



RESEARCH PAPER

Analysis of Self-Confidence and Lack of Exposure on English Speaking Skills of EFL Learners: A Study at BS Level

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ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the impact of self-confidence, lack of exposure, and motivational factors on the speaking skills of BS-English students at several universities in Pakistan. It explores how these factors affect communication abilities, with a focus on understanding their role and evaluating teaching methods to enhance speaking skills. The research employs a quantitative design, using SPSS software for analysis. Three hundred participants completed a questionnaire featuring closed-ended questions and qualitative inquiries. Findings indicate that learners' reluctance to speak English outside the classroom, coupled with limited grammar knowledge, impedes their communication skills. The discussion emphasizes the importance of practical language use and identifies various challenges, including vocabulary proficiency, grammar issues, and pronunciation difficulties. Effective strategies such as exposure, accurate language models, vocabulary development, and addressing psychological barriers are highlighted. Motivational factors are found to positively impact speaking skills, with high motivation correlating with increased engagement and improved language abilities.

KEYWORDS Communication Skills, Motivational Factors, Practical Language, Pronunciation Difficulties, Teaching Methods

Introduction

Language serves as the primary mode of human communication, enabling the exchange of ideas, information, and emotions. Effective communication hinges on the precise delivery of messages, ensuring clarity and understanding between speakers and receivers. Speaking English entails more than mere utterance; it involves knowing what, where, and how to articulate ideas. Proficiency in speaking is pivotal for success in diverse contexts, with demand for such skills on the rise. Learners often face difficulty due to differences in their mother tongues, necessitating confidence to navigate real-life communication.

Teaching speaking skills to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners is complex, considering their diverse backgrounds and ages. Teachers must facilitate comfortable and fluent expression, focusing on linguistic aspects like vocabulary, grammar, and fluency, as well as non-linguistic aspects such as motivation and self-confidence. Effective speaking involves encoding messages fluently for receivers to decode accurately, emphasizing interactive communication in real-life situations.

Self-confidence, defined as "firm trust" by Murray (2006), is essential for language learning. It empowers learners to pursue their goals without hesitation. Low self-confidence creates barriers in language acquisition and goal achievement. Ozbey (in Ibrahim, 2016) categorizes self-confidence into intrinsic and extrinsic types, emphasizing

its role in self-awareness and motivation. High self-confidence is crucial for English speaking proficiency. Confidence enables learners to communicate without fear, facilitating language acquisition and societal integration. Teachers play a vital role in motivating students to overcome low self-confidence. Self-confidence and motivation are interlinked affective factors driving language learning. Motivation, derived from the Latin "to move," propels learners toward their goals. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations influence learners' pursuit of language proficiency.

Literature Review

There is no language speaking in this present age as much as English language is speaking. English language becomes a medium of communication in today's world that is why it is known as global language. The importance of English language prominently for the sake of speaking is undeniable. Davies and Pearse, (2000) states that the use of English language exactly and correctly in daily conversation according to the situation is the chief target of teaching and learning second languages. Mastering English communication opens doors to job opportunities, university admissions, and career advancement, making it a valuable skill for learners.

Lack of speaking practice impedes confidence development. Regular practice is essential for confidence and motivation enhancement. Learners with high motivation can boost their self-confidence, crucial for effective communication. Mastering speaking skills requires time and practice. Learners must grasp vocabulary, grammar, and contextual word usage. Despite years of English instruction, students often struggle with speaking proficiency, affecting various aspects of their lives. Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering confidence for effective communication. Confidence and consistent practice are key to developing speaking proficiency. High anxiety levels hinder learning performance, emphasizing the importance of confidence-building strategies. Language Speaking English poses challenges for learners due to fear of making mistakes, confusing grammar rules, and difficulties in pronunciation. Additionally, inadequate vocabulary, grammar knowledge, and lack of practice hinder speaking proficiency. Lack of understanding leads to demotivation, impacting learners' motivation levels.

Strategies to improve English speaking include focusing on accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation. Pronunciation is crucial for conveying meaning, while fluency entails clear and uninterrupted communication. Accuracy ensures grammatical correctness and appropriateness in speech. Balancing fluency and accuracy, maintaining coherence, and adapting language to the context are essential aspects of effective speaking. EFL learners face challenges in speaking English due to limited practice and lack of confidence. Self-confidence, coupled with practice, is crucial for enhancing speaking skills. Increased practice and motivation, facilitated by teachers, can improve learners' confidence and proficiency in English communication.

Speaking Skills

Prominent scholars have put forth several definitions for speaking. Speaking, according to Cameron (2001), is the active use of language to convey meanings in a way that allows others to understand you. According to Bygate (2001) and Thornbury (2005), communication is interactive; hence, L2 learners should focus on developing their ability to manage this engagement. Furthermore, according to Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983), speaking involves a simultaneous and immediate performance of connected mental and bodily activities. They view speaking as a sophisticated ability including an understanding of vocabulary, grammar, sounds, and subsystems of language culture.

According to Cameron (2001), Speaking is the active expression of meanings in a foreign language, demanding attention to linguistic nuances for effective communication. To convey thoughts accurately, a speaker must carefully choose words, grammar, and organize ideas to ensure understanding by the audience speaking, or oral communication, is defined by Thornberry (2005) as an activity involving two or more individuals in which hearers and speakers must respond quickly to what they hear and contribute at a high level. Each person enters the conversation with a goal or aim in mind. According to Chaney (1998), as cited by Kayi (2006), speaking is the process of creating and conveying meaning in a range of circumstances by utilising both verbal and nonverbal signals. Furthermore, they won't have any trouble interacting and communicating with people wherever they go when they travel (Gard & Gautam, 2015).

English-speaking skills

Speaking is a crucial skill emphasized by Ur (2012), vital for fluency in English through effective vocabulary and word arrangement (Bygate, 2009). Challenges for EFL learners include applying grammar and vocabulary appropriately (Ur, 2000; Bygate, 2009). Manurung (2015) notes difficulties in accurate grammatical production due to native language grammar differences. Limited practice opportunities contribute to students' speaking challenges in English (Castaneda, 2019; Essien, 2016). The process of speaking involves creative discourse and precise word selection for effective communication (Brown, 2004). Communication, as defined by Seiler & Beall (2005), Sulaiman Masri (1997), and others, is a two-way interchange of spoken and written words with a specific purpose. Positive environments are essential for university students to enhance communication skills (Ihmeideh et al., 2010; Cleland et al., 2005).

Effective communication involves accurate message interpretation (Nurashiqin Najmuddin, 2010). Verbal and non-verbal communication impact language skills, with conversational activities aiding enhancement (Harlak et al., 2008). Suchdeva (2011) notes the challenge in learning skills, with listening and speaking being fundamental in English acquisition. Effective communication is crucial for success in a globalized world, with precise communication skills essential for goal achievement (Rao, 2019). English's global prominence poses challenges in learning, requiring extensive practice and encountering various factors (Al-Jadidi, 2009). The importance of language as a key tool for success is highlighted (Suchdeva, 2011), and Rao (2019) emphasizes the universal necessity of communication. Approximately 670 million people worldwide have native or near-native English proficiency (Rao, 2019).

Components of speaking skills

Pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and understanding are the five components of speaking ability, according to Harris (1994). The researcher would go over each thing one by one for this reason.

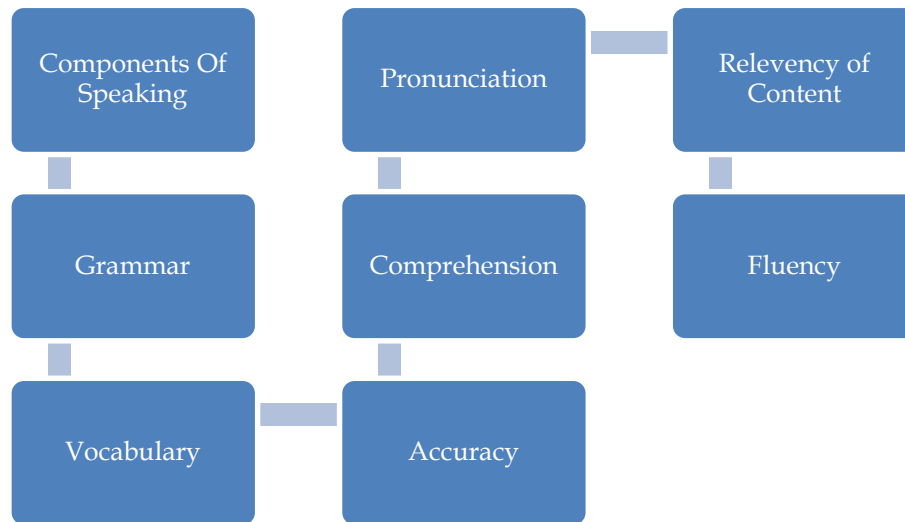


Figure No. 01. Five Components of Speaking Ability

According to Brown (2004), speaking mastery is the world's most crucial skill, essential for communication in every field. For EFL learners, key components include grammar, comprehension fluency, pronunciation, and a rich vocabulary. Weir (2008) emphasizes accuracy, fluency, content relevance, and intelligibility as essential components of speaking skills.

Research Methodology

The research employs a mixed-method approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods. This methodological triangulation enhances the depth and validity of the investigation, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of students' self-confidence levels and speaking skill challenges.

Research Instruments

A questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions is used to gather data on self-confidence, practice levels, and opinions of participants. The questionnaire ensures efficient and reliable data collection, facilitating statistical analysis and qualitative exploration.

Research Site

Data is collected from BS English departments at two universities and one college in Rahim Yar Khan District, facilitating easy access to participants and ensuring relevance to the study's objectives.

Sampling and Population

The sample includes 300 BS English students from the selected institutions, employing basic random sampling to ensure equal representation. Participants come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of speaking skill challenges.

Data Collection

Both closed and open-ended questions are used in the questionnaire, administered collectively during class sessions. Participants are guided through the questionnaire to ensure clarity and understanding of the research process. Data collection

methods involve qualitative observations and quantitative assessments, with SPSS utilized for analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data will be analyzed using SPSS software for quantitative aspects, while qualitative responses to open-ended questions will be manually analyzed. The mixed-methods approach involves quantitative data analysis to ensure a comprehensive interpretation of findings. Quantitative Analysis Statistical tests will be computed using SPSS Statistics version 20.0.

Validity and Reliability

Validity testing of the questionnaire was conducted, resulting in a validity value of 0.65, ensuring that the instrument measures what it claims to measure.

Ethical Considerations

All the ethical limitations were taken into consideration while conducting this research. The cultural and ethical beliefs of all the participants were given highest priority during this study.

Results and Discussion

In order to collect the data and derive the findings regarding the speaking performance of BS English students, I developed a questionnaire that contained 40 quantitative questions and 3 qualitative questions. On the basis of the information obtained, the results have been derived. The information obtained from the questionnaire was analysed descriptively with the help of tables under the following headings:

Holistic Analysis of Speaking Performance

In order to find out the speaking performance of students, I took responses from three different institutes in the form of a questionnaire in which respondents gave their views and filled out the questionnaire freely. Each response was marked by observing four different language items: vocabulary, grammar, content, and pronunciation.

Table 1
Speaking in English in Classroom

SR. no.	GENDER	Frequency/percentage									
		A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Male	62	59	27	25.7	8	7.6	4	3.8	4	3.8
2	Female	104	53.3	48	24.6	34	17.4	9	4.6	0	0
3	Total	166	54.2	75	24.5	42	13.7	13	4.2	4	1.3

The table presents responses to statements categorized by agreement levels (A, SA, N, DA, SDA) across genders. Among males, 59% agreed and 25.7% strongly agreed, while 7.6% were neutral, and 3.8% each disagreed or strongly disagreed. Females exhibited a similar pattern with 53.3% agreeing and 24.6% strongly agreeing, 17.4% neutral, and 4.6% disagreeing. Overall, 54.2% of respondents agreed, 24.5% strongly agreed, 13.7% were neutral, and 4.2% disagreed, with 1.3% strongly disagreeing. Females had a higher total agreement percentage (77.9%) compared to males (84.7%). The absence of Strongly Disagree responses in females suggests higher overall agreement compared to males.

Table 2
English Language Speaker

SR. no.	GENDER	Frequency/percentage									
		A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Male	57	54.3	17	16.2	21	20	9	8.6	1	1
2	Female	83	42.6	24	12.3	64	32.8	17	8.7	7	3.6
3	Total	140	45.8	41	13.4	85	27.8	26	8.5	8	2.6

Males predominantly agreed with 54.3% and strongly agreed with 16.2%, while 20% were neutral, and 8.6% and 1% disagreed or strongly disagreed, respectively. Females showed a lower overall agreement at 42.6%, with 12.3% strongly agreeing, 32.8% being neutral, and 8.7% and 3.6% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. The total agreement rate was 45.8%, with 13.4% strongly agreeing, 27.8% neutral, and 8.5% and 2.6% in disagreement or strong disagreement. Males had a higher combined agreement percentage (70.5%) compared to females (55.2%). Females had a more significant percentage in the neutral category (32.8%) compared to males (20%). The data suggests gender differences in agreement levels, with males generally showing higher agreement and a lower proportion of neutral responses compared to

Table 3
Understanding the Lectures Delivered in English

SR. no.	GENDER	Frequency/percentage									
		A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Male	56	53.3	38	36.2	8	7.6	2	1.9	1	1
2	Female	88	45.1	72	36.9	16	8.2	12	6.2	7	3.6
3	Total	144	47.1	110	35.9	24	7.8	14	4.6	8	2.6

Males exhibited higher agreement levels with 53.3% agreeing and 36.2% strongly agreeing, while 7.6% were neutral, and only 1.9% and 1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Females had a slightly lower overall agreement at 45.1%, with 36.9% strongly agreeing, 8.2% being neutral, and 6.2% and 3.6% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. The data indicates potential gender discrimination with differences in agreement levels, with males generally showing higher agreement than females across the categories.

Table 4
Fluently in Front of Other

SR. no.	GENDER	Frequency/percentage									
		A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Male	46	43.8	18	17.1	24	22.9	55	14.3	1	1.0
2	Female	64	32.8	18	19.2	48	22.6	54	27.7	11	5.6
3	Total	110	35.9	36	11.8	72	23.5	69	22.5	12	3.9

Males displayed higher agreement levels, with 43.8% agreeing and 17.1% strongly agreeing, while 22.9% were neutral, and 14.3% and 1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Females showed a lower overall agreement at 32.8%, with 19.2% strongly agreeing, 22.6% being neutral, and 27.7% and 5.6% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. The total agreement rate was 35.9%, with 11.8% strongly agreeing, 23.5% neutral, and 22.5% and 3.9% in disagreement or strong disagreement. Males had a higher combined agreement percentage (61.9%) compared to females (52.0%). The data suggests potential gender discrimination, with differences in agreement levels, where males generally showed higher agreement than females across the categories.

Table 5
Others are Better Speakers

SR. no.	GENDER	Frequency/percentage									
		A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Male	45	42.9	14	13.3	19	18.1	15	14.3	11	10.5
2	Female	80	41	34	17.4	35	17.9	33	16.9	13	6.7
3	Total	125	40.8	48	15.7	54	17.6	48	15.7	24	7.8

Males displayed a mixed response, with 42.9% agreeing, 13.3% strongly agreeing, 18.1% being neutral, and 14.3% and 10.5% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. Females showed a similar trend with 41% agreeing, 17.4% strongly agreeing, 17.9% being neutral, and 16.9% and 6.7% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. The total agreement rate was 40.8%, with 15.7% strongly agreeing, 17.6% neutral, and 15.7% and 7.8% in disagreement or strong disagreement. Males had a slightly higher combined agreement percentage (56.2%) compared to females (58.4%). The data suggests a nuanced picture of gender differences, with both males and females exhibiting varied levels of agreement across the categories. While the overall agreement rates are comparable, further analysis is needed to understand the specific nuances of gender discrimination in responses.

Table 6
Fear of Being Ridiculed

SR. no.	GENDER	Frequency/percentage									
		A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Male	31	29.5	20	19	8	7.6	24	22.9	22	21
2	Female	62	31.8	29	14.9	29	14.9	52	26.7	23	11.8
3	Total	93	30.4	49	16	37	12.1	76	24.8	45	14.7

Males had diverse responses, with 29.5% agreeing, 19% strongly agreeing, 7.6% being neutral, and 22.9% and 21% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. Females also showed a varied pattern, with 31.8% agreeing, 14.9% strongly agreeing, 14.9% being neutral, and 26.7% and 11.8% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. The data implies gender-related disparities in agreement levels, with both genders exhibiting a range of responses. Further investigation is needed to understand the underlying factors contributing to these differences in the context of gender discrimination.

Table 7
Nervous Habits

SR. no.	GENDER	Frequency/percentage									
		A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Male	38	36.2	28	26.7	10	9.5	19	18.1	10	9.5
2	Female	87	44.6	43	22.1	27	13.8	28	14.4	10	5.1
3	Total	125	40.8	71	23.2	37	12.1	47	15.4	20	6.5

Males demonstrated a diverse range of responses, with 36.2% agreeing, 26.7% strongly agreeing, 9.5% being neutral, and 18.1% and 9.5% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. Females displayed a similar pattern, with 44.6% agreeing, 22.1% strongly agreeing, 13.8% being neutral, and 14.4% and 5.1% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. The data suggests a moderate gender variable influence on agreement levels, with similarities in combined agreement percentages. Further analysis may uncover specific factors contributing to the observed variations in agreement within each gender category.

Table 8
Fear of Making Mistakes

SR. no.	GENDER	Frequency/percentage									
		A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Male	48	45.7	22	21	12	11.4	14	13.3	9	8.6
2	Female	102	52.3	47	24.1	25	12.8	13	6.7	8	4.1
3	Total	150	49	69	22.5	37	12.1	27	8.8	17	5.6

Males presented varied responses, with 45.7% agreeing, 21% strongly agreeing, 11.4% being neutral, and 13.3% and 8.6% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. Females displayed a similar pattern, with 52.3% agreeing, 24.1% strongly agreeing, 12.8% being neutral, and 6.7% and 4.1% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. The total agreement rate was 49%, with 22.5% strongly agreeing, 12.1% neutral, and 8.8% and 5.6% in disagreement or strong disagreement. Females had a slightly higher combined agreement percentage (76.4%) compared to males (75.7%). Both genders showed a substantial level of agreement, with females having a marginally higher overall agreement rate. The data suggests a relatively minimal gender difference, with both males and females generally aligning in their responses across the categories.

Table 9
Difficulty to Express in English

SR. no.	GENDER	Frequency/percentage									
		A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Male	52	49.5	18	17.1	13	12.4	14	13.3	8	7.6
2	Female	87	14.6	48	24.6	35	17.9	20	10.3	5	2.6
3	Total	139	45.4	66	21.6	48	15.7	34	11.1	13	4.2

Males exhibited diverse responses, with 49.5% agreeing, 17.1% strongly agreeing, 12.4% being neutral, and 13.3% and 7.6% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. Females showed a distinct pattern, with 14.6% agreeing, 24.6% strongly agreeing, 17.9% being neutral, and 10.3% and 2.6% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. The total agreement rate was 45.4%, with 21.6% strongly agreeing, 15.7% neutral, and 11.1% and 4.2% in disagreement or strong disagreement. Females had a lower combined agreement percentage (39.2%) compared to males (67%). The data suggests a notable gender variable influence, with females having lower overall agreement rates and higher disagreement rates. Further analysis may reveal specific factors contributing to the observed gender-based variations in responses.

Table 10
Textbook Language

SR. no.	GENDER	Frequency/percentage									
		A		SA		N		DA		SDA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Male	36	34.3	16	15.2	13	12.4	23	21.9	17	16.2
2	Female	49	25.1	26	13.3	32	16.4	57	29.2	29	14.9
3	Total	85	27.8	42	13.7	45	14.7	80	26.1	46	15

Males displayed varied responses, with 34.3% agreeing, 15.2% strongly agreeing, 12.4% being neutral, and 21.9% and 16.2% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. Females showed a different trend, with 25.1% agreeing, 13.3% strongly agreeing, 16.4% being neutral, and 29.2% and 14.9% expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. The total agreement rate was 27.8%, with 13.7% strongly agreeing, 14.7% neutral, and 26.1% and 15% in disagreement or strong disagreement. Males had a higher

combined agreement percentage (49.5%) compared to females (38.4%). The data suggests a notable gender variable influence, with males generally showing higher overall agreement and lower disagreement rates. Further investigation may reveal the specific factors contributing to these observed differences in responses based on gender.

Discussion

This discussion delves into various facets of English language proficiency, focusing on individual experiences, challenges, and efforts to improve speaking skills. The exploration of an individual's English journey underscores a preference for English in class for convenience, despite fluency in daily life. Challenges include anxiety from classmates' proficiency, fear of judgment, and limited practice. Issues such as word recall difficulties, Urdu reliance, and rote memorization by the teacher contribute to the complexity of language development. Intrinsic motivation drives a love for practicing English for confidence, emphasizing the significance of pronunciation for proficiency. Respondents seek recognition as well-educated through English proficiency.

Regarding gender-related disparities, the data indicates potential differences in perceived convenience in understanding English lectures. Males tend to express higher self-perceived fluency in speaking English in daily life compared to females. Concerns about peers' proficiency, fear of being laughed at when speaking English, and making mistakes while speaking exhibit mixed responses from both genders. Notable gender-related variations in confidence levels emerge when expressing opinions in English, with males exhibiting higher confidence levels.

Additionally, males generally express higher agreement on various aspects, such as teacher's focus on textbook language, confidence in practicing English with peers, belief in oneself, and participation in speaking activities. Both genders exhibit a positive sentiment towards the enjoyment of speaking and listening to English songs, facing difficulty in practicing speaking in class, and the belief that practicing English is easier with a proficient speaker.

The importance of English courses for skill enhancement is prevalent among respondents, with both genders showing agreement. A common belief exists that learning English is essential for recognition as a well-educated person. Enjoyable English practice is perceived as significant for building speaking confidence, and there is shared agreement on the importance of pronunciation for English language proficiency. The value of teacher feedback, the effectiveness of teachers in dealing with speaking problems, and the impact of English speaking practice on pronunciation are emphasized. Overall, the data consistently reflects a positive attitude towards language learning practices, with females often exhibiting slightly higher levels of agreement.

Conclusion

The processes of teaching and learning English became highly engaging and enjoyable as the actions were put into practice. Students became engaged in the activities because of the classroom atmosphere. Furthermore, everyone in the classroom enjoyed learning English thanks to the use of communicative games. The activities were done well, and everyone actively participated, so the class felt more lively. The promise of rewards enhanced their attention and participation. The activities provided more vocabulary and pronunciation practice, resulting in a broader range of words and improved pronunciation. Despite occasional mispronunciations, students communicated more confidently in English. Group divisions reduced anxiety and increased assurance.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, certain recommendations have been suggested that may be applied to other speaking-related contexts.

- Policy changes at the educational level are crucial to address issues in English language learning. Recommendations include enhancing grammar education through qualified instructors, revising the curriculum to emphasize practical language use, and integrating communicative activities to boost speaking skills.
- Policymakers should prioritize ongoing teacher training to ensure the adoption of contemporary teaching strategies, fostering a more dynamic and engaging English curriculum for BS students. Teachers, in turn, are advised to implement communicative tasks, group activities, and diverse topics to improve students' speaking abilities effectively.
- Effective practice within the classroom is pivotal for enhancing speaking skills. Teachers should address grammar and pronunciation deficiencies by allocating ample time for student speaking, focusing on tenses, prepositions, and subject-verb agreement.
- Teachers should prioritize students' active involvement in the learning process. Providing more opportunities for speaking, designing relevant scenarios for authentic communication, and incorporating interactive games can contribute to effective language instruction.
- Supporting speaking clubs and encouraging students to join can provide a platform for regular English practice. Lectures should guide students to engage in speaking activities, enhancing pronunciation, vocabulary, and confidence.
- Students can overcome shyness through support, motivation, and psychological training
- Promoting interaction among students is essential to ensure they have sufficient opportunities for verbal expression.

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