Insufficiency of Oral Communication Performance of Kurd EFL Undergraduate
Learners at the Universities of Kurdistan: Reasons and Suggested Solutions

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Abstract

Insufficiency of oral communication performance is noticed among Kurdish EFL learners at the universities of Kurdistan region of Iraq. Thus, the current study investigates the reasons behind this issue and attempts to suggest solutions for it. The data has been gathered among 120 Kurdish EFL university students and 20 instructors at the universities of Charmo and Sulaimani. The results and discussion of the data gathered identify the main reasons behind the issue as students' shyness, fear of losing face, reliance on L1 use, lack of self-confidence and de-motivation; that is in addition to the lecturers' focusing mainly on grammar and writing skill and ignoring listening skill. In addition, the paper suggests solutions for the issue which are mainly overcoming students' shyness, focusing on listening and speaking skills and avoiding L1 use in the class. .

1-Introduction

In the era of globalization and technology, learning English has become a need for many people, especially students. The demand on learning English as a second/foreign language continuously increases since English is one of the most widely used international languages in the world and it is needed for different purposes, especially for business affairs. In McDonough and Shaw's (1993:133) views, due to "the recent growth of English as an international language of communication, there is clearly a need for many learners to speak and interact in a multiplicity of situations through the language, be it for a

foreign travel, business or other professional reasons".

2 Literature Review:

It is generally agreed upon that language encompasses four different skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing that each of them has their own significance. Speaking, as an important productive skill, is defined as "an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information" (Burns and Joyce, 1997). Besides, for Bygate (2010:63) the study of speaking skill "involves understanding the psycholinguistic and interpersonal factors of speech production, the forms, the meanings, and processes involved, and how these can be developed".

2.1 Significance of Speaking Skill:

Concerning the significance of speaking skill among the other ones, Nunan (2001:225) states that when someone asks "Do you know another language", what is generally meant is "Can you speak the language?" Moreover, "people may often form judgements about our language competence from our speaking rather than from any of the other skills" (McDonough and Shaw1993:133). Besides, Rivers (1991) argues that speaking is used twice as much as reading and writing in communications. Moreover, in terms of why speaking should be taught in language classes, Harmer (2007b:123) believes that getting students to speak provides them with opportunities to practice real-life situations, provides feedback to teachers and students about how successful they are and what problems they experience.

2.2 Factors Prohibiting Mastering Speaking Skill:

Many factors have been diagnosed by different scholars in the field of teaching EFL/ESL that may inhibit learners from speaking English properly inside and outside the classroom. In Ur's views (2012:118), there are many problems that inhibit students to participate in the class in which they include:

- **Shyness and inhibitions**: students are often inhibited and shy to speak in the class; that is to avoid making mistakes and losing face
- **Not finding things to say**: only providing an interesting topic is not sufficient as the students need to feel that they have relevant things to say.
- **Low participation of the individuals**: in large classes, there are very little chances for participation as talkative students usually dominate the class.
- **First Language (Henceforth L1) Use**: specifically, in monolingual classes, the students find it easier and more natural to use their mother tongue.

Moreover, Nunan (1993 cited in Lazaraton, 2001:110) points out that the biggest challenges that the teachers face in EFL classes are the students' lack of motivation, reliance on using L1 and difficulty in getting students to speak as it is a cultural issue for some that speaking is not allowed in the class except when they are called on to do so by their teachers. Besides, Chastain (1988) agrees that shyness and low confidence are the reasons behind the lack of motivation to speak English. In addition, Tsui (1996 cited in Nunan, 2001:233-234) identifies a number of reasons behind the problem, such as:

- Students' lack of confidence, unwillingness to take risks,
- Fear of making mistakes and derision,
- Teachers' intolerance of silence (giving little or no time to wait),
- Uneven allocation of turn (favoring better students),

- Incomprehensible input (difficult language use by teachers).

Furthermore, Lazaraton (2001:110) believes that large numbers of students in one class, which are often norms overseas, limits the students' opportunity to talk and the teacher's opportunity to provide necessary feedback to the students. Besides, other problems may appear if the teacher is a non-native speaker of English as they might not be competent or confident enough to speak English. Additionally, another major reason could be that speaking skill is almost overlooked, while more class time is devoted to other skills such as reading and writing (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992:165; Miller, 2001:125).

2.3 Techniques/Strategies to Improve Oral Communication:

Needless to say that the interaction that takes place in the EFL classrooms between the teacher and students, or among students themselves, is of paramount importance. How the teacher responds to students' participation and errors is considered effective. To solve the students' insufficiency of oral communication, various points are suggested by different scholars. Lazaraton suggests the following:

- Teachers need to organize authentic, motivating and varied class activities.
- If the necessary technology is available, showing movies or television programs and audiotape programs can be enjoyable for students and can provide them with authentic practice in listening to native speakers' speech.
- The teacher can assign out-of-class learning activities, e.g. watching and/or listening to an English-language film, television show, or radio program.
- The teacher can invite English native speakers to the class to give

speeches, talks, or presentations followed by questions from the students.
- They can also be encouraged to start an English club or to find an English speaking conversation partner.

(Lazaraton, 2001:110-111)

In addition, other suggestions have also been made for the teachers:

- Using group work,
- Basing activity on easy language,
- Making a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate interest,
- Giving some instruction or training in discussion skills,
- Keeping students speaking the target language.   (Ur, 1996:121-122)

Besides, Harmer states that "[g]ood speaking activities can and should be extremely engaging for the students. If they all participate fully – and if the teacher has set up the activity properly and can then give sympathetic and useful feedback – they will get tremendous satisfaction from it" (2007b:123). In addition, in a successful speaking lesson, learners talk a lot, participation is even, language is of an acceptable level and motivation is high (Brown and Yule, 1983 cited in Nunan, 2001:120).

2.4 Role of Listening in Mastering Speaking:

It is generally accepted that listening skill has a paramount role in developing speaking skill and without a good input (listening) it is impossible to have a good output (speaking). Thus, EFL/ESL learners need to continuously listen to English since this builds up the required knowledge. After doing so, they can start speaking the second language (Nation and Newton, 2009:38). Moreover, for the students to move from reception stage to production stage, they

need to have good prior experience as a listener (Brown and Yule, 1983 cited in Nunan, 2001:237).

3. Methodology:

In order to gather data for this study, two tools of data collection are used, namely 'Likert Scale Questionnaire' (see appendix 1) and 'Open Ended Questionnaire'. The participants of the data collection are Kurdish EFL students and lecturers. It is worth noting that prior to the data collection process, the questionnaire was considered and approved by three experts in applied linguistics at the universities of Charmo and Sulaimani.

3.1 Questionnaire and Open-Ended Questions Tools:

To collect the required data, a questionnaire is given to 120 fourth year students; 60 students from Department of English, College of Education and Languages, University of Charmo and another 60 students from Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Sulaimani. The questionnaire consists of two parts: the first one is a 25 items 5-point Likert scale statements and the second part consists of two open-ended questions as follows:

1- In your opinion, what are the main reasons behind the insufficiency of the learners' abilities to speak English well inside and outside the class?
2- What solutions do you suggest to improve/develop the students' speaking skill?

Moreover, the same open-ended questionnaire as for the students is given to 20 lecturers (10 lecturers from each above mentioned universities) (see appendix 2). The aim of directing the same questions to the lecturers and students' participants is to find out the reasons and suggested solutions about the issue from students and lecturers

as two facets of the matter. Besides, it is believed by the researcher that students and lecturers may have different/contradicting views about it.

3.2 Research Questions:

The research questions for the current study are:
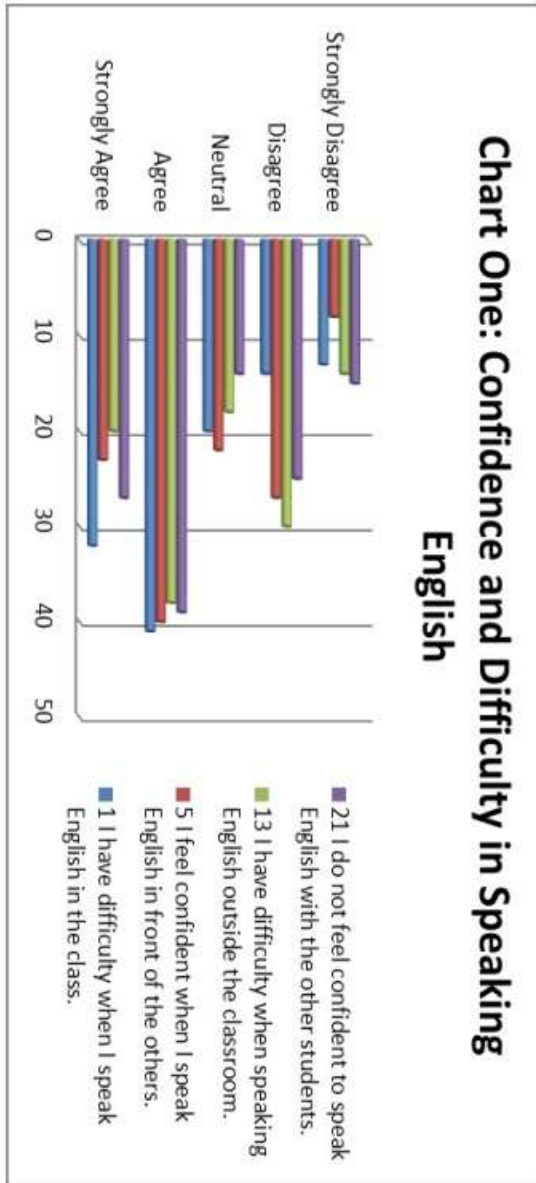
1- What are the main factors affecting Kurd EFL undergraduate learners' oral communication performance?
2- What are the suggested solutions for this issue?

4. Results:

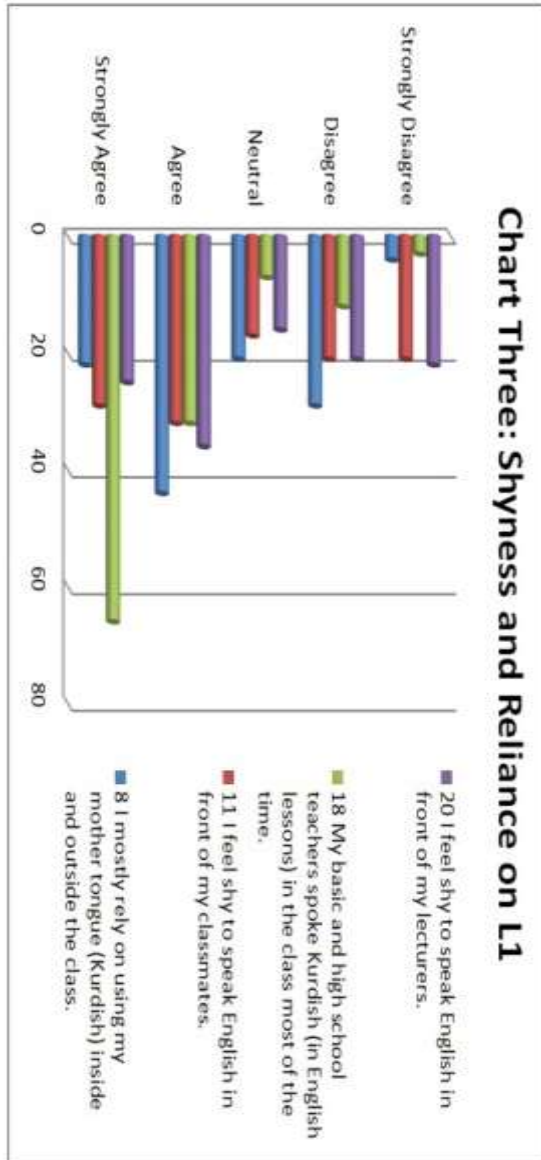### 4.1 Students' Results:
4.1.1 Students' Questionnaire Results:

The questionnaire statements are divided into seven different groups of statements relying on their closeness to one another.

Chart One: Confidence and Difficulty in Speaking English

Legend:
- 21 I do not feel confident to speak English with the other students.
- 13 I have difficulty when speaking English outside the classroom.
- 5 I feel confident when I speak English in front of the others.
- 1 I have difficulty when I speak English in the class.

Chart Two: De-motivation

Legend:
- 22 Few marks are assigned by lecturers for class speaking activities, and this demotivates me.
- 10 My classmates do not motivate me to speak English in the class.
- 6 All our lecturers are non-native speakers of English, this demotivates me to speak English in the class.
- 4 The majority of the lecturers do not motivate me to speak English in the class.

The data results show that the majority of the students do not feel confident while they speak with the other students (55%) or in front of the others (53%). Besides, the majority of the participants (61%) agree that they have difficulty in speaking English inside the classroom followed by less than half of the participants (42%) having difficulty while speaking English outside the classroom.
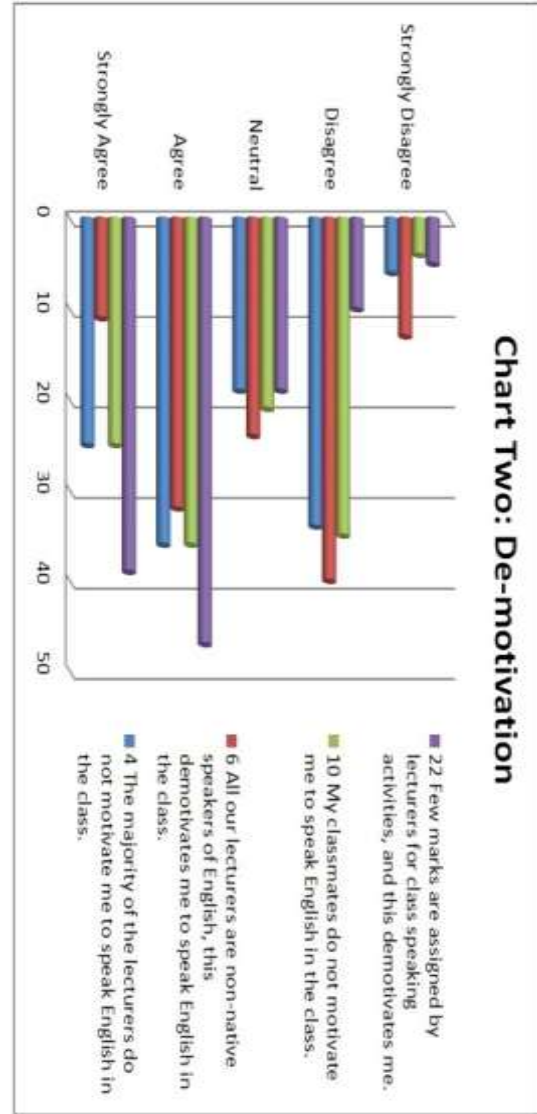
Just over half of the students (51%) agree that their lecturers and classmates are not sources of motivation for them. In addition, assigning little marks by lecturers on oral activities in the class is also considered as another source of de-motivation that over two thirds of the students (72%) agree on. Conversely, the lecturers' being non-native speakers of English (statement 6) is not considered de-motivating by the majority of the students that only (36%) of the students approved it.

Chart Three: Shyness and Reliance on L1

- 20 I feel shy to speak English in front of my lecturers.
- 18 My basic and high school teachers spoke Kurdish (in English lessons) in the class most of the time.
- 11 I feel shy to speak English in front of my classmates.
- 8 I mostly rely on using my mother tongue (Kurdish) inside and outside the class.

Chart Four: Lack of Opportunities to Speak English inside/outside the Class or to Native Speakers

- 23 A large number of students in one class gives me little opportunity to speak English.
- 17 I do not have opportunities to speak with native speakers outside classes.
- 14 I feel comfortable when sometimes have a chance to speak to English native speakers.
- 9 I am not given enough opportunities by my lecturers to perform speaking tasks in the class.
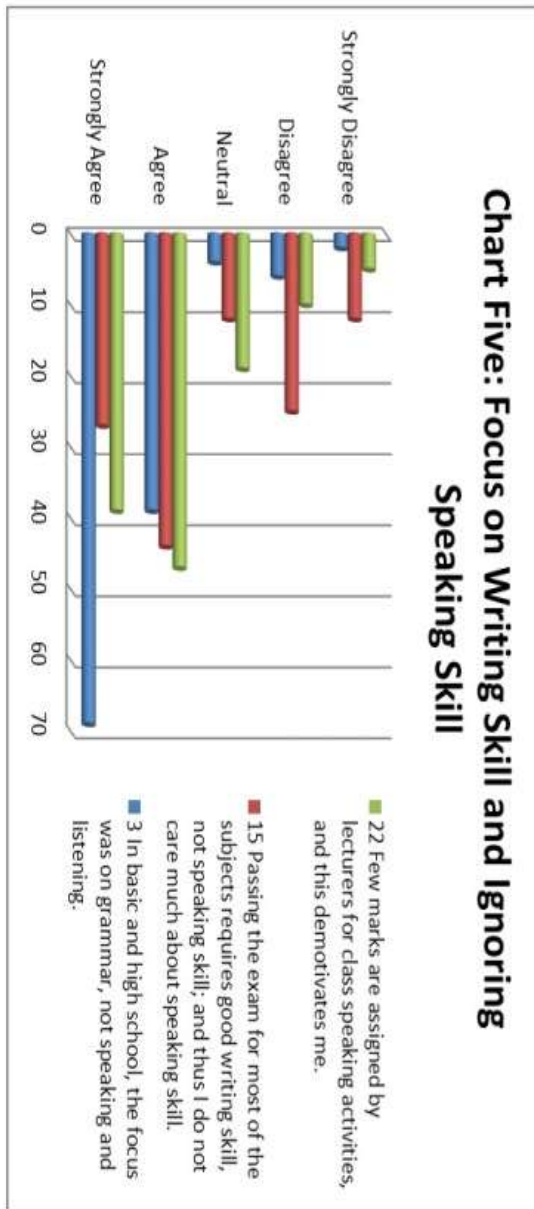- 7 I have good opportunities to practice English outside the classroom.

Over half of the students (51%) feel shy to speak English in front of their classmates (statement 11) and lecturers (statement 20). Additionally, (55%) rely on using L1 (Kurdish) inside and outside the class. Besides, the vast majority of the students (82%) agree that in basic and high schools their English language teachers used Kurdish most of the time. This can be seen as a cause for students' reliance on L1 use inside and outside the class most of the time.
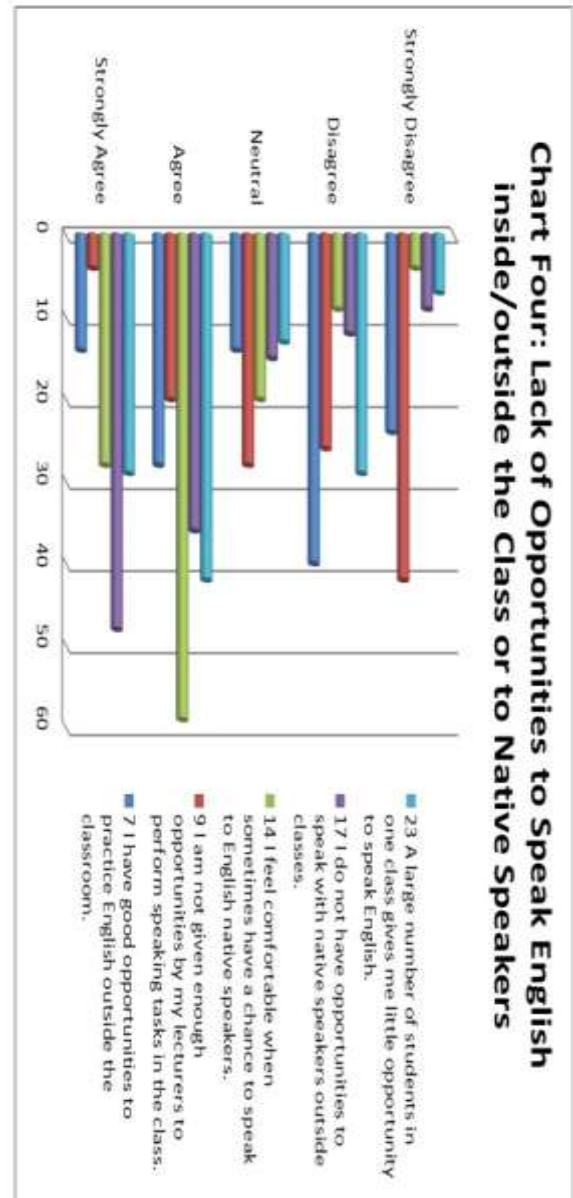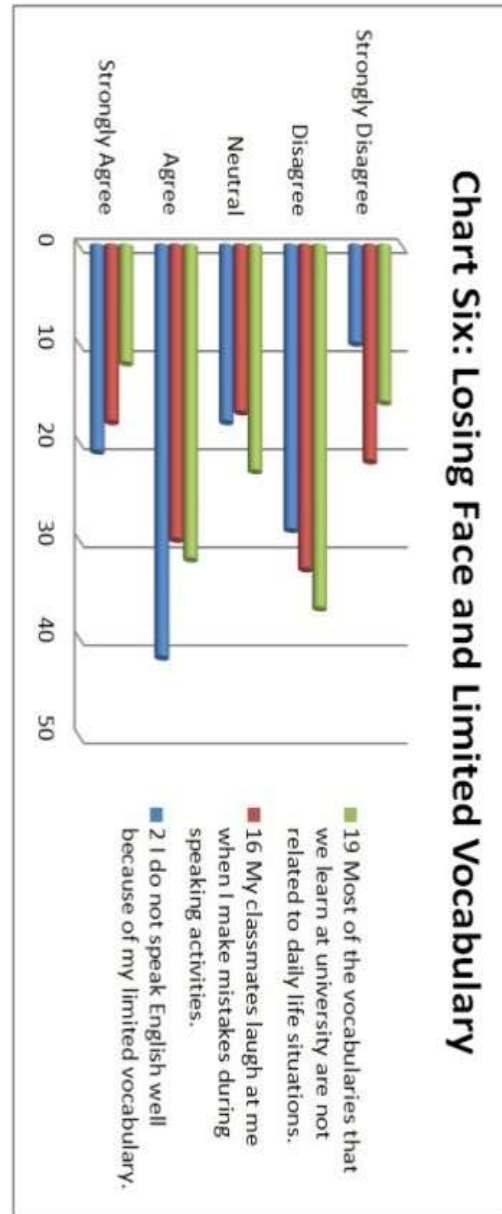
Over half of the students (53%) agree on not having sufficient opportunities to practice English outside the class. Besides, the majority of the students (59%) agree that a large number of students in one class reduces their opportunities to speak English inside the class. Conversely, (57%) disagree to criticize their lecturers for not providing them with sufficient opportunities to speak English inside the class. Moreover, over two thirds of the participants (68%) agree that they do not have opportunities to speak with English native speakers; in case of getting a

chance, (73%) feel comfortable to speak to native speakers of English.

Chart Five: Focus on Writing Skill and Ignoring Speaking Skill

- 22 Few marks are assigned by lecturers for class speaking activities, and this demotivates me.
- 15 Passing the exam for most of the subjects requires good writing skill, not speaking skill; and thus I do not care much about speaking skill.
- 3 In basic and high school, the focus was on grammar, not speaking and listening.

The vast majority (90%) of the participants agree that in primary and high school the focus was on grammar, not speaking English, in the class. In addition, (59%) believe that the reason behind their reluctance to improve their speaking is that passing the exams needs only good writing

skill, not speaking. Besides, (72%) agree that assigning little/no marks on speaking activities in the class, discourages them to participate in the oral activities.

Chart Six: Losing Face and Limited Vocabulary

- 19 Most of the vocabularies that we learn at university are not related to daily life situations.
- 16 My classmates laugh at me when I make mistakes during speaking activities.
- 21 I do not speak English well because of my limited vocabulary.

Just over half of the students (52.5%) agree that their limited vocabulary is the cause of their insufficiency of oral communication skills. In addition, (44%) of the students disagree that the vocabularies they study at university are not related to daily life

activities. Moreover, (40%) of the students show agreement to the point that their classmates laugh at them when they make speaking mistakes in the class whilst (46%) reject that idea and do not have that problem at all.

Chart Seven: Corrective Feedback and Internet Access
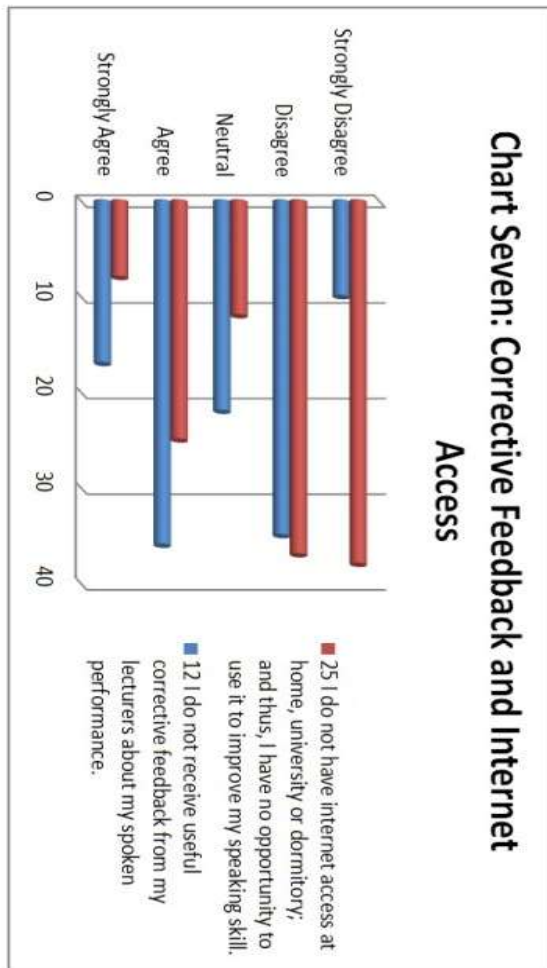
Less than half of the students (44%) agree that they do not receive useful corrective feedback about their speaking mistakes from their lecturers. Besides, (75%) do not have the problem of internet access to inhibit their opportunities to improve their speaking skill.

4.1.1.2 Students Open-Ended Questions' Results:

The first open-ended question (see appendix 1) seeks the students' opinions about the reasons behind the students' insufficiency of oral communication performance.

4.1.1.2.1 Reasons behind the Issue:

Below is a summary of the main reasons from the student participants' views:

- **Reasons Related to Lecturers:**

Lecturers are considered by many students as one major reason behind the issue. They are criticized for:

- focusing much on grammar/writing and ignoring listening/speaking skills.
- not creating good and/or equal opportunities for the students' practice.
- not using group work and pair work in the class.
- spoon feeding that encourages the students to become teacher reliant.
- lack/shortage of classroom management skills that cause nuisance in class.
- evaluating students' progress only on writing skill, ignoring speaking skill.
- using L1 (Kurdish) by some lecturers from time to time in class.
- not providing sufficient motivation and scaffolding in the class.
- not providing up to date resources to the students.
- being harsh and authoritative in the class; thus, getting angry in the event of student participants make mistakes in speaking activities.
- the conversation topics not being fun and unrelated to daily life activities.

- **Reasons Related to Students:**

The students are also considered as another main reason behind the issue. They are considered responsible because of their:

- Feeling shy to speak English in front of the students and lecturers. Some students also state that they are even shy to speak their mother tongue

(Kurdish) with their lecturers inside and outside the class.
- limited/poor vocabulary.
- reliance on memorization just to pass the exam.
- lack/shortage of practicing English inside/outside the classroom.
- reliance on using L1 inside and outside the class.
- not attending summer courses to improve their speaking skills.
- not using technology to improve their listening and do not try to speak with English native speakers on internet.
- not motivating one another; on the contrary, they laugh at the one who makes mistakes (Grammar, speaking) in the class.
- lack self-confidence and reliance on lecturers' spoon feeding.
- studying just to pass the exams that only needs good writing skill.

- **Reasons Related to Family and Society:**

Family and society are also considered responsible for the issue in one way or another. They do not provide sufficient motivation, encouragement and support to the students to improve their English. On the contrary, some students state that if they speak English, the people around will laugh at them and accuse them of being show off. Thus, family and society play a discouraging role in this matter and do not appreciate the value of knowing a language like English.

4.1.1.2.2 Suggestions to Solve the Issue:

The second open-ended question seeks the students' suggestions for the issue. The students suggest several points mainly to the lecturers and students.

- **Suggestions to Lecturers:**

The lecturers are suggested to play a vital role in solving the issue; that is through taking different steps such as:

- motivating the students to improve their speaking performance and reinforcing their participation.
- helping them overcome their shyness and reduce their fear of making mistakes.
- creating equal opportunities for them to practice English inside the class.
- if necessary, forcing the reluctant students to speak English in the class.
- surrounding them with English and providing extra resources to them.
- having fun, authentic and interesting conversation topics in the class.
- using more group work in the class.
- assigning more marks on speaking activities.
- creating a friendly English environment inside and outside the class.
- not using L1 in the class at all.
- evaluating the students on both skills, oral and written.
- providing good corrective feedback on speaking activities.

- **Suggestions to Students:**

The following suggestions are made to the students. They should:
- use internet and technological devices to listen to/watch English radio/TV programmes and movies as often as they can.
- overcome their shyness through more exposure to English.
- practice speaking English inside and outside the class.

- speak in front of a mirror or video/audio record their own conversations and listen to them later on to identify the pitfalls.
- enrich their vocabulary.
- be confident and trust their abilities.
- motivate themselves and the others.
- be self-reliant and not to wait for spoon feeding.
- not be afraid of making mistakes.
- not laugh at one another in case of making mistakes.
- attend seminars, presentations and debates in English.
- use external sources and attend English language summer courses.
- find English native speaker partners to speak to either face to face or online.

Besides, the curriculum designers and administrative staff of English departments at the universities are suggested to surround the students with English. Besides, they suggest getting English native speaker lecturers to teach in English departments since they help the students to overcome their shyness to speak and avoids the use of L1 in the class. In addition, the curriculum should be oral based, and the focus should not be only on writing.

4.1.2 Lecturers Open-Ended Questionnaire's Results:

As mentioned earlier 20 lecturers from both Universities answered the two open-ended questions (see appendix 2). Their answers to the first question show their views about the reasons behind the issue.

4.1.2.1 Reasons behind the Issue:

- **Reasons Related to the lecturers:**

From the lecturers' views, several other reasons are identified as causes of students' insufficiency of oral communication performance in which the lecturers are seen as responsible because of:

- focusing on teaching grammar, reading and writing and ignore speaking.
- not providing the students with corrective feedback.
- evaluating students' progress only on writing performance, underestimating speaking performance.
- spoon feeding the students that makes them teacher reliant.
- not motivating the students to speak English inside/outside the class.
- using L1 in the class.

- **Reasons Related to the Students:**

The students are also criticized due to their:

- reluctance to improve their speaking performance.
- shyness to speak English in the class.
- reliance on using L1 (Kurdish) inside and outside classrooms.
- de-motivation to improve their English. ,
- limited vocabulary.
- lack of confidence in their speaking abilities.
- fear of making mistakes; that is due to their fear of losing face.
- not using technology to improve their speaking performance.
- lack awareness of English culture.
- reliance on memorization and writing skill to pass the exams.
- not practicing English inside and outside the classroom.
- lack/shortage of exposure to English.

In addition, other reasons are also mentioned such as the lack of native speaker lecturers,

shortage of semi-native competent lecturers, crowdedness of the classes, students' lack of opportunities to speak English outside the class, having no opportunities to speak with English native speakers and the students' hopelessness to get a decent job after graduation.

4.1.2.2 Suggestions to Solve the Issue:

The lecturers made various suggestions to themselves (lecturers), students, administrative staff of English department and curriculum designers.

- **Suggestions to Lecturers:**

The lecturers are suggested to:
- update themselves with the latest knowledge about the methods and techniques of teaching.
- help the students to overcome their shyness.
- focus more on speaking activities.
- use audio/visual aids to contextualize real life situations.
- use more group work to increase students' talking time (STT).
- have joyful /entertaining activities.
- motivate the students to speak English.
- prevent the use of L1 in the class.
- reinforce students' participation in speaking activities.
- give proper corrective feedback to the students.
- assess the students' performance on both speaking and writing.
- assign good marks on speaking activities.
- give home works to the students such as listening to/watching English movies/programs and oblige them to discuss/present them in the class.
- be friendly with the students and create a good rapport with them.

- **Suggestions to Students:**

The students are suggested to:
- overcome their shyness to speak English.
- practice English inside/outside the class as much as possible.
- use external resources such as internet and technological devices to listen/watch English radio programs, songs and movies.
- think in English.
- have and attend seminars, presentations and debates in English.
- enrich their vocabulary.
- speak in front of a mirror and record their voices to listen to them later on.

Furthermore, other suggestions are also made to the administrative staff and curriculum designers of English departments. They are urged to decrease student numbers in the classes, avoid the lecturers using L1, oblige the teachers to assign good marks on speaking activities, establish English zone and create, if possible, opportunities for the students to visit English speaking countries. Additionally, there should be conversation subject in every single year of the university, minimum for four hours a week, and successful graduates be invited to give talks to the students to encourage and motivate them.

5. Discussion and Analyses of the Data:

The results about the reasons related to lecturers agree with Scarcella and Oxford (1992) and Miller (2001:125) that many English teachers ignore listening and speaking skills and focus on reading and writing. This seems to be the same for Kurdistan universities and schools. Besides, Ur's (2012:118) reason that "not finding things to say" might be linked with "the topics of conversation are not fun/entertaining and not related to daily life activities". Thus, students find it hard to talk

about them. Moreover, the lecturers' harshness and not being even handed contradicts Harmer's (2007b:127) description of good and successful teachers that they provide equal opportunities to students, draw out the quiet ones, control the talkative ones and do not react with anger and ridicule in case of students making mistakes or unplanned things.

In addition, lack of corrective feedback and large number of students in one class as causes of the issue go in line with Lazaraton (2001:110) that "large numbers of students in one class, which are often norms overseas, limits the students' opportunity to talk and the teacher's opportunity to provide necessary feedback to the students". Thus, the lack of corrective feedback is very risky. That is why the lecturers should pay attention to its vital role in developing the students' speaking performance (Harmer, 2007b:123). Furthermore, the data gathered also agree with Ur (1996:121-122) that using group work, allowing only target language to be used in the class and the lecturers should choose interesting topics and tasks for the students. Likewise, Harmer (2007a:166) states that group work dramatically increases students' talking opportunities, different opinions, varied contributions, and promotes learner autonomy. What is more, the learners with higher motivation are considered to be more successful than the ones with little or no motivation (Ushioda, 1996:7; Lightbown and Spada, 2006:56; Cook, 2008:136). Thus, the lecturers should do their best to increase the learners' motivation to learn English.

On the other hand, the results about the reasons related to students agree with Ur (2012:118) that students' shyness and use of L1 are two major factors that prohibit mastering speaking skill properly. Besides, Nunan (1993 cited in Lazaraton, 2001:110) states that the main difficulties that teachers face in EFL classes are students' lack of

motivation, L1 use and difficulty in getting students to speak. Nunan mentions that in some cultures it is not easy to involve students to speak as many of them need to be called to speak by the teacher. Linking Nunan's words to the current paper's data, several students stated that they feel shy to speak even their mother tongue in front of their teachers. Thus, it may be concluded that shyness and being afraid of participating in oral activities could be norms in Kurdish culture that may need further investigations. Additionally, the results also agree with Tsui that the students' lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes are major causes of the issue (1996 cited in Nunan, 2001:233-234). Contrary to Tsui's results, reasons such as teachers' intolerance of silence and incomprehensible input have not been mentioned by the subjects in the current paper. Moreover, regarding the lack of motivation, the results also agree with Chastain (1988) that shyness and low confidence cause students' de-motivation. Besides, the students' limited vocabulary is considered as a big obstacle. So, the students' vocabulary should be enhanced because L2 learning proficiency can be predicted from the amount of vocabulary the student has (Zareva et. al. 2005; Meara and Fitzpatrick: 1999).

In addition, the results go in line with Hamad's (2013:94-95) who investigated Saudi college students' obstacles affecting their speaking skills. Hamad identified the major factors to be the students' weak English background, their fear of losing face, lecturers' letting students using their L1 in the class, not including sufficient listening and speaking exercises in the curriculum and large number of students in one class. Besides, similar results were yielded by Zhang (2009) that limited opportunities to speak English outside the class, limited exposure to English speakers or members of the international

communities are the major obstacles that face EFL students. Aligned with the previous views, Kasper (2001:520) believes that the classroom is the only environment for the EFL students to practice their English which is not sufficient at all.

The results about the suggestions to the lecturers agree with Lazaraton's (2001:110-111) suggestions to improve speaking skills in which they include using motivating, authentic and varied exercises, using technology to show enjoyable movies and TV programmes so the students can listen to native speakers, assigning out-of-class learning activities such as watching TV shows and then forcing the students to discuss them in class and encouraging the students to join English clubs and find English speaking conversation partners. Besides, regarding forcing students' participation, Swain (2005) believes that the students need to be pushed in order for their knowledge (input) to come up (output). Moreover, the results are also on line with Ur (1996:121-122) that in order to improve the students' speaking level, the teachers should use group work to increase student talking time, choosing interesting conversation topics and keeping the students use only the target language. Furthermore, the results also agree with Patil (2008) that reducing the fear of making mistakes and increasing the students' confidence are important steps that teachers should take to create a friendly and comfortable atmosphere to the students. What is more, the importance of listening skill has been focused upon by the lecturers and students' participants; this agrees with the literature that without a good listening (input), it is impossible to have a good speaking (output). Thus, a good prior experience as a listener moves the students from reception phase to production phase in learning a target language (Nation and Newton, 2009:38; Brown and Yule, 1983 cited in Nunan,

2001:237). In addition, the participants' practice in listening to native speakers. Regarding enriching vocabulary, the results agree with McGarthy (1988) and Lewis (2000:8) that acquiring sufficient vocabulary by the students is the most important task in learning a language. In addition, the students should gradually overcome their shyness and increase their confidence so as to get motivated as these points are diagnosed as major points affecting students' mastering speaking skill by Chastain (1988).

6. Conclusions:

The study has come up with a number of conclusions:

1- The majority of Kurdish EFL university students face challenges/difficulties while they speak English inside the classroom.

2- The main factors affecting Kurdish EFL students' oral communication performance are weak English background, shortage/lack of exposure to listening activities, shyness and fear of losing face, shortage/lack of motivation and equal opportunities to speak in the class, lack of self-confidence, lack of English native speaker lecturers, reliance on using L1 inside and outside the class and so on as so forth.

3- In order to be good English language users, Kurdish EFL university students should use technology to improve their listening and speaking skills, practice speaking English as much as possible, overcome their shyness, be self-reliant and motivated, read external sources and avoid using L1 in the class.

4- The lecturers are urged to focus more on speaking/listening activities in the class, force students to speak English, assign more marks on

speaking activities, evaluate the students' progress equally on both speaking and writing skills, have entertaining, authentic and interesting speaking activities in the class, and create a friendly environment for the students so they may overcome their shyness and become self-confident and self-reliant.

Recommendations:

1- The curriculum designers of English departments are recommended to focus equally on both oral and written activities. Thus, the curriculum should be oral based side by side with the focus on writing. In other words, writing skill should not be improved on the expense of speaking skill.

2- The administrative staff of English departments are recommended to reduce the number of students in one class, establish English zones, encourage the lecturers to avoid using L1 in the class, create a good rapport with the students and use technology in the benefit of improving speaking skill. Additionally, they are also recommended to provide English native speaker lecturers to teach in English departments and focus on improving both oral and written skills that is through assessing the students' progress on both skills, not only written one.

Pedagogical Implication:

Needless to say that speaking skill is one of the most demanding skills in the field of language learning and teaching. Generally, EFL students, including Kurdish ones, come across many obstacles while attempting to improve that skill. The current study found

out the major factors that prohibit the Kurdish EFL students in the process of improving their speaking skill from the students and lecturers' perspectives Moreover, the study also concluded various suggestions to solve the issue from the students and lecturers' views again.

The current study is considered of high significance for EFL students and lecturers alike. It identifies the major factors that prohibit students' speaking skill improvement and makes viable suggestions to both students and lecturers to solve that problem. Thus, it may be seen as beneficial especially to students, lecturers and administrative staff of English departments in the universities of Kurdistan.

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المستخلص:

نظراً لعدم كفاية أداء التواصل الشفوي بين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعات إقليم كردستان العراق، إنبرت هذه الدراسة لتقصّي أسباب هذه المشكلة ومحاولة اقتراح حلول مناسبة لها.ولبلوغ هذه الغاية، تم استقاء طالب جامعي كردي من 120بيانات من عينة مكونة من و 20 محاضراً في دارسي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية جامعتين في كردستان هما جامعة جرمو وجامعة السليمانية. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة وبعد مناقشة البيانات التي تم جمعها أن الأسباب الرئيسية للمشكلة تكمن في خجل الطلاب ، والخشية من فقدان اعتبارهم لدى المقابل ،بالاضافة الى اعتمادهم على لغتهم الاولى ، وانعدام الثقة بالنفس والدافعية لديهم. فننج عن ذلك تركيز الطلبة أثناء الدرس وبشكل رئيسي على القواعد النحوية ومهارة الكتابة وتجاهل مهارة الاستماع. وفي ضوء تلك النتائج ، اقترح هذه الدراسة حزمة من الحلول للمشكلة تركزت بشكل أساسي على تطوير مهارات الاستماع والتحدث ، والتغلب على خجل الطلاب وتجنب استخدام اللغة الأولى داخل الصف.

پوختە:

ئاستى قسەکردنى خوێندکارانى کورد کە زمانى ئینگلیزى وەکوو زمانێکى بێگانه دەخوێنن لە زانکۆکانى هەرێمى کوردستانى عێراقدا لە ئاستى پێویستدا نییه. لەبەر ئەوه، ئەم

توێژینەوەیە ھەولٙدەدات دەستنیشانی ھۆکارەکانی پشت ئەم کێشەیە بکات و چارەسەرەکانیشی بخاتەروو. داتاکانی توێژینەوەکە لە (١٢٠) خوێندکار و (٢٠) مامۆستای زانکۆکانی چەرموو و زانکۆی سلێمانی وەرگیراون. ئەنجامی داتاکان و شیکارییەکانیان ھۆکارەکانی کێشەکە دەستنیشان دەکەن کە بە شێوەیەکی سەرەکی خۆیان دەبیننەوە لە شەرمکردنی خوێندکار، ترس لە شەرمەزاربوون لە ئەگەری ھەلٙەکردندا، پشتبەستن بە بەکارھێنانی زمانی یەکەم، بڕوابەخۆنەبوون، نەبوونی پاڵنەر، ئەمە سەرەرای جەختکردنەوەی مامۆستایان لە پۆلدا بە شێوەیەکی سەرەکی لەسەررێزمان و نووسین و فەرامۆشکردنی گوێگرتن. جگە لەمەش، توێژینەوەکە پێشنیاری چارەسەرکردنی کێشەکەش دەخاتە ڕوو کە گرنگترینیان بریتییە لە جەختکردنەوەی زیاتر لەسەر گوێگرتن و قسەکردن، زاڵبوون بەسەر شەرمکردنی خوێندکاراندا، ھەرورھا ڕێگریکردنە لە بەکارھێنانی زمانی یەکەم (کوردی) لە پۆلدا.

Appendix 1: Students' Questionnaire
Dear participant,

I am conducting a research entitled ***"Insufficiency of Oral Communication Performance of Kurd EFL Undergraduate Learners at the Universities of Kurdistan: Reasons and Suggested Solutions".*** It is important that your answers are honest and serious. The results of the questionnaire will only be used for academic purposes. Anonymity and confidentiality will be assured. Thus, I highly appreciate your time and effort to fill in this questionnaire.

Part A/   Please tick one option only:

	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I have difficulty when I speak English in the class.					
2	I do not speak English well because of my limited vocabulary.					
3	In basic and high school, the focus was on grammar, not speaking and listening.					
4	The majority of the lecturers do not motivate me to speak English in the class.					
5	I feel confident when I speak English in front of the others.					
6	All our lecturers are non-native speakers of English, this demotivates me to speak English in the class.					
7	I have good opportunities to practice English outside the classroom.					
8	I mostly rely on using my mother tongue (Kurdish) inside and outside the class.					
9	I am not given enough opportunities by my lecturers to perform speaking tasks in the class.					
10	My classmates do not motivate me to speak English in the class.					
11	I feel shy to speak English in front of my classmates.					
12	I do not receive useful corrective feedback from my lecturers about my spoken performance.					
13	I have difficulty when speaking English outside the classroom.					
14	I feel comfortable when sometimes have a chance to speak to English native speakers.					
15	Passing the exam for most of the subjects requires good writing skill, not speaking skill; and thus I do not care much about speaking skill.					
16	My classmates laugh at me when I make mistakes during speaking activities.					
17	I do not have opportunities to speak with native speakers outside classes.					
18	My basic and high school teachers spoke Kurdish (in English lessons) in the class most of the time.					
19	Most of the vocabularies that we learn at university are not related to daily life situations.					
20	I feel shy to speak English in front of my lecturers.					
21	I do not feel confident to speak English with the others.					
22	Few marks are assigned by lecturers for class speaking activities, and this demotivates me.					
23	A large number of students in one class gives me little opportunity to speak English.					
24	Having English native speaker lecturers helps improving my speaking performance.					
25	I do not have internet access at home, university or dormitory; and thus, I have no opportunity to use it to improve my speaking skill.					

Part B/

1- In your opinion, what are the main reasons behind the insufficiency of the leaners' abilities to speak English well inside and outside the classroom?

2- What solutions do you suggest to improve/develop the students' speaking skill?

Thanks for filling in the questionnaire.

Appendix 2: Lecturers' Questionnaire
Dear EFL Lecturers,
I am conducting a research paper entitled *"Insufficiency of Oral Communication Performance of Kurd EFL Undergraduate Learners at the Universities of Kurdistan: Reasons and Suggested Solutions".* Please devote some time to answer the following questions. The results of this open ended questionnaire will only be used for academic purposes. Anonymity and confidentiality will be assured. Your time and effort to fill in this questionnaire is highly appreciated.

• In your views, what are the main reasons behind the insufficiency of the leaners' abilities to speak English well inside and outside the classroom?

• What solutions do you suggest to improve/develop the students' speaking skill?

Thanks for filling in the questionnaire.
concentration on the vitality of corrective feedback by the lecturers agrees with Harmer (2007b:123). Thus, corrective feedback should not be overlooked by the lecturers. Furthermore, the results also agree with Harmer (ibid:25) that in the successful lessons a "positive, enjoyable and respectful relationship" could be noticed between the teacher and the students.

The results about the suggestions to students agree with Nation and Newton (2009:38) and Brown and Yule (1983 cited in Nunan, 2001:237) that improving listening skill plays a paramount role in developing speaking skill. Besides, the results are also on line with Lazaraton (2001:110-111) that watching TV programmes can be enjoyable for students and may provide them with authentic