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EFL Learners' Problems in Learning Speaking Skills in Different Contexts: A study of Literature Review from 2013 to 2018

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Abstract: Speaking is a productive language skill which is responsible for speakers and listeners to make oral communication for exchanging and sharing information to build comprehensive relationship. English is such a language having global demand to perform all levels of communication for the learners from different L1 backgrounds. But, for EFL learners, learning speaking skill is always considered complex and problematic and needs much effort to maintain. This review studies problems faced by learners in EFL contexts published from 2013 to 2019, a total of six years, located and retrieved search engine Google scholar and online databases. Thirty (30) studies were analyzed using Nvivo 12 software. The principal findings include: (a) EFL learners' learning speaking problems are related to curriculum, teaching method, learning activities, using L1, psychology, and examination system; (b) psychological problems are major concerned for EFL learners' learning English speaking skill; (c) Iran as the context of the highest number of studies; (d) quantitative is the most popular research design chosen and (e) tertiary learners are the most prolific participants of the studies. The study is not exhaustive, but it provides potential insights for the EFL teachers, English supervisors, administrators, staff of the Ministry of Education and above all learners in developing speaking skills.

Key words: Speaking Skills, EFL & L1

1 Introduction

Speaking is such a macro language skill which is actively used to convey message and meaning through the word of mouth to maintain effective communication in the daily life. (Hosni, 2014, Afshar and Asakereh, 2016, & Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). The spread of English as a lingua franca requires learners to gain communicative competence due to different practical purposes (Copland, Garton, & Burns, 2014). The scenario of learning English speaking skill in EFL context is not an easy task and some learners even developed problematic speaking skills. Behind this matter there are many reasons found to discuss and solve. In this regard researchers from different English as Foreign Language (EFL) context picked multi-facet problems and suggested multi-dimensional solutions to develop students' speaking skills. In this study, the researchers synthesized studies conducted from 2013 to 2018 in different contexts (Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iran, India, Palestine, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, Oman, Sudan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, Poland, Ukraine, Turkey, Romania, Vietnam and Laos) and categorized seven umbrella terms of problems faced by EFL learners such as i) Curriculum ii) Teaching Method iii) Learning activities iv) Using L1 v) Psychological Factors vi) examination system and vii) Linguistic Knowledge. This paper offers an overview of published studies on EFL learners speaking problems and provides insights for English teachers, English supervisors, administrators, and staff of the Ministry of Education to overcome these problems for developing EFL learners' leaning speaking skills.

2 Objectives

The objectives of this study are to identify (a) the types of speaking problems faced by EFL learners, (b) the most frequent speaking problems of EFL learners, (c) the most study held in the context, (d) the most used research design and (e) the most targeted respondents and their levels of education.

3 Methodology

The selection of studies was retrieved from Google Scholar and online databases, namely Research gate, Elsevier, JSTOR, Scopus and Springer link. The key words for searching were "speaking problems, English speaking skills problems, oral English skill problems and oral English communication skills challenges". The search was limited to 2013 - 2018, inclusive, a total of 6 years. Only studies that dealt with learners' learning speaking skills were selected and a total of 48 studies was obtained. The selection of studies was further refined to EFL context studies only leaving 30 studies which were exported from the Mendeley as a RIS file for import into NVivo software, version 12, a program to analyze the qualitative data. Next, seven (7) themes were developed prior to the coding by creating a Node classification. The first author coded the content of each article according to year of publication,

level of study, EFL contexts and research design adopted by the researchers and finally, research gaps highlighted by authors of the studies. Each article was read reflectively to identify contents according to file classifications and seven themes regarding EFL learners' problems in learning speaking skills which were then highlighted and coded to the relevant node.

4 Results

The results of the study are shown in the following figures: according to the objectives (a) and (b), different types of problems and the most studied problems as the psychological problems with word cloud are in the display;

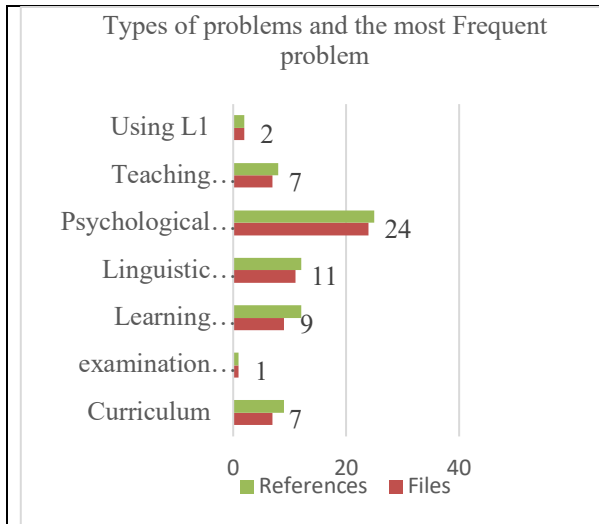


Figure:1.1 Types of problems



Figure 1.2 Word Cloud of Psychological Problems

According to the objective (c), the highest number of studies conducted in Iran among reviewed EFL contexts are shown as;

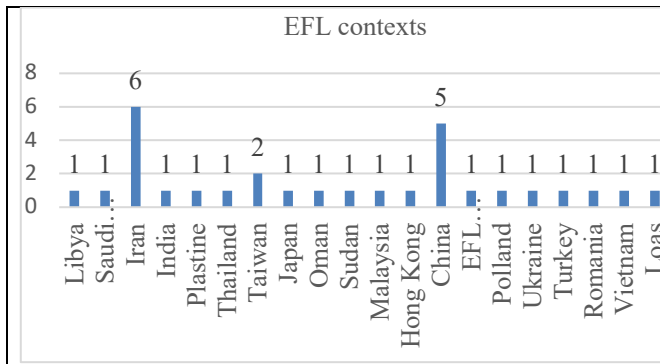


Figure 2.1 EFL Contexts

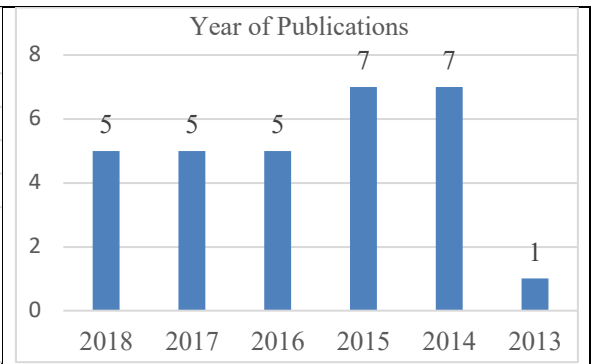
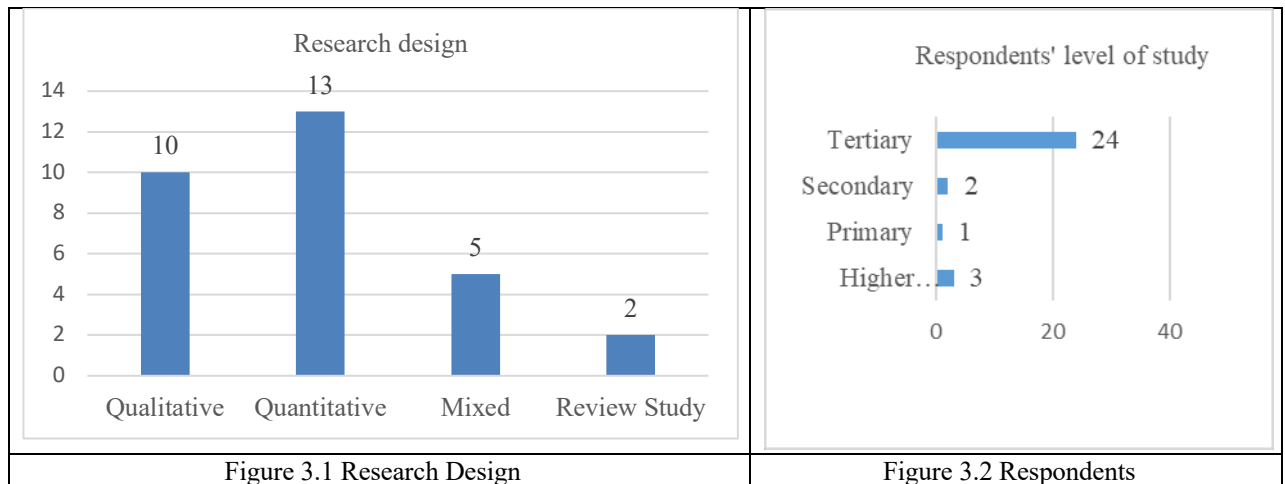


Figure 2.2 Year of Publications

According to the objectives (d) and (e), among these studies, quantitative method as research design and tertiary level learners as respondents are found mostly as illustrated in the following figure.



5 Conclusion

To summarise, this paper has reviewed studies on EFL learners' learning speaking skills problems in non-native context. As in this digital era, English has gained the status of Lingua Franca, EFL learners often need to communicate verbally with overseas people through online and offline for multi purposes, the problems should be identified and resolved in this regards. Thus, this paper provides insights for English teachers, English supervisors, administrators, and staff of the Ministry of Education to overcome these problems for developing EFL learners' leaning speaking skills.

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