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Investigating the Use of Action Research to Improve the Speaking Skill

Case study Second year EFL learners at Mila University

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Selma's Dedication

To my beloved mother and father, the source of my success and happiness may Allah bless them;

To my dear supporting sisters and brothers;

To all my family;

To my dear friend and mate Boutheyna;

To all those who believe in me and pray for my success.

Boutheyna's Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work:

To the memory of my grandmother;

To the source of tenderness 'my mother' for her love and support;

To my precious father;

To my dear sister Amani;

To my lovely brothers Aymen and Mehdi;

To my uncles, my aunts, and their sweet sons and daughters;

To all the members of my wonderful family;

To my best friend Selma;

To all those who love me and believed in my success.

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Abstract

The speaking skill is crucially important in learning English as a foreign language. However, students often face difficulties when trying to speak English in order to communicate. Therefore, the effectiveness of action research in finding solutions for learners' language problems is an issue that is gaining interest in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. The present study aims at exploring how teachers and learners do perceive the use of action research and its effectiveness in finding efficient solutions to ameliorate the speaking skill. It is hypothesized that if Action Research were used in Oral Expression classes, the students' speaking skill would be improved. In order to achieve the preceding aims, two questionnaires were used. The first questionnaire was administered to a sample of sixty English students. The second one was distributed to eight oral expression teachers who teach second year classes at Mila University Centre. The results obtained from the teachers' and students' questionnaires reveal a positive perception from both; teachers and learners, towards using action research in speaking classrooms and its effectiveness in finding appropriate solutions for learners' speaking problems.

List of Abbreviations

AR: Action Research

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

FL: Foreign Language

TL: Target Language

L1: First Language

SL, L2: Second Language

OE: Oral Expression

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General Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem

The ability to speak efficiently is among the main objectives for foreign language (FL) learners. Richards (1999, p.19) indicated that "the mastery of the speaking skill is a priority for many second language or foreign language learners." Hence, they evaluate their mastery of the target language on the basis of their achievement in oral production. Speaking is considered as an important skill for learners.

Many language learners find it difficult to express them-selves orally since speaking is regarded one of the most difficult skills of FL learning. Its difficulty lies in the several aspects that should be mastered as speaking covers different areas of mechanics (pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary), functions (interactions and transactions), and pragmatics, social and cultural rules such as turn taking and relative roles of participants. Moreover, some of these aspects are based on regulations such as grammar, whereas others are not including rate of speech. As a result, most of FL learners encounter various problems in speaking specifically grammatical mistakes, deficient vocabulary, hesitation, lack of self-confidence, shyness, and anxiety. Hence, improving the speaking skill is not an easy task.

2. Aim of the Study

The present study aims at investigating teachers' and learners' perceptions towards the use of action research as a method for developing the speaking skill.

3. Research Questions

This study endeavours to find answers to the following questions:

-Do learners face difficulties in their speaking skill?

- What are teachers' perspectives towards the implementation of action research?

- Do learners have positive attitudes towards the use of action research?

4. Hypothesis

In the light of the aim and research questions, it is hypothesized that:

Teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the use of action research to improve the speaking skill would be positive.

5. Research Methodology

For collecting data, two questionnaires have been adopted: teachers' questionnaire and learners' questionnaire. The teachers' questionnaire was intended to second year Oral Expression teachers in the department of foreign languages at Mila University Centre. The learners' questionnaire was given to second year university learners in the department of Foreign Languages, Mila University Centre. The purpose of these questionnaires is to gather information about teachers' and learners' opinions about the usefulness of classroom action research in finding solutions to learners' speaking problems for the sake of improving the speaking skill.

6. Structure of the Study

This work is divided into three main chapters. The first and the second chapters are devoted for the review of literature and the third chapter is the practical part of the study.

The first chapter deals with the speaking skill. It tackles different elements related to the speaking skill mentioning its definition, aspects, functions, teaching and learning focusing on the students' common problems and the different classroom activities, and assessment. The second chapter provides a better understanding of action research in education. The main

focus of this chapter is on the importance, types, principles and the process of action research. The last chapter deals with data analysis. It provides detailed analysis of both teachers' and learners' questionnaires.

Finally, recommendations and suggestions are provided for teachers, learners and researchers. Moreover, it states the limitations that encountered the process of this study.

Chapter One: Speaking Skill

Introduction

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Chapter one: Speaking Skill

Introduction

The speaking skill is one of the main skills to be developed for an effective communication in both first and second languages. This chapter deals with the speaking skill. It starts by defining the speaking skill. After that, it presents its aspects and functions. Then, it explores teaching and learning speaking focusing on the principles and the approaches of teaching, the common EFL learners' difficulties, the strategies they use to overcome the faced problems, and the most common classroom activities. At the end, it sheds light on the assessment of the speaking skill.

1.1. Definition of Speaking

Many experts defined speaking in different ways. According to Brown (1994), Burns and Joyce (1997), "speaking is an interactive process of constructing meanings that involves producing, receiving and processing information" (as cited in Afrizal, 2015, p.349). In other words, speaking is the active use of language to build utterances in order to transfer messages that includes production, perception and dealing with information. For Chaney and Burk (1998, p.13), speaking is the process of how to build and share meaning and information in various situations using verbal and non-verbal features such as gestures and facial expressions. Furthermore, Hedge (2000) defined speaking as "a skill by which they (people) are judged while first impressions are being formed" (p. 261). It means that speaking reflects people's thoughts and opinions.

From the mentioned definitions, it can be concluded that speaking is a productive and an active skill. It is a complex process of communication which involves how to construct, produce, and exchange information in different contexts through verbal and nonverbal elements.

1.2. Aspects of Speaking

Speaking has many different aspects including two main categories: fluency and accuracy.

1.2.1. Fluency

Fluency is defined as "the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation" (Hedge, 2000, p.54). It means speaking smoothly and naturally.

Many students think that fluency is to speak quickly, for that reason they speak rapidly without pauses. However, Thornbury (2005, p.7) emphasised the importance of pausing as well as speed in fluency claiming that all speakers need to stop from time to time to be well understood by the listener.

1.2.2. Accuracy

Accuracy is the capability to speak correctly without making errors (Scrivener, 2005, p.160). In this respect, Nation and Newton (2009, p.152) pointed out that accuracy is measured by the number of errors. Therefore, to be accurate, learners should pay attention to different elements: grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

1.2.2.1. Grammar

Grammar is a significant component of speaking. It is the system of rules that governs the structures and the relationships of words within a sentence. It is about the arrangement of sentences including words order, verbs and nouns system, phrases, clauses, etc. (Brown, 2001, p.362). Therefore, EFL learners should know about the set of English grammatical rules to produce correct sentences.

1.2.2.2. Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays a crucial role in learning any language. Richards and Renandya (2002, p.255) believed that "vocabulary is a core component in language proficiency and provides much of the basis of how well learners speak, listen, read and write." Thence, speakers cannot communicate efficiently if they do not have sufficient vocabulary or do not know how to choose the appropriate ones.

1.2.2.3. Pronunciation

Accuracy in terms of pronunciation means the awareness of the phonological rules. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), "pronunciation includes the role of individual sounds and sound segments, that is, features such as stress, rhythm, and intonation." (p.175). Hence, mastering these aspects helps learners speak the FL effectively.

1.3. Functions of Speaking

Interaction, transaction and performance are the three main functions of speaking.

➢ **Talk as interaction:** it serves as a social function where the speakers converse "to establish and maintain social relationships" (Brown & Yule, 1983, p.3).Greeting, engaging in small talk, and recounting recent experiences are some examples of this function (Richards, 2008, p.22).

➢ **Talk as transaction:** it places more emphasis on the transference of information in state of the social side. Consequently, the speakers focus on the clarity of the message and the success of its transmission as when they give directions or buy goods in the shop (Brown & Yule, 1983, p.2).

➢ **Talk as performance**: It refers to "talk that transmits information before an audience, such as classroom presentations, public announcements, and speeches" (Richards, 2008, p.24). Thus, it takes the form of monologue instead of dialogue.

1.4. Teaching and Learning Speaking

1.4.1. Principles of Teaching Speaking

To improve an effective speaking class, many principles should be taken into consideration. Bailey (2003, pp. 54-56) suggested the following:

- ***Being aware of the differences between the SL and the FL***:

Teaching speaking in FL or second language (SL) contexts is not the same. Learning to speak a FL is more challenging than learning a SL since the FL is not used for communication in

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the society and learners have few opportunities to use the target language (TL) outside the classroom.

-Providing opportunities for students to talk by the use of group work and pair work, with the limitation of the teacher's talk:

Group work and pair work activities serve in increasing the amount of time given to the learners to practise the TL. In addition, the absence of the teacher from the conversation allows them to take different roles such as asking questions.

- Giving Students practice in both accuracy and fluency:

Opportunities to develop both accuracy and fluency are very necessary for learners since speaking effectively requires both of them. Teachers, therefore, must focus their practice on fluency as well as accuracy realizing that making errors is a natural part of the learning process.

- Using speaking tasks that involve the negotiation of meaning:

Communication is regarded as the key of learners' progress which includes negotiation of meaning. The latter means trying to understand what others say and make your-self understood.

-Designing classroom activities that involve guidance and practice in both interactional and transactional speaking:

Communication outside the classroom embodies both the interactional and the transactional purposes. Hence, speaking activities should cover these purposes since language learners will have to speak in different settings.

1.4.2. Approaches of Teaching Speaking

The progress in language teaching and learning has strongly influenced the way of teaching the speaking skill. The Environmentalist, Innatist, and Interactionist approaches are the main ones that guide the way of teaching speaking.

1.4.2.1. The Environmentalist Approach

Previously, until the end of the 1960s, language learning was based on the ideas of the environmentalist approach which views learning as being conditioned through external environment rather than the internal mental processes (Martinez-Flor, Uso-Juan, & Soler, 2006, p.140). In other words, it focuses only on the external factors and neglects the mental capacities. Learning speaking within this approach follows a stimulus-response-reinforcement pattern which leads to the habit formation. Stimulus is all what is given by the teacher to the learners (input), while the response is the learners' reactions to the stimulus by repeating, imitating and memorizing the input (Martinez-Flor, Uso-Juan, & Soler, 2006, p.140).

In this approach, the speaking skill is promoted through listening, repeating and memorizing the grammatical structures and patterns regardless of the development of the oral communication. Drilling is the best activity that was believed to achieve the automation of the speaking skill (Martinez-Flor, Uso-Juan, & Soler, 2006, p.140).

1.4.2.2. The Innatist Approach

The most influential proponent of the innatist position is Chomsky who criticized the behaviourist theory of learning, pointing out that it failed to explain how people produce sentences which they never heard before. He assumed that children are born with an innate

capacity to acquire the language which is the core idea for the innatist approach. This approach states that cognition plays a decisive part in creating the ability to produce an unlimited number of sentences with the knowledge of a limited number of grammatical rules. Then, the learners' role is to actively think and generate language instead of just receive the input and repeat it (Martinez-Flor, Uso-Juan, & Soler, 2006, p.141).

The innatist approach did not give rise to any teaching speaking methodology, but only replaced the practice of drills by "cognitive methods which would enable learners to hypothesise about language structures and grammatical patterns"(Burns & Joyce, 1997, as cited in Martinez-Flor, Uso-Juan, & Soler, 2006, p.142).

1.4.2.3. The Interactionist Approach

From the late 1970s to the 1980s, the interactionist approach had a great influence on language learning since it gives importance to both the linguistic environment and the innate capacity for language development (Martinez-Flor, Uso-Juan, & Soler, 2006, p.143). In other words, it emphasizes the internal factors (the complex cognitive processes) as well as the external factors (the functions of the language and the social context in which it is produced). Hence, the interactionist approach focuses on preparing learners to face the different functions of language, producing various speech acts and dealing with the different real life-situations (Martinez-Flor, Uso-Juan, & Soler, 2006, p.145). As a result, "speaking was viewed as an interactive, social and contextualized communicative event" (Martinez-flor, Uso-Juan, & Soler, 2006, p.145).

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1.4.3. Learners' Speaking Problems

Developing learners' FL speaking is very challenging for learners. Luoma (2004, p.1) stated that "speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and competence in speaking takes a long time to develop." Similarly, Chaney and Burk (1998, p.13) claimed that the mastery of speaking is a difficult task which requires intensive practice. Therefore, students face many problems in their attempt to speak the language.

1.4.3.1. Deficient Vocabulary

EFL learners face difficulties to find the appropriate word or phrase to express themselves due to the limited vocabulary repertoire. Deficient vocabulary hinders them from speaking and expressing their opinions and thoughts. Gan (2012) said that, "Vocabulary problem was the main reason why they [students] sometimes could not express themselves clearly and appropriately" (p.49).

1.4.3.2. Grammatical problems

The status of grammar in learning any language is very sacred. The majority of EFL learners suffer from grammatical mistakes which can affect their ability to perform in the classroom. According to Gan (2012, p.50), the lack of grammatical knowledge is the most common problem that students encounter as they would experience a stumbling block.

1.4.3.3. Lack of Interest in the Topic

In FL classes, learners may often keep silent and refuse to participate. Lack of participation in speaking sessions may be due to the selected topic. Rivers (1968) stated that, "they (teachers) may have chosen a topic which is uncongenial to him (student) or about which knows very little and as a result he has nothing to express" (p. 192).

1.4.3.4. The Use of the Mother Tongue

The use of the first language (L1) is one of the factors that cause speaking difficulties for EFL learners. Littlewood (1981, as cited in Al Hosni, 2014, p.24) stated that the use of the L1 minimizes the valuable opportunities for FL. FL learners use their L1 due to several reasons:

- The L1 is easier for them than the FL (Ur, 1996, as cited in Al Hosni, 2014, p.26).
- They feel less stressed when they use their L1 (Ur, 1996, as cited in Al Hosni, 2014, p.26).
- The adequate vocabulary (Al Hosni, 2014, p.26).
- The weak sentence structures (Al Hosni, 2014, p.26).

Hence, learners will find it difficult to use the FL correctly if they keep on borrowing words from their mother tongue.

1.4.3.5. Low Motivation

Motivation is defined as "the crucial force which determines whether a learner embarks in a task at all, how much energy be devoted to it, and how long he preserves" (Littlewood, 1984, as cited in Al Hosni, 2014, p.24).The main factor that makes learners find learning a new language difficult is lack of motivation. It has been proved in many studies that students with a

high motivation gain better scores than those who have low motivation in oral performance (Al Nakhala, 2016, p.103). Thus, it is important for teachers to perceive students' motivation state in order to use it as a facilitator to their oral communication promotion.

1.4.3.6. Psychological Problems

Different psychological factors impede EFL learners' oral performance including shyness, anxiety, and lack of confidence.

1.4.3.6.1. Shyness

Many EFL learners suffer from shyness specially in speaking classes. Harmer (2007) said that, "students are often reluctant to speak because they are shy and are not predisposed to expressing themselves in front of other people" (p.345). Moreover, Baldwin (2011, as cited in Al Nakhala, 2016, p. 102) explained that speaking in front of people is one of the most common phobias that students encounter and feeling of shyness makes their minds go blank.

1.5.2.6.2. Anxiety

Anxiety is one of the serious obstacles faced in SL/FL learning. "It is one of the most negatively influential affective variables, which prevent learners from learning a foreign language" (Park & Lee, 2004, p.197). Learners may avoid interacting with peers or giving responses because they fear being laughed at, and even being negatively evaluated by the teacher.

1.5.2.7.3. Lack of Confidence

Lack of confidence is one of the problems which prevent learners' participation in FL speaking classes. Learners' willingness to communicate and express themselves is determined partly by their self-confidence (MacIntyre, Clément, Dornyei & Noels, 1998, p.551). Harton, Millalieu, and Hall (2003, as cited n GÜrler, 2015, p.15) stated that "if self-confidence is low, then the feelings start to edge towards the negative which would be very bad for performance". In other words, when learners lose their self-confidence, they will fail in achieving high performances.

1.4.4. Learners Speaking Strategies

FL learners aim to improve native-like communication and that can be reached by making use of various strategies. Bygate (1987, as cited in Lewis, 2011) identified two types of communicative strategies: achievement and reduction strategies.

1.4.4.1 Achievement Strategies

Learners use this type of strategies to compensate for their gap by using substitute (Bygate 1987, as cited in Lewis, 2011, p.48). The achievement strategies are:

•*Guessing Strategy:*

Foreignizing or borrowing a mother tongue word, literal translation, code switching and word coining are the guessing strategies that can be used by learners to compensate for their gaps (Bygate, 1987, as cited in Lewis, 2011, p.48).

•Paraphrase Strategy:

The learner looks for an alternative word or expression to express the idea. It includes using general words, approximation (lexical items) and circumlocution (describing and exemplifying) (Bygate, 1987, as cited in Lewis, 2011, p.48).

•Co-operative Strategy:

It is when the speaker gets assistance from the other interlocutor. The speaker, for example, may ask for the translation of a word which is not understood to the L1 (Bygate, 1987, as cited in Lewis, 2011, p.48).

1.4.4.2. Reduction (Avoidance) strategy

Learners use this type of strategies when they do not have control over the used language. The speaker may reduce his communicative objectives or change the message to get away of troubles (Bygate, 1987, as cited in Bakiri, 2016, p.32).

In addition to the aforementioned strategies, Brown (2001, p.276) suggested the following:

• Asking for clarification (What?);

• Asking someone to repeat (Huh? Excuse me?);

• Using fillers (Uh, I mean, Well) in order to gain time to process;

• Using conversation maintenance cues (Uh, Huh, Right, Yeah, Okay, Hm);

• Getting someone's attention (Hey, Say, So);

• Using formulaic expressions (at the survival stage) (How much does―costs? How do you get to the―?); and

• Using mime and nonverbal expressions to convey meaning.

1.4.5. Classroom Speaking Activities

To improve FL speaking, different classroom activities are designed. Among these activities, we shed light on the following:

1.4.5.1. Discussion

Discussion is one of the most common used speaking activities. It is defined as an activity where students exchange ideas and opinions about a certain topic (Byrne, 1986, p.67). It has a significant role in developing students' speaking skill as it "can provide important opportunities for developing certain aspect of fluency" (Hedge, 2000, p.277). Besides, it provides the students with the practice of the needed strategies in interpersonal communication mentioning taking and holding turns, introducing a topic or shifting to a new one, and encourages responses (Hedge, 2000, p.277). Discussion, then, is a very useful activity since it gives students the chances to practise the language and express their opinions, ideas, comments, etc.

1.4.5.2. Role Play and Simulation

Role play and simulation are "activities where learners imagine themselves in a situation outside the classroom, sometimes playing the role of someone other than themselves, and using language appropriate to this new context" (Ur, 1991, p.131). Three distinct advantages have been claimed for role play and simulation activities by Harmer (2001, p.275). First, they are

entertaining and motivating. Second, they enable hesitant students to speak forthrightly as long as they are not responsible for their opinions and behaviours. Third, they allow students to practise language in different situations.

1.4.5.3. Information Gap Activity

Information gap is a useful activity "in which one person has the information that the other lacks. They must use the target language to share that information" (Bailey, 2003, p.56). Hence, it is performed in pairs where each student has different information that should be exchanged to fill in the gap. For example, one student has to describe a picture, whereas the other one draw it. According to Kayi (2006, p.3), information gap activities are very effective in improving students speaking as they provide them the chance to talk extensively using the TL.

1.4.5.4. Communicative Games

Communicative game is a "set of well fun-designed activities that can stimulate students' interaction in the classroom" (Dewi, Kultsum, & Armada, 2017, p.64).They stated that these activities require the students' active involvement to express their point of view or give information. The use of communicative games in speaking classes maintains learners' interest in learning, promotes their motivation, and provides them opportunities to speak (Zhu, 2012, p.805). Thus, communicative games can be a useful type of activities to overcome learners' difficulties in speaking.

1.4.5.5. Storytelling

Storytelling is one of the traditional techniques used in FL classes to promote learners' speaking proficiency level. It is an activity "in which the student are asked to retell the content of the stories in different word constructions by involving certain interaction between the storyteller

and the listener" (Zuhriyah, 2017, p.123). Thus, this activity provides students opportunities to practise new vocabulary by retelling or summarising stories. Kayi (2006, p.3) claimed that storytelling activity helps in enhancing learners' creative thinking.

1.4.5.6. Brainstorming

Brainstorming is another activity used in speaking classes to foster EFL learners speaking skill. Lince and Defriyanti (2013, as cited in Srihandayani & Marlina, 2019, p.24) pointed out that brainstorming is a creative thinking activity used to solve a certain problem by gathering a list of solutions spontaneously contributed by the members (individuals or in groups). The students are not evaluated or criticised for their ideas which make them express new ideas freely (Kayi, 2006, p.3). Furthermore, it enhances students' creativity and critical thinking and helps the improvement of their cognitive development (Srihandayani & Malina, 2019, p.25).

1.6. Speaking Assessment

Assessment is a key element in teaching speaking. It is "the means by which students' language learning development and achievement are monitored over time" (Hedge, 2000, p.376). Hughes (2003) stated that "if you want to encourage oral ability, then test oral ability" (p.44). That is, if teachers identify and analyse students' weaknesses and strengths, they will be able to help and encourage them develop their speaking level.

It is important to know what to test. Vigoya (2012, p.97) suggested that accuracy and fluency are the key elements to be assessed in oral performance. To test learners' accuracy (linguistic competence), three components can be used by the teacher: pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Whereas, learners' ability to speak fluently (communicative competence) can be tested through mechanical skills, language use and judgment skills.

The assessment of oral performance can be explicit or implicit. The explicit assessment is when the teacher comments on students' performance or corrects them such as saying 'that was really good'. The implicit assessment is when the teacher corrects learners' production indirectly as when a student gives incomplete answer and the teacher asks another one to give help (Harmer, 2001, p.100). There are several ways that teachers use to assess students'performance:

•**Comments:** the teacher may comment on students' performance using both positive and negative assessment (Harmer, 2001, p.101). 'Nod approvingly' and 'that is not quite right' are examples of these two types of comments.

•**Marks and grades:** Harmer (2001, p.101) asserted that marks and grades can be given after an oral activity or at the end of the course. Good grades affect students' motivation positively, whereas, bad grades can be highly discouraging. Actually, grading students' spoken performance is difficult since teachers may be subjective in their rewarding. Hence, it is necessary for teachers to demonstrate the criteria for the grading. If the teacher explains the basis on what he is going to give grades or marks, "it will be relatively easy for students to understand how and why they achieved the marks and the grades" (Harmer, 2001, p.102).

 •**Reports:** some teachers write reports on their students' performances at the end of a term or a year. They can be written for the students, the parents or the school. These reports should indicate clearly what students have achieved, assess feasibly their future prospects, and achieve judiciously a balance between positive and negative feedback (Harmer, 2001, p.102).

Additionally, students can also take an active part in assessing and evaluating their oral performances. Harmer (2001) considered that students "frequently have a very clear idea of how

well they are doing or have done, and if we (teachers) help them to develop this awareness, we may greatly enhance learning" (p.102).

Conclusion

In conclusion, speaking is one of the fundamental language skills. In EFL teaching, it is an important element that requires special attention from both learners and teachers. However, many EFL learners find it difficult to speak effectively due to several problems. To improve learners' speaking skill, it is necessary for teachers to be aware of learners' speaking problems in order to select the appropriate methods, strategies and techniques.

Chapter Two: Action Research

Introduction

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Chapter Two: Action Research

Introduction

Action research nowadays is gaining much interest among practitioners and the field of language teaching. This chapter is giving an idea about action research. It discusses first the definitions provided by different scholars to clarify the vision along with a brief history. Then, it presents concisely the main forms that an action research project may take. Additionally, it highlights its importance and purposes in addition to a collection of its principles and characteristics. Furthermore, it sheds light on the process by which a teacher as a researcher can carry out an action research project and the tools used during the process. Finally, it provides some well-known models of action research.

2.1. Definition of Action Research

Nowadays, to accomplish their roles as guides and facilitators of their students' learning, teachers exert efforts to adapt their teaching processes and improve their practices to help learners develop different skills. Action Research (A.R) is one such tool that helps teachers improve the teaching-learning process. Different definitions are suggested to describe the nature of A.R. Singh (2006, p. 261) referred to A.R as

> a method for improving and modifying the working system of a classroom in school. The teachers and principal are able to study their problems of teaching scientifically. It is an objective oriented method. The action research project does not contribute in the fund of knowledge but it improves and modifies the current practices.

There are several features in this definition that are important to highlight. First, A.R is a method that is oriented more to practitioners' (teachers) and learners' development. It cares more about finding solutions for the difficulties found within a classroom whether learners' language problems or teachers practices.

It can be engaged in an A.R by a single teacher, a group of colleagues, or a whole school to find solutions for a shared problem. Burns (2010, p.2) stated that in A.R, a teacher becomes an investigator of his/her personal teaching. In this context, the teacher identifies and collects information about an issue or a problem that s/he believes can be done better and consider worth looking in order to make changes for the sake of improvement.

A.R is a continuous and reflective process where educators make decisions in their classrooms based on students' needs and educational problems. By integrating research into the classroom and engaging both learners and teachers in research activities, findings can be applied immediately and problems solved more quickly (Hewitt & Little, 2005, p.1). This means that learners are also an essential part in doing A.R. They work together with their teachers to detect their language problems and needs. Moreover, learners' within A.R get closer to their teachers, which helps in selecting the most effective strategies that suit them.

A.R then is a combination of research and action because the undertaken action is based on the data collected from the classroom. It is carried out by teachers to understand the teaching situation, evaluate their teaching, and bring changes about their teaching and find solutions to learners' language problems and consequently developing their skills and raising their awareness of learning strategies.

2.2. History of Action Research

Action research has emerged from the modern human organization theory. It assumes that workers of an organization have the capacity to solve the problems and take decisions. Therefore, they must be given the opportunity to study and solve encountered problems so that they can improve their practice (Singh, 2006, p.263). Singh (2006, p.264), and McNiff and Whitehead (2006, p.36) added that it is also originated from the field of social psychology where Kurt Lewin presented it in terms of person and goal. Kurt assumed that the person has to overcome the barriers between him and his goal using his abilities. A.R was taken up in education in 1953 by Stephen Corey in his book "Action research to improve school practices".

Burns (2005, p.245) acknowledged that in the domain of ELT, AR flourished in the 1990s. By the late 1980s, A.R did not receive much serious attention as a distinct style of research in language teaching. However, calls for the participation of the teachers in classroom-centred research were increasing. At the same time, its expansion was predicted by Breen and Candlin in 1980 within their proposals that curriculum evaluation should be an integral aspect of classroom teaching and learning. A further urge for A.R (teacher as researcher) in ELT came from the distinction made between 'teacher training' (teaching as a discrete and trainable skills), and 'teacher education' (teaching as a professional capable of clarifying the concepts and thinking processes that guide the effective second language teaching) where the latter appeared to be a more effective approach which reflected in autonomous professionals. The notion of A.R (reflective language teaching) is now strongly adopted in most discussions of language teacher/teaching development.

2.3. Types of Action Research

Teachers while conducting an A.R may choose to focus their study on a group of students, a class, several classes, whole school or schools in the district. The focus depends on the needs, interests of teachers and schools (Hewitt & Little, 2005, p.3). Therefore, A.R may take any form of the following:

2.2.1. Individual Action research

Individual action research "focuses on a single issue in the classroom [...].The problem is one that the teacher believes is evident in his or her classroom and one that can be addressed on an individual basis" (Ferrance, 2000, p.3). The teacher collects and analyses data, and implements the change on his/her own class without sharing the results with other classes because they do not share the same problem area. (Ferrance, 2000, P.3)

2.2.2. Collaborative Action Research

Teachers of the same school work together and focus on one problem within a class, or a common problem upon classes of the same school (Hewitt & Little, 2005, p.4). As an advantage of this type, Hewitt and Little (2005) argued that it "fosters a joint effort because more than one teacher is involved in a specific area of study. Opportunities for sharing and dialogue are more likely to occur" (p.4). The main benefit of this type is that the efforts exerted by two teachers or more on a shared issue would be better and more effective than the efforts of only one teacher. In addition, it gives the teachers a chance to improve their collegiality through exchanging experiences and knowledge.

2.2.3. School-wide Action Research

It focuses on the problems that are common to all teachers and principal of a school. They work collaboratively (two teachers and more with administrators). Therefore, this type is more in-depth than the first ones because it investigates different dimensions of the problem (Hewitt & Little, 2005, p.4). Ferrance (2000, p.4) provided an example of school-wide action research case; the problem is the lack of parental involvement in school activities, the team working on the problem includes both teachers and administrators working on finding solutions for more parental involvement.

2.2.4. District-wide Action Research

This type is wider which makes the problem under the focus wider as well. Ferrance (2000, p. 5) showed that "a district may choose to address a problem common to several schools or one of organizational management". For district-wide research, staff from each school in the district, collaborate in correcting the common problem or finding ways to solve the issue under the study. Ferrance (2005, p.5) showed that the advantage of this type is mainly bringing energy to the process because of the involvement of multiple groups from different schools. Moreover, it brings real school improvement based on data collected from several schools.

2.4. Principles and Characteristics of Action Research

Each form of research has its own features and principles which make it different from the other research methods. A.R as any method has its main principles and features. Altrichter, Posch, and Somekh (1993, pp. 5-6) provided six main principles that distinguish A.R from the other types of research. They stated that it is:

a- Carried out by people that are directly related to the situation that is being studied (teachers in the classroom).

b- The starting point of the research: while the most forms of research follow the in-fashion theories, A.R is initiated from the questions aroused from teacher's every day practice.

c- An A.R project must be appropriate and suits the values of school and teacher's work conditions, and work on their improvement.

d- Methodologically eclectic: it offers a bunch of different methods for researching and developing practice.

e- The evaluative and reflective nature: Reflection is the most salient underlying feature of A.R, where teachers must act reflectively upon their practice to open options for new actions in the future. In other words, changing and learning from the result of the change.

f- Each A.R project has its own character which makes it hard to put a detailed model of it.

In addition to the mentioned principles, others are suggested by different scholars and summarized by Cohen, Manion, and Morisson (2007, p.299-300):

- A.R is participatory (a research in which people are part of the improvement of their practices);

- Tends to avoid the paradigm of research that controls variables;

- Sees theory and practice as two independent yet complementary phases of the process;

- Develops through a self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and re-planning;

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- Involves keeping a personal journal to record progress and reflections.

Moreover, A.R is collaborative; including collaboration between practitioners within and outside the school (Hitchcock, 1995, p.28). Also, it is important to note that its findings are not a subject of generalization because the classes are different, as Best and Kahn (2005) claimed, "its findings are to be evaluated in terms of local applicability, not universal validity" (p.21). An action researcher must consider these principles in conducting his project to preserve its value as a research method and not just as a set of activities.

2.5. Purposes and Importance of Action Research

The purpose of an A.R project can be derived from its definitions which make it clear that its purpose is far from the development of theory (fundamental research) and its general application (applied research). The main purpose of A.R is clearly stated by Altrichter, Posch, and Somekh (1993) by saying that

> It lies in the will to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as the conditions under which teachers and students work in school. Action research is intended to support teachers, and groups of teachers in coping with the challenges and problems of practice and carrying through innovations in a reflective manner (p.4).

Basically, the purpose of A.R. is to make better of the teaching process through bringing a change to solve the problems that teachers detect while teaching which also results in raising teachers' confidence in their teaching. Furthermore, teachers observe the effectiveness of the change they have made and take further actions on the basis of this observation (Reflection).

Hence, an enhancement in the level of the learners in a classroom or a whole school would be the result of the change and a main purpose of A.R as well.

Moreover, Koshy (2005, p.29) adopted and viewed the aims offered by the Teacher Training Agency in 1998 as worthy of consideration. These aims are:

- To encourage teachers' engagement in research and evidence about their learners' achievements;
- To support teachers in designing, applying, and for carrying out more classroom-based research about pedagogy where teachers have an active role; and
- To provide examples of good practice in making use of research.

In few words, it can be said that A.R, as a purposeful study, aims in general at developing the teaching and learning quality as well as working conditions.

The purposes of A.R may overlap with its importance. Therefore, to state the matter simply, it can be said that the purposes are the aims behind doing an A.R while the importance is what impact an A.R may have. A.R can be a worthwhile pursuit for a number of reasons:

- Bridging the Gap between research and practice

A significant benefit appears in the role of A.R in bridging the gap between research and practice, Hine (2013, p.153) argued that the theoretical components underpinning A.R practice are used to help practitioners understand and observe what is happening in a classroom setting. At the same time, the collected data is used to understand theories and research related to practice. To simplify the matter, teachers make use of their background knowledge about conducting research to make better of their practices. At the same time, they are employing their teaching experiences to enrich their knowledge of teaching theories and practices.

- *Professional Development*

A.R has been always directly linked to teacher's professional growth and development. Hine (2013, p.152) summarized Hensen's ideas about the importance of A.R to teacher's professional improvement stating that

> Action Research (a) helps teachers develop new knowledge directly related to their classrooms, (b) promotes reflective teaching and thinking, (c) expands teachers' pedagogical repertoire, (d) puts teachers in charge of their craft, (e) reinforce the link between practice and student achievement, (f) fosters an openness toward new ideas and learning new things, and (g) gives teachers ownership of effective practices.

The benefit of action research is that it leads to improvements in educational practice. It impacts teachers' daily and future instructional practices. Through A.R, teachers become more aware of their teaching practices and having more knowledge of their students' needs. Moreover, the process empowers teachers to change by pushing a teacher out of his/her usual classroom practices and makes them more aware of new strategies and confident to try them in their classes. Generally, A.R encourages the teacher to be more open to new changes and sharing confidently his/her experiences with the colleagues.

- *Interactions and sharing of thoughts*

A.R increases sharing and collaboration across teachers, departments and schools. Ferrance (2000, p.14) argued that teachers teaming up together allows them to talk about teaching and their teaching strategies and styles, and share thoughts which in turn maintain a stronger relationship. Through A.R, teachers become more flexible in their thinking and more open-minded to their colleagues' ideas and opinions. It offers a chance for discussion between

the teachers, in which they exchange their thoughts, teaching styles, experiences, new knowledge, etc. As a consequence of this openness, teachers develop strong relationships and sense of collegiality.

- Reflect on own practice

A.R gives importance to reflection. Many researchers as Frabutt et al. (2008), Holter and Frabutt (2012), and Mills (2011) pointed out that A.R enables researchers to develop a systematic inquiring approach toward their own practices oriented towards affecting positive change in this practice (as cited in Hine, 2013, p.152). Simply, they become the decision makers of change and taking parts in setting the goals of the development and hence, witnessing the effectiveness that the change they made had on their learners' achievements. Consequently, teachers become empowered and more confident in their teaching.

Moreover, it provides a chance for practitioners to evaluate themselves, evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching methods and strategies they are using, and how they can work better with other teachers (Ferrance, 2013, p.15). Opportunities for teachers to evaluate themselves in schools are often few, and usually happen only in an informal manner. Therefore, teachers using A.R. are given the chance to observe their own teaching and detect its weaknesses in a more formal manner.

- Helps to shift teachers' focus

Through A.R, teachers shift their focus from curriculum and theoretical principles towards their learners. This shift results in knowing learners better, and more raising consciousness of their needs (Kosnik & Beck, 2000, p.128). Thus, one cannot adopt contents and methods to teach simply from theoretical principles. A.R emphasizes the crucial role of the

identification of the problems as the basis of curriculum modification rather than adopting trending methods that may not suit the learners. Hence, using A.R helps to shift teachers' focus from the direct implication of teaching theories to the identification of their learners' weaknesses as the basis of the change.

-*Learners' achievements*

The appropriate modification of teaching practices that A.R brings will result in positive effects on student achievement (Pelton, 2010, p.6). This improvement is attributed to teachers shedding light on their learners needs and focusing on solving their problems.

2.6. The Process of Action Research

Not all action researchers agree on a specific process for conducting an A.R. Cohen, Manion, and Morisson (2007, p. 304) suggested that several ways which a teacher may adopt to conduct an A.R exist. These ways differ in the steps followed. They suggested that an A.R goes through two general phases, a diagnostic phase and a therapeutic phase. The diagnostic phase is concerned with problem analysis and hypotheses building, while the therapeutic one deals with testing the hypotheses by experimenting.

Although different processes are suggested, they all focus on the same general stages which are clearly stated in the following cycle.
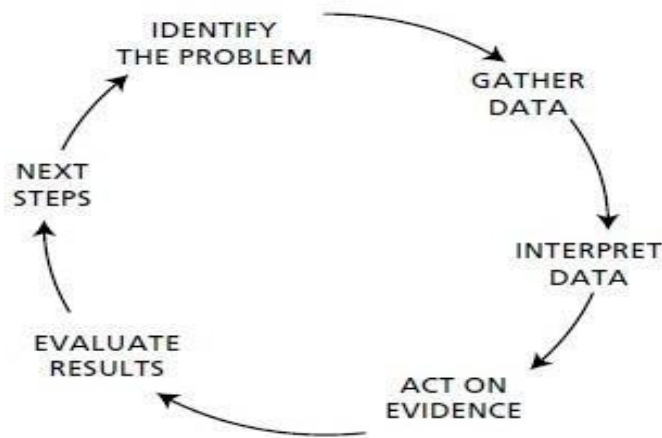
Figure 1: Action Research Cycle (Ferrance, 2000, p.17)

2.6.1. Identification of the Problem

The first step in the research is to decide what exactly to study. Teachers identify the problems or concerns within their own classrooms (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.217). To state the matter differently, the practitioner choses a topic that s/he would genuinely like to examine, such as improving some practice or correcting an issue within his classroom that is not working as it should (the goal of A.R).

Teachers often have several problems they need to ameliorate. However, Singh (2006) stated that "The feasibility of the problem depends upon its delimitations. Hence, the problem is also delimited in this step." (p.264) In order to reach the aim of an A.R, the topic must be specific, manageable and takes into consideration time requirements, data collection and the analysis skill of the teacher. Hughes (2003, p.131) stated that once the problem is selected, the teacher tries to pose questions that serve to guide the research such as: what is the cause of the problem? As a practitioner what can I do about it and what steps can I take to solve the problem? Developing the guiding questions will eventually lead to specifying research questions and

hypotheses and putting a research plan. It may be noted that careful planning at this first stage will limit false starts and frustrations.

2.6.2. Data Collection

In the second stage of the cycle, the researcher collects information from a variety of sources about the phenomenon of interest (Hine, 2013, p.155). Mackey and Gass (2005) stated that "the practitioner may conduct a preliminary investigation in order to gather information about what is happening in the classroom" (p.217). In this data gathering phase, the practitioner selects the most appropriate tools for the study. S/he must use at least three sources of data to make the basis for action; this process is called 'Triangulation' (Ferrance, 2000, p. 11). It allows developing the practitioner's knowledge and strengthening his/her understanding of the learners and the learning environment. As well, it helps minimizing the weaknesses of any single source (Ferrance, 2000, p.11). There are many tools for data collection such as: questionnaires, observation, interviews, focus groups, diaries, journals, audio/videotapes, etc.

-Questionnaires

In descriptive studies where data sources are various, the questionnaire is a major instrument for gathering data. Henceforth, a questionnaire; according to Singh (2006, p.192), is a systematic form or a set of questions that are submitted to a sample of the population from which the researcher desires to collect data. Generally, it includes questions that are factual and designed for collecting information about certain conditions and practices; such as: opinions, attitudes, or preferences.

In the body of the questionnaire, two types of questions might be used, open-ended and closed questions. Singh (2006, p.193) explained that the open- ended questions provide a space

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in which the respondent is asked to answer. This type permits explanations, but the responses would be difficult to summarize and tabulate. In contrast, the closed questions consist of a question or a statement to which a person responds by selecting one or more choices. This type facilitates the tabulation and analysis of the data.

For constructing a good questionnaire, the researcher must consider some key characteristics of a questionnaire. Foremost, the questionnaire should be simple (short with simple language). Further, each question should have an aim behind asking it. Moreover, questions must contain only one idea and avoid being directive. Finally, the items should be arranged in categories to ensure easy and accurate responses (Singh, 2006, p.197). As advantages of it, it is easy and gathers a reasonable amount of information in a short time. It is very handy, especially, in case where the researcher cannot see the entire sample required. (Koshy, 2005, p.89).

-Interviews

An interview is a flexible qualitative method for gathering data. It is a conversational exchange between the interviewer and the interviewee in which multi-sensory channels are used (verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard) (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.349). The researcher (teacher) may record the interview to give full attention to the whole interview (Koshy, 2005, p. 92).

Interviews are of three types: structured, semi structured, and Unstructured. Dörnyei (2007, p.135, 136) explained that the structured interview is where the questions are pre-prepared and identical with every interviewee. Less rigid is the semi-structured in which the interviewer provides guidance but also keen to follow up interesting developments and let the interviewee

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elaborate on certain issue. However, unstructured interviews allow flexibility to follow the interviewee in unpredictable directions. The intention is to create a relaxed atmosphere in which the respondents may reveal more than they would in formal contexts.

-Observation

Observation is a data gathering technique, as Mason (1996, p.60) noted, it refers to "methods of generating data which involve the researcher immersing in a research setting, and systematically observing dimensions of that setting, interactions, relationships, actions, events, and so on, within it"(as cited in Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 175). The distinctive feature of observation as a research process is that it offers the teacher the opportunity to gather live data from naturally occurring situation (Classroom). In this way, the researcher can look directly at what is taking place in the classroom rather than relying on second-hand sources.

Different types of observation can be identified according to the level of structuring (structured and semi-structured). Koshy (2007, p.99) suggested that through structured observation, the teacher may collect both qualitative and quantitative data using checklists and observation schedules. In semi-structured, checklists and schedules may still be used but with some flexibility to record both comments and unexpected outcomes.

-Focus Groups

Dörnyei (2007, p.144) argued that this is an economical way to gather large amount of data. Focus group interviews involve a group of people (6 to 12 members) where the interviewer records their answers. It involves participants thinking together, inspiring and challenging each other, and reacting to the issues. Just like interviews, the semi-structured type is the most common because it uses both closed and open-ended questions.

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-Journals

Keeping a journal is common in A.R. It is one of the most important research methods and is very commonly used by teachers doing research. Burns (2005, p.89) mentioned that journals allow the teacher researcher to record the events happening in the situation, reflections, beliefs, ideas and his/her teaching practices. However, it is a tool to be combined with other tools such as observations and interviews and cannot be used by itself.

Furthermore, learners, as well, may have some L2 journals. Mackey and Gass (2005, p.178) pointed out that L2 journals allow learners to write their impressions and perceptions about learning without the constraints imposed by the questions. Thus, the teacher would be able to access data that is inaccessible by his/her observations or interviews. Moreover, the teacher would gain the opportunity to view the subject under the investigation from a view point rather than his own.

2.6.3. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Once the relevant data is collected, the researcher (teacher) moves to the following step which is analysis and interpretation. Yet, the researcher, before starting the analysis, must recall the aim of his/her investigation to enable him/her relate the data to the research questions and hypotheses. As Koshy (2005) pointed out, "You need to look at the data you have collected from several sources and relate them to what your original, expected outcomes were" (p.109).

The manner in which data is analysed in A.R. will depend on the data that is collected. Quantitative data should be analysed statistically while qualitative data are likely to take the form of descriptions. For the analysis of the latter, Koshy (2005, pp.113-114) suggested a useful framework of three steps: reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction refers

to the process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying the relevant data. Then, displaying data which can include different types of graphs and charts to make the data organized and accessible for the teacher to draw conclusions easily. In the step of conclusion drawing, the researcher tries to decide what the results mean and put explanations. This type is concerned with the data collected from tools such as interviews, observations, and journals.

Quantifiable data collected from tools such as questionnaires are analysed statistically and displayed in forms of tables, charts, and diagrams. Koshy (2005, p. 110) claimed that charts and diagrams are useful in two ways. On one hand, they make the information easier to understand. On the other hand, they break the ambiguity a reader may encounter while reading the explanations in texts. Furthermore, a teacher researcher may use some statistical packages to help him analysing the data. Two of the most common packages are the SPSS and VARBRUL. SPSS offers analysis for sophisticated statistics in addition to statistics such as frequency, correlations, regression, t-tests, etc. It also offers converting data into charts and graphs (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p 291). VARBRUL (variable rules analysis) is a statistical package that is used in linguistics and designed for the description and analysis of data variation and making comparisons between variables (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 292).

After the analysis of all the data, the teacher represents his/her data and draws conclusions for planning action. The purpose of this step is to compare the findings of the different data sources and build interpretations from the data collected (Koshy, 2005, p.108).

2.6.4. Action Based on Data

The fourth step includes the teacher making a decision about what action to undertake based on the data s/he analysed. According to Ferrance (2000, p. 12), the researcher makes use of the analysed and interpreted data to design a plan of action that allows making the change in practice. In other words, after the careful analysis of the data, review of the available literature is done for taking decisions and necessary actions.

The teacher develops new teaching strategies and puts them into practice. As Mackey and Gass (2005, p.218) mentioned, the action planning includes adopting new method of teaching to address the problem or new techniques to raise students' awareness of their problems. Henceforth, the suggested solution must serve the specific problem identified in the very beginning of the A.R process and make the learners more conscious of the problem because their consciousness raises the opportunity for the new action to be more effective.

Moreover, Ferrance (2000, p.12) emphasised continuing collecting data during the action for future plans. To put it differently, the teacher starts another process of collecting data while implementing the new planned action. The collected data form the basis of the next action that the researcher would take after finishing the current one and reflecting upon its effectiveness.

2.6.5. Reflection

The researcher in this phase assesses the results of his/her intervention to check its effectiveness. In case of an effective action, then, the teacher reports that the collected data was reliable and helpful, and the change made by the teacher is considered effective for the learners. However, if the action resulted in no change, the teacher plans (considering the data collected

during action) for future actions and thinks of what changes should be made to reach better results (Ferrance, 2000, p.12).

Skytt and Couture (2000, p.16) argued that there are three options after taking the action:

a- To continue the intervention,

b- To disband it,

c- To modify it in some way(s).

Hence, A.R is a cyclical process where information gained from previous actions may open the door for another research cycle.

2.7. Models of Action research

It is worthy to mention some leading models in the field such as those of Lewin, Kemmis and McTaggart, Stringer, and Sagor.

-Lewin's Model:

Kurt Lewin is the pioneer of the field of A.R in education. According to Elliot (1991, p.69), Lewin's model involves a spiral of cycles, whenever a cycle ends another cycle starts. The basic cycle starts with an identification of the general idea (the situation the teacher wants to improve), reconnaissance (collection of information related to the problem and explaining it), general planning (description and discussion of the suggested frameworks), developing the first action step (decide what exact courses and methods, from those outlined in the general plan, to implement next), implementing the step (actual use of the plan), evaluating and revising the plan

(modification and changes in the general plan). Then the researcher spirals into developing the second action step and so on.

INITIAL IDEA
↓
RECONNAISSANCE
(fact finding)
↓
GENERAL PLAN
STEP 1
STEP 2

IMPLEMENT STEP 1

EVALUATE

AMENDED PLAN
STEP 1
STEP 2

IMPLEMENT STEP 2

EVALUATE → etc
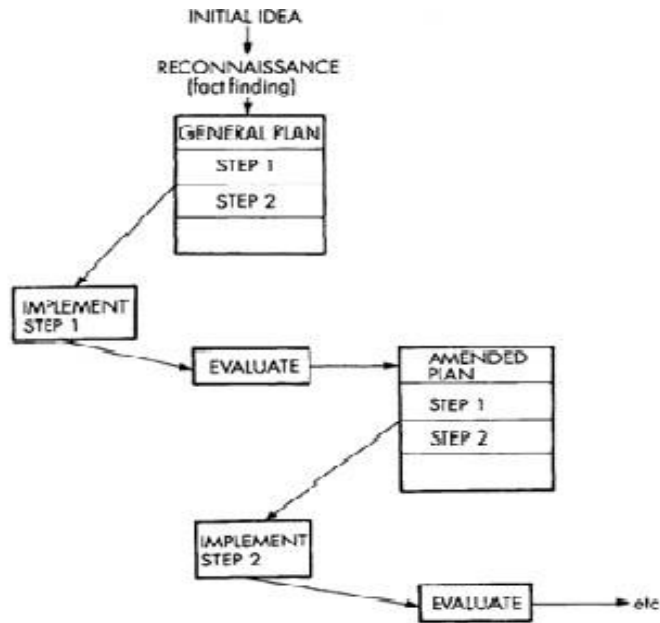
Figure 2: Lewin's Action Research Model (Elliot, 1991, p.70).

-Kemmis and McTaggart Model:

According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), A.R goes through a process which consists of four stages in a self-reflective cycle of: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (as cited in Burns, 1999, p.32). The cycle starts with developing a plan for the action that aims at improving the situation. Then, the teacher applies the planned change and observes the effectiveness of the new teaching strategy/method on the problem s/he is targeting. Finally, s/he reflects on the effects of the action for further planning.
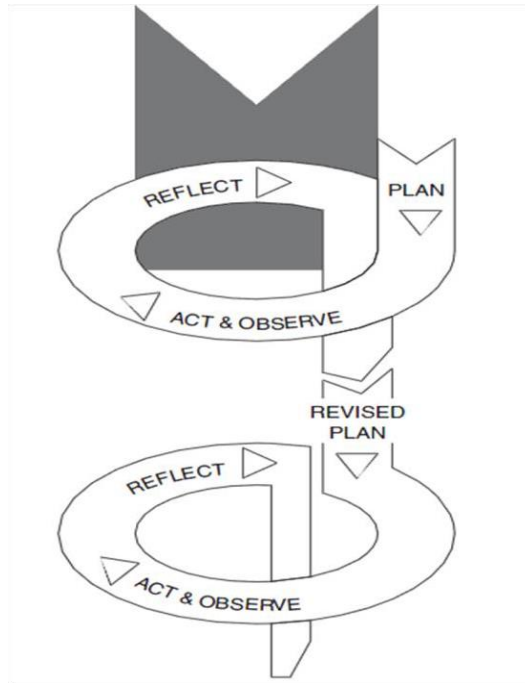
Figure 3: Kemmis and McTaggart's Cycle of Action research (as cited in Burns, 1999, p.35)

-Stringer's Model:

Stringer's process is adopted by many teachers for the intent of improving the educational practices and solving classroom problems. Stringer (2004) believed that the basic A.R cycle includes a look, think, and act helix (as cited in Hine, 2013, p.153). The 'look' stage includes gathering information through observations and recordings of what is happening in the classroom. After, during the 'think' stage, the researcher analyses and interprets the data and relate it to the problem of the study. Finally, s/he 'acts' on the basis of the collected and analysed data.
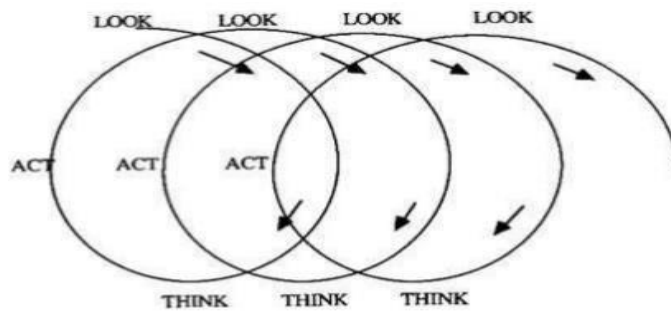
Figure 4: Stringer's Helix of Action Research (as cited in Hine, 2013, p.154)

-Sagor's Model:

Sagor designed a closely similar model for the previous ones. Sagor (2005, pp.5-6) suggested a process that consists of four steps which are: clarifying vision and targets, articulating theory, implementing action and collecting data, and reflecting on the data and planning informed action. The first step aims at stating the goals and the ways that may lead to achieving them. In the second step, teachers engage in planning a process to reach the goal and examining the factors that may influence its realization. The third step takes place during teaching. Teachers carry out their theory and collect data at the same time about what is happening and what has been accomplished in comparison to what is supposed to be reached. The final step of reflection involves the teachers revisiting the three stages. They revisit the goals (step one), their previous thinking of the best way to realize the goals (step two), and the impact of their actions (step three). Then, produce a revised theory of action, which then forms the basis for future action.
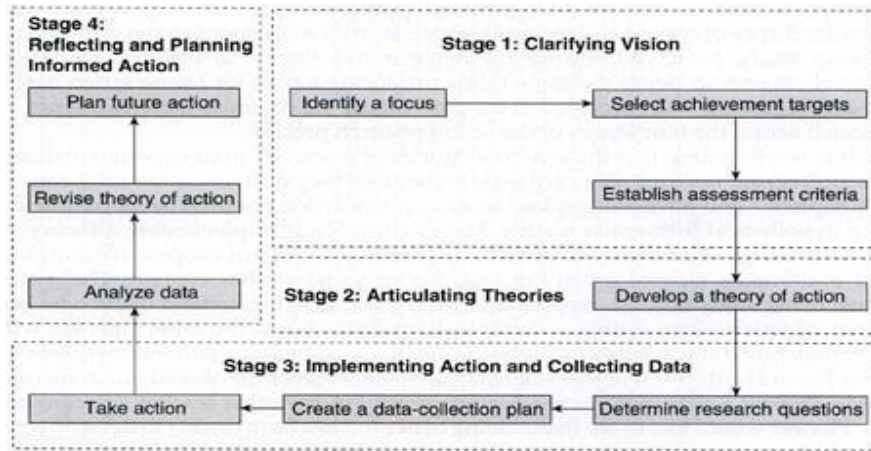
Figure 5: Sagor's (2005) Action research Cycle (p.7)

Conclusion

Action research combines the mastery of the professional knowledge a teacher has with his/her practice experience. Although there is no one universally accepted process that constitutes conducting action research, it is generally agreed that it focuses on researching an issue of interest to the teacher inside the classroom to determine what to change. As a result, it brings a great improvement to the teaching process and thus, the learning and learners' achievements.

Chapter Three: Practical Part

Introduction

3.1. Teachers' Questionnaire

3.1.1. Population

3.1.2. Description of Teachers' Questionnaire

3.1.3. Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

3.1.4. Discussion of the Results

3.2. Learners' Questionnaire

3.2.1. Population and Sample

3.2.2. Description of Learners' Questionnaire

3.2.2. Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

3.2.3. Discussion of the Results

Conclusion

Chapter Three: Practical Part

Introduction

The present work is about eliciting teachers' and students' points of view about the effective use of action research on enhancing EFL learners' speaking skill. In this chapter, the analysis and the interpretation of the results obtained from the teachers' and students' questionnaires are statistically presented through tables. Therefore, this part is divided into two main sections. The first section is devoted to the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire. The second section relates to the learners' questionnaire. Both; first and second sections, include administration and description of the questionnaire, in addition to the interpretation, and discussion of the results.

3.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

3.1.1. Population

The questionnaire was administered to eight teachers of OE in the department of Foreign Languages- Mila University Centre. We have distributed it to both full time and part time teachers teaching second year classes. The distribution is based on the consideration that second year OE teachers are more knowledgeable about second year learners speaking difficulties and the most appropriate ways of teaching them.

3.1.2. Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire

It is composed of twelve questions which vary between Yes/NO questions, open-ended questions, and multiple choice questions that are sectioned into four parts:

Part One: General information (Question 1- 2)

The first section seeks to gather information about the teachers; their degrees and experiences

Part Two: Teaching the speaking skill (Questions 3- 9)

The aim of this section is to investigate information from teachers concerning their learners speaking skill.

Part Three: Action research (Questions 10- 12)

This section is devoted for probing teachers' perception of the use of action research to improve learners' speaking skill.

Part Four: Teachers' recommendations (Question 13)

In this section, teachers were invited to make suggestions and comments about teaching speaking and the use of action research.

3.1.3. Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

Part one: General information

Question 1: What is your academic degree?

    a- Master

    b- Magister

    c- Doctorate

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	4	50%
b	2	25%
c	2	25%
Total	8	100%

Table 1: Teachers' Academic Degree

This question aims at knowing teachers' academic degree. Table 1 indicates that four teachers representing 50% of the teachers hold a Master degree, while the other 50% is divided equally between teachers who hold Magister Degree and teachers who hold Doctorate degree. Teachers' academic degrees which vary between Master, Magister, and Doctorate imply that the respondents would provide reliable answers that would serve the aim of the study.

Question 2: How long have you been teaching Oral Expression to Second year university learners?

Options	Respondents	Percentages
1 year	2	25%
2 years	1	12.5%
4 years	1	12.5%
5 years	1	12.5%
8 years	1	12.5%
9 years	2	25%
Total	8	100%

Table 2: Teachers' Teaching Experience

Question 2 seeks to know the experience of the questioned teachers in teaching OE to second year learners. The collected answers displayed in table 2 show that the informants' experience ranges between one and nine years. We notice that five teachers have more than three years of teaching experiences. Therefore, this illustrates that the informants have enough experience that allows us to get more concrete information.

Part 2: Teaching the Speaking Skill

Question 3: How do you see your students' speaking level in general?

    a- Good

    b- Average

    c- Below average

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	0	0%
b	8	100%
c	0	0%

Table 3: Students' level in Speaking

Question 3 looks for how the teachers see second year learners speaking level based on the background they have about them. Table 3 denotes that all the teachers agreed upon their learners' speaking level being average. The result gives a hint that their learners face difficulties in speaking that need to be detected and worked on.

Question 4: What are the frequent difficulties that your students face in the speaking sessions?

        a- Hesitation

        b- Pronunciation

        c- Lack of vocabulary

        d- Grammatical mistakes

        e- Lack of motivation

        f- Shyness

        g- Others

Options	Respondents	Percentages
adf	1	12.5%
abcdf	2	25%
abcdef	2	25%
cdfg	2	25%
abcdefg	1	12.5%

Table 4: Learners' Speaking Difficulties

The purpose behind this question is to know learners' most frequent speaking problems based on their teachers' observations and tests. All the teachers opted for more than one option. As it is highly noticed in table 1, the problems that are encountered by learners while speaking and placed first are shyness and grammatical mistakes. Lack of vocabulary and hesitation take the second position of the most difficult aspects for second year learners. From the results, we figure out that there are some speaking problems that call for solutions to help learners overcome them.

Question 5: Do you think that learners are aware of their speaking problems?

a- Yes

b- No

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	6	75%
b	2	25%

Table 5: Learners' Awareness of their Speaking Problems

This question seeks to see if learners are conscious of their problems. The majority of the respondents (75%) reported that their learners are aware of their own speaking problems, whereas, 20% of them answered by no. The data above implies that most of the learners are conscious of their speaking problems.

Question 6: Do you think that learners are aware of how to solve their speaking problems?

a- Yes

b- No

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	1	12.5%
b	7	87.5%

Table 6: Learners' Awareness of How to Solve their Speaking Problems

Question 6 aims at investigating teachers' opinions about their learners' awareness concerning ways of solving their speaking problems. The data in table 6 show that the majority of the questioned teachers (87.5%) believe that their learners are not aware of how to overcome their speaking problems. Only one teacher thinks that his learners are aware of this matter. According to the results of table 6, we may deduce that the need for doing an action research that takes learners difficulties into consideration and raises their consciousness of how to overcome them is required.

Question 7: Do you use certain strategies to detect and solve learners' speaking problems?

    a- Yes

    b- No

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	8	100%
b	0	0%

Table 7: Teachers' Use of Strategies to Detect and Solve Learners' Speaking Problems

Question 7 is asked to collect information about whether the informants use certain strategies that take into consideration their learners' speaking problems. The results (table 7) indicate that all the questioned teachers use certain strategies to fit their learners' needs.

Question 8: If yes, what are those strategies?

Teachers' answers varied between those who concentrate on one strategy that is seen as the most appropriate for their learners, and those who vary strategies to fit all the learners. According to the responses given by the instructors, two teachers are actually using action research within their speaking classrooms. The other teachers opt to use other strategies as cooperative learning strategies (two teachers) and encouraging their learners to speak by creating a good teacher-learner relationship within the classroom. Furthermore, one teacher reported that s/he relies on the prepared talk to help developing learners' speaking skill.

We can say that OE teachers take into consideration their learners' needs to choose the appropriate strategies.

Question 9: Do you think that changing the method/strategy/type of tasks used without regarding learners' needs would be effective?

    a- Yes

    b- No

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	1	12.5%
b	7	83.5%

Table 8: Effectiveness of the Change in Regard to Learners' Needs

This question targets if the teachers think that considering learners' speaking problems while choosing the teaching strategies is important. The data indicate that seven teachers out of eight see that making the change without considering the needs would not be effective. However, one teacher pointed out that this would work. Hence, we may say that OE teachers at Mila University Centre believe that detecting the learners' needs is an essential step before opting for certain teaching method/ strategy/ teaching task.

Part 3: Action Research

Question 10: Do you think that it is beneficial to use Action Research to solve learners' language problems?

    a- Yes

    b- No

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	8	100%
b	0	0%

Table 9: The Effectiveness of Action Research Use

This question aims to collect teachers' opinions about using action research to solve learners' different language problems. From the teachers' answers, it is highly noticeable that all the questioned teachers (100%) agreed on the effectiveness of action research to solve learners' language problems.

Question 11: Do you see Action Research as an effective method to solve learners' speaking problems?

a- Yes

b- No

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	8	100%
b	0	0%

Table 10: The Effectiveness of Action Research for Learners' Speaking Problems

Since this research investigates the effects of action research on the speaking skill, this question is meant to probe teachers' opinions about its effectiveness for solving learners speaking problems. The entire informants responded in a positive manner. They all said that action research is an effective method to deal with learners speaking problems. This result reflects teachers' positive point of view towards the use of action research for the sake of improving learners speaking skill.

Question 12: If yes, what are the long-lasting outcomes you believe classroom action research would have on your learners' speaking skill?

We asked this question to collect the outcomes that teachers believe action research would have on learners' speaking skill. The respondents gave various suggestions which are summarized as follows:

a- Action research would help ameliorate learners' fluency, competency, and mastery of the language.

b- It gives learners an idea and a chance to be trained in how to identify their problems and find ways to solve them.

c- This method helps FL teachers know better their learners while investigating their needs.

The given suggestions echo OE teachers' positive opinion about the outcomes of action research on the learning process as it gives learners awareness of their problems and the most appropriate solutions, and on the teaching process as it may facilitate teaching by giving teachers a background about their learners.

Part4: Teachers' Recommendations

Question 13: Please, add any suggestions you see relevant to the aim of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was ended with an open request to teachers to share any comments concerning the issue of using action research in speaking classrooms. This question was not answered by most of the respondents. However, some of them suggested the following:

- Teachers should be aware of action research and its use.

- Action research is an effective method to be used by teachers in speaking classrooms.

- Action research might be the appropriate method to overcome learners' speaking skill.

- Teachers should use action research to ameliorate the four skills not only the speaking skill.

3.1.4. Discussion of the Results

The present questionnaire intended to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the use of action research as a method to solve learners' problems inside the speaking classrooms. The majority of the questioned teachers are experienced ones which gives a chance to get more reliable answers.

The teachers reported that their learners are of an average level, they face many problems while speaking, and they are in general not aware of how to overcome them. Therefore, we can deduce that this lack of awareness is an urge for the use of action research. For the sake of improvement, the teachers are making efforts to use certain strategies that they believe would fit their learners and believe that the choice must be based on the needs detected while teaching.

Furthermore, all the questioned teachers tend to have a positive attitude toward action research since they all agreed upon the inefficiency of changing their teaching strategies without studying learners speaking difficulties. To confirm their opinions, two questions were addressed to know if they view action research as an effective method/strategy or not. All the informants responded that action research would be influential in finding the suitable solutions for learners' language problems generally, and learners' speaking problems particularly. They added that it is influential in raising learners' awareness of their speaking problems and help creating a good teacher-learner relationship.

According to the discussed results, teachers' attitudes toward the use of action research has proven to be positive and also showed a tendency to use it and recommend it for other teachers.

3.2. Learners' Questionnaire

3.2.1. Population and Sample

The questionnaire was addressed to second-year EFL learners at Mila University Centre. The selection of the population is based on the consideration that students of second year are in transitional phase. In other terms, they already have experienced the interaction with their teachers and peers in the previous year which allows them to detect the speaking areas in which they encounter difficulties. Additionally, they can give ideas about how their teachers help them overcome these difficulties. It was distributed through Facebook groups and e-mails in a Google Document format. Sixty students had answered the questionnaire.

3.2.2. Description of the Learners' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is composed of questions which are grouped into four parts:

Part One: General information (question 1 and 2)

The aim of this part is to gather general information about the questioned learners.

Part Two: Speaking skill (questions 3-9)

The main aim behind this part is to explore learner's difficulties in speaking, their awareness of them, and how they manage to overcome them.

Part Three: Action research (questions 10-19)

Part three investigates learners' attitudes toward action research in developing the speaking skill and their awareness about its importance.

Part Four: recommendation (question 20)

The last part seeks learners' suggestions related to the topic of the questionnaire.

3.2.3. Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

Part 1: General Information

Question 1: Was English your first choice?

   a. Yes

   b. No

Options	Respondents	Percentages
A	48	80%
B	12	20%

Table 11: Learners' English Choice

The question aims at investigating if English was the first choice of learners. 80% of the questioned learners affirmed that English was their first choice, whereas, only 20% of them said the opposite. The results assume that the majority of second year learners of English at Mila University are motivated and interested in learning English.

Question 2: How do you consider your level in English?

   a. Good

   b. Average

   c. Below average

Options	Respondents	Percentages
A	38	63.3%
B	22	36.7%
C	00	0%

Table 12: Learners' English Level

By this question, we aim to determine learners' level in English. Table 12 shows that 63.3% of the respondents have a good level in English. The others (36.7%) stated that their level in English is average. Thus, most of students have a good level in the English language indicating that they have achieved high scores.

Part 2: Speaking Skill

Question 3: Is your spoken English:

a. Good

b. Average

c. Below average

Options	Respondents	Percentages
A	25	41.7%
B	34	56.7%
C	1	1.6%

Table 13: Learners' Speaking Level

The aim of question 3 is to identify learners' level in speaking the FL. From table 13 more than half of the respondents (56.7%) declared that their speaking level is average. On the other hand, 41.7% of them pointed out that their level in the oral skill is good. So, more than the half

of learners have an average speaking level which indicates facing difficulties which requires remedy.

Question 4: Do you think that speaking is the skill that needs the most to be developed in order to master the English language? Justify your answer, please.

    a. Yes

    b. No

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	47	78.3%
b	13	21.7%

Table 14: The Importance of Speaking

The aim of this question is to investigate learners' opinions about the importance of the speaking skill. More than 78% of the learners agreed on the superior status that speaking has in learning the FL. Their justifications are summarized as follows:

- Speaking is the most used skill in daily life.

- Speaking needs to be developed since it is the means of communication.

- To master a language, learners have to speak it.

- Speaking is an important skill; we use it to express our ideas and opinions.

- It is difficult and needs more efforts to be developed in comparison to the other language skills.

Few learners (21.7%) did not give priority for the development of the speaking skill. Their justifications can be summarized in the following points:

- All the language skills are equally important for mastering the language.

- The listening skill is the one that needs improvement the most.

- Developing the writing skill is much required since most exams rely on it.

The results prove that the majority of learners considered speaking as the most needed skill to be developed.

Question 5: Do you encounter any problems while speaking?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	59	98.3%
b	1	1.7%

Table 15: Learners' Encountering Speaking Problems

The aim behind this question is to know whether learners face problems in oral production. Almost all the learners (98.3%) reported that they have problems while speaking. Only one learner (1.7%) claimed that s/he does not encounter any problem in speaking the FL. The results illustrate that the overwhelming majority of learners have obstacles in speaking that need to be resolved by adopting the most appropriate methods, strategies and tasks.

Question 6: If yes, what are the problems you face while speaking?

a- Hesitation

b- Pronunciation

c- Lack of vocabulary

d- Grammatical mistakes

e- Lack of motivation

f- Shyness

g- Others

Options	Respondents	Percentages
A	5	8.33%
B	2	3.33%
C	3	5%
D	6	10%
E	2	3.33%
F	6	10%
G	1	1.66%
Ac	3	5%
Af	3	5%
Bd	1	1.66%
Bf	1	1.66%
Cd	3	5%
Cf	1	1.66%
Cf	1	1.66%
Ef	3	5%
Abc	2	3.33%
Abf	3	5%
Adf	1	1.66%
Aef	1	1.66%
Bce	1	1.66%
Cdf	2	3.33%
Cef	2	3.33%

Abcd	1	1.66%
Acdf	2	3.33%
Bcef	1	1.66%
Abcdef	2	3.33%
None	1	1.66%
Total	60	100%

Table 16: Learners' Speaking Problems

The question is designed to identify the problems faced by the learners while speaking. By analysing table 16, the most frequent problem is shyness (f) (29 learners) followed by both hesitation (a) and lack of vocabulary(c) (23 learners). 19 learners said that they suffer from problems in grammar (d), and 14 ones have difficulties in pronunciation (b). It can be concluded that shyness, lack of vocabulary, and hesitation are the most common problems faced by learners in speaking.

Question 7: Are you aware of ways to solve your speaking problems in the classroom?

    a. Yes

    b. NO

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	48	80%
b	12	20%

Table 17: Learners' Awareness of Ways to Solve Problems

The question's aim is to figure out learners' awareness about how to solve their speaking problems. Table 17 shows that 80% of the sample stated that they are aware of ways to overcome their speaking difficulties while the rest of learners (20%) said that they are not aware of how to

solve them. Thus, a large number of learners are aware of how to find solutions to their obstacles in spoken language.

Question 8: What are these ways?

Question 8 seeks to know the ways used by learners to solve their speaking problems. The learners who answered this question (44 learners) presented various strategies to reinforce their oral abilities. 13 learners use listening to overcome the difficulties; Some of them listen to native speakers while others listen to music. 8 of the students indicated that the best way for developing speaking is practice. Additionally, 7 learners focused on the psychological aspect saying that, to speak effectively, they try to raise their self-confidence and forget about mistakes and meets laughter. Reading aloud, speaking in front of the mirror, watching movies, recording speech were also mentioned by learners to be used in their attempt to overcome the barriers. From the results, learners use different ways to increase their speaking level. They show their willingness to ameliorate their oral abilities.

Question 9: Have you noticed any improvement in your speaking skill using these solutions?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	48	80%
b	12	20%

Table 18: Speaking Skill Improvement

This question is designed to reveal the learners' opinions about the usefulness of the strategies used by them to promote speaking in English. From table 18, 80% of the sample asserted that these solutions are effective as they notice improvement in speaking. The rest

learners (20%) declared that they do not recognize any improvement after using their strategies. Therefore, most of students are really aware of the appropriate strategies to foster their speaking competence.

Part 3: Action Research

Question 10: You prefer your Speaking teacher to teach you:

a. By adopting trending methods

b. By adopting methods that fit your speaking problems and needs

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	10	16.7%
b	50	83.3%

Table 19: Learners' Teaching Preferences

The purpose behind this question is to investigate how learners prefer to be taught. More than 83% of respondents like better to be taught by taking into consideration their speaking problems and needs. 16.7% of them prefer trending methods even if they are not suitable for them. Hence, the majority of learners give importance to their speaking problems and how to overcome them in order to develop their speaking level.

Question 11: Do you like working together with your teacher on detecting your speaking problems?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Respondents	Percentages
a	55	91.7%
b	5	8.3%

Table 20: Teacher-learner Detection of Problems

The aim of this question is to know if the learners like the help of the teacher in the detection of their speaking problems or not. Table 20 adverted that for about 92% of the learners want to work together with the teacher in order to detect their weaknesses in the speaking skill, while the rest (8.3%) dislike this collaboration. It can be concluded that the majority of learners like the teacher's involvement in detecting their oral problems.

Question 12: Does your teacher help you in detecting your speaking problems?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Respondents	Percentage
a	49	81.7%
b	11	18.3%

Table 21: Teachers' Help in Speaking Problems Detection

The question is asked mainly to determine whether teachers actually help their learners solve their speaking problems or not. 49 learners making up 81.7% asserted that their teachers assist them to detect their speaking problems. However, 11 learners (18.3%) claimed that their teachers do not do so. Hence, most of the teachers detect learners' speaking difficulties as the starting point of conducting an action research.

Question 13: Does your teacher help you in solving your speaking problems?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Respondents	Percentage
a	45	75%
b	15	25%

Table 22: Teachers' Help in Solving Speaking problems

This question is put to reveal the role of the teachers in solving their learners' problems. As can be seen in table 22, most of the informants (75%) get help from their teachers in overcoming the speaking problems. 15 learners, who represent 25% of the sample, displayed that their teachers do not work on solving their speaking problems. The result confirms that most of teachers solve learners' problems indicating their use of action research.

Question 14: How does your teacher help you in detecting your speaking problems?

a- Interviews (Interacting with each individual student)

b- Focus groups (Interacting with students in groups)

c- Observation during speaking

d- Questionnaires

e- Tests

f- Others

Options	Respondents	Percentage
a	2	3.33%
b	9	15%

c	12	20%
d	3	5%
e	1	1.66%
f	4	6.66%
ab	3	5%
ac	4	6.66%
ad	1	1.66%
bc	1	1.66%
be	2	3.33%
ce	5	8.33%
abc	4	6.66%
abd	1	1.66%
abe	2	3.33%
bce	2	3.33%
abde	1	1.66%
acde	1	1.66%
abcde	2	3.33%
Total	60	100%

Table 23*:* Teachers' Techniques to Detect the Speaking Problems

This question aims at determining the techniques used by teachers to detect speaking problems. For about 52% of the questioned learners stated that observation (c) is the used tool by their teachers to discover the weaknesses. 45% of the respondents said that their teachers detect speaking problems through focus group (b), whereas 35% of them claimed that their teachers

interview them (a) in order to find out their oral production stumbling blocks. The results reveal that observation, focus group, and interview are the most used techniques by OE teachers to help their learners' identify their barriers in speaking.

Question 15: Do you think that making you aware of your speaking problems would help to ameliorate your speaking skill?

    a. Yes

    b. No

Options	Respondents	Percentage
a	59	98.3%
b	1	1.7%

Table 24: Efficacy of speaking problems awareness in developing speaking skill

By this question, we want to investigate learners' opinions about the impact of learners' awareness of their speaking problems on the development of the speaking skill. 59 learners out of 60 said that their awareness of the speaking problems serves in promoting their speaking skill. The results affirm that the respondents are conscious about the efficacy of the awareness of their weaknesses and difficulties in improving their speaking competence. That is to say, they are aware of the importance of action research in developing their speaking skill.

Question 16: Do you think that detecting your problems would help your teacher selecting the most appropriate teaching strategies/methods/activities?

    a. Yes

    b. No

Options	Respondents	Percentage
a	60	100%
b	00	0%

Table 25: Efficacy of Detecting Speaking Problems

The question's aim is to investigate learners' perceptions about the effect of detecting speaking problems on selecting the most appropriate teaching strategies/methods/activities. As it is highly noticed, all the learners (100%) considered discovering learners' speaking obstacles helpful in adopting the most appropriate teaching strategies/methods/activities in OE sessions. Therefore, all the questioned learners view that taking into consideration learners' speaking problems while selecting teaching strategies/methods/activities is indispensable.

Question 17: In your opinion, the strategies/methods/activities chosen on the basis of your speaking problem would…

       a- Increase the level of your engagement in the lessons

       b- Raise your motivation

       c- Develop the teacher-learner relationship

       d- Introduce you to new strategies you did not know

       d- All of them

Options	Respondents	Percentage
a	3	5%
b	3	5%
c	2	3.33%
d	4	6.66%
e	32	53.33%

ab	3	5%
ac	1	1.66%
ad	3	5%
abc	1	1.66%
abd	4	6.66%
bd	3	5%
bc	1	1.66%
Total	60	100%

Table 26: Efficiency of Teaching According to Speaking Problems

The aim of this question is to explore the effect of the teaching strategies/methods/activities selected on the basis of learners' speaking problems. 53.33% of the respondents stated that the chosen strategies/methods/activities would increase the level of learners' engagement in the lessons (a), raise their motivation (b), develop the teacher-learner relationship(c), and introduce them to new strategies they did not know (d). 25% of the respondents stated that teaching according to learners' problems would increase the level of learners' engagement in the lessons (a), and 25% of them claimed that it would raise their motivation (b). While 14 learners said that it would introduce them to new strategies they did not know (d). In the light of what has been said, we can deduce that choosing the teaching strategies/methods/activities that serve learners' needs and suit their level is very efficient.

Question 18: Do you believe that the use of Action Research in the speaking classroom would improve your speaking skill?

    a. Yes

    b. No

Options	Respondents	Percentage
a	58	96.7%
b	2	3.3%

Table 27: Action Research Effectiveness in Improving Speaking Skill

This question aims at unveiling learners perspectives towards the efficacy of using action research in developing the speaking skill. Table 27 shows that a great number of learners (58 out of 60) believe in the effectiveness of action research in speaking improvement, while only 2 learners denied this view. According to the informants' views, action research is effective for fostering learners' speaking skill.

Question 19: What impacts you think Action Research would have on your speaking skill?

a- Raise your awareness of your speaking problems

b- Raise your awareness of ways of solving your speaking problems

d- Raising your interest in learning

c- Overcoming classroom difficulties

e- All of them

Options	Respondents	Percentage
a	6	10%
b	4	6.66%
c	2	3.33%
d	1	1.66%
e	34	56.66%
ab	2	3.33%

ac	3	5%
ad	1	1.66%
abc	4	6.66%
abd	2	3.33%
bd	1	1.66%
Total	60	100%

Table 28: The Impact of Action Research on learners' Speaking Skill

The purpose behind asking this question is to discover learners' points of view about the impact of action research on speaking skill. 56.66% of the questioned students think that action research would raise their awareness of their speaking problems (a), raise their awareness of ways of solving their speaking problems (b), increase their interest in learning (c), and overcome classroom difficulties (d). 30% of the respondents claimed that it would only raise their awareness of ways to solving their speaking problems (a), while 21% of them considered that it would help them know how to solve their problems (b). From the results, learners consider that action research has positive impacts on speaking indicating that it would be beneficial in fostering teaching and learning speaking.

Part 4: Further Recommendations

Question 20: Please, add any suggestions you see relevant to the aim of the questionnaire.

The question is intended to know what learners' want to add in relation to the topic. Only 17 participants answered this question, and their suggestions are as the following:

Learners	Suggestions
5 learner	It seems that action research has a positive impact on solving learners' problems in speaking
4 learners	Teachers should pay attention to their learners' problems in speaking
3 learners	All teachers should apply action research in their classrooms in order to promote their students' speaking level
1 learner	Every learner should be aware of his speaking problems and figure out the way and the strategy that helps him/her solve those problems
1 learner	Through action research teachers discover learners' weaknesses which helps them develop learners' level by using the appropriate activities
1 learner	To improve the speaking skill, learners have to listen to native speakers, watch movies, listen to music, and read books
1 learner	It is good if the teacher used strategies according to our preferences like role play or discussion instead of presentations
1 learner	Developing the speaking skill is necessary and teachers should help learners to ameliorate their level

Table 29: Learners' Recommendations

3.2.4. Discussion of the Results

The analysis of the data collected from the learners' questionnaire serves in drawing a set of results concerning the improvement of the speaking skill and the important role of classroom action research.

The learners consider speaking as the most important skill since it is used for communication and expressing ideas and opinions. The majority of them encounter such difficulties in speaking like shyness, hesitation, lack of vocabulary, and grammatical mistakes. From the data analysis, most of them are willing to develop their oral abilities making use of various strategies including the use of English to interact with classmates, listening to native speakers, and raising self-confidence.

Teachers have a vital role in finding out their learners' problems. The results indicate that a large number of teachers detect them through different tools (observation, focus group, interview). The detected problems can be solved through action research which helps teachers make better decisions about the process of teaching speaking; it helps them select the most appropriate strategies/methods/activities which would be beneficial for the promotion of learners' level.

Based on the results, learners have positive perceptions about the use of action research on the development of the speaking skill. The majority of them believe in the positive impacts of action research on the process of teaching/learning speaking.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we discussed the students' and teachers' questionnaires which investigate their opinions toward the use of action research to improve EFL learners' speaking skill. From both teachers' and learners' questionnaires, we deduce that both teachers and students have positive attitudes towards the use of action research and agreed that learners really encounter several speaking problems speaking. In addition, they confirmed the hypothesis that the use of action research in speaking classrooms would help in developing EFL learners speaking skill.

In language classes, students face many problems while trying to speak and they are not able to overcome them without teachers' help. Therefore, some teachers opt for action research to help them find the most efficient solutions.

Recommendations and suggestions

In the light of the research findings, we shall present the following recommendations and suggestions to EFL teachers, learners, and future researchers:

➢ EFL Teachers

- Due to the several challenges that teachers face to improve their learners' speaking skill, we suggest the application of action research.

- Teachers should help their learners' determine their speaking problems.

- The teaching activities and strategies should be selected on the basis of learners' needs and weaknesses.

➢ EFL Learners

- EFL learners should be aware of their points of weaknesses in speaking.

- They should help their teachers in the process of problem identification.

➢ Future Researchers

- Concerning future researchers, it is suggested for them to conduct a research about the effectiveness of action research in enhancing the other language skills (listening, reading, and writing).

- We suggest carrying out the current research again with different research methodology.

Limitations of the Study

Throughout this study, several limitations have been encountered.

- Difficulties to get learners answers through social media because of the incapacity to reach them personally due to the current circumstances.
- Changing the research methodology after the spread of the pandemic.

General Conclusion

Developing the speaking skill is a difficult task. It requires experience and practice in regular basis. Action research is viewed as an effective method that is used to ameliorate learners' oral abilities. The current study is conducted to explore the impact of action research on the speaking skill. In this research, some light has been shed on EFL learners' and teachers' different perspectives about the application of action research to foster the speaking skill. The study departs from a main hypothesis that is: if teachers applied action research, learners' speaking skill would be developed.

In attempt to answer the research questions and test the hypothesis, two questionnaires are adopted. They are addressed to sixty second year university learners and eight second year teachers of oral expression, from the department of English-Mila University Centre. The findings from this research paper provided answers to its research questions and confirmed the hypothesis.

The research is composed of three chapters. It began with a theoretical framework which dealt with the main concepts related to the speaking skill in the first chapter and to the action research in the second chapter. Whereas, in the third chapter; the research methodology, the results and their interpretations were provided.

To conclude, EFL learners do encounter several difficulties while speaking which call for teachers' involvement to find appropriate solution for these difficulties. Teachers and Learners have positive perceptions about the use of action research to develop learners' speaking skill. They see that the use of action research would help teachers be aware of learners' problems and

find out the solutions for the sake of improving their level in speaking as well as raising learners' awareness of their speaking problems and ways of overcoming them.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Teachers' Questionnaire

Appendix II: Learners' Questionnaire

Appendix I: Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teacher,

This questionnaire is a part of a research work. It aims at investigating your points of view towards the use of classroom action research to improve second year learners' speaking skill.

We would be grateful if you answered the following questions.

Part 1: General information

1- What is your academic degree?

Master ☐   Magister ☐   Doctorate ☐

2- How long have you been teaching Oral Expression to Second year university learners?

.... years.

Part 2: The Speaking Skill

3- How do you see your students' level in general?

- Good ☐

- Average ☐

- Below average ☐

4- What are the frequent difficulties that your students face in the speaking sessions?

- Hesitation ☐

- Pronunciation ☐

- Lack of vocabulary ☐

- Grammatical mistakes ☐

- Lack of motivation ☐

- Shyness ☐

- Others …………………………………………………………………………...

5- Do you think that learners are aware of their problems?

Yes ☐   No ☐

6- Do you think that learners are aware of how to solve their problems?

Yes ☐   No ☐

7- Do you use certain strategies to detect and solve learners' speaking problems?

Yes ☐   No ☐

8- If yes, what are those strategies?

....,..,.

....,.......................................

9- Do you think that changing the method/strategy/type of tasks used without regarding

learners' needs would be effective?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Part 3: Classroom Action Research

10- Do you think that it is beneficial to use Action Research to solve learners' language

problems?

       Yes ☐   No ☐

    11 -Do you see Action Research as an effective method to solve learners' speaking problems?

       Yes ☐   No ☐

    12-If yes, what are the long-lasting outcomes you believe classroom action research would

have on your learners' speaking skill?

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Part 4: Teachers' Suggestions

13-Please, add any suggestions you see relevant to the aim of the questionnaire.

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                                          Thank You.☺

Appendix II: Learners' Questionnaire

Dear student,

This questionnaire is a part of our research work intended for second-year learners at Mila University Centre. It aims at investigating the role of action research in improving the speaking skill.

Action research is a method used by teachers to detect their learners' language problems inside the classroom and find solutions for those problems through conducting a research to decide what teaching method and strategies are appropriate to reach the improvement.

We would be grateful if you answered the following questions.

Part 1: General Information

1- Was English your first choice?

   -Yes   ☐

   -No   ☐

2- How do you consider your level in English?

- Good   ☐

-Average   ☐

- Below average   ☐

Part 2: The Speaking Skill

3- Is your spoken English:

- Good ☐

- Average ☐

- Below average ☐

4- Do you think that speaking is the skill that needs the most to be developed in order to master

the English language?

Yes ☐   No ☐

-Justify your answer, please.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

5- Do you encounter any problems while speaking?

Yes ☐   No ☐

6- If yes, what are the problems you face while speaking?

- Hesitation ☐

- Pronunciation ☐

- Lack of vocabulary ☐

- Grammatical mistakes ☐

- Lack of motivation ☐

- Shyness ☐

- Others ………………………………………………………………………………

7- Are you aware of ways to solve your speaking problems in the classroom?

Yes ☐   No ☐

8- What are the ways you use to solve your speaking problems?

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9- Have you noticed any improvement in your speaking skill using these solutions?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Part 3: Action Research

10- You prefer your Speaking teacher to teach you:

- By adopting trending methods or strategies   ☐

- By adopting methods that fit your speaking problems and needs   ☐

11- Do you like working together with your teacher on detecting your speaking problems?

Yes ☐   No ☐

12- Does your teacher help you in detecting your speaking problems?

Yes ☐   No ☐

13- Does your teacher help you in solving your speaking problems?

Yes ☐   No ☐

14- How does your teacher help you detecting your speaking problems?

-Interviews (Interacting with each individual student) ☐

- Focus groups (Interacting with students in groups) ☐

- Observation during speaking ☐

- Questionnaire ☐

- Tests ☐

- Others …………………………………………………………………………………..

15- Do you think that making you aware about your speaking problems would help ameliorating your speaking skill?

Yes ☐   No ☐

16- Do you think that detecting your problems would help your teacher selecting the most appropriate teaching strategies/methods/activities?

Yes ☐   No ☐

17- In your opinion, the strategies/methods/activities chosen on the basis of your speaking problem would…

- Increase the level of your engagement in the lessons ☐

- Raise your motivation ☐

- Develop the teacher-learner relationship ☐

- Introduce you to new strategies you did not know ☐

- All of them. ☐

18- Do you believe that the use of Action Research in the speaking classroom would improve your speaking skill?

Yes ☐   No ☐

19- What impacts you think Action Research would have on your speaking skill?

- Raise your awareness of your speaking problems ☐

- Raise your awareness of ways of solving your speaking problems ☐

- Overcoming classroom difficulties ☐

- Raising your interest in learning ☐

-All of them ☐

Part 4: Further Suggestions

20- Please, add any suggestion you see relevant to the aim of the questionnaire.

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Thank You ☺

ملخص

تعتبر مهارة التحدث عنصرا محوريا في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. رغم هذا نجد أن الطلبة يواجهون عدة صعوبات عند محاولة التحدث والتواصل باللغة الإنجليزية. ومن هذا المنطلق نجد أن موضوع فعالية البحث الميداني في إيجاد حلول للصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلبة أثناء التحدث يلقى رواجا في مجال تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى سبر آراء الطلبة والأساتذة حول استعمال البحث الميداني وفعاليته في إيجاد حلول مناسبة لتطوير مهارة التحدث لدى الطلبة. تنطلق هذه الدراسة من فرضية أن البحث الميداني يمكن أن يكون فعالا في تطوير مهارة التحدث لدى الطلبة. يأخذ هذا البحث كعينة للدراسة طلبة السنة ثانية ليسانس. ولغرض الوصول لهذا الهدف تم توزيع استبيانين. الأول موجه لستين طالب في السنة الثانية في المركز الجامعي ميلة، والثاني موجه لثماني أساتذة تعبير شفهي يدرسون السنة الثانية في المركز الجامعي ميلة. البيانات المتحصل عليها تشير إلى أن كلا من الطلبة والأساتذة ينظرون إلى استعمال البحث الميداني في حصص التعبير الشفهي وفعاليته نظرة إيجابية.

Résumé

La compétence orale est d'une importance cruciale dans l'apprentissage de l'anglais en tant que langue étrangère. Cependant, les étudiants rencontrent souvent des difficultés lorsqu'ils essaient de parler anglais afin de communiquer. Par conséquent, l'efficacité de la recherche-action pour trouver des solutions aux problèmes linguistiques des étudiants est une question qui suscite de plus en plus d'intérêt dans le domaine de l'enseignement d'anglais comme une langue étrangère. La présente étude vise à explorer la façon dont les enseignants et les étudiants perçoivent l'utilisation de la recherche-action et son efficacité à trouver des solutions efficaces pour améliorer la capacité d'expression orale. L'hypothèse est que si la recherche-action était utilisée dans les classes d'expression orale, les compétences orales des élèves seraient améliorées. Afin d'atteindre les objectifs précédents, deux questionnaires ont été utilisés. Le premier questionnaire a été administré à un échantillon de soixante étudiants d'anglais. Le deuxième a été distribué à huit enseignants d'expression orale des classes de deuxième année au Centre Universitaire de Mila. Les résultats obtenus à partir des questionnaires des enseignants et des élèves révèlent une perception positive des deux; enseignants et étudiants, vers l'utilisation de la recherche-action dans les classes orales et son efficacité à trouver des solutions appropriées aux problèmes du compétence orale des apprenants.