consonants	

Note: N=4 Studies appear in several subcategories

This table is intended to point out the different consonants and vowels in which EFL learners are having problems. Besides, it reflects that most of the studies have found similar sounds, which are considered difficult to pronounce.

The alphabet of the English language contains lots of different sounds that are classified into two main categories: vowels and consonants. In fact, EFL learners find it really difficult to pronounce phonemes that they have never heard before. In two studies, the findings show that there are some vowels considered as the most difficult ones such as /ʌ/, /ɔ:/, /ɜ:/, north, palm, schwa and goat (Benzies, 2013; Keshavarz & Khamis 2017). On the other hand, vowels are not the only issue around EFL practitioners. When it comes to learning consonants, students tend to substitute sounds. Hago and Khan (2015) argues that the most common sounds are the following ones: “the substitution of /p/ by /b/ in all word

positions, the substitution of /ŋ/ sometimes by /n-k/ and sometimes by /n-g/, the substitution of final /z/ by /dʒ/, /v/ replaced by /f/, and the confusion of /l/, the dark with /l/ the light” (p.97). Besides, a different study reflects that there are other consonants that causes problems in EFL pronunciation acquisition such as (/f/, /v/, /θ/ and /ð/) (Keshavarz & Khamis 2017). To contribute to the list of consonants, the study of Sahatsathatsana reflects that consonants found as the most difficult ones are the following: [θ], [ð], and [dʒ] (Sahatsathatsana, 2017). With this in mind, it is a reality that learners have difficult times when they try to imitate a consonant or vowel sound. However, it is also noticeable that learners are having problems with common sounds of the English alphabet which could be considered a case to study in the future.

Table 11

Psychological factors

Psychological Factors	Author(s)	No. of studies
Motivation	Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016); Gilakjani, Namaziandost and Ziafar (2020).	2
Attitude	Gilakjani, Namaziandost and Ziafar (2020).	1
Wish of speak	Nowacka (2012)	1

Note: N=3 Motivation is repeated in two studies

Table 11 represents the three main psychological factors affecting EFL learners. The lack of motivation seems to affect the students' performance in pronunciation. However, motivation does not come only from students. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) concluded that teachers must be the ones who have to be in touch with motivation consciousness. In fact, a meaningful class comes from teachers who have enough interest to teach, and thus, motivation symbolizes an extra item within this kind of class. However, Iranian teachers are in need of motivation, and therefore convert their pronunciation classes (if there is the case to have any pronunciation class) into classes, which seem to be not good enough (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). On the other hand, it seems that students possess enough motivation to learn. Besides, the high motivation of EFL Iranian learners helps the idea of reaching a native pronunciation and accent (Gilakjani, Namaziandost & Ziafar 2020). Indeed, motivation is part of the most common problems around teaching and learning pronunciation; however, there is a need for motivation consciousness in teachers' interests rather than students'. Otherwise, how students perceive and receive the language is another important factor that affects pronunciation acquisition. In this case, the attitude that students bear in certain contexts affects their learning. As an example, students who have a great vision about speakers of the target language are more likely to learn pronunciation on better terms (Gilakjani, Namaziandost & Ziafar 2020). Lastly, another term that has to be with psychological factors indirectly is the wish to speak. Since students know the importance of having a good level of pronunciation, the wish to speak correctly is not a factor considered as a problem, but it relates with the idea of how motivation affects the students' performance. Besides, learners who have the wish to use and pronounce words successfully are more likely to reach a native-accent pronunciation (Nowacka, 2012).

Table 12

Teaching instruction

Teaching resources	Author(s)	No. of studies
Teaching material/s	Benzies (2013); Gilakjani and Sabouri, (2016).	2
Pronunciation instruction	Benzies (2013); Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016); Gilakjani, Namaziandost and Ziafar (2020).	3
Phonetic Instruction	Nowacka (2012).	1

Table 12 is intended to analyze some of the items considered as teaching resources. It classifies the most important aspects of teaching; besides, how teaching devices contribute to acquiring pronunciation knowledge among EFL learners.

An accurate pronunciation performance goes hand in hand with the use of classroom materials. In fact, the reason why teachers are not giving the same amount of importance to pronunciation has to be with the lack of needed material within the classroom. In this case, one of these resources is known as “time management”. In fact, time is a resource that most teachers need to prepare a class; that is why it seems difficult to give emphasis to a pronunciation class since teachers do not have enough time to do it (Gilakjani & Sabouri,2016). To have a better understanding, it is noticeable that teaching materials are not considered so important in learning pronunciation. For example, the fact that learners

do not have enough opportunities to practice, the time that teachers employ to create pronunciation classes and materials, the monotonous activities teachers prepare, and the lack of testing the students' pronunciation skills (Benzies, 2013). The previous examples introduce the importance of pronunciation instruction. As a matter of fact, students do not reflect the issue, but instead, pronunciation issues appear due to teachers' methodology.

Different studies argue with the idea that pronunciation is not taking the enough importance that it should have within an EFL class, and thus, the methodology used is not the appropriate one. In addition, this problem appears since teachers do not have suitable materials for preparing pronunciation class (Benzies, 2013; Gilakjani, & Sabouri 2016; Gilakjani, Namaziandost, & Ziafar, 2020). Contrary to the previous statement, some of Iranian teachers show the desire to have an extra instruction in terms of teaching pronunciation (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). The previous finding helps us to know that teachers need extra help from higher entities such as educational institutions. On the other hand, it is important to point out that some of the methodologies that few teachers use have helped students to reach a native-speaker pronunciation. One study argues that phonetic instruction is a perceivable tool that has helped to overcome pronunciation problems of EFL learners (Nowacka, 2012).

CHAPTER VI

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This research synthesis aimed to analyze the different factors that affect the lack of pronunciation and speaking skills of EFL learners. After analyzing twenty main studies and gathering information from different sources, which were focused on the area of pronunciation and speaking performance, it can be concluded that learners face problems due to the following variants: language barriers, psychological factors, teaching instruction, and learning environment. The analyzed studies have provided sufficient evidence to support the use and interference of the first language “mother tongue” as a common issue of language barriers in both: pronunciation and speaking skills. It is due to the outcomes from the different studies which revealed meaningful impact affecting an accurate learners’ performance (Abrar et al., 2018; Ahmed, 2017; Keshavarz & Khamis, 2017). In terms of speaking skills, many students face difficulties when they try to express themselves due to the lack of vocabulary. Not having stocks of words to communicate in adequate spaces contribute to students being reticent (Mridha & Muniruzzaman, 2020).

Additionally, after examining studies from the pronunciation perspective, it is noticeable that another variants of language barriers contribute to non-accurate pronunciation such as phonetic (vowels/consonants), stress and intonation problems (Ahmed, 2017; Benzies, 2013; Dost, 2017; Hago & Khan, 2015; Keshavarz & Khamis Abubakar, 2017; Sahatsathatsana, 2017).

Furthermore, research also illustrates how psychological factors influence the way in which students perceive and keep the foreign language. Firstly, studies pointed out “motivation” as one of the most common psychological factors within the area of education which affect not only students but also teachers (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Gilakjani, Namaziandost & Ziafar, 2020). Secondly, the students’ wish to speak and their attitude also contribute to what causes them to have struggles, and thus, not being able to develop what is needed in communication: speaking and pronunciation skills (Abrar et al., 2018; Gilakjani, Namaziandost & Ziafar, 2020; Nowacka, 2012).

Due to the mentioned factors affecting learners’ speaking and pronunciation skills, “teaching instruction”, and the learning environment has become another area which contributes to those problems faced by EFL practitioners. Although students have benefited from teachers’ instruction (Nowacka, 2012), it is a minimum amount of these cases which lead us to conclude that there is a lack of creditable methodologies in teaching pronunciation. Besides, the English program itself tends to be weak in the different studies we analyzed (Mridha & Muniruzzaman, 2020). The misuse of helpful materials and lack of consciousness of how important is teaching “pronunciation” contribute to the development of the students’ issues (Benzies, 2013; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Gilakjani, Namaziandost & Ziafar, 2020).

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the results of this research synthesis, there are specific recommendations that we can make. Firstly, since pronunciation and speaking share the same problems in the area of language barriers and learning environment, it will be a great idea to try to overcome those issues by creating new English programs that are realistic to every single

context. It is because we are talking about EFL learners where English sometimes is not even taken into consideration. On one hand, the use of mother tongue is a big problem in this kind of program, so starting using the mother tongue partially will be a great idea for future teaching plans. Additionally, pronunciation is another language barrier that creates a low performance in speaking. As findings show, teachers are not focusing on pronunciation, and thus, they do not know how to introduce it in their EFL classes. For future education, teachers should learn how to teach pronunciation and to try to give it the same importance as the other skills in the path of learning a language. With the development of brand new programs, new prepared teachers and methodologies will appear. These ideas can create new ways of teaching speaking and pronunciation that most programs do not tend to focus on nowadays. Secondly, the conclusions in our research synthesis can create a pathway to follow for institutions, schools, and even teachers who are facing anxiety and psychological problems among students who are forced to speak in class. Motivation and negative attitudes are something very common in this study; this can be fixed if teachers know how to handle different situations, and having enough motivation in what they are teaching. To conclude, English programs have to change in EFL contexts. By modifying the programs, students could have the possibility to practice all the skills with the same importance, and therefore, they would create more competences at the moment of oral production. New English programs can fix the students' psychological problems and put them in a lower level. With new programs, new methodologies and teachers will appear. This will be helpful for students to feel safe, to be ready to speak clearly, and finally, to have a great pronunciation within their English classes and outside them.

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