**University 8 Mai 1945 – Guelma**                    جامعة 8 ماي 1945ـقالمة

*Faculty of letters and Languages*                    كلية الآداب واللغات

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**Option: Linguistics**

**Investigating Teachers and Students' Attitudes towards the Impact of Gender on EFL learners' Oral Performance**

**Case Study: First and Second Year Master Students of English at 8 Mai 1945 Guelma University**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture**

**Board of Examiners**

**Chair:** Mrs. Hosna HENAINIA                    (MA.A)        University 08 Mai 1945 Guelma

**Supervisor:** Mr. Layachi ZEMMOURI                    (MA.A)        University 08 Mai 1945 Guelma

**Examiner:** Mrs. Amina BOUDRAA                    (MA.A)        University 08 Mai 1945 Guelma

<table>
<tr><td>**Submitted by:**</td><td>**Supervised by:**</td></tr>
<tr><td>Marwa NEZZAR</td><td>**Mr.** Layachi ZEMMOURI</td></tr>
</table>

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**Dedication**

I dedicate this work to all my family members.

A special feeling of gratitude to my parents who have been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges until my research has fully finished.

May Allah bless you!

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**Abstract**

English as an international language is used as a means of communication between people all over the world. Hence, oral proficiency is very essential for EFL learners to achieve an effective communication. However, mastering the oral skill seems to be a challenging task in EFL context since it is considered as the most difficult aspect of language learning. In this regard, this study aims at investigating gender impact on EFL learners' oral performance. Female students are generally known as being better performing the spoken language than male students. The latter are assumed to be less competent in oral performance. To reach the objective of this current research and in order to check the former hypothesis, a descriptive analytical method was followed. It utilized two questionnaires; the first was distributed to 120 master-one and master-two students including 85 females and 35 males from the department of English at 08 Mai 1945 Guelma University, while the second was devoted to 17 teachers who teach master degrees at the same department. The obtained results confirm the research hypothesis in which both students and teachers from the chosen sample agreed that female EFL learners outperform male EFL learners in speaking performance. Despite the limitations that were encountered in this study, some recommendations and suggestions are provided to aid teachers and students in conducting future researches.

# List of Abbreviations

**%:** Percentage

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language.

**ENA:** Evolutionary Neuroandrogenic

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**FL:** Foreign Language

**N°:** Number

**SL:** Second Language

**SLA:** Second Language Acquisition

**TOFEL:** Test Of English as a Foreign Language

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**General introduction**

Throughout history, there was no such a global language than today's English Language. The latter connects people from different parts of the world. Thus, to learn English or any other languages, learners need to achieve an effective communication through mastering the four skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Nevertheless, many English foreign language (EFL) learners tend to list speaking skill as their main objective to master language, to communicate effectively and appropriately, and to achieve further academic goals such as teaching. However, attaining oral proficiency is not an easy task since EFL learners' oral performance might be affected by many factors. One of these factors which may influence EFL learners' oral competency is gender. It has been a subject of investigation until the current time where many researchers are still questioning whether gender differences in oral performance truly exist in EFL context.

## 1. Statement of the Problem

Along with listening, reading, and writing, speaking is a very important language skill that EFL learners should acquire the most. Thus, mastering the oral skill means being able to communicate effectively and appropriately, to build learners' critical thinking, to connect to the social world, and so on. However, English speaking proficiency is a challenge for most university EFL students. The case of Algerian EFL learners at 08 Mai 1945 Guelma University is not an exclusive. Females are generally superior to males when speaking and expressing ideas orally. This study examines the issue of gender and its influence on EFL learners' oral competence.

## 2. Aims of the Study

Since oral proficiency is a problematic issue for many EFL learners at the university, this study focuses on exploring the effect of gender on EFL students' oral

performance; more specifically, first and second year master students from the department of letters and English language at the university of Guelma. This research attempts to unveil the extent to which the participants master English speaking and investigates gender differences in relation to EFL learners' oral performance. Furthermore, it examines the major difficulties that may face EFL learners in oral performance.

## 3. Research Questions

The current study addresses the following questions:

- To what extent EFL learners at the department of English, University of Guelma master the speaking skill?

- Who master speaking better: male or female EFL learners?

- What are the problematic issues that EFL learners face in oral competence?

## 4. Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this research are:

- EFL female learners at the department of letters and English language, University of Guelma exceed male learners in speaking performance. ($H_1$)

- EFL male learners at the department of letters and English language, University of Guelma exceed female learners in speaking performance. ($H_0$)

## 5. Research Methodology and Design

### 5.1 Research Method and Data Gathering Tools

The current research is conducted through a descriptive analytical method, aiming at confirming the research hypothesis and answers the research questions. Accordingly, two questionnaires are distributed to both first and second year master students in order to see their views and insights concerning EFL learners' oral performance and if it is influenced by gender differences. Hence, data analysis is

presented as the following: analyzing the questionnaires' results, examining EFL students' oral performance, and finally investigating gender differences and whether they have an impact on students' oral performance and finding out the difficulties they face while orally performing the English language.

## 5.2 Population and Sample of the Study

The sample of the present investigation comprises 120 participants including 85 females and 35 males out of 250 First and second year master students at the department of Letters and English language at the University of Guelma 08 Mai 1945, and 17 teachers of master degree at the same department. The sample is chosen randomly. First and second year master students are targeted because they are supposed to be familiar with speaking skill as well as verbal and non-verbal components of oral performance.

## 6. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into two main parts in addition to the general introduction the conclusion. The first part is a theoretical background which consists of two chapters. The first chapter is devoted to speaking performance in terms of definitions, types, aspects, characteristics, difficulties and different types of speaking activities. The second chapter tackles gender as a main factor influencing EFL learners' oral performance. It first deals with factors that impact EFL learners' speaking performance, and then it moves to describe the notion of gender. It reveals different researches and issues about gender differences in language learning in general and speaking performance in EFL contexts.

The second part is devoted to the third chapter which is called the "Field of Investigation." It represents the practical part of the dissertation which investigates how

data are gathered and then analyzed. It also provides the description and the analysis of the questionnaires collected from first and second year master students and teachers at the English department, Guelma University. Moreover, it tries to provide recommendations and pedagogical implications that may help researchers in the future.

**Chapter One**

**Oral Performance**

**Introduction**

During the process of learning English in EFL classrooms, teachers' main goal is to develop learner's communicative competence. Thus, acquiring the basic four skills of the language (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) is the primary focus. However, amongst these skills, speaking is considered to be the most important one for EFL learners. It enables them to participate in the different classroom activities, express their different ideas and opinions, as they can use it in real life situations. Mastering this skill requires acquiring the different aspects and characteristics of the spoken language. Furthermore, teachers should use the right speaking activities that make the learners more productive and enable them to practice speaking.

**1.1 What is Speaking?**

Oxford Dictionary (2009) defined speaking as "the action of conveying information or expressing one's feelings in speech," which denotes that speaking is an activity through which people can transmit meaning and describe their emotions in a given conversation. Similarly, Syam & Pettawali (2021) defined speaking as the capacity to express and convey meaning. They added that speaking is the use of a specific language in the real life setting (p. 3). That is, speaking is the ability to make use of a certain language orally in daily life situations.

Moreover, Huebner defined speaking as "a skill used by someone in daily life communication by much repetition, etc. It consists of competence in sending and receiving messages" (as cited in Iftakhar, 2013, p. 184). In other words, speaking is the ability to exchange messages through the extensive practice of the oral language in everyday life interaction. According to Webster New World Dictionary, to speak means

to produce utterances, to make a conversation and hold it verbally, and to ask for something (as cited in Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, p. 35). This means that speaking is an oral interaction which is held to meet a certain demand. Additionally, Burns & Joyce (1997) and Luoma (2004) defined speaking as "an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information" (as cited in Lestari, 2019, p. 917). That is, speaking is simply an oral conversation where speakers build up knowledge through exchanging ideas.

## 1.2 The Importance of Speaking as a Skill

Communication is the process of exchanging ideas, feelings, and opinions. Language is an important tool that allows the interaction between members of a given society where they can speak and discuss different topics. Thus, speaking proficiency positively affects the communication process. EFL learners aim at being communicatively competent; which means to be able to use the spoken language accurately and appropriately.

Akhter et al. claimed that communication is considered as a fundamental requirement in today's society. Thus, life without communication is almost impossible. Through language, people can meet their different needs .They added that people also need to interact to the whole world and this can be achieved by the English language. Accordingly, it is important to improve the oral skill to be able to interact with people who speak different languages (2020, p. 6020). In other words, mastering the speaking skill is very essential for people to interact with others and fulfill their different demands. In addition, mastering the English language enables humans to communicate with people from different parts of the world.

English speaking skill is highly significant for humans' interaction which enables them to speak everyday and everywhere. As an international language, English

has become a medium that connects people from different parts of the world (Efrizal, 2012, p. 127). Likewise, McDonough & Shaw (1993) argued that Human's progress has relied heavily on the ability to communicate. English oral skill helps in improving students' capacity to practice the language. Its significance is seen in people's interaction in everyday real life situations (as cited in Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, p. 36). Accordingly, speaking contributes in the success of learners to improve their daily life interaction with others and to effectively take part in the oral communication.

**1.3 The Relationship between Speaking and Listening**

According to Harmer, language skills constitute of two categories: the receptive skills, reading and listening; and the productive skills, speaking and writing (2007, p. 265). These skills are mostly used in EFL classrooms. However, when it comes to developing learners' communicative competence, listening and speaking seem to be the primary focus. Both of them are interrelated. While speaking usually cannot stand alone without listening, the latter also helps in receiving the intended message so as to respond properly.

Rivers (1966) claimed that "speaking does not of itself constitute communication unless what is being said is comprehended by another person" (as cited in Floriasti, 2013 p. 18). When people are involved in a conversation they must listen and talk to create an interaction with the person they are talking to (Harmer, 2007, p. 275). An effective communication takes place when there is a great interaction between speakers as well as listeners. Furthermore, Redmond & Vrchota (2007) claimed that "speakers are at the mercy of the listeners" (p. 120). This means a speaker needs the listener to convey a certain message and the same thing for a listener who necessitates to a speaker to understand and be part of the oral interaction.

## 1.4 Speaking vs. Writing

Speaking and writing are two main skills which are used to communicate and share different ideas and thoughts. However, written language differs from spoken language where each one has a certain characteristic that the other lacks. Accordingly, Brown (2001, p. 303-305) differentiated between speaking and writing in terms of some characteristics:

### 1.4.1 Permanence

The first difference to be noticed is permanence. Verbal language is ephemeral, i.e., spoken words evaporate into air as soon as they come out of one's mouth only if the speech has been recorded. Meanwhile, the written language has a permanent record which means that the reader can go back to what is written whenever s/he wants.

### 1.4.2 Orthography

Another difference is at the level of orthography. The oral language is identified by phonemes where the speaker has available to him the full range of voice quality effects, facial expressions, gestures … These paralinguistic features are available to the speaker but not to the writer. They help to facilitate the work of the speaker to convey the meaning. However, the written language has only graphemes which represent pictures, punctuations and charts. In addition, written texts are sometimes obscure which requires more attention for the readers to get the intended message.

### 1.4.3 Complexity

Speaking and writing also differ at the level of complexity. People may think that writing is more complicated than speaking, however, both of them are actually complex. The only difference lies at the level of clauses. While writers form longer sentences with subordination, speakers tend to produce shorter sentences and coordinate them with conjunctions.

### 1.4.4   Vocabulary

The last difference is vocabulary. Usually writing is more rigorous than speaking. The writer often produces a formal language as s/he has enough time to write, edit, delete, and include the exact terms which may cause a kind of difficulty for the readers to grasp the meaning of some words. Accordingly, they sometimes find themselves obliged to use dictionaries to look for meaning. Contrastively, speaking has a limited vocabulary which is generally used in people's daily life. Thus, speakers tend to use simple and less formal terms which are easy to understand by everyone.

### 1.5 Aspects of Oral Proficiency

Mastering the speaking proficiency for EFL learners is a challenging task which requires achieving competency in its components. Speaking has two major components which are: fluency and accuracy. This means that those features should be the focus of learners who want to develop their oral performance.

### 1.5.1  Accuracy

Accuracy is another important aspect for the mastery of the speaking skill. The term accuracy refers to the capacity to construct the right grammatical sentences (Shen, 2013, p. 819). Similarly, for Skehan (1996), accuracy refers to "how well the target language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language" (as cited in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 139). In other words, accuracy means producing the foreign language properly and correctly in accordance with grammatical structures of the language.

Furthermore, for Thornbury (2005), to achieve accuracy in speaking, learners should use right grammatical structures, the exact words in relation to their contexts, and to maintain stress, intonation and pitch (as cited in Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, p. 36).

It means that an accurate spoken language is a language that has an accurate grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

### 1.5.1.1 Grammar

Every language in the world has its own unique grammar. Without grammar people cannot produce the language and communicate with each other. Grammar is the guideline for both speaking and writing. One way to achieve the main objective (speaking/writing proficiency) is that students must follow the grammatical rules which are found in pronunciation, morphology, and syntax (Bohari, 2020, p. 70). That is, for EFL learners to be communicatively competent and make their speech correct, grammar rules need to be acquired. Such rules include the way utterances are pronounced, how to form words, sentences and so on.

Furthermore, Debata referred to grammar as "the study of words and the ways words work together; an invisible force that guides us as we put words together into sentences" (2013, p. 483). It means that grammar is the way words are ordered in order to form sentences. Using a correct grammar helps the learners to deliver a clear message and enhances the success of the communication process. According to Thornbury (2005), students need to correctly apply grammar rules including the length and complexity of words, as well as well-structured sentences. He also emphasized on the use of accurate vocabulary which implies using appropriate words in appropriate settings (as cited in Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, p. 36). This means that in addition to using correct grammar rules, learners should be aware of producing meaningful speech, i.e., to place words in their appropriate situation.

### 1.5.1.2 Vocabulary

Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary defined the word vocabulary as "all the words that a person knows or uses" (p. 495). According to Neuman and Dwyer (2009),

vocabulary is the terms that a speaker needs to have knowledge about to achieve a successful communication (p. 385). Vocabulary is the background that a speaker has and which enables him/her to interact with others. That is, an effective communication is largely dependable on having enough vocabulary background.

Furthermore, Vocabulary is the use of specific words in their appropriate context in order to transfer meaning. Thus, it is an important aspect in learning a foreign language and an essential part in learners' verbal and writing skills. It enables the learners to practice the language and express their feelings, attitudes, ideas and so on. Hence, to be more competent while speaking, foreign language learners need to enrich their vocabulary to produce meaningful utterances and promote their oral skill.

**1.5.1.3 Pronunciation**

Being fluent in English, using correct grammar and producing meaningful utterances is not enough for an EFL learner to be communicatively competent. Therefore, pronunciation is another important aspect for an effective speaking. Boyer (2002) defined pronunciation as "a necessary part of speaking (oral communication) that involves making the correct sounds of a particular language and how the sound is put together in the flow of speech" (as cited in Erdiana et al., 2019, p. 133). This indicates that one key aspect towards achieving oral proficiency is producing accurate pronunciation.

Furthermore, Pourhosein Gilakjani (2012) and Yates and Zielinski (2009) also defined pronunciation as the way people produce sounds to express ideas when they talk. It consists of a language's vowels and consonants, and aspects of the speech, such as: stress, rhythm, intonation, phrasing and voice quality (as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016, p. 967). That is, producing accurate pronunciation requires learning its

aspects. Correct pronunciation may reduce miscommunication and make the message clearer to the listener.

**1.5.2 Fluency**

Oral fluency is amongst the most prominent indicators of second language performance. It is generally linked to 'Oral Proficiency' (Rossiter et al., 2010, p. 584). This means that fluency is a very important feature for the development of the speaking performance. Furthermore, Wysoki'nski et al. (2010) defined verbal fluency as the capacity to produce and communicate words in a line with established requirements (as cited in Olabarrieta-Landa et al., 2015, p. 516). It means fluency is being able to speak and interact with others applying the other component of the spoken language which is accuracy.

According to Hedge (2000), "The term fluency 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" (p. 54). That is to say that oral fluency is the capacity to relate units and produce appropriate utterances without any hesitation or redundancy. Therefore, fluency facilitates the communication process and makes the message sounds clearer to the listener.

**1.6 Paralinguistic Features**

According to Chaney, speaking is **"**the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts**"** (1998, p. 13). From this definition, speaking is the act of creating and communicating ideas in different situations. Furthermore, speaking is produced through verbal language, i.e., spoken words; and non-verbal language, i.e., through the paralinguistic features, such as: eye contact, body language, gestures and so on.

Those paralinguistic features play a significant role in the process of conveying meaning while speaking and help in achieving competency. According to Harmer (2007), the paralinguistic features fall into two categories: those which involve the voice (vocal paralinguistic features) and those which are related to the human body (physical paralinguistic features).

According to Girsang et al. (2021), learning paralinguistic elements support the students in reducing misunderstanding between speakers allowing messages to be conveyed according to the speaker's desire (p. 2). Such paralinguistic features play important roles in the process of conveying meaning and achieving competency.

### 1.6.1 Vocal Paralinguistic Features

According to Harmer (2007, p. 43), there are various ways to express things based on the context, irrespective of the sounds, stress or intonation used. In vocal paralinguistic features, people are aware of smallest details when speaking. For instance, one may control his/her speech choosing either to speak loudly or softly. However, the variation in the tone depends on the circumstances people are in. For example, someone who communicates using a high tone to express anger and when using low tone then it may express sadness, sickness and so on. That is, the tone of the voice affects the communication process and more specifically the way people perceive the message.

### 1.6.2 Physical Paralinguistic Features

According to Thornbury, "the term 'paralinguistics' is used to define non-vocal features of communication, such as the use of kinesics, as well. This is known as 'body language' or 'kinesics' which includes gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact" (as cited in Irgin, 2017, p. 67). The following features are the most important physical features used in EFL classrooms:

### 1.6.2.1 Gestures

For Gulnaz & Ismaiel (2017), "movement of the head, hands, arms and legs are called the gestures and they are employed to convey specific messages to the learners" (p. 49). Additionally, Harmer (2007) claimed that gestures are used to convey meaning though they differ from one culture to another. He provided an example in the British English behavior, when someone shrugs his/her shoulders as an indicator to mean "I do not know" or "I do not care" (p. 44). That is, gestures are peculiar to a certain culture and the way someone understands a gesture, someone else from another culture may interpret it differently.

Lozano & Tversky (2006) and McCafferty (2004) stated that gestures serve two functions; the first is the external side of the speaker, i.e., they simplify the production of the speech and help the speakers in arranging their thoughts. The second is the external side in which gestures help in facilitating the perception of the speech (as cited in Sato, 2020, p. 2). In other words, integrating gestures within speaking benefits both speakers and listeners; it helps the speakers in expressing the information and enables the listeners to clearly comprehend the intended message. This indicates the importance of using gestures in the speaking performance of EFL learners and their effectiveness in eliminating misunderstanding.

### 1.6.2.2 Facial Expressions

Facial expressions are another important paralinguistic features which seem to be significant in speaking performance. According to Wierzbicka (1999), "facial expressions are semiotic units (form-meaning pairings) that can be analyzed with the same semantic methodology used to analyze words" (as cited in Elliott & Jacobs, 2013, p. 2). In other words, facial expressions are meaningful utterances which might be

examined by the use of the same conceptual methodology that analyses words, i.e., people interpret facial expression the same way as words.

According to Knapp et al. (2013), the face is a system which holds several messages. It may transmit information about a person's character, concerns, and perceptions during conversation, as well as emotions and the way they intend to show themselves to others (p. 293). The way someone's face appears may reflect his/her feelings and attitudes like fear, anger, happiness, excitement and so on. Therefore, during oral performance, facial expressions play an important role in transmitting the message.

### 1.6.2.3 Eye Contact

Another paralinguistic feature and important aspect in speaking performance is eye contact. According to Khan et al. (2016), the eyes "speak louder than our words." Eyes can captivate a person and communicate information that words may or may not be able to convey. The eyes show the truthfulness of the spoken words. Almost everyone can reach the minds of others through spoken words that is why eye contact is vital in the process of teaching and learning. Eye contact usually matches someone's capacity to convey a vocal message (p. 84). It means that eye contact as a non-verbal behavior attracts the listener' attention so that s/he can focus on the message and achieve a better understanding.

The eyes are a significant element in teaching and learning environment. Eye contact creates a strong, subconscious feeling of attachment that can be felt even when the eyes are painted or filmed (Barati, 2015, p. 224). Wainwright (2003) also identified six distinct advantages of eye contact which are: "seeking information; showing attention and interest; inviting and controlling interaction; dominating, threatening and influencing others; providing feedback during speech; and revealing attitudes" (as cited

in Butt et al., 2011, p. 42). As a result, maintaining the eye contact while speaking in EFL classrooms is very essential as it contributes in the success of the communication process.

## 1.7 Characteristics of Spoken Language

In addition to grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency, learners need to dig deeper to know more about the characteristics of the spoken language. Brown (2001, p. 270-271) stated a number of characteristics of the oral performance in which he considered them as hard to achieve but learning them is great way to master the spoken language.

### 1.7.1 Clustering

Clustering is an effective characteristic in speaking performance. It is based on sharing information. The learners are required to organize their information into groups. It is a strategy that helps in the learning process and enhances the learners speaking performance.

### 1.7.2 Redundancy

Redundancy is using different words to refer to the same thing. The aim behind such redundancy in speaking is to clarify a certain point. However, this strategy is difficult to achieve since it requires having a large vocabulary.

### 1.7.3 Reduced Forms

This characteristic involves learning contractions, elisions, reduced vowels… and using them as native speakers do. However, learners who do not learn them usually they use a more formal language just as the language of books.

### 1.7.4 Performance Variables

It is very important to teach learners how to perform pauses, hesitation, backtracking and correction in order to develop their speaking ability. For example, such a silence in thinking is represented by filters including "um, well, I mean …"

### 1.7.5 Colloquial Language

Another characteristic in the speaking skill is the colloquial language. Learners should acquire colloquial language of the native speakers including words, idiomatic expressions, phrases … By achieving them, learners will know more about the native language as they will get in touched to its culture.

### 1.7.6 Rate of Delivery

Another way to master fluency is through the rate of delivery. It is an important task for EFL teachers to focus on during the oral performance. Learners should be taught how to deliver an adequate speech that enables the listeners to clearly grasp the spoken words and comprehend the message. Accordingly, maintaining an appropriate rate of delivery that is not be too slow and not too fast is an effective way for the production of the oral speech and for the success of communication.

### 1.7.7 Stress, Rhythm and Intonation

Stress, Rhythm and Intonation are very significant features in the pronunciation of the English language. One way for learners to deliver essential information is to maintain their voice quality. Therefore, learners should be aware of using these features to achieve oral proficiency and contribute in the success of verbal communication.

### 1.7.8 Interaction

Interaction is another important characteristic of spoken language. The success of the communication process requires interlocutors who interact with the speaker and take a part in the conversation. That is, speaking is an important part in the

communication process which requires an effective engagement between learners to be as both speakers and listeners.

**1.8 Types of Classroom Speaking Performance**

In the process of teaching speaking in EFL classrooms, teachers need to use different procedures and activities that promote learners' productivity and enhance their oral performance. To achieve this goal, Brown (2001, p. 271-274) also provided five types of teaching activities:

**1.8.1 Imitative**

It is a type of speaking performance which is done through imitation. Learners are exposed to a taped record then they are asked to imitate what they have heard. This sort of activity is implemented to focus on a particular element in the language but not to achieve a meaningful interaction. It is a good opportunity for EFL learners to listen and then repeat orally the grammatical or the phonological strings in the language in order to determine a specific difficulty.

**1.8.2 Intensive**

Intensive speaking is a type of speaking performance which is a little bit different from the previous one. In this activity, learners are asked to produce short stretches in order to examine the student's competency in some aspects of the language including pronunciation, such as: stress, intonation, and rhythm; and grammatical rules of the language. Intensive speaking can be either self-initiated by oneself or as part of certain pair work exercises in which they go through specific forms of language.

**1.8.3 Responsive**

In this type, learners actively engage in the classroom discussion with short responses to the teacher, asking questions to clarify ambiguous points, or giving comments and so on. These kinds of responses create conversation between learners

and their teachers. Such replies are generally significant and carry meaning as they do not require to be extended into dialogues.

### 1.8.4 Interactive

Interactive speaking is similar to responsive speaking. However, in this type, learners are much more involved in classroom discussion. They usually share ideas to discuss actual information. This type of classroom activity enables learners to deal with real world situations.

### 1.8.5 Extensive

Extensive speaking is the most important and difficult type of speaking since it allows learner to speak for a considerable period of time. It is usually targeted to advanced learners. In this type, the teacher is supposed to ask his/her learner to produce oral presentations or long monologues. Compared to the previous types, extensive speaking requires a more formal language.

### 1.9 Speaking Activities

The aim of teaching speaking in EFL classrooms is to make students communicatively competent. Accordingly, foreign language teachers need to create a relaxed and entertaining atmosphere that makes learners more productive, motivates them to study and improves their speaking skill. Therefore, for teachers to promote their learners' speaking performance and achieve competency, they should use different speaking activities in their classrooms in order to create a good atmosphere and encourage their learners to actively engage in the classroom.

### 1.9.1  Role-Play

Role-play is a very useful technique in EFL classrooms. It is considered as a key component that enhances the oral performance. Underhill (1987) states that in this activity "The learner is asked to take on a particular role and to imagine himself in that

role in a particular situation" (p. 55). Furthermore, Scrivener (2005) provided another definition:

> In role-play, learners are usually given some information about a 'role' (e.g. a person or a job title). These are often printed on 'role cards'. Learners take a little preparation time and then meet up with other students to act out small scenes using their own ideas, as well as any ideas and information from the role cards. A simple role card could do nothing more than name the role e.g. mother, detective or alternatively they could offer guidance as to what to do rather than the role itself, e.g. buy a train ticket to Brighton (as cited in Kuśnierek, 2015, p. 81)

In this classroom activity, the learner is provided with a card that states which role to play (doctor, patient, seller etc.) or to describe such role as to visit a doctor, in a restaurant, etc. Then, based on the given settings, s/he is supposed to improvise and create his/her own scene in a limited period of time. Finally, s/he needs to perform the scene with the other colleagues.

Role play is an essential classroom activity that provides learners with a chance to exercise and enhance learners' speaking skill in a variety of real-life setting (Chen-jun, 2006, as cited in Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010, p. 20). Moreover, students appreciate practicing the foreign language through role-play activities. Their contribution in such activities helps them to speak without reluctance or being afraid in the actual conditions improving their acquisition of the foreign language (Kumaran, 2017, as cited in Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018 p. 728). That is, role-play is an important activity in foreign language classrooms since it makes learners entertained and this helps them to overcome shyness and improve their speaking skill in realistic settings. It also makes them more comfortable while communicating with foreign language.

**1.9.2 Storytelling**

According to Cameron (2001) storytelling may be a fun technique to train both listening and speaking skills (as cited in As, 2016, p. 196). That is, storytelling is an enjoyable activity which provides an opportunity to EFL learners to improve their oral and listening abilities. In this task, learners are exposed to listen to a story and may be asked to summarize it as well, or asked to create a story from their own imagination.

Furthermore, Wang & Lee (2007) stated that storytelling is an effective speaking activity which fosters students' imagination and development of storylines. Moreover, it pushes students to make up details, predict plots, and draw conclusions (as cited in Marzuki et al., 2016, p. 18). In other words, storytelling fosters learners' imagination and creativity, as it enables them to practice the target language and improve their speaking performance.

**1.9.3 Information Gap**

Information gap is another speaking activity that is used in EFL classrooms. Harmer (2003) considered this activity "as a key to the enhancement of communicative purpose and the desire to communicate" (as cited in Lanovastia et al., 2016, p. 100). This task involves sharing information between learners, i.e., each learner has some information that another learner does not have. By exchanging that information, the prescribed task is solved cooperatively (as cited in Ismaili & Bajrami, 2016, p. 613). That is, information gap is based on the cooperation between students. Each learner is required to share the missing idea with the other one in order to accomplish the task.

This kind of information gap activity obliges the learner to speak in order to complete the task. In addition, a learner feels more relaxed when speaking since s/he shares information with other colleague rather than with the whole class (Sartika, 2016, p. 277). This means that information gap is an effective way that motivates learners to

participate and be more active as it provides them with an opportunity to improve their speaking skills.

**1.9.4 Games**

Another way to improve learners' speaking skill is through games. They are considered to be the most colorful activity in EFL speaking classrooms. Hadfield (1990) described games as "an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun" (as cited in Deesri, 2002). That is to say that though games are governed by specific rules that learners need to follow, they are also enjoyable. Moreover, games are activities that enable communication among learners in the classroom via speaking and writing to provide their personal opinion or provide information (Dewi et al., 2016, p. 64). This denotes that games allow learners to take part in the classroom participation enhancing not only their speaking skill but also their writing skill.

Constantinescu (2012) listed a number of advantages of games claiming that they are not designed only for entertainment purposes but also to make learners motivated; they help in creating a good atmosphere, they have a long lasting impact, make learners feel comfortable and help them to encounter their fear and tension while learning, and develop their critical thinking skills, etc. (as cited in Gozcu & Caganaga, 2016, p. 127). As a result, these kinds of activities facilitate the learning process and enhance the learners' communicative skills.

**1.9.5 Discussion**

Discussion is another important activity that is used in EFL classrooms. Following a content-based course, students can be exposed to a discussion. After dividing them into small group of four or five, the teacher should identify the reason behind the discussion so that learners engage with each other and share ideas which are right to the point of the discussion topic. Apart from the aim of discussion activities,

students are supported to ask for clarification, raise questions, and reformulate ideas ….
Such activities raise students' critical thinking and enable to make decisions (Hardi,
2019, p. 7). Thus, discussion activities encourage interaction among students and
provide them with the chance to practice language and enhance their speaking
performance.

### 1.9.6 Brain Storming

One more important activity that enhances the oral performance is brain
storming. Mirkhodjaeva described brain storming as a creative task that involves
providing a certain topic where learners work either individually or in groups and are
asked to form ideas in a short period of time. Then, they share their thoughts without
judging each other (2019, p. 137). Such spontaneous activity supports each others to
speak and come up with innovative ideas. The positive side of such an activity is that
students are not criticized for whatever idea they share. As a result, brainstorming
promotes learners' speaking ability and motivates them to speak with confidence and
without being afraid of committing mistakes.

Furthermore, According to Conklin (2006), brainstorming improves learners'
collaboration and creativity. It also enables students to produce as much ideas as they
can in a shorter duration. Brainstorming may be applied in smaller groups that consist
of four or five students, and students might communicate their opinion using either
spoken or written language (as cited in Lestari, 2016, p. 75). That is, brainstorming
activities encourage learners' interaction and make them more creative. In addition,
these kinds of activities are a good opportunity for learners to practice language and
improve both oral and writing skills.

### 1.9.7 Oral Presentations

According to Graig (2013), oral presentation is an important EFL speaking activity since it helps EFL/ESL students to improve their English pronunciation, fluency, critical thinking, creativity, and writing (as cited in Hammad, 2020, p. 4). That is, preparing an oral presentation and delivering it in front of the whole class is an effective way to develop students' speaking performance. It is also a good opportunity to speak with correct pronunciation and without redundancy. Furthermore, it encourages their rational reasoning and fosters their productivity.

To conclude, ''learning to speak is a lengthy, complex process'' and ''is more effectively achieved by speaking … in living natural English'' (Al-Mutawa and Kailani, 1989, as cited in Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010, p. 229). Accordingly, teachers should be aware of the importance of teaching speaking in EFL classrooms and work on improving their students speaking performance in the actual settings. Thus, applying the appropriate speaking activities help in realizing that goal.

### Conclusion

Improving oral performance for EFL learners is not an easy task. Learners need to dig deeper to know more on how to be proficient in the spoken language. Therefore, this chapter provides definitions of the speaking skill and highlights its importance as it marks the relationship between speaking and other skills. It also sheds light on its components, aspects, and characteristics which are considered to be the way towards achieving oral proficiency. Furthermore, it also introduces the components of the non-verbal language and its importance on the success of oral performance. This chapter concludes with a suggestion of different types of speaking activities that can be used in EFL classrooms to promote learners speaking ability.

# Chapter Two

## An Overview on Gender as a Main Factor Influencing EFL Learners' Oral Performance

**Introduction**

Due to globalization, English has received a great importance from a large population all over the world. Thus, the world has noticed a significant growth on the number of non-native speakers which exceeds the population of English native speakers. Accordingly, in EFL classrooms, there is a huge demand to develop English skills, mostly the speaking ability which is considered as the main skill to achieve an effective communication, future career and success in different aspects of life.

However, "Producing spoken language has often meant a difficulty and an obstacle for English learners'' (Namaziandost et al., 2019, p. 4). That is, there are barriers that hinder EFL learners' speaking proficiency. Gender appears to be one of the important factors which may influence EFL learners' verbal skill. As a result, gender in EFL contexts has raised a debatable issue among various researchers aiming at answering questions like: Is there any significant difference between males and females in verbal ability? Who are better in speaking performance: males or females?

**2.1 Factors Influencing EFL Learners' Oral Performance**

Achieving speaking competency seems to be not an easy task for EFL learners since their speaking ability might be influenced by many factors. Learners may encounter difficulties which can be either from the external world or from the internal side of the learner. As a result, those factors should be detected in order to help learners encounter difficulties and develop their speaking skills.

**2.1.1 Cognitive Factors**

Thornbury classified the cognitive factors into four main categories: the first category is linked to familiarity with the topic of the discussion. He claimed that "the greater the familiarity, the easier the speaking task" (2005, p. 25).This means that being familiar with a certain topic and having enough background knowledge about it facilitates speaking. Being acquainted with the genre is the second category. It is important to be familiar with genres especially when it comes to delivering a lecture or a given speech (p. 25). The third factor is being familiar with the interlocutors in which "the better you know the people you are talking to and the more shared knowledge you can assume, the easier it will be." That is, when speakers know each other, they will comfortably discuss and share more ideas and information. Finally, cognitive factors which also involve processing demands if the speech event needs high cognitive effort, for instance, it is difficult to express a complex process without the use of visual aids. This explains the need of speakers in some cases to use aids in order to support such information and make it clearer to the listener.

**2.1.2 Poor Listening Practices**

Doff stated that students can achieve proficiency in speaking only if they develop their listening skill. Speaking and listening skills are intertwined. On one hand, a listener should master the listening skill to understand what has been said. On the other hand, a speaker should produce clear and meaningful utterances to facilitate comprehension and make the listener engage in the communication process (1998; as cited in Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, p. 3). Thus, listening is considered as a key factor towards achieving speaking proficiency as well as the effectiveness of the communication process. Accordingly, EFL learners should work on developing their listening skill by more practice and for further perfection in their oral proficiency.

### 2.1.3 Mother Tongue Interference

Baker and Westrup suggested that "barriers to learning can occur if students knowingly or unknowingly transfer the cultural rules from their mother tongue to a foreign language" (2003, p. 12). A common issue amongst EFL Learners is thinking in their mother language; they literally translate their ideas into the target language. This is mainly because students are not trained enough to think in the target language which leads them to encounter serious problems in their speaking skill. It can also affect the effectiveness of communication and may create misunderstanding of the intended message.

Language is an aspect of culture and both cannot be separated. This means that learning a foreign language requires knowing its culture because each language has its own vocabulary that belongs to its culture. Accordingly, EFL learners should avoid literal translation from their mother tongue to English. Moreover, they should have enough practice for the different vocabulary of the language and learn more expressions that belong to the English culture.

Another significant problem is the use of mother tongue during the speaking activities. Harmer (1991) provided several reasons that justify learners' use of their native language instead of the target language. The first reason is when they are asked by their teachers to speak about a certain subject they do not have sufficient vocabulary; they attempt to use their native language. Secondly, the use of the mother tongue appears to be so natural amongst learners. If teachers do not force their students to speak in English, they will spontaneously use their mother language to transmit things to their classmates (as cited in Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, p. 36). Hence, teachers need to encourage their EFL learners to speak in English and implement effective classroom activities that enrich their vocabulary knowledge.

### 2.1.4 Feedback During Speaking Activities

According to Harmer (1991), teacher's feedback depends on the type of the mistakes committed by the learners. He also added that the teacher should indirectly correct their mistakes. Besides, Baker and Westrup (2003) proposed that during speaking the teacher should always support his/her learners and provide them with positive feedback (as cited in Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, p. 37). It is very important for teachers to provide an indirect and positive feedback in order to correct mistakes. This is a good method to help students speak with less fear and motivate them to participate and take part in the different speaking activities.

Feedback seems to be a very important criterion that enhances students' speaking performance in EFL classrooms. Its significance arises from the belief that it can raise both teachers' and students' consciousness of excellent verbal standards, improve students' oral performance by allowing them to be aware of their performance, and promote more positive speaking attitudes (Au & Bardakçı, 2020, p. 1455). As a result, teachers who provide their learners with a positive feedback are aware of its effectiveness during speaking activities in enhancing their learners' oral production and achieving competency.

### 2.1.5 Performance Factors

Students' speaking performance in EFL classrooms can be shaped by various conditions. Nation & Newton (2009) assumed that those conditions may include time pressure, planning, performance quality, and the amount of support (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, p. 37). This means that students might face these conditions which affect their speaking performance. As result, it is very important to detect those conditions in order to promote learners' speaking proficiency.

Such conditions like speaking or having an oral presentation in a very short time may negatively affect student's speaking performance. Furthermore, for planning, Thornbury (2009, p. 26) stated that "the more time to prepare, the easier the task will be." That is, the well preparation for speaking task leads to a better speaking performance. However, the fewer students are prepared, the more speaking will be hard for them. Additionally, students' speaking might also be affected by performance standards, such as: the lack of mastering the paralinguistic features like the use of body language, eye contact, good voice quality, or any speaking components including fluency and accuracy.

## 2.1.6 Affective Factors

According to Krashen (1982), there are three main affective factors which block the second language learning. Motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety are the main factors agreed on among different scholars. Hence, to take these factors into consideration, learners should be motivated enough, their self-confidence should be high, and they should be less anxious. As a result, they will have the desire to learn the foreign language and develop their speaking skill.

## 2.1.6.1 Lack of Motivation

Learners' willingness to study a language is referred to as motivation. Ortega (2009) claimed that is not sufficient for students to have ambition to acquire a language only; they should also put out a considerable effort to achieve their objective (as cited in Ariyanti, 2016, p. 80). According to Gardner (1985), motivation is seen as a major factor in the effectiveness of language acquisition as it has a significant impact on the success of new language learning (as cited in Zareian & Jodaei, 2015, p. 297). Accordingly, EFL students who are motivated enough are more proficient at speaking

than those who lack motivation. This is mainly because motivated learners are more ambitious and willing to learn and achieve better outcomes.

Motivation is an important factor in EFL classrooms. According to Ausubel, "motivation can promote learning and learning can produce motivation again" (as cited in Hong & Ganapathy, 2017, p. 17). This means that both motivation and learning are interrelated. On the one hand, Learners might be motivated for the sake of learning and achieving proficiency. On the other hand, learning itself can motivate students towards achieving good learning outcomes. As a result, motivation plays a significant role in fostering the students' learning abilities.

### 2.1.6.2 Lack of Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is another psychological factor that appears to affect EFL learners' speaking performance. Learners have consistently claimed that self-confidence is one of the most important things they need in order to develop their verbal communication abilities (Reinsch & Shelby, 1996, p. 45). Accordingly, the lack of self-confidence hinders students' speaking performance. Al Nakhalah stated that Students generally lose confidence when they perceive that their discussion partners have not grasped them or when they do not comprehend other speakers. In this case, they would opt for silence rather than speaking (2016, p. 103). As a result, teachers should provide enough support to their learners and foster their belief in their capacity to speak and achieve competency.

### 2.1.6.3 Anxiety

Javed et al. (2013) defined anxiety as a psychological mental state which involves an unmanageable feeling of fear that is caused by doubt (p. 1564). According to Na, "anxiety can make learners get discouraged, lose faith in their abilities, escape from participating in classroom activities, and even give up the effort to learn a

language well (as cited in Sutarsyah, 2017, p. 145). In this regard, Anxiety appears to be a significant element that commonly influences FL learners' speaking performance and leads to refusing to participate in speaking activities (Melouah, 2013, p. 65). Thus, anxiety appears to be a serious problem that weakens EFL learners' speaking performance.

Teachers play a significant role in reducing speaking anxiety amongst their EFL learners. Ansari (2015) suggested that "teachers should avoid comparing students to each other, forcing them to talk, and humiliating and not respecting them." He also claimed that teachers should be more innovative in finding indirect methods to correct their students' mistakes (as cited in Rafada & Madini, 2017, p. 311). In other words, teachers should provide a huge amount of support to their learners to make them trust their leaning abilities. Furthermore, they need to treat them equally in order not to make them feel frustrated and unable to speak. They also need to deal with their mistakes positively to encourage their speaking productivity.

### 2.1.7 Shyness

According to Brown (2001), several psychological factors such as shyness are assumed to be an underlying cause that negatively influences students' speaking performance (as cited in Nijat, 2019, p. 65). Furthermore, Saurik (2011) stated that most English students seem to be shy while performing the language orally since they are afraid of making mistakes as they might also be terrified of being mocked by their peers (as cited in Al Nakhalah, 2016, p. 102). Therefore, teachers should create a good atmosphere and suitable speaking activities that help learners overcome shyness and actively participate in the classroom.

### 2.1.8 Age Factor

Teaching EFL is obligatory in many countries from different parts of the world since English has become a global language. As a result, various countries appear to be influenced by the common belief of "just teach earlier" and teach foreign languages at earlier ages (DeKeyser, 2013, p. 54). One of the most important purposes to teach English early is to be communicatively competent. Accordingly, various researchers conducted various studies to investigate the best age to learn EFL and obtain better results in oral performance.

In EFL classrooms, learners' age can affect their verbal ability. Amongst the speaking components, pronunciation appears to be a challenging factor since it enables learners to communicate effectively and properly and to convey a clear message. Accordingly, many scholars like Paradis (2004), Johnstone (2009) and Oyama (1976), seem to focus on the pronunciation component when it comes to oral performance. This means besides fluency, vocabulary and grammar, pronunciation appears to be the most important factor affected by age.

According to Paradis (2004) and Johnstone (2009), to achieve better results and learn a foreign language without difficulty mainly in the pronunciation system, teaching at an early age seems to be very effective (as cited in Damar, et al., 2013, p. 96). Similarly, Sloane appears to support this idea in his article: Is there a Best age to learn a foreign language? First, acquiring a proper pronunciation seems to be one of the major linguistic skills that can only be attained between the ages of fifteen months and puberty. This is mostly due to the brain's physical growth which develops faster at that period. Second, improving one's speech is an important mimic exercise since after puberty foreign language learners become discomforted and frustrated to imitate foreigners. On the other hand, children seem to enjoy the act of imitation. The third

argument is supported by Haugen (1965) where he claimed that losing one's accent is to entirely integrate with another community and their way of life, and a foreign accent is the final trace of a foreigner's original identity (1979, p. 9). That is, according to the previous views, starting learning the speaking skill earlier is beneficial to achieve speaking proficiency mainly the phonological system including stress, rhythm and so on.

Oyama (1976) claimed that adults are unable to achieve native-like proficiency in a foreign language mainly because of the "fossilization –a permanent cessation of the second language development" (as cited in Shumin, 2002, p. 205). In the same line, Renandya (2002) claimed that "because of "fossilization"… [Adults] have problems with prosodic features like: intonation, stress, rhythm, etc" (Derakhshan et al., 2016, p. 177). This means that adults are incapable to attain oral proficiency similar to native speakers and likely to make incorrect errors that might not be corrected as to have difficulty in maintaining such phonetic characteristics like pitch, stress and so on.

To sum up, according to the above mentioned scholars' claims, age seem to be an important factor in EFL settings. Therefore, speaking proficiency seems to be an unattainable goal for adults mainly for achieving an accurate pronunciation. Meanwhile, younger learners are claimed to be the best in speaking performance. Correspondingly, the best age to teach speaking EFL and achieve oral competency is at earlier stages of the humans' life.

**2.2 Gender as a Main Factor Affecting EFL Learners' Speaking Performance**

A number of gender studies have been subjects of investigation amongst many scholars in different research areas up to the current time. Gender has been studied as a main variable that affects various areas including cognition and learning abilities,

learning languages, learning styles, etc. In the same line, in EFL contexts, gender appears to be another major factor that affects EFL learners' speaking performance.

## 2.2.1 Gender and Sex

Before examining gender differences in learning contexts, it is very important to justify the use of the term gender instead of sex. Some individuals mistakenly assume the terms "Gender" and "Sex" to be equal. In some dictionaries also they are classified as the same. However, in sociolinguistics studies, the terms appear to be different (Ali, 2016, p. 75). This means that the field of sociolinguistics uses the term gender rather than sex to indicate that the two terms are distinct from each other.

Moreover, according to Rhoda Unger (1979), the prevalent utilization of the word sex indicates biological reasons, meanwhile, the term gender is used to indicate "traits that are culturally assumed to be appropriate for women and men" (as cited in Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2011, p. 791). Likewise, according to Diamond (2002), the term gender is typically employed in socio-cultural settings in contrast to the biological ones (p. 321). Hence, from these views, the word sex encompasses biological (innate) features that make men different from women. On the other hand, the term gender embodies males and females' social and cultural behaviors.

## 2.2.3 Gender and Cognition

For more than a century, psychologists and the general public view have been attracted by the idea that there exist gender differences. Nevertheless, this issue of interest seems to be ongoing until the present day (Caplan, 1997, p. 30). Meanwhile, other studies reveal no differences in which both have the same cognitive abilities.

Earlier studies conducted by Maccoby & Jacklin (1974) whose results were in favor of males in spatial ability test (as cited in MacIntyre, 1997, p. 390). Similarly, Michael Bryant, the American psychologist, drew on a conclusion claiming that males

are better in both visual and spatial ability. However, females exceed males in terms of listening comprehension and recalling and locating vocal speeches (as cited in Qian, 2015, p. 67). This also reveals the existence of gender differences and shows that males are asserted to be good at visual-spatial intelligence including buildings, design, innovative things and even learn more with visual things. On the other hand, girls appear to be good listeners and better auditory learners.

Moreover, according to Kraft and Nichel (1995), females outperform males in language learning tasks, such as: recalling auditory messages, facial features, names, as well as places. However, males perform better on the travel directions tasks (as cited in Viriya & Sapsirin, 2014, p. 77-78). This means that females are better language learners in listening ability and visualizing things, meanwhile, males seem to be more skillful in recalling map activities.

Furthermore, from an article written by D. Voyer & S. Voyer (2014), Hyde, Fennema, and Lamon (1990) also argued that gender inequalities in mathematical ability have historically favored boys, yet new studies indicated that the gap is decreasing. There has also been evidence by scholars like Hedges & Nowell (1995, p. 1174) who were in favor of males' superiority in science achievement tests, while women are usually declared to be better in reading comprehension.

## 2.3 Gender and Learning Styles

Learning styles are defined as "general approaches used in leaning a new language or any other subject" (Oxford, 1993, p. 65). Reid (1998) stated that there are six learning styles: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, group, and personal (as cited in Viriya & Sapsirin, 2014, p. 78). Each individual has his/her preferable and unique styles to learn new things. Accordingly, learners' differences in learning styles have

raised a huge interest amongst many researchers. One of the factors studied is the gender variable affecting foreign language learners' learning styles.

According to a literature conducted by Aliakbari & Tazik (2011, p. 661), different researchers conducted studies which obtained different results. For example, in Reid's research, males favor more visual and tactile styles in comparison to females. Moreover, Oxford (1995) directed a study whose results show that males are more tactile and kinesthetic than females. However, Willing's (1988) results revealed that females seem to be more visual and kinesthetic than males. Additionally, Enstein (1982) proposed that females are highly auditory than males.

Viriya & Sapsirin (2014) conducted a study on 150 learners to investigate gender differences in language learning styles. The findings indicate that gender has an impact on language learning style. Females prefer major learning styles in tactile, auditory and kinesthetic and males opt for individual learning style. However, both males and females favor minor learning style for visual. That is, learners seem to differ in their way of learning languages.

Moreover, another study was investigated by Riazi & Mansoorian (2008) in order to investigate gender preferences in learning styles. 150 males and 150 females Iranian EFL students were chosen from 6 various cities. The results revealed that both males and females were less interested towards personal and collective learning styles. In addition, males seemed to be inclined to tactile and kinesthetic learning styles more than females.

To date, gender differences in learning styles exist though the results obtained are mixed and differ from one study to another. Hence, teachers should be aware of their learners' differences in their way of learning and make sure to use a variety of

activities that match with their differences. This will provide an opportunity to each individual to learn according to his/her preferences and encourage his/her productivity.

## 2.2.4 Gender and the Acquisition of the First Language

Acquisition is defined as the natural process whereby infants acquire their mother language spontaneously (Warastuti, 2011, p. 222). However, the rate of acquiring the first language differs from one individual to another according to different factors. Accordingly, many scholars have investigated gender differences as one of the influencing factors which have attracted the attention of many scholars in the field of language acquisition.

The Evolutionary neuroandrogenic (ENA) theory assumes that during childhood, females' language improves better and quickly than males. But, since the language is a skill that can be developed and which is not only the area of the left hemisphere, males' right hemisphere work more individually. Therefore, they can reach females' level of proficiency in terms of language comprehension and even outperform women in the most innovative and scientific application fields of language (Ellis, 2011, p. 713). In other words, although the language is acquired better and faster by female children, males can also be as proficient as females and even exceed them.

In the United States, Nelson (1973) conducted a study in order to examine children's acquisition of vocabulary between the age of 1 and 2 years. The sample consists of two groups which were divided conforming to the degree during which such vocabulary is acquired. The indicator was the child's age at which s/he had learned fifty words. The results obtained show that girls are faster in acquiring new vocabulary items in which they reached fifty words in 18 months whereas boys in 22.1 months (as cited in Coates, 2013, p. 149).

Likewise, Carpenter et al. (1998) & Fenson et al. (1994) assumed that girls acquire language quickly and have a greater vocabulary than boys throughout their initial years of life. For instance, girls acquire 95 words at 16 months, whereas boys acquire only 25 words (as cited in Adani & Cepanec, 2019, p. 142). This indicates that girls learn vocabulary more quickly than boys and shows the greatest difference between males and females at language development mainly in the acquisition of vocabulary.

Additionally, Diaz Campos (2004) conducted a study on university-level students to examine gender differences on the acquisition of phonology in the process of second language acquisition (SLA). He stated that females outperform males in producing more accurate phonemes. Contrastively, other studies attained results that shows males' priority over females (Farhady, 1982; Nyikos, 1990), while others like Bakon (1992) concluded that there exist no gender differences (as cited in Bowden et al., p. 112). Therefore, those studies show contradictory results which vary from one researcher to another. While some researchers approve the presence of males and females differences in acquiring the mother language, others reveal no significant features that make them distinct from each other.

Hyde & Linn (1988) conducted a meta-analysis of 165 studies in order to investigate the differences between males and females first language verbal skills. They concluded that "there are no gender differences in verbal ability, at least this time in the American culture, in the standard ways that verbal ability has been measured… the magnitude of the gender difference in verbal ability is so small that it can effectively be considered to be zero" (p. 62). This study denotes that though there is a slight difference that females exceed males in the oral performance of the mother language, they are still considered to have similar verbal skills.

### 2.2.5 Gender and Learning EFL/ESL

Reviewing the literature of different researchers shows that numerous studies focus on gender differences in learning foreign languages. According to Aslan (2009), there is a link connecting gender and second language learning performance (as cited in Ali, 2016, p. 75). Besides, Farashaiyan & Hua (2012) conducted a study in order to investigate if there is any difference between male and female EFL learners in language proficiency in accordance to their pragmatic knowledge. 120 university students were chosen randomly to pass the TOFEL test. The results indicate that females' performance is better than males' in the proficiency test.

In the same line, in order to investigate factors affecting second language learning, such as gender, a study was carried out by Andreou et al., (2008) on 146 males and 306 females' undergraduate students from the University of Thessaly in Greece. Findings obtained from this study concerning the gender issue conclude that females' performance is higher than males' performance especially in syntax and semantics which justifies females' dominance on verbal tasks.

Besides, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) argued that when it comes to the acquisition of phonetic features, females seem to be naturally better than boys in the oral production (as cited in Sunderland, 2000, p. 205). As similar to Maccoby and Jacklin (1974), several researchers examined studies whose results prove that females mostly exceed males in verbal abilities (Gordon and Lee, 1986; Boyle, 1987; Stumpf, 1995; Andreou et al., 2005; Kiss and Nikolov, 2005). In addition, females are also capable to retain more words than males (as cited in, Fontecha, 2010, p. 93)

### 2.2.6 Gender Attitudes towards Learning EFL/ESL

ALNorsi (2013) and Eshghinejad (2016) defined the term attitude as "a psychological process in which learners favor or disfavor a certain situation" (as cited

in Abu-Snoubar, 2017, p. 18). Weinburgh (1998) argued that attitudes toward learning affect learners' behaviors in their reading preferences as well as foreign language speaking (as cited in Eshghinejad, 2016, p. 3). In EFL learning contexts, researchers appear to be interested in questioning learners' attitudes towards learning languages. They also held different studies to see if gender differences towards learning EFL truly exist.

For example, Burstall claimed that girls are highly motivated than boys when it comes to learning languages. Some parents believe that learning languages fit girls the most, while boys are preferred to go for subjects, such as electronics and mechanics (Johnson, 2008, p. 27). It is believed that learning languages seem to suit girls more than boys while the latter are more likely to go for technical branches.

Besides, Abu-Snoubar (2017) examined a study on Al-Balqa Applied University students in order to investigate their attitudes towards learning EFL. The sample of this research is composed of 68 males and 108 females who were randomly selected. The results reveal that all students hold positive attitudes towards learning English. However, females are demonstrated to have more positive attitudes in comparison to males.

Asghar et al. (2018) administered a questionnaire in order to investigate the difference between males and females' attitudes towards learning ESL in regard to behavioral, cognitive and emotional aspects. The sample consists of 95 female and 63 male students from different departments at the University of Gujrat, Pakistan. Findings show that all students' attitude towards English as a foreign language is negative though there is a very slight difference where males show a little bit positive attitude towards ESL.

Additionally, a questionnaire was carried out by Mahripah (2014) in order to examine EFL learners' attitudes towards the improvement of their English speaking skill. Accordingly, a questionnaire was distributed to 131 students at the Department of English Language Education in Indonesia. Although females show a little bit more positive attitude than males, still the difference is not considerable. The results also reveal that their attitudes towards speaking English are not stable as it changes according to the learning time. That is, each year in their university, they may have an attitude that is different from the previous one.

Another study was conducted by Ali et al. (2019) in order to investigate the attitudes of Saudi EFL learners towards speaking skills. For this sake, a questionnaire was administered to 50 females and 50 males from colleges of Arts, Business and Community. The analyzed data obtained from this study show that there are no significant gender differences as they seem all to have a positive attitude towards EFL speaking performance.

Furthermore, Soomro & Farooq (2018) examined a research to investigate EFL Learners' attitudes towards developing speaking skills at the University of Taif, Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, a questionnaire was delivered to 184 males and females undergraduate students who were selected to investigate the issue of this research. The interpreted results show that most variables demonstrated a strong positive effect.

## 2.2.7 Gender and EFL Speaking Proficiency

Since speaking is considered as a cornerstone in EFL classrooms and a key to the success of communication, many researchers relate it to gender differences. While some assume that males and females differ in speaking performance, others found no distinction between them. For instance, a recent study was executed by Namaziandost et al. (2019) on 25 Iranian male and 25 Iranian female Upper-intermediate EFL

students aged from of 17 and 20 years old to examine their speaking accuracy and fluency. The analyzed results point out that females are better in speaking fluency.

Ali et al. (2019) carried out a questionnaire for 100 male and female EFL Saudi learners at colleges of Arts, Business and Community, aged from 18 to 20 years. The study is revealed for the purpose of measuring the perception of learners towards English-verbal ability. As a result, they concluded that both male and female learners perceive learning English speaking skill the same as they turn to be conscious of the purpose of learning the English language.

Other researchers received results which are interpreted in favor of females' priority in speaking performance. For instance, Rahayu (2016) examined a research on males and females' speaking skill at SMAN 1 Bantarujeg University based on their pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and fluency. Males outperform females only in pronunciation. However, females' total score is 148 that are higher than males who marked 135.

Similarly, Erdiana et al. (2019) administered a speaking test on first-grade students at SMA Labschool Banda Aceh University in Indonesia based on scoring speaking components that are: pronunciation, grammar, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary in order to examine if female EFL learners outperform male learners in verbal ability. The results obtained from this study indicate that females surpass males in the speaking ability. Since female students marked 68.5 while male students marked 63.3, the authors of the article considered the difference to be very small where it cannot be popularized amongst all EFL students. That is, the difference between males and females is very little in which it cannot be assumed that females exceed males in oral performance.

**Conclusion**

This chapter highlights gender as a main factor influencing EFL learners speaking proficiency. It first investigates other factors that hinder EFL speaking performance. Then, gender is investigated in relation to cognition, attitudes towards learning foreign languages and learning styles. It also deals with gender as a variable that affects the acquisition of the mother language as well as learning English as a FL/SL. Finally, it reveals different studies about differences in speaking performance between males and females. As a result, such questions like who is better in speaking skill: males or females? are still amongst the most controversial issues in foreign language learning/teaching until the present time. Even the empirical data provided different results that make the issue more complicated. Eventually, there is no exact answer that proves the existence of gender differences in attaining EFL proficiency.

**Chapter Three**

**Field of Investigation: Data Analysis and Pedagogical Implementation**

**Introduction**

This study aims at investigating teachers and students' attitudes towards EFL learners' speaking performance level and the impact of gender on the oral performance of master students, at the department of letters and English language, University of Guelma. The data collection has been based on a descriptive analytical approach using two questionnaires; one was distributed to teachers, and the other was devoted to students. The main aim of these questionnaires is to provide a valid data and elicit worthy results. Hence, the obtained answers from both questionnaires will help to fulfill the objective of the study and confirm or reject the research hypothesis. Accordingly, this chapter is devoted to the analysis, description and interpretation of the questionnaires' results. After that, a summary of the findings is provided and then a conclusion to the whole chapter. Finally, some pedagogical implementations are recommended.

**3.1 Population and Sample of the Study**

The population of this study includes EFL first and second year master students and teachers who teach master degree from the department of Letters and English Languages (language and culture) at 08 Mai 1945 University, Guelma, during the academic year 2021/2022. Out of first and second year master students' population, 120 students including 85 female and 35 male students were chosen as a sample for students' questionnaire; while only 17 teachers contributed in answering teachers' questionnaire. The reason behind choosing this sample is because both teachers and students are already familiar with speaking skill and its different components as they are supposed to have speaking activities in their different modules.

### 3.2  Students' Questionnaire

The first questionnaire used in the present study was designed and distributed to first and second year master students of English at 08 Mai 1945 University, Guelma.

### 3.2.1  Aims of the Students' Questionnaire

Students' questionnaire is designed to figure out first and second year master students' speaking performance level and detect the difficulties they face during speaking. Moreover, it also investigates the differences between males and females in oral performance.

### 3.2.2  Description of Students' Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire first starts with an introduction which states briefly the aim behind the current study. Then, it presents twenty-six (26) questions which are organized under three sections that are presented as follows:

**Section One: General Information (Q1- Q6)**

The first sections is composed of six (6) questions which are related to students' background information including their age (Q1) and their gender (Q2), the number of years they studied English (Q3) and whether it was their first choice to study English at the university (Q4). It also presents questions about their general level (Q6) in English and the extent to which they use accurate English.

**Section Two: Learners' Attitudes towards Speaking Performance (Q7 – Q19)**

The next section consists of thirteen (13) questions which are designed to investigate students' attitudes towards speaking performance. It focuses on students' perspectives towards the most important skill to be developed (Q7) and whether they consider speaking as an important skill in EFL classrooms (Q8). Furthermore, it presents questions to investigate whether they enjoy speaking English (Q9) and their interest to develop their speaking skill (Q10). The next questions seek to know learners'

level of speaking in general (Q11), their speaking inside and outside the classroom (Q12 & Q13) as well as the difficulties they face during speaking (Q14). Question 15 and 16 (Q16 & Q17) aim to know whether teachers encourage their students to speak in the classroom and the extent to which they take part in the speaking activities. Finally, the last two questions (Q18 & Q 19) present students' views about their level in speaking fluency and accuracy.

**Section Three: Students' Attitudes towards Gender in Relation to Speaking Performance (Q20 – Q27)**

Finally, section three provides seven questions (Q7) that are related to students' attitudes towards gender in relation to speaking performance. It first deals with a question about students' attitudes towards speaking (Q20); then, it presents other questions to investigate their perspectives about male and female EFL learners' speaking inside the classroom (Q21) and their level of speaking fluency (Q22) and speaking accuracy including the use of accurate grammar, pronunciation and appropriate vocabulary (Q23), as well as the use of paralinguistic features (Q24) and speaking with confidence (Q24). Finally, the last part of this section consists of further comments or suggestions concerning the topic (Q25).

**3.2.3 Administration of Students' Questionnaire**

Students' questionnaire was administered online via *Google Form* to the whole population of first and second year master students (250 students) at the Department of English, Guelma University on May, 9th, 2022. As a result, 120 answers were received during three days. The questionnaire was gathered after receiving students' answers. They were very cooperative as they helped in sharing the link of the questionnaire to their colleagues.

### 3.2.4  Analysis of Results from the Students' Questionnaire

**Section One: Background Information**

**Question One:** Age

Table 3.1

*Students' Age*

| Age | Number | Percentage |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 21 | 31 | 25.84% |
| 22 | 33 | 27.5% |
| 23 | 28 | 23.33% |
| 24 -50 | 28 | 23.33% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

As it is indicated in Table 3.1 that represents students' age, 27.5% of students are aged twenty-two years (22), 25.84 % are aged twenty-one (21), and 23.33% are aged twenty-three years (23). These three categories of students' age refer to the normal age of first and second year master students. In the same line, 23.23 % of the students are aged from twenty-four (24) to fifty (50) years mainly because they either failed in their previous years or they stopped studying then they carried on studying at a later age. This implies diversity in the age of first and second year master students during the academic year 2021/2021.

**Question Two:** Gender:

Table 3.2

*Students' Gender*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|-----------|
| Males | 35 | 29.17 |
| Females | 88 | 70.83% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

According to Table 3.2 which is about students' gender, the large majority of the students which represent 70.83% are females, while less than one-third (29.17 %) are males. These findings indicate that females are more than males in the department of letters and English language. Therefore, females are the most oriented towards studying EFL than males do.

**Question Three:** Was English your first choice?

Table 3.3

*Students' Choice of Learning English*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|-----------|
| Yes | 95 | 79.2% |
| No | 25 | 20.8% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

The obtained results from Table 3.3 which represents students' choice of learning English reveal that English was the first choice for 95 students making up 79.2% of the whole sample which indicates that the majority of students are supposed to be motivated and have the desire to study English. By contrast, only 25 students who represent 20.8% of the sample argued that English was not their first choice. This

denotes that this minority of EFL learners was either imposed by someone else to study English or their average in the Baccalaureate Exam did not allow them to choose the field they want.

**Question Four:** How long have you been studying English? …. years (including this year)

Table 3.4

*Students' English Learning Experience*

| Years | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 11 Years | 51 | 42.5% |
| 12 Years | 49 | 40.83% |
| 13 Years | 9 | 7.5% |
| 14 Years | 8 | 6.67% |
| 15 Years | 3 | 2.5% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

Table 3.4 reveals the obtained results about the students' English learning experience. It demonstrates that there are various categories of learners' years of English learning experience. The first category which holds the largest percentage for the years during which English has been studied is 42.5% which counts for fifty-one (51) students who have been studying English for eleven (11) years which refer to the normal age of reaching master-one degree. The second represents 40.83% which refers to forty-nine (49) students who have been studying English for twelve (12) years which indicates the normal age of reaching master-two degree. Moreover, 7.5%, 6.67% and 2.5% represent students who have been studying English for thirteen (13), fourteen (14) and fifteen (15) years respectively. Thus, few students have been studying English for

more than twelve (12) years which denotes that they have failed during their previous years.

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

Table 3.5

*Students' General Level in English*

| Options | Number | Percentage |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Very good | 22 | 18.3% |
| Good | 69 | 57.5% |
| Average | 29 | 24.2% |
| Bad | 0 | 0% |
| Very bad | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

The descriptive statistics in Table 3.5 which are about the students' general level in English, suggest that students' English general level varies from *average* to *very good*. Accordingly, more than half of master students (69) making up 57.5% claimed that their English level is good, while 29 students who represent 24.2% out of the sample evaluated their level as average. In addition, 22 learners who stand for 18.3% from the whole sample argued they are very good EFL learners. This indicates that despite being master students, there is still a minority of students who face difficulties in learning English which makes their English language level average, meanwhile, the majority face little or even less difficulties in learning English.

**Question Six:** Your English Accuracy is:

Table 3.6

*Students' English Accuracy Level*

| Options | Number | Percentage |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Very good | 31 | 21.5% |
| Good | 74 | 61.7% |
| Average | 15 | 25.8% |
| Bad | 0 | 0% |
| Very bad | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

As pointed out in Table 3.6 which indicates students' accuracy level, the majority of the students who represent 61.7% opted for a *good* English accuracy level which indicates their use of correct and appropriate language as they are worth to be master students. Furthermore, 25.8% of the students argued their use of accurate English language is *average* which means they have problems in using correct grammar, appropriate vocabulary, or spelling mistakes… However, 31 students who represent 21.5% claimed they are *very good* EFL learners when it comes to using accurate language which denotes their highest level and their ability to use the English language correctly and appropriately.

**Section Two: Learners' Attitudes towards Speaking performance**

**Question Seven:** According to you, what is the language skill that needs to be developed the most?

Table 3.7

*Students' Views on the Most Important Speaking Skill*

| Options | Number | Percentage |
|---------|--------|------------|
| Speaking | 62 | 51.67% |
| Listening | 39 | 32.5% |
| Reading | 13 | 10.83% |
| Writing | 6 | 5% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

Table 3.7 shows students' views on the most important language skill. According to the obtained results, the highest percentage of the participants (51.67%) claimed that speaking is the most important skill to develop, while 32.5% argue that listening is the most essential skill. However, few students, representing 10.83%, opted for reading as the major skill to be developed, and only 5% asserted that writing is the most significant language skill. Regardless to the fact that all the four skills are important in language, more than half of the participants consider speaking as the most important one that deserves to be developed since it enables them to orally communicate with others and express their ideas, feelings and so on.

**Question Eight:** Do you consider speaking as an important skill in EFL classrooms?

Table 3.8

*Students' Attitudes on the Importance of Speaking in EFL Classrooms*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 120 | 100% |
| No | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

From the obtained results in Table 3.8, which demonstrates students' attitudes on the importance of speaking in EFL classrooms, it appears that all the participants chose '*yes*' as an option to agree that speaking is an important skill in EFL classrooms. This denotes that all of the participants are aware of the importance of mastering the speaking skill in developing their communicative competence as it allows them to express their ideas, thoughts, feelings…

**Question Nine:** Do you enjoy speaking English?

Table 3.9

*Students' Perceptions towards Speaking English*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 119 | 99.2% |
| No | 1 | 0.8% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

As indicated in Table 3.9, which reveals results about the students' perception towards speaking English, nearly all participants (99.2%) claimed they enjoy speaking English. Only one student said s/he does not enjoy speaking English. This indicates that the majority of master students like to speak English find it an entertaining task.

**Question Ten:** Are you interested in developing your speaking skill?

Table 3.10

*Students' Interest in Developing their Speaking Skill*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Interested | 116 | 96.7% |
| I don't know | 4 | 3.3% |
| Not interested | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

According to the reported results of students' interest in developing their speaking skill (Table 3.10), nearly all participants (96.7%) claimed that they are *interested* in developing their speaking skill which indicates their willingness to boost their speaking level. However, only four (4) students out of the whole sample opted for the option *I don't Know* to indicate that they are not sure about developing their speaking skill or they are not aware enough of the importance of the speaking skill.

**Question Eleven:** How can you describe your level in speaking?

Table 3.11

*Students' Perceptions on their Speaking Level*

| Options | Number | Percentage |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Very good | 20 | 16.8% |
| Good | 56 | 47.1% |
| Average | 39 | 32.8% |
| Bad | 4 | 3.4% |
| Very bad | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

As denoted in Table 3.11, which represents the students' perceptions on their speaking level, it appears that learners' speaking level varies from *bad* to *very good.* Nearly half of the participants, representing 47.1%, rated their speaking level as good which denotes that speaking English is generally easy for them. In addition, about one-third of them (32.8%) argued that their level in speaking is *average*. This indicates that they do not speak well and cannot handle all the speaking situations. Moreover, 16.8% of the participants stated that their speaking is *very good* which indicates that this category of learners can have a high speaking competency level as they can engage successfully in a conversation. However, only four (4) students representing 3.4% claimed their speaking is *bad* which means they face many difficulties in speaking activities which negatively affects their speaking performance and create misunderstanding of the spoken message.

**Question Twelve:** How often do you speak English in the classroom?

Table 3.12

*Students' Participation in the Classroom*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Always | 47 | 39.2% |
| Sometimes | 61 | 50.8% |
| Rarely | 10 | 8.3% |
| Hardly ever | 2 | 1.7% |
| Never | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

As indicated in Table 3.12, which demonstrates results related to students' participation in the classroom, 50.8% of the students claimed that they sometimes participate in the classroom which means they contribute in classroom different

activities but they are not fully engaged. Moreover, 39.2% stated they always participate in the classroom which indicates that they are studious and cooperative learners, who make consistent effort, engage regularly in classroom activities, always prepared for class participation and aware of every detail presented by the teachers and their classmates. However, 8.3%, which stands for ten (10) participants demonstrated that they rarely participate in the classroom which implies that they demonstrate a limited effort in terms of preparation before classes. Only two (2) students representing 1.7% of the whole participants argued they hardly ever participate in the classroom which denotes that they demonstrate a very limited effort as they neglect to participate almost all the times in classroom activities.

**Question Thirteen:** How often do you speak English outside the classroom?

Table 3.13

*Students' Speaking English outside the Classroom*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Always | 12 | 10% |
| Sometimes | 57 | 47.5% |
| Rarely | 34 | 28.3% |
| Hardly ever | 13 | 10.8% |
| Never | 4 | 3.3% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

Table 3.13 reveals results about the extent to which students speak English outside the classroom. The highest percentage is 28.3% which represents those who sometimes speak English outside the classroom. This indicates that they speak in English from time to time even outside their academic atmosphere which helps in improving their oral ability. Furthermore, 28.3% demonstrated they rarely use English

outside the classroom which denotes that they speak English out of their education settings to a limited extent. Moreover, only 10% of the students stated they speak English outside the classroom which infers their willingness to use the language and develop their communicative competence. Very few students (3.3%) claimed they never use English outside the classroom.

**Question Fourteen:** What are the difficulties you face during speaking?

Table 3.14

*Students' Difficulties in Speaking*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Anxiety | 41 | 34.2% |
| Lack of self-confidence | 39 | 24.2% |
| Shyness | 46 | 38.3% |
| Poor listening practice | 14 | 11.7% |
| Fear of mistakes | 48 | 40% |
| Poor pronunciation | 13 | 10.8% |
| Lack of vocabulary | 48 | 40% |
| Others: No difficulty | 3 | 2.5% |

Table 3.14 represents students' speaking difficulties. The highest percentage is 40% which represents participants who claimed that they lack vocabulary during speaking. In addition, 38.3% of the participants stated that they feel shy when it comes to speaking English. Moreover, 40% of the students demonstrated that they are afraid of making mistakes, while more than one-third (34.2%) of the sample claimed they suffer from anxiety which hinders their speaking. Furthermore, 24.2% stated that they lack being self-confident which negatively affects their speaking performance. Only few students, representing 11.7%, announced that they suffer from poor listening practice

which influences their speaking skill; and 10.8% of the sample have poor pronunciation which influences the effectiveness of the spoken message. However, few students (4) representing 2.5% out of the whole sample claimed they face no difficulty during their speaking performance which indicates that they professionally master all the speaking components as they suffer from no barrier that affects their speaking performance. Therefore, the majority of students opted for multiple difficulties which means that each learner may have more than one speaking obstacle that affects their English verbal ability.

**Question Fifteen:** Do your teachers encourage you to speak inside the classroom?

Table 3.15

*Students' Perceptions on Teachers' Speaking Support inside the Classroom*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 98 | 81.7% |
| No | 32 | 18.3% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

Table 3.15 represents students' perceptions on teachers' speaking support inside the classroom. The obtained results show that 81.7% of the participants opted for the option *yes* claiming that their teachers encourage them to speak inside the classroom. This indicates that teachers are aware of the importance of speaking EFL in their classes and provide opportunities to their learners to get involved in the different speaking activities to enhance their speaking skill. However, the minority of the participants (18.3%) opted for the second option *No* which denotes that these students see that their teachers do not allow them to speak and take part in the speaking activities which affects their speaking progress towards achieving proficiency.

**Question Sixteen:** How often do you participate in classrooms oral activities?

Table 3.16

*Students' Participation in Classrooms Oral Activities*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Always | 46 | 38.3% |
| Sometimes | 54 | 45% |
| Rarely | 16 | 13.3 |
| Hardly ever | 4 | 3.4% |
| Never | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

As denoted in Table 3.16, which demonstrates students' participation in classroom oral activities, the highest percentage (45%) which stands for fifty-four participants (54) said they sometimes participate in speaking activities. This means that they are interested in speaking English and willing to take part in oral activities but to a limited extent where they only engage in this type of activities from time to time. In addition, 38.3% out of the whole number of participants argued that they always participate in the speaking activities which indicates their high interest and willingness to speak English and active engagement in the different speaking activities. However, 13.3% out of the whole number of the participants claimed that they rarely participate in speaking activities; while (4) students, making up 3.4%, claimed that they hardly ever participate in classroom speaking activities. Therefore, the majority of students are active learners who take part in oral activities.

**Question Seventeen:** During the speaking performance, your English teachers often emphasize on:

Table 3.17

*Students' Perceptions on the Speaking Components Mostly Emphasized on by their Teachers*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| a. Correct grammar | 12 | 10% |
| b. Correct pronunciation | 15 | 12.5% |
| c. Appropriate vocabulary | 13 | 10.85% |
| d. Fluency | 8 | 6.66% |
| All the above | 40 | 33.3% |
| (a+b) | 11 | 9.2% |
| (b+c) | 7 | 5.83% |
| (a+b+c) | 14 | 11.66% |

As denoted in Table 3.17, which represents students' perceptions on the speaking components mostly emphasized on by their teachers, one third (33.3%) out of the whole sample claimed that their teachers mostly focus on all the verbal components including correct grammar, correct pronunciation, appropriate vocabulary and fluency which indicate that teachers are aware of the importance of these speaking aspects. Thus, emphasizing on all of them indicates the teachers' willingness to develop their learners' speaking skill and achieve competency. However, other students chose variety of answers (either one option or more). Hence, 12.5% claimed that their teachers emphasize more on having correct pronunciation; while 11.66% argued that correct grammar, pronunciation and using appropriate vocabulary (a+b+c) are the major focus by their teachers during speaking. Moreover, 10.85% said that the use of appropriate

vocabulary is the main speaking aspect emphasized on by their teachers. Meanwhile, others (10%) stated that correct grammar is their major focus during speaking, and 9.2% of the whole sample said that speaking with both accurate grammar and pronunciation (a+b) are the major focus during speaking. Only 6.66% of the students opted for fluency that is emphasized most by their teachers, and 5.83% asserted that their teachers focus more on correct grammar and appropriate vocabulary (b+c) while performing the verbal speech. Thus, emphasizing on all of those speaking aspects indicates the teachers' willingness to develop their learners' speaking skill and achieve competency.

**Question Eighteen:** How can you describe your oral performance in each of the following: (pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar)

Table 3.18

*Students' Level of Oral Performance in Pronunciation, Vocabulary, and Grammar*

| Option | Pronunciation N° | Pronunciation % | Vocabulary N° | Vocabulary % | Grammar N° | Grammar % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Excellent | 18 | 15% | 11 | 9.2% | 25 | 20.8% |
| Good | 76 | 63.3% | 62 | 51.6% | 69 | 57.5% |
| Average | 26 | 21.67% | 47 | 39.2% | 26 | 21.7% |
| Bad | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Very bad | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** | **120** | **100%** | **120** | **100%** |

Table 3.18 represents students' level of oral performance in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. According to the results obtained about the students' level of accuracy in each component differs from *excellent* to *average*. Concerning pronunciation, the majority (63.3%) of students claimed their pronunciation is *good*

which indicates that their pronunciation is mostly correct as they produce clear articulation which is understood almost by all the listeners. Additionally, 21.67% of the sample stated their pronunciation is *average*. This implies that their pronunciation is acceptable despite the existence of occasional errors. Only 15% of the students asserted their pronunciation is *excellent* which denotes that their pronunciation is very clear and easy to understand.

As for the students' speaking vocabulary level, the highest percentage (51.6%) represents students who claimed they are *good* at using appropriate vocabulary in their speaking performance. This means that they have a *good* range of relatively well-chosen vocabulary as they generally express things adequately which can cope in a variety of speech topics. Meanwhile, 39.2% of the participants argued their level in speaking with appropriate vocabulary is *average*. This denotes that they speak with limited vocabulary and can cope in some conversations while they can fail to express some items in other topics. Only few students (9.2%) asserted that they are *excellent* at using accurate vocabulary when they speak which implies that these learners use very appropriate and relevant words and expressions which are pertinent to the discussed topic.

Concerning the use of accurate grammar in speaking, the majority of the learners (57.5%) stated that they are *good* at using correct grammar during their speech which implies that their speech has very few grammatical errors as it demonstrates their ability to use complex form of sentences most of the times. Furthermore, 21.7% of the learners claimed they have an *average* use of correct grammar during their speech. Additionally, 20.8% argued they are *excellent* at using accurate grammar when they speak which demonstrates their proficiency level on using correct and variety of complex grammatical structures.

**Question Nineteen:** Your speaking fluency is:

Table 3.19

*Students' Speaking Fluency Level*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Excellent | 11 | 9.2% |
| Good | 71 | 59.2% |
| Average | 32 | 26.7 |
| Bad | 6 | 5% |
| Very bad | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

Table 3.19 represents students' speaking fluency level which demonstrates that the majority of students (59.2%) claimed that their speaking fluency is *good* which denotes that they speak without noticeable effort where they can orally discuss a given topic at ease and with less hesitation. Other participants, representing 26.7%, asserted that their speaking fluency is *average* which means that these students demonstrate some fluency while orally performing the language. However, few students (10) representing 9.2% from the whole sample reported their speaking fluency level is *excellent* which denotes that they are able to use very fluent language in which their speech reflects a clear articulation and with no hesitation; while only 6 students making up 5% from the whole sample asserted that their fluency level is *bad* which demonstrates that their speech is slow and hesitant.

**Section Three: Students' Attitudes towards Gender in Relation to Speaking Performance**

**Question Twenty:** What is your attitude towards speaking in general?

-If negative why?

Table 3.20

*Students' Attitudes towards Speaking English*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Positive | 115 | 95.8% |
| Negative | 5 (females) | 4.2% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

As denoted in Table 3.20 which represents students' attitudes towards speaking English, nearly all the participants (95.8%) stated they have a positive attitude towards speaking English which indicates their willingness to speak EFL and achieve proficiency. However, 4.2% of the participants which stand up for five females claimed that they have a negative attitude towards speaking EFL. Therefore, there are almost no gender differences in terms of the attitudes towards speaking EFL.

The following statements represent the justification of these female learners minority who hold a negative attitude towards speaking English:

1- I listen more than I speak and if I am obliged to speak I hesitate during my speech.

2- Because of stress, low self-confidence.

3- I am very anxious person, I rarely express things and if I do, most of the times I do not deliver what I exactly want to. I am not a talkative person which makes me more introvert.

4- I do not like to speak. I am kind of an introvert person.

5- I am simply an introvert person and I do not prefer to speak especially in public.

The first answer shows that the learner is a good listener but not a good speaker. She suffers from speech hesitation which makes her choose not to speak though she needs only to practice the language to achieve perfection. The second answer indicates that the participant suffers from psychological problems which hinder her speaking performance and leads her to hold a negative attitude towards speaking. Additionally, the third participants' answer indicates that she feels anxious whenever she says things orally which negatively affects the delivered message and leads her to be an introvert person who holds a negative attitudes towards speaking. In the last two answers, the participants clearly stated they are introvert persons who feel comfortable by keeping silent all the time as they do not enjoy speaking EFL.

**Question Twenty-one:** Who speaks more inside the classroom?

Table 3.21

*Students' Attitude towards Males and Females Speaking inside the Classroom*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Males | 21 | 17.5% |
| Females | 99 | 82.5% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

As it is denoted in Table 3.21, which represents students' attitudes towards males and females speaking inside the classroom, the majority of the students (82.5 %) argued that females speak more inside the classroom. Meanwhile, only 17.5% stated that males speak more inside the classroom. This implies that females are more active inside the classroom as they participate and take part in the different speaking activities more than males.

**Question Twenty-two:** Who is more fluent when speaking?

Table 3.22

*Students' Attitudes towards Gender Speaking Fluency*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Males | 46 | 38.3% |
| Females | 74 | 61.7% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

Table 3.22 represents students' attitudes towards gender speaking fluency. From the obtained results, the majority of students (61.7 %) reported that females are fluent EFL speakers. However, males were chosen to be more fluent EFL speakers only by 38.3% of the students. This denotes that the majority of female students are able to use the verbal language without redundancy and hesitation. Only few male students can do so. Therefore, females outperform males in speaking fluency.

**Question Twenty-three:** Who is better in speaking according to the following characteristics?

Table 3.23

*Students' Attitudes towards Gender in relation to Pronunciation, Vocabulary and Grammar*

| Option | Pronunciation | | Vocabulary | | Grammar | |
|--------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | N° | % | N° | % | N° | % |
| Males | 48 | 40% | 32 | 26.7% | 39 | 32.5% |
| Females | 72 | 60% | 88 | 73.3% | 81 | 67.5% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** | **120** | **100%** | **120** | **100%** |

Table 3.23 presents students' attitudes towards gender in relation to pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Concerning pronunciation, from Table 3.23, 60% of the students assumed that females have accurate pronunciation while only 40% of them claimed that males have accurate pronunciation. This means that the majority of females are better than males in mastering the phonological system, i.e., they can pronounce words correctly and articulate clearly in a way that enables the listener to get the exact word, whereas, the majority of males do not master pronunciation which means that they have poor pronunciation that may prevent the listener to understand the intended words.

Moreover, according to the obtained results in Table 3.23, more than two-thirds (73.3%) of the sample reported that females use accurate vocabulary while speaking. On the contrary, only 26.7% claimed that males speak with more accurate vocabulary. This denotes that females use more adequate and rich vocabulary which makes them able to provide details and more explanations that contribute in the success of the communication process.

Additionally, as marked in Table 3.23, more than two-thirds (67.5 %) of the participants claimed that females use accurate grammar rules when speaking, meanwhile, less than one-third (32.5%) of the sample argued that males' speaking performance is more accurate in terms of using correct grammar rules. Thus, it reflects that the majority of female students' control of grammar is good as they can speak the language with suitable and correct structure to participate effectively in classroom speaking activities.

**Question Twenty-four:** Who seems to be more proficient in using paralinguistic features? (Including gestures, eye contact, facial expression and voice quality)

Table 3.24

*Students' Attitudes towards Gender Use of Paralinguistic Features*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Males | 27 | 22.5% |
| Females | 93 | 77.5% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

Table 3.24 presents results about students' attitudes towards gender use of paralinguistic features. 77.5% of the target sample asserted that females use more paralinguistic features in speaking performance. However, only 22.5% of students argued that males use more paralinguistic features while verbally performing the language. This means that the majority of females maintain the use of paralinguistic features better than males which promote the females' ability to strongly and effectively convey the intended message.

**Question Twenty-five:** Who seems to be more comfortable when speaking?

Table 3.25

*Students' Perceptions on Gender Speaking with Confidence*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Males | 59 | 49.2% |
| Females | 61 | 51.8% |
| **Total** | **120** | **100%** |

Table 3.25 represents students' perceptions on males and females' comfort when speaking. The obtained results show that 51.8% of the participants claimed that

females are more comfortable when speaking English; while nearly half of the participants (49.2%) claimed that males are more comfortable in speaking EFL. This indicates that though there is a slight difference where females exceed males in comfortably speaking EFL, they are considered to be equal in terms of performing the oral language feeling more relaxed which is a positive thing that helps them to be more confident when speaking.

**Question Twenty-six:** Any other comments are most welcome

Since this question is optional, very few participants (6) representing 5% contributed and provided some comments in relation to this research study. They stated that the reason why females outperform males in speaking performance is mainly because the majority of EFL learners at the Guelma University are females. In addition, males are considered to be not interested towards learning languages but the few ones who show interest towards EFL, they are better than females in speaking performance. However, others claimed that females are seen to be more efficient at speaking EFL. They are also more expressive and more confident when performing the English oral language.

**3.2.5 Summary of the Results from the Students' Questionnaire**

The analysis of the students' questionnaire provides insights about students' perspectives towards speaking and the impact of gender on EFL learners' speaking performance. Participants who contributed in answering this questionnaire are first and second year master students from the department of English at the University of Guelma in which females outnumber males. Moreover, the majority of these participants chose to study English by their own choice as they reached first and second year master degree at a normal age (11 and 12 years) without failing in their previous years. The majority of them also indicated their general level in English is *good*.

The next section is about students' attitudes towards speaking performance. It shows that the majority of students announced that speaking is the most significant skill that needs to be developed as they considered it very important in EFL classrooms. Also, nearly all the participants claimed that they enjoy speaking and they are interested in developing it. In addition, this section also reveals that the majority of students have a good speaking level and they master all the speaking components though nearly all students argued that they face some difficulties which hinder their speaking performance.

The last section aims to reveal the impact of gender on EFL learners speaking performance. Nearly all students have a positive attitude towards speaking EFL. In addition, findings reveal that female EFL learners speak the most in the classroom as they outperform males in performing the verbal language including speaking fluency and accurate grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary; and the non-verbal language (the paralinguistic features) like body language, eye contact, voice quality... However, when it comes to speaking comfortably, both of them are equal since the participants seem to disagree on who outperforms the other.

## 3.3  Teachers' Questionnaire

The second questionnaire is devoted to teachers, who teach master degree, from the English department at 08 Mai 1945, Guelma University.

### 3.3.1 Aims of Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers' questionnaire seeks to compare its results with students' questionnaire results as well as to consolidate this research and add more authenticity to it. Furthermore, it examines teachers' perspectives towards their learners' speaking performance. It also investigates gender differences in speaking performance amongst EFL first and second year master students.

### 3.3.2 Description of Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire begins with a brief introduction that presents the topic and the aim of the present research study. After that, it introduces three sections which are comprised of 21 questions which are presented as follows:

**Section One: General information (Q1- Q4)**

The first section demonstrates general information about teachers and students. I consists of four (4) questions; the first one (Q1) is related to teachers' years of teaching English. The next two questions (Q2 and Q3) are about students' general level of English and the extent to which it is accurate. Finally, the last question (Q4) in this section is about the importance of each language skill (speaking, listening, reading and writing) according to the teachers' perceptions.

**Section Two: Teachers' Attitudes towards Speaking Performance (Q5 – Q14)**

The second section consists of ten (10) questions that present teachers' attitudes towards speaking performance. Question 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 present teachers' perspectives on the importance of speaking skill, whether they are interested in developing their learners' speaking performance and if they encourage them and allow them to speak inside their classes as well as the main features they emphasize on during speaking. In addition, questions from 9 to 14 are designed to reveal teachers' views on their learners' level in speaking in general, their participation in the speaking activities, the difficulties they face during speaking performance, as well as their speaking fluency and their use of an accurate grammar, pronunciation and appropriate vocabulary during speaking.

**Section Three: Teachers' Attitudes towards Gender in Relation to Speaking Performance (Q15 – Q21)**

Finally, the last section provides seven (7) questions which tackle students' attitudes towards speaking skill (Question 15). This question requires a justification in case a student has a negative attitude towards speaking. The following question (16) is about gender speaking inside classrooms. Question 17, 18 and 19 are presented to know males and female learners' speaking fluency and accuracy and to see who are more comfortable when speaking. Finally, the last question 20 is designed for teachers if they want to add further comments or suggestions.

### 3.3.3 Administration of Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers' questionnaire was sent online via a link in *Google Form* to all teachers who teach master degree from the Department of English, Guelma University. It took place on May, 19th, 2022. Therefore, only 17 teachers volunteered and took part in this questionnaire. Hence, all of them provided responses which are used as tool to investigate this study.

### 3.3.4 Analysis of Results Obtained from Teachers' Questionnaire

**Section One: General Information**

**Question One:** How long have you been teaching English? .....years

Table 3.26

*Teachers' Years of Experience*

| Years | Number | Percentage |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 4 years | 1 | 5.9% |
| 10-15 years | 14 | 82.8% |
| 18 years | 2 | 11.8% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.26 reveals teacher's years of experience. From the obtained results, 82.3% of the teachers reported they have been teaching English from nine (9) to fifteen (15) years; while two (2) teachers representing 11.8% from the whole sample claimed that they have been teaching English for eighteen (18) years. However, only one (1) teacher who represents 5.9% out of the entire sample argued that s/he has been teaching English for four (4) years. As a result, the majority of teachers have a great experience in teaching EFL.

**Question Two:** How can you describe your students' level in English?

Table 3.27

*Teachers' Perceptions towards their Students' Level in English*

| Options | Number | Percentage |
|---------|--------|------------|
| Very good | 0 | 0% |
| Good | 11 | 64.7% |
| Average | 6 | 35.3% |
| Bad | 0 | 0% |
| Very bad | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.27 demonstrates teachers' perceptions towards their students' level in English. Students' English level vary from *average* to *good* in which more than two-thirds (64.7%) of the whole sample claimed that their students' English level is *good*, meanwhile, six (6) teachers making up 35.3% argued that the general English level of their students is *average*. Therefore, the majority of first and second year master students have a *good* level in English.

**Question Three:** How can you describe your students' accuracy?

Table 3.28:

*Teachers' Perceptions towards their Students' English Accuracy*

| Options | Number | Percentage |
|---------|--------|------------|
| Very good | 0 | 0% |
| Good | 10 | 58.8% |
| Average | 7 | 41.2% |
| Bad | 0 | 0% |
| Very bad | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.28 shows teachers' perceptions towards their students' English accuracy. The highest percentage (58.8%) of teachers opted for *good* to demonstrate their students' use of accurate English; while only seven (7) teachers making up 41.2% out of the whole sample argued that their students' level of English accuracy is *average*. Therefore, the majority of students use accurate English committing fewer mistakes in terms of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.

**Question Four:** According to you, what is the language skill that needs to be developed the most?

Table 3.29

*Teachers' Views on the Most Important Language Skill*

| Options | Number | Percentage |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Speaking | 9 | 52.9% |
| Listening | 6 | 35.3% |
| Reading | 1 | 5.9% |
| Writing | 1 | 5.9% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.29 represents teachers' views on the most important speaking skill. The majority of teachers (52.9%) claimed that the most significant language skill that needs to be developed the most is speaking; while 35.3% of them assumed that listening is the major skill that learners need to develop. One (1) teacher representing (5.9%) asserted that reading is the most important skill; meanwhile, another teacher (5.9%) stated that writing is the major skill which requires to be developed the most. As a result, more than half of the teachers declared that speaking is very important for EFL learners to enhance.

**Section Two: Teachers' Attitudes towards Speaking Performance**

**Question Five:** Do you consider speaking as an important skill in EFL classrooms?

Table 3.30

*Teachers' Perceptions towards the Importance of Speaking in EFL Classrooms*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|:------:|:------:|:----------:|
| Yes | 17 | 100% |
| No | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.30 denotes teachers' perceptions towards the importance of speaking in EFL classroom. The demonstrated results show that all teachers (100%) opted for *yes* arguing that speaking is a significant skill in EFL classrooms. this indicates that all the teachers are conscious towards the usefulness of speaking English in foreign language classes.

**Question Six:** Are you interested in developing your student' speaking performance?

Table 3.31

*Teachers' Interest in Developing their Students' Speaking Performance*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|:------:|:------:|:----------:|
| Interested | 17 | 100% |
| I don't know | 0 | 0% |
| Not interested | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

As denoted in Table 3.31, that represents teachers' interest in developing their students' speaking performance, the obtained results show, again, that all teachers (100%) are interested in developing their students speaking performance. This indicates

that these teachers have the desire to develop their students speaking skill and help them to be communicatively competent.

**Question Seven:** Do you encourage your students to speak inside the classroom?

Table 3.32

*Teachers' Support to their Learners to Speak inside the Classroom*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 17 | 100% |
| No | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.32 indicates teachers' support to their learners to speak inside the classroom. According to the obtained results, all the teachers encourage their students to speak inside the classroom which implies that they give them opportunity to speak and take part in the different speaking activities so that they could develop their speaking performance and achieve proficiency.

**Question Eight:** How often do you allow your students to speak in the classroom?

Table 3.33

*Students' Speaking Opportunities inside the Classroom*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Always | 13 | 76.5% |
| Sometimes | 4 | 23.5% |
| Rarely | 0 | 0% |
| Hardly ever | 0 | 0% |
| Never | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.33 demonstrates students' speaking opportunities inside the classroom. Findings show that the majority of the teachers (76.5%) argued they *always* provide opportunities to their learners to speak which implies that students' chance to speak and participate in speaking activities is very high. However, 23.5% of the teachers claimed that they *sometimes* provide their learners the chance to speak in their classes which indicates that they speak more than their students while they allow them to speak from time to time and to a limited extent.

**Question Nine:** How often do your students participate in classrooms oral activities?

Table 3.34

*Students' Participation in Oral Activities*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Always | 7 | 41.2% |
| Sometimes | 10 | 58.8% |
| Rarely | 0 | 0% |
| Hardly ever | 0 | 0% |
| Never | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.34 presents results about students' participation in oral activities. The majority of teachers (58.8%) asserted that students *sometimes* speak during the oral activities. This indicates that learners speak from time to time but do not fully engage in the speaking activities. However, 42.2% of the teachers announced that their learners *always* participate in the oral activities which denote that their learners are very active and fully prepared to engage and take part in all speaking activities as they play an important role in the success of communication inside the classroom.

**Question Ten:** During the speaking performance, you often emphasize on:

Table 3.35

*Teachers' Emphasis during Speaking Performance*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| a. Correct grammar | 0 | 0% |
| b. Correct pronunciation | 0 | 0% |
| c. Appropriate vocabulary | 2 | 11.8% |
| d. Fluency | 5 | 29.4% |
| All the above | 7 | 41.2% |
| ( a+b+c ) | 3 | 17.6% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.35 denotes teachers' emphasis during speaking performance. Findings show that the highest percentage (41.2%) represents teachers who argued that they emphasize on all the speaking components including correct grammar, correct pronunciation, appropriate vocabulary and fluency which means that mastering them is very important for an effective speaking performance. However, 29.4% of the teachers opted for fluency as the major focus in speaking performance; while others (17.6%) considered correct grammar, correct pronunciation, and appropriate vocabulary very important during speaking performance which influences the intended message. Additionally, only two (2) teachers making up 11.8% out of the whole sample regarded appropriate vocabulary as an important aspect that contributes in the success to students' speaking performance. Therefore, for the majority of teachers, mastering all the speaking components together is very significant for learners to develop their speaking performance.

**Question Eleven:** How can you describe your students' level in speaking?

Table 3.36

*Teachers' Perceptions on their Students' English Speaking Level*

| Options | Number | Percentage |
|---------|--------|------------|
| Very good | 2 | 11.8% |
| Good | 8 | 47.1% |
| Average | 7 | 41.2% |
| Bad | 0 | 0% |
| Very bad | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.36 demonstrates teachers' perceptions on their students' speaking level. The obtained findings denote that students' speaking level ranges from *very good* to *average* in which the highest percentage (47.1%) represents teachers who rated their students' English speaking level as *good* which implies that their students are of an advanced speaking level as they generally engage successfully in oral conversations; while 41.2% of the teachers claimed that their students' level in speaking EFL is *average* which means that they have an acceptable speaking level. Moreover, 11.8% out of the entire sample argued that students are *very good* EFL speakers which indicates that they attained a  high level of proficiency in speaking which enables them to effectively interact with others and boost the success of the communication process.

**Question Twelve:** What are the difficulties that your students face during speaking? (you can choose more than one answer)

Table 3.37

*Students' Difficulties during Speaking*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Anxiety | 9 | 52.9% |
| Lack of self-confidence | 10 | 58.8% |
| Shyness | 9 | 52.9% |
| Poor listening practice | 7 | 41.2% |
| Fear of mistakes | 9 | 52.9% |
| Poor pronunciation | 9 | 52.9% |
| Lack of vocabulary | 15 | 88.2% |
| Lack of interest | 1 | 5.9% |
| Negative feedback | 1 | 5.9% |

Table 3.37 illustrates students' difficulties according to their teachers' perceptions. The obtained results show that the majority of teachers (88.2%) claimed that their students lack vocabulary which hinders their speaking performance; while 58.8% of the teachers viewed that their students are less confident which negatively affect their performance of the spoken language. Moreover, 52.9% asserted that the difficulties mostly influence their students' speaking performance are: anxiety, shyness, fear of mistakes and poor pronunciation. Additionally, 41.2% of them announced that poor listening practice is a serious difficulty that impacts EFL learners speaking performance. Only 5.9% of teachers argued that students' lack of interest and negative feedback are among the barriers that make speaking difficult.

**Question Thirteen:** How can you describe your students' oral performance in each of the following?

Table 3.38

*Students' Level of Oral Performance in Pronunciation, Vocabulary and Grammar*

| Option | Pronunciation | | Vocabulary | | Grammar | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N° | % | N° | % | N° | % |
| Excellent | 1 | 5.9% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Good | 7 | 41.2% | 8 | 47% | 6 | 35.3% |
| Average | 9 | 52.9% | 7 | 41.2% | 11 | 64.7% |
| Bad | 0 | 0% | 3 | 11.8% | 0 | 0% |
| Very bad | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** | **17** | **100%** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.38 illustrates results obtained about students' level of oral performance in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Starting with pronunciation, the majority of teachers (52.9%) claimed that their students' pronunciation is *good* which infers that students have a good accent as well as good articulation while they commit less pronunciation mistakes. Moreover 41.2% declared that their students' pronunciation level is *average* which denotes that their accent is generally acceptable though it is often quite faulty. Only one (1) teacher representing 5.9% asserted that the pronunciation of his/her students is *excellent* which infers their proficiency level in pronouncing words correctly and without mistakes.

As for vocabulary, all teachers opted for either *good*, *average,* or *bad* to assess their students' use of appropriate vocabulary. The majority of them (47%) argued that their students' use of appropriate vocabulary is *good*. This means that students have a broad vocabulary where they generally use precise and concise terms that cope with

almost all the different speaking conversations. However, 41.2% of teachers viewed their students' use of vocabulary while speaking as *average*. This indicates that students have a limited vocabulary which cannot serve their speaking performance in all topics. Only two (2) teachers making up 11.8% out of the whole sample claimed that their students' use of vocabulary is *bad* which indicates that they use a very limited vocabulary which cannot cope in all the conversations.

Concerning grammar, the majority of teachers (64.7%) declared that their students' use of grammar in their speaking is *average* which indicates that students often make mistakes which sometimes make the meaning unclear. However, 35.3% admitted that students are *good* in using accurate grammar during speaking which implies that students almost maintain the use of correct grammar in their speech as they commit fewer mistakes which generally do not obscure the meaning.

**Question Fourteen:** Your students' speaking fluency is:

Table 3.39

*Students' Speaking Fluency Level*

| Options | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Very good | 0 | 0% |
| Good | 9 | 52.9% |
| Average | 7 | 41.2% |
| Bad | 0 | 0% |
| Very bad | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.39 illustrates students speaking fluency level according to their teachers' views. The results show that the highest percentage (52.9%) stands for teachers who considered their students have a *good* fluency level that infers that their

speech is generally fluid as they speak smoothly. Meanwhile, 41.2% of teachers viewed their students' speaking fluency as *average* which denotes that their speech is relatively smooth.

**Section Three: Teachers' Attitudes towards Students' Gender in Relation to Speaking Performance**

**Question Fifteen:** What is your students' attitude towards speaking in general?

- If negative, why?

Table 3.40

*Students' Attitudes towards Speaking in General*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|:------:|:------:|:----------:|
| Positive | 16 | 94.1% |
| Negative | 1 | 5.9% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** |

As showed in Table 3.40 which illustrates students' attitudes towards speaking in general, almost all teachers (94.1%) viewed that their students have positive attitudes towards speaking EFL. This indicates that students are motivated and willing to speak English. However, only one (1) teacher making up 5.9% opted for the option *No* claiming that students have a negative attitude towards speaking. s/he justified his/her view saying that students suffer from barriers such as bad pronunciation, lack of vocabulary, anxiety … which hinders their speaking performance and make them hold a negative attitude towards speaking.

**Question Sixteen:** Who speaks more inside the classroom?

Table 3.41

*Male and Female Students' Speaking inside the classroom*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Males | 1 | 5.9% |
| Females | 13 | 76.5% |
| Both | 3 | 17.6% |
| Total | 17 | 100% |

Table 3.41 reveals teachers' views about male and female students' speaking inside the classroom. The obtained findings show that the majority of teachers (76.5%) claimed that female learners speak more inside the classroom. This means that female students are generally more active as they engage the most in speaking activities. 17.6% of the teachers argued that both males and females speak equally in the classroom which means they have equal speaking performance as they participate equally in speaking activities. Nonetheless, only one (1) teacher asserted that males speak more inside the classroom.

**Question Seventeen:** Who is more fluent when speaking?

Table 3.42

*Gender Speaking Fluency*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Males | 4 | 23.5 |
| Females | 8 | 47.1% |
| Both | 5 | 29.4% |
| Total | 17 | 100% |

As indicated in Table 3.42 which illustrates teachers' perceptions about gender speaking fluency, 47.1% of teachers claimed that females outperform males in speaking fluency. Moreover, 29.4% argued that both males and females have equal performance in speaking fluency; while 23.5% stated that male students exceed females in speaking fluency. These findings indicates that the majority of teachers held the view which says that female EFL learners are generally more fluent which means that their speech is more fluid in comparison to male EFL students.

**Question Eighteen:** Who is better in speaking according to the following characteristics?

Table 3.43

*Teachers' Perceptions of Gender Speaking Performance in Pronunciation, Vocabulary and Grammar*

|  | Pronunciation | | Vocabulary | | Grammar | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Option** | **N°** | **%** | **N°** | **%** | **N°** | **%** |
| Males | 2 | 11.8% | 3 | 17.6% | 2 | 11.8% |
| Females | 10 | 58.8% | 8 | 47.1% | 9 | 52.9% |
| Both | 5 | 29.4% | 6 | 35.3% | 6 | 35.3% |
| **Total** | **17** | **100%** | **17** | **100%** | **17** | **100%** |

Table 3.43 presents teachers' perceptions of gender speaking performance in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Concerning gender differences in pronunciation, 58.8% of teachers stated that female students are better in pronunciation more than males; While 29.4% of the teachers claimed that both female and male students have an equal pronunciation performance. Only 11.8% of teachers viewed male students as the ones who have better pronunciation. Therefore, according to the majority of teachers EFL female learners exceed males in pronunciation.

For the use of vocabulary by males and females during speaking; the highest percentage 52.9% of teachers declared that females' use of vocabulary in their speech is more appropriate than males, meanwhile, 35.3% of teachers stated their male and female students' use of vocabulary in speaking performance is equal. Only 11.8% of teachers argued that males outperform females in vocabulary usage during their speech. Thus, according to the majority of teachers female EFL learners are better than males even in speaking vocabulary usage which indicates that female EFL learners have a rich vocabulary in comparison to male EFL learners.

The last point in the above table presents gender use of correct grammar in speaking. The most of respondents (47.1%) claimed that females' use of correct grammar while speaking is higher than males, meanwhile, 35.3% announced that both male and female learners equally use correct grammar when they speak. Moreover, only 11.8% of teachers claimed that males are better than females in speaking with an accurate grammar. Therefore, the majority of the respondents show again that females use more accurate grammar when they speak EFL.

**Question Nineteen:** Who seems to be more proficient in using paralinguistic features? ( including gestures, eye contact, facial expression and voice quality)

Table 3.44

*Gender Use Paralinguistic Features*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Males | 0 | 0% |
| Females | 13 | 76.5% |
| Both | 4 | 23.5% |
| **Total** | 17 | 100% |

As denoted in Table 3.44, which shows the results about gender use of paralinguistic features according to their teachers' views, 76.5% of the teachers asserted that females' use of the paralinguistic features during speaking is more than males'. However, only 23.5% of the teachers stated that both males and females have an equal use of paralinguistic features. As a result, the majority of teachers show that females exceed males in the use of paralinguistic features along with speaking performance. This indicates that female EFL learners are more skillful than male EFL learners in using non-verbal elements, such as: maintaining eye contact, body language, maintaining good voice quality and so on.

**Question Twenty:** Who seems to be more comfortable when speaking?

Table 3.45

*Gender Comfort in Speaking Performance*

| Option | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Males | 5 | 29.4% |
| Females | 8 | 47.1% |
| Both | 4 | 23.5% |
| **Total** | 17 | 100% |

Table 3.45 illustrates teachers' views on gender comfort in speaking. The highest percentage of teachers 47.1% stated that females are more comfortable when speaking; while others (29.4%) claimed that males seem to be more comfortable when they perform the verbal language. Moreover, 23.5% asserted that both females and males feel comfortable when they speak. Therefore, the obtained show that the largest percentage of teachers out of the whole sample viewed that female EFL learners are the one who exceed male EFL learners when performing the spoken English language

comfortably which means they appear to be more confident and able to express thoughts and ideas at ease and without being influenced by external or internal barriers.

**Question Twenty-one: Teachers' Further Comments**

This section is concerned with comments or suggestions that teachers can add if they would like to. Few teachers provided comments about this research investigation. Some believed that males lack motivation and interest which hinders their speaking proficiency and make female students outperform them. Others claimed that even though female students are more at ease expressing thoughts and ideas orally, it does not mean that male students are not good at that. Many female students have oral proficiency and rich vocabulary but when they are given the choice, they choose not to participate. Moreover, others stated that females appear to be better than males in speaking performance since in the English department females are more than males.

**3.3.5 Summary of Results Obtained from Teachers' Questionnaire**

The first section is about general information; it demonstrates that nearly all the teachers experienced teaching for many years. Thus, they are supposed to be professional teachers in the field of English language teaching. Additionally, this section also shows that the majority of the teachers viewed their students' English general level as *good*. Finally, it reveals that the majority of them consider speaking as the most significant skill that students need to develop.

The second section reveals teachers' attitudes towards speaking performance in which all of them considered speaking as very important in EFL classrooms and argued they are all interested and willing to develop their learners' speaking performance. They also claimed that learners sometimes take part in the speaking activities as they provide them with opportunities to participate in the classroom. They also argued that students face difficulties which hinder their speaking performance where the majority

of them announced that their students lack vocabulary. Furthermore, each teacher emphasized on a certain speaking component during speaking performance but the majority opted for all the speaking components considering them as very important and the key towards achieving oral proficiency. Finally, the majority of teachers viewed their students' speaking level as *good* in all the speaking components.

The last part reveals teachers' attitudes towards the impact of gender on speaking performance. Nearly all teachers declared that all their students have a positive attitude towards speaking EFL. They also demonstrated the differences between male and female EFL learners in which the majority of them stated that females speak more than males in the classroom as they exceed males in all the speaking components including speech accuracy and fluency as well as the use of the paralinguistic features. Additionally, females are seen to be more comfortable than males when they orally perform the language.

## 3.4 Pedagogical Implementations and Recommendations

The main focus of this research is to investigate students' level of speaking in addition to the impact of gender on EFL learners speaking performance. Along with reading, writing and listening, speaking in EFL classrooms is regarded as a very important skill since it is considered as a key to master any language. However, EFL learners might face barriers and difficulties that negatively impact their speaking performance. Accordingly, this section is implemented for further suggestions and recommendations to both teachers and students which can be summarized as follows:

## 3.4.1 Recommendations to Students

After presenting the results and the analysis obtained from students' questionnaire, the following recommendations are proposed for further research:

▪ Students should be more conscious about the importance of speaking in learning EFL do their best to develop it.

▪ Students should be more motivated and highly self-confident and trust their abilities to master English and achieve speaking proficiency.

▪ Students should know that practice makes perfection; the more they practiced speaking, their listening ability will be developed; and the more they enrich their background knowledge, the easiest the speaking task will be.

▪ Students should be more careful during the speaking activities which are held inside classrooms by listening carefully to others in order to grasp the intended meaning to be able to engage effectively and contribute in the success of these tasks.

▪ Students should not compare themselves with others but rather focus on their speaking difficulties and look for different solutions to fix them.

▪ Students should be aware of the importance of maintaining the non-verbal language (the paralinguistic features) and its effectiveness in speaking performance as well as the good delivery of the intended message.

### 3.4.2 Pedagogical Implementations to Teachers

Teachers play a vital part in enhancing students' speaking performance. Thus, the following suggestions are recommended to teachers to help their students develop their speaking skill:

- Teachers should be more aware of the importance of teaching speaking in their classes and provide learners with more opportunities to speak and practice EFL.

- Teachers should treat both males and females the same and provide equal opportunities to each one of them to speak.

- Teachers need to take into consideration learners' different interests and implement suitable methods and techniques as well as a variety of speaking activities that helps students to grasp ideas better and develops their speaking skills.

- Teachers should provide their learners with a positive feedback and create a relaxed atmosphere which motivates them to learn better and also speak comfortably and achieve more positive outcomes.

- Teachers should focus on teaching all the verbal components as well as the non-verbal ones and raise their awareness about the importance of mastering each component for an effective speaking performance.

### 3.5  Research Perspectives and Limitations

Like any other research, this study also has limitations though it reached its aim and confirmed its research hypothesis. Time limitation is a major obstacle faced in conducting this research. This study reveals EFL learners' speaking performance and unveils gender differences in oral proficiency. Therefore, it needs a longitudinal classroom observation in order to clearly witness students speaking level and reveal gender differences in speaking performance. In addition, first and second year master students at the department of English at Guelma University are a sample that consists of more than 70% female students; this makes the attained results difficult to be generalized to all EFL learners of this department. Moreover, there were many teachers who teach master degree but only few (17 teachers) contributed in answering the teachers' questionnaire.

### Conclusion

This chapter aims at investigating the impact of gender on EFL learners' oral performance. It gathered detailed data through the analysis of results of both teachers and students' questionnaires in which the research hypothesis is confirmed. It also

provided some recommendations to both teachers and students which may help EFL learners to boost their speaking performance and further achieve competency.

Findings have revealed two important results; on one hand, most of the students have an advanced level of speaking proficiency but did not yet reach the proficiency level in which the majority of teachers and students claimed that EFL learners at Guelma University are *good* in terms of speaking fluency and accuracy. On the other hand, gender has a great impact on EFL learners' oral performance. Accordingly, the majority of teachers and students seem to agree that females outperform males in the verbal language. That is female EFL learners are better than male EFL learners in speaking more fluently and using more accurate English language. Additionally, the majority of them asserted that females exceed males on the use of paralinguistic features (the non-verbal language) and speaking with more confident.

The analyses of the questionnaires show that nearly all students face serious problems and barriers that hinder their speaking performance. However, all of them are aware of the importance of speaking in EFL classroom and willing to develop this skill and achieve competency. Similarly, the majority of teachers also consider speaking as an *important* skill as they are *interested* to improve learners' speaking skill. The majority of teachers confirmed that through their emphasis on the use of an accurate and fluent language in their classes.

## General Conclusion

Speaking is very important in EFL classroom, it is considered as the key towards achieving competency in communication and also for the success of future carrier. However, achieving speaking proficiency is not an easy task since EFL learners might face difficulties and barriers that hinder their speaking performance. Accordingly, this dissertation, which is organized under three chapters, is conducted for the purpose of examining gender as a main factor impacting EFL learners' oral performance.

The first two chapters are theoretical parts where the first holds a general overview about oral performance in terms of defining speaking, stating its importance, its relationship with other language skills. It also provides the different speaking aspects and its verbal and non-verbal components. Meanwhile, the second discusses gender as a main factor influencing EFL learners' learning especially their speaking performance. It first states different speaking difficulties that can influence EFL learners' speaking performance. Then it moves on to provide an overview about gender in relation to cognition, learning styles and languages. Finally, it sheds on the light on gender in relation to EFL learners' oral performance. The second chapter reveals a very important issue in which gender differences are still controversial up to the current time.

The last chapter deals with the practical part in which gender differences in performing the spoken language in EFL contexts are investigated using two questionnaires. It also reveals students and teachers' attitudes towards speaking performance and their perception towards gender differences in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, this study highlights students speaking difficulties and barriers that hinder their speaking performance as it spots light on the various speaking activities that enhance their speaking skill.

The obtained research results are in accordance with the research hypothesis; EFL female learners at the department of letters and English language, University of Guelma exceed male EFL learners in speaking performance. In contrast, male students are less competent in performing oral speech. This is because the majority of teachers and students who took part in answering the questionnaires approved that female EFL learners outperform males in speaking performance in terms of accuracy and fluency as well as the use of paralinguistic features and speaking with more confidence. Moreover, the findings of this study show that the majority of the students have a *good* speaking level despite the difficulties they face like the lack of vocabulary, poor listening practices and anxiety, etc. Furthermore, teachers and students appear to be aware of the importance of the speaking skill since it is agreed by all the participants that nearly all the students have a *positive* attitude towards speaking and they are *interested* in developing it. Findings also show that students are generally given the chance to speak and participate in classroom different speaking activities which is a good opportunity for EFL students to develop their speaking skill. Finally, this chapter provides a number of recommendations for both teachers and students which help to develop learners' speaking performance.

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## Appendices

**Appendix One**

## Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to participate in the following questionnaire as a part of an investigation carried on the department of English at the University of Guelma. The study aims at examining ''the Impact of gender on EFL Learners' Oral Performance.'' The results would help us provide information to confirm or reject our Master research hypothesis. It takes only from 10 to 15 minutes to answer the questions as you are required to just tick (√) the appropriate answer or make a full statement when necessary. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

Ms. Marwa NEZZAR

Department of English

University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma

**Section One: Background Information**

1- Age**:** …… years.

2- Gender**:**   male ☐   female ☐

3- Was English your first choice?   Yes ☐   No ☐

4- How long have you been studying English? …………years ( including this year)

5- How can you describe your general level in English?

| Very good | |
|-----------|---|
| Good | |
| Average | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Bad | |
| Very bad | |

6- Your English Accuracy is:

| | |
|---|---|
| Very good | |
| Good | |
| Average | |
| Bad | |
| Very bad | |

**Section Two: Learners' attitudes towards speaking performance?**

7- According to you, what is the language skill that needs to be developed the most?

Listening ☐

Speaking ☐

Reading ☐

Writing ☐

8- Do you consider speaking as an important skill in EFL classrooms?

Yes ☐     No ☐

9- **Do you enjoy speaking English?**

Yes ☐     No ☐

10- Are you interested in developing your speaking skill?

Interested ☐

I don't know ☐

Not interested ☐

11- How can you describe your level in speaking?

| | |
|---|---|
| Very good | |
| Good | |
| Average | |
| Bad | |
| Very bad | |

12- How often do you speak English in the classroom

| | |
|---|---|
| Always | |
| Sometimes | |
| Rarely | |
| Hardly ever | |
| Never | |

13- How often do you speak English outside the classroom

| | |
|---|---|
| Always | |
| Sometimes | |
| Rarely | |
| Hardly ever | |
| Never | |

14- What are the difficulties you face during speaking?

Anxiety ☐

Lack of self-confidence ☐

Shyness ☐

Poor listening practice ☐

Fear of mistakes ☐

Poor pronunciation ☐

Lack of vocabulary ☐

Others: ……………………………………………………………………………

15- Do your teachers encourage you to speak inside the classroom?

Yes ☐   No ☐

16- How often do you participate in classrooms oral activities?

| | |
|---|---|
| Always | |
| Sometimes | |
| Rarely | |
| Hardly ever | |
| Never | |

17- During the speaking performance, your English teachers often emphasize on:

| | |
|---|---|
| Correct grammar | |
| Correct pronunciation | |
| Appropriate vocabulary | |
| Fluency | |
| All the above | |

18- How can you describe your oral performance in each of the following?

|           | Pronunciation | Vocabulary | Grammar |
|-----------|---------------|------------|---------|
| Excellent |               |            |         |
| Good      |               |            |         |
| Average   |               |            |         |
| Bad       |               |            |         |
| Very bad  |               |            |         |

19- Your speaking fluency  is:

| Excellent |  |
|-----------|--|
| Good      |  |
| Average   |  |
| Bad       |  |
| Very bad  |  |

**Section Three: Students' Attitudes towards Gender in Relation to Speaking**

**Performance**

20- What is your attitude towards speaking in general?

Positive ☐     Negative ☐

If negative why? ....................................................................................

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

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

21- Who speaks more inside the classroom?

Males ☐          Females ☐

22-  Who is more fluent when speaking?

Males ☐          Females ☐

23-  Who is better in speaking according to the following characteristics?

|  | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|
| Pronunciation |  |  |
| Grammar |  |  |
| Vocabulary |  |  |

24- Who seems to be more proficient in using paralinguistic features? ( including

gestures, eye contact, facial expression and voice quality)

Males ☐          Females ☐

25- Who seems to be more comfortable when speaking?

Males ☐          Females ☐

26- Any other comments are most welcome

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………….

Thank you for your collaboration

**Appendix Two**

**Teachers' Questionnaire**

Dear teachers,

You are kindly invited to fill in the following questionnaire which is a part of an investigation carried on the department of English at the University of Guelma. The study aims at examining ''the Impact of gender on EFL Learners' Oral Performance.'' The results would help us provide information to confirm or reject our Master research hypothesis. It takes only from 10 to 15 minutes to answer the questions as you are required to just tick (√) the appropriate answer or make a full statement when necessary. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

Marwa NEZZAR

Department of English

University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma

**Section One: General Information**

1- How long have you been teaching English?    ………….. years (Including this year)

2- How can you describe your students' level in English?

| | |
|---|---|
| Very good | |
| Good | |
| Average | |
| Bad | |
| Very bad | |

3- How can you describe your students' accuracy?

| | |
|---|---|
| Very good | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Good | |
| Average | |
| Bad | |
| Very bad | |

4- According to you, what is the language skill that needs to be developed the most? ☐

Listening

Speaking ☐

Reading ☐

Writing ☐

Section Two: Teachers' attitudes towards speaking performance?

5- Do you consider speaking as an important skill in EFL classrooms?

Yes ☐          No ☐

6- Are you interested in developing your student' speaking performance?

Interested ☐

I don't know ☐

Not interested ☐

7- Do you encourage your students to speak inside the classroom?

Yes ☐    No ☐

8- How often do you allow your students to speak in the classroom?

| | |
|---|---|
| Always | |
| Sometimes | |
| Rarely | |
| Hardly ever | |
| Never | |

9- How often do your students participate in classrooms oral activities?

| | |
|---|---|
| Always | |
| Sometimes | |
| Rarely | |
| Hardly ever | |
| Never | |

10- During the speaking performance, you often emphasize on:

| | |
|---|---|
| Correct grammar | |
| Correct pronunciation | |
| Appropriate vocabulary | |
| Fluency | |
| All the above | |

11- How can you describe your students' level in speaking?

| | |
|---|---|
| Very good | |
| Good | |
| Average | |
| Bad | |
| Very bad | |

12- What are the difficulties that your students face during speaking?

Anxiety ☐

Lack of self-confidence ☐

☐

Shyness

Poor listening practice ☐

Fear of mistakes ☐

Poor pronunciation ☐

Lack of vocabulary ☐

Others: ………………………………………………………………………

13- How can you describe your students' oral performance in each of the following?

|  | Pronunciation | Vocabulary | Grammar |
|---|---|---|---|
| Excellent | | | |
| Good | | | |
| Average | | | |
| Bad | | | |
| Very bad | | | |

14- Your students' speaking fluency is:

| Excellent | |
|---|---|
| Good | |
| Average | |
| Bad | |
| Very bad | |

**Section Three: Teachers' Attitudes towards Students' Gender in Relation to Speaking Performance**

15- What is your students' attitude towards speaking in general?

Positive ☐    Negative ☐

If negative why? ................................................................................................................

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

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

16- Who speaks more inside the classroom?

Males ☐ Females ☐ Both ☐

17- Who is more fluent when speaking

Males ☐ Females ☐ Both ☐

18- Who is better in speaking according to the following characteristics?

|  | Males | Females | Both |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pronunciation |  |  |  |
| Grammar |  |  |  |
| Vocabulary |  |  |  |

19- Who seems to be more proficient in using paralinguistic features? ( including gestures, eye contact, facial expression and voice quality)

Males ☐ Females ☐

20- Who seems to be more comfortable when speaking?

Males ☐ Females ☐

21- Any other comments are most welcome

……………………………………………………………………………………

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Thank you for your collaboration.

**Le résumé**

L'anglais en tant que langue mondialisée est utilisé comme moyen de communication entre les peuples du monde entier. Par conséquence, la maîtrise de l'oral est essentielle pour que les apprenants EFL parviennent à une communication efficace. Cependant, maîtriser la compétence orale semble être une tâche difficile dans le contexte de l'EFL car elle est considérée comme l'aspect le plus difficile de l'apprentissage des langues. À cet égard, cette étude vise à étudier l'impact du genre sur la performance orale des apprenants EFL. Les étudiantes sont généralement connues pour être plus performantes en langue parlée que les étudiants masculins. Ces derniers sont supposés moins compétents à l'oral. Pour atteindre l'objectif de cette recherche actuelle et afin de vérifier l'hypothèse de cette étude, une méthode descriptive analytique a été suivie. Deux questionnaires on été utilisé; le premier a été distribué à 120 étudiants en master 1 et master 2 dont 85 filles et 35 garçons du département d'anglais de l'Université de 08 mai 1945, Guelma; tandis que le second était consacré à 17 enseignants de masters dans le même département. Les résultats obtenus confirment l'hypothèse de recherche selon laquelle les étudiants et les enseignants de l'échantillon choisi ont convenu que les apprenantes EFL surpassent les apprenantes EFL masculins en termes de performances orales. Malgré les limites rencontrées dans cette étude, certaines recommandations et suggestions sont fournies pour aider les enseignants et les étudiants à mener de futures recherches.

**الملخص**

تعتبر اللغة الانجليزية لغة عالمية، إذ تستخدم كوسيلة للتواصل بين الناس في جميع أنحاء العالم، ومن ثم فإن إتقان الكفاءة الشفوية ضروري للغاية بالنسبة للأجانب الذين يتعلمون هذه اللغة من أجل تحقيق تواصل فعال. لكن يبدو أن إتقان هذه المهمة مهمة صعبة عند طلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية كونها أصعب جانب في تعلم اللغة. في هذا الصدد تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من تأثير الجنس على الأداء الشفوي لمتعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. إذ تعرف الطالبات عموما على أنهن أكثر من يتمتع بأداء شفهي للغة بشكل أفضل من الطلاب الذكور. ويفترض أن يكون الذكور أقل كفاءة منهن. وللوصول إلى الهدف من هذا البحث والتحقق من الفرضية المطروحة تم اتباع المنهج الكمي الوصفي التحليلي من خلال استبيانين، حيث تم توزيع الأول على 120 طالبا في السنتين الأولى والثانية ماستر منهم 85 طالبة و 35 طالبا، بينما خصص الثاني ل 17 أستاذا من نفس القسم. وتؤكد النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها فرضية البحث والتي اتفق فيها جل الطلاب والأساتذة على أن الفئة الأكثر إتقانا للغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في أداء المهارة الشفوية هم فئة الإناث. وعلى الرغم من العراقيل التي تمت مواجهتها في هذه الدراسة فقد تم تقديم بعض التوصيات والاقتراحات لمساعدة الأساتذة والطلبة في إجراء بحوث مستقبلية.