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DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS AND ENGLISH
LANGUAGE***



***Investigating Learners' Difficulties in Speaking and Writing
Skills: The Case of First Year Students of the Department of
English at M'sila University***

***Dissertation submitted to the department of English as a partial
Fulfillment for the requirement of the Master degree in language studies.***

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Investigating Learners Difficulties in Speaking and Writing Skills

Dedication

Before all, I thank ALLAH for helping me to achieve this work which I dedicate:

To the candles of my life; my mother and my father for their support , and advice

To my brothers:Hassan, Marwan, and Smail

To my sisters: Karima ,Samia Fatima, Nada , and Imen

To my nephews and nieces

It is also a pleasure to acknowledge a great dept to my friends

Investigating Learners Difficulties in Speaking and Writing Skills

Dedication

Before all ,I thank ALLAH for helping me to achieve this work which I dedicate:

To the candles of my life ;my mother and my father for their support , and advices

To my brothers Nabil and Haithem

To my sisters: Rebiha ,Houria, Chaima ,and Assil

It is also a pleasure to acknowledge a great dept to my friends

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For Most thanks to Allah for blessing and helping us achieve this work.

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Finally, we would like to offer thanks to all the students who accept to participate in this case study

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Declaration

I declare that we have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

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Abstract

This research study sought to find out the main difficulties that EFL learners encounter while producing language and the causes that are related to these challenges, at the department of letters and English language at M'sila University. A questionnaire was designed for first year students as the main procedure to gather faithful data. The obtained results showed that learners face different types of difficulties among them: to the lack of vocabulary, grammar, mispronunciation, spelling mistakes, and punctuation. In addition to that, the respondents' answers revealed that many psychological factors affect learners such as: low self-confident, demotivation, and anxiety; which are resulted from the lack of practice. The quantitative and descriptive approaches were applied in order to compile results and analyze them. Our study is limited to unveil learners' difficulties while producing language hence and any extra obtained data are peripheral, moreover the broad aim of this study is to provide some strategies to improve speaking and writing skills.

Key words: speaking, writing, hindrances, First year EFL learners

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Lists of abbreviation:

EFL: English as Foreign language .

LMD: liscence, master , doctorat.

FL: foreign language.

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Introduction

Today ,English language is a global medium of communication , therefore the importance of English has increased a lot in the present social ,political ,and commercial contexts due to the economic development, and the demand for using English effectively is necessary around the whole world , thus reinforced many students to learn it .

Though English language learning as any other foreign language learning is progressive and it encounters many challenges .This process is based on mastering four language capacities or what is called language skills; listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Additionally, these capacities are categorized into two types: receptive skills and productive skills. Receptive skills consist of reading and listening whereas, productive skills include speaking and writing.

Since language is a mean that human use to communicate and express their thoughts we tend to focus on productive skills..where which learners need to talk, to articulate words and to transfer their thoughts either in written form or in spoken form, but during the performance of those two acts, learners encounter many challenges that can affect on their achievements.

The aim of this study is to identify the difficulties that EFL learners face, and to provide some strategies use to improve speaking and writing.

The Main research questions are:

In this work, we tend to identify the difficulties that learners face in speaking and writing skills .the participants of our research

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are first year students at the department of letters and English language at M'sila University. Therefore, we try to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main difficulties that prevent learners from speaking and writing skills?
2. What are the main strategies that learners would adopt to improve the productive skills.

The Main Hypotheses are:

In this dissertation we will identify the difficulties that face learners in speaking and writing and we will provide some strategies that can help learners to improve the productive skills. By the end of our investigation we attempt to verify our suggested hypothesizes.

1-students face problems in expressing themselves because they do lack language vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

2- Adopting some strategies such as: enriching vocabulary, listening to videos or role plays, and expressing oneself through speaking, would improve writing and speaking skills.

Significance of the Study

The main objective of this work is to shed light on the difficulties that EFL learners encounter in speaking and writing skills, and to determine the strategies that learners should adopt to improve the productive skills.

The objectives of study

- ✓ To identify the obstacles that prevent learners from speaking and writing.

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- ✓ To suggest alternative strategies that may help students to improve the productive skills.

Research Methodology

In order to test our hypotheses, we gather faithful data, that fit the objectives of this study and mixed methods qualitative and quantitative method are adopted

Research tools

The questionnaire is the main data gathering tool in this study .It will be given to first year students of the English department at M'sila University

Questionnaire is designed to obtain students' different opinions about the research subjects.

Population and Sampling

The main participants of the research are forty students who study English as Foreign language at Msila University. The population for this study consists of first year LMD students who are chosen randomly. The sample seize is forty students which consists of thirty-five female and five male.

The content of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of two chapters: the first chapter is concerned with the literature review, which represents the key concepts related to language learning and teaching in general, and focuses also on speaking and writing skills. It reports the main difficulties that learners encounter during their

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performance; finally it ends with suggested strategies used to improve the productive skills. .

The second chapter deals with the practical phase, that is conducted within the first year LMD students of M'sila University studying English as Foreign Language, the research based on a questionnaire as the main procedure to collect data about the hindrances that learners encounter while performing productive skills.

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I-Chapter One

Introduction:

Through history, English became the global medium of communication, thus reinforced many students around the world to learn it. When learning English language, students need to master the four skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading).

In this research, the light will be shed on speaking and writing skills, since they are considered as the main skills that EFL learners should improve in order to produce their capacities and express them.

This chapter deals with literary review that tackled the key concepts of the productive skills and the main difficulties those learners face and concludes with some strategies used to solve the challenges that students encounter.

I-1-Learning English as Foreign Language

Learning language is a term used to describe the act of acquiring knowledge and skills of the language learned. Therefore Learning English as Foreign language is considered as one of the most widely spread phenomenon around the world. EFL refers to the study of English by non-native learners whose local medium of communication is not English, this study can occur either in the students home country as part of curriculum or in Anglophone country that they may visit in order to achieve different goals.

I-2-Objectives of EFL learning

There are three main objectives of learning English as foreign language which are:

Linguistic objectives :

- ✓ To acquire the linguistic basics such as grammar, vocabulary.

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- ✓ To develop the language skills.
- ✓ To have the linguistic competence.

Socio-cultural objectives :

- ✓ To be familiar with the English culture.

I-4 English Language learning and Learning skills

English language learning indicates the act of acquiring enough knowledge about the English language. Learning skills are very broad terms used to describe set of abilities that are needed to acquire new knowledge those skills are: critical thinking, creative thinking:

- ✓ Critical thinking focuses more on how the subject works.
- ✓ Creative thinking is to look at the way to solve problems from different perspectives.

Moreover, language is also learnt for communicating, and collaborating:

- ✓ Communicating indicates the process of exchanging the information.
- ✓ Collaborating means working together to produce piece of work.

So learners need to clarify the complex ideas and knowledge through the exchange between them to make the learning process more successful.

I-4 Teaching English as Foreign Language

Kimble-Garmezy (1963pp133) define teaching as showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instruction, guiding the study of something, providing knowledge.

Brown (2003) argues that teaching should define with learning, because it facilitate the process of learning

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Teaching English as foreign language became an academic field, and it is not an easy task because it is a process of applying the theory of learning and teaching the English language for the benefits of learners with different languages. This act can occur either in learner's country or in English region, the leader of this process called the teacher, who can be a native speaker or a foreign speaker. The teacher role is not only help the students to learn and to improve the English language, also he must care about learners goals behind their language learning as **Harmer** (2000) states that teachers play different roles.

I-5 The objectives of teaching English as Foreign Language:

Teaching English as foreign language is one of the most rewarding jobs that achieve three main objectives:

I.5.1. Practical objectives:

The acquisition of foreign language as means of communication is to provide the learners with the basic linguistic materials such grammar, vocabulary.

I.5.2. Educational objectives:

To provide the learners with the basic linguistic materials such grammar, vocabulary and to consolidate and to develop learning strategies at critical thinking and self-assessment and to enable students to use various documents and feel interest in extra subjects outside classroom.

I.5.3. Socio-cultural objectives:

To provide learners with the life, customs, and traditions of English people through visual materials and reading materials.

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I-6.English Language Teaching and language Skills

Teaching English is used to describe the act of training the students whose first language is not English. One of the most important objectives of this act is to develop set of language skills. These skills commonly refer to the four capacities that allow students to use a language as **Kevin** (2017) states that the four skills of language are set of four capacities that allow an individual to comprehend and to produce spoken language, those capacities include: listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

I-7.Factors Influencing Language Learning Skills:

Language learning skills can be affected by three factors which are: Psychological, Pedagogical, and Linguistic factors.

I-7-1 Psychological Factors:

There are many psychological problems that prevent learners in their language learning process ,those psychological barriers including lack of self-esteem, anxiety, personality , motivation.....etc

a- Lack of Self-esteem:

Self-esteem is a cognitive factor that plays an important role in learning process, it is known also the personal judgment of worthiness as **Coopersmith** (1967) defines self-esteem as a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that individuals hold towards themselves. It can be an important part of success.

In other words self-esteem refers to the learners believe in his abilities to succeed Students need high degree of self-esteem in order to make progress in their learning process and to perform any activity in the right way as Brown (2007) argues ; no

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successful cognitive or effective activity can be carried out with some degree of self-esteem.

b- Anxiety:

It is a psychological phenomenon which relates to the learners feelings of fear and worry .it makes obstacles and creates troubles for learners to be successful in learning process. It is too easy for foreign language classroom to create inhibition and anxiety (**Littlewood**.1999.3)

Those negative feelings challenge learners during their training process which make them losing concentration, and reveal them by making them feel uncomfortable about language learning process.

c- Personality:

Personality refers to stable internal factors or traits which underlie consistent individual as differences in behavior .these internal factors are called traits .it assumed that individuals differs in terms of extent to which they possess any given trait Fadi(2003)

It is categorized into two kinds of personality: extroversion and introversion.

✓ According to **Erton** (2010) extrovert is a person who has a tendency to focus on the outer world of people and events , that means extroversion refers to type of the human behavior who loves to be surrounded by and interact with the other people .they are socially confident and outspoken that to say they enjoy human interaction.

✓ **Zhang** (2009) states that introvert is a person who is more interested in his or her own thoughts and feeling, that is to say introversion refers to personality that here

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person interest in his own mental self and they feel comfortable when they are alone that means they have their own world of fact. Therefore Learner's personality can affect on how they learn the second language; that means the introverted learners have been shown to take longer to acquire second language, the extroverted learners on the other hand are more likely to go out on a limb and try out their newly learned language.

d- Motivation:

It refers to the students desire to learn in order to achieve different learning goals. **Harmer** (2001. 51) defines motivation as a kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do something to achieve something. It is one of the most important causes that lead to success.

In addition to that there are two types of motivation intrinsic and extrinsic motivation:

- ✓ **Harmer** (2001p51) states that intrinsic motivation comes from within individual that means it is personal desire of the learning process.
- ✓ extrinsic motivation which refers to outside factors that pushes students to learn

Therefore the lack of motivation has become more commonly recognized as perhaps the major psychological factors that learners face in their learning process ,which is caused by impaired learners who do not show the reasons behind the leaning process.

I-7-2 Pedagogical factors:

Unqualified teacher, teaching method, and inadequate materials are considered as pedagogical factors can effect on the language learning process.

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a- Unqualified teacher:

Students do their efforts to master the language; however they often face different types of obstacles that hinder their language development one of those obstacles related to teacher quality, which is considered one of the most important pedagogical element that affect learning process, because the teacher plays different role in learning process according to **Harmer** (2001.56) teachers play different roles. Those roles including: the creation of pleasant atmosphere and to set goals and tasks on the appropriate way, and to create best condition to facilitate the learning process. The problem widely spreads and makes confuse among students, because learners cannot determine whether the teacher is good or not.

b- Inadequate learning materials:

Materials refer to the tools and items that used by the teacher and learners in the learning process to make it more successful ,like books may be needed tools , but they are not enough by themselves because they cannot tell how words are pronounced, that is why learners need audio tools such as videos to get the right pronunciation. Flynn (1998. 67) states that video helps students to understand the instruction than use of text book.

c- Teaching method:

The term teaching method refers to the general principle, pedagogy and management strategies used for classroom instruction **Bryson** (2003), that means it should comprise the principles and the ways used by the teacher to make learning process easier. Those strategies should be determined on the nature of subject matter and the learner's needs and characteristics as **Bryson** (2003) states that the choice of

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teaching method depends on what fits you –your educational philosophy , classroom demographic ,subject areas....

So teaching method is very important to make learning easier and to achieve the learner's needs and also to reach language proficiency.

I-7-3 linguistic factors:

There are many linguistics barriers that can affect language learning skills, those barriers including: phonology, semantic, syntax, and orthography.

Phonology:

Phonology is one of the most important factors that can affect language learning skills .it deals with the organization of sounds. It is considered as one of the basic feature of linguistic competence that why many learners interest in learning language in order to speak it. **Ur** (1984. 120) states many if not most foreign language learners are interested in learning to speak. Therefore Learners can be affected by the phonological problems which obviously hinder their learning pronunciation, and ultimately prevent them from achieving proficiency in the oral and auditory skills.

a- Semantics:

Semantic field is considered as one of the most important linguistic factors that language learning skills can be affected. It used to describe the concept of the meaning of the context and vocabulary, which the basic for all the language skills development. As **Paul** (1997.149) states that vocabulary is not end itself, a rich vocabulary makes the language skills easier to perform». So learning language means learning its vocabulary, because we use vocabulary in communication either in spoken form or in written form

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Therefore many students face the semantic problems or having limited vocabulary which makes them unable to express their thoughts and ideas, and also to understand the others thoughts.

b-The syntax:

Syntax is one of the language components that can affect language learning skills. It deals with the structure and the organization of the language, it consists of grammar, which is one of the most features that learners need to master because it facilitates the comprehension of the texts, and all the four language skills based on the correct grammar structure **Ur** (1980. 4) Argues the way a language learning manipulates and combines words or bits in order to form longer units of meaning».

However many learners can encounter the problems of building sentences grammatically correct which prevent them sending their message correctly and understandable.

c-Orthography:

Orthography is one of the most important factors that language learning skills can be affected. It deals with the study of letters and punctuation which are the basic of any piece of writing as well as in reading, and how they are formed to express sounds and to form words. It is an important system to establish correct usage and make the written texts more understandable as **Harmer** (2004) states that; if we want our students to be writers in English we need to teach them how to use punctuation convention correctly. Therefore orthographic problems can affect learners which make their piece of writing unclear.

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I-8.Receptive skills vs. Productive skills

When learning either English language or other language there are four capacities or what are known language skills , must be achieved those skills are categorized into two type : receptive and productive skills.

Receptive skills, known as passive skills. It is defined by **Macmillan Dictionary** (2009) as ;the skills of being able to understand a language when you listen it or read it ,that means receptive skills the capacity of understanding a language during listening and reading or in other words it means receiving the language and decoding the meaning to understand the message .

Productive skills are speaking and writing; using the acquired language to produce a message through speech or written text that want the other to understand as **Jaramillo and Medina** (2001) state that speaking and writing are important forms of expression used to persuade or convince other people as well as to share ideas and feelings.

I-9.The integration of the four skills

To have a mastery of language, learners must be competent in those four skills, which are interrelated and cannot exist as separate entities within the language **Harmer** (2007) states that any of the four English Language skills is rarely done in isolation .

When students listen to a lecture, they may also take notes at the same time, and it is possible for students to be competent in one skill than another.

Learners from their language background may have no trouble in reading and writing, but they may find the language sounds more difficult to produce, on the other hand, students from orally based cultures may find it easier to speak rather than to write.

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I-10 Speaking skill

I-10-1 Speaking Skills definition

The Oxford Dictionary (2009. 414) defines speaking as the action of conveying information or expressing one's thoughts and feelings in spoken language.

The New Webster Dictionary (1994) states: that speaking is an act of expressing ideas, feelings and thoughts orally. It also called the oral communication. It means that speaking is a way to exchange thoughts, emotions ... orally in order to communicate.

As Chastain (1990.330-335) argues that speaking is a productive skill that involves many components such as grammar strategies, sociolinguistics, and discourse. Speaking is productive skill that involves using speech in order to express a meaning to other people focusing regularly on particular aspects of speaking as fluency and accuracy. Speaking fluently deals with the spontaneous use of language and having self-confidence while practicing oral skill and expressing thoughts, emotions and opinions without fear of making mistakes and without making pauses; on the other hand accuracy refers to the capacity to produce sentences grammatically correct ,and it requires also the knowledge and the mastery of vocabulary.

Speaking is one of the four skills that EFL learners should master because it regarded as the primary form of language that student use to express thoughts ,ideas and feelings as speaking is to communicate , it becomes generally the main goal of learning language. Many if not most foreign language learners are interested in learning to speak (**Ur**. 1984.120).

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I-10-2Hindrances while speaking

Speaking is considered as the difficult skills, Luama (2004) states that speaking in a foreign language is very a difficult and competence in speaking takes a long times to develop. However, many learners encounter many difficulties among those challenges lack of grammar knowledge, mispronunciation of words lack of vocabulary and other psychological problems

I-10-2-1-the lack of grammar knowledge

According to **Longman dictionary of Contemporary English** (2001.1437); grammar are the rules by which words changes their forms and combines into sentences. So grammar is set of rules that tell how words are combined in order to communicate. It deals also with the words in sentences. However, many students get confused with the English grammar as **Davis and Pearson** (2000) state that; many people don't like speaking in front of large group of people .This especially true in foreign language, because we may worry about producing utterances with many errors or oddities them , while grammar is very needed to form right sentences, and to combine words in order to establish longer units of meaning

Many EFL learners face the problem of producing sentences grammatically correct. This is due to the ignorance of grammar rules such as the use of the negative in the same sentences, and the mixed use of tenses. Therefore inappropriate use of grammar rules leads to misunderstanding communication

I-10-2-2Mis-pronunciation:

Pronunciation refers to the way words usually spoken in order to produce clear language. Therefore speaking English language based on having a good pronunciation,

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which is considered as the first thing that learners are evaluated at. **Hedge** (2000.261) argues that speaking is a skill by which they are judged and while the first impressions are being formed. **Bada and Ozkanalso** state the importance of pronunciation at the oral skill (2011.122). In speaking, they complete with limited time to recall words and also take of their pronunciation.

Usually mispronunciation is one of the main factors that hinder many EFL learners, the problem is resulted from the fact that learners produce words without carrying about their right pronunciation; this mispronunciation can lead to ineffective communication and prevent learners from achieving proficiency that is why learners should have phonetic awareness.

I-10-2-3The lack of vocabulary:

According to **Oxford dictionary** vocabulary is the body of words in particular language. Therefore speaking languages based on having a store of words and concepts, which are considered as the key element for successful communication and oral achievement, because students cannot express their thoughts and sending their messages when they have limited vocabulary . **Harmer (2001)** argues that the knowledge of word classes also allows speakers to perform well formed utterances.

Thorunbury (2005.22) also consolidates the importance of vocabulary when speaking a language has also a relatively high proportion of words and expressions, but many EFL Learners face this obstacle , that prevent them from sharing thoughts and opinions with others. The problem is resulted to the lack of reading books , listening to English music , discussing with friends and another reason which is related to the use of dictionaries when learners organize their thoughts in the mother tongue.

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I-10-2-4 Psychological impact:

a- lack of Self-confidence:

The term self-confidence refers to the student's abilities to take risk and facing the fear of making mistakes and having limited capacities. Therefore speaking is based on learners' capacities to speak the target language, which contributes to doing tasks proficiently and correctly as Brown (2007pp154) claims ; no successful cognitive or effective activity can be carried out without some degree of your self- esteem self-confidence , knowledge of your self –esteem ... belief in your own capacities to successfully perform that activity , however the lack of self-confidence is one of the psychological obstacles that prevent EFL learners from speaking, which makes them think that their English is weak and feel they cannot speak the English language well. This phenomenon occurs when learners realize that are not understood by others or when they don't understand other speakers. In this situation the students would resume to silence. Learners with high self-confidence develop and progress in their oral skill, on the other hand low self-confidence can affect learners negatively since they have limited abilities.

b- Anxiety:

Anxiety is a complex affective concept that is associated with feelings of an uneasiness and worry. It seems to be an obstacle for the learners to be successful in oral skill, which makes them nervous and afraid when they attempt to express their thoughts .Ur(2000.111) states that learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in foreign language in the classroom. **Wrench and Gorhan (2009.55)** argue that many students don't learn when they are fearful, anxious, apprehensive, or scared .students don't

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communicate effectively with “teachers” when they are fearful , anxious , apprehensive or scared to communicate .Students don’t complete tests well when they are fearful anxious , apprehensive or scared of testing situations. Anxiety as a negative feeling inhibits students from speaking fluently which makes trouble in learning process as well as it caused by ineffective communication.

c-The use of mother tongue:

Learners encounter the problem which is the use of native language when they cannot share their thoughts in foreign language, so they borrow words from the mother tongue .According to **Backer and Westrup** (2003.12); barriers to learning can occur if students knowingly or unknowingly transfer the cultural rules from their mother tongue to a foreign language. This problem breaks down the student’s capacities to use the foreign language being learnt.

I-10-3 Techniques used to develop speaking skill:

Students who are engaged in learning a foreign language have plenty of techniques to use in order to develop their competence and overcome some of the hindrances they face when they want to communicate.

I-10-3-1Role play:

It is a technique used to make students use a language in order to develop speaking skill; it can be an excellent opportunity for the students to launch themselves into extended interaction and good way to develop fluency.

According **Ur** (1984. 131); a role play is used to refer to all sorts of activities where the learners imagine themselves in situation outside classroom.... sometimes the role of someone other than themselves and using a language appropriate to the new context.

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Doff (1995:240) presents some advantages of this technique saying that a role play gives a chance to use a language in context and for new topics ... because they are acting out a situation. Role plays encourage students to use natural expression and intonation as well as gesture.

I-10-3-2 Expressing point of view:

It is spoken activity and strategy that helps students to use language in order to develop the oral skill. It is a dynamic activity in which students express their opinions on number of issues or making comments on the other person's point of view as **Cheney** (1998) states that speaking is based on the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in different contexts. This activity provides to learners the self-confident and self-assuredness, and it helps them to develop their oral skill, since it gives them the opportunity to express their thoughts orally in well-organized manner and enable them to clarify or modify ideas through the use of their personal experiences.

I-10-3-3 Discussing different topics:

Discussion is considered as most commonly act that can help learners to develop their oral skills, and it provides some enjoyable moments in classroom, **Harmer** (2007:146) states the discussion advantages; it can provide some enjoyable and productive speaking in language classroom.

Discussions are considered as one among the best ways of presenting an interesting form of oral practice in classroom. **Harmer** (2007:145) argues that discussing in a foreign language helps the learners to develop their communicative abilities and provides some enjoyments in classroom.

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Actually discussing in foreign language classrooms help students to develop their communicative capacities and motivates the students to go on conversation and dialogue for long time.

I-10-3-4 Questioning:

It is spoken activity that is considered as communicative tools, it serves as means of provoking conversations and opinions, and strategy that helps students to develop their oral proficiency. Besides that, it is a preplanned activity and more useful states; questionnaires are useful because, by being preplanned they ensure that both questioner and respondent have something to say to each other (Ibid. 165).

Questioning as a spoken activity can be taken as the basic for different communicative tasks such as the discussion and prepared talk and it also enhances learners to develop their communication skills.

I-11. Writing skill:

The Oxford dictionary defines writing as the whole body of words and techniques of combination of words used by a nation people. **The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing system, Florian Colmas** defines writing system as a set of visible or tactile signs used to represent units of language in systematic way ;with the purpose of recording messages which can be retrieved by everyone who knows the language in question and the rules of which its units are encoded in the writing system.

Writing is one of the productive skills. It refers to the abilities that allow learners to translate their thoughts and opinions into written form. It is considered as one of the difficult activities as **Jozef** (2001.05) states that writing is among the most complex human activities. ».

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Aspects of an effective writing:

a-Vocabulary: an effective writing based on choosing accurate words to express thoughts which is the key to be understood.

b- Spelling: in English writing there are spelling rules and connection between how word must be spelt and be pronounced that is why learners must be aware about the spelling rules.

c- Grammar: grammar knowledge is very important and needed in writing ,there are rules must be followed to make meaningful message that why learners must be aware about grammar rules in order to build well-structured sentences.

d- Punctuation: it is one of the most important aspects of an effective writing because it helps the reader to understand the text.

I-11-2 Types of writing:

Writing as means of communication has different types; narrative ,descriptive, argumentative ,and expository.

A- Narrative: It tells a personal, fictional experience or story. The writer tries to portray the main character with a plot and setting. It focused in novels, autobiography and essays.

b-Descriptive: it is used to create a clear picture of person, place or something, which provide details to the reader. When describing; the writer uses his emotions with the use of adjectives and adverbs.

c- Argumentative: it attempts to convince the reader with writer's point of view by giving different evidences. The writer should be objective and show the opposing opinions, then criticize them.

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d- Expository: it provides an explanation of information about a person, a thing. It provides factual data, clear reasons statistical information, and causes and effects. Expository writing is free of any form of description of emotion and opinions.

I-11-3- Hindrances while Writing:

During performing of writing act learners face many challenges that prevent them from achieving well-structured piece of writing those challenges are :lack of vocabulary, spelling mistakes , punctuation problems ,and poor achievement in cohesion and coherence

I-11-3-1The lack of vocabulary:

Vocabulary is an important aspect of language skills which is considered as the body of words that make up the language as **Ourghi** (2002.77) argues; writing is primary conveying meaning and sending a message by selecting relevant lexical items and putting them in written form».

The Cambridge Dictionary defines vocabulary as ; all the words known and used by a person , so writing in English tends to use more vocabulary than the spoken English ,but many non- native learners face the problem of having a limited vocabulary ,which makes them unable to express their thoughts .This problem is due to the lack of reading books stories and so on , which is a great way to build vocabulary quickly, furthermore learners also neglect using dictionaries that resulted fail to recall on important words to use all the time don't succeed in choosing the appropriate words .

-11-3-2 Spelling mistakes:

Spelling mistakes is considered the first problem that EFL learners encounter **Harmer**(2001.256) states that the correspondence between sound of words and the way

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it is spelt is not obvious, he indicates that many English words are pronounced the same, but written differently and carried distinctive meanings such as to and two, and the English variations also are not spelt the same way for instance American accent and the British one differ in the spelling of some words such as behavior and behaviour. The problem is due to the lack of reading which is the basic of good spelling as Frith (1980) argues that learning to read simply imply learning to spell, and learning to spell should imply learning to read .

I-11-3-3 Poor achievement in Cohesion and coherence:

They are the most linguistics qualities to build any piece of writing; on the one hand coherence is the property of the unity in written text and the logical organization of ideas it is very important to give a text meaning; the readers can understand the writer 's purpose and his/her line of thoughts only if the text is coherent as harmer states (2004.25). On the other one , cohesion is when the connection between sentences, words and phrases are easy understandable. but many EFL learners have difficulties in writing introduction, topic sentences, the problem is resulted from the fact that learners focus only the language matters rather than the meaning .

I-11-3-4 Punctuation:

It is set of symbols used in writing to link between sentences. It is one of the most important aspects of English writing, and yet it is one that is taken lightly as Seely(1998) states that punctuation plays a crucial role in reading as well as in writing. This. This feature gives a meaning to the written words like pauses and changes in tones of the voices while speaking, however many learners encounter difficulties in achieving

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the punctuation while it is very needed to establish clear meaning, and an error in punctuation can convey a completely different meaning to the intended one.

I-11-3-5- Grammar mistakes:

Grammar is defined as the description of the ways in which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences in that language (Ibid.2001.12). Those ways are called grammar rules , so grammar knowledge is the most important factor to build any written text as **Brooks and Penn** (1970p20) state ...for one thing in writing ,we must understand the structure of the language, but many students get confused with those rules. Many students encounter grammar difficulties like reference of tenses that needed to be distinguished, and there are also the plural and the singular forms that should be learned .Since English writing is based on building sentences grammatically correct.

I-11-4Techniques used to improve writing

There are various strategies used to improve writing skills, among them writing in every day, using dictionaries to improve vocabulary, reading books and magazines, play written games, and write short stories

I-11-4-1 writing in English every day:

Writing in English is the most important and effective strategy used to improve the learners' writing abilities , starting by thinking of the techniques to improve writing for instance; writing a diary of something that happens every day as writing a few lines of story each day ...etc. This might be difficult at first but the more writing continues, the easier it will become.

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I-11-4-2 Using dictionary to improve vocabulary:

Dictionaries are considered as one of the most important ways used in learning language and an essential tool to improve vocabulary, because having a wide range of vocabulary is very important to write in English. **Ourghi** (2002) argues that writing primarily conveys meaning and sends a message by selecting relevant lexical items and putting them in written form, so building a good vocabulary is the key to develop good writing skills, since good expressions are based on great vocabulary.

I-11-4-3 Reading books and magazines:

Reading is a very important skill that help students to learn and to acquire knowledge every time and everywhere as **Urquhart and Weir**(1998.22) state reading is the process of reviewing and interpreting information encoded language from the medium of print. It has two types: intensive and extensive reading . Reading is one of the most important skills that used is to develop writing skills .**Johnson** (2008.07)believes that the relationship between these skills is that reading helps learners become good writers. **Harmer**(2001) also proposed extensive reading as remedy for students to overcome spelling difficulties.

To write better obviously need better reading; they are interrelated; reading articles from newspapers and magazines that are interesting. The more you read, the better your writing become.

I-11-4-4 Play written games:

Games are a tool of entertainment and fun. **Hadfield** (1996.04) defines games as an activity with rules ,goal, and an element of fun. Another definition is proposed by **Su Kim**(1995.35)games are welcome to break from age the usual routine of the language

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class , they are motivating ,challenging .Games provide language practice in the various skills speaking ,writing ,listening ,and reading ... They create meaningful context for the language use.

There are numerous games that can be involved in the production of language such as: cross words, puzzles and city maps .These types of games develop students' vocabulary as well as their knowledge .They also teach them academic and social skills.

Conclusion

The productive skills, speaking and writing are regarded as important processes in learning English as foreign language, since they help students to express their thoughts, ideas.....etc in written and spoken forms.To conclude speaking and writing are two complex and difficult skills, because learners face many challenges while performing those two acts.

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Chapter Two

Introduction

This chapter deals with the practical phase of the work that investigates the learning process of productive skills at M'sila University among first year EFL Students. Since this research paper aims to find out enough data about learners achievements in both speaking and writing skills through a questionnaire which considered as the main procedure to collect data and to analyze learners opinions.

II.1.The approach:

This work follows a mixed method: quantitative and qualitative approach, because the questionnaire which is the main procedure to collect data about the difficulties that learners face while producing the language .It consists of different types of questions : open and close questions.

II.2.Quantitative analysis:

It involves analyzing data that resulted from the closed questions by using statistics techniques. the researcher relies on the use of descriptive statistic , which includes percentages, tabulations graphs, representation and measurement of central tendency , frequency and percentage ,may be provided within text or may be represented in tables or through graphs which involves the use of bar graphs or pie chart .whereas the measure of central tendency includes three types :the mean ;the mode ,and the medium .

II.3. Qualitative analysis:

The qualitative analysis transforming information given in texts, it involves interpretation and explanations of the informants responses in order to provide more

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explanation to the open questions. The researcher may use tables or diagrams to summarize and recapitulate the main points.

II.4. Sampling and population:

The main participants of the research are forty students, who study English as foreign language in M'sila University. The population of this study consists of first year students, who are chosen randomly to answer a piece of questions related to the research topic. The sample size is forty participants, which include thirty-five female and five male, their ages between 18-21 years old.

II.5. Research instruments and procedures:

This work focuses on a questionnaire as the main procedure to collect data about the difficulties that learners face while producing language in both spoken and written form. The choice of this method depends entirely on the subject of the research, the sample and the aims.

II.5.1. Questionnaire:

In order to obtain the most faithful information from the sample studied, the instrument for collecting information is a questionnaire, which has been designed for first year students in EFL classroom because, it is one of the well-known instruments that are used in collecting data in a foreign language research.

This tool involves different types of questions "open" "close" "open-ended"

Closed questions require the students' answers by "yes" or "no" or to pick up the right answer from a set of opinions and open-ended questions require them to give a personal answer. The whole questionnaire is made up of ten questions which are classified under seven items.

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-**Item one:** question one and two are connected the learner's performance in English as foreign language, and in which skill they better perform.

- **Item two:** question three asks the participants to what they relate their achievements to : whether for the use personal strategies or teacher strategies.

-**Item three:** questions four and five tend to find out if the students face hindrances while performing language skills then they need to categorize types of those hindrances.

-**Item four:** question six tends to discover the reasons behind learners poor achievements.

-**Item five:** question seven and eight seek to identify students writing problems and their causes.

- **Item six:** question nine asks student if they agree or disagree that speaking and writing can affect on each other.

- **Item seven:** the last question tends to find the students views about the previous strategies, and if they agree they should list some of them with the achieved resulted if they disagree they should mention the reasons.

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II.6.DataAnalysis:

After data collection the results have been interpreted and discussed.

1- **Question :As a learner of English as Foreign language, how do you assess your performance?**

Students level	Student s number	Ratio
Good	10	25%
Average	24	60%
Weak	6	15%
Total	40	100%

Table 1 : the level of student performance

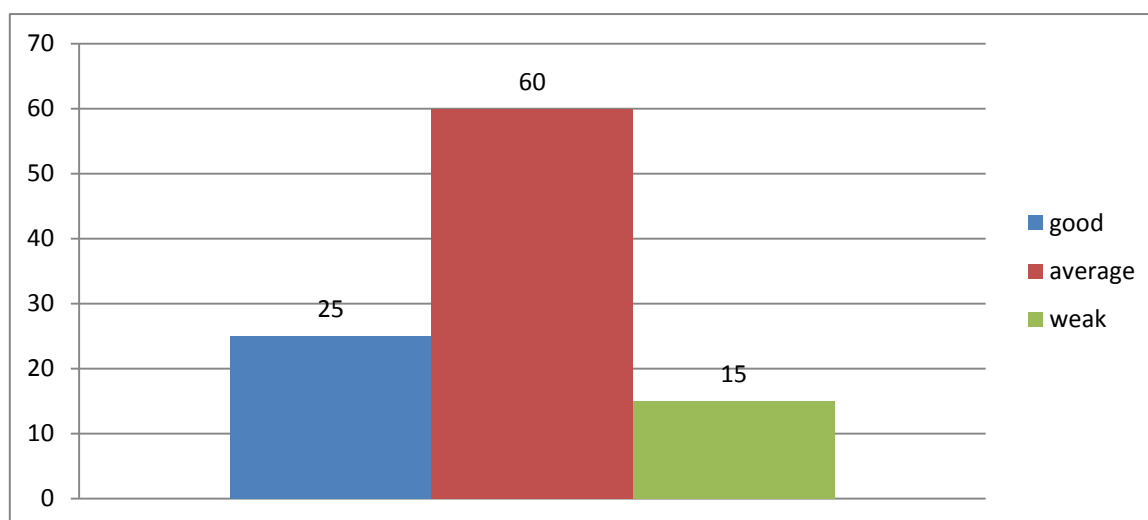


Figure one Learners' performance in English

By this question we tend to determine students' performance in English ;and we obtained the following results : most of students 60% present an average in performing

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English language, the others 25% claim that they have good level whereas 15% of students are weak in their performance.

-Question 2: At which skills you better perform?

Better performed skills	Students number	Ratio
Productive skills	25	62.5
Receptive skills	15	37.5
Total	40	100

Table 2:skills that learners better perform

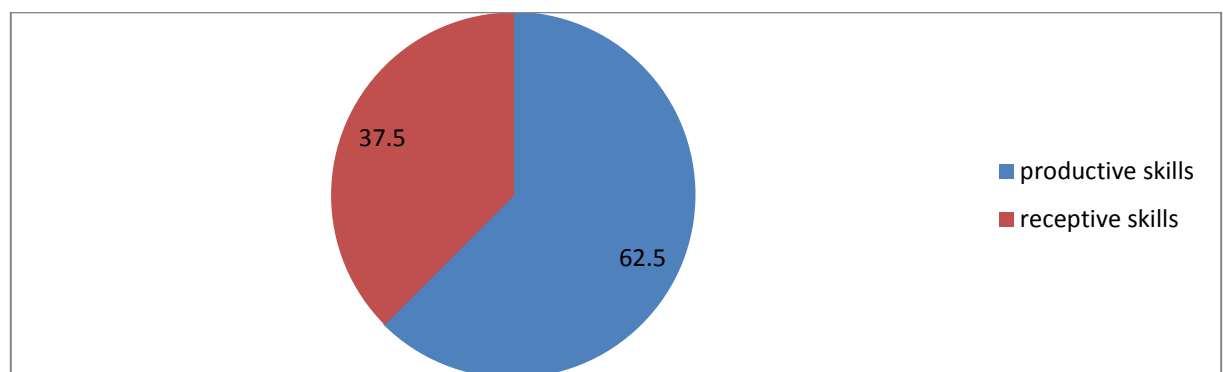


Figure two: Skills that learners better perform

The question aims at determining the skills that learners better perform. The results show that the majority of them 62.5% chose the productive skills, while the others 37.5% said that they are well performing in receptive skills.

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Question 3: What do you relate your achievements; whether to the teacher strategies or personal strategies?

The achievement s source	Students number	ratio
Teacher strategies	19	47.5
Personal strategies	21	52.5
total	40	100

Table 3: the strategies used to achieve the productive skills

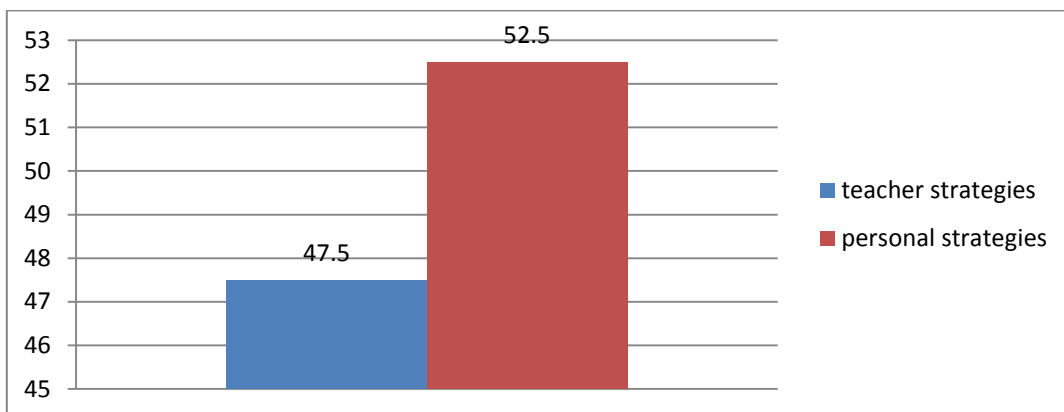


Figure three: The strategies used while achieving the productive skills

The question is designed to detect the strategies that learners adopted to achieve the productive skills: whether the teacher strategies or personal strategies. The results denote that some students 52.5% relate their achievements to personal strategies, whereas 47.5% of students relate to teacher strategies.

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Question 4: Do you face obstacles while speaking?

Strategies to develop speaking	Students number	ratio
yes	37	92.5
no	3	7.5
total	40	100

Table 4 : the obstacles that learners face while speaking

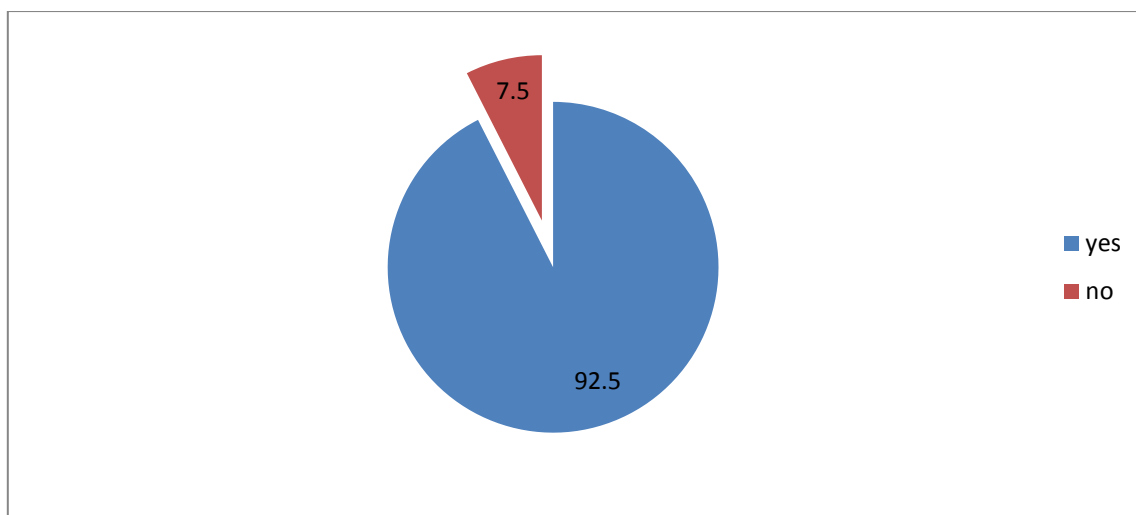


Figure four :Obstacles that learners face while speaking

This question aims to know if students face obstacles while speaking or no .the response to this question show that large number of students 92.5% faced obstacles while performing, and7.5% they do not face any obstacle.

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Question 5: what types of hindrances do you face in speaking?

Speaking hindrances types	Students number	ratio
phonology	8	20
lexicon	22	55
grammar	10	25
total	40	100

Table 5:Speaking hindrances types

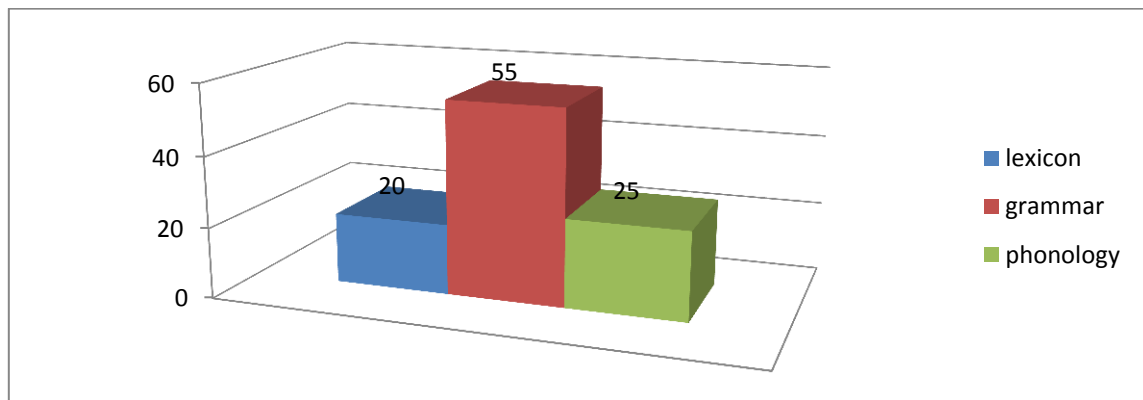


Figure five :Speaking hindrances types

This question aims to find out the hindrances that learners face while speaking. The findings show that most student 55% relate their speaking difficulties to grammar knowledge ,25% of learners encounter phonological problems, and 20% of students faced lexicon difficulties.

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Question 6: What do you relate your poor achievements in speaking to?

source of the poor achievement in speaking	Students number	ratio
Rare practice	26	65
Psychological factors	5	12.5
Personal investment	9	22.5
Total	40	100

Table 6: the causes behind poor achievement in speaking

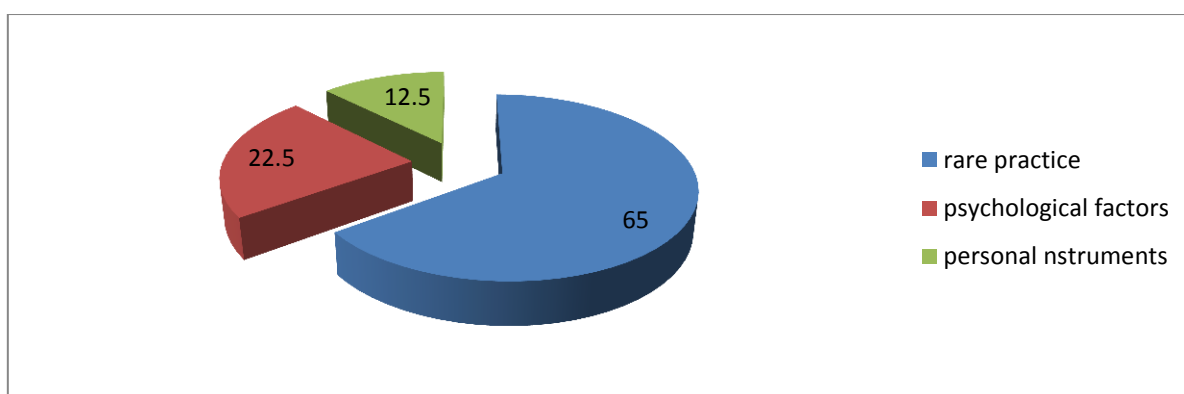


Figure six :The causes behind poor achievement in speaking

The question aims at determining the source of student's poor achievement in speaking. The results show that the most students 65% relate their poor achievements in speaking skill to, their rare practice, 22.5% of them to psychological factors, and 12.5% of students turned their poor achievements to little personal instruments.

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Question 7: What sort of writing problems do you generally face?

Writing problems	Students number	Ratio
Concise writing	07	17.5%
Expressing ideas	15	37.5%
Cohesion and coherence	18	45%
Total	40	100%

Table 7:the obstacles that learners face while writing

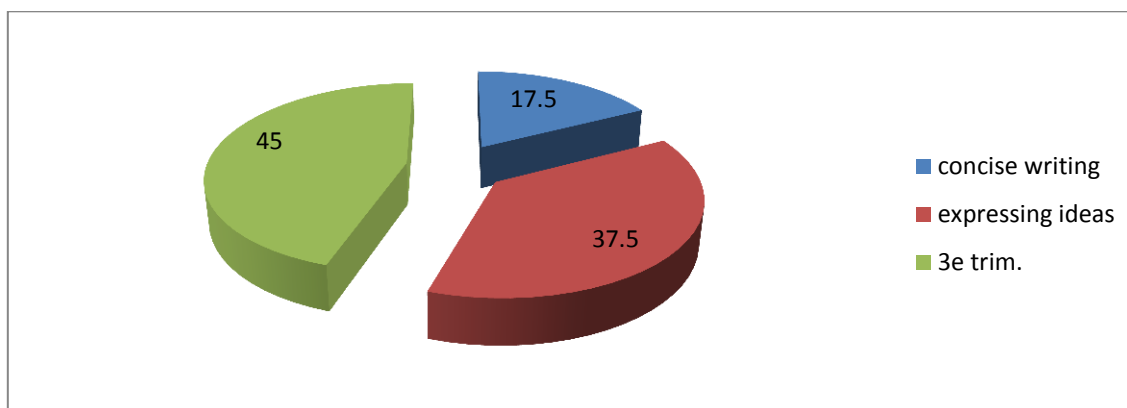


Figure Seven: The obstacles that learners face while writing

The table above show the obstacles that learners face while writing. The finding show that 45%of students find problem in achieving cohesion and coherence, 37.5% of them encounter the expressing ideas difficulties, and 17.5% of learners faced the problem of concise writing.

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Question 8: What do you relate problems to?

Source of writing problems	Students number	ratio
Little practice	21	52.5
Learning strategies	11	27.5
Personal investment	9	20
total	40	100

Table 8:Source of writing problems

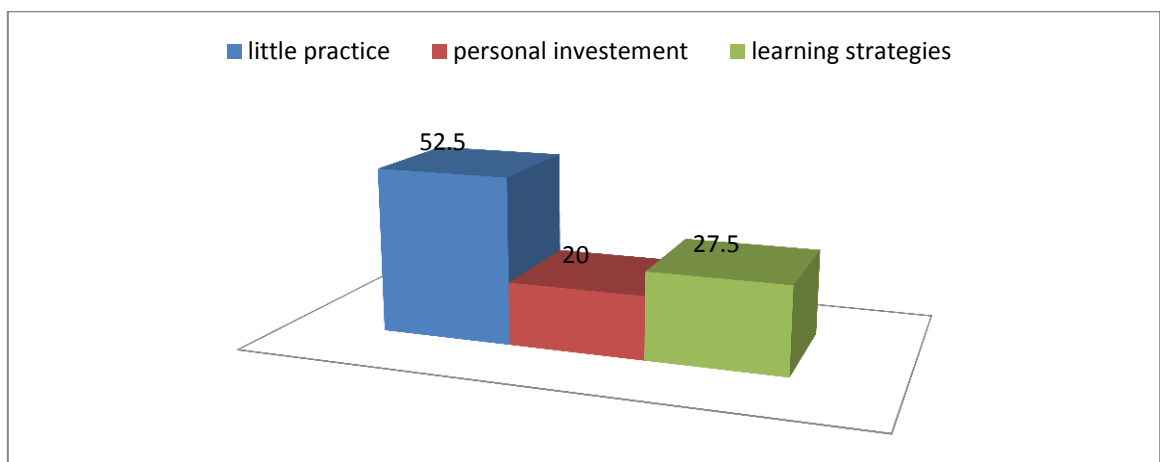


Figure eight :the source of writing problems

The question aims to determining the source of the problems that learners face while writing .the results show that , most of students 52.5% relate their writing problems to little practice, 27.5% of them relate their difficulties to learning environment, whereas 20% turned them back to their personal investment.

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Question9: Writing and Speaking affect one on other positively and negatively, do you agree or disagree?

Writing and speaking	Students number	ratio
agree	24	60
Neutral	6	15
disagree	10	25
total	40	100

Table 9:Students points of viewif writing and speaking are interrelated

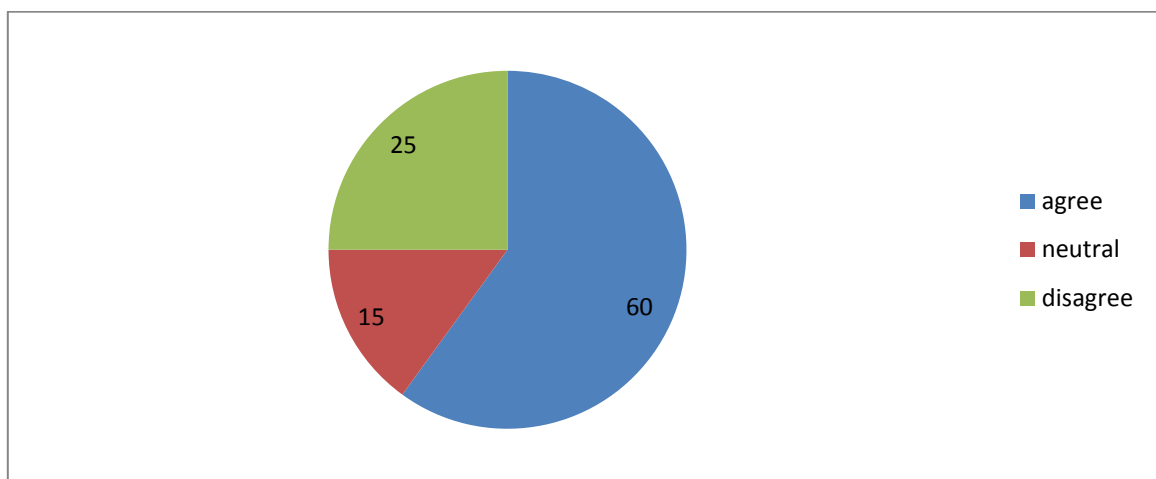


Figure nine: The student's points of views if Speaking and Writing are interrelated skills

When learners asked whether they agree or disagree that writing and speaking affect one another 60% of students agree 25% of them disagree and 15% were neutral.

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Question10: Have you ever thought of strategies that might help you better to achieve in productive skills? YesOr No.....

- ✓ **If yes**, list some of the strategies, and tell what results have you achieved?
- ✓ **If NO**, list some of your reasons.

Speaking and writing are interrelated	Students number	ratio
Yes	37	92.5
No	3	7.5
Total	40	100

Table 10: speaking and writing are interrelated

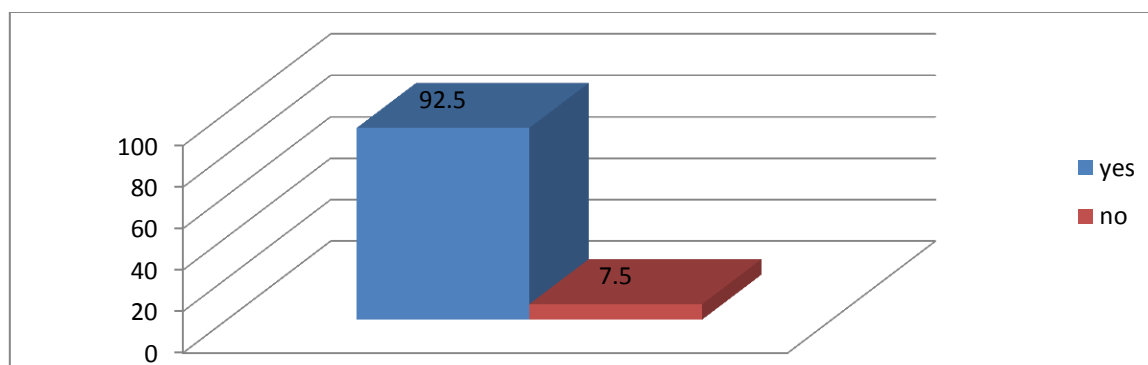


Figure ten :Speaking and Writing are interrelated skills

In this question, the students asked if they adopt strategies to develop the productive skills most of students 92.5% adopt some strategies to better achievements in productive skills those strategies are:

Concerning speaking skill :

The strategies that students adopt are:

- ✓ Communicating with friends in English.
- ✓ Listening to English music and to native conversation.

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- ✓ Questioning..
- ✓ Watching videos .
- ✓ telling short stories.

Concerning writing skill

- ✓ Extensive reading « reading stories and books.
- ✓ Using dictionaries.
- ✓ Play written games.
- ✓ Sharing thoughts through email, letters and other ways.

The Main achievements are :

- ✓ Rich vocabulary.
- ✓ Communicate effectively with friends.
- ✓ Using grammar correctly.
- ✓ Better improvement in writing skills.

The other relate their poor achievements to

- ✓ Psychological factors

II.6. Discussion of the findings:

The aim behind this study is to investigate the learning process of productive skills, writing and speaking for the first year students at M'sila University. A questionnaire was used as a procedure in order to gather enough information about the productive skills, and the main challenges that learners face while performing the English language.

II.6.1.The Students Questionnaire:

The data collected from the questionnaire that was administrated to first year students at the Department of English of M'sila university; show that, the students have an

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intermediate level in performing English language « see table 1 », since they better perform in productive skills «see table2 ».

Based on results the tables above strengthen our hypothesis about if learners face problems in writing and speaking, and the results show that learners face many problems speaking and writing

Concerning speaking skill , the finding from the results of questionnaire, about the problems that learners face while speaking :

The majority of students encounter difficulties in grammar ,language vocabulary , and other phonological problems «see table 5 », this problems are resulted from the lack of practice , the lack of listening to native conversations, moreover the lack of using English language outside classroom which results in mispronunciation , in addition to that ,learners encounter set of psychological factors are also which challenge them during speaking act such as self-confidence ,anxiety ,shyness, and the fear of rejection . Moreover, most of the time they are influenced by their mother tongue. But the majority of them adopt strategies to improve their oral skills ,among these strategies: watching videos , questioning , telling stories....

However in writing skills, the learners face also sort of problems problems relate to the lack of vocabulary and grammar and other challenges in achieving cohesion and coherence that is to say they fail to use conjunctions and connectors to link sentences , and expressing ideas that means learners cannot transfer their thoughts and ideas in written form .Those challenges are turned back to the little practice such as poor reading which results in limited vocabulary , free writing, learning environment such as inadequate writing official courses and personal investment.

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II.7. Recommendation:

From the findings of this research , we can say that speaking and writing are interconnected skills in teaching and learning English as Foreign Language at M'sila university, the study shows that, the most learners face difficulties while producing the English language that is it is important to provide some recommendations that learners can use to improve their levels. The main Suggestions and recommendations to EFL learners to enhance their level in speaking and writing are:

Concerning speaking:

- ✓ Access to communication with native speakers, because the opportunity to interact with native speakers outside classroom is significant advantage, native speakers linguistic model can provide appropriate feedback
- ✓ Students should design pair and group work activities to increase their cooperative learning through exchanging and discussion of ideas ,and help them to feel less inhibited when speaking out .
- ✓ Students have to vary speaking activities that help them to develop their communicative abilities such as: role play discussion and debates and play some games.
- ✓ Watching videos and listening to English music to develop the oral skills

Concerning writing:

- ✓ Students should make reading books and novels as hobby to improve their writing level.
- ✓ Engage with teachers explanation and follow the instructions suggested in the classroom because some teachers are better than the other at providing appropriate

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and effective leaning for their students, this will make the students more develop in their learning.

- ✓ Students from time to time play written games, and encourage the team work either in classroom or outside.
- ✓ Students need to be aware about the different elements such as the language rules and the organization of writing and so on.
- ✓ Self-writing; learners should write by their own short stories and diaries
- ✓ Teacher should test students writing proficiency ; in which this procedure is usefull to obtain a valid information about the difficulties that they face.
- ✓ Teacher should make writing session more practical rather than theoretical.

Conclusion

This chapter deals with gathering reliable data about the students difficulties while producing the language ,and the strategies that they adopt to enhance the productive skills and resolve the problems .

The information was gathered through submitting a questionnaire which administred to first year LMD students at Msila University.

All in all, the analysis of the results comfort and improve our hypothesis about the difficulties that learners face due to language vocabulary and grammar knowledge , and they adopt different strategies improve speaking and writing.

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General conclusion

Our research aimed to investigate the difficulties that learners face at M'sila University in speaking and writing skills ,to detect the causes behind these problems ,and to provide alternative strategies to improve those skills. The results of the study showed that learners encounter many challenges among them: linguistics barriers such as the lack of grammar and vocabulary .., and other psychological problems like anxiety .For that reason we choose to deals with first years students in the department of M'sila University in the academic year 2017/2018 to tackled the learners weaknesses in speaking and writing skills.

For the sake of conducting an investigating study about the barriers that prevented learners from speaking and writing a sample of forty first year EFL students at Mohamed Boudiaf University was selected in this way data richness enhanced.

Accordingly, the research work began with the theoretical framework which was devoted to conduct data about the productive skills and to discuss the difficulties that learners encounter in theoretical way .

Then ,it dealt with practical phase of the work which entitled Research Design and Data Analysis that served both the design of research and the analysis of the results that collected through the questionnaire which was used as the main instrument for gathering information from the the first year LMD student of Msila University .

The main results obtained from the research tool confirmed the two hypothesis :
Firstly ,the participants encountered challenges while producing language due to the lack of grammar knoweldge and the language vocabulary, and other challenges such

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as : mispronunciation, spelling mistakes, cohesion and coherence ,punctuation,and other psychological problems such as anxiety ,lack of selfconfidence .

Secondly,based on the main findings ,expressing one s self ,watching and listening to videos or role play ,and enriching vocabulary are strategies that learnersa dopt in order to develop wrting and speaking skills .

Thus, this research attempt to give a clear image about speaking and writing skills and to ellicidate the difficulties tha tlearners face while performing those acts ,and to provide alternative strategies to improve those skills.

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الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى ثبات أهمية المهارات الكتابية و الكلامية في تحسين عملية تعلم اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة مسيلة والهدف منها تسليط الضوء على اهم المعوقات التي تواجه الطالب أثناء ممارسته لهذه المهارات تنقسم المذكرة إلي قسمين الجزء النظري و هو عبارة عن مقدمة للموضوع ادمجنا فيه مفاهيم خاصة بالقدرة الكلامية والكتابية و يحتوي أيضا على أهم لعراقيل التي يواجهها الطالب أثناء القيام بالمهارات الكتابية أما الفصل الثاني فهو عبارة عن أسئلة وجهت إلى السنة الأولى انجليزية ومن خلال الإجابات المقدمة من طرف الطلاب تم التوصل إلى وجود صعوبات تعرقل الطلاب أثناء تأديته للمعارات الكتابية و الكلامية.

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**MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND
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FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE



Investigating Learners' Difficulties in Speaking and Writing Skills: The Case of First Year Students of the Department of English at M'sila University

Dissertation submitted to the department of English as a partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Master degree in language studies.

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Appendix

Gender:

Age:

Level:

- As a learner of English as a foreign language, how do you assess your performance?

a- good

b- Average

c- Weak

- At which skills do you better perform?

a- Receptive skills

b- Productive skills

-What do you relate your achievements to?

a- Teacher s strategies

b - Personal strategies

-Do you face obstacles while performing?

a-yes

b- no

-If yes what type of hindrances do you face in speaking?

a- Lexicon

b- Grammar

c-phonological

What do you relate your poor achievements in speaking to ?

a- Rare practice

b-Psychological factors

- what sort of writing problems you generally face ?

a-concise writing

b -expressing ideas

c - achieving coherence and cohesion

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- What do you relate problems to?

a- Little practice

b- Personal investment

c - Learning environment

- Writing and speaking affect one another positively and negatively ?

a- YES

b- No

- Have you ever thought of following strategies that might help you better achieve in productive skills?

a- YES

b- No

a- If yes list some of them :

-
-
-
-

And tell what the results have you achieved.

-

b- If no list some of your reasons.

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