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**INVESTIGATING FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEAKING SKILLS OF UNDERGRADUATE EFL LEARNERS AT PAAET, KUWAIT**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study aims to identify the difficulties encountered by EFL undergraduate students with their speaking skills in the English department at the College of Basic Education, Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET). The study was conducted using the descriptive approach which contained a questionnaire comprising 27 items applied to a sample of 420 female students. The results found that students encountered moderate difficulties among the five factors. Students ranked the factors according to which contributed to the development of their English-speaking skills the most in the following order: preference of native speakers as teachers, followed by English language proficiency, teaching methodologies, environmental influences, and emotional influences. The results also indicated that there is a significant relationship between the factors that influence the development of speaking skills and demographic variables such as year of study, major GPA, and grade in conversation class.*

**KEYWORDS:** L1, L2, mother-tongue interference, code-mixing, code-switching

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## INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are among the most productive skills when learning any foreign language. Foreign language proficiency may be determined by one's speaking skills (Hamilton, 2013). Jesa (2010) defined speaking skills as, "The ability to choose appropriate vocabulary and structures in all contexts" (p.10). Nanthaboot (2014) believed that speaking skills involve, "The ability to share information fluently and accurately, including the ability to choose appropriate vocabulary and structures in all contexts (p.11). Thus, with these definitions, speaking skills are important because they allow learners to successfully communicate their ideas, information, and opinions.

In the Arab world, students studying English as a foreign language may struggle with developing their English-language speaking skills. In Kuwait, Arabic is a native language while English is practiced as a foreign language. Most courses in Kuwait's public schools (governmental sector) are taught in Arabic, apart from one full-year course of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Students are expected to take one EFL class per year. When English is taught, there tends to be a strong emphasis on reading, writing, and listening. Al-Lawati's (2002) study found that the speaking tasks are least emphasized given their exclusion from textbooks and exams. This disincentivizes teachers from dedicating time to strengthen students' speaking skills. Not only that, but many other researchers tried to pinpoint other factors that may hinder the actual learning of

English-speaking skill in EFL contexts since most of learners in that contexts find a serious difficulty in learning and practicing this skill. Thus, in this research, the researchers investigated the factors that may influence the development of English-speaking skill in governmental schools in Kuwait.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This research explores the factors that influence the development of English-speaking skills in Kuwait. Research globally has investigated the factors influencing the development of English-speaking skills in EFL classrooms. In Kuwait, however, only a few studies have explored this issue further (AlRowayeh, 2017; AlMutairi, 2021; Dashti et al., 2021). Our study will contribute to the existing literature in Kuwait. While multiple factors affect the development of speaking skills, the literature acknowledged five primary factors. These factors include preference of native speakers, teaching methodologies, English language proficiency, environmental influences, and emotional influences.

### ***Preference of Native Speakers as Teachers***

English teachers in public schools are usually non-native speakers that have studied English as a foreign language. Native speakers teach in private schools where English is the language of instruction. Given that most English teachers are non-native speakers, they tend to use their native language in the classroom. Studies have found that the use of their native language impairs language learning because students are not getting enough exposure to the target language. Littlewood (1981) argued that teachers resort to L1 for classroom management purposes. For instance, students that do not understand concepts in English ask for the concept to be explained again but in Arabic. According to Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2014), “Communicating in L1 makes it difficult for students to improve their speaking skills as it reduces the chances of using the target language to communicate” (p.23). Many teachers use L1 because it accelerates the learning process and allows them to clarify content. Al-Hosni (2014) argued that using L1 to clarify meanings, “Indirectly and unconsciously conveys the message that English is not helpful as a mode of instruction. It also indicates that teachers have low expectations of their students’ ability to understand English” (p.27). Thus, it is better to force students to hear the target language instead of conforming to the use of L1 as it reduces needed language practice. Sha’ar and Boonsuk’s (2021) study revealed that 89% of business students prefer to study with foreign teachers rather than Thai teachers because foreign teachers will strengthen their English fluency. The same study found that students would register to speak to foreign lecturers to practice the language. According to Sha’ar and Boonsuk (2021), “Students believe that practicing the language and studying with foreign lecturers will improve their speaking skills unlike the Thai teachers who use code-mixing and code-switching in their English classes or in casual interactions with students” (p.6). Code-mixing and code-switching will be elaborated on in the following sections.

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### ***English Language Proficiency***

Sha'ar and Boonsuk (2021) believed that “Students need sufficient exposure to the English language. Exposure, meaning, enough vocabulary, correct pronunciations, and real experience of using the language” (p.6). However, interference from L1 makes it difficult for learners to pronounce certain words. They must learn the stress, intonations, and tones (AlSiddiq & Abdaldfi, 2020). Having an ample vocabulary and familiarity with the English language allows for fluid conversations in English. Students may show a desire to express their interests in English but do not have the specific vocabulary to do so. For instance, talking about political affairs requires political terminology. Thus, students are unable to remember specific terminology and apply them in conversations. When students cannot find the right words, it obstructs the conversation. Students learn vocabulary items that are presented in their textbooks, with little relevance to their interest or daily communicative needs. There's excessive focus on the descriptive aspect of language while neglecting the relevance of language in authentic situations (Nurdin, 2020). Sa'ar and Boonsuk (2021) asserted that most students surveyed “Could not communicate effectively because of their limited vocabulary knowledge and uncertainty about grammatical usage” (p.3). This causes students to code-switch, code-mix, and use body gestures when they cannot express themselves in the target language. Littlejohn and Hicks (1996) described that L2 learners first think in their native language and then, “Translate what they want to say and thereafter learn how to say those things in English” (p.142). The phenomena of constructing sentences in L1 and then translating it into English is known as mother-tongue interference. Sunitisarn et al. (2017) found that thinking in L1 before producing output in L2 negatively impacts the learning of speaking skills. In Jordanian universities, 45.3% of students swapped English with Arabic to communicate (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014). Similarly, students will replace L2 in the middle of speaking activities with L1 (Al-Rashaeedi, 2020). Ellis (1994) and several authors maintained that L1 has no essential in teaching EFL and that too much L1 might deprive learners of valuable input in L2. Thus, it is widely recommended that learners should avoid excessively mixing L1 and L2 while in an L2 class.

### ***Teaching Methodologies***

English in public schools emphasize reading, writing, and grammar skills, as outlined in Kuwait's national English curriculum. These core skills are strongly emphasized because they are meant to mimic questions found on exams. Al-Lawait's (2002) study found that speaking tasks are disregarded given their exclusion from textbooks and exams. As such, teachers do not feel the need to practice speaking. The curriculum design of textbooks excludes oral activities. Al-Abri (2008) recommended using songs, rhymes, and stories to encourage the use of conventional language. Curriculum drafters should design tasks to encourage speaking and, consequently, should assess speaking on exams.

EFL teaching methodologies must be refined and improved. AlQaysi's (2016) study, based in Malaysia, found that Arab schools place emphasis on teaching the form of English rather than teaching the meaning. For example, students will memorize vocabulary items and grammar rules. AlQaysi noted, “The results show that Arab students in the Intensive English Unit use several types of vocabulary memorization strategies. Also, they use simple methods which do not need

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deep learning strategies to learn new words” (p.190) Students will receive comprehension questions which require them to drill a structure (Al-Hosni, 2014). This obstructs understanding because students memorize formulas and patterns instead of conceptualizing the meaning. Al-Hosni’s (2014) study, based in Oman, revealed, “Teachers discussed that speaking is integrated into reading and writing. They discussed the implicit inclusion of speaking skills as gained through reading and writing” (p.27). Chaney (1998) addressed the common misconception that oral communication competence develops naturally over time and those cognitive skills involved in writing automatically transfer to analogous oral communication skills. However, teachers are unaware that reading and writing do not necessarily translate into the improvement of speaking skills. Focusing on the form of language does not ensure that it will be utilized; speaking activities ensure that language is put into use. Plus, learners view drills or dialogue practice as nonessential communicative domains while their native language remains the appropriate medium for discussing matters of immediate importance (Littlewood, 1984). As opposed to studying drills and forms, language is most effective when contextualized, otherwise known as content-based instruction (Brown, 2000). Al-Hosni (2014) surveyed teachers on the inclusion of English-speaking skills in their lessons. Teachers reported that they did not have enough time, especially since their supervisors expect them to complete their lessons. If teachers fixated on speaking activities, they would not have enough time to delve into content. Even when teachers want to, they do not have enough time to clarify pronunciation points, especially in larger classes (Khan et al., 2018). Larger classes are not appropriate settings for foreign language learning because students are not given individualized training and feedback (Bahanshal, 2013). Arabic classes, however, allocate lessons exclusively for speaking along with reading, writing, and translation (Haron, 2013). Finally, non-native speakers teaching EFL tend to rely on code-mixing and code-switching during their lessons. A study conducted in Nakhon si Thammarat Rajabhat University (NSTRU) found that the Thai language is used 70-80% of the time in an English classroom. Teachers often justify this by claiming students will understand the content in L1 (Shabir, 2017).

### ***Environmental Influences***

Students need regular exposure to the English language both in and out of the classroom. The social milieu promotes L2 learners’ enthusiasm, motivation, goals, and proficiency levels, especially in natural situations (Al-Rasheedi, 2020). While English is practiced as a foreign language, it is utilized in professional and academic atmospheres. A study conducted in Omani schools found that students only meet and use English in their textbooks (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012). Even as students are in English classes, they do not receive sufficient training. For instance, Soomro and Farooq (2018) found that even while discussions occur in class, students just passively nod their heads. According to Soomro and Farooq, “Students do not pay attention to discussions even inside the class, nor are they able to point out their own strengths and weaknesses; these factors make it difficult to achieve target competency” (p.323). Students do not utilize class discussions which are designed for language and speaking practice. The focus of class discussions, of course, is to improve the oral production of students. Speaking activities should maximize individual language use (Al-Hosni, 2014).

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Family is often called the first environment because it is where children receive their education, guidance, and training (Malihah et al., 2019). In countries where English is a foreign language, English is usually not practiced enough at home. If families are not using English regularly at home, students will favor their native languages due to comfort and familiarity. Sha'ar and Boonsuk's (2021) study found that most business students do not speak English with their families. This is because their family members did not receive sufficient English language training. Students who do not have speakers to engage with at home limit their use of English publicly. Students are encouraged to create their own environment in which they can develop their speaking skills despite shortcomings of the surrounding. Students are encouraged to use English in authentic situations that arise, such as in malls, grocery stores, or abroad. When the opportunity to speak in English presents itself, students should pursue it. It is also recommended that students seek English-language content such as films, videos, and podcasts. Listening to English content expands the vocabulary of the learners, thus improving their speaking skills (Nazim & Hazarika, 2017). Content as such also clarifies pronunciation points. Schools and universities should accommodate language learners with the proper facilities, equipment, and training. A study conducted in Sudan found that undertrained instructors, the lack of teaching facilities, inappropriate teaching material, and the English curricula are among major issues affecting speaking skills (AlSiddiq & Abdaldfi, 2020). The same study recommended equipping universities with language laboratories containing audio-visual equipment, language software, and pronunciation checkers. Teacher training, syllabus development, and the use of effective teaching methods are recommended too (Al-Hosni, 2020; Al-Rasheedi, 2020). Al-Jamal and AlJamal's (2014) study reported that, "Students felt that their universities do not offer courses for teaching speaking. Difficulties such as large class number; no focus on speaking; absence of motivation, and the use of Arabic" (p.23). Adding that, "Some students were motivated to practice English on their own by watching movies and listening to music" (p.23). Above all, the motivation to learn a foreign language will drive a learner to interact in L2. Students are motivated by reasons that vary according to personal need for acquiring a foreign language (Al-Wreikat & Bin Abdullah, 2010).

### ***Emotional Influences***

According to Willis (1996), learners need opportunities to express what they think or feel and to be immersed in a constructive surrounding, without feeling threatened. Those who study a foreign language tend to feel insecure about expressing themselves publicly using a foreign language. They fear mistakes related to their pronunciation, word choice, and grammar. This may reduce their public practice of the target language. According to Babpoor et al. (2018), students shy away from volunteering or engaging in class discussions. They even shy away from speaking in English, sometimes completely avoiding it. Sha'ar & Boonsuk (2021) found that placing students in classrooms with fewer people will encourage them to communicate in English.

Students in larger classrooms tend to keep quiet instead of participating to avoid humiliation or the instructor's feedback. They added, "The diversity of English GE classes (i.e., students from different majors are grouped to study in one classroom) increases students' reluctance to speak English or participate in English class activities" (p.3). Intentionally avoiding the use of English

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during class activities was a common thread found in the literature. Students may avoid participating in class discussions due to the fear of making mistakes publicly, fear of criticism, or shyness (Ur, 1996). Students also may have nothing to add to the conversation. Low or uneven participation, dictated by large class size, tends to prevent students from engaging in discussion, even when they want to. Plus, mother-tongue interference is common because students feel comfortable speaking in their native tongue in front of larger audiences (Kadi & Madini, 2019). Stephen Krashen (1988)'s theory of affective filter postulates that the motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, and personality traits shape a language learner. Thus, learners with high motivation and self-confidence along with low anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation and self-confidence, along with anxiety, introversion, and inhibition form an affective filter. An affective filter is a mental block that prevents comprehensible input from being used for language. When the learner lacks confidence, the filter 'rises' and prevents language acquisition. Krashen (1988) writes:

These attitudinal factors relate directly to acquisition and not learning, since they tend to show stronger relationships to second language achievement when communicative-type tests are used, tests that tap the acquired rather than the learned system, and when the students taking the test have used the language in "acquisition-rich" situations, situations where comprehensible input was plentiful. Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter--even if they understand the message, the input will not reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device. Those with attitudes more conducive to second language acquisition will not only seek and obtain more input, but they will also have a lower or weaker filter (p.22).

### ***Variables***

It's worth examining the relationship between the factors that influence a learner's English-speaking skills with demographic variables such as year of study, major GPA, and grades received in English conversation classes. The literature suggests that a student's year of study can impact their English-speaking skills. Yimam (2019) explored the factors affecting English speaking skills among first-year students in Debre Markos University. Yimam (2019) found that students at any year of study may struggle with their speaking skills, but first-year English majors struggled the most because their exposure to the English language was limited in high school. As such, it can be inferred that a student's English language proficiency rises significantly as the student progresses with their studies. This holds true for English majors especially; as they receive more training in the target language, they will feel accustomed to it.

However, students that are not majoring in English tend to demonstrate "Gradual disengagement in studying English owing to a growing disinterest, or the choice to prioritize their main field of study" (Rudd & Honkiss, 2020, p.134). Similarly, Andrade's (2009) study reported that fourth-year students felt that their English had improved naturally through the study of general education courses and major courses, even if they weren't majoring in English. Fourth-year students noted

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that they received adequate exposure in their general education classes that allowed them to strengthen their English. Furthermore, several studies found that student with advanced and intermediate levels of English tend to perform academically better (Graham, 1987; Waluyo & Panmei, 2021). Many researchers noted the relationship between a student's GPA and TOEFL scores, with their English language proficiency (Johnson, 1988; Martirosyan et al., 2015). For instance, Waluyo & Panemi's (2021) study explored the relationship between English proficiency and academic achievement, finding that a student's grades in English classes held predictive power on GPAs. They write: The analysis results confirmed positive correlations and predictive powers of students' grades on their GPAs. These results offer new insights on the role of English courses for undergraduate students studying at a university in a non-English speaking country...highlighting the fundamental role of English courses needed for other courses taught in English (p.1).

Furthermore, Xu's (1991) study found that a student's length of English training had a significant impact on their GPAs and overall academic performance. TOEFL scores were found to be nonsignificant predictors of a student's academic performance (Xu, 1991; Light et al., 1987). Therefore, there is a strong need for universities to invest in instructional reforms and improved English training classes for students given that it will improve their English language proficiency. Finally, a student's performance in English speaking classes may indicate their English-speaking skills. For instance, a study conducted in Vietnam found that EFL students that engaged in task-based speaking activities "Gained more oral growth than their peers in the control group which was instructed in the traditional method" (Xuyen & Trang, 2021, p.17). Other studies such as Hammad's (2020) revealed that oral presentations had a positive impact on a student's English-speaking, ELT tests, and reduced their anxiety and shyness. Oral practice is a way for students to develop their speaking skills because they are utilizing grammar, vocabulary, intonation, language selection, discourse, and communicative cues (Riadil, 2020). Public speaking classes target a student's speaking skills and help them overcome any negative responses associated with public speaking. As students receive more public speaking practice, their English-speaking skills will improve as well.

### **Significance of the Study**

Educators of English as Foreign Language (EFL) in Kuwait give the least emphasis to speaking-related activities. The EFL curriculum emphasizes reading and writing drills while neglecting other academic skills. A successful curriculum would account for all the skills needed. Even after the Kuwaiti national curriculum changed from an objective-based curriculum to a competence-based curriculum, listening and speaking skills were still neglected. This research calls for the integration of speaking activities and exercises in the EFL curriculum. It is believed that the strengthening of speaking skills will enhance a students' English language proficiency at large. Teachers, too, will benefit from this implementation. Teachers should be provided with training sessions on how to teach oral skills. This research recommends the improvement of the EFL curriculum and teaching methodologies used by EFL teachers through the integration of speaking-related activities. Doing

so will strengthen the English language proficiency of students and teachers, as well as strengthen the national curriculum.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The current research adopted the descriptive approach to examine difficulties related to the speaking skills that students in the English department at the College of Basic Education may encounter. The descriptive approach is relevant to the study because it describes the phenomenon under study and analyzes its data. It also indicates the relationships between its components, viewpoints raised, the processes included, and its effects. The researchers used a self-report survey methodology with several statistical tools.

### ***Participants***

The sample included all female students at the Department of English at the College of Basic Education, Public Authority of Applied Education and Training. The College of Basic Education is a four-year full-time teacher training program. The participants were randomly selected to answer the survey online on Microsoft Forms through their instructors. The study sample consisted of 420 female students with varying levels in terms of year, major GPA, and grade in conversation class, as demonstrated in the following table. They are enrolled in a program designed to graduate teachers to teach English as a foreign language in Kuwait's primary schools. The participants are taught by instructors in the Curriculum and Instruction Department and English Language Department.



**Table 1. Distribution of the Study Sample According to Demographic Variables**

Variable		N	Percentage
Year	Year 1	15	3.60%
	Year 2	88	21.00%
	Year 3	186	44.30%
	Year 4	131	31.20%
Major GPA	1.00-1.99	28	6.70%
	2.00-2.99	188	44.80%
	3.00-3.99	190	45.20%
	4.00	14	3.30%
Grade in Conversation Class	A	150	35.70%
	B	140	33.30%
	C	94	22.40%
	D	32	7.60%
	F	4	1.00%

***Study Tool***

The study tool included a questionnaire that, initially, consisted of 27 items divided into five domains. The first domain is the preference of native speakers and includes four items. The second domain is the teaching methodologies consisting of six items. The fourth domain is the environmental influences and includes five items. The fourth domain is English language proficiency and entails five items. Finally, the fifth domain is the emotional influences, comprising seven items. Each item is scored on a five-point Likert scale as follows: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

***Validity of the Questionnaire***

The validity of the questionnaire was verified using external validity and internal consistency. Regarding external validity, the questionnaire was presented to a group of arbitrators specialized in English. The questionnaire was amended according to their suggestions. The validity and content of the questionnaire was approved by the arbitrators. Regarding internal consistency, the questionnaire was confirmed by calculating the correlation coefficient between each item and the total degree of the dimension it belongs to. The correlation coefficient between each dimension and the total degree of the questionnaire obtained from the pilot study was applied to a sample consisting of 45 students in the English department. The statistical package (SPSS) was used to

calculate correlation coefficients using Pearson Correlation. The following two tables display the results.

**Table 2. Correlations Between Each Item and The Questionnaire's Total Degree**

Items	Correlations	Items	Correlations	Items	Correlations
Preference of Native Speakers		10	0.710**	19	0.503**
1	0.820**	Environmental Influences		20	0.555**
2	0.774**	11	0.781**	Emotional Influences	
3	0.719**	12	0.755**	21	0.648**
4	0.444**	13	0.627**	22	0.725**
Teaching Methodologies		14	0.765**	23	0.821**
5	0.619**	15	0.473**	24	0.760**
6	0.477**	English Language Proficiency		25	0.728**
7	0.595**	16	0.620**	26	0.528**
8	0.401**	17	0.682**	27	0.469**
9	0.706**	18	0.427**		

(\*\*) Correlation is significant at the (0.01) level

The previous table indicates the correlation between each item and the total degree of the dimension it belongs to. It is statistically significant at the level of significance of (0.01). The correlation between preference of native speakers' items and the total degree of the dimension ranged between (0.444-0.820). The correlation between the teaching methodologies items and the total degree of the dimension ranged between (0.401-0.710). The correlation between the environmental influences' items and the total degree of the dimension ranged between (0.472-0.682). The correlation between the English language proficiency items and the total degree of the dimensions ranged between (0.427-0.682). Finally, the correlation between the emotional influences' items and the total degree of the dimensions ranged between (0.469-0.821). This indicates the internal consistency and thus the validity of the construction.

**Table 3. The Correlations Between Each Domain and The Questionnaire's Total Degree**

Domain	Correlations
Preference of Native Speakers	0.626**
Teaching Methodologies	0.643**
Environmental Influences	0.545**
English Language Proficiency	0.599**
Emotional Influences	0.486**

Correlation is significant at the (0.01) level (\*\*)

The table above indicates that the correlation between each dimension and the total degree of the questionnaire are high, significant at the significance level of (0.01), and ranged between (0.486-0.643). This asserts the internal consistency and the validity of the construction.

#### ***Reliability of the Questionnaire***

The questionnaire's reliability coefficient was calculated by finding Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for each dimension of the questionnaire through the statistical package (SPSS) after applying it to the pilot sample as displayed in the following table.

**Table 4. Reliability Coefficients for The Questionnaire's Domains**

Domain	No. of Items	Alpha
Preference of Native Speakers	4	0.81
Teaching Methodologies	6	0.79
Environmental Influences	5	0.76
English Language Proficiency	5	0.77
Emotional Influences	7	0.75
Total Questionnaire	27	0.80

Based on the previous table, the dimensions of the questionnaire are characterized by a degree of statistically significant reliability. The reliability correlations of the questionnaire reached (0.80), and the reliability correlations of the dimensions ranged between (0.75-0.81). Thus, the results obtained when applied to the study sample are credible. To determine which factors strongly

affected students' speaking skills, the degree of difficulty was used along with a five-point Likert scale. From the five-point scale, the responses were divided into three levels as follows. An arithmetic mean that ranges between (3.67-5) indicates that the degree of difficulty is high. An arithmetic mean that ranges between (2.34-3.66) indicates that the degree of difficulty is moderate. An arithmetic mean that ranges between (1.00-2.33) indicates that the degree of difficulty is low.

### ***Statistical Treatment***

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to input data to be treated in order to answer the questions of the study, including tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, One Way ANOVA, and the Scheffe Test.

The following section displays the results of the study after conducting the statistical analysis of the data. To answer the study questions, the responses of the study sample were collected and processed statistically using the statistical package (SPSS) to get the arithmetic means and standard deviations of each item in the questionnaire. The following section presents and discusses the results.

## **RESULTS**

### **The study addressed the following research questions:**

1. What factors influence the development of learners' English-speaking skills in the English Department at PAAET?
2. Are any of the following variables (year of study, major GPA, and grade in conversation class) linked to the factors that influence the development of students' speaking skills in the English Department?

### **First Question: What factors influence the development of learners' English-speaking skills in the English Department at PAAET?**

The frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviations were calculated for each item in all dimensions and then arranged in accordance with the arithmetic means, as shown in the following table.

**Table 5. Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations of The Study Sample Responses Regarding All Domains**

Domain	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order According to Mean	The Level
Preference of Native Speakers	3.74	0.57	1	High
Teaching Methodologies	3.39	0.54	3	Moderate
Environmental Influences	3.35	0.69	4	Moderate
English Language Proficiency	3.65	0.46	2	Moderate
Emotional Influences	3.03	0.75	5	Moderate
Total Questionnaire	3.43	0.33	-	Moderate

The table above illustrates the degree of difficulty with speaking skills as reported by the students in the English department. The reported degree of difficulty was high, with a general arithmetic mean of (3.43) and a standard deviation of (0.33). Ranging from most to least difficult, the preference of native speakers as a domain was evaluated with a high degree of difficulty with (M=3.74). The domain of English language proficiency was evaluated with a moderate degree of difficulty with (M=3.65). The domain of teaching methodologies was evaluated with a moderate degree of difficulty with (M=3.39). The domain of environmental influences was evaluated with a moderate degree of difficulty with (M=3.35). Finally, the domain of emotional influences was evaluated with a moderate degree of difficulty with (M=3.03). The results for each domain will be analyzed separately.

### **Preference of Native Speakers**

The frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviations were calculated for each item in the first dimension and then arranged in accordance with the arithmetic means, as shown in the following table.

**Table 5. Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations of the First Domain: Preference of Native Speakers**

#	Items	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order According to Mean	The Level
1	I prefer learning English with a native speaker of English.	36.67	32.38	26.67	4.29	0.00	4.01	0.90	2	High
2	Being taught by a native speaker of English can make students more fluent in English.	42.38	32.38	21.43	3.33	0.48	4.13	0.89	1	High
3	I am motivated to speak in English with native speakers of English.	29.05	38.10	28.57	4.29	0.00	3.92	0.86	3	High
4	I feel anxious when I am taught by native speakers of English.	4.29	22.38	40.95	23.33	9.05	2.90	0.99	4	Moderate
	The general mean of the domain						3.74	0.57	-	High

The table above illustrates the difficulties encountered by students in the English Department with their speaking skills in terms of their preferences of native speakers. The data indicates that difficulties were high as demonstrated by an arithmetic mean of (3.74) and a standard deviation of (0.57). The dimension includes four items, three of which scored “high” in terms of difficulty. The

second item, “Being taught by a native speaker of English can make students more fluent in English” scored the highest with a mean of (4.13). The first item, “I prefer learning English with a native speaker of English” followed with a mean of (4.01). The third item, “I am motivated to speak in English with native speakers of English” followed with a mean of (3.92). Finally, the fourth item, “I feel anxious when I am taught by native speakers of English” scored the lowest with a mean of (2.90).

### Teaching Methodologies

The frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviations were calculated for each item in the second dimension and then arranged in accordance with the arithmetic means, as shown in the following table.

**Table 6. Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations of the Second Domain: Teaching Methodologies**

#	Items	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order According to Mean	The Level
5	Our teachers use efficient tools and facilities to improve our speaking skills.	4.76	29.52	44.29	18.57	2.86	3.15	0.88	5	Moderate
6	I use Google Translate or social media apps to help with my English-speaking skills.	23.33	37.14	28.10	7.62	3.81	3.68	1.03	2	High
7	Our teachers always speak in English during class	12.38	35.24	30.00	19.05	3.33	3.34	1.03	4	Moderate
8	Our teachers speak in Arabic when we do not understand a phrase in English.	16.19	47.62	26.19	8.57	1.43	3.69	0.89	1	High

9	Our teachers use different activities, such as games, to encourage speaking in English.	8.57	32.38	27.62	25.71	5.71	3.12	1.07	6	Moderate
10	Our teachers provide opportunities to practice speaking in English during class.	11.90	33.33	39.05	11.90	3.81	3.38	0.97	3	Moderate
The general mean of the domain							3.39	0.54	-	Moderate

The table above demonstrates the difficulties encountered by students in the English Department with their speaking skills in terms of the teaching methodologies used. The data indicates that difficulties were moderate as demonstrated by an arithmetic mean of (3.39) and a standard deviation of (0.54). The dimension includes six items with varying responses. The eighth item, "Our teachers speak in Arabic when we do not understand a phrase in English " had the highest rank with a mean of (3.69). The sixth item, "I use Google Translate or social media apps to help with my speaking skills" followed with a mean of (3.68). The tenth item, "Our teachers provide opportunities to practice speaking in English during class" followed with a mean of (3.38). The fifth item, "Our teachers use efficient tools and facilities to improve our speaking skills" earned the penultimate rank with a mean of (3.15). Finally, the ninth item, "Our teachers use different activities, such as games, to encourage speaking in English" ranked the lowest with a mean of (3.12). All the aforementioned items were evaluated as "moderate."

### **Environmental Influences**

The frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviations were calculated for each item in the third dimension and then arranged in accordance with the arithmetic means, as shown in the following table.



**Table 7. Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations of the Third Domain: Environmental Influences**

#	Items	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order according to Mean	The Level
11	I speak in English with my friends.	9.52	25.71	36.19	22.38	6.19	3.10	1.05	4	Moderate
12	I speak in English at home.	7.62	20.48	36.19	25.71	10.00	2.90	1.08	5	Moderate
13	I speak in English with my teachers outside of class.	10.48	33.81	34.76	19.05	1.90	3.32	0.96	2	Moderate
14	I communicate in English outside of the classroom.	9.52	28.57	37.62	20.00	4.29	3.19	1.00	3	Moderate
15	I watch movies, listen to songs, and/or listen to podcasts in English.	50.48	30.48	14.76	3.33	0.95	4.26	0.90	1	High
The general mean of the domain							3.35	0.69	-	Moderate

The table above demonstrates the difficulties encountered by students in the English Department with their speaking skills in terms of their environmental influences. The data indicates that difficulties were moderate as demonstrated by an arithmetic mean of (3.35) and a standard deviation of (0.69). The dimension includes six items with varying responses. The fifteenth item, "I watch movies, listen to songs, and/or listen to podcasts in English" got the highest degree with a mean of (4.26). The remaining five items were evaluated as "moderate." The thirteenth item, "I speak in English with my teachers outside of the classroom" earned a mean of (3.32). The fourteenth item, "I communicate in English outside of the classroom" earned a mean of (3.19). The eleventh item, "I speak in English with my friends" came in the penultimate order with a mean

of (3.10). Finally, the twelfth item, “I speak in English at home” scored the lowest with a mean of (2.90).

### English Language Proficiency

The frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviations were calculated for each item in the fourth dimension and then arranged in accordance with the arithmetic means, as shown in the following table.

**Table 8. Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations of the Fourth Domain: English Language Proficiency**

#	Items	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order According to Mean	The Level
16	I have an ample vocabulary to talk about common topics such as the news.	22.38	33.33	34.29	8.57	1.43	3.67	0.96	3	Moderate
17	I have enough knowledge about grammar that can help me speak more accurately.	23.33	39.52	30.00	6.19	0.95	3.78	0.91	2	High
18	I use Arabic when I cannot describe something in English during class.	7.62	38.57	34.76	16.67	2.38	3.32	0.92	5	Moderate
19	I use body gestures when I cannot describe something in English.	12.86	43.33	32.86	8.57	2.38	3.56	0.91	4	Moderate
20	My English is easily understood by others.	22.86	51.43	21.43	3.81	0.48	3.92	0.80	1	High
The general mean of the domain							3.65	0.46	-	Moderate

The table above demonstrates the difficulties encountered by students in the English Department with their speaking skills in terms of their English language proficiency. The data indicates that difficulties were moderate as demonstrated by an arithmetic mean of (3.65) and a standard deviation of (0.46). The dimension includes five items, two of which earned a high degree. The twentieth item, “I think my English is easily understood by others” earned a high degree along with a mean of (3.92). The seventeenth item, “I have enough knowledge about grammar that can help me speak more accurately” earned a high degree along with a mean of (3.78). The sixteenth item, “I have an ample vocabulary to talk about common topics such as the news” scored a moderate degree with a mean of (3.67). The nineteenth item, “I use body gestures when I cannot describe something in English” came in the penultimate order with a mean of (3.56). Finally, the eighteenth item, “I use Arabic when I cannot describe something in English during class” earned the lowest with a mean of (3.32).

### Emotional Influences

The frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviations were calculated for each item in the fifth dimension and then arranged in accordance with the arithmetic means, as shown in the following table.

**Table 9. Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations of the Fifth Domain: Emotional Influences**

#	Items	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order According to Mean	The Level
21	I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English in front of the class.	24.76	33.33	24.29	13.33	4.29	3.61	1.12	1	Moderate
22	Others who speak better discourage me.	7.62	22.38	28.10	27.62	14.29	2.81	1.16	6	Moderate

23	I cannot speak in class because my self-confidence is low.	9.52	23.33	26.67	27.14	13.33	2.89	1.19	5	Moderate
24	Shyness prevents me from speaking in class.	12.38	29.05	30.00	20.00	8.57	3.16	1.14	4	Moderate
25	My anxiety prevents me from speaking in class.	10.48	29.05	34.76	18.57	7.14	3.17	1.07	3	Moderate
26	It is difficult to find opportunities to practice speaking in English when I am out of the classroom.	12.86	31.90	30.48	19.52	5.24	3.28	1.08	2	Moderate
27	I do not think I will make use of my English-speaking skills.	2.38	13.81	24.76	30.95	28.10	2.31	1.10	7	Low
The general mean of the domain							3.03	0.75	-	Moderate

The table above demonstrates the difficulties encountered by students in the English Department with their speaking skills in terms of their emotional influences. The data indicates that difficulties were moderate as demonstrated by an arithmetic mean of (3.03) and a standard deviation of (0.75). The dimension includes seven items, six of which were evaluated as “moderate.” The twenty-first item, “I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English in front of the class” earned a moderate degree with a mean of (3.61). Item twenty-six, “It is difficult to find opportunities to practice speaking in English when I am out of the classroom” earned a mean of (3.28). Item twenty-five, “My anxiety prevents me from speaking in class” earned a mean of (3.17). Item twenty-two, “Others who speak better discourage me” earned a mean of (2.81). Item twenty-seven, “I do not think I will make use of my English-speaking skills” earned the lowest degree with a mean of (2.31).

**Second Question: Are any of the following variables (year of study, major GPA, and grade in conversation class) linked to the factors that influence the development of students' speaking skills in the English Department?**

An independent sample t-Test and One-Way ANOVA were used. The results are displayed in the following tables.

**Table 10. Results of Variance Analysis (ANOVA) to Compare Means and Standard Deviations of The Responses Regarding Speaking Skills According to "Year"**

Domain	Year	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Preference of Native Speakers	Year 1	15	3.86	0.59	Between Groups Within Groups Total	1.95	3	0.65	2	0.113
	Year 2	88	3.76	0.48		135.13	41	0.33		
	Year 3	186	3.67	0.60		137.09	5			
	Year 4	131	3.82	0.58			41			
	Total	420	3.74	0.57			8			
Teaching Methodologies	Year 1	15	3.50	0.48	Between Groups Within Groups Total	0.22	3	0.07	0.25	0.863
	Year 2	88	3.38	0.6		123.84	41	0.30		
	Year 3	186	3.40	0.54		124.06	5			
	Year 4	131	3.38	0.52			41			
	Total	420	3.39	0.54			8			
Environmental Influences	Year 1	15	3.77	0.76	Between Groups Within Groups Total	2.87	3	0.96	2.05	0.106
	Year 2	88	3.40	0.69		193.85	41	0.47		
	Year 3	186	3.33	0.58		196.72	5			
	Year 4	131	3.32	0.8			41			
	Total	420	3.35	0.69			8			
	Year 1	15	3.71	0.37		1.68	3	0.56		

English Language Proficiency	Year 2	88	3.65	0.42	Between Groups Within Groups Total	88.39 90.07	41 5 41 8	0.21	2.63	0.04 4
	Year 3	186	3.58	0.5						
	Year 4	131	3.73	0.44						
	Total	420	3.65	0.46						
Emotional Influences	Year 1	15	2.98	0.69	Between Groups Within Groups Total	3.08 234.50 237.58	3 41 5 41 8	1.03 0.57	1.82	0.14 4
	Year 2	88	2.87	0.92						
	Year 3	186	3.08	0.62						
	Year 4	131	3.09	0.8						
	Total	420	3.03	0.75						
Total Degree	Year 1	15	3.56	0.28	Between Groups Within Groups Total	0.52 44.84 45.36	3 41 5 41 8	0.17 0.11	1.60	0.18 9
	Year 2	88	3.41	0.32						
	Year 3	186	3.41	0.28						
	Year 4	131	3.47	0.39						
	Total	420	3.43	0.33						

It is worth noting from the table above that there are no statistically significant differences between the study sample concerning the following domains: preference of native speakers, teaching methodologies, environmental influences, emotional influences, and the total degree. The degree as given by the variable “year” is calculated as the (f) value, amounting to, respectively, (2), (0.25), (2.05), (1.82), and (1.6). Its significance level is greater than (0.05). There are, however, differences regarding the fourth domain, English language proficiency. The calculated (f) value is (2.63), and its significance level is less than (0.05). To find the significance of the differences, the Scheffe test was used, and the results are displayed in the following table.

**Table 11. Results of The Scheffe Test: The Differences Between the Responses Regarding Speaking Skills According to “Year”**

Domain	Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
English Language Proficiency	Year 1		0.059	0.129	-0.015
	Year 2			0.069	-0.075
	Year 3				-1.44**
	Year 4				

\*\* Correlation is significant at the (0.05) level

The table above indicates that there are statistically significant differences between students in their fourth year and third year of studies regarding their English language proficiency, specifically in favor of fourth-year students.

**Table 12. Results of Variance Analysis (ANOVA) to Compare Means and Standard Deviations of The Responses Regarding Speaking Skills According to “Major GPA”**

Domain	Major GPA	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Preference of Native Speakers	1.00-1.99	28	3.63	0.45	Between Groups Within Groups Total	1.64	3	0.55	1.67	0.173
	2.00-2.99	188	3.80	0.64		135.69	416	0.33		
	3.00-3.99	190	3.69	0.52		137.33	419			
	4.00	14	3.79	0.45						
	Total	420	3.74	0.57						
Teaching Methodologies	1.00-1.99	28	3.29	0.32	Between Groups Within Groups Total	1.10	3	0.37	1.23	0.297
	2.00-2.99	188	3.44	0.55		123.15	416	0.30		
	3.00-3.99	190	3.36	0.53		124.25	419			

	4.00	14	3.50	0.86						
	Total	420	3.39	0.54						
Environmental Influences	1.00-1.99	28	3.14	0.61	Between Groups Within Groups Total	21.33 175.39 196.72	3 416 419	7.11 0.42	16.8 6	0.00 01
	2.00-2.99	188	3.33	0.7						
	3.00-3.99	190	3.33	0.61						
	4.00	14	4.54	0.43						
	Total	420	3.35	0.69						
English Language Proficiency	1.00-1.99	28	3.60	0.32	Between Groups Within Groups Total	4.44 85.93 90.37	3 416 419	1.48 0.21	7.16	0.00 01
	2.00-2.99	188	3.57	0.44						
	3.00-3.99	190	3.71	0.49						
	4.00	14	4.06	0.24						
	Total	420	3.65	0.46						
Emotional Influences	1.00-1.99	28	2.93	0.46	Between Groups Within Groups Total	14.88 223.16 238.05	3 416 419	4.96 0.54	9.24	0.00 01
	2.00-2.99	188	3.17	0.56						
	3.00-3.99	190	2.98	0.88						
	4.00	14	2.16	0.93						
	Total	420	3.03	0.75						



Total Degree	1.00-1.99	28	3.32	0.28	Between Groups Within Groups Total	1.03	3	0.34	3.22	0.02
	2.00-2.99	188	3.46	0.36		44.38	416	0.11		3
	3.00-3.99	190	3.41	0.3		45.42	419			
	4.00	14	3.61	0.24						
	Total	420	3.43	0.33						

It is worth noting from the table above that there are no statistically significant differences between the study sample concerning the following domains: preference of native speakers and teaching methodologies. The total degree as given by the variable “major GPA” is calculated as the (f) value, amounting to, respectively, (1.67) and (1.23). Its significance level is greater than 0.05. There are, however, differences among environmental influences, English language proficiency, emotional influences, and the total degree. The calculated (f) values are, respectively, (16.86), (7.16), (9.23), and (3.22), with a significance level less than (0.05). To find the significance of the differences, the Scheffe test was used, and the results are displayed in the following table

**Table 13. Results of The Scheffe Test: The Differences Between the Responses Regarding Speaking Skills According to “Major GPA”**

Domain	Major GPA	1.00-1.99	2.00-2.99	3.00-3.99	4.00
Environmental Influences	1.00-1.99		-0.182	-0.183	-1.140**
	2.00-2.99			-0.0001	-1.21**
	3.00-3.99				-1.21**
	4.00				
English Language Proficiency	1.00-1.99		0.034	-0.111	-0.457**
	2.00-2.99			-0.145**	-0.491**
	3.00-3.99				-0.345**
	4.00				
	1.00-1.99		-0.240	-0.051	-0.765**

Emotional Influences	2.00-2.99			0.188**	1.005**
	3.00-3.99				0.817**
	4.00				
Total Degree	1.00-1.99		-0.143**	-0.096	-0.293**
	2.00-2.99			0.047	-0.149
	3.00-3.99				-0.196**
	4.00				

\*\* Correlation is significant at the (0.05) level

The previous table indicates that there are statistically significant differences between students with major GPAs of (4.00) and students with major GPAs of (1.00-1.99), (2.00-2.99), and (3.00-3.99), regarding their environmental influences and English language proficiency, in favor of students with GPAs of (4.00). There are differences between students with major GPAs of (4.00) and students with major GPAs of (1.00-1.99) and (3.00-3.99) regarding the total degree of the dimensions, specifically in favor of students with major GPAs of (4.00). Also, there are notable differences between students with major GPAs of (2.00-2.99) and (1.00-1.99) regarding the total degree of the dimensions, specifically in favor of students with major GPAs of (2.00-2.99). Differences are also present between students with major GPAs of (3.00-3.99) and (2.00-2.99) concerning English language proficiency in favor of students with major GPAs of (3.00-3.99). Finally, there are differences between students with major GPAs of (2.00-2.99) and (3.00-3.99) concerning their emotional influences, in favor of students with major GPAs of (2.00-2.99).

**Table 14. Results of Variance Analysis (ANOVA) to Compare Means and Standard Deviations of The Responses Regarding Speaking Skills According to “Grade in Conversation Class”**

Domain	Grade in Conversation Class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Preference of Native Speakers	A	150	3.76	0.53	Between Groups	2.53134.80	4415419	0.630.33	1.94	0.102
	B	140	3.81	0.61						

	C	94	3.68	0.59	Within Groups Total	137.3 3				
	D	32	3.53	0.50						
	F	4	3.75	0.00						
	Total	420	3.74	0.57						
Teaching Methodol ogies	A	150	3.42	0.57	Betwee n Groups Within Groups Total	3.75 120.5 0 124.2 5	4 4154 19	0.94 0.29	3.23	0.01 3
	B	140	3.41	0.55						
	C	94	3.27	0.44						
	D	32	3.46	0.64						
	F	4	4.08	0.48						
	Total	420	3.39	0.54						
Environm ental Influences	A	150	3.59	0.71	Betwee n Groups Within Groups Total	18.66 178.0 6 196.7 2	4 4154 19	4.67 0.43	10.8 7	0.00 01
	B	140	3.27	0.65						
	C	94	3.18	0.62						
	D	32	3.03	0.56						
	F	4	4.20	0.23						
	Total	420	3.35	0.69						
English Language Proficienc	A	150	3.77	0.43	Betwee n Groups	3.72 86.65 90.37	4 4154 19	0.93 0.21	4.45	0.00 2
	B	140	3.60	0.50						

y	C	94	3.56	0.41	Within Groups Total					
	D	32	3.54	0.53						
	F	4	3.80	0.23						
	Total	420	3.65	0.46						
Emotional Influences	A	150	2.76	0.83	Between Groups Within Groups Total	18.56 219.4 9 238.0 5	4 4154 19	4.64 0.53	8.77	0.00 01
	B	140	3.13	0.71						
	C	94	3.24	0.59						
	D	32	3.24	0.66						
	F	4	3.43	0.49						
	Total	420	3.03	0.75						
Total Degree	A	150	3.46	0.30	Between Groups Within Groups Total	1.23 44.19 45.42	4 4154 19	0.31 0.11	2.87	0.02 3
	B	140	3.44	0.36						
	C	94	3.39	0.29						
	D	32	3.36	0.40						
	F	4	3.85	0.20						
	Total	420	3.43	0.33						

It is worth noting from the table above that there are no statistically significant differences between the study sample concerning the first domain, preferences of native speakers. The total degree as given by the variable “grade in conversation class” is calculated as the (f) value, amounting to (1.94). Its significance level is greater than (0.05). There are, however, differences concerning teaching methodologies, environmental influences, English language proficiency, emotional influences, and the total degree. The calculated (f) values are, respectively, (3.23), (10.87), (4.45),

(8.77), and (2.87) with a significance level less than (0.05). To find the significance of the differences, the Scheffe test was used, and the results are displayed in the following table.

**Table 15. Results of The Scheffe Test: The Differences Between the Responses Regarding Speaking Skills According to “Grade in Conversation Class”**

Domain	Grade in Conversation Class	A	B	C	D	F
Teaching Methodologies	A		0.007	0.156**	-0.136	-0.661**
	B			0.148**	-0.144	-0.669**
	C				-0.192	-0.817**
	D					-0.625**
	F					
Environmental Influences	A		-0.326**	0.409**	0.567**	-0.608
	B			0.082	0.240	-0.943**
	C				0.157	-1.017**
	D					-1.175**
	F					
English Language Proficiency	A		-0.167**	0.208**	0.233**	-0.029
	B			-0.041	0.065	-0.197
	C				0.024	-0.238
	D					-0.262
	F					
Emotional Influences	A		-0.370**	-0.480**	-0.481**	-0.668
	B			-0.109	-0.110	-0.297
	C				-0.001	-0.188

	<b>D</b>					-0.187
	<b>F</b>					
Total Degree	<b>A</b>		0.015	0.075	0.101	-0.392**
	<b>B</b>			0.059	0.086	-0.407**
	<b>C</b>				0.026	-0.467**
	<b>D</b>					-0.493**
	<b>F</b>					

\*\* Correlation is significant at the (0.05) level

The previous table indicates that there are statistically significant differences between students with a grade of (B) in conversation class compared to students with a grade of (A) concerning environmental influences, English language proficiency, and emotional influences, specifically in favor of those with a grade of (B). Differences are present between students with a grade of (C) and students with a grade of (A) concerning teaching methodologies, environmental influences, English language proficiency, and emotional influences, specifically in favor of students with a grade of (C). Also, there are differences between students who have earned a (C) and students who have earned a (B) regarding teaching methodologies, in favor of students who have earned a (C). Furthermore, there are differences present between students who have earned a (D) and students who have earned an (A) concerning emotional influences, in favor of students who have earned an (A). There are differences between students who have earned an (A) and students who have earned a (D) regarding their environmental influences and English language proficiency, in favor of students who have earned an (A). Finally, there are differences between those who earned an (F) and those who have earned a grade of (A), (B), (C), and (D) concerning teaching methodologies, environmental influences, and total degree, in favor of (F).

## DISCUSSION

Several studies have investigated the factors influencing the development of EFL learners' English-speaking skills. The preference of native speakers as teachers, English language proficiency, teaching methodologies, environmental influences, and emotional influences were all relevant factors that affected the development of speaking skills. Our results found that being taught by native speakers had the largest influence on the development of a student's speaking skills. The preference of native speakers earned the highest, with a mean of (3.74) and a difficulty level of "high." Our findings confirmed that students in PAAET's English Department prefer to be taught by native speakers of English, believing that it will improve their English-speaking skills. The second item, "Being taught by native speakers of English can make students more fluent in

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English” scored the highest mean (4.13) among the five dimensions. The first item, “I prefer learning English with a native speaker of English” earned a mean of (4.01). The fourth item was the only item in the domain that ranked “moderate” with a mean of (2.90), “I feel anxious when I am taught by native speakers of English.” Therefore, students have a desire to be taught by native speakers of English. Many studies have confirmed that native speakers of English can improve a student’s fluency of English. This is largely because non-native speakers may switch to L1 which hinders the development of the target language (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014). Sha’ar and Boonsuk’s (2021) study found that 89% of Thai students prefer to study with native speakers and voluntarily attend the classes of foreign lecturers to practice the target language. Code-mixing and code-switching during class negatively affects the development of speaking skills (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014; Ellis, 1994; Littlewood, 1981; Sha’ar & Boonsuk, 2021).

English language proficiency received a mean of (3.65), ranking second, with a difficulty level of “moderate.” This indicates that English language proficiency strongly impacts a student’s English-speaking skills. Studies (Genesee, 2021; Graham, 1987) have confirmed that students with high English language proficiencies speak in English more frequently. When students have an ample vocabulary, sufficient grammar knowledge, and are confident that their English is understood by others, they will engage in English frequently. If a student’s English is not proficient enough, they may resort to code-mixing, code-switching, or the use of hand gestures to communicate their message. The eighteenth item, “I use Arabic when I cannot describe something in English during class” earned a mean of (3.32). The nineteenth item, “I use body gestures when I cannot describe something in English” earned a mean of (3.56). Both items had a moderate degree which suggests that while students in the English department are proficient English speakers, they may struggle occasionally. To improve their speaking skills, students may need to isolate L1 from L2. Ellis (1994) and several authors maintain that L1 and L2 should not be used together when communicating during class. Thus, communicative competencies develop when a communicator has comprehensive knowledge needed to apply language in a specific context.

Teaching methodologies received a mean of (3.39), ranking third, with a difficulty level of “moderate.” This indicates that teaching methodologies have a strong impact on the development of a student’s speaking skills. The results demonstrated that inadequate EFL teaching methods hinders the development of English-speaking skills. The eighth item, “Our teachers speak in Arabic when we do not understand a phrase in English” earned the highest mean in the second dimension, with a mean of (3.68). Students believed that teaching methodologies targeted towards teaching English-speaking are inadequate as demonstrated by the fifth and ninth items, earning means of (3.15) and (3.12) respectively. The literature confirmed that EFL teachers are not properly trained to teach oral skills to students (Al-Lawati, 2002; Al-Hosni, 2014; Chaney, 1998; Sha’ar & Boonsuk, 2020; AlSiddiq & Abdaldfi, 2020). This is because EFL teachers have received their formal education on how to teach main competencies such as reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. Many EFL teacher-training programs do not include communicative competencies. Also, there’s a common misconception among EFL teachers that oral communication competence will naturally develop through reading and writing. However, studies negate that conception,

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noting that students in EFL classrooms tend to memorize forms rather than understand meanings (Littlewood, 1984; Chaney, 1998; Brown, 2000). Similar to our findings, many studies found that EFL teachers resort to code-mixing during class (Al-Hosni, 2014; Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014; Sha'ar & Boonsuk, 2020; AlSiddiq & Abdaldfi, 2020). Teachers often justify this by claiming students will understand once L1 is used (Shabir, 2017). Therefore, EFL teachers need to improve their teaching choices by refraining from code-mixing, by integrating speaking activities when possible, and to use English as the main mode of communication.

Environmental influences received a mean of (3.35), ranking fourth, with a difficulty level of “moderate.” This indicates that environmental influences had an average effect on a student’s English-speaking skills. Our results found that students were not immersed in an English-speaking environment. The thirteenth, fourteenth, and eleventh items, earning means of (3.32), (3.19), and (3.10), respectively, indicate that students in the English Department do not receive enough exposure to the target language out of the classroom, thus hindering the improvement of their speaking skills. The twelfth item, “I speak in English at home” scored the lowest in the domain with a mean of (2.92). The fifteenth item, “I watch movies, listen to songs, and/or listen to podcasts in English” scored the highest in the domain, with a mean of (4.26). Whether directly or indirectly, this indicates that students are making progress towards the improvement of their speaking skills. The literature widely recommended creating one’s own means of practicing English (Nazim & Hazarika, 2017; Al-Wreikat & Bin Abdullah, 2010; Al-Rasheedi, 2020; Al-Jamal & AlJamal, 2014). This may include practicing the language at home, with friends, and with teachers out of the classroom. Genesee (2021) believed that the home language of ELL students benefits their overall academic success as well as higher achievement in academic subjects including literacy. Furthermore, watching English content such as movies, films, and podcasts acts as language practice. The content, in a way, clarifies pronunciation points, intonations, and stresses in the English language just as well as an instructor could.

Emotional influences received a mean of (3.03), ranking last, with a difficulty level of “moderate.” This indicates that emotional influences have the least impact on a student’s English-speaking skills. Students in our study demonstrated mild hesitancy towards using the English language due to emotional factors. Several students reported that they were not confident due to shyness, anxiety, discouragement, and fear of humiliation. This, in turn, affects their likelihood of using the language. The twenty-seventh item, “I do not think I will make use of the English language” earned the lowest mean of (2.31). Stephen Krashen’s (1988) theory of affective filters postulates that emotional factors shape a language learner. Learners with high motivation and self-confidence are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Students will only learn a foreign language if they are motivated to do so emotionally. Students are motivated by reasons that vary according to personal need for acquiring a foreign language (Al-Wreikat & Bin Abdullah, 2010). The need to learn a foreign language will drive a learner to practice the language. The results found that students in the English department strongly believe that they need the language be it for personal, academic, or professional reasons. As such, this will increase their determination to learn the language.



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The second research question examines the relationship between the factors that influence the development of speaking skills and demographic variables such as year of study, major GPA, and grade in conversation class. It was found that a student's year of study was significantly linked to their English language proficiency. Fourth-year students outperformed third-year students regarding their English language proficiency. The results may favor fourth-year students because they have accumulated more English training in the classroom compared to third-year students. Similarly, Andrade's (2009) study reported that fourth-year students had a higher level of English language proficiency because they had more exposure to courses, all of which were taught in English. Thus, their English language proficiency naturally improved over time. Furthermore, it was found that a student's major GPA was linked to their environmental influences, English language proficiency, and emotional influences. For instance, students with GPAs of (4.00) outperformed students with GPAs of (1.00-1.99), (2.00-2.99), and (3.00-3.99) regarding their environment. Our results found that students with a GPA of (4.00) spoke English more frequently at home, with their friends, and out of the classroom compared to their other peers. This aligns with Genesee (2021)'s finding that EFL students that practiced English at home demonstrated higher academic success, especially in literacy subjects. Students with GPAs of (3.00-3.99) reported higher English language proficiency compared to students with GPAs of (2.00-2.99). Students with GPAs of (2.00-2.99) had stronger emotional influences that negatively affected their speaking skills compared to students with GPAs of (3.00-3.99). For instance, students with GPAs of (2.00-2.99) were emotionally challenged by shyness, discouragement, inhibition, anxiety, and fear of humiliation.

Students that enter the EFL teacher-training program at PAAET are expected to take an English conversation class during their freshman year. The conversation class consists of speaking activities, oral presentations, and public speaking activities. Our results found that students with lower grades in conversation classes were challenged by the teaching methodologies, environmental influences, emotional influences, and English language proficiency. Students who performed lower in speaking classes noted the teaching methods used in conversation classes are inadequate. Plus, students who performed lower in conversation classes had lower English proficiency levels. Therefore, students with a proper command of English vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency feel more confident as they speak publicly. Those with lower English proficiency levels feel inhibited by their weak command of the English language. This inhibition causes them to receive low grades in conversation classes. Our results found that students with lower English language proficiency were inhibited by shyness, the fear of making mistakes, and the fear that their English would not be understood. Even high-achieving students may receive lower grades in speaking classes, not because they do not understand the input but because their affective filter (and reluctance) blocks language acquisition. Krashen (1988) suggests that although students may struggle with higher affective filters, their motivation to learn the target language will lower the affective filter. Krashen (1988) writes, "The presence of a higher affective filter, however, would predict less success in the long run. However, evidence suggests that instrumental

motivation is superior as a predictor of achievement in second-language acquisition in such situations” (p.32).

## CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the factors that influence the development of English-speaking skill of 420 students in the College of Education, English Department. The results found that the preference of native speakers as teachers was the factor that had the strongest influence on the development of a student’s speaking skills. English language proficiency and teaching methodologies followed, also had strong influences. The factors that had the lowest influence were emotional and environmental factors. The results imply that a student’s institution (preference of native speakers as teachers, English language proficiency, and teaching methodologies) has a larger influence on their English-speaking skills compared to personal factors (environmental and emotional influences). Therefore, EFL instruction in schools and universities need to be improved. To strengthen English-speaking skills, speaking skills need to be integrated into the EFL curriculum, giving it just as much recognition as other EFL competencies. This will provide students with more exposure to communicative language practice. The second research question investigated found that a student’s year of study, major GPA, and grade in conversation class were linked to the factors that influence the development of English-speaking skills.

As students receive more exposure to the target language (year of study), they will receive higher grades (major GPA and grade in conversation class). More exposure and higher academic performances can positively influence the development of the English speaking-skills. All our findings supported the improvement of the EFL curriculum through two important factors: efficient teachers and teaching methodologies. According to Al-Fadley et al., 2020, “It’s mandatory to be aware of current teaching techniques and selecting appropriate supplementary materials...and being familiar with the English language culture and English language proficiency are the first two qualities of effective EFL teachers.” Doing so will increase the English language proficiency of students thereby strengthening their English-speaking skills. Higher English language proficiency increases a student’s language input and their willingness to learn.

Limitations of the study mostly involve the study sample. The current study sample included 420 female participants from the English Department in the College of Basic Education. The study could have collected a larger number of participants to provide their input. A larger pool of participants would have affirmed a consensus. Also, the study sample was limited to female participants. The College of Basic Education segregates classrooms based on gender due to the feminization policy enacted by the Ministry of Education. Including male participants will diversify participants and the data. Finally, a qualitative study could have been provided stronger results. A qualitative study would involve interviewing EFL teachers. Including the input of teachers is necessary to evaluate and compare their perceptions. Because teachers oversee their classrooms and their students, they have a strong understanding of the issues students encounter with their skills.

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