



INVESTIGATING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE FACTORS HINDERING THEIR ENGLISH-SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract

The aim of this study is investigating the students' perceptions of the factors hindering their English-speaking skills. Even though English is a universal language and is essential for both academic and professional success, Pakistani university students still struggle greatly to improve their English-speaking abilities. Prior studies have identified a number of factors that contribute to these challenges, including the language backgrounds of the students, ineffective teaching strategies, lack of exposure to English-speaking situations, and learning that is centered around exams. The primary elements that directly affect English language acquisition are students, families, schools, and peer groups. Nonetheless, there is still a lack of knowledge regarding how students themselves view these factors, especially in particular academic settings like Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sanghar Campus. A quantitative method was utilized in this study, and the sample of this study consisted of 120 (60 males and 60 females) BS students from the department of English Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sanghar Campus. Data were analyzed through frequency and descriptive analysis by using SPSS. The results indicate that most student express a strong desire to speak English fluently and enjoy conversing in English. However, they face significant factors that hinder their progress. Limited practice outside the classroom, family background, motivation levels, communication barriers, and environmental factors all contribute to students' difficulties in developing their speaking skills. A major challenge identified in this study is the lack of sufficient opportunities to practice speaking English, both in and outside the classroom. Gender-based differences in perceptions were also observed, with female students consistently reporting fewer barrier and higher motivation level compared to male students. This study recommends that the university should incorporate regular, structured speaking activities into English language courses, such as role plays, debates, group discussions, and presentations.

Keywords: *English-Speaking, Student Perceptions, Speaking Skills, University Students, English Speaking Challenges*

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1. Introduction

Since pidgins and creoles were developed for efficient communication, multilingualism has been practiced globally (Bangash et al., 2021). English is a global language linked to developments in mass media communication, trade, commerce, politics, science, and technology (Sarwar et al., 2012; Zughoul, 2003). It suggests that English is a window to the world since it offers a viewpoint on the many global trends (Elbashir, 2017) and current knowledge on any aspect of human development and activities (Zughoul, 2003).

English was used by traders along the coast as a Pidgin and Creole in British India before being designated as the official language (Bangash et al., 2021). Since Great Britain controlled a quarter of the world, English was made the official language of the countries that were still under British control. In various areas, including Pakistan, the English language continues to have a strong influence. Urdu and English are both recognized as official and institutional languages in Pakistan. According to research by Parveen and Mehmood (2013), 11% of Pakistanis speak English as well.

Particularly in nations like Pakistan, where English is the official and designated second language, learning English as a second language has become more and more important. In addition to being a sign of authority and status, it is also a surefire way to advance in your profession and land a job (Mueser & Cook, 2012). The English language has been promoted by the Pakistani government through a number of programs. However, because of the lack of a standardized and sufficient educational framework (Shamim & Rashid, 2019) and the scarcity of qualified teachers (Jadoon et al., 2020), these have not yet been implemented. Accordingly, learning English as a second language is challenging for Pakistani students at all levels (Bangash et al., 2021). Furthermore, even though English's importance is widely acknowledged in Pakistan at all levels, rural areas still view it as a challenging topic to study in comparison to metropolitan areas (Bangash et al., 2021).

According to Farooq et al. (2011), the primary elements that directly affect English language acquisition are students, families, schools, and peer groups. Promoting the

English language has grown challenging, especially in rural areas, for a variety of reasons, including social or cultural impediments and a lack of suitable surroundings (Bangash et al., 2021). As a result, children from rural backgrounds who attend school in rural areas do worse in the English language course than students from urban areas (Bangash et al., 2021). Fundamental writing and reading skills are taught by Pakistani teachers, however secondary education does not follow the same methodology. In many rural areas of Pakistan, learning and using English is not given much importance in schools; instead, instruction is provided in national languages such Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, and so on (Bangash et al., 2021). Therefore, the goal of this study is to determine all issues that students at Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University's Sanghar Campus have reported having with their ability to learn and speak English.

Therefore, the goal of this study is to investigate the factors hindering students from speaking English fluently. The results of this study would be helpful in highlighting the problems and offering different solutions for problems related to learning English in Pakistan's educational system. Even though English is a universal language and is essential for both academic and professional success, Pakistani university students still struggle greatly to improve their English-speaking abilities. Prior studies have identified a number of factors that contribute to these challenges, including as the language backgrounds of the students, ineffective teaching strategies, a lack of exposure to English-speaking situations, and learning that is centered around exams. According to Saeed et al. (2022), the primary elements that directly affect English language acquisition are students, families, schools, and peer groups. Promoting the English language has grown challenging, especially in rural areas, for a variety of reasons, including social or cultural hurdles and a lack of suitable surroundings (Bangash et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, there is still a lack of knowledge regarding how students themselves view these factors, especially in particular academic settings like Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sanghar Campus. It is difficult to create successful ways to improve English-speaking proficiency without a thorough grasp of these perceived difficulties. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors to university students' proficiency in English and to examine students' perspectives according to gender differences.

1.1. Research Objectives

1. To examine university students' perceptions of the factors hindering their learning of English speaking skills.
2. To compare the perceptions of factors hindering learning English speaking skills based on gender

1.2. Research Questions

- Q1: What are the perceptions of universities students regarding the factors that hinder their learning of English-speaking skills?
- Q2: How do the perceptions of factors hindering English speaking skills differ between male and female universities students?

2.Literature Review

Oral presentation should be the first step in teaching a language since it can significantly improve the development of reading and writing skills, both of which rely on spoken language (Brown, 1994). Speaking is the practice of using both spoken and non-spoken symbols to convey meaning in a variety of contexts. Speaking is defined by Brown (1994) and Burns and Joyce (1997) as an interactive process of meaning creation that includes the creation, receiving, and processing of information. Speaking is the production of auditory signals to elicit a range of verbal responses from listeners, according to Bygate (1987). It is regarded as methodically combining sounds to create coherent sentences.

Basically, speech is a utilitarian act. Either productive or active, it is a skill. These two definitions lead us to the conclusion that speaking is an exchange between two or more people. when people who are interacting can understand each other, as long as they have practiced communicating effectively. An obvious example of a speaking activity is any interaction between a teacher and student. Since the instructor is in charge of making sure that every student understands the material through their speech, they should be proficient speakers during the lesson. According to Tarigan (1993), speaking is a language ability that is best developed in childhood and is taught during that time. It is derived from listening abilities. Speaking is a useful oral and auditory skill that can be used in real time (Bailey, 2005). Since the other interlocutor is waiting for the speaker to answer at that precise moment and the speaker cannot change his response as he could in writing, it is real-time. The language is productive because it is directed outward. It is oral because the speech is given orally, and it is auditory because the response is connected to the input, which is often received orally. According to Trudgill (1992), there are three steps involved: (i) gathering ideas, (ii) arranging them in the best possible order, and (iii) choosing the language to use when speaking with other people. Students exercise these abilities in their mother tongue and confidently address their audience. They will also gain from these exercises when speaking a foreign language. However, this study suggests that both teachers and students struggle to talk and express themselves in English in Pakistan, although English is the official language and the medium of instruction in the educational system.

Students who speak English as a second language have challenges due to a number of issues (Ur, 1996). But the most noticeable element is the sense of inhibition (Ur, 1996). It suggests that pupils are shy, fearful, and worried about making mistakes (Ur, 1996). Speaking English can be challenging for a variety of reasons, including the students' backgrounds and personalities, inadequate teaching methods, the curriculum, and the environment (Ahmed, 2015; Bashir et al., 2011; Bilal et al., 2013; Karim, 2012; Tariq et al., 2013). For instance, the students will not be able to keep up the conversation if they are not proficient in the language. According to Ur (1996), some pupils lack the motivation to speak in English. Students' inability to speak English fluently is further impacted by their limited vocabulary, poor grammar and pronunciation, and fear of making mistakes (Salera et al., 2020; Ur, 1996). Students experience shame and guilt when they are unable to put words together to produce a respectable phrase or discourse because they rarely practice speaking English formally or even casually with their peers (Bashir et al., 2011; Bowen, 2005; Alam & Ashrafuzzaman, 2018). Additionally, self-confidence is linked to something that is said or told (He & Chen, 2010). It becomes the most crucial factor in affecting pupils' speaking abilities and has a big effect on them. Human communication is complex (Gebhard, 2006; Harmer, 1991). They need to communicate clearly in order to share information or convey something. Speakers employ language to accomplish certain goals. Speakers should simultaneously be listeners and speakers in order to communicate effectively. Pakistani university students need help improving their English language skills in hearing, reading, and writing (Kanwal & Khurshid, 2012).

Furthermore, students' speaking abilities are not enhanced by the existing English language course materials and teaching methods. The problems related to oral communication are not adequately addressed by the current English language education system. Nonetheless, a variety of techniques have been developed to enhance speaking abilities through the design of curricula, teaching principles, and speech evaluation. (see, e.g., Bailey, 2005; Goh, 2007). Trent (2009) contends that a lack of confidence and fear over making mistakes are two of the many things impeding the ability to speak English.

According to Cotter (2007), learners are taught how to use English in classrooms. They ought to be engaged in learning about the functioning of language, nevertheless. They ought to consider a variety of linguistic components, develop a shared vocabulary for language discussion, and use this understanding to evaluate texts critically for correctness, efficacy, and meaning (Cotter, 2007). A proficient speaker would know when to use specific grammatical constructions (Cotter, 2007). Three categories of information are identified by Backlund (1990, referenced in Elbashir, 2017) as having an effect on oral

communication efficiency: content knowledge, self-knowledge, and social knowledge. Spoken communication will undoubtedly be hindered if any of these are poor (Backlund, 1990, cited in Elbashir, 2017).

Additionally, dominating the conversation, using inappropriate loudness and pitch, engaging in excessive small talk, ignoring someone, and persistently interrupting others are all problems that hinder oral communication (Backlund, 1990). In a study on improving students' oral communication abilities, Bashiruddin (2003) found that the main obstacle to teaching English in Pakistan is the presence of inexperienced English language teachers (ELTs), which contributes to students' communication deficiencies. In a 2007 study conducted at the "Jurong" primary school in Singapore, Rama et al. discovered that using language games helped improve students' speaking abilities in English classes. Students were split into two groups for the study: an experimental group that improved speaking abilities through communicative language games, and a control group which employed a teacher-centered approach that included real-life activities and the vocabulary needed to carry on a conversation. A qualitative and action research investigation regarding the effectiveness of using group work to teach speaking in an English classroom in Malaysia was conducted by Hamzah and Ting (2009). Because participants felt comfortable representing themselves in small groups without worrying about speaking in a foreign language, the study's findings showed enthusiasm for group work activities and proficiency in spoken language.

Kanwal and Khurshid (2012) looked into the difficulties college students have learning English. They discovered that more support is needed for university students generally in order to improve their English hearing, reading, and writing skills. Additionally, their research revealed that university students are not happy with the present teaching methods and course materials for English. Many factors affect students' fluency in speaking English, according to their study. For instance, they worry about making mistakes when speaking; they lack the necessary vocabulary for speaking and expressing themselves effectively or sufficiently; shyness and nervousness make students hesitant to use English; they are scared to use English in public because they are unsure of their own communication skills. Supportive language may be able to help pupils get over their fears, anxieties, and dread (Kanwal & Khurshid, 2012).

Additionally, a positive atmosphere and a suitable setting may help students talk with enthusiasm, accuracy, and fluency (Ahmad, 2011). According to research, students are hesitant to apply their reading skills and speak English. It is recommended that exercises be added to the exercise section to help students improve their speaking, writing, and reading skills. According to research, a lot of students still prefer to write in their native tongues, such as Pashto, Punjabi, or Urdu. For this reason, students may need to

write essays or poems frequently in order to get over their fear of writing and improve their literary writing skills (Coleman, 2010; Khan, 2013).

When learning to speak a second language, research on second language learners revealed worries about feeling uncommunicative in the target language (Elbashir, 2017; Brown, 2004; Ur, 1996; Krashen, 1982). Interaction in the target language is usually affected by this problem (Ur, 1996). When studying English as a second language, students typically find it difficult to make mistakes (Hieu, 2011; Kurtus, 2001). Insufficient fluency in English makes learning more difficult and negatively affects pupils' academic performance. Poor ability to produce fluency in oral communication can arise from providing inadequate instruction on language norms, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Thornbury, 2005; Nunan, 1999).

Similarly, second-language speakers may hesitate if they make mistakes or pause (Kurtus, 2011). According to research, the elements of oral competency—grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation—are linked to and have an impact on verbal fluency (Elbashir, 2017). Similarly, Thornbury (2005) contends that students' comprehension of the grammar of the target language is necessary for them to be able to communicate orally with fluency. However, Richard (2006) believes it is related to pronunciation, while Moges (2009) believes it depends on vocabulary.

Effective communication requires linguistic fluency (Nunan, 1999). English serves as a second language for people who learn it after their native tongue and also as a foreign language for people who move from their home country to another for study or residence because it is the most broadly spoken language and has become a global language (Westrup & Baker, 2003). In this regard, one of the most challenging aspects of learning English as a second language is improving oral fluency. In nations like Pakistan, where students speak their native tongue and interact with second-language speakers hardly at all outside of the classroom, this is particularly true. Linguists believe that language is taught by usage and practice, much like habits are created (Ur, 2000). Students in Pakistan's educational institutions have very little exposure to and understanding of English, even though the language is widely used in classrooms (Bangash et al., 2021). As a result, individuals have trouble putting their thoughts into the right words when they express themselves in English, which leads to speech that is full of pauses and mistakes (Bangash et al., 2012).

In general, pauses caused by pupils' hesitation and repeated words when speaking in English are strongly associated with poor word choice and grammar (Nunan, 1999). Overall, studies on English as a foreign language reveal a variety of factors that affect students' proficiency in the language (see, for example, Elbashir, 2017). For instance, students frequently worry about speaking incorrectly. Additionally, their limited vocabulary in languages hinders them from communicating efficiently or successfully

(Nunan, 1999). Students' shyness and anxiety are additional factors that make them reluctant to speak in English (Kanwal & Khurshid, 2012). Because they are unsure of their own English communication skills, they are terrified to speak the language in public (Kanwal & Khurshid, 2012).

Therefore, it is essential to utilize words of encouragement to help pupils get over their fears, anxieties, and dread (Nunan, 1999). Students may also communicate more energetically, accurately, and fluently if they are in a nice atmosphere and in a suitable setting (Ohata, 2005). In view of the aforementioned literature, the goal of the current study is to determine the barriers preventing Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sanghar Campus students from speaking English fluently.

3. Research Methodology

The methodology utilized in the present study is quantitative. In quantitative research, information is gathered to test theories or to find out how the general public feels about a particular topic (Gay, 2015). The quantitative survey approach looked acceptable because the study's purpose was to investigate students' perspectives and then compare them based on gender. The following procedures made up the data collection:

3.1. Sampling of the study

The sample of this study consisted of 120 (60 males and 60 female) BS students of the department of English of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sanghar Campus. The selection of study samples was drawn through the use of a random sampling technique.

3.2. Research instrument

A questionnaire was adapted from Muhammad Saeed, Sohail Azam and Zahid Ullah 2022, used as a research instrument to collect data from the selected sample. The instrument was based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree as follows: 5) Strongly Agree, 4) Agree, 3) Neutral, 2) Disagree, and 1) Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire consisted of 5 main variables/main constructs (main theme questions). Each main theme variable/question had sub-variable/sub theme questions, shown in table-1 in the analysis section.

3.5. Data analysis

In light of the study's objectives, the gathered data was examined, calculated and evaluated. SPSS was used for the analysis of the tabular data. As seen in the section of findings that follows, findings and inferences are made using frequency and descriptive analysis.

4. Findings

S. N O	MAIN THEME QUESTI ON	SUB-THEME QUESTIONS	S D	D	N	A	S A	Mea n Scor e	Std. Devia tion
1	Students' perceptions of English-speaking skill	You desire to speak English fluently	2	2	3	24	89	4.63	0.766
		You think English speaking is a difficult task	10	31	25	43	11	3.12	1.146
		You like to speak English with others	1	0	8	27	84	4.61	0.69
		I speak in English with my fellow students outside the classroom	12	42	35	19	12	2.81	1.132
2	Students' perceptions regarding student background related factors	Your family dislikes speaking English at home	36	43	20	8	13	2.33	1.271
		Your family members can speak English fluently	16	23	28	27	26	3.2	1.339
		English is commonly used in your family	18	36	27	26	13	2.83	1.239
		You feel hesitant while speaking English with family members	14	34	25	35	12	2.98	1.205
3	Students' perceptions regarding motivation for English speaking	Career advancement and promotions motivate English-speaking skill development	4	3	19	56	38	4.01	0.939
		Limited time for speaking skills leads to demotivation	3	15	23	52	27	3.71	1.032
		Availability to switch to writing instead of speaking lessens motivation	4	39	30	24	23	3.19	1.183
4	Students' perceptions regarding oral communi	Lack of understanding of pronunciation causes communication problems	3	12	6	66	33	3.95	0.977
		Lack of sufficient vocabulary contributes to speaking problems	2	7	16	54	41	4.04	0.929
		Nervous feelings cause avoidance in English communication	3	16	20	46	35	3.78	1.086
		Low self-esteem contributes to anxiety while speaking English	3	14	26	32	45	3.85	1.128

	cation	Shyness causes oral communication avoidance with fellow students	3	1 0	1 3	5 0	4 4	4.02	1.021
5	Students' perceptions regarding environmental factors	Lack of English-speaking opportunities in the classroom leads to poor performance	3	4	1 1	4 8	5 4	4.22	0.927
		Technology for learning speaking skills is available in classrooms	1 3	2 9	2 7	3 0	2 1	3.14	1.272
		English speaking is used most of the time at university	1 3	3 2	1 7	2 9	2 9	3.24	1.366
		You don't like to speak English because people will laugh at you	2 5	2 2	2 2	2 0	3 1	3.08	1.493

Table 4.1

4.1. Students' perceptions of English-speaking skills

The majority of the students expressed a strong desire to speak English fluently ($M= 4.63$, $SD= 0.766$), indicating a high level of aspiration for English proficiency. Similarly, most students reported enjoying English speaking with others ($M= 4.61$, $SD= 0.69$). However, when asked about difficulty of English speaking, responses varied, with a moderate mean score ($M= 3.12$, $SD= 1.146$), suggesting a mix of perceptions. Notably, many students reported limited practice outside the classroom ($M= 2.81$, $SD= 1.132$), highlighting a potential barrier to speaking skill development.

4.2. Students' perceptions regarding background related factors

Family background emerged as a significant factor influencing English speaking skills. A considerable number of students reported that their family members do not commonly use English at home ($M= 2.83$, $SD= 1.239$) and their family dislikes speaking English at home ($M= 2.33$, $SD= 1.271$). However, responses were more balanced regarding whether family members can speak English fluently ($M= 3.2$, $SD= 1.339$). Additionally, a moderate level of hesitation was observed when speaking English with family members ($M= 2.98$, $SD= 1.205$), suggesting that home environments may not provide sufficient opportunities for English practice.

4.3. Students' Perception Regarding Motivation for English Speaking

Motivation plays a crucial role in language acquisition. The findings suggest that career advancement and promotions significantly motivate students to develop their English-speaking skills ($M= 3.71$, $SD= 0.939$). However, limited time allocated for speaking practice emerged as a demotivating factor ($M= 3.71$, $SD= 1.032$). Additionally, the ability to switch to writing instead of speaking was perceived as a moderate discouraging factor ($M=3.19$, $SD= 1.183$), indicating that students may resort to alternative language skills rather than overcoming speaking difficulties.

4.4. Students' Perceptions Regarding Oral Communication

Several communication barriers were identified in students' perceptions. Lack of pronunciation understanding ($M=3.95$, $SD= 0.977$) and insufficient vocabulary ($M= 4.04$, $SD = 0.929$) were reported as significant challenges. Furthermore, nervousness ($M= 3.78$, $SD= 1.086$) and low self-esteem ($M= 3.85$, $SD = 1.128$) were found to contribute to students' anxiety while speaking English. Shyness was another notable factor, with many students avoiding oral communication due to discomfort ($M= 4.02$, $SD= 1.021$). These findings highlight the psychological barrier that hinders students from engaging in English speaking activities.

4.5. Students Perceptions Regarding Environmental Factors

Classroom and environmental factors were also examined as potential barriers to English speaking skills development. The lack of English-speaking opportunities in classrooms was identified as a major concern, with a high mean score ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.927$), suggesting that students feel restricted in their ability to practice speaking during lessons. In contrast, availability of technology for learning speaking skills in classrooms received a moderate response ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.272$), indicating that while resources may be available, they may not be effectively utilized. Students provided mixed responses regarding the extent to which English is spoken at university ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.366$), implying that the linguistic environment varies across institutions or contexts. Lastly, fear of being ridiculed for speaking English was another notable issue ($M= 3.08$, $SD = 1.493$), suggesting that social anxiety may contribute to students' reluctance to practice English.

S. No.	Construct	Gender	N	M	SD	Std. Error Mean	t	p
1	Students' perceptions of English-speaking skill	Male	60	3.3167	0.47135	0.06085	-14.672	0.000
		Female	60	4.2667	0.1714	0.02213		
2	Students' perceptions regarding student background-related factors	Male	60	1.8125	0.58336	0.07531	-16.609	0.000
		Female	60	3.8542	0.75253	0.09715		
3	Students' perceptions regarding motivation for English speaking	Male	60	2.8556	0.71404	0.09218		

		Female	60	4.4167	0.53722	0.06935	-13.533	0.00
4	Students' perceptions regarding oral communication	Male	60	3.1967	0.85529	0.11042	-11.85	0.00
		Female	60	4.66	0.42832	0.0553		
5	Students' perceptions regarding environmental factors	Male	60	2.3625	0.68338	0.08822	-19.13	0.00
		Female	60	4.4792	0.51727	0.06678		

Table 4.2

This table presents the analysis of data collected to compare male and female students' perceptions of barriers to learning English speaking skills. The findings are based on an independent sample t-test, which examine differences in perceptions across various constructs.

The dataset includes multiple constructs related to students' perceptions of barriers to English speaking skill. The analysis considers mean (M), standard deviation (D), and standard error mean for both male and female students. The independent samples t-test determines whether these differences are statistically significant.

For the construct measuring students' perceptions of English-speaking skills, male students had a lower mean score (M= 3.3167, SD = 0.47135) compared to female students (M= 4.2667, SD = 0.17140). The t value (-14.672, P= 0.000) indicates a significant difference, suggesting that female students perceive fewer barriers to developing English speaking skills than male students.

Regarding student background related factors, male students reported a lower mean score (M= 1.8125, SD= 0.58336) compared to female students (M= 3.8542, SD= 0.75253). The t value (-16.609, P = 0.000) conforms a statistically significant difference, implying that male students may face more challenges related to background factors when learning English speaking skills.

For motivation towards learning English, male student had a mean score of (M= 2.8556, SD= 0.71404), indicating a lower perceived motivation compared to female students. The statistical results suggest that female students demonstrate greater motivation for learning speaking skills.

Students' perceptions regarding oral communication also revealed gender-based differences. Male students had a lower mean score, suggesting a greater level of difficulty in speaking fluently and confidently in English compared to female students. The T-test

results indicate a statistically significant gap, highlighting the need for more support in developing male students' oral communication skills.

Another critical factor examined was environmental influences on English speaking skills. The findings indicate that male students receive more environmental barriers, such as lack of exposure, few opportunities for practice, are unsupportive surroundings. Female students, on the other hand, showed significantly higher mean scores, suggesting that they experience a more conducive environment for practicing English speaking skills.

Defining reveal significant gender-based differences in students' perceptions of barriers to learning English speaking skills. Female student consistently reported higher in course suggesting a more positive perception and fewer barriers compared to male students. The statistical significance of these differences underscores the need for targeted interventions to support male students in overcoming challenges related to confidence background motivation oral communication and environmental influences in learning English speaking skills.

5. Discussions

With a focus on differences in gender, this study aims to investigate how students perceived barriers to developing their English-speaking abilities in a university setting. The results demonstrate that although the majority of students are very motivated and want to get better at speaking English, they encounter significant barriers because of their environment, communication anxiety, and familial history. Compared to male students, female students were shown to perceive less barriers and to have more favorable views.

The data indicated an important mean score for students' desire to speak English fluently ($M = 4.63$) and their pleasure in conversing in English with other people ($M = 4.61$). These results imply that students have a strong desire to improve their speaking abilities and are motivated to use English in social situations.

These results are consistent with those of Waluyo and Bakoko (2022), who found that students who have positive affective attitudes about English are more likely to actively seek out speaking chances and gradually improve their fluency. In a similar vein, Waluyo and Bakoko (2022), highlighted that obtaining oral proficiency in English as a second language (ESL) requires positive learner attitudes.

Students expressed limited practice speaking English outside of the classroom, despite their desire ($M = 2.81$). This suggests a gap between intended and actual language use, which is probably caused by a lack of speaking partners and surroundings.

According to Tariq et al. (2014), many students have little exposure to English outside of the classroom, which makes it difficult for them to practice speaking naturally.

This confirms the recent results and highlights the necessity of giving students access to more casual, real-world speaking situations.

Students pointed out that their family don't often speak English at home ($M = 2.83$), and many of them said that their family don't like it when people speak English at home ($M = 2.33$). These factors indicate that the use of the English language is discouraged at home, which could lower exposure and confidence levels overall.

According to Naz, Shah and Qayum (2020), sociocultural and familial backgrounds are crucial for language acquisition success, particularly in ESL environments when English is not the primary language spoken at home. More barriers stand in the way of fluency for learners from non-English speaking households. All themes, including motivation, communication hurdles, environmental support, and language skill perception ($M = 4.26$ vs. 3.31), were significantly more positively perceived by female students than by male students, according to the independent samples t-test. Perceived barriers were consistently higher among male students.

Ali, Masroor, and Khan (2020), who noted that female learners frequently outperform their male counterparts in terms of motivation and participation in English-speaking tasks, provide support to this gender gap. Additionally, female students in Pakistani contexts exhibit greater involvement and confidence in their ability to study English, according to (Murtaza et al, 2023).

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into students' perceptions of English-speaking skills, highlighting key factors that influence their ability and motivation to communicate effectively in English. The results indicate that while most students express a strong desire to speak English fluently and enjoy conversing in English, they face significant challenges that hinder their progress. Limited practice outside the classroom, family background, motivation levels, communication barriers, and environmental factors all contribute to students' difficulties in developing their speaking skills.

A major challenge identified in this study is the lack of sufficient opportunities to practice speaking English, both in and outside the classroom. Many students reported that their family environment does not encourage English usage, which may contribute to hesitation and reduced confidence when speaking. Furthermore, motivation plays a crucial role, with career advancement being a key driving force. However, limited classroom time for speaking activities and the tendency to switch to writing instead of speaking were found to negatively impact students' motivation.

Oral communication barriers, such as pronunciation difficulties, insufficient vocabulary, nervousness and low self-esteem, emerged as significant factors that lead to

avoidance of English communication. These psychological barriers indicate a need for targeted interventions to build students confidence and fluency in speaking. Additionally, environmental factors, such as the lack for speaking opportunities in classrooms and social anxiety about speaking English in public, further contribute to students' reluctance to engage in oral communication.

Gender-based differences in perceptions were also observed, with female students consistently reporting fewer barrier and higher motivation level compared to the male students. The statistical analysis revealed that male student experiences greater challenges related to confidence, family background and environmental support, suggesting that specific strategies maybe needed to enhance their English-speaking skills.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of creating a supportive learning environment that provides ample opportunities for speaking practice. Integrating technology, promoting interactive speaking activities, and addressing psychological barriers can significantly improve students English speaking skills. Further research May focus on developing targeted strategies to bridge the gender gap and enhance the overall effectiveness of English language instructions.

6.1. Recommendations and Future Research Directions

University should incorporate regular, structured speaking activities into English language courses, such as role plays, debates, group discussions and presentations.

Leverage mobile applications like WhatsApp voice messages, speech-recognition apps, or language exchange platforms to encourage informal speaking practice outside the classroom.

Design targeted mentoring or language support groups for male students who face more psychological and environmental berries, ensuring inclusive and equitable development in speaking skills.

Future studies can examine how students' English-speaking abilities can be enhanced in casual learning environments by using smartphone apps like WhatsApp. This can assist in locating useful online resources for language practice outside of the classroom.

More research should look at gender-specific barriers to speaking English, concentrating on the reasons why male students exhibit less drive and confidence. This can aid in the creation of gender-neutral focused strategies. To comprehend emotional barriers like anxiety and the fear of being judged when speaking English, researchers can employ qualitative methodologies. The development of encouraging and student-friendly learning environments can be guided by such observations.

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