
STUDENT RELATED FACTORS AFFECTING AFGHAN EFL UNDERGRADUATES' SPEAKING SKILL

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ABSTRACT

Speaking skill is one of the most important skills of the four language skills. It is believed as an indicator of competency in a language. Nazara (2011) considers speaking skill as an essential skill of the four language skills and suggests that EFL students have to master the speaking skill. Unfortunately, the majority of Afghan EFL undergraduates are facing issues in the speaking skill. Most of Afghan undergraduate EFL learners are good in reading and writing but they are not accurate and fluent in oral communication (Zia and Sulan, 2015). Hence, this study was conducted to particularly investigate student-related factors that affect students' speaking skill. A mixed-method approach was used for the study. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. The data collected through questionnaires was analyzed in SPSS whereas the data collected through interviews was thematically analysed. A total of 90 students were purposively selected and participated in the study. The findings show that psychological factors and weak background of English language in the part of students were some of the factors that impede students speaking skill. It is hoped that the findings of the current study will help teachers as well as educators to be attentive toward students-related responsibilities to reduce the factors that affect students' speaking skill.

Key Words: Afghan EFL undergraduates; speaking skill; student-related factors

ABSTRAK

Keterampilan berbicara merupakan salah satu keterampilan terpenting dari empat keterampilan berbahasa. Hal ini diyakini sebagai indikator kompetensi dalam suatu bahasa. Nazara (2011) menganggap keterampilan berbicara sebagai keterampilan penting dari empat keterampilan bahasa dan menyarankan bahwa siswa EFL harus menguasai keterampilan berbicara. Sayangnya, mayoritas sarjana EFL Afghanistan menghadapi masalah dalam keterampilan berbicara. Sebagian besar pelajar EFL sarjana Afghanistan pandai membaca dan menulis tetapi mereka tidak akurat dan lancar dalam komunikasi lisan (Zia dan Sulan, 2015). Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini dilakukan untuk secara khusus menyelidiki faktor-faktor yang berhubungan dengan siswa yang mempengaruhi keterampilan berbicara siswa. Pendekatan metode campuran digunakan untuk penelitian ini. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui kuesioner dan wawancara. Data yang dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dianalisis dengan SPSS sedangkan data yang dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dianalisis secara tematik. Sebanyak 90 siswa dipilih secara purposive dan berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa faktor psikologis dan latar belakang bahasa Inggris yang lemah di pihak siswa adalah beberapa faktor yang menghambat keterampilan berbicara siswa. Diharapkan temuan dari penelitian ini akan membantu guru serta pendidik untuk memperhatikan tanggung jawab terkait siswa untuk mengurangi faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi keterampilan berbicara siswa.

Kata Kunci: Sarjana EFL Afghanistan; keterampilan berbicara; faktor yang berhubungan dengan siswa

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is measured as one of the most essential skills of the four skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing- of a language. Generally, speaking skill is believed as an indicator of language competency i.e. someone who is good in speaking skill of a language is considered competent in that language. Speaking skill is the most important skill and one has to master in the speaking skill of a language while learning it as a foreign or second language because students are mostly jugged on their speaking skill in real life situation (Rao, 2019). This is supported by Hedge (2001), who state that it is speaking skill that helps in judging one's language competency and helps to make an impression of his/her ability in that particular language. This is further supported by Mazouzi (2013), who believes that learning a language means to be able to speak that language. Speaking skill is considered the most important and essential skill to be mastered in foreign language teaching/learning and this is why majority of ELT seminars and conferences are focusing on speaking skill and significant work has been constantly publishing as a course book, audios, and videos on speaking skill (Nazara, 2011).

However, Afghan EFL undergraduates are not up to the mark in this important language skill. Afghan EFL undergraduates are good in the reading, writing, and listening of English language, but they face issues while speaking. Most of the Afghan undergraduates face problems while they communicate in English and this is because of the anxiety they have while participating in classroom speaking activities (Zia and Sulan, 2015).

The aim of this study is to examine the possible student related factors that affect Afghan EFL undergraduates' speaking skill.

The objectives of the research are (1) to investigate students' attitudes towards English language, (2) to investigate psychological factors that hinders students' speaking skill, and (3) to investigate students' abilities and background knowledge of English language.

The research questions are (1) What are the students' attitudes towards English language? (2) What are the psychological factors that hinders students' speaking skill? (3) What are students' abilities and background knowledge of English language?

The role of students is equally important in learning and improving their speaking skill. However, there are

some issues on the part of the students that affect their speaking skill. The most significant issue on the part of students is the psychological factors. According to Cabe and Selatan (2012), psychological factors like fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, shyness, anxiety, and lack of motivation are some of the leading issues that hinder students' speaking skill. Another issue with the students might be their learning style, i.e., the method or approach the teacher uses in the speaking class may not be suitable for them. Learning styles refer to a different characteristic of the learners, i.e., visual, auditory, extrovert and introvert learners. Learning styles, in fact, categorize learners on the basis of their processing capabilities, which result in diverse learning necessities (Kuhn, 2009).

Speaking skill is to use a language for a purpose (Baker and Watsrup, 2003). To convey ideas, opinions, feelings, and thoughts to others by talking is speaking (Oxford Advanced Dictionary, 2015). A speaker has to use his psychological, physiological, and physical abilities to speak properly. Every skill of a language is essential, but speaking has got the status that it is always believed to be the indicator of competency in a language. It provides the speaker with the ability to share his/her ideas in various contexts (Chaney and Burk, 1998). This is backed by Huebner (1960), who states that it is speaking skill which one can use in daily life communication.

Studies have shown a number of factors that affect speaking skill. The major factors being identified are inadequate exposure to English language (Mezrigui, 2011; Shteivi and Hamuda, 2016 and Tuan and Mai, 2015). Similarly, psychological factor is also one of the main factors that hamper students speaking skill (Juhana, 2012). Students could not perform well in the speaking skill because they feel fear and pressure of friends lest they make any mistake which will surely be accompanied by friends laugh on them. This is supported by Afshar and Asakereh's study (2016), who found that the speaking skill of EFL students

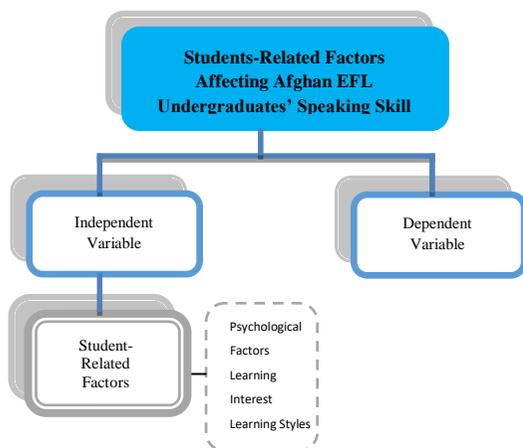


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

is greatly affected by psychological factor and it damages students' improvement in speaking skill.

Some factors are closely related to the students, which affect their speaking skill. One of the main factors that affect students' speaking skill is psychological factors. A study carried by Cabe and Selatan (2012) identified psychological factors that hinder students from speaking and they found that psychological factors like fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, shyness, speaking anxiety and lack of motivation were the main factors that affect students' in-class speaking of English. Savaşçı (2014) carried research to explore the factors affecting students' reluctance in oral communication and found the main factors as anxiety, the teacher being in the class, classroom conditions, students' fear of making a mistake while speaking, and some students who were not responding positively in the conversation activities.

A student can experience different psychological factors in the speaking class because of several factors, which may be the environment, the teacher, the activities, the setting or even him/herself. Of these, some are anxiety, lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, shyness, lack of interest, learning styles, and so on (Bourezzane,

2015). The psychological factors are presented in the following sections.

Many factors affect students' speaking skill, but anxiety is one of the factors that affects speaking skill to a great extent. Oxford (1999) explains that it is a learner's fear or apprehension that comes into being when they speak the language. It is a fact that every human being experiences anxiety mostly at the initial phase of their activities in various spheres and reduces in time (Bourezzane, 2015).

Int the same way, students' motivation plays a significant role in the success or failure of the process of learning, no matter if it is a second language or foreign language learning (Bourezzane, 2015). Researchers, as well as teachers, opine that it is the motivation that is the most crucial factor which affects the tempo of the success of the second or foreign language. (Dörnyei, 1998).

Self-confidence is another aspect that contributes to the success of students in speaking skill. Self-confidence, to put it simply, is the positive thinking and right image of oneself. In ESL and EFL confidence is one of the crucial elements. Self-confidence boosts a person to perform well in the language even with weak linguistic competence and feels free with no worry of being ridiculous or

any sort of negative thinking of making mistakes (Bourezzane, 2015).

The fear of making mistakes also affects students' speaking skill. To err is human, but sometimes the thought of making mistakes becomes dominant and leaves the learner with great trouble. It is a kind of pessimism, where the learner sees the negative angle in every stance. Previous research (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016; Juhana, 2012) have proven that the fear of making a mistake affect speaking skill.

Shyness is another factor that affects speaking skill. Manning and Ray (1993) claimed that shyness is not a state that permanently affects people. An example is that some people on one occasion are shy but not on the other. Similarly, some people are shy for most of the time.

Additionally, lack of interest is affecting students' performance. It is known that interest plays a vital role in the learning process. Most of the time learners are not interested in language learning, but they are compelled by others which results in failure in the learning of a specific language. According to Lehman and Schraw (2009), it is interest that increases motivation, engagement, and persistence. Therefore, it can be deduced that it is the lack of interest that reduces motivation, engagement,

and perseverance which are considered the most critical aspects of ESL/EFL learning practice.

Furthermore, every human being is born with innate learning styles. These learning styles make learners different from each other. Kuhn (2009) explains that "*learning styles are the distinctions among individuals' processing capabilities that result in very different learning necessities*" (p.575). Learning styles cover various form, i.e., learning preferences like visual vs auditory learners, personality traits like extroverts vs introverts learners and cognitive styles like field dependence vs field independence.

Similarly, learning preferences of students have a role in students' successes. Oxford (2001) defines learning preferences as physical, perceptual ways with which the student is at ease and makes clear four significant areas of learning preferences. The learner who is visual needs some stimuli with speaking activities and speaking activities without visual support will be very difficult for them and will decrease their chances of participation in such activities. On the other hand, those learners who are auditory are very much at ease with the simple classroom. It means that classroom interactions in role play, discussion,

and similar other activities motivate them. Additionally, audiotaped conversations and reading aloud conversations are helpful for their stimulation to participate in speaking classroom activities. In contrast, kinesthetic and tactile learners love those activities where they can move like role plays and language games. They would not like to just sit for an hour. According to Dörnyei (2005, p.141), "*the various sensory preferences do not eliminate each other, and some learners are both auditory and visual.*"

Likewise, students personality traits have a relationship with their speaking performance. Personality traits refer to the psychological tendencies and behaviours of an individual (Hampson, 2012). Previous research shows the relationship between learners' personality traits and their oral presentation in the intended language. Four categories of personality have been discovered and can be seen in the learning process of which extroversion and introversion are the most explored variables in personality traits. These two terms are opposite. In literature, there is no agreement about the effects of personality styles on speaking.

Moreover, affective learning strategies can help students to better perform in speaking activities. Affective

learning strategies are strategies which can be used by ESL/EFL learners in improving progress and especially increasing proficiency in speaking (Oxford, 2001). Even though, psychological factors which undoubtedly affect EFL undergraduates' speaking skill in classroom activities, students can overcome these problems with the help of effective learning strategies.

Finally, students have to help themselves and enjoy in the speaking activities. Hidayat and Herawati (2012) carried a study on factors influencing students' speaking fluency and found that the students were successful in speaking because they were enjoying the learning process. Secondly, they had great self-motivation and also, they had support from other people around them.

METHOD

Research Design

Mixed method approach has been used for the study to collect in depth data. Mixed method is used to see in detail the factors that hamper students' speaking skill. Mixed method research provides the researcher with the in-depth understanding of the research issue (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2016).

Research Site and Participants

The research has been conducted at the English department of Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani University. The university is located in the city of Asadabad, Kunar, Afghanistan. It is a public university and currently offers admission in 21 degree programs under five faculties. 190 students are currently studying their degree program at the department of English in four different levels (classes). So, the population of the study comprise of 190 students. Of 190 students, 50 students from senior level (third year undergraduate) and 40 students from junior level (fourth year undergraduate) are purposively selected as the sample of the study. *"In purposively sampling the researchers do not simply study whoever is available but rather use their judgment to select a sample that they believe, based on prior information, will provide the data they need"* (Fraenkel et al., 2016, p.101).

Data Collection and Analysis

Two instruments i.e. questionnaire and interviews were used as data collection instruments for the study.

Questionnaire is the broadly used data collection instrument in social science that provides the researcher with systematic data (Parajuli, 2004). The researcher has adopted the

questionnaire from Pal (2015) and then adapted to suit the study.

Interview as a data collection instrument provide the researcher with in-depth insights (Kendall, 2008). The data collected with interviews helps in the validation of data being collected through questionnaire. The interviews were conducted after data has been collected through questionnaires.

The quantitative data was analysed through SPSS version 20 and qualitative data was analysed thematically. Thematic analysis classifies data into related themes (patterns) from the data (Alhojailan, 2012). The privacy of the participants was kept by assigning a code name to each interviewer.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The Results of the Questionnaire

Students' attitudes toward English language

The following responses are about the students' attitudes toward the English language. The respondents were required to provide the information about the attitudes they hold toward English language. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Frequency and Percentage of Student Attitude Toward English Language

No	Items		Alternatives					Total
			Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	
1	I like to speak in English	Fre.	0	0	0	3	87	90
		%	0	0	0	3.3	96.7	100
2	I speak in English inside the classroom	Fre.	0	15	75	0	0	90
		%	0	16.7	83.3	0	0	100
3	I actively participate in the speaking class	Fre.	0	0	0	57	33	90
		%	0	0	0	63.3	36.7	100
4	I watch English TV programs	Fre.	56	31	3	0	0	90
		%	62.2	34.4	3.3	0	0	100
5	I listen to English radio programs	Fre.	0	78	12	0	0	90
		%	0	86.7	13.3	0	0	100
6	I speak English fluently with my English teacher	Fre.	49	41	0	0	0	90
		%	54.4	45.6	0	0	0	100
7	I speak English fluently with my classmates	Fre.	0	0	37	53	0	90
		%	0	0	41.1	58.9	0	100
8	I speak English fluently in front of the audience	Fre.	0	0	42	48	0	90
		%	0	0	46.7	53.3	0	100
9	I try to find out how to improve my English accent	Fre.	0	0	0	19	71	90
		%	0	0	0	21.1	78.9	100
10	I do not have negative attitude towards the culture of native speakers of English	Fre.	0	3	36	40	11	90
		%	0	3.3	40	44.4	12.2	100

According to Table 1, when the students were asked about their attitude towards speaking in English, the majority of them (87) replied that they like to speak in English (96.7%), while (3) students replied usually (3.3%). To question no.2, which asked the students about the frequency of speaking English inside the classroom, the majority of them (75) replied that they sometimes speak English inside the classroom (83.3%), while (15) students replied that they rarely speak English inside the classroom (16.7%). To question no. three which asked the students about their participation in

speaking class; the majority of the students (57) replied that they usually participate actively in the speaking class (63.3%), while (33) students replied that they always participate actively in the speaking class (36.7%).

Similarly, to question no.4 which asked the students about watching English programs on television; majority of the students (56) replied that they never watch English programs on television (62.2%), 31 students replied that they rarely watch English programs on television (34.3%), while 3 persons replied that they sometimes

watch English programs on television (3.3%). To question no.5 which asked the students about listening to English programs on the radio; the majority of the students (78) replied that rarely listen to English programs on the radio (86.7%), while (12) students replied that they sometimes listen to English programs on the radio (13.3%). To question no. 6 which asked the students about their fluency of English speaking with their teacher; the majority of them (49) replied that they never speak fluently with their English teacher (54.4%), while 41 students replied that they rarely speak fluently with their English teacher (45.6%). To question no. seven which asked the students about their English-speaking fluency with their classmates; the majority of them (53) replied that they usually speak fluent English with their classmates (58.9%), while 37 students replied that they sometimes speak fluent English with their classmates (41.1%).

In the same way, question no.8 which asked the students about their English speaking fluency in front of the audience shows that the majority of them (48) usually speak fluent English in front of the audience (53.3%), while 42 students replied that they sometimes speak fluent English in front of the audience (46.7%). To question no.9 which asked about the student's efforts to improve their English accent; the

majority of them (71) replied that they always try to improve their English accent (78.9%), while 19 students replied that they usually try to improve their English accent (21.1%). To question no.10 which asked about the attitude of the students towards the culture of native speakers of English; majority of the students (40) replied that they rarely have negative attitude towards the culture of the native speakers of English (44.4%), 36 students replied that they sometimes have negative attitudes towards the culture of the native speakers of English (40%), 11 students replied that they never have negative attitudes towards the culture of the native speakers, while 3 students replied that they usually have negative attitudes towards the culture of the native speakers (3.3%).

Psychological Factors that Hinder Students' Speaking Skill

According to table 2, question no.11 asked about the fear of the students while starting a conversation in English; the majority of them (73) replied that they are always afraid to start a conversation in English (81.1%), while 17 students replied that sometimes afraid of starting a conversation in English (18.9%). Question no.12 which asked the students about their feel of shyness while speaking in English; the majority

of them (48) replied that they sometimes feel shyness while speaking in English (53.3%), while 42 students replied that they rarely feel shyness while speaking in English (46.7%). Question no. 13 which asked about the confidence of the students when speaking English majority of the students (62) replied that they

sometimes feel confident when speaking English (68.9%), 24 students replied that usually feel confident when speaking English (26.7%), 3 students replied that they rarely feel confident while speaking in English (3.3%), while 1 student replied that he always feel confident when speaking in English (1.1%).

Table 2. The Frequency and Percentage of Psychological Factors That Hinder Students' Speaking Skill

No			Alternatives					Total
			Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	
11	My English Teacher: I am not afraid of starting a conversation in English	Fre. %	73 81.1	0 0	17 18.9	0 0	0 0	90 100
12	I do not feel shy when speaking English	Fre. %	0 0	0 0	48 53.3	42 46.7	0 0	90 100
13	I feel self-confident when speaking English	Fre. %	0 0	3 3.3	62 68.9	24 26.7	1 1.1	90 100
14	I do not fear making mistakes while speaking in English	Fre. %	2 2.2	67 74.4	17 18.9	4 4.4	0 0	90 100
15	I do not feel nervous while someone is speaking English to me	Fre. %	0 0	0 0	28 31.1	57 63.3	5 5.6	90 100
16	I do not get nervous when speaking English in class	Fre. %	5 5.6	62 68.9	19 21.1	4 4.4	0 0	90 100
17	I feel sure and relaxed when speaking English	Fre. %	31 34.4	54 60	5 5.6	0 0	0 0	90 100
18	I don't fear speaking English in public places	Fre. %	14 15.6	62 68.9	14 15.6	0 0	0 0	90 100
19	I am not in constant fear of forgetting my speech	Fre. %	1 1.1	15 16.7	66 73.3	8 8.9	0 0	90 100
20	I don't feel confused when I miss a word while speaking English in speaking class	Fre. %	0 0	13 14.4	65 72.2	11 12.2	1 1.1	90 100
21	I do not have fear speaking English with native speakers	Fre. %	13 14.4	76 84.4	0 0	1 1.1	0 0	90 100

Similarly, question no. 14 which asked the students about their fear of making mistakes while speaking in English; majority of the students (67) replied that they rarely feel fear of making mistakes while speaking in English (74.4%), 17 students replied that they sometimes feel fear of making a mistake while speaking in English (18.9%), 4 students replied that they usually feel fear while speaking in English (4.4%), while 2 students replied that they never feel fear of making mistakes while speaking in English (2.2%). Question no.15 which asked about the students' nervousness while someone is speaking English to them; majority of them (57) students replied that they rarely become nervous when someone is speaking English to them (63.3%), 28 students replied that they sometimes become nervous when someone is speaking in English to them (31.1%), while 5 students replied that they never feel nervous when someone is speaking English to them (5.6%).

Likewise, question no.16 which asked the students about their nervousness when speaking English in the class; the majority of the students (62) replied that they usually get nervous when speaking English in the class (68.9%), 19 students replied that they sometimes get nervous when speaking English in the class (21.1%), 5 students replied that they always get

nervous when speaking English in the class (5.6%), while 4 students replied that they rarely get nervous when speaking English in the class (4.4%). Question no.17 which asked about the feeling of sureness and relaxation while speaking English; the majority of the students (54) replied that they rarely feel sure and relaxed when speaking English (60%), 31 students replied that they never feel sure and relaxed when speaking English (34.4%), while 5 students replied that they sometimes feel sure and relaxed when speaking English (5.6%). Question no. 18 which asked the students about their fear when speaking in public places; the majority of the students (62) replied that usually feel fear when speaking English in public places (68.9%), 14 students replied that they sometimes feel fear when speaking English in public places (15.6%), while 14 students replied that they always feel fear when speaking English in public places (15.6%). Question no.19 which asked the students about their fear of forgetting speech; the majority of the students (66) students replied that they sometimes feel fear of forgetting speech (73.3%), 15 students replied that usually feel fear of forgetting speech (16.7%), 8 students replied that they rarely feel fear of forgetting speech (8.9%), while 1 student replied that he always feel fear of forgetting the speech (1.1%).

Similarly, question no. 20 which asked about the confusion of the students when they miss a word while speaking in English speaking class; the majority of the students (65) replied that they sometimes feel confused when they miss a word while speaking English in speaking class (72.2%), 13 students replied that they usually feel confused when they miss a word while speaking English in speaking class (14.4%), 11 students replied that they rarely feel confused when they miss a word while speaking English in speaking class (12.2%), while 1 student replied that he never feel confused when speaking English in speaking class (1.1%). Question no.21 which asked about the fear of the students when speaking to native speakers; the majority of the students (76) replied that they usually feel fear when speaking to native speakers (84.4%), 13 students replied that they always feel fear when speaking to native speakers (14.4 %), while 1 student replied that he rarely feel fear when speaking to native speakers (1.1%).

Students' Abilities and Background Knowledge of English Language

According to table 3, question no. 22 asked about expressing a point of view in English without Pashto translation; the majority of the students

(53) replied that they sometimes could express their point of view in English without Pashto translation (58.9%), while 37 students replied that they rarely express their point of view in English without Pashto translation (41.1%). Question no.23 which asked about the students preference of speaking in their mother tongue; the majority of the students (49) replied that usually prefer mother tongue for speaking (54.4%), 26 students replied that they always prefer their mother tongue for speaking (28.9%), 14 students replied that they sometimes prefer to mother tongue for speaking (15.6%), while (1) student replied that he rarely prefer to speak in mother tongue (1.1%).

Question no.24 asked about the students comprehension of what the other person is saying in English; the majority of the students (54) replied that they usually find it easy to comprehend what the other person is saying in English (60%), 35 students replied that they always find it easy to comprehend what the other person is saying in English (38.9%), while 1 student replied that he sometimes find it easy to comprehend what the other person is saying in English (1.1%). Question no.25 which asked the students about their knowledge of grammar to construct errors free sentences when speaking English; the

majority of the students (44) replied that they sometimes construct errors free sentences when speaking English (48.9%), 35 students replied that rarely construct errors free sentences when speaking English (38.9%), 9 students

replied that they usually construct errors free sentences when speaking English (10%), while 2 students replied that they always construct errors free sentences when speaking English (2.2%).

Table 3. The Frequency and Percentage of Student's Abilities and Background Knowledge of English Language

No	Items		Alternatives					Total
			Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	
22	I can express my point of view in English without Pashto translation	Fre. %	0 0	37 41.1	53 58.9	0 0	0 0	90 100
23	I do not prefer to speak in my mother tongue	Fre. %	26 28.9	49 54.4	14 15.6	1 1.1	0 0	90 100
24	I find it easy to comprehend what the other person is saying in English	Fre. %	0 0	0 0	1 1.1	54 60	35 38.9	90 100
25	I have good knowledge of English grammar that helps me to construct errors free sentences when speaking English	Fre. %	0 0	35 38.9	44 48.9	9 10	2 2.2	90 100
26	I have good knowledge of English vocabulary that can let me easily express my ideas when speaking English	Fre. %	0 0	0 0	16 17.8	45 50	29 32.2	90 100
27	I do not make a lot of pauses when I speak in English	Fre. %	0 0	60 66.7	25 27.8	5 5.6	0 0	90 100
28	When I am speaking in English, I do not first construct my message in my mother tongue and then to translate it into English word-by-word	Fre. %	38 42.2	52 57.8	0 0	0 0	0 0	90 100

Likewise, question no.26 which asked students about their knowledge of English vocabulary that can let them

easily express their ideas when speaking English; the majority of the students (45) replied that usually they

have vocabulary that can easily let them to easily express their ideas when speaking English (50%), 29 students replied that always have vocabulary that can let them to easily express their ideas when speaking English (32.2%), while 16 students replied that sometimes have vocabulary that can let them to easily express their ideas when speaking English (17.8%). Question no. 27 which asked about the pauses students make when speaking in English; the majority of the students (60) replied that they usually make pauses when speaking in English (66.7%), 25 students replied that they sometimes make pauses when speaking in English (27.8%), while 5 students replied that they rarely make pauses when speaking in English (5.6%). Question no.28 which asked the students about the construction of message in mother tongue and then translating it into English word-by-word; the majority of the students (52) replied that they usually construct the message in their mother tongue and then translates it into English word by word (57.8%), while 38 student replied that they always construct their message in their mother tongue and then translates it into English word by word (42.2%).

The Findings of the Interviews

The Students' Attitudes towards English Speaking Class

Pertaining to the students' attitudes towards the speaking class; the majority (Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S3, Y3S4, Y3S5, Y4S1, Y4S3, Y4S4) of the students replied that they like their English-speaking class. One student (Y4S1) elaborated that when he enrolled in the university, he felt fear and shyness in the speaking class and he explained that he felt that way because he thought that the teacher will bring him to the front of the class but as they did a few practical activities in the speaking class, now he feels very comfortable in the speaking class and is very interested in the speaking class as compared to other classes. He likes and wishes to speak for more extended time in the class. The majority of the students said that they like the English-speaking class because they want to practice their vocabulary in the speaking class. They are interested in the speaking class as it seems the only class to all the students that will improve their English speaking. The following excerpts are some of the examples of learners' responses to the question regarding their attitudes towards the speaking class and the students' stances towards it.

Y3S3: "I like my **speaking class**, and I myself have chosen this field. I like to learn and speak the English language as it is an international language and is spoken everywhere". (Line 17-19)

Y4S3: "I feel very good in my **speaking class**. It is an international language but regardless of the factor whether a language is international or not but one should feel good about it otherwise one will not be able to learn it". (line 23-25)

The Psychological Factors

Regarding their confidence, while speaking in English; the students' responses were entirely different from each other. Some students said that they are confident while others said that they are not as confident as it should be for an English major student. They explained their stance that they have neither spoke nor listen to native speakers, so while speaking in English, they usually think of their vocabulary and sentences that whether they are right or wrong. They are not sure of their vocabulary and pronunciation that is why they are not so confident when speaking in English. The following excerpts are some of the examples of learners' responses to the question regarding their confidence while

speaking in English and the students' stances towards it.

Y3S4: "I feel very **confident** when I speak in English. I have studied English for three years in the university, in the courses and also taught English in various courses that is why I am **confident** in my English". (Line 22-24)

Y4S4: "I should say my **confidence** level is about 30% while I speak English. Because we do not have strong background in English and also it is not our own language". (Line 23-25)

Relating to the fear of making mistakes while speaking in English; the majority (Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S3, Y3S5, Y4S1, Y4S2, Y4S5) of students said that they feel the fear of making mistakes while speaking in English. They explained that they feel the fear of making mistakes because it is not their native language and they never have the chance to listen or speak to a native speaker. They are unsure about their English vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar and that is why every time they speak English, they feel the fear of making mistakes. They are afraid because if they make any mistake people will laugh at them. The following excerpts are some of the examples of learners' responses to the question regarding their confidence

while speaking in English and the students' stances towards it.

Y3S5: "Usually, I have the **fear of making mistakes** in speaking English. I feel fear because if we make mistakes people will laugh on us". (Line 23-24)

Y4S5: "Yes, I feel a little bit of **fear of making mistakes**. We feel fear because it is not our mother tongue and when one talk in the language of others, definitely they will feel the **fear of making mistakes**". (Line 28-30)

Discussion

The primary objective of the study is to carefully examine the factors that affect the students' speaking skill of Afghan universities especially, at the University of Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani, Kunar. The study investigated the factors that affect students speaking skill in the part of the students.

Three research questions were used as the basis for this study: 1) what are the attitudes of Afghan EFL undergraduates toward English language? 2) what are the psychological factors that hinder Afghan EFL undergraduates speaking skill? 3) what are the abilities and background knowledge of Afghan EFL undergraduates? A questionnaire and interview were the primary tools in

which data were collected. The data of questionnaire was categorized and analysed quantitatively using SPSS version 20 and the data collected through interviews was qualitatively analysed by giving the thematic description. The simple narrative description was used for the analysis. Based on the research questions the discussion of research finding is presented next.

Students' Attitudes Toward English Language

The first research question in this study is intended to explore the attitudes of Afghan EFL undergraduates toward English Language. The attitudes of Afghan EFL undergraduates were identified from the students' responses to the questionnaire and interview protocol. The findings are discussed from the perspective of students' responses.

Based on the findings presented in Table 1 the students have a positive attitude towards learning and speaking English. It was also proven by their interview responses that they are very motivated to learn and speak English.

Y3S3: "I like my speaking class, and I myself have chosen this field. I like to learn and speak the English language as it is an international

language and is spoken everywhere". (Line 17-19)

Y4S3: "I feel very good in my speaking class. It is an international language but regardless of the factor whether a language is international or not but one should feel good about it otherwise one will not be able to learn it". (Line 23-25)

According to Bourezzane (2015), motivation plays a significant role in the success or failure of the process of learning, no matter if it is second language or foreign language learning. However, Table 1 (in section 4) also revealed that students sometimes speak English inside the classroom. Similarly, according to Balasree et al., (2017), listening to English radio and TV plays a vital role in improving listening skill and so speaking skill. However, the student's responses revealed that they rarely watch English TV and listen to radio programs.

Student Psychological Factors

Based on the finding presented in Table 2, the students are usually afraid of English conversations. They feel shy and do not feel confident when speaking in English. They usually have a fear of making mistakes while speaking in English. Similarly, they usually feel nervous and feel fear when

speaking English in class and public places. These statements were also supported by their interview responses.

Y4S4: I should say my confidence level is about 30% while I speak English. Because we do not have a strong background in English and also it is not our own language. (Line 23-25)

Y3S5: Usually, I have a fear of making mistakes in speaking English. I feel fear because if we make mistakes, people will laugh at us. (Line 23-24)

Y4S5: Yes, I feel a little bit of fear of making mistakes. We feel fear because it is not our mother tongue and when one talk in the language of others, undoubtedly they will feel the fear of making mistakes. (Line 28-30)

This was also found by Juhana (2012) that numerous psychological factors prevent students from speaking fluently in the English class. Juhana (2012) adds that the most notable factors are a fear of mistake which is caused by the other students' presence. The students think that friends will laugh at them if they make any mistake. Similarly, anxiety and shyness are the other factors that hinder one's speaking skill. In the context of Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani University

(SJAUK), the students also feel shy, feel nervous and are not confident while speaking in English.

There are certain reasons that make Afghan students worried and discouraged while speaking in English. The students do not have a strong background in English language at the school level. At the school level, they are not required to communicate in the English language. So, when students reach the university level where they are required to converse in speaking classes, they face several difficulties in the English language. Their lack of practice and contact with the English language at the school level resulted in them feeling shy and unconfident while speaking in English.

Students' Abilities and Background Knowledge

The findings in table 3 show that the students usually understand what others say in English and their English vocabulary is satisfactory as they can comprehend other's messages as well as express their ideas when speaking in English. On the other hand, their knowledge of grammar is not satisfactory, and they can rarely construct errors free sentences when speaking in English. According to Richards and Renandya (2008), grammar not only helps in mastering spoken language and making correct

sentences, but it also enables the learner to manipulate structures and understand suitable grammatical form for the context. Foppoli (2009) states that it is grammar that enables students to structure and organize their messages and ideas across. It means that it is difficult to adequately convey ideas without enough command of the grammar patterns and structures. In the case of students in SJAUK, they usually construct their message in their mother tongue first and then translate it into English verbatim (word-by-word). This tends to interrupt the fluency of the utterance and is shown by the many pauses that they made while speaking English.

The Afghans faced an enormous amount of problems in the past. The three-decade of war has ruined every sector of life including education. English is not the first or second language in Afghanistan, and its status is only of a foreign language. The students come to university without having a strong background in the English language at schools. As the use of English at school level is very limited.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

This study has attempted to explore the students-related factors that affect Afghan EFL undergraduates'

speaking skill. To conclude, what have been analysed, presented, and discussed in this study are presented next.

The role of students in learning speaking is also of paramount importance. It is true that the teacher and the environment help the students in learning speaking but the student, himself/herself, is also the focal point in learning speaking. The study showed that students' attitudes were favorable towards the English language. However, they were strongly affected by psychological factors. They were afraid to start a conversation in English. They felt shy and did not feel confident when speaking in English. They were afraid of making mistakes while speaking in English and felt nervous and were uncomfortable when speaking English in class and public places. Similarly, their knowledge of grammar was not satisfactory, and they rarely could construct error-free sentences when speaking English. The students first construct their message in their mother tongue and then translate it into English word-by-word and usually make lots of pauses when speaking in English. These were some of the factors that affected their speaking skill.

The students' weak background of English language at the school level

ultimately causes an issue for them at the university level. At the school level, the students did not converse enough in the English language but at the university level they are required to speak in English language and this sudden change from native language to English language causes the students to feel worried, anxious, and shy.

Based on the conclusion of discussions on findings, the following recommendations are reached. Students should be responsible for improving their speaking skill. They should actively participate in the classroom speaking activities provided by the teacher. They should actively participate in the pair work, group work, role-plays, dialogues, discussions, and other classroom activities provided by their teacher to improve their speaking skill. In addition, they should communicate with people outside the classroom to practice their English. They should make their plans for learning and practice new vocabulary by listening to English radio or TV programs. They ought to use and practice whatever they have learned in the classroom both inside and outside of the class to improve their confidence.

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