Speaking and Reading Skills Challenges Kurdish EFL Students Expose from Teachers' an Students' Perspectives

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Abstract:

This study focuses on identifying the major challenges that high school EFL students experience in speaking and reading skills in target language. Although EFL students study English language for twelve years in the context of Iraqi Kurdistan, they still have challenges in language skills. Little research has been conducted to investigate the challenges of speaking and reading skills. A mixed approach was used for collecting data. With reference to selected high schools in Koya district, this study aims at identifying the major challenges that EFL high school students encounter in speaking and reading skills. The data was gathered from 15 high school teachers and 323students to understand students' challenges of speaking and reading skills. Thematic analysis was used for interpreting the collected data from structured interviews of teachers and statistical analysis was used for interpreting the collected data from the students' questionnaire. This study gives detailed explanations of speaking and reading skills challenges. It provides informed recommendations for identifying challenges and overcoming obstacles. Ultimately, the study provides practical and useful information, and recommendations for teachers and high school EFL students to address barriers. The results of the study revealed considerable and potential challenges to Kurdish EFL students in speaking and reading skills such as, linguistic and nonlinguistic challenges. It is suggested that students should be given appropriate learning environment, and linguistic competency to overcome obstacles.

Keywords: Speaking skill, reading skill, EFL high school students, teachers' perspectives, students' perspectives, and challenges

الملخص:

تركز هذه الدراسة على إدراك التحديات الرئيسية التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المدارس الثانوية في مهارتي التحدث والقراءة باللغة الهدف. ورغم أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية لمدة اثني عشر عاما في مدارس كردستان العراق، إلا أنهم لا يزالون يواجهون تحديات في المهارات اللغوية. ولقد أجري القليل من الأبحاث لمعرفة تحديات مهارتي التحدث والقراءة. ولقد استخدمنا في هذه الدراسة نهج مختلط لجمع البيانات. ووقع الاختيار على مدارس الثانوية في مدينة كويا، حيث ركزت الدراسة على تحديد التحديات الرئيسية التي يواجهها طلاب المدارس الثانوية في مهارتي التحدث والقراءة. ولتحقيق هذه الغاية، تم جمع البيانات من 15 معلما في المدارس الثانوية و 323 طالبا لفهم تحديات الطلاب في هاتين المهارتين. وتم استخدام التحليل المواضيعي لتفسير البيانات التي تم جمعها من المقابلات المنظمة مع المعلمين وتم استخدام التحليل الإحصائي لتفسير البيانات التي تم جمعها من الطلاب عن طريق الاستبيان. وتقدم هذه الدراسة تفسيرات مفصلة لتحديات مهارتي التحدث والقراءة. و توصيات مستنيرة لتحديد التحديات والتغلب على العقبات. وفي النهاية، توفر الدراسة معلومات عملية ومفيدة وتوصيات للمعلمين وطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المدارس الثانوية لتذليل العقبات. وكشفت نتائج الدراسة عن العديد من التحديات الكبيرة والمحتملة لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مهارتي التحدث والقراءة مثل التحديات اللغوية: القواعد والمفردات وعلم الأصوات

213

واللغة الأم والعقبات غير اللغوية مثل القلق والخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء والافتقار الى الخبرة والتجارب السابقة. وتوصي الدراسة بتزويد الطلاب ببيئة تعليمية مناسبة وكفاءة لغوية للتغلب على العقبات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مهارة التحدث، مهارة القراءة، طلاب المدارس الثانوية في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وجهات نظر المعلمين، وجهات نظر الطلاب، والتحديات

پوخته:

ئەم توێژینەوەیە تیشک دەخاتە سەر ناسینەوەی ئاستەنگە سەرەکیەکانی خوێندکارانی قۆناغی ئامادەیی لە کارامەییەکانی قسەکردن و خوێندنەوە لە زمانی مەبەست ڕوبەرویان دەبنەوە (زمانی ئینگلیزی وەک زمانی بێگانە). هەرچەندە خوێندکاران بۆ ماوەی دوازدەسالٚ لە چوارچێوەی کوردستانی عێراق زمانی ئینگلیزی دەخوێنن، بەلٚام هێشتا ئاستەنگیان هەیە لە کارەمەییەکانی زماندا. توێژینەوەی پێویست ئەنجام نەدراوە بۆ لێکۆلٚینەوە لە ئاستەنگەکانی توانای قسەکردن و خوێندنەوە.

شێوازی وەسفی و ئامار بەکار هاتووە بۆ کۆکردنەوەی زانیاری. بە ئاماژەدان بە خوێندنگە ئامادەییە دیاریکراوەکان لە قەزای کۆیە، ئەم توێژینەوەیە ئامانجی دەستنیشانکردنی ئاستەنگە سەرەکیەکانە کە خوێندکارانی قۆناغی ئامادەیی ڕوبەرویان دەبنەوە لە کارامەییەکانی قسەکردن و خوێندنەوە.بۆ ئەم مەبەستە، زانیاریەکان لە ١٥ مامۆستای ئامادەیی و ٣٢٣ خوێندکاروەرگیراوە بۆ تێگەیشتن لە ئالٚەنگاریاکانی کارامەییەکانی قسەکردن و خوێندنەوە لای خوێندنەوە. شیکاری بابەتی بۆ لێکدانەوەی زانیاریە کۆکراوەکان لە چاوپێکەوتنی ڕێکخراوی مامۆستایان و شیکاری ئاماری بۆ لێکدانەوەی زانیاریە کۆکراوەکان لە خوێندکارانی پرسیارنامەکە بەکارهێنراوە. ئەم توێژینەوەیە ڕوونکردنەوەی وردی ئاستەنگەکانی توانای قسەکردن و خوێندنەوە دەدات. پێشنیارپێشکەش دەکات بۆ دیاریکردنی ئاستەنگەکان و زالٚبوون بەسەر بەربەستەکان.

لە کۆتایدا، توێژینەوەکە زانیاری کرداری و بەسوود و پێشنیار بۆ مامۆستایان و خوێندکارانی ئامادەیی بۆ چارەسەرکردنی بەربەستەکان پێشکەشدەکات. ئەنجامەکانی توێژینەوەکە ئاستەنگی گەورە و بەرچاوی بۆ خوێندکارانی کوردی لە کارامەییەکانی قسەکردن و خوێندنەوەهدا دەرخستوە وەک ئالٚەنگاریە زمانەوانی: ڕێزمان، وشەسازی، فۆنۆلۆژی، زمانی دایک و بەربەستی نا زمانەوانی وەک دلٚەڕاوکێ، ترس لە هەلٚەکردن، نەبوونی ئەزموونی پێشوەخت و ڕاهێنان. پێشنیاز دەکرێت ژینگەی فێربوونی گونجاو و کارامەیی زمانەوانی بۆ زالٚبوون بەسەر بەربەستەکان بۆ خوێندکاران دابین بکرێت.

کلیلەوشە: کارامەیی قسەکردن، کارامەیی خوێندنەوە، قۆناغی ئامادەیی، تێڕوانینی مامۆستایان، تێڕوانینی خوێندکاران، وە ئالٚەنگاریەکان.

1.INTRODUCTION

According to Koneru (2011), language skills can be either in oral or written forms. The skills are either receptive which is used for receiving information such as reading skill or productive which is used for sending information such as speaking. Speaking skill is the ability to communicate clearly and fluently, which calls for not only knowledge of language components but also the capability to process information and employ language efficiently (Harmer, 2007). Grabe and Yamashita (2009) argue that reading skills are automatic processes that facilitate quick and effective decoding and fluent text comprehension. Reading is a process that includes recognising and deciphering written words, along with articulating and pronouncing them. It comprises comprehending, interpreting, and enhancing the meaning of the text.

Kurdish EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students study English in high schools for years, yet they face difficulties in the use of English language especially productive skill-speaking and receptive skill-reading. Skills are supposed to be ignored not only in the syllabus but also by nearly all stakeholders. The majority of EFL students perceive challenges while attempting to achieve speaking and reading skills. They encounter several obstacles in developing both language skills. Students cannot reach the expected level in language skills and have challenges in utilizing the language skills in various contexts. Kurdish EFL students cannot speak in target language and comprehend a text even after studying both skills for many years.

There were a limited number of studies concerning the investigation of challenges of speaking and reading skills among Kurdish EFL students. This study eagerly tackles challenges of speaking and reading skills in selected high schools in Koya district among students. The research gathers information and reveal teachers' and students' viewpoints on the difficulties of speaking and reading skills of English language. The objectives of this research are to identify major challenges that EFL high school students experience in both speaking and reading skills. The current study attempts to address these research questions.

1. What are the major challenges that EFL students encounter in speaking and reading skills from the teachers' perspectives?
2. What are the main difficulties that EFL students experience in speaking and reading skills from the students' viewpoints?

This study is significant to provide further information to researchers, readers, teachers, and students who seek for identifying obstacles of improving language skills, particularly speaking and reading skill. Students gain better guidance and broaden comprehension for enhancing the target language. It paves the way for EFL students to determine appropriate means for enhancing language learning, professional success, and self-confidence. It also supports novice teachers to become familiar with major difficulties of language skills, particularly speaking and reading skills, and academic achievement. It can also be used to ensure that educational programs are relevant and effective in helping students develop their speaking and reading language skills. It provides educational stakeholders with a better understanding of current issues relating to both language skills.

2. Language Skills

According to Baker (2001, p.17), language skills include "specific, observable, clearly definable components" of language that users intend to reach the expected levels. He refers to language skills and the knowledge of components. The language skills consist of listening, speaking, reading and writing while the components include grammar, vocabulary and phonology without referring to the actual integration of both skills and components. Moreover, Nation (2024, p.3) illustrates that "developing a language skill, involves developing accuracy, fluency, and complexity in the use of that skill," and skill entails having the ability to use a variety of language sources instantaneously.

Spiro (2013) believes that overall language proficiency can be enhanced through integrating language skills together. Language learning occurs by combining various skills and needs collaboration of numerous dimensions of information and capability. That is, language skills are interconnected constituents to give comprehensive communicative skill. To learn another language, Koneru (2011) mentions four reasons, cultural awareness; that is to encourage better communication and understanding amongst individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Cognitive development that supposes learning a language has been supported as a means of enhancing cognitive ability and intellectual growth. Learning a language has social and ethical values, students are able to establish more meaningful connections with speakers of the target language in greater numbers. Careers and employment could mean getting a promotion in a career, expanding one's career options, or avoiding unemployment.

2.1 Speaking Skill

Torky (2006) states that speaking skill is one of the productive skills that refers to students' communicative competence. It is a skill that speakers employ to communicate orally for the purpose of expressing numerous messages and conveying different points of view. Nunan (1989) divides speaking skill into two major groups of monologue which relies on delivering an interrupted speech orally, and of dialogue which the main objective is to engage with other speakers. Whereas Brown (2000) classifies speaking skill according to its functions which are either transactional for delivering knowledge or interactional for preserving social connections. Nafa (2023) states that speaking skill can develop linguistic competence and be significant for improving other skills such as reading skill, since students get familiarization with numerous language context, increase vocabularies and broaden comprehension. Davis and Norris (2024) mention that speaking is an explicit, instant expression of speakers' capability to converse with interlocutors successfully in a language. Several language components can be revealed while speaking, such as fluency, grammatical rules, lexical knowledge without preparing or editing in advance.

Thornbury (2005) categorizes knowledge that is related to speaking either as linguistic knowledge that focuses on language features or extra linguistic knowledge that is distinct from language features. The linguistic knowledge includes phonology, vocabulary, genre, discourse, and pragmatic knowledge. Phonology is the speakers' pronunciation of lexical items and vocabulary is the usage of words in conversation between two interlocutors. Genre knowledge; speaking has transactional purpose which is to impart knowledge or interpersonal task which is to form social relationship. Discourse knowledge; speakers need to identify how to arrange, relate interlocutors' utterances and

guide to interactive conversation. Pragmatic knowledge; it demonstrates the relationship between language usage and context. Whereas extra linguistic knowledge is not reliant on language, but it includes topic, context, cultural knowledge, and the familiarity among interlocutors.

2.2 Speaking Skill Challenges

Scholars mentioned major linguistic obstacles that face high school EFL students. Grammar issues are considered to be the most inevitable challenges that almost students experience. They are neither familiar with the correct usage of grammatical instructions nor with their applications in appropriate context. Students' insufficient vocabulary explicitly impacts on their speaking proficiency. They struggle with having enough words and selecting them for different purposes while practising speaking skill. Another obvious difficulty is errors in pronunciation. Students do not have knowledge about English language phonology. Mispronouncing some English vocabularies cause difficulty for successful communication process (Ullah, Ahmed and Sabawoon, 2023, Marlia et al., 2023, Elisathusilawani, 2023, Fajaryani, Herliza and Ali, 2023, Rusdin and Purwati, 2023). According to Muhi and Dajang (2023), the inceptive difficulty of improving EFL students' verbal capacity was the insufficient chances to practise, specifically oral presentation among students in class activities while it is considered to be crucial to develop oral language skill. They believe that the predominant challenges for students' lack of speaking skill relates to students' insufficient practice, opportunities and encouragement to speak in target language.

Furthermore, scholars argue that EFL students have anxiety when they attempt to enhance speaking skill. High school students have fear to initiate conversation in target language. They have lower self-confidence and are afraid of making mistakes. Students' timidity and nervousness are regarded as contributing factors that become the major challenges among EFL students. They cannot acquire expected level of language proficiency. Scholars also refer to the significance of supportive environments to encourage students to enhance speaking skill. Students need to be motivated and developed self-efficacy for the purpose of providing effective improvement (Normawati et al., 2023, Yazici and Bavli, 2022, Hajar and Rahman, 2022, Valdivieso-Arcos and Argudo-Serrano, 2022). According to Goh and Burns (2012), affective factors should be taken into account in order to comprehend major language learning problems. For instance, anxiety strongly related to speaking skill because without any preparation or practice, language students should have capability of understanding and using language on their own.

2.3 Reading Skill

Yukselir (2014) notes that the complicated skill of reading involves utilizing the abilities of memory, focus, perceptions, and comprehension. It is also considered to be the most beneficial skill for acquiring knowledge. According to Koneru (2011) reading can be scrutinized as a procedure of acknowledging words and interpreting them. The dominant part of improving students' reading skill is to develop vocabulary knowledge, critical reading skill, and synthesize information (Watkins, 2017). Afflerbach, Pearson and Paris (2008) state that reading is multifaceted complex venture that involves visual recognition and intricate nature which has a profound influence on individuals. According to Fisher, Frey and Lapp (2022), reading skill is a process which individuals can

understand and analyze texts effectively, in a way that they can identify words, grasp meaning, use cognitive resources and read smoothly.

2.4 Reading Skill Challenges

Scholars refer to major challenges of reading skill among high school EFL students. The first and foremost difficulty that face EFL students at high school level relates to vocabulary. Students have inadequate lexical knowledge when they come across with unfamiliar and ambiguous vocabularies, they have difficulties with pronouncing, spelling and comprehending them. They also consider that curricula and text types impact students' comprehension. Students are discouraged from long texts, lack of reading strategy even they cannot understand words in context. There is an obstacle of differentiating between ideas, and making inferences and references. Students also run into difficulties such as linguistic complexity, coherence, and cohesion. Students need to identify word order and sentence structure. The aforementioned challenges faced by EFL students are discussed by scholars (Ramadhianti and Somba, 2023, Alharbi, 2022, Nanda and Azmy, 2020, Da Costa, 2019, Kasim and Raisha, 2017).

Khan et al., (2020) note that lack of reading skill happens when students consider reading as infuriated task and lose their motivation. Both lexical knowledge and sound system of the target language help students to comprehend and understand texts and foster the process of reading skills. Mahmood (2022) notes that students' low motivation and language competency are main obstacles that cause low reading capacity of EFL students. Students' insufficiency has been realized through inadequate subject knowledge, poor performance, lack of motivation, and infrequent reading practice. He discloses several benefits of improving reading skill such as improving oral fluency, increasing general understanding, providing sufficient amount of vocabularies, and enhancing syntactic knowledge.

Ismail and Ab Rashid (2020) refer to other reasons that make problems for EFL students in reading comprehension; for example, the influence of culture, methods of teaching that are used by teachers, and texts' difficulty levels. Akbari (2015) identifies that there is no appropriate environment outside classroom setting to familiarize students with the target language and they do not practise enough in English. They are not encouraged to take part in class discussion and there is no class discussion or team working. Students have anxiety, frustration, complex of tasks, they put heavy emphasis on final exams rather that acquiring language skills.

3. Previous Studies

Desta (2019) carried out a descriptive study on investigating speaking skill challenges. The researcher used a mixed method to conduct the study that aimed at investigating the major difficulties that EFL students face. The subjects of her study was EFL students and teachers in high schools. Her research tools were unstructured interview, questionnaire and observation. She realized obstacles such as physical environment and class activities. In other words, the main difficulties were unfavourable classroom environments for group work and immobile desks, students were lack of motivation to speak up. The other challenges related to teachers' lack of commitment to the teaching-learning process and the extensive coverage of material in students' textbooks. Both teachers and

students were not capable of employing various strategies to facilitate effective and easy communication in the classroom.

Muhedeen and Mahmood (2022) conducted a study on teaching English speaking skill at preparatory schools. They used both qualitative and quantitative research method. They collected fata from interviewing fifteen teacher and observing lessons. The study found some internal and external obstacles that impact speaking skill. Students use their native language more than the foreign language and teachers focus much on teaching grammar. Class management and time constrain also affect appropriate way of teaching speaking skill. They also revealed two significant categories of difficulties that EFL students encounter while attempting to improve speaking skill which are internal and external difficulties.

Nanda and Azmy (2020) pointed out the challenges of students' reading comprehension. They considered the factors, effects, and possible explanations interconnected with inadequate reading comprehension. They identified several reasons that hinder students' achievement; students had low motivation, limited prior knowledge, and also had inadequate vocabulary of target language. Students did not relate reading texts with other activities that they were doing outside class. They focused on those texts that were included for their assignment by their teachers. Kurdish high school students were not motivated in reading texts in their curricula because they could not understand texts. This related to the difficulty of texts that were not appropriate with students' levels and texts were only required for entertainment, information, and general understanding.

Pammu and Hasyim (2023) conducted a study on the role of extensive reading and confidence levels of Kurdish EFL students. They gathered data via survey questionnaire to EFL students in Kurdistan region. They realized that students' confidence was a critical factor in enabling them to engage in active discussion, solve problems, and express themselves which all contribute to improved academic performance. Students' achievement in school and the learning context were interrelated. There were several obstacles and challenges of speaking and reading skill among EFL students, yet some current other difficulties need to be investigated and identified.

While these previous studies provide valuable insights, the current research seeks to further investigate challenges of speaking and reading skills among EFL students. However, few studies have addressed the essential speaking and reading components, which this paper aims to explore. Despite extensive research about undergraduate students' problems in language skills, there remains a need to investigate high school EFL students in particular. In light of the findings from prior studies, this research focuses on recent issues concerning language learning challenges and guides educational stakeholders in improving both language skills. Students realize the significance of language learning, promote awareness, become better readers and communicators, and improve their language impairment. Accordingly, the present study was designed to gather deep insight from high school teachers and students, who have explicit interaction with the challenges. It shares not only linguistic challenges but also other personal, environmental or psychological influences on EFL students' language proficiency.

4. Research Method

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) describe mixed method as empirical study that gathers and examines data in both qualitative and quantitative forms. It combines both numerical data and descriptive information to provide richer understanding of the research topic. This study gathered data from the interviews of teachers and questionnaires of students. The researcher interviewed fifteen teachers and distributed a questionnaire form to 323 students to reveal the most challenges that face EFL students in speaking and reading skills, in Koya district in the academic year (2024-2025).

4.1 Research Instruments: Interviews

According to Bryman (2004), researchers can delve into participants' ideas and experiences, have better awareness and perceive the phenomena. Best and Khan (2016) state that open-ended interviews are provided to permit participants to express ideas and feelings in their own words, and this technique encourages a deeper consideration of the interviews' perceptions. This study employs structured interview, the researcher prepares a list of predetermined questions for interviewees.

4.2 Research Instruments: Questionnaires

Creswell (2018) defines questionnaire as a typical research tool which requires participants to provide basic knowledge and choose their answers from given responses. Quantitative research employs numerical process for collecting data and then the data is analyzed by statistical method (SPSS). The present study provides a questionnaire for students and aims at identifying major challenges of speaking and reading skills.

4.3 Piloting The Tools, Validity and Reliability

According to Aguinis (2024), it is significant for adjusting the study before it becomes available on a larger scope. This will help the researcher ensure the suitable structure of the research tools, the devoted time and avoid any accidental ambiguity. In the piloting study, the researcher used the interview questions to interview three teachers and distributed the questionnaires among twenty students randomly. The researcher calculated the Pearson correlation between each item and its respective dimension to determine the validity. To assess the reliability of the scales, the researcher utilized Internal Consistency Reliability, the Cronbach's alpha values for each dimension: Speaking (linguistic) (0.810), Speaking (non-linguistic) (0.836), Reading (linguistic) (0.909), and reading (non-Linguistic) (0.679).

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Analysis of Teachers' Interviews

Since gathering teachers' perspectives on speaking and reading challenges was one of the key objectives of this study, thematic analysis is useful to understand their experiences, thoughts, and viewpoints. Some difficulties of speaking and reading skills were found from teachers' interview data. The researcher realizes these major themes from interview items and analyzed below.

5.1.1 The Challenges of Speaking Skill

Almost all teachers reported the significance of grammar for high school EFL students. Lack of linguistic knowledge, particularly syntax, impacts negatively on students' speaking skill. Even students are not familiar with basic grammatical rules, parts of speech or word formations. Teacher (14) pointed out that "students have problems in English grammar which is basic for my students, they need it a lot while speaking in target language." All interviewed teachers in this study argued that their students have restricted knowledge about English language lexical items. Students cannot express their ideas due to limited vocabularies, and understand the language while conversing in English. They do not have much knowledge of word formation process. Even they are not quite familiar with affixation process which affects on word meaning in English language. Students are not enriched with a large amount of synonyms and antonyms. Students cannot deliver the messages with poor pronunciation. Teacher (14) indicated that students have pronunciation problems. They are not familiar with English phonology. They do not distinguish between stress places, silent letters, vowels and diphthongs. teacher (1) announced that due to the fact that some sounds are not available in students' native language sound system, it is problematic for them to master these sounds.

Teacher (2) asserted that "unfortunately, the foremost challenge of students in speaking skill is their shyness, anxiety and lack of self-confidence." Almost all students feel shy to express their opinions in English language. Students have anxiety which negatively influences their abilities to communicate in foreign language. Consequently, the students stay passively throughout the lesson and do not participate in speaking lesson. Some teachers believed that one of negative points about school assessments is the real purpose of evaluating. Assessments are only for getting marks, not for acquiring the language objectives. Unfortunately, only some specific parts of language skills are evaluated and the most ignored area is speaking skill, as mentioned by teacher (5). Practising is ignored by majority of students. There are different ways for students to practise the speaking skill, for instance, participating in courses, having online friends, or speaking with classmates. Since the limited time, students cannot practise a lot in class, they are often advised to practise their speaking skill with friends outside. The majority of teachers referred to the methods of teaching that are used in some high schools are not helpful. They revealed that some teachers cannot adapt themselves with up-to-date methods of teaching and using new technological gadgets that are significant for enhancing foreign language. Sometimes students discouraged from learning when they are not introduced with current approaches of teaching.

5.1.2 The Challenges of Reading Skill

The majority of teachers claimed that students' shortage of vocabularies has negative impact on reading skill, it becomes obstacles that students cannot comprehend the texts' overall meaning. Students' shortcoming in English vocabularies leads to a loss of concentration and motivation. Some teachers argued that there was no relation between grammatical rules and reading texts whereas some other teachers strongly disagreed with their colleagues and they insisted on the great role of syntax for high school EFL students. This is grammar that "helps students to identify sequence of words and different forms of vocabularies and their function in sentences." Teacher (4) believed that grammar rules alone do not hinder a student's reading proficiency. Instead, a lack of effort and insufficient integration into the second language are the primary issues. The majority of teachers raised the phonological issues of their students as major challenges. Teacher (9) reported that "students do not have phonological information, they only know some specific words and they cannot pronounce new other words that they were not familiar with them before."

Teacher (5) proclaimed that fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence often cause students to hesitate when reading aloud. This anxiety results in an uncertain and shaky voice, undermining their ability to express themselves clearly. Overcoming this fear is key to building a confident and supported learning experience. He also noted that confidence in one's abilities is the cornerstone of effective and productive learning. Almost all teachers referred some techniques that are missed by high school EFL student. They thought that high school students are neither familiar with reading strategies nor with enhancement of reading skill. They considered that students do not have much desire for reading either for entertainment or specific detailed knowledge. Teachers insisted on developing reading techniques and practising a lot by students to assure students' comprehension and improvement of reading skill generally. Students face difficulties in English language skills because they were not provided appropriate programmes and resources. Some teachers are not satisfied with their school curricula. They believed that *Sunrise* series mostly focus on grammar and ignored almost all other areas of English language.

5.2 Analysis of Students' Perception

The data was analyzed through using SPSS version 26 and the following results were obtained via descriptive statistics. Table (3) presents the descriptive statistics by showing minimum, maximum, means, and standard deviations for Student's Reading and Speaking. Speaking (linguistic) (M=3.31) and (SD=0.845), Speaking (non-linguistic) (M=3.58) and (SD=0.796), Reading (linguistic) (M=3.51) and (SD=0.855) and Reading (non-linguistic) (M=3.48) and (SD=0.800).

Table (3) Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD. Deviation
Speaking (linguistic)	323	1	5	3.31	0.845
Speaking (non-linguistic)	323	1	5	3.58	0.796
Reading (linguistic)	323	1	5	3.51	0.855
Reading (non-linguistic)	323	1	5	3.48	0.800

The relationship between Speaking (linguistic) and speaking (non-linguistic)

The Pearson correlation was utilized to determine the relationship between variables. As shown in Table (4), there is a statistically significant correlation of (0.462) between the two variables (P-Value=0.0.000<0.05). This relationship is direct, meaning that the increase of the former is also the increase of the latter, and vice versa. It is also considered a moderate relationship in terms of strength.

Table (4) The correlation between Speaking (linguistic) and Speaking (non-linguistic)

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Pearson Correlation	P-Value (sig.)
Speaking (linguistic)	323	3.31	0.845	0.462	0.000
speaking (non-linguistic)	323	3.58	0.796		

The relationship between Reading (linguistic) and Reading (non-linguistic)

The Pearson correlation was utilized to determine the relationship between variables. As shown in Table (5), there is a statistically significant correlation of (0.404) between the two variables (P-Value=0.0.000<0.05). This relationship is direct, meaning that whatever (linguistic challenges) increases the former also increases the latter (nonlinguistic challenges), and vice versa. It is also considered a moderate relationship in terms of strength.

Table (5) The correlation between Reading (linguistic) and Reading (non-linguistic)

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Pearson Correlation	P-Value (sig.)
Reading (linguistic)	323	3.51	0.855	0.404	0.000
Reading (non-linguistic)	323	3.48	0.800		

5.3 Discussion of Results

5.3.1 Discussion of Teachers' Interview

From teachers' interview data, several challenges were revealed, in agreement with previous studies Akbari (2015), Ghafar and Amin (2022), Marlia et al. (2023), and Rusdin and Purwati (2023). For both speaking and reading skills, high school EFL students had nonlinguistic obstacles such as having anxiety, shyness, demotivation, and fear of making mistakes among classmates. Students also had gaps in their linguistic knowledge, they cannot arrange words grammatically, provide sufficient amount of vocabularies, and lack of the correct pronunciation of words as well. Teachers proclaimed old methods for speaking and reading skills that were still being used, instead of providing up-to-date

methods for enhancing language skills and taking benefit from technological devices. They also focused on the significance of creating good learning atmosphere for practising by students and providing appropriate curricula that encourage students to master language skills.

In line with studies reviewed in the literature, Muhedeen and Mahmood (2022) illustrated teachers were not familiar with up to date methods and techniques, and students were not comfortable with class environment and materials. Nanda and Azmy (2020) identified that students lacked enthusiasm, had not rich background knowledge, and also had insufficient vocabulary of foreign language. Sabah and Muhammad's (2017) revealed that students were not interested in reading texts in their curricula because they could not comprehend texts, this related to the difficulty of texts that were not suitable with students' levels and texts were only required for entertainment, and over-all comprehension.

5.3.2 Discussion of Students' Questionnaire

According to the findings of the students' questionnaire, several (linguistic and nonlinguistic) challenges of speaking and reading skills identified. The majority of students have difficulty in language areas such as vocabulary, pronunciation, code switching, and grammar in context. The Mean of 3.31 indicated that the respondents generally lean towards agreement about speaking (linguistic) challenges. The standard deviation of 0.845 revealed that there were not extreme differences in opinions. These results are consistent with previous studies (Ullah, Ahmed and Sabawoon, 2023; Elisathusilawani, 2023; Fajaryani, Herliza and Ali, 2023; Wulandari, Amalia and Ramdhani, 2022). The majority of students have nonlinguistic difficulties, they have anxiety and they could not keep English conversation. They do not receive valuable feedback and are not provided with more opportunities for practising English language. The mean of 3.58 shows that students tend to agree with the questionnaire items of Speaking (nonlinguistic) challenges, but not extensively. The standard deviation of 0.796 indicates that respondents are rather varied but still relatively close to the mean. It indicates agreement among students. In accordance with previous studies (Ramdhani, 2022; Hajar and Rahman, 2022).

Students also experience the challenges of reading skill. There are several linguistic difficulties that EFL students encounter while attempting to master reading skill. Students face linguistic challenges, for instance, they are not familiar with a wide range of lexical items, consequently, they do not comprehend English texts. They are also influenced by the pros and cons of assessments. The Mean of 3.51 suggests that the respondents tend to agree with items about reading (linguistic) challenges. It is beyond neutral midpoint, and suggests a slightly preference towards agreement. The standard deviation of 0.855 shows moderate variability in responses. In alignment with previous studies (Al Nooh, 2013; Mahmood, 2022; Kasim and Raisha, 2017). Students also have some nonlinguistic challenges with reading skill. The content of texts is not appropriate culturally. Students do not have previous language background, they are not familiar with extra language texts and are not involved in target language. The Mean of 3.48 recommends that the responses are rather above neutral midpoint and they lean towards agreement with questionnaire items about reading (nonlinguistic) challenges. The students generally agree rather than strongly agree. The standard deviation of 0.800 shows that responses were varied, but they were still relatively close to the mean.

The results of this study are aligned with prior studies (Mohaideen, Ismail and Ab Rashid, 2020; Ramadhianti and Somba, 2023).

6. Conclusions

The present study highlighted several linguistic and nonlinguistic challenges that faced EFL students in high schools. Students cannot express their views due to their lack of grammatical knowledge. Another challenge is their restricted knowledge about English language vocabularies. Students do not understand the language while conversing or reading in target language due to their limited familiarity with lexical items. Phonological knowledge is considered to be another obstacle for EFL students. They cannot recognise stress position, pausing or raising intonation which may cause miscommunication. The primary challenge is students' shyness, anxiety and lack of self-confidence. Assessments, particularly in speaking skill, are the most ignored part of the language, generally, they are only for getting marks and passing grade, not for acquiring the language skills proficiency. The majority of students do not have much experience and they use code switching. Class atmosphere is not appropriate, for example, the physical arrangements of the classroom are not suitable for group discussion.

Appendix 1: Teachers' Interview Items

1. What challenges do your EFL students encounter during speaking in English?
2. Do you think that anxiety has a negative impact on EFL students' speaking skills?
3. Do you think that lack of grammar knowledge may impair students' speaking skills?
4. What techniques and methods do you think to be most effective to enhance the EFL students' speaking skills?
5. What specific programs or resources do you believe could benefit those students struggling with speaking skills?
6. What challenges do your EFL students experience during reading in English?
7. What impact does anxiety have on the reading skills of EFL students?
8. Do you think that lack of grammar knowledge may impair students' reading skills?
9. What techniques and methods do you think to be most effective to enhance the EFL students' reading skills?
10. What specific programs or resources do you believe could benefit those students struggling with reading skills?
11. How you think that lack of vocabulary may impair students' speaking and reading skills?
12. Do you believe that students' speaking and reading skills are hampered by limited pronunciation skills?
13. How effective is practice outside the classroom for speaking and reading skills?
14. What recommendations and/ or suggestions may you offer for the sake of overcoming the challenges EFL students encounter during speaking and reading endeavours?

Appendix 2: Students' Questionnaire

Read each statement carefully. Then for each statement, select a number that represents your opinion. 1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Undecided, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree

No	Items	1	2	3	4	5
1	My limited vocabulary range makes it difficult for me to express my ideas in spoken language.					
2	I have difficulties in pronouncing English words.					
3	When speaking in English, I frequently code-switch and use my mother tongue.					
4	Learning English grammar in real life situations can enhance speaking proficiency.					
5	When I speak in English, I get anxious.					
6	I find it difficult to maintain conversation in English.					
7	Feedback on my spoken English from peers or teachers is crucial to my progress.					
8	More opportunities to practice speaking with peers are beneficial for me.					
9	Learning new vocabulary on a regular basis may enhance my language skills.					
10	English texts are challenging to comprehend.					
11	Culturally contextualized text contents are hard for me to understand.					
12	I lack much experience in practising speaking and reading skills before entering high schools.					
13	Reading skills can be improved through entire engagement in the target language.					

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229

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