



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 5. Issue.3. 2018 (July-Sept)



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

LACK OF SELF-CONFIDENCE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR AFFECTING SPOKEN
ENGLISH OF BANGLADESHI UNDERGRAD LEARNERS AT FENI UNIVERSITY

MD. ABDULLAH AL YOUNUS

Lecturer, Department of English, Feni University, Feni, Bangladesh

E-mail: younuseng4cou@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

English speaking skill is the criterion to evaluate the proficiency of English language of the learners. The learners having good proficiency in oral English has great demand in every sectors of real life situation. But they face many difficulties due to lack of confidence during their conversation in English. The purpose of the study was to explore the causes of poor confidence in English speaking of Bangladeshi tertiary level undergrad learners and provide some suggestions so that they may find some ways to develop their abilities or self-confidence in speaking English. To collect data, 50 undergrad learners of English Department of Feni University were chosen and they were provided questionnaire. In addition, a classroom observation and interview of the learners were made to check the proficiency level of the participants. Moreover, the teachers also were provided a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview of ten teachers was arranged. The analysis of the data has shown that the learners have problems with motivation, self-esteem and anxiety that affect their self-confidence in speaking English. This study ends with some synthesis that will help teachers in motivating speaking and grapple for a propiate environment where all the learners can feel relaxed and motivated to communicate in English.

Key Words: Self-confidence, Psychological factor, Motivation, Anxiety, Self-esteem, Undergrad, Bangladesh.

Introduction

Background of the study

Daily activities are mostly performed through using either first or second language. In the era of globalization good proficiency in English speaking has a great demand all over the world especially in the countries where English is used as a second or foreign language and Bangladesh is not different one. Speaking is one of the four skills of English language. It is the second criterion to know the level of English fluency of a learner. In different competitive examinations the learners are evaluated through this skill after writing skill in criterion. When a learner wish to pursue a foreign degree he/she has to sit for IELTS, GMAT, GRE, SAT, CAT or any other examinations to prove their worth in English language. The good English speakers find a better chance then. Moreover, in the job sector the candidates who know English well grab the opportunity to have good jobs. Everywhere the fluent English speakers have great demand.

English is taught compulsorily at primary, secondary and higher secondary level in Bangladesh. It is a matter of sorrow that after finishing several steps of their academic stages these learners face many problems when they speak in English at tertiary level. It is due to their lack of confidence in English speaking. This lack of confidence arises due to both cognitive and psychological factors during their speaking English. Vocabulary, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy are cognitive factors. Fear of making mistakes, lack of motivation, self-esteem, and acculturation due to having both cognitive and affective factors the learners keep silent even if they are required to talk to someone. Sometimes they feel hesitation when they are asked to speak even on a known topic. Fear of making mistakes works in them consequently their minimum level of speaking fluency gets lost. Therefore, most of the learners of Bangladesh suffer from inhibition as it is closely related with their mind. Their unwillingness to talk in a foreign or second language obstructs them mostly in the context of EFL classroom. Cultural barriers also create wide gap among EFL Bangladeshi tertiary level undergrad learners.

Aim of research

This research study aims at the following objectives:

1. Reviewing the common and basic features of English speaking skill.
2. Identifying the general obstacles of the undergrad learners in developing English speaking skill.
3. Suggesting possible recommendations for lessening the barriers in the development of undergrad students' English speaking skill.

Research questions

1. What are the key factors that hinder confidence of speaking English of the tertiary level learners?
2. What are the possible techniques or procedures that will promote tertiary level learners' English speaking fluency?
3. What are the common oral problems that university students face when speaking in English?

Significance of the study

Hopefully the result will be helpful in some ways ways:

- It will help rethink about the English speaking proficiency of the undergrad learners.
- This study will lead to reinvestigate the nature of barriers that our university students face in their English speaking.
- It can provide further motivation to the undergrad learners to be self-aware about English speaking fluency development.
- Concerned English teachers could be endowed with a new insight to assess the English speaking deficiencies of their learners from a realistic point of view and therefore, to take initiative accordingly.
- English speaking course designers would be benefitted to associate the findings in the contents and prescribed activities for such courses.
- In general, the findings of the study would produce a more comprehensive scenario of English speaking skill of the learners from any level in our country.

Literature Review

Speaking skill is one of the four skills of English language. It is productive skill. To speak means to produce some words organizing in order to convey a meaningful message. Chaney (1998 in Kayi, 2006) said that speaking is a process by which the speaker can share and build his/ her views through verbal or non-verbal ways.

But it has been a matter of concern that a large number of tertiary level learners face many problems in speaking English. Among many obstacles, psychological issue is one of them. Thornbury(2005) in David Nunan stated that lack of teachers motivation, inadequate confidence of the learners, much anxiety or shyness, fear of making mistakes or errors etc. are the causes of low fluency in English speaking. In another study Burns and Joyce in Nunan (1999) ; Schwartz (2005); Thornboy (2005) claimed that anxiety or shyness, lack of confidence, lack of motivation and fear of producing any mistake are the main psychological factors that affect largely English speaking skill of the tertiary level learners. In another study of Brown (2001) it is found that less encouragement of the teachers causes lack of confidence in speaking English among the learners. Language development is hindered if the anxiety level is so high among the learners. Oxford (1999) makes clear that language anxiety is in the top position among the factors influencing self-confidence in

learning a foreign language. According to Chomsky's Universal Grammar theory, every child can learn its first language easily. But when it is time to learn a second language the same learners face some that either inhibit or enhance the system of learning the target language. And these factors are cognitive, affective, biological and socio-cultural variables (Stern, 1983).

Krashen (1985) said that language acquisition needs a congenial environment where self-confidence and motivation are developed. Yashima(2004) claimed if the learners willingly attend the classroom speaking activities it is called self-confidence. Students' active and spontaneous participation in the speaking activities grow their confidence and enhance their motivation. In another study Schutz (2007) opined that self-confidence, motivation and anxiety form affective factor and these are required for the acquisition of second language. Richards (2008) Learners often evaluate their success of language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they have improved in their spoken language proficiency. From the Krashen's hypothesis Du (2009) said that affective filter hypothesis affects the affective factors of second language acquisition. As a result, the learners lack motivation and confidence works less so anxiety gear up. In the meantime filter is completely low and the learners are relaxed and make an attempt to be an active learner. Self-esteem is the name of a feeling. It means being happy with one's own character or abilities. Lack of self-esteem has been one of the major problems of the learners these days. For self-esteem Coopersmith(1967) said:

"By self-esteem we refer to the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself; it expresses an attitude of approval, and indicates, the extent, successful and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed in the attitude that the individual holds towards himself".

Self-esteem and self-confidence are two important factors of human domain. Some researchers view these two factors are same while some assert that these two are different (Bong & Clark, 1999; Choi, 2005).Huit(2004) says there is a difference between self-esteem and self-confidence i.e self-esteem is cognitive while self-confidence is affective. It is true that they are counter-part. Luoma (2004) English speaking skill is the cornerstone of improving overall English language learning. For this the confidence level must be high to gain the top most level of language learning. Liu (2015) said that the average value of the four subjective factors affecting listening and speaking ability were from high to low: learning attitude, learning motivation, learning method and strategy, and autonomous learning situation.

Research Methodology

This study follows mixed method to investigate the common factors that affect the psychological problem namely lack of self-confidence of Bangladeshi undergrad learners. Statistical data have been collected on the lack of confidence of the learners and the opinions of the teachers regarding their views on the problems of students. To carry out the study the participants have been chosen from Department of English of Feni University, Bangladesh. At this, 50 students participated randomly where 30 students were male and the rest 20 were female. All the students are from undergrad level especially from first year to third year. Most of them are from first and second year and the number is 43. And the rests are from third year. Their age on average 18-23. All the students studied English for today as their compulsory subject in their both Secondary and Higher Secondary level. Moreover, 10 teachers were selected for an interview who are currently teaching at different universities in Bangladesh. Six of them are from the Department of English of this University. one of them is professor and the rests are lecturer. The other teachers are from different Universities of Bangladesh. They are highly educated and currently teaching language courses in their respective University. This study was made so that better findings can be made sure.

To collect data two written questionnaires were delivered to the teachers and the learners respectively and both the questionnaires contained 10 open ended questions each. All the students were given the same questionnaire to reflect their authentic opinion answering all ten questions. It was not mandatory to write up their name in the questionnaire. All the questions in the questionnaire are regarding the causes of the lack of confidence in their oral communication. Besides, a random interview of the learners was conducted to know the causes of low confidence in English speaking. As part of field work, the learners were asked to deliver

an extempore speech for three minutes to observe their level of fluency. Teachers interview were taken to perceive their opinion about the causes of lack of confidence in English speaking of the learners. Time plan for the interview was 10 minutes. Secondary data were collected from different books, articles, thesis, newspapers, and online sources as part of the research methodology. It creates beauty to know as the Kunaprr.

Findings of the Study

In the learners' questionnaire 10 questions were given on the basis of their psychological issue. The learners were asked to put their real answer in the questionnaire. The first question was regarding their motivation to speak in English. Almost all the learners ensured that they are little motivated to oral communication in English. The percentage is less than 20. But motivation is the core of the development in English speaking fluency. The next question was regarding their fear of making mistake when the learners talk in English. 70% of the students opined that they are afraid of making mistakes. Here the causes of fear are many. One of the major reasons the stock of vocabulary is too poor. There are also much more grammatical problems. Moreover, fear of wrong pronunciation causes them anxiety. Shyness discourages them to produce any English word. These problems are being generated due to scanty of speaking activities the learners participate. In response to a question regarding their get ashamed to talk in English class 50% of the learners agreed that they have been ashamed when they deliver any answer even in English class. It is because of less participation in English conversation and improper knowledge on the related topic. The tertiary level learners are considered up to the mark in their presentation on a topic. But they get nervous when they talk on a topic even their heart-beat gets rise consequently they stop talking or cry out. The materials they use for increasing their ability to talk in English are not well chosen or designed. 43% of the learners made sure that pictures, tape-recorder, videos and other materials are used for the development of their English speaking fluency. They said that materials increase their motivation buy they are less facilitated and the classroom are not well equipped with these materials.

Findings from the teacher's questionnaire has shown that there are noticeable obstacles faced by the EFL learners when they speak in English. The learners mostly focus on reading and writing skills as these two skills have been emphasized in secondary and higher secondary level in Bangladesh. Most of the teachers assured that the level of English speaking of the learners is low. As a result they find less interest when they talk to someone in English. Moreover, the students find difficulties in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence structure, inhibition, cultural problems have been found among the English speakers during their teaching English. They find the learners are bored in their speaking listening class. Sometimes, the learners are not found self-esteemed during their talking in English in EFL classroom. Self-esteem means the learners must have believe in the potentiality that will lead them to perform any linguistic action successfully. In other words if confidence works in time talking in English it is called self-esteem. Self-esteem helps the learners to learn a language easily.

From the learners interview some reasons have been added to the lack of confidence among the learners English speaking. They have pointed out that inadequate motivation of the secondary and higher secondary teachers, thought of overlook or under estimation of the listeners, fear of making mistakes, anxiety, lack of adequate practice of English speaking, improper knowledge of English grammar. Learning English only to cross the stairs of examination and getting a certificate is one of the main reasons of the low level confidence. Because, they do not have headache about the proficiency of English rather only promoting in the next stage of academic life. The learners pointed out that limited scope of speaking English is another cause low confidence in speaking in English. They also blamed the curriculum and syllabus system of Bangladesh. In curriculum and syllabus from Primary to Higher Secondary level, Reading and Writing skills have been emphasized. Listening and speaking are less emphasized in curriculum and syllabus. Less participation in different workshops, inadequate talking to natives, motivation, inhibition, cultural barriers, religious are the one of the root causes of poor confidence in English speaking. Inhibition means unwillingness to talk in English. It leads the learners to backwardness. The number of people believe in English is the language of the Christian. The practice of this language is the practice of Christianity. This under estimation and wrong conception about learning a foreign language influence them to less confidence to learning a language. The cultural barriers

obstruct much for the acquisition of a foreign language. Cultural barriers mean East-West attitude. English language is thought the language of the West. With the emergence of this language, the culture of the Western nations mixes with the East. The culture would affect the culture of this sub-continent. 20% learners reacted in this way.

From the teachers interview it has been found that most of the learners suffer from anxiety. Tension works in them when they go for talking in English. Nervousness and apprehension cause them poor proficiency in English speaking. All the teachers reflected their view regarding the poor condition of the learners in English speaking skill. The teachers' opinion is that the learners suffer much due to lack of self-confidence, motivation, self-esteem, shy, fear of making mistakes, inadequate vocabulary, poor grammatical competence and inhibition.

Recommendations

- Using yellow and red card – Yellow and red card can be used to promote the level of proficiency in English speaking. In this way, several groups can be formed from the target learners. Each group consists of two members. If one member uses mother tongue during his/ her conversation yellow card could be shown. If it happens two times red card could be shown. In this way the learners could be more engaged in speaking English. Finally, proficiency will touch the target learners.
- Proper feedback and cares develop the fluency of the English language speakers.
- Successful stories of the successful figures encourage the students to develop their level of confidence. This successful stories directly or indirectly gather much encouragement among the learners. It enhances the learners abilities to do better in the examination.
- Learners can be given task to listen to tape recorder, videos, songs, stories. Then they might be asked to write the summary and say orally.
- Emphasizing on British and American pronunciation.
- Understanding one's body language plays a positive role in speaking skill. Facial expressions, gestures and body language help the learners. During conversation these sign language affect both positively and negatively.
- The curriculum designers and the syllabus planners could reshape their ideas during designing their curriculum and syllabus.
- For speaking improvement, regular practice of listening is a must. It helps the learners to have a good connection with pronunciation a linguistic devices. Good pronunciation encourages the learners to talk in English.
- Good vocabulary stock raises the confidence of the target language learners. If the learners know the English word for the words of mother tongue they get pleasure tries to speak in English.
- Classroom activities such as dialogues, discussion, songs, role-plays, communication games, information gap, brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, picture describing, find the difference and Jigsaw-activities could play a vital role in developing English speaking.
- Mimic of English TV news presenters. It will help the learners much to learn the right pronunciation.
- Proper feedback from the teachers to the learners will lessen the problems in English speaking skill.
- Using minimal response during conversation. Such as use of idiomatic phrases or predictable words. Such as- Is it right? Yes/ No.
- Meta-language could be used to develop the level of self-confidence among the learners. It means students may feel shy or get embarrassed when speak in English or they could comprehend that their partner could not understand what have been said. Students will use clarification phrases to grow self-confidence.
- Motivation is required to develop the level of self-confidence among the English language learners. It helps them to be much more engaged in learning a language proficiently.
- Supporting atmosphere in the classroom could be helpful for the learning of a language.
- Practicing English in a relaxed way. No hurry! Take time to get well.
- Talking with himself / herself or talking with a English speaking friend.
- Focus on fluency, not grammar. Communicative Competence means sharing views fluently in English.

- Helping anxious students outside the classroom. The weak and less mindful learners could be identified and proper monitoring will be helpful for them to the target language.
- Gaming facilities in the classroom is required.
- E-learning is the most upto date way to learn a second language.
- Assessing different tests.
- Using narrative activity. Using this technique the learners will make a short summary of and large story and will say or write it to the parents.
- Using Bangla in the classroom should be prohibited for both the teachers and learners.

Conclusion

Self-confidence is the pre-requisite for language acquisition successfully. It helps everyone to cross the stairs of pride and glory. In second language acquisition both cognitive and affective theory are required. Both these linguistic elements play vital role for language development. What cannot be denied in a second language acquisition in that self-confidence plays the core role in acquisition and learning a language? Learners' speaking abilities mostly depends on their use of practice and use of everyday language. Teachers motivation and involvement in the development of the learners' speaking abilities have been crucial and a part and parcel in a language classroom. Main psychological aspects of developing self-confidence are motivation, self-esteem and anxiety. These things affect them. In that case the teachers can create an atmosphere in the classroom where the learners find interest to learn the target language. In addition, it has been seen from the study that fears and anxiety create obstacles to the oral performance of the learners. Classroom activities such as Imation, intensive, responsive, transactional, interpersonal and extensive are the classroom activities. Students' fluency will rise. The learners require a sound environment for better proficiency in English. Both cognitive and affective factors largely affect the learners' self-confidence among the learners. A learner without self-confidence in English speaking is like a ship without and an engine.

Reference

- Bippus, S. L, and Eslami, Z. R. (2013). Adult ESOL, Students and service-learning: Voices, experiences, and perspectives. *TESOL J* 4: 587-597.
- Bong, M., & Clark, R. E. (1999). Comparison between self-concept and self-efficacy in academic motivation. *Educationalist psychologist*, 34 (3), 139-153.
- Brown, H. D (2001). *Teaching by Principles.An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Chao, C (2003). *Foreign Language Anxiety and Emotional Intelligence: A Study of EFL Students in Taiwan*. USA: Texas A & M University-Kingsville.
- Choi, N. (2005). Self-efficacy and self-concept as predictors of college students' academic performance. *Psychology in the shools*, 42(2), 197-205.
- Du X (2009). The Affective filter in second language teaching. *Asian Social Science*, (5) 8: 162.
- H. Youssef. (2016). Psychological Factor Affecting English Speaking Performance for the English Learners in Indonesia.
- Huitt, W. (2005). Self-concept and self-esteem Educational Psychology Interactive Retrieved from <http://Chiron.Naldosta.edu/whuitt/col/regsys/self.html>.
- Juhana (2012). *Psychological Factors That Hinder Students from Speaking in English Class (A Case Study in a Senior High School in South Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia)*. *Journal of Education and Practice*. ISSN 2222-288 (Online). Vol-3, No-12.
- Kayi, Hayriye. (2006). Teaching Speaking: Activities to Promote Speaking in a Second Language. [Online]
- Krashen S (1988). *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. New York: Prentice-Hall, Interntional.
- L, Zhibo. (2015). Factors affecting English listening and speaking abilities of non-English major students: taking engineering students as an example. *World Transactions on Engineering Technology Education*.Vol. 13, No. 4, 2015.
- Liu, M. (2007). Anxiety in Oral English Classroom: A Case Study in China. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*. Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 119-137.

-
- Luoma, S. (2004). *Assessing Speaking*. In J. C. Alderson, & L. F. Bachman (series Ed.). U. K: Cambridge University Press.
- Melouah, A. (2013). *Foreign Language Anxiety in EFL Classroom: A Case Study of First-year LMD Students of English at SaadDahlab University of Blida, Algeria*. Arab World English Journal. ISSN: 2229-9327. Vol. 4, No. 1. Pp. 64-76
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second Language Teaching & Learning*. USA. Heinle&Heinle Publisher.
- Oxford (1999). Anxiety and the language learner: New Insights. In Arnold J. (Ed). *Affect in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- P, Academia (2017). A Quantitative Study of self-confidence in learning English as a foreign language. (5) 2, 24-28, ISSN 23`5-7704.
- Schutz, R (2007). Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition. Retrieved from <http://www.sk.com.br/sk-hrash.html>.
- Schwartz, R. L. (2005). Taking a Closer Look at Struggling ESOL Learners. [Online]. Available at www.ncsall.net. (March 3, 2011)
- Stern, H. H. (1983). *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yashima T, ZenukNishide L, Shimizu K (2004). The Influence of Attitude and Affect on Willingness to Communicate and Second Language Communication. *Language Learning*, 54, 119-152.
-