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**IncreasingLearners' Speaking Proficiency through Risk-taking**  
**The Case of First-year Licence Students, at the Department of English,**  
**University 8 May 1945,Guelma**

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Culture**

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to:

Myself

My family

Those who love me

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### **Abstract**

The present study aims at exploring the role of risk-taking in developing students' speaking proficiency. It aims at raising first-year students' awareness about the importance of risk-taking in enhancing speaking proficiency, at the Department of English, 8 May 1945 University, Guelma. It is, thereby, hypothesized that when students are risk-takers, their speaking proficiency will increase. To test this hypothesis, the descriptive quantitative method is adopted through the administration of a structured questionnaire to one-hundred fifty-two (152) students. The results demonstrated that risk-takers have a high level of speaking proficiency. Data also showed students' positive attitudes towards risk-taking in oral classes. Accordingly, it is highly recommended that both teachers and learners reconsider the important role of risk-taking in raising speaking achievement.

**Key words:** risk-taking; speaking achievement; speaking proficiency.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**FL:** Foreign Language

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**L2:** Second Language

**SLA:** Second Language Acquisition

**WTC:** Willingness to Communicate

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## **General Introduction**

Speaking the target foreign language effectively and proficiently is the desire of all language learners. Nevertheless, to become a good speaker is a very difficult goal to achieve, as it requires the development and mastery of certain aspects such as fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. That is why in oral expression classes, learners should be encouraged to speak. The involvement of learners in oral communications helps them to practice their speaking skill, which will enable them later to use the language successfully in order to make the communication process effective.

In EFL classroom, the speaking skill is needed to be developed instantly because it is the skill nearly all learners care for the most. So, learners have to be exposed to extensive oral instruction to reach such goal. The more activities learners perform the better and the faster they will learn. Thus, It is necessary for them to engage in new tasks and experiences for the sake of learning. An effective way to develop students' speaking proficiency is risk-taking because it could help learners increase their capacity to solve oral problems, be more fluent and accurate, and develop a sense of accomplishment. Risk-taking is one of the most significant techniques that widely enhance and develop students' speaking proficiency. Risk-taking strategies use could generate many benefits for learners and their intellectual improvement when properly used. It is a very attractive language learning tool that develops not only learners' linguistic and expressive skills, but also boosts their self-confidence and motivation to learn. Risk-takers could be good achievers because they are unafraid of making mistakes, they speak frequently and use their own words during classroom discussion, and this is the most attractive part about risk-taking.

## **1. Statement of the Problem**

Oral communication is absolutely considered to be an important activity in the EFL classrooms. Hence, students need to communicate in the class from time to another to convey their messages, express their feelings, and exchange information in order to enhance their speaking proficiency. The engagement of first-year students in discussions may improve their level of speaking proficiency. However, it is observed that many students are not risk-takers. They have fear to interact in debates and classroom discussions. What complicated this issue is students' shyness, anxiety, hesitation, fear to make mistakes, lack of self-esteem as well as lack of self-confidence. Besides, they are afraid of participation because of their teachers and peers' judgement. Whenever they discuss, they prefer to stay in their comfort zones; they get only involved in easy topics or already tackled subjects and they do not opt for new ones. As a result, their speaking proficiency would not evolve much.

Lack of risk-taking have hindered the communication process and have decreased the learners' speaking proficiency. Hence, learners should be aware of the importance of risk-taking in the EFL classes. Eventually, our research addresses the following questions:

- What is the impact of risk-taking on students' speaking proficiency?
- Are students aware of the importance of risk-taking in oral classes?

## **2. Aims of the study**

Risk-taking is a very effective way to learn a foreign language. Since, it would contribute to develop students' capabilities in oral communication and decrease the fear they confront whenever they interact. Moreover, it is considered as the key factor behind the success of students' academic career; it provides them with a great

opportunity to speak, discuss, and share knowledge and learn new content. Therefore, the aim of this study is two-fold:

- 1- To raise the students' awareness towards the usefulness of risk-taking to improve their speaking proficiency.
- 2- To raise students' awareness about the importance of risk-taking in raising students' speaking proficiency.

### **3. Research Hypothesis**

Risk-taking is among the crucial methods or ways that may influence the students' oral communication positively. It facilitates EFL learning process since learners participate automatically which lead them to develop their speaking skills. However, the lack of such method would affect student's motivation, outcomes and their level. Consequently, their speaking proficiency will not be enhanced. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

**H<sub>1</sub>**: if students are risk-takers, their speaking proficiency will increase.

The null hypothesis implies that no relation exists between the two variables:

**H<sub>0</sub>**: if students are not risk-takers, their speaking proficiency will not increase.

## **4. Research Methodology and Design**

### **4.1. Research Method**

This research is conducted through the quantitative descriptive method. It aims at confirming or rejecting the hypothesis and answering the research questions. So, this method helps describing and analysing the relationship between the two variables by means of the students' questionnaire. The questionnaire was the only tool used to investigate the impact of risk-taking on developing the speaking proficiency.

#### **4.2. Population of the Study**

The sample of this study is composed of first-year students at the department of English, University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma. The purpose behind choosing first-year students is that they were assumed to attend foreign language classes for the first time, a place where they need to communicate extensively. In addition to, these students are expected to be unfamiliar with taking risks and they would better express this new experience and depict the accompanying feeling they have whenever they get involved in risk taking. Hence, one hundred fifty-two (152) students were chosen randomly from two-hundred fifty (250) students to constitute our sample following Krejcie and Morgan's sampling table (1970; as cited in Cohen et al., 2000, p. 94).

#### **4.3. Research Tools**

The current study was conducted through a structured questionnaire that was administered to first-year students during the second semester, at the Department of English, University of 8 May 1945, Guelma. The questionnaire aims to find out to which extent students benefit from risk-taking in order to promote their speaking proficiency, and to determine the major causes and the impacts of such inclination on the students.

### **5. Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into two main parts. The first part is the theoretical one, which contains two chapters. First chapter is entitled "*Speaking Proficiency*". It provides an overview about speaking skill. It includes definitions, components, characteristics and the importance of speaking. Also, it tackles how to teach the speaking skill in EFL classes and how learners will acquire and master this skill, in addition to the difficulties that are encountered both teacher and learners. The second chapter is entitled "*Academic Risk-Taking*". It is devoted to the origin of risk-taking,



its historical development, its definitions, types, importance and its advantages and disadvantages, in addition to the problems with risk taking and the ways how to foster it in the language classrooms.

The second part is committed to the practical investigation, presented in the third chapter, which is entitled "*Field of Investigation*". This chapter includes a description of students' questionnaire and its administration. It also tackles the analyses of the data driven from the questionnaire. Moreover, it deals with the interpretation of the results according to the research questions and hypothesis. Finally, the chapter ends with the general conclusion, some pedagogical implications, research limitations, recommendations, and further suggestions for future research works.

## **Chapter One: The Speaking Skill**

### **Introduction**

Speaking is one of the four most prominent language skills and the basic standard for language proficiency. It is considered as a crucial skill of the language learning process that provides a foundation for the development of other language skills. Language learners and teachers alike work steadily to achieve high oral competency and a good mastery of communication skills. Yet, many language teachers face a hard time trying to improve their learners' speaking skill.

This chapter sheds light on the different concepts and elements related to the speaking skill. It deals with the basic definitions of key terms, aspect of speaking, and types of speaking situations; in addition to the relationship of speaking with other major skills and its significance. The chapter also tackles the barriers that hinder learners from achieving speaking mastery. Teacher roles when in charge of teaching speaking are also explained. This chapter also demonstrates some important characteristics of the speaking skill along with the main activities used by teachers to enhance oral proficiency.

### **1.1. Definition of Speaking and Speaking Proficiency**

The term speaking has been widely defined by many different scholars and authors throughout the years. In very simple terms, speaking means the ability to use a language (Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary, 2008, p. 426). It is the process of uttering words to create appropriate speech articulating on the different organs such as lungs, tongue, and lips (Al Nakhalah, 2016, p. 99). In these two first definitions, the main focus is on speaking being a verbal process performed by means of sound. Furthermore, Chaney (1998) insisted that speaking is delivering a message whether by

using verbal or non-verbal cues (as cited in Bougandoura, 2012, p. 1). That is to say using sounds or body language to convey specific ideas in different situations.

In a more sophisticated way, speaking is basically “a collaborative and interactive process. It is an exchange. We may finish each other’s comments, interrupt, disagree with or extend what is said” (Cole et al., 2007, p. 12). This entails that the process of speaking requires more than one agent in order for interaction and ideas exchange to take place. In the same vein, McDonough et al. maintained that speaking is the ability to produce speeches for a variety of purposes such as expressing ideas, opinions and wishes to establish and construct social relations, or solve communication problems by choosing the most suitable and accurate words depending on the context (2013, p. 157). Underwood (1997, p. 11) went further emphasizing the main components of speaking. She argued that speaking is an active process that required three areas of knowledge or mechanics, which are grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary taking into consideration the social and cultural background of both interlocutors.

As a synthesis of the definitions, speaking is the process of coding meaning into words or gestures by different interlocutors. Speaking enables people to perform a variety of speech acts depending on their needs, objectives and the speech situation and context.

On the other hand, speaking proficiency is the ultimate goal that the majority of language learners endeavor to achieve. *The Cambridge Dictionary* defined *proficiency* as the skillfulness of doing something and having great competence to do it (*Proficiency*, n.d.). Stern (1983, p. 341) defined proficiency as: “the actual performance of given individual learners or groups of learners”, which means that proficiency is the ability to appropriately accomplish a task.

Speaking proficiency, however, is “a complex language skill that involves knowledge and pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and culture” (Suminih, 2017, p. 10). Oral proficiency then necessitates some form of control over the primary individual levels of the language in relation to its use, mainly the structural and social contextual ones. Similarly, Foster defined speaking proficiency in terms of the basic language skills. She claimed that a proficient language speaker is the one who has a rich vocabulary package, controls well the language forms, makes very few language mistakes, and knows what to say in what context (2020, p. 1).

For the purpose of achieving a high language proficiency, the process of learning must focus on two important elements which are the linguistic and contextual aspects. First, proficiency requires having the sufficient knowledge and being conscious of using and choosing the appropriate words that convey the intended meaning in the right time and context. Second, the ability of saying and performing those chosen words fluently and accurately (McCarthy, 1972, p. 9). Nevertheless, much work is needed to reach a proficiency stage.

Luoma also emphasized how hard it is to achieve language proficiency (2004, p. ix). The development of the speaking skill needs much effort and time and this is where the difficulty of learning a foreign language lays. Besides, the four main skills of the language are tightly interrelated, and to achieve the speaking proficiency one needs working on all the three remaining skills.

### **1.2. Terminology Related to Speaking**

The terms communication, conversation, and interaction are very close terms to each other and to speaking at the same time. For a better understanding of this relationship, it is wiser to tackle these three important terms.

### **1.2.1. Communication**

Communication is defined by *The Merriam Webster Online Dictionary* as “a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour”. Communication is a broad term which indicates information transmission either verbally or non-verbally with an intended objective. For Thornbury (2006, p. 146), communication is “the learner ability to respond appropriately with speech”. In other words, communication is the process that empowers learners to test out their language skills.

### **1.2.2. Conversation**

In *the Cambridge Online Dictionary*, conversation means a talk between two or more people in which thoughts, feelings, and ideas are expressed, questions are asked and answered, or news and information are exchanged (*conversation*, n.d.). It denotes a purposeful oral exchange of ideas and sentiments between two or more people.

Moreover, Thornbury and Slade (2006) pointed out that conversation is the engagement of people throughout all the day to express their needs. It is an important activity which may involve a small discussion about the weather at the supermarket, or gossiping around the coffee machine. It takes different forms such as a phone conversation with friends or face to face exchange. It could also occur in different situations such as; business, doctor patient appointment, and teacher students discussions (p. 1). Thus, conversation is an essential part of people’s lives and without it communicative needs would not be reached.

### **1.2.3. Interaction**

Interaction is “an occasion when two or more people or things communicate with or react to each other” (*interaction*, n. d). It is a direct process where two people speak together and one of them influences the other. On his side, Rivers (1987) claimed

that interaction is based on carrying a certain message with the purpose of transmitting it authentically. The content of that message is the interest of both the speaker and the listener in such a situation. In addition, it requires the involvement of expressing ideas that must be understood, one speaks the other responds (p. 4). In other words, it is about performing a verbal action and receiving a reaction. Wells added that in interaction “exchange is the basic unit of discourse” (Wells, as cited in Rivers, 1987, p. 4). Thus, the most important features in interaction include: listening, responding, and negotiating meaning.

The above terms, interaction, communication, and conversation, are closely interrelated. Interaction is a broader term that includes communication, which is in turn a specific form of interaction. Moreover, both interaction and communication lead to building a conversation, which is a specific form of communication. Most importantly, all these processes are accomplished by means of speaking.

### **1.3. Aspects of Speaking**

Some aspects of speaking should be given more importance in the learning process in order to ensure the success of instruction and increasing speaking proficiency.

#### **1.3.1. Vocabulary and Language Features**

Vocabulary is the backbone of any language, without lexis no verbal communication would take place. According to Turk (2003), vocabulary means “the appropriate diction or the most important thing in a language especially in speaking. It helps us to express our thoughts, feelings and ideas easily both in oral or written form” (p. 87). Vocabulary is the building blocks that enable speakers to construct and transmit meaning in every medium. Vocabulary is not only about knowing the words but also what they mean and how they could be used.

Hiebert and Kamil (2005) divided vocabulary into two types which are oral and printed one. Oral vocabulary is the knowledge of meaning when we speak or read loudly however, the printed one is when we write or read silently and it is more complex than the oral. Moreover, vocabulary could be classified as receptive or productive. Receptive is about understanding and recognizing the meaning of words, those words are often less used and less frequently since they are just received, and productive is about the use of vocabulary either in writing or orally, generally those words are used regularly and widely known. Thus, the written vocabulary plays an important role in enhancing literacy rather than the oral vocabulary does (2005, p. 3).

Concerning language features, Harmer (2001) assumed that “the ability to speak fluently presupposes not only a knowledge of language features but also the ability to process information” (p. 269). Language features are related mainly to “connected speech”. Being competent in speaking English needs not only to perform separated phonemes but to focus more on the connected sounds. In connected speech, the modification (assimilation), deletion (elision) and addition (linking) should take place, in addition to, the weakened form as contraction and stress pattern. Thus, the involvement of students in special tasks of connected speech is necessary for better achievement (Harmer, 2001, p. 269).

Similarly, Alameen and levis emphasized that the connected speech results in “dramatic” changes to the way words are pronounced (2015, p. 159). In these language features, vowels and consonants’ sounds are kept very close and blended when uttered. Moreover, English speakers produce speeches by using different expressive devices, which are defined by Aleksandrova et al. as linguistic forms used to:

express the emotional state of the speaker, his subjective attitude to the objects and phenomena of reality...[it] serves not just as a message, but as an intensified impact on the addressee, presupposes the retention and strengthening of the listeners' attention (2020, p. 60).

Differently put, expressive devices are language tools put at speakers' service to help them clearly and openly convey meaning in any situation. Expressive devices also promote understanding and capture receivers interest. Similarly, Gil referred to expressive devices as language features that "add vividness to the utterance" (2001, p. 124). Expressive means are those linguistic forms used to strengthen utterances and make them more emphatic and clear.

### **1.3.2. Intonation**

As it is claimed by Wells (2006, p. 1), intonation is the music of language, it focuses on raising or lowering the pitch of the voice. In addition, knowing such differences widely helps to transmit the intended meaning. Hence, the emphasis in teaching speaking falls on accent, the stressed and unstressed syllables, and their functions. Intonation focuses on the segmental features of any language. It makes a distinction between the pronunciation of consonants and vowels sounds and the main differences between them. If speech loses these aspects, all the words would be pronounced the same way. Consequently, the speech without intonation lacks its monotony (Wells, 2006, p.1). Thus, intonation is an important feature for English learners; it makes them aware about how to pronounce and articulate sounds taking into consideration the utterances' specificities.

In a similar fashion, Turk has confirmed that the same words may function differently only by changing the intonation, the same sentence could be turned to a



question simply by rising the voice at the end of the sentence (1985, p. 134). Thus, intonation is a powerful tool that should be given more attention as it could affect not only the pronunciation patterns of utterances but also their meaning.

### **1.3.3. Pronunciation**

According to Richard and Schmidt (2002), pronunciation is the way of uttering words in the spoken language. It is an important part of the language, because any mispronouncing makes the understanding of intended meaning complicated for listeners (as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016a, p. 196). Pronunciation is closely tied to the mastery of sound systems and an important aspect in conveying meaning.

Azmi et al. (2019) stated that pronunciation deals with thesegmental features, vowels, consonants, stress, and intonation (p. 462). As mentioned by Harmer (2007, p. 343), “if students want to be able to speak fluently in English, they need to be able to pronounce phonemes correctly, use appropriate stress and intonation patterns and speak in connected speech” (as cited in Azmi et al., 2019, p. 462). In simpler words, producing English language correctly depends on the ability of being fluent, accurate, and mastering the right articulation of words’ sounds. Moreover, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016a) determined that good pronunciation makes the speaker more confident and reduces his anxiety. Whereas learners with limited pronunciation are more confused and less confident, which negatively influences their ability to produce an adequate pronunciation (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016b, p. 968). Therefore, clear and good pronunciation leads to convey the meaning appropriately. So, pronunciation is a vital element that makes the process of communication easy and purposeful.

### **1.3.4. Grammar**

Grammar “is a systematic way of accounting for and predicting an ideal speaker’s or hearer’s knowledge of the language” (Purpura, 2004, p. 6). That is to say

grammar is a set of rules for forming sentences. To produce a language accurately and correctly, the learner must know a set of rules that ensure the accuracy of speech and its understanding. Moreover, Thornbury (2005) argued that there is a difference between spoken and written grammar and each one has specific qualities. He listed some features of spoken grammar in which clause is the basic unit of construction, clauses are usually added (co-ordinate), vagueness tolerated, and direct speech favoured (p. 21).

All in all, forming and constructing meaningful ideas and sentences necessitates using rules and correct grammar whether in oral or written forms.

### **1.3.5. Mental/Social processing**

Speaker's ability to produce speech is not only based on the knowledge of language skills, but also depends on social and mental processing which are necessary in oral communication (Harmer, 2001, p. 271). Language is a cognitive social phenomenon that carries out culture and enables individuals to exchange experiences and ways of thinking across different contexts. Social mental processing deals with issues like "attitude change, social perception, personal identity, social interaction, intergroup bias and stereotyping, [roles] attribution" (Krauss & Chiu, 1998, p. 42). It examines the mental processes involved in perceiving, thinking about, and interacting with others in the social world. According to Harmer, social processing implies conversations between two or more interlocutors mainly focused on exchanging utterances. It aims at mutual understanding between both the speaker and the listener taking into consideration the emotions of participants, knowledge processing, and respecting the turn taking (2001, p. 271). This entails that social mental processing is all encompassing as it deals with social content and aims of interaction, and the psychological aspects that are involved from the part of interlocutors.

### 1.3.6. Accuracy versus Fluency

Richards and Rodgers (2001) mentioned that “fluency and acceptable language is the primary goal” in language production whatever language situation speakers are put in, whereas “Accuracy is not judged in the abstract but in context” (p. 157). This entails that fluency is a fixed requirement in all speaking performances, while accuracy is evaluated in relation to the speech situation. On his side, Harmer (2001) claimed that accuracy is “intended to ensure the correctness” (p. 104). It has to do with the choice of suitable structures and words to convey the intended message. Ellis and Barkhuizen shared the same point of view with Harmer. They defined accuracy as “how well the target language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language” (2005, p. 139). In other words, to be accurate in language means to produce language that is grammatically and structurally correct. Language learners must be aware of the grammatical structure and vocabulary to avoid committing errors and causing misunderstandings. Moreover, Nunan (2003) pointed out that “accuracy is the extent to which students’ speech matches what people actually say when they use the target language” (p.55). In other words, accuracy is achieving a native like control of grammar and structures.

As far as fluency is concerned, Hedge stated that this concept “relates to the production and it is normally reserved for speech. It is the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation” (2000, p. 54). That is to say, fluency is a quality of spoken language and has to do with appropriate sound production patterns in the target language. In the same vein, Hughes (2002) argued that being fluent is having the capability of expressing oneself effectively. Otherwise, the communicative process would fail and the listeners misunderstand and consequently lose attention in the speaker’ message (p. 113). This

means that accuracy and fluency are related to each other. Richards (2006) defined fluency as “the natural use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence” (p. 14). So, keeping communication going could be realized even when speakers have poor communicative capacities. If fluent enough, speakers could deliver meaning effectively and have a successful communication. Thus, fluency is the ability to use language spontaneously and appropriately to convey a comprehensible message.

Brown (1994, p. 254) clarified the distinction between fluency and accuracy, he held that “accurate means clear articulate grammatically and phonologically correct. While, fluent means flowing naturally”. Which means, accuracy is related with using grammar correctly while fluency is about being spontaneous and natural in speaking. In addition, Baker and Westrup (2003) distinguished between accurate and fluent speaker too. They held that “accurate speakers do not make mistakes in grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation. Fluent speakers can express themselves appropriately and do not usually worry unduly about making mistakes” (p. 7). Hence, accuracy is directly linked to grammar correctness, whereas fluency does not necessarily mean good command of grammar rules.

In a nutshell, Accuracy and fluency are two crucial characteristics associated with speaking, their major role is the production of grammatically and phonologically correct utterances. In order to be effective communicators EFL learners must learn how to speak accurately and fluently.

#### **1.4. The Importance of Speaking**

The major goal of learning a foreign language is the ability to use it effectively to communicate accurately and fluently. So, speaking is given much priority than other

skills, because of many reasons. Bygate (1987) argued that speaking should be given much care in both the native and foreign language since “do you speak English?” is more often asked rather than “do you write in English?” (p. vii). This clearly shows the great importance accorded to the speaking skill.

In the professional sphere, mastering languages especially English is mostly required by companies, and fluent speakers among other applicants have more chances to seize jobs. English is an international language and a lingua franca for various communities and nationalities, it is considered as the main medium of communication in different domains such as; business, finance, science, medicine, and technology. Many governments insist on teaching English in different level (Baker& Westrup, 2000, p. 2). Thus, fluent English learners have the chance to take apart in the progress and prosperity of their countries.

Speaking is an engaging activity that pushes people to communicate across different contexts and situations. Consequently, it could enormously develop people’s vocabulary and grammar while engaging in different discussions. Speaking is necessary for enhancing the capability of acquiring and practicing a language (Goh, 2007, p.1). Furthermore, high speaking proficiency allows learners to confront the fear of public performances and make them able to express themselves easily. It also helps individuals establish good relations and friendship. Besides, if it was not for speaking foreign languages, watching movies without subtitles or reading literature without translation would be impossible (Yang, 2014, pp. 334-335).

On the whole, the speaking skill is very important not only at foreign language classrooms, but also at individuals’ daily life and careers. It opens so much horizons for people if well mastered and continually refined.

## **1.5. The Relationship between Speaking and the Other Skills**

The relationship between speaking and listening, writing, and reading is explored in the following sub-titles:

### **1.5.1. Speaking and Listening**

Speaking and listening are closely related to each other, and performing one of them necessitates the simultaneous involvement of the other skill. There is a “natural link between speaking and listening” (Brown, 2000, p. 275). If one participant speaks the other who is the receiver must listen carefully to receive and decode the produced message in order to respond and vice versa. Consequently, the absence of one of the skills makes the process of communication difficult if not impossible.

Many researchers agree that a good speaker is a good listener, in this respect, Byrne (1986) determined that oral communication is a process that occurs between two interlocutors in which speaking and listening take place simultaneously for successful interaction (as cited in Alam, 2013, p. 19). Listening will not occur in isolation from speaking so they are parallelly correlated. Additionally, many researchers agreed that a good speaker is a good listener. Rivers (1996, as cited in Osada, 2004, p. 55) reported that speaking alone does not build an interaction except if the meaning gets understood. This means if the listener listens carefully and gets the meaning, the communication will succeed. Therefore, there is a strong relationship between listening and speaking; one process cannot take place with the other one being involved.

### **1.5.3. Speaking and Writing**

Speaking and listening are acquired naturally nevertheless the writing and the reading skills are learnt at schools. Writing and speaking are similar somehow. Since, the written form mirrors the spoken language. Widdowson (1978) held that speaking and writing are both productive skills in which language is used either verbally or

nonverbally. However, they differ from each other in terms of limitation of time, spontaneity, and mediums (p. 57). When an idea expressed through speech it is directed to the person addressed immediately. That is to say if the idea was not coded efficiently because of the lack of vocabulary, communication fails. However, in writing there is enough time to think about the appropriate words and structures that will be used to communicate meaning at last. Moreover, while speaking the body language could be used to visualize and backup the meaning to communicate, whereas writing lacks this feature. Besides, the spontaneity during speaking is the feature that does not exist in the writing. They differ in terms of production; speaking is produced orally, whereas writing through words.

Despite their differences, there are similarities between writing and speaking. Linadsy and knight (2006, p. 60) claimed that the way individuals speak differ depend on whom addressees and for what the reasons of communication. Similarly, in the written form of language the type of writing depends on who the readers are and for what purposes this piece of writing aims at.

#### **1.5.4. Speaking and Reading**

Reading as another language skill is very essential too. Bright and McGregor (1970) avowed that “where there is little reading there will be little language learning... the student who wants to learn English will have to read himself into a knowledge of it unless he can move into an English environment” (p. 52). In other terms, learning a language is strongly based on reading. It leads to the development of the speaking by providing learners with a huge amount of knowledge. The more learners read the more they will acquire the needed skills to survive English language based communications. Moreover, reading and speaking skills are related to each other and both develop each other, reading improves speaking and vice versa (Maizarah& Purwanti, 2020, p. 146).

Reading provides learners with necessary words and expression to communicate. At the same time, speakers' language proficiency allows them to comfortably read any text and understand it.

According to Mart (2012), reading is the source that feeds language learning by giving the learners the needed vocabulary, which helps them to communicate and improve their speaking skill. In addition, reading outside the classroom enables learners to broaden their knowledge, which effects their oral communication positively in return (p. 91). Through reading, students become more competent in using the oral form of the language, as well as being able to guess the meaning of unknown words.

Achieving a high level of speaking proficiency necessitates the integration of the four skills. Burns and Siegel (2018) stated that, "The four language skills are at the heart of current practice in English language teaching" (p. xiii). Differently put, to become a competent speaker it is obligatory to listen, read, and write extensively. Listening and reading are beneficial for improving pronunciation and enriching lexis. Besides, writing in the target language would certainly enhance the speaking proficiency, as it is both the manifestation and reflection of one's speaking.

In conclusion, the four language skills are interrelated and connected and affect each other. Furthermore, to succeed in the EFL classrooms these skills must be developed simultaneously since the improvement of one skill leads to the development of another one and so on.

### **1.6. Types of Speaking Situations**

The focus in this part is mainly put on the two basic types of speaking situations which are: the interactive and non-interactive speaking situations.



### **1.6.1. Interactive Speaking Situations**

An interactive speaking situation is a direct interaction between two or more participants either directly in face to face interaction or via a medium. Advantageously, in interactive situation any form of communication ambiguity could be easily eliminated as interlocutors could ask for further explanation or simply repetition (Vadivel& Ganesan, 2020, p. 819). This means that interactive situation allows for mutual exchange of both information and interlocutors' roles because they could be either speakers or listeners. It also requires participants to be comprehensive through responding in the most appropriate and relevant way.

Interactive speaking situation is very beneficial for developing language learners' speaking skills. According to Bashir et al. the existence of a multitude of language "scripts" could help with interactive speaking activities because it will help learners "predict what they will hear and what they will need to say in response" (2011, p. 40). In other words, interactive situations present a meaningful opportunity for learners to practice the language and handle different speech situation.

### **1.6.2. Non-interactive Situations**

As its name entails, in this speaking situation there is no exchange of information but only a message delivery. It includes different types such as radio broadcasting, plays, delivering a speech, a poem or singing in which the interaction is absent (Vadivel& Ganesan, 2020, p. 820). Basically, in a non-interactive situation there is an active source of information that transmits meaning to a passive receiver.

Implanting non-interactive speaking situation of native speakers in language classes was very effective in helping learners "acquire a better accent" (Au et al., 2015, p. 344). This entails that non-interactive situations offer learners a rich listening

practice. Moreover, it exposes them to authentic output that would help them develop phonologically.

### **1.7. Speaking Obstacles**

The major aim of foreign language learners is to practice English fluently and proficiently. However, they face many obstacles that may hinder their speaking performance. Here are below the main obstacles that face language learners.

#### **1.7.1. Anxiety**

Most EFL learners face anxiety mainly when communicating, MacIntyre (1999) described the kind of debilitating anxiety as a negative feeling raised when using a foreign language in front of others. It is caused mainly by the lack of vocabulary and low English proficiency. So, when learners attempt to communicate, they will get embarrassed, start shaking, have a dried mouth, face difficulty in breathing and forget about what they are going to say.

Besides, when students compare themselves with brilliant ones they find themselves in a dilemma because they are less proficient than them, therefore they become anxious (p. 27). Therefore, most learners feel so anxious and cautious to use a second language publicly. Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 125) explained that “anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system”. In other words, anxiety accounts for all the undesirable feelings triggered by the fear of engaging in oral communication. Moreover, Horwitz et al. claimed that anxious students are more likely to be class skippers, careless, and are not certainly attention seekers as they prefer to sit in the back of the class hiding to avoid any kind of abasement (1986, p. 130). These are the main strategies anxious speakers use to protect themselves.

According to Arnold and Brown (1999, p. 8), “anxiety is quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process”. Thus, anxiety is the major factor that influences the students’ production and weakens their oral performances.

### **1.7.2. Fear of Making Mistakes**

Fear of making mistakes became one of the major factors for students’ reluctance to speak in English in the classroom. Ur (2000, p. 111) stated that “learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom. Worried about, making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts”. Thus, EFL learners are always reluctant about speaking a foreign language. They avoid speaking in the classroom due to the fear of negative evaluation or endangering self-value. Furthermore, fear of making mistakes is a prominent factor that leads learners to keep silent, because they are afraid to look foolish or silly and their classmates will laugh at them (Middleton, 2009, as cited in Januariza & Hendriani, 2016, p. 470). This suggests that language learners perceive mistakes as threats and not as an essential part in the learning process without which they will never improve.

### **1.7.3. Lack of Self-confidence**

Dörnyei (2005, p. 65) defined self-confidence as “the belief that a person has the ability to produce results, accomplish goals, or perform tasks completely”. In other words, self-confidence is being able to achieve and perform any activity appropriately and successfully. It is an effective factor that helps language learners trust their abilities and use language confidently. It also encourages them to acquire new knowledge through taking part in new experiences.

There are many reasons that hinder the student's speaking and make them lose their self-confidence. As Juhana (2012, p. 102) stated, "students' lack of confidence usually occurs when students realize that their conversation partners have not understood them or when they do not understand other speakers". So, they keep silent and will not continue their discussions or lose attention in whatever is being said. She also claimed that "many students think that their English is bad and feel that they cannot speak English well" (p. 102). The negative way of thinking about oneself affect learners' self-confidence. Therefore, lack of self-confidence makes the classroom a threatening environment.

Ni (2012) stated that the students who lack self-confidence are characterized by being afraid and shy to express themselves. Also, they cannot deliver a full and meaningful idea as a result of their reluctance (p. 1509). Due to their lack of faith in their abilities, they hold from performing orally. In addition, Hale (2004, p. 13) asserted that bad performance and lack of experience extremely lead to low self-confidence. So, self-confidence affects language performances and it is affected by them at the same time. Subsequently, low confidence could be the result of unpleasant incident in language classroom.

#### **1.7.4. Lack of Motivation**

Motivation is the key for successful communication. According to Slavin, motivation is the power that pushes learners to keep on going in the right direction until they reach what they are looking for (1997, p. 345). So, motivated language learners are goal oriented and good achiever. Thus, "motivation is the crucial force which determines whether a learner embarks in a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it and how long he preserves" (Littlewood, 1981, p. 53). In simple words, motivation is the guide for a successful journey.

Nevertheless, there are many difficulties that push learners towards demotivation. Littlewood (2001, p. 27) stated that “low ability leads to low motivation which also leads to low effort and low achievement”. This means that low achievers are demotivated by nature or because of the lack of practice. Nevertheless, in both cases this will absolutely affect their language improvement and accomplishments.

#### **1.7.5. Shyness**

Speaking in front of public is phobic for the majority of language learners. Pilkonis (1977) mentioned that shyness is the avoidance to communicate with others also the failure to interact properly in different social contexts (p. 596). The shy learners are unwilling to speak because of the fear of making mistakes, or getting embarrassed. This emotional and psychological state makes learners unable to express themselves properly and sufficiently in the target language.

In addition, Bowen (2005) and Robby (2010) as cited in Januariza& Hendriani, 2016, p. 470) claimed that some learners were born shy and calm and they take this quality with them to language classrooms. Accordingly, this natural personality trait hampers them from taking part in language activities and causes them to remain silent.

#### **1.7.6. Lack of Willingness to Communicate**

Before stating the causes of lack of Willingness to Communicate (WTC), it is wiser to define this concept. It is the desire of individuals to initiate a communication with others using a second or a foreign language. So, those people or learners who show less anxiety and fear during communication are more willing to engage in speaking practices. However, lack of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is avoiding to communicate because of a set of factors including: communication apprehension, anxiety, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and limited linguistic competence, lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, and many others. McCroskey (1997) defined the

communicative apprehension as to be afraid or anxious during communication either with one person or more (p. 192).

In language classes, participation is focal for it allows teachers to monitor performances and check upon learners' progress. However, learners are often reluctant to speak because they are shy and less confident especially in the presence of other learners (Arifin, 2017, p. 36). Oral manifestation of thoughts and feelings could be quite challenging for lots of learners. They are held captive with the idea of losing face and looking ridiculous in the eyes of their peers. Other learners are restrained from expressing themselves in the classroom because of the fear of making mistakes or not being good enough to speak in front of an audience (p. 37).

Along with fear, anxiety, lack of confidence and shyness, Juhana added motivation. He emphasized that motivation is crucial for the success of learning, thus one of the most desirable criterion learners must have. The lack of motivation however is a serious issue (2012, p. 103). If learners do not feel the need to communicate because they believe they do not have anything to say, are bored or lost interest in the course, they would be held from achieving success in the course.

#### **1.7.7. Interlanguage and Negative Transfer**

The greatest majority of language learners tend to produce utterances in the target language similar to their mother tongues which most of the times results in wrong expressions. This is the result of negative transfer of the grammatical rules and structure of the first language to the second language. Thyab maintained that this is a major complexity in teaching speaking or any other skill. She contended that the differences existing between the language systems makes native language interference or what is known as negative transfer a more persistent issue (2016, pp. 1-2). Language

learners resort to their first language systems because they feel safer when communicating. Eventually, they fall into errors due to such divergence.

In consistency with Thyab, Savilles-Troike (2006, p. 200) held that language interference as inappropriate influence of native language systems on FL use either in written or spoken forms. Indeed, the latter is a major obstacle for language learning that holds learners from properly mastering the new language system.

### **1.8. Teaching Speaking**

Speaking is one of the four basic language skills that language learners are judged upon the most in real life situations. Therefore, the teaching of speaking is a very important process that involves precision and special attention from teachers. The popular belief holds that speaking must be taught through “interaction” as it would provide learners with a good context for practice, exchange, and retention of authentic materials (Kayi, 2006, para. 3). Otherwise stated, speaking activities must include genuine linguistic output and result in correct output structurally and communicatively speaking.

Due to the importance of speaking in every language learner journey, Westwood et al. introduced a set of guidelines to help teachers design and conduct oral activities in their classrooms. First and foremost, teachers must decide upon course content and objectives of that course in consistency with learners’ needs and learning ends. Second, when instruction starts teachers must do their best to put learners at ease by creating a motivating friendly atmosphere for them. Third, the content must be presented gradually and progressing to the next step only when previous content has been grasped by the greatest majority of learners. Fourth, teachers ought to apply feedback and reward systems. Finally, if possible, teachers should deal with smaller groups of learners and vary activities constantly (as cited in Tahir, 2013, pp. 13-14).

## **1.9. Speaking Activities**

There are many types of speaking activities for teachers to choose from, each focusing on different speaking aspects. Yet, all speaking activities aim at enhancing learners' personal as well as professional development. The following are the most common speaking activities used in language classrooms to teach the speaking skill.

### **1.9.1. Discussions**

The implementation of discussions in the language classrooms came as means to decrease teachers' talk time, and give learners more opportunities to communicate their thoughts and feelings in the target language in a friendly judgment-free environment (Rini et al., 2015, p. 9). A discussion, as an educational tool, is a collaborative orderly process of knowledge construction based on communicating ideas among students themselves or with the teacher with the purpose of reaching conclusions (Wilkinson, 2009, p. 330).

According to Mohammed and Ahmed, discussions basically aim at helping less developed language users take part in purposeful, extended, and relatively lengthy conversations through logical reasoning and consistent argumentation. The use of discussions also aims at boosting learners' self-confidence and reflecting their understanding of the course and stages of performance development (2021, p. 2). Discussions are very interesting activities that are used repeatedly and consistently in language classrooms due to their significance.

Parpuralli accented the role discussions play in the enhancement of language learners' speaking skills at the level of cognition and performance. He argued that discussions are amongst the best activities advised to ensure whole class involvement as well-planned and well-constructed discussions would prompt learners to take personal initiatives to speak and motivate them to express themselves and share their



experiences on the one hand. On the other hand, discussions help develop learners' cognitive skills and intellectual ability because they give learners the time and topics needed to learn how to ask questions, organize ideas, and use argumentation in the target language (2018, p. 152). On a similar basis, Wallwork confirmed that discussions are great exercises for learners to practice their English. He also added that when using discussions teachers would have all the time to properly and effectively assess learners' performances and later present corrective measures (1997, p. 7).

### **1.9.2. Listening Live Activities**

Speaking and listening are closely interrelated activities thus changes in one skill influences the other one, and/or development of one of them necessitates the development of the other skill. To put it in another way, a speaker is automatically a listener; learning about how a language is used and internalizing those rules depends on listening (Pinem, 2014, p. 15). Accordingly, listening live activities are used for speaking skill enhancement in language classrooms.

Live listening has been commonly defined as activities where learners are listening to their teachers or other people invited to the classroom in "face to face" non-recorded situations. Consequently, learners would be exposed to a variety of language forms each time they meet a new speaker or a new situation; they would be subjected to "genuine" language produced by people with different genders, ages, and voice features such as tone and speed. Active listening activities could take any of these forms "reading aloud, story-telling, interviews, and conversations" (Ofemile, 2011, p. 3). Grugeon et al. held that live listening is "never a passive activity" as it involves active engagement from the part of learners and involves both their cognitive and linguistic competences (2005, p. 123).

Although the occurrence of the same exact speeches the way they were performed by the teacher or visitors in a real world setting is very far from being a realistic assumption, active listening activities were found to be very effective in introducing authentic language chunks. Moreover, the use of face to face listening situations minimizes undesirable noises and technical problems that would arise if recording have been used instead, and teachers would have more control over learners reactions and misunderstandings as they could observe learners' non verbal cues (Kadagidze, 2006, p. 150).

### **1.9.3. Reading Aloud Activities**

Another important activity to improve speaking is reading aloud. In addition to, expanding learners' lexical and grammatical background of the target language and emphasizing comprehension, producing audible readings tremendously supports oral skills enhancement, mainly pronunciation and intonation (Gabrielatos, 2002, p. 2). When using reading aloud learners would develop a multitude sub language of skills and structures.

Reading aloud is a very beneficial practice in language teaching and learning settings since it refines speaking by developing “an awareness of sound-symbol relationships” (Griffin, 1992, p. 784). It enriches learners' learning experiences and offers a more inclusive practice that encompasses not only vocabulary retention but also their correct patterns of pronunciation.

On his part, Huang emphasized the importance of this activity if materials are appropriately chosen and the execution of the activity went smoothly. He went further saying that the implementation of aloud reading would generate five main benefits. First, reading aloud introduces learners to a bunch of sociolinguistic features of the target language such as dialects and accents. Second, this activity promotes fluency

through introducing learners to the fundamental components of language related to phonology such as pitch, stress, and tone. Third, reading aloud enhances materials understanding as it gets learners fully involved with the ideas and feelings they are reading. Forth, performing voiced reading tasks deeply instills knowledge related to the four skills in learners' minds. Finally, initiating learners to new materials each time kills classroom boredom and rises excitement and motivation to learn (2010, p. 149).

#### **1.9.4. Dialogues**

Dialogues are famous classroom techniques used for improving speaking through “practicing functions of language like greeting, agreeing, disagreeing, apologizing, suggesting, asking information” (Shafaat, 2018, p. 16). Dialogues are semi-controlled conversations amongst two or more learners about a given topic. Learners are presented with a speaking situation and left to perform the speech scenario suitable for the context provided spontaneously. The main aim of dialogues is practicing the language via the exchange and negotiation of meanings to reach a resilient end (Matthews et al., 1989, p. 24).

In order to make maximal profit out of dialogues teachers carefully construct topics for conversations and monitor performances. Ergo, to ensure successful dialogues teachers must follow specific criteria. For this technique to be effective, the topics discussed must be interesting and innovative in terms of grammatical structures and ideas. Besides, new dialogues must go in consistency with what has already been learned and allow learners to rehearse previous knowledge. Most importantly, the dialogue should promote genuine conversations (Pilleux, 1969, p. 2004). Accordingly, not every dialogue presents a meaningful language practice. If not well designed, learners would not benefit much from dialogues.

Dialogues originated from the communicative language teaching approaches that is why they are considered whole-task practices and inclusive techniques for social, structural and psychological growth. Moreover, the use of dialogues equips language learners with the essential skills and materials their oral practices require. Lastly, dialogues were found to be very effective in pushing learners to express themselves, and creating a supporting unbiased environment for communication to take place (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2017, p. 9). As a result, good dialogues are excellent for authentic language practice and teaching communication across different language systems of different cultures.

#### **1.9.5. Communicative Games**

A major concern in all educational setting is finding ways to make the classroom an inventing milieu that raises learners' engagement in activities and interest in courses. On top of that, the speaking skill is the most difficult one to teach as well as the most desired skill to master out of other language skills (Dewi et al., 2017, p. 63). Subsequently, a tendency to use less stressful effective tools arose leading to the creation of communicative games.

Communicative game is "a set of well-fun design activities that can stimulate students' interaction in the classroom". They are very important in building learners' confidence and keeping them active (Dewi et al., 2017, p. 64). They could be defined as tasks which encourages "playing while learning or learning by plying" for speaking improvement. These games integrate both the element of fun and knowledge, in addition to excitement and interaction. They stimulate group work, competition, and co-operation (Hadi, 2015, p. 111). Orally performed games come in different forms, varying from guessing and picture games to role plays and problem solving tasks (Harmer, 2001, p. 272).

Communicative games are amongst the very interesting and novel techniques in the field of language teaching. Zhu (2012) stressed the notable role these activities play in bettering language learners' oral practices. He contended that during games, learners especially the weak inactive ones are given the chance to overtly practice their language without fear (p. 802). This entails that, learners' attention is not solely nor entirely directed towards the activities performed and the way they perform, it is rather directed towards the felling of joy and excitement of getting to know other learners. Language learners would be overflowed with feelings that the negative effects of stress and anxiety arising from what was once a hostile environment, the classroom, would be minor. Aside from diminishing the distance between teacher-learner and learner-learner, communicative games are very flexible tools that could be used at any time of instruction and serve different purposes like boosting motivation or assessment depending on the teacher's objectives (p. 803). The implantation of communicative games then saves teachers' time as they could help them attain diverse aims.

#### **1.9.6. Problem-Solving Activities**

As its name entails, problem solving activities are problem-oriented tasks that challenge learners to find a way out of different language use related issues either individually, in pairs, or collectively (Klippel, 1984, p. 102). The distinguishing feature about these activities is that they incite learners to think in the target language to find most convincing solutions (Klippel, 1984, p. 103). So, problem-solving activities develop learners ability to think and provide them with a meaningful language practice. Generally speaking, all problem-solving tasks are based on the assumption that in order to develop learners' skills they need to encounter a knowledge "gap". This gap is supposed to be somewhere between the actual level of knowledge and the next stage of learning development that is not yet reached by students (Uktamjonova, 2021, p. 283).

The gap works as a bridge between learners' current level of knowledge and a higher level to ensure content consistency and relevance.

Problem-solving activities are very good exercises for speaking skill improvement. First, speaking problem-based tasks motivate participation and competition among learners (Oradee, 2012, p. 533). Likewise, Ormond (2006) affirmed that solving authentic language related problems occasionally develops learners' higher order thinking and analysis skills (p. 111). Differently put, problem-solving tasks push learners to deal with language problems critically and provide logical justifications and explanations for them. Consequently, learners would move from not having a clue about what to do with the problem to solving and uncovering a new information it at last.

#### **1.9.7. Information-Gap Activities**

Information-gap activities commonly refer to a pair work assignments where students exchange pieces of information to complete the task. One student knows the information needed and the other one tries to find what that information is and vice versa. The information in quest given to learners are different, yet related to the same topic (Pratama& Awaliyah, 2015, p. 23). In this type of activities, students are left to do the work on their own with the teacher there as prompter whose primary job is to clarify task ambiguities. The main aim behind information gap activities is to develop learners' self-dependence while accomplishing tasks (Ismaili& Bajrami, 2016, p. 614).

Information-gap tasks are very effective in teaching speaking. Moss and Ross-Feldman (2003) affirmed that since these activities encourage meaning negotiation, they urge learners to produce graspable, comprehensible, and accurate output for others to understand almost effortlessly ( para. 11). On similar grounds, Ortiz-Neira claimed that information gap activities are very motivational activities with great potentials to

develop learners' oral fluency and foster interaction due to their communicative nature (2019, p. 116). Parupalli (2018, p. 148) on his side added that these activities offer a purposeful practice of contextualized authentic language. All in all, information-gap activities are very effective in developing learners' cognitive and linguistic skills along with keeping them interested in learning.

#### **1.9.8. Opinion-Gap Activities**

Opinion-gap activities are task based communicative activities that require students to give their personal judgments, feelings, or attitudes in response to a given situation in order to complete a task. (Aliakbari& Mohsennejad, 2014, p. 2). In opinion-gap tasks, learners are triggered to think beyond the level of the information itself. Accordingly, there is no wrong or right responses in this case as not all people think and process information alike; every way to approach that gap of knowledge would be accepted as long as it fits the context of the activity (Saleky, 2018, p. 83). The primary aim of this activity then is to keep students going with their learning.

Like other types of gap-centered activities, opinion gap tasks have very satisfying results when applied for improving learners' speaking chiefly because they promote target language use for self-expression. Equally, these tasks promotes interaction and raises participation rates (Marashi& Naddim, 2019, p. 201). Overall, opinion-gap tasks help learners recycle what they know orally without fear of negative judgments originating from the production of wrong responses.

#### **1.9.9. Reasoning-Gap Activities**

According to Prabhu (1987) reasoning-gap tasks are activities that urges learners to derive new information through reasoning, deducing, and understanding the relationship between language patterns. The teacher's role in this task is to provide learners with a better unusual language experience (as cited in Namaziandost et al.,

2019, p. 3). Reasoning-Gap activities are techniques that are used by the teacher to enhance the speaking practice and break the boredom in EFL classes.

Moreover, Efe et al. (2018) claimed that reasoning-gap activities go hand in hand with the information presented and correspond with the intended meaning. They are developed gradually compared with information gap activities and opinion gap activities. Those activities are about choosing one piece of information from others rather than just thinking about the cognitive process of information. In addition, reasoning-gap activities provide learners with the chance to construct the meaning by their own selves. "Reasoning-Gap involves logic, arithmetic and diagrammatic forms", these forms contribute to the development of learners because they work as alternative practice in which reasoning can be practiced (p. 543).

#### **1.9.10. Debates**

Debates are an essential tool to practice English in EFL classes for expressing and defending different opinions in various situations. Hence, debates give the students the chance to meet new ideas through discussions. As Somjai and Jansem (2015, p. 29) affirmed "debate has some benefits in the teaching and learning process". So, debates have a great role in enabling students to practice speaking through argumentation and evidence.

Krieger (2005) claimed that many scholars argued that debates are the best way for learning a language because of the engagement of learners in different mental and linguistic activities (p. 25). Consequently, debates work on both the listening and speaking skills from one side. From the other side, they develop learners thinking and ability to respond appropriately.

Furthermore, Paulette and Wolf (2000, p. 176) proclaimed that debate is arguing and defending a point of view in that opposites others' opinions. So, debate is an



activity in which students share their ideas, and approve or disapprove the ones of others. Moreover, Snider (2008) declared that debate is continuously exchanging and contributing to develop our lives, country and community (p. 13). The necessity for debating and their possible occurrence in real life obliges learners to train on how to explain and persuade others with something using strong arguments.

#### **1.9.11. Role-plays**

Role-plays are effective teaching activities and a very useful techniques for developing learners' speaking proficiency. According to Harmer (1998) role-play activities are activities where imaginative situations are created and learners are supposed to act according to the roles assigned to them (p. 92). In addition, he added that, "role-play is more than just play-acting: it offers chances for rehearsal and engagement that some other activities fail to give" (1998, p. 94). This means that in role-play learners get to perform roles of characters that exist in the real world and try to use similar language patterns this characters would use in actual conversations. So, learners would practice using language in different situations.

In the same vein, Ur (1996) defined role-play as the kind of activities in which language learners are acting imaginatively outside the classroom, performing others' role using the language that meets the requirements of that context (p. 131). This activity encourages learners to speak the target language in addition to improving their communicative effectiveness. It also develops their fluency due to the variety of practices they are involved in and enriches their creativity

#### **1.9.12. Oral Presentations**

Oral Presentations are considered as richer than written documents, because oral presentation is a direct contact between the speaker and the audience in which the speaker tries to convince his ideas by using verbal and non-verbal communication.

They are unique activities compared with speeches and debates which are completely different as explained by

Rizvi (2005) explained that “oral presentations differ from other forms of oral communication such as speeches and debates” (p. 196). Because in oral presentations there is a direct contact between the speaker and the audience, where he/she tries to explain a given idea to them using verbal and non-verbal communication. Whereas in debates there is a mutual exchange between speakers and listeners and the use of argumentation.

Moreover, Harmer (2007) declared that oral presentations are formal activities, well planned not like conversations, they seem like written activity (p. 351). That is to say, oral presentations are not improvised like conversation and they do not occur spontaneously. They rather rely on previous collection and preparation of ideas to be presented. This preparation enables learners to be more confident and fluent while speaking. Furthermore, according to King (2002) “The introduction of oral presentations to the EFL classrooms provide a rewarding and stimulating experience both for teachers in developing facilitating skills and for students in training themselves to have confident presentations in public” (p. 413). Oral presentations are good for both the learner and the teacher as they are enjoyable activities that build learners’ skills and motivation.

According to Meloni and Thompson (1980), “if properly guided and organized, oral presentations provide a learning experience and teach lifelong skills that will be beneficial to ESL/EFL students in all school subjects, and later in their careers” (p. 503). Oral presentations provide learners with more opportunities to share their knowledge and practice English authentically rather than other speaking tasks. Thus,

oral presentations are very important in EFL classes and outside, making students more creative and competent.

However, the majority of students dislike the oral presentation because of many factors. Brooks and Wilson confirmed that the unfamiliarity with oral presentations lead learners to fail to present and avoid speaking. Also, shyness and anxiety arising from such activities hinders learners from making good performances (as cited in Hanifa& Yusra, 2018, p. 320).

#### **1.10. Teachers Roles in Speaking**

According to Leu (2005, as it is cited in Koran, 2015, p. 407), teaching effectively requires the presence of a good teacher. The one with the ability to provide an appropriate climate for better achievement and creates appropriate chances to facilitate the teaching learning process. Thus, when the teacher neglects his\her role inside the classroom, the students feel unable to accomplish their tasks.

Teachers should be energetic, well informed, and motivated because they are required to play different roles such as assessing, prompting , motivating, monitoring and so on (Koran, 2015, p. 407). Harmer explained that:

[T]eachers use many metaphors to describe what they do. Sometimes they say are like actor ‘we are always on the stage’; others think they are like orchestral ‘because I direct conversation and set the place and tone ‘yet others like gardeners ‘because we plant the seeds and then watch them grow (2001, p. 56).

The teacher has different functions in the language classroom in order to cover all areas and monitor every aspect related to teaching and learning. Each role the teacher plays serves a predetermined purpose, but generally, all what the language teacher does contributes to the improvement of learners’ speaking skill. Below are the main roles teachers occupy in the language classroom.

### **1.10.1. Prompter**

Generally, students in role plays activities lose words for expressing their opinions the main reason is limited linguistic competence. So, the teacher should become prompter for helping them to say what is coming next, by giving hints, phrases, and providing vocabulary. In addition to that, teachers encourage students to be creative and overcome those gaps of knowledge from time to time, because constant help from the teachers do not allow them to learn by themselves (Harmer, 2001, p. 60). Hence, dividing students individually is the best way for controlling to not using their mother tongue. Consequently, the major role of the teachers is to support their students to speak and prompt their speaking proficiency. The purpose of prompting then is to give students great amount of motivation and encouragement. As McDonough et al. (2013) argued “the teacher as prompter who provides sensitive encouragement for the learner to steer their learning” (p. 297). So, the teacher’s role is to motivate learners and guide them from time to another. In addition, s/he should not directly give them the answer but help them indirectly by giving them clues to rise their attention and boost their thinking. Whenever students fail, the teacher should encourage them as prompter by pushing them forward. Consequently, without motivation effective learning and teaching would not take place (p. 297).

### **1.10.2. Participant**

Teachers could take part in discussions or role-plays with their students by asking them questions and introducing the topic. Moreover, teacher’s role is restricted to prompting and introducing new knowledge through engaging students continuously and creatively. When students engage in speaking activities teacher should intervene from a while to another for correcting mistakes and knowing the students difficulties. However, this intervention should not overtake and dominate the process; otherwise,

the students' speaking skill would not be enhanced (Harmer, 2001, p. 276). Teachers' guidance is thus very helpful in pushing learners to improve and pinpointing their weaknesses.

The involvement of teachers in oral tasks with their learners would reduce their anxiety and fears. Also, it makes students enjoy their activities. Furthermore, the teacher as participant has a crucial role especially when he/she joins discussions "not as teachers but as peers of L2 learners". When giving students such specific speaking activity, teacher should control over their performance and provide them with a feedback when it is necessary. This role makes the teacher more attentive about the students' difficulties. Besides, during the students' involvement in speaking activities, the teacher must anticipate the difficulties that may be faced by students in order to provide them with the appropriate strategy for to overcome them (Koran, 2015, p. 408). As participant in activities, the teacher would stay close to learners and have a better view about their abilities, weaknesses, and strengths. This would help the teacher in future instruction and activities.

### **1.10.3. Feedback Provider**

After a deep observation and assessment of the students' oral performance, the teacher must provide his/ her learners a feedback by giving comments and correcting their mistakes. Harmer stated that after the accomplishment of the needed activities, the teacher should evaluate learners' performances and give them the corresponding feedback about the content of activity and the used language skills. Of course, providing feedback is not a random activity and the teacher must follow certain approaches. The provided feedback on the oral performances of learners should help them make needed improvements. Yet, the over correction may hinder the speaking process by making students more confused and fearful to participate (2001, p. 276).

Therefore, feedback needs to be carefully conveyed; teachers must know how and when to give a feedback.

Azmi et al. (2019) mentioned that feedback is usually the comments provided by teachers to their learners on the quality of achieving tasks. If feedback is delivered inappropriately, learners would feel demotivated and vice versa. So, teacher's feedback is inevitable affecter of learners' motivation to speak up. Hence, it is "the heart of an effective teaching" (p. 448). Motivation alone does not improve the students' achievement, it must be accompanied with teacher's feedback. Additionally, Azmi et al. (2019) claimed that evaluation and feedback in front of all the class have a positive effect on all students either those who speak or merely listen (p. 451). For instance when students mispronounce this could lead to self-correction where learners find their mistakes and correct by themselves. If they fail to do so, the teacher will provide them with the model answer from which all the class will benefit (Azmi et al., 2019, p. 458). Consequently, the committed errors and teachers' feedback providing learners with the chance to self-discovery and later skill enhancement.

### **1.11. Assessment of Speaking**

Assessing speaking skill is a vital activity in the teaching learning process. Brown (2003) defined assessment as a continuous process in which the learner is evaluated whether through direct question or giving a comment or a feedback. Assessment of students' performance could be done by the student himself, the teacher or peers. It could be intentionally or incidentally (p. 4). Hence, through the assessment the students' level would be ameliorated in speaking. Though, self and peer assessment is not always authentic due to bias, it could help learners notice one thing or two about their performances.

The same for Kyriacou (2007), he claimed that the assessment is the evaluation of students' performance. He added that assessment is an essential part of teaching and learning process in the classroom (2007, p. 105). Furthermore, assessment can be done either formally or informally as Brown (2003) stated. The informal assessment involves unplanned questions or direct comments on students' errors, where learners are encouraged to rehearse to pronounce words correctly. On the other hand, the formal assessment is based on the planning of specific activities in which the results of the performance is an evaluation for both students and teachers (pp. 5-6).

In addition, the teacher is the guide for students to accomplish their determined goals and the main objective of assessment is to check the realization of those goals (Cunningham, 1998, p. 45). The teachers' role is not restricted just for controlling or assessing but, they should focus on the students' performance, way of speaking, language used, and even the body language.

Rost (2002) argued that assessment is very important because of the immediate and accurate feedback, which would enhance the level of students and raise their self-awareness about their strengths and weaknesses (p. 204). On her part, Luoma (2004) declared that speaking is a very specific, thus its assessment could take place through direct interaction (p. 170). In addition, Underhill (1987) confirmed that teachers need to observe constantly the learners' use of language in different tasks and contexts (p. 27). Also, he added that when two interlocutors speak surely one speaks the other responds to him/her, but the evaluation of the process requires a third person who should assess the whole performance (1987, p. 51).

Thornbury (2005) insisted that assessment could be done at the beginning or the end of most language courses, or at different times of the course itself. The assessment of speaking skill takes the form of interview that contains different types of oral

activities. Moreover, the test of speaking is somehow uneasy and takes a long time to be contrasted. Because testers have to interview each student individually based on different criteria, in fact this could make a disturbance (pp. 124-125). Therefore, Providing students with feedback after the assessment process is the major goal of assessing, and which makes the whole process of teaching more successful (Cameron, 2001, p. 216).

### **Conclusion**

Speaking is a very important language skill that approximately all language learners wish to master, at the same time, various language programs and courses emphasize the most. This skill has a great significance, it makes learners communicatively competent and able to survive various language use situations. It also opens wide horizons for it skillful users, at the level of academia, personal life, and professional career. Yet, reaching a high speaking proficiency is not an easy task because the nature of languages differ and that makes it hard for language learners to make that shift from one system to the other. Moreover, the affective filters language learners that face hinder them from mastering speaking effectively.

Nevertheless, there are many ways that could help language learners overcome those difficulties. Thus, there are various techniques and activities to teach speaking is noteworthy; each strategy is used for a given reason and to satisfy the needs of a given group of learners needs. The same thing applies for other forms of speaking activities inside the language classroom. Besides, teachers could play a notable role in pushing learners to go forward and stay motivated to learn. Additionally, learners themselves could own sources of power to face learning speaking difficulties. Through believing in themselves and their abilities and putting fear aside, they could improve their oral capacities.



## **Chapter Two: Academic Risk-taking**

### **Introduction**

Getting involved in new experiences and trying out things that one has never expected to do before is a natural part of learning. To learn means to take the risk of stepping out into the unknown to make it known. Learning risks may have diversified connotation to people depending on their drives and aspirations. In language classroom, however, risk-taking is often viewed as a good thing. Learners undergo several psychological processes that affect the process of learning itself and its outcomes.

This chapter is entirely devoted to the discussion of risk-taking. It begins with a historical background to the emergence and evolution of risk taking. Then it moves to key terms definitions. The chapter also tackles the types and main traits of risk takers. Along with discussing the main levels of risk taking suggested by prominent scholars in the field. Moreover, the chapter presents the main theories associated with risk taking. In addition to the main factors influencing risk-taking in oral communication are provided. Finally, the chapter discusses the most effective ways to encourage risk-taking in speaking enhancement.

### **2.1. Origins and History of Risk-taking**

Though it was not all documented, the care for risks is as old as humans' existence. In fact, the first written references to risk measurement decision-based dated back the time of ancient civilizations, more precisely in Mesopotamia. The people there used to make detailed analysis of risks from different perspectives based on the information of involved agents. The results of the analysis would demonstrate that the breadth of the risk show whether it is a major or a minor one, its possible results, and available options to minimize the losses would be later reported to the concerned

stakeholders (Oppenheim, 1977, as cited in Trimpop, 1994, p. 1). Overall, risk-taking in the past was exclusively related to commerce and business.

Several other records about risk control in many fields, mainly economics, existed at the time in the ancient world. Some records like “bottomary contracts”, that dealt exclusively with managements of profit and loss coverage for commercial vehicles and loads, was even codified in the “Code of Hammurabi” and other institutional codes due to its worth. Romans and Greeks have similarly dealt with risks in economics (Trimpop, 1994, pp. 1-2). Almost the same principles of loss compensation and risk administration in business and other human activity practices were applied in different parts of the globe. Yet, risk control was still not conducted on scientific basis. It was until 1657 that Pascal came up with the probability theory which helped laying down the floor for numerical risk analysis (Ore, 1960, as cited in Trimpop, 1994, p. 3). Nevertheless, Alaszewski (2009) acknowledged that risk taking was not merely the result of risk analysis, as real knowledge and observable facts were conducive to final decisions (p. 488).

In sociology, risk analysis was accorded a great relevance and was considered the essence of a multitude of contemporary theories of society. Zinn (2004, p. 3) stated that risks were introduced into social sciences only after the publication of Ulrich Beck’s (1992) “Risk Society”, and “the Risk and Culture” of Douglas and Wildavsky (1982). Beck came up with the idea that the analysis of risks together with the uncertainties of the unknown could eliminate and cope with the vagueness of the future. The later would make enacting relevant decisions easier (Zinn, 2004, pp. 3-4). Risk society sheds the light on how risks from society are perceived and approached by people, and what could be done to improve the way contemporary and modern society problems could be regulated. It is concerned mostly with risks ranging in nature from

purely social and psychological risks to environmental and biohazard ones (Zinn, 2017, p. 1). Whereas for Douglas and Wildavesky, they regarded risk as a positive outcome related construct that has to do with cultural issues, such as identity and emotions (Zinn, 2004, p. 4). Basically, risk-taking was studied in relation to social factors contingent to decision-making and the way individuals are empowered or denied power based on how much they are willing to put on the line (Bialostok, 2015, p. 561). So, risk-taking in sociology dealt with different aspects of life; it investigated risk engagement tendencies in relation to humans' behaviors, emotions, social roles, and culture.

The risk investigation sphere kept developing ever since and never ceased introducing new theories and ways of closely analyzing and controlling daily risks across distinct areas of research. In recent times, risk appeared as an influential notion in the area of education especially in the field of learning and teaching languages (Beebe, 1983, p. 48). Essentially because of the nature of the activity itself. Besides, the learning/teaching process brings together individuals with a variety of concerns and expectations about the educational context and content and the other parties involved. (Bialostok, 2015, p. 561). Yet, no much research has targeted risk taking and examined it in the educational milieu.

## **2.2. Definition of Academic/Intellectual Risk-taking**

In order to obtain a thorough vision about the concept of risk-taking in relation to education, it is wiser to move gradually from the definition of risk itself to the behavior resulting from interest and engagement in risk from psychological and social perspectives.

The actual roots of the word risk are unclear, but it is suggested that this term has likely originated from the Italian word "risco" derived from the verb "risicare"

which means “to run into danger”. It has been ever since used as analogous with menace resulting from uncertainty (Bialostok, 2015, p. 563). Sublett and Jensen maintained that the term risk is extremely broad and difficult to define as it relates to numerous fields. Yet, one common point risk definitions share across distinct contexts is that risk connotes an “unexpected event in the future” (2017, p. 20). In a similar fashion, risk is defined by *The Merriam Webster Online Dictionary* as “someone or something that creates or suggests a hazard”. Fundamentally, risk is synonymous with all what is doubtful, unpleasant, and unpredictable situations with mostly negative outcomes.

Broadly defined, risk-taking is a psychological construct and a “developmental trait” that resides in human beings’ behaviors. It describes the impulses of individuals to perform a given act regardless of its outcomes (Alshalabi, 2003, as cited in Cervantes, 2013, p. 422), or what Clifford refers to as a “decisions under uncertainty” (1991, p. 264). Both definitions have focused on the process of risk taking itself; it is characterized by indefiniteness and vagueness.

On her part, Beebe asserted that risk-taking is “a situation where an individual has to make a decision involving choice between alternatives of different desirability; the outcome of the choice is uncertain; there is a possibility of failure” (1983, p. 39). Beebe accented the aspect of uncertainty surrounding risk related conduct. At the same time, she focused on negative outcomes anticipation as a risk-taking result. Bouhenika argued that risk-taking is the propensity to get involved in comportment that can be “harmful, dangerous, frightening, with a large room for pain, criticism, embarrassment and even loss; yet, at the same time it provides the opportunity for positive outcomes to appear” (2015, p. 85). This entails that risk-taking could be equally positive or negative

depending on the context and the action itself. It a fifty-fifty outcome oriented process, a “gamble” that could yield gain or loss (Brown, 1987, p. 104).

Yang and Yuewu further highlighted the nature of the upshots to expect when taking risks. They argued that risk centered decisions “have the potential to be harmful or dangerous, yet at the same time provides the opportunity for some kinds of outcome that can be perceived as positive” (2015, p. 113). Although the term risk itself has a negative tenor, the process of engaging in risk-taking behavior does not solely bring about unfavorable upshots. Risky behaviors “vary in the amount of ambiguity about the likelihood of each outcome occurring” (Smith et al., 2016, p. 40). Trimpop added that risk-taking could be either a “consciously, or non-consciously” governed conduct with no clear ends; yet, brings about harm or profit for “the physical, economic or psychosocial well-being of oneself or others” (1994, p. 9). In other words, risk-taking could be the result of thoughtful consideration, as it could be the ensuing consequence of rush and improvisation. Moreover, Trimpop stressed the gambling feature accompanying risk-taking behavior and the effects it generates on the risk-taker as well as other people (1994, p. 9).

In the academic sphere, risk-taking is simply the “learners tendency to assume risks” that are linguistic in nature when operating in different language systems (Chan & Wu, 2004, as cited in Maftoon& Afroukhteh, 2013, p. 134). In line with the previous definition, Ely (1986) argued that intellectual risk-taking corresponds to the undertaking of language use risks for the sake of learning (p. 3). This indicates that risk-taking is intrinsic and comes from within learners themselves. Likewise, Bang emphasized that academic risk-taking is empowered by learners’ “willingness” to handle unfamiliar learning challenges no matter what the outcomes would be (as cited in Suryani&Argawati, 2018, p. 34). Nacaroglu and Kizkapan also asserted the

importance of personal motives in making efforts to manage problems originating from the learning situation (2020, p. 16). From his side, Beghetto viewed intellectual risk-taking as a significant “adaptive learning behavior” that enables learners to cope with and manage learning risks for the purpose of gaining knowledge. Risk-taking is what allowed learners to discover their level, competencies, and ways for improvement (2009, p. 210). In the context of language learning and teaching classrooms, the linguistic risk-taking is directly linked to the personal steps learners take for the sake of communication in different language systems.

According to Slavkov and Séror (2018), linguistic risks come in many forms starting from making regular communication structural mistakes to causing confusions and miscomprehensions due to differences in cultures and language systems (p. 1). The language learners are encouraged to take the risk of using the language in an impulsive yet relevant and meaningful way inside or outside of the language classroom (Slavkov& Séror, 2018, p. 9). Learners as risk-takers are expected to engage in communications and keep their language as natural as possible in order to achieve proficiency.

All in all, academic risk-taking behavior is closely correlated to learners’ inclinations to put themselves in situations where they need to confront the undesirable to attain the desirable. It is the result of the thriving need to achieve success and constant challenging of oneself. Though many risk-taking attempts may end up with failure, they are all regarded as minor steps in reaching major levels of proficiency.

### **2.3. Characteristics of Risk-taking**

Risk-taking is said to be a “multi-party process” affected by psychological and sociological circumstances of individuals (Cunningham-Bryant, 2019, p. 55). The way people engage in and perform risk-taking behaviors is forged not only by their mental

and emotional states, but also with the people surrounding them. These factors are what characterize and make risk-taking behaviors the way they are.

Commonly, risk-taking process has been assigned specific set of characteristics based on the observable qualities of the process itself and its executer. Luft (2007) stated four main features of risk-taking in language learning. He claimed that risk-taking means:

- a- being willing to appear foolish in order to communicate and get the message across.
- b- using the language when not required to do so.
- c- being comfortable with uncertainty and willing to try out guesses.
- d- being willing to make mistake in order to learn and communicate (as cited in Suryani& Argawati, 2018, p. 36).

Differently put, linguistic risk-taking is sometimes irrational. It can be spontaneous and a random process. Risk-takers are inclined to speak although they feel uncertain. Since their aim is improvement, risk-takers cannot avoid making mistakes. They challenge complicated situations in order to learn effectively. Consequently, true risk-taking initiatives are performed by self-confident learners who care more about their academic achievement than they care for peers' judgment about their language performance.

Additionally, Wang and Lin (2015, p. 114) asserted that risk-takers seek challenges even when failure is a potential outcome. In other words, risk-taking triggers learners to confront their fears and take charge of the subsequent consequences of their acts. Besides, risk-takers crave to communicate their minds and feed their learning curiosity. Hence, they see risk-taking as a potential for progress and remedial instruction. Lin and Lin argued that risk-taking pushes learners to confront what

hampers them and keeps them from achieving success (2020, p. 52). One could understand that risk-taking is a positive trait that facilitates learning.

#### **2.4. Types of Risks in Language Classrooms**

Kusumaningputri (2012) conducted a research on linguistic risk-taking behaviors mainly in communication and oral performances amongst language students. Based on the learners' observation and answers to the interview, he categorized linguistic risks into five main types (p. 404): *risk of getting satire*, *risk of refusal*, *risk of having long talks*, *risk of scores*, and *risk of acting and saying inappropriately*.

##### **2.4.1. Risk of Getting Satire**

The risk of getting satire is very common in almost every educational context not only language teaching. Kusumaningputri (2012, p. 404) claimed that learners are restrained from communicating due to their fear of negative comments from teachers and peers alike. The fear of getting mocked at or criticized causes learners to halt from taking part in the language classroom and taking genuine steps towards improvement. Kusumaningputri also reported that satire affects learners in and outside the classroom (2012, p. 405). Likewise, Hasanah et al. asserted that when "ridiculed" by peers, learners get so inhibited that their minds goes blank and they cannot think properly about what to say or do. In this case, anxiety takes over and keeping silent seems like a better solution (2019, p. 52). Consequently, assessing and evaluating learners' progress would be nearly impossible.

##### **2.4.2. Risk of Refusal**

This type of risk is closely linked to the previous one and, according to Kusumaningputri, has to do with learners' ability to socialize and read non-verbal cues. It is normal to be conservative about participation at the onset of language instruction because everything is unfamiliar starting from the subject and classmates, to the



teacher. Yet, if this caution persists along instruction course it would be problematic (2012, p. 406). Furthermore, attributes such as learning progress, self-esteem, and self-confidence positively correlate with establishing mutual relationships with classmates (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016, p. 3). When learners are not able to build social bonds with peers, they would feel alienated and risk-averse. Additionally, not being able to properly read non-linguistic gestures because of differences in culture and personalities, hampers learners from actively engaging in the classroom (Kusumaningputri, 2012, p. 406).

#### **2.4.3. Risk of Having Long Talks**

Kusumaningputri (2012, p. 406) argued that the primary reason behind risk of long talks rests within learners' perceptions of openly expressing oneself. Learners' fear of not being grammatically and lexically competent in the target language makes speaking a threatening situation.

#### **2.4.4. Risk of Scores**

Test scores is considered a permanent concern to learners and a source of discomfort at examinations and assessments. The fear of scores affects learners' ability to think and accomplish task accurately (Kusumaningputri, 2012, p. 407). This indicates that test scores mess up with learners' self-esteem and motivation; it heightens chances of failure and weakens intellectual potency.

Aydin et al. noted that the fear of tests decreases motivation, concentration, and learning achievements and opens the door for errors' production (2006, as cited in Aydin et al., 2020, p. 4295). They also mentioned that test terror causes inconsistency between the scores and learners real levels of language mastery. On a larger scale, low scores apprehension and enduring test anxiety may cause learners to lose interest in the language course all at once (as cited in Aydin et al., 2020, p. 4295). This denotes that

fear of tests and assessment in general could affect learners' results negatively. In this context, tests cannot reflect learners' real level; which leads to demotivation and lack of engagement in the classroom.

#### **2.4.5. Risk of Acting and Saying Inappropriately**

Speaking performances raise the probability of committing mistakes due to the complexity of the task and the number of sub skills involved. According to Kusumaningputri (2012), this type of risk prevails as a result of the shortage of knowledge about the target language systems and uses, or the lack of awareness about cultural differences between the languages systems and cultural suitable language behaviors (p. 408). In either ways, learners perceive interaction as a source of threat and cease performing it. Humaera (2015) explained that poor belief in personal ability and low motivation makes speaking an inhibition source. Learners fear “not being able to perform to expectation” or even worse, “portraying an image of incompetence” inside the classroom or outside when performing social interactions (p. 41).

### **2.5. Types of Risk-takers in Language classes**

When it comes to risk-taking learners could be grouped into two distinct categories; one contains individual with high odds of getting involved in risks, the other is devoted to those who are not fond of risk-taking behaviors.

#### **2.5.1. High Risk-takers**

Ermyna declared that high risk-takers are hyper active, energetic, and self-motivated individuals. They are keen on expressing themselves heedless of the nature of the outcomes. Besides high risk-takers could easily adjust their behaviors and fit in effortlessly in every situation (2013, pp. 5-6). In a similar fashion, Wen and Clement (2003) asserted that high risk-takers are resilient learners that can handle negative

feedback and overcome it (as cited in Tavakoli& Ghoorchaiei, 2009, p. 8). In other words, high-risk takers are eager learners with great ambitions and adaptive skills.

As far as learning outcomes are concerned, Lin and Lin (2020) acknowledged that high risk-taker are little influenced by affective filters thus have more chances to outshine in language learning (p. 51). Suryani and Ningtyas (2018, p. 43) as well accented high risk-takers' superiority. They held that students with high level of risk-taking are motivated to pinpoint weaknesses and work on them. Hence, they have better chances to excel. Being a high risk-taker is "a necessary trait" for language success (Latha& Ramesh, as cited in Triwittayayon& Sarobol, 2018, p. 58).

### **2.5.2. Low Risk-takers**

Contrary to high-risk takers, low risk-takers are characterized with shyness and conservatism. They feel safer using a nearly fixed set of words and expressions in the target language, or "fossilized structures" that they know perfectly how to use them. Whereas, high risk-takers are "more resistant to fossilization", they constantly introduce new words and structures into their personal language register (Hongwei, 1996, as cited in Fasihi& Biria, 2017, p. 3). Consequently, low risk-takers do not appreciate new content much and stick up to what they have already learned and mastered.

Brown (2000) asserted that low risk-takers possess great self-control abilities and high levels of inhibition. Ergo, they tend to avoid what could potentially expose their vulnerability and endangers their self-worth (as cited in Humaera, 2015, p. 32). Jonassen and Grabowski further insisted that due to their extreme levels of cautiousness and self-protection, Low risk-takers miss out valuable learning experiences. They prioritize their cognitive and emotional states' stability at the expense of language enhancement. Nevertheless, low risk-takers have better decision-making skills and less

likely to experience regret (1993, p. 403). Furthermore, low risk-takers were found to use more rote learning and memorization strategies with excessive rehearsals. In the time high risk-takers rely on gambles and arbitrary replies (Maftoon& Afroukhteh, 2013, p. 144). So, low risk-taking is highly associated with rote memorization and bad learning strategies unlike high risk-taking that reflects awareness and high self-control.

## **2.6. Young's Levels of Risk-taking**

The degree of risk-taking behavior exhibited does not work the same way for all individuals. There are certain discrepancies amongst people that holds them from approaching risks similarly. Wherefore, Young (1991) had categorized learners into five main sets based on how much risks they take in the furtherance of their learning achievements: *the Uninhibited, the Analytical, the Cautious, the Inhibited, and the Non-risk-taker*.

### **2.6.1. The Uninhibited Risk-takers**

As its name indicates, learners at this level take the risk-taking behavior to its extremes. According to Young (1991), uninhibited risk-takers are passionate enthusiastic learners that are willing to go up and down their learning. They are thrill-seekers that show high degrees of motivation and readiness to perform whatever risks it takes for improvement sake. In spite of that, these learners require teachers to make additional effort to preserve their learners' keenness on their studies (p. 8). For the most part, uninhibited risk-takers care less about the accuracy of the responses they construct. Still they venture into new classroom practices audaciously.

### **2.6.2. The Analytical Risk-taker**

This degree is ranked second to the previous one in term of the inclination to perform risks. The traits of analytical risk-takers are apparent in early childhood like the first type. Nevertheless, at this level learners are more cautious about the risks they

choose to face. (Young, 1991, p. 9). Analytical learners are conservative critical thinkers that like first to study the threats and their contexts prior to the actual engagement in the risk.

### **2.6.3. The Cautious Risk-taker**

Young (1991) claimed that every child at the very early years of his/her childhood is a cautious risk-taker who is triggered to confront risk for the purpose of environment discovery. This interest in risks could thrive later if well taken care of and properly rewarded by teachers. Young added that young prudent learners care more about their self-image than their desire to uncover the unknown. Differently expressed, when other learners exhibit the tendency to try out a given challenge, cautious learners would gladly step back and clear the floor for them (p. 9). Likewise, Vertzberger expressed the same point saying that cautious risk-takers are rather “risk-averse” and concerned more with what they will endanger if they proceed with the risk-taking practice (1998, p. 77). They prefer to keep what they have, nothing more nor less, than risk it all and lose.

### **2.6.4. The Inhibited Risk-takers**

Inhibited risk behavior is very apparent notably with young learners. Inhibited risk-takers are very cautious about being involved in risks whatsoever even when tempting rewards are proposed. Their behavior is controlled by withdrawal and restraint towards all what is new and unknown and less likely to be altered. Inhibited risk-takers cannot just let go of their skepticism about initiatives, albeit a careful cost-benefit analysis of a risk situation has been conducted (Young, 1991, p. 10). Inhibited risk-takers are somehow perfectionists eager for absolute accurate responses otherwise not engaging in any classroom activity would be much preferable.

Cervantes inferred that inhibited risk-takers or “reticent risk-takers”; they are very reserved when it comes to overt classroom performances. Unless they are completely secure about the information they have, they like to maintain “introverted behaviors” (2013, p. 432). Inhibited learners are very self-aware and care a lot about their personal value and self-image, they see risk-taking as a threatening behavior that could cost them losing face in front of their classmates and teacher. Consequently, they resort to inhibition to restrain themselves from damaging their ego (Andres, 2000, as cited in Bouhenika, 2015, p. 86).

#### **2.6.5. The Non risk-takers**

Non risk-takers are extremely vigilant learners that favor mitigating and holding the effects of risks at minimum by not performing them the first place. They miss out priceless opportunities to learn due to their obsessive fear of failure (Young, 1991, p. 10). Risk-avoiders are said to “see merit in caution”, hence intentionally ignore threatening paths to desired results and opt for all what spares them discomfort (Weigold & Schlenker, 1991, p. 26). They value their personal wellbeing over intellectual development for their obsessive fear of negative reactions.

### **2.7. Factors That Affect Risk-taking**

There are many psychological, physiological, and contextual factors, which tremendously shape learners risk-taking propensities. Here below some of these factors.

#### **2.7.1. Gender**

Historically speaking, gender-oriented issues such as risk-taking was and is still governed by dominant social norms. The matter which gave males more privileges and power and established a “hegemonic masculinity”. Simultaneously, this created a stereotypical image about women as being “risk-averse” (Peñaloza, 2020, p. 38). Irwin and Millstein (1991) suggested a model to explain the factors that could

independently or collectively alter males and females behaviors when taking risks. They traced back differences in risk-taking behavior to biological maturation, cognitive system development, self-view, society's conventions, peer and family influences, personal value system, and finally risk perception (as cited in Brynes et al., 1999, p. 379). So, risk-taking in relation to gender is a very wide domain that encompasses different factors influencing this relationship starting from individuals themselves, their homes and communities, to their societies and laws.

Karimi and Biria (2017) believed that risk-taking and gender are “interactive variables”. Gender differences in risk-taking are strongly linked to the long-established qualities each gender reveals. For instance, men are known to be more “competitive, optimistic, adventurous and overconfident”. They are indifferent about the results of their actions when they are determined to accomplish things. Whereas, women are more responsible and have a “pessimistic attitudes than men toward ambiguity, pressure and measuring probability” (p. 898). Unless they are positively sure about the consequences of their decisions, women would not take the risk. Subsequently, men are risk-takers while women are risk-averse often times. For Ehsan et al. (2014), gender differences in risk-taking are present everywhere every day in all human beings activity be it a simple or a problematic one (p. 1087). Still one truth is evident, males are more risk-oriented than females due to many intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

On practical ground, however, much research has been conducted to uncover the type of relationship that links risk-taking and gender. For example, Clifford hypothesized that gender and risk-taking are highly interrelated. She conducted an experiment with fellow researchers, Clifford noted that girls have a less tendency to engage in risk-taking behaviors than boys; and when they do so they opt for low stakes' options. She suggested that girls are more rational than boys. In other words, girls have

more analytical power and they sort things out in a consistent logical manner. In addition to that, girls have a strong ability to assess and accord suitable relative weight to risks they take (1991, p. 283). Thus, girls are less likely to take risks that may lead to more harm than benefit, contrary to boys.

### **2.7.2. Motivation**

Deci and Porac (1978) have emphasized the major role the element of risk plays in increasing individuals' intrinsic motivation and belief in self-worth. They postulated that pushing individuals out of their comfort zones and exposing them to relatively new threatening situations would give them more control over their abilities to handle the danger. Once the risk is gone and individuals are no longer on alert, they will be able to efficiently assess their performances and decisions. Whether or not the risk has been managed successfully, the mere fact that individuals were face to face with risk and had to overcome it stimulates them to repeat the experience with an apt psyche and more confidence (as cited in Clifford, 1991, p. 270). Invariably, the results could be more pleasing if individuals get to choose the risks they want to face.

Moreover, Hiemer and Abele (2012) contended that more motivated individuals tend to gamble more regardless of the outcomes of their risky tendencies; whereas, the less motivated ones prefer staying out of threatening situations. Yet, the "powerless" people or the less motivated ones for risk-taking, only opt for risky behaviors if there is a very high probability that their current, mostly negative, situation could be changed (pp. 489-490). This entails that their motivation in this case stems from their absolute need for better conditions.

### **2.7.3. Anxiety**

Another affective factor that enormously influences the rates and types of risk-taking is anxiety. Smith et al. (2016) revealed that there is a direct proportion between



the levels of anxiety and risk-avoidance. Individuals with high levels of discomfort and fear about the uncertainty of their decision ends tend to be risk-averse. As there is a probability of negative outcomes, apprehensive individuals cease from taking risks. On the contrary, their less anxious counterparts are more willing to get involved in risky tendencies (p. 43). In the same way, Dahlbäck (1990) asserted that the intensity of risk and the degree of anxiety go hand in hand with each other (p. 1236). The greater the degree of ambiguity of the risk the greater the feeling of frustration and fear would be.

As far as language learning is concerned, Cubukcu (2007) noticed that those who perceive risk as source of threat only are very hesitant to make risks. Their level of anxiety reaches its peak if they are called on to present, think of test scores, or think they are not good enough. The mere imagination of scenarios where they fail epically and make fools of themselves frightens them and pushes them away from risks. The opposite is true for relaxed and less agitated learners who see risks as the cause of loss or gain alike. Even when risks bring loss it is still a gain because they believe that every risk-taking is a chance for potential growth (as cited in Kusumaningputri, 2012, p. 404). Suleimenova (2013) claimed that language learners asserted that when they are called on to perform orally they suffer intense anxiety levels and start stammering, losing words, and making mistakes (p. 1862). Hence, a lot of them tend to avoid performing such tasks and choose preserving face instead.

#### **2.7.4. Self-confidence**

Valuing oneself and trusting one's abilities and skills affects individuals risk-taking conducts. According to McClelland (1965) theory, he presumed that go-getters with high self-appraisal plump for high risk situation where success would matter more and their capability is emphasized (as cited in Tajeddini& Tajeddini, 2008, p. 441). Those with high self-confidence rates have an innate inclination towards "exploratory

behavior” (Tajeddini& Tajeddini, 2008, p. 448). Risk-taking gives sense to confident individuals’ personal abilities, qualities, and judgments and vice versa. Bandura (1986) added that self-confidence is what fuels risk-taking initiatives; faith in one’s skills motivates him/her to proceed towards ambiguous conditions for the sake of learning and improving (as cited in Clifford, 1991, pp. 269-270). So, elevated rates of self-confidence pushes individuals towards high risk-taking.

#### **2.7.5. Self-esteem**

One more factor conducive to changes on risk-taking inclinations is personal self-esteem. Liu presumed that there is a strong correlation between risk-taking rates and the views about self-worth and value. Liu suggested that language learners who have high self-esteem are more likely to put themselves at risk and go for less safer options in decision making (2012, p. 46). Learners with enhanced belief in their selves tend to initiate conversations and establish more relations with classmates. High self-esteem allows learners to succeed by keeping them motivated, committed, optimistic, and willing to do whatever it takes to improve.

On the other part, learners who take less risks or risk-averse are those who lack self-appreciation and are easily manipulated by others. Those who halt from hazards according to Ehrman and Oxford are “influenced by anticipated criticism from others or by self-criticism” (1995, p. 69). In other words, the reason why some learners are risk-avoiders is because they were subject to speculation about what others would think of their performances, or the negative self-view they have. As a result, they keep away from risk at the cost of language practice.

#### **2.7.6. The Classroom Atmosphere and Teaching Materials**

All learning contexts must provide the positivity and encouragement learners need to study comfortably and successfully. Learners could be both risk-takers and risk-

avoiders depending on the situation that are acting in and their perception of the risk to face. If friendly and stress free the classroom atmosphere is, it would be more inviting for learners to step up and take part in classroom activities irrespective of the ramifications. The teacher could help in putting learners at ease through varying the activities to give learners multiple opportunities to participate (Yang & Yuewu, 2015, p. 118). Moreover, when language teaching material are slightly explained and clarified and presented to learners who has minimal control over the target language they would freak-out (Cervantes, 2013, p. 119). As a matter of fact, there is so much for learners to handle in language classroom and with complex language materials and difficult tasks the anxiety is doubled. Hence, learners avoid risks.

Through his work, Ely (1986) declared that there is a direct link between learners' classroom anxiety and risk-taking. There is no point of pushing learners to take risks when the classroom itself is problematic to them (pp. 22-23). Learners need to be relieved and put at ease before they are expected to adopt risky learning behaviors.

## **2.8. The Main Theories that Control Risk-taking**

The *Affective filter hypothesis* and *self-efficacy theory* are the major theories that influence risk-taking in different situations during the learning process.

### **2.8.1. The “Affective Filter Hypothesis” Theory**

Towell and Hawkins (1994) reported that the affective filter hypothesis is an internal process that occurs in subconscious manner. Here language production is affected by learners' motivation, experiences, attitudes, and feeling in the early ages or what is known as “puberty” (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 46 as cited in Towell & Hawkins, 1994, p. 27). This indicates that learners have no control over their speaking inhibition. When the person is very inhibited the filter is high and it hinders the L2 input from

being transmitted into knowledge. Whereas with the less inhibited people that have lower filter acquisition of knowledge happens proportionally (p. 27).

Furthermore, Mora-Flores (2011, p. 70) argued that good achievement in language classes is based on the encouragement of risk-taking. Learners should recognize that working in collaboration may help them reach good results. In their discussions of the affective filter hypothesis, Krashen and Terrell (1983) claimed that students during communicating should feel safe and commit mistakes naturally as they are part of learning. Moreover, language learners should be more confident to succeed and enhance their capacities as speakers of English (as cited in Mora-Flores, 2011, p. 70). Which means that the power of affective filter could be heightened or diminished depending on how much learners are determined to learn.

In the same vein, Lin and Lin (2020) confirmed that risk-taking is a positive affective filter because risk-takers are not afraid to use language whenever they got the chance. They are highly motivated, more confident, and less anxious (p. 54). So, the filter is low and the comprehension of knowledge is stored in the brain. Thus, risk-takers are more successful in SLA (Second Language Acquisition) unlike the learners who did not take risks and were reluctant to speak. Risk-averse have a high negative affective filter because of factors like anxiety, lack of confidence, and hesitation, which make them unable to produce comprehensive knowledge or acquire (Lin & Lin, 2020, p. 54). Thus, risk-taking and the affective filter hypothesis have a great influence on students' proficiency. Yet, learners should recognize the importance of risk-taking and work on lowering affective factors with the help of their teachers so that learning would become easier (Lin & Lin, 2020, p. 57).

### **2.8.2. The “Self-efficacy Theory”**

In simple words, self-efficacy is the ability and the belief in the self-ability to accomplish a specific activity appropriately and effectively. It is the motive that pushes the person to do a task powerfully. Moreover, self-efficacy is the determination and effort to accomplish tasks following given strategies (Bandura, 1977, as cited in Heslin& Klehe, 2006, p. 705). Heslin and klehe (2006) confirmed that self-efficacy is related to specified tasks, it may be low in some activities and high in others (p. 705). So, high self-efficacy leads learners to be more tolerant towards the negative comments, whereas those learners with low self-efficacy see themselves as incompetent due to their negativity about the tasks and themselves. Additionally, Maddux (1991) indicated that self-efficacy has a great role in developing individuals at different levels and regulating their emotions such as: reducing anxiety, overcoming fears, building self-confidence and self-esteem (p. 65).

According to Bandura (1977) easy activities has not helped much in acquiring new knowledge and that hindered the improvement of self-efficacy. On the other hand, the hard activities lead to high level of proficiency and rising self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, as cited in Clliford, 1991, p. 269). So, self-efficacy reflects the challenges that people faced. In addition, it has to do with building upon previous experiences with language activities and developing personal strength that would enable to face the coming ones. Furthermore, Bandura (1986, p. 402) emphasized that people who failed activities before but insisted on developing themselves through time, are more likely to enhance their learning efficacy, compared to those who succeed but do not keep going for better achievement (as cited in Clliford, 1991, pp. 269-270). Which means that high self-efficacy is the result of taking learning challenges or simply risk-taking.

## 2.9. Advantages and Disadvantages of Risk-taking

Risk-taking is related to more than factor that either facilitate or hinder the process of learning depending on risk-takers themselves. The advantages of risk-taking may appear in the involvement of learners in different discourses without any hesitancy. For instances, researchers confirmed that “fossilized structures” are less frequent in the discourses of high risk-takers, since they have the desire to use new vocabulary. Also they are more willing to enhance their levels and utilize the language correctly (Alshalabi, 2003, as cited in Fasihi& Biria, 2017, p. 31). On the other hand, shyness and inhibition may affect learners’ performance by increasing the possibility of making errors (Fasihi& Biria, 2017, p. 31). Thus, those are the characteristics of low risk-taking speakers. In addition, Burgucu et al. (2010) argued that among the advantages of risk-taking is being extrovert. Extrovert learners are motivated participate freely and extensively without thinking about fears or making mistakes in their speeches. Thus, their anxiety would be lower as a result of taking risks throughout the use of language (p. 4). Besides, extroversion improves the student’s oral skill. Whereas, introversion is considered as disadvantage in taking risks. The introvert learners face many obstacles while using L2 because of being inhibited and anxious. Those reasons lead to the discouragement of risk-taking (Burgucu et al., 2010, p. 4). Consequently, some learners sit at the back while risk-takers participate whenever they can, because they are more active and like learning.

Seri (2013) emphasized that risk-taking is an essential aspect of learning a second language. Learners who take risks are venturous tend to speak and participate even they are wrong, which makes them as good learners. Hence, risk-taking is a necessary factor that helps students succeed in their learning process despite their individual differences. Moreover, it is considered as a powerful strategy for learners to

develop their skills and overcome learning obstacles (p. 5). She further argued that risk-takers speak frequently without waiting to be called by their teacher. So, their involvement in discussions is automatic and constant. By doing so, learners are developing themselves and learning from their mistakes and fears (Seri, 2013, p. 6).

Additionally, Cervantes (2013) insisted that another advantage of risk-taking may appear in the suitable choice of the quality and quantity of the linguistic patterns. Risk-takers especially with high level show their risk-taking behaviour in their learning, which may improve their linguistic competence. They tend to use new structures of language even though they are not sure about its correctness (Cervantes, 2013, p. 429). Certainly, another benefit of risk-taking is the desire to communicate in different social situations by using of course new vocabulary (Cervantes, 2013, p. 430). Consequently, the speaking proficiency would enhance as they are practicing new language in different situations.

Concerning disadvantages, high risk-takers may overrate taking risks to the extent that they start ignoring the aspect of accuracy. This could become a problem and an obstacle in learners' way to achieve speaking proficiency. Thus, one cannot deny the influence of using a new language not yet fully mastered on learners' psychology, in terms of nervousness and apprehension, when it is judged wrong several times. Moreover, the common fears that are faced by students including: peers reactions, mockery, and rejection necessarily contribute to the failure and inhibition of learning speaking (Cervantes, 2013, pp. 430-431).

## **2.10. Factors Influencing Risk-taking in Speaking/Oral Communication**

Learners' communication could be easily affected by a range of psychological and environmental factors that manipulate the way and the sum of risks they are willing to perform in the classroom. The most important factors are stated below:

### **2.10.1. Anxiety**

Goh and Burns maintained that some learners are very anxious about their oral competences and face a hard time in improving and mastering this skill. Yet, not all learners are prepared enough to take the risk of performing oral tasks in front of their classmates and teacher (2012, p. 26). Being put in a situation where they need to speak up and try out learned skills is very stressful and troubling. Learners may feel stupid and less competent, so they step aside from all what causes face loss and public humiliation. Moreover, language learners could have a “trait anxiety” which is an inborn quality in learners that causes their cognition to function inappropriately whenever they are stressed. Learners could also have “language anxiety” which is only related to how learners feel about specific situation (Goh& Burns, 2012, p. 26).

Furthermore, anxiety could then be a natural trait in learners’ personality or an occasional state related to the context itself. In both cases, anxiety affects learners and their oral performances negatively. Apprehensive learners feel they cannot afford threats to their personal worth and abstain from assuming intimidations (Goh& Burns, 2012, p. 27). Accordingly, their ability to develop oral skills would be long, impaired, and overwhelming. Likewise, Richards (2015) contended that speaking anxiety is the result of “many language learning and language-using situations” (p. 154). Which means that speaking anxiety raises from the process and language content presentation and the situations that requires overt oral performances.

In short, if learners have not achieved a full mastery of the needed skills for speaking because of their complexity or lack of clarification, they will fear to take part in any activity that necessitates those skills to spare themselves negative judgments and satire. On the other hand, oral performances raises levels of apprehension and



uneasiness amongst learners making them avoid as much as possible these types of activities.

Woodrow specified five stressful situations in speaking classes that learners have reported, which highly affect them and make them hesitant about taking the risk of speaking. The situations are ranked as follow:

- Performing in front of classmates.
- Giving an oral presentation.
- Speaking in English to native speakers.
- Speaking in English in classroom activities.
- Speaking in English to strangers (as cited in Richards, 2015, p. 155).

As part of the language classroom, learners know they have to perform orally or present from to time in front of everybody. This might be a very dangerous situation for the greatest majority of learners, thus they ranked classroom performances and presentation first. But, when it comes to speaking to strangers and native speakers, which are less likely to happen to all language learners, they were ranked last. So, these learners have organized threatening situations in relation to the potential of their occurrence.

### **2.10.2. Self-esteem**

Risk-taking in oral performances is closely related to learners' self-esteem. If learners feel good about themselves and their abilities no matter what the others say, they are most likely to assume uncertain speaking performances and the results they produce no matter what their nature is (Brown, 1987, p. 105). Differently put, learners with high self-esteem are better equipped to control their learning and assess their performances. they have a high self-worth, self-confidence, self-determination, and self-control. Contrarily, learners with low self-esteem tend to be extremely cautious about

what they do and if they feel that a given oral task would bring them harm, they would not perform it. They feel safer when they keep away from oral activities they cannot handle.

On his side, Ortega accented that self-esteem and speaking skill development strongly correlate. He held that for learners to face and perform risk-taking behaviors they need to show an appreciation of all internal factors related to learners and external factors related to teachers and fellow learners (2007, p. 116). Once learners reach an understanding that everything starting from fear and judgments is a natural part of learning process, they would start to welcome risks and take them more often so to enhance their speaking abilities.

### **2.10.3. Silence**

Silence in EFL classes may influence student's attitudes. Hence, the silent learner in a way or another is avoiding to speak during discussions due to the lack of enthusiasm and the fear of making mistakes that would embrace him/her in front of classmates. If someone has a high self-esteem, he/she would not be affected by any affective factor and engage comfortably in speaking. Self-esteem is strongly connected with risk-taking. So, once mistakes are made learners should not give much importance to them and move on with their speaking venturously (Brown, 1987, p. 105).

### **2.10.4. Motivation and Attitude**

Motivation is a necessary trait for language development. According to Minghe and Yuan (2013), the greater the level of motivation about the language learning the greater the involvement in risk-taking would be and vice versa. Enthusiastic learners show higher interest in mastering speaking (p. 58). Thus, they are more willing to take learning risks. They would constantly participate, interact and try out what they have learned. Similarly, attitudes function the same way as motivation in boosting learners

risk-taking rates and speaking task involvements. Learners with positive views towards the language are more likely to excel in it (Alrasheedi, 2020, p. 68). The learners who like the target language, its culture, and the way it is spoken would work seriously and intensively to develop it through taking risks.

#### **2.10. 5. Language Classroom and Materials**

In some learning contexts, some learners have good command over the target language skills and could perfectly express themselves in oral tasks. Nevertheless, they choose not to take part in the activities. The reason behind that is, according to Riasati (2015), the atmosphere inside the classroom itself. Comfortability and friendly relationships are highly recommended in language classrooms for their great impact on learners' participation and speaking enhancement. Learners would hesitate to take the risk of speaking and expressing themselves orally if the classroom atmosphere reflects hostility and negativity (p. 21). Learners with low self-confidence and low self-value would prefer not making fools of themselves in front of their judgmental classmates and teachers. So, they cease from assuming speaking risks to preserve their self-image.

Sometimes the problem is related to the ways and content of instruction. Materials could be boring and unengaging, so students would not be motivated to learn or take part later in activities. Learners would be more interested in the content that reflects their need and accounts for a little enjoyment while learning. The teachers then are required to keep materials relevant to what their learners want and what they need. If this kind of materials would presented, learners would feel the urge to take advantage of all what the teacher presents. They would be interested in the activities that follow lessons (Alrasheedi, 2020, p. 69). Consequently, learners would be confident about the content and motivated about risk-taking and improving their oral abilities.

### **2.10.6. The Teacher**

Teachers are responsible for learners' progress and learners are very dependent upon teachers especially in foreign language classes. Teachers could influence the students' way of thinking as well as their beliefs. Brown (2001) insisted that risk-taking has not much been encouraged in different contexts around the world, instead the focus is on the correctness and the accuracy (as cited in Kusumaningputri, 2012, p. 403). Consequently, the discouragement of making mistakes by teachers put learners in real dilemma where there is no escape except towards anxiety. Because learners are expected to only provide correct responses, otherwise their participation is not welcome. So, no gambles are tolerated in such contexts only correctness is valued.

### **2.11. Ways of Increasing Risk-taking in Speaking**

Due to the importance of risk-taking in speaking development, teachers must orient their classroom management skills and teaching strategies towards encouraging learners' propensities toward risk-taking behaviors. Helmen et al. (2020) suggested many beneficial ways to achieve such goals. First, teachers need to integrate a set of principles in the way their classes functions or what Helmen et al. referred to as "creating a language-learning community" (2020, p. 82). Learners need to be put at ease to perform a task such as speaking. That is why learners are supposed to be part of a supporting environment that pushes them forward rather than diminishing their linguistic achievements.

Besides, teachers must get to know well their students and understand them to be able to properly correct them and know what will trigger these learners to keep going. Teachers also must divide allocated time on all learners and make sure to give all learners equal opportunities to take part in classroom activity (Helmen et al., 2020, p. 82). Secondly, language of instruction and the learning content must be explicit and

thoroughly explained so that all learners would be able to perform task effectively. Teacher should feel free to use whatever tools they feel are necessary to convey meanings to learners. Thirdly, there must be a logical sequencing of content presented to learners to ensure smooth transition from one aspect of language to another (Helmen et al., 2020, pp. 83-84). Teachers must provide learners with relevant content that moves from what they already know to the unknown; this would help learners acquire related vocabulary and structures each time as their learning evolves gradually. Fourthly, the teacher must leave the floor for learners to express themselves and try as much as possible to give them more time than him/her to take part in interaction. Also, teachers should make students constantly “active and engaged” not only in classroom activities but also in interactions with classmates. They could also make use of creative teaching and modern strategies such as using music and acting to get learners involved and less bored (Helmen et al., 2020, p. 85).

Additionally, pair work activities are effective strategies for fostering risk-taking in EFL classes, they help students improve their speaking skill through getting them involved in small groups discussions. This would reduce anxiety and put learners at ease to discuss and participate. Pair work activities also develop the collaboration of students and allow the teacher to provide them with personalized feedback. Thus, learners must be encouraged to work in pairs and be more confident to express themselves (Zúñiga, 2013, pp. 27-28). In short, risk-taking is an essential component of learning, and a significant aspect of enhancing the speaking proficiency.

## **Conclusion**

Risk-taking as a psychological construct is very influential in enhancing learning achievements and learners' progress. It offers learners multiple chances to try out their language skills and overcome their fears for the sake of improvement. Through risk-

taking, progress could take place since risk-taking presents new learning experiences help learners to move to the next stages of learning.

There are many factors that hamper learners from fully taking advantage from risk-taking. Learners need to overcome them to be able to learn effectively and efficiently. Thus, changing one's attitudes towards risk-taking propensities could be boosted by both learners and teachers. If learners believed in their abilities and keep moving forward without paying attention to negativity and criticism, they would become high risk-taker thus high language achievers. Moreover, teachers also could assist them in their journey of assuming risks by being supportive and encouraging.

## **Chapter Three: Field Investigation**

### **Introduction**

After having dealt with both variables of the research, speaking skill and risk taking strategies, on theoretical basis in the first two chapters, now it is time to examine them on practical grounds. This chapter is entirely devoted to investigating the relationship between speaking enhancement and student's inclinations towards taking learning risks. It introduces and explains the results and tools of research. It starts with a description of the main tool of research, which is student's questionnaire, and the population upon which the research was conducted. Then, it moves to the reading and interpretations of the data that the administration of the questionnaire yielded. Additionally, it provides an analysis and examination of the main results and sums up the findings of the current study.

### **3.1. Students' Questionnaire**

The present research relies exclusively and solely upon the data generated by the students' questionnaire, which was hopes to gather the needed numerical data for interpretation and analysis.

#### **3.1.1. Aims of Students' Questionnaire**

The ultimate goal behind conducting the student's questionnaire was to better understand the variables of the research from students' points of view and reveal the relationship between them. The questionnaire was piloted first to uncover how students perceive the speaking skill and risk-taking behaviour. More importantly, the students' questionnaire was directed towards investigating the correlation between risk-taking and speaking; it was meant to investigate the effects of risk taking propensity on oral performances improvement and how much students are willing to risk it for ameliorating their speaking levels. Moreover, the questionnaire aimed to raise students'

awareness about the usefulness of risk-taking strategies in learning in general and on speaking enhancement in specific.

### **3.1.2. Population of the Study**

The sample for this research consisted of randomly selected first year students from the department of English at the University of 8 May 1945, Guelma. There are two hundred fifty (250) first year English students at the department of English but only one hundred and fifty two (152) students took part in the research, as it is the required number for the representativeness of the sample according to the sampling table of Krejcie and Morgan (1978, as cited in Cohen et al, 2000, p. 94). The reason behind opting for first year students is that this is their first experience with extensive language instruction and their first time having oral expression classes. Everything is new to them starting from the content and classes to classmates and teachers. Subsequently, they are more likely to experience risk taking in learning; especially that they are constantly in need of using English at different occasions for communication in front of their classmates and teachers.

### **3.1.3. Description of the Questionnaire**

The students' questionnaire was designed in consistency with the information presented in the two first theoretical chapters. It is composed of four basic sections with a total of thirty-two questions. All the questions are of closed ended nature dominated chiefly by multiple-choice questions and few yes and no items. The questions with already predetermined answers would facilitate the analysis and provide quantitative data for interpretation. Only the final part of the questionnaire, the suggestions part, allows for open-ended responses in order to allow students to express themselves and provide personalized responses that would further eliminate ambiguity and justify their views.



The first section of the students' questionnaire comprises of five lead questions intended to collect necessary background information about the sample of the research. From Q 1 to Q5 the primary aim of these questions was to build student's profile and draw a clearer image about who these learners are, how long have they being dealing with English, and their levels of proficiency in the language.

Section two entitled "speaking proficiency" is composed of a total of fourteen questions starting from Q6 to Q19. As the title entails, this section deals with the students' capacities and preferences in speaking as well as their views towards this particular language skill. It also seeks to extract students' strategies to improve speaking and the difficulties they face in oral expression.

The third section of the questionnaire is allotted to investigating the relationship between speaking and risk taking strategies. With twelve questions, this section starts first by enquiring about student's familiarity with risk-taking and what makes them either risk-takers or risk-averse. Then the scope of questions shifts towards how and to what extent do students' inclination towards risk taking affects their speaking proficiency enhancement.

The questionnaire ends with a small section for further suggestions and comments from the part of learners. This part offers gives students full freedom to add anything they wish to say about the topic under investigation.

#### **3.1.4. Administration of the Students' Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was administered at the department of Letters and English Language, 8 May 1945 University-Guelma, to First-year Licence students. The process took one week from May 27<sup>th</sup> to June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021. Because it was approximately the end of year and many students started skipping classes. So, the questionnaire was distributed as hard copies at the level of the department and electronically in first year

English students and university Facebook groups. It is worth mentioning that the paper form was distributed in classes as well as the corridors and other different parts of the university and yielded one hundred forty responses. While only twelve students answered the electronic version.

### 3.1.5. Analysis of Results and Findings from the Students' Questionnaire

This section includes quantitative data analysis and interpretation.

#### Section One: General Information

**Question One:** What is your gender?

Table 3.1

#### *Students' Gender*

Options	Number of studens	Percentage
Female	109	71.7%
Male	43	28.3%
Total	152	100%

Table 3.1 shows that the highest majority of the sample are females (71.7%), while males represent only 28.3% of the population. This indicates that females have more tendency towards studying foreign languages and English in particular on the one hand. On the other hand, the results imply that the data gathered for the research would be dominated by the female students' point of views.

**Question Two:** How old are you?

Table 3.2

*Students' Age*

Options	Number of students	percentage
18-19	88	71.5%
More than 19	35	28.5%
Total	123	100%

As shown in the table above, the greatest majority of the population (71.5 %) are aged between eighteen and nineteen years. This entails that these learners had a natural educational course and failed no year before they have reached the university. While 28.5% reported they are more than nineteen years, probably because they have failed some years at high or middle school or at the level of the university itself and this is not their first time being first-year students. It is worth mentioning that twenty-nine students skipped this question and provided no answer for this part.

**Question Three:** How long have you been studying English (including this year)?

Table 3.3

*Students' Experience in Studying English*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
8 years	108	71.1%
More than 8 years	44	28.9%
Total	153	100%

Table 3.3 demonstrates that the majority of the participants (71.1%) have been studying English for eight years including this year, which means that their experience with learning English is exclusively limited to school instruction either at the level of High School, Middle School, and the University. The rest of the population (28.9%),

however, reported that they have been studying English for more than eight years. This entails that they have not succeeded in some academic years.

**Question Four:** Was studying English as a Foreign Language at the university your choice?

Table 3.4

*Student's Choice of English*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	141	92.8%
No	11	7.2%
Total	152	100%

According to the data displayed in the table above, 92.8% of the research sample claimed that studying English was their personal choice. Whilst, only 7.2% said it was not their choice. The results show that nearly the whole population chose English by themselves because they like it, thus they are expected to be very motivated to study it as a university major and keener to develop their language skills and levels of use of English.

**Question Five:** How could you describe your level in English?

Table 3.5

*Students' Level of Proficiency in English*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Good	66	43.4%
Average	81	53.3%
Bad	5	3.3%
Total	152	100%

When asked about how well students think they are good in English, more than half (53.3%) of the population said they have an acceptable command over the language. Whereas 43.4% of the respondents said they have a good level in English. Only 3.3% said they have poor command over English and need to further work hard on their English proficiency level. Overall, the results show that the larger part of the population are satisfied with their level in English and would not need much effort on the part of teachers to help them adopt to instructions and content.

### **Section Two: Speaking proficiency**

**Question Six:** Which of the four skills you wish to master most?

Table 3.6

#### *The Skills Students' Wish to Master the Most*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Listening	24	15.8%
Speaking	91	59.9%
Reading	14	9.2%
Writing	23	15.1%

More than half of the respondents (59.9%) reported that they are interested in developing their speaking skills due to its importance in the classroom in general and the outside world in particular. This also suggests that they are interested in bettering their communicative abilities. Some students (15.8%) opted for listening, which entails that they are aware of the correlation between speaking and listening, and how developing listening could help them perfect their oral performance be it on the level of pronunciation, fluency, and intonation. Other students (15.1%) said they would like to master writing, which is probably related to the university life and the importance of academic writing in the success of students and their educational achievements. Only

9.2% of the participants contended they want to improve their reading skills, which may mean that they are keen on enlarging their vocabulary storage and improving their writing styles and structure use.

**Question Seven:** How is your speaking proficiency?

Table 3.7

*Students' Speaking Proficiency Level*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Low	15	9.9%
Average	112	73.7%
High	25	16.4%
Total	152	100%

The table above shows that 73.7% of the participants reported they have an average command over speaking and need further work on their oral skills. While, 16.4% of them believe they are proficient English speaker. However, 9.9% of the population said they have very poor speaking level. These results are very consistent with the results of Table 3.6, as it shows that the highest portion of the population have no full mastery of speaking and wish to attain higher levels in this skill. All in all, these results show that the language proficiency will not be a main problem for students when performing orally because the majority have an acceptable level in speaking. Besides, they are expected to participate more in activities and classwork.

**Question Eight:** Does your mother tongue language influence your speaking skill?

Table 3.8

*Mother Tongue's Interference in Students' Speaking Skill*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	80	52.6%
No	72	47.4%
Total	152	100%

Concerning mother tongue interference in learners oral performances, 52.6% of the participants admitted that their mother tongue influences their language use in oral performances. This means that they have not been trained enough to think in the target language. They may also be relying on literal translation of expressions from the mother tongue to the target language. The rest of students (47.4%) maintained that their oral performances are free from mother tongue interference. It may entail that these students are aware that language use should be in English rather than Arabic.

**Question Nine:** How often do you participate in oral discussions in the classroom?

Table 3.9

*Students' Participation in Classroom Discussions*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Always	39	25.7%
Sometimes	95	62.5%
Rarely	13	8.6%
Never	5	3.3%
Total	152	100%

Table 3.9 revealed that a large number of respondents (62.5%) claimed they take part in classroom discussions from time to time. Some participants (25.7%) avowed they constantly participate and express themselves in oral classes. Few learners (8.6%) said they seldom engage in oral discussions, while 3.3% said they never do so. The results show that the majority of learners are very confident to express themselves and are eager to try out their language for the purpose of perfecting it. The nature of the topics discussed in the classroom may also be a reason why students are interested to participate. Yet, those reticent to participate have probably poor self-confidence, language command, or interest in topics discussed.

**Question Ten:** When discussions are raised in the classroom, do you

Table 3.10

*Students' Reactions to Discussions Held in the Classroom*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
volunteer to speak	77	50.7%
wait till you are called	55	36.2%
keep silent	20	13.2%
Total	152	100%

When oral discussions are held in the classroom, 50.7% of respondents said they venture willingly in oral discussions. 36.2% of the students reported they participate only when urged by teachers, and 13.2% preferred keeping silent. This may suggest that the majority are self-motivated to participate in oral discussions. They are keen on expressing themselves and practicing the language at different occasions with different topics. Those who wait to be called on are less motivated and need a little push by teachers to overcome their fear of oral expression. Yet, students who prefer merely



observing and not taking an active part in discussions have probably issues with language command, or classroom environment, or discussion topics.

**Question Eleven:** What are the techniques that are often used by your teacher in oral expression sessions?

Table 3.11

*Techniques Teachers Often Use in Oral Expression Sessions*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Listening scripts	66	43.4%
Watching videos	76	50%
Oral presentations	105	69.1%
Free discussions	71	45.7%
Storytelling	16	10.5%
Role-plays	26	17.1%
Games	47	30.9%
Other(s)	0	0%

The most used activity by oral expression teachers in the classroom according to students is oral presentations (69.1%). Watching videos ranked second with 50%, and free discussions took the third position with 43.4%. In fourth position comes listening scripts with 30.9%, and games right after with 30.9% of the responses. After that, there are role-plays and storytelling with 17.1% and 10.5% respectively. No participants went for other. These results imply that teachers use a variety of techniques in oral classes that have different objectives and target a given language use aspect, in order to cope with students' diversified needs and learning profiles.

**Question Twelve:** Do you have confidence when speaking in the classroom?

Table 3.12

*Students' Confidence When Speaking in the Classroom*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	111	73%
No	41	27%
Total	152	100%

The greatest majority of respondents (73%) contended that they are very confident about their speaking performances; thus, they participate more in oral classrooms. This is probably due to their faith in their linguistic abilities and their zealotness for improving their speaking level. However, less than one third of the participants (27%) opted for “no”. Perhaps, the reason why they feel less confident when speaking is that they are weak in terms of language skills and/or fear of peers and teachers' negative judgments on their performances.

**Question Thirteen:** Do you agree that classroom environment affect your performance in speaking?

Table 3.13

*The Influence of Classroom Environment on Student' Speaking performance*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	94	61.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	40	26.3%
Disagree	18	11.8%
Total	152	100%

As displayed in the table above, 61.8% of the population strongly agreed that the classroom sphere has a significant impact on their speaking performance. This indicates that these students have potentially some serious issues with public speaking anxiety, negative feedback, boredom, and self-confidence. Some respondents (26.3%) reported that they feel indifferent about the learning environment on their performance. Seemingly, these learners have never considered the effects of the classroom aspects on their performances or that the classroom effects are minimal compared to other difficulties they face. The rest of the participants (11.8%) disagreed about that, which means that these students are very comfortable with their classrooms. If ever their performances went wrong, classroom environment would not be the cause; there are other reasons that led them to fail in speaking.

**Question Fourteen:** Do you have difficulties in speaking?

Table 3.14

*Students' Difficulties in Speaking*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	92	60.5%
No	60	39.5%
Total	152	100%

When asked whether they encounter obstacles while speaking, a great number of students (60.5%) claimed they do. Whereas, 39.5% claimed they do not have any problems. This is consistent with the pervious results of learners having problems with mother tongue interference and classroom environment (Table 3.8 and Table 3.12).

**-If yes, what are the difficulties you face?**

Table 3.15

*Difficulties Faced by Students in Speaking*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Lack of vocabulary	62	40.7%
Lack of confidence	37	24.4%
Mispronunciation	19	12.5%
Anxiety	26	17.1%
Shyness	25	16.5%
Fear of making mistakes	56	36.8%
Demotivation	11	7.2%
Lack of self-esteem	30	19.7%
Communication apprehension	8	5.3%
Other(s)	2	1.3%

In order to get more clarification about the types of obstacles they have with speaking, students were asked to pick up the most persistent problems they have. Less than half the informants (40.7%) opted for the lack of vocabulary as a major issue in speaking. Fear of making mistakes is ranked the second with 36.8% responses. Lack of confidence is ranked the third with 24.4% and lack of self-esteem in fourth position with 19.7%. After that comes anxiety and shyness are ranked in the fifth and sixth positions with 17.1% and 16.5% respectively. Mis-pronunciation according 12.5% of the participants is the seventh most tiring issue that faces students. Demotivation got the eighth place with 7.2% votes. At last, communication apprehension is seen as the least problematic speaking issue for the population of the research with only 5.3%. 1.3% of the informants opted for other, they added *the fear of forgetting words* and what they have prepared for oral presentations and *fear of new topics* that they have no

clues about. On the whole, these results show that there are many problems that affect students' oral performances and they could be classified into linguistic, psychological, and contextual factors.

**Question Fifteen:** Do you feel afraid to speak?

Table 3.16

*Students' Fear of Speaking*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	64	42.1%
No	88	57.9%
Total	152	100%

The results of Table 3.16 display that more than half of the respondents (57.9%) do not fear oral expression practices. This is very strange especially when comparing these results with the results of Table 3.15; where many students reported they fear making mistakes, have anxiety, and fear they would not be good enough and have what it takes to speak. However, 42.1% of the participants contended they feel afraid whenever they have to speak.

**-If your answer is “yes” is it because of?**

Table 3.17

*The Reasons Behind Students Fear of Speaking*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Fear of speaking in public	69	45.4%
Fear of making pronunciation mistakes	125	82.2%
Fear of teachers' negative feedback	58	38.2%
Other(s)	0	0%

For the purpose of better understanding why some students said they fear speaking, they were asked to clarify why. The greatest majority (82.2%) opted for the fear of making pronunciation mistakes. Possibly, because they are not aware yet about the rules of speech and they have not trained enough on accents, intonations, stress ... and other sound features. Other students (45.4%) reported that they fear speaking in public. This emphasizes their lack of self-confidence and their vulnerability to classroom contextual factors. A small number of students (38.2%) chose fear of negative feedback from the part of teachers. This may suggest that these learners have had bad previous experiences with language teachers and that fear still persists, or that their self-worth is extremely important to them and they cannot endanger it by giving others the opportunity to criticize them. No student added other reasons for fear of speaking.

Surprisingly, some if not all of the students who previously said “no” answered this part thought it clearly says “If your answer is yes” then you could proceed answering this part. This means that those students have not been 100% faithful and truthful with their pervious response; it seems that they have opted for “no” for no logical reason.

**Question Sixteen:** Are you satisfied with your level in speaking?

Table 3.18

*Students' Feelings about their Speaking Proficiency Level*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Satisfied	62	40.8%
Unsatisfied	90	59.2%
Total	152	100%

As shown in the Table 3.18, more than half of the population (59.2%) are unhappy with their current level in speaking. Whilst, 40.8% of the respondents are satisfied about their speaking proficiency. The results demonstrate students' consciousness about the importance of speaking. Hence, they are able to evaluate their speaking level and they are highly inclined towards making improvements.

**Question Seventeen:** How important do you consider speaking skill in EFL classrooms?

Table 3.19

*The Importance of Speaking*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Not important	8	3.5%
Important	89	58.6%
Very important	55	36.2%
Total	152	100%

The results of this table accents the previous conclusions. According to 58.6% of the sample, speaking is important in EFL classes. While 36.2% considered speaking to be of great value in language classrooms. Only, 3.5% of the respondents did not think that speaking is of that significant. Overall, the results are very promising as they show the weighty value students accord to speaking. This entails that they will be more or less willing to do whatever it takes to develop their speaking and reach a full mastery of oral skills.

**Question Eighteen:** Do you agree that the Internet and electronic sources should be used in EFL classrooms to improve your communicative competence?

Table 3.20

*The Use of Internet and Electronic Sources in EFL Classes for Communicative Competence Improvement*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Agree	114	75%
Neither agree nor disagree	35	23%
Disagree	3	2%
Total	152	100%

As it is presented in the above table, 75% of the population indicated that they encourage the use of electronic devices and the Internet in enhancing their communicative competence. Few students (23%) were neutral, they probably prefer the traditional ways of instruction. Very few students (2%) did not think that electronic devices and the internet should be used in the classroom for communicative competence improvement. As a result, these results prove that the use of technology nowadays have become supplementary and indispensable part of students' life.

**Question Nineteen:** Do you practice English outside the classroom?

Table 3.21

*Students' Practice of English outside the Classroom*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	124	81.6%
No	28	18.4
Total	152	100%

Table 3.21 demonstrates that 81.6% of the students reported that they practice English outside the classroom. This suggests that they strongly believe in the fact that



practice makes perfect and they are motivated to seize every opportunity available to practice their language outside the classroom. As the previous table shows (table 3.20), these learners may even use electronic means and communicate with native speakers to enrich their speaking practices. In addition, they know that classroom instruction alone will not be enough to help them enhance their speaking proficiency. Nevertheless, 18.4% of the population contended they merely rely on classroom practices. Supposedly, these learners either think that the learning content and activities presented in the classroom are really helping them get better or they are just too lazy or shy to use English in places other than the classroom.

### **Section Three: Enhancing Speaking Proficiency through Risk-taking**

**Question Twenty:** What does Risk-taking mean to you?

Table 3.22

#### *Risk-taking Meaning to Students*

Options	Number	Percentage
Less hesitancy during speaking	29	19.1%
Volunteering to participate in oral discussions frequently	35	23%
Not worrying about making mistakes or public failure	52	34.2%
Being social and engaging in different conversations without any fears.	36	23.7%
Total	152	100%

When asked about the meaning of risk-taking, 34.2% of the respondents went for taking the risk of speaking in public regardless of the consequences. While, 23.7% claimed that risk-taking means being social and taking parts in speaking activities fearlessly. Almost the same number of participants (23%) believed risk taking is the personal inclinations towards frequent engagement in oral discussions. The remaining

members of the population (19.1%) said risk taking signifies relaxed speaking. Doubtlessly, the majority of learners are aware of the meaning of learning risk taking. They know that it entails venturing speaking performances no matter what results it brings about. Since they have guessed it right, they are expected to better understand and respond to following questions and provide genuine answers.

**Question Twenty-one:** Are you an introvert or an extrovert student?

Table 3.23

*Introvert vs. Extrovert Students*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Extrovert	90	59.2%
Introvert	62	40.8%
Total	152	100%

Table 3.23 demonstrates that more than half of the population (59.2%) are extroverts, and 40.8% are introverts. Extrovert students are active in oral classes, they care less about judgments and take advantage of every speaking practice. On the other side, introverts are really not fond of classroom engagement. They are not expected to take much learning risks as their less cautious counterparts.

**Question Twenty-two:** Is risk-taking necessary to improve speaking achievement?

Table 3.24

*The Role of Risk-taking in Improving Speaking Achievement*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	137	90.1%
No	15	9.9%
Total	152	100%

As shown in the Table 3.24, the majority of respondents (90.1%) claimed that risk-taking is a necessary trait to improve speaking practices. This suggests that students are familiar with the advantages of risk-taking behaviors in bettering speaking performances and helping learners overcome speaking obstacles. It also implies that these students have the potential for risk-taking in the future. Nevertheless, 9.9% of the participants opted for “no”. Presumably, these students are extremely protective for personal face and self-value. Hence, they believe they are better without taking risks and they could improve their speaking in other ways.

**Question Twenty-three:** Do teachers help students to take risks in their debates?

Table 3.25

*Teachers' Encouragement of Risk-taking in the Classroom Debates*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Always	28	17.1%
Sometimes	98	64.5%
Rarely	16	10.5%
Never	12	7.9%
Total	152	100%

As displayed in table above, 64.5% of the respondents reported that their teachers push them to take risks in classroom discussions occasionally. 17.1% of the students avowed that their teachers continuously urge them to engage in risks. While, 10.5% and 7.9% of the participants respectively claimed their teachers either rarely or never help them take risk in oral debates. This indicates that teachers accord a considerable amount of attention to their students' performance weaknesses and strengths. It also presupposes teachers' awareness of the importance of intellectual risk-taking.

**Question Twenty-four:** How important is risk-taking in your oral discussions?

Table 3.26

*The Importance of Risk-taking in Oral Discussions*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Not important	12	7.9%
Important	93	61.2%
Very important	47	30.9%
Total	152	100%

According to the data displayed above, 61.2% of the respondents claimed that risk-taking is important in oral discussions. Whereas, 30.9% of participants claimed it is vital for learners to take part in oral communication. Very few students (7.9%) reported that risk-taking plays no role in classroom discussions. As a result, data in Table 3.26 are consistent with the results of the previous table (Table 3.24). It demonstrates students' awareness about the significant role of risk-taking strategies that perform in raising students' participation in oral discussions.

**Question Twenty-five:** What are the reasons that prevent students from taking risks?

Table 3.27

*The Reasons that Prevent Students from Taking Risks*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Psychological factors	63	41.4%
Linguistic factors	42	27.6%
Environmental factors	47	30.9%
Total	152	100%

Table 3.27 demonstrates the reasons why students hold from risk-taking. less than half of the informants (41.4%) reported that psychological factors is what stops them from taking-risks. 30.9% of the population avowed that environmental factors are amongst the reasons that make risk taking for them an impossibility. Linguistic factors were the least problematic as only 27.6% of the population chose them. The results of this table are very relevant to what has been discussed before mainly in Table 3.12, Table 3.13, Table 3.15, and Table 3.17. Overall, data demonstrates that there are three main types of obstacles that hinder risk-taking propensities; these obstacles could be related to either the knowledge about language, the emotional and cognitive state of students, or the teaching/learning context and the agents involved in it. These factors are the same factors that holds learners from speaking in the classroom, which means that speaking is the risk to language students they need to take to improve.

**Question Twenty-six:** Does risk-taking change your speaking proficiency positively?

Table 3.28

*The Positive Effects of Risk-taking on Speaking Proficiency*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	136	89.5
No	16	10.5
Total	152	100%

Table 3.28 displays that most of the respondents (89.5%) reported that risk-taking affects their level of speaking proficiency positively. This suggests that these students' risk taking practices have been successful and brought by satisfying results, as far as speaking is concerned, and that these students are more likely to continue risk-taking in future oral practices. However, 10.5% of the population claimed that risk taking had no positive effects on their oral performances. Probably, the risks these

learners took were minor ones and made no considerable changes in their speaking level. Moreover, this could mean that the learning risks these respondents engaged in engendered unpleasant outcomes, which may in return turn students into risk-aversion.

**Question Twenty-seven:** Do you agree that risk taking is a beneficial technique to increase your speaking achievement?

Table 3.29

*Risk-taking as a Beneficial Technique to Increase Students' Speaking Achievement*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Strongly agree	110	72.4%
Neither agree nor disagree	38	25%
Strongly disagree	4	2.6%
Total	152	100%

For more elaboration about how effective is risk-taking in speaking improvement, respondents were asked to show how much they agree to this claim. 72.4% of the research population strongly approved the previous claim, while 25% were more reserved about such claim. 2.6% of the respondents strongly rejected the beneficial role risk-taking practices play in enhancing speaking. Once more, there is an inconstancy in the responses of the participants. In the results shown in Table 3.28, only 10.5% of the population believed risk-taking had no positive effects over their oral performances. Yet, in this table results show that 27.6% of the sample either have nothing to say about the positive effects of risk-taking on oral performances, or have totally rejected them. Again, respondents are being unfaithful in conveying their opinions and personal experiences.

**Question Twenty-eight:** As an EFL learner, how strongly do you feel that you are satisfied about your risk-taking in your discussions?

Satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Unsatisfied

Table 3.30

*Students' Views about their Risk-taking in Discussions*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
1	16	10.5%
2	39	25.7%
3	75	49.3%
4	16	10.5%
5	6	3.9%
Total	152	100%

As demonstrated by table 3.30, 49.3% of the respondents are neither very satisfied nor very dissatisfied with their risk-takings. This suggests that they have been taking risks and obviously not all of them turned out well. 25.7% of the respondents reported they are satisfied about the risks they took. Since they are satisfied with their risks, the rates of success are probably higher. 10.5% said they are unsatisfied with all their risk taking, because all their risks were probably not successful and resulted in failure. The same number of participants (10.5%) reported that they are very satisfied with the risks they have taken. Seemingly, their risks brought more success than failure. Only 3.9% of the population avowed they are very unsatisfied at all with the learning risks they were engaged in. This may suggest that all the risks they took failed epically. All in all, the whole population have taken risks before. Though not all the risks were successful, the majority of learners are very pleased with the intellectual risks they were involved in. Hence, they are expected to engage in more risky inclination as their learning proceeds.

**Question Twenty-nine:** To what extent is risk-taking useful in enhancing speaking achievement?

Useful 1 2 3 4 5 useless

Table 3.31

*The Extent to which Risk-taking Affects the Speaking Skill*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
1	37	24.3%
2	35	23%
3	47	30.9%
4	27	17.8%
5	6	3.9%
Total	152	100%

When asked about the usefulness of risk-taking in enhancing speaking, 30.9% of the respondents were somehow satisfied about the usefulness of risk-taking in enhancing speaking. This may entail that risk-taking has actually been useful in pushing them towards improvement. 24.3% of the participants claimed that risk-taking is very useful in enhancing students speaking skills. Probably, these respondents have tried risk taking before and it did their speaking level a great good. While 23% of the sample reported that they think risk-taking is somehow useful in relation to improving oral performance. This may suggest that these students noticed positive changes in their speaking skill. 17.8% of the students contended that taking learning risks is not that useful. Possibly, nearly all the risks they previously took failed and had no positive impact on their speaking skills. Only 3.9% of the respondents believed risk-taking is not useful at all. This may entail that all the risks they engaged in brought improvements to their speaking level.



**Question Thirty:** Does risk-taking lead to high speaking proficiency?

Table 3.32

*The Relation between Risk-taking and High Speaking Proficiency*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	139	91.4%
No	13	8.6
Total	152	100%

Nearly the whole population (91.4%) contended that there is a strong correlation between risk-taking strategies and high levels of speaking mastery. However, very few learners (8.6%) avowed that there is no correlation at all. Thus, the majority of students are aware that risk-taking strategies lead to positive outcomes in oral command.

**Question Thirty-one:** Which factor could increase the effectiveness of risk-taking in order to enhance the speaking skill?

Table 3.33

*Factors that could Increase the Effectiveness of Risk-taking in Enhancing Speaking*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Motivation	106	69.7%
Positive feedback	69	45.4%
Linguistic competence	42	27.6%
Interaction with the teacher	41	27%
Peers' interaction	18	11.8%
other (s)	0	0%

In order to better understand risk-taking behaviors, students were asked to choose which factors are more effective in raising speaking level through risk-taking.

More than two thirds of the respondents (69.7%) opted for motivation. 45.4% went saying that positive feedback highly affects the outcomes of risk taking. Seemingly, both intrinsic motivation coming from within learners and extrinsic motivation resulting from appraisals have great impact on the effectiveness and rates of risk-taking. In other words, this entails that the more motivated the more the better risk-taking engagement would be and vice-versa. Nearly one third of the population (27.6%) claimed that linguistic competence is a vital aspect in raising the effectiveness of risks in speaking. This suggests that when confident about their grammar and lexis command, students would be less afraid to make mistakes and rather focused on well performing orally. 27% of the respondents feel that risk-taking could be boosted if learners had good relation with their teachers. This means that if teachers stand closer to their students and show them support and interest in their development, students would worthy and do their best to reach their potentials. Only 11.8% of the sample opted for peers' interaction. As language learners, students need to perform orally in front of their classmates or take part in group and pair work. If learners fail to socialize and build relation with their classmates, they would probably never be able to overcome their fear of peers' judgment and halt from taking the necessary risks that would enable them to improve their oral proficiency. No one of the participants opted for other.

**Question Thirty-two:** Would you please add further comments/suggestions about this topic?

Only 30.3% of the research sample replied to this section of the questionnaire. In addition to good luck wishes and compliments on the choice of the topic and the information this research would reveal about the correlation between risk-taking and

speaking proficiency enhancement, some students added relative comments that are summarized in the following points:

-Speaking is at the center of language teaching and communication, so learners need to do whatever it takes to improve this skill.

-Learning speaking is not solely the result of classroom instruction, that is why learners need to do extra curricula speaking practices. Improving speaking requires extensive and continuous rehearsals.

-Even when they do not know what risk-taking is truly, many language learners take learning risks every single time they open up their mouths in language classrooms.

-Risk-taking is seen as a good student's quality most of language teachers favor in classroom, and it is greatly assumed that it is associated with language learning success.

-Risk-taking is a very beneficial learning technique that could be more efficient if language learners have good command of basic language skills.

-Learners need to face their fears and start taking gambles from time to time; it going to be exciting and purely advantageous.

-Teachers play a major role in boosting their learners' motivation to take risks. If teachers were supportive and tolerant, more learners would find courage to step in intellectual risks.

### **3.1.6. Summary of Results and Findings from the Students' Questionnaire**

Quantitative data from students' questionnaire showed that developing speaking is at the center of interest of many first-year students who participated in the research (59.9%) due to its considerable worth. Moreover, the level of speaking proficiency of the larger part of the population (90.1%) are from average to high. Thus, the mastery of speaking will not be a major issue in students' oral performances. Rather, failure to express oneself in the classroom could be traced to other problems. For instance, the

data has shown that more than half of the respondents (52.6%) struggle with the negative language transfer from mother tongue to English. It is mainly the result of lack of practice and exposure to the English language. Though many respondents (62.5%) reported that they frequently and voluntarily engage in classroom discussions and oral activities, some learners (36.2%) need to be pushed by teachers to participate or else they will keep silent (13.2%). Nevertheless, teachers are aware of the problems that hamper students from actively engaging in classwork. As a result, teachers were found to imply a variety of oral activities to help their students get better. Teachers rely mainly on oral presentations (69.1%), using videos (50%), and listening activities (43.4%). The least used activity by teachers, however, is storytelling (10.5%). The results show how most students (73%) are self-confident in speaking tasks due to their level of mastery of language skills. Still many (61.8%) reported facing problems in speaking performances because of teaching/learning context related specificities. Furthermore, students encounter many problems while speaking that could be categorized in terms of their nature into psychological, environmental, and linguistic ones.

It was revealed that less than half of the informants (42.1%) fear speaking as it causes them to express themselves in public, expose their performances' weaknesses, and make themselves targets of teachers' criticism. That is why 59.2% of the participants said they were unhappy about their speaking performances in the classroom. 75% of the participants were for the use of technological devices in speaking enhancement, which gives teachers more opportunities to attract their students' attention and foster them to make more speaking achievements. The data from the students' responses showed that the greatest majority of learners (81.6%) do not merely rely on classroom instruction and oral activities to develop their speaking skill.

They are rather motivated to learn by themselves and communicate using English outside of the classroom setting.

Furthermore, more than half of the participants (57.9%) are aware of the meaning of risk-taking in relation to speaking practices. In addition, more than half of the respondents said they are extroverts (59.2%), which entails that these learners are naturally predisposed to take learning risks. The greatest majority students who took part in this research (90.1%) believed that risk-taking is needed to improve speaking. The results from the analysis shows teachers keenness to instill learners to take learning risks in oral performances, as many learners (81.6%) felt they are encouraged by their teachers to do so. That is why most students (92.1%) reported that risk taking is very important in speaking enhancement. It was found that speaking is the intellectual risk those who wish to be proficient speakers need to overcome, because both language speakers and risk-takers face the same psychological, environmental, and linguistic difficulties. Additionally a great portion of respondents avowed that risk-taking positively affects their speaking proficiency and could bring great benefits (89.5% and 72.4% respectively).

All in all, most students said they are very satisfied about the way their risk-taking for the sake of speaking improvement turned out. The majority of the participants (91.4%) contended there is a strong correlation between high speaking proficiency and risk-taking rates. Finally, when inquiring about the factors that could improve risk-taking efficiency, the majority of the members of the research sample claimed that motivation and positive feedback are amongst the most influential factors.

## **Conclusion**

The third chapter was completely committed to evaluating and interpreting the data the administration of students' questionnaire generated. After a series of analysis of

participants' responses, it was found that first-year students are very conscious about the significant role speaking plays in their academic as well as professional life. This chapter has unveiled how enthusiastic students are to improve their speaking level and achieve high oral proficiency. Though it might not be an easy task due to the multitude of obstacles that hampers learners from easily reaching this goal. It has also shed light on a very important learning facilitator and booster if well used, which is academic risk-taking. The chapter showed the familiarity of learners with this technique and teachers hard work to implement this skill in the classroom and make learners more risk-takers. This chapter has uncovered a positive causal correlation between the taking learning risks and subsequent improvement in students' speaking proficiency.

Risk-taking as a learning strategy has long been proven to positively affect learners' learning achievements. It empowers students to take advantage of every available learning opportunity and how to succeed, fail, and grow from failure in their educational endeavor.

### **General Conclusion**

The most important aspect of learning is the fulfillment of individuals' goals and reaching satisfaction about the outcomes of such practice. Accordingly, finding ways that would make such eminent ambitions come true is of notable value. Risk-taking behaviors in academic context was generally associated with positive results and appreciation from teachers and the majority of students alike.

Along this research, risk-taking and speaking proficiency were profoundly investigated individually on theoretical grounds in the two first chapters, then practically in the third one. In-depth analysis of data has uncovered a shared mutuality and interconnection between risk-taking and positive changes in the speaking level. Furthermore, answers to the main research questions put at the beginning were reached. First, it was demonstrated that risk-taking truly helps increasing students' oral capacities and communicative competence. Second, students could increase their speaking proficiency through overcoming their fears of public performances, ignoring or at least holding at minimum the effects of negative judgments of teachers and students, believing in personal skills, and obviously taking risks more often. Third, the most apparent problematic factors that holds learners from confidently and comfortably take risks are the psychological factors such as anxiety and lack of motivation. Besides, students reported struggling with linguistic issues and classroom context related factors. Fourth, risk-taking propensities by the part of students in oral classrooms had tremendous effects on enhancing students' speaking proficiency. Consequently, risk-taking is related to high speaking proficiency.

## **Pedagogical Implications and Research Limitations**

### **1. Ways of Enhancing Risk-Taking in Speaking**

Speaking is both the most desired skill to achieve and most stressful one to learn especially for new language learners. It necessitates much effort to be appropriately mastered. Nevertheless, if learners are willing to gamble a bit and use risk-taking strategies, improvement could be fast and successful. But before that learners need first to show their willingness to do whatever it takes to reach such goal. They need to believe in mastering the speaking skill as the ultimate aim of learning and risk-taking as the means, which will help them attain this goal. Once their mind are set according to these parameters, they could go ahead and work on their linguistic and psychological problems, such as the poor language command and affective factors. So that they will develop the skills and spirit needed to venture into risks as learning experiences.

Being the agents responsible for undertaking risks, learners need to develop certain skills in order to better perform and benefit from risk-taking. First, learners need to seize every opportunity to learn about the language use inside and outside the classroom. The instruction provided inside the classroom would target the skills learners' need to develop to perform basic communication. However, outside language practices would supplement classroom instruction, and at the same time teach learners about the other language use patterns they would not be taught in the classroom especially if they practiced with native speakers. Subsequently, learners would enhance their language mastery along with the confidence in their abilities to communicate effortlessly. It could even help them to accept and tolerate mistakes as inseparable from learning practices and develop a system of self-evaluation and assessment. Consequently, they would embrace learning risks and show more tendency to take them.



As part of small language learning classroom communities learners need to build a strong personality that would render them immune to destructive criticism and toxic individuals. Essentially, what makes learners risk-averse is fear of being ridiculed or deemed incompetent in terms of language skills by their classmates and/or teachers. It is this feeling of inferiority that makes learners prefer silence to being laughed at. People will always criticize for whatever reason and ceasing from participating because others do not like the performance is not really ways. That is why language learners must welcome negative judgments but not hold on to them as they may show them their areas of weaknesses. They need to stay positive and engage in oral discussion no matter what the outcomes would be.

Learners could perform risks, work on their performances on their own, and reach desired goals. Yet, when teachers are not by their side supporting them, they may lose interest and drop off. That is why the presence of a knowledgeable supportive other is necessary to fuel learners desire to move forward. Teachers are the only individuals in the classroom with the power to access learners' inner thoughts, alter the way they think, and know how to boost their self-esteem and ability to achieve. Teachers could assist learners in working on their risks and skills through providing guidance and reassurance. They play an important role in changing learners minds about learning and about risk-taking. This will make learners feel protected and fosters their motivation to become proficient speakers by assuming language risks.

## **2. Teachers' Role in Enhancing Students' Risk-taking in Oral Classrooms**

Oral classrooms represent a hostile environment for a great number of learners. It is then of pivotal importance for teachers to make the classroom setting as comfortable and supportive as possible. This would help learners lower down their affective filters, step out of their comfort zones, and actively assume speaking risks.

Students would achieve better if teachers make them feel valuable and apt to perform oral classroom tasks. This might be challenging for teachers to achieve due to the restraints on time and contextual issues such as the number of learners in the classroom. Nevertheless, there is no harm in trying to make it work even if not all the odds are in teachers' favor.

Teachers could help learners socialize and get closer to their classmates by putting in them in pair and group work. One way to implement risk-taking in oral classrooms is to create a peer-based learning environment. It would be very beneficial for learners to build strong relationships with peers, because it could help them overcome their apprehension of speaking openly and expressing themselves in activities. This method allows students to start with small-scale risks in front of few classmates, which would gradually develop to become large scale risks performed in front of the whole class and so on. As part of a digital era, all what involves modern technologies and internet use would be highly interesting and motivating for learners. Subsequently, teachers may take advantage of this point and implement electronic devices in order to get learners to be more involved and engage in speaking risks.

### **3. Students' Role in Enhancing Risk-taking in Oral Classrooms**

It is true that teachers play a significant role in pushing learners towards assuming risks. Yet, the greatest contributors to the success of this process are learners themselves. Internal factors are given the lion's share of importance in the success of risk taking attempts. Teachers support alone is no use if not accompanied with students' determination and strong will to make improve using risk-taking strategies. Learners need to believe in themselves and trust their language skills and capabilities; learners should have high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. They should not merely focus on the probable negative outcomes their speaking risks would bring. They should

rather focus on the way they perform and eliminate all sources of fear and anxiety. Once they reach the conclusion that higher the sense of efficacy is, the greater effort making and persistence; they would take speaking risks more often. Risk perception mindsets students and causes them to either assume or keep away from risks. Hence, learners need to understand that whatever ends risk-taking conducts lead to, every speaking risk is a potential source of personal and educational growth.

Like any other research, the present investigation had undergone many obstacles that impeded the course of work. First and foremost, looking for authentic and reliable sources of information was a very hard and long process as most relevant books and article were inaccessible. Second, due to personal circumstances and severe health issues and being hit by corona virus the researcher had to do so much work in a very limited period of time. Besides, the new educational scheduling of universities made it hard for the researcher to contact and access first year learners on the one hand. On the other hand, it made it very difficult to cope with working this research project from one part and the training report on the other. Third, due the previous reason only one research tool was used for data gathering and collecting. It is suggested then on future researchers interested in this topic to use more than one tool; for instance use interviews to better understand students' responses, interview teachers to see the way they look at risk-taking in speaking enhancement, or even make observations through attending oral sessions and noticing students' taking speaking risks closely.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Student s' Questionnaire**

Dear students,

This study is carried out to investigate your opinions about the impact of Risk-taking on student's speaking proficiency. It is our pleasure to invite you to take part in this academic research. It has the aim of exploring the main factors that may influence the student's speaking skill, and the effectiveness of risk-taking in oral communication. Your answers would be very helpful to realize this aim. Hence, you are kindly asked to answer the following questions; please tick (√) your choice or make comments when needed. Your responses will be dealt with confidentiality and anonymity.

Thank you in advance for your time, effort and collaboration.

**Ms. Ikram BENYOUB**

**Department of Letters and English Language**

**Faculty of Letters and Languages**

**8 May 1945 University- Guelma**

#### **Section one: General information**

1-What is your gender?

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>

2-Your age ..... years

3-How long have you been studying English (including this year)? .....

4-Was studying English as a Foreign Language at the university your choice?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

5-How could you describe your level in English?

Good	
Average	
Bad	

**Section Two: Speaking proficiency**

**6-Which of the four skills you wish to master most?**

Listening	
Speaking	
Reading	
Writing	

**7-How is your speaking proficiency?**

Low	
Average	
High	

**8-Does your mother tongue language influence your speaking skill?**

Yes	
No	

**9-How often do you participate in oral discussions in the classroom?**

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

**10-When discussions are raised in the classroom, do you:**

volunteer to speak?	
wait till you are called?	
keep silent?	

**11-What are the techniques that are often used by your teacher in oral expression sessions?**

Listening scripts	
Watching videos	
Oral presentations	
Free discussions	
Storytelling	
Role-plays	
Games	
Other(s), would you please specify below	

.....

**12-Do you have confidence when speaking in the classroom?**

Yes	
No	

**13-Do you agree that classroom environment affects your performance in speaking?**

Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	

**14-Do you have difficulties in speaking?**

Yes	
No	

-If yes, which one from the following:

Lack of vocabulary	
lack of confidence	
Mispronunciation	
Anxiety	
Shyness	
Fear of making mistakes	
Demotivation	
Lack of self-esteem	
Communication apprehension	
Other(s), would you please specify below	

.....

**15-Do you feel afraid to speak?**

Yes	
No	

-If your answer is “yes”, is it because of?



Fear of speaking in public	
Fear of making pronunciation mistakes	
Fear of teachers' negative feedback	
Other (s), would you please specify below	

.....

**16-**Are you satisfied with your level in speaking?

Satisfied	
Unsatisfied	

**17-**How important do you consider speaking skill in EFL classrooms?

Not important	
Important	
Very important	

**18-**Do you agree that the internet and electronic sources should be used in EFL classrooms to improve your communicative competence?

Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	

**19-**Do you practice English outside the classroom?

Yes	
No	

**Section Three: Enhancing speaking proficiency through risk-taking**

**20-**What does Risk-taking mean to you?

Less hesitancy during speaking	
Volunteering to participate in oral discussions frequently	
Not worrying about making mistakes or public failure	
Being social and engaging in different conversations without any fears	

**21-**Are you an introvert or an extrovert student?

Extrovert	
Introvert	

**22-**Is risk-taking necessary to improve speaking achievement?

Yes	
No	

**23-**Do teachers help students to take risks in oral debates?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

**24-**How important is risk-taking in your oral discussions?

Not important	
Important	
Very important	

**25-**What are the reasons that lead students to not taking risks?

Psychological factors	
Linguistic factors	
Environmental factors	

**26-**Does risk-taking change your speaking proficiency positively?

Yes	
No	

**27-**Do you agree that risk-taking is a beneficial technique to increase your speaking achievement?

Strongly agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Strongly disagree	

**28-**As an EFL learner, how strongly do you feel that you are satisfied about your risk-taking in your discussions?

Satisfied      1      2      3      4      5      Unsatisfied  
 —      —      —      —      —

**29-**To what extent is risk-taking useful in enhancing speaking achievement?

Useful      1      2      3      4      5      Useless  
 —      —      —      —      —

**30-**Does risk-taking lead to high speaking proficiency?

Yes	
No	

**31-**Which factor could increase the effectiveness of risk-taking in order to enhance the speaking skill?

Motivation	
Positive feedback	
Linguistic competence	
Interaction with the teacher	
Peers' interaction	
Other(s), would you please specify below	

.....

**Section four: Further Suggestions**

-Would you please add further comments/suggestions about this topic?

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

**Thank you for your cooperation**

## **Résumé**

La présente étude vise à explorer le rôle de la prise de risque dans le développement de la maîtrise de la parole des étudiants. Elle vise à sensibiliser les étudiants de première année Licence à l'importance de la prise de risques, au Département d'anglais de l'Université de Guelma, le 8 Mai 1945, à l'importance de la prise de risque. On suppose ainsi que lorsque les étudiants prennent des risques, leur maîtrise de la parole augmentera. Pour tester cette hypothèse, la méthode quantitative descriptive est adoptée par l'organisation d'un questionnaire structuré à cent cinquante-deux (152) questions. Les résultats ont démontré que les personnes qui prennent des risques ont un haut niveau de maîtrise de la parole. Les données ont également montré les attitudes positives des étudiants à l'égard de la prise de risques dans les cours oraux. Par conséquent, il est fortement recommandé de continuer les recherches concernant l'importance de la prise de risque pour la maîtrise de la communication.

## ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن دور المجازفة في تنمية كفاءة الطلاب في التحدث. و تهدف كذلك إلى توعية طلاب السنة الأولى ليسانس بأهمية المجازفة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية ، جامعة 8 ماي 1945 ، قالمة. و عليه افترضنا أنه عندما يكون الطلاب من ذوي المجازفة فإن كفاءتهم في الكلام ستزيد. و لاختبار صحة هذه الفرضية، تبنت هذه الدراسة الأسلوب الكمي الوصفي من خلال إجراء استبيان مكون من مائة و اثنين وخمسين (152) سؤالاً. و أظهرت النتائج أن أصحاب المجازفة يتمتعون بمستوى عال من الكفاءة في الكلام. كما أظهرت البيانات مواقف الطلاب الإيجابية تجاه المجازفة في الفصول الشفوية. و بناء على ذلك، أوصت الدراسة بأن يعيد المدرسون والمتعلمون النظر في أهمية المجازفة في اكتساب جيد للحديث.