


# Problems Face Fourth Class Secondary Students in Speaking English

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history</b> Received March 3, 2026 Revised March 10, 2026 Accepted April 17, 2026</p>	<p>This study aims to investigate the challenges faced by EFL students in Tikrit city, Salahdin Governorate, Iraq, with a particular focus on speaking difficulties across linguistic elements such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. To achieve this, an interview instrument consisting of four targeted questions was developed and validated by experts in methodology and linguistics to ensure reliability. The data were analyzed using statistical tools including percentages, Pearson correlation coefficient, mean, and standard deviation, which provided a clear picture of the consistency of the interview questions and the distribution of student responses. Findings revealed that fourth-grade students struggle significantly with speaking English, with difficulties most pronounced in pronunciation (37.50%) and fluency (37.50%), followed by vocabulary (16.67%) and grammar (12.50%). These results highlight the multifaceted nature of speaking challenges, suggesting that phonological accuracy and speech flow are the most critical barriers to effective communication. Based on these insights, the study recommends that curriculum designers, educators, and EFL teachers place greater emphasis on oral practice, integrate pronunciation and fluency-focused activities, and adopt innovative teaching strategies to enhance communicative competence. Such measures are expected to improve the quality of English language education and empower students to achieve greater confidence and proficiency in spoken English.</p>
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## I. Introduction

### A. Problem of the study

Speaking English is widely regarded as the second most essential of the four core language skills, as it involves oral delivery and requires coordinated use of multiple organs, including the lungs, nose, vocal tract, vocal cords, tongue, teeth, and lips. For many Iraqi students, the desire to speak English stems from the need to communicate effectively with both native and non-native speakers, whether inside the classroom or in broader social contexts. Despite this motivation, learners often encounter substantial difficulties that hinder their ability to express ideas, emotions, and feelings clearly. These challenges are most evident in the linguistic domains of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency, which collectively shape the quality of oral communication. As a result, students frequently experience embarrassment, hesitation, or silence in speaking situations, leading them to avoid participation altogether. Such obstacles not only limit their communicative competence but also undermine their confidence, underscoring the urgent need for pedagogical interventions that prioritize oral practice, reduce anxiety,

and strengthen linguistic accuracy to empower students to achieve greater proficiency in spoken English.

Fluency in English requires more than just grammatical accuracy; it demands a strong command of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and the ability to speak at a natural pace without relying on translation from the native language. Fluent speakers are expected to combine grammatical rules and lexical knowledge seamlessly, producing utterances that reflect spontaneity and coherence, even with occasional stumbles. However, many students struggle with idioms and vocabulary, which limits their expressive capacity and disrupts fluency. Research by Floriasti and Permatari (2020) highlights that students often report low vocabulary knowledge, difficulties with pronunciation, and challenges in forming well-structured utterances, all of which hinder effective communication. Furthermore, Yassi and Kaharuddin (2018) emphasize that poor pronunciation can significantly undermine spoken English, even when learners possess adequate vocabulary and grammar, as misarticulated sounds distort meaning and reduce intelligibility. These findings suggest that vocabulary enrichment and pronunciation practice must be prioritized alongside grammar instruction to build a more holistic foundation for oral proficiency in EFL contexts.

## B. The value

The present study is anticipated to provide significant value by systematically identifying the problems students encounter when speaking English as a foreign language, both within classroom settings and in real-life communication. By uncovering specific areas of difficulty, such as pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary, the findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the linguistic and communicative barriers that hinder students' oral proficiency. These insights are expected to enhance students' ability to communicate more effectively, fostering confidence and competence in their English use. Moreover, the study holds considerable educational importance for teachers, offering evidence-based guidance on which aspects of speaking require greater instructional focus. It also provides practical implications for curriculum developers and textbook designers, emphasizing the need to prioritize speaking skills alongside other language components. Ultimately, the study underscores the critical role of speaking in language acquisition and calls for pedagogical strategies that integrate oral practice, contextual learning, and supportive assessment to help students master this skill more effectively.

## C. Aims of the study

Students learning English as a foreign language often encounter multifaceted challenges that hinder their speaking performance, particularly in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. Mispronunciation can obscure meaning and reduce confidence, while grammatical inaccuracies disrupt clarity and coherence. A limited vocabulary restricts expression, forcing reliance on repetitive or simplistic language, and a lack of fluency, marked by hesitation, pauses, or overuse of fillers, weakens communication flow. Statistical analysis of these difficulties can reveal patterns across learners, highlighting systemic issues such as insufficient exposure, ineffective teaching methods, or anxiety in oral practice. The underlying causes often stem from limited interaction with native speakers, inadequate emphasis on oral skills in curricula, and psychological barriers like fear of making mistakes. To address these problems, recommendations include integrating more communicative activities, providing targeted pronunciation drills, expanding vocabulary through contextual learning, and fostering supportive environments that encourage risk-taking in speech. By implementing these solutions, institutions can empower learners to overcome linguistic obstacles and achieve greater confidence and competence in English communication.

## D. Limits of the study

The current study is limited to a sample of fourth-year students in the Scientific branch at Secondary Schools in Tikrit city, Salah Al-Deen governorate, during the academic year (2022-2023).

## E. Section Two

### 1) Theoretical Background

#### a) What is Speaking?

Speaking is one of the most essential skills in English language learning, particularly for EFL students, yet it is often overlooked due to its complexity and the challenges it poses for assessment. Burn and Joyce (1997) and Louma (2004) define speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information within contexts shaped by forms, meanings, participants, and environments. Despite its central role as a productive skill, speaking tends to be overshadowed by other language components because teachers perceive it as difficult to evaluate, a concern highlighted by Egolin (1999) and Kruk (2019). This neglect results in limited opportunities for learners to engage in authentic communication, thereby hindering their fluency, accuracy, and confidence. Therefore, prioritizing speaking in EFL classrooms is crucial not only for developing linguistic competence but also for fostering communicative effectiveness through pedagogical approaches that emphasize interaction, contextual learning, and supportive assessment strategies.

#### b) Communicative Competence

Students learning English as a foreign language are expected to speak both accurately and fluently, which requires the development of communicative competence. Communicative competence consists of four interrelated components. First, grammatical competence includes knowledge of pronunciation, vocabulary, word formation, and sentence structure, serving as the foundation for accurate language use. Second, sociolinguistic competence refers to understanding social and cultural norms and to using language appropriately across contexts, including variations in topic, setting, and communicative purpose. Third, discourse competence involves the ability to comprehend and produce coherent and cohesive texts across the four language skills, enabling effective communication across various genres. Finally, strategic competence encompasses the use of compensatory strategies to overcome communication difficulties, allowing learners to maintain interaction despite limitations in grammatical or sociolinguistic knowledge. Together, these competencies form a comprehensive framework for promoting effective oral communication in EFL contexts (Peterwagner, 2015; Widdowson, 2003).

#### c) Features of spoken interaction

According to Pawlak and Waniek-Klimczak (2015), spontaneous spoken interaction is characterized by several distinctive features that differentiate it from written discourse. First, spoken discourse is often context-dependent and may appear less formally structured or even inappropriate when judged by written standards. It consists of variable and flexible units rather than fixed grammatical constructions. In addition, spoken interaction is inherently

collaborative, frequently involving shared contributions and overlapping utterances among speakers. Repetition is another common feature, as speakers often restate ideas for emphasis or clarification. Moreover, spoken language can be ambiguous due to the immediacy of production and the reliance on contextual cues. It is also highly interactive, requiring constant negotiation of meaning between participants. Elements such as pauses, fillers, and placeholders are frequently present, reflecting real-time language processing. Furthermore, spoken discourse extensively uses discourse markers to organize ideas and manage conversation flow. Substitutions and formulaic expressions are commonly used to facilitate communication efficiency. Certain routines also govern speech acts, helping speakers adhere to socially accepted communication patterns. Finally, spoken discourse is creative and dynamic, allowing speakers to adapt language use to different communicative situations (Pawlak & Waniek-Klimczak, 2015).

Linguistics, as the scientific study of language, encompasses key components such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. In language learning, particularly in speaking, linguistic competence is crucial to learners' ability to communicate effectively. Linguistic problems often reflect learners' level of mastery of these components and can significantly hinder their speaking performance. Numerous studies have identified common linguistic difficulties faced by students learning English as a foreign language. These include inadequate pronunciation, limited vocabulary, and insufficient grammatical knowledge, all of which contribute to communication breakdowns and reduced fluency. For instance, learners may struggle to produce intelligible sounds, construct grammatically accurate sentences, or select appropriate lexical items during interaction. Such challenges ultimately affect their confidence and ability to participate actively in spoken communication (Randu Farhani et al., 2020; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020; Widyasworo, 2019; Wulandari et al., 2022).

#### *F. Pronunciation*

Pronunciation refers to the way in which words and sounds are produced in a language, including aspects such as stress, intonation, and articulation, which contribute to intelligibility and communicative effectiveness. It involves not only the accurate production of individual sounds but also the appropriate use of suprasegmental features that influence meaning and listener comprehension. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), many students experience difficulties with pronunciation, hindering their ability to participate effectively in spoken interaction. For instance, learners may struggle to express their ideas clearly, which can lead to anxiety and reduced confidence during discussions, as well as difficulty in understanding others' viewpoints (Pawlak et al.). Despite the growing number of studies on pronunciation, these findings have not always resulted in

significant changes in classroom practices or instructional approaches (Jarosz, 2019). Furthermore, learners often encounter challenges in perceiving and producing unfamiliar sounds in a new language, particularly when these sounds do not exist in their first language. Baker and Goldstein (2008) argue that students must develop the ability to both recognize and reproduce target language sounds accurately across different communicative contexts. This includes mastering the articulation of consonants and vowels, as well as understanding how these sounds function within words and sentences. Therefore, explicit instruction and guided practice in pronunciation are essential to help learners improve their speaking proficiency and overall communicative competence.

#### *G. Grammar*

Grammar plays a crucial role in language use, as it governs how words are systematically arranged to form meaningful and accurate sentences. It involves the understanding and application of grammatical structures, including syntax, morphology, and sentence patterns, which are essential for effective communication. In the context of speaking English as a foreign language (EFL), grammatical competence significantly influences learners' ability to convey ideas clearly and appropriately. However, many learners encounter grammatical difficulties that hinder their speaking performance. These problems may arise from a range of complex factors, including physical, neurological, and even genetic influences that affect language processing and production (Farrell, 2006). As a result, learners may struggle with constructing grammatically correct sentences, leading to misunderstandings or reduced fluency in communication. Therefore, developing grammatical accuracy alongside fluency is essential to helping learners achieve effective spoken communication.

#### *H. Vocabulary*

Vocabulary refers to the set of words in a language, along with their meanings, and plays a fundamental role in effective communication. It encompasses various word classes, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, which enable learners to construct meaningful expressions in both spoken and written forms. In language learning, vocabulary can be categorized into receptive and expressive vocabulary. Expressive vocabulary refers to learners' ability to produce words appropriately when speaking or writing (Kersner & Wright, 2015). However, many students struggle with vocabulary, especially when selecting appropriate words in real-time communication. Hamaguchi (2010) notes that such difficulties are often associated with weaknesses in expressive vocabulary, where learners struggle to retrieve and use the correct lexical items when needed. As a result, students may face challenges naming objects, describing pictures, expressing ideas, opinions, and feelings, and explaining actions or events. These limitations can significantly hinder their

speaking performance and reduce their overall communicative effectiveness. Therefore, strengthening learners' vocabulary mastery, particularly their expressive vocabulary, is essential for improving their ability to communicate clearly and confidently in English

### *I. Fluency*

Fluency refers to the ability to engage in conversation confidently, using appropriate words and structures accurately while maintaining a smooth and natural flow of speech (Hill, 2022). It is widely regarded as a key component of speaking proficiency in a second language, as it reflects how effectively speakers can express their ideas at length with minimal hesitation and effort (Tarakcioglu & Wright, 2020). However, many learners experience fluency-related problems that hinder their communicative performance. These difficulties are often linked to limited vocabulary, which restricts learners' ability to retrieve and use appropriate expressions during interaction. In addition, fluency problems may arise from various factors, including insufficient language knowledge and skills, as well as environmental, cultural, and social influences. Personal factors, such as physiological and psychological conditions, can also contribute to disruptions in speech production (Sargin, 2006; Güneş & Söylemez, 2018). Furthermore, Thornbury (2005, as cited in Cetlawa, 2011) notes that even native speakers may experience embarrassment and frustration, which can negatively affect their fluency. These challenges demonstrate that fluency is not only a linguistic issue but also a complex interplay of cognitive, social, and affective factors that influence learners' speaking abilities.

## **II. Method**

### *A. Population and Sample*

The study population consisted of fourth-year students in the scientific branch of public secondary schools in Tikrit City, Salah al-Din Governorate, during the 2022–2023 academic year. From this population, a sample of 60 students, both male and female, was initially selected. However, for in-depth analysis, six students were purposively selected as the main participants, and their responses were analyzed to address the study's objectives. To collect qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with these six participants, comprising three male and three female students. The interview protocol included four open-ended questions designed to elicit students' perspectives and experiences related to the research focus.

### *B. Research instruments*

The researcher asked the specialists to kindly read the statements and provide their judgments on whether they are valid. Some statements have been modified according to their points of view. The present interview includes four questions. Names of the jury members are distributed according to their academic degrees

- Professor Nahida T. Majeed (PhD) College of Education
- Assist Professor Issra B. Abd Rahman (Ph.D.), College of Education
- Assist Professor Mohmmmed S. Abd Waheed (MA), College of Education for Women
- Instructor Aslam H. Taha (PHD) College of Education
- Instructor Elaf S. Abdullah (M.A) College of Education for Women.

### *C. Interview*

An interview is a widely used research instrument for establishing rapport with participants, selecting appropriate lines of inquiry, gathering in-depth data, and diagnosing issues to provide a comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon (Vegetal, 2002; Tellis & Barone, 2018). In this study, the interview method was used to collect detailed information about students' beliefs and the difficulties they encounter when speaking English as a foreign language. The interviews were conducted with selected students and included a range of questions on familiar topics such as family, friendships, and personal interests to encourage natural, meaningful responses. The primary aim of the interviews was to analyze students' spoken language using key linguistic elements, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. Through this process, the study sought to identify and describe the specific challenges students face in speaking English, thereby providing a clearer understanding of the factors influencing their communicative performance.

#### *1) The Construction of the Interview*

The interview instrument consisted of four main questions, each representing one of the key linguistic components of spoken language: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. Each question was assigned a 25% weight to ensure balanced evaluation across all components. The interview structure was designed to elicit sufficient and relevant information about the speaking abilities of fourth-grade students in the scientific branch of secondary schools. Furthermore, the questions were systematically organized and categorized into the four linguistic elements, enabling a more focused analysis of students' performance in each area. This categorization facilitated the identification of specific strengths and difficulties in students' spoken English.

#### *2) The face validity of the interview*

Face validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument appears to measure what it is intended to measure, based on subjective judgment, particularly from experts in the relevant field (Brink, 2006). It primarily relies on an evaluative decision by specialists who assess whether the instrument adequately represents the construct under investigation. D'Este and Ludbrook (2013) further

emphasize that the credibility of test results can be strengthened when both experts and non-specialists can interpret and make meaningful judgments based on the findings, often facilitated by interview-based assessments. In addition, Cotlon and Covert (2007) argue that establishing face validity involves systematically reviewing the instrument, organizing its components, such as interview items, into a structured format that enables evaluators to determine their appropriateness and relevance for data collection.

In this study, the interview instrument, comprising four carefully constructed questions, underwent rigorous validation by a panel of experts in methodology and linguistics. The questions were designed to assess four critical domains of spoken language: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. Expert feedback was instrumental in refining the instrument, leading to modifications that enhanced clarity, contextual relevance, and alignment with the intended linguistic constructs. This iterative validation ensured that the instrument was not only theoretically sound but also practically effective in capturing the nuanced difficulties students face when speaking English as a foreign language. By strengthening the tool's validity and reliability, the study generated robust data that accurately reflected learners' challenges, thereby providing a solid foundation for subsequent statistical analysis and pedagogical recommendations.

### 3) Content validity of the interview

Content validity refers to the extent to which an instrument adequately represents and measures all aspects of the construct under investigation (Brink, 2006). In the present study, content validity was carefully examined to ensure that the interview questions comprehensively addressed the four domains of spoken language pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. To achieve this, the "Pearson correlation coefficient formula" was applied before administering the interview, enabling the researchers to statistically verify the consistency and relevance of the items. This process strengthened the instrument's credibility by confirming that it was both theoretically aligned with the intended linguistic variables and empirically capable of generating valid and reliable data on students' speaking difficulties.

### 4) Reliability of the Interview

The reliability of the interview instrument was assessed using interrater reliability, which measures the consistency between independent raters in evaluating participants' responses. In this approach, the interview data were scored by two independent raters to ensure objectivity and consistency in the assessment process (Whetzel & McDaniel, 2004). Catano et al. (2010) further explain that reliability measurement reflects the extent to which the variability in scores is attributable to differences between raters rather than inconsistencies in the instrument itself. To establish reliability, the interview was administered to two students (one male and one female) as

a pilot test. The test was conducted at the end of November 2022 and subsequently retested after a 14-day interval. The consistency of the scores across the two administrations was then analyzed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The analysis yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.75, indicating acceptable reliability for the instrument. This result suggests that the interview provides reasonably consistent measurements of students' speaking performance across different administrations

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Interrater Reliability of Speaking Components

No.	Question	Pearson Correlation Coefficient
1-	Pronunciation	0.50
	Grammar	-0.27
	Vocabulary	-0.75
	Fluency	0.27
2-	Pronunciation	0.75
	Grammar	0.65
	Vocabulary	0.75
	Fluency	0.75
3-	Pronunciation	-0.75
	Grammar	-0.11
	Vocabulary	0
	Fluency	0.18
4-	Pronunciation	0.75
	Grammar	-0.75
	Vocabulary	-0.86
	Fluency	0.69

### 5) The Pilot Interview

A pilot study was conducted as a preliminary procedure to test the effectiveness of the research instrument and the overall methodology before the main data collection phase. The pilot interview served as an initial trial to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and practicality of the interview questions when administered to students like those in the target population. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), pilot studies are essential for providing participants with experience in responding to interview questions and expressing their views, thereby improving the quality of the collected data. Furthermore, Montgomery (2016) states that the purpose of a pilot study is to gather preliminary information that can inform and refine procedures for the main study, as well as to identify potential methodological issues. In this study, the pilot phase involved two fourth-grade students (one male and one female) who were randomly selected from different secondary schools. These participants were excluded from the main sample to avoid bias. The results of the pilot study were used to revise and improve the interview instrument and its administration, ensuring the final version was more effective and better suited to achieving the research objectives.

### 6) Final Administration of the Interview

The interview was conducted with the students in the second week of October 2022. The students were interviewed and asked four questions each. Each student

spent half an hour answering, and the researcher recorded their marks based on their responses. They were fourth-grade students.

### III. Results and Discussion

#### A. Data Analysis of the Interview

The interview was used in the present study as a primary instrument to obtain accurate, in-depth information about students' difficulties in speaking English, particularly with key linguistic elements, namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. In addition, the interview aimed to identify the underlying causes of these difficulties, which may lead to errors or communication breakdowns in spoken English, and to explore possible solutions to address these challenges. The instrument consisted of four questions designed to elicit students' responses across the targeted linguistic domains.

The first interview question, "Describe your family," was intended to prompt students to produce spontaneous spoken language in a familiar context. To analyze the responses, descriptive statistics, including percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations, were calculated for each linguistic category. Furthermore, overall speaking performance was assessed by summing scores across all categories. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2, which summarizes students' performance in each linguistic component and their overall speaking proficiency.

Table 2. First Question

Skill	percentage	Mean	St. Deviation
Pronunciation	66.66%	3.66	1.08
Grammar	66.66%	3.50	1.22
Vocabulary	83.34%	4	1.29
Fluency	83.34%	3.83	1.63
Total		14.99	5.22

According to Table 2, participants achieved the highest performance in vocabulary and fluency, with a percentage of 83.34%, which is categorized as very good. In contrast, pronunciation and grammar received the lowest scores, each at 66.66%, reflecting noticeable errors in these areas. The overall mean score for participants was 14.99, with a standard deviation of 5.22, indicating moderate variability in students' speaking performance. These findings suggest that students demonstrate moderate proficiency in pronunciation and grammar, while performing better in vocabulary and fluency. Therefore, pronunciation and grammar can be identified as the most challenging aspects of speaking for the participants in this study.

1) *The second question was "Explain the weather today?"*

As shown in Table 3, the results indicate that the students demonstrated a moderate level of performance across all four speaking skills: pronunciation, grammar,

vocabulary, and fluency, with each skill achieving a percentage of 66.66%. This suggests that, overall, the participants' speaking proficiency falls within the medium category. However, the findings also reveal that approximately 33.34% of the performance reflects difficulties across these linguistic components, indicating that students still encounter notable challenges in speaking English. These difficulties are evident in errors related to pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, and fluency.

Table 3. Second Question

Skill	percentage	Mean	St. Deviation
Pronunciation	66.66%	3.83	1.5
Grammar	66.66%	3.83	1.29
Vocabulary	66.66%	3.66	1.22
Fluency	66.66%	3.38	1.11
Total		14.7	5.12

Furthermore, the overall mean score was 14.7, with a standard deviation of 5.12, indicating moderate variation in students' performance. This result implies that while some students perform relatively well, others experience considerable difficulties in speaking. Therefore, it can be concluded that the participants generally possess a moderate level of speaking proficiency but still require improvement in all key linguistic areas.

2) *The third question was "What are your hobbies?"*

As shown in Table 4, participants achieved the highest performance in vocabulary (100%), followed by grammar (83.34%). In contrast, performance was lower in pronunciation (66.66%) and fluency (50%), with fluency the lowest. These findings suggest that students possess strong lexical knowledge and a relatively good command of grammatical structures, enabling them to construct meaningful, structurally appropriate sentences. However, despite this competence, they encounter considerable challenges in achieving accurate pronunciation and maintaining a smooth, natural flow of speech during oral communication. The lower pronunciation performance may be attributed to factors such as the influence of students' first language, limited exposure to authentic spoken English, and insufficient practice in articulating target-language sounds. Similarly, difficulties in fluency may stem from hesitation, limited automaticity in language production, and challenges in integrating vocabulary and grammar in real-time communication. Consequently, these findings highlight a gap between students' linguistic knowledge and their ability to apply it effectively in spoken interaction. Therefore, greater pedagogical emphasis should be placed on improving pronunciation accuracy and developing fluency through communicative practice, interactive activities, and increased exposure to authentic language use.

Table 4. Third Question

Skill	Percentage	Mean	St. Deviation
Pronunciation	66.66%	3.33	1.29
Grammar	83.34%	4.16	1.29
Vocabulary	100%	4.33	0.5
Fluency	50%	3.33	0.86
Total		15.15	3.94

The overall mean score was 15.15, with a standard deviation of 3.94, suggesting moderate variation in participants' performance. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that pronunciation and fluency are the most problematic areas for students when engaging in spoken English, highlighting the need for greater instructional focus on these aspects to enhance their communicative effectiveness.

3) *The fourth question was "What are you interested in at your school?"*

As shown in Table 5, participants demonstrated varied levels of achievement across the four speaking domains, reflecting both strengths and persistent challenges in their oral proficiency. Vocabulary emerged as the strongest area, with students attaining 83.34%, indicating a relatively solid command of lexical resources that supports their ability to express ideas. Grammar followed at 66.66%, suggesting moderate competence in sentence construction and structural accuracy. In contrast, fluency and pronunciation both recorded the lowest percentages at 50%, highlighting significant barriers to effective communication, particularly in maintaining speech flow and in accurately articulating sounds. The overall mean score of 14.65, with a standard deviation of 5.23, indicates moderate performance and noticeable variability among learners, underscoring differences in individual abilities and learning experiences. These findings reveal that while students possess a comparatively strong vocabulary base, their struggles with pronunciation and fluency remain critical obstacles, emphasizing the need for targeted pedagogical interventions that prioritize oral practice, phonological training, and fluency-building activities to enhance communicative competence.

Table 5. Forth Question

Skill	Percentage	Mean	St. Deviation
Pronunciation	50%	3.33	1.29
Grammar	66.66%	3.83	1.22
Vocabulary	83,34%	4.16	1.22
Fluency	50%	3.33	1.5
Total		14.65	5.23

Based on the analysis of the interview data, the study identifies several linguistic problems affecting students' speaking performance. These problems are categorized into four main areas: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. To determine which difficulty is most prevalent, descriptive statistical measures, including percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations, were

used. The analysis reveals that pronunciation and fluency constitute the most significant challenges for students, indicating that these areas require greater attention in instructional practices to improve overall speaking proficiency.

The study's findings reveal that students' speaking difficulties are primarily associated with four key linguistic components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. Based on the analysis of the interview data, each component contributes differently to students' overall speaking challenges. Pronunciation difficulties were among the most prominent, accounting for 37.50% of the total problems. Specifically, students demonstrated issues related to incorrect stress patterns (50%), inappropriate intonation (33.83%), limited motivation to approximate native-like pronunciation (30.83%), and the influence of their first language on English pronunciation (33.83%). These findings suggest that both linguistic and affective factors contribute to students' pronunciation difficulties.

In terms of grammar, the findings reveal a comparatively lower proportion of difficulties (12.50%) than those observed in other linguistic components; however, several notable issues still emerged. While a subset of students demonstrated some ability to use the present simple tense appropriately (18.75%), a larger proportion struggled to distinguish parts of speech (37.50%), which often led to confusion in sentence construction. Furthermore, a smaller group of learners (9.37%) reported feeling embarrassed when attempting to use past-tense forms correctly, suggesting that affective factors, such as anxiety and self-consciousness, may hinder their willingness to communicate. These results indicate that although grammar may not represent the most dominant challenge compared to pronunciation and fluency, it nonetheless constitutes a significant barrier to effective oral communication. Addressing these issues requires instructional strategies that not only reinforce grammatical accuracy but also reduce learners' anxiety, thereby fostering greater confidence and encouraging active participation in spoken English.

Vocabulary-related difficulties accounted for 16.67% of the total challenges, underscoring the importance of lexical knowledge in effective communication. Students reported several specific issues, including difficulty comprehending unfamiliar words (22.21%), limited ability to employ synonyms and antonyms appropriately (16.66%), and problems with spontaneous translation during real-time interaction (27.77%). These limitations reveal that many learners lack sufficient lexical resources, which restricts their ability to express ideas with precision and clarity. A constrained vocabulary not only hampers fluency but also reduces confidence, as students often resort to repetitive or simplistic word choices. Such findings highlight the need for instructional approaches that emphasize vocabulary expansion through

contextualized learning, exposure to authentic materials, and practice with lexical variation across different communicative settings. Strengthening students' vocabulary knowledge will not only enhance their expressive capacity but also support improvements in grammar, fluency, and overall communicative competence.

Fluency difficulties were found to be as prominent as pronunciation issues, accounting for 37.50% of the total problems reported by students. Learners frequently struggled to maintain a natural flow of speech, with 33.33% indicating hesitation and self-interruption during communication. Additionally, 30.83% of students reported challenges in effectively integrating grammatical structures and vocabulary in real-time, which hindered their ability to construct coherent utterances. A significant proportion (50%) experienced frequent pauses and difficulty completing sentences, while 30.83% reported difficulty conveying ideas with confidence and coherence. Taken together, these findings underscore that pronunciation and fluency represent the most dominant obstacles to effective oral communication, followed by vocabulary and grammar. This pattern suggests that instructional practices should place greater emphasis on enhancing oral fluency and pronunciation through targeted exercises, interactive speaking tasks, and supportive feedback, while continuing to reinforce grammar and vocabulary development. Such a balanced approach would not only address the most pressing challenges but also contribute to improving students' English as a foreign language speaking proficiency.

#### IV. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, most students encounter linguistic problems in English as a foreign language, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. This study identifies three causes that lead students to face linguistic problems in speaking English. A personal cause refers to the fact that each student is different from another. It is evident that some students can learn in one step, while others need to repeat the same activity twice or three times. So, students feel nervous as they are exposed to the target language. Environmental causes involve both in- and out-of-classroom factors. In the classroom, time is insufficient to develop students' abilities; the EFL teacher must cover all four skills in 45 minutes and complete the entire textbook. Neither the teacher nor classmates are encouraged to speak. Outside the classroom, Arabic is the primary language of communication in Iraqi society. For this reason, students do not have a chance to practice or interact with others. The final cause is an inappropriate teaching method for teaching English as a foreign language. The teacher always speaks and explains while the students listen.

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