

Challenges In Developing Productive Skills In English

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Abstract: Developing productive skills—speaking and writing—in English poses several challenges for learners. Common difficulties include limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, native language interference, and minimal exposure to real communication. Classroom environments and limited feedback can further hinder progress. This paper highlights these key obstacles and emphasizes the need for interactive methods and supportive teaching strategies. Understanding these challenges is essential for improving learners' ability to communicate effectively in English.

Keywords: Communicate, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, productive skills, interpretation, nuances of language.

Introduction: In today's globalized world, the ability to communicate effectively in English is more important than ever. English has become the dominant language in international business, education, science, and online communication. As a result, learning English is no longer a luxury but a necessity for students and professionals around the world.

While many learners achieve success in understanding written texts and listening to spoken English, they often struggle when it comes to expressing themselves through speaking and writing. These two skills—known as productive skills—are essential for active participation in academic, social, and professional contexts. However, their development is often hindered by a variety of linguistic, psychological, and environmental factors.

Starting with challenges with writing, lack of grammar knowledge can be one of the foremost reasons behind this. Many high school and university students are observed to be ignorant of grammar rules, thus having difficulty in writing even a paragraph. Apart from this, if they are learning English as a second language understanding verb tenses, grammar structure, article usage and other such kinds of basic, yet important rules can be challenging, especially when their native language has no similarity to English.

The second reason can be limited vocabulary. It is one of the factors that hinders the ability of students to write clearly and effectively as they may not find

enough vocabulary to convey their opinions. Moreover, they may have problems with choosing the right word which requires familiarity with the nuances of language.

When it comes to speaking, it is also seen as one of the biggest challenges compared to other sections: Listening, Reading and Writing. As an IELTS Speaking instructor, I have seen numerous students being unwilling to attend this class because of difficulties in this section. The first reason why they find it hard is that a large proportion of students lack confidence as they are so shy to talk in front of people. Even though their peers support them by sharing opinions, they may still cannot openly express themselves or once they are comfortable with their friends and speak confidently, it can be tough to speak among others. In short, they can not get out of their comfort zone and get along well with others.

The following one of the most problematic things in speaking is pronunciation. For those who are learning English as a second language, it may be considered tough due to its complex phonetic system, especially "th" sounds and intonation, which is can destroy the whole speech if a word is pronounced or given stress differently. Mispronunciation can lead to self-consciousness and reluctance to participate in conversations.

Turning to the general problems, lack of practice can be the one reason why students may not improve their productive skills. The more time students spend on

their improvement, the better they can speak and write. In turn, as learners do not see improvement in their writing and speaking, they may be discouraged which can halt them from continuing.

Not having enough ideas can also make learning process harder. It is obvious that in productive skills – writing and speaking, a person has to convey their opinions and if they do not have enough idea of what to communicate or write, it is one of the most challenging things. In this case, even excellent grammar and vocabulary cannot help.

There was research conducted in North South University in 2024. In order to explore the challenges and their probable solutions in developing speaking skills at the tertiary level in the EFL context, this study tried to answer the following questions

- 1) What are the challenges teachers and learners face in developing learners' English-speaking skills at the tertiary level in Bangladesh?
- 2) What are the probable solutions to overcome those challenges?

To explore the challenges in developing English-speaking skills at the tertiary level, this study employed a mixed-method approach involving students and educators from three universities in Dhaka. Quantitative data, collected through a student survey, revealed common issues such as lack of confidence, limited classroom interaction, fear of making mistakes, and insufficient exposure to real-life speaking opportunities. Qualitative data from teacher interviews further highlighted systemic factors, including large class sizes, exam-oriented curricula, and limited institutional support.

Data were analyzed using both statistical patterns and thematic interpretation. The analysis revealed that students often struggle due to anxiety, lack of practice, and minimal encouragement, while teachers identified structural and pedagogical limitations as key obstacles. Suggested solutions included creating more interactive speaking environments, incorporating speaking-focused tasks in regular assessments, providing teacher training on communicative methodologies, and ensuring institutional support for English language practice beyond the classroom.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the development of productive skills—speaking and writing—in English is influenced by a range of challenges that learners frequently encounter, including limited vocabulary, poor grammar, pronunciation difficulties, lack of confidence, and insufficient practice. These issues are further intensified by environmental and institutional factors

such as exam-oriented curricula, large class sizes, and limited exposure to authentic communication.

Overcoming these obstacles requires a multifaceted approach that includes interactive teaching methods, increased opportunities for real-life language use, continuous feedback, and supportive learning environments. By addressing both the internal struggles of learners and the external limitations of the classroom, educators and institutions can better equip students to express themselves confidently and effectively in English.

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