



ISSN: 2617-6548

URL: [www.ijirss.com](http://www.ijirss.com)



## Factors Affecting Students' Speaking Performance in English Department of Jawzjan University

Ahmad Shah Qasemi

*English Language and Literature Department, Jawzjan University, Sheberghan, Jawzjan, Afghanistan*

(Email: [qasemiahmadshah@gmail.com](mailto:qasemiahmadshah@gmail.com))

### Abstract


This study aims to recognize the problems that students of English department face when they speak English. To achieve the objective of the investigation a quantitative research was designed. A questionnaire was used as the main data collection tool. The findings of the study showed that majority of the students have a positive perception about importance and necessity of speaking skill. According to the findings most of the students do not have the opportunity of practicing English speaking out of the class. Moreover, dissimilarity in English education background of the students are another challenge which is recognized in outcome of the study. Furthermore, the findings showed that most of the students feel motivated and confident in speaking performance. Moreover, the findings also revealed that the teachers have significant role for motivating the students in speaking performance. To sum up, the result exposed that students are appreciated and praised when they perform a speaking task efficiently.

**Keywords:** EFL, Speaking skill, Factors, Speaking Problems.

**DOI:** 10.53894/ijirss.v3i4.46

**Funding:** This study received no specific financial support.

**History:** Received: 16 September 2020/**Revised:** 5 November 2020/**Accepted:** 25 November 2020/**Published:** 9 December 2020

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**Competing Interests:** The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

**Transparency:** The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study was reported; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained.

**Ethical:** This study follows all ethical practices during writing.

### 1. Introduction

Language is a means of communication and plays an important role in human being life. Because, Human being is a social creature and language is a social phenomenon as well. Every member of community needs it to express their necessities. Nowadays, English language has a prestigious status as one of the widely spoken languages in the world. Therefore, the importance and popularity of learning English is increasing dramatically all around the world the same in Afghanistan. For this reason, it has been given a significant value at institutions, schools, and higher educational organizations [1].

Speaking in every language is one of the most significant competence to be improved as means of communication. Also, speaking skill is considered as one the most difficult parts of language learning. The learners who study English as an English as a foreign langue (EFL)/ English as a second language (ESL) find it very difficult to express their thoughts, ideas, information and hopes successfully. In English language departments where students' major field is English; they mostly evaluate their progress and success in English learning based on how well they have been improved in their spoken language skill. Concentration on speaking skill in a second/foreign language is naturally difficult and it is considered as one of the most challenging language skills to be captured [2]. In English language department of Jawzjan University the

students' major problem in learning English is speaking. They can write about a good topic, read novels, books and understand English native speakers and teachers while speaking English. They can easily pass grammar and other exams but when they are asked to speak, they find it much more difficult. Although this challenging is not limited to Afghan English learners. The studies conducted in different parts of the world have identified that EFL/ESL learners face many challenges in practicing speaking skill and many researchers have been discussed it from different angles.

Additionally, English language lecturers, who teach different subjects of English at Jawzjan University found out that students face problems in stating their thoughts, hopes, information appropriately. In most cases the first problem refers to the teachers who deal with the students, another refers to the environment and to the learners themselves, most of the learners are interested to use local languages instead of English. Also, another common problem refers to psychological issues when students are speaking, they are afraid of making mistakes. Moreover, Students' speaking problem at Jawzjan University may not be recognized since the establishment of the department of English language. This investigation aims to recognize the factors affect students' performance in speaking English. English language teachers should know learners speaking problems in English; to utilize effective policies to solve students' difficulties in speaking English.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Factors affect EFL learners' speaking performance

Identifying the factors which influence students' speaking performance is very important for the teachers. Because teachers can help the learners to overcome their difficulties in learning and practicing speaking skill. Students' speaking performance are influenced by many factors like; environments, affective factors, listening skill, and feedback during speaking tasks [3]. Likewise, for most of the English learners mastering speaking skill is very difficult, and they are still unskilled in communicating orally in English [4]. According to Penny, there are many factors that are considered as the causes of difficulty in speaking, and they are as follows [5]:

1. Inhibition. Making mistake is a common problem for learners. Similarly, being criticized is another usual fact. On the whole, students are simply shy.
2. Nothing to say. Lack of interest is another source to express themselves.
3. Low or irregular participation. Due to the large number of the students and tendency of some students to dominate only a few of the students can participate in discussions, while others speak very little or not at all.
4. Native language use. In classes where most of the students share the same mother tongue are willing to use it because it is easier and students feel relaxed when they speak in their mother tongue.

The lack of target language environment is another problem. It causes lack of involvement in real-life circumstances. In the same vein, some instructors use first language (L1) for class organization. Though, that can be another factor that results to the problem of speaking difficulties [6]. "Language is best learned when the learners' attention is focused explicitly on linguistic features" [7]. In addition, the findings of some studies showed that learners can improve their speaking competence by enhancing learning strategies that enable them to become independent learners [8]. Finally, many factors can be the sources of difficulties in speaking English among EFL learners [9]. Most of these factors are associated to the learners themselves, the teaching strategies, the curriculum, and the environment. For example, many students' do not have sufficient vocabulary to get their meaning across, and consequently, they cannot follow the going interaction. Inadequate strategic competence and communication skill can be another factor as well for not being able to keep the interaction going. Many studies have been conducted to identify the factors affect students speaking performance in EFL classes. For example; an investigation carried out to find teachers' beliefs on speaking skills based on motivational orientations [10]. The outcomes of the study showed that the teachers had negative opinions about speaking instruction. Although they believed that instruction has a great importance in speaking skill. The findings of the study also identified that even though the teachers had been taken many motivational orientations towards speaking English, again they felt unskilled in oral communication. The result also showed that the students' self-assessment about their speaking skill was negative and they expressed themselves as incapable speakers of English. Only a part of them stated that they had a good participation in speaking activities [10].

Bozorgian studied the association between listening skill and the other language skills. The findings showed that there is a close relationship between listening comprehension and language proficiency. That is, the good listening skill score, the better speaking skill score [11]. In the same vein, Prieto conducted a study about the cooperative learning tasks. The result demonstrated that one way to develop speaking skill is to interact with others, learn from others, and in order to involve the learners select the topics based on learners' interests [11]. Lukitasari conducted a study about learners' strategies in dealing with speaking problems. The obtained result demonstrated that students face a lot speaking difficulties such as inhibition, nothing to say, limited participation, and using mother tongue in their speaking classes. The other finding of this study showed that the learners did not do better in their speaking tasks because they had not learned three components of speaking called vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation [12]. Also, another study identified that learners' oral performance was influenced by their lack of vocabulary, shyness, and feel of being disliked. It was also discovered that students' cooperation, self-confidence, vocabulary knowledge, and the class environment motivated them to improve their speaking competency [13]. To conclude, the limitation of oral activities in textbook is a strong cause of students' difficulties in speaking, as a result he suggested some oral activities in the form of songs, rhymes, and simple stories and more conversational language to enable students to have more fun and enjoy learning to enhance their speaking skill [14]. Likewise, some issues were investigated in teaching English speaking in a foreign language classroom, the findings discovered that the huge number of the students in the classroom, the shortage of English teaching time, and the teaching

materials that do not match with the communicative needs of the students; are the main causes of learners' speaking difficulties [12].

### 3. Methodology

This study addresses two main questions:

1. What are the problems that the students of English department face when they speak English?
2. What are the factors that affect their speaking performance?

#### 3.1. Participants

It is a case study. The total number of participants were (N=108) undergraduates at English Department of Jawzjan University. Their ages ranges under 20 to 27.

#### 3.2. Research Instrument

In this study, the questionnaire was used as the only instrument of enquiry to identify the problems that English Department students encounter when speaking English. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first section offers general information about the subjects and second section identifies the problems which occurs during speaking English by the participants.

#### 3.3. Significance of the study

This investigation will provide the following significances:

- The findings of the study will help the English Department teachers at Jawzjan University to find out speaking difficulties and correct them.
- This study will also provide some recommendations that help the teachers to deal with problems and decrease the factors behind the weakness of speaking English

### 4. Findings and Discussions

#### 4.1. Section one: General information:

The collected data from the first part of the students' questionnaire presented a summary of the respondents: sex, age group and their background of studying English by using descriptive statistics. Table 1 shows the demographic data of the participants. The total number of the survey participants was 108 which consists of 63 (58.3%) male and 45 (41.7%) female.

**Table-1.**

Gender of the participants

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	45	41.7
	Male	63	58.3
Total		108	100.0

Table 2 describes the age of the participants. It shows that 38 (35.2%) students are in age group of under 20 years old, 68 (63.0%) participants are in age group of 20-23 years old and 2 (1.9%) in age group of 24-27 years old.

**Table-2.**

Age group of the participants.

Age Group	Frequency	Percent (%)
Under 20	38	35.2
20-23	68	63.0
24-27	2	1.9
Total	108	100.0

Table 3 demonstrates the English education background of the participants according to the given time duration groups. Based on their responses in the survey the highest number of the students 51 (47.2%) are in group 2-4 years, 24 (22.2%) are in group more than 7 years and 8 (7.4%) are in group 5.7 years. How long have you been learning English?

**Table-3.**

English education background of the participants.

Age Group	Frequency	Percent (%)
Under 1 year	25	23.1
2-4 years	51	47.2
5-7 years	8	7.4
More than 7 years	24	22.2
Total	108	100.0

#### 4.2. Section two: Students' perceptions towards speaking in EFL classes and different problems they encounter.

**Table 4** shows that majority of the participants 67 (62.0 %) affirmed that they like speaking English very much. While the other 25 (23.1%) confessed that speaking English is a common activity. 5 (4.6%), 1 (0.9%) showed that they do not like speaking English much this explains lack of motivation and interest. How much do you like speaking English in class?

**Table-4.**  
Importance of speaking skills.

	Frequency	Percent %
Very much	67	62.0
Rather	10	9.3
Normal	25	23.1
Little	5	4.6
Not at all	1	0.9
Total	108	100.0

**Table 5** by this question, the researcher wants to identify the frequency of students' speaking English outside of the classroom. About half of the students 51 (47.2%) confirm that they sometimes speak English and 30 (27.8%) state that they usually do. Whereas 15 (13.9%) confess that they always speak and only 12 (11.1%) selected for "rarely" that is a sign of lack interest and they have problems. Whether speaking English practice has significant role to enhance students' speaking competence. How often do you practice speaking outside the classroom?

**Table-5.**  
Practicing English outside the classroom.

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Always	15	13.9
Usually	30	27.8
Sometimes	51	47.2
Rarely	12	11.1
Total	108	100.0

**Table 6** describes that 91 (84.3%) students feel that speaking skill is very necessary in their future job. A small portion of the students 16(14.8%) think that speaking skill is necessary in their future job. By this question researcher wants to discover the perception of students' towards necessity of speaking skill, the findings showed that majority of the participants are interested in to improve their speaking skill. What do you think about the necessity of speaking skills to your future job?

**Table-6.**  
Perceptions of students towards necessity of speaking skill.

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very necessary	91	84.3
Necessary	16	14.8
Normal	1	0.9
Total	108	100.0

**Table 7** demonstrates that most of the participants 75 (69.4%) affirm that they are given plenty of time to fulfill a task in speaking class. While, 33 (30.6%) think that they need more time to perform a speaking task. As the findings show that students have sufficient time to perform a speaking assignment. Are you given plenty of time to perform a speaking task?

**Table-7.**  
Given time to students for fulfilling speaking assignments.

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Yes	33	30.6
	No	75	69.4
	Total	108	100.0

**Table 8** shows that majority of the participants 86(79.6%) affirm that they get preparation for performing a task. A part of the students state that they do not get preparation for doing a task. Since giving assignment makes the students more commitment and dutiful. Luckily, the students seem to be hardworking and well-organized. Do you prepare for a task before the task is performed?

**Table-8.**  
Preparation for a task.

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	No	22	20.4
	Yes	86	79.6
	Total	108	100.0

**Table 9** shows whether students feel anxious when they are asked to speak English? This question designed to identify to what extent students were anxious to speak in English. From above table, it is recognized that 61 (56.5) of the students do not feel anxious when they are asked to speak English. They are seen to have high level of self-confidence and speaking skill. Whereas 47 (43.5%) students in class are concerned when they are asked to speak English. They may have poor English knowledge and accent. They may have pressure from teachers can also cause students' anxiety. Do you have the pressure to perform well?

**Table-9.**  
Feeling pressure to perform well

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	No	61	56.5
	Yes	47	43.5
	Total	108	100.0

**Table 10** shows that 86 (79.6 %) affirm that they listeners are patient, appreciative, sympathetic and helpful. Only a small number of the students think that the listeners are not grateful and supportive. Since, the learning environment has significant effect on students' learning. Luckily their learning environment is very supportive which helps them to be interested in speaking. Are the listeners patient, understanding, sympathetic and supportive?

**Table-10.**  
Sympathetic of the listeners.

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	No	22	20.4
	Yes	86	79.6
	Total	108	100.0

**Table 11** shows that 39 (36.1%) of the participants assert that they feel worried in speaking class, while 37 (34.3%) declare that they feel confident in speaking English. Similarly, 31(28.7%) state that they feel motivated in speaking English. The findings in total shows that majority feel happy in the class, because they are interested and feel confident and motivated. Only part of the class has anxiety problems in speaking English. How do you feel in speaking class?

**Table-11.**  
Feeling in speaking class.

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Motivated	31	28.7
Anxious	39	36
Confident	38	35.2
Total	108	99.1

In **Table 12** the researcher wants to know whether they speak in the classroom because they are good English speakers now or no. A quarter 21 (19.4%) of the students evaluated themselves very good in speaking and about half of the participants 52 (48.1%) stated that they speak English because they are good speakers now. 34 (31.5%) declared that their English-speaking skill is average. Only 1 (0.9%) evaluated her/his English-speaking skill very poor. Consequently, it is very significant for students to know that teachers do not expect them to speak perfect English and teachers understand it takes time and effort for them to learn to communicate in English. Can you evaluate your listening skills?

**Table-12.**  
Evaluating participants.

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Bad	1	0.9
Average	34	31.5
Good	52	48.1
Very good	21	19.4
Total	108	100.0

**Table 13** indicates that 36 (33.3%) of the students confirmed that they are praised by their teachers when they answered a question correctly. While 32 (29.6%) of the students stated that are admired when answer a question correctly.



And about a quarter of the students also acknowledged that they are admired when have a right answer to the questions. Unfortunately, 3 (2.8%) students selected for “never”. Consequently, praise is a powerful affective factor that teachers should always consider it. It accomplishes as a positive energy that enhance students’ self-esteem and develops their self-confidence. Therefore, teachers in a conversation class should praise their students. Praise is an affective factor that teachers should always take into account. Does your teacher praise you when you answered a question well?

**Table-13.**  
Motivating the students by the teacher.

	Frequency	Percent %
Always	32	29.6
Often	22	20.4
Sometimes	36	33.3
Rarely	15	13.9
Never	3	2.8
Total	108	100.0

## 5. Conclusion

This article went over the factors that affect students’ English-speaking performance. The listed factors in this article have a significant role in identifying some factors affect students’ speaking performance. Overall, the findings of the study showed that majority of the students have a positive perception about importance and necessity of speaking skill. It indicates that they are aware of communication skill’ role in effective EFL education. According to the findings most of the students do not have the opportunity of practicing English speaking out of the class. It affects their oral communication ability in English. Moreover, dissimilarity in English education background of the students are another challenge which is recognized in outcome of the study. It is a considerable factor that the teachers should take into account and implement variety of teaching activities to grab all students’ interest to the lesson. The evidence from the study showed that the given time for students to be prepared for speaking task is sufficient. Based on the researcher experience it specifies that the students are not given sufficient assignments to perform. Feeling pressure to perform well is another common difficulty of EFL learners; according to the findings less than half of the students have anxiety, fear and inhibition in performing an oral activity which lead to speaking difficulties and affected EFL students’ speaking fluency. This result is consistent with the previous findings. A small number of the respondents felt shy to speak in English because of fearing of their classmates’ laughing and being criticized but more than a half of the respondents do not think so. It indicates that the students need to give motivation, encouragement also some psychological training for eliminating their shyness due to laughing of their classmates.

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