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CONTEMPORARY REASONS OF ENGLISH SPEAKING DILEMMA AMONG THE BENGALI MEDIUM STUDENTS: A STUDY ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

The main focus of this paper is to find out the factors which inhibit the Bengali medium students from speaking English. This paper investigates the dilemmas existing in teaching-learning and practicing spoken English in the Bengali medium background students. In Bangladeshi education system English language is compulsory for both Bengali and English medium students, but unfortunately it has been found that the student's especially Bengali medium students are not sufficiently expert in communicating through English language. The main intention of this study is to identify the influential factors; the data have been collected through the research procedures like survey questionnaires, and classroom observation. In terms of findings the study identified some major factors which is responsible for creating dilemma among students such as, lack of practice in speaking English, anxiety or inertia in public speaking, less responsive environment for speaking major influential factors and their probable solution to overcome the dilemma in speaking English among the Bengali medium of students of Bangladesh. For the findings of the major English and lack of speaking activity in primary and secondary level of education. After a comprehensive analysis in both qualitative and quantitative methods, a recommendation has been made for the learners, teachers, ELT practitioners and all the people occupied in the teaching and learning English in Bangladesh. The possible solution to overcome these responsible factors is to give students more opportunities for the speaking practice not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.

Key words: speaking skill, dilemma, Bengali medium, classroom observation, responsive environment.

INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to deny the importance of English language learning throughout the world and especially in developing countries like Bangladesh. In many countries, it has been proved that having English proficiency is like getting higher position in every sector.

English is mandatory subject in Bangladeshi conventional school and colleges. Despite of that the majority of the students are not enough capable on English language specially in speaking English. English as a compulsory subject for school, college and undergraduate program in Bangladesh, students always consider English as media to pass the exam

rather than applying in their daily conversation. English is greatly accepted as having huge possibilities for individual development and professional career, because of its obvious role in business and economical development

On the other hand if anyone wants to engage with the global economy he or she has to have a good command in English language, especially in speaking. For that reason in the process of teaching English as one of the most important skills, speaking activity should be planned more for educating students. Speaking practice will help students to learn that how to use and implement it in the communication process. In this English learning procedure students especially second language learner like Bangladeshi students face trouble in speaking English.

(Richard ,2008) also focus that the students always evaluate their English learning capability on the basis of their speaking progress .According to Pinter (2006) speaking is considered as the greatest challenge for all language learners .Some major factors are involved in this speaking English challenge .(Brown ,2001) stated that teachers should give more opportunities to the students in speaking activities in the classrooms .(Brown, 2001) also find that there are some vital factors active behind the less progress in speaking English .According to Brown shyness and anxiety considered the major factor in speaking English. However (Gebhard,2000) also found that students main problem in speaking English is shyness and anxiety .

All the above evidence is pointing out the importance to mitigate the dilemma or challenges in speaking English among the ESL(English as second language) learners.

Objectives of the study

The objective of the study is to find out the major factors which hinder the Bengali medium students from speaking English.

Rationale of the study

This study will find out the reasons which slow down the Bengali medium students in speaking English. No study has been found specifically on speaking English dilemma in Bengali medium students .Though some study focus on English speaking anxiety, but it is very essential to find out

the responsible factors behind this dilemma in speaking English .That is why this study will focus on finding the factors of speaking English dilemma. I hope this study will help the students to improve their condition by the identified factors and teachers will get help in improving students speaking condition with the recognized major factors.

Methodology

Primary data were collected from undergraduate students who are currently studying in public and private universities of Bangladesh. Targeted students were selected from Bengali medium background .Respondents were 100 and data were collected through questionnaire consisting of 10 questions .The questionnaire was prepared on the basis of classroom observation and need of the students. Respondents were only the undergraduate students of public and private university of Bangladesh .Secondary data was also used in this study and the data were collected from different journals, books and online sources. For the data analysis statistical analyzing tool Mean Median Mode has been used.

Literature Review

The need of learning English varies from country to country. In Bangladeshi context it is essential to have a good command in English to avail a good position in professional life. For that reason in Bangladeshi educational system English language courses are mandatory in primary and tertiary level. Though the students of Bengali medium have twelve English courses in their primary and tertiary level of education. But somehow these students when they get admitted into the undergraduate program majority of them cannot cope up with the English speaking environment, Because of the medium of classroom instruction in undergraduate level is English .Most of the students specially the Bengali medium background students refrain themselves from speaking English in the classroom. From the observation it is identified that students have knowledge in English language and they can write English, but when they ask to do the speaking activity they feel uncomfortable.

The objective of speaking English is different from country to country. Some people learn English for professional purpose some for

expressing their thoughts and feelings to others .but the main purpose is communication. So in this matter the learner's difficulties and problems are similar to ESL learner's country to country .Most of the non native English speakers face the similar kind of problems in their language learning process.

Sato(2003) has identified that in Japan English language learners are good in writing and reading but not listening and speaking .In this regard Sato found that the most common problem that the Japanese students face are shyness, fear of doing mistake , quietness and shyness in class activities .Not relevant practice in the classroom for developing English speaking skills, more practice on grammar translation method , excessive number of students in a classroom , fear of becoming inferior compare to other English language speaker .These problems make Japanese student uncomfortable in speaking English and make lower rate of speaking English .(p.5)

The problems of Hong kongese are quite similar to the Japanese Gan.z (2012) has surveyed a research on 20 students who were studying in English language in undergraduate level .There students also felt they didn't get the English speaking environment to talk and practice outside of the educational institution. They identified that they have lack of vocabularies and phrases when they speak English .For example one student namely Jane said that when she tries to speak English she couldn't find the appropriate word or phrase to express her thoughts perfectly ,for that reason it became a challenge to complete her sentence with appropriate English vocabularies.

The same scenario is found even in India, the neighboring country of Bangladesh. Hanumantharao(2011) has done a research in India and mention some of the problems in English language teaching and learning condition. His study discussed that lack of appropriate teaching equipments, defective curriculum and testing system , lack of motivation , excessive number of students in language classroom , fear of doing mistake in front of other speaker are the common challenges Indian students face in their English language acquisition system .His research also found that the class duration is too short that teacher

could not get enough time to interact with the every learners and learners couldn't get opportunities to practice English in the classroom , which make students fear and anxiety in speak English .

Above mentioned findings are similar with Bangladeshi ESL students specially the Bengali medium students always face challenges while speaking English in front of people. Bengali medium students always suffer to complete their sentence with appropriate vocabulary while speaking .

Arju(2011) has mentioned in his research that the maximum ESL learners are lagging behind of having adequate knowledge of vocabulary .(p,52)

Though regular practice of speaking English in the classroom can solve the problem of inadequate vocabulary .But it is quite impossible for teacher to have regular practice in the large classroom which consist huge number of students .Sinha (2001) has mentioned that in a regular classroom we need to have small number of students in order to do proper speaking activities. But it is very rare to found standard or small number of students in language classroom.(Siddique, 2004,p.3)

Bashir and Ferdousy (2006) have found from their study that number of students of language classroom vary from 45 to 91. This ratio of student's number is really a large number according to 60% language instructors.

Some other important factors Siddique (2004) has found in a study that the teacher centered classroom, large classes and cultural dilemma are most common challenges in Bangladeshi ESL learners.

On the other hand Ahmed(2006), Chowdhury & Shails (2011)have figure out that large classes, lack of confidence , lack of positive speaking friendly environment, students fear of doing mistakes and shyness are common challenges among the students of Bangladesh .

Siddique has identified a major issue in teaching English language in Bangladesh. He shows that the Bangladesh is one of the few countries in the world where teachers don't get proper training before starting their classes.(Siddique,2004,p.2)

Though Bengali medium students complete their twelve years education of primary and tertiary level with twelve English courses. But after completion of these courses of English, student often feel uncomfortable in their tertiary level of education. Because the medium of instruction in tertiary level of education is English and English speaking environment is not habituated by the students of Bengali medium students, that is why they always feel low or inferior about their knowledge of English.

In the undergraduate program sometimes student get compulsory English language courses .Most of the courses follow CLT methodology for the classroom activities. Which means they have opportunities to know how to do presentation, how to communicate in personal and professional life but somehow it is quite difficult to solve all the problems what they didn't recognize in their primary and secondary level of education? That is why they feel inertia or fear of public speaking.

Some other factors are found in speaking English dilemma in ESL students .Non native student sometimes unable to understand teachers lecture because of teachers fluent speech and avoid to use native language (Bangla language) in classroom .Young (1992) also stated that listening can generate anxiety if it is not understandable.

Unhealthy competitiveness can cause speaking English dilemma. Bailey (1983) found the cause of confusion or anxiety when she analyzed 11 students. She found that when they compare to other speaker in the class they found themselves less proficient. Price (1991) stated that confused or anxious learners always compare themselves with their peer group or classmates which make them more uncomfortable in speaking English.

Horwitz and cope (1986) reported that students are very afraid when they ask for their speaking activities. They are always in a fear that if this activity expose their inadequacies and this kind of feeling often make them frightened and panic.

In addition the researcher Gregson and Horwitz stated that when the students become scrupulous about the errors while giving presentation and any other class activity that

practice of scrupulousness make them anxious and panic about the language learning .

The most objectionable manner of ESL learning is about teacher or instructors class techniques. Sometimes students over reactions on students speaking mistakes bring negative outcomes in their motivation. When a teacher or instructor wants to correct the error while students speaking activities which make them feel like stupid. Judgmental teaching attitude (samimy,(1994)and a harsh manner of teaching (AIDA,1994) are linked to students uncomfortable in classroom activities .

Fear of having speaking test can be a major factor of speaking English dilemma. Sometimes student can being near tears when they are pushed to have speaking or listening test. Young 1991; Daly 1991 mentioned that language testing may lead foreign language fear or anxiety. When students have to go for a speaking test, it may cause sweating or shaking their bodies for the cause of nervousness.

Data analysis and findings:

The below table shows the findings of the major influential factors. The question asked to the students is that what are the dilemmas they are facing when they speak English.

Question: The dilemma which I am facing while speaking English are,

Table 1: Statistical analysis of major factors that creates the dilemma among the Bengali medium students.

	Factors	Mean	Median	Mode
1	Lack of practice in speaking English	4.55	5	5
2	Inertia or anxiety in public speaking	4.48	5	5
3	Less responsive environment to speak English	4.47	4.5	5
4	Less activity on English speaking practices in primary and secondary level	4.42	5	5

	of education.			
5	Lack of knowledge in using appropriate vocabulary	4.32	4	4
6	Lack of practice in communicative method in the classroom	4.17	4	5
7	Negative reaction from audience about the mistakes and error while speaking	4.16	4	4
8	Lack of confidence	4.11	4	4
9	Inferior complexity or feeling low compare to other speakers .	3.88	4	5
10	Confused about grammar and pronunciation	3.84	4	4

The above table shows that the most influential factor which inhibits the students speaking English is their lack of practice in speaking English. Basically in Bangladeshi education system English is compulsory for both Bengali and English medium students, but most of the time Bengali medium student have difficulties in speaking English .The main reason behind it is they have learned English grammar and its application in writing, but not in speaking English .Most of the time student of Bengali medium primary and secondary level could not get opportunity to do the speaking practice in the classroom. Because the education system of teaching English at primary and secondary level is based on GT(Grammar Translation) method and the teachers are not trained up to conduct CLT(Communicative Language Teaching)method in classroom. That is why the lack of practice has

become the most influential factor which makes the Bengali medium students hesitant to speak English. According to the result of the study the second influential factor in speaking English is inertia or feeling uncomfortable while speaking in front of people or public speaking. Language acquisition itself is a complex process. Bangladeshi students as a second language learner always feel uncomfortable while they speak English in front of people. Though speaking is the fastest way of communication, but Bengali medium student when they do the communication they feel shy, nervous and uncomfortable .The reason can vary person to person but most common reason is lack of confidence. Sometimes the negative reaction of the listener can make speaker more nervous and uncomfortable in speaking .Students are always conscious about the reaction of listener whether they are commenting on their speaking quality or not.

The third influential factor is less responsive environment to speak English. For the Bengali medium students it is very tough to get the opportunity to do the speaking practice in the classroom. That is why they need to do speaking practice outside the classroom, but most of the times the environment such as society or the people with whom they are surrounded do not co operate with them. If anybody wants to do the speaking practice he or she needs a speaking partner .but it is so hard for them to get interested communicator.

Another important factor is the educational system of Bangladesh in primary and secondary level. Though English is compulsory in both primary and secondary level, but the method which follows in the school and colleges is not that much supportive to do the speaking practice. Student spent twelve years in primary, secondary and tertiary level, in this period they do not perform as much of speaking practice That is why it became difficult for them especially Bengali medium students to diminish the confusion or dilemma in speaking English.

The other strong factors are lack of knowledge on proper vocabularies ,lack of confidence , negative reaction from audience , inferior complexity or feeling low compare to others

, lack of knowledge in grammar and right pronunciation .Bengali medium students always face the dilemma in choosing right vocabulary when they speak English ,they can write English sentences but when they are asked to speak they feel uncomfortable because they think if the student start speaking there might be mistakes in pronunciation and vocabulary .That is why they refrain themselves from speaking English in front of people .Sometimes audience negative reaction such as laughing on pronunciation ,commenting on errors while speaking makes student more confused and nervous in their speaking .It is very unfortunate that the Bengali medium student are getting knowledge on English grammar throughout their twelve years of education but when they start speaking in front of people they become confused about the proper use and rules of English grammar .

Recommendation

This part of the study will suggest some solutions of the problems that form dilemma in speaking English .Probable actions can be, The educationist of Bangladesh should not only set the English spoken lesson or activity in the book, but also ensure the classroom practice.

Communicative language methods such as pair work, group work, discussion should be applied in the classroom. If the students do more speaking activity in the classroom they can get rid of the dilemma in speaking English.

An English language lab can be a strong accelerator for removing the dilemma .Because in a language lab student can do the spontaneous speaking practice which can help them to remove confusion in speaking English .Language lab environment is different from classroom ,because in a classroom student numbers are huge so that it is quite difficult for the teachers to engage all the students in speaking activity .But in language lab student can get more speaking opportunities and the materials, because the students number is less than the classroom and they can easily get more time and attention from the language instructor .

All the above recommendation is for the institutions and teachers but the most important role should be played by the students themselves. If the students try to remove the dilemma with their

self interests it would be easier for them to become a fluent speaker .Student should create an environment where they can practice speaking English outside the classroom, because the classroom should not be the only place for the practice. If they practice the real life situation in their daily life with their peer group it would be more effective to remove the dilemma.

Limitation of the study

Though the objectives of the study was well defined and it was conducted according to defined methodology, But some limitation need to be discussed for further development. In this study the universities were selected within Dhaka city, if universities situated in other cities in Bangladesh could include that can add more information for the comparison .Beside the public and private universities ,the other technical institution like medical college can be added for the data collection. However, because of the nature and volume of the present study, I could not include these sectors in my study. The further study can be done including all the academic sectors in Bangladesh. To get in depth scenario an action research can be done to get the specific result of any specific institution. Moreover, the educationist occupied in the teaching and learning English can be interviewed for the further data.

Conclusion

The current study highlights the factors that create dilemma in the speaking English activity of the Bengali medium students. A regular speaking activity both in classroom and outside the classroom can build students confident and remove dilemma. Though we are not English speaking country but we cannot deny the importance of speaking English to be the part of the global economy .That is why speaking English should be more focused beside other skills .As a middle income country we are earning our economy by doing global business .Our future generation is our students and if they can compete with the world through their strong communication we can easily became developed country in near future.

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