

Fluency Hindrance of M. A. Students: Obstacles and Treatments

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ABSTRACT:- This study examines the use of English language among the students in M.A. in Iraq, and how they fluent in this foreign language. Hence, in societies where English is not spoken, fluent English speaking by M. A. students is a problem. The primary goal of this research is to identify the primary factors that obstruct English departments' ability to communicate effectively. Clarify the importance of English language in general and in M.A. students in particular. Analyze the data and investigates the results after the questionnaire. The investigation included 20 students from English department, the students were skeptical about the questionnaire. The researcher follows the qualitative methods of collecting and analysing the data of the study. As a result, the researcher discovers that insufficient vocabulary, inaccuracy in grammar, low use of English, speaking, reading, and listening challenges, and lastly mixing English with their home language are the primary causes of difficulty after collecting and analysing the data. The schools' authorities also must address those issues in order to increase students' fluency.

Keywords: English language, fluency, M.A. students, qualitative, questionnaire.

I. INTRODUCTION

Everyone wants to be able to communicate in English. Therefore learning it is a constant challenge around the world. Thus, learners desire to converse in English, read and listen to others, and watch and listen to audio and video recordings. This article focuses on a specific problem in department of English, at the University of Kufa \ college of Arts. The challenge is the department's students' fluency; many of them are highly capable and knowledgeable, but they can't communicate fluently; they stammer and make mistakes, and they make a big effort to speak in a continuous flow.

The key factors that restrict learners' fluency are discussed in this paper. A questionnaire has been created to help identify the main causes. A total of 20 students from the English department have been chosen to take part in the survey. The data was examined and concluded after answering the questionnaire's questions. So, the present paper proposes the following questions to be answered.

- 1- What is the definition of fluency?
- 2- What are the causes of fluency problems?
- 3- What can be done to increase M. A. students' fluency?

In relation to these questions, it aims at:

1. Identify the primary factors that obstruct English departments' ability to communicate effectively.
2. Clarify the importance of English language in general and in M.A. students in particular.
3. Analyze the data and investigates the results after the questionnaire.
4. Determine the causes of M. A. students' inability to communicate fluently, as well as the elements that influence English fluency.
5. Help Iraqi M. A. students enhance their fluency.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Thomson (2015) defines fluency as "is often used to denote general second language (L2) proficiency". It is the flow and the efficiency in the expressing of our thoughts, or ideas by using foreign language. Thus, the person can comprehend the second language easily, as well as reading and writing in this second language. This fluency can be tested especially in speaking. Furthermore, in the speaking of second language in fluency, sometimes there are few grammatical mistakes during the speech, but the most important point is that; the listeners should understand the speaker's speech.

Therefore, fluency is important among the students in English department; due to the importance of this skill. This study concerns with the fluency among the students in M.A. in English department, and what kind of difficulties in practicing English language, as well as how they improve their fluency in English.

2.2 Fluency

Chambers (1997) explains that fluency as "a common used notion". Thus, English language is used to communicate with other speakers as a second language. Furthermore, accuracy is described as the capacity to speak a language without any form of difficulty or stammering. In this sense, fluency is the ability to interconnect effectually and obviously in a foreign language (Pineda, 2017, P.80). Moreover, fluency is defined as the ability to speak a foreign language without hesitation or stammering (Lynda 2017, P. 80).

Fluency, on the other hand, is not just a means of speaking correctly, but also of comprehending what is being said. Riso, (2013) states that fluency supports the speaker in communicating with the people of the society (P.1). The frequency of pauses should not be excessive; instead, they should be normal and only happen between clauses and sentences. Those pauses can be viewed as part of the speech rhythm, but if they are longer than required, they will be considered as a type of speech disablement (Ullakonoja 2009,P. 90).

2.3 Fluency of English Language Learners

Learners of English may make grammatical errors while speaking, they may be hesitant of themselves and their language. Thus, they may believe that they have acquired a good level of English proficiency, but they lack the confidence to communicate smoothly with others. This is typical; learners may get a high level of English learning by traditional methods, but they must put in extra effort to achieve a strong level of fluency (Krashen, 1981, P.19). If you can't locate direct physical touch with a real speaker, you can increase your English language fluency by speaking in front of a mirror (Leonard, 2015, P. 229). Another option to improve your fluency is to enroll in a program that requires you to participate in real-life speaking scenarios with native speakers (Lundquist, 2008, P. 11).

When an English learner interacts with an English native speaker, the native speaker will lose a lot of time since the learner takes a long time to recall his thoughts and choose the appropriate words for the context (Abley, 2003, P.30). There are a variety of studies and programs aimed at teaching people not just how to write and read in English, but also how to speak it fluently (Bygate, 1987, P. 62).

2.4 Accuracy

The majority of English classes attempt to educate and focus on grammar and vocabulary, but if students wish to speak professionally, they must join in specific grammar and communication courses. To make their students fluent, the teacher in such courses must emphasize communication correctness. Learners can be made more accurate by watching movies, using technological equipment, computer programs, and smart boards, among other things. Subject-verb agreement, past tense, negation, and producing object pronouns are four syntactic categories that can be used to assess a speaker's accuracy (Pineda, 2017, P.4).

Accuracy and fluency cannot be acquired independently; they work together to help speakers perform effectively. Fluency refers to speaking a language without hesitation or stammering, while accuracy refers to avoiding errors. To be an excellent fluent speaker, the learner must focus on both (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, P.34).

Finally, learners of English language as a second language, emphasize on their accuracy in their speech. It means the correct use of the system of language including the pronunciation, grammar and the vocabulary. Thus, the learners need to learn the important skills in the use of second language and they need a lot of practice.

2.5 Communication Strategies in a Second Language

Putri (2012) illustrates that communication is very important for people around the world. Thus, we try to communicate to other people by using different means such as language. Therefore, the understanding of different languages helps to communicate with others easily. Hence, speaking our native language in communication with others does not need a great energy to memory words, or grammatical constructions. While speaking the second language; just like English language for Iraqi people needs a greater effort to memory the words and constructions in order to produce clearly speech that can be communicated. This procedure causes a type of interruption and hesitancy. Therefore, communicative strategies do not only play an central role in communication, but they also donate to second language acquisition. Thus, communicative strategies (CS) helps to make an open communication channel, it also helps to encourage hypothesis development . Consequently, Communication strategies are the systems which are used by both non-native and native speakers of a language to solve the problems that encountered in the course of communication; due to lack of information. For these reasons, certain strategies are used to overcome this problem.

There are two main types of communicative strategies:

1- Avoidance strategies

This type refers to the preference of the speaker of second language to be saved by preferring his native language in order to avoid the mistakes. This type divided into two branches:

a- Topic avoidance: it means that the learners of second language avoid to talk about the topics that they find it difficult to express.

b- Message abandonment: it means that the learners of the second language sometimes leaves the message unfinished; because of the lack of the linguistic items or structures.

2- Achievement strategies

This strategy means that the speakers of second language as a learner sometimes needs to borrow from his first language in order to achieve the aim of communication. This borrowing has many phases such as miming, retrieval or using gestures.

Rabab'ah (2005) explores the strategies as follows:

1. Approximation: It is the use of an alternative expression that may not express exactly what it means. Such as the use of *stool* for *chair*

2. Paraphrase \circumlocution: It means the describing, or explaining the meaning, or the purpose of the specific expression. For instance: a type of vehicle, it is something we use to....., it has four legs,.....

3. Word coinage: it is the creating an (L2) word thinking that it might work. Example , 'fish zoo' for 'aquarium'

4. Foreignizing: The trying out an first language word, but adjusting it slightly morphologically or phonologically.

5. Borrowing: The use of a word from other languages. For instance, when a German native speakers use words, or expressions which are not part of their (L1 or L2). while they are communication with a native English speakers .

6. Appeal for help: It means the asking of the interlocutor for a help.

7. Code switching: it refers to the use, or the insert of a language item extra than the language used in the speech.

8. Literal translation: It refers to the word-for-word translation, this translation is form the native language to the target language.

9. Use of hesitation devices \fillers: It means that when a learner may use filling words in order to fill a pause and to gain time to think.

10. Non-verbal strategies: They are the use of non-linguistic resources such as miming , gestures, facial expressions and sound imitation to help the learner/speaker to express the meaning.

2.6 The Methods for Improving your Spoken English without a Speaking Partner

1. Think in English:

One of the important reasons which make interruption in the fluency; is the thinking in one language to perform, or speak another. Sometimes it is so difficult for the learners of second language to speak without thinking in their native language. Thus, if the speakers do just like this, they translate from one language to another and translation is not an easy process.

Furthermore, the Arabic natives who want to learn English face this difficulty; most of them think in Arabic first and then try to translate their thought into English . This process spend time and causes interruption. So the solution of this problem is that the learners must practice mind to think in English straight. For instance, try to use English when they thinking about their day, or when they are trying to make decision about the food. That way the learners never have to use their native language and translate words. (Susan & Selinker, 2008, P. 30).

2. Talk to yourself

Learners of English language sometimes cannot make direct physical interaction with actual speakers, what to do? There is a beneficial way to practice English easily. It is buy talking to themselves. This practice will make the speakers listen to their thoughts aloud, and think in English better and faster. Thus, the learners may commit some errors, those mistakes will help them to do better in the future (Cook, 2008, P.53).

3. Use a mirror

In order to prove themselves, the learners can use this way by choosing a specific topic, and stranding in front of the mirror then speak. Thus, mirror is another way to improve the fluency. Hence, it is important to choose a topic that the learner interests in and try to make a conversation with himself in the mirror. This way is very useful to see yourself while speaking and consider your mistakes in the pronunciation or choosing the vocabulary. This process let the speaker s observe themselves concerning with the limitation of the rules and the structures of speech, and the facial use in the speaking of second language. It also helps the speakers to trust themselves in their ability to speak without any fear, or hesitation (Sandra , 2013, P.29).

4. Focus on Fluency

A speaker who speaks English as a second language must pay much more attention to the flow of speech than to grammar. If the speaker is thinking all the time about the grammar that follows, he will hesitate and, as a result, make mistakes. However, if the speaker concentrates on speaking fluently, he will make some mistakes but will still be understood (Susan & Douglas, 2002, p.99).

5. Listen and repeat

Listening is one of the skills that play a big role in learning a language. Listening to some videos on the internet or on TV channels can be useful in two ways: firstly, it trains your ear to hear and practise English words, and secondly, the speaker imitates the language in the same way as he hears it, which trains his speech organs to pronounce the words and structures easily and fluently (Cook, 2008, P.48).

III. PROCEDURES

3.1 The Nature of the Study

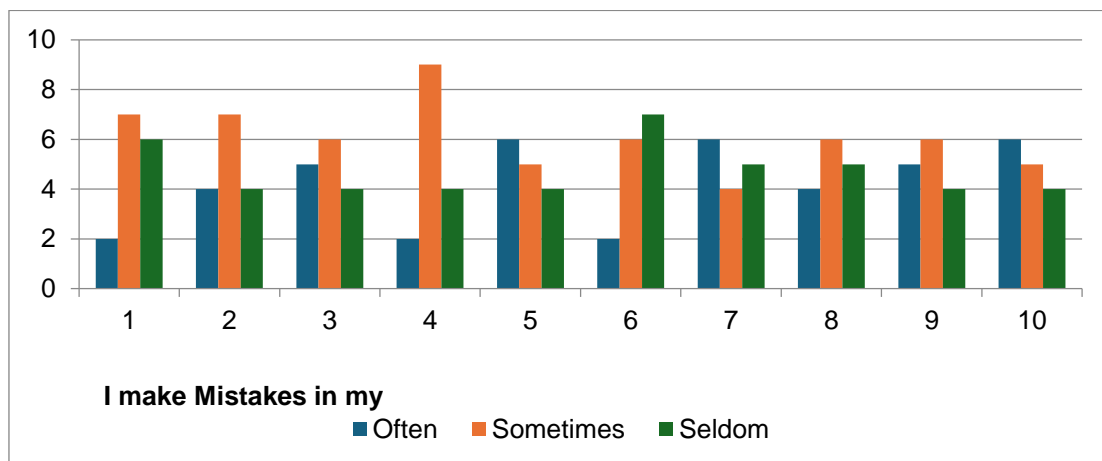
The researcher follows the qualitative methods in selecting and analysing the data, in order to reach to credit and reliable results. The data are fifteen students in English department \College of Art in Kufa University, all of them M.A. students. The students answer the questionnaire that presented by the researcher in sheet of papers. The data of the study consists of a questionnaire with twenty-two questions on the reasons for using English, causes hindering students' fluency and other factors. The responses to the questions were categorized and designed using the statistical techniques of the Microsoft Excel program. Each question is conveyed by a descriptive graph, or table to show the percentages of the results.

Data Analysis and Results

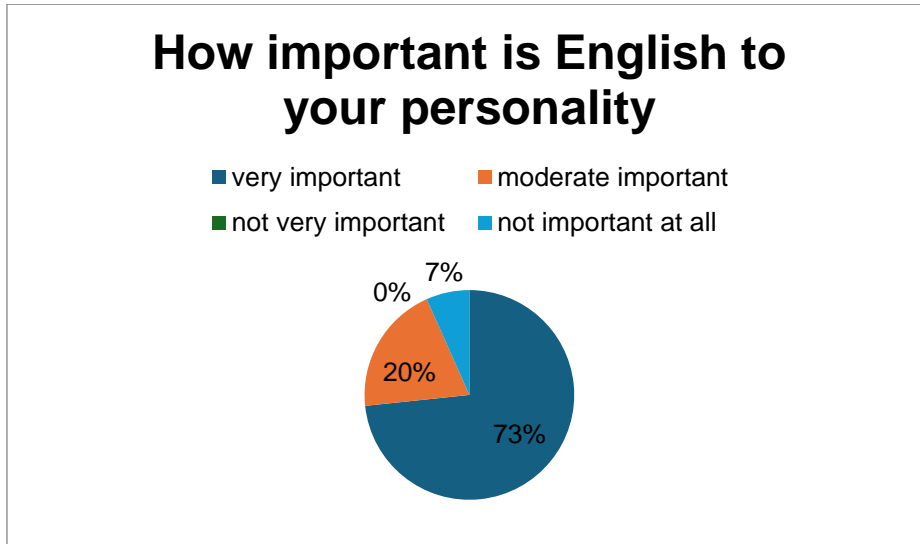
Questions one to ten were about the mistakes students make in different situations and on different occasions. Most mistakes are made in pronunciation.

Chart (1) questions score 1-10. Table 1

| | Students' fluency in English | Seldom | Sometimes | Often |
|----|------------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|
| 1 | Mistakes in pronunciation | 6 | 7 | 2 |
| 2 | Mistakes in grammar | 4 | 7 | 4 |
| 3 | Cannot remember vocabulary | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| 4 | Pauses and hesitation | 4 | 9 | 2 |
| 5 | Substitution of words | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 6 | Ask for repetition | 7 | 6 | 2 |
| 7 | Worry about mistakes | 5 | 4 | 6 |
| 8 | Misunderstood listener | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| 9 | Speak English in class | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| 10 | Speak English out of class | 4 | 5 | 6 |

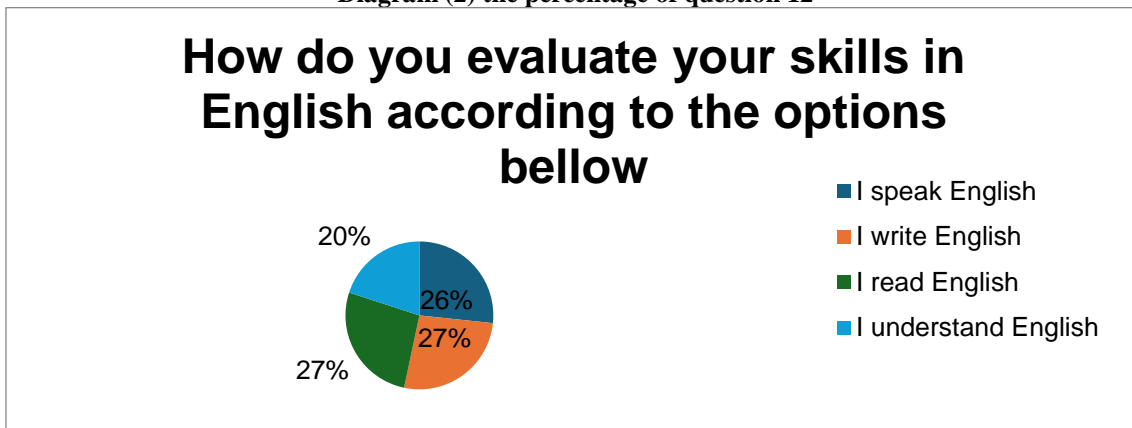


Question number 11 refers to the importance of the English language for the students' personality. From the results of the questionnaire, it appears that English is very important to the students' personality with a percentage of 73% the other 20% are moderately important to their personality and the remaining 7% are not of great importance. See the following diagram Diagram (1) Question eleven percent



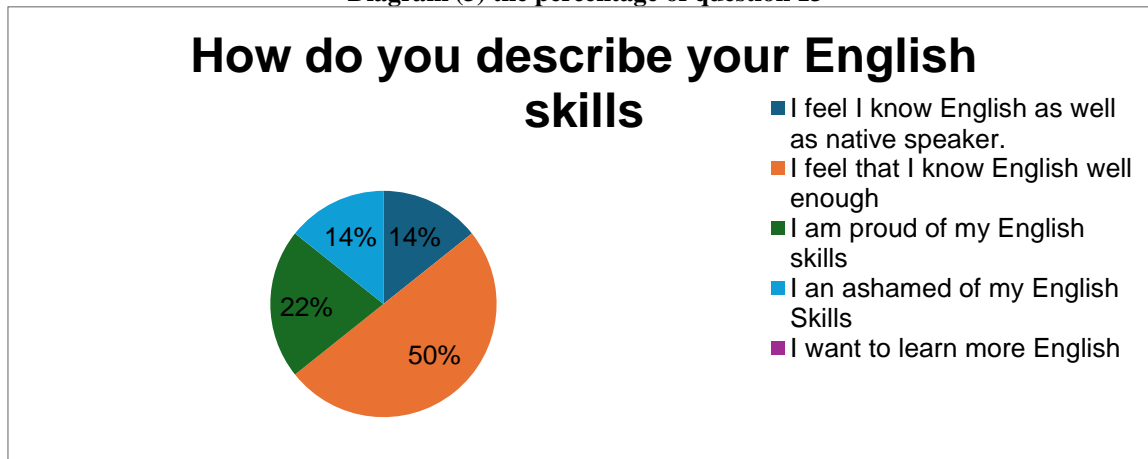
Question number 12 was about the students' evaluation of the four skills. 26% of the students state that their English speaking is the best skill, the next skill is understanding spoken English which scores 20%, third is writing English well with 27%. The ability to read English is also in the same rank with 27%.

Diagram (2) the percentage of question 12



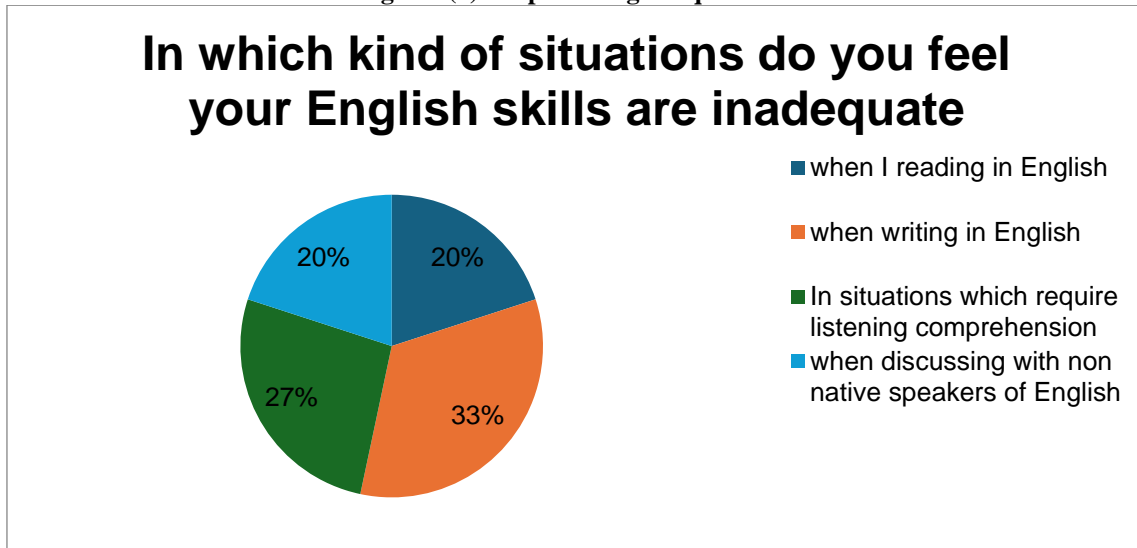
As for the assessment of students' English proficiency in question 13, the responses show that 14% the students agree that they need to learn more about English, 50% admitted that they know enough about English, 22% are proud of their English as they can use and communicate it easily, 14% are ashamed of their English proficiency and need more work to improve it, and finally, none of the participants prove that English is their mother tongue. All the above percentages are shown in the following chart.

Diagram (3) the percentage of question 13



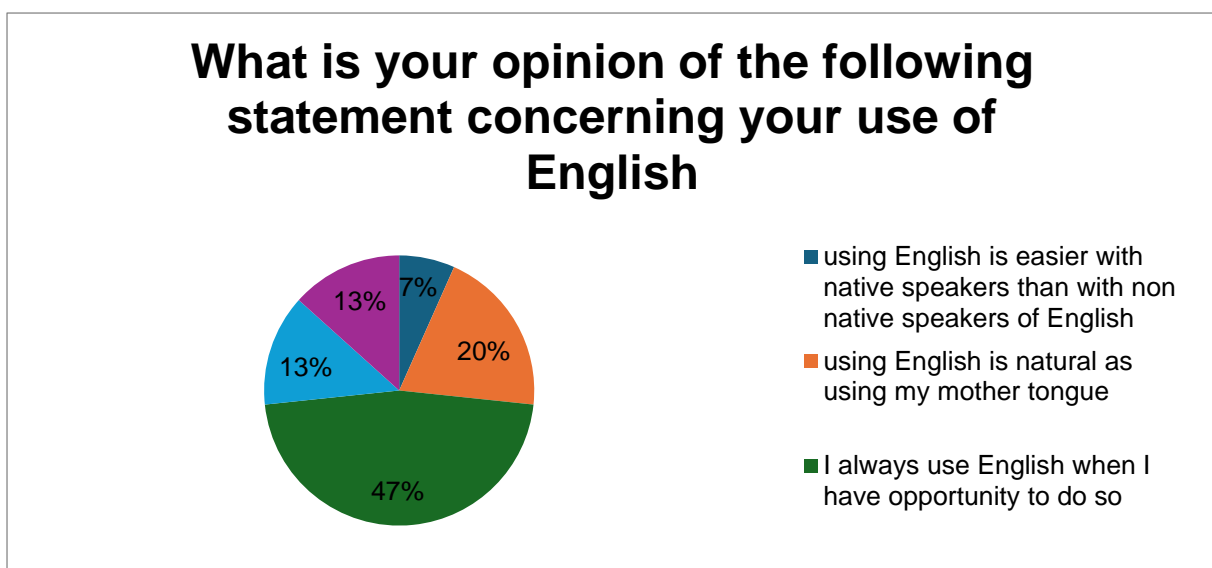
Question 14 asks students to indicate which skill they are inadequate at compared to others. 20% of the students indicated that they perform inadequately in reading, while 20% of them perform inadequately in discussion with non-native speakers of English. 33% of students reported that their writing skills were inadequate and 27% of students reported that they performed better in a situation requiring comprehension. See chart (4).

Diagram (4) the percentage of question 14



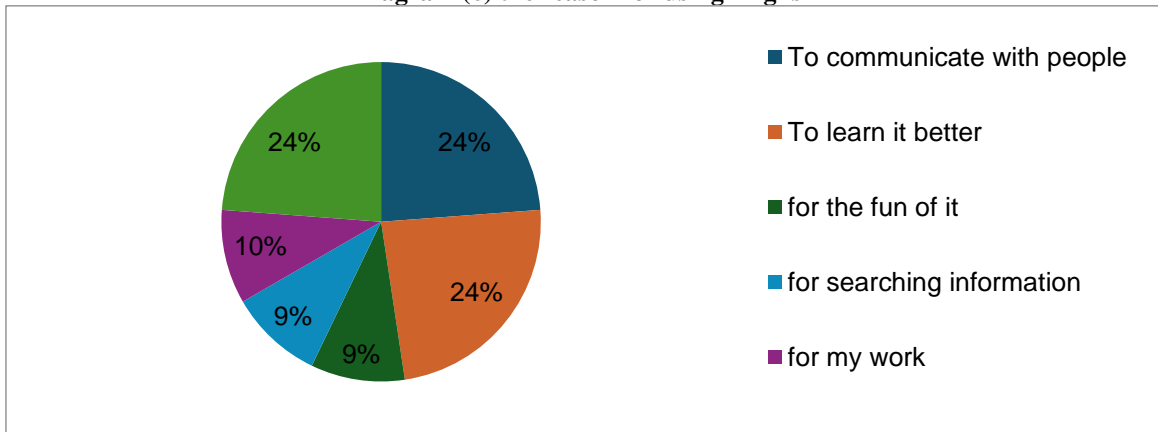
Question 15 asked students to note their initial reaction to the way they use their English. Most of them, 47% of students use English when they have the opportunity to do so. 20%, said that their use of English is natural and native, which does not mean that their language is native, but that they feel comfortable using their English, which is why it is natural. Another 13% of students use English when it is absolutely necessary. 13%, is accounted for by students who use English to speak fluently. Finally, The smallest percentage of the students 7% , who participated in the survey say that it is easier to speak English with native speakers. See chart (5) below.

Diagram (5) students' opinions about statements concerning English use.



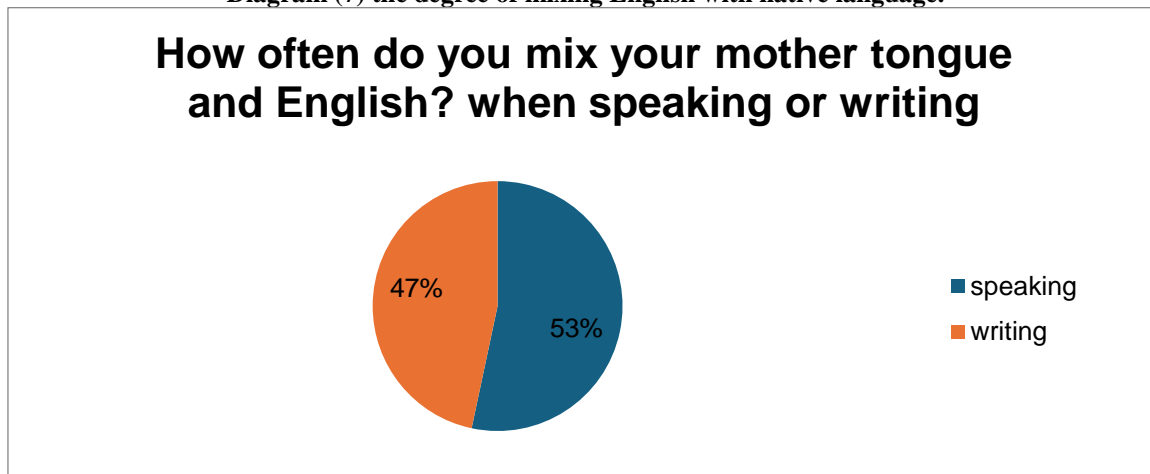
Question 16 is about the reason for students' use of English. 24% is to communicate with others and for the students. The third reason for using English is to gather or search for information with a percentage of 9% and 9% for fun. . The other 10% for work. Finally, 0% is for easier activities and among friends.

Diagram (6) the reason for using English

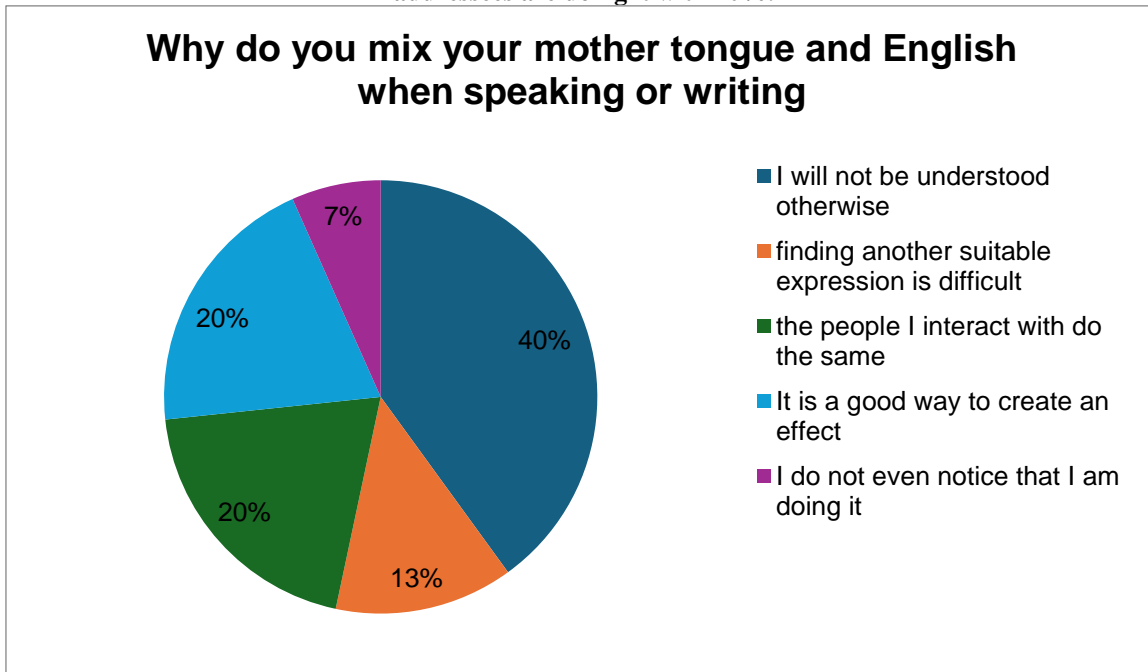


When asked about mixing English and the mother tongue, the students state that the majority of them, 53%, prove that they mix English with Arabic in speaking. The rest of them, including 47%, only mix writing. Look at the chart below to see the percentage.

Diagram (7) the degree of mixing English with native language.

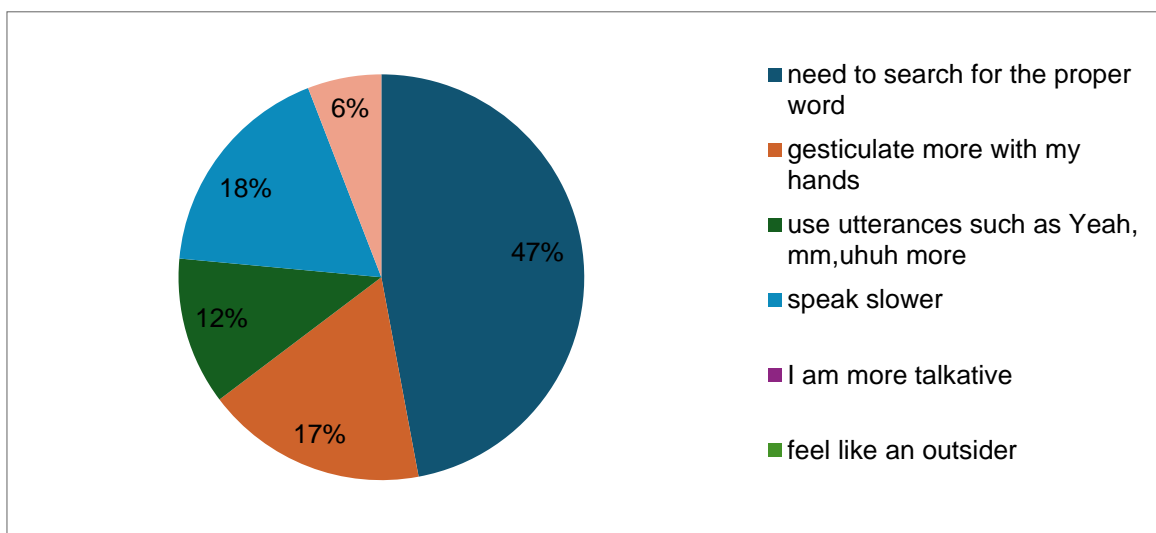


Question 17 was about the nature of the mixing of English and Arabic, whether in writing or speaking. Question 18 was about the reason for mixing the mother tongue with English. According to the students' answers, 13% think that it is difficult to find another suitable expression in English, 20% think that mixing is a good way to get an effect. 40% of the students think that they would not be understood if they did not mix English and their mother tongue. The last two reasons, with 7%, are that students do not feel that they are mixing the two languages, and that the other group is doing the mixing because their addressees are doing it with 20%.



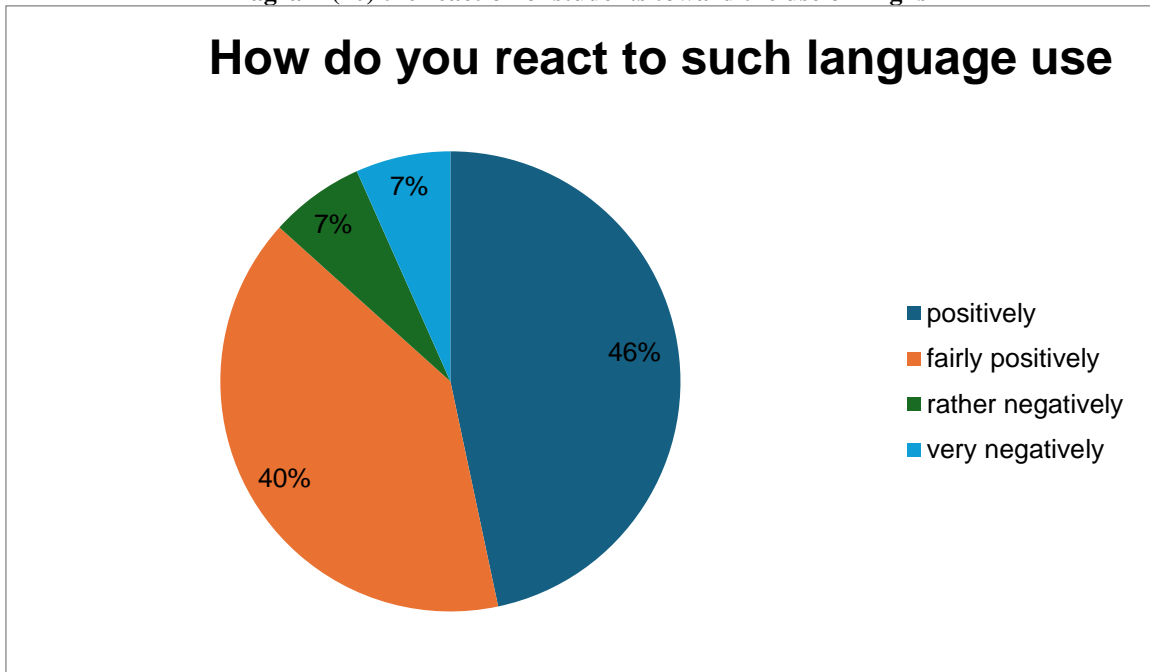
The next question, which is 19, is about the nature of the student as a speaker of English as a second language. Seven options are given, but the majority choose only five options. The first option with 47% shows that they have to search for the right words when speaking English. The next percentage with 18% for speak slower. 17% is for gesticulate more with hands. 12% proves that students use interjections like hmm, yea when speaking English and finally, 6% is for the same as mother tongue..

Q\ Compare yourself as a speaker of English and as a speaker of your mother tongue, and choose those statements that best describe you as a speaker of English.
 Diagram (9) the nature of students as speakers of English

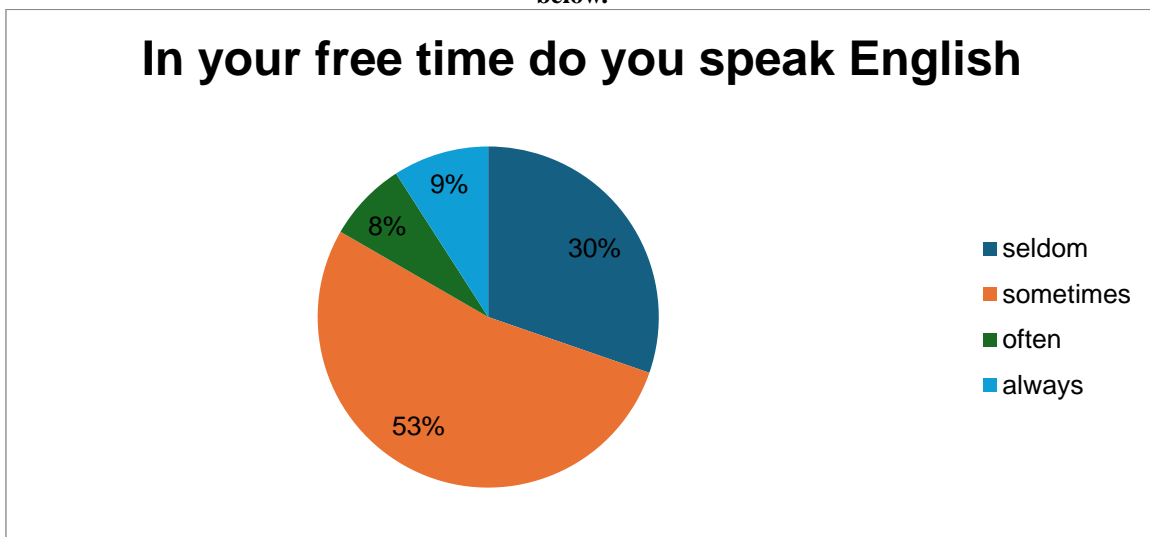


Question 20 is about the evaluation of the use of English from the students' point of view. 46% of students respond positively, 40% of students respond fairly positively, only 7% of students respond somewhat negatively and finally only 7% respond very negatively. See the chart below.

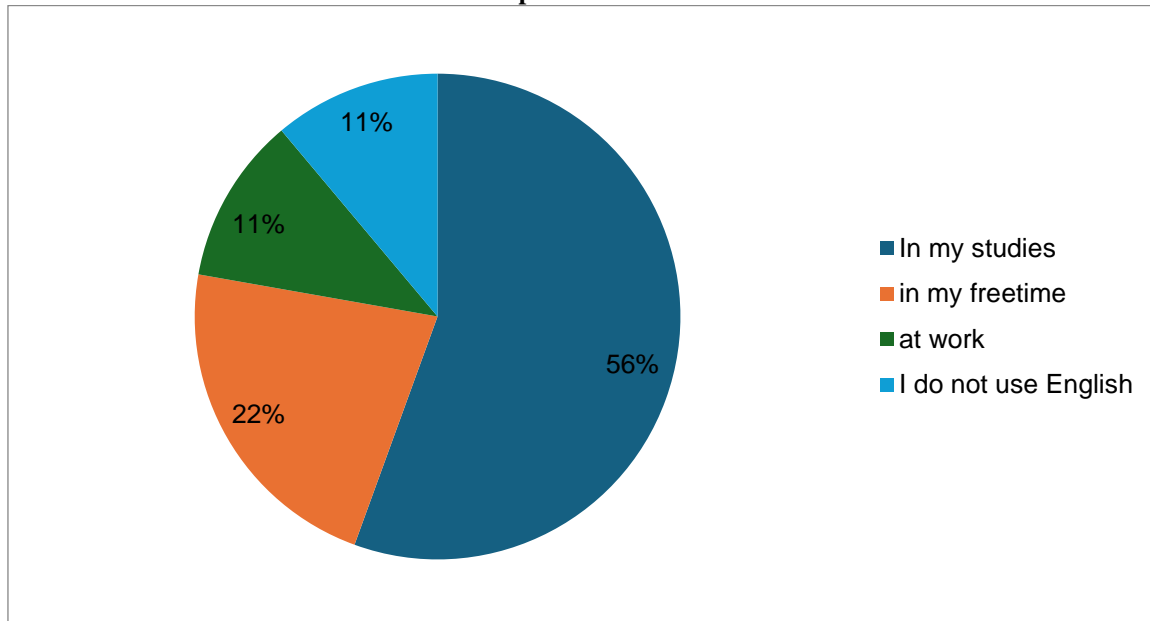
Diagram (10) the reaction of students toward the use of English



Question 21 is about the use of English in leisure time. 53% of the students say that they sometimes use English in their free time. 30% of them rarely use English in their free time. 9% of the students always use English in their free time. 8% of them often use English in their free time. Finally, only See chart (11) below.



Finally, question 22 is about the situation or purpose in which students use English most often. 56% of students use English in their studies, 22% in their leisure time, 11% of students do not use English at all in the four situations mentioned below and finally only 11% of students use English at work. This is the end of the data analysis of the research questionnaire. In the next section we will explain the most important result.



IV. CONCLUSIONS

From the data analysis explained earlier, the following results can be derived:

- 1- Most students who learn English as a foreign language have low vocabulary, they also speak with pauses. These problems hinder their speaking.
- 2- Most students have problems and obstacles in their pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.
- 3- In terms of the four skills, students have many obstacles in speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- 4- The majority of students feel that they need to learn more English; to improve their language.
- 5- Most of the student feel that they speak naturally, but with some problems. Thus, they need to practice more.
- 6- The most common reason for students to use English is to communicate with others, by expressing their thoughts and ideas and to learn better English.
- 7- Almost of students mix English with their mother tongues, just like Arabic. This happens when students feel that they cannot remember certain vocabulary and they feel that they will not be understood if they do not mix the two languages.
- 8- Some of the students respond positively to the use of English.

V. DISCUSSION CONCLUSION

From the above results, it can be concluded that most of the students want to learn English and speak fluently, but certain problems might hinder their speech and fluency. Poor vocabulary, hesitation and shyness, the lack of practice are the main problems that hinder them. Most students have problems with soft skills, including speaking. One of the good findings is that majority of the students have a strong motive to learn and speak English. As well as to use English in their studies. So, academic institutions need to use this motive to improve students' fluency, by providing suitable circumstances as well as environments including much more practice. It is also known that students mix English with their native Arabic language. This mixing is a result of affecting their fluency, and this temporary solution only makes matters worse. Therefore, certain arrangements need to be made to overcome these difficulties and improve the students' language skills.

VI. SUGGESTION

For future studies the researcher suggest the following:

1. The Role of Arabic Language in the Memorizing of English for Foreigners.
2. Who Fluent in English Language effects on our Communication as Foreigners.
3. The Importance role of the Fluency of the Teacher Learner of English as a Second Language.

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