



**EnJourMe (English Journal of Merdeka):
Culture, Language, and Teaching of English**

Journal homepage: <http://jurnal.unmer.ac.id/index.php/enjourme/index>

Problems the first year students encounter in EFL learning at private universities of Bangladesh: Four private universities in consideration

Md. Mehedi Hassan *, **Md. Nazmul Haque**

Department of English, Pundra University of Science & Technology, Bogura, Bangladesh

*Corresponding author: mehedi598086@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Received 19 December 2023
Accepted 30 December 2023
Available online 31 December 2023

Keywords:

Bangladesh, EFL learners, first year, problems, suggestions, university

DOI: 10.26905/enjourme.v8i2.120606

How to cite this article (APA Style):

Hassan, M., & Haque, N. (2023). Problems the first year students encounter in EFL learning at private universities of Bangladesh: Four private universities in consideration. *EnJourMe (English Journal of Merdeka): Culture, Language, and Teaching of English*, 8(2) 198-205, doi: <https://doi.org/10.26905/enjourme.v8i2.120606>

ABSTRACT

The English language becomes a key factor in the academic life of first-year FFL learners at the graduation level in Bangladesh as this is the first time when they have to be exposed to English Medium Instruction (EMI). When the first-year FFL learners at private universities try to speak and write in English it becomes a challenge for them. The research intends to find out the first-year FFL learners problems they face at Private Universities in Bangladesh and some suggestions to overcome them. 40 FFL learners from 4 different private universities participated and the mixed method comprising qualitative and quantitative methods is applied in this study. The data has been collected through the research instruments like survey questionnaires and interviews. The study recommends that vocabulary skills, pronunciation, teaching techniques of teachers, syllabus design, motivation, and a proper environment are important factors that should be developed to enhance their communicative competence. And for overcoming these problems they need motivation, to know more words and their use in sentences, and knowledge regarding sentence structures. And also they need an English reading environment inside and outside of their classroom.

© 2023EnJourMe. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

English is used as a medium of instruction at most of the public and private universities of Bangladesh. Even though English is a mandatory subject starting in the primary grades, children have not yet mastered the skill of speaking fluently both within and outside of the classroom. Additionally, the students' access to English outside of the classroom is quite limited. They spend most of their time with their family, friends, and the neighborhood, where the local tongue is widely spoken. The learn-

ers are not required to use English outside of the academic environment in an FFL context like a private university. They are unable to practice spoken English conversation because of this. There is no requirement for the students to use English outside of academic contexts.

In Bangladesh, reading in English as a foreign language is a twelve-year requirement for pupils. However, the degree of competence they achieve is relatively low. It makes sense why the majority of them perform poorly on English exams. The two main issues that learner-speakers have are knowledge factors and skills aspects. The linguistic expertise a speaker uses for oral production is referred to as one of the knowledge factors. Because of the skill aspects, the knowledge of the learners is not sufficiently automated to guarantee fluency. English speakers should therefore have linguistic expertise. They ought to be functionally aware of the function of speech in both interpersonal and transactional contexts. Second, the speakers must be competent in discourse, which governs their ability to link and structure individual utterances. The third requirement for learners is pragmatic competence, which refers to a specific language and the situations in which it is used, as well as the goal of language use. English speakers should use proper grammar, have a large vocabulary, and have clear pronunciation.

It goes without saying that for the majority of pupils, attempting to speak English is equivalent to confronting a ghost in the night. They frequently believe that trying to become proficient in speaking English is unattainable. Additionally, the majority of students view English as a Subject to pass rather than a language to speak. But regardless of how English is perceived in Bangladesh, there is no denying that it is highly valued there based on demand and the volume of usage in government and educational settings arena. English is mostly taught and learned academically in classrooms in Bangladesh.

Therefore, the majority of school and college students have no other choice except to learn English in a classroom. The kids must go there to receive academic instruction including showing and having teachers evaluate their homework. How much English do the pupils attempt to utilize in class to accomplish all of these tasks? This is a significant question for those who operate in the linked industry and for those who are trying to find solutions to the difficulties or issues that prevent them from speaking English. Studies have been done on the issues, concerns, and challenges associated with teaching and learning spoken English in Bangladesh. Studies have been carried out from both urban and rural perspectives. Speaking practice is complicated by unfamiliar themes, learners, lack of vocabulary, and shyness. They are unable to practice spoken English conversation because of this. The students don't view it as a communication tool, merely as a subject of study. It should go without saying that speaking abilities are quite important. Speaking ability is crucial since it affects engagement and communication directly. As a result, a person's proficiency in a language is mostly determined by how well they can communicate in that language. This research examines the classroom-related challenges that are responsible for the Bangladeshi students' inability of speaking English in the classroom. It includes the reasons and purposes of the study and shows the significance and scope of it as well.

Objective of the study

The research is to find out the challenges that problems and its main goal was to examine the difficulties first-year college students face when speaking, writing, and reading FF (Foreign Languages) like English. It was created to identify and assess the type of speaking, writing, and reading issues they were having, or the most frequent issues they were having. The study attempted to give some recommendations for the concerned FFL practitioners to enhance their English speaking, reading, and writing fluency based on the data.

Literature Review

In Bangladesh, first-year FFL learners encounter problems at private universities. The English departments may indicate the problems as FFL learners at the private varsity levels in Bangladesh. Ahmad (2014) said that the quality of FLT and motivation of FFL learners were found to be significantly impacted by factors like language anxiety or English phobia, the educational background of family members, and the location of the educational institutions. Speaking ability was also discovered to be the most undervalued language skill in Bangladeshi colleges in both rural and urban areas. Research undertaken by Hasan and Akhand (2009) on the difficulties and sustainability of FLT at the college and varsity level in Bangladesh, the sixty-four regions of the nation were included in that extensive investigation, as well as colleges. Its findings indicated that the lack of sufficient teaching resources and the teachers' subpar FLT proficiency were the two factors that had an impact on the teaching and learning of spoken English. The ability to communicate effectively is one of the most crucial survival skills in today's globalized society.

According to Canale and Swain (1980), linguistic skills that make it possible to communicate Grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence make up its four components. Understanding the syntax, phonology, vocabulary, and word-formation processes allows us to utilize the language for a variety of diverse tasks and functions. This is referred to as linguistic competence. The ability to modify language use according to sociocultural contexts is included in the second skill, sociolinguistic competence. Rahman (2015) said that After Bangla, the sole official language of Bangladesh, which has a history of roughly two centuries of British colonial rule, English is the language that is used the most for commerce, technology, education, and general communication. Florez (1999) explained that Because oral communication depends on speaking ability, it is seen as a crucial skill. Speaking is crucial since it is used in conversations and for describing things; speaking and listening go hand in hand. Producing, receiving, and digesting information are all parts of the interactive process of generating meaning that is speaking. Islam et al. (2022) explained that It is noteworthy that students from Bangla-medium backgrounds generally have the same difficulties speaking and reading English. From Bangla: Translation It has been seen that students attempt to construct sentences first in their original tongue, then attempt to translate them into English, which is a big problem in the function of the learner's first language. An important issue is the lack of speaking and listening exercises in first-year undergraduate courses. Sometimes, teachers did not place a strong emphasis on speaking abilities. Lack of desire brought on by limited opportunities to utilize English in real situations in Bangladesh's non-academic setting. Shagia (2016) said that Writing is one of the four essential language skills, and it has a major role to play in

language training because students are forced to take exams so that they can prove their knowledge by writing correctly. Mandal and Pragma (2019) told that the Bangladeshi educational system cannot function without the study of English as a second language. Gaining competency is crucial for Bangladeshi learners to pursue higher education both domestically and abroad, work in specific fields, and communicate with foreign agencies or international organizations. Bangladesh regards secondary-level education as essential for the development of English language fluency. Azad and Nazmul (2017) explain that these days, in the modern world, English is regarded as a universal language. So it is crucial to understand the language effectively. Communication skills refer to the capacity to use the language system effectively under any conditions, taking into account the functions and linguistic variety as well as prevailing sociocultural presuppositions. Amir (2022) explains that Bangladeshi English can take Bengali pronunciations, grammar, and meaning into account.

Ayuni (2018) said that EFL learners find it difficult to learn new languages. When students want to master a foreign language, they must study a variety of skills from that language. Grammar is one of the key components of learning a foreign language. It is because each language has its grammar or rules. EFL learners encounter certain challenges as they study grammar. For EFL learners, grammar is challenging.

2. Method

In this research, qualitative and quantitative methods were applied. For data collection, the researcher went to four well-known private universities in Bangladesh.

2.1. Population Sampling

The research aims to find out the problems that first-year students encounter in FFL learning at private universities in Bangladesh. For this reason, the research is conducted in four private universities in Bangladesh. The participants were randomly chosen from Pundra University of Science & Technology, Varendra University, Green University of Bangladesh, and East Delta University. All of the universities were first-year FFL undergraduates (Table 1).

Table 1. Participants of the study

SL.	University Name	Participants
1.	Pundra University of Science & Technology	10
2.	Varendra University	10
3.	Green University of Bangladesh	10
4.	East Delta University	10

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

Question 1: Are you facing problems as a first-year FFL learner at your university?

Most of the first-year FFL learners (92%) who responded to the questionnaires asserted that they faced problems while 6% of the participant replied negatively and only 2% of the students left the question unanswered (Figure 1).

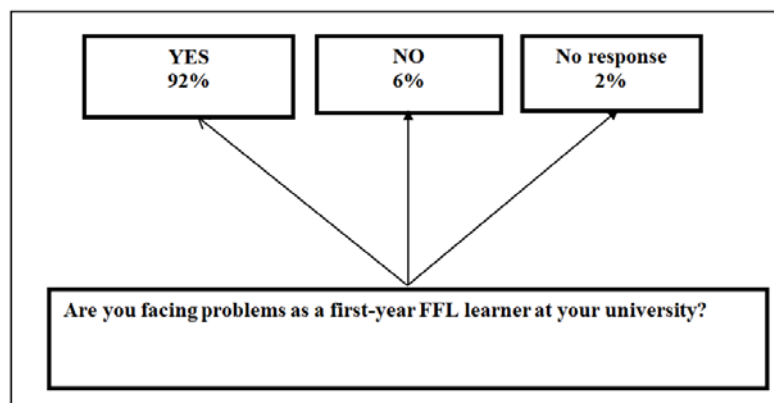


Figure 1. Result of question 1

Question 2: What are the problems that you have faced as an FFL first-year student?

In the answer to the question, 58% of the participants argued that they encountered problems in speaking and writing, 30% answered that they faced problems in speaking, 10% of them in writing, and only 2% in reading problems (Figure 2).

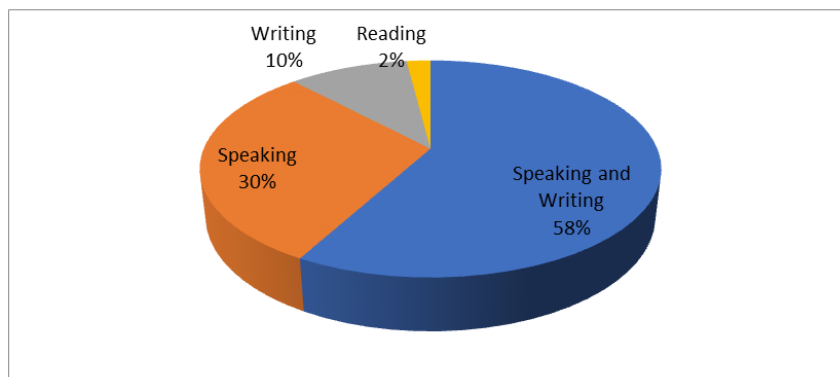


Figure 2. Summary of question 2

Question 3: How well can you communicate in English?

The participants who responded to the questionnaire revealed that they can communicate as FFL first-year learners. About 4.6% of students' communication competence is excellent, about 10% of their communication competence is very good, about 38% of students responded that their communicative competence is poor, about 38.4% of students' communication competence is good and 9% of them didn't respond to this question.

So the result is given the information and communication competence of first-year FFL learners at private universities in Bangladesh. The result shows at the time of first-year FFL learners is not good because only 4.6% of students' communication skills are excellent and only 10% of students'

communication skills are very good. So they need to become more skill full about communication (Figure 3).

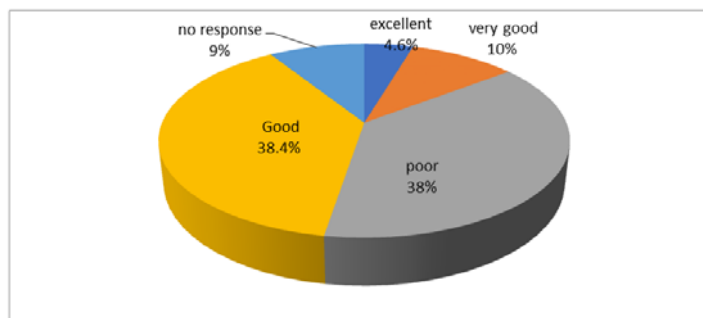


Figure 3. Result of question 3

Question 4: What are the factors that you need to develop to enhance your communicative competence?

About 98% of students who responded to this question said that vocabulary skills, pronunciation, teaching techniques of teachers, syllabus design, motivation, and a proper environment are important factors that should be developed to enhance their communicative competence. It has been found that students' lack of vocabulary causes problems in their speaking and writing. Therefore, students should give an effort to build their vocabulary knowledge, and teachers should also take necessary measures. They need to get over their nervousness and accept it. Their speaking cannot be made better until they overcome their psychological obstacle. The authorities should construct the curriculum and syllabuses in such a way that students may engage in the lessons and assignments more and more to solve speaking difficulty, writing problem, and reading problems. Speaking, writing, and reading abilities can be developed through a variety of methods outside of the classroom, such as through extracurricular activities. Students should be encouraged by their professors to access online English-language content like reading news, watching films, and so forth.

Question 5: What are the administrative and logistic supports that the institution provides?

In this question, all the students respond similarly to their opinion like, the institutions must take the required steps to assist first-year FFL students with their speaking, writing, and reading issues. According to the study, numerous students profited from the club and practice sessions for English that the university organized. As a result, the institution should emphasize not only the student's academic achievements but also their proficiency in speaking, writing, and reading English.

Question 6: What do you think about how the teachers give feedback on your mistakes in speaking, writing, and reading?

As they are beginners so they said that if their teacher behaves friendly and encourages them they make a good performance. By getting good feedback FFL learners become get more positive

motivation. So 89% of students agree that yes they do mistakes but teachers should manage it. They should encourage them and give effective feedback to them. Some students highlight some issues like that if their teacher should comprehend language and its norms as well as be able to apply them in real-world situations. Problems might arise when speaking, writing, or reading due to a lack of grammar expertise. So teachers also be careful about their grammatical mistakes.

Question 7: What are the roles that you think of the peer in practicing English speaking, writing, and reading?

In this question, students give their opinions in different ways. Some of the students say they need to build their vocabulary knowledge. That is why, they should have to read more and more stories, and novels. Some say they need to improve their self-motivation. For this, they have to take the initiative and goodwill to start giving an effort to overcome speaking, writing, and reading. Some say they need more classroom activities and classes outside activities.

3.2. Discussion and recommendations

The researcher examines the problems of first-year FFL learners in private universities in Bangladesh. Finally, the researcher found that lack of vocabulary knowledge, students' shyness, phobia of the English language, family background, lack of motivation, lack of classroom activities, for environmental issues students encounter many problems in the first year. For overcoming these problems they need motivation, they need more knowledge about vocabulary words, and they need an English reading environment inside the classroom and outside of their classroom. Finally, the problems that they encounter in their first year will be solved.

Limitation of the Study

The researcher has some limitations in conducting the research. Researchers need to conduct 4 private universities in Bangladesh that are situated a long distance. The researcher also had to experience challenges in maintaining the formalities to survey 40 students. For example, researchers first need to take permission and provide them with the questions collected. Sometimes FFL first-year students were confused thinking in their responses. The paper will be marked. Students were also shy and introverted at the beginning.

4. Conclusion

In this research, several issues came forward regarding the problems the first-year students encounter in FFL learning at four private universities in Bangladesh which include the lack of practice, guidance, and self-motivation of the FFL learners to improve their speaking in their first-year FFL undergraduate level of education. It also explored their lack of practice and incompetence in grammar and vocabulary, and the absence of the scope of a friendly environment to practice speaking. It was shown that socioeconomic background is also quite important in this regard. However, this study examined the perspectives of some seasoned FFL first-year students based on their early educa-

tional experiences. As a result, it highlighted some significant elements, such as the roles of higher education institutions and the English undergraduate syllabuses English curricula: literature, language skills, and linguistics. Additionally, it provides some insight into the three main components of the undergraduate English curricula: literature, language proficiency, and linguistics. All of these factors that need to be addressed have a significant impact on first-year FFL learners at private universities in Bangladesh.

5. Acknowledgement

Especially thanks to the students of four private universities (Pundra University of Science & Technology, Verendra University, Green University of Bangladesh, and East Delta Universities) for their cooperation.

6. References

- Ahmad, S. (2014). A Socio-psycholinguistic investigation into the correlation between English language learner motivation and the present status of EFL learning in Bangladesh. *Bangladesh Research Foundation Journal*, 3 (1), 61-74.
- Amir F. (2022). Teaching English in Bangladeshi Secondary Schools: A Blessing or A Curse. *ingua Didaktika: Jurnal Bahasa dan Pembelajaran Bahasa*
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24036/ld.v16i2.120304>.
- Ayuni M. (2018). Problem Based Learning in Foreign Language Learner's (FLL) Grammar Class: How Will Students Perceive It? *International Summit on Science Technology And Humanity*.
- Azad H. and Nazmul M. (2017). Language in India. Challenges Faced by Students in Learning English. Vol. 17 Issue 6, p1-92. 92p. <https://web.s.ebscohost.com/>.
- Hasan, K., & Akhand, M. M. (2009). Challenges & suitability of TESL at the college level in Bangladeshi context. *Journal of Nepalese English Language Teaching Association (NELTA)*, 14(1-2).
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2008). Rethinking the Role of Communicative Competence in Language Teaching. *Intercultural Language Use and Language Learning*, 41-57.
doi: [10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0_3)
- Florez, M. C. (1999). Improving adult English language learners' speaking skills. *ERIC Digest*. Islam, W., Ahmad, S., & Islam, M. D. (2022). International Journal of TESOL & Education. Investigating the Problems Faced by the University EFL Learners in Speaking English Language. Vol. 2; No. 2; 2022 56. <https://i-jte.org>. DOI: [10.54855/ijte.22223](https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.22223).
- Mandal and Pragya P. (2019). Difficulties in learning English faced by Bsecondary level students in Bangla medium schools in Bangladesh. <https://dSPACE.bracu.ac.bd/xmlui/handle/10361/12410>
- Rahman, S. (2015). English language policy initiatives and implementation in Bangladesh: Micro political issues. *Asian EFL journal*, 88, 59-96.
- Shagia Afrin. (2016). Problems of Non-English Major Undergraduate Students in Bangladesh: An Observation. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 12 pages. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>