



## Identifying the factors that affect the oral participation among EFL Libyan understudy learners at the Department of English, Sirte University.

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### Abstract

This study aims to identify the possible factors that might cause the oral participation problems among EFL Libyan understudy learners at the Department of English, Sirte University. Thus, a quantitative design was employed in this study using a close-ended questionnaire in order to obtain the required data. The data was analyzed manually. In the study, 25 students were selected non-randomly to complete the questionnaire. The results indicated that there are some factors which influence the learners' oral participation such as fear of mistake and criticizing, shyness, lack of confidence, lack of vocabulary, inability to express their ideas and thoughts, lack of motivation, lack of support, lack of time. These factors are involved into four groups: students' factors, teachers' factors, curriculum's factors and environments' factors. The researchers adopted some recommendations that will be useful for teachers as well as learners.

### Keywords

**Oral participation problems, EFL, Students' factors, Teachers' Environments' Curriculum factor.**

### 1. Introduction

One main concern of language learning is the communication process which is performed through speech. Speaking is a crucial part in the EFL classroom context which needs much practice to master this skill. In traditional teaching English, teachers often give more interest to the cultural aspects of the language, and neglect the speaking skill. In the Libyan context, where English is considered as a foreign language, teaching speaking represents a real challenge to EFL teachers since English is typologically different from the Arabic language, teachers encounter many problems in making students response orally in the target language (Laubazaid,2012).

At the university level, Spoken English courses are mainly scheduled to improve the students' oral performance because they can serve as a suitable space for practicing pronunciation, and language articulation with all its phonetic and phonological aspects. However, they still face some hindrances. As it is noted, several students do not participate orally in classroom and do not show any proof of progress; which indicates that there are some factors that might hinder the learners to participate and perform English well.

One of the main goals that EFL teachers aim to achieve is to provide an adequate environment of

teaching the language. Hence, students could practice their English language in the classroom and in their daily lives. However, there seem to be challenges that may prevent teachers from achieving such a goal. It is noted by the researchers that very few learners who participate in classes and other learners may never contribute in any conversational sessions. This is due to several factors that could cause such an issue among EFL learners. For that reason, this study has been conducted to shed lights on the factors behind learners' inability and hesitation to participate during classes.

Thus, this study shades some light on what hinders the students in the Department of English at Sirte University from participation in the classroom. A sample of students who passed Spoken III and Spoken IV courses in the English department at Sirte university have been chosen as a sample case for this study because they have enough experience in the department as well as they have already practiced speaking skill in the spoken courses to enlighten the photo for the researchers to get the exact answer for the research question. The focus in this study was on students', teachers', curriculum's and environmental factors that influence learners' oral participation.

## 2. Literature review

According to Lee (2005), participation usually means students speaking in class which includes answering and asking questions, making comments, and joining in discussions. In other words, classroom participation includes paying attention, being on task, asking and responding to questions, participation in group discussion, making good use of class time. Therefore, students who do not participate in those ways mentioned are often considered to be passive in the classroom.

Speaking is regarded as one of the most difficult skills to master for the majority of EFL learners, even those who have a background about the language still have problems when they come to have a real conversation with native speakers. It is similar to what Luoma (2004:1) stated that "speaking in a foreign language is a very difficult and competence in speaking it takes a long time to develop."

The factors that affect the learners' participation in the classroom varied from one researcher to another. Rababa'h (2005) puts forward that there are a lot of factors that may prevent learners from participating in English classes. These factors are connected to the learners themselves, the teaching techniques, the curriculum and the environment.

### 2.1 Factors related to Students

Students' linguistic knowledge plays an important role in their oral participation, and lacking of this knowledge may affect students' participation. According to Richards (2008) there are some linguistic problems that affect someone's participation such as poor in grammar, lack of vocabulary and mispronunciation.

In addition, learning a foreign language needs to know a large number of its vocabulary. As Thornbury (2005:22) argued "spoken language also has a relatively high proportion of words and expression". The situation in EFL classes is that many students often face difficulty in oral participation because their vocabulary is limited. This lack of vocabulary leads them to use their mother tongue or repeat the same words, so they are unable to communicate effectively in target language. Beside this, there is a noticeable factor which is mispronunciation of words, which leads to problems in reception or comprehension of an utterance's meaning. Similarly, Gilakjani (2011)

points out that if the speakers have improper pronunciation, their utterance will not be understandable to listeners. As a result, they will not be successful in their communication. This means that, students may fail to produce an effective oral communication because of their pronunciation mistakes. Usually these problems are because of lack of experience with English sounds.

In additions, Davies and Pearse (2000) argued that many of EFL learners often prefer to keep their ideas for themselves rather than producing ungrammatical sentences because they are scared from facing their teachers and classmates as a reason of being radical behind them.

On the other hand, the psychological factor is one of the factors that may hinder EFL students from participating orally. The barriers that may prevent students including use of mother tongue, lack of self-confidence, shyness, and fear of making mistakes.

It is clearly noticed that EFL students often use their mother tongue inside and outside the classrooms because of less exposure to the target language. Students may try to shift to their native language when they fail in expressing their ideas and thoughts and this is due to lack of vocabulary. According to Baker and Westrup (2003:12) "barriers to learning can occur if students knowingly or unknowingly transfer the cultural rules from their mother tongue to a foreign language". Therefore, using the mother tongue or borrowing words from their native language can prevent them from acquiring the target language. In addition, it will lead to breakdown of communication inside and outside the classroom.

### 2.2 Factors related to teachers

As it is known, the teacher is the main source of knowledge for EFL learners as they have the whole responsibilities to encourage the students to share their ideas without any obstacles. So, factors that related to the teacher including teacher role and teacher methods and techniques.

According to Harmer (2001) teacher roles are changed fluently according to the nature of class lessons' stages and activities. Moreover, Harmer has classified certain distinct roles which are identified as controller, assessor, prompter and

organizer.

In addition, there are some methods and techniques that might be used by the EFL teachers in the teaching process. One of them is called teacher-centered method in which students simply obtain information from the teacher without building their engagement level with subject being taught (Boud & Feletti, 1999). The approach is least practical, more theoretical and memorizing (Teo and Wong, 2000). It does not use activity-based learning to motivate the students to learn real life problems based on applied knowledge. The lecturer may attempt to maximize the delivery of information with minimizing time and effort as a result, both interest and understanding of students may get lost. To address such shortfalls, Zakaria, Chin & Daud (2010) specified that teaching should actively involve students as the main participants rather than just focus on imparting rules, definitions, and processes for them to memorize.

The second one is students-centered method, in which many scholars today adopt more supple student-centered method to enhance active learning (Greitzer, 2002). According to Hesson and Shad (2007) most teachers today apply the students-centered approach to promote interest, analytical research, critical thinking and enjoyment among students. The teaching method is regarded more effective since it does not centralize the flow of knowledge from the teacher to the students. The approach also motivates goal-orientated behavior among students, hence the method is very effective in improving student achievement (Slavin, 1996).

The third one is teacher- student interactive method. This teaching method applies the strategies used by both teacher-centered and students-centered approaches. The subject information produced by the learners remembered better than same information presented to the learners by the lecturer (Jacoby, 1978, Mc Danial, Friedmand and Boune, 1978; and Slamecka and Graf, 1978). The method encourages the students to search for relevant knowledge rather than the lecturer monopolizing the transmission of information to the learners.

### **2. 3 Factors related to the curriculum**

Curriculum is an important tool in teaching, it

should meet the students' needs and it should be suitable to their level. Tanner and Tanner (1988) defined curriculum as the reconstruction of knowledge and experience systemically developed under the auspices of school (or university), to enable the learner to increase his or her control of knowledge and experience. In fact, the curriculum is based on several points or criteria through which the students feel more satisfied.

One of these criteria is "the quality of instruction" which refers to the degree to which students perceive the made of instruction to be of high quality. If students believe there is high quality of instruction, they are more likely to feel satisfied (Aman 2009). The second criterion is "the variety of courses in major" which refers to students' perception that the curriculum at their instructions provides a variety of courses in their major. Variety of courses has been identified as predicator in student's satisfaction (Cort et al., 2000). If there is a variety of courses, students are more likely to have broader skills and knowledge, which in turn affects their satisfaction level with curriculum. The third one is "the major course content" which refers to the students' perception that courses in their major have relevant content. Parayitam (2007) believed that the students' perception of course content set by the instructor were positively related to both effectiveness and satisfaction. The fourth criterion is "capstone experiences" which refers to the degree to which students are provided an opportunity to integrate, synthesize, and reflect on what has been learned across a course of study. It could be argued that if students are satisfied with their capstone experience, they are more likely to be satisfied with the curriculum.

Another criterion that makes the students feel more satisfied is "the academic advising". It refers to the extent to which students are satisfied with academic advising, including accessibility of faculty, and the quality of the interaction with their advisor. Close relationships with faculty, especially as part of the advising process, are instrumental in students feeling connected to their institution (Corts et al., 2000; Russell & Lehman, 2008; Gordon, 2005). Further, Peterson, Wanger, & Lamb, (2001) found that effective academic advising played a role in a student's positive perceptions of the institution.

Finally," the grading" is another criterion that

makes the students feel satisfied. The more the grading system is perceived to be fair or the more students earn the grade that they expect, the more likely they are to feel satisfied. Parayitam (2007) indicates that perception of fairness of the instructor's grading procedure is related to students' satisfaction.

## 2. 4 Factors related to the environment

Classroom environment is an important factor in effective teaching and learning. Mc Combs & Whister (1997:51) said that: "learning occurs best in an environment that contains positive relationships and interaction and in which the learner feels appreciated, acknowledged respected and validated". Non motivated atmosphere for the EFL learners also hinder students' participation and prevent their speaking development. As the teacher is the main source for creating a relaxed atmosphere for the learners and to give them the opportunity to express themselves, Davies and Pearse (2000:82) state some implications for effective teaching "Try to create a relaxed atmosphere in your class so that most learners are not frightened of speaking in front of the class. And do as many speaking activities as possible in pairs and group, so that the learners can speak English without the rest of the class listening." Therefore, motivating atmosphere is an important factor for teaching and learning in foreign language. Littlewood (1981) asserts that the developing communicative skills can only be realized if the learners have motivation and opportunity to express their classmates and teachers.

On the other hand, class size is regarded as one of the major challenges for both teaching and learning processes. In overcrowded classes, EFL students have less opportunities to speak since teachers face many difficulties in managing the classes. Celce-Murcia, M. (2001) said that large classes limit both student opportunities to talk and teachers' interventions to provide feedback. Yet, large classes prevent EFL learners from having an equivalent chance of participation during the session. However, small classes are beneficial for language learning because students will get enough opportunities to speak and communicate.

In addition, time allotted is another obstacle for both students and teachers. This prevents teachers

from giving greater opportunity for their students to participate in classroom activities. As a result, students react inappropriately because they believe that teachers are not fair with them. Therefore, they are also constrained by both time limitation and large classes since they have neither adequate time nor the space to realize their aims. Consequently, time allocation represents a barrier to students' participation (Selma, 2016).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

Quantitative research design was adopted in this study to obtain the data. A close-ended questionnaire was used in order to identify the factors that might cause a student's difficulty to participate during classes.

### 3.2 Research question

This study aims to answer the following question:

- What are the possible factors that might affect the Libyan EFL learners' oral participation at the Department of English, Sirte University?

The research question is designed to grasp the issue fully. The factors that affect Libyan learners' participation inside the class should be identified.

### 3.3 Participants

The sample of the study was those who are studying spoken III and spoken IV in the third and fourth semesters in English department at Sirte university. The reason beyond this as they have already passed spoken I and II, they could be aware of the problems that might be faced while they communicate and participate. The participants were selected non-randomly as they were chosen from specific subjects. About 25 students with different ages and gender were participated, as Dawson (2002:47) stated that "sampling refers to choosing a smaller, more manageable number of people to take part in your research." Having a larger sample would require more time for analysis and more space for presenting the results which was not possible in this rather small research with relatively limited time.

No	Nationality	Gender		Age	Semester			
		Male	Female		6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>
25	Libyan	6	19	Between 21-26	2	5	10	8

Table (1) – Biographical information

### 3.4 Data collection method

In this study the researchers used a questionnaire for students which was adopted from (Cheekeong et.al, 2014, Yassen, 2018 & Selma, 2016).). The aim of the questionnaire is to explore the factors that might affect the oral participation of Libyan EFL learners at the department of English, Sirte university. The questionnaire is designed according to five Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree and strongly disagree). It consists of 24 items which are divided accordingly into four themes (students' factors, teachers' factors, curriculum factors & environmental factors). The items 1 to 6 are related to teachers' factors, items 7 to 12 are related to curriculum factors, items 13 to 18 are related to students' factors and items 19 to 24 are related to environmental factors.

The questionnaire was handed out to the students in English without translation as it is assumed that the students could understand the content. The data has been gathered in two days.

### 3.5 Data analysis

In this study, as the number of participants were small, so the data was analyzed manually. The formula that has been used to calculate the percentage of the data items is as follows:

The number of responses is divided by (÷) the total number of the participants then multiplied by (×) 100. Example:-  $10 \div 30 \times 100 = 33\%$

## 4. Findings

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influence the EFL Libyan learners in the department of English to participate orally in classes. Quantitative data from a close-ended questionnaire was analyzed manually.

The overall percentages of the participants' agreement on the factors that affect their oral participation (as shown in table 1) indicate that the curriculum factors have got the highest percentage (34.5%) in affecting the learners' oral participation according to the learners' points of views. However,

the factors which are related to the students themselves have got the second position with 31%. Though factors related to the instructional environment have rated 18.2%, a ratio of 16.3% has been recorded for the factors which are related to the teachers' roles for their influence on the students' oral participation.

No	Themes	Percentage
1	Factors related to teacher's role	16.3 %
2	Factors related to the curriculum	34.5 %
3	Factors related to students	31 %
4	Factors related to the instructional environment	18.2%

Table 2: Overall percentage of oral participation factors

The results of the questionnaire about the factors that influence the learners' oral participation are divided into four sections. The first section is about the factors that are related to the teacher's role, the second section is about the factors which are related to the curricula, the third section deals with the factors which are related to the students. Finally, the last section discusses the results of the factors which are concerned with the instructional environment.

### 4.1 Factors related to the teacher's role

As can be seen from table 3, more than a half of the statements received high percentages of disagreement from the participants which indicates that not the teacher who limits the learners' oral participation in the class. About 14 (56%) of the participants disagreed with statement (4) which is says that *the teachers do not force the students to express their ideas in the target language (English)*. Also, the table shows that about 13 (52%) of the participants disagree respectively with the statements (3 & 5) which are based on *the instructors frequently criticize their pronunciation mistakes so they feel demotivated to speak; and there are no native speakers, so this does not require them to use the target language (English)*. In addition, about 12 (48%) of the responses disagreed with statement 6 which states *the teaching methods and techniques used by teachers do not encourage them to use English*. Whereas, about 10 (40%) of the participants agreed with statement (2) which says *"our speeches are frequently interrupted by teachers, so this discourages us for using English."* However, 10 (40%) of the students disagreed with *their teachers do not frequently use the target language in the courses, so they prefer using their native language (Arabic)*.

No.	Items	S	A	N	DA	S	D
1.	Our teachers do not frequently use the target language in the courses, so we prefer using our native language (Arabic)	1 4%	7 28%	7 28%	9 36%	1 4%	
2.	Our speeches are frequently interrupted by teachers, so this discourages us for using the target language (English).	0 0%	10 40%	6 24%	9 36%	0 0%	
3.	Our teachers frequently criticize our pronunciation mistakes so we do not want to speak and we feel demotivated	3 12%	3 12%	6 24%	11 44%	2 8%	
4.	Our teachers do not force us to express our ideas in the target language(English).	2 8%	4 16%	5 20%	11 44%	3 12%	
5.	There is no native speakers, so this does not require us to use the target language (English).	2 8%	4 16%	6 24%	11 44%	2 8%	
6.	Teaching methods and techniques used by our teachers do not encourage us to use the target language (English).	1 4%	6 24%	6 24%	11 44%	1 4%	

Table 3: Teacher’s Role factors

4.2 Factors related to the curricula

As can be noted in Table 4, the agreement percentage is high on most of the items. In this regard, 18 participants, which represent (72%) of students' responses agreed on item 8 that they do not make any speaking and listening activities, so this affects them in a negative way in using the target language (English)., 64% of the participants agreed on items 7 and 9, "our vocabulary knowledge is not sufficient enough to express our ideas and argue about any topics", and "most of our exams are written so we do not give priority to oral language" While 15 (60%) of the participants agreed on item (10) which is based on "When we use our native language during our English course, we do not get any constructive feedback.", and similarly on item (11), about 15 (60%) of the responses showed that *due to the content of some courses which focus on theoretical part of the language and the attitudes of teachers towards the courses' content, the students could not be able to use target language orally.* While 16 (64%) of the participants disagreed on statement 12 "course do not give us a chance to use target language (English)".

NO.	Items	S	A	N	DA	S	D
7.	Our vocabulary knowledge is not sufficient enough to express our ideas and argue about any topics.	6 24%	10 40%	4 16%	3 12%	2 8%	
8.	We do not make any speaking and listening activities, so this affects us in a negative way in using the target language (English).	8 32%	10 40%	1 4%	4 16%	2 8%	
9.	Most of our exams are written so we do not give priority to oral language.	12 48%	4 16%	3 12%	2 8%	4 16%	
10.	When we use our native language during our English course, we do not get any constructive feedback.	5 20%	10 40%	5 20%	5 20%	--	
11.	Some course because of their contents and attitudes of our teachers make us not use	7 28%	8 32%	3 12%	6 24%	1 4%	

	target language orally.						
12.	Courses do not give us a chance to use target language (English).	3 12%	1 4%	5 20%	11 44%	5 20%	

Table 4 – Curricula factors

4.3 Factors related to the students

The results of the third section on personal factors that contribute to the oral participation difficulties encountered by Libyan EFL learners, as seen in table 5, 92% of the participants agreed on item 13 which states that "It is easier to express our ideas and thoughts in our native language (Arabic)". Whereas, 80% of the students feel that they are part of the problem as they feel worried and anxious while talking in the target language and make a mistake. However 18 (72%) of the respondents agreed on "I fear criticism from others while speaking." Then, 14 (56%) of the responses agreed that the students feel shy and have a lack of confidence while speaking English in class. However, it is showed that less than a half of the students about 12 (48%) disagreed with item 18 which is "I find it difficult to build sentences, I know the grammar but I can't put it into sentences". The last but not least, about 11 ( 44%) of the students disagreed with that *they are passive in some courses, so they do not need to use the target language (English).*

NO.	Items	S	A	N	DA	S	D
13.	It is easier to express our ideas and thoughts in our native language (Arabic).	4 16%	19 76%	1 4%	1 4%	0 0%	
14.	In most of the courses we are passive, so we do not need to use the target language (English).	2 8%	6 24%	6 24%	10 40%	1 4%	
15.	Feeling of making mistakes while talking in the target language increases our anxiety.	11 44%	9 36%	2 8%	2 8%	1 4%	
16.	I fear criticism from others while speaking.	8 32%	10 40%	1 4%	2 8%	1 4%	
17.	I am shy, I don't feel confident while speaking English in class	6 24%	8 32%	2 8%	6 24%	3 12%	
18.	I find it difficult to build sentences, I know the grammar but I can't put it into sentences.	--	6 24%	7 28%	7 28%	5 20%	

Table 5 – Students' factors

4.4 Factors related to the instructional environment

As it is shown in table 6, the items are designed to investigate the instructional environment which plays an important role in the oral participation of the students. About 17 (68%) of the students disagreed with item 19 which stated "My classmates do not support me while I am speaking English." In addition, about 15 ( 60%) of the participants responded that the class is not noisy and 12 (48%) of the students disagreed with item 23 which stated "in the class, there are more than 30 students." Whereas, 12 (48%) of the participants agreed that there are no enough facilities to watch videos and play games related to our lessons.. Also, 11 (44%) of

the responses agreed with that the class doesn't have a friendly and motivating atmosphere which enhance the learning procedure. Only 9 (36%) of the students agreed with item 24 which stated "the amount of time allotted to learning speaking is enough."

NO.	Items	S	A	N	D	S	D
19.	My classmates do not support me while I am speaking English.	1 4%	3 12%	4 16%	14 56%	3 12%	
20.	The class is noisy.	5 20%	--	5 20%	13 52%	2 8%	
21.	The class has a demotivating atmosphere which does not enhance the learning procedure.	1 4%	10 40%	8 32%	5 20%	1 4%	
22.	In the class, there are no enough facilities to watch videos and play games related to our lessons.	1 4%	11 44%	2 8%	9 36%	2 8%	
23.	In the class, there are more than 30 students.	---	7 28%	6 24%	12 48%	---	
24.	The amount of time allotted to learning speaking is enough.	---	9 36%	8 32%	6 24%	2 8%	

Table 6 – Instructional Environment's factors

4.5 Discussion

The aim of this study is to identify the factors that influence the EFL learners' oral participation in classroom. Findings of this study revealed that the most influential factors that affected the students' oral participation were curriculum related factor, students' related factor, instructional environment's related factors, and teachers related factors, respectively. The results of the study are discussed in the light of the reviewed literature based on the research question

The discussion is started with the most striking theme and ranked them according to the overall highest percentages. With reference to the correlation among oral participation factors, it is indicated that factors related to the curriculum were the most influential factor in oral participation difficulties. According to the results, the majority of the students agreed with that they could express their ideas and thoughts in an effective way in their mother tongue (Arabic Language). This means that the students find it difficult to express their thoughts and ideas in English language

due to the lack of motivation in the curriculum itself. This result, to a large extend, in line with the results of the previous studies ( Rabab'ah, 2005 and Al Hosni 2014;). Moreover, this indicates that learners who share the same mother tongue tend to use it as it is easier due to the lack of English exposure or because of the course content. It can be said that the course content influenced the level of participation from students as they were more willing to participate if they were interested in the subject matter being delivered. This weakness is further compounded by the lack of speaking and listening activities in the curriculum. This leads us to notice that the curriculum does not provide students with sufficient opportunities to use the English language communicatively. Therefore, the type of activities and tasks in courses are so important in improving speaking skills. So that, few tasks and activities do not encourage students to use the English language communicatively. It can be said that the students will be able to improve their communicative skills and use the English language appropriately if they are encouraged to use English in real communicative situations. Although there is a continuous improvement in the curriculum at the department of English at Sirte university, there are still inadequate opportunities to speak English in lectures and tutorials, which contributed to a range of problems that closely related to the inability of the students to express themselves in English. This can lead to suggest using extracurricular activities that can be taken place not at the lectures' time but it might be outside the classroom's time. This means that, the extracurricular activities can play an important role in motivating the students and developing their communicative skills. This is similar to the opinion of Littlewood (1981) that the development of communicative skills can only take place if learners have the motivation and opportunity to express their own identity and relate with the people around them. However, the students need an effective guidance to practice as much as possible using English inside and outside the classrooms. This supports the opinions of Chi (2011) that if the students do not know how to practice well and feel disappointed as practice does not always help them make much progress in their studies, teachers should give them guidance on effective practice. In addition, Willis (1996) stated that learners need chances to say what they think and to participate in a supportive atmosphere using language they have heard or seen without feeling threatened. Alongside, the majority of the students emphasized that most of their exams are written so that there is a very restricted use of oral English. The paper and pen exam are given the priority in assessing the students' communicative skills. These results are consistent with a research by Cheekeong and et al (2014) who assert that the oral practical exams should be designed and taken a part for most of the courses' content in order to motivate the students to use the spoken language.

Additionally, the majority of students agreed that the do not receive any feedback from their teachers. This will not encourage students to practice orally and enhance their speaking skills. So that, the teacher's constructive feedback has a positive impact on students. In other words, feedback from the teachers encourages students to be more active and participative in class activities. Other research findings which took place in the second rank, is the factors related to the students. According to the results showed in table (5) the students find it difficult to build sentences and express their ideas and thoughts using target language. This might be related to linguistic difficulties as the students tend to speak in Arabic when they discuss different tasks because they do not know how to say it in English. Therefore, the inadequate vocabulary stock and weak sentence building skills are the reasons for using the mother tongue. In addition, the results also showed that in speaking class most of students were anxious which may occur because they are afraid of committing errors in front of their peers. Also, some of students have low self-confidence and lack of motivation. Many of students did not feel confidence to speak in front of class because they believe their language skill is insufficient than others in classroom. This result is similar with Abebe and Deneke (2015) who found factors that contribute to the reluctance of students to participate in the class discussion was the lack of confidence in using English. So that, it can be suggested that teachers should be aware of this, try to find a motivated atmosphere in order to build up the students' confidence. At the same time, students themselves should realize this problem and be responsible to communicate without feeling shy and nervous. Furthermore, the results showed that a high number of students do receive sufficient support from their teachers and surrounding environment. In accordance with the results of this study, the teachers' methods and techniques has a positive impact on the majority of the students to be more encouraged and not to feel criticized. This leads to increase the students' ability to use oral English inside the classroom without interrupting and feeling discouraged even they made mistake in pronunciation. It is also indicated that the teachers are aware of the necessary teaching strategies and thus they use the target language (English) to enhance the students' speaking skills. However, some teachers use the native language as an alternative to explain the meaning of unknown words or expression. This could indirectly and unconsciously convey a message to students that using English cannot be helpful to clarify the meaning of instruction or unknown words, and this also might mean that teachers have low expectations of their students' understanding ability of English. However, there is no doubt that using lots of native language (Arabic) reduces the amount of exposure to English during the lesson. This result

consists with Alyan (2013) who asserts that the student will use their mother tongue to communicate with each other and with the teacher if their teacher does not use the target language during the lesson.

Moreover, the results of the last factor, which concerned with the instructional environment revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that the teaching environment was friendly, and interesting since there were listening comprehension activities to enhance their speaking skills, however, teaching aids such as watch video and play games related to the lesson and the time allotted to learning speaking are not enough in the class.

#### 4.6 Recommendation and limitation

In the light of the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- In order for the curriculum to provide students with frequent opportunities of participation, various tasks such as debating or listening to authentic material of speeches and other interactive approaches are suggested to be included. Such these communicative tasks would be more effective and would be as a broader platform to express themselves in English and practice it inside and outside the classrooms.
- It is recommended that a friendly classroom environment might be fostered in order to motivate the students to participate efficiently without feeling of hesitation.
- In order to reduce the feeling of anxiety and increase the self-confidence, it is recommended for the teacher to postponing error correction till the end of the task and praising the student's work to encourage them to participate. To achieve this, students are assigned in groups or pairs, which will allow the anxious students to gradually lose their anxiety, and become indulged in performing the speaking task assigned.
- For the students, they are suggested to be more active in class in which all their contributions are significantly important for their learning outcomes.

This research had some limitations. The first limitation was the selection of the sample size, which was only students from the English Department of Sirte University. More ideas and insight could be gained if a greater number of students from different departments and faculties were sampled, and data could be easily generalized to a larger sample. In this study, a close-ended questionnaire was used as the main data gathering tools. An observation tool and a semi-structured interview could bring in in-depth and real-life problems of students about their oral participation, due to time limitation and access to the setting and participant it was not conducted.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the factors in the classroom learning environment that affect the learners' oral participation among the undergraduate students in the Department of English at Sirte University. Findings revealed that the curricula factors obtained the highest percentage of agreement as they are the first reason that affect the learners' oral participation. Whereas the factors which are related to the students themselves were in the second position of the list of the factors that influence the learners' oral participation, environmental factors and teachers' factors have got the lowest percentage of agreement.

As a result, by getting enough knowledge about the factors that affect the students' oral participation, the administration of the Department of English is better to construct the courses in a way that will increase participation levels and engage students in discussions thus contributing to their learning outcomes and development.

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