

# **Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students**

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## **Abstract**

Iraqi students at preparatory schools encounter difficulties when speaking English as a foreign language .So, this study aims to investigate Iraqi sixth-year preparatory school students' difficulties in the speaking skill according to the gender and specialty variables . Accordingly, a survey is conducted in nine preparatory schools of AL-Risafa 1/ General Directorate of Education :(418) students from the sixth-year scientific branch ( 210 males & 208 females) and (342) students from the literary branch (170 males & 172 females),in Baghdad, during the first term of the academic year (2015-2016).A suitable questionnaire of 10 items is designed and exposed to a jury of specialists in ELT. The results indicate that the subjects of the study , i.e. preparatory school students are poor in speaking the foreign language .This is due to the lack of teaching methods, pronunciation ,cultural knowledge, motivation ,self confidence, exposure to English spoken in class ,vocabulary, and grammar. Then, conclusions ,recommendations, and suggestions are put forward.

## **1.1 The Problem of the Study and its Significance**

According to Basim (2007) ,Al Mudhaffar (2012) and Ali et al. (2015),the majority of Iraqi learners still find difficulties in using EFL speaking skill. These difficulties may be attributed to one or more of these elements : use of the mother tongue ,lack of vocabulary , anxiety due to the fear of making errors, improper listening strategies, inadequate training , large classes, and lack of time. The main reason for speaking difficulty is that English speaking classes in Iraq are not efficient enough to develop the English speaking skills of students.

Pedagogically , students' motivation is an important factor to develop their skills in the classroom .Therefore, EFL teachers should

## **Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen**

adopt many learning styles and strategies to encourage their students to speak efficiently.

The significance of the problem lies in the fact that identifying speaking difficulties is very important in order to put an end to them or at least to reduce them . Thus, the present study investigates these difficulties according to gender variable (male & female students)and specialty (scientific& literary branches).

### **1.2 Aims**

The present study aims at identifying the 6<sup>th</sup> year preparatory school students' EFL speaking difficulties according to:

1. the gender variable (male & female), and
2. the specialty variable ( scientific & literary).

### **1.3 Hypotheses**

The following two hypotheses are adopted to achieve the aims of the study:

1. There are no statistically significant differences in the frequencies of students' speaking difficulties according to the gender variable.
2. There are no statistically significant differences in the frequencies of students' speaking difficulties according to the specialty variable ( scientific & literary ).

### **1.4 Limits**

This study is limited to:

1. The 6<sup>th</sup> preparatory school students at Al-Risafa 1/General Directorate of Education , during the first term of the academic year ( 2015 -2016),
2. A questionnaire of (10) items including the EFL speaking difficulties the students may encounter inside the classroom adopted and adapted from Ali et al. (2015 :170 ) , and
3. The gender and specialty variables , i.e. male / female and scientific/ literary.

### **1.5 Procedures**

The study involves the following procedures:

1. Selecting a sample of the 6<sup>th</sup> year preparatory students according to gender and specialty variables .
2. Constructing a questionnaire as a study instrument for investigating the difficulties the students face in speaking in English .
3. Finding out the validity and reliability of the instrument.

## **Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen**

4. Applying the questionnaire to the sample of the study .

### **2.1 Speaking as a Language Skill**

Speaking as a language skill has been tackled by many researchers and as follows:

1. Tarigan (1985 as cited in Anggiana ,2011:15) defines speaking as a skill of conveying words or sounds of articulation to express or to deliver ideas , opinions, or feelings.
2. Brown(1980:270) demonstrates some characteristics of the spoken language that can make oral performance easy, in some cases difficult: **a.Clustering. b.Redundancy c.Reduced forms. d.Performance variables. e.Colloquial language. f.Rate of delivery. g.Stress,Rhythm,and Intonation h.Interaction.**
3. Clark & Clark(1997:223) define speaking as a fundamental and instrumental act. The nature of the speech act should therefore play a central role in the process of speech production. Speaking begins with the intention of affecting listeners in a particular way.
4. Rață ( 2011: 391-392) state that speaking is the productive skill in the oral mode .It is different from other skills in being more complicated and involves more than just pronouncing words .Based on the previous definitions and perspectives, speaking is the instrument of language and the primary aim of speaking is for communication. So, the students learn to speak in order to be able to communicate.

### **2.2 Designing Speaking Techniques**

According to Brown (2001: 274),there are seven principles to be considered for designing speaking techniques .They are:

- 1.Shift from language based focus on accuracy to message based focus on interaction, meaning and fluency.
- 2.Provide intrinsical motivation technique.
- 3.Encourage use of authentic language in meaningful context.
- 4.Provide appropriate feedback and correction.
- 5.Capitalize on the natural link between speaking and listening.
- 6.Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication.
- 7.Encourage development of speaking strategies.

Accordingly ,six types of classroom speaking performance are expected to be carried out in the classroom:

- 1.Imitative

## **Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen**

- 2.Intensive.
- 3.Responsive.
- 4.Transactionnal (dialogue).
5. Interpersonal( dialogue).
- 6.Extensive (monologue).

### **2.3 Communication Classroom Teacher**

The teacher has two main roles in the communicative classroom. The first role is to facilitate the communication process between students in the classroom, and between them and the various activities and the texts. The second role, is to act as an independent communicator within the learning –teaching group .To achieve communicative classroom, there are many techniques and skills which may be used in the classroom and as follows:

- 1.Organizing the classroom into small groups.
- 2.Motivating students
- 3.Using effective teaching materials
4. Dealing with huge class size
- 5.Assessing students' work. (Harmer,2007:13-43& Al-Khuli,1990:9) .

With this orientation, Dickinson (1995: 165) recommends that EFL teachers allow learners to choose appropriate learning activities and opportunities that storm their brains effectively. One technique is to discuss learning goals and materials with the teacher ,raising learners' English learning motivation and arousing their interest. Then , EFL teachers give learners some directions and freedom to inspire their creativity , motivation ,and autonomy.

### **2.4 English Speaking Problems**

According to Edan and Munji ( 2014:446) and Ali et al. (2015:165), speaking difficulties arise due to students' :

- (1) being afraid of making errors while expressing themselves in the oral form;
- (2) lack of the opportunity for real life communication in the foreign language ;
- (3) lack of demonstrating their oral activities ;
- (4) lack of vocabulary ;
- (5) difficulty in using grammar during speaking ;
- (6) poor of pronunciation;
- (7) use of the mother tongue in class; and

## **Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen**

(8) speaking anxiety .

Richards & Renandaya ( 2005:205) refer to the four factors that affect students' oral communication ability:

- 1.Age or maturational concentrates .The aging process itself may affect or limit the adult learners'ability to pronounce the target language fluency.
- 2.AuralMedium.Listening plays an extremely important role in the development of speaking abilities. Speaking feeds listening which is the basic mechanism through which the rules of language are internalized.
- 3.Social –Cultural Factors. To speak a language , learners must know how language is used in a social context.
- 4.Affective Factors . The affective factors relating to foreign language learning are : emotion , self – esteem, empathy ,anxiety ,attitudes and motivation .

These four factors play an important role in determining the success and failure of students in the learning of the speaking skill .

On the other hand, researchers in the field of teaching pronunciation like Dauer (1993:8) assert that pronunciation is a critical factor in the speech process which involves the following stages: speaker thinks, speech organs move, sound travels through air, the listener hears, and the listener understands the message. In recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on teaching competent pronunciation in the foreign language. This is due to the increasing realization that poor pronunciation can cause serious speaking problems for learners, such as communication breakdowns, anxiety ,stereotyping and discrimination (Morley ,1998:20-23) .However, English pronunciation is often neglected in the EFL classroom due to teachers' lack of pronunciation teaching strategies and techniques (Varasarin ,2007:24).Accordingly ,the questionnaire adopted in this study is dedicated to recognize preparatory school students'speaking difficulties to know the essential factors that contribute to the existence of these difficulties.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Population &Sample**

The population of the present study includes the 6<sup>th</sup> year preparatory school students of AL-Risafa1/ General Directorate of Education ,

## Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen

during the first term of the academic year (2015-2016) .The total number of the population is (15166); (8333) from the scientific branch (4181 males & 4152 females ) and (6833) form the literary branch (3390 males & 3443 females).The total number of the sample is (760) students taken from the two branches(See Appendix(1)),distributed according to their gender and specialty as shown in Table (1) .

Table(1)The Sample of the Study

	Specialization	Number of the Sample		Total
		Males	Females	
1	Scientific Section	210	208	418
2	Literary Section	170	172	342
	Total	380	380	760

### 3.2 Instruments

In order to achieve the aim of the study and to test its hypotheses, a questionnaire of 10 question items including the difficulties the students encounter in speaking in English inside the classroom is taken from Ali et al. (2015 :170),their attitudes toward speaking, and their views about the current teaching methods the teachers use during speaking class ,to identify difficulties encountered by students through speaking instruction of preparatory school students.(See Appendix (2)) .The instrument is exposed to a jury of experts for the purpose of ascertaining its face validity, and by using the percentage in their agreement, the initial form of the questionnaire remained the same as the final form.(See Appendix(3)) .

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedures

After achieving its validity on the difficulties in EFL speaking, the questionnaire has been applied to the sample of the study and then the students have been asked to respond to its items. This was on 21<sup>st</sup> , 22<sup>nd</sup> ,& 27<sup>th</sup> , December, 2015.The items of the questionnaire are designed to be measured on the basis of a five – point rating scale ( strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral =3,disagree= 2, strongly disagree =1) (See Appendix 2).In order to find out the reliability coefficient of the instrument ,it has been applied randomly to (80) students from the two sections. The reliability of the instrument has been found to be(0.78) by using test-retest and by using Pearson Correlation Coefficient Formula; such a result is considered acceptable according to عودة (1988:345). Obtained results are presented according to the

## Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen

aims of the present study and as shown below:

**Table (2) Weighted Mean ,Weighted Percentile, & Rank Order of the Items of Questionnaire on the EFL Speaking Difficulties for the Sample of Study**

<i>Difficulties</i> <i>No of Items</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Weighted Percentile</i>	<i>Rank Order</i>
1	3.125	62.50	10
2	3.566	71.32	9
3	3.836	76.72	5
4	3.799	75.98	7
5	3.964	79.28	4
6	3.970	79.40	3
7	3.805	76.10	6
8	4.045	80.90	1
9	3.786	75.72	8
10	3.973	79.48	2

**Table ( 2 )** shows the detailed results of each of the (10) questionnaire items on EFL speaking difficulties for the sample in the two sections in respect to their weighted mean, weighted percentile ,and rank order .The item is considered difficult if its weighted mean is equal or more than the theoretical mean which is (3).It can be concluded from the table that the students in the two sections encounter difficulties in the speaking skill. After the analysis of the (10) items of the instrument, it appears that item number (8) (*I don't know where my pronunciation problem lies*) with the weighted mean ( **4.045**) occupies the first rank ,while item number (1) (*'English for Iraq' , for the 6<sup>th</sup> preparatory stage is a little helpful to improve my speaking competence*)with the weighted mean( **3.125**) occupies the last rank .

**Table (3) Frequencies , Percentage of Sample's Responses to the Items of the Questionnaire of Difficulties in Speaking&Chi-Square Value for the Differences in the Students'Gender Variable**

<i>Item</i> <i>N</i>	<i>Choices</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Df</i>	<i>Comp.X<sup>2</sup></i> <i>Value</i>	<i>Tab.X<sup>2</sup></i> <i>Value</i>	<i>Level of</i> <i>Significance</i> <i>0.05</i>
		<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>				
1	SA	47	6.20	39	5.10	4	1.864	9.49	Insignificant
	A	163	21.40	166	21.80				
	N	10	1.30	12	1.60				
	D	123	16.20	117	15.40				
	SD	37	4.90	46	6.10				
	Total	380	50	380	50				
2	SA	107	14.10	105	13.80	4	1.190	9.49	Insignificant
	A	159	20.90	158	20.80				
	N	13	1.70	18	2.40				
	D	47	6.20	42	5.50				
	SD	54	7.10	57	7.50				

## Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen

	Total	380	50	380	50				
3	SA	110	14.50	115	15.10	4	1.171	9.49	Insignificant
	A	194	25.50	189	24.90				
	N	7	0.90	9	1.20				
	D	40	5.30	34	4.50				
	SD	29	3.80	33	4.30				
	Total	380	50	380	50				
4	SA	67	8.80	58	7.60	4	3.927	9.49	Insignificant
	A	255	33.60	249	32.80				
	N	14	1.80	16	2.10				
	D	21	2.80	34	4.50				
	SD	23	3.00	23	3.00				
	Total	380	50	280	50				
5	SA	125	16.40	139	18.30	4	1.958	9.49	Insignificant
	A	194	25.50	175	23.00				
	N	9	1.20	9	1.20				
	D	26	3.40	28	3.70				
	SD	26	3.40	29	3.80				
	Total	380	50	380	50				
6	SA	158	20.80	153	20.10	4	1.106	9.49	Insignificant
	A	145	19.10	157	20.70				
	N	14	1.80	14	1.80				
	D	26	3.40	25	3.30				
	SD	37	4.90	31	4.10				
	Total	380	50	380	50				
7	SA	75	9.90	97	12.80	4	4.825	9.49	Insignificant
	A	235	30.90	209	27.50				
	N	11	1.40	13	1.70				
	D	30	3.90	34	4.50				
	SD	29	3.80	27	3.60				
	Total	380	50	380	50				
8	SA	126	16.60	124	16.30	4	0.750	9.49	Insignificant
	A	203	26.70	200	26.30				
	N	11	1.40	14	1.80				
	D	28	3.70	27	3.60				
	SD	12	1.60	15	2.00				
	Total	380	50	380	50				
9	SA	101	13.30	104	13.70	4	0.811	9.49	Insignificant
	A	195	25.70	193	25.40				
	N	18	2.40	14	1.80				
	D	35	4.60	34	4.50				
	SD	31	4.10	35	4.60				
	Total	380	50	380	50				
10	SA	65	8.60	100	13.20	4	13.973	9.49	Significant
	A	270	35.50	243	32.00				
	N	7	0.90	9	1.20				
	D	13	1.70	16	2.10				
	SD	25	3.30	12	1.60				
	Total	380	50	380	50				



### **3.3.1 Results Related to the First Aim**

With respect to the gender variable, **Table( 3 )** reveals the following:

**1. Results Related to Question One :** There are no statistically significant differences between males and female ,regarding their view towards the existing textbook, since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is **(1.864)** is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  – value which is **(9.49)** at the level of significance **(0.05)** and the degree of freedom **(4)** . This reveals that **(27.60%)** of male students agree or even strongly agree with the item number **(1)** (*‘English for Iraq’, for the 6<sup>th</sup> preparatory stage is a little helpful to improve my speaking competence* ),**(1.30 %)**of them are neutral and **(21.10%)** disagree or even strongly disagree with it, whereas **(26.90 %)** of female students agree or even strongly agree with this item,**(1.60 %)** are neutral and ( **21.50**) disagree or even strongly disagree with it.This means that**(54.50%)**of males and females do not show a positive view towards the textbook,whereas**(42.60%)**of them show a positive view towards it.

**2.Results Related to Question Two :** There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students ,regarding their views towards the teaching of English speaking , since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is ( **1.190**) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  – value which is **(9.49)**. This reveals that **(35.00%)** of male students agree or even strongly agree with the item number**(2)** (*My school does not regularly focus on speaking*) and **(1.70 %)** are neutral with it ,whereas ( **34.60%**) of female students agree or even strongly agree with this item and ( **2.40%**) are neutral with it .This means that male and female students think that their schools do not attach great importance to the teaching of English speaking.

**3.Results Related to Question Three :** There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students ,regarding their views towards the use of mother tongue during the teaching of English speaking , since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is ( **1.171**) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  – value which is **(9.49)**.This reveals that **(40.00 %)** of male students agree or even strongly agree with the item number **(3)**(*Arabic is used in class excessively*) and **(0.90 %)** are neutral with it ,whereas ( **40.00%**) of female students agree or even strongly agree with this item and ( **1.20%**) are neutral with it .This means that

## **Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen**

male and female students complain of the use of mother tongue in class.

**4. Results Related to Question Four :** There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students ,regarding their views towards practicing speaking in daily life activities ,since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (3.927) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  – value which is (9.49).This reveals that ( 42.40 %) of male students agree or even strongly agree with the item number (4)(*There is limited exposure to English spoken in class*) and (1.80%) are neutral with it ,whereas, (40.40%) of female students agree or even strongly agree with this item and (2.10 %) are neutral with it.This means that male and female students lack exposure to English spoken in class.

**5. Results Related to Question Five:** There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students, regarding their views towards self-confidence in practicing speaking English, since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (1.958) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  – value which is (9.49).This reveals that (41.90%) of male students agree or even strongly agree with the item number (5) (*I am never quite sure of myself when speaking in English*) and (1.20%) are neutral with it ,whereas, (41.30%) of female students agree or even strongly agree with this item and ( 1.20%) are neutral with it .This means that male and female students lack self-confidence when speaking in English.

**6. Results Related to Question Six :** There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students ,regarding their views towards anxiety and fear of making mistake when using English in class , since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (1.106) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  – value which is (9.49) .This reveals that (39.90%) of male students agree or even strongly agree with the item number (6) (*I am afraid of making mistakes when using English in class*) and (1.80 %) are neutral with it ,whereas, ( 40.80%) of female students agree or even strongly agree with this item and ( 1.80%) are neutral with it .This means that male and female students suffer from speaking anxiety when using English in class. So, both of them lack motivation in developing their speaking skills. This difficulty gets the third rank.

## **Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen**

**7. Results Related to Question Seven :** There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students ,regarding their views towards the difficulty in using grammar during speaking, since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (4.825) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  – value which is (9.49). This reveals that (40.80%) of male students agree or even strongly agree with the item number (7) (*Our vocabulary knowledge is not sufficient enough to orally produce ideas and arguments about any topic*) and (1.40 %) are neutral with it , whereas ( 40.30%) of female students agree or even strongly agree with this item and ( 1.70%) are neutral with it .This means that male and female students suffer from lack of vocabulary knowledge.

**8. Results Related to Question Eight :** There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students ,regarding their views towards the difficulty in pronunciation during speaking, since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (0.750) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  – value which is (9.49).This reveals that (43.30%) of male students agree or even strongly agree with the item number (8) (*I don't know where my pronunciation problem lies*) and (1.40 %) are neutral with it ,whereas, ( 42.60%) of female students agree or even strongly agree with this item and ( 1.80%) are neutral with it .This means that male and female students suffer from lack of pronunciation knowledge. This difficulty gets the first rank.

**9. Results Related to Question Nine :** There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students ,regarding their views towards the difficulty in using grammar while speaking, since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (0.811) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  – value which is (9.49).This reveals that (39.00%) of male students agree or even strongly agree with the item number (9) (*I have difficulty in using grammar while speaking* ) and (2.40%) are neutral with it ,whereas ( 39.10%) of female students agree or even strongly agree with this item and ( 1.80%) are neutral with it .This means that male and female students suffer from lack of grammar knowledge.

**10. Results Related to Question Ten :** There are statistically significant differences between male and female students ,regarding their views towards cultural cognitive problems, since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (13.973) is higher than the tabulated  $X^2$  – value

## Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen

which is (9.49). This reveals that (44.10%) of male students agree or even strongly agree with the item number (10) (I usually translate Arabic into English while speaking) and (0.90%) are neutral with it, whereas, (45.20%) of female students agree or even strongly agree with this item and (1.20%) are neutral with it. This means that both male and female students suffer from lack of cultural differences and in favour of female students. This difficulty gets the second rank.

The following can be concluded from the above detailed results :  
**1.** There are no significant differences between the two groups in the **nine** items, namely; from item number (1) to item number (9). Accordingly, the first hypothesis is accepted concerning these nine items .

**2.** There are significant differences between the two groups only in item number (10) . Accordingly , the first hypothesis is rejected concerning this item. The above results reveal that both male and female students suffer from difficulties in speaking in English.

**Table ( 4 ) Frequencies , Percentage of Sample's Responses to the Items of the Questionnaire of Difficulties in Speaking & Chi-Square Value for the Differences in the Students' Specialization Variable**

Item		Scientific Section Male & Female		Literary Section Male & Female		Df	Comp.X <sup>2</sup> Value	Tab.X <sup>2</sup> Value	Level of Significance 0.05
N.	Choices	F	%	F	%				
1	SA	46	6.10	40	5.30	4	3.976	9.49	Insignificant
	A	172	22.60	157	20.70				
	N	13	1.70	9	1.20				
	D	144	18.90	96	12.60				
	SD	43	5.70	40	5.30				
	Total	418	55	342	45				
2	SA	117	15.40	95	12.50	4	0.528	9.49	Insignificant
	A	173	22.80	144	18.90				
	N	16	2.10	15	2.00				
	D	48	6.30	41	5.40				
	SD	64	8.40	47	6.20				
	Total	418	55	342	45				
3	SA	115	15.10	110	14.50	4	2.109	9.49	Insignificant
	A	215	28.30	168	22.10				
	N	9	1.20	7	0.90				
	D	43	5.70	31	4.10				
	SD	36	4.70	26	3.40				
	Total	418	55	342	45				
4	SA	69	9.10	56	7.40				
	A	269	35.40	235	30.90				

## Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen

	N	17	2.20	13	1.70	4	3.965	9.49	Insignificant
	D	37	4.90	18	2.40				
	SD	26	3.40	20	2.60				
	Total	418	55	342	45				
5	SA	140	18.40	124	16.30	4	2.453	9.49	Insignificant
	A	202	26.60	167	22.00				
	N	9	1.20	9	1.20				
	D	33	4.30	21	2.80				
	SD	34	4.50	21	2.80				
	Total	418	55	342	45				
6	SA	182	23.90	129	17.00	4	19.262	9.49	Significant
	A	143	18.80	159	20.90				
	N	13	1.70	15	2.00				
	D	30	3.90	21	2.80				
	SD	50	6.60	18	2.40				
	Total	418	55	342	45				
7	SA	78	10.30	94	12.40	4	19.394	9.49	Significant
	A	240	31.60	204	26.80				
	N	15	2.00	9	1.20				
	D	46	6.10	18	2.40				
	SD	39	5.10	17	2.20				
	Total	418	55	342	45				
8	SA	155	20.40	95	12.50	4	10.437	9.49	Significant
	A	212	27.90	191	25.10				
	N	12	1.60	13	1.70				
	D	23	3.00	32	4.20				
	SD	16	2.10	11	1.40				
	Total	418	55	342	45				
9	SA	103	13.60	102	13.40	4	34.765	9.49	Significant
	A	193	25.40	195	25.70				
	N	17	2.20	15	2.00				
	D	55	7.20	14	1.80				
	SD	50	6.60	16	2.10				
	Total	418	55	342	45				
10	SA	83	10.90	82	10.80	4	10.388	9.49	Significant
	A	298	39.20	215	28.30				
	N	9	1.20	7	0.90				
	D	9	1.20	20	2.60				
	SD	19	2.50	18	2.40				
	Total	418	55	342	45				
	Total	418	55	342	45				

**3.3.2 Results Related to the Second Aim:**

With respect to the specialty variable , **Table (4)** reveals the following :

**1. Results Related to Question One :** There are no statistically significant differences between the two sections since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (3.976) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  - value which is (9.49) at the level of significance (0.05) and the degree of freedom (4) .This reveals that (28.70%) of students in the first section agree or even strongly agree with the item number (1) and (1.70%) are neutral with it ,whereas (24.60%) of them show a positive view towards it.( 26.00%) of students in the second section agree or strongly disagree with the new textbook and (1.20%) are neutral with it ,whereas (17.90%) of them show a positive view towards it .This mean that (54.70%) of students in the two groups do not show a positive view towards the existing textbook, whereas (42.50%) of them show a positive view towards it.

**2. Results Related to Question Two :** There are no statistically significant differences between the two sections since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (0.528) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  - value which is (9.49).This reveals that ( 38.20%) of students in the first section agree or even strongly agree with the item number (2) and (2.10%) are neutral with it ,whereas ( 31.40%) of students in the second section agree or even strongly agree with this item and (2.00%) are neutral with it .This means that the students in the two sections think that their schools do not attach great importance to the teaching of English speaking.

**3. Results Related to Question Three :** There are no statistically significant differences between the two sections since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (2.109) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  - value which is (9.49) .This reveals that (43.40%) of students in the first section agree or even strongly agree with the item number (3) and (1.20%) are neutral with it ,whereas ( 36.60%) of students in the second section agree or even strongly agree with this item and ( 0.90%) are neutral with it. This means that the students in the two sections suffer from the use of mother tongue in class during teaching.

**4. Results Related to Question four :**There are no statistically significant differences between the two sections since the computed

## **Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen**

$X^2$  - value which is (3.965) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  - value which is (9.49). This reveals that (44.50%) of students in the first section agree or even strongly agree with the item number (4) and (2.20%) are neutral with it ,whereas (38.30%) of students in the second section agree or even strongly agree with this item and ( 1.70%) are neutral with it. This means that the students in the two sections suffer from lack of exposure to English spoken in class.

**5.Results Related to Question Five:** There are no statistically significant differences between the two sections since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (2.453) is lower than the tabulated  $X^2$  - value which is (9.49). This reveals that (45.00%) of students in the first section agree or even strongly agree with the item number (5) and (1.20%) are neutral with it ,whereas (38.30%) of students in the second section agree or even strongly agree with this item ( 1.20%) are neutral with it .This means that the students in the two sections suffer from lack of self-confidence when speaking in English.

**6.Results Related to Question Six:** There are statistically significant differences between the two sections since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (19.262) is higher than the tabulated  $X^2$  - value which is (9.49). This reveals that (42.70%) of students in the first section agree or even strongly agree with the item number (6) and (1.70%) are neutral with it ,whereas (37.90%) of students in the second section agree or even strongly agree with this item and (2.00%) are neutral with it. This means that the students in the two sections suffer from speaking anxiety when using English in class and this difficulty in favour of the scientific branch.

**7.Results Related to Question Seven:** There are statistically significant differences between the two sections since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (19.394) is higher than the tabulated  $X^2$  - value which is (9.49). This reveals that (41.90%) of students in the first section agree or even strongly agree with the item number (7) and (2.00%) are neutral with it ,whereas (39.20%) of students in the second section agree or even strongly agree with this item and (1.20%) are neutral with it. This means that the students in the two sections suffer from lack of vocabulary knowledge and this difficulty for in favour of the scientific branch.

## **Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen**

**8. Results Related to Question Eight:** There are statistically significant differences between the two sections since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (10.437) is higher than the tabulated  $X^2$  - value which is (9.49). This reveals that (48.30%) of students in the first section agree or even strongly agree with the item number (8) and (1.60%) are neutral with it, whereas (37.60%) of students in the second section agree or even strongly agree with this item and (1.70%) are neutral with it. This means that the students in the two sections suffer from lack of pronunciation knowledge and this difficulty for in favour of the scientific branch.

**9. Results Related to Question Nine:** There are statistically significant differences between the two sections since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (34.765) is higher than the tabulated  $X^2$  - value which is (9.49). This reveals that (39.00%) of students in the first section agree or even strongly agree with the item number (9) and (2.20%) are neutral with it, whereas (13.80%) of them disagree or even strongly disagree with it. (39.10%) of students in the second section agree or even strongly agree with this item and (2.00%) are neutral with it, whereas (3.90%) of them disagree or even strongly disagree with it. This means that the students in the two sections suffer from lack of grammar knowledge and this difficulty for in favour of the literary branch.

**10. Results Related to Question Ten :** There are statistically significant differences between the two sections since the computed  $X^2$  - value which is (10.388) is higher than the tabulated  $X^2$  - value which is (9.49). This reveals that (50.10%) of students in the first section agree or even strongly agree with the item number (10) and (1.20%) are neutral with it, whereas (39.10%) of students in the second section agree or even strongly agree with this item and (0.90%) are neutral with it. This means that the students in the two sections suffer from lack of cultural differences and this difficulty for in favour of the scientific branch.

The following can be concluded from the above detailed results:  
1. There are statistically significant differences between the two groups in these five items : (6,7,8,9, and 10). Accordingly, the second hypothesis is rejected concerning these five items.  
2. There are no statistically differences between the two sections in the



## **Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen**

items: (1,2,3,4,and 5). Accordingly, the second hypothesis is accepted concerning the five items . The above results reveal that both of the two sections suffer from difficulties in speaking in English.

### **4.1 Conclusions:**

From the frequencies of students' responses to the items of the questionnaire shown in the results of the present study , the following conclusions can be drawn :

1. Most Iraqi students at the 6<sup>th</sup> preparatory schools ,according to the gender & specialty variables, encounter difficulties in speaking in English. These difficulties are arranged to their rank order .They are due to the lack of :
  - a. pronunciation knowledge ,in favour of students in the scientific branch .
  - b. cultural knowledge, in favour of females, and in favour of students in scientific branch .
  - c. motivation in developing their speaking skill ,in favour of students in the scientific branch .
  - d. self confidence when speaking in English,in favour of students in the scientific branch .
  - e. using English in class .
  - f. vocabulary knowledge , in favour of students in the scientific branch.
  - g. exposure to English spoken in class.
  - h. grammar knowledge, in favour of students in the literary branch.
  - i. a positive view towards the teaching of English speaking at schools.
  - j. a positive view towards the new textbook .
2. Some teachers still use traditional techniques in the teaching of speaking.

### **4.2 Recommendations :**

Based on the conclusions drawn , the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Students should be trained in using various types of learning strategies.
2. Teachers should be trained in using various types of the teaching strategies that may reduce their use of mother tongue in class.
3. Teachers should use technical activities that increase the students' employment of the favorable strategies to promote their motivation in speaking.

## **Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen**

4. Teachers should incorporate authentic speaking materials from a variety of topics as well as realistic speaking tasks in class.

5. Systematic guided activities of learning strategies should be integrated into classroom syllabus to facilitate autonomous and activity speaking.

### **4.3 Suggestions for Further Studies:**

In relation with the present study, research can be made in these areas :

1. Identifying strategies that facilitate preparatory school students' oral communication.

2. Investigating the most effective way in teaching speaking skill for Iraqi preparatory school students.

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### Appendix ( 1 )

**The names of the nine schools are:**

1. Al-Ansar Preparatory School for Boys.
2. Al- Farahidi Preparatory School for Boys .
3. Al- Fawz Preparatory School for Girls.
- 4.Al- Furatain Preparatory School for Boys.
5. Al- Intisar Preparatory School for Girls.
- 6.Al- Istiqlal Preparatory School for Girls.
- 7.Al-Markaziyah Preparatory School for Boys.
8. Al- Risalah Preparatory School for Boys.
9. Al- Zahra' Preparatory School for Girls.

### Appendix (2)A Questionnaire for Investigating the difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students in Speaking in English

No .	Item	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree1	Notices
1	'English for Iraq' , for the 6 <sup>th</sup> preparatory stage is a little helpful to improve my speaking competence .						
2	My school does not regularly focus on speaking.						
3	Arabic is used in class excessively.						
4	There is limited exposure to English spoken in class.						
5	I am never quite sure of myself when speaking in English.						

## Investigating English Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Iraqi Preparatory School Students ..... Asst. inst. Anfal Taha Yaseen

6	I am afraid of making mistakes when using English in class.						
7	Our vocabulary knowledge is not sufficient enough to orally produce ideas and arguments about any topic.						
8	I don't know where my pronunciation problem lies.						
9	I have difficulty in using grammar while speaking.						
10	I usually translate Arabic into English while speaking.						

### Appendix (3)

**The names of the jury members arranged according to their academic ranks.**

1. Prof. Abdul- Latif Al- Jumaily, Ph.D ,Duhuk University
2. Prof. Muayyad M. Sa'eed, Ph.D ,Al- Farahidi University College , Baghdad .
3. Prof. Fatin Khairi. Al-Rifa'i , Ph.D, College of Education/ Ibn Rushd for Humanities , University of Baghdad.
4. Asst. Prof. Istiqlal H. Al-Marsumi, Ph.D, College of Arts, Al-Mustansiriyah University.
5. Asst. Prof. Nadia Fadhil , Ph.D, College of Islamic Sciences, University Baghdad.
6. Instructor Muayad Naji , Ph.D, Ministry of Education.
7. Instructor Ali Arif, Ph.D, College of Languages, University of Baghdad.

**تحديد الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلبة العراقيين في المدارس الإعدادية أثناء التكلم باللغة الانكليزية  
م. م. انفال طه ياسين**

#### المستخلص

يواجه الطلبة العراقيون في المرحلة الإعدادية صعوبات أثناء التكلم باللغة الانكليزية. لذا تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في الصعوبات التي تواجه طلبةنا في المرحلة الإعدادية أثناء التكلم باللغة الانكليزية وفقاً لمتغير الجنس والاختصاص. تضم الدراسة عينة (418) طالباً وطالبة من الفرع العلمي و(342) طالباً وطالبة من الفرع الأدبي جاء اختيارها عشوائياً من المرحلة السادسة لتسع مدارس إعدادية ضمن المديرية العامة لتربية بغداد – الرصافة الأولى خلال الفصل الأول من العام الدراسي (2015-2016). لتتحقيق أهداف الدراسة واختبار فرضياتها تبنت الباحثة استبانة مؤلفة من (10) فقرات لمعرفة صعوبات التكلم باللغة الانكليزية. تم عرض أداة البحث على مجموعة من الأساتذة المختصين في تدريس اللغة الانكليزية لغرض إثبات الصدق الظاهري. أظهرت النتائج ضعفاً لدى عينة الدراسة المتمثلة بطلبة السادس الإعدادي أثناء التكلم باللغة الانكليزية والسبب في ذلك هو الضعف في طرائق التدريس والتلفظ والمعرفة الثقافية والثقة بالنفس والمشاركة في التحدث باللغة الانكليزية وكذلك الضعف في المفردات والنحو. وفي ضوء النتائج وضعت عدد من التوصيات والفرضيات في دراسات مستقبلية .