Perspective Speaking Difficulties Faced by Omani Students: Empirical Data on Self-Perception

Said Al-Saadi  
Faculty of Education, University of Malaya  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Phuangphet Tonawanik  
Bangkok University  
Bangkok, Thailand

Said Al Harthy  
Faculty of Education, University of Malaya  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract
This research aims at identifying the main learning difficulties in speaking English faced by a selected cross-section of Omani EFL students. It seeks to establish student self-perception of their own difficulties based on a questionnaire survey. Three research questions were investigated: (1) what are the students’ attitudes towards speaking in English? (2) what are the most common speaking English difficulties encountered by Omani students as they perceive this? (3) are there any significant differences in such difficulties according to gender and education system? The study sample consisted of 200 students, divided into 100 male and 100 female from grades 10 and 11, Basic Education and General Education schools. A 30-item questionnaire was developed and administered. The study identified the main learning difficulties in English speaking as perceived by the students. It was found that there were no significant differences between students in their attitudes toward speaking according to their gender and education type. The data also suggested that students in general find it especially difficult to speak English. Based on this, a systematic analysis was carried out which resulted in 17 speaking sub-skills that needed to be addressed while improving this skill. Student perceptions of the most difficult sub-skills were also analysed according to gender and education type. Some key limitations of the study are broached.

Keywords: TEFL, speaking difficulties, self-perception