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Factors Affecting Fluency of English Speaking of EFL Students: A Case Study of Government Degree College (GDC) Batkhela

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Abstract
The investigation of factors affecting English-speaking skills remains a fundamental topic in second-language acquisition research. But somehow, there is still a gap understanding of the factors affecting learners' speaking fluency. This study explored the major factors affecting speaking fluency among undergraduates studying English as a Foreign Language using a quantitative, descriptive case study design. Forty undergraduate students were used as the population for data Collection through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. Four main categories have been analyzed, including linguistic, psychological, environmental, and pedagogical factors. The findings underscore that each of these factors has influenced learners' speaking fluency. Environmental factors have the most significant impact on fluency, including limited exposure to English and a lack of a supportive speaking environment. Then, linguistic factors — grammar, vocabulary, and sentence formation in actual speaking have the second-greatest and most significant impact. Writing-centered syllabus, lack of audio-visual materials, anxiety, and low confidence were the most influential factors in the pedagogical and psychological section. The study recommends using interactive and balanced teaching methods and a syllabus. Enough opportunities must be provided, and a good English-speaking environment is needed to boost students' confidence and develop their oral competence.
Key Words: English-speaking, fluency, EFL students, second language acquisition, rural area.

Introduction
English in today's world is the most influential global language, serving as a medium for international communication. The significance of English can not be avoided in any aspect, such as education, business, and technology. English functions as a medium for gaining knowledge and professional opportunities (Crystal, 2003). In almost every academic and professional field, effective use of English is an essential requirement. Speaking is regarded as the most important among the four main skills of a language because it directly reflects learners' communicative competence and confidence in real life (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

Success in higher education and career development depends on speaking fluently, which also helps improve academic performance and social status.

In Pakistan, English holds a special position in the social and linguistic context. The second official language of Pakistan is English, used in legal documents, as a medium of instruction in education, and as a symbol of prestige (Mahboob, 2009; Zaib & Al-Hawtali, 2025.). However, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) in most institutions and holds a higher standing in educational and administrative institutions. However, old, traditional, grammar-oriented methods with a limited focus on communicative skills are still used (Bhutto & Kazmi, 2020). Reading and writing are easy for many students, but they cannot express their thoughts and ideas in spoken English. Students in government colleges in rural areas face this problem more, as teaching resources are limited and exposure to English outside the classroom is very low.

Effective communication in daily life requires strong fluency in speaking, which reflects learners' overall proficiency. Speaking competence development depends on multiple factors, such as linguistic, psychological, and environmental, and cannot be achieved solely through mastering linguistic competence (Ngoc & Dung, 2020; Zaib, 2022). A limited vocabulary, weak pronunciation, and limited grammatical knowledge are linguistic factors that affect learners' speaking fluency. Students are further discouraged from speaking due to psychological issues like anxiety, lack of motivation and fear of making mistakes (Horwitz, 1986; Saeed et al., 2024). English-speaking fluency is also affected by environmental factors, such as the unavailability of an English-speaking environment, unsupportive peers, and inadequate teacher feedback (Ali, Kamal, & Imran, 2003; Zaib et al., 2025).

The Pakistani educational system has used English for many years, but students remain unable to communicate effectively in spoken English, especially those from government colleges. In rural areas, students do not have enough exposure to an English-speaking environment, and they do not have enough teaching resources, so this problem is seen more in such areas. University students in urban areas remain the main primary focus of previous studies, and little attention is given to regional institutions. To focus on students from rural areas and report on the condition of regional institutions, research is needed. This study aims to explore the factors influencing students' English fluency at Government Degree College (GDC) Batkhela.

The following questions are answered in this research: What are some of the main factors that stop students from developing their speaking fluency at Government Degree College Batkhela? Which factors influence is most significant? These questions are addressed, and a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' speaking ability is presented. To analyze the factors that keep EFL students from achieving oral fluency in English will remain the purpose of this study, and to determine which factor has the highest impact. The importance of this study can be seen as it focuses on rural area public college students, who have not received enough attention in previous studies. Teachers and policymakers will benefit from this by developing strategies tailored to the problems students in the college face and to their needs to improve speaking fluency. This research will also contribute to existing research on second language acquisition (SLA) in Pakistan, offering new insights into how factors affect speaking performance. Not only GDC Batkhela teachers and curriculum designers will get help from this but institutions across Pakistan that face similar

issues can also get help.

Literature Review

In global education, speaking English is the central focus. Many researchers studies this topic factors affecting speaking fluency of EFL and ESL learners over the past years. Relevant studies on this topic is analyzed in this section to study the present topic in detail and identify gaps.

Leong and Ahmadi (2017), in their paper mentioned that English-speaking not only involve good linguistic knowledge but also the skill to speak confidently and fluently to express ideas. Findings of their research reveals that lack of motivation, limited vocabulary and fear of making mistakes affected learners' speaking fluency. Tavakoli (2024) gives the definition of fluency as a combination of speech rate, coherence and smoothness, mentioning that fluency is develop through consistent practice and interaction.

Alaraj (2018) says relying on memorization often leads to facing problems when communicating spontaneously. He proposed that task-based learning and speaking activities help students to recognize linguistic patterns, improving both fluency and accuracy. Vy et al. (2021) supported this by stating that peer discussions, pair work, and exposure to an English-speaking environment can significantly contribute to the development of speaking fluency. Ejaz et al. (2020) analyzed speaking problems among ESL students in Pakistan. Their findings reveal that mostly students know grammatical rules but fail to speak freely and confidently reason of which is limited exposure and cultural constraints. Their study highlighted that lack of opportunities and speaking activities hinders fluency development. Saeed et al. (2022) explored university students' perceptions of barriers to English-speaking in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Students highlighted shyness, low confidence and fear of judgment as the main barriers. The study suggests the importance of creating supportive classroom environment where peers see mistakes as part of learning.

Linguistic factors also affect English speaking fluency. Ngoc and Dung (2020) categorized linguistic factors into grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary deficiencies, emphasizing that incorrect pronunciation results in a breakdown in speaking. Wali Khan Monib and Rahman (2020) discovered that students' expressive ability is restricted by not having enough vocabulary, leading to hesitation and code-switching during speech.

Leong and Ahmadi (2017) in non-native context connect poor linguistic competence to lack of language exposure. They argued that those students have a smaller lexical range and less natural pronunciation, and that they rarely engage with English media such as films or podcasts. Similarly, Imran Ejaz et al. (2021) found that students of rural areas in Pakistan have limited access to quality language instruction and English-speaking peers which negatively affects their linguistic development. Sadullayeva (2023) states that linguistic competence is developed through continuous speaking practice rather than focusing only on grammar drills. She emphasized that use of spoken language in real life and oral feedback are key components in mastering speaking competence.

Psychological factors such as motivation, confidence, and anxiety can also influence learners' ability to speak. Horwitz et al. (1986) introduced a new concept, Foreign Language Anxiety, arguing that fear of making mistakes and negative evaluation can prevent students from speaking in class. This idea aligns with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter hypothesis, in which he states that emotional obstacles such as low self-esteem and anxiety block language

acquisition. When the affective filter is high, students cannot fully process input. Ngoc and Dung (2020) observed that most students avoid oral participation due to shyness and anxiety. Learners afraid of making mistakes often avoid speaking activities. Saeed et al. (2022) confirmed that the main reasons affecting Pakistani students' speaking are fear of judgment and low confidence. Psychological support improve students' willingness to speak.

Wali and Rahman (2020) highlighted that self-confidence and intrinsic motivation can help strongly in speaking development. Motivated learners take part in every activity and show faster fluency development. Leong and Ahmadi (2017) suggested creating an environment that is psychologically safe to boost learner confidence and reduce anxiety. Pedagogical elements such as teaching style, curriculum design, and teacher feedback can also affect speaking fluency. Bhutto and Kazmi (2019) critically analysed English textbooks and found that Pakistani textbooks provide sufficient grammar instruction but lack communicative activities. This limitation of textbooks prevents students from practicing real conversation and applying grammatical knowledge orally in the real world.

Brumfit (1984) questioned whether "language is education or education is language," which reinforces the idea that instruction must prioritize communication rather than memorization. He proposed increasing interactional methods and activities, such as discussions, storytelling, and debates, to enhance students' confidence. Bhatti et al. (2021) found that Pakistani classrooms are mostly teacher-centred, and speaking opportunities for students are low. Their research suggests that teachers should use communicative language teaching (CLT) and interactive approaches in order to make learners more active participants in class. Similarly, Vy et , such as group work and peer feedback, are effective. (2021) demonstrated that strategies that focus on students, such as group work and peer feedback, enhance both accuracy and fluency.

Ngoc and Dung (2020) highlighted that both normal and positive teacher feedback increase students' motivation, whereas excessive feedback increases anxiety. This aligns with Krashen's (1982) emphasis on a "low-anxiety" learning environment that increases input absorption. Environmental factors can also affect speaking fluency. Ejaz et al. (2020) observed that in rural areas of Pakistan, the social environment discourages English speaking. Students do not get enough authentic opportunities outside the class. Saeed et al. (2022) reported that societal attitudes towards English influence learners' motivation and participation. Supportive environments encourage fluency.

Imran Ejaz et al. (2021) found that socio-economic status influences exposure to English. Students from wealthier backgrounds have more resources and teacher support. Sadullayeva (2023) emphasized interaction with English native speakers or media to master pronunciation and fluency. Ngoc and Dung (2020) highlighted that students with well-spoken English-speaking families are orally fluent, emphasizing the importance of family support. Despite these studies on English-speaking in Pakistan and globally, most focus on urban-level contexts; few investigate localized settings. There is also a limited distinction among all factors in one frame. This study addresses these gaps by analyzing factors affecting the speaking fluency of EFL students at Government Degree College Batkhela, providing context-specific, focused analysis using a quantitative, descriptive case study with Likert-scale questionnaires.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative, descriptive case study design to investigate the factors influencing the English-speaking fluency of EFL students at Government Degree College (GDC) Batkhela. The descriptive strategy aims to show the available conditions without changing variables, while the quantitative method involves surveying a sample of students to gather data on various factors influencing speaking fluency. Creswell (2014) says that descriptive approach helps in understanding phenomena as they naturally occur. That is why the current study uses this approaches to investigate better speaking fluency challenges face by students.

Population and Sampling

The focus of this study is undergraduate EFL students at Government Degree College (GDC) Batkhela. Participants are selected through purposive sampling. Individuals relevant to the study objective are included. Number of participated students are 40. Niymbili et al. (2023), sees purposive sampling as ideal for small and focused educational research, this research follows his guidance for sampling method.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

For data collection a questionnaire is used. Students responded to Likert-scale statements. Likert-scale range from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). The questions are divided thematically to four sections: Linguistic, Psychological, Environmental and Pedagogical factors. Validation of questionnaire was made from experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and content validity. With permission from administration data were collected from students during regular college hours. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, that their questionnaire would be anonymous, and that they should participate voluntarily. To ensure authenticity participants completed the questionnaire individually.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis specifically mean and percentage distribution are used to analyze collected data, to summarize responses and identify trends among factors affecting speaking fluency. Creswell (2014) and Cohen et al. (2018) recommended these statistical techniques for low-scale educational study which aims to describe patterns rather than establish causal relationships. The results were then compared with the findings of existing studies to identify differences and confirm broader patterns.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the study confidentially was maintained. Names and other identifiable details were not collected. They were assured that the data will be used only for academic research purposes, and they can participate voluntarily; no one has forced them.

Data Analysis

The collected data from 40 students of Government Degree College (GDC) Batkhela were analyzed using descriptive tools, specifically mean and percentage methods. Each questionnaire item was measured on a five-point Likert-

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scaleranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). Some statements were positive so their scores were reversed to avoid mistakes and confusion in data interpretation. Factors with higher mean value and percentage mean greater negative influence on English-speaking fluency. Four main categories have been analyzed: Linguistic Factors, Psychological Factors, Environmental Factors, and Pedagogical Factors.

The linguistic section consist vocabulary, grammar, sentence formation, pronunciation and native language interference. The psychological part includes nervousness, hesitation, lack of confidence, and difficulty in organizing thoughts. The environmental section covers peer interaction, exposure to English in society, speaking in family, and media. Pedagogical factors include syllabus design, teaching methods, instructional materials.

The results of analysis are summarized in Table 1 and 2, which represent the mean of each question, sectional mean, and overall percentage of each category and their relative influence on fluency. Table 1 represents the values of Linguistics and psychological factors while Table 2 represents the values of environmental and pedagogical factors. The data show variation among the four categories and their impact on students' speaking fluency. The data were also represented in graphic form, in the Findings and Discussion chapter. As shown in the tables, the four factors have differences in the mean and percentage values which shows that some factors exert more influence than others on students' speaking fluency. The variations are further explored in the Findings and Discussion section.

Here's the complete data formatted as an APA-style table:

Table 1: *Factors Affecting English Speaking Skills: Linguistic, Psychological, Environmental, and Pedagogical Dimensions*

Section	S.No	Question Statement	Mean	Sectional Mean	Sec.Percnt
Linguistic	1	I have enough vocabulary to express my ideas in English.	2.6	3.08	61%
	2	My grammar knowledge helps me speak English fluently.	2.1		
	3	My pronunciation affects my confidence while speaking.	3.3		
	4	I find difficulty in forming correct sentences while speaking English.	3.9		
	5	I mix my native language with English during	3.5		

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|					
		speaking.			
Psychological	6	I feel nervous in front of people while speaking English.	3.3	2.47	54%
	7	I lose confidence when someone corrects my mistakes.	2.8		
	8	I am motivated to improve my speaking skills.	1.4		
	9	I speak English confidently outside the classroom.	2.4		
	10	I find difficulty in organizing thoughts while speaking English.	3.8		
Environmental	11	My classroom environment promotes English speaking.	2.0	3.5	70%
	12	Speaking English in my culture is considered showing off.	4.1		
	13	I use my mother tongue instead of English in an informal setting.	3.6		
	14	I speak English with my family members.	3.7		
	15	The lack of English speaking in our society affects my fluency.	4.1		
Pedagogical	16	My teachers encourage students to speak English.	1.8	2.8	56%
	17	I get enough opportunities to participate in discussions.	2.5		

18	My teachers deliver lectures in English.	2.0
19	We have audio-visual materials that make English speaking easier.	3.9
20	The syllabus focuses more on writing than speaking.	3.8

Note. Sectional mean represents the average score for all items within each dimension. Sec.Percnt = Sectional Percentage.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the most influential factors are environmental, with a sectional mean value of 3.50 and an overall percentage of 70. The data shows that students from rural-area colleges get limited opportunities outside the classroom to speak English. The lack of an English-speaking environment and limited exposure to authentic communication hinder students' ability to practice and speak English fluently. This lack of meaningful contexts makes it difficult for students to develop natural fluency. This reinforces the observation of Dinh and Dung (2020), who emphasized that limited exposure to English outside the classroom is a significant barrier to EFL students in mastering speaking. No matter how well students learn English in class, limited practice in the real world can prevent them from achieving oral fluency.

Next to environmental factors are linguistic factors which affected students' fluency the most. The mean value for linguistic factors is 3.08 (61%). Learners reported that they face challenges in forming correct grammatical sentences and switching to their native language while speaking. These difficulties indicate a lack of control over syntactic structures and lexical choices in real-world communication. Learners may have the basic knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, but struggle to apply these rules fluently while speaking, which can result in self-correction, hesitation and disrupted speech flow.

FACTORS AFFECTING SPEAKING FLUENCY
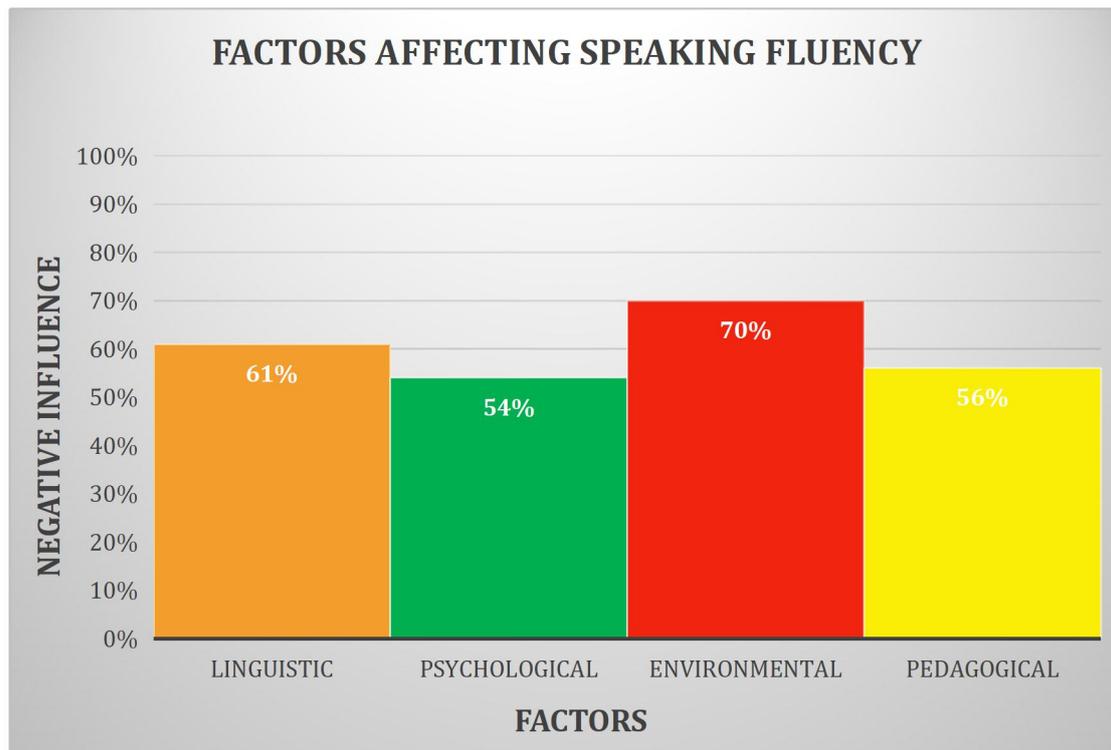
Pedagogical factors also show a moderate influence on the speaking fluency of students, with a mean value of 2.80 (50%). The most influential factors in this section are the unavailability of audio-visual materials in the rural colleges and syllabus design which focuses more on writing than speaking, which limits learners from developing oral competence. Traditional curriculum and writing oriented teaching methods fail to provide enough opportunities to students to practice spoken communication. Such approaches are inadequate for enhancing oral competence. Student centered, communicative and practice centered approaches must be adopted.

Psychological factors show the lowest influence with a mean value of 2.47 (54%). Although students have reported that they feel nervous while speaking, with a mean value of 3.3, and that they often struggle to organize their thoughts while speaking, with a mean value of 3.3, these factors have the highest negative influence on students' fluency, but the overall influence of psychological factors is lower than the others. These observations align with Horwitz et al. (1986), who demonstrated that foreign language anxiety is a barrier to learners in enhancing oral performance. Students' fear of mistakes, self-consciousness and hesitation reduce their participation in speaking activities. Confidence and mental readiness are essential for effective communication.

Overall, the data show that the main barriers are environmental and linguistic, followed by pedagogical and psychological. Although lack of confidence, audio-visual materials and writing-focused syllabus contribute, the most challenging are lack of exposure, limited speaking opportunities, and weak linguistic control. Fluency development thus depends on the combined influence of environmental, linguistic, pedagogical and psychological factors rather than any single factor.

To enhance students' oral competence, the teacher should make the classroom more interactive and communicative. Audiovisual materials should be made available, and English should be used in society and at home in informal

settings. Colleges should organize debates and language activities to increase exposure and confidence. A balanced approach should be adopted in designing the syllabus and teaching methods to improve the oral competence of learners.

Conclusion

This study investigated the factors affecting English-speaking fluency of EFL students at Government Degree College Batkhela. The research highlights that the main reasons for students' disrupted speaking are environmental and linguistic. Fewer opportunities outside the classroom to practice speaking English, limited exposure to authentic communication, and weak control over linguistic factors like grammar and sentence formation hinder learners' fluency. Pedagogical factors such as a writing-focused syllabus and a lack of audio-visual materials further affect fluency. At the same time, Psychological factors like anxiety and lack of confidence have a smaller but notable impact. Overall the findings indicate that speaking fluency depends on all factors, linguistic, psychological, environmental, and pedagogical rather on a single cause. Adopting interactive, communicative, and practice-centered teaching methods is important to improve speaking. Exposure to an English-speaking environment outside the classroom and creating supportive environments can also help in fluency development. From these measures students from rural institutions facing similar hurdles can achieve oral proficiency.

Recommendations

This study is limited to rural areas students future researches may include larger sample from rural and urban colleges to increase generalizability. This study only use qualitative method with only questionnaire for data collection. Mixed-methods with interviews, observation and surveys may provide a deeper understanding of factors affecting speaking fluency. Researchers can also investigate the impact of technology and digitals tools on speaking communication.

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