

Re-Thinking improvement issues in EFL speaking commitment at higher education - A speaking discourse analysis perspectives

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Abstract

Many linguistic speaking inputs require more confidence to communicate effectively in higher education. Focusing on the speaking discourse perspectives aiming to meet student satisfaction in committing to speaking EFL, we customized the adopted instruments as follows: (Asakereh & Dehghannezhad, 2015) and (Oxford, 1990). The research questions are RQ1. What language input challenges do Albanian students face in the university setting while speaking EFL? RQ2. Is the EFL speaking discourse affected positively by strategies utilized in FL speaking performances? For the academic year 2022/23, the current researcher obtained qualitative data output from two instruments N=250 online questionnaires. Using the second instrument (SILL), we tested the following hypotheses: H1=students achieve satisfaction with up-to-date language input in bringing knowledge to life through continuous effective instructional practices H2=the effectiveness of the strategies used by EFL teachers toward speaking commitment needs ongoing improvement. SPSS data output reported a significant correlation between the research hypotheses. It targets the perspectives of the instructional impact of Metacognitive Strategies and Affective Strategies for increased learner autonomy. The result of this research promotes Affective Strategies to maximize learner autonomy indicating significant practical implications in the classroom to accomplish speaking goals. Concerning improvement issues in EFL speaking at higher education, commitment marks the relevance of empowering teaching speaking content.

Keywords: EFL Learning Strategies, Language Input, Speaking Difficulties, Student Autonomy

Public Interest Statement

This article serves as an alarm of awareness for small country students who strive to become proficient in speaking the English Language. The EFL teachers in higher education must reconsider issues affecting student progress. To improve proficiency in speaking English, university students need more encouragement. The Ministry of Education has taken a positive step forward by implementing a policy promoting proficiency, which is typical for Balkan countries. However, the study has shown that students in higher education require practical and modern approaches to endorse. This article sheds light on using significant aspects of speaking commitment in higher education.

1. Introduction

Speaking is marked as an indicator of student proficiency in general. EFL students' speaking performances are rooted in academic commitment. One of the universal issues facing higher education institutions is EFL student support. Students indicating more support are more likely to need additional improvement. Numerous researchers have discussed speaking skills tools and strategies. The perspective of student learning during classroom interaction should cultivate mutual peer support to progress in a comfortable and pleasant advantageous classroom environment (Santaria et al., 2023). (Arief, 2016) states that classroom interaction determines student success in learning a foreign language. Therefore, it becomes very important for teachers to foster engaging classroom communication. Thus, classroom domains and language input foster and develop speaking skills through content or teaching tools. Researchers have established discourse analysis perspectives in class interaction and interpreted numerous contexts in this setting. Moreover, promoting classroom interactions is very important. (Che Ahmad et al., 2017) highlight the Affective Strategies regarding commitment to learning, student involvement in fostering classroom interaction, and features influencing EFL speaking comfort. (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016) point out that the major students face affective-related, socially-related, and linguistically-related aspects that affect student attitude and self-confidence during speaking performances in the classroom. To solve this problem, and strengthen the emotional rapport between EFL teachers and students (Jaya. H.P. et al., 2022) promotes teachers' role in developing EFL students' networks with peers. This emotional connection will make the students comfortable facing difficulties for the EFL teacher credits in their emotional development (Harganauer et al., 2015). English Language spoken discourse, as it usually occurs in class communication, provides new insights into language use. In North Macedonia, the English Language is an obligatory subject. The North Macedonia government established the law to incorporate the English Language into the school curriculum from the beginning of education to the university for over a decade and a half. Despite this fact, students often need more support in speaking routines, leading to speaking failure. Therefore, they need to seek improvement to become proficient speakers. From a linguistic speaking perspective, accounting for spoken discourse and guiding students' commitment is crucial. Taking instructional shift forms and reconsidering content curriculum to further development of spoken forms (e.g., Carter & McCarthy 1995; Ochs, Schegloff, & Thompson, 1996). This study aimed to identify the challenges encountered by Albanian students in university and examine how teaching strategies employed in class could influence their speaking performance. Specifically, it focused on identifying the issues affecting EFL students' speaking skills and proposing effective learning practices to enhance their foreign language (FL) proficiency.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Discourse analysis and the teaching of speaking

Several analytical discourse approaches discuss learner engagement in speaking performance as critical to ensure academic development in FL learning (Chung et al., 2020). Speaking is an integral skill for foreign language learners, crucial for accurate communication. Analyzing various textual units through speaking tasks is essential to teach speaking effectively. However, learners may encounter challenges that can affect their commitment, including a lack of essential academic skills required for success. Regarding speaking discourse, language dwells in a position for teacher-student and student-student communication in various topics and manners with a language that helps raise issues related to its practice and functions (Rachmawati. S. A. & Setiawan. S, 2022). The variety of approaches in the array of research practices brings the perspectives of speaking skills as a demanding skill for EFL learners. Trends that reflect mastering speaking skills show students' problems exist at university even after many years of studying (Darmawan, Alam S, P., Nirma, & O.N. 2021). (Paradewari, 2017; Intan, 2018 et al.) claim that vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional occasions affect speaking skills performances. The current research investigates the

challenges that higher education Albanian EFL students face in learning and the coping strategies they employ. The goal is to find ways to increase students' commitment to speaking in higher education. Regarding student development speaking performances, the teachers' strategies put up with ideas and feedback data that enable FL learners to be confident users of English. Speaking is the only aspect that proves that students master the Language. Many studies support the critical role of self-efficacy and vicarious experience in students' speaking, which affects EFL speaking skill performances (Alawiyah, 2018). (Luz, 2015) suggests building good classroom interactions to improve the quality of learning.

2.2 Re-Thinking improvement issues in EFL speaking commitment

EFL teachers worldwide propose that the top priority of EFL courses is to develop students' proficiency. The global need to foster EFL teaching speaking acknowledges becoming proficient, which remains among the most challenging issues for many learners who still need improvement. A challenging issue for EFL teachers lays a cognitive burden on learners, alleviated through approaches that foster critical-thinking mindsets and effective teaching attitudes. An important aspect of teaching is to support learners' awareness of effective learning strategies and develop a curriculum content with focus instructional practices that will enable EFL students to achieve speaking proficiency. Strategy is an aspect of approaching speech modes. Moreover, it involves active employment of form-function maintained in the multi-competence (Cook, 2016). The curriculum must provide language input and instructional techniques that help recognize and overcome communication obstacles for effective communication output. Several researchers have highlighted the attributes of learning strategies as problem-solving oriented, which contribute to communicative competence and increase the role of teachers in involving cognitive aspects of language learning and competence improvement. The current research's objective was to analyze the problems Albanian university students face and find some standard solutions to those problems. Therefore, strategies are particular linguistic aspects that learners improve or develop their language (Nunan, 2001).

2.3 Theoretical issues in the teaching of speaking at higher education

The EFL teaching speaking practice focus, in general, has shifted to facilitate and attain linguistic input delivery with guaranteed accuracy. Regarding academic orientation, the focus is to reconcile students experiencing particular difficulties identified with emotional performances. Numerous research show that introducing certain methodological strategies and techniques advances the ability to master efficient ideas, which promise new possibilities in terms of the complex linguistic input. There is an awareness of investigating contemporary methodological speaking approaches and the possibility of introducing activities that increase interactive teaching maintenance. In North Macedonia, the use of English Language is the second and the third official language. Therefore, interaction within the scope of formal speaking is not as in many countries. As a result, the process to practice, improve and develop speaking is in classes or through additional self-initiated courses. Developing speaking skills for the accurate production of speech forms upon enhancing fluency through a situational task-based approach might reinforce a combination of approaches related to speech varieties. In this instance, (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001) claim the significance of peer assessment that enables one to set goals collaboratively. Hence, EFL students create unique speech forms and develop metalinguistic knowledge to improve learners' skills in anticipating conversation management, particularly in speaking activities like debates, presentations, and interviews. Moreover, to improve students' speaking skills, teachers must adopt effective methods that utilize feedback and suggestions to ensure the success of language teaching techniques that prioritize the learner, as emphasized (Ellis, 2009; Robinson, 2011 et al.). It is essential to refer to studies (Bialystok & Bremer, 1990) committed to widening teaching-speaking access to higher education to deliver the best possible student involvement.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research approach

The current research provided qualitative data evidence about Albanian students at the University of Tetova, North Macedonia. Additionally, explored students' linguistic correlation validity in English-speaking discourse performances.

The study focused on the following research questions:

RQ1. What language input challenges do Albanian students face in the university setting while speaking EFL?

RQ2. Is the EFL speaking discourse affected positively by strategies utilized in FL speaking performances?

The study conveyed the following hypotheses:

H1 student satisfaction is achieved with up-to-date language input in bringing knowledge to life through continuous effective instructional practices.

H2 the effectiveness of the strategies used by EFL teachers towards speaking commitment needs ongoing improvement.

3.2 Data collection

The researcher obtained qualitative data from the higher education institution in North Macedonia, the University of Tetova, using online survey questionnaires from the institutions' official e-mail. In the first instrument, 130 students participated. Whereas in the second instrument, 120 students participated.

3.3 Instruments

To gather data on speaking skills, the current researcher used the following instruments: The first instrument, the EFL questionnaire consisting of fifteen questions, was adopted (Asakereh & Dehghannezhad, 2015). The researcher customized the original copy to obtain data based on the objectives. Likert scale items were classified as Linguistic, Materials (Books, & Resources), and Teachers' Instructional Practices concerning speaking skills. The second instrument (SILL) Strategy Inventory of Language Learning by Oxford (1990), was adapted, modified, and customized to measure EFL students' challenges and speaking difficulties in higher education. The Likert scale items were classified into four categories: MS=Memory Strategies; CS=Cognitive Strategies; MCS=Metacognitive Strategies; and AS=Affective Strategies consisting of twenty questions.

3.4 Procedure

SPSS 29.0 was used to transform, analyze, explore, and obtain data output. The descriptive analyses of correlations give estimates of student satisfaction by means, standard deviations, and frequencies. Validity calculated the correlation of each statement in a group and the correlation between groups. In addition, between the two instruments' outputs. The two-tailed Kendall's Tau and Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient selected direction to verify the study's hypotheses and measure the strength of the relationship between linguistic content and teacher instructional practices. In the second instrument, the researcher selected the nonparametric correlation coefficient to determine the satisfaction of the strategies used by EFL teachers toward student speaking commitment. The first instrument result shifted to numbers 1-5: Very Unsatisfactory, Unsatisfactory, Neutral, Satisfactory, and Very Satisfactory. The second instrument result shifted to numbers 1-3 as follows: Never, Sometimes, and Often. The students were required to respond in terms of how well the statement described them.

3.5 Summary of data output

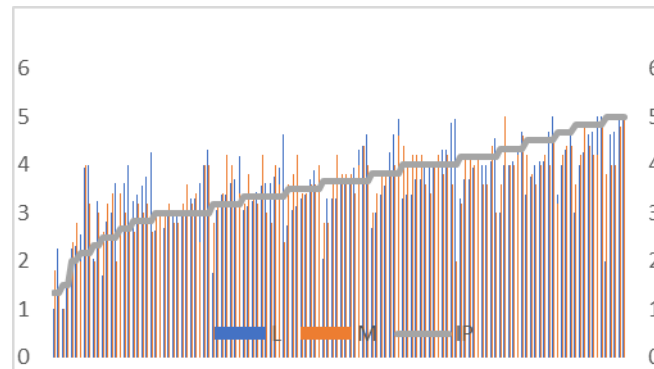
Table 1. Correlation of Language, Materials, and Instructional Practices

Descriptive Statistics			
Correlations			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
L	3.6096	.81390	130
M	3.5538	.75021	130
IP	3.5936	.83553	130

Table 2. Two-tailed Correlation of Kendall's Tau b and Spearman's Rho

			L	M	IP
Kendall's tau_b	L	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.472**	.454**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001	<.001
	M	Correlation Coefficient	.472**	1.000	.559**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.	<.001
	IP	Correlation Coefficient	.454**	.559**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.
Spearman's rho	L	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.602**	.590**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001	<.001
	M	Correlation Coefficient	.602**	1.000	.708**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.	<.001
	IP	Correlation Coefficient	.590**	.708**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.
	N		130	130	130

Figure 1. The output of the EFL questionnaire



Out of the 130 cases analyzed, the data from the first instrument of 31.8% scale and 68% ordinal measured. Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, for the three groups. Kendall's Tau and Spearman's Rho coefficients show a moderate positive correlation. Additionally, Figure 1 visually represents the correlation between the independent variable, IP, and the dependent variables, L and M. Therefore, the result indicates the necessity to adjust teachers' instructional practices based on this information.

Table 3. Kolmogorov-Smirnov & Shapiro-Wilk Correlation of SILL output

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
MS	.163	120	<.001	.950	120	<.001
CS	.141	120	<.001	.939	120	<.001
MCS	.145	120	<.001	.910	120	<.001
AS	.174	120	<.001	.933	120	<.001

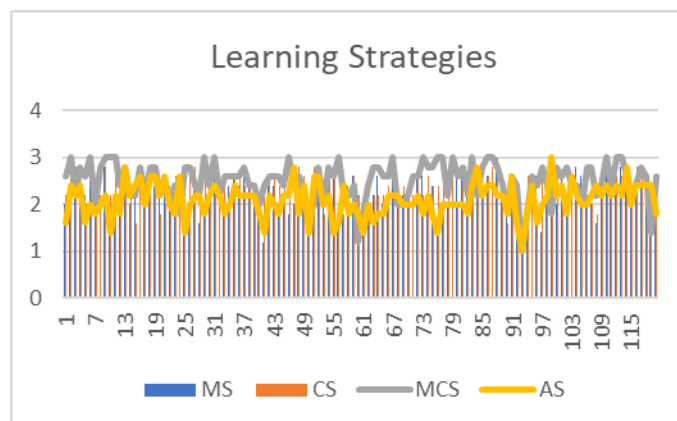
Table 4. Correlation description of output data of the two instruments

Cases						
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
B1	120	92.3%	10	7.7%	130	100.0%
A	120	92.3%	10	7.7%	130	100.0%

Table 5. ANOVA Correlation of Strategies of Language Learning

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
MS	Between Groups	16.715	112	.149	1.583	.271
	Within Groups	.660	7	.094		
	Total	17.375	119			
CS	Between Groups	13.959	112	.125	1.745	.224
	Within Groups	.500	7	.071		
	Total	14.459	119			
MCS	Between Groups	17.399	112	.155	.632	.852
	Within Groups	1.720	7	.246		
	Total	19.119	119			
AS	Between Groups	13.740	112	.123	.622	.859
	Within Groups	1.380	7	.197		
	Total	15.120	119			

Figure 2. The correlation of SILL output



The SILL measurement presented a level of 20% on the scale and 80% on the ordinal, with 120 cases analyzed. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests ensured normality, indicating a significant correlation among the SILL strategies. Moreover, the results helped identify key issues and variables related to strategy use. Furthermore, in the following case processing summary, ANOVA indicates a significant correlation between SILL strategies of language learning (Memory Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, Metacognitive Strategies, and Affective Strategies), as shown in the output of the SPSS analysis. Additionally, the visual data shown in Figure 2 point out the students' awareness of integrating Affective Strategy and flexible instruction to proceed with strategies. As a result, it may increase student autonomy and improve speech production in various speaking discourses.

4. Discussion

In higher education, having good speaking skills is crucial. Many researchers promote speaking instructional practices in class. It is essential to consider different learning requirements and variables outlined in C and identify speaking skill targets to develop effective instruction. Additionally, Affective Strategies influence speaking commitment in higher education, as indicated in D. In addition, both Figure 1 and Figure 2 outline students with low self-esteem struggle to produce various speech modes, leading to a lack of progress in speaking class performances. As a result, it is crucial to improve Affective Learning Strategies to encourage foreign language learners to reflect on and modify their output while being accountable for their metalinguistic knowledge opportunities. As the primary objective was to establish a connection between the speaking skills of EFL students and their language learning strategies, it is crucial to analyze data related to student satisfaction to gain insight into their needs, as shown in the output. Therefore, re-thinking improvement issues in achieving student satisfaction influences the EFL teacher instructions, as it can promote student engagement with up-to-date instructional practices.

5. Conclusion

The current study reveals the EFL students' satisfaction with the speaking skills acquired through linguistic input. The goal was to provide ideas for EFL teachers to enhance their instruction on

speaking skills. In addition, students learning English as a foreign language must be able to engage in effective communication, known as discourse competence. Includes understanding the appropriate language and correct grammatical structure usage in a given context. Mastery of these skills leads to pragmatic competence and successful communication. Based on the output of the current study statistics, to achieve this, teachers should encourage Affective Strategies and re-think issues in speaking instruction, which can help students become more autonomous and committed to improving their speaking skills. Activities like role-play, dialogues, debates, or project-based tasks can increase participation and engagement in classroom discussions. Using strategies such as Affective can provide students with opportunities to communicate with native speakers, fellow students, or peers worldwide, promoting internationalization and increasing collaboration. The output suggests re-thinking Affective Strategies influences EFL student self-confidence and results in constructive attitude and autonomy in the ongoing involvement in speaking performance commitment. When teaching speaking skills, it is also important to use course materials that encourage practical communication and create inclusive and cooperative learning environments. Teachers should actively engage with their students' spoken discourse to enable them to develop effective communication strategies. Providing linguistic structures and tasks that enhance speaking and promote discussion strategies can be helpful. The recommendation based on the current study relates to the curriculum update by empowering content with appropriate speaking approaches. Moreover, the discourse-related challenges in speaking English at higher education suggest re-thinking improvement of language input to students' increased confidence in speaking task performances to endorse maximum successful output.

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Author Bionote

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Authorship and Level of Contribution

The current paper is authentic; Author 1 declares 100% uniqueness except as indicated in the references.

Glossary of Terms

A list of words, phrases, and meanings

L – Linguistic

M – Material and Resources

IP – Instructional Practices

MS – Memory Strategies

CS – Cognitive Strategies

MCS – Metacognitive Strategies

AS – Affective Strategies

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Appendix A

First Instrument - Anonymous Questionnaire, Student satisfaction with acquired speaking skills concerning Linguistic Input, Materials, and EFL teacher's instructions. Please respond honestly to the following statements regarding how accurately they describe you. Chose the following: VU - Very Unsatisfactory; U – Unsatisfactory; N – Neutral; S – Satisfactory; VS - Very Satisfactory

Declaration: The questionnaire aims only for research purposes

How satisfactory do you find?			VU	U	N	S	VS
Linguistic input	L1	The spoken terminology you learn in English Language class					
	L2	The effect of your speaking discourse on the improvement of your pronunciation					
	L3	The improvement of your fluency in speaking task performances					
	L4	Your ability to make use of the content you have acquired in the classroom for situation-based communication					
Materials & Resources	M5	The class content topics provide the opportunity for you to speak in English with your classmates and the EFL teacher					
	M6	The level of the course book introduced to you provided for language in use					
	M7	The contribution of class speaking tasks to the improvement of your weaknesses in speaking skills					
	M8	The speaking classroom activities you are asked to do by your teacher in the course of the semester					
	M9	The topics your teacher presents in the classroom for discussion					
Instructional Practices	IP10	The teacher's motivation for speaking tasks like presentations, role-plays, or other classroom speaking discourse performances					
	IP11	The help of your EFL teacher when you face speaking problems in the classroom					
	IP12	The way your teacher evaluates your speaking skills					
	IP13	The way your EFL teacher makes use of audio-visual facilities in the classroom					
	IP14	Your teacher's encouragement on discourse analysis of the speaking topics including dialogues, presentations, and writing texts.					
	IP15	The motivation you get from your FL teacher to speak in turn-taking, group discussion, or project-based tasks					

Appendix B

The second instrument – Anonymous Questionnaire, (SILL) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. This form of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) is for EFL students in higher education. You will find statements about learning to speak in English. Please respond honestly to the following statements regarding how accurately they describe you. Choose the following: 1. Never, 2. Sometimes, 3. Often

Declaration: The questionnaire aims only for research purposes

THE STRATEGIES	Never	Sometimes	Often
<u>PART A: MEMORY STRATEGIES</u>			
Q1. I think of relations between what I already know and new terms I learn while listening to English			
Q2. I try to use new words while speaking in English and make connections with my already own brain dictionary			
Q3. I connect the sound of a new English sound and an image of the word to help me remember the word			
Q4. I practice speaking by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used			
Q5. I am confident to ask other colleagues to help me with vocabulary selection while speaking			
<u>PART B: COGNITIVE STRATEGIES</u>			
Q6. I say or repeat loudly new English words several times			
Q7. I try to speak like a native English speaker.			
Q8. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.			
Q9. I start conversations in English.			
Q10. I watch English TV shows or choose movies spoken in English			
<u>PART C: METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES</u>			
Q11. I notice my English mistakes while speaking and use that as feedback to help me do better.			
Q12. I look for people I can speak to in English			
Q13. I look for as many opportunities to speak in English.			
Q14. I have clear goals for improving my speaking English skills.			
Q15. I think about my progress in speaking English.			
<u>PART D: AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES</u>			
Q16. I try to relax whenever I feel skeptical about using English.			
Q17. I encourage myself to speak English even when I fear making mistakes.			
Q18. I feel confident when I start speaking in English.			
Q19. I Worry about making mistakes in speaking tasks. performances			
Q20. I keep thinking that the other students are better than me at speaking English.			

