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## The Difficulties of EFL Students in Speaking English at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute

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### ABSTRACT

Today, many students face with the English speaking difficulties during conversations, because of these problems most of EFL (English as Foreign Language) students deny to speak in English and have a preference to use their mother language. So, the research tried to do a study based on the "The difficulties of EFL students in speaking English at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute." This research aims to find out the difficulties, and factors caused problems while students speaking English. This research was conducted at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute. It helps the students to know the factors which caused problems in speaking. The participants were 20 male students from third class of English language and literature department of Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute. The data was collected through a questionnaire that is consisted of 12 questions. An instrument consisting of twelve questions was used to gather the data. The SPSS application was used to examine the gathered data. The majority of pupils, the study discovered, struggle with a variety of aspects of speaking English, including vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and confidence issues.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most crucial components of communication is language, which is utilized as a medium of exchange between people anywhere in the world. Every human being on the planet uses language for all purposes, including communication, information sharing, and thought and idea expression. The best means of communicating ideas, messages, intentions, sentiments, and opinions to other people is through language. Thus, language is not only a means of human communication but also one of the most significant facets of the human experience (Rahayu, 2015). The language is used to communicate across national borders in this day of globalization, which is why English is taught and studied in every school. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are the four skills that are studied in English classes; these skills are interdependent and the ability to speak is one of the most crucial ones that students acquire when learning the language (Fahira, 2022).

One of the most crucial language abilities is speaking. The majority of students at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute struggle with speaking English. When someone speaks, they should be able to interpret what they are saying based on the context in which they are speaking, according to Brown (2008), who defines speaking as an interactive process of creating meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information.

### Research Questions

1. What are the difficulties of EFL students in speaking English at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute?
2. What are the reasons that EFL students have difficulty in speaking English at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute?

### Goal of the Study

This study aims to identify the challenges faced by English as foreign language (EFL) students when speaking the English language and to ascertain the challenges faced by students at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute.

### Significances of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the speaking challenges that fifth-semester EFL students encounter. Based on academic methods, this research will assist teachers in achieving their highest standards for students' speaking abilities.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Definition of Speaking

According to Kayi (2006), speaking is the use of language in a brief amount of time with a few awkward pauses, which is referred to as fluency. It implies that speaking is the process of creating meaning in a variety of situations using both verbal and nonverbal cues.

Speaking, in the words of Ahmed Ali (2021), is the act of delivering language orally. We use a variety of body components to produce sounds when we speak, including the tongue, teeth, lips, the vocal cords, lungs, and vocal tract. The four abilities are speaking, writing, listening, and reading. The talent of "speaking" is one that this research focuses on. It typically takes at least one listener to understand this vocalized version of language. A "dialogue" is a conversation that takes place when two or more individuals are speaking to each other. Dialogue can occur organically when speech is exchanged between individuals. It can also prepare and practice, for example, giving a speech or putting on a presentation. Of course, some people talk to themselves! Some English learners

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practice speaking standing alone in front of a mirror.

### Functions of Speaking

According to Rahayu (2015), speaking is the capacity to generate words, to convey ideas, and to convey sentiments. Speaking, along with reading, listening, and writing, is one of the fundamental abilities in foreign language learning. It takes time to become proficient at something. A lengthy procedure is required. Language is a complicated system that requires constant exposure to reorganize students' thought processes, (Rubi and Thomson, 1994). Therefore, in order for pupils to become more proficient language learners, they must practice.

According to Brown and Richards (2008), there are three categories of speaking functions: talk as performance, talk as transaction, and talk as interaction. Conversations utilized in everyday social interactions are referred to as "talk." When people meet, they greet each other, strike up a discussion, share stories, and so on. Conversely, speaking as a transaction refers to the context in which the meaning or message is conveyed, such as when instructors instruct students, etc. As can be seen from the aforementioned definitions, speaking is the act of utilizing utterances to communicate to try and convey ideas, feelings, and opinions as well as to trade information. As a result, speaking is an essential tool for effective communication.

### Talk as Interaction

Kandati & Tatipang (2021) claim that this function is associated with social function and pertains to what we often understand by conversation. We still engage in interpersonal connection in our regular conversation. This is a reference to our talk. It is an interactive form of communication that occurs naturally between two or more individuals. This relates to the attempts made by individuals to spread his message to others. Therefore, they must use their verbal abilities to interact with others. Social relationships are this function's primary goal.

### Talk as Transaction

According to Paranduk & Karisi (2021), this performance is mostly concerned with getting our point over to others in a clear and precise manner when speaking. Speaking as a transaction is more concerned with getting our point across and ensuring that others understand us when we speak. When speaking in this style, educators and students typically concentrate on conveying meaning or discussing how they arrived at an understanding.

### Talk as Performance

Speaking as a talk performance, according to Soreh (2022), is the act of communicating knowledge to an audience or participants through speech. Speaking exercises have a greater emphasis on monologue than on dialogue. Speaking as a performance talk has several main characteristics, such as concentrating on the message that needs to be received by the audience, stressing speech form and accuracy, using language that sounds like

written language, using more monologues, and having a predictable structure and sequence.

### Types of Speaking Skills

Nggeabak (2021) depicted that the spoken language is divided into monologue and dialogue types:

#### Monologue

When a speaker employs spoken language in a monologue, the hearer must continuously process lengthy speech segments. Whether the hearer understands or not, the discourse will continue at the same time. He classified monologues into two categories. First of all, prepared monologues-such as speeches and other written content-typically show little repetition and are thus challenging to understand. Second, unplanned monologues-such as spontaneous lectures and protracted "stories" during conversations-show greater redundancy, which facilitates comprehension; yet the addition of additional performance variables and other hesitations may facilitate or impede comprehension (Nggeabak, 2021).

#### Dialogue

Dialogues include two or more speakers and can be categorized as either transactional-which aims to deliver propositional or factual information-or interpersonal, which fosters social ties. Because there may be a lot of shared knowledge (background details, schemata) between the players in each scenario, the familiarity of the interlocutors will lead to talks with more implicit meanings, assumptions, and other meanings. To ensure successful comprehension in interactions between or among participants who are not familiar with one another, references and meanings must be made clearer. When these allusions are not made explicitly, misinterpretations are likely to occur.

### The Difficulties in Speaking

Rahayu (2021) asserts that the capacity to speak English successfully in formal and everyday contexts is one English language competency that every learner of foreign languages has to acquire. For the majority of people, becoming proficient in speaking is the most crucial aspect of learning English, and their level of success is determined by their capacity to participate in English-language conversations. When speaking, speakers must be cognizant of a number of factors or be knowledgeable about the sociocultural norms (turn-taking, speech rate, length, and pause), language functions (such as greeting, requesting, and obtaining permission), and language mechanics (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary). As Khan (2005) noted in his study, a number of his subjects had speech impairments. There were several things that contributed to speech issues, like:

### Linguistics Problem

The study of language, or linguistics, focuses on words, phonology, and language structure, or grammar. In general,

linguistics is the study of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The linguistic issue preventing pupils from speaking is the problem.

### **Vocabulary**

A person's vocabulary is their understanding of words and their definitions. Oral vocabulary and printed vocabulary are the two types of vocabulary. The words we can read and utter aloud are known as oral vocabulary. The words in printed vocabulary are those that make sense to us both silently when we read and talk. According to Khan (2005), the majority of international students find it difficult to express themselves verbally. The students' inability to blend their vocabulary to make meaningful utterances is the root cause of this issue.

### **Grammar**

The most crucial aspect of language is grammar. Sentences are formed and formatted, then it is examined. The difficulty that students have with grammar is that they are unable to identify its rules, which makes it difficult for them to communicate successfully in English.

### **Pronunciation**

How to pronounce a word is known as pronunciation. The reason why students have trouble pronouncing words correctly is that they are unaware of the proper spelling. Due to this issue, the pronunciation of the students is incorrect, and the connotation is inappropriate.

### **Psychological Problems**

The study of psychology focuses on how people think and behave as they interact with their surroundings. Students' emotional and physical health is linked to psychological speaking issues, which can have a detrimental effect on their speaking ability.

### **Less Confident**

Self-confidence is linked to a person's character, aptitude, and strength, which can occasionally show up excessively. Self-focus leads to good self-confidence. Bad emotions and thoughts, such as remorse, shyness, inflated expectations, a delusion of humility, anxiety, melancholy, and so forth, can lead to a decrease in confidence. Students who lack confidence may develop poor speaking skills. Therefore, it's critical to boost pupils' self-confidence so they can speak and convey themselves effectively.

A study conducted in Iran by Afshar and Asakereh (2016) revealed that a number of social issues, issues with instructors, a lack of facilities for instruction, and the country's educational system's curricula were among the main factors causing problems for the speaking abilities of both freshmen and seniors. Furthermore, the test findings indicated that there is no discernible difference between the freshmen and seniors' assessments of their speaking difficulties.

### **Strategies to Solve Difficulties in Speaking**

Speaking in English is difficult for pupils since it requires

a lot of study to become competent speakers with strong comprehension. As a result, students need to expand their vocabulary and pronunciation skills. Juhana (2012) states that the following are possible solutions for the psychological issue:

#### **The Solution to Solve Fear of Mistake**

To help students overcome their anxiety of making mistakes when speaking, teachers should focus on creating a positive learning environment and helping students feel comfortable speaking in English. First and foremost, a teacher-student relationship needs to be established. It implies that the teacher should make the pupils feel at ease and that they can rely on the teacher to support them when they make mistakes. Second, when teaching English, the instructor needs to help the students focus more. Finally, the instructor should foster a peaceful environment that helps elevate pupils' issues.

#### **The Solution to Solve the Shyness**

In terms of strategies for overcoming shyness, educators should come up with effective ways to help their pupils deal with their shyness. The instructor establishes a welcoming and transparent classroom atmosphere. It is believed that by doing this, shy pupils will feel comfortable with making mistakes while learning. Students won't have to worry about their poor grammar and pronunciation in this method.

#### **The Solution to Solve the Anxiety**

It is possible to reduce pupils' speaking fear by encouraging them and fostering a relaxed atmosphere. Motivating the students and fostering a relaxed environment in the classroom is crucial for the instructor to observe, as these actions can reduce students' worry, boost their confidence, and promote their desire to communicate (Keramida, 2009).

#### **The Solution to Solve the Students' Lack of Motivation**

Teachers can address students' lack of motivation by engaging them in activities that increase their interest in the language, help them recognize its value, and help them become more self-assured. According to Aftat (2008), teachers should constantly help and motivate their pupils in addition to probing them with questions that shed light on the causes of their problems to boost their motivation. Encouraging pupils also makes them feel secure and accepted in their studies, thus doing this becomes crucial. Teachers can engage in activities that increase students' interest in English, help them become more self-assured, and raise their knowledge of the value of English to help them overcome their lack of motivation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The current study was conducted at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute's Department of English Language and Literature. Twenty male students in the third class participated in this investigation. A questionnaire was

employed as the research tool in this study. The purpose of the questionnaire was to evaluate the students' English-speaking difficulties. There are twelve items in the questionnaire given to Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute's EFL students.

### Data Collection

The researcher collected the data by distributing the questionnaire to the EFL students of Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute about challenges of EFL students in speaking English. Twelve questions make up the questionnaire, and each one is focused on the challenges EFL students face when speaking English. The researcher distributed the form and provided instructions on how to complete the questionnaire to junior English language and literature department students. More to the point, everyone had plenty of time to finish their task. After that, all distributed questionnaires were gathered.

### Data Analysis

This study examined students engaged in a test containing 12 questions. The researcher analyzed collected data through the SPSS program to explore the results of the study.

### Findings and Results

This part presents the results of the collected data in order to reach to the answers of research questions. Each of the findings is described in detail through tables. The following section presents details findings of the study. According to Table 1, eight participants, or 40% of the total, said that they strongly agreed with the statement, while the remaining eight participants, or 40% of the total, indicated that they agreed with the statement. Just one student (5%) selected the neutral option. Just

**Table 1:** I feel afraid to speak in English because my vocabulary is limited

Options	Participants' answers	Percentage
Agree	8	40%
Strongly agree	8	40%
Neutral	1	5%
Disagree	2	10%
Strongly disagree	1	5%

**Table 2:** I have difficulty to arrange the words in to sentences to speak English

Options	Participants' answers	Percentage
Agree	10	50%
Strongly agree	5	25%
Neutral	3	15%
Disagree	2	10%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

two students, or 10% of the total, disagreed with the statement, and one student, or 5%, severely disagreed. According to the results, Eighty percent of pupils agreed with the statement.

As shown in Table 2, fifteen students, or seventy-five percent of the total, stated that they had trouble stringing words together to form sentences, fifteen percent of them had no specific response, and ten percent of the participants said they had no trouble speaking in English. As a result, the majority of participants admitted that they found it challenging to put words together in sentences when speaking in English.

**Table 3:** I just want to speak when I think my grammar is correct

Options	Participants' answers	Percentage
Agree	9	45%
Strongly agree	3	15%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	6	30%
Strongly disagree	2	10%

According to Table 3, 8 students, or 40% of the participants, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the aforementioned statement, whereas the majority of respondents (60%) agreed and strongly agreed with it. In general, the majority of participants said that they only use English when they think their grammar is fine.

**Table 4:** I have habit of using mother tongue when speaking to avoid misunderstanding

Options	Participants' answers	Percentage
Agree	11	55%
Strongly agree	2	10%
Neutral	1	5%
Disagree	4	20%
Strongly disagree	2	10%

Table 4 shows that out of all the participants, 11 students (45%) said they speak in their native tongue and 2 of them highly agreed with the assertion. Two students (10%) strongly agreed with the statement, four students (20%) disagreed, and just one student selected neutral. The majority of the participants overall stated that they spoke in their native tongue due to misunderstandings. When pupils communicate in English, it shows a sort of bad tendency.

The result in Table 5 shows, 35% of respondents were shy while speaking English because of incorrect pronunciation and fortunately, 65% of participants claimed that they do not ashamed while speaking English. Having no shyness while speaking English, it can be students' positive point.



**Table 5:** I get ashamed to speak in English because I do not have good pronunciation

Options	Participants' answers	Percentage
Agree	4	20%
Strongly agree	3	15%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	8	40%
Strongly disagree	5	25%

**Table 6:** I don't want to make a mistake in speaking because I am afraid of getting correction

Options	Participants' Answers	Percentage
Agree	4	20%
Strongly agree	3	15%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	10	50%
Strongly disagree	3	15%

Table 6's data percentages indicate that, out of the 20 students who responded, only 3 (15%) of all the participants strongly agreed with the statement, and 4 (20%) agreed with it. Ten students (50%) indicated that they disagreed with the statement, and 3 (15%) strongly disagreed with it. More students disagreed with this question.

**Table 7:** I have less confidence to speak English because I think my friends will laugh at me when I speak

Options	Participants' answers	Percentage
Agree	9	45%
Strongly agree	2	10%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	6	30%
Strongly disagree	3	15%

The result in Table 7 has shown that 2 students (10%) and the other 9 students (45%) from all participants agree with the statement. But, 6 students (30%) answered that they disagreed and 3 students (15%) mentioned that they strongly disagreed with the statement. The result has shown that most of the participants think, their friend will laugh on them when they speak English.

The percentage on Table 8 represents that 5 students (25%) of respondents strongly agreed and other 11 students (55%) agreed with above sentence. Meanwhile, there is only 1 participant (5%) answered neutral. But, 2 pupils (10%) disagreed and 1 student (5%) strongly disagreed with the statement. The result has shown (80%) of all participants claimed that they forget everything while English speaking, that can be the negative point of students.

**Table 8:** When I start to speak in English, I get blank and forget everything suddenly

Options	Participants' answers	Percentage
Agree	11	55%
Strongly agree	5	25%
Neutral	1	5%
Disagree	2	10%
Strongly disagree	1	5%

Based on the table 9, three students (15%) strongly agreed and 3 students (15%) of all participants agreed with the statement. 11 students (55%) answered that they disagreed and 3 participants (15%) strongly disagreed with the statement. the result has shown that (70%) of participants do not nervous when they speak English with people.

**Table 9:** I feel nervous when I have to speak English with or in front of other people

Options	Participants' answers	Percentage
Agree	3	15%
Strongly agree	3	15%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	11	55%
Strongly disagree	3	15%

**Table 10:** I feel nervous when the teacher asks me to speak English

Options	Participants' answers	Percentage
Agree	1	5%
Strongly agree	0	0%
Neutral	1	5%
Disagree	9	45%
Strongly disagree	9	45%

Table 10's percentage indicates that just 5% of all the participants agreed, and none of them strongly agreed. In the meantime, just 1 student (5%) selected neutral. Nine students (45%) disagreed with the statement, and nine students (45%) strongly disagreed. Consequently, ninety percent of all participants said they don't become anxious when the teacher asks them to talk in English.

According to Table 11, percentages of data represent that there are 20 students' responses, 7 students (35%) strongly agreed and the other 10 students (50%) from all participants agreed with the sentence. There are 3 respondents (15%) disagreed. The result shows that most of the participants (85%) declared that they are not fluent in English; it means they have difficulties with fluency or they cannot speak fluently.

**Table 11:** I am not fluent in English when I speak in front of the class

Options	Participants' answers	Percentage
Agree	10	50%
Strongly agree	7	35%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	3	15%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

**Table 12:** I speak slowly because I always translate from mother tongue to English before speak English

Options	Participants' answers	Percentage
Agree	13	65%
Strongly agree	3	15%
Neutral	1	5%
Disagree	3	15%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

Based on Table 12, the three students that are (15%) of all the participants, strongly agreed and the other 13 students that are (65%) of all the respondents, agreed with the statement. Only 1 student (5%) chose neutral. There were 3 students (15%) disagreed with the statement. Unfortunately, (80%) of all participants declared that they first make sentences in their native tongue and then speak English. That is another negative point that EFL students face with.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The debate based on the study's findings is presented in this section. The study's outcome addressed the problem statement's solution, which sought to understand the challenges faced by Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute's EFL students when speaking English.

### Students Problems in Speaking English

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher has found some problems in speaking English at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute. The students' problems in speaking English consist of "vocabulary, grammar, using mother tongue, shame, confidence, nervousness, pronunciation and fluency." They were still having trouble pronouncing vowels and consonants correctly. They can become confused when pronouncing vowels and consonants in English due to the differences in pronunciation between their mother tongue and English. The fact that they hardly ever practice pronouncing English words with their tongues may contribute to their difficulty pronouncing them. Their tongues are therefore unable to enunciate English words appropriately.

The research results are in line with Fitriana's (2015) theory, which states that pronunciation bears equal importance to other components of learning a foreign language, such

as syntax or vocabulary. Pronunciation accuracy is crucial for improving speaking abilities. Additionally, there are strong links between pronunciation and other subjects like grammar and listening.

The researcher also discovered that speaking English has a vocabulary issue. Having a strong vocabulary is crucial for speaking English. We will never be able to speak English if we do not know its vocabulary. Many students learning English as a second language have trouble employing words and expressions when speaking, according to Khan (2005). As a result, in order to speak English fluently, you must first study and grasp the language's lexicon.

Furthermore, a lot of pupils avoid speaking English frequently due to grammatical errors. This is in line with finding of Normawati, *et al.* (2023) "the first difficulty deals with the aspect of grammar, which is caused by the differences between the students' first language and English, the language being learnt". Students frequently experience vertigo when speaking English due to the language's peculiarities. Learning English grammar is quite challenging. Grammar gets challenging when students don't acquire structural knowledge. The majority of students also frequently speak in their home tongue when speaking English, which causes pauses in speech since it takes time to form sentences. Therefore students should not think about mother tongue in speaking English.

The findings of this study indicate that students' fear of speaking in front of the class, because of their lack of fluency. When pupils speak in this situation, teachers should reprimand them generally rather than placing the blame squarely on them. They will be inspired to speak in front of the class as a result. They will nevertheless exude confidence. The findings of this investigation diverge from those of earlier investigations. According to the results of this study, students' major language issues are effect of mother tongue and pronunciation.

In conclusion, speaking issues among students, the pronunciation of English words is a challenge for many students since they don't often practice pronouncing words with their tongues. Second, a deficiency in vocabulary knowledge among pupils as opening a dictionary to commit words to memory is not common. For students to communicate in everyday English activities, grammar is another major issue.

### Novelty of Research

This study applies to fifth-semester EFL students of the English Department at Sar-e-pul Higher Education Institute in 2023 and aims to find out the difficulties of EFL students in speaking English. The findings of this study may be the same as previous studies, but based on the research area and time, it is different and limited from others. So, the findings of this research show the novelty of the study.

### Contribution to Knowledge

The article "The Difficulties of EFL Students in Speaking English at Sar-e-pul Higher Education Institute" mostly

focuses on difficulties or challenges of EFL students of Sar-e-pul Higher Education Institute in speaking the English language. This study will reveal the problems that the EFL students encounter with them and also represent the difficulties of EFL students in speaking English to their teachers. By identifying the problems the teachers try to do their best to solve the existing problems in speaking English. If teachers can't solve speaking challenges, students cannot share their ideas, thoughts, and problems and also the process of teaching will be not successful.

### Fulfillment of Research Gap

The researchers noticed during their careers and teaching the courses of EFL students at Sar-e-pul Higher Education Institute that the students face some difficulties and challenges in speaking English while discussions and communication during class activities. EFL students couldn't speak English very well and they preferred to talk in their mother tongue. So, the researchers tried to do a study on the difficulties of EFL students in speaking English at Sar-e-pul Higher Education Institute in order to answer the main questions as follows:

1. What are the difficulties of EFL students in speaking English at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute?
2. What are the reasons that EFL students have difficulty in speaking English at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute?

### CONCLUSION

This study has been done on the difficulties of EFL students in speaking English at Sar-e-Pul Higher Education Institute. Speaking is a crucial skill in a language, but nowadays many students have challenges in speaking English. The outcomes of this study reveal the four main problems EFL students encountered while speaking English. The first challenge has to do with grammar, which is influenced by the mother tongue. In general, people prefer their native tongue due to grammatical errors. The second aspect is difficulty with the pronunciation of English words; they cannot pronounce some words because of exceptions significant differences between the pronunciation system of their mother tongue and English. The third issue is related to the limitation of vocabulary, students have difficulty arranging words and mastering the meaning of new words in English. The last difficulty is the low confidence of students; most of the students face difficulties in speaking English that is because of less confidence or embarrassment.

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