



## An Investigation of EFL Graduates' Perspectives on the Impact of Speaking Skills on their Employability

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### Abstract

This study examines the perspectives of Al-Hadba University graduates on the development of their English-speaking skills during their academic tenure and their subsequent impact on their employability, particularly in the context of job interviews. Utilising a quantitative survey methodology, the participants' cohort comprised 198 graduates who completed their studies at Al-Hadba University within the past five years. Findings reveal that over 90% of respondents recognise proficiency in speaking as crucial for professional achievement; however, many expressed dissatisfaction with their skill development. The study identified key obstacles, including excessive correction, large class sizes, outdated educational content, and students' psychological factors, such as shyness and low self-confidence. Graduates expressed a preference for communicative and learner-centred instructional approaches that incorporate technology, facilitate group discussions, and engage in practical, real-world tasks. The study advocates for curriculum reforms that integrate industry-relevant materials and provide ample opportunities for continuous speaking practice. It highlights the necessity for interactive teaching methods that align with the communication demands of both academic and professional environments, while also offering constructive recommendations to enhance English-speaking teaching.

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## دراسة وجهات نظر خريجي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية حول تأثير مهارات التحدث في فرص توظيفهم



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### الخلاصة

تستعرض هذه الدراسة تصورات خريجي جامعة الحدياء حول تنمية مهاراتهم في التحدث باللغة الإنكليزية خلال فترة دراستهم الجامعية، ومدى انعكاس ذلك على قابليتهم للتوظيف، ولا سيما في مقابلات العمل. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الكمي من خلال استبانة شملت (198) خريجاً أنهوا دراستهم في جامعة الحدياء خلال السنوات الخمس الأخيرة. وتشير النتائج إلى أن أكثر من 90% من المشاركين يعثرون إتقان مهارة التحدث عاملاً جوهرياً لتحقيق النجاح المهني؛ إلا أن عدداً كبيراً منهم أعرب عن عدم رضاه إزاء مستوى التطوير الذي حصل عليه في هذا المجال. وقد أبرزت الدراسة مجموعة من التحديات التي تعيق تنمية هذه المهارة، من بينها: الإفراط في التصحيح، وكثرة أعداد الطلبة داخل الصفوف، وتقديم المحتوى التعليمي، إلى جانب عوامل نفسية للطلاب مثل الخجل وضعف الثقة بالنفس. وأوضح الخريجون تفضيلهم لأساليب تدريس تواصلية تتمحور حول الطالب، تستند إلى التكنولوجيا، وتعزز النقاشات الجماعية، وتوظف أنشطة عملية تحاكي الواقع. وتدعو الدراسة إلى إجراء إصلاحات في المناهج التعليمية عبر إدماج محتويات ذات صلة بمتطلبات سوق العمل، وتوفير فرص متواصلة للتدريب على مهارة التحدث. كما تشدد على أهمية تبني طرائق تدريس تفاعلية تتواءم مع احتياجات التواصل في السياقات الأكاديمية والمهنية، وتطرح جملة من التوصيات العملية لتطوير تعليم مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنكليزية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** مهارات التحدث؛ مهارات اللغة الإنكليزية؛ قابلية التوظيف؛ الطلاقة اللغوية؛ متعلمو اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية

## 1. Introduction

The English language is indisputably a global language, spoken in numerous countries around the world. As stated by Crystal (2003:6), approximately a quarter of the global population is already proficient in English. (1) Although English is not a mother tongue or an official language in Iraq, it has been prioritised in foreign language education. Consequently, the widespread use of the English language positions it as a pivotal tool for communication, a crucial factor in employment, the industrial sector, and private business. In recent years, with the surge of the global job market, the English language has garnered greater significance for international communication. As a result, the mastery of English and its application for efficient communication have become vital. Individuals are compelled to cultivate proficient oral communication skills in English alongside academic achievements. According to Richards and Renandya (2002:20), it is emphasised that the primary objective of learning English is to develop proficiency in speaking, which is considered more important than other skills, such as listening, writing, and reading. (2). Additionally, Nunan (1991:51) states that the evaluation of language learning success relies on learners' ability to participate in conversation. (3). Speaking is regarded as the benchmark for students' attainment in language acquisition, indicating an individual's capacity to use English effectively and fluently for interpersonal communication and to achieve pragmatic communication goals (Brown, 2000; Hammerly, 1991). (4,5)

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the role of English language proficiency in shaping graduates' employability has become increasingly significant, particularly in contexts where English serves as a medium for professional communication. At Al-Hadba University, students in the Department of English dedicate their academic years to developing language skills; however, concerns persist regarding the degree to which these skills translate into tangible advantages during job interviews and subsequent workplace performance. Evidence suggests that a gap may exist between the linguistic competence cultivated in academic settings and the communicative demands of the labour market. This misalignment may hinder graduates' opportunities for employment and limit their effectiveness in professional environments. Without a clear

understanding of how graduates perceive the relevance and applicability of their language training, curriculum designers and instructors may struggle to address these shortcomings. Thus, the problem lies in the insufficient exploration of graduates' perspectives on the impact of their English language skills on employability, which in turn underscores the need for a critical examination of the adequacy of current curricula in preparing students for professional success.

### 1.2. Research Questions

This study attempts to answer these research questions:

1. What do graduates of Al-Hadba University think about the speaking skills they developed throughout their academic years?
2. To what degree do speaking skills influence students' opportunities for success in job interviews and within the workplace?
3. What factors might have prevented the enhancements of students during university years and prepared them for employment requirements?

### 1.3. Method

The study utilised a quantitative descriptive approach, conducting an online survey directed to students who graduated within the last four years from the Department of English at Al-Hadba University. The primary objective was to examine the extent to which their English-speaking skills have impacted their performance in job interviews and their overall career progression. Additionally, the research sought to gather insights on how these graduates believe university courses could have better equipped them to master this vital skill.

### 1.4 Participants

This study involved a total of 198 graduates from the Department of English at Al-Hadba University, comprising 89 females and 105 males. The participants completed their study between 2020 and 2023 Table 1. Of the 60 participants, 31.1% are currently employed, with approximately 75 individuals, or 39.5%, having attended job interviews. Of those interviewed, nearly 18.9% of participants conducted their interviews in English, while 20.6% of participants engaged in interviews in Arabic.

**Table (1): Participants' Years of Graduation**

| Year of Graduation | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| 2020               | 18        | 8.4     |
| 2021               | 34        | 15      |
| 2022               | 61        | 32.1    |
| 2023               | 85        | 44.5    |
| Total              | 198       | 100.0   |

### 1.5. Data Collection Instruments

An online survey was developed using Google Forms and validated by an expert to ensure reliability. It was produced in Arabic and English through a back-translation process to maintain accuracy. The survey begins with a brief introduction and consists of four sections: the first gathers demographic information (age, gender, graduation year, employment status, job interview experience); the second includes six items on the importance of English-speaking skills for employability, measured on a four-point forced Likert scale; the third comprises six yes/no items on barriers to developing English-speaking skills; and the fourth presents eight teaching strategies to improve speaking proficiency, also rated on a four-point Likert scale. An optional final section allows participants to provide additional comments or suggestions.

### 1.6 Procedure

An online survey was disseminated via email to former students whose contact information was previously obtained by the researcher. Additionally, a hyperlink to the survey was shared through WhatsApp, accompanied by a brief note outlining the purpose of the survey, which pertains to a study on English-speaking skills among graduates of Al-Hadba University from 2020 to 2024. To further enhance participation, recipients were encouraged to share the survey with their colleagues.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Speaking Skills

Speaking skills refer to the cognitive abilities that enable effective communication; they can be enhanced through language learning and teaching. It is one of the four essential language skills, along with reading, writing, and listening. It has been defined by Baily (2011) as “speaking is a productive oral skill that consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning” (6). Theodor Huebner in Mevada & Gurjar (2015) says, “Language is essentially speech and speech is basically communication by sound” (7). According to Brown (2001), speaking is an interactive process for creating meaning, which entails producing, receiving, and processing information (8). As for Bashir, Azeem, & Dogar (2011:38-39), (9) three key areas encompass the knowledge of speaking, illustrated in the following diagram.

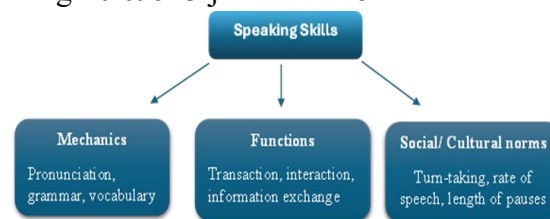


Fig. No. (1)

There are numerous indicators of speaking competence that can be observed in class or during any speaking activity. Florez (1999) suggests that effective speakers articulate sound structures and intonation clearly. They select vocabulary appropriate for the topic and audience, emphasise keywords, utilise body language or gestures, and ensure that listeners understand and engage in the conversation (10). While Harris (1969) introduced a comprehensive speaking scale consisting of five components for accurate grading, namely (pronunciation, grammar structure, fluency and comprehension of content) (11). As previously mentioned, there are four fundamental English skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are categorised into two types:



Fig. No. (2)

In Figure 2, it is illustrated that receptive skills encompass reading and listening, while productive skills include speaking and writing. The latter are often referred to as active skills because they involve the production of language, making them observable and evaluable. Furthermore, learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) must acquire these skills to use the language effectively. The term “receptive skills” is labelled passive because learners absorb information without actively producing language themselves.

### 2.2. Speaking Competence: Fluency and Accuracy

Among the most fundamental features of speaking skills are fluency and accuracy, both of which are vital for delivering high-quality spoken content. These elements are interconnected and support each other. As Wang (2014) states, speaking competence covers fluency and accuracy (12). Fluency can be defined as a smooth and deliberate verbal expression of thoughts and emotions in communication, without any ambiguity or interruptions. Fidan (2016:

135) states that fluency is “language learners speaking or reading without stuttering or causing long silence in its most general form” (13). As Göçer & Karadağ state, fluency is the ability to speak in a certain rhythm without long pauses when speaking. “Language learners can express themselves at a certain point and at a pace that follows the topic or situation without wasting too much time thinking” (14). Whereas accuracy in speech means being able to produce sentences with correct pronunciation, word order, and grammar. As Fidan (2016: 135) notes, accuracy represents the speaker's comprehensive utilisation of the structural components of language, including syntax, vocabulary, and pronunciation, in their oral delivery (13). According to Karadağ and Göçer (2018), speaking fluently and accurately is one of the principles for knowing a language. In the scope of language acquisition and usage, there tends to be a predominant focus on fluency rather than accuracy. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognise that both fluency and accuracy play integral roles in achieving language proficiency (15). Learners must comprehend that fluency does not inherently equate to speaking at a rapid pace. It is preferable to articulate thoughts at a measured pace, focusing on coherence rather than speed.

### 2.3. Speaking Skills and Employability

In today's world, speaking skills are essential for employability. Job interviews demand the ability to convey knowledge and information assertively, while delivering presentations requires unwavering confidence. Businessmen must actively engage with and communicate with other professionals globally to thrive. Job interviews can be stressful for many job seekers, even when they are conducted in the candidate's native language. In EFL classrooms, there is often a focus on reading and listening skills, while speaking skills are frequently undervalued. As a result, learners may struggle to pronounce even single words or sentences due to reasons such as lack of practice, poor teaching methods, shyness, and lack of confidence. Öztürk and Gürbüz's (2014) findings suggest that EFL learners may experience speaking anxiety due to concerns about pronunciation, the fear of being asked sudden questions, and worries about making mistakes and receiving negative evaluations (16). McCarthy and Goffin (2004) indicate that interviews can lead to increased anxiety as individuals feel a lack of control over the situation (17). Numerous studies have consistently demonstrated the substantial value

of English language proficiency in enhancing employability, not only in English-speaking nations but also in countries where English serves as the primary language of business (18) (Clark & Paran, 2007).

### 2.4 Previous Studies

Several studies highlight the challenges faced by non-native English teachers and graduates in securing employment due to language proficiency and employability skills. According to Clark & Paran (2007), non-native EFL teachers in the UK experience hiring discrimination (18). Shafi & Nayan (2010) found that Malaysian undergraduates struggle with employability skills, affecting their job prospects (19). Clement & Murugavel (2015) noted that many engineering graduates in India lack communication skills, advocating for more interactive teaching methods (20). Research by Thomas et al. (2016) revealed that Bahraini employers value English communication skills, and students need to present themselves confidently (21). Ting et al. (2017) emphasised the importance of English proficiency among Malaysian employers and students, noting a preference for proper grammar over colloquial forms (22). Durga (2018) stated that English proficiency is crucial for employment (23). Lastly, a recent review by Mariano & Tantoco (2023) stressed the need for enhanced communication skills in technical and vocational education programs, advocating for a curriculum broader than just linguistic content to include essential employability competencies (24).

### 3.1. Data Analysis and Findings

One of the initial questions posed to participants in the survey pertained to their proficiency levels in English skills, as presented in Table 2. The results indicated that reading skills were rated highest, with nearly 40.3% of respondents expressing confidence in this area. Listening skills followed closely behind. In contrast, writing and speaking skills reflected similar levels of proficiency, with approximately 18.6% of participants rating their writing capabilities as good, while about 16.5% reported confidence in their speaking skills.

**Table (2): Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Level of English Skills**

| No. | Statements | Frequency | Percent |
|-----|------------|-----------|---------|
| 1.  | Reading    | 81        | 40.3    |
| 2.  | Writing    | 41        | 18.6    |
| 3.  | Listening  | 40        | 16.5    |
| 4.  | Speaking   | 36        | 24.6    |
|     | Total      | 198       | 100.0   |

Participants were requested to provide their feedback on several statements regarding their perceptions of the importance of English-speaking skills, particularly in the contexts of education and job interviews. The responses are organised according to a Likert scale, which includes the following levels of agreement: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The table below presents a summary of the participants' responses to these six statements. As for item (1), a very high majority, 95% of participants who agree and strongly agree, believe that speaking skills should be central in English courses. This underscores a strong demand for communicative competence in English language curricula, showing that learners see speaking as essential, not secondary. Regarding item (2), an overwhelming 96% agree or strongly agree, confirming the belief that oral proficiency plays a vital role in employability. This reflects the practical value of speaking skills in professional contexts. Item (3), with 98% agreement, confirms the previous item, reinforcing that success in interviews is closely linked to verbal communication skills. It shows that students recognise the strategic importance of speaking. In item (4), about 94% feel the need for further improvement, suggesting that while students value speaking, they lack confidence or feel current training is insufficient. This calls for extended and continuous training, even beyond graduation. Although still high at 91% agreement, item (5) has slightly higher disagreement 9% than the others. This indicates that a small group believes other factors (e.g., qualifications, experience) are also influential, although speaking skills are still seen as critical. As for the last item, most participants 91% believe in the importance of lifelong learning and consistent practice of speaking skills. The 9% disagreement may reflect those who either feel they have already mastered the skill or prioritise other competencies post-graduation.

**Table (3): Percentages of the Importance of English-Speaking Skills**

| N o. | Statements                                                                             | SA  | A   | D  | SD |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|
| 1    | English courses should prioritise the development of speaking skills in the curriculum | 59% | 36% | 3% | 2% |
| 2    | Proficient speaking skills are crucial for success at job interviews                   | 55% | 41% | 1% | 1% |
| 3    | Effective speaking skills play a significant role in                                   | 51% | 47% | 1% | 1% |

|   |                                                                                                   |     |     |    |    |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|
|   | enhancing performance during job interviews                                                       |     |     |    |    |
| 4 | I need additional postgraduate training to improve my speaking skills                             | 37% | 57% | 3% | 3% |
| 5 | English-speaking skills are a key factor that directly affects my success in job interviews       | 36% | 55% | 8% | 1% |
| 6 | Speaking skills are the skills that need to be learned after graduation, with consistent practice | 51% | 40% | 5% | 4% |

Then, participants were asked to identify factors that hinder their development of speaking skills, which are essential for employment. The table contains 12 statements, and participants were asked to indicate their agreement by selecting “Yes” or their disagreement by selecting “No”. The findings from Table 4 reveal a range of pedagogical and psychological impediments to the development of speaking skills among EFL learners. The most significant barrier reported was overcorrection by instructors 80%, followed by issues such as deficient vocabulary 78%, large class sizes 78%, and lack of technology integration 77%. These results suggest that learners often feel discouraged or anxious when speaking due to fear of making mistakes and receiving critical feedback. Furthermore, a substantial portion of students 76% indicated that the courses focus mainly on intensive listening rather than interactive speaking, and over half 55% viewed the classes as teacher-centred. Such traditional methods limit student engagement and reduce speaking opportunities. Psychological barriers also emerged prominently, with 69% of learners expressing shyness or discomfort speaking in front of peers or instructors. Additionally, 72% of students believed that the topics covered in English courses were not aligned with practical verbal communication needs, especially in workplace contexts. Overall, the data suggest a need for a shift toward more communicative, learner-centred approaches that foster confidence, integrate technology, personalise instruction, and encourage meaningful speaking practice in supportive environments.

**Table (4): Impediments to the Development of Speaking Skills**

| N o. | Statements                                                                                                                      | Yes | No  |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 1    | The courses rely significantly on intensive listening to our instructor, and we are not engaged in speaking with the instructor | 76% | 24% |
| 2    | The topics covered in English courses are far from verbal communication in the workplace                                        | 72% | 28% |

|   |                                                                                                                                                        |     |     |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 3 | Courses are basically teacher-centred, and we rarely find a chance to talk during the lecture, which limits our opportunities to talk during the class | 55% | 45% |
| 4 | I was shy and uncomfortable around colleagues                                                                                                          | 69% | 31% |
| 5 | I have a deficient vocabulary                                                                                                                          | 78% | 22% |
| 6 | I feel hesitant to speak English in front of the instructor                                                                                            | 69% | 31% |
| 7 | English-speaking course topics fall outside the scope of the workplace                                                                                 | 71% | 29% |
| 8 | I have a poor grammar level                                                                                                                            | 62% | 38% |
| 9 | Negative remarks from the instructor prevent the students from participating                                                                           | 70% | 30% |

Participants were asked to share their perspectives on the most effective teaching methodologies that have significantly contributed to the improvement of their speaking skills. The data gathered from participants demonstrates a clear preference for interactive and student-centred teaching methodologies to enhance English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking skills. Notably, the strategies rated highest included engaging in group discussions with the instructor 95% agreement, selecting topics for peer discussions 93%, and utilising technology such as videos and audio materials 94%. These findings indicate that learners benefit significantly from collaborative and communicative activities that facilitate real-time language use in meaningful contexts. Additionally, individual presentations were positively rated by 91% of participants, underscoring the importance of structured speaking tasks in fostering fluency, confidence, and the ability to organise ideas effectively. While grammar instruction and peer collaboration received favourable responses as well (both at 81% agreement), their slightly lower ratings suggest that, although essential, these components are more effective when integrated into communicative frameworks rather than implemented in isolation. Conversely, traditional methods such as professor-led reading aloud (21% agreement) and independent reading by students (49% agreement) were perceived as the least effective strategies. These methods may not provide adequate speaking practice, interaction, or immediate feedback elements that are critical for developing oral proficiency. Similarly, strategies such as vocabulary memorisation (68% agreement) and dialogue exchanges between two students without instructional guidance (56% agreement) received moderate support, indicating that rote or unstructured activities have a limited impact on the development of speaking skills. Overall, the results

are consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT), which prioritise interaction, learner autonomy, and authentic language use. The findings emphasise the necessity for EFL instructors to focus on methodologies that actively engage students in the learning process, offer opportunities for oral communication, and leverage supportive technologies to create dynamic and effective language-learning environments.

**Table (5): Participants' Perspectives on How English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teaching Methodologies Contributed to the Enhancement of their Speaking Skills**

| N o. | Statements                                                 | SA  | A   | D   | SD  |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1    | Engaging in group discussions in class with the instructor | 35% | 60% | 4%  | 1%  |
| 2    | Learning how to master speaking skills through grammar     | 23% | 58% | 12% | 7%  |
| 3    | Make students peers                                        | 23% | 58% | 17% | 2%  |
| 4    | Choose a topic and discuss it with students                | 28% | 65% | 4%  | 3%  |
| 5    | Using technology such as videos and audio                  | 25% | 69% | 4%  | 2%  |
| 6    | The instructor reads loudly                                | 6%  | 15% | 51% | 28% |
| 7    | The students read alone                                    | 13% | 36% | 41% | 10% |
| 8    | An individual detailed presentation of the material        | 25% | 66% | 9%  | 0%  |
| 9    | Memorise words                                             | 25% | 43% | 20% | 12% |
| 10   | Dialogue between two students                              | 15% | 41% | 30% | 14% |

In the following table, participants were asked to give their opinion on potential enhancements to the course structure that could significantly improve the teaching of speaking skills. Each statement represents a proposed method or strategy, and participants responded with "Yes" or "No" to indicate agreement or disagreement.

#### 1. Most Supported Improvements

Item (2) had the highest agreement, with nearly 88% of participants believing the course materials are outdated and disconnected from real-world applications, highlighting the need for revision. Item (4) received strong approval at 86%, emphasising the importance of technology in improving speaking skills through language learning apps, multimedia, and virtual platforms. This suggests a preference for interactive and engaging educational tools. Item (6) highlights that 85% of respondents approve of the provision of a vocabulary list with meanings and pronunciations, emphasising the importance of

vocabulary in effective communication. Similarly, item (1) shows that about 83% support integrating speaking courses across all academic years, indicating a need for systematic instruction in speaking skills throughout the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) journey. Item (3) reveals that around 82% advocate for equal instructional time for speaking skills, suggesting they are currently undervalued compared to grammar and writing. This emphasises the necessity to elevate speaking skills in classroom practices.

#### 2. Moderately Supported Improvements

As for item (7), a significant majority 79% expressed a positive opinion. Participants support the idea of enhancing student engagement with native speakers through international partnerships. This reflects the importance participants attach to authentic speaking environments, cultural exchange, and practical language use that extends beyond traditional textbooks. Concerning item (5), approximately 75% of respondents indicated a positive response. While this finding is not directly related to speaking proficiency, it suggests a favourable view toward integrated assessment methodologies. This may suggest an understanding that reading proficiency is closely linked to vocabulary enhancement, comprehension skills, and, by extension, speaking fluency.

#### 3. Least Supported Suggestion

Item (8) reveals that only 12% of respondents support using the target language exclusively, while 88% of respondents oppose this method. This disapproval suggests that most participants feel hesitant about an English-only approach, likely due to anxiety, comprehension challenges, or the need for clarification in their native language. The findings suggest a preference for a bilingual or scaffolded approach, particularly in the early stages of learning or during complex speaking tasks. These insights can help shape future instructional strategies.

**Table (6): Participants' Opinions about EFL Course Structuring Improvement Needed to Elevate the Teaching of Speaking Skills**

| N o. | Statements                                                             | Yes | No  |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 1    | Add a compulsory speaking skills course in all academic years          | 83% | 17% |
| 2    | Change the course of the material to meet the market                   | 88% | 12% |
| 3    | Give more hours to this material, just like grammar and other subjects | 82% | 18% |
| 4    | Using technology                                                       | 86% | 14% |
| 5    | Evaluate students with degrees on their reading performance            | 75% | 25% |

|   |                                                                                                        |     |     |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 6 | Providing a comprehensive list of vocabulary along with their meaning and pronunciation                | 85% | 15% |
| 7 | Collaborative partnerships with international universities to engage our students with native students | 79% | 21% |
| 8 | Using only the target language                                                                         | 12% | 88% |

#### 4. Discussion

##### 1. What do graduates of Al-Hadba University think about the speaking skills they developed throughout their academic years?

The importance of speaking skills in the academic journey is widely recognised by graduates. Despite this recognition, there is a notable sense of dissatisfaction regarding their current level of proficiency. Over 90% of participants affirmed that speaking skills should be a fundamental component of English courses, which they view as essential for both academic and professional success. However, 94% indicated a need for further improvement in this area. This observation highlights a perceived gap between the significance attributed to speaking skills and the actual training provided. Graduates express a clear desire for more comprehensive and consistent speaking instruction to be integrated throughout their academic experience.

##### 2. To what degree do speaking skills influence students' opportunities for success in job interviews and within the workplace?

The findings indicate a strong consensus on the vital role of speaking skills in securing employment and excelling in job interviews. Notably, 96% of respondents recognised the importance of oral proficiency in enhancing employability, while 98% directly linked interview success to effective verbal communication. This indicates that graduates view speaking skills not merely as academic tools, but as essential strategic skills for career advancement. These insights confirm that proficiency in speaking is regarded as a crucial factor within professional environments.

##### 3. What factors might have prevented the enhancements of students during university years and prepared them for employment requirements?

The findings highlight a combination of pedagogical limitations and psychological challenges affecting the enhancement of speaking skills.

**Pedagogical Barriers:** A significant proportion of instructors 80% tend to overcorrect students, while most of the course materials 88% are perceived as outdated, which ultimately discourages student engagement. Additionally, the lack of technology integration 77%, the prevalence of large class sizes

78%, and teacher-centred instructional approaches 55% restrict opportunities for interactive practice. Moreover, the curriculum's focus on listening skills rather than active speaking 76% reduces the chances for students to engage in verbal output.

Psychological Barriers: High levels of shyness 69% and discomfort when speaking in front of peers or instructors hinder the development of confidence. Moreover, the absence of practical, real-world speaking tasks leads to decreased motivation and preparedness among students.

## 5. Conclusions

The findings emphasise the necessity for reforms in both curriculum content and instructional methodologies. Students have expressed a strong interest in several key enhancements, including the integration of technology-enhanced learning 86%, the inclusion of updated materials relevant to current market trends 88%, the provision of structured vocabulary support 85%, and the implementation of mandatory speaking courses throughout all academic years 83%. These results reflect a significant demand for learner-centred, communicative, and skills-based instruction that is aligned with the evolving requirements of the job market.

## 6. Recommendations

To enhance English-speaking proficiency among undergraduates, several measures are recommended. A mandatory skill-based speaking course should be introduced for all academic years, featuring assessments like presentations and discussions. The curriculum should be revised to include business English and task-based speaking activities that reflect real-world demands. Teaching methods should focus on communicative, student-centred approaches, such as role-plays and debates, while incorporating technology like language apps and multimedia resources for practice. Providing structured vocabulary lists and regular fluency exercises will strengthen learners' foundations. Reducing class sizes will allow for personalised feedback and a supportive environment that encourages participation. Finally, instructor training should emphasise communicative methodologies and effective use of technology to promote sustainable improvement in speaking skills.

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