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Barriers of Oral English Language Learning for Raparin University Students in Kurdistan Region

Barham Qadir Abubaker*

Pishdar Directorate of Education, Ministry of Education

barham.qadir@uor.edu.krd

&

Shirwan Sharif Aziz

Education and Psychology Department, University of Raparin

&

Alan Slah Saadi

Education and Psychology Department, University of Koya

alan.salah@koyauniversity.org

&

Rawezh Ibrahim

English Department, University of Raparin

rawezh.en@uor.edu.krd

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Abstract

The ability to speak English fluently is one of the basic prerequisites to be a voice which can be heard in every corner of the world. In other words, learning oral English language has become an essential necessity for humans since individuals are integrated culturally and economically closely. It is crystal clear that what you intend to say highly depends on your oral language proficiency and accuracy which helps the listeners to get your oral messages appropriately. The study sets out a questionnaire which consists 25 closed ended questions that has been taken from *The Survey on Barriers of Oral*

* **Corresponding Author:** Barham Qadir Abubaker, E.Mail: barham.qadir@uor.edu.krd

Tel: +9647702504719 , **Affiliation:** Ministry of Education -Iraq

English Learning for College Learners in China by Yuehong Wei¹ & Li Zhang 2013 with a little bit of change. The questionnaire distributed to the Kurdish learners of English from first stage to fourth stage randomly at Rapparin University in Kurdistan region of Iraq. The data which collected through the questionnaire has been analyzed via quantitative methods. The purpose of the study is to indicate the barriers of oral English language learning, and their accurate scales among the Kurdish learners of English.

Keywords: Oral language, barriers of oral English language learning and Rapparin University learners.

حواجز تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية الشفوية لطلاب جامعة رابارين في إقليم كردستان

برهم قادر ابو بكر

مديرية التربية والتعليم بشدار - وزارة التربية والتعليم

و

شيروان شريف عزيز

قسم التربية وعلم النفس - جامعة رابارين

و

آلان صلاح السعدي

قسم التربية وعلم النفس - جامعة كويا

و

روضة ابراهيم

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية - جامعة رابارين

المخلص: هذه الدراسة تحت عنوان (معوقات تعلم اللغة الانجليزية لطلبة قسم اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة رابارين) حيث شملت عينة الدراسة الحالية طلبة قسم اللغة الانجليزية البالغ عددهم (100) طالب وطالبة في جميع المراحل الدراسية. حيث اختيرو بطريقت عشوائية ، والمنهج المستخدم في هذه الدراسة هي المنهج الاحصائي لجمع وتحليل البيانات .وهدفت الدراسة الى الكشف عن معوقات تعلم لغة التخاطب بالانجليزية، وتصنيف هذه المعوقات حسب اولويتها كما هدفت الى

تحديد مستوى تأثيرهم. اما فيما يخص المعالجات الاحصائية المستخدمة حيث تم الاستفادة من برنامج SPSS, V.23 و Microsoft Office Word > ومن نتائج هذه الدراسة تم التوصل الى ان نسبة 67% من الطلبة يرون بان بيئة التعلم والتعليم هي العائق الرئيسي امام تعلم اللغة الانجليزية وفي ضوء هذه النتائج قدم الباحثان مجموعة من التوصيات والمقترحات.

الكلمات الدالة: اللغة الشفهية ، حواجز تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية الشفهي ومتعلمي جامعة رابارين.

Literature Review of Oral Language:

Oral language can be simply defined as a means of communicating or sharing information with the others. Thinking, knowledge and skills are highly utilized in this process so as to speak and listen in a way that is successful and get the intended results (PDST, 2014, P.3). Oral language is the first, most essential , and most commonly used structured communication channel for children. It is the basic way through which each kid will be able to organize, assess, narrate, and manage his or her own experience. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, oral language is the major cultural mediator, the means by which children locate and define themselves in the world. (Cregan, 1998, as cited in Archer, Cregan, McGough, Shiel, 2012). Listening and speaking are the two basic skills that combine to make the oral language. Sometimes *orality* as a term can refer to oral language. Oral language and written language are affecting each other; in other words they have reciprocal relation . Learning to read and write is depending on oral language. preschool learning skills of speaking and listening are the most essential and vital to make future reading and writing effective and to be learnt more easily and rapidly. Insufficient preschool oral language skills make obstacles to the children in coming years compared to their peers (Morrow, Roskos and Gambrell, 2016, p. 2).

Cameron and Dempsey (2016) wrote a book to guide teachers to include more oral activities in their teaching materials so that learning environment would emerge and the better outcome would be achieved. Giulier (2012) focuses on the importance of oral language skills which can be combined with modern technology to provide small groups of learners with advanced vocabulary and structure foundations in the classroom environment. Some other beneficial books have been written by prominent writers on oral language skills (Byers, 2001; Smith, 2005; Lazaraton,2002; Munro,2011; Clay, 2015; Beals,1995; Silverman and Hartranft,2014).

Concerning barriers of oral English language learning, Woo-hyun and Ju (2005, p.1) found that inability of using grammar rules ,the lack of vocabulary and the poor education system are the prominent factors to block the ways of a successful oral communication. Alhmadi (2014,p.38), and Bashar and Zeb (2019, p.16) have reached that the English programme and curriculum, teaching strategies, and learners' motivation, anxiety and reticence are the most effective factors that affect oral English speaking skills and language learning ability.

Liton (2016,p.91) reveals that most of the interviewing voices show learners negative opinions about learning English because of cross-cultural factors, lack of motivation and EFL teaching method and curriculum strategic shortages before going to university. Rani (2016, p.74) shows that there are five communication barriers such as *Attitudinal Barriers, Behavioral Barriers, Cultural Barriers, Language Barriers and Environment Barriers* which can avoid a communication to be successful or they result in a communication breakdown. While Jureddi and Brahmaiah (2016, p.115) classify

barriers as *Language barriers, Physical barriers, Attitudinal barriers, and Psychological barriers* that they cause disappointment in our relations . According to Raju and Joshith (2017, p.48) the insufficient number of teachers, the lack of advanced technology, inadequate teacher training , irresponsibility of the government, depriving public education sector, misbehavior of the parents, and the weakness of exam system and anomalous curricula play a bad role for learning English as a second language. Despite all the above mentioned studies there aren't many studies to shed light on the barriers of oral English learning in Iraq specifically in Kurdistan region .Thus, this paper focuses on the obstacles in oral English language learning for the Kurdish learners of English at Rapparin University to indicate and analyze them . It is the worth of mentioning that English has been studied since 1873 in Iraqi educational organizations (Al- Chalabi, 1976, p.41)

Introduction

Oral language which consists of listening and speaking is the crucial part of English language or the other languages. Speaking and listening are regarded as the foundation of reading and writing skills specifically when they will be learnt effectively. The listener receives the message from the speaker and has the ability to hear and understand what the speaker says or make meaning out of it. Learning oral English language means getting the mastery of the other fields of linguistics such as phonology, morphology, grammar, discourse, pragmatics, semantics and etc. Oral language is regarded as a social interactive process which is used in our daily life .Via this incredible process, humans are creating, exchanging, sharing ideas, information, , facts, feelings, and experiences among themselves as a sender or receiver . So it can be said that oral language is essential to the existence and survival of humans as groups, societies, and nations to each other . Humans can build or destroy their relations through the language they speak. That is why, language barriers cause difficulties to convey our ideas to people around the world in this globalization era. Language barriers are realized in various fields of life such as in international business, aviation and social settings, health, education and etc.

Research Aim

The study aims to know whether there are barriers of oral English language learning such as *attitude, learner Autonomy, differences of Thinking, Fossil, negative Transfer of mother language, affective factors, motivation, culture, and teaching environment* as a foreign language for Rapparin University learners of English Department in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

Research Question

The following main questions are answered throughout the study:

- 1- What are the barriers of oral English language learning at Rapparin university?
- 2- To what degrees these barriers affect oral English language learning?
- 3- What are the best required strategies and styles to tackle these barriers?

The significance of the Study

The study is paving the way and highly important to English language teachers and English curriculum designers to recognize the barriers so as to avoid them from happening and make the process of learning much easier and more effective.

Research Methodology

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study consists of (178) Rapparin University learners at four different stages of study. The sample of the study comprises of 100 learners that have been selected randomly. The learners were highly qualified to decide about the options of the items which reflected their actual attitude towards their own barriers.

Data Collection Tool

The researchers used a closed ended quantitative questionnaire to indicate the current barriers of oral English language learning. There were 25 items in the questionnaire which each item included five options ranging from: A=strongly agree, B=agree, C=undecided, D=disagree, and to E=strongly disagree. The questionnaire was distributed to 100 learners from first stage to fourth stage randomly that both genders actively participated in.

(see Appendix I)

Validity and Reliability of the Tool

The questionnaire was given to five specialized university experts for judging about the validity and the suitability of the items (see appendix II). The experts confirmed the clarity and suitability of the items to be applied to conduct the study. And the worth of mentioning that the devoted time to respond the questionnaire was approximately (15-20) minutes. After that Cronbach's alpha formula was used to show the reliability of the questionnaire that the coefficient was 80%. The researchers have used SPSS,V.23 and Microsoft office word tools for analyzing the data and drawing the figures.

Results and Discussions

The results of data obtained through administering SPSS,V.23 tools to the questionnaire items. The results have been shown via ten separate figures with relevant discussions for the sake of accuracy and convenience. Figure (1) is an overview of all survey results which comprehensively appears 86% of the participants strongly agree about item 2. This means that majority of the learners have a strong desire to learn oral English language.

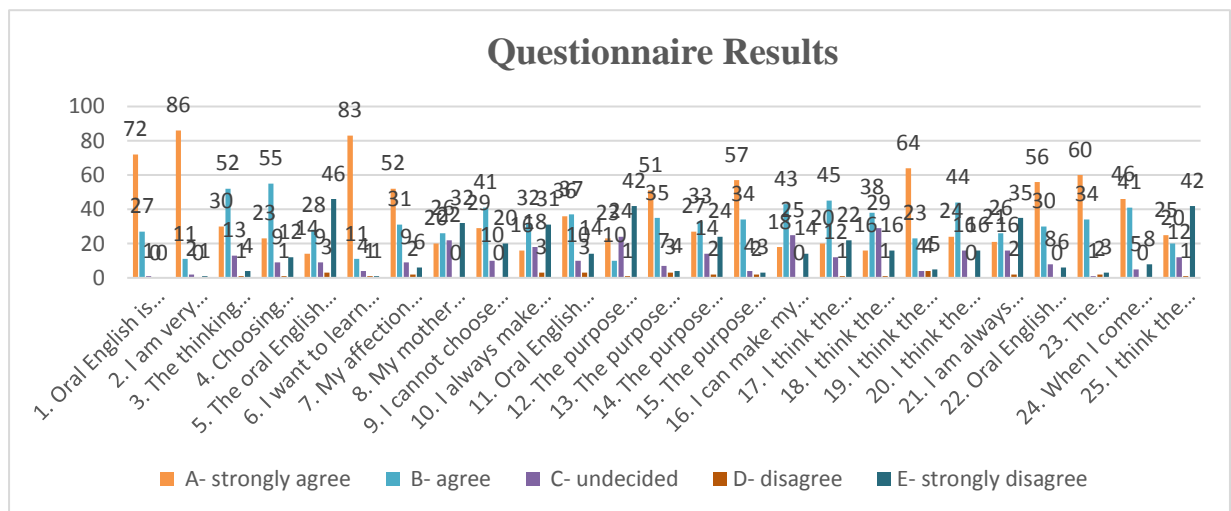


Figure 1

Figure (2) makes clear that almost all learners have positive attitude towards learning oral English language learning in way that 86% of them strongly agree to have eagerness to learn it. It is notable that 72% of them admit the value of oral English Language.

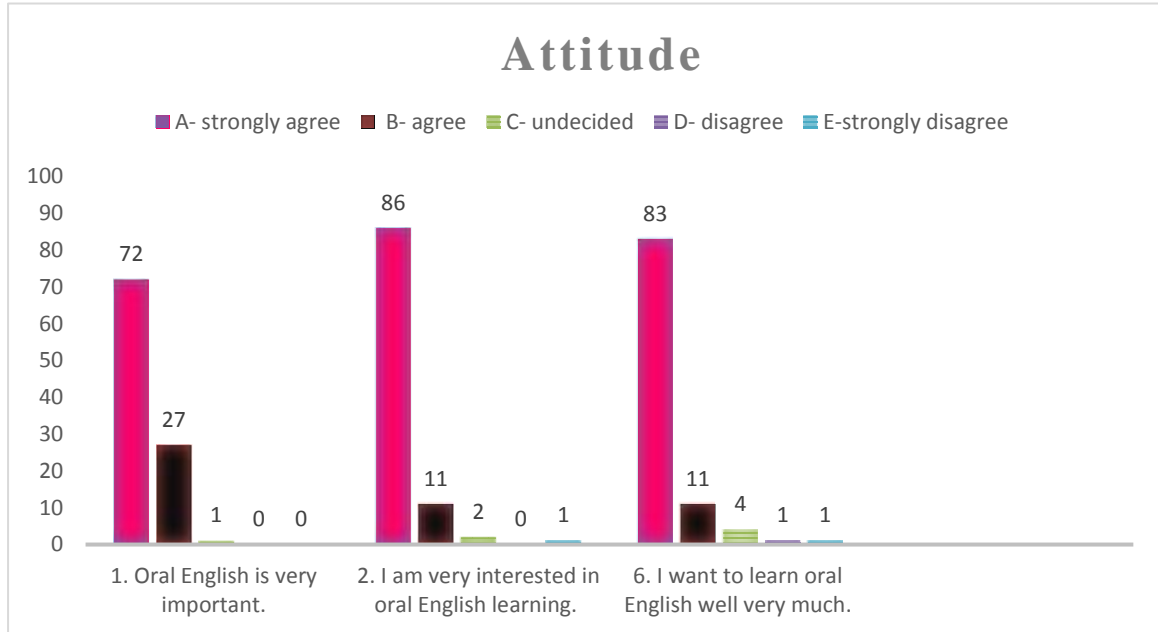


Figure (3) shows that nearly half of the learners strongly disagree that they cannot learn the language without their teachers and they believe that they can make their own plans effectively. So the lack of Autonomy makes more difficulties among learners of the target language.

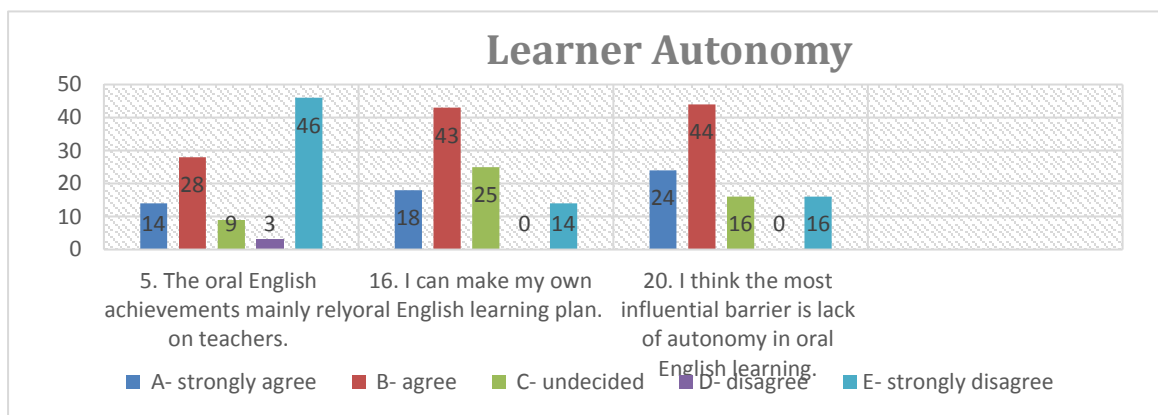


Figure (4) shows 52% of the learners agree that the difference of thinking between Kurdish and English affects learning oral English language negatively while only 16% of them strongly disagree.

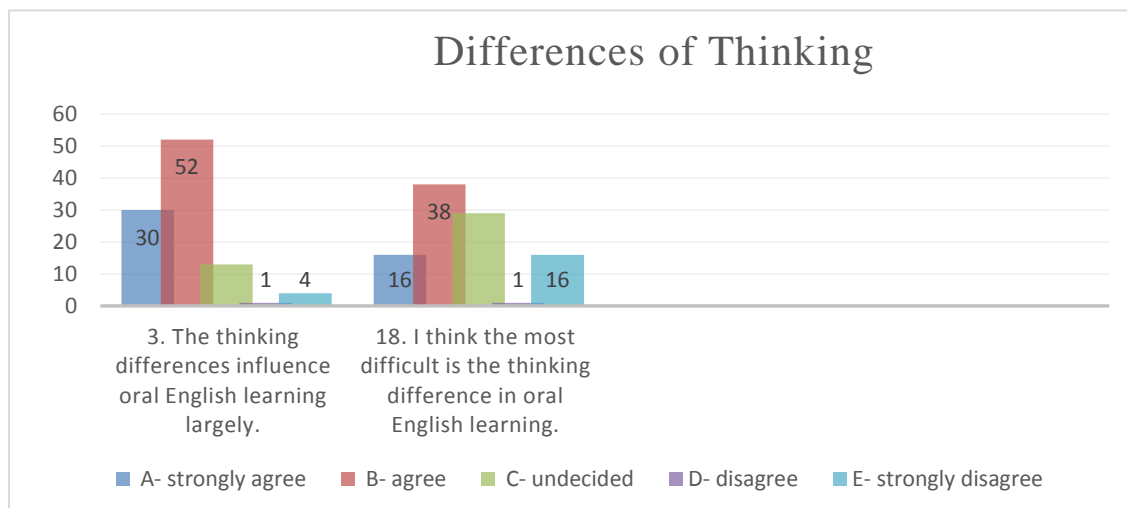


Figure 4

Figure (5) shows 55% of the learners face difficulties to choose appropriate words at the time of speaking while 45% of them refer to recognizing and distinguishing the meaning of words as the most difficult one. Repeating the same mistakes can be mentioned as one of the barriers since 32% of them regard it as an inevitable barrier.

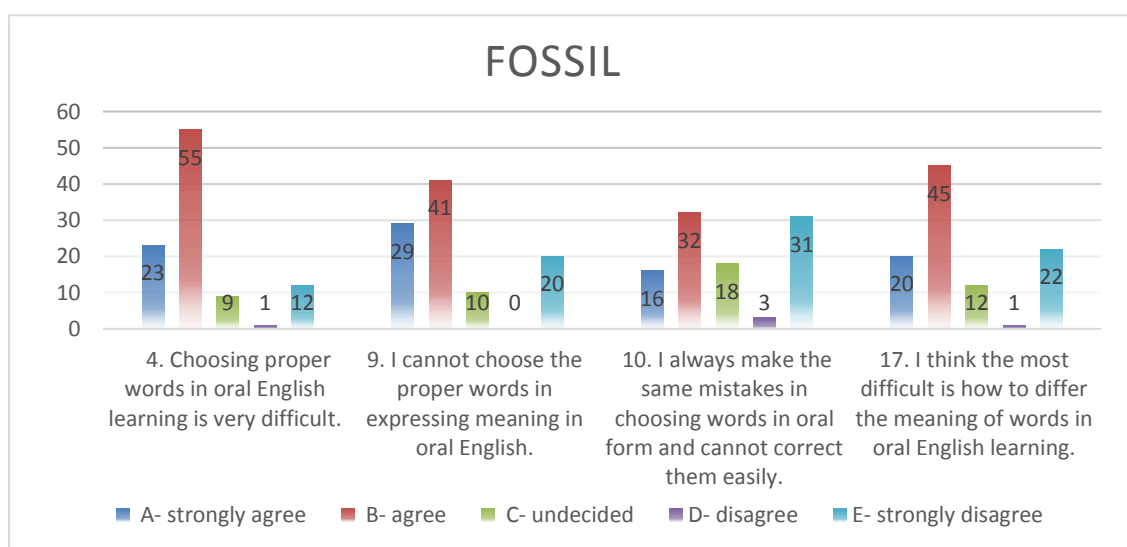


Figure 5

Figure (6) shows that 46% of the learners strongly agree that they think in Kurdish when they face difficult sentences in English. So it can be said that their mother tongue plays a negative role in process of English oral language learning in many different ways.

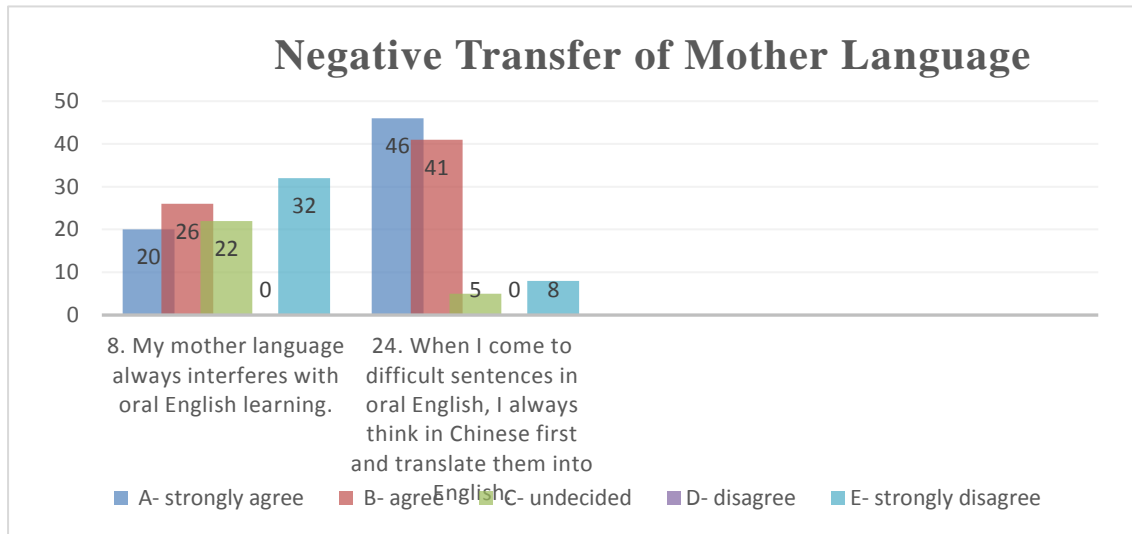


Figure 6

Figure (7) shows that affective factors affect oral English language learning, some of them positively, but some of the others negatively depending on the learner. Affective factors are the specific emotions that the learners have about themselves or surrounding environment that the main ones are *anxiety*, *self-esteem*, *attitude*, and *inhibition*. According to figure (7) 60% of learners agree that communication between learners and teachers helps oral English language learning and 56 % of them regard oral English language learning as a sense of being proud.

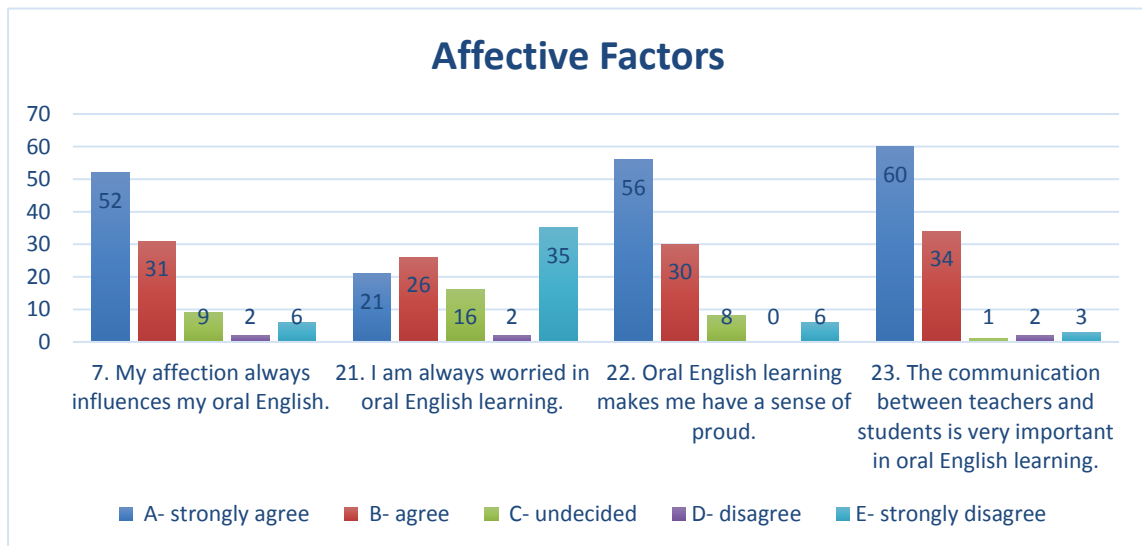


Figure 7

Figure (8) shows 57 % of them strongly agree that their aim at learning oral English language is to get their own interests while 51% of them want to learn the language to achieve good jobs. Thus motivation can be referred as a key aspect of learning oral English language.

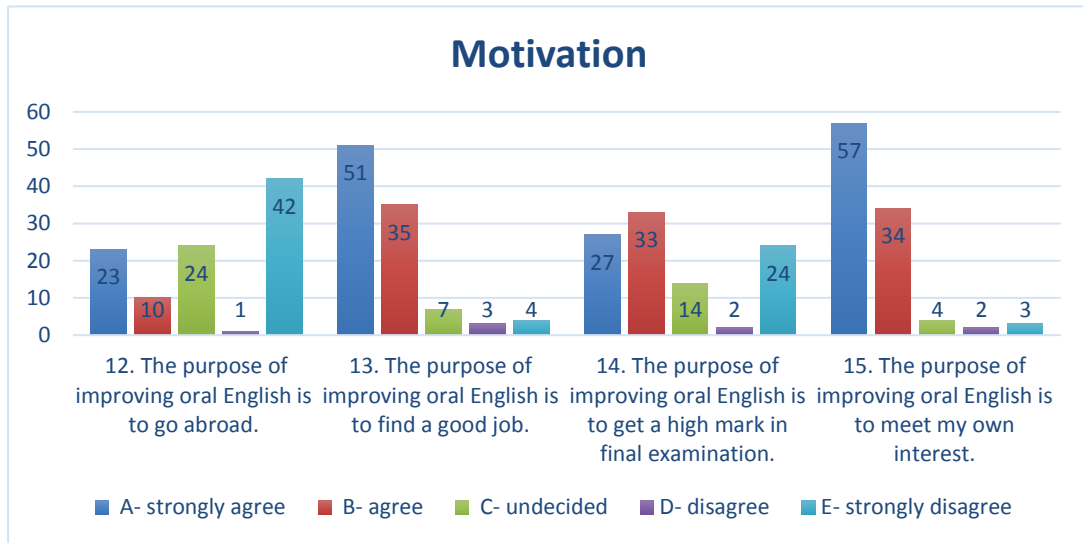


Figure 9 shows 42% of the learners strongly disagree about neglecting the culture of target language and only concentrating on the language itself in learning oral English since language is a part of culture. Therefore, it can be said that there is a direct relation between language learning and culture awareness.

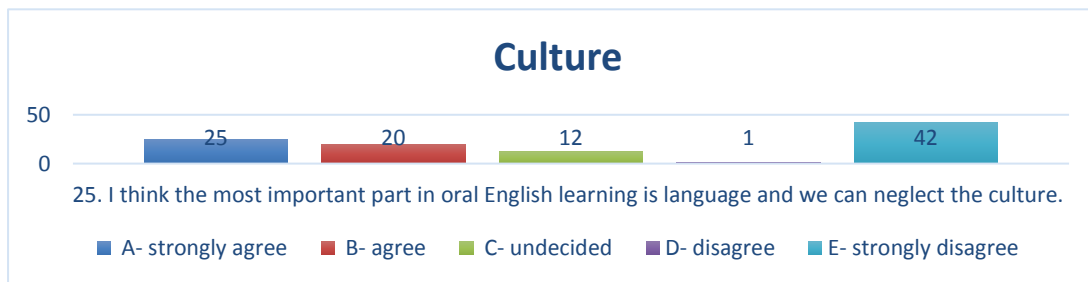


Figure 9

Figure (10) shows 64% of the learners strongly agree that the lack of suitable and appropriate teaching environment is one of the most effective difficulties in learning oral English language despite of teaching styles and approaches which are applied by teachers.

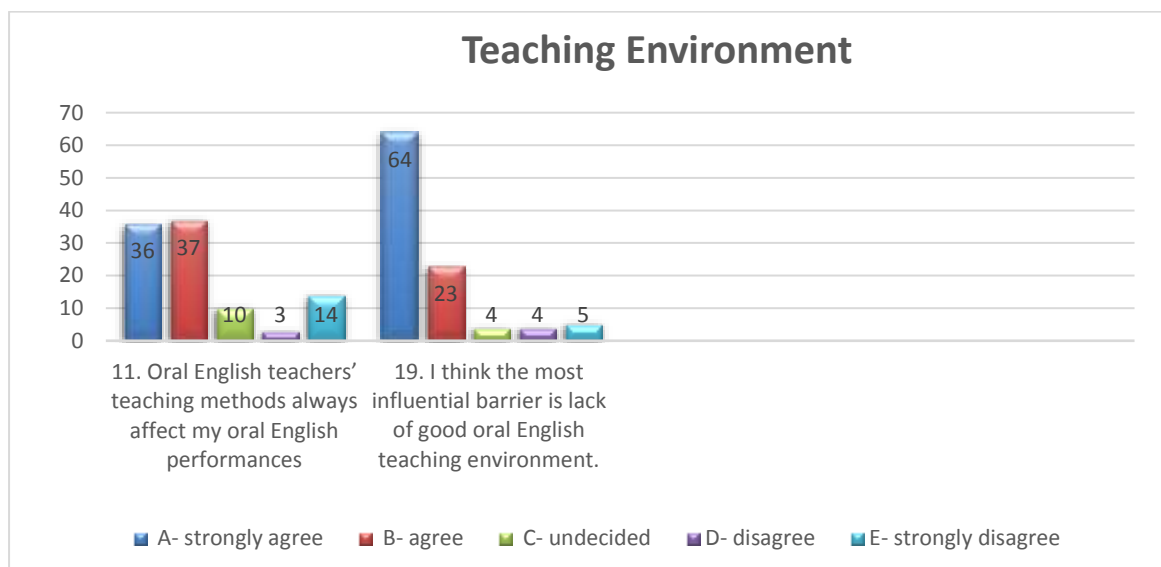


Figure (10)

Conclusion

The results of the survey clearly show that Kurdish learners of oral English face many challenges and barriers such as *learner autonomy, differences of thinking, choosing and understanding words easily, the negative influence of mother tongue, affective factors, and culture*. According to the survey results, teaching environment can be regarded as the most influential barrier among the other barriers. Nearly all learners keep their fingers crossed to learn the language; in other words, they have positive attitude towards the language whether to find jobs or meet their desires . More than half of the learners strongly believe that learning oral English language is depending on the learner – teacher communications. Various barriers require different solutions. So, avoiding these obstacles needs lots of tasks, styles and approaches. Teachers had better to give the learners a kind of autonomy which helps learners to be active and make their own plans that through such liberal system, learners would be more independent and engaged. Vocabulary problems can be tackled by asking the leaners to take different vocabulary tasks and drills such as comparison games, memory games, word guessing games, vocabulary box matching, vocabulary Sketchnoting and etc. since practice makes perfect. The Kurdish language system is different from English language system that makes the learners face difficulties in learning oral English language, and thus, the teachers should take the two different systems of the languages into consideration so as to overcome this difficulty via recommending watching movies, listening to English channels and reading English materials which improve the competence of the learners. Enhancing positive affective factors by encouraging the learners to speak and reducing the negative affective factors since these affective factors such as *emotion, feeling, mood, and manner* are responsible to the amount of input and output of the language. Language and culture are inseparable, so English language teacher should pay closely attention to cultural differences and identify the key various points in their teaching syllabus and apply the most suitable strategies. Appropriate Teaching environment is highly dominant and it promotes the learners' achievements because it has a great impact on physical and psychological conditions of the learners. Therefore, teachers are

required to apply suitable and comprehensible teaching methods and prepare a good oral teaching environment for the learners.

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Names	Specialization	Academic Rank and qualification	Work Place
Shahab Taib Tahir	Kurdish Linguistics	Prof. Dr.	Rapparin University
Jwan Nuri Salh	Psychology	Asst. Prof. Dr.	Koye University
Polla Abdul-Samad Mahmood	Psychology	Asst. Prof. Dr.	Rapparin University
Hazhar Qadir Ibrahim	psychology	Lecturer. Dr.	Rapparin University
Nawzad Qadir Ibrahim	English Linguistics	Asst. Prof. M.A	Rapparin University

Appendix I

Appendix II

1. Oral English is very important. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
2. I am very interested in oral English learning. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
3. The thinking differences influence oral English learning largely. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
4. Choosing proper words in oral English learning is very difficult. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
5. The oral English achievements mainly rely on teachers. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
6. I want to learn oral English well very much. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
7. My affection always influences my oral English. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
8. My mother language always interferes with oral English learning. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
9. I can not choose the proper words in expressing meaning in oral English. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
10. I always make the same mistakes in choosing words in oral form and can not correct them easily. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
11. Oral English teachers' teaching methods always affect my oral English performances. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
12. The purpose of improving oral English is to go abroad. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
13. The purpose of improving oral English is to find a good job. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
14. The purpose of improving oral English is to get a high mark in final examination. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
15. The purpose of improving oral English is to meet my own interest. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
16. I can make my own oral English learning plan. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree

17. I think the most difficult is how to differ the meaning of words in oral English learning. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
18. I think the most difficult is the thinking difference in oral English learning. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
19. I think the most influential barrier is lack of good oral English teaching environment. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
20. I think the most influential barrier is lack of autonomy in oral English learning. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
21. I am always worried in oral English learning. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
22. Oral English learning make me have a sense of proud. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
23. The communication between teachers and learners is very important in oral English learning. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
24. When I come to difficult sentences in oral English, I always think in Kurdish first and translate them into English. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree
25. I think the most important part in oral English learning is language and we can neglect the culture. A strongly agree, B agree, C undecided, D disagree, E strongly disagree