

Investigating EFL learners' Attitudes Towards English Variety in EFL Context A Case Study of EFL Students at Sudanese Universities,(2022)

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Abstract:

The study aims at: investigating EFL Sudanese learners' attitudes toward English variety used in EFL context and measuring learner' speaking performance of English language in relation to the English variety used in Sudan. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. Pre and post tests were used as tools for data collection. The sample of the study were twenty (20) EFL under-graduate students who were randomly selected from Sudanese Universities. The sample were firstly requested by the researcher to take the pre-test on performing oral interaction on selected topics related to their academic courses. Then ,before they were given the post-test, students received a week instructions on how to present orally topics related to their academic studies and justifying answers. Then after the a week training on oral interaction, they were given the post-test on similar tasks. The collected data were statistically analyzed by SPSS program. The results indicated that: EFL Sudanese learners have different attitudes toward using EFL variety, speaking generally is a difficult task for many of EFL learners and using effective teaching instructions in EFL classroom develops learner' speaking performance. The study recommends: instructions of improving speaking skills should be highlighted in EFL classes and EFL students should be encouraged to speak English language according to the language variety of EFL context.

Key Words: EFL learners' attitudes toward English variety, learner' speaking performance.

مستخلص:

تهدف الدراسة إلى معرفة مواقف طلاب اللغة الانجليزية السودانيين من استخدام اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية وقياس أداء الطلاب في مهارة الكلام الشفهي باللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. اتبعت الدراسة المنهج التحليلي الوصفي كما استخدمت نظام اختبار قبلي وبعدي في أداء مهارة الكلام الشفهي لقياس أداء الطلاب. تكونت عينة الدراسة من عشرين (20) طالباً وطالبة جامعيين تم إختيارهم عشوائياً من عدة جامعات سودانية حيث تم إعطائهم إختبار قبلي ثم تدريب لمدة إسبوع على مهارة الكلام الشفهي وإستخدام اسلوب التبرير في الإجابات، ثم تم إعطائهم إختبار بعدي في موضوع مهارات الكلام مماثل للأول ، بعد ذلك تم تحليل البيانات بنظام الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الإجتماعية (SPSS) ، توصلت الدراسة إلى عدة نتائج كان أهمها: أن طلاب اللغة الانجليزية السودانيين لهم مواقف مختلفة ناحية استخدام اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، أن الكثير من طلاب اللغة الانجليزية يواجهون صعوبات في أداء مهارة الكلام الشفهي وأن استخدام أساليب التدريس الفعالة تطور مهارات الكلام لدى طلاب اللغة الانجليزية. توصي الدراسة بإستخدام أساليب التدريس الجيدة في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية و تشجع الطلاب على ممارسة مهارات الكلام باللغة الانجليزية.

1.0 Introduction

English language became a world language as it is used globally for communication, education and sciences in the modern era. Aldosary (2010) argued that no wonder English is being studied as a foreign language worldwide as a compulsory or a preferred optional language in most countries. The language varieties spoken in certain community can be classified as standard and non-standard dialects. The standard dialect is a prestigious, codified variety that has the highest social status and used in formal occasions (Sailzmann, 2007). The non-standard dialect is any variety of language which is not standardized and lacks prestige (Cook, 2003). Sometimes the standards variety is considered as a language, whereas the non-standard variety is considered as a dialect. The varieties of a language can be classified as regional dialect and social dialect based on speaker's geographical origin and social background. The educational implication of the regional and social dialects can be considered within the standard and non-standard category. This is because a variety spoken by a certain social

group or region can be emerged as a standard variety; while the other varieties remain in the status of non-standard variety (Hudson, 2001).

It is argued that the varieties of a language play an important role in educational context. In this connection, learning is claimed to be better and more successful when conducted in the variety spoken by students (Cheshire, 2005). However, selecting and compromising standard and non-standard varieties in different spheres of life such as in education, politics, social, etc., seems complex and controversial.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Many EFL learners face difficulties in communicating with different varieties using different the suitable varieties. The problem is appeared in the weakness of students who could only use their regional dialects. As such, many EFL learners are unfamiliar with many other varieties, which causes their comprehension difficulties when they listen to authentic materials.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims at:

1. investigating EFL Sudanese learners' attitudes toward English variety used in EFL context.
2. measuring learner' speaking performance of EFL as a variety of English used in Sudan.

1.3 Questions of the Study:

The study tries to answer the following questions:

- 1.To what extent do Sudanese EFL learners show positive attitudes toward EFL variety.
2. To what extent do EFL learners confidently perform speaking according to the EFL variety ?

1.4 Hypotheses of the study:

The study tries to suggest the hypotheses that may answer the previous questions.

1. Sudanese EFL learners have different attitudes toward EFL variety.
2. Using good teaching instruction in EFL classroom develops Sudanese learner's speaking performance.

1.5 Significance of the Study:

The study directs the students' attention towards the importance of knowing different language varieties that are used around the world. The study reflects the importance and need of students to communicate in English language using their English variety.

1.6 Research Methodology :

The study will adopt the descriptive analytical method. The data for this study will be obtained through Pre-post tests for EFL University students of arts at Sudanese Universities. Then it will be analyzed statistically with SPSS Program.

2.0 Literature Review:

Nowadays, the number of English language users has been growing rapidly, and it has become an international language to connect people with diverse linguistic backgrounds and to be widely used in various communication modes. It had reached the point that the majority of users are not native speakers of English, and they have more opportunities to speak English with non-native speakers than native speakers (Kirkpatrick, 2007). In response, non-native speakers have formed their own English that is different from 'Standard English' in terms of linguistic and cultural aspects.

With the background, 'English as an International Language (EIL)' started being highlighted as the instrument to introduce English diversity (both native and non-native) into the EFL curriculum. This to encourage EFL learners to accept their English varieties and gain ownership of English, which potentially leads to high L2 confidence and performance of the learners. (Montakantiwong, 2018) claimed a paradigm shifting in English teaching from EFL

to EIL. In a similar vein, other EIL researchers (Lee, Nakamura & Sadler, 2017) stressed the crucial role of EIL to develop L2 confidence in EFL education based on their L2 speaking confidence level to be measured before and after the treatment.

2.1 EFL Learners Attitudes Towards English Variety in EFL Context

EFL learners' attitude towards English varieties with its functions might be potential to enrich EFL learning by designing appropriate learning materials. Sevinj (2015) argues that the attitudes of EFL learners towards English varieties indicating that accents perceived as Standard English is considered to be more prestigious competence that indicates high status. However, the present study investigates EFL learners' attitude towards Speaking English language at University level in Sudan.

3.0 Material and Method:

The participants of this study were (20) of EFL under-graduate students who were randomly selected from Sudanese Universities. They were requested by the researcher to perform pre-post tests in oral interaction. In the qualitative analysis of their performance in pre- post-tests to measure their attitudes toward EFL variety, and to see to what extent they will confidently perform speaking. They were ordered to presents orally some topics in their profession. After the pre-test they were received a week instructions on how to speak and argue describing issues or topics in their academic field. Then, after instructions, they were given the post test. Then the results were statistically analyzed by SPSS program. The analyses of the data were shown in the following section

4.0 Data Analysis:

4.1 The Analysis of the Pre- Oral Test:

The researcher aims at testing EFL students' performance in English language through a oral test to see to what extent they

are able to speak and comprehend the language. The test includes four areas of assessment which are: oral interaction, every one of the present a topic orally in front of the class. The test also includes vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Twenty (20) of EFL students from Sudanese Universities were chosen as a sample to take the test. They were given a topic to read aloud and answering short questions. They are also given a written paragraph with empty spaces to write a suitable vocabulary and correct grammar that fit the context. The researcher used statistical analysis to know the variation of the statistical function between the samples. The following are results:

4.1.1 EFL Learners' Speaking performance:

Table and figure (1) EFL learners' speaking performance

Options	Frequency	Percent
Performed speaking successfully	11	55.0
To some extent	4	20.0
Failed to perform correct speaking	5	25.0
Total	20	100.0

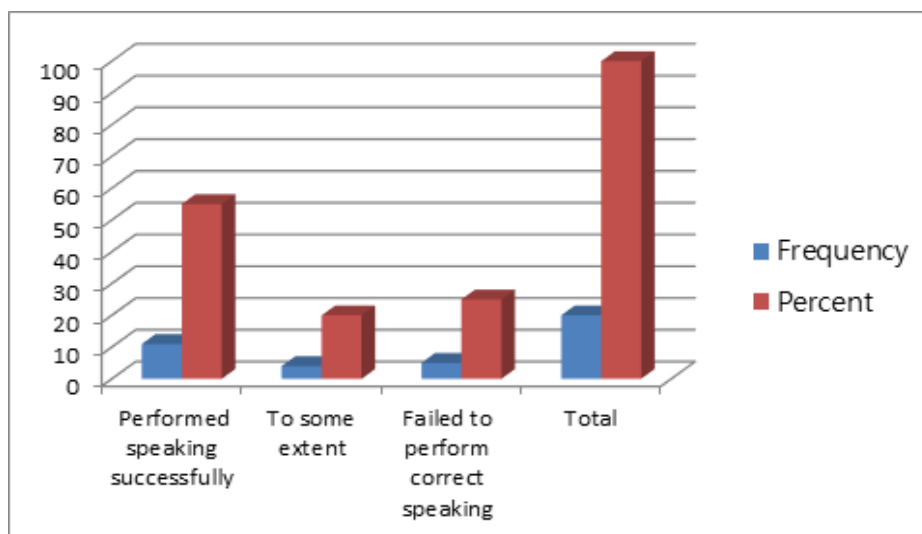


Fig (1)

According to the statistical analysis of table (1), (55%) of the sample able to perform speaking successfully with the ups and downs of English sounds and answer questions of oral reading. Moreover, (20%) of the sample speak with some mistakes. However, (25%) of the sample find difficulties in oral interaction and so they failed answering the questions.

4.1.2 EFL Learners' Pronunciation Performance:

Table and figure (2) EFL learners' pronunciation

Options	Frequency	Percent
Performed correct pronunciation	9	45.0
Performed incorrect pronunciation	9	45.0
Failed to interact	2	10.0
Total	20	100.0

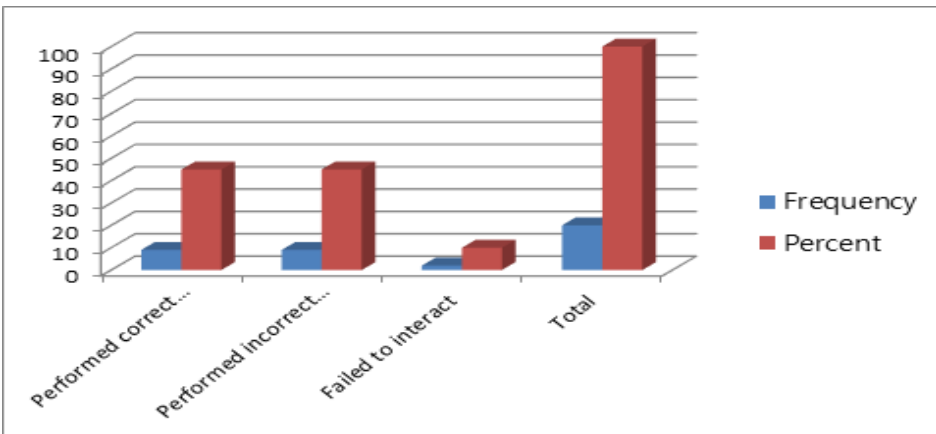


Fig (2)

According to the statistical analysis of table (2), only (45%) of the sample have succeeded in using correct pronunciation in the oral reading and answering the questions. The analysis shows that, (45 %) of the sample miss some letters and sounds in their pronunciation. Unfortunately (10%) of the sample failed to interact. As shown, about have of the sample failed to use correct pronunciation.

4.1.3 EFL Learners' Vocabulary Performance :

Table and figure (3) EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge

Options	Frequency	Percent
Used correct vocabulary	10	50.0
To some extent	4	20.0
Failed to use correct vocabulary	6	30.0
Total	20	100.0

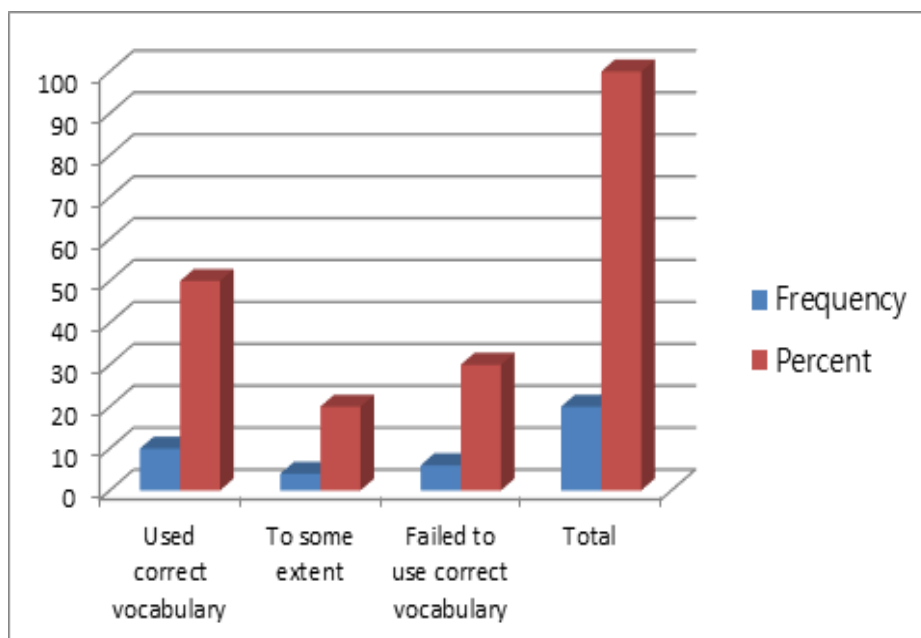


Fig (3)

According to the statistical analysis of table (3), only (50%) of the sample use the correct English vocabulary items in answering the question. The results also showed that, (20) of the sample have few vocabulary items to use in their task, while (30%) of the sample failed to write the suitable vocabulary.

4.1.4 EFL Learners' Use of Grammar:

Table and figure (4) Performing correct Grammar items

Options	Frequency	Percent
Used the right grammar	9	45.0
To some extent	6	30.0
Failed to use the right grammar	5	25.0
Total	20	100.0

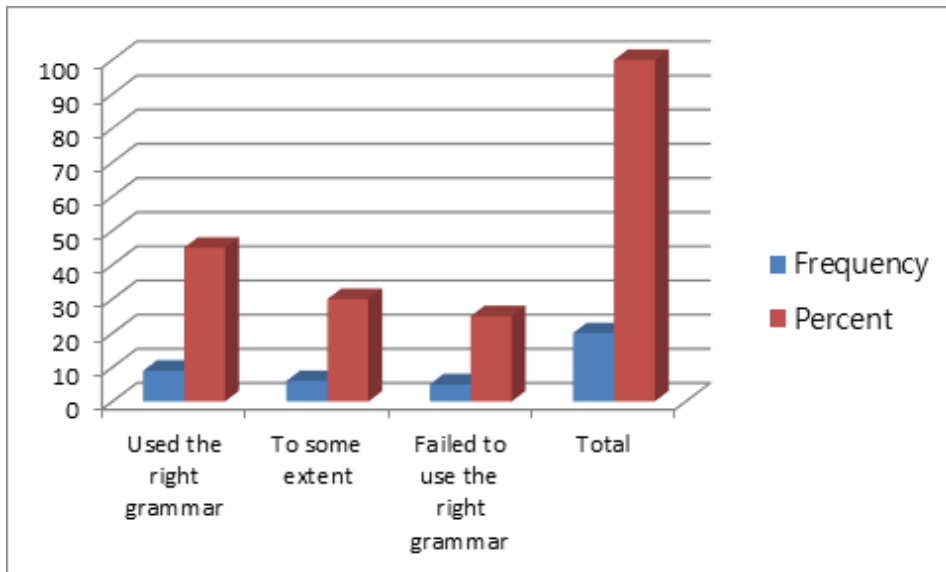


Fig (4) According to the statistical analysis of table (4), (45%) of the sample able to use correct grammar in answering the test. However, (30%) of them have grammar mistakes and (25%) failed to use correct grammar in their answers. Therefore, nearly half of EFL students face difficulties in communicating ideas accurately.

4.2 The Analysis of the Post-Test:

4.2.1 EFL Students' Speaking Performance After Training Instructions

The statistical analysis in Fig (5) shows that, (70%) of the sample performed good speaking about the topic under discussion

while (30%) of the sample performed speaking with difficulties.

Table and figure (5) Students' Speaking Performance After Instructions

Options	Frequency	Percent
Performed speaking successfully	14	70.0
Performed speaking with difficulties	6	30.0
Total	20	100.0

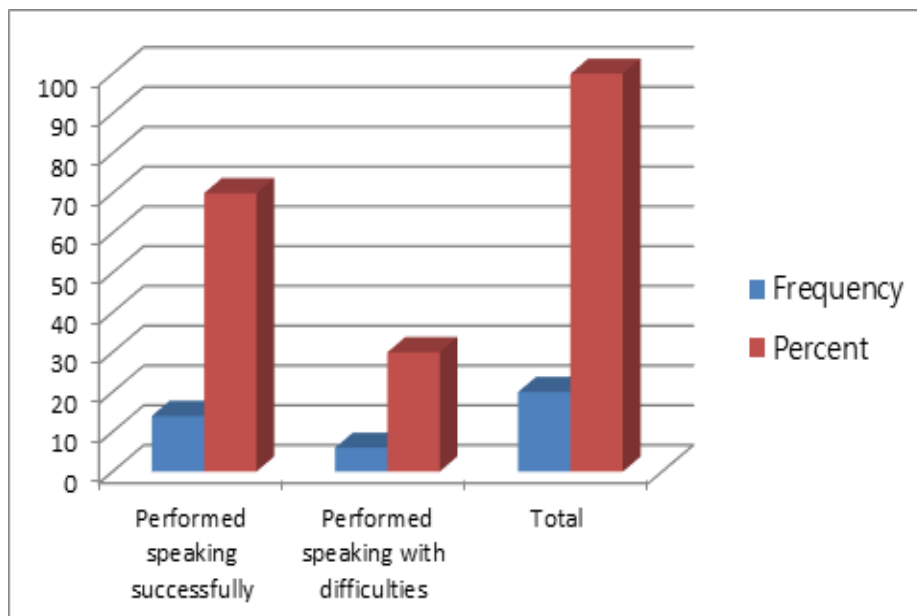


Fig (5)

4.2.2 EFL Learners' Pronunciation Abilities:

Table and figure(6) EFL learners' pronunciation

Options	Frequency	Percent
Performed correct pronunciation	13	65.0
Performed incorrect pronunciation	2	10.0
Failed to interact	5	25.0
Total	20	100.0

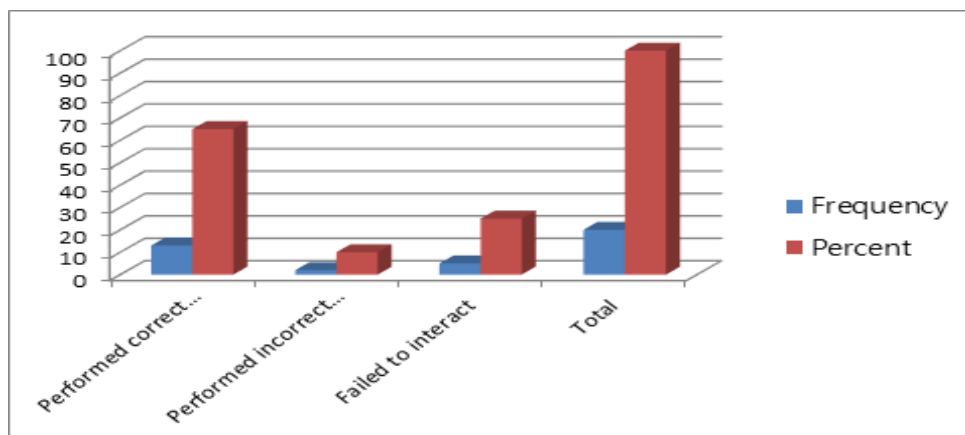


Fig (6)

Again according to the statistical analysis of table (6), the majority of the sample (65%) performed correct pronunciation in their oral interaction according to their English variety. The analysis showed that, only (10%) of the sample performed some words with incorrect pronunciation as missing some letters and sounds in the pronunciation. Unfortunately (25%) of the sample failed to interact

4.2.3 Using Grammar and Vocabulary:

Table and figure (7) Performing correct Grammar items

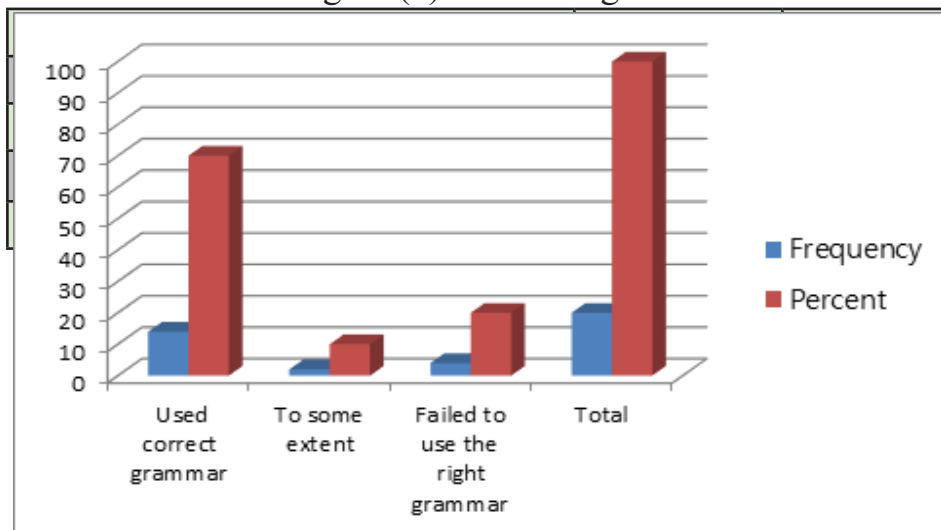


Fig (7)

Again the statistical results in Fig (7), indicated that in the pos -test (70%) of the sample used correct grammar in their oral performance while two of them (10%) of the sample have some mistakes in their oral performance and only (20%) made misuse of grammar in their oral performance.

5.0 Conclusion Findings and Recommendations:

The study aims at investigating EFL Sudanese learners' attitudes toward English variety used in EFL context and measuring learner' speaking performance. For the purpose of the study the researchers used pre-post tests to measure students performance of speaking as an EFL speakers. The statistical analysis of the pre-test from Fig (1) to Fig (4) indicated that only half of the sample (50%) who performed good oral interaction. However, the statistical analysis in the post-test, the learners performed speaking better than that of pre-test, which means that, the teaching instructions of developing speaking skills have improved their performance of speaking, as its appear in Fig (5), Fig (6), and Fig (7) (70%) of the sample performed good speaking instead of (50%) in the pre-test. Using technology enhances learners oral interaction.

5.1 Findings and Recommendations:

Findings

After the data analyses the study came out with the following findings:

1. Speaking generally is a difficult task for many of EFL learners.
2. Sudanese EFL learners have different attitudes toward EFL variety.
3. Using effective teaching techniques in EFL classroom develops learner' speaking performance.

5.2 Recommendations:

Based on these findings, the study recommends that:

1. Instructions of improving speaking skills should be highlighted in EFL classes.
2. Students should be encouraged to speak English language according to the language variety of EFL context.
3. Effective methods of teaching speaking should be used in EFL classes.

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