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An Assessment of the Teaching Practices of the English Oral Skills at the
Palestinian Universities

By

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the soul of my grandfather, to my grandmother and parents, to my husband and children, and to my brothers and sisters for being the source of inspiration and for their constant support during my study.

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Abstract

Speaking is one of the major skills in English. In spite of its importance as an interactive skill, it is rather marginalized in the Palestinian EFL context with regard to pedagogy and research. This study aims at appraising the current practices of learning, teaching, and assessing the oral skill of English at the Palestinian Universities in order to detect the points of strength as well as weakness in the oral classrooms. A descriptive analysis was made using quantitative and qualitative methods. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire given to 152 students. Another questionnaire was given to the oral class teachers, in addition to a semi-structured interview. To verify data, class observation was also made. Results were studied in a quantitative and qualitative manners. Frequencies and percentages were manually figured out. Means and standard deviations were calculated for some items using an online software. The results showed that the majority of students did not make effort to reach high level of competency in speaking. It was also found that the method of assessment was mainly made by one-sided oral presentations rather than interactive dialogues. In addition, the majority of teachers did not use standard rubrics for assessment. Though teachers claimed using the Communicative Approach and Task-based Learning, there is medium success in developing their students' fluency. Teachers claimed that such lack of success is due to overcrowded classes, lack of time, and lack of using technology, in addition to students' insufficient efforts to prepare for the oral class. The study recommends that interconnected efforts by the students, the teachers, and the English Departments altogether should be increased to enhance students' oral fluency.

Key terms: Speaking, oral skill, oral class, fluency, learning, teaching, assessment.

Arabic Abstract

ملخص الدراسة

مهارة الكلام إحدى المهارات الرئيسة الأربع في اللغة الإنجليزية، وعلى الرغم من أهميتها كمهارة تفاعلية، فإن الباحثين يعتقدون أنها لا تزال مهمشة في العديد من الأوساط التي تتحدث الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية، سواء في مجالي التعليم والبحث العلمي، مقارنة بمهارات لغوية أخرى كالكتابة والقراءة، مما أدى في كثير من الحالات إلى تخريج طلاب لا يتقنون الحديث باللغة الإنجليزية بطلاقة.

وبالنظر إلى فلسطين على أنها دولة تتحدث الإنجليزية باعتبارها لغة أجنبية، فقد دعت الحاجة إلى البحث والاستقصاء عن مكانة الإنجليزية المحكية بكونها إحدى المهارات التي يتمّ تدريسها في الجامعات الفلسطينية. وبناء على ذلك فقد كان لهذه الدراسة البادرة للقيام بتحليل طرق وأساليب تعلّم وتعليم وتقييم مهارة الكلام في الجامعات الفلسطينية، من أجل الكشف عن نقاط القوة والضعف في المقاربات لتعلمها.

تم في هذه الدراسة عمل تحليل وصفي لمساق المهارة الشفوية، باستخدام النوعين الكمي والنوعي لجمع البيانات، حيث تم توزيع استبانة على اثنين وخمسين ومئة طالب من المساق، ووزعت استبانة أخرى على ثمانية مدرسين لدراسة آرائهم، إضافة إلى مقابلة سبعة مدرسين منهم، وملاحظة ستة صفوف لتدريس مهارة الكلام للتحقق من مدى صحة البيانات. وبناءً على ذلك تم تحليل البيانات يدوياً، وتمّ جمع الآراء وتصنيفها وحساب التكرارات والنسب المئوية للقيم الناتجة، وتمّ أيضاً إيجاد الأوساط الحسابية والانحرافات المعيارية والمعدلات لبعض البنود باستخدام برنامج إلكتروني على الإنترنت.

تظهر نتائج الدراسة أن معظم الطلاب لا يبذلون جهداً كافياً لبلوغ مستوى عالٍ من الكفاية في الكلام. كما أن الوسيلة الرئيسة التي يتم من خلالها تقييم القدرة الكلامية للطلاب هي تقديم العروض الشفوية من جانب واحد، أكثر منها في الحوارات التفاعلية، إضافة إلى أن معظم المدرسين لا يعتمدون مرجعية قياسية للتحقق في تقييم مستوى الطلاب. لقد تبين أنه بالرغم من القول باعتماد النهج التواصلي لتعليم اللغة والتعلم القائم على تنفيذ المهام منهجيين أساسيين في التدريس، إلا أن المقدرة في تطوير مهارة الطلاب الكلامية لا تزال متوسطة، ذلك أن زيادة عدد الطلاب بشكل يفوق قدرة استيعاب المساق، وشح الوقت، إضافة إلى قلة استخدام الوسائل التكنولوجية السمعية والبصرية، وتقصير الطلاب في ممارسة مهارة الكلام والتحضير الخارجي لها = كل تلك العوامل أثرت سلباً في تخريج طلاب يتكلمون الإنجليزية بطلاقة. وبناءً على ذلك، توصي الدراسة بضرورة تكثيف وتوحيد الجهود من قبل الطلاب والمدرسين وأقسام اللغة الإنجليزية معاً، من أجل النهوض بمهارة المحادثة ومستوى الطلاقة عند الطلاب.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background

Speaking is a productive skill that gives confidence to the EFL learners. It comes second after listening and before reading and writing in the natural sequence of language skills. Despite its importance as a communicative skill, speaking has been ignored in the learning and teaching processes in the EFL contexts (Alastrue & Perez-Liantada, 2010; Chen & Goh, 2011; Chuang, 2011; Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, & Göksu, 2012; Korn, 2008; Moriam, 2005; Noonan, 2005).

In the past, English language was taught by means of traditional methods, mainly through Grammar Translation (GT) where attention was focused on memorizing grammar rules and lists of vocabulary to produce correct writing and reading (Lawtie, 2004). Such method of instruction proved not to be helpful for achieving oral fluency because grammar structures and vocabulary were not effectively employed in a natural flow of speech. Speaking, for long, has not received the desired attention; there have been few in-class oral interactive discussions and activities performed for enhancing students' speaking skills. Marginalizing the EFL oral skill in the Palestinian governmental schools and universities have resulted in lacking oral fluency.

In the recent decades, the methodology of teaching English has changed to the Communicative Approach (CLT) which is supposed to focus on listening and speaking as the basic elements for communication; nevertheless, the systems of learning and instruction in our country still do not give priority to the oral skill and do not give enough chances for learners to express themselves. There seems to be a deficiency in the pedagogy of English classrooms at both school and university. That is, classes are rather teacher-centered than

learner-centered as teachers usually speak while students take the role of listeners except when they ask and answer questions, which is a passive way of learning (Lawtie, 2004).

The EFL students have recently been called “mute English learners” because the majority of them are usually competent readers and writers but not fluent communicators (Wolff, 2010 as cited in Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, & Göksu, 2012). This is because they lack self-esteem and motivation, and they are rather reluctant when it comes to expressing themselves in English. As a result, they fear making pronunciation and grammar mistakes, and they may lack the vocabulary necessary for speaking out their ideas. Keene (2006) believed that both lack of motivation and passive learning are the first two obstacles in the way of learning English in the EFL contexts.

Another reason for students’ weakness in the oral skill is the lack of communication with native speakers; there are few chances to meet native speakers of English here in Palestine, and the Israeli occupation still put obstacles in the face of Palestinians to prevent them from travelling abroad or receiving tourists. This obstacle lessens the chances to use English as a lingua franca with the other nations. In addition, the unnecessary use of Arabic between students and teachers as well as among peers in the departments of English may hinder students’ English oral fluency.

It is believed that when one learns another language, s/he is required to achieve a high level of competence in all language aspects including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics in both spoken and written versions. However, the situation in Palestine as an EFL context does not meet these standards. Accordingly, this paper investigates the current practices and methods used in the oral courses taught at the Palestinian universities: Hebron University, Bethlehem University, An-Najah University, and Birzeit University.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The oral skill of English is given little attention at the national universities. What makes it worse is that English is seldom practiced outside of the classroom. Having only two oral courses taught in traditional ways by inexperienced teachers in pedagogy, with little use of technology (Lai, Y.-S., Tsai, H.-H., & Yu, P.-T., 2009), and with limited communication chances with native speakers have all created a situation where English majors lack the adequate level of language proficiency which enables them to speak fluently in any context.

1.3. Rationale and Significance of the Study

Oral fluency has always been considered a minor issue in language learning (Kayi, 2006). The amount of practicing speaking inside the classroom is insufficient, compared to the amount of listening; that is, the teacher is the major speaker while students feel at ease to be receptive to language. In addition, the Palestinian EFL learners, when given the floor to speak, do not have equal chances for interaction and negotiation as the class is usually crowded and time is limited, this is from the one side. On the other side, students do not work on themselves outside the classroom in terms of the extensive listening, practice, and preparation, which negatively affects their participation during the class as well as the general atmosphere for communication.

The necessity to explore this problem from all sides requires researching this topic. In order to make things clearer, this study aims at an in-depth investigation of the status of the oral skill at the national universities, covering three major processes: learning, teaching, and assessment. This study is expected to be of a great value and contribution to the field of applied linguistics in Palestine and the region around in that it attempts to help understand the problem, find solutions, and suggest recommendations for developing the skill of speaking in a context where it is marginalized.

1.4. Purposes of the Study

1. To investigate the learning reasons for the lack of oral fluency in the Palestinian EFL learners.
2. To describe the current Palestinian oral classrooms in terms of the teaching and assessment methods used.
3. To investigate the pedagogic problems faced by the oral course instructors in teaching the skill.
4. To define the linguistic components of speaking (i.e., vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar), and to describe how students practice them to improve their oral fluency.

1.5. Research Questions

1. What are the learning reasons for the lack of oral fluency among the Palestinian EFL learners?
2. What is the nature of the current Palestinian EFL oral classrooms, and how much effective are the teaching and assessment methods in building students' oral fluency?
3. What are the pedagogic problems faced by teachers in the oral classes?
4. What determines the degree of fluency in the oral skill, and how do students practice the linguistic components of speaking (i.e., vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar) to improve their oral abilities?

1.6. Hypotheses of the Study

1. It is hypothesized that students do not make enough efforts to develop speaking due to lack of confidence and anxiety of making mistakes.
2. It is hypothesized that the current Palestinian EFL oral classrooms are pedagogically not well-taught, and assessment is not based on valid rubrics.

3. It is hypothesized that the teaching conditions do not help teachers to develop students' speaking skills, such as crowded classes, lack of time, and lack of technology aids.
4. It is hypothesized that the degree of fluency in speaking gets lowered by less attention to the accuracy of linguistic elements of speaking; vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, altogether.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

The teaching conditions of the oral skill of English in Palestine are not like other conditions in other EFL contexts. This is the reason why generalization of results could be limited.

1.8. Definitions of Key Terms

The following list of terms is considered as common knowledge for the applied linguists. The researcher enlists the terms for more clarification for the interested readers outside of the domain. Almost all of the definitions are taken from Spratt et al. (2005, pp. 178_181).

1. Accuracy (in speaking): The use of correct forms of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.
2. Appropriacy: Using the level of formality that suits a situation.
3. Assessment: judging learners' performance by collecting information about it.
4. Connected speech: Spoken language in which all the words join to make a connected stream of sounds.
5. Fluency: Speaking at a normal speed, without hesitation, repetition or self-correction, and with smooth use of connected speech.

6. Focus on form (of the foreign language): To focus on how the language is pronounced or written, on how its grammar is formed and used, and on the form and meaning of vocabulary.
7. Formal assessment: Assessing learners through tests or exams and giving their work a mark or grade.
8. Informal assessment: Observing learners to see how well they are doing something and then giving them comments on their performance.
9. Language awareness: Understanding how language works and how to teach/learn it.
10. Learning strategy: The way chosen and used by learners to learn language.
11. Motivation: The thoughts and feelings we have which make us want to do something, continue to want to do it and turn our wishes into action.
12. Oral mistakes: mistakes learners make when they are speaking in the accuracy of grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary, or in the degree of formality of the language they use (appropriacy).
13. Rubrics: A rubric is a set of scoring guidelines used for grading a student's work. A typical rubric contains a scale of certain key different traits of performance assigned to be examined and assessed against, ranging from 0 or 1 as the minimum score to 4 or 6 as the top score in order to find the right place on the scoring scale to which a particular student's results correspond. (Acosta et al. 2006)
14. Subjective test: Assessment that depends on the teacher's judgment.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

This chapter reviews the general background of the speaking skill including: the definition as well as the importance of speaking, the internal and external reasons for speaking problems, and the linguistic elements of speaking (i.e., vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar). It also highlights the speaking practices and assessment in the EFL oral classroom, and it ends up with relevant studies to the problem.

2.1. Theoretical Background

2.1.1. Definition of speaking. "The way you speak can affect your whole life." (The Story of English, BBC, 1986 as cited in Honey, 1989, p. IIX) Speaking, or 'spoken discourse', as Kreidler defined it is "any act of speech that takes place in a given place and within a given period of time, whether delivered by telephone, television, or face to face." (1997, p. 34) Speaking is also expressed as "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts." (Chaney, 1998, p. 13, as cited in Kayi, 2006, Introduction) Bainbridge and O'Shea defined successful oral communication as "the process of giving and receiving a clear message"... which "involves not only all aspects of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, but also intention, and verbal and non-verbal language." (2010, p. 178)

2.1.2. Importance of the speaking skill. Until the eighties and nineties of the past century, it was sufficient for the EFL learners to only understand and write English for the sake of having a good career since English was basically learned for almost only instrumental motives. In other words, non-native English speakers were not necessarily required to be fluent or proficient in speaking because of the lack of the communication means among native speakers (NS) of English and non-natives (NNS). However, things have changed

gradually with the technological revolution and the increasing importance of English as a world language. We are now at the beginnings of the Third Millennium; we live in the time of the internet (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Skype, Viber), multimedia, satellites, and specialized TV channels, so communication among world nations has grown easier and faster because the world now is like a global village.

Since English is the first and most wide-spreading international language, it has become essential for the EFL learners to learn how to speak the language in order to be good communicators. According to Honey (1989), when a layman native speaker of English hears a non-native speaks the language, the way the non-native speaks may affect the native-speaker's intelligibility of what is said if the language was broken or influent. That is, it may cause distraction, or may it create a sense of prejudice and stereotyping against the non-native. This is one of the reasons why the spoken ability of the EFL speaker is important.

Widiati and Cahayono (2006) have reported Riggenback and Lazaraton (1991) who expressed that effective oral communication is a sign of success in second language acquisition\ learning. What makes the oral skill essentially important and required for people's academic and professional promotions is that it is given special focus in the standard tests such as TOEFL. Several examples of internationally standardized tests can be mentioned here. There is a special test designed for measuring speaking proficiency called TSE or Test of Spoken English (Chalhoub-Deville & Wigglesworth, 2005), in addition to the SPEAK test and IELTS speaking test. Madsen argued that oral proficiency test "is widely regarded as the most challenging of all language exams to prepare, administer, and score" (1983, p. 147).

In terms of oral proficiency, Iwashita (2010) argued that it is not always easy to figure out what it means; it differs from a researcher to a researcher and from a context to another. Yet, there are four major common features which define oral proficiency: the complexity of

the syntax used, the accuracy of grammar, the amount and diversity of lexis, and how much fluent the speaker is. This means that proficiency is more inclusive, comprehensive and complicated than fluency. Studies revised by Iwashita (Iwashita, Brown, McNamara, & O'Hagan, 2008; Norris & Ortega, 2003; Ortega, 2003) did not focus, or rather gave little attention to pronunciation. Oral proficiency may be professionally indicative of both accuracy and fluency in using the language.

It is believed that knowing a language means knowing how to speak it (Lawtie, 2004). Nunan (1991), as cited in Lawtie, expressed that “success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language.” (2004, p. 1) Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, and Göksu (2012) expressed that speaking is the most challenging linguistic skill a learner would master because it works as an instant process that takes place between listener(s) and speaker(s) under time constraints, depending to a large extent on the cognitive actions and reactions of the interlocutors. Therefore, teachers should do what it takes to motivate their students to speak in the classroom by implementing the right activities in the appropriate way and through creating positive atmosphere where students have fun practicing the language.

Widiati and Cahayono (2006) in their study of EFL speaking in the Indonesian context stressed that speaking is a significant means of communication; therefore, it should be given special focus in instruction. According to them, communication whether in the native language or in the target language can take two forms: either spoken or written. Unlike the common belief that the written version is more complicated than the oral, it is suggested (Artini, 1998 as reported in Widiati and Cahayono) that speaking transcends writing in three aspects: the segmental (i.e., word and sentence stress), and suprasegmental (i.e., intonation and rhythm) speaking features, in addition to the paralinguistic aspects; such as, the voice quality (e.g., pitch, loudness, rate, tempo, etc...), facial expressions, and body language.

2.1.3. Internal, organic, and psychological reasons for speaking problems.

Speaking is a human skill that needs to be refined. Brigance (1961) argued that only few people get born with inherently good speaking voices and abilities. On the other hand, many speakers may face internal problems which may hinder their oral fluency. For one thing, some people have poor voices resulted from organic problems, so they need speech correction or therapy from experts. Another cause of weak speaking is resulted from personality problems, such as lack of confidence and lack of earnestness. "Dead-flat" speaking also results from mismanaging the voice itself. Therefore, language speakers should pay attention to how speech sounds should be pronounced in order to produce more effective speech, or at least not get misunderstood.

So as to produce comprehensible speech, Brigance (1961) asserted that the speaker should have good articulation of sounds, which differs from pronunciation. "Articulation is uttering clear, distinct syllables. To do this you must, first, *shape* the speech sounds with the speech organs, next, *combine* the separate sounds to make up intelligible speech... if the sounds are slurred, muffled, or projected weakly, the listener is kept under tension." (1961, p. 349) Brigance also added that to be a good language speaker, one needs to have his\her voice flexible in rate, emphasis, pitch, and inflection.

The psychological part is also a key factor in learning and teaching the oral skill. In other words, the teacher as well as the student has to know how to play their roles systematically but not randomly. As for the teacher, s/he should know how to encourage their students to speak out their mind without inhibition and support them to overcome their errors and mistakes, taking into consideration that making mistakes is part of the leaning process. With respect to this very point, Oxford (1999), as reported in Hue (2010), spotted light on some situations where learners feel uneasy when they speak. For instance, when a student gets a negative feedback on spot, the least that could be said is that they feel disappointed and

their motive to express themselves decreases. Learners also grow nervous when they get called on suddenly and randomly without a chance to get prepared. In addition, when a quiet or absent-minded student is targeted, s/he feels embarrassed and may stop speaking at all. If the same thing occurs constantly in the classroom, the general atmosphere, then, would be discouraging, demotivating, and even threatening to create interactive communication.

2.1.4. External, pedagogical, and physical reasons for speaking problems. In a study conducted by Chen and Goh (2011) in Singapore, 331 Chinese oral EFL teachers expressed that they have several difficulties in teaching the oral skill. One problem is related to physical shortcomings, such as the lack of teaching resources and equipment, and the inappropriate class shapes, sizes, and distribution of students. Another problem is related to teachers' views and evaluation of their own proficiency level; that is, they confessed their frustration of their low performance and lack of management in their oral classes. They also expressed their need to learn and receive professional training in designing creative tasks, activities, and techniques in order to increase their students' motivation and involvement in the oral class.

An external reason that prevents students from communicating in class is culture; in some cultures it is unacceptable to speak out loud and express oneself before the teacher, so some students feel shy to speak, which hinders their oral fluency (Lawtie, 2004). In order to break this cultural barrier, Lawtie suggested to distinguish the oral class from other classes by arranging it in a way that serves interaction (i.e., decorating desks for pair/group works, or in a U-shape, not in lines). In addition, the instructor should lessen his/her part in discussion to make the class more learner-centered not only in certain activities, but follow this strategy during the class to be the norm. Instead of being a dictator, the teacher can play other positive roles to manage the class and keep it under control (e.g., assessor, counsellor, monitor, facilitator, language resource, planner, informer, manager...etc.) (Spratt, M., Pulverness, A.,

& Williams, M., 2005). What encourages students more to speak confidently in class, according to Lawtie, is giving positive feedback and allocating part of the grades for assessing the speaking skill whether in class discussions or in exams.

2.1.5. Factors of fluent speaking. Noonan (2005) distinguished between the successful EFL speakers of English and the non-successful ones. Successful speakers are usually able to converse clearly; that is, they know how and when to initiate, pause, narrate, and describe what they mean with a varying length of connected speech, and they understand almost all of the details they hear, regardless of the topic they discuss. Unsuccessful speakers, on the other hand, are simply unable to speak and communicate their ideas effectively, and they are usually misunderstood. In this regard, Noonan identified the factors which determine success or non-success in the EFL speaking. Firstly, the degree of general motivation the learner has (i.e., success in the oral skill correlates positively with motivation). Secondly, the type of motivation the learner has whether intrinsic/integrative (i.e., learners being interested in the language, culture, and people of the L2) or instrumental (i.e., using language as a means to seek professional promotion). Integrative motivation is superior to instrumental motivation in creating fluent speakers, while having both types is the best.

Noonan (2005) added that the of complexity of language (i.e., Krashen's comprehensible input), the length of time of listening, and the extent of interaction and participation all affect students' success in speaking. The psychological factor or affective filter also determines fluency in speaking such as anxiety and lack of confidence. If the affective filter is high (e.g., high anxiety and low self-esteem), the speaker may feel reluctant or hesitant to speak, which negatively affect fluency. Lastly, internalizing the grammatical structures indirectly through exposure to language is much better for speaking than the explicit learning and memorization of rules.

2.1.6. Linguistic and non-linguistic elements of speaking. Widiati and Cahayono (2006) expressed that speaking English as a second/foreign language is not restricted to learning grammar and lexis; non-native speakers need to know how to use a certain piece of language appropriately in context, or what so-called pragmatics. Spoken language should also sound accurate in pronunciation in order to convey the intended meaning without being misunderstood. In Speaking, the meaning or message of an utterance (i.e., a stretch of words uttered by a speaker) can be conveyed through several elements. Some of these elements are nonlinguistic; such as the contextualization of previous shared knowledge of both the speaker and the hearer, and body language of the speaker (e.g., gestures, tone of voice, eye gaze, posture of the body, hand movement...etc.) (Wilson, 2004). On the other side, there are the linguistic factors; such as the lexis or vocabulary of an utterance, and the grammatical factors (e.g., word order, function words, word endings...etc.) Last of all is the prosody of an utterance, such as emphasis which also plays a role in communication (Kreidler, 1997).

Nunan (2003), as cited in Kayi (2006), summarized several aspects that should be learned/taught in any oral course. First, ESL/EFL students need to learn how to produce speech sounds and patterns, word and sentence stress, and intonation and rhythm. In addition, they need to learn how to choose the appropriate utterances (lexis) according to the right context. Coherence and cohesion of thoughts should be taken into account, and knowing the purpose of speaking (i.e., expressing ideas, values, judgments) is also required to have logic in communication. Last and most, students have to learn how to speak fluently (quickly and confidently) with few or no pauses (without hesitation). So doing, fluency would be achieved.

2.1.6.1. The role of vocabulary in speaking. Before exploring the role of vocabulary or *lexis* (i.e., the Greek term of it) in speaking, we need to define the term “*vocabulary*” which means all words of a language, including phrases, chunks, expressions...etc. Speaking depends to a large extent on the repertoire of vocabulary one stores during the process of

language learning. Since speaking is one of the daily human behaviors, speakers need to use the right words for the right context/ situation in order to get their points across appropriately without being misunderstood. There are several situations (e.g., formal greetings, public speeches, group discussions, one-on-one conversations...etc.) where the methodology of employing vocabulary in speaking should be adapted in accordance to the degree of formality of the context and the type of the target audience, taking into consideration the denotations (i.e., the surface/direct meaning of a word) and connotations (i.e., the implied/indirect meaning of a word), using certain pieces of vocabulary.

Liu and Jackson (2008) as cited in Gan (2012) argued that shortage of a speaker's vocabulary whether in quantity, in quality, or in appropriacy is considered a major defect in his/her spoken language. Gan cited one of his study subjects, named Jane, saying in an interview with her: "I think there is a gap between my vocabulary range when I write and speak...I have enough time to figure out the most appropriate words and phrases. But when it comes to speaking, some words and phrases may never come to my mind, so my expression may not deliver my intended meaning precisely." (p. 49) Another participant called Elizabeth said: "In some social situations that involve use of high colloquial language, you'll find that you face a shortage of vocabulary and you can't express accurately what you want to say." (p. 49) Based on this, Gan concluded that shortage of vocabulary definitely leads to lack of fluency in speaking. Gan asserted that there should be special focus on vocabulary inside of the class, and that students need to extensively work on their lexis out of class time.

2.1.6.2. The role of pronunciation in speaking. Pronunciation is a key element in speaking and communication (Celce-Murcia & Goodwin, 1991; Pennington, 1996, as cited in Seferoglu, 2005). Pronunciation means according to Haycraft "the main features that make up speech." (1971, p. 1) Once we say pronunciation we mean the accent of a spoken language or variety where there are other elements than pronunciation, such as vocabulary, grammar, and

idioms (Honey, 1989). When we learn to speak a second or foreign language, it is not enough to attain grammar and vocabulary; that is, what is the use of learning a piece of language without knowing how to pronounce it? Wrong pronunciation can hinder comprehensibility of speech.

In fact, the majority of ESL\EFL speakers suffer, at their home countries, from difficulties in learning the correct pronunciation of English (e.g., Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA)). This fact is supported by the views of many linguists who refer such difficulties in pronunciation to the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) which claims that learning a foreign accent becomes difficult after the stage of adolescence and almost impossible after the age of puberty (Lenneberg, 1967 as cited in Hurford, 1991). It is true that the younger the learner is, the better the learning process becomes. Honey claims that "although we do not choose the accent which we grow up speaking, we can alter it to a considerable extent... everybody's accent changes, at least slightly, in the course of a lifetime." (1989, p. 57) This can also be applied to learning the L2\ FL accent by using efficient methodology of teaching.

The point is that instead of beginning to teach grammar, we should basically start with phonetics of vocabulary, including the sound system (i.e., consonants, vowels, and diphthongs), the weak and strong syllables (i.e., stressed and unstressed), the sentence stress, rhythm, and intonation. So doing before or even along with teaching grammar may help internalize the correct pronunciation of English words in the learners' minds from the very beginning before it becomes fossilized (Yates, 2002). That is, learning the language structures with pronunciation unnoticed makes it difficult, later on, to modify what has been memorized and stored as "English" in the brain. In this respect "The teacher will do well to delay showing the written version until the learner can pronounce the spoken version with some ease; an initial period of purely oral teaching is invaluable." (Haycraft, 1971, p. 3)

2.1.6.3. *The role of grammar in speaking.* Grammar governs the relations among words with reference to a certain tense of time. Teaching English has always been done through grammar translation which focus mainly on the explicit explanation of grammar rules were communication has little to do. Due to the negative effect of focusing on form over communication, new trends have invaded the world of pedagogy in the Arab World in the latest 20 years. That is, teaching English in the EFL countries has started to focus on communication and learning grammar indirectly through examples and language functions. However, Noonan (2005) said that a counter-argument by Rod Ellis suggested that teaching metalanguage (i.e., grammar rules of the language) helps in learning language through something called “noticing”. Noticing means to consciously be attentive to both form and meaning of the linguistic structures one hears or produce (Batstone, 1996 as reported in Noonan). This is thought to be true, especially at the beginning of the learning process because oral fluency could not be achieved if language structures were broken.

Gan (2012) expressed that sometimes despite having the competence of mastering the grammatical rules, the lack of performance in a natural setting affects fluency in speaking. This phenomenon sometimes results in the unconscious slips of tongue in some grammatical structures, such as missing the third-person singular (s) in subject-verb agreement and switching past forms of infinitives with the present forms. Therefore, grammatical errors are inevitable in EFL speaking because students cognitively have little or no time to think of the accuracy of structures in connected speech. However, constant practice enhances the spoken performance and decreases the grammatical mistakes.

2.2. Speaking Practices and Assessment in the EFL Classroom

2.2.1. Classroom activities. Lawtie (2004) remarked that oral class instructors should take care of two things when designing and implementing oral activities and tasks. First, instructors need to make sure that the in-class activities are attractive and interesting for

students. Secondly, instructors need to choose activities which are appropriate for students' level. Bainbridge and O'Shea (2010), as ESL/EFL experts, suggested a set of practices brought together in a holistic, problem-solving approach to successfully teach oral communication class to their Emirati students. First of all, carouseling (i.e., forming the class into two circles round the room: inner and outer) for conversations and ask/answer dialogues. Another technique used is the rotational group-work in which the teacher divides the class into groups of four to five members and assigns one of them as "Mr./Ms. floater X" who after group-discussion moves to other groups to negotiate the ideas already discussed in his/her group. A third way to communicate in the oral class is through pair-work in a 'controlled conversation'. And a fourth and last oral activity is the memory game in which learners sit in a circle, and each learner repeats his/her neighbor's sentence and add one more to it.

It is argued that the best way for learning and practicing speaking is through interaction, which can be achieved using constructivist and collaborative methodologies like CLT. As CLT is inspired by situations of real life, oral instructors need to provide healthy environment for interactive communication activities and meaningful tasks that contain authentic language to enhance speaking (Kayi, 2006). Kayi, in her article, suggested 13 in-class activities in order to improve the oral skill. For example, holding a *discussion* after a content-based lesson can be beneficial to conclude the lesson if the purpose of discussion was set before by the teacher. Such activity is believed to enhance critical thinking and quick decision-making among students as well as improving the oral communicative skill.

Other activities recommended by Kayi (2006) were *role-plays* and *simulations* (i.e., "A simulation is a situation in which a person is placed into a scenario and is directly responsible for the changes that occur as a result of their decisions" (Madsa, 2012, p. 3)). Other activities were *information gap* (i.e., sharing information with partners who do not have it, and vice versa), *brainstorming* (i.e., generating ideas freely and quickly within a limited time without

being criticized), *storytelling* (i.e., telling stories before class fosters creativity and imagination, and boosts self-esteem), and *story completion* (i.e., the class sit in a circle, and a student begins narrating a story and leave the rest for his/her peers to continue). In addition, *interviewing* people according to certain rubric set by the teacher is a good way to promote the oral skill and get socialized. *Reporting* (i.e., reading a newspaper, magazine or article before coming to class and then reporting the gist to friends and peers), *playing cards* (i.e., exchanging cards that contains topics and titles among groups and forming questions for discussion about them), *picture narrating*, *picture describing*, and *finding the difference* between couples of pictures to discuss similarities/differences among them are also of the activities that can be applied to enhance the skill of speaking.

Chuang (2011) examined the perceptions of EFL Taiwanese majors with regard to the most effective in-class activities for improving spoken abilities. Students' ranking came respectively as the following: Formal debates (open discussions) came in the first place, as they were thought to be giving fair chances for "concerned" students to express themselves in L2. Story-telling and information sharing (restating and summarizing) came in the second place; they were perceived as helpful, not difficult, and not demanding neither for students nor for teachers. Pair and group-work came third; they were not that favored because they were thought of as easily exposed to distraction and failure; that is, they would have had bad experience with mismanaged collaborative work. Last but not least, oral presentations, nonetheless, came at the bottom of the list because they were believed by students to be the least helpful in boosting oral fluency, especially the text-based ones. Students perhaps felt that presenting before an audience may embarrass them if mistakes were made.

2.2.2. Tips and tools to achieve oral fluency. Oral fluency in the target language is not a skill achieved for granted in an EFL context; it needs from the learner to exert some effort and to work on oneself in order to be able to communicate fluently. Girija, Rao, and Raju

(2011) suggested some tips for enhancing the skill of speaking; such as, listening to recordings and radio broadcasts as well as watching TV shows that present the authentic language, which gives the learner the opportunity to hear the language from its people.

In addition, attending lectures, reading scripts aloud, and participating in discussions also enrich the spoken language with a variety of vocabulary and structure. These tips can be followed academically through classes or non-academically at home, depending on the learner's motivation and persistence to improve their oral English. Pedagogically, in order to teach the oral skill in the best way (Giriya et al., 2011), there must be a language lab for learners at every university, provided with the necessary equipment and software programs for teaching and testing speaking; such as audio player/recorder, video player/recorder, and computers, in addition to a computer-based testing (CBT).

The teacher here bear some responsibility in improving their students' spoken language. Lawtie (2004) argued that the teacher should be the first model for his/her students by speaking English and avoiding L1 as much as possible during the class even if s/he is not so fluent or not having a perfect accent. Fluency in speaking comes by practice, whether inside the class or outside of it.

Huang (2010) as cited in Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, and Göksu (2012) gave the EFL learners several pieces of advice to improve their speaking abilities. Huang advised learners to work on listening and speaking as one unit and to keep practicing the former forms as well as the new ones. In addition, they suggested that learners recite texts to get introduced to new vocabulary and to try to be acquainted with various topics in order to have variety of expressions, phrases and styles. Dinçer et al., from their side, asserted that learners need to work on themselves through participation whether in or out-of-class activities; the more the participation the better and the faster the improvement.

2.2.3. Assessment in the oral classroom. Evaluating the oral skill of the EFL learners should not be arbitrary; there should be some standard criteria for assessing the level of the learner whether formally or informally. Spratt, Pulverness, and Williams (2005) suggested to have a clear description for the levels of the oral skill to judge against in three aspects; accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation where they enlisted five basic levels for assessment:

- 1) The learner who is scored 5 speaks very well as s/he has very few errors in speaking (i.e., extremely high accuracy in grammar and lexis, oral fluency without hesitation or searching for words, and very clear stress and intonation).
- 2) The learner who is scored 4 speaks quite well as s/he commits some errors, but their message is always conveyed (i.e., accuracy is quite well, with moderate fluency, some hesitation, some searching for words, and with reasonable control of stress and intonation).
- 3) The learner scored 3 has some oral problems as they make errors frequently and are not always understood (i.e., speech is quite hesitant, frequently inaccurate and influent with poor lexis and structure, and phonetically difficult to comprehend).
- 4) The learner scored 2 suffers from serious oral difficulties as they hardly can communicate (i.e., speech is very inaccurate, extremely hesitant with very poor lexis and structure, and phonetically very hard to comprehend).
- 5) The learner scored 1 is almost unable to speak L2.

It has recently become common to use more professional means for assessing the level of performance in any field of study apart from the traditional ways of testing students' achievements through exams. Such novel means are called rubrics. Brookhart (2013) defined a rubric as a list of criteria divided into levels of proficiency to which the performance or work of a student is categorized. According to Brookhart, what makes rubrics professional is that during the process of assessing a performance the assessor *describes* in-detail rather than

evaluates (i.e., the assessor describe the performance according to the criteria set but do not judge it). In other words, the work is not taken as a whole; each part has its own level of performance and score, so it is normal that the assessed person do better in parts than others. What matters is that the criteria set be appropriate for the performance (Sinwongsuwat, 2012), organized, and well-written. The final evaluation and judgment come after finishing the performance or work as the scores get calculated and the whole level of proficiency becomes clearer (See rubric samples, appendix F).

2.3. Relevant Studies to the Topic

The speaking skill is rather marginalized in the research field. However, there have been a few studies which discussed speaking as a challenging skill in the ESL/ EFL contexts (Martinez-Flor, Uso-Juan, & Soler, 2006; Nunan, 2003; Zhang, 2009, as cited in Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, & Göksu, 2012). The next section will be devoted to reviewing some studies related to the topic with a brief critique to each study. The studies handle three major issues: students' attitudes and perceptions towards learning the skill, the challenges faced by teachers in teaching the skill, and some means used for assessing the skill.

2.3.1. Students' perceptions and attitudes towards speaking. Noonan (2005) surveyed the views of 66 Chinese EFL students through open-ended questions. Based on this, he classified students into two groups: 33 successful communicators, and 33 unsuccessful in communicating effectively. He did a qualitative analysis for answers, and his classification was based on the degree of smoothness in initiating, sustaining, and succeeding to get ideas across in a connected speech as well as comprehending most of the spoken discourse in a variety of topics.

Based on his assessment, Noonan came out with suggestions for his struggling students in order to improve their spoken English. For example, he advised them to have both strong instrumental and integrative motivations to work hard and improve, and to overcome the fear

of losing face and have courage to speak out. In addition, he suggested that students listen to input containing structures a bit more complex than their level of competence, neither too simple nor too complex in order to achieve progress in speaking. Noonan also asserted that interaction between fluent (native speakers if possible) and non-fluent speakers bridge the gap between both parties in a way that reaches a level in between where non-fluent speakers feel obliged to move to a higher level of competency, which at the end make them improve. Lastly, Noonan advised the EFL learners to try to internalized the grammatical structures indirectly through listening and communication rather than through memorizing grammar rules.

The researcher thinks that though Noonan presented some good points about successful and non-successful speakers, his results were not highly reliable because they were not based on action research instruments like class observation, testing, or recording. His judgment was based one side of the story_ surveying students attitudes and perceptions towards learning and practicing the skill, with reference to his own definition to successful/non-successful learning.

Gan (2012) conducted another study to understand the speaking problems in English language learning. Gan (2012) reported the challenges which encounter the ESL oral class students in a teacher training institute in Hong Kong. His study questioned the effectiveness of the current classroom pedagogy of teaching speaking. He used a qualitative means of collecting data represented by a semi-structured interview with 20 students.

Responses of students in the interviews indicated that they do not have enough chances to speak English whether in lectures or in tutorials. In addition, the curriculum was reported to have shortage in the strategies used for improving spoken English, and the classroom environment was demotivating as well. In sum, Gan expressed that several interrelated factors; social-cultural, institutional, and interpersonal altogether resulted in problems which contribute to create influent future teachers.

Although interviewing students is a direct way of gathering detailed responses with regard to the problems they encounter in learning speaking, Like Noonan's (2005) study, Gan's (2012) study was not based on sufficient means of data collection. One instrument (i.e., a semi-structured interview) is not enough to verify data. There should be another means of measuring students' problems, like class-observation, where the degree of correctness in students' responses could be measured.

With regard to the speaking strategies, Moriam (2005) investigated the difference in using strategies among 102 Japanese and 63 Bangladeshi EFL majors. Moriam surveyed students' views using a compiled questionnaire with reference to two sets of questionnaires: Language Strategy Use Survey (Cohen & Chi, 2004 as cited in Moriam) and The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford, 1990 as cited in Moriam). The survey was accompanied by a self-evaluative format for the students to determine their level of confidence in their speaking abilities. Moriam's results have shown that:

Cognitive and affective strategies had the strongest correlations with the other categories in both cultures. The Japanese learners' self-evaluation had the strongest correlations with the use of affective and interpersonal strategies. The Bangladeshi learners' self-evaluation had the strongest correlations with the use of cognitive and communicative-experiential strategies. (Moriam, 2005, p.47)

It seems, according to Moriam's (2005) interpretations to students' responses, that when students are in good mood and fresh mind, they would achieve more learning than when they are not. Accordingly, Moriam recommends that students need to be put in good, positive, and relaxing atmosphere.

2.3.2. Problems faced by teachers in teaching speaking. With respect to the challenges teachers encounter in teaching the oral skill of English in China, Chen and Goh (2011) surveyed the views of 331 EFL university teachers from all around China through

open-ended question surveys, and 30 teachers had semi-structured interviews. Results of the study have shown that in addition to the external constraints (e.g., crowded classes and shortage of instruction recourses), teachers confessed that they have low oral English proficiency and insufficient pedagogical competency. In accordance, teachers expressed, according to Chen and Goh, that they need to have regular training in managing oral classrooms, in terms of designing effective in-class tasks. They also asserted that they need to be acquainted with the strategies to reinforce students' motivation and boost their participation.

Unlike the common studies which focus on the reasons for students' problems in learning the oral skill, Chen and Goh's (2011) study shed light on the reasons for teachers' problems in teaching the skill, among them are teachers' low pedagogical competency. Two instruments (i.e., questionnaire and interview) were sufficient for collecting data. However, it would be more professional if they were accompanied by observing teachers' classes in order to see on ground the problems they face and the degree of their competency in managing oral classes.

In terms of the oral activities implemented in classrooms, Chuang (2011) surveyed the views of Taiwanese university EFL students from all across the country through online questionnaires. Students were asked to describe the efficacy of activities they carry out in the oral class. The results indicated that presenting a topic or speech with reference to a text, despite its popularity in oral classes, were perceived by students as the least effective in developing their EFL oral skills, while referring to written cues during the presentation is rather more helpful but unfortunately not usually allowed. However, presenting without referring to a text was thought to be more efficient despite its rare adoption in oral classes. As for class discussions, the gives and takes, sharing experience, and telling stories were the

favorites. Pair and group works had controversy in terms of the frequent use of L1, working with unmotivated classmates, and not taking the activity seriously to accomplish it.

The study suggested that teachers need to update their knowledge with regard to the pedagogy of classwork and activities in order to try to find the ones suitable for their students in terms of motivation, participation, and feedback. Though Chuang's (2011) results seem interesting and applicable in the EFL contexts, his online questionnaire is not as valid as face-to-face questionnaires in a sense that the face-to-face mode enable students to respond in better understanding, that is, the researcher is with them.

2.3.3. Assessment. Assessing the oral skill is of a great importance in the domain of pedagogy because of the special nature of speaking as a communicative and interactive skill. Alastrue and Perez-Liantada (2010) had their contribution in this regard. They carried out a longitudinal survey from 2004 to 2009 to document and archive the attitudes of 200 EFL secondary level Spanish teachers towards assessing the oral skill of English through the 'Selectividad' English exam. The results have shown that the lack of time devoted for teaching speaking, the crowded classes, the traditional way of instruction, and students' lack of interest have all put speaking and oral communication skills in a minor status in the Spanish EFL classes.

In order to promote the status of speaking, Alastrue and Perez-Liantada suggested to implement the task-based methods of integrative skills or to adopt the collaborative constructivist learning in the EFL Spanish secondary classrooms, and to use realia and technology in teaching as they boost motivation, participation, and willingness to interact in English. In order to do so, Alastrue and Perez-Liantada asserted that teachers need to get regular training and to be updated with respect to the pedagogy of the EFL communicative classrooms. In addition, the means of assessing PAU exams in Spain should be reconsidered to include both types of testing; the written as well as the spoken.

Results of Alastrue and Perez-Liantada seem to be very indicative to the context of teaching in Palestine. In terms of technology as an example, learning with technology aids in the classroom was evident, based on a personal experience as a student, to be more effective in boosting learning rather than non-technology classes.

With respect to the means of assessing the speaking skill. Sinwongsuwat (2012) investigated two of the major tasks through which the EFL Thai students get evaluated, which are face-to-face interviews and role-plays. Sinwongsuwat ran a small-scale classroom study to measure the efficacy of both types of tasks in assessing the learners' real spoken abilities, and he concluded that using "non-script role plays" with reference to appropriate rubrics for assessment is more accurate in determining students' real spoken abilities in natural situations and more capable as well in developing students' proficiency in English conversations.

Running an action research, though based on a small-scale classroom like that of Sinwongsuwat (2012), usually come up with results more valid and reliable than surveying students or teachers' attitude with regard to a certain problem or issue, especially if the researcher was the teacher of the class. Here, according to the results, the researcher do believe, based on a personal experience as a student, that non-script role plays are more descriptive as well as improving to students' real spoken abilities and less nerve-raking than other activities like oral presentations, for instance.

2.4. Summary

This chapter was devoted to explore the corpus of literature and studies related to the practices of learning, teaching, and assessing the oral skill of English in the EFL contexts. First of all, a theoretical background about the speaking skill was presented in terms of definition, importance of the skill, and internal as well as external reasons for the lack of oral fluency. Secondly, the linguistic elements of speaking (i.e., vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar) as well as the non-linguistic elements (i.e., body language and voice qualities) were

identified. In addition, the speaking practices, including the in-class activities, tips, and tools applied in the EFL oral classrooms were provided, and the criteria used by practitioners for assessing the oral skill were explored.

Lastly, relevant studies to the topic, in terms of students' perceptions and attitudes towards speaking, the problems faced by teachers in teaching the skill, as well as assessment of students' performances were all presented and discussed. Some of these studies will be used as a reference in designing the methodology of the study. Their results will be used in the discussion of the results whether as supporters or as opponents.

In the next chapter, the methodology of conducting the study will be discussed in details in terms of the participants, instruments of data collection, and the means of data analysis.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The status of oral skill of English seems to be marginalized in the BA English Language Programs at the Palestinian Universities. In order to prove so, the efficacy of practices of learning, teaching, and assessing speaking was investigated in this study to measure the degree of fluency the EFL majors have in speaking. This chapter will discuss in details the methodology which was followed for conducting the study in terms of the sample of subjects from whom data was gathered, as well as the instruments which were used for data collection.

3.2. Participants

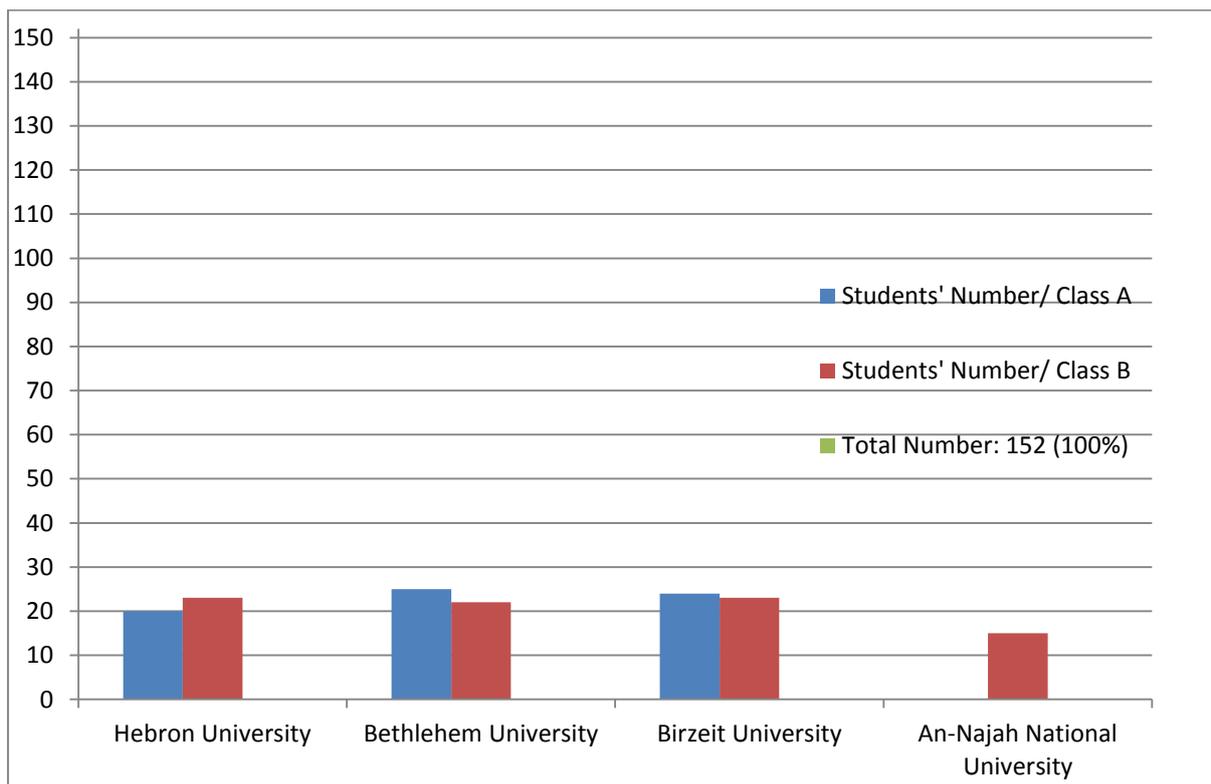
3.2.1. Students. 152 Palestinian English majors composed the largest sector of the sample. They aged between 18 and 24 years, and they were studying at four Palestinian universities: Hebron University, Bethlehem University, Birzeit University, and An-Najah National University. All of the students were enrolled in the Oral skill classes under different titles of the course (e.g., Oral communication, Conversation Comprehension, and Interactive English). 85 students were in the second year (i.e., the majority of students in the sample), while 54 students were in the third year, and only 13 student were graduates. University level did not show relation with students' fluency in English because of the unequal proportions of participants to each level. 131 participants were females while only 21 participants were males since most of the students in the English Departments at the four universities were females. Gender did not show relation with students' fluency because of the remarkable discrepancy in proportions between female and male students. The students filled out a 20-item-survey-questionnaire, and their opinions were quantitatively analyzed.

Table 3.1.

Description of the Students

Category	Class (1)	Class (2)	Class (3)	Class (4)	Class (5)	Class (6)	Class (7)
University Name	Hebron University	Hebron University	Bethlehem University	Bethlehem University	Birzeit University	Birzeit University	An-Najah University
Gender	F: 19 M: 1	F: 16 M: 7	F: 23 M: 2	F: 18 M: 4	F: 21 M: 3	F: 20 M: 3	F: 14 M: 1
University Level	2nd: 14 4th: 6	2nd: 18 3rd: 4 4th: 1	2nd: 23 3rd: 2	2nd: 18 3rd: 1	3rd: 22 4th: 2	2nd: 3 3rd: 16 4th: 4	2nd:6 3rd: 9
Age Range	18_22	18_23	18_23	18_20	19_23	19_24	19_21
Total Number	20	23	25	22	24	23	15

Graph 3.1. Proportions of the oral class students to the Palestinian Universities.



3.2.2. Instructors. Eight oral course instructors from the English Departments at the four universities (i.e., two instructors from each university) composed a small group in the sample (i.e., eight instructors vs. 152 students). Six of the instructors were females and two

were males (i.e., gender did not show difference in capability neither in the interviews nor in class observations). Four of the eight instructors were native speakers of English while the other four were Palestinians whose mother tongue is Arabic (i.e., the native-speaker teachers may slightly surpass the Arab teachers in pronunciation and fluency since English is their mother tongue).

Four out of the eight instructors received training/ attended workshops/ conferences in teaching the oral skill (i.e., three Arabs and one native-speaker), while the other four (i.e., three native speakers and one Arab) did not. Training did not show difference among classes because of the few numbers of receiving training in teaching the skill as was reported by the trained teachers. Moreover, five out of the eight instructors have PhDs in the English language and Literature, while the rest have MA degree in the language. Degree also did not show difference in the efficacy of teaching the skill among the observed classes.

Furthermore, half of the instructors (i.e., four) have been teaching English courses for more than 15 years, one instructor not less than 10 years, while the rest (i.e., three) have taught courses for less than 10 years (i.e., two of them are MA degree holders). Here it was noticed that the longer the years of teaching, the more the experience, and the higher the confidence and awareness teachers have shown.

When it comes to teaching the oral course, five of the instructors have taught it for less than 10 times, while the rest have taught it for 11 to 16 times, which may have influence on teachers' experience in teaching the skill if accompanied with constant progress in their pedagogical tools. The instructors responded to a 14-item-questionnaire, while seven of them were interviewed to validate their answers in the questionnaire; instructor number eight welcomed the interview but apologized for running out of time to be interviewed.

Table 3.2.

Background of the Instructors

Category	Teacher (1)	Teacher (2)	Teacher (3)	Teacher (4)	Teacher (5)	Teacher (6)	Teacher (7)	Teacher (8)
Name of University	Hebron University	Hebron University	Bethlehem University	Bethlehem University	Birzeit University	Birzeit University	An-Najah University	An-Najah University
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female
Academic Degree	MA	PhD	MA	MA	PhD	PhD	PhD	PhD
Years of Teaching English	1_5 years	More than 15 years	More than 15 years	More than 15 years	1_5 years	More than 15 years	10_15 years	1_5 years
Years of Living/ Working/ Studying in an English-speaking Country	34 years in the U.S.A	Never	28 years in the U.S.A and Canada	2 years in the U.S.A	30 years in the U.S.A	6 years in the U.S.A	12 years in NY/ U.S.A	25 years in Lancaster/ England
No. of Times of Teaching Courses in the Oral Skill	6_10 times	More than 16 times	1_5 times	More than 16 times	1_5 times	6_10 times	1_5 times	1_5 times
No. of Times of Receiving Training/ Workshops in Teaching Speaking	1_5 times	1_5 times	_____	1_5 times	_____	_____	1_5 times	_____
Mother Tongue	English	Arabic	English	Arabic	English	Arabic	Arabic	English

3.3. Data Collection and Instrumentation

To evaluate the status of the oral skill of English at the Palestinian universities, two types of data collection were administered. **The quantitative type** was mainly done through surveying 152 Palestinian oral class students and eight of the teachers who teach the course, by means of two questionnaires. Students' questionnaire consisted of 20 questions. The aim of it was to investigate students' perceptions, practices, and attitudes towards learning the oral

skill. The questionnaire was close-ended in nature; that is, all questions listed had finite options to choose from, except for the last question which had two sections: close-ended (i.e., yes/no question) and open-ended (i.e., Wh-question). The question was “Do you prefer that a native-speaker teacher teach the oral skill? Why?”

Instructors’ questionnaire, on the other hand, consisted of 14 questions. The aim of it was to investigate the instructors’ approaches (i.e., the set of techniques, strategies, methods...etc.) to teach the speaking skill and the challenges they encounter in the oral class. The questionnaire was close-ended like that of the students, except for the last item which was: “Please list any other potential problems and difficulties you might encounter in teaching the English oral skill to the Palestinian EFL learners in your university.”

The qualitative type was mainly done through interviewing seven of the eight participating instructors to have their questionnaire answers validated, and to give them the chance to share experience and provide other information if any. Finally, unplanned visits to six oral classes were done to see how they are run and to observe the interaction among students and teachers in the class.

3.3.1. Design of the questionnaires. The items of the questionnaires were mostly taken from former studies (Moriyam, 2005; Ozsevik, 2010; Ramirez, 2010; Razmjoo & Ardekani, 2011; & UW Office of Educational Assessment (OEA), 2006) besides some adaptations to meet the research questions and hypotheses of the study. The questionnaires were validated by four professors from Hebron University, and they investigated four major issues (**See Appendices A & B, Students’ Questionnaires/ Teachers’ Questionnaires**):

1. The EFL students’ as well as teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards the oral skill, and the reasons for not developing high fluency in speaking (Moriyam, 2005; Noonan, 2005; Ramirez, 2010; Razmjoo & Ardekani, 2011).

2. Aspects of teaching the oral class (Ozsevik, 2010).
3. The problems encountered in such class (Ozsevik, 2010).
4. The components which determine fluency in speaking and how students practice them to improve their spoken abilities (Ramirez, 2010).

3.3.2. The interviews. In order to validate the oral instructors' answers in the questionnaire, the researcher interviewed two instructors from each university. However, one instructor out of the eight did not have enough time for the interview because of her busy schedule. The interviews were recorded, and each interview took around 15-20 minutes. The interview consisted of 12 questions which handled almost all the issues concerning speaking like that presented in the questionnaire. The interviews were semi-structured in a way that the researcher had to ask some prompt questions based on the responses of the interviewees (**See Appendix C, Interview Questions**).

The interviews began by asking the interviewees to give their points of view in the role of spoken English in the EFL students' lives and careers. Teachers, then, were asked about the representation of the oral skill and the methodology of teaching in the textbook they use. After that, they were asked to report the problems and challenges they encounter in teaching the speaking skill in the Palestinian EFL classrooms and to describe their oral classes. The interviewees were also asked about the means of assessment they use to evaluate their students' performances in the class. Moreover, they were asked if the current methodologies of teaching and assessing the oral skill have met/ failed to meet students' needs and expectations.

Teachers, after that, were asked about their students' motivation to participate in their classes, in addition to their opinions in the qualifications of the Palestinian English teachers if

such qualities do meet the requirements of teaching the skill of speaking. Moreover, they were asked to suggest solutions to overcome the difficulties and problems pertaining to teaching the skill in order to improve the students' oral competency. Last of all, teachers were asked if they did receive regular or enough training in the skill such as workshops and the role of the English departments in this regard (**See Appendix D, Transcription of the Interview Answers**).

3.3.3. Class observation. During the visits to the English Departments at the four universities, the researcher was invited by six oral instructors to attend their classes. As the visits occurred at the end of the term before the final exams, the instructors were finalizing their classes by mainly discussing the principles of delivering presentations and speeches, and in some classes students were actually delivering presentations. The visits gave an indication to what may take place in the EFL oral classes. During the observations, the researcher took notes with regard to the proceeding of classes (**See Appendix E, Class Observations**).

3.4. Summary

In this chapter, the methodology of the study was discussed in details. First, both groups of subjects in the study (i.e., 152 students and eight teachers) were described. In addition, the instruments of data collection were introduced. That is, both the students' and teachers questionnaires, the interviews with seven teachers, and the observations to six classes were presented. In the next chapter, the results of the study will be presented and discussed in detail in light of the objectives, research questions, and hypotheses of the study.

Chapter Four

Results and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, results of students' and teachers' questionnaires will be presented with reference to the four categories mentioned in the methodology section (See pages 32_33). An attempt will be made to find agreements or disagreements from the interviews and observations for each category. Then, the results for each group will be related to the research questions and hypotheses.

Because the sample of the teachers is small (i.e., only eight teachers), simple statistical analysis was used (i.e., counting numbers for the same response was done), and studying their results was qualitative rather than quantitative. The sample of students, on the other hand, was relatively bigger (i.e., 152 students); therefore, more sophisticated analysis was used (i.e., calculation included percentages, means, and standard deviations). The discussion of results will involve the responses of students and teachers to find out if they both agree to the same ideas or show variations in their views about the practice of speaking in the classroom.

4.2. Students' and Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes towards the Oral Skill and the Reasons for not Developing High Fluency in Speaking

For this category, students were asked eight questions while teachers were asked only one question. The first four of them were replicated from Noonan (2005). The other questions were adapted from Moriam (2005), Ramirez (2010), and Razmjoo and Ardekani (2011):

1. On an average day of study, how much time do you spend listening to spoken English?
2. How well do you understand most of the English you listen to while learning English?

3. In an average week of study, how much time do you spend speaking to native speakers of English?
4. Saving face means not wanting to embarrass oneself in front of others. Based on this, which of the following statements best describes you?
5. How does the grade influence your participation in an oral activity?
6. From your experience, how does the grade influence learners' participation in an oral activity? (Question 7 in teachers' questionnaire/ directed to teachers.)
7. Which of the following statements apply to you?
17. Indicate with an X to the choice you think is correct for each of the following items (1, 6, 7, 8).
8. Do you prefer that a native speaker teacher teach the oral skill? Why?

Listening is the first step to oral fluency. In this respect, question (1) in the students' questionnaire was: ***“On an average day of study, how much time do you spend listening to spoken English?”*** (See appendix A) Out of 152 students from the four universities, 59% of the students said that they listened to spoken English for less than two hours. 26% of them reported that they practiced listening for more than two hours. However, only 15% of them said they spent the majority of their free time, listening to spoken English.

In accordance, when nearly 60% of the Palestinian EFL majors listen to English for less than two hours a day, the consequences will be unexpected high level of fluency. ***As a result, shortage of extensive listening is one of the reasons for students' low level of fluency.*** Most of the teachers in the interviews reported the problem of low extensive listening to spoken English (See Appendix D), and they recommended students to start early listening. It is advised, according to Noonan (2005), that students listen to comprehensible input (i.e., the level of language which contains structures one level beyond students' level of competency), which was first suggested by Krashen (1985). This level of language may increase students'

motivation to do more listening because they do not feel much difficulty and pressure in comprehension. In this regard, teachers are advised to suggest suitable shows and videos for their students to get exposed to in the form of extensive listening assignments, which was reported in the interview with instructor (2) to be already done (See Appendix D).

Question (2) in the students' questionnaire says: "***How well do you understand most of the English you listen to while learning the language?***" (See appendix A) As was verbally explained to students, the spoken English was meant to be classroom English. Out of the 152 students, 54% of the students said they understood the main message except for some parts, 43% of them said they understood all of the spoken English easily, whereas only five 3% of them said they understood some parts with great difficulty.

The researcher did not expect that respectively high percent of students (i.e., nearly 87%) understand most the English they hear easily without serious problems but expected higher percent of students than 3% who understand some parts with great difficulty. This indicates that the level of language in the classroom is deliberately chosen by teachers to be appropriate for students' comprehension level. ***As a result, students comprehension to classroom language is not a reason for their low level fluency.*** However, the researcher thinks that the majority of the EFL students in Palestine have difficulty in comprehending the colloquial English (i.e., not that they usually hear in the classroom). However, when Noonan (2005) asked his sample of Chinese students nearly the same question, the majority of the students (even the successful ones as he classified them) said that they understood the main message except for some parts. Maybe, the cultural and linguistic differences between Palestine and China showed discrepancy in results.

Question (3) in the students' questionnaire was: "***In an average week of study, how much time do you spend speaking to native speakers of English?***" (See appendix A) 80%

of the students said that they spoke with native speakers of English for less than two hours per week. 11% of them said they spoke for more than two hours per week, whereas only 9% students said they worked/ lived with native speakers of English, so they had to speak to them for long periods of time.

It was expected that the majority of the EFL Palestinian students rarely interact with native speakers of English because native speakers rarely visit Palestine or live there. In addition, despite having the internet service almost everywhere, there are rare attempts to engage in controlled linguistic and cultural exchanges with native-speaker academics across borders. In accordance, students have rare chances to hear the language ‘live’ from its speakers, which at the end affects the amount and quality of language they would hear and learn. ***Based on this, low interaction with native speakers is another reason for not having high level of fluency.*** Here teachers are advised to devote a fixed time of the class during the oral course where students go through online debates with native speakers as part of cultural exchange (e.g., Soliya Program). Students, on the other hand, are recommended by teacher (1) in the interview to find a proficient/ native speakers to regularly interact with (**See appendix D**).

Noonan (2005) had this question in the study. According to the results of his study, less than 62% of his successful students indicated that they interacted with native or fluent speakers more than one hour per week. On the other hand, more than 85% of the non-successful language learners confessed that they interacted with native or fluent speakers for less than one hour a week. Noonan referred the weak interaction with native speakers to the few number of native speakers who would exist in a big-populated country like China. This result supports the viewpoint of the current study which calls for having constant connections and interactions with the native speakers.

One of the obstacles students encounter in learning to speak a foreign language is the feeling of anxiety to speak out before others. Question (8) in students' questionnaire was: *"Saving face means not wanting to embarrass oneself in front of others. Based on this, which of the following statements best describes you?"* (See appendix A) The results came as the following:

Table 4.2.1.

Students' Level of Anxiety to Speak out in English

No.	Statement	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%
1.	I'm not afraid of losing face. Speaking English with others is not a problem.	68	45%
2.	I'm afraid of losing face, but I know I need to practice English to be better in speaking, so I force myself to speak.	66	43%
3.	I'm afraid of losing face, so many times I avoid speaking English.	15	10%
4.	My spoken English is so poor, so I don't dare to speak out.	3	2%

According to table 4.2.1., 45% of the students did not feel afraid to speak English in front of others, which is relatively high for students who are still in the process of learning. 43% of them, nonetheless, reported that they try to overcome this anxiety and speak. Only 10% of them felt reluctant to speak while 2% did not dare to speak out at all. Instructors (3) and (5) asserted that many of the students, especially the girls, had the anxiety and shyness to express themselves despite their good linguistic competence (See appendix D).

The researcher expected that the highest percentage would go for item (2) which indicates that students feel nervous to speak out but know they need to practice the language to be better in speaking, so they force themselves to speak. The following place was expected for item (3); that is, some students feel afraid of losing face if they spoke in front of others, so

many times they avoid to speak. The researcher, from her experience on ground as a student, thought that these facts may be more reasonable and descriptive to the level of students in speaking a foreign language. Students, maybe, imagine themselves better than what they actually are. Still, the results may hold truth. It remains in the end that 88% of the oral class students have enough courage to speak out versus only 12% who do not have that courage to speak, which means that *anxiety of losing face is not a major reason for students' low level of oral fluency*. Accordingly, if the largest sector of students were encouraged, motivated, and put in healthy environment for interaction, they would show improvement in speaking, which is the mission of teachers to do what takes to make students get rid of anxiety.

Noonan (2005) when asked his participants the same question, 48.5% of the successful learners said that they were not afraid of losing face at all, while 39.4% of them indicated that they needed to practice to become better speakers. That is, although they felt afraid of losing face, they forced themselves to speak English with others. This indicates that 88% of his students have enough courage to speak out versus 12% who do not have that courage. On the other hand, the highest proportion of the non-successful learners said that they felt afraid of losing face; as a result, many times they avoided speaking. Yet, 33% of them said that they felt afraid but knew that they needed to practice, so they forced themselves to do so. In sum, 48.5% of the unsuccessful students had the courage to speak out versus 51.5% who did not have this courage. In this respect, Noonan advised teachers to provide encouragement and positive environment for students to feel comfortable to interact.

Staying on the same ground of comfort and anxiety and their impact on making mistakes in speaking, question (16) in the students' questionnaire was: *“Which of the following statements applies to you?”* (See appendix A) Five options were provided, and the results were the following:

Table 4.2.2.

The Degree of Comfort Students Feel When They Speak English

No.	Statement	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%
1.	I feel comfortable but have few slips of tongue when I speak English.	78	51%
2.	I feel comfortable and confident speaking English.	28	18%
3.	I'm not so comfortable as I hesitate sometimes and make some mistakes when I speak.	23	15%
4.	I feel uncomfortable and not confident as I make many hesitations, pauses, and errors in speaking, and I speak too slow.	13	9%
5.	I usually forget what I want to say and stop speaking at all.	10	7%

According to table 4.2.2., the item “I feel comfortable but have few slips of tongue...” came in the first place as 51% (i.e., more than half of the students) chose it; whereas the item “I usually forget what I want to say and stop speaking at all.” was selected by the least number of students (i.e., only 7%). The researcher did not expect exactly such results; she expected that the highest percentage would go for item (3) which says: “I’m not so comfortable as I hesitate sometimes and make some mistakes when I speak.” followed by the other results in the same arrangement.

It is reasonable that the English majors, who are still in the process of learning a foreign language, to hesitate during speaking that language and to make some mistakes and errors, especially if students do not spend much time and effort in listening and practicing the language extensively outside of the classroom. However, according to the results in table 4.2.2., it is positive that nearly two thirds of the students (69%) have slight to moderate problems in speaking versus nearly one third of students (31%) who have moderate to severe speaking problems. *This means that the majority of students do not suffer from major*

speaking problems that negatively affect their fluency. Still, teachers bear huge responsibility to reduce all the negative factors (i.e., affective filters), such as anxiety, shyness, and lack of confidence which hinder positive learning, as was recommended by instructor (2) and (7) in the interview (See Appendix D). They also need to reinforce students' positive perceptions and attitudes towards themselves in terms of their spoken abilities (Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, & Göksu, 2012).

With respect to the influence of receiving grades for participating in the oral class, question (10) in students' questionnaire was: *“How does the grade influence your participation in an oral activity?”* (See appendix A). Four options were given, and the results were arranged from the highest percentage to the lowest. See the following table:

Table 4.2.3.

The Influence of Assessment on Students' Motivation to Participate

No.	Item	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%
1.	Grading the oral activity motivates me to take it more seriously and participate.	76/152	50%
2.	I like to participate in any oral activity/discussion whether it is assessed or not.	45/152	30%
3.	I don't participate in the oral activity if there were no assessment.	17/152	11%
4.	I don't like to participate in any oral activity whether it is assessed or not.	13/152	9%

Table 4.2.3. above shows that grading oral activities motivated half of the students (50%) to participate. This means that *half of the students had the motive to speak, but they needed a stimulus to do so_ here the grade (instrumental motivation)*. The results, here, go in line with teachers' choices in question (7) in the teachers' questionnaire because five

teachers out of the eight confirmed it. In addition, teachers' responses to question (8) in the interview indicated that students in general were motivated.

However, nearly one third of the students (30%) expressed that they liked to participate in any oral activity whether it was assessed or not. This means that 30% of the students had the eagerness and motive to practice the language and share experience only out of loving the language but not for the grade (integrative motivation), which is more effective in creating fluent speakers (Noonan, 2005). This point was agreed upon by three teachers for the same question in the teachers' questionnaire. It was also verified in the interviews with the teachers that the majority of students had motivation to speak, but most of them needed stimuli (e.g., constant encouragement and receiving grades) in order to speak. In this respect, the following table gives the major points of question (8) in the interviews with teachers:

Table 4.2.4.

Students' Motivation according to Teachers' Answers in the Interviews

Students' motivation	<u>Instructor (1):</u>	<u>Instructor (2):</u>	<u>Instructor (3):</u>	<u>Instructor (4):</u>	<u>Instructor (5):</u>	<u>Instructor (6):</u>	<u>Instructor (7):</u>
	It's very subjective, & it depends on the student. Some students speak to get the grade. Others feel the need to improve, so they work hard. Most of the students in general are motivated.	My students are fairly motivated. I motivate & encourage them all the time to speak and not to fear making mistakes. Participation in the oral class is the heart of the course, & without it students' wouldn't improve. Rewards increase their motivation.	We have large classes (30 students each). Minority of students are motivated to participate, esp. most of the students are girls who feel shy to speak out and persuade.	We have quite different levels in every class in terms of motivation to participate. I have a student who's almost like a native == speaker. In order to make use of that, I video-tape them to use them like a sample-model for others. It really draw their attention and motivates them to work harder to be better.	In general, I find students motivated to respond. They engage in discussions. Some students speak more than others, but in general, everyone is participating either as a presenter or as an evaluator. When I find unmotivated students, I try to work on them.	Sometimes students are motivated than others. When they have exams, they tend to be unprepared & unmotivated to participate. But in general students are motivated, but it depends on the topic. Games and stories are really motivating.	It depends on students, on the teacher, and on the topic itself. The teacher should always look for interesting topics for students to get them motivated to participate.

Only 11% of the students, on the other hand, expressed that they did not participate if there were no assessment, and one teacher agreed with this point. However, 9% of them said they did not participate at all whether the activity was assessed or not, and only one teacher confirmed that. To sum up, 20% or the minority of the students expressed that they hardly participated, in comparison to 80% of students who were at ease to participate. This result indicates that the majority of students are keen to be fluent speakers and that they have motivation (i.e., whether instrumental or integrative) to do so. *Accordingly, students' motivation is not a reason for their low level of fluency. However, the instrumental motivation in the majority of students (i.e., driven by grades) do not effectively contribute to achieve high level of fluency.*

Moving to the question before the last, question (17) in the students' questionnaire says: *“Indicate with an X to the choice you think is correct for each of the following items.”* (See appendix A) A Likert scale was used, and the results were the following:

Table 4.2.5.

Students' Practices with Regard to Speaking

No.	Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	To what extent do you speak English whenever you get the chance?	(0.4) 39%	(0.2) 17%
2.	During class discussions and activities, how often do you interact in English with your classmates?	(0.4) 35%	(0.2) 18%
3.	To what extent do topics discussed in your oral class meet your interests, needs, and expectations?	(0.3) 33%	(0.2) 17.5%
4.	To what extent do you feel afraid of making mistakes when you speak English?	(0.3) 31%	(0.24) 24%

With reference to table 4.2.5., students indicated that they spoke English the time they had the chance with an average of 39% and 17% deviation of opinions from the mean. Though this item was the highest in percentage among all items; still, it seems that the majority of students suffer from the anxiety of losing face, so many times they feel reluctant to speak when they get the chance to do so. Based on this, students are called to keep self-esteem and increase their attempts to speak the language because *their relatively low to moderate attempts to speak English is counted as a reason for not being fluent speakers*. Chuang (2011) expressed that lack of practice causes lack of self-esteem and reluctance to speak out.

Students also expressed that during class discussions and activities they interacted in English with their classmates with an average of 35% and 18% deviation of opinions. Accordingly, only one third of the students (35%) are keen to interact in English with their classmates versus two thirds who do not bother to do so. *This indicates that low interaction in the classroom can be counted as a reason for students' lack of fluency in spoken English*.

Low interaction can be referred to several reasons. For instance, topics of discussion suggested in the class may not meet students' expectations and needs, which was actually found out. That is, students expressed that only 33% of the topics met their needs with 17.5% deviation of opinions from the mean. This relatively low percent indicates that *the choice of topics can be a reason for students' reluctance from speaking and an indirect cause for their low fluency*. Teachers are advised in this place to carefully choose topics based on students' needs. Teachers may ask their students to suggest their favorite topics for discussions, which at the end may help increase students' motivation to participate.

Last of all, according to table 4.2.5. above, students reported that they feared making mistakes when they spoke English with an average of 31%. This result positively indicates that only one third of the students have this fear. Yet, the item had the highest disperse of opinions

from the mean (24%), which shows discrepancy among students in this regard. *Accordingly, fear of making mistakes is not a major reason for low fluency among students.*

Question (20) in the students' questionnaire was: *"Do you prefer that a native-speaker teacher teach the oral skill? Why?"* The question had two parts; closed-ended (i.e., Yes/No question) and open-ended (i.e., Wh-question). The answers were the following:

- 1) 116/152 students (76%) said 'Yes'.
- 2) 33/152 students (22%) of the students said 'No'.
- 3) Three students (2%) did not answer.

Many of the students who answered 'Yes' gave similar repeated reasons (i.e., nearly 62 answers) that can be summarized into the following points (PS., Some reasons might not be justified but had to be reported):

1. Native-speaker (NS) teachers teach the language and pronunciation better because English is their mother tongue (L1), so they're confident to speak the language (i.e., they are the experts).
2. NS teachers are more familiar with the language culture, so they are more familiar with the vocabulary appropriate for the different contexts (i.e., pragmatics).
3. NS teachers make students speak English properly, perfectly, and fluently.
4. NS teachers do not speak Arabic, so they force us to speak English all the time.
5. Students have better chances to learn the accent; the most important part of the oral skill.
6. NSs are better in speaking, and we love the way they speak as it is more interesting.
7. NS teachers are more capable to improve our skills, especially speaking and listening.
8. NS teachers are usually stronger and less to make mistakes in the language.
9. NS teachers have very good communication skills, so we can interact with them comfortably.

10. NS teachers are richer in vocabulary and idioms than non-native speakers.
11. NS teachers give us more knowledge about the language.
12. Being taught by NS teachers is good for learning how to use the language (e.g., when we do not know the meaning of some words, the NS teacher explains the meaning by employing the words in novel sentences).

Some of the students who answered 'No' gave repeated reasons (i.e., nearly 17 answers) that can be summarized into the following points (PS., Some reasons might not be justified but had to be reported):

1. Sometime, we cannot understand everything NSs say.
2. Arab teachers who know both languages (i.e., Arabic and English) would be easier to deal with.
3. What matters is that we receive the idea or message regardless of that the teacher is a native speaker or not.
4. I don't mind being taught by a native-speaker or Arab as much as being taught by an active and efficient teacher.
5. If the non-native-speaker (NNS) teacher speaks fluently and has clear pronunciation, then I'll learn from them the oral skills needed.
6. We are not required to sound native-like as long as the message is got across; the accent does not matter.
7. NS teachers make fun of us.
8. NNS teachers make us feel like we both are in the same level.
9. When I do not know some words in English, I need to use Arabic, so that the Arab teacher can understand me.
10. I can communicate with NNS teachers easily.

11. NNS teachers are more related to the local life aspects (i.e., are more familiar with the Arab culture and social life).

Since the majority of students (76%) went for the choice of being taught the speaking skill by a native speaker teacher, there was a consensus that native speaker teachers were more competent in pronunciation, vocabulary, culture, and pragmatics of the language. Besides students' claims, the researcher also believes that students' curiosity to deal with foreign language speakers and to hear how they speak the language using a rich repertoire of words can also be counted as a reason (Noonan, 2005). Target culture can also be a factor; that is, students' integrative motivation to learn the language makes them keen to be taught by native speaker teachers in order to be able to imitate their accent and to have the chance to know every detail about their habits, rituals, and culture as a whole.

On the other hand, students who preferred a non-native speaker teacher to teach them the oral skill were only 22%. Their reasons were that nonnative speaker teachers were easier to be understood than native speaker teachers. They also claimed that they did not care about having a native-like accent as much as to be good communicators, and that they feel more comfortable to speak to an Arab teacher from the same background. The researcher thinks that those students are rather instrumentally motivated; that is, they are not much interested to get introduced to the authentic language and culture of a native-speaker teacher as much as having a career. *According to the majority of students, not being taught by a native speaker may be one of the indirect reasons for not having fluency in speaking.*

4.3. Aspects of Teaching the Oral Class

For this category, students and teachers were asked the following questions (Some of the questions were adapted from Ozsevik (2010)):

1. What kind of activities/ tasks are usually carried out in your oral class?

2. What kind of topics do you usually discuss in your class? (Directed to teachers.)
3. Choose from the following characteristics of the traditional methods the ones that exist in your oral class. (Directed only to students.)
4. Choose from the following characteristics of the modern methods the ones that exist in your oral class. (Directed to students.)
5. How much traditional/ non-traditional do you rate/ consider your oral class? (Directed to students.)
6. What are the means of assessment used in your oral class? (Directed to students.)
7. How is the general assessment distributed in percentage to the activities and achievements of the oral class?
8. What aspects of the oral class do you value the most and think should receive large percentage of assessment?
9. What type of testing is usually given in your oral class (with percentage)?
10. When you make speaking mistakes, what type of correction do you usually receive? How often? (Directed to students.)
11. How do you usually correct your students when they make mistakes in speaking? (Directed to teachers.)
12. What teaching methods do you usually implement in your oral class? How often? (Directed to teachers.)
13. In your opinion, should the following descriptions (i.e., items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 in question 12) apply to the oral class? (Directed to teachers.)

In terms of the most popular activities done in the oral class, students and teachers were asked: *“What kind of activities are usually carried out in your oral class? (You can choose more than one option.)”* (See appendix A & B) Seven options were provided the last of

which was ‘Other’ to give students and teachers the chance to add other options if any; however, no suggestions were added. Students’ results were the following:

Table 4.3.1.

Activities Performed in the Oral Class according to Students

No.	Activity	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%
1.	Oral presentations	130	86%
2.	Open discussions	99	65%
3.	Watching and discussing videos	84	55%
4.	Listening activities	76	50%
5.	Solving exercises	41	27%
6.	Tasks and games	23	15%
7.	Other	9	6%

Table 4.3.1. above indicates that “*oral presentations*” were the most carried out activities in the oral class with 86% of students’ choices. “*Open discussions*”, “*watching and discussing videos*”, and “*listening activities*” came next respectively (65_ 50% of choices). However, students indicated that “*solving exercises*” and “*tasks and games*” were rarely carried out (i.e., they got less than 30%).

When the instructors were asked the same question, their answers were nearly the same to those of the students. That is, all the eight instructors chose “*oral presentations*” and “*open discussions*” as the most carried out activities in the oral class. The results were supported by teachers’ responses in the interviews (See table 4.2.2.) and the observations done for once to classes (See appendix E).

In the following table are the key points of question (5) in the interview with the instructors:

Table 4.3.2.

Major Activities Done in the Oral Class as Reported in the Interviews

Describing the oral class	Instructor (1): Many types of activities: E.g., a controversial topic to discuss.	Instructor (2): Different prepared tasks: Delivering presentations, language functions live, intensive listening, work on some vocabulary using a pictured dictionary, bring informal vocab. from English videos, etc.	Instructor (3): Students have to write and present three kinds of speeches: narrative, self-introduction, & persuasion. Group-work. Watching a lot of videos to critique them.	Instructor (4): A lot of activities which integrate the four skills. Discussions, presentations and speeches. Viewing videos. Reading about theory as self-study and students have quizzes to make sure they read the material but the majority of the class depends on practice.	Instructor (5): A compiled material. Exercises on specific skills. Reading texts about specific concepts/ ideas in language, using body language to communicate. The format: Doing exercises and evaluate them together in terms of a constructive feedback. We have closed Facebook page to post links & assignments on. Online sites to practice pronunciation. Sometimes we show videos that evoke students to get engaged & communicate.	Instructor (6): Using a lot of audio-visuals. Listening with pictures. Multimedia. Reading texts to comment on language. Body language.	Instructor (7): Public speaking. Debating. Critical thinking. Engaging in real social interactional conversations.
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Open discussions (Borg, 2001, as cited in Chen & Goh, 2011), show teachers' true linguistic and personality abilities in managing the oral class. They also were reported by Chuang as the most helpful in-class activities because they "provide a much needed opportunity to use the target language in a meaningful way." (Chuang, 2011, p. 82)

Topics of presentations were said, in the interviews with the teachers, to be selected by students who usually feel free to choose the topic they find interesting. However, teachers (3) and (4), for example, said that they requested certain types of presentations according to

certain chronological and instructional arrangements along the semester, such as, preparing a narrative, followed by a self-introduction, and ends with a persuasive speech. “*Listening activities*” came in the second place as six instructors chose them. Instructor (2) reported in his interview that he relied much on intensive as well as extensive listening. “*Showing and discussing videos*”, and “*task and games*” had the third place with five choices, while half of the instructors (4/8) chose “solving exercises” to be the least to do in the oral class. (See table 4.3.2. above)

Such results were expected by the researcher as she thought that the theme of the EFL oral class in Palestine still depends mainly on the conscious learning of the language, such as giving oral presentations where the presenter gets prepared, memorize, and consciously recite. This way of practicing the oral skill in the classroom may be important for formal meetings but not so helpful for daily-life communication exchanges. According to Chuang (2011), text-based oral presentations were perceived as the least helpful in enriching spoken abilities.

The researcher agrees with this view because, from her experience as a student, oral presentations and public speeches have always been a struggle for students. That is, such kind of classwork increases the presenter’s anxiety and may be embarrassing, especially if the presenter were not prepared well. Moreover, oral presentations usually make the audience feel easily distracted and bored. It is advised that students, from school, be gradually subjected to regular training in giving impressive presentations and speeches, and this should be a key part of each class. In terms of the oral class, oral presentations should come as an achievement means of assessment at the end of the course in order to achieve the desired goals.

Other in-class activities such as open discussions or debates, watching video clips, and listening to recordings are thought to be more effective for communication because these enhance listening and speaking simultaneously without increasing students’ affective filter. In

addition, focus should be much directed to “tasks and games” where motivation increases, anxiety lessens, and where the class becomes more energetic and fun for students. Here, tasks and games need the collaboration of students through pair and group work under the teacher’s supervision. This was noticed in class (5) where students performed a whole-class vocabulary game at the end of the meeting (See appendix E). Chuang (2011) expressed that this type of activity is usually difficult to manage (i.e., it needs competent and skilled teachers) because students can easily be distracted if they were not triggered enough to engage, and they may switch to speak in other topics in their mother tongue.

In order to know how students and teachers perceive and value class activities, they were asked: “*What aspects of the oral class do you value the most and think they should receive large percentage of assessment? (You can choose more than one option.)*” (See appendix A & B) Results of students were the following:

Table 4.3.3.

Aspects of the Oral Class which Should Receive Assessment according to Students

No.	Item	Frequency (Count/152)	Percentage
1.	Oral presentations	109	72%
2.	Open discussions	93	61%
3.	Watching and discussing videos	82	54%
4.	Listening activities	64	42%
5.	Tasks and games	47	31%
6.	Solving exercises	34	22%
7.	Tests and exams	26	17%
8.	Other	9	6%

According to table 4.3.3., almost the same ranking of results was given by students in both question (4) above and question (12) here but with a bit less percentages, which verifies

their answers in both questions. That is, “*oral presentations*”, again, came at the top of the list as the most valued means of assessment with 72% of students’ choices, followed by “*open discussions*”. Students may see that presenting a topic or speech in front of others as a challenge and indication of their language and personality abilities, which is partially true because presentations may not show exactly students’ true abilities (Chuang, 2011). “*Open discussions*”, on the other hand, are like an open space where students feel free to express themselves, which appeals to students (i.e., these got 61% of students’ choices). They also disclose students’ real spoken, cultural, and personality abilities because, according to Chuang, students’ responses to the proposed points would rather be prompt and spontaneous.

“*Watching videos*”, “*listening activities*”, and “*tasks and games*” came in the middle of the ranking as they got between 54% down to 31% respectively. These activities may appeal to students as a socio-cultural, enjoyable, and useful part of the class; yet, they, at the same time, seem to be not taken seriously like oral presentations and open discussions despite their importance (Girija, Rao, and Raju, 2011). “*Solving exercises*” and “*tests and exams*”, however, came at the bottom of the table as they got less than 23%. Students, maybe, believe that solving exercise and taking exams do not work much for the speaking skill, which was supported by Sinwongsuwat (2012).

Surprisingly, teachers’ answers, when they were asked the same question, have almost gone in line with students’ answers, except for “*tasks and games*” which was chosen by only one teacher versus 31% of students’ choices. This choice may be referred to that “*tasks and games*” take much time and effort from teachers to carry out, and maybe they are more difficult to control and assess than other works (Chuang, 2011). As for the item “*Oral presentations*”, it was selected by the all the eight instructors. It is argued that oral presentations are “the most popular teacher-selected oral activity and the least student preferred English speech production tasks.” (Chuang, p. 84). This is reasonable because oral

presentations are not demanding on the part of teachers, whereas they are exhaustive and nerve-wracking for the majority of students. “Open discussions”, in addition, was selected by six teachers, “watching videos” had five choices, “listening activities” had four choices, whereas “solving exercises, tasks, games and tests” were selected by only one teacher.

With regard to the topics discussed in the oral class, question (2) in the teachers’ questionnaire was: *“What kind of topics do you usually discuss in your oral class? (You can choose more than one option.)”* (See appendix B) The results came as the following:

Table 4.3.4.

Topics Discussed in the Oral Class

No.	Item	No. of Instructors
1.	Cultures, habits and rituals.	6/8
2.	Social media.	5/8
3.	Language issues and religion.	4/8
4.	Politics, arts, and other.	3/8
5.	Science.	2/8

According to table 4.3.4., *“cultures, habits, and rituals” came in the first place as the most topics discussed in the oral class, followed by “social media”,* and then “language issues and religion”; that is, more than half of the instructors out of eight chose them. On the other hand, “politics, arts, and science” were the least chosen topics posed for discussion. It was expected that discussing topics with regard to the different cultures world-wide and the diversity of habits and rituals among nations would be taking large space in the oral class. That is, these issues evoke the curiosity of students to get to know about them, so teachers find them more interesting for negotiation than other topics.

As for social media, they play, nowadays, a major role in people’s lives; therefore, they definitely have their share of discussion in any debate. However, the researcher thought that

politics would get more number of choices because of the special conditions of Palestine due to the Israeli occupation and the status quo in the Arab World in general. Nevertheless, it seems that teachers as well as students prefer to get out of the mantle of politics. As for science and art, they may be not of the favorite topics in our context, so they often do not take large part of our discussions, which clearly appears in the results above. After all, it remains that students be given the chance to choose the topics they are interested in whether for presentations, or in discussions and formal debates (Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, and Göksu, 2012).

Students when asked (in question 17) on a Likert scale: *“To what extent do topics discussed in your oral class meet your interests, needs, and expectations?”*, their answers had an average of 33%. This means that only one third of the topics do appeal to the majority of students. Preferences happens to differ from a student to another, and it is normal that some topics would appeal for some but not for all. However, there are interesting topics for most of the students; therefore, teachers are advised to interpret the favorites of their students in order to increase their motivation to get involved (Dinçer et al. 2012).

As for assessment. Students were asked: *“What are the means of assessment usually used in your oral classroom? (You can choose more than one option.)”* (See appendix A) Results were arranged in the following table:

Table 4.3.5.

The Means of Assessment used in the Oral Class according to Students

No.	Item	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%
1.	Oral presentations.	139	92%
2.	Activities and tasks.	84	55%
3.	Tests.	63	42%
4.	Homework (i.e., portfolio).	52	34%

According to table 4.3.5., *“oral presentations” came again in the first place with 92% of students’ choices as the most assessed works in the oral class*, which was expected by the researcher. Oral presentations have traditionally been considered as key part of the EFL oral class around the world (Chuang, 2011). The researcher thinks that delivering oral presentations gives experience in speaking in front of others and polishes the conscious and formal part of oral proficiency (i.e., the presenter prepares his/herself beforehand and choose the words s/he will say). However, oral presentations do not work much on the informal side of using language in the spontaneous daily conversations. Therefore, assessment here covers the formal side of the students’ performance. Chuang, in this regard, argued that the efficacy of oral presentations in disclosing students’ true spoken abilities, especially those based on texts, is suspected, so using them as a means of assessment cannot fully be relied on.

Tasks and activities, on the other hand, came in the second place with 55%. They are thought to be important for learning language functions and authentic expressions. They also can be helpful for increasing students’ motivation and lower down their anxiety as they make learning more fun, which proved to be more effective than traditional learning. Therefore, they should be given as much importance in assessment as oral presentations. Sinwongsuwat (2012) expressed that among the classroom tasks which truly had efficacy in assessing the oral skill were the “face-to-face” interviews and “role-plays”. Face-to-face interviews were described as one of the most important means of assessment officially adopted around the world. In this regard, instructor (2) in the study when was asked about the means he used for assessment, he said that he used to interview his students at his office. Through interviews in addition to other means, he was able to interpret their linguistic and personality levels (**See appendix D**).

“Tests” and “homework” were the least means used for assessment; that is, less than 43% of students chose them, which is respectively not so low. This is normal and expected

because evaluating speaking do not depend much on formal/ pen-and-paper tests and do not require doing much homework, except for a few external activities the teachers may ask for, besides the extensive preparation and self-practice students do extensively. Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, and Göksu (2012) expressed that assessment which depends on taking exams usually neglect the personal interests (i.e., intrinsic motivation) of learners and make them used to ‘external rewards’ rather than ‘self-satisfaction’ in order to avoid punishment.

When the teachers were asked the same question, the item “in-class activities” came in the first place; that is, six teachers out of the eight chose it, which supports the researcher’s point that students should rather be assessed indirectly through class tasks and activities, such as non-scripted role-plays (Chuang, 2011) rather than through oral presentations. “Tests” came in the second place with five choices. Such choices make the researcher wonder how students are assessed through tests. “Tests” may be the formal listening-writing type which measures the level of comprehension students gain through listening and responding through writing.

“Oral presentations” and “homework papers” had the least number of choices (3/8). Oral presentations being less used than other means for assessment, according to teachers, is something suspected because this classwork is the most popular one used for testing students’ spoken abilities in the EFL contexts (Chuang, 2011). However, this result may support the idea that direct assessment to conscious performance of students may not give accurate evaluation to the students’ real spoken abilities.

Although teachers agreed upon the oral presentations as the main means of assessment, they differed in *the criteria they use for assessment between subjective assessment to rubrics*. With regard to assessment, the following table presents the major points of question (6) in the interview with the instructors:

Table 4.3.6.

Means of Assessment as Reported by Teachers in the Interviews

Assessment	Instructor (1):	Instructor (2):	Instructor (3):	Instructor (5):	Instructor (5):	Instructor (6):	Instructor (7):
	Mainly, students get assigned in peer-groups for conversations, using language functions. In addition, they deliver persuasive speeches. I assess their pronunciation, body lang., & eye-contact. If they were catchy or read their speeches from a paper. I take in consideration their level of competence & performance as well as their backgrounds to build on what they have. It remains subjective and difficult to grade them.	Assessment is built on practice in different activities. It is versatile (rather informal). E.g., testing students' presentations (linguistic & personality performance) Interviewing them. Observing their interaction. Recording collection of their extensive listening.	Rubrics. A detailed one for each assignment. Video-taping students in persuasive speeches, and students evaluate each other.	We work as a team for designing rubrics for every activity. Rubrics are given to students with guidelines. They use it as a checklist. At the end of the activity, they receive the rubric filled by the teacher as an assessment.	Assessment is based on the progress in the oral performance of students in class. E.g., two formal speeches, one of them is video-recorded, & students come to the office & evaluate themselves. E.g., Final group project presentation based on a research topic they choose. So students should be responsible in organizing logistics. They are evaluated against themselves, not based on some ideal standard.	Students' presentations get video-taped. They have the chance to comment on the skills used and those not applied. No written homework to assess their writing skill. They do summarize texts & reflect on videos but assessment is based on the oral presentations of summaries & reflections.	_____

As for testing the oral skill, students and teachers were asked: *“What type of testing is usually carried out in your oral class? (With percentage?)”* (See appendix A & B) Because each student has his/her own distribution of percentages, approximate percentages were put according to the means figured out. See the following table:

Table 4.3.7.

Types of Testing Students in the Oral Class

No.	Type of Testing	Approximate Marks	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%
1.	Speaking	50%	80	53%
2.	Listening & Writing	40%	61	40%
4.	Other	10%	11	7%

Looking at table 4.3.7., it indicates that *speaking was the major skill students were tested through in the oral class with 53% of choices* and approximately 50% of marks, which may be represented through oral presentations, open discussions, and tasks and games. Listening and writing, on the other hand, had 40% of students' choices and approximately 40% of marks, which may be represented through listening activities, exercises, and tests. "Other", however, had 7% of choices and 10% of approximate marks, which may be given to body language and personality, or other issues assigned by the instructors.

Teachers when asked about the same issue in their questionnaire, they gave the same choices. That is, seven out of the eight teachers chose "speaking" as the a means of testing with approximately 50% of marks. Five teachers, on the other hand, chose "listening and writing" with approximately 40%, whereas two teachers chose "other" and gave it 10% of marks. The same results by students and teachers can be referred to that many of the students as well as teachers had a look at the course outline to have the exact percentages.

The results were expected because it is the norm that testing students' spoken abilities is usually done through speaking, this is from the one hand. From the other hand, testing students' comprehension gets usually done through listening and responding to what they hear either through speaking or through writing, which is a traditional way of testing. In this place, Sinwongsuwat (2012) has called for "questioning the effectiveness of the traditional

means of...assessing our EFL learners' conversation skills.” (p. 83) Sinwongsuwat asserted that non-scripted role-plays as part of oral testing (it can even be applied to collaborative tasks and games) are the best to use as a means for assessment if accompanied with the appropriate rubrics.

Question (10), in the teachers' questionnaire, asked about the methods used in the Palestinian oral classroom. The question was: *“What teaching methods do you usually implement in your oral class? How often? (Indicate with an X).”* (See appendix B) Eight instructors answered the question, and the results were the following:

Table 4.3.8.

The Teaching Methods Implemented in the Oral Class

No.	Teaching Method	Low	Moderate	High
1.	Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	—	—	8/8
2.	Task-based Learning (TBL)	—	1/8	7/8
3.	The Direct Method	—	4/8	4/8
4.	Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)	—	5/8	3/8
5.	Total Physical Response (TPR)	2/8	2/8	2/8
6.	Grammar Translation (GT)	6/8	2/8	—

According to table 4.3.8., the methods can be categorized into three ranks. *CLT and TBL were the most methods used in the Palestinian EFL oral class* because they were selected by almost all of the teachers. These two innovative methods are principally supposed to create communicative atmosphere for interaction using tasks and language functions where primacy is given to students.

The researcher thinks that despite teachers' inclination to use them, they are not seen to be fully or perfectly implemented. That is, lack of time and courses specified for speaking, in addition to the untrained teachers in managing oral classes all are not helping to carry out tasks, especially that the teacher's role still dominate the class (Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, & Göksu, 2012).

Ozsevik (2010) expressed that CLT is one of the most recognized methods in English Language Teaching (ELT) according to many linguists. However, Ozsevik when investigated the views of the EFL teachers in Turkey with regard to implementing CLT in English classrooms, they confessed that they were rather not convinced with the total adoption of CLT. They asserted that implementing such methodology requires having qualified and trained teachers, especially in the spoken abilities. The EFL Turkish teachers also referred their speaking difficulties to the traditional methods they learned English through, such as GT, in addition to the lack of strategic and sociolinguistic knowledge invested to manage the class, and lack of training in CLT.

As for the Direct Method and ALM, they were indicated to be moderately used, maybe, to focus on pronunciation and drilling some expressions and phrases. These methods need a fluent and native-like teacher to be a good model for students. TPR and GT were the least methods chosen by the instructors; TPR is not familiar in our context as it depends on comprehending teacher's commands and responding to them through body language and movement, so it is more suitable for beginners. GT, as a traditional way of teaching vocabulary and grammar forms explicitly, is not suitable for teaching the speaking skill and was expected by the researcher to be eliminated by teachers. It is worth mentioning that none of the teachers in the interviews named a certain method they used in teaching. All of them indicated that they incorporated a mix of communicative activities for speaking (**See appendix D**).

The following table presents the major points of questions (3) and (7) in the interviews

with the teachers:

4.3.9.

The Methodologies of Teaching Speaking as Reported in the Interviews

Methods of teaching speaking	Instructor (1): Practical teaching of language functions/ using certain expressions in conversation.	Instructor (2): Using a blend of material to arrive at the intended goals. E.g., language functions, intensive listening, pictured dictionary.	Instructor (3): _____	Instructor (4): More than one textbook. A variety of resources. The recent one was published 2011.	Instructor (5): No textbooks. A compiled material is used. The course is constantly redesigned & readapted according to students' needs.	Instructor (6): We keep changing, adding & deleting material and developing the methodology	Instructor (7): A lot of activities to encourage students to take a stand. E.g., public speaking, debating a controversial issue, & provoking arguments & counter-arguments.
Pros. & cons. of the current methods	Speaking is the highest level to attain, so it needs creative and communicative methods & strategies in teaching.	I'm with the novel methods for teaching & testing students. The problem is not in them but in the situation at hand. No method is right or wrong 100%. It depends on students' levels & needs, & if it fulfills the objective. Yet, teachers are sometimes restricted to use traditional methods.. the formal exam issue. Yet, the special nature of the oral class which demand using different methods than other classes helps in using non-traditional methods and techniques.	This is a required course not optional, so many of the students don't like that because they feel forced to speak. We try to meet our students' needs by using effective and suitable methods.	The methods we use support students. We try to adopt new methods & adapt them to our situation. We keep developing the tools we use in the classroom. I try to see what other universities are doing overseas. I keep looking for new textbooks & new techniques.	I'm not trained in EFL. I don't know much about teaching methodologies, and how they are used. I find it difficult to grade students in numbers because they're gaining the skill. Methodologies should be creative and to move beyond textbooks and numbers to meet students' needs & abilities.	_____	We can't say that the current methodologies have failed, but they haven't measured up. Yet, there is the potential of recourse to improve students' ability to speak out. My teaching philosophy is that the teacher works as a referee, & students are the players in the playground. They do everything, but my role is bounded to showing, directing, & correcting in a limited time. I may incorporate the Direct Method indirectly.

Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, and Göksu stated that: “All approaches are not adequate separately in education and being eclectic and combining approaches is more feasible...according to students’ needs, English levels, activity types, lesson’s purpose, etc.” (Dinçer, et al., 2012, p. 4) Chen and Goh (2011), from their side, asserted that teachers need to have some training in how to implement the methods of teaching according to students’ speaking needs and levels of proficiency.

Question (5) and (6) in the students’ questionnaire were: “*Choose from the following characteristics of traditional/ modern methods the ones that exist in your oral class (You can choose more than one option).*” (See appendix A) In order to make a comparison between the results of both questions, they were put ‘together’ in the following table:

Table 4.2.10.

Features of the Traditional/ Modern Methods which exist in the Oral Class

No.	Traditional Characteristic	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%	Modern Characteristic	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%
1.	The class is rather teacher-centered.	77	51%	Focus is on meaning and functions, and explanation is done indirectly through activities and tasks.	94	62%
2.	Other.	47	31%	The class is rather learner-centered.	83	55%
3.	Technology is rarely used.	38	25%	Technology is usually used.	69	45%
4.	Traditional arrangement of seating	32	21%	Seating is usually prepared for tasks and activities.	59	39%
5.	Explicit explanation of the lesson, and focus is directed to structure and form.	24	16%	Other.	10	7%

The results in table 4.3.10. above have shown that *the characteristics of traditional methods are not really there in the Palestinian EFL oral class, compared to the characteristics of the modern methods*. For instance, the item “The class is more teacher-

centered.” was selected as the most prominent feature of traditional education with 51% of choices versus 55% of choices for the modern feature “The class is more learner-centered.” The researcher interprets that in spite of the fact that teachers here in Palestine still, somehow, play a traditional role in dictating students; yet, it seems that the role of students has started to take over the class. Chuang recommended that “Teachers need to provide greater number of opportunities for the EFL learners to speak out as well as increase the variety of oral communication activities students engage in during the class periods.” (Chuang, 2011, p. 85)

On the other hand, the item “Focus is rather directed to meaning and functions, and explanation is done indirectly through activities and tasks.” had the highest percentage as a modern feature with 62% versus only 16% for the item “Explicit explanation of the lesson, and focus is directed to structure and form.” in the traditional characteristics, which makes a good indication to a healthy oral class. Noonan (2005) expressed that the speaking skill requires more focus on achieving communication among students through activities rather than explaining rules and memorizing forms.

In terms of technology use, 25% of students said that audio-visual aids and multi-media are rarely used, whereas 45% of students reported that technology aids are usually used, which indicates that using such aids is really taking over. Collin (2002), as cited in Alastrue and Perez-Liantada (2010), asserted that the integration of technology had a big influence on boosting motivation to participate and practice spoken English. As for seating, 21% of the students said that seats were usually arranged in traditional rows, while 39% of them reported that seats were usually prepared in groups to perform tasks.

The item “Other” in the traditional features’ table, surprisingly, had 31% with no suggestions from students. The respectively high percent makes the researcher wonder what other suggestions students would add as characteristics of the traditional methods existing in

their oral classes. The researcher tried to enlist the main characteristics but could not count them all, so she put the option “Other” to give students the chance to add their options if any.

Based on the two questions above about the characteristics of the oral class, students were also asked in question (7) to give a description to their oral class in order to measure the validity of their answers in questions (5) and (6). The question was: **“How much traditional/non-traditional do you consider your oral class?”** (See appendix A) The results came as the following:

Table 4.3.11.

The Degree of Traditionalism/ Modernity of the Palestinian Oral class

No.	Description of the Oral Class	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%
1.	Half traditional/ half non-traditional	69	45%
2.	Non-traditional	53	35%
3.	Traditional	30	20%

The results in table 4.3.11. indicate that nearly half of the students (45%) see their oral class as “half-traditional/ half non-traditional”, and nearly one third of them (35%) consider their class as “non-traditional”, while only one fifth of them (20%) believe that their oral class is traditional. ***Accordingly, the Palestinian EFL oral class can be described as half-traditional inclined to be non-traditional. That is, despite having some traditional traits in teaching (e.g., the class somewhat teacher-centered, and technology not well-invested), new methods like the Communicative Approach and Task-based Learning are gradually taking over the Palestinian class, especially in oral communication courses.***

Results of the tables 4.2.9., 4.2.10., and 4.2.11 were verified by the observations done to six classes. The table next presents the major descriptions for each class. Based on the

descriptions, *it was noticed that the majority of the classes were half traditional inclining to be non-traditional*. See the following table:

Table 4.3.12.

Description to Six Oral Classes Based on One Observation

University	Hebron University		Bethlehem University		Birzeit University		An-Najah University	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Teacher's Type	Native-speaker	Arab	Native	Arab	Native	Arab	Arab	Native
Language	English only.	—	English only.	English only.	English only.	Almost English.	—	English only.
Level of Interaction	Medium	—	High	Medium	High	High	—	Medium
Nature of Activities	2 script-based presentations & open discussion	—	Audio-visual data show & open discussion	Audio-visual data show & explanation	2 flash-card presentations, discussion, & refreshing game	Silent reading to 2 texts, discussion & group-work	—	Explanation, board-based notes, & discussion
Teacher's Role	Facilitator	—	Informer	Instructor	Facilitator	Informer	—	Informer
Assessment	A check-list (not a rubric)	—	Rubrics	Rubrics	A check-list (not a rubric)	Not clear	—	Not clear
Seating	Traditional rows	—	U-shape	Traditional rows	U-shape	Squares for group-work	—	Traditional rows
Technology	The class is not equipped. No use except when necessary	—	Class is equipped with e-service & data show.	Class is equipped with e-service & data show.	The class is not equipped. No use except when necessary	No use, but reported to use it a lot.	—	No use except when necessary.
General Atmosphere	Highly positive	—	Highly positive	Lowly positive	Highly positive	Moderately positive	—	Moderately positive
Nature of the Class	Half-traditional	—	Non-traditional	More non-traditional	More non-traditional	Half-traditional	—	Half-traditional

In this regard, many researchers asserted that there should be serious rethinking and actual execution on ground in adopting modern methods for teaching and assessing the oral skill the best way possible in order to produce fluent speakers to the domain of pedagogy and education (Alastrue & Perez-Liantada, 2010; Chen & Goh, 2011; Chuang, 2011; Dinçer,

Yeşilyurt, & Göksu, 2012; Gan, 2012; Giriya, Rao, & Raju, 2011; Moriam, 2005; Noonan, 2005; & Sinwongsuwat, 2012).

In terms of error correction and the feedback students receive when making mistakes, question (18) in students' questionnaire was: *“When you make speaking mistakes, what type of correction do you usually receive? How often?”* (See appendix A) Three types of correction were listed in the following table:

Table 4.3.13.

Types of Error Correction/ Feedback Students Receive in the Oral Class

No.	Type of Correction	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Self-correction	(0.4) 38%	(0.2) 20%
2.	Teacher-correction	(0.4) 37%	(0.2) 19%
3.	Peer-correction	(0.3) 30%	(0.2) 23%

According table 4.3.13. above, **“self-correction” was the most occurring type in the class with an average of 38%**. Although the percent does not exceed 50%; still, it gives a good indication that students have the ability to realize their mistakes and correct themselves on spot. *“Teacher-correction”* came in the second place with an average very close to self-correction (37%). These two types seem to be the common types of correction in the oral class because they have less dispersion of opinions and lower deviation from the mean compared to peer-correction. *“Peer-correction”*, on the other hand, was the least to use (30%) and simultaneously the most controversial because it had the highest deviation from the mean (i.e., choices were disperse but not close to the average). It may be interpreted that peer-correction is not preferable as it may create harassment and discomfort among students.

In order to know more about error correction/ feedback, teachers were also asked about the mechanisms they used in correcting students' mistakes. Question (8) was: *“How do you usually correct your students when they make mistakes/ errors in speaking? (You can choose more than one option.)”* (See appendix A) Five options were given, and the results were the following:

Table 4.3.14.

The Mechanisms of Error Correction/ Feedback Adopted in the Oral Class

No.	Strategy of Correction	f (Count/ 8)
1.	I usually correct spoken mistakes on spot to let all of my students learn the correct form, If the error were global (i.e., breaks communication).	6/8
2.	I usually delay correction at the end of the activity/discussion to give the mistake/error special focus.	4/8
3.	I usually give my students the chance to correct themselves; if they couldn't, I may ask other students to do the correction, or I myself correct them.	2/8
4.	I usually don't do correction to spoken mistakes in order not to affect students' motivation.	1/8

It seems, according to table 4.3.14. above, that the eight teachers were divided upon themselves in terms of the mechanisms they used to correct their students. *The majority of teachers (i.e., six out of eight) said that they corrected spoken mistakes on spot to let all of their students learn the correct form immediately, especially when the errors were global* (i.e., breaks communication). Four teachers said that they delayed correction at the end of the activity to give the mistake special focus. Two teachers confirmed that they gave their students the chance to correct themselves; if they couldn't, the teacher might ask other students to do the correction, or s/he his/herself corrected them. Nonetheless, only one teacher

confessed that s/he did not do correction to spoken mistakes in order not to affect students' motivation.

Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, and Göksu (2012) argued that in the accuracy-oriented approach, grammatical errors may end in fossilization, so they need to be corrected on spot, while newly learned forms should be repeated to avoid missing them. In fluency-oriented approach, grammar and pronunciation errors should be tolerated, especially for beginners because correcting them on spot would hinder students' improvement in the skill.

As for the researcher, she is convinced that there is no one clear-cut way for giving feedback. Simply, it depends on the type of mistake committed because, for instance, if it were a slip of tongue, such as slipping the singular (s), the teacher would say or recast the correct form on spot without breaking the context, which would be enough for the student to unconsciously hear it, correct it, and continue speaking. However, if the error were global in a way that makes the speaker misunderstood, the teacher would ask the student to rephrase again what s/he intends to say, and then the teacher may indirectly provide the correct form without embarrassing them. To sum up, what matters in giving feedback is to choose the right time to correct the mistake and the right technique to comment on it in order to let students learn from their mistakes without affecting their motivation or self-esteem.

Question (11) in the teachers' questionnaire attempted to gather teachers' perceptions with regard to the typical oral class. The question was: ***"In your opinion, should the following descriptions apply to the oral class? (Indicate with an X.)"*** (See appendix B) The question had ten items, and the results were the following:

Table 4.3.15.

Teachers' Opinions in the 'Typical' Oral Class

No.	Item	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree
1.	The oral class should be learner-centered.	—	—	8/8
2.	The oral course teachers should be highly proficient in English.	—	—	8/8
3.	The oral class should be non-traditional/ creative.	—	—	8/8
4.	Communication in English should be the main objective of the oral class.	—	—	8/8
5.	Teaching the oral skill needs high knowledge of the target culture.	1/8	2/8	5/8
6.	The oral class should be devoted to speaking rather than to listening.	3/8	1/8	4/8

According to table 4.3.15. above, *all the instructors (i.e., eight out of eight) asserted that the oral class should be learner-centered, non-traditional, creative, and centered on communicative interaction.* Such result was expected by the researcher and is supposed to be the norm in the oral class. The instructors also confirmed that the oral course teachers should be highly proficient in English, while most of them agreed with that teaching the oral skill requires high knowledge of the target culture, two teachers did not know, whereas one disagreed.

The researcher believes that the special nature of the oral class needs the teacher to be fluent, to be rich in vocabulary and native-like in pronunciation, and to be acquainted with the target culture because language is representative of its culture. With respect to item (6), only half of the teachers (4/8) confirmed that the oral class should be devoted to speaking rather than to listening, one teacher did not know, and three disagreed. In this regard, the researcher believes that speaking should dominate over listening in the oral class because students

already listen to English in all English classes (i.e., rather receptive to language). Therefore, students in the oral class should be given the floor to speak as much as possible.

4.4. Problems Faced by Teachers in the Oral Class

In the light of the challenges teachers face in managing the English oral classes, two questions were asked in the teachers' questionnaire (i.e., adapted from Ozsevik, 2010). Questions were the following:

1. What are the challenges and difficulties the oral class teachers encounter in teaching the skill?
2. Please list other potential problems and difficulties you might encounter in teaching the English oral skill to the Palestinian EFL learners in your university.

In this regard, question (12) in the teachers' questionnaire was: *“What are the challenges and difficulties the oral class teachers encounter in teaching and assessing the oral skill? (Indicate with an X.)”* (See appendix B). The results came as the following:

Table 4.4.1.

Challenges Teachers Encounter in the Oral Class

No.	Item	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree
1.	The number of students is large for running effective classes.	1/8	—	7/8
2.	Teachers receive little training in teaching the oral skill.	—	2/8	6/8
3.	The traditional way of teaching which focuses on grammar and writing has a negative impact over the oral skill.	1/8	1/8	6/8
4.	Students have a passive style of learning (i.e., inclined to be receptive to input rather than productive to output).	1/8	2/8	5/8
5.	Students have low-level proficiency in English.	1/8	2/8	5/8

No.	Item	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree
6.	Students switch to L1 unnecessarily.	2/8	1/8	5/8
7.	Technology (e.g., the internet, audio-visual aids, YouTube, computer software...etc.) is still not invested enough in the oral class.	3/8	—	5/8
8.	Teachers usually use traditional ways to assess the oral skill (i.e., listening and writing tests, delivering presentations...etc.) without using rubrics.	3/8	—	5/8
9.	Arab teachers unnecessarily use L1 (Arabic) in their classes.	1/8	3/8	4/8
10.	Teachers usually take the traditional role of dictating students (i.e., the class is still teacher-centered).	2/8	2/8	4/8
11.	Students lack motivation to improve their communicative competence.	3/8	1/8	4/8
12.	There is a lack of efficient instruments for assessing the oral skill.	4/8	—	4/8
13.	Teachers have misconceptions with regard to how the oral class should be run.	2/8	3/8	3/8

According to table 4.4.1. above, the most challenging problem teachers suffer from in teaching the oral skill was *the large number of students* which hinders running effective classes because it deprives students from having sufficient and equal chances to speak (i.e., *seven* instructors out of eight agreed). In addition, *the little training which instructors receive in teaching the oral skill* (Chen & Goh, 2011), and *the traditional way of teaching English which focuses on grammar and writing* were also seen among the major obstacles which impede oral fluency (i.e., *six* out of the eight instructors agreed). These three challenges were also reported in the interviews with the instructors. Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, and Göksu (2012), from their side, expressed that the EFL speaking classrooms around the world suffer from major problems which negatively affect the accuracy and fluency of learners' language, among them are crowded classes and the limited time of the class.

Students, from their side, were somewhat negatively viewed as rather being *passive rather than active (i.e., prefer to listen to teacher and be dictated rather than to interact)*, whose *proficiency in English was relatively low*, and who *switched to L1 unnecessarily (five teachers agreed)*. Of course there are exceptions from students who work hard and have eagerness to learn, but these are the minority. Subaşı (2010) argued that students' anxiety to speak as well as their fear of negative evaluation cause them to refrain from speaking in L2.

In terms of *technology*, *five* instructors agreed that it *was not well invested in the oral class*, whereas three instructors disagreed. It may depend first and foremost on the resources each instructor has in their class. Giriya, Rao, and Raju (2011) asserted the importance of technology aids, expressing that “teaching aids can be used effectively to capture and sustain the attention of a class.” (p. 303)

Four out of the eight instructors, non-the-less, agreed to that *Arab teachers* of English language classes, including the oral class, *used Arabic unnecessarily*, and they *used to take the traditional role of dictating students* (i.e., the class is somehow teacher-centered). This has been noticed by the researcher during her school and university levels; that is, almost only few teachers who used English solely in their classes. However, during the researchers' visits and observations to six oral classes, she noticed that English only was used with students.

Half of the instructors (i.e., *four* teachers) also confirmed that *students lack motivation* to improve their communicative competence, which can be noticed through their lack of preparation beforehand, their weak self-efforts, their shortage in the extensive work outside of the class, and their reluctance from participation inside of the classroom (Chen & Goh, 2011). Motivation differs among students, some of them seem to be highly motivated while others feel less motivated, which depends on their educational and social backgrounds, in addition to their own personality traits. Teachers, in this place, are advised to constantly encourage

students to speak, to choose interesting topics for discussions and to let students choose the topics themselves, and to provide positive and relaxing atmosphere for interaction (Noonan, 2005). Most of the problems above were reported in the teachers' responses to question (4) in the interviews. The following table reports the major challenges mentioned in the interviews:

Table 4.4.2.

Problems Reported by Teachers in the Interviews

Problems of teaching the oral skill	<u>Instructor (1):</u> Students get scared & nervous that I'm a native-speaker. Some of them like to hear me speaking but do not like to speak themselves. I rely sometimes on translation to get my point across.	<u>Instructor (2):</u> The huge no. of students in the classes (35 -45). Only one course for speaking. The amount of training for speaking is limited. Students don't feel encouraged/ motivated to work on themselves outside of the class. Students' mentality goes for the grade. Students preparation before the class in not enough which is reflected in participation.	<u>Instructor (3):</u> Students struggle to pronounce well. Lack of motivation. Having grammatical mistakes. Anxiety & shyness to speak in front of a crowd.	<u>Instructor (4):</u> Students are not exposed to the language. Large number of students.	<u>Instructor (5):</u> The default switching to Arabic. Students also don't know how to evaluate themselves.	<u>Instructor (6):</u> Fossilization in pronunciation. Lack of fluency. Using fillers, long pauses.	<u>Instructor (7):</u> Shyness which can be referred to the lack of vocabulary and can lead to anxiety. The number of students which deprive them from having equal chances . It consumes a lot of time and efforts.
Training to teach oral classes	<u>Instructor (1):</u> There's not enough workshops and training because it takes time and money, & at this university it's just not there. You have to pay one to train others. We teach others, so it's hard to have competent	<u>Instructor (2):</u> There is no enough training. I build my work on the training that I got when I was a an MA student. We don't have enough workshops held at the department to develop our awareness, methodologies	<u>Instructor (3):</u> We do get workshops all the time at the educational center we have, but whether they are on the oral skill.. No. There's no enough training in the oral skill.	<u>Instructor (4):</u> To tell you the truth, I'm a person who always try to go for professional development activities, & I have my network of contacts of professors in other U.S. universities. I'm always in touch. I see what they're	<u>Instructor (5):</u> There's no training in general even when we have new faculty members. Each teacher gives their responsibility to develop themselves & show this kind of desire. We only hold regular meetings. When I first	<u>Instructor (6):</u> I didn't receive any training. It's all based on what I gained as experience in speaking. I didn't go to conferences related to teaching & English. I'm more interested in gender and women studies. That's	<u>Instructor (7):</u> We do have some workshops not necessarily on oral communication, but I think we have enough workshops available on campus where faculty members can draw a lot benefit from.

	trainers train us. I think many of the graduates have no idea about the teaching methodology. They need workshops how to teach.	, & techniques in the oral skill. Teachers need to develop through team teaching collaboration, inflection, attending further classes & workshops in the field, which is, to a great extent, not available at our department.		doing. I try to learn, & we learn from each other. We share experiences. There's a room for new information. I believe in continuous professional development. We do hold discussions and workshops to a certain extent, but I don't rely on this. I attend conferences.	came here, I asked others to sit in their classes to see & learn. I've also read works about pedagogical methods. I'm not trained in it but read & did research about it. It's not necessary to make compulsory on teachers to take certain courses as it might not serve their needs.	where my work lies.	
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Chen and Goh summed up three major sources of difficulty the EFL university teachers encounter in teaching the oral skill. According to them, teachers have “difficulty in developing students’ motivation, inadequate knowledge of planning and implementing effective oral activities...”, students, on the other hand, have “inactive participation and low English proficiency”, whereas the situational problems are represented by the “lack of conducive environments, large class sizes, limited teaching resources and insufficient teaching time.” (2011, p. 336)

As for assessing students’ oral abilities, *five* teachers out of the eight agreed that English *teachers used traditional means to assess the oral skill*. Assessment usually gets done to students’ performances in delivering presentations or through listening and writing tests and without using standard rubrics for evaluation (Sinwongsuwat, 2012). With reference to the interviews held with the teachers (See **appendix D**), at least two of them asserted that they usually used rubrics for assessment, and they gave the researcher copies of the rubrics they use (See **appendix F**). Other teachers, however, expressed that they used subjective evaluation without using a systematic list of rubrics. In addition, when the teachers where

asked whether there was a *lack of efficient instruments for assessing the oral skill*, four of them agreed and four teachers disagreed. It depends on each teachers' policy in assessment.

See the following table:

Table 4.4.3.

Means of Assessment as Reported in the Interviews

Assessment	Instructor (1):	Instructor (2):	Instructor (3):	Instructor (4):	Instructor (5):	Instructor (6):	Instructor (7):
	Mainly, students get assigned in peer-groups for conversations, using language functions. In addition, they deliver persuasive speeches. I assess their pronunciation, body lang., & eye-contact. If they were catchy or read their speeches from a paper. I take in consideration their level of competence & performance as well as their backgrounds to build on what they have. It remains subjective and difficult to grade them.	Assessment is built on practice in different activities. It is versatile (rather informal). E.g., testing students' presentations (linguistic & personality performance) Interviewing them. Observing their interaction. Recording collection of their extensive listening.	Rubrics. A detailed one for each assignment. Video-taping students in persuasive speeches, and students evaluate each other.	We work as a team for designing rubrics for every activity. Rubrics are given to students with guidelines. They use it as a checklist. At the end of the activity, they receive the rubric filled by the teacher as an assessment.	Assessment is based on the progress in the oral performance of students in class. E.g., two formal speeches, one of them is video-recorded, & students come to the office & evaluate themselves. E.g., Final group project presentation based on a research topic they choose. So students should be responsible in organizing logistics. They are evaluated against themselves, not based on some ideal standard.	Students' presentations get video-taped. They have the chance to comment on the skills used and those not applied. No written homework to assess their writing skill. They do summarize texts & reflect on videos but assessment is based on the oral presentations of summaries & reflections.	_____

Last of all, the item *“Teachers have misconceptions with regard to how the oral class should be run.”* came at the bottom of the table as only three instructors agreed with it. Of course the teachers have their long experiences in the field which came out of long years of teaching; however, it was not intended to suspect any teacher's efforts. The researcher, from

an objective viewpoint, tries to investigate the points of strength as well as weakness in almost all aspects related to teaching the speaking skill in an attempt to critically discuss them and suggest solutions to promote them. Chen and Goh (2011) contributed that most of the EFL teachers in their study “reported low-self efficacy about their oral English proficiency and inadequate pedagogical knowledge for teaching oral skills.” (p. 343)

It is worth mentioning that *asking teachers about the challenges they encounter in teaching speaking is of a great importance because teachers are the major holders of their classes, and success of their students depends first and foremost on their endeavors.* That is, the special nature of the oral skill and its importance as the core of language require special training in how to teach and run oral classes because we see graduates who attain language skills but do not know how to speak fluently. This is the reason why this study came out.

Question (14) in the teachers’ questionnaire was also related to the problems of teaching the oral skill. Unlike the other close-ended questions in the teachers’ questionnaire, this question was open-ended. Three out of the eight instructors responded to the question: *“Please list any other potential problems or difficulties you might encounter in teaching the English oral skill to the Palestinian EFL learners in your university.”* Answers were the following:

Instructor (1): “Access to technology is difficult to use here. I must carry all equipment by myself.”

Instructor (6): “Using technology in instruction is a problem. Also, students sometimes don’t read assigned texts. They think “Interactive English” class is based only on the ability to speak (communicate/ interact).”

Instructor (8): “Students’ anxiety, limited resources, and large classes.”

It is noticed that the answers repeat themselves in many questions whether in the questionnaires or in the interviews indicating that the challenges encountered by teachers and students in approaching the oral skill are connected to each other and affecting each other in a way that hinders producing fluent EFL graduates. Accordingly, they need to be seriously taken into consideration as a whole in order to promote the status of the English oral skill in the Palestinian context.

In order to overcome the difficulties in teaching the oral class, teachers in the interviews provided some suggestions in questions (10) and (12). See the following table:

Table 4.4.4.

Teachers' Suggestions to Overcome Difficulties of Teaching the Speaking Skill

Ways to overcome teaching difficulties	<u>Instructor (1):</u> Get children below the age of six hear English.. to speak English because the younger the better..	<u>Instructor (2):</u> Increasing the oral class courses. Reducing the no. of students to the utmost of our ability. Having extra training for teaching the oral class.	<u>Instructor (3):</u> _____	<u>Instructor (4):</u> _____	<u>Instructor (5):</u> We need to constantly evaluate ourselves & our methodologies as teachers. To adapt each semester.	<u>Instructor (6):</u> We need to encourage students who fear to stand up.. who think they don't have good English.. who lack confidence.. to be prepared before class.	<u>Instructor (7):</u> We have to give students the chance to try out, even if they mistake. The first time they may make mistake. The second time they'll overcome it. They can overcome shyness & anxiety by if they try.
Suggestions	<u>Instructor (1):</u> Start early listening & participating in English conversations with a friend, one hour a day. Just have English time.. find a proficient English speaker. I think there's a big improvement in the education	<u>Instructor (2):</u> Changing the system of teaching English as it is the reason behind the miseries we face. We teach English in a wrong way, extensively not intensively. We need to double & triple the amount of training & give our	<u>Instructor (3):</u> Practice; I think there's not enough speaking from the very beginning. There's not a system that allows students to speak enough. They're taught to take tests, so they feel forced to speak. To overcome this, we assign oral	<u>Instructor (4):</u> Students need to be exposed to the language. There's a space to do more. We need to always encourage them to work at home because after all they're going to do the work. We just tell them how, give them ideas,	<u>Instructor (5):</u> To gain feedback form students. It's important to hear from them to know what they need to improve their skills. This gives a double-faced evaluation for students & teachers. Oral classes should be small to give attention	<u>Instructor (6):</u> They have to start form school, & they have to employ efficient, proficient, & competent teachers. The system of teaching EFL has to be changed. Students need to work on their pronunciation, with our aids.	<u>Instructor (7):</u> We need to work on quality not quantity, by reducing the no. of students in the class &by providing equipped English labs. There exist but not enough for all students. We need recourses. We need to learn the concept of

	system here with the movies, videos, the internet...etc.	students the liberty to use language.	presentations in every single class.	encourage them to engage in the English club & magazine, to listen to English, & to use English.	to each student since each one has their own level & needs.	We should provide students with English lab to practice listening & speaking. They should prepare & get used to self-learning.	communication. We need to learn how to listen to each other.
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According to table 4.3.4. above, teacher (1) suggested that children below the age of six need to hear and practice English because the younger, the better. Students should start early listening to English, to participate in conversations, and just to have English time. Teacher (2) recommended the English Department to increase the number of oral courses and to reduce the number of students in classes. Teacher (2) also advised teachers to have extra training for teaching the oral class, and that the system of teaching English should be changed to be more intensive, by giving extra training and liberty to students to practice the language inside of the class. Teacher (3) suggested that students need to keep practicing. Teacher (4) encouraged students to be more exposed to the language and to work at home.

Teacher (5), from her side, asserted that oral class teachers need to constantly evaluate themselves and their methodologies, to keep adapting, and to gain feedback from students. Oral classes should be small to give attention to each student's special needs. Teacher (6) contributed that students should be always encouraged, especially those who fear to stand up and who lack confidence. English teachers should be proficient and competent in teaching, and students need to work on their pronunciation. Last of all, teacher (7) recommended that students should be given the chance to try out even if they make mistakes because at the end they will learn. Teachers need to work on quality not quantity, by reducing the number of students in class. In addition, equipped English labs should be adequately provided for all

students, and the concept of communication among teachers and students should be emphasized; we should learn how to listen to each other.

4.5. Components of Speaking and Students' Techniques to Practice Them

The following questions (i.e., adapted from Ramirez, 2010) investigated students' and teachers' perceptions towards the linguistic components of speaking as well as the techniques and practices adopted by students to improve them. The first four questions were directed to students, while the rest were directed to teachers:

1. If you did not know a word or phrase during speaking, what would you do?
2. What do you do in order to speak with correct English pronunciation?
3. Indicate with an X the choice you think correct for each of the following items (i.e., items 2, 3, 4, 5, 9 in question 17).
4. What grades do you usually have in grammar?
5. To what extent being competent (i.e., knowing how to use the language correctly) does affect fluency in speaking? (Directed to teachers.)
6. In your opinion, should the following descriptions (i.e., items 2, 8, 9, and 10 in question 11) apply to the oral class? How often? (Directed to teachers.)
7. What do you think of the following statements (i.e., five items)? (Directed to teachers.)

To begin with, **vocabulary** is the core of language. Based on this, students were asked in question (14): ***“If you didn’t know a word or phrase during speaking, what would you do? (You can choose more than one option.)”*** (See appendix A) Five options were provided, and the results were the following:

Table 4.5.1.

Students' Techniques to Compensate for a Missing Word during Speaking

No.	Item	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%
1.	I try to use another synonym, or use gesture (i.e., body language) to explain it.	138	91%
2.	I try to remember it even if it took me a while.	43	28%
3.	I wait for the teacher or another student to remind me with the word or to give me another suggestion.	38	25%
4.	I use L1 (e.g., Arabic) instead.	22	15%
5.	I feel embarrassed (shy) and stop speaking at all.	4/152	3%

With reference to table 4.5.1. above, ***over 90% of the students said that they tried to use another synonym, or they use gesture/ body language to explain the missing word.*** On the other hand, less than 30% of the students said that they either tried to remember the word they missed even if it took a while from them, or they waited for the teacher or another student to say the word or give another suggestion, or they used Arabic instead, whereas only 3% of the students felt embarrassed and stopped speaking at all. Instructor (7) reported in his interview that one of the problems he faced in teaching the oral skill was students' shyness to speak due to the shortage of vocabulary (**See appendix D**).

The researcher thinks that all the techniques above are possible to use by students; yet, she expected that students would, mostly, wait for the teacher's or peers' help or use Arabic instead, but having 91% of students who try to use another synonym or body language to express themselves indicates that students depend on their abilities to improve in speaking. Such technique can be considered as self-correction, which was indicated by students to be the most type of correction used in the oral class.. Liu and Jackson (2008) as reported in Gan (2012) argued that shortage of vocabulary whether in quantity, in quality, or in appropriacy

was considered a major defect in spoken language. Therefore, one needs to be acquainted with sufficient repertoire of lexis and to know its context in order to produce comprehensible speech. In this regard, students were asked about the techniques they used to compensate for a missing word during speaking.

In terms of *pronunciation*, students were asked: “*What do you do in order to have correct English pronunciation? (You can choose more than one option.)*” (See appendix

A) The results were arranged in the following table:

Table 4.5.2.

Students’ Techniques to Improve Pronunciation

No.	Item	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%
1.	I pay attention to how English speakers on T.V produce sounds and apply stress and intonation, and I try to imitate them.	105/152	69%
2.	I imitate my oral teachers’ pronunciation.	64/152	42%
3.	I check dictionary for pronunciation.	59/152	39%
4.	I practice English pronunciation in my free time.	45/152	30%
5.	Other.	19/152	13%

With reference to table 4.5.2. above, *the majority of students (69%) indicated that they paid attention to how English speakers on TV produce sounds and apply stress and intonation in an attempt to imitate them.* Here TV and multimedia, in general, have their big role in facilitating the learning process because of their powerful audio-visual effect, in addition to that they have recently become reachable anywhere and anytime due to the internet service widespread almost everywhere (Girija, Rao, and Raju, 2011).

A respectively high percentage of students (42%) said that they imitated the pronunciation of their teachers. It is worth mentioning, again, that the oral class teacher is

preferable to be a native-speaker or native-like in order to make a professional model for his/her students in fluency. 39% of the students expressed that they checked dictionary for pronunciation, whereas 30% said they practiced English pronunciation in their free time. The last two techniques in table 4.4.2. are related to each other; that is, the learner needs, during practicing or reading something, to refer to the transcription of some words whether online or through a printed dictionary. The researcher thinks that students need to constantly watch their phonetic performances, such as the enunciation of sounds (i.e., vowels, diphthongs, and consonants). They also need practice applying word and sentence stress and to use intonation correctly for the right purpose. So doing, students will improve in pronunciation, or else, speaking with mispronunciation will lead to unintelligibility (Gan, 2012).

In speaking, vocabulary items do not make sense if they were misconnected. Here comes the role of grammar; to govern the relationships among language items. Based on this, students were asked question (19) which was: *“What grades do you usually have in grammar exams?”* Results were the following:

Table 4.5.3.

Students’ Grades in Grammar

No.	Grade	<i>f</i> (Count/152)	%
1.	Low (Less than 69)	13/152	9%
2.	Average (70_79)	49/152	32%
3.	High (80_100)	90/152	59%

According to table 4.5.3. above, *more than half of the students (59)% reported that they had high marks in grammar classes (i.e., they got an average over 80%)*. 32% of them, on the other hand, indicated that they had good grades in grammar classes with an average between 70_79%, whereas only 9% of students admitted that they got low grades in grammar

(i.e., less than 69%). Good achievements in grammar classes are expected to correlate with students' abilities in language skills, including speaking. That is, students become acquainted with the language basics which enable them to orally employ grammatical structures. However, it is not always the condition.

Gan (2012) expressed that the recurrent grammatical slips and mistakes are signs for the lack of speaking fluency, which is true. However, Noonan (2005) asserted that the explicit learning of grammar and the memorization of rules did not help improve students oral abilities. The indirect internalization of grammatical structures through listening and exposure to the language is much better in enhancing the oral fluency.

In order to measure the importance of each speaking element, students were asked in question (17): *“Indicate with an X the choice you think is correct for each of the following items.”* (See appendix A) The results were the following:

Table 4.5.4.

Students' Practices to Improve their Performance in Speaking

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	To what extent do you pay attention to use correct grammar in speaking?	(0.42) 42%	(0.3) 26%
2.	To what extent do you work on your pronunciation to improve your speaking skill?	(0.4) 38.5%	(0.2) 16%
3.	When you learn a new vocabulary or expression, to what extent do you use it in speaking?	(0.4) 37%	(0.2) 21%
4.	To what extent do you consider yourself successful in choosing the right words for the right context in speaking?	(0.35) 35%	(0.3) 28%
5.	Do you use fillers to have time in conversation when you face difficulty in thinking of appropriate reply?	(0.34) 34%	(0.1) 13%

With reference to table 4.5.4. above, the item ***“To what extent do you pay attention to use correct grammar in speaking?”*** had the highest positive answers with an average of 42%. However, students’ answers were deviated from the mean for 26%, which shows high dispersion of their opinions. It seems that ***grammar*** is the easiest element to employ correctly in speaking since grammar is usually given special focus during school and university levels, so students do not have much difficulty, using it in speaking. Noonan (2005) indicated that successful learners of English spent more time listening to spoken English than studying grammar, and that grammar rules should be learned indirectly through listening to language and simultaneously through practicing grammatical structures in speaking.

As for ***pronunciation***, students were asked ***“To what extent do you work on your pronunciation to improve your speaking skill?”*** Their positive answers had an average of 38.5% and deviation of 16% from the mean. This means that students’ answers were relatively consistent and condensed close to the mean. The researcher believes that learning the correct pronunciation do not exert much effort like that needed for learning, memorizing, and practicing vocabulary. Pronunciation merely needs paying attention (i.e., clear ear) to how native-speakers speak, and how English sounds are produced in connected speech.

In terms of ***vocabulary***, students were asked three questions. The first one was: ***“When you learn a new vocabulary or expression, to what extent do you use it in speaking?”*** The positive answers had an average of 37% and relatively high deviation of 21%. ***Vocabulary items (i.e., including phrases, idioms, and chunks) seem to be the most difficult to be learned and get employed in speaking.*** Students seem to be more reluctant to practice vocabulary than grammar and pronunciation. This reluctance can be referred to the weak exposure to the language and simultaneously to the extra focus paid to grammar and writing whether in school or at the university. What makes this expectation more valid is that participants gave an average of 35% to their ***success in choosing the right words for the***

right context during speaking (p.s., this item had the highest dispersion of answers with 28%). Students also reported using fillers to have time when they felt stuck in conversations with an average of 34% and 13% deviation from the mean (p.s., this item had the lowest dispersion of answers). Instructor (7), when interviewed, reported the problem of students' shyness to speak due to the shortage of vocabulary they had.

In the light of these results, it is recommended that extra focus should be given to learning and practicing phrases through language functions because the inadequate use of lexis causes unintelligibility and incomprehensibility (Gan, 2012). Therefore, teaching language expressions and functions should be the key objective in any English class on which pronunciation practice can be built and grammar indirectly can be internalized.

In addition to the questions directed to students with respect to the components of speaking, teachers were also asked additional questions to have their points of view in this regard. Questions (9) in the teachers' questionnaire was: *"To what extent being competent (i.e., knowing how to use the language correctly) does affect fluency in speaking?"* (See **appendix A**) There was a consensus among the eight teachers that being competent in the language leads to fluency, and none disagreed; that is, the more the language is correctly produced, the more fluently it is spoken. The positive correlation between competency in language and fluency in speaking is undoubted; it is a common knowledge. The reason why the researcher asked such question was to document teachers' opinions in this regard.

Question (11) in the teachers' questionnaire also had four items related to the elements of speaking. The question was: *"In your opinion, should the following descriptions apply to the oral class? (Indicate with an X)"* (See **appendix B**). The results were the following:

Table 4.5.5.

The Importance of Vocabulary, Structure, and Pronunciation for Speaking according to Teachers

No.	Item	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree
1.	The oral class should involve some focus on the accuracy of structure.	—	—	8/8
2.	The oral class should involve some focus on pronunciation.	—	—	8/8
3.	The oral class should involve some focus on vocabulary and expressions.	1/8	—	7/8
4.	Fluency should be emphasized over accuracy in speaking.	1/8	2/8	5/8

According to table 4.5.5. above, the eight teachers agreed that the oral class should involve some focus on the accuracy of structure and pronunciation, and seven of them agreed that there should be some focus on vocabulary while one teacher disagreed. The researcher believes that the major part of the oral class should be centered on practicing vocabulary and language functions whereby students would exercise pronunciation and indirectly practice the language grammatical structures.

Teachers were also asked if fluency should be emphasized over accuracy in speaking. While five teachers agreed with the statement, two teachers indicated that they did not know, and one teacher disagreed. It is thought that fluency cannot be achieved with faulty language. Therefore, students need to practice to speak correctly using the right tense, the appropriate vocabulary, and the correct pronunciation in order to be more confident in their language and speak fluently. In this regard, Willerman (2011), as reported in Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, and Göksu (2012) asserted that accuracy does not contradict fluency, but the contrary is true because one leads to the other.

Based on question (11) above, question (13) in the teachers' questionnaire aimed at knowing teachers' views with regard to the elements of speaking. The question was: *“What do you think of the following statements? (Indicate with an X.)”* (See appendix B) The results were the following:

Table 4.5.6.

The Factors which Affect Fluency in Speaking

No.	Item	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree
1.	Fluency in speaking requires using vocabulary accurately and appropriately according to the context.	_____	_____	8/8
2.	Fluency in speaking requires using correct structure (grammar).	1/8	_____	7/8
3.	Fluency in speaking requires having correct (native-like) pronunciation.	3/8	1/8	4/8
4.	It's better that a native speaker of the language teach the oral skill.	3/8	1/8	4/8

With reference to table 4.5.6. The eight teachers confirmed that fluency in speaking requires using vocabulary accurately and appropriately according to the context, which also asserts the point in question (11) above that part of the class should focus on vocabulary and language expressions (Gan, 2012). The researcher believes that the more the students get exposed to and practice new expressions within their contexts, the more fluent speakers they grow.

In addition, seven teachers out of the eight agreed with that fluency in speaking requires using correct structure (grammar), while one teacher disagreed. Of course, structure of the spoken version differs from that in the written version in that it has more abbreviations, cuts, pauses, and slangs, while the written version usually has full sentences especially in formal writing. Yet, speaking still should be based on the rules of syntax (Gan, 2012).

Last but not least, four teachers (i.e., two native speakers and two Arabs) expressed that it is better that a native speaker of the language teach the oral skill, and that fluency in speaking requires having correct (native-like) pronunciation, whereas two teachers (i.e., also two native speakers and two Arabs) disagreed and one teacher who is a native speaker did not know. It seems that the oral class teachers see fluency through correct usage of vocabulary and grammar according to context rather than through correct pronunciation of words. Teachers' views, after all, depend on their experiences in the field of language teaching. What matters here, whether teachers were native speakers of the language or non-native, is that they make good models for their students as fluent English speakers.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

To begin with, it was hypothesized that the Palestinian EFL learners do not reach high level of fluency in speaking. Therefore, it was essential to investigate the reasons behind their speaking problems. In addition, it was suggested that the Palestinian EFL oral classrooms be described in terms of how they are run, what teaching methods are used, and what problems teachers encounter in teaching the skill. Moreover, the linguistic components of speaking were sought to be studied with respect to their roles in achieving oral fluency. Based on this, data were gathered about the problem, and the results were presented and discussed. Conclusions and recommendations are presented ahead in an attempt to help suggest solutions and further research to the problems of the oral class at the Palestinian Universities.

5.1. Conclusions Related to Research Question One

The first objective of the current study was *“to investigate the learning reasons for the lack of oral fluency in the Palestinian EFL majors.”* Research question One was: *“What are the learning reasons for the lack of oral fluency among the Palestinian EFL majors?”* It was hypothesized that *“students do not make enough efforts to develop their fluency in speaking due to lack of confidence and anxiety of making mistakes.”*

In terms of the reasons which cause low fluency among students, the first reason is the lack of extensive listening to English. It was found out that nearly 60% of the students listen to English for less than two hours per day, which lessens the opportunity of exposure to the target language. This indicates that the majority of students do not make enough efforts to improve their speaking skills through listening to English though chances are available on TV, recordings, and audio-visual multimedia. Here, it is recommended by the researchers as

well as the practitioners that students should increase the time allocated for listening and watching English TV shows, YouTube videos, and rehearsal recordings. Instructor (2), in the interview, advised the English majors “to start early listening and to have their English time” as part of their daily life-style (**See appendix D**). So doing, they definitely will be better speakers because listening to language is the primary step to fluency (Girija, Rao, & Raju, 2011; & Noonan, 2005).

Secondly, the findings have shown that 97% of EFL majors do not have problems in comprehending spoken language; that is, 54% of them understand the main message of what they hear except for some parts, while 43% of them understand almost all the English they hear easily. This means that students have less problems in comprehension, but they face problems in producing the language, which can be referred to the lack of exposure and practice to English. Noonan reported Krashen’s (1985) comprehensible input as the preferable level of language students need to listen to. English has many tongues and slangs (i.e., accents and dialects); therefore, the level of language should be deliberately selected by teachers according to students’ level, but not to be sophisticated and highly technical.

A third reason for students’ lack of oral fluency is their rare chances to speak with native speakers. That is, the majority of students in the study (79%) said that they interacted with native speakers for less than two hours per week, which is never sufficient for practicing the authentic language (Noonan, 2005). It is difficult to travel abroad for most of the Palestinian students; therefore, it may be helpful, at least, to communicate with native speakers in our country during the course when they are available. That is, there should be a fixed part of the oral class where students hear, learn, and speak the common English ‘live’ as part of the communication process. It is suggested that native speakers of English be invited to join the class and share experience, or they can be invited online to attend cross-cultural sessions get prepared and supervised by the teachers using technology (e.g., Soliya Program).

This strategy provides a good solution to overcome students' reluctance to speak the language since it strengthens their connection to the target culture.

Fourth, the anxiety of losing face proved not to be mainly responsible for students' lack of fluency because 88% of the students indicated that they had the courage to speak. That is, 45% of the students expressed that they did not feel afraid of losing face when they spoke while 43% of them said they had this anxiety, but they knew they need to practice to be better in speaking, so they forced themselves to speak. Students also reported on a Likert scale that they feared making mistakes for an average of 31% percent, which is positively not so high.

Fifth, with regard to comfort/discomfort of making mistakes, two thirds of the students (69%) said that they felt comfortable when they spoke but had slight to moderate slips of tongue. 31% of them, on the other hand, reported that they were uncomfortable because they had moderate to severe problems in speaking (e.g., hesitations, long pauses, serious mistakes and errors, slow rate of speaking...etc.) Though students' attempts to speak out were not enough and needed to be increased, they confirmed that they had the initiative and guts to speak English whenever they got a good chance with an average of 39%. They also expressed that they actually interacted in English with their classmates and teacher during the oral class with an average of 35%, which was relatively good but needed to be increased. Students are advised here to try persistently to overcome their fears and speak, while teachers are called on to constantly encourage students and provide positive atmosphere for communication (Noonan, 2005; & Subaşı, 2010).

Sixth, students' motivation seems not be a negative factor for their lack of oral fluency; still, it remains important. That is, 80% of the students had the motive to speak out, but many of them (50%) needed a stimulus to do so, such as receiving good grades, constant encouragement and praise by teachers. Five teachers out of the eight, in turns, said that

receiving marks motivated the learners to take it more seriously and participate, which was also confirmed by the teachers in the interviews (See appendix D).

5.2. Conclusions Related to Research Question Two

The second objective of the study was *“to describe the current Palestinian oral classrooms in terms of the teaching and assessment methods used.”* In this respect, the second research question was: *“What is the nature of the current Palestinian EFL oral classrooms, and how much effective are the teaching and assessing methods in building students’ oral fluency?”* It was hypothesized that *“the current Palestinian EFL oral classrooms are pedagogically not well-taught, and assessment is not based on valid rubrics.”*

First of all, in terms of the nature of the oral class, most of the students (71%) described their classes as half traditional inclining to be more non-traditional, which indicates that there are serious efforts made to have a healthy environment for speaking and communication, and that the new trends in teaching are really taking over the class. Still, only 54% of students expressed that they were given more chances to speak, while 59% of the students said that their oral class focused on achieving communicative interaction.

With respect to technology, 34% of the students reported that audio-visual aids and multimedia were used, which is good but not enough to enhance students’ spoken abilities. It seems that technology is rather not well-invested in many of the Palestinian EFL oral classes. This issue requires the English Departments at the Palestinian Universities to seriously rethink about the integration of technology as an essential part of instruction, and to equip the oral classes with an English laboratory for practice as well (Girija, Rao, & Raju, 2011).

Secondly, the results have disclosed that the most methodology used in the Palestinian oral classrooms was the Communicative Approach (CLT), followed by Task-based Learning

(TBL), while other methods such as the Direct Method, Audio-lingual Method (ALM), and Total Physical Response (TPR) were fairly used, with weak reference to Grammar Translation (GT). In fact, teachers noted that they ‘indirectly’ adopted a mix of methodologies, depending on the objective they wanted to achieve from a certain activity or task, but not a one-for-all methodology (Chen, & Goh, 2011). It is worth mentioning that CLT and TBL are regarded the best methods used for creating communicative interaction among learners. What matters here is the correct implementation of such methods on ground in the Palestinian oral classroom but not merely saying to do so.

Thirdly, the oral class teachers also expressed that they generally used a blend of several textbooks they chose as a compiled source of material adapted, each semester, in order to accommodate for the prompt needs and requirements which arise for the course. This flexibility, supposedly, should make the learning as well as the teaching processes more efficient and fruitful for teachers and students.

Fourth, in terms of the most applied as well as valued in-class activities in the oral class, delivering oral presentations was reported to be on top, followed by open discussions. That is, students’ views showed that “oral presentations” were the most used means for assessment (92%). In terms of the most recurrent topics discussed in the class, “cultures, habits, and rituals” were the most to discuss followed by “social media”. “Language issues and religion” were also of the topics usually handled, while other topics like “politics, arts, and science” were rarely discussed. Students, from their side, expressed that the topics usually suggested for discussion in their oral classes met their interests, needs and expectations with an average of 33%. Such not satisfying choice of topics calls on teachers to rethink of students’ needs and to suggest topics which more interesting and catchy to them.

Fifth, intensive listening in the classroom as well as showing videos and using multimedia are also among the activities performed, but they are still not adequately invested in some classes according to the surveys, the interviews, and the observations. Teachers here call for practicing ‘extensive listening’ at home by viewing the English TV shows, documentaries, movies, videos...etc. Tasks, games, and solving exercises are also done through pair and group works as reported by teachers and students, but needs to be increased.

In the same context, more than half of the teachers (i.e., five out of the eight teachers) indirectly indicated that they used traditional ways to assess their students; such as, delivering presentations as well as listening and writing tests, and half of them reported that there was a lack of efficient instruments for assessing the oral skill (Sinwongsuwat, 2012). However, not all of the teachers seemed to follow this type of traditional assessment. That is, two of the teachers asserted that they used detailed “rubrics” for assessing different types of activities; each activity had its own criteria (**See appendix F**). The other teachers reported that they subjectively evaluated the oral performance as a whole with reference to some criteria (e.g., linguistic and personality levels and eye contact).

With respect to error correction and feedback students receive, “*self-correction*” came first with an average of 38%. The average indicates that students have the ability to realize their mistakes and correct themselves on spot. “*Teacher-correction*” came second with an average of 37%, which is very close to self-correction. However, “*peer-correction*” was the least to use (30%), which may be justifiable for the reason that students usually do not accept other colleagues’ corrections or criticism.

Teachers, when asked about the mechanisms they used in correcting mistakes, six of them said that they used to correct spoken mistakes on spot to let all of their students learn the correct form. Half of the teachers, on the other hand, indicated that they delayed correction at

the end of the activity to give the mistake special focus. Two of them, on the other hand, reported that they gave their students the chance to correct themselves. Last of all, one teacher said that s/he did not do correction to spoken mistakes in order not to affect students' motivation. All the ways of corrections are thought to be correct; what matters is how much serious the mistake is and how to correct it, the right time and the way without affecting students' self-esteem and motivation (Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, & Göksu, 2012).

5.3. Conclusions Related to Research Question Three

The third objective of the current study was *“to investigate the problems faced by the oral course instructors in teaching the oral skill.”* In accordance, the third research question posed was: *“What are the problems faced by teachers in the oral classroom?”* It was hypothesized that *“the teaching conditions do not help teachers to develop students' speaking skills, such as crowded classes, lack of time, and lack of technology aids.”*

Several problems were reported by the oral class teachers. First of all, the large number of students which usually hinders running healthy and effective oral classes. The teachers complained that their classes were usually overcrowded with more than 25 students reaching to 45 while the appropriate number should perfectly be between 15 and 20 students. Teachers also explained that having huge classes did not give enough and equal opportunities for all students to speak and participate. Therefore, classes should be strictly specified in number, and simultaneously the number of speaking courses should be increased (Chen, & Goh, 2011).

Secondly, six teachers confirmed that they received little training (e.g., workshops) in terms of teaching the oral skill, and almost all of their efforts was personal. However, only three teachers agreed that they had misconceptions with regard to how to teach the oral skill. There is no doubt that teachers try their best to achieve the goals and objectives of their

classes. Still, they need to constantly look for what best works for their classes in order to gain the best results (Chen & Goh, 2011). The English Departments at our universities are called, here, to give regular training in how to teach and manage oral classes.

Thirdly, with regard to motivation, the majority of students do not have enough motivation to prepare and work extensively outside of the class. Inside the class, on the other hand, most of the students instrumentally get motivated by grades to participate and speak out versus minority of students who have personal and integrative motivation that force them to speak (Chen, & Goh, 2011).

Fourth, teachers expressed that the traditional way of instruction whether in school or at the university which focuses, in general, on grammar and writing was believed to negatively impact creating fluent EFL speakers. Teachers also were reported to take the traditional role of dictating students who were said to have a passive style of learning (i.e., they are usually inclined to be receptive to input rather than being productive to output.) Half of the teachers, in addition, have reported that there was a lack of efficient instruments for assessment (rubrics).

The fifth problem is that the EFL Arab teachers as well as students sometimes switch to L1 (i.e., Arabic language) unnecessarily as they find their mother tongue a comfort zone when they get stuck in English (Chen, & Goh, 2011).

5.4. Conclusions Related to Research Question Four

The fourth objective of the study was *“to define the linguistic components of speaking (i.e., vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar) and to describe how students practice them to improve their oral fluency.”* The fourth research question of the current study was: *“What determines the degree of fluency in the oral skill, and how do students practice the*

linguistic components of speaking to improve their oral abilities?” It was hypothesized that “the degree of fluency in speaking gets lowered by less attention to the accuracy of linguistic elements of speaking; vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, altogether.”

To begin with, in terms of students’ abilities to compensate for a missing word, over 90% of them said that they tried to use another synonym, or they used gesture/ body language to explain it. However, less than 30% of the students said that they either tried to remember the word they missed, or they waited for help or used Arabic instead, whereas only 3% of the students expressed that they felt embarrassed, so they stopped speaking at all. This means that the majority of students have the ability to recognize their vocabulary mistakes and try to self-correct themselves before asking for others’ help.

Secondly, vocabulary proved to be the most difficult linguistic element that should be worked on to improve in speaking, in comparison to grammar and pronunciation. That is, when students were asked about the extent of using new vocabulary they previously learned during speaking, their positive answers did not exceed 37% as an average. In addition, students gave an average of 35% for their success in choosing the right vocabulary words for the right context and 34% for using fillers to have time in conversation when they faced difficulty in thinking of an appropriate reply. This means that only about one third of the students do not have problems in using vocabulary easily in speaking.

Thirdly, when students were asked about the techniques they used at home to strengthen their abilities in pronunciation, the majority of them (69%) indicated that they paid attention to how English speakers on TV produce sounds and apply stress and intonation, and they tried to imitate them. A good proportion of students (42%) said that they imitated their teachers’ accents. 39% of the students expressed that they checked dictionary for pronunciation, whereas 30% of them said that they practiced English pronunciation in their

free time. In light of the results, students are required to practice extensive listening to English videos and TV shows in order to observe how native-speakers pronounce words. Here the audio-visual learning has the biggest influence on students' improvement in speaking. In order to measure how much students work on their pronunciation, their positive answers on a Likert scale had an average of 38.5%, which is relatively higher than their efforts in practicing vocabulary but still not enough.

Fourth, in terms of the role of grammar in speaking, it was thought that students' achievements in grammar classes may correlate positively with their fluency in speaking because students are supposed to have the basics that make them able to orally employ grammatical structures (in addition to vocabulary and pronunciation). In this regard, more than half of the students (59%) reported that they used to achieve high grades in grammar classes. 32% of them, on the other hand, indicated that they had average grades in grammar, whereas only 9% of students admitted that they got low grades. Accordingly, more than half of the oral class students, supposedly, should not have problems in employing correct grammatical structures in speaking. This result was asserted by the students' answers with respect to the extent to which they paid attention to use correct grammar in speaking. That is, grammar had the highest average among the elements of speaking (42%) on a Likert scale. We should not neglect the intralanguage (i.e., within the same language) as well as the interlanguage (i.e., between languages) influences on making spoken grammatical mistakes.

Fifth, the instructors when asked about the relationship between being competent (i.e., knowing how to use the language correctly) and having fluency in speaking, they had consensus with respect to that competence in the language correlate positively with fluency. That is, the more the language is correctly produced, the more fluently it is spoken. This indicates that fluency in speaking never occurs without exerting efforts in learning, attention,

exposure and constant practice of the linguistic components of speaking (Dinçer, Yeşilyurt, & Göksu, 2012).

Sixth, with respect to describing a speaking lesson, the eight teachers agreed with that it should involve some focus on the accuracy of structure and pronunciation, and seven of them agreed with that there should be some focus on vocabulary while one teacher disagreed. Teachers were also asked if fluency should be emphasized over accuracy in speaking. While five teachers agreed with the statement, two teachers expressed that they did not know, and one teacher disagreed. It is believed that fluency in speaking is better achieved if the language was accurate because the more the linguistic elements are accurate, the more the confident and fluent the speaker becomes.

Concluding the study, it is worth noting that by observing six classes for one time and interviewing seven instructors, teacher's degree (i.e., the sample composed of five PhDs and three MAs) as well as the years of living in native-speaking countries (i.e., teachers were four native speakers and four Arabs) were not of much noticeable impact on the teacher being skilled in teaching the oral skill as much as the effect of the years of experience, teacher's endeavors to improve and be updated in the field, his/her level of fluency, and the correctness of their pronunciation. Therefore, the key point is that teachers should permanently look for the updates in the domain of pedagogy and always train themselves to be better.

5.5. Recommendations

To begin with, students are the stakeholders, so, first and foremost, they are the ones who need to have the inner power and passion to work on themselves to be fluent speakers. However, there are several recommendations and suggestions which need to be taken into account in order to enhance the status of the speaking skill and produce fluent English speakers to the community.

1. Students need to increase the time allocated for English, by watching English TV shows, documentaries, and YouTube videos as well as listening to recordings because listening to language is the primary step to fluency. It is good to mention that the audio-visual learning has the biggest influence over the subconscious acquisition of language.
2. Overcrowded classes are never helpful for improving students' oral fluency. On the contrary, they decrease teachers' abilities to manage their classes, they prevent from running healthy communication, and they deprive students from sufficient and equal opportunities in terms of participation. Therefore, the English Departments at the Palestinian Universities should seriously take this issue into consideration when making decisions and try to assign more oral classes with lesser number of students in the class.
3. Teachers are advised to eliminate the traditional methods and be updated with the best methods and techniques for running their classes (e.g., performing pair and group tasks, simulations, picture stories, games, showing videos, and holding open discussions) in order to develop their students' oral fluency the best way possible. As for public speech and formal presentations, teachers need to train their students to professionally employ their assets.
4. Teachers are also required to create positive atmosphere for communication and discussions, by choosing interesting and catchy topics. They also need to constantly encourage students to speak and practice whether inside of the classroom or outside and to give them advice and support if they slipped,.
5. The oral class should basically focus on vocabulary and pronunciation. That is, practicing language functions, chunks, and frozen expressions as well as correct pronunciation is a big challenge for students. Therefore, primacy should be given to teach students how to use vocabulary appropriately in context, on which pronunciation practice can be built, and grammar indirectly can be internalized.

6. Technology is still not well-invested in the Palestinian English oral classes. The class should necessarily be equipped with the internet service, a smart board, a video-conference, and audio-visual data show in order to easily show YouTube videos and online documents anytime when needed.
7. Communication with native speakers is very beneficial for developing students' fluency. Therefore, it is advised that a fixed part of the oral class be innovated where students hear the authentic English 'live' either by inviting native speakers of English to the class, or through online sessions get prepared and supervised by teachers (e.g., Soliya Program). This strategy provides a good solution for students' reluctance to speak, as it increases their excitement level to interact and strengthens their connection to the target culture.
8. It is not sufficient for students to have one or two courses for the oral skill. Speaking needs to be more emphasized in the English courses in general and to have at least three courses specified for speaking and communication in the Bachelor English Language Program in order to see real progress in students' fluency.
9. It is recommended that an English laboratory be provided for students to practice listening and pronunciation rehearsals.
10. It is recommended that teachers use rubrics as their means of assessment. Rubrics are standardized world-wide because they're accurate, comprehensive, detailed, and objective, and their criteria can be adapted to suit any activity or classwork, compared to the subjective assessment. They also save teachers' time and efforts in describing students' proficiency levels, and they can easily be checked when needed.
11. Instructor (2) in the study recommended that the system of teaching English should be changed, not only in the oral class, but also in all classes which work towards qualifying students to become proficient in English. English is usually taught extensively rather than intensively whether in school or at the university; that is, the teaching hours are not

sufficient, and students' training as well as the opportunities for language use is minimum. Therefore, it is advised that such suffice be made up through intensive summer schools where appropriate conditions for teaching and learning be provided, and students be given time and liberty to use the language. (Appendix D)

12. Last but not least, the English Departments at the national universities are recommended to provide the oral class teachers with regular training with regard to class management using the best methods and techniques. Training can be done through holding regular meetings and working as a team, by holding workshops run by experts, and by attending conferences.

5.6. Suggestions for Further Research

This study has presented a descriptive analysis for the current practices of learning, teaching, and assessing the oral skill of English and their influence on students' oral fluency at the Palestinian Universities. Based on the results above, further research is suggested with regard to the following points:

1. Studying the influence of the integrative motivation on learners' oral proficiency, compared to the instrumental motivation.
2. Studying the impact of being taught by native speaker teachers on learners' oral fluency, compared to teaching by non-native Arab teachers.
3. Investigating the effect of using non-traditional techniques like the audio-visual aids on learning the oral skill, compared to the traditional techniques like presentations and listening activities.
4. Investigating the effect of using rubrics for assessment on students improvement in speaking, compared to formal assessment.

5.7. Closing Point

In the end, by surveying the views of eight oral class teachers and 152 English majors, and by observing six oral classes, the researcher hopes that views of the sample has given good indication of the status of oral skill in the Palestinian universities, and that the study has brought good contribution to the field of pedagogy and applied linguistics. It remains that the recommendations and suggestions given for further research be taken into consideration.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire

Researcher: Duaa W. Muhtaseb

Questionnaire

Gender: Female Male

Age:

University level: First Second Third Fourth

University Name:

This questionnaire was designed as an instrument to collect data for the MA thesis "*Appraisal of the Practices of Teaching, Learning and Assessing the Oral Skill of English at the Palestinian Universities*". Questions of the questionnaire are related to the speaking skill of English (i.e., Oral communication/ Conversation Comprehension/ Interactive English_ the title of the course in your university), and it is directed to the EFL oral course students at the Palestinian Universities in the West Bank.

Please choose what best describes what you think for the following questions:

1. On an average day of study, how much time do you spend listening to spoken English?

- a. Less than 1 hour.
- b. 1_2 hours.
- c. More than 2 hours.
- d. I spend the majority of my free time listening to spoken English.

2. How well do you understand most of the English you listen to while learning English?

- a. I understand all of it easily.
- b. I understand the main message but don't understand some parts.
- c. I understand some of it with great difficulty.
- d. I don't understand what is said except for a few words.

3. In an average week of study, how much time do you spend speaking to native speakers of English?

- a. Less than 1 hour.
- b. 1_2 hours.
- c. More than 2 hours.
- d. I work with native speakers, so I have to speak with them for long periods of time.

4. What kind of activities/ tasks are usually carried out in your oral class? (You can choose more than one option.)
- a. Solving exercises. b. Watching and discussing videos. c. Listening activities.
 - d. Open discussions. e. Oral presentations. f. Tasks and games. g. Other.
5. Choose from the following characteristics of 'the traditional methods' the ones that exist in your oral class. (You can choose more than one option.)
- a. The teacher speaks more than the students (i.e., the class is rather teacher-centered).
 - b. Focus is directed to memorization and form rather than to communication and meaning.
 - c. Traditional arrangement of seating (i.e., no pair or group-work).
 - d. Teaching is done explicitly through rules and focus is on structure and form.
 - e. Technology is rarely used, only paper and pen.
 - f. Other.
6. Choose from the following characteristics of 'the modern methods' the ones that exist in your oral class.
- a. Students are given more chances to speak (i.e., the class is more learner-centered).
 - b. The oral class focuses on achieving communicative interaction among students.
 - c. Seating is usually arranged in pairs and groups to carry out activities and tasks more effectively.
 - d. Focus is on meaning and functions, and learning is done indirectly through activities and tasks.
 - e. Technology is usually used (e.g., audio-visual aids, computer, internet...etc).
 - f. Other.
7. How much traditional/non-traditional do you rate/consider the oral class you are enrolled in?
- a. Very traditional.
 - b. Traditional.
 - c. Half traditional.
 - d. More non-traditional.
 - e. Very non-traditional.
8. Saving face means not wanting to embarrass oneself in front of others. Based on this, which of the following statements best describes you?
- a. I'm not afraid of losing face. Speaking English with others is not a problem.
 - b. I'm afraid of losing face, but I know I need to practice to get better in speaking, so I force myself to speak English with others.
 - c. I'm afraid of losing face, so many times I avoid speaking English.
 - d. My spoken English is so poor, so I don't dare to speak out.

9. What are the means of assessment used in your oral classroom? (You can choose more than one option.)
- Tests.
 - Activities and tasks.
 - Oral presentations.
 - Homework (i.e., portfolio).
 - Other.
10. How does the grade influence your participation in an oral activity?
- Grading the oral activity motivates me to take it more seriously and participate.
 - I don't participate in the oral activity if there were no assessment.
 - I like to participate in any oral discussion/ activity whether it is assessed or not.
 - I don't like to participate in any oral activity whether assessed or not.
11. How is the general assessment already distributed in percentage to the activities and works of the oral course?
- In-class activities (%).
 - Oral presentations (%).
 - Homework papers/ portfolio (%).
 - Tests (%).
 - Other.
12. What aspects of the oral class do you value the most and think should receive large percentage of assessment? (You can choose more than one option.)
- Solving exercises.
 - Watching and discussing videos.
 - Listening activities.
 - Open discussions.
 - Oral presentations.
 - Tasks and games.
 - Tests and exams.
 - Other.
13. What type of testing are you usually given in the oral course (with percentage)?
- Listening & Writing (%).
 - Speaking (%).
 - Other.
14. If you don't know a word or phrase during speaking, what will you do? (You can choose more than one option.)
- I try to use another synonym, or use gesture (body language) to explain it.
 - I try to remember it even if it took from me a while to recall it.
 - I wait for the teacher or other student to remind me with the word or to give me another suggestion.
 - I use L1 (e.g., Arabic) instead.
 - I feel embarrassed (shy) and stop speaking at all.
15. What do you do in order to have correct pronunciation? (You can choose more than one option.)
- I always pay attention to how English speakers on T.V produce sounds and apply stress and intonation, and I try to imitate them.
 - I always check dictionary for pronunciation.
 - I always practice English pronunciation in my free time.
 - I imitate my oral teacher's pronunciation.
 - Other.
16. Which of the following applies to you? (You can choose more than one option.)
- I feel comfortable and confident speaking the English language.
 - I feel comfortable but have few slips of tongue when I speak.
 - I'm not so comfortable and hesitate when I speak, and I make some mistakes.

- d. I feel uncomfortable and not confident as I make many hesitations, pauses, and errors in speaking and speak too slow.
- e. I forget what I want to say and stop speaking.

17. Indicate with X the choice you think is correct for each of the following items:

No.	Item	1. Almost never	2. Rarely	3. Sometimes	4. Usually	5. Always
1.	To what extent do you feel afraid of making mistakes when you speak?					
2.	When you learn a new vocabulary or expression (from some English TV show/ radio broadcast or any other source of learning), to what extent do you use it in speaking?					
3.	Do you use fillers (e.g., well, right, anyway, now let me see...etc.) to have time in conversation when you face difficulty in thinking of appropriate reply?					
4.	To what extent do you work on your pronunciation to improve your speaking skill?					
5.	To what extent do you pay attention to use correct grammar in speaking?					
6.	During the oral course discussions and activities, how often do you interact in English with other classmates?					
7.	To what extent do you speak English whenever you get the opportunity?					
8.	To what extent do topics discussed in your oral class meet your interests, needs and expectations?					
9.	To what extent do you consider yourself successful in choosing the right words for the right context while speaking?					

18. When you make speaking mistakes, what type of correction do you usually receive? (You can choose more than one option.)

No.	Type of correction	1. Almost never	2. Rarely	3. Sometimes	4. Usually	5. Always
	Self-correction					
b.	Peer-correction					
c.	Teacher-correction					

19. What grades do you usually have in grammar exams?

1. Poor 2. Fair 3. Good 4. Very Good 5. Excellent.

20. Do you prefer that a native-speaker teacher teach the oral skill? Why?

- a. Yes b. No

End of Questionnaire (Thank you!)

Appendix B: Teachers' Questionnaire

Researcher: Duaa W. Muhtaseb

Questionnaire

This questionnaire was designed as an instrument to collect data for the MA project "Appraisal of the Practices of Teaching, Learning and Assessing the Oral Skill of English at the Palestinian Universities". Questions are related to the speaking skill of English (i.e., Oral communication/ Conversation & Aural Comprehension/ Interactive English), and it is directed to the EFL oral course teachers at the Palestinian Universities in the West Bank.

Gender: Male Female

The academic degree: BA MA PhD Other:

Years of Teaching English: a. 1_5 years b. 5_10 years c. 10_15 d. More than 15 years.

Years of studying/working in an English-speaking country (Name the county(s)):

Name of University:

a. An-Najah National University b. Bethlehem University c. Birzeit University d. Hebron University

Number of times you've taught the oral skill course:

a. 1_5 times b. 6_10 times c. 11_15 times d. 16_more.

Please choose what best describes what you think for the following questions:

1. What kind of activities/ tasks do you usually carry out in the oral class? (You can choose more than one option.)

- a. Solving exercises. b. Watching and discussing videos. c. Listening activities.
d. Open discussions. e. Oral presentations. f. Tasks and games. g. Other.

2. What kind of topics do you usually discuss in the oral class? (You can choose more than one option.)

- a. Politics. b. Social media. c. Arts. d. Science. e. Religion.
f. Cultures, habits and rituals. g. Language issues. h. Other.

3. Have you ever participated in any kinds of programs (e.g., workshops or special training) devoted to the oral skill? If yes: How many times?

- a. Yes b. No

a. 1_5 times b. 6_10 times c. 11_15 times d. 16_more.

4. What are the means of assessment you use in your oral class?
- In-class activities.
 - Oral presentations.
 - Homework papers/ portfolio.
 - Tests.
 - Other.
5. What type of testing do you usually administer in the oral course (with percentage)?
- Listening and writing (%).
 - Speaking (%).
 - Other.
6. What aspects of the oral class do you value the most and think should receive large percentage of assessment? (You can choose more than one option.)
- Solving exercises.
 - Watching and discussing videos.
 - Listening activities.
 - Open discussions.
 - Oral presentations.
 - Tasks and games.
 - Tests.
 - Other.
7. From your experience, how does the grade influence learners' participation in an oral activity?
- Receiving marks for participating in an oral activity usually motivates learners to take it more seriously and participate.
 - Learners usually don't like to participate in the oral activity if there were no assessment.
 - Learners usually like to participate in any oral discussion/ activity whether it is assessed or not.
 - Learners are hardly motivated to participate in any oral activity whether assessed or not.
8. How do you usually correct your students' when they make mistakes and errors in speaking? (You can choose more than one option.)
- I usually correct spoken mistakes on spot to let all of my students learn the correct form.
 - I usually delay correction to the end of the activity/ discussion to give them special focus.
 - If the error were global (i.e., breaks communication), I prefer to correct it on spot.
 - I usually give my students the chance to correct themselves; if they couldn't, I may ask other students to do the correction, or I myself correct them.
 - I usually don't do correction to spoken mistakes in order not to affect students' motivation.

9. To what extent being competent (i.e., knowing how to use the language correctly) affects fluency in speaking?

- a. Being competent in the language greatly affects fluency; the more the language is correctly produced, the more fluently it is spoken.
- b. Being competent in the language may correlates positively with fluency.
- c. Being competent in the language doesn't affect fluency; there is no relation between accuracy of language and fluency in speaking.

10. What teaching methods are you implementing in your oral class? How often? (Indicate with an X)

No.	Method	1. Almost never	2. Rarely	3. Sometimes	4. Usually	5. Always
1.	Grammar-translation					
2.	Audio-visual Method					
3.	Direct Method					
4.	Task-based Learning					
5.	Communicative Approach					
6.	Total Physical Response					

11. In your opinion, should the following descriptions apply to the oral class? (Indicate with an X)

No.	Item	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Don't Know	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
1.	The oral class should be learner-centered.					
2.	Fluency should be emphasized over accuracy.					
3.	Communication in English should be the main objective of the oral class.					
4.	The majority of the oral class should be devoted to speaking over listening.					
5.	The oral class requires teachers to have a high proficiency in English.					
6.	The oral class should be non-traditional and creative.					
7.	Teaching the oral skill requires high knowledge of the target language culture.					
8.	The oral class should involve some focus on the accuracy of structure.					
9.	The oral class should involve some focus on vocabulary and expressions.					
10.	The oral class should involve some focus on pronunciation.					

12. What are the challenges and difficulties the oral skill teachers encounter in teaching and assessing the oral skill? (Indicate with an **X**)

No.	Item	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Don't Know	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
1.	Teachers receive little training in practicing and teaching the oral skill.					
2.	Teachers usually take the traditional role of dictating students (i.e., the oral class is still teacher-centered).					
3.	Teachers unnecessarily use L1 (e.g., Arabic) in their oral classes.					
4.	Teachers have misconceptions with regard to how the oral class should be run.					
5.	Teachers use traditional ways to assess the oral skill (i.e., through listening and writing tests, presentations...etc.) without using rubrics.					
6.	Students have low-level English proficiency.					
7.	Students have a passive style of learning (i.e., are inclined to be receptive to input rather than productive to output).					
8.	Students lack motivation to improve their communicative competence.					
9.	Students switch to L1 (e.g., Arabic) unnecessarily.					
10.	Number of students is large for running effective oral classes.					
11.	The traditional way of instruction which focuses on grammar and writing has a negative impact over the oral skill.					
12.	There is a lack of efficient instruments for assessing the oral skill.					
13.	Technology (e.g., the audio-visual aids, the internet, computer software... etc.) is still not invested enough in the oral class.					

13. What do you think of the following statements? (Indicate with an X)

No.	Item	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Don't Know	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
1.	Fluency in speaking requires using vocabulary accurately and appropriately according to the context.					
2.	Fluency in speaking requires having correct (native-like) pronunciation.					
3.	Fluency in speaking requires using correct structure (grammar).					
4.	I try to achieve fluent communication among my students in the oral class.					
5.	It's better that a native-speaker of the language teach the oral skill.					

14. Please list any other potential problems and difficulties you might encounter in teaching the English oral skill to the Palestinian EFL learners in your university.

The researcher welcomes your comments. If you have any, please add.

End of Questionnaire

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Researcher: Duaa W. Muhtaseb

General Instructions: This interview is principally composed of open-ended questions addressing the various issues related to teaching and assessing the English oral skill to the EFL learners at the Palestinian Universities. The participating teachers will be asked to review the questions before the interview.

The interview is going to be semi-structured in a way that the interviewer may ask some prompt questions based on the responses of the interviewee on the already prepared questions. Participants have the right not to answer any question(s) they feel uneasy with.

Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself. How have you become an EFL teacher? When and where have you studied English? And why did you choose this profession?
2. How much important, do you think, is the spoken English for the EFL students' lives and careers?
3. How is the oral skill represented in the textbook you are teaching? Is the methodology of teaching the oral skill covered/ represented in the course book?
4. What are the problems that you encounter in teaching the spoken English to the Palestinian students in your oral classroom?
5. Could you describe for me your oral class? How is it run? What kind of activities do you carry out in?
6. How do you assess your students' performance in the oral skill?
7. Do you think the current methodologies used for teaching and assessing the oral skill of English have failed to meet our students' needs and expectations, or the opposite?
8. How do you rate your students' motivation to participate in the oral activities and discussions?
9. From your experience, do you think the Palestinian English teachers at our universities are qualified enough to teach the oral skill of English?
10. How can we overcome the difficulties pertaining to teaching the oral skill?
11. Do you receive enough training in the oral skill of English (e.g., workshops), or there is shortage from the English Department in this regard?
12. Do you have any suggestions to effectively improve the skill of speaking among the Palestinian students?

Appendix D: Transcription of Interviews' Answers

A. Pre-planned Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself. How have you become an EFL teacher? When and where have you studied English? And why did you choose this profession?

Instructor (1): I'm an American (native-speaker of English) who came here with my husband. I've been living here (Palestine) for approximately four years. I became an EFL teacher by chance. I'm trained as an elementary school teacher. I studied early education. I was born as a teacher... I love teaching.

Instructor (2): Well, this is a long story. I've been a student in the English Department back in 1985. After that, I travelled to the States where I completed my MA in TESOL. After this, I started my career as an EFL instructor at the English Department... I completed my PhD 2001. Ever since I started working.. I've been teaching courses in methodology in addition to different language courses, one of which is the oral class.

Instructor (3): I came to Palestine 12 years ago from the Dominican Republic. I was a teacher there for eight years, and I got married and moved to Palestine. I have my Masters in International Teaching, so I had an English Degree from Simmons College in Boston/ Massachusetts in the United States, and my Masters from Framingham State in Massachusetts as well. I've taught English in the Dominican Republic, Jordan, Canada, and Palestine. I always wanted to teach English, actually. I was an English major, and I went on to do my Master in education and teaching English, so I always loved being in the classroom, I'm very passionate about education.

Instructor (4): My background is TESOL. I did my Masters at Boston University in the U.S. in the TESOL program. I really like teaching.. I have the passion for teaching. I started teaching the year 1979, but at the university 1980. I did not have my Master's degree then. You know, I was asked to join the faculty, and I really learned from very good professors who were teaching at the university then because I was a student at...University earlier, and I learned some very good skills about classroom practices. After that, I did my Master's program. I've always kept taking part in professional development programs.

Instructor (5): My specialty is not in English as a foreign language. My training is in English literature, and also literature in general (German literature.. Arabic literature), and also my PhD. So it's not having taken any specific courses on teaching English for second language learners or English as a foreign language. I don't have direct training in that. So, for me it wasn't a choice, it was a course that was new in the university, and for me it was appealing. I found it very interesting and useful for the students, so I volunteered to teach the course and design it for the first semester I taught it at the university. So I'm the first to teach and design this course here. I grew up in the U.S., and I did all of my undergraduate and graduate training in the U.S., so English is a native language for me.

Instructor (6): I studied first at...University, and when I had my BA, then, what else I'm I going to study other than linguistics or literature? So I ended up into linguistics and then came back and started teaching for 10 years. Political conflicts in the university made me an English teacher rather than a linguistics teacher because of the separated department, so I was placed in the other department. Then I moved to the Women's Studies Program which now is in Women's Studies Institute and worked there for ten years, then I came back here, so I've been here for six or seven years teaching linguistics mainly and Interactive English was developed. I started teaching it and I liked it.

Instructor (7): Ok. As an undergraduate I went to study at Bagdad University, and I studied English Literature, actually. Then, I never really intended to teach and work as an ESL/EFL teacher, but, anyway, I ended up teaching linguistics and communication. Now, that means we did a lot of the time with students whose native language is not English; and therefore, we have to be sensitive to their needs, and to be considerate of the problems they encounter in the acquisition of a foreign language. That puts a lot of constraint on our strategy. I don't know whether I'm a successful EFL teacher or not. I know that when I walk into the classroom, I have an objective, and I use different methods to achieve and accomplish this objective. I could tell whether my students really understand my objective by doing certain activities, either by soliciting information from students to figure out or find out whether they understood or not. This is how I do it. As I said, I've taught and been teaching in the West Bank for almost ten years. I also have taught English, communication and linguistics to American native speakers.

2. How much important, do you think, is the spoken English for the EFL students' lives and careers?

Instructor (1): Spoken English is very important for those who wish to pursue a higher degree or study literature to understand what they read, but for those who're not going to use the language, there is no much use for it. If you want to learn it, you'll learn it if you need it.

Instructor (2): The oral skill is immensely important because without this skill students won't be able to move in their real life, and in reality speaking is one of the most important skills that students have to master in order to lead a successful life, so this is why students at the English Department have to train themselves become competent and proficient in speaking. Unfortunately, their spoken ability is not that proficient, and they're not communicative because of the lack of training, and because students do not work on themselves out of the borders of the classroom. As for the speaking ability, it is the most important because it shows whether students are really communicative or not.

Instructor (3): I think, actually, considering the demand for English nowadays, not only in Palestine but worldwide, I think it's very crucial that students leave universities having mastered English, especially here in...university the physical therapy, education, the business, the nursing. A lot of the books are in English. In the Business Department, for example, students go on working for, you know, companies that demand that they speak English very well, so definitely it's very important.

Instructor (4): I see it is very important because if you go and have a look at what's taking place in the market, you see that in some way that they are using their English orally and in writing, in fact.

You see many of the documents in English. Many institutions, NGOs.. have the headquarters in Europe or U.S.A., and they have to deal with, you know, either people work, or communicate with these people in English.

Instructor (5): I think the spoken English is incredibly important in order to communicate or even understand material effectively, one needs to speak about it, I think. Speaking allows for comprehension on a level that is very effective. I think one also needs to take in consideration what you mean by oral, so I think the everyday communication and language is one part, but this can be learned outside of the university in terms of how to make it in the street or in the market. So this is not what I think need to be taught. What I think what needs to be taught is how to communicate effectively in terms of communicating ideas, analysis about material, reflecting on subjects.. ideas in order to speak in academic or scholarly context, but this can also be beyond scholarly or academic context, but those skills which I think need to be focused on.

Instructor (6): passed the question.

Instructor (7): It is one of the most important skills.. listening and speaking because if you notice that what we do most of the time is either we are listening or speaking. We do these two skills or we practice them more than we practice writing and reading; therefore, we have to pay a lot of attention to the manners.. to the skills.. to the aptitudes involved in these two skills and always embellish them, so they become excellent. So, this is why I say and I see why it's important to pay a great deal of attention to the spoken English.

3. How is the oral skill represented in the textbook you are teaching? Is the methodology of teaching the oral skill covered/ represented in the course book?

Instructor (1): We teach language functions which is a practical way of teaching (i.e., when would you use certain expressions in a conversation).

Instructor (2): The books that I use in my oral class are adequately sufficient, and the spoken ability is very represented, but the problem is not in the text but rather in the amount of time given for training; this is the problem we are facing. As far as the books are concerned, they reflect the intended aims for teaching speaking. Let me tell you something about these books. In fact, I'm using a blend of textbooks or materials to arrive at the intended goals of teaching the oral skill. One of which is a file comprised of language functions and situations of how to say different things in different situations, which is very much wanted from students who want to work on their speaking ability, so we call this language functions and expressions used in different situations. Another one would focus on listening; intensive listening inside the classroom where we practice listening in the form of stories, and students have to fill in/out missing language. Sometimes, we use multiple choice, true/false, and other skills as well. Also, I'm using a pictured dictionary where students see different pictures of different topics and themes under which we have a punch of words they are supposed to use in meaningful sentences to train themselves construct meaningful and structural sentences in different situations. Of course, this is the material upon which all the different tasks and activities are designed. Every time we meet, the

scenario would go like this: The students would give oral presentations in front of their classmates, we work on the dictionary where the students start to give sentences live, we move then to some listening training, and also we do some play of language functions and expressions live.. we manipulate different dialogues and role-plays to come up with a product of some training every time we meet. But again, the problem isn't in the material but rather in the amount of training that we have, unfortunately.

Instructor (3) passed this question.

Instructor (4): In fact, I always try to look for the best textbook available, and I think there's no one particular textbook that really has all the skills that you need which has the content, the topics, the skills that you'd like to have your students be equipped with. I try to have more than one textbook. I go for many or variety of recourses, but luckily I was able to find, or we as crew were able to find a good textbook that is very recent, and has most of the skills, and sample models. As I told you, the latest edition was published 2011, so I was lucky to have this book.. I'm happy with it, but it's not the only recourse. I rely on many recourses.

Instructor (5): We don't use any textbook. We have compiled material that we put together. The other instructors and I urgently formulated the course, and I have worked since then with two or three other professors who teach the course, and Dr. (X) put a lot of effort on redesigning the course, rethinking it, adding a lot of additional material. For us it was thinking about what are the goals and objectives of the course, what's important for our students to know in the context in Palestine right now as graduates of the department. It was also very important for us not just to build their ability to speak effectively in terms of pronunciation and articulation, but in terms of meaning to get communicate it through how people speak and the words that they use. So, by using a certain word over another word, politically, can mean something. In the case of Palestine, if you say "the Israeli Defense Forces" as opposed to "the Israeli Army" you make a big difference. So being conscious of the words that you choose communicates, politically, your understanding of something. So this is also something that we look at not just in terms of politics but in terms of social issues, personal interests.. people's understanding of themselves. An exercise that we do is that thinking about the words that we say a lot.. which is so self-reflective. Focusing on these skills, we draw different materials, so I've put in material that is a literary as well as analytical text that talk about language. So I would draw on very beautiful memoirs of a native American in prison, and he's talking about what it means to write, and what it means to speak, and he's reflecting on language. So I use texts like this for them to read out loud in class, and to communicate their meaning out that text, but the same time the text is analyzing language. I teach another text by Black American woman talking about black slaves that were brought to the U.S. and how they began using the English language in a way that's against grammar.. broke grammar, but they used it effectively as a way to organize amongst themselves. So it's not about communicating with perfect grammar, but it's about how you make use of the language to serve your own purposes. So we draw in different texts each semester and put in more texts.. we take out other

texts. During the semester, we add texts that are in relation to the students' knowledge, so the text serve the exercises that we do in class, so it's not that they just have to read, read, and read, but that they're all chosen for a specific oral or listening exercise that we do in class.

Instructor (6): As for the methodology, we keep changing, adding, and deleting material, and we keep developing the methodology that we use in the class. Every semester we sit as teachers, and we talk about what is better to use next time that did not work out this time.

Instructor (7): Well, usually the textbook has a lot of activities which encourage students to elaborate, to take a position or to take a stand on certain issues. In fact, one of the requirements in my communication class is that students do a public speaking as their first assignment; to stand before a live audience, and to deliver any speech they come across after they rehearse the speech. In the second exam, usually I have students debate with each other a controversial issue. Of course they have to prepare before they come to class, they know the topic they are going to debate, and they have enough information at their disposal to really use. But again, the purpose of the second assignment is not only to speak but also to listen attentively, and then try to either rebut the argument they hear or to introduce another argument or to support their argument. That is how I do it.

4. What are the problems that you encounter in teaching the spoken English to the Palestinian students in your oral classroom?

Instructor (1): When the students see and hear that I'm a native speaker, they automatically get scared.. very nervous... they shut down, so I have to really provoke them, and push them to speak, to take a chance and be brave. Some of them feel excited that they have a native speaker and just love to listen to me speaking but don't like to speak themselves. Many of the problems occur with the language; I don't know the Arabic words for something that I'm trying to get a point across, and I have to use the students to translate it, which is somehow good for students to practice translating. The problem is I don't want students to depend on translation.

Instructor (2): The problems can be summarized in the following: First of all, the huge number of students in the classes. I usually take huge oral classes which means that the amount of special care that you need to give for each and every student is not going to be seized as an opportunity. When you teach a class of 35_45 students to speak, especially with the fact that this is the only speaking course available at the English Department, you won't be able to work much with your student. So the huge number of students is the basic obstacle that I face. Imagine a class of 15_20, the amount of time of care that you are going to give to students is going to be doubled automatically. In fact, I make up for this difficulty by giving extra classes and extra time before and after the formal class. The second problem is that the amount of time of training for speaking is limited; we have only 45 hours, we have huge number of students who won't have sufficient and enough time to become proficient in speaking, and this is a second major problem. Again, I try to compensate for it by giving extra classes on my own by meeting students in my office, so that they can speak to me more and more and deliver presentations. A third problem is that although I guide them and direct them all the time to practice

outside the borders of the classroom, giving them assignments and homework, they in general don't listen and don't feel encouraged to work on themselves... I don't know why.. They don't get motivated although the atmosphere inside the classroom is nice, and the students are motivated and very much interactive, but only very few of them would listen to you and work on themselves extensively outside the classroom. This is another problem because, I think, their mentality goes for the grade only. They want to memorize what is available, and they don't want to strengthen their bones, as we say, by working on themselves by themselves, and this is a third major problem. The last or fourth problem is that students' preparation prior their arrival to the class is not that adequate and enough, and it usually reflects itself in their participation throughout the course. Their preparation is not that much, they are not energetic and interactive. Of course, I can't just generalize, but the overwhelming of students are not encouraged to speak, and they fear that they might make mistakes although I guarantee to them all the time that I'm not going to chop their heads off, they need just to feel relaxed and speak, but I face this problem as a fourth one.

Instructor (3): Some of the problem are: 1. Pronunciation; we have students who struggle to pronounce well. 2. Motivation; I don't think they understand the importance of just how crucial they need to speak well. You know, we try to tell them the book that we're using is a book from the United States about oral communication skills, and it covers different kinds of speeches from different contexts. So, those are the problems; the students' motivation, pronunciation, grammar.. definitely a big problem. You know, students write but still have grammatical mistakes. The other problem that we have is that when they do present, a lot of them don't like to speak in front of a crowd, so nerves is one of the biggest problems. You can have a great student writing the most amazing speech, but she's not an oral communicator, and, you know...girls are very shy, and they freeze...you have nerves as one of the biggest problems we have as well.

Instructor (4): Students are really not exposed to the language, so we try to give them ideas on how to be exposed to the language. They need to listen to it because this is not a second language here, so it's problem, but some of the students try to listen to English, to read anything they like. This is what I tell them, and also the nature of the work in the classroom helps, you know. I also fight in order to have less students in the class. I always tell them (the English Department) I need 20 students the maximum, but I receive like 25 students. I always like to have less students in the class which is also another problem because in a communication class you cannot have so many.

Instructor (5): There is the default when they go to Arabic a lot. You know, it's part working on developing their self-awareness of how they speak. So, it's not just listening, we always teach that speaking is always about listening at the same time. If you want to develop your ability to speak well, you have to listen to other people. Either you listen in terms of how they speak and you can learn from them, or you listen to your audience and see are they really understanding you or not. If they don't understand you, you have to change how you speak. And also listening to yourself, so you have to be able to evaluate yourself, and this is the hardest part. So what we do is that we record them and their

presentations, and I give them this form (a paper to fill in), and they come in and evaluate themselves, as an outsider evaluating how they speak. This is one exercise that we do, but this is the most difficult thing, how to self-evaluate.

Instructor (6): You know, some courses go much better and more active than others depending on the students, their proficiency, their creativity, and their ability to communicate and interact. Of course they develop, but still, you know, they have problems in pronunciation that it does not change, and we cannot treat that. Also, their problems in fluency might develop like we count that they should overcome the use of fillers.. they should overcome long pauses if unnecessary and so, and so on. They learn all other skills and a bit of oral language skills that have to do with pronunciation and articulation, correctness and clarity, but they don't become like native speakers or close to native speakers. Even native speakers benefit from this course because for some of them clarity of pronunciation is a problem because they know they are native speakers, so they just go fast and swallow words and so on. We focus on the thing that they have to use to make the enunciation better.

Instructor (7): One of these problems is that the students are shy to speak out, and this can be for two reasons: 1. Maybe they lack the vocabulary necessary for the topic to discuss or 2. Because of shyness, and shyness causes anxiety. These are the primer reasons which undermine students' ability to speak out. Also, another drawback in our classes is the number of students in each class, which deprives students from having the same opportunity, or if we have to do it, it takes us so long, and it consumes a lot of time and a lot of effort. Imagine when you have 25 students is different from having 45 students in class. With 25 you can move.. you can do a lot of activities, but when you have 45, what's happening here there's no way you can really cover all students' speaking skills.

5. Could you describe for me your oral class? How is it run? What kind of activities do you carry out in?

Instructor (1): Many types of activities.. Sometimes we have a topic to discuss, and I try to get something controversial; hopefully, it will peak their interest, and, you know, I make statements that are really outlandish! Maybe not fair.. e.g., The Israeli soldiers are very conscientious people, and they are regulated by their government, so they don't do anything wrong, and they treat everyone fair. This will really get them going. So I try to get something they really know about.. feel strongly about.. to make them interact; otherwise, I let them speak... and I try to give them suggestions to improve.. to get this eye-contact.. This is the biggest challenge, I guess.

Instructor (2): Every time we meet, we work on different prepared tasks; students deliver presentations in front of their classmates in order to polish their ability to stand before an audience to deliver a presentation. I usually assign six presentations, throughout the course, for each student, and because students like this, I discovered that they would give more than fifteen each. Of course, I ask them to come to my office in case they don't have time during the course to do this huge number of presentations. Usually, I do this at the beginning of the course... before the real time of the lecture starts... in the breaks, so that we can have some presentations in this time. Sometimes, I give some extra classes for these presentations in addition to the fact that students are all the time invited to come

to my office to deliver presentations. After presentations, we do some language functions live.. related to the different situations. After this, we do listening intensively. Of course I teach them the technicalities of how to approach listening and how to listen to and do things (linguistically speaking). Then, we work on some vocabulary under different themes and topics from a pictured dictionary. Also, we have added other skills like bringing some controversial topics, and students at home would prepare themselves to take a stand regarding these controversial topics... I would provide them with the text that is controversial, so that they prepare it at home; e.g., “Which is better to live in the city or in the country?” So next time students would come prepared...either with or against the topic.. with the motion or against it, and I just would split the lecture into two parties where students start arguing with or against this topic.. Also, I would make sessions where students just come out without speaking, and they just receive a bunch of questions that they are supposed to respond to; we do this very often. Also, I requested a couple of times... that students would go and bring me informal vocabulary from films, documentaries, from T.V shows... American English... to list them, and make copies for their classmates where every student would go home with a long list of informal vocabulary that they need to be acquainted with in order to properly understand things that they listen to on media, and when they use English, as well, they might use them. In addition to all of this, there are out-of-class assignments that I have assigned from the beginning of the course the most important of which is that students are supposed to bring me every time they come something we call extensive listening that they do themselves, in addition to the listening that we do inside the classroom...So at the end of each meeting, as they leave the class they are supposed to hand me things that they have listened to the day before...from a film for example, from a documentary, talk show, or any kind of English that they might have encountered...This is very important because we raised a slogan at the beginning of the course saying that working outside by yourself every day is very much more important than only attending a class and taking things from the teacher, and just finishing a course...Learning is a life-long journey, and students need to understand this right from the beginning, and listening outside the classroom every day for couple of minutes is 100 times more important than working with me on the materials available only in this course. So, we have a cocktail of different things that we do every time. One last thing is that every time they deliver a presentation, we discuss the topic they present, and I would open the floor for discussion, so that students can exchange the ideas with me, listen to my opinion, and I learn from their expertise in life about different topics...In fact, after all presentations are done, I would give a couple of minutes for each topic so that students would give their say regarding their opinions...We raise questions, we give opinion, and we might give a counter-opinion, so that we may generate discussion and interaction.

Instructor (3): Our class here at...university is basically the following: Students have to write and present three kinds of speeches. They have to write the narrative, the self-introduction, and they have to do a persuasion speech. We let them be creative, able to express themselves the way they want. I don't tell them what topic. They have the liberty to design the speech if they want as they please. So in

the class, there's a lot of speeches. To prepare them for speeches we have like group-work, class presentations, group presentations. We watch a lot of videos on speeches, and right now we're showing them different kinds of speeches, and they have to critique them; what is good.. what is not, is the speaker effective? Are they clear? Do they have a good introduction or not. So they're now critiquing our speeches. That's what we're doing at our classes.

Instructor (4): I do a variety of activities; you know, integration of the four skills, discussions, presentations...It's all clear in the course syllabus; all types of activities, many speeches they deliver.. they view videos.. we have discussions. We try, also, to connect theory with practice; you know, they read a little bit about theory as self-study. I just ask them about it; I make quizzes just to make sure they've read the material. They reach an understanding to the material, and then most of the class is practice. So, this is what we do. We give them guidelines, structure, and then they have to think about a particular topic they like, and they try to prepare their own speech.

Instructor (5): We have a compiled material as I said. We do exercises that work on specific skills, or we read texts that talk about specific concepts or ideas about language. I always try to have the students involved as much as possible, and the exercise we did today is that two students were asked to facilitate an exercise in class, so that they were learning to teach the students about an exercise which is using body as part of communication.. you're also communicating by how you move your body language. So this is a very good exercise in that it's not just focusing on pronunciation and articulation, but also on how to communicate in terms of how to help people learn, so it becomes the role of teachers, and then the class as a whole just evaluate them. This is what we often do.. doing an exercise and together as a class we evaluate it, and we do it in the way I spoke about today in terms of a constructive feedback, and point out what is effective and working and what could be used or done differently or improved. This is generally the format.. exercising in class.. discussing the material that we read.. always adapting and adding.. this is very new that I decided to have them do this assignment for Thursday. I adapt it in terms of what came out in class.. I didn't plan it beforehand. It's a mix of different exercises that are always been adapted every semester. Every semester I teach the classes very different because it ends up in terms of what students need.. what they want.. what they're interested in.. what new material that we find could respond to their needs. We also created a Facebook page, so that we have a closed Facebook page for the class. They can post links. I have assignments for them to look at certain links online for certain videos to respond to. We have a list of links on the course back in terms of looking at pronunciation emphasis.. basic training links.. sites online where they practice and hear certain words. So we give these kinds of resources. Dr..... uses this much more than I do. She's become very interested in using multimedia and videos. She requires a classroom that has a smart board, so she's always able to access media and use it. I use it some, but she really is using it very effectively. Also the idea of video-taping them and having them coming and be watched is also done as I said.

Instructor (6): You've seen us. It was not a real sample of what we usually do, but activities include like I said in the questionnaire.. I use a lot of audio-visuallys.. I use listening with pictures.. we use media.. we use text that they have to read and comment on the language.. to analyze the language. So this semester, we're going also to include non-verbal language. We always teach them body language.. what it means.. using hand gestures and facial expressions or movement of the body.

Instructor (7): I think I have already discussed in question three. Again, I have them do public speaking, I have them debate, I have them do critical thinking, and I provide enough opportunities for them to engage in real social interactional conversations. However, as I said the drawback in our classes is the number of students in each class, which deprives students from having the same opportunity, or if we have to do it, it takes us so long, and it consumes a lot of time and a lot of effort.

6. How do you assess your students' performance in the oral skill?

Instructor (1): I assess it using groups of two or three to have conversations with each other using language functions and vocabulary in the book. I assess them by their pronunciation.. body language.. If they're reading the material from a piece of paper, or if they were memorizing it.. how is their facial gestures, but other than that.. it's very subjective and very difficult to grade oral presentations.

Instructor (2): Generally speaking, assessment has to be built on practice, so whatever you do assessment has to reflect that...In the oral class, I assess students in light of the different activities and tasks they get involved with, this is one thing. Also, my assessment to my students is versatile and doesn't take only one form of assessment...the formal and traditional one where students memorize things and sit for a written exam. This is part of it but it is never sufficient. As you know, professors these days have started to use alternative methods for assessment, and I'm convinced teachers have to use different ways of assessing students. My assessment in this course is rather informal because teaching speaking has to be informal and shouldn't be done using pen and paper... Again, I test their presentations.. I meet them in my office for informal conferences and interviews.. I assess their linguistic and personality performance when they deliver presentations.. I would observe their interaction throughout the course from which I draw conclusions about their ability to use the language...I also record collections of their extensive listening that they bring to me all the time. In short, my assessment is varied, rather informal. I rely on different techniques and strategies, and all these reflect what we do inside the class such as exercises and tasks.

Instructor (3): Rubrics. We use only rubrics to assess. With every speech that we have.. with every assignment, there is a rubric.. a very detailed one, which I can show you if you like, so that's the only way we assess, and we actually video-tape them...For the persuasive essay, they have to persuade us of something, and the students say whether they're persuaded or not, so they evaluate each other, but in the end we only use rubrics as a form of assessment.

Instructor (4): For every particular activity, we work really good as a team. We design rubrics for every activity. The rubrics are given to the students at the same time with the guidelines for the

activity, and they try to use it like a checklist for the activity. So, it's rubrics, and at the end of every activity they receive the rubrics filled by the teacher as assessment.

Instructor (5): This is part of the discussion that we had today. Largely, it's based on their oral performance in class, so we have two formal presentations they do in class, and we prepare them beforehand; one of them is video-recorded, so they come in and evaluate themselves. We have a final group project presentation; this is based on a research topic that they choose. They do a research, interview people outside of the university or inside, and they develop the material.. they do readings. They don't give me anything written, but they create a presentation together that they perform in front of the class. So this is also part of the grade. It's different than the oral presentations which is that you have a text in front of you or text you prepared, and you memorize, and you present. This is how together we present and do presentation in front of the rest of the students based on the work that they've done by themselves, and figure out how do we transition from one speaker to the next, and how to make use of multimedia if they want to do a power point.. if they want to show a video.. how they have to prepare all of this in the time they have. So it's about being responsible in terms of organizing logistics.. in terms of asking and answering questions from the audience, so it's learning about oral communication skills on a different level that's beyond just oral presentations. So their evaluation is based on progress and development; we evaluate how they develop and improve. They're not based on some ideal standard, but they're evaluated against themselves; how they were at the beginning and how they leave the class. I always tell them I'm not comparing you with another speaker because you all're starting from a different place. The point is how you end up from where you start. This is how I grade them.

Instructor (6): Assessment is like the following: First, as they give presentations we video them when they are in practice. We give them something to prepare and they have to present it in class, and they present. After each presentation, students comment on the skills that they have to apply, and whether the person applied them or not. What they do they can do to improve and should avoid and so on. Then in the presentations I video them, and I give them the form. They observe each other, and they come watch themselves, and as they observe their work they evaluate it, so they figure out whether they did well.. which things they have to avoid, and they always say that this is very helpful because seeing themselves gives them better idea. We don't give them any written homework to assess their writing skills because this is just oral skills. Yes, I give them a written assignment where they have to summarize certain texts, or they have to give reflections on a video or things like this.

Instructor (7): I would say they are girl, but the possibility to maximize their ability to be excellent is available, but again the recourses here, you know, are very limited and very bounded; therefore, we can do much about it. But as I said, if the opportunity arises, we will certainly live up to that expectation.

7. Do you think the current methodologies used for teaching and assessing the oral skill of English have failed to meet our students' needs and expectations, or the opposite?

Instructor (1): Language is something very hard to acquire. Speaking is a difficult skill. It's like one of the highest levels to learn. Just to have two courses is not enough, especially when you're coming from public schools where they're teaching English using Arabic.. I feel this is a big problem.. Many of students are coming from villages.. small schools.. even public schools in small districts, and teachers don't emphasize using English in the classroom.. Also, the students' needs.. if you need English, you're going to try harder.. you're going to try outside of the classroom.. you're going to try other methods, but, otherwise, if you don't need it, you're not going to take advantage of what is in the classroom, or what's available outside, so current methodologies depends on students whether or not they work hard enough to absorb what we're teaching. I feel if our teaching methods are conducive, we'll teach them, but they need more opportunities.

Instructor (2): Of course not. I'm with the novel methodologies and strategies for testing students, but the problem is not in them but in the situation at hand. Sometimes current methodologies might not suit a particular group of learners, and we shouldn't be judging a strategy or technique as wrong or right 100%. We evaluate it in light of how it is used, with who, when and where, and whether your use of this method or strategy is beneficial and fulfilling the aim for which you have a course for a particular group of learners...and whether you're meeting their needs.

Instructor (3): Of course they're effective for some. You know, this is a required course; this is not a course that they can choose to take or not, so a lot of them don't like to. So, when we're forcing them to speak, they don't like. I do think we meet our students' needs; however, do they meet our expectations as teachers.. no, not always. I set a standard really high, but it's not always as I want.. I get disappointed quite a bit. Either you feel there is not enough effort, or you have students who're always shy. So, well I think we're doing relatively well.

Instructor (4): I think the opposite; it's supporting the students. Something else is that we try to adopt new methods and adapt them to our situation, and at the same time we keep modifying and developing all the tools we're using in the classroom. I mean we realize what could have been done in a better way, and we try to think about it and adopt it for the following time. So this is how we developed this course. To tell you the truth, I've started this course from scratch, and then I've had others working with me.. different people, but I was the one who's been working throughout this period all the time. I tried to see what other universities are doing overseas. I got in touch with many professors. I've seen new textbooks until we've reached this stage, and, still, we keep modifying and updating all the material, adding more skills and so on.

Instructor (5): To be honest, because I'm not trained in EFL, I haven't done too much research on what the teaching methodologies are.. how they're used. So I can't judge so much on that, but this is something we thought about.. always struggle about in the department... You are required to give them

a grade that is in number and to come up with this number somehow in evaluation, and I find it very difficult to give students numbers as their final grade or as their midterm grade because you're evaluating them on skills that they're gaining, and it's relative in terms of their own ability and in terms of what is effective in communication. There isn't a certain standard in terms of.. is this correct grammar or not correct grammar, and it goes beyond that. So I think evaluation is very difficult, and it's connected to how the teaching methodology is. I think the teaching methodology for this class has to be creative, and it has to move beyond textbooks and beyond numbers.. beyond the same course every semester. I think it needs to change with the students and their needs.. to change with their interests, with their abilities...If this is happening, then I think it's effective.. If it's not, I think there's a problem with the methodology.

Instructor (6): passed the question.

Instructor (7): I wouldn't say they have failed, but they haven't measured up. As I said, there's the potential provided that we have the recourses to really improve, boost, and maximize student's ability to speak out.

8. How do you rate your students' motivation to participate in the oral activities and discussions?

Instructor (1): This is very subjective, and it depends on the student and their motivation. If they have a need for English, of course, they'll try hard.. they'll be willing to make mistakes, but if they're just there to take a grade, they won't participate. Getting them to do anything like asking them to go to the dentist and bull their teeth back. It's very difficult, so how I rate them. It depends on the student, but in general most of the English majors are motivated. The others.. not so much.. they just need the grade.

Instructor (2): Compared to other classes, they are fairly motivated because I motivate and encourage them all the time just to speak and don't fear making mistakes. I feel that, doing so, they listen to me compared to other classes, especially where participation in the oral class is in the center or in the heart of this course; without it students wouldn't improve, so they have to be motivated to work on this. I always encourage them that they're going to be rewarded and their grades will improve in case they give me extra work. So, I believe that their motivation depends to a great extent on the teacher's encouragement which is something I do myself.

Instructor (3): We have very large classes about 30 students each. As for motivation, you always have good, good ones, but it's always the smaller number than the ones who don't participate. Again, the English Department here is more than 70% women. I have 60 students.. I have only three boys. The girls are very shy; you know, they tend to participate less because we also teach students who're going to be teachers.. they're soft-spoken, and, you know, they're not the type that go try to persuade so hard. The number of unmotivated are always higher than the ones that are motivated, unfortunately.

Instructor (4): The question was missing.

Instructor (5): In general, I find students motivated to respond. I mean that they're engaged in discussion.. they want to speak. In this class you have students who want to speak more than others,

but this is also a class that we focus on incorporating everyone. In the class either as a presenter or as an evaluator you give feedback to other students, so everyone is participating. I don't have people who do not participate, and even if they don't, I'll work with them. If they're uncomfortable with certain exercises, I'll find a different way with them to participate. Maybe on the outside I'm observing what's happening and making comments, but I find ways to make everyone participate. Generally I find those people are motivated.

Instructor (6): Sometimes, they're more motivated than others. I tell you, these two past weeks they have been unmotivated not because of the class, but because they had exams, and this system of giving exams on Tuesday and Thursday and the class comes before 2:00 o'clock, so if they have literature exam they skip the class.. if they have linguistics exam they skip the class. So every class you have four or five people that skip classes, and they come to class unprepared or not prepared enough. But many of them usually are motivated, and they think it's very helpful for them, and it depend sometimes on the topic. Sometimes you need to give them certain things they have to get some knowledge about, which is a bit stiff, but other times, you know, when we for instance analyze talks, I like to do certain games. Lost in translation, they like it. Making or forming a story as a group, they like it. When you do activities like this, they get more motivated and enthusiastic about it.

Instructor (7): Well, this depends on the students, depends on the teacher, and depends on the topic. Sometimes you see students very much interested; and therefore, you should always find topics of great interest to students to get them motivated to participate and so on. There are many tips which you can really use, and I normally use them in my class to motivate the students.

9. From your experience, do you think the Palestinian English teachers at our universities are qualified enough to teach the oral skill of English?

Instructor (1): Yes, I think they are very qualified.

Instructor (2): Well, I don't know whether they're qualified enough or not because I can only talk about myself. I might talk about the qualifications that they're supposed to hold in order to be qualified. A teacher shouldn't be teaching an oral class if s/he didn't take training in teaching the oral class.. if s/he's not certified, if s/he doesn't have experience of how to generate discussion and to have a task-based class mainly useful for teaching the oral class. S/he has to be a native-speaker or native-like. S/he has to be very flexible, motivating and enthusiastic. All of these are qualifications that we need to have in teachers teaching oral classes.

Instructor (3): It's so hard for me to answer that because I'm not from here. I mean I don't have exposure to other universities. I've been here.. that's it. You know, the two teachers I teach with are very competent, but I can't comment on other teachers.

Instructor (4): I think yes.. I'm sure yes because we know the needs of our students, and if I'm a person who really is aware of what is taking place about our needs in the market, our students, and what's taking place in other parts of the world, then we can because, you know, the world now is the like global village, so we can prepare our students for what is to come. We need them to be able to

communicate wherever they are.. in any context.. in any situation they're put because from what I see communication is number one. You know, in any program even for further studies, for graduate programs, you see one of their objectives is that in whatever field they need the students to be able to communicate, you know, maybe their work, their thesis.. to communicate well whatever the results they have reached.. whether it is a lab results, or to communicate well on the job.. because you need really to communicate whatever the ideas you have. This is the main objective.

Instructor (5): I think it's a question that should be asked to every teacher in general. It's not just about the oral skill. I don't think there's anything specific about the oral skill that makes it different than teaching literature or writing. You know, I think if you know material, it's very different than being able to teach. Being able to teach is another set of skills. So, what you need to do as a teacher to serve the university, and what you need to do in order to be able to teach right is to do the research.. to do the work.. to self-evaluate yourself.. to talk to others to figure out how effectively you teach the course even if you're not trained in it. In terms of the faculty if qualified enough, it's not something that I can judge. I don't sit in other teachers' classes and evaluate them, so I don't know. I think it's a question for any faculty member anywhere in the world, and it should be something taken seriously at our university.

Instructor (6): I don't know about other English teachers in other universities.

Instructor (7): Yes, they are. They're highly competent, highly qualified, provided. If we give them the opportunity and the material, they can excel, I guess.

10. How can we overcome the difficulties pertaining to teaching the oral skill?

Instructor (1): We need to get children below the age of six to hear English.. to speak English.. to practice the language. The younger the better.. not using Arabic.. using English.. I think this would be the biggest help.

Instructor (2): By eliminating these difficulties. Instead of having one course for teaching the oral class, we need to have two courses.. why not three? Instead of having 45 students in one single class, why not make them fifteen in this particular course because students' practice is a must in this course, and the oral class shouldn't be teacher-centered where all the load and work is only on the teacher's shoulders. Mainly, by reducing the number of students to the utmost of our ability, and by having extra training time for teaching the oral class which comes in the form of having extra classes we can overcome many of the difficulties we do face in teaching the oral class.

Instructor (3): the question was missing.

Instructor (4): the question was missing.

Instructor (5): Just as I said before. We need to continually evaluate ourselves as teachers.. our methodologies.. our ways of evaluating.. adapting each semester.. changing the course. That's just what we need constantly working on.

Instructor (6): We try to encourage students. Those, for instance, who are scared to stand up.. who think that they don't have good English.. who lack confidence, you know, we push them and

encourage them, and with the oral skills we go. We have a certain schedule that we go by; we teach them, first, the oral language elements, we focus on language itself, what it does, the use of language, the meanings.. deconstructing the meanings of words, fluency and so on. They also have to be prepared before they come for a presentation.

11. Do you receive enough training in the oral skill of English (e.g., workshops), or there is shortage from the English Department in this regard?

Instructor (1): No, there's not enough workshops. There is not enough training in that it takes time.. and money (you have to pay one to train others), and at this university.. it's just not there.. you're trying to teach others.. to teach us is harder.. Most of us get training in our universities; so you feel you're born a teacher.. you have the natural ability to teach.. but I think many who're just English majors have no idea about the methodology to teach; they need workshops.. they need the skills.. and I think that should be taught_ how to teach.

Instructor (2): There is no enough training. The training that I build my work on is the one that I got when I was a student completing my MA training period. Unfortunately, we don't have enough workshops held at the English Department where the teacher might get some chance to develop their awareness, methodologies and techniques in a particular course, one of these is the oral course. Teachers have to develop by team teaching collaboration, by inflection, attending further classes and workshops in the field, which to a great extent, is not available at our department.

Instructor (3): No, we don't get enough training in the oral skills. We do get workshops all the time, constantly with the educational center we have, but whether they're on the oral skill of English.. No.

Instructor (4): To tell you the truth I'm a person who always try to go for professional development activities, and now I have my network of contacts from other professors in other U.S. universities. I'm always in touch.. I see what they're doing. I try to learn. You know, we learn from each other.. we share experiences. At this stage we share experiences, and always there's a room for the new experiences, new information, and so on. This is what I believe in.. continuous professional development. We do hold discussions and workshops here to a certain extent, but I don't rely on this. I've always had my contacts. There are different kinds of professional development; it could be a workshop, training, meeting with other professors, conferences like last year I've been to three conferences. In these three conferences, I was able to meet some professors that I personally have known earlier , and I was able to interact with them. In the evenings we would sit to discuss and share experiences with these renowned professors who are really ready to share their experiences.

Instructor (5): There's no training in general even when we have new faculty members. You know, each faculty member is giving their responsibility of how they feel they want to develop themselves. You know, when I first came here I asked other faculty members if I can sit in their course because I wanted to see and wanted to learn. I've also read work on pedagogy and pedagogical methods. I'm not trained in it, but I've read and done research about it. But I think it's a responsibility for each faculty member to show that kind of desire. I don't think it needs to be institutionalized. I don't think...as an

institution needs to make it compulsory upon faculty members that they need to take certain courses because it might not necessarily serve their needs, but I think that each faculty member should take the responsibility to evaluate themselves and what they need to do to develop.

Instructor (6): I did not receive any training. It's all based on what I gained as experience in teaching. I didn't go to conferences related to teaching English. I'm more interested in gender and women studies. That's where my work lies.

Instructor (7): I don't think there is shortage. We do have some workshops not necessarily on oral communication, but I think we have enough workshops available on campus where the faculty members can draw a lot benefit from.

12. Do you have any suggestions to effectively improve the skill of speaking among the Palestinian students?

Instructor (1): Yes, start early listening.. participating in English conversations. You can do it with a friend.. you can do it one hour a day.. just have English time.. Here, people in these days are very proficient in English. You can find someone who speaks English well. I, as a native-speaker, have to get around.. have to shop, and I find people who can speak English, so there is ability I find it with children. Children can help me the most, so it's coming around.. I think there is a big improvement in the education system here with the movies, videos, internet. They have more access to English, and it is helping them, so my suggestion... use them as resources.

Instructor (2): Yes, of course. First of all, changing the system of teaching English as it is the reason behind the miseries that we face not only in the oral class, but in all classes working towards qualifying students to become proficient in English. We teach English in a wrong way, so far, not only in schools but also in English departments in the Palestinian universities. We teach English extensively not intensively. Intensive English practice and teaching is something that we don't have at the English Department; we give students courses and classes that are very few, not much timing, the training is limited, and students' opportunities for language use is minimum. If we want to improve, not only in speaking but in all language skills, we need to have conditions for teaching and learning and give students the liberty to use language. We need to double or triple the amount of training that we have...If we eliminate these problems, I'm sure that students' proficiency is going to improve a great deal. Thank you.

Instructor (3): My suggestion is basically, and I always tell the students, Practice! Practice! Practice! I think, you know, I can't comment on what students did in high school before coming here. I've never been through Al-Tawjihi Exam. I've never been in the system here. I just think there is not enough speaking from the very beginning. There's not a system or curriculum that allows them to speak enough, so when they come here, we're forcing them to speak, with less writing and less grammar. We're asking them, actually, to speak. It's difficult for a lot of them because, you know, I've come across a lot of them. They've never had discussions and debates were they're forced to speak in an academic situation. They learned grammar.. they're taught to study.. they're taught to take

tests. You know, they come from a background where it is necessary that they need to speak a lot, and they'll never get better if they don't practice to speak. They can write me grammatically correct sentences, but can they have a conversation with me about the Palestinian politics.. no they can't. Some can , but I definitely think there needs to be more practice, and that's what we try to do here at...University. We really, literally, assign oral presentations in every single class.

Instructor (4): Students need to be exposed to the language. I always believe that there is a space to do more, you know, whether through encouraging them do more at home because after all they're going to do the work. We just tell them how to do the work, but we are able to give them ideas. We also can do more at the department level, you know, from the English club, the English magazines.. to try to have ways to have these students get exposed to the language because they're not using the language. This is the problem. So in some way or another we always try to find ways to tell the students on how to listen to English.. to use English.

Instructor (5): The recommendation is gaining feedback from students. I think it's also very important to hear from them, to know what they need to improve their skills. So, I did teach once English for the Master students in the university, and it was a one-semester-course, and they had to tell me that this should be at least two semesters; you know, something that needs to be continually practiced, and this course possibly as well. Maybe your students are interested, in the second level of the course, incorporating these methodologies in other courses that they take. So, I think it's a lot about learning by students' feedback because it's evaluating on both sides. We can evaluate something, but they also have the source of evaluating themselves and their ability to improve. So I think it should be a component that we need to think about. As for students, it depends on each person or individual. I have some students who just speak very well in English, but they're not confident, or they're not able to communicate their ideas effectively. Even though they might have fluent language, or they have full control over the language in terms of being aware of their volume or their voice production or their tone, so what's the benefit if they're not conscious of these things. I don't think there's any one way. I think it's very important that classes are small, so that you can give individual attention to each person because each person is going to have something different to develop or work on. But I think it is incredibly important that the course is always adapted to the students, and it's not based on textbook. For me this is really important.

Instructor (6): They have to start from school, and they have to employ efficient, proficient, and competent teachers. The level of performance and competence of English graduates is not satisfactory, so most of them go and take teaching employment and start teaching, and they are not competent and not fluent. They don't have the oral skills, and they don't have good pronunciation skills, and so on, so they will not teach properly. Schools also don't focus on the four skills. The system of teaching English as a foreign language has to be changed. Students need to work on themselves as they have been taught wrong pronunciation. On their own they cannot; they can if you provide them with the aids. For instance, if you have a lab, they can go and practice, record themselves, listen to themselves,

repeat, practice the oral skills on their own, and they can do that. Sometimes I give them links to things on computer. Usually a few of them check them, and sometimes almost all of them check them, and it depends on where they come from, if they have a computer available to them, if they have internet. Infrastructure has to be set, and they have to be prepared to learn on their own.. self-learning and to spend enough time doing that.

Instructor (7): As I said, the number of students in the class matters a lot in producing quality of students and for providing laboratories equipped with social media and internet for all students. There is some but not adequate enough to accommodate for all students. So, we need recourses; that's basically my suggestion. By the way, I've trained American students to become good, competent public speakers. I think I can contribute to the whole community in Palestine. You came to the right person about this subject. This is something that I did in America, and I was trained by an American professor; he made me train American students. Actually I have a book about public speaking. The question is that our recourses are limited. Actually, this course is necessary not only for college students, it is necessary for public officials, doctors, lawyers, engineers, managers, bank executives, and employees... Our problem in the Palestinian community is communication. When we speak we don't listen, and when we listen we just listen to ourselves not to our addressee, and therefore our answer to the addressee is wrong. Believe me. I've been living here for ten years, and I've been just tuning in and listening attentively to people. Our major problem is really listening and communication.

B. Unplanned/ Prompt Questions:

Instructor (1) was asked: "How do you assess your students' performance?"

Answer: I take in consideration their beginning level, their backgrounds, how well they can speak, if they can understand me as a native speaker, and I try to build on what they have. I try to use peer-groups in the conversations, so they can practice with one another. They can listen for mispronunciations; they can pick it up. They can learn the skill; they can assess themselves. So, I assess them using groups. I assess them in doing their own presentations about something they feel strongly about, especially persuasive; how to persuade people. Usually, that gets them going, encourages them to try, and I rate that on their body language, eye contact, pronunciation, and whether the topic is interesting or not.

Instructor (2) was asked: "Do feel that teachers are more restricted to certain methodologies in teaching and testing, or they feel free to use the ones that are suitable for their teaching?"

Answer: There are some restrictions; some regulations would call on teachers to use traditional methodologies.. the exam issue, but I feel because of the special features or nature of the oral class, a teacher has just to start using different practices in testing different classes. We are not teaching, by

the way, a theme, topic or content course were students read, and you ask them in the material itself in the form of a formal exam.. a written one. The nature of the oral class and the activities that we employ would dictate that you test students using different methodologies which I encourage very much of course. I myself do this and don't mind using them.

Instructor (3) was asked: "Do you feel the need of having more courses in the oral skill?"

Answer: Actually, we have two in this department; we have Oral Communication then they take Advanced Oral, so they graduate from...University having taken two, plus their seminar is all oral. It is in the oral presentation of their thesis, plus in most if not all of the literature courses we now require that they do one oral presentation as part of the class. So, here at...University, they're emphasizing a lot on presentations orally; from the second year onwards they're presenting every single semester.

Instructor (3) was also asked: "Do you feel that the oral skill or speaking needs extra focus over the other skills?"

Answer: No, I think the four skills are equally important. I mean, you can be a great speaker but write horribly.. that doesn't work because if you were a good speaker and not a good writer it doesn't serve a purpose, or you can be a great writer and you don't speak well. When you go out for the job force.. I mean if you go interview for a big company, and you can't express yourself, I don't think it's gonna help you. I think they're equally important.

Instructor (4) was asked: "How do you find your students' level of proficiency?"

Answer: "We have quite different levels in every class; in this class I have one student who's almost like a native speaker. So what do I do when I have this, I video-tape the student, and we use it like a sample-model for other students. It really works because students like to observe, especially if I show this to another class, you know, because her classmates have already seen her. When I use this, of course I take permission from the student, other students view this video, and it really draws their attention more than looking at any speech from YouTube because they see how a classmate is doing an excellent work. I also ask the student to tell them how s/he prepared, what did she do...etc.

Instructor (5) was asked: "What about viewing and discussing videos and e-learning, do you refer to such techniques?"

Answer: "We do. I mean we look at videos in terms of different ways; what makes in engaging a speaker, what makes someone and their mind communicate in an engaging manner, so we begin in many different ways of communicating effectively. Someone can speak quietly, but they communicate in a way that you want to hear everything they say, so there's something effective, even if it's quiet. Also we've created a Facebook page, so we have a closed page for the class where they can post

links.. I have assignments for them to look at certain links online.. certain videos to respond to. We have a list of links on the course packet in terms of looking at pronunciation.. emphasis. Basically training site links.. they can practice or hear certain words, so we give them this kind of recourse.

Instructor (5) was also asked: “In general, do you as faculty members attend conferences, hold meetings to discuss certain issues about this very class?”

Answer: “There’s no training in general. For this class, we have meetings among the professors, so we have coordinator for the meetings, and we always meet at the very beginning and at the very end of each semester. This semester we had a number of long meetings in terms of re-evaluation the course, getting feedback from different instructors. You’ll see when you attend a different instructor’s class, it’s gonna be a completely different class. We’re very different as instructors because we focus on different things, she’s from a different place than I am. We respond to the students’ needs, so it’s going to be different. We learn from each other, and I think that’s very important.

Instructor (7) was asked: “Do you adopt a certain methodology you use in classroom; CLT, Direct Method.. or a mixed one?”

Answer: Not really. My teaching philosophy is that the teacher works as a referee, and students are the players in the playground. So, they do everything, but your role is limited and bounded to showing, directing, correcting in a limited time. Students have to perform and I watch them and guide them slowly here and there, but they have to do the work. As I said they are the players in a soccer game, and I’m the referee; when there’s a penalty, I whistle, but as long as they’re kicking the ball. So, I have to give them the freedom to try out, to speak out. Even if they make mistakes. It’s ok; the first time they make mistakes, the second time probably they’ll overcome such mistakes. And shyness.. how can they overcome anxiety and shyness? By having them do it. I’m acquainted with the Direct Method, for example, but sometimes I incorporate it indirectly without knowing that I’m really resorting and using this method here. My focal point is that I have to provide students with opportunity to speak out, to excel and to engage in a constructive dialogue. That’s the most important thing. Now, what tools you use, what tips, what strategies, you are free, actually. There isn’t a specific strategy, and there isn’t a perfect strategy. You can try some strategy, sometimes it works, other times it doesn’t. You have to keep renewing your lexicon of strategies, and so on.

Appendix E: Class Observations

The first visit was to two oral classes at Hebron University on Tuesday, Dec. 3rd, 2013. In class one, the instructor was a native speaker of English. She invited the researcher to attend her class and introduced her and the objective of her visit (i.e., distributing a questionnaire) to the students. Before beginning the 45-minute-class, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to the students and gave the teacher her copy of the instructors' questionnaire. Questionnaires were filled out within 10 minutes. After that, two students gave their presentations. Each student presented her topic without interruption from the teacher and students. After finishing the presentations, the teacher asked her students to comment on each presentation from many perspectives; such as, the content of the presentation, delivery of it, posture of the presenter, her voice, her language, eye contact...etc. It was like a short discussion among students, presenters and the teacher where students commented on the negatives and positives of the presentations. Positive atmosphere was felt as the teacher (a native speaker of English) was more a facilitator of the class and had a friendly relationship with her students, and the class was more learner-centered. In other words, students felt free to express themselves. The teacher did not use technology aids, and seating of students was in traditional rows. Based on the class description, it was rather half-traditional.

As for class two at Hebron University, the researcher came at the end of the class and distributed questionnaires to students and the teacher who was an Arab teacher. Students when asked about the nature of the class, they said it was full of discussions, group work and oral presentations, in addition to audio-visual activities. The class cannot be described more. It is worth mentioning that both teachers at Hebron university work according to the same course outline, but each one seems to have her/his own policy in teaching.

The second visit was to Bethlehem University, on Wednesday, Dec. 4th, 2013. In class three, students and their native-speaker teacher, first, filled out the questionnaires. The teacher, then, gave a lesson about the disciplines of delivering a public speech, using a data-show projector that shows a Microsoft Word document provided with illustrations and cartoons to make it clearer and more attractive for her students to get involved. The teacher was more an informer, providing learners with the needed information through hints she prepared on the data show. Students had the major role, by explaining, commenting, and exemplifying on each point, while the teacher, friendlily, was miming using her voice and body language. As a result, a positive atmosphere predominated the class. It is good to remark that the class was audio-visually equipped with a fixed data show and connected with an internet service in order to show any video or online document on spot when needed. Students' seating was in U-shape. Based on the class-description, the class was rather non-traditional.

On Friday, Dec. 6th, 2013, the researcher visited class four at Bethlehem University where the teacher was an Arab. After filling out the questionnaires, students had a revision in the basics of delivering a speech and how to present different types of topics (e.g., narrative, article, poetry...etc.) in a kind of preparation for the final exam. Their non-native teacher, in turn, explained for her students how the assessment is going to be distributed, using a Microsoft Word document showed on a head projector. English was only used and Arabic was banned except for few words uttered here and there in the class. Students' seating was in traditional rows. The class can be described as half traditional; though it was equipped with technology aids, students were rarely interactive, and the teacher spoke the majority of class time. It is good to mention that the oral class instructors at Bethlehem University indicated that they work as one team; they used "kind of" same materials, apply the same strategy in teaching, and adopted the same rubrics for assessment (**See appendix F**). In addition, they

reported that they hold regular meetings to discuss each and every detail in their classes in order to work on the problems they face and improve themselves and their students.

The fifth visit was to Birzeit University, on Tuesday, Dec. 10th, 2013. In class five, the teacher was a native speaker of the language. Questionnaires were filled out first. Two students, then, gave their presentations using small flash cards. The presentations were assessed by the teacher. After finishing presentations, the teacher asked her students to comment on both girls' performances. At the end of the class, students played a refreshing memory game. Instructed by the teacher, they stood in a big circle all around the class; each one had to bear in mind two of their favorite words. When the teacher counted down, the game started with an appointed student who said their first word out loud to a facing colleague who, in turn, said their own word to another facing colleague, and so on till all students say their two words. The teacher, then, asked her students to mention some of the words they remember from the game, which was fun and helpful for refreshing students' memory, and enriching for their repertoire of lexis. The class more non-traditional as it was rather learner-centered; the teacher was more a facilitator, and almost all students' voices were heard. Presentations were not script-based, and they were assessed with reference to a checklist (i.e., not sure if it was a standard rubric). Games took part in the class; yet, technology was noticed not to be used.

The same day, Tuesday, Dec. 10th, class six was also visited at Birzeit University. The teacher was an Arab. She introduced the researcher and the aim of her questionnaire to the students. After the questionnaires were filled out, the teacher distributed copies of a paper containing an Arabic term used to refer to an unmarried/single person especially females. The term holds different nominations and meanings in Arabic Dictionaries (i.e., Aanes), which means in English "spinster". Students had five minutes to have a look at the term and discuss their ideas in groups; then the teacher started a discussion with her students about the

sociocultural connotations of the word “Aanness” and its gradual transmission from a neutral meaning into a rather negative meaning used for calling unmarried mature women. Many students gave their opinions in the discussion. English was only used and Arabic was banned though the teacher was an Arab. After that, the teacher asked her students to open their books to look at a poem describing discrimination against black people. Students gave their opinions regarding the subject. The lesson was more about integrated skills including “silent” reading, listening, and speaking because students had to look at a script, read it silently, and then discuss it aloud. Students’ seating was arranged in groups. The class could not be decided if teacher-centered or learner-centered because both students and the teacher had fair chances to speak. Technology was not used although it was reported by the teacher in the interview to be used. According to one observation, the class could be described as half-traditional.

On Thursday, Feb. 13th, 2014, the researcher visited to An-Najah University. She did not catch class seven to distribute the questionnaire and do the observation due to distance from Hebron to Nablus to arrive early enough to attend the class. However, the researcher had the chance to meet instructor seven who was an Arab, interview him, and give him a questionnaire copy to fill out.

In class eight at An-Najah University, the teacher was a native speaker of English. After filling out questionnaires. There was an open discussion about the differences between the Palestinians and British cultures in peoples’ life styles, manners, habits...etc. It was an exciting topic for students to discuss. One good thing which was noticed is that unfamiliar words, expressions, or habits new for students were written by the teacher and students on the board to make it easier for everyone to get introduced to and remember. Only English was used as the teacher did not know Arabic, and it was like a give-and-take discussion involving both students and the teacher. Technology was not used, and students’ seating was in traditional rows. The class was rather half-traditional.

Appendix F: Samples of Assessment Rubrics

Rubric 1

(For more information on this **Peer Critique Evaluation** option, read *Oral Presentation Evaluations-Pros and Cons*)

Peer Evaluation Sheet for Oral Presentations

Presenters _____

Content **Comments**

- Began with a clear purpose
- Showed command of the material
- Supported assertions with evidence
- Used adequate and appropriate visuals
- Used material suited to this audience's needs, knowledge, concerns, and interests
- Gave a sufficient amount of information

Organization

- Presented a clear line of reasoning
- Used transitions effectively
- Avoided needless digressions
- Summarized before concluding

Style

- Seemed confident, relaxed, and likeable
- Seemed in control of the speaking situation
- Showed appropriate enthusiasm
- Pronounced, enunciated, and spoke well
- Used appropriate hand gestures, tone, volume, and delivery rate
- Had good posture and eye contact
- Answered questions concisely and convincingly

Overall professionalism: Superior _____ Acceptable _____ Needs work _____

Reviewer: _____

-Amy R. Slagell, Director of the Fundamentals of Public Speaking Program, Iowa State University

Rubric 2

(For more information on this **Holistic Grading Approach**, read *Oral Presentation Evaluations-Pros and Cons*)

Informative Speech Feedback Form

Speaker _____

Topic _____

Guide: O-Outstanding S-Satisfactory N-Needs Work

Introduction		Comments
Attention and interest	O S N	
Revealed topic	O S N	
Established credibility	O S N	
Previewed the body	O S N	
Related to audience	O S N	
Strong delivery of intro	O S N	
<hr/>		
Body		
Main points clear	O S N	
Pattern of organization helpful	O S N	
Support materials adequate	O S N	
Content accurate and interesting	O S N	
Language use strong	O S N	
Connectives effective	O S N	
Visual aid content strong	O S N	
<hr/>		
Conclusion		
Prepared audience for ending	O S N	
Reinforced the central idea	O S N	
<hr/>		
Delivery		
Maintained eye contact	O S N	
Used voice effectively	O S N	
Gestures effective	O S N	
Stance Strong	O S N	
Visual aid presentation strong	O S N	
<hr/>		
Overall Evaluation		
Topic challenging	O S N	
Speech adapted to audience	O S N	
Speech fit the assignment	O S N	

Suggestions for next time:

-Amy R. Slagell, Director of the Fundamentals of Public Speaking Program, Iowa State University

Rubric 3

Name _____

Section _____

ENGL205 Persuasive Speech Assessment Sheet

3= well done, present in the presentation and meets standards

2= needs improvement, partial credit is awarded because it is there, you are on the right track but it needs to be reviewed as to exactly what it should be like

1= not visible in the presentation and/or done incorrectly

/42 **Structure**

/15 **Introduction**

- Attention Getter:** Attention getter grabs the audience and creates information hunger
- Background and Audience Relevance:** Relevant background information on the topic is provided and the speech is clearly adapted for this particular audience
- Stance and Position:** The position is stated clearly
- Speaker Credibility:** The speaker clearly discloses a connection between him or herself and the topic and gives a reason for personally caring about the topic
- Preview:** Preview states and tells audience what main points will be covered

/15 **Body**

- Main Points:** Argument or problem is clearly stated, supports the position, and is well-developed using a variety of supporting materials, and includes appropriately organized sub points
- Sources:** At least three high-quality sources are cited
- Audience:** The speech elicits some type of change/movement from the audience
- Transitions:** All transitions have effective review, signpost, and preview
- Visual Aids:** Visual resources effectively support the speech and follow the guidelines outlined in the textbook

/12 **Conclusion**

- Signal Transition to the Conclusion:** Speaker clearly indicates the beginning of conclusion through the use of a transition and through vocal tone, gestures, movement, and/or a brief pause
- Reviews Main Points:** Review uses appropriate signposts and clearly restates all of the main points
- Call to Action:** A clear call to action is communicated to the audience members in the conclusion
- Memorable closer:** The closer refers back to the attention getter effectively and memorably ends the speech

/58 **Delivery**

/6 **Body Language**

- Nonverbal Delivery:** Gestures/Body Movement/Facial Expression Speaker uses appropriate gestures, facial expressions, and body movement that clearly enhance the message

/12 **Facial Expressions**

- Facial Expressions:** The speaker's facial expressions are lively and appears natural
- Extemporaneous and Enthusiastic:** Student is very conversational, visibly excited about speech topic, and clearly engages the audience
- Eye Contact:** Speaker maintains eye contact with all parts of room and only occasionally glances at notecards
- Notes:** The speaker's notes do not distract them from the audience

3 **Voice**

- Volume, Rate, Other:** Speaker uses audible voice, is easy to understand and uses vocal variety in a way that clearly enhances the speech

/15 **Language**

- Language Use:** The speaker uses a more formal style of language than used in conversations
- Grammar:** The speaker uses language that is grammatically correct
- Errors:** The speaker avoids fallacies &/or common thinking errors in the speech
- Fillers:** The speaker do not use fillers in the speech
- Articulation and Pronunciation:** Language is clearly articulated in the speech and words accurately pronounced

_____/9 **Visual Aids**

_____**Content:** Visuals are informative, effective and not distracting

_____**Preparation:** The visual aids are prepared properly, in accordance with the textbooks recommendations

_____**Comfort:** The speaker is comfortable using the visual aids

_____/9 **Overall Effectiveness**

_____**Topic:** Topic is significant and is appropriate for this audience

_____**Rhetorical Sensitivity:** Shows respect and consideration for the diversity of the audience and is sensitive to multiple perspectives

_____**Purpose:** Speech is clearly persuasive and well communicated

_____/4 **Length of Time: Length of presentation is within the assigned time limit**

TOTAL _____/100

Comments:

Rubric 4

Order of Presentation: _____

Class ID: _____

ENGL 205 Oral Communication Skills
English Department – Fall 2013

Self-Introduction Talk Evaluation Form

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Speaker Position	right	center	left
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- Notes / 3x5 cards: yes no used: often / sometimes / not at all
- Audio-visual aids: yes no PowerPoint / photos / blackboard

Organization				
		1	2	3
1	Introduction			
2	Body			
3	Conclusion			

Verbal Skills				
		1	2	3
1	Appropriate volume			
2	Lively intonation			
3	Clear articulation			
4	Varies speaking rate			
5	Control of grammar			
6	Fillers ("uh"; "hmm")			

Non-verbal Skills				
		1	2	3
1	Eye contact			
2	Facial expression			
3	Gesturing			
4	Moving while speaking			
5	Posture			

• Presentation Time: _____ (m) _____ (s):

1 Pt. for (0.5-1.0 min.) **2 Pts.** For (1.0-1.5 mins.) **3 Pts.** (2.0-3.0 mins.)

• Comments:

- Comments: _____

Final Score (45): _____