

Non-Linguistic Factors Affecting Students' Acquisition of Arabic Speaking Skills in Al Jamea Tus Saifiyah University Nairobi Campus, Kenya

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Abstract

This article aimed to identify and explore non-linguistic factors affecting the acquisition of speaking skills in Arabic amongst students of Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus. The study has adopted a mixed-methods approach; specifically, the study used a cross-sectional design. The study was underpinned on Krashen's theory, also known as Krashen's Monitor Model. One research question guided this study: What are the non-linguistic factors that can affect students' acquisition of Arabic speaking skills in Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University in Nairobi, Kenya? The study targeted a total population of approximately 898 people, which comprised students and lecturers. 24 lecturers were sampled using the simple random sampling method to sample 17% of the total number. 81 students were sampled using stratified sampling methods from different age-groups. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules, then analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Qualitative data were transcribed; coded, categorized, themes derived from the categories, interrelated the themes, and finally interpreted the meaning from the themes. To ensure the reliability, questionnaires for teachers and students were tested using test-retest reliability (also called retest reliability). The trustworthiness of qualitative things was defined in terms of their credibility, dependability, and conformability. The study found out that certain non-linguistic factors affect students' acquisition of Arabic language speaking skills, and several suggestive measures were identified to overcome the factors and challenges faced by the students of Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University. Further, the study made recommendations for policy formulation to the interested parties. All Ethical considerations were observed throughout the entire study.

KEYWORDS: Kenya, Second Language Acquisition, Non-linguistic Factors, Comprehensible Input.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Second Language Acquisition refers to the process of learning a second language (L2) after the first language. This field of second language learning is old and new at the same time. Scholars for centuries have been fascinated by the questions posed by the nature of foreign language learning and language teaching. (Gass, 2001) It is new in the sense that the field, as it is now represented, only goes back about 40 years. In the earlier part of the modern phase, most scholarly articles emphasized language teaching and only had a secondary interest in language learning. However, pedagogical concerns questioned and derived demand for studying second language learning in school-context. Gass & Selinker (2001) claim that this process of learning a second language can sometimes occur in a classroom context or sometimes not. Many different types of theories, researches and studies revolved around the term SLA, i.e. Second Language Acquisition. Furthermore, there are also studies carried out globally and locally in identifying how SLA is affected by several factors.

Undoubtedly as a second language, Arabic language issues have turned to be international, in regard to the fact that it is amongst the eleven international languages. Apart from its status as the fifth most commonly spoken native language in the world with over 300 million speakers, it is the official language of 20 countries and an official language of the United Nations, Arab League, Organization of Islamic Conference and African Union. Worldwide there are many types of researches done on Arabic Language Acquisition as well as on the factors which affect its acquisition. (Hanah, 2018)

Abdullahi, Rouyan & Noor in Malaysia (2018) reviewed a number of studies on the factors which might have an influence on the learning of Arabic as second language macro-skills, i.e. reading, writing, listening, and speaking among Malay undergraduate students. It confirms many factors have significant correlations with the students' performances in learning Arabic language macro-skills. In 2018, Journal of Language Teaching and Research, published a research that studied what problems of learning Arabic are faced

by Non-Arabic speaking Children in Jordan. It investigated through two main approaches; reasons for language weakness of non-Arabic speaking children and secondly treatment. The research also aimed to detect the aspects of similarity and difference amongst Arabic and non-Arabic speaking children regarding their ability to acquire language and problems of learning it. (El-Omari & Bataineh, 2018) All these researches around the world mark the importance given to this subject of research in the field of Second Language Acquisition.

In the African continent, one should regard the fact that the plurality of languages and multilingualism is the natural assets of society in Africa (Wolff, 2014). Different African languages are an essential medium of instruction for providing quality education in Africa, together with the adequate introduction of “intercontinental languages of wider communication” (international languages of wider communication, like English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and also Arabic) as a subject of instruction. A research was done by Bokamba on African professionals residing in the United States to analyze Multiple Language Acquisition (MLA) and functioning in Africa as a case study of multilingualism in Central Africa. It concluded by offering an explanation for the achievement of ‘native- like’ proficiency in several languages by young Africans. (Bokamba, 2018).

Sirajudeen and Adebisi (2012), carried out a research in Nigeria. It investigated the number of obstacles hinder the effectiveness of teaching and learning Arabic in Nigeria as a Foreign Language. It concludes that the teaching-learning process has inexorably resulted in the circle of the production of Arabic teachers who lack requisite pedagogical competencies for teaching a foreign language. A number of recommendations are put forward towards improving the situation.

In Kenya, most of the studies revolve around the acquisition of the English as Second Language as it is one of the most frequent languages used in Kenya especially in its education systems (Kimemia, 2001). But one could not disregard the fact that there are other languages as well, which are taught in classrooms as suggested by Kenyan school’s curriculum. The National Education Sector Plan which was laid by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kenya (2015) states that “The current secondary education (of Kenya) curriculum comprises 32 subjects. ... These areas include: Arabic, German and French, Islamic Religious Education, Hindu Religious Education, Sign Language, Music, and Art and Design.”

This statement provides us insight for the indigenous nature of Kenyan curriculum of studies which comprises of different language. Indigenous African languages have borrowed from other languages, especially English, French, and Arabic. For this multilinguistic tradition of Kenyan society, a research was carried by Mose (2018) at South Eastern Kenya University in Kitui County, Kenya. The purpose of this study was to establish the extent of multilingualism and mother tongue maintenance mechanisms among the Nubian Language Speakers in Western Kenya. Data were gathered through interviews with Nubian speakers, and it concluded with the findings that the Nubians speak up to six different languages which include Arabic as well. This explains the importance and significance of any study done on Arabic Language Acquisition. Such studies are beneficial to Kenya, especially as the Arabic language is deeply rooted in the African culture as well as its curriculum. And not only will it help us to understand the relevance of Arabic but also help in the teaching of Arabic in a classroom context.

The current study will focus on one macro skill of the Arabic language, i.e. speaking. ‘Speaking’ is the skill defined as the oral mode or the productive skill which is more complicated and which involves more than just pronouncing words (Iqbal, 2012). In the acquisition of a second language, speaking is an important skill to master. Speaking skills play a vital role in one’s social and academic life by becoming responsive and receptive to information in society. As a result, these skills contribute to the development of confidence and effective interaction skills like socialization as well as other macro skills such as reading and writing. Studies of second language use have identified many problems and difficulties foreign language learners face in order to learn to communicate in the second language in secondary schools and higher institutions.

In Malaysia, Samah (2012) carried a study to investigate these factors and concluded that most students have knowledge in Arabic grammar and vocabulary, but they are not able to use it while speaking the Arabic language. This problem occurs for several factors. Among the factors are confidence in speaking Arabic language, motivation for learning Arabic, the weakness of pedagogy in teaching Arabic language communication, the influence of the first language, and so forth. Learners’ exposure to literature during the Arabic language teaching is expected to improve their speaking skills by enriching their vocabulary and also the use of Arabic in a variety of ways.

In Australia, Latu (1994) carried a study which investigated the four macro skills of English Language in relation to the factors which affect its acquisition. This study aimed at determining factors which might have an impact on the learning of English macro skills as a second language (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) by Tongan learners in Australia who learn English as a Second Language. Likewise in Kenya, Verah in 2017 carried out a study to identify factors affecting students’ acquisition of speaking skills in English among secondary schools in Turkana East district of Kenya. It established that there are certain linguistic and non-linguistic factors affecting the acquisition of speaking skills in English amongst secondary students in Turkana

East District, Kenya. He further established other factors like adequacy of instructional resources used in teaching speaking skills in English and teaching strategies used to impart speaking skills.

After considering the above-discussed studies, it is elucidated that Second Language Acquisition has many researches carried down in different languages worldwide including Arabic, and many factors that affect it have been studied with different participants and research methods. Nevertheless, according to Baker and Westrup (2003), in many countries, speaking skill is not given such importance as other language skills. This is because speaking skills are not assessed frequently or tested in exams. Therefore, teachers usually disregard this skill and focus on other areas of language learning features such as grammar or vocabulary. Specifically, in Kenya over the years, most of the attention has been given to investigate reading and writing for curriculum purposes, whereas listening and speaking remain neglected skills (Mekonge, 2017).

It is evident that speaking, just like other macro skills of any language, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing, is an important skill to master and should be given equal attention. Likewise, just like any second language, Arabic speaking skill should also be investigated with proper focus and studies in Kenya. For this gap to be bridged, this study will focus on the acquisition of Arabic speaking skills and will study the factors which affect its acquisition among the students of Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University, Nairobi.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Al-Jamea-Tus-Saifiyah, a principal educational institute of Dawoodi Bohra community in Nairobi, Kenya, is an international institute that accommodates more than 700 students from 14 different nationalities. As an Arabic University, all students are obliged to learn Arabic and master the speaking skill to meet their academic requirements. A student who graduates from the University must be capable of speaking Arabic fluently as a result of the eleven-year learning program of the University. For that goal to be achieved, Arabic is the primary language for the medium of instructions in the University. However, as the literature review reveals that second language acquisition process is influenced by several cognitive and environmental factors (Cummins, 2000).

Likewise, students of Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University, who ought to master the skills during the learning of Arabic as a second language, are also subjected to these factors. Its consequences are reflected in their performance during tests, as well as when they try to communicate in Arabic inside and outside the academic environment. The challenges faced by non-native learners of Arabic may be shared or specific according to their individual differences, diversified cultural and social background. Therefore, if students are to be successful Arabic language learners, the non-linguistic factors must be identified and investigated among the students at Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University. In result, teachers and administrative authorities will try to address and overcome these factors by introducing new teaching strategies and implementing different language policies according to the student's differences as well as the complexity of the language learning process. Students would be facilitated with measures according to their needs and factors to acquire speaking skill proficiency as it plays an important role in their religious, academic, as well as social life.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was grounded on Stephen Krashen's (1985) theory of Second Language Acquisition. The Krashen's Monitor Model, described by him consists of basic hypotheses in this model: (a) the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, (b) the Natural Order Hypothesis, (c) the Monitor Hypothesis, (d) the Input Hypothesis, and (e) the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

The hypotheses were set apart from the structure-based approaches that emphasized learning rules or memorizing dialogues, to approaches that emphasized using language with a focus on meaning. Overall, the model attempts to cover most of the factors involved in second language acquisition: age, personality traits, classroom instruction, innate mechanisms of language acquisition, environmental influences, input, etc. The mere teaching of grammar for acquiring language proficiency was disregarded, which lead to new teaching strategies to develop for second language teaching in classrooms. The comprehensible input hypothesis has been a source of ideas for many types of research in second language acquisition. Many classroom researches have confirmed that students can make a great deal of progress through exposure to comprehensible input without direct instruction (Patsy & Harwich, 2013).

The Affective-Filter Hypothesis: Krashen proposed an 'Affective Filter' in which the learner's emotional state can be compared to a filter that can be regulated to freely allow or deter input necessary for acquisition to take place. It is intended to include certain emotions and factors, such as anxiety, self-doubt, motivation, attitude, self-confidence, and anxiety, which interfere with the process of acquiring a second language. If the Filter is up, the input is prevented from passing through. If the information is prevented from passing through, there can be no acquisition. This is explained by the figure 1.

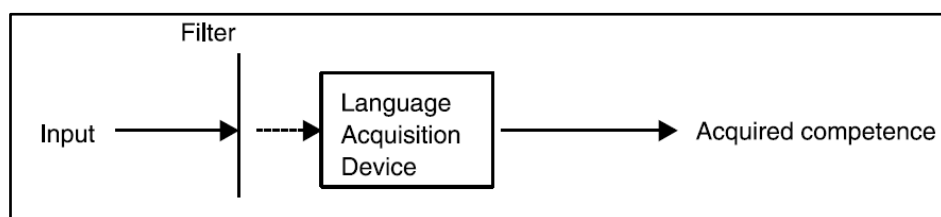


Figure 1- Operation of the Affective Filter.

Source: Krashen, 1982, Pergamon.

According to Krashen, the Affective Filter is responsible for individual variation in second language acquisition and differentiates child language acquisition from second language acquisition. Those whose attitudes are not ideal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input but also have a high or strong Affective Filter. Even if they understand the message, the input will not reach that the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the Language Acquisition Device. On the other hand, those with better attitude are more encouraging to second language acquisition. They will not only seek and obtain more input but also will be more open to the input, and it will strike “deeper.” (Krashen, 1982, p. 31)

The five hypotheses will guide the research in identifying the factors and its extent to which it affects the second language acquisition. The hypothesis of the Monitor Model will be applied to determine its effect on the acquisition of Arabic language speaking skills by its learners. The Natural Order Hypothesis implies that apart from the teaching language and its process, there can be some other natural factors of the learner, which tends to affect his natural order of second language acquisition. Further, the Affective Filter hypothesis will be applied to study that a learner’s emotional state can be compared to a filter that can be regulated to freely allow or deter input necessary for acquisition to take place. It is intended to include certain non-linguistic factors such as motivation, attitude, self-confidence, and anxiety which interfere and affect the process of acquiring a second language.

IV. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Second language acquisition is a process that is influenced by several linguistic and non-linguistic factors (Cummins, 2000). Many studies investigated different factors that affect the acquisition of language macro skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) of many different languages, such as English, French, and German. Likewise, different empirical studies reviewed confirm many non-linguistic factors that affect students' performances in learning Arabic language macro-skills. Researches on non-linguistic factors take into account the social and personal settings in which learners find themselves.

Norton and Toohey (2001) argue that even when individuals possess some of the characteristics that have been associated with successful language learning, their language acquisition may not be successful if they are not accessible to other social and individual factors in the process of acquisition. Although understanding the relationship between individual characteristics such as age, motivation, and its success in second language learning is a challenge. Nevertheless, studies in all these areas are of great importance to both researchers and educators. Researchers seek to know how different linguistic and non-linguistic factors are related and how they interact with learners' acquisition of Second Language.

Abdullahi, Rouyan & Noor (2018) in Malaysia presented a research that intended to review a number of studies on the factors which might have an influence on the learning of Arabic as second language macro-skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) among Malay undergraduate students. Regarding speaking skills, most of the studies identified several common linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Among them are: poor vocabulary, lack of practice, lack of confidence, bad learning environment, and lack of collaboration with Arabic speakers, shyness, and feeling intimidated. These different studies sampled different Malaysian universities and their students. Therefore, the mixture of results was regenerated due to diversities in methodology, variables used and the time of the study.

A similar study was carried out in Malaysia by Haron in 2014, which investigated the challenges and obstacles to speaking Arabic faced by good and poor Malay speakers of Arabic. The study used individual and focus group interviews with 14 participants to collect data. The findings revealed two types of obstacles, namely, internal and external obstacles. Internal obstacles refer to the limitations that come from the learners’ own selves, knowledge, and skills. These factors can be related to linguistic factors such as lack of vocabulary and adequate language knowledge. It concluded to a similar finding that Malay speakers of Arabic felt more hampered by the internal problems than by the external problems. (Haron, 2014)

Latu (1994) carried out a study in Australia, which emphasized on the four macro skills of English Language in relation to the factors which affect its acquisition. This study aimed at determining factors which might have an impact on the learning of English macro skills as a second language (reading, writing, listening,

and speaking) by Tongan learners in Australia who learn English as a Second Language. This study was correlational in design and students' performance in the four English language macro skills were correlated with their perception of factors hypothesized to be associated with their learning of those English language macro skills at school. In light of appropriate linguistic theories, it concluded that for speaking it could be accounted that linguistic factors such as perceived ability in English; frequency of use of English with non-Tongan speakers; and non-linguistic factors such motivation to learn language were the most related to affecting the acquisition of English as a Second language by the students.

Lutz (2015), investigated that how individuals learn a Second Language and the variables that influence this process among South African students. The participants for this study were from 128 primary school learners of Grade 6 and 7 from a government school of South Africa. This was a non-experimental, quantitative study that sought to identify variables and find relationships between these variables. Several variables (factors) such as age, gender, attitudes, motivation, language learning goals, personality characteristics, personality type, and learning style were investigated. Within this study, it was established that gender might play a role in second language achievement, as on average the female participants in this study achieved higher results than the male participants in terms of second language 92 marks. Another result was that self-esteem might affect language achievement of students as those who rate themselves highly as language learners in comparison to their classmates and native speakers also appear to achieve good results in the second language.

Verah, (2017) conducted a research to identify the factors affecting the acquisition of speaking skills in English amongst secondary students in Turkana East District, Kenya. The scope involved students from 5 public secondary schools in Turkana East Sub-county, Kenya. The target population comprised 1210 students and 9 teachers of English out of which 4 were Heads of Department. The sample size comprised 3 randomly, and purposively selected public secondary schools, 137 students, 6 teachers of English out of whom 3 were heads of the English department, making a total of 145 respondents. Data were collected using questionnaires, interview schedules, observed schedules of the classroom. The objectives of the study were to: establish the adequacy of instructional resources used in teaching speaking skills in English, establish the methods teachers of English use in the teaching of speaking skills, and to identify other factors affecting the acquisition of speaking skills in English. The findings of this study were that the students' acquisition of speaking skills in English was affected by their age of enrolment, lack of motivation, and lack of practice. A positive attitude and motivation in most cases attributed to the success of students in acquiring better speaking proficiency. Also, in the classroom, teachers did not employ enough teaching methods that could give students opportunities to practice speaking good English.

In a research done in Kenya by Bwire (2007), he investigated learner competencies and proficiency in English listening comprehension in Selected Secondary Schools in Kenya. This study is related to the current study as it emphasizes that poor listening may affect the acquisition of speaking skills as well. A stratified sample of 520 students, 56 teachers, and 8 heads of department of English from 15 public secondary schools in Nairobi and Vihiga district was sampled. A questionnaire for teachers of English was used to get information, and an audio-based test was used to measure students' listening comprehension proficiency. The study supported the view that there is a direct relationship between listening and speaking skills in a communication process. "Speaking and listening are reciprocal activities with both playing different roles" (Bwire, 2007: 59). As this study suggests, listening plays an extremely important role in the development of speaking abilities. Apart from other gaps like participants and the subject of the study, this study did not examine the effects of other factors that affect speaking proficiency as well. The current study will investigate different factors concurrently, and results will be derived.

From the reviewed literature, it is evident that learning a second language is a very complex process. The complexity of factors involved in the learning of a second language makes it even harder to account for why there is a success or lack of success in learning a second language. The review has revealed that not only are there factors which are language-related, i.e. linguistic (e.g. vocabulary) but factors that are indirectly related to the language, i.e. non-linguistic (e.g. age, motivation, peer influence, etc.) also affect the process of acquiring speaking skill in Arabic.

The most pertinent gap is that the reviewed literature is not informed by data and evidence from research on the locale of this current study. The location of the studies as reviewed, none has been done in the Langata suburb of Nairobi County, Kenya. The units of analysis from the review are majorly elementary or secondary schools, colleges, and universities, targeting mainly students and in limited cases some teachers. So far, no research has been conducted to show the factors affecting the acquisition of speaking skills in Arabic among students of Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University in Nairobi, Kenya. This study will be a response to this gap and will target Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University Nairobi campus in Kenya and will involve students of all age-groups of 14 to 25 years, lecturers as well as administrative authorities of the University. To conclude, all gaps

related to the locale of the study, subject (Target Language), research method, and participants will be filled by the current study.

V. METHODOLOGY

This study adapted a mixed-methods approach; specifically, the study used a cross-sectional design. The purpose of this approach is to collect, analyze and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. This design provides information about the outcomes or exposures and will further analyze data collection with a view to answering questions concerning the status of the object of study. The primary purpose of the study lies in its attempt to determine non-linguistic factors associated to the students of Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University in Nairobi, Kenya.

This study targeted the students and teachers of Al-Jamea Tus-Saifiyah University. The campus has a total population of 898 people who make the target population for this study. The population comprises 790 students (Male Student 419 and Female Student 371), lectures, and administration representatives (total of 108). The researcher used a stratified and simple random sampling technique to sample 111 students, boys and girls. 24 lecturers were sampled using the simple random sampling method to sample 17% of the total number. 81 students were sampled using stratified sampling methods from different age-group to respond to the questions. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules, then analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) program.

Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules, then analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Qualitative data were transcribed; coded, categorized, themes derived from the categories, interrelated the themes, and finally interpreted the meaning from the themes. To ensure the reliability of research instruments, questionnaires for teachers and students were tested for reliability using test-retest reliability (also called retest reliability). The trustworthiness of qualitative things was defined in terms of their credibility, dependability, and conformability. The results of the discussions were reported in the form of tables and graphs.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study sought to investigate the factors affecting students' acquisition of Arabic speaking skills in Al-Jamea-Tus-Saifiyah University. Different non-linguistic factors were identified, and data were collected from students and lecturers of the Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi campus. Questionnaires and Interviews were used to investigate the extent of effects and how to overcome them. The respondents were issued a list of statements that best expressed their opinion on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 where 1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3= Undecided, 4= Disagree, 5= Strongly Disagree. Strongly agree and agree were combined as a positive response while disagreeing and strongly disagree were incorporated as negative responses.

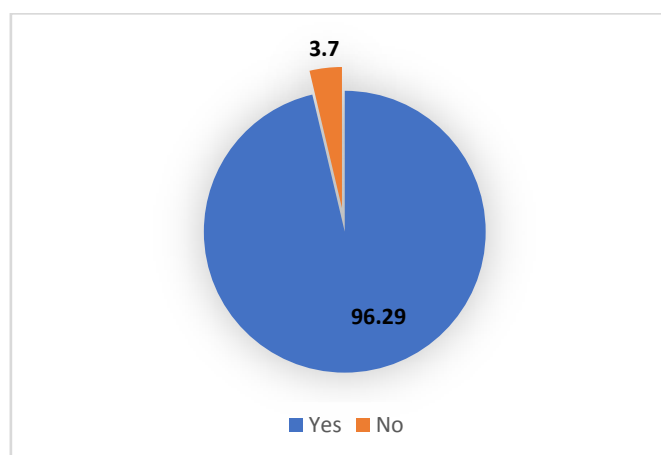


Figure 2. Respondent's Response on Factors affecting Students' Acquisition of Arabic Speaking Skills in Al-Jamea-Tus-Saifiyah University

Figure 2 shows that majority (96.29%) of the all the teachers' and students' respondents agreed that there are certain factors that affect students' acquisition of Arabic speaking skills Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah university while only (3.7%) disagreed.

This indicates that it was agreed by most of the students and lecturers that the process of acquiring speaking skills are often hindered by certain factors inside and outside the classroom. This aligns with the linguistic theories, especially the Krashen's Theory (1982) which established that the Language Acquisition

process is affected by certain factors. Furthermore, it also aligns with all the reviewed studies' findings done in Malaysia, South Africa and Kenya. The same finding reflected in a descriptive study done in Kenya by Verah (2017) in his study on factors affecting students' acquisition of speaking skills in English among secondary schools in Turkana East district of Kenya. He established that there are certain factors affecting the acquisition of speaking skills in English amongst secondary students in Turkana East District, Kenya.

Further, non-linguistic factors associated with the students' learning of Arabic speaking skills are presented. Figure 7 shows the responses collected from student and teachers regarding the effects of non-linguistic factors which affects Arabic speaking skills..

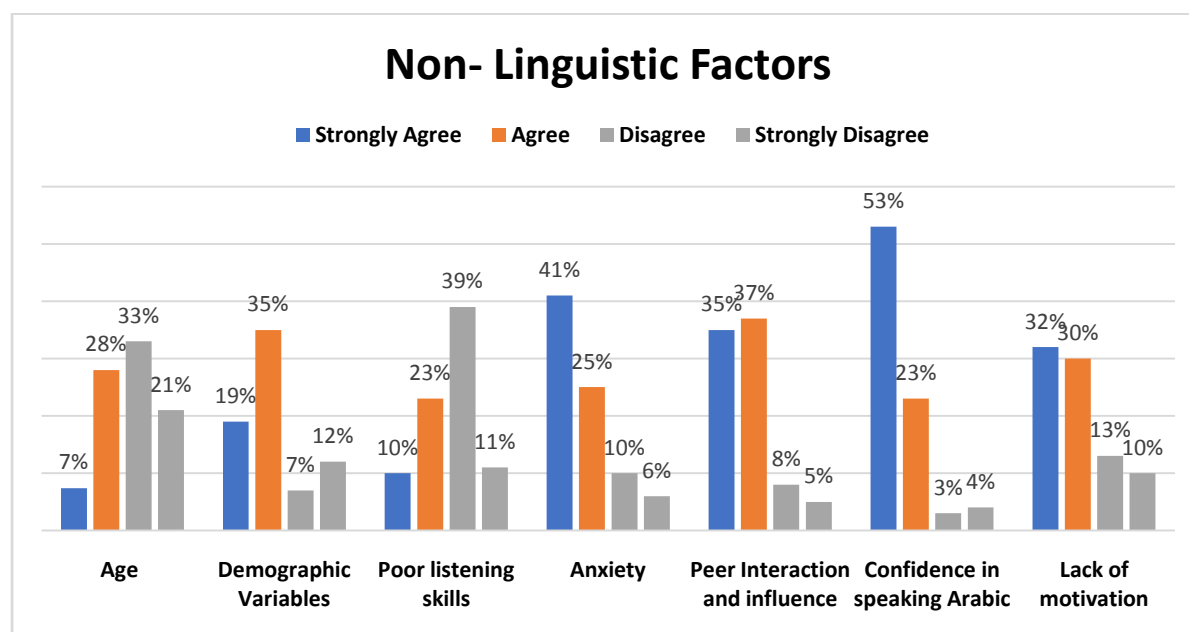


Figure 3 -Respondent's Response on Non-Linguistic Factors Affecting Students' Acquisition of Arabic Speaking Skills

Findings from respondents' responses in figure 8 indicated that the majority of the students (76%) agreed that confidence in speaking Arabic influenced acquisition proficiency in speaking in Arabic. Furthermore, other factors like peer influence, anxiety, lack of motivation and demographic variables were also agreed by many students (72%, 66%, 62%, and 53%) respectively.

This indicates that confidence in speaking Arabic highly affect in acquiring and speaking Arabic. This is aligned with the Affective-Filter Hypothesis proposed by Krashen's theory. 'Affective Filter' in which the learner's emotional state can be compared to a filter that can be regulated to freely allow or deter input necessary for acquisition to take place. It is intended to include certain emotions and factors, such as anxiety, self-doubt, motivation, attitude, self-confidence, and anxiety, which interfere with the process of acquiring a second language. This also concurs with the Malaysian study, which suggested that confidence plays a vital role in acquiring speaking skills in Arabic.

On the contrary majority of the students (54%) disagreed that Age is a factor that is influential in acquiring Arabic speaking skills. This indicates that most of the students disregarding the fact about which age they are studying in university they don't see their age as a hindering factor in the language acquisition process. In addition, an equal number of respondents (50%) also disagreed that poor listening skills can affect language acquisition. These responses refute Bwire's study findings (2007) that suggest that there is a direct relationship between listening and speaking skills in a communication process.

Further to the same response, the researcher wanted to establish what type of attitude and motivation students of Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University have for Arabic Language learning. According to Philpot (2007), lower motivation levels or lack of motivation hinders learners from actively participating in speaking activities. A positive attitude often helps in a better acquisition. For that purpose, the researcher sought information on how they perceive speaking skills. Figure 9 shows the response of students for which language they find easy and preferable to learn.

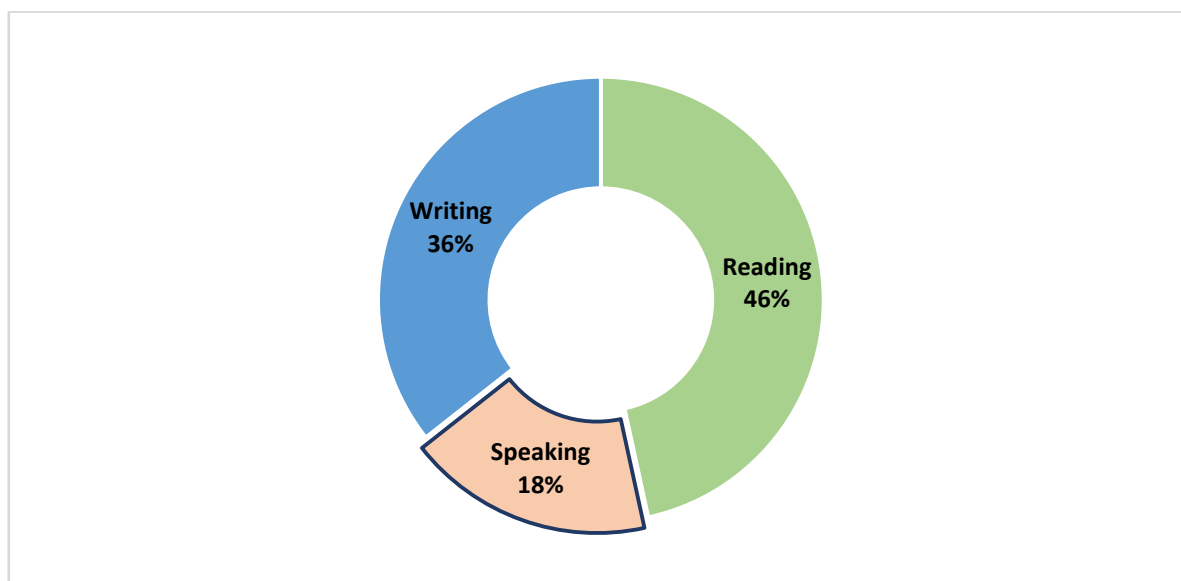


Figure 4. Students' Responses on the Arabic Skills they Liked

As evident from responses Figure 4, majority of the students, (46%), found reading interesting, compared to the other language skills. Out of the 81 students, only 18% found speaking as a skill easy and preferable. This indicates that the majority of the students had a negative attitude towards speaking Arabic. The motivation for students towards learning Arabic speaking was also investigated through collecting responses for their reasons and purpose for learning the Arabic Language. Table 6 shows the distribution of students' purposes for learning Arabic at secondary school.

Students' purposes for learning Arabic

Table 1

Students' Responses on Why They Study Arabic Language

Why do you study Arabic at Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University?	Frequency (%)
To able to understand books	70%
To able to communicate	13%
My teacher or parents told me to do it	10%
It is compulsory at school	5%
It is an interesting language	2%
Total	100%

Table 1 reveals that a large majority (70%) of student study Arabic with a mindset of becoming able to understand Arabic books. However, a very low percentage of students (13%) have an attitude to learn Arabic for communicative purposes, i.e. to able to communicate.

This indicates that the attitude of most of the students regarding learning Arabic is related to studying rather than communicating purpose. This attitude affects the acquisition of speaking skills of Arabic, and more focus is on other skills such as writing and reading. This finding concurs with the finding of Verah, (2017) in which he established that the students' acquisition of speaking skills in English was affected by their lack of motivation. A positive attitude and motivation in most cases attributed to the success of students in acquiring better speaking proficiency.

Finally, from responses from students and teachers, it may be concluded that several non-linguistic factors affect the Arabic speaking skill acquisition among students of Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University, Kenya. These factors are confidence in speaking Arabic, anxiety, lack of motivation and negative attitude toward language learning.

The study also sought to identify appropriate measures that need to be taken in order to overcome the challenges affecting students' acquisition of Arabic speaking skills in Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University. The data collected from students and teacher in the questionnaire, and the interview was categorized into twelve different themes. These thirteen themes provide suggestive measures that need to be put in place for increasing the fluency and proficiency of students in speaking Arabic. Table 2 below outlines those measures:

Measures to Overcome Challenges Affecting Students' Acquisition of Arabic

Table 2

Lecturers' and Students' Suggestions for Measures to Overcome Challenges Affecting Students' Acquisition of Arabic Speaking Skills

Suggestive Measures (Response)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
More Exposure for Speaking	20	23
Informal Practice outside classroom	18	21
Teaching in Arabic language	9	10
Arabic Environment	9	10
Motivation and Encouragement by teachers	6	7
Extra Classes for Speaking	6	7
More reading and listening by students	5	6
Speaking related activities should be integrated in teaching strategies	5	6
Vocabulary Enhancing Programs	3	3
Speaking with explanation of language and grammar	3	3
Individual Teaching	2	2
Occasional test to assess speaking proficiency	1	1
Total	87	100

The above-given table represents that majority, 23% of the respondents are of the opinion that students should get more exposure for speaking Arabic inside and outside the classroom. This is supported by what stated earlier in the importance of frequency of use of language to achieve fluency in speaking. Moreover, there is a significant need for providing exposure inside and outside the classroom teachers and administrative language policymaker that ensure the learner is actively participating in speaking Arabic. Sufficient opportunity should be provided for students to speak Arabic. This is also in line with the other suggestive measure advised by 21%, i.e. the informal practice of speaking Arabic where student.

Another essential measure that needs to be exercised according to the students was teaching in the Arabic language not only for grammar teaching but also as a medium of communicating inside the. 10% of respondents advised that for contextual use of Arabic inside and outside the classroom. Arabic environment should be created where teaching in the first place should be exercised in Arabic. One of the respondents said that: *"The whole environment of the school should be conducive for Arabic, including the faculty. Medium of teaching should be Arabic at all times. All communications/announcements should be in Arabic"* (Teacher 2, 2020)

To sought information on the language used by teachers in teaching, the data was collected to establish the fact that teaching is mostly done in a language other than Arabic. Figure 5 represents the language used by teachers to teach in the classroom and for communication outside the classroom.

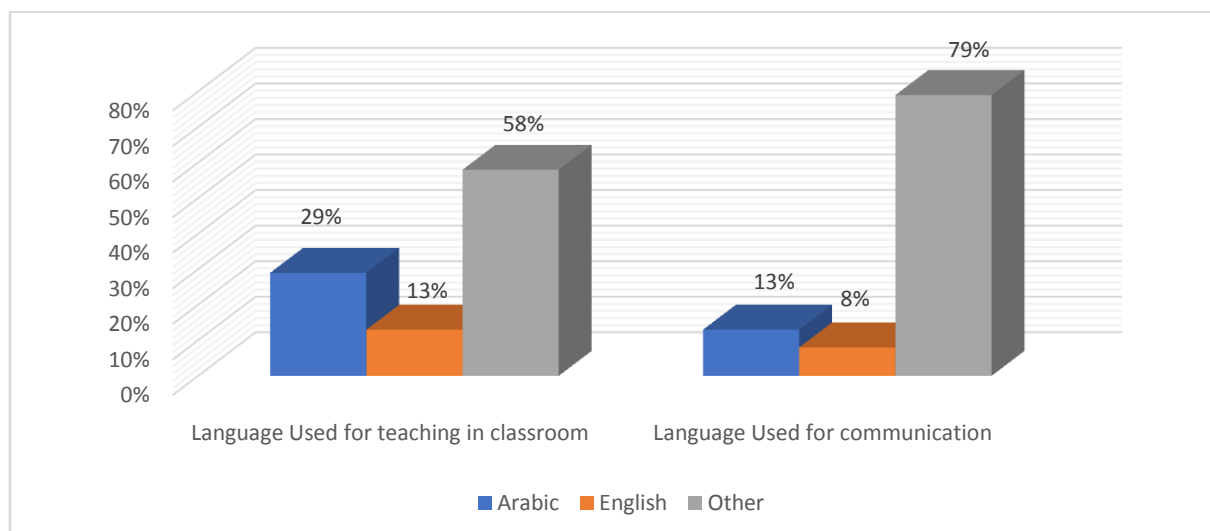


Figure51- Language Use by Teachers to Teach in Classroom

As indicated in figure 5 majority, 71% of teaches in a language other than Arabic. In comparison, only 29% of them uses Arabic as a medium of communication during teaching. On the other side, for communicating outside the classroom with students, only 13 % of the teachers use Arabic. This data is related to the previous data represented in Figure 6, where it was shown that only 5% of total students speak Arabic for communication in the University. This indicates that a lack of a supportive environment inside and outside the classroom is a must measure to be taken in order to contribute to help student speak Arabic more. All these measures align with the study done by Mall (2001) in South Africa and Botswana and by Ahmed (2016) among Malay students where they suggested to provide more opportunity for students to practice speaking as well as employing communicative approach inside the classroom.

Other suggestions given by 7% of the students included to motivate students and give extra classes for students who lack in Arabic speaking proficiency, 6%, of them, advised to encourage reading as it will help increase the vocabulary of the students. Another 6% opined that speaking related activities should be integrated into the lesson plan. Other suggested for individual teaching where a student should be taught Arabic and encouraged to speak in person to overcome the anxiety and fear of speaking in public. An environment should be created where he is not scared of mistakes and can speak informally in front of that person. The last suggestion was also given to manage occasional test and assessment for students' speaking ability in order to guide them for improving their fluency and proficiency.

VII. SUMMARY

The study's purpose was to identify and explore non-linguistic factors affecting the acquisition of speaking skills in Arabic amongst students of Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah Nairobi Campus. The study was guided by one research question: What are the non-linguistic factors that can affect students' acquisition of Arabic speaking skills? From the calculations of qualitative and quantitative data collected from respondents, various non-linguistic factors were determined as affecting students' acquisition of Arabic speaking skills.

Five non-linguistic factors were studied, and it was revealed that students' confidence level was agreed by most of the respondents as it affects the frequency of use of language as well as fluency while speaking. Also, the influence and interaction with peers and motivation to learn the language affects the acquisition of the Arabic language. It was also found that most of the students were motivated more towards learning other skill of Arabic rather than acquiring speaking skills. Age and poor listening skills were disagreed by majority of the respondents for its less effect on the acquisition of speaking skills.

Suggestive measures were suggested by teachers and students that need to be taken to overcome the challenges faced in acquiring Arabic speaking skills. Majority of the teachers and students agreed that to achieve better proficiency in speaking Arabic; students should provide adequate opportunities to speak Arabic. Teaching and learning in Arabic, and students should communicate informally among their peers inside and outside the classroom. A large number also suggested that the Arabic environment should be created that could help them to develop Arabic speaking skills. Other suggestions from teachers and students were encouraging students to motivate them, providing extra remedial classes for those who need to cope up with learning Arabic speaking skills. More reading and speaking activities, vocabulary enhancing programs should be integrated into the lesson plan. Occasional tests should be designed and tailored to assess speaking skills, just like how other macro skills of Arabic are tested.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study concluded that there are several non-linguistic factors which affect students' acquisition of Arabic speaking skill in Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah University in Nairobi, Kenya. These factors were lack of confidence and motivation in students. Likewise, other factors like peer influence and interaction were also found significant in acquiring speaking proficiency as it was found students often use a language other than Arabic while communicating among them. Lastly, the study concluded with several measures and suggestions to overcome the challenges faced by students in acquiring Arabic speaking skills. As aspired by most of the respondents, adequate opportunities should be provided for students to speak Arabic inside and outside the classroom. An overall Arabic environment should be created all over the University, where all aspects of teaching and learning should be done in Arabic, and students would find the environment to practise speaking Arabic.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Administrative Authorities

- The learning process of Arabic as a second language at all levels should be more student-centred rather than teacher-centred. All the factors which affect the learning process should be considered by the authorities as well as teachers.
- It is important to create an environment that will support the students' learning process and offer opportunities for acquiring Arabic speaking skills as well as to practise it. For that Arabic language should be compulsorily used as a primary medium of instructions inside and outside the classroom. The authorities should strengthen the implementation of its existing policy of using Arabic as a primary medium of instruction. All announcements, oral and written are to be in Arabic. Especially on Thursdays, (as directed in the policy and guidelines of University) only Arabic is to be spoken throughout the campus.

Lecturers and students

- An integrated lesson plan should be prepared by teachers in order to enhance the speaking proficiency of students, and the proper opportunity should be provided for them to learn and practice the skill in the classroom. Teachers should also take into account individual differences and high involvement of non-linguistic factors as much as the linguistic factors, and prepare their lesson plan accordingly.
- Students should be encouraged to use Arabic as much as possible in their communication at school and also at home, if possible. Reading, writing, and listening should also be encouraged for students as it will help them in increasing their vocabulary and results in speaking fluency.
- To overcome personal factors like motivation, anxiety, etc. individual teaching should be initiated. Also, extra remedial classes should be taken to cater needs of for those students who need extra instructions and practice to learn Arabic as a new second language.

Scholarly Community

- The current study can be replicated, either at the same level with more participants or at different levels and locale, so as to verify the findings which have been established in this study. Likewise, a similar study should be done to investigate factors affecting the acquisition of other two macro skills (reading and writing) of Arabic.
- To identify and explore measures to overcome factors affecting language acquisition, more researchers need to carry out studies and find out other strategies. These strategies and measures can be implemented by teachers, schools and universities to cater to students' needs and improve their language proficiency.

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