

# Learning English as a Foreign Language: An Analysis of the Causes of Anxiety among Public University Students in Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** In today's globalized environment, it is imperative to learn English, as studying a second language has a positive effect on brain function. People who speak more than one language excel in memory, critical thinking, confidence, problem-solving, attention, multitasking, and listening skills. English is utilized in fields such as science, aviation, computing, tourism, and education, making it a significant issue requiring improvement to remain competitive globally. However, the study focuses on the complex world of English language learning anxiety among university students in the Bangladeshi educational scene, with another objective being to identify ways to address the challenges of learning English and overcoming anxiety. A mixed technique (qualitative and quantitative) is used to conduct the study, with data gathered from both primary and secondary sources in the study area. Primary information was obtained from students of various faculties at Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University in Bangladesh, with simple Key Informant Interviews (KII) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI) also used to collect data. Most respondents recognize the importance of improving teaching methods and motivating students to practice English more as a means to address the challenges of learning English and overcoming anxiety, among other factors.

**Keywords:** Learning English, Foreign Language, Anxiety, Challenges, Strategy etc.

## 1. Introduction

English proficiency is now vital globally, especially in non-native English-speaking countries like Bangladesh, where it is integral to higher education. Many students there enroll in public institutions to enhance their English skills for better academic and professional opportunities. Yet, anxiety often accompanies this journey (Majumder et al., 2017).

Mastery of the English language has become increasingly vital in our interconnected world. Adeptness in English is often seen as a prerequisite for

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professional progress, offering a significant advantage in the global economy and expanding career opportunities. Even a basic proficiency in English can substantially broaden one's employment prospects, unlocking doors to positions previously beyond reach. As one of the most widely spoken languages globally, English proficiency is now a prerequisite for many employers, attracting attention from recruiters and multinational corporations seeking candidates with this skill set. Demonstrating competence and employability through English proficiency on one's resume can greatly enhance one's prospects in securing a more lucrative job (Herbert, 2022).

English is important for emerging nations like Bangladesh, because it helps with technology, business, and education. In Bangladesh, a developing nation with over 160 million inhabitants, about 150 public and private universities cater to a substantial number of students pursuing higher education, primarily at the tertiary level. Despite completing primary and secondary education in Bangla, students encounter the unfamiliarity of the university environment as English becomes the medium of instruction at the tertiary level. While aspiring to secure a career after obtaining a tertiary education diploma, a significant majority face challenges due to insufficient English proficiency (Majumder et al., 2017).

Bangladeshi students in public universities have firsthand experience with the challenges of learning a foreign language, such as English, in an academic setting. The associated anxiety has gained attention globally, impacting not only learning but also the general health and academic performance of students. Therefore, understanding the concerns of Bangladeshi students in public universities learning English as a second language is crucial for educators and scholars worldwide (Mamun, 2021).

Bengali medium students in Bangladesh face challenges in verbal English communication due to a lack of exposure to communicative English language contexts. The rigid Grammar Translation curriculum in secondary and upper secondary levels hampers their learning and acquisition abilities in spoken English classrooms at the postsecondary level. Moreover, disparities between secondary and university education in classroom and learning cultures further impede language acquisition, preventing the primary goal of the oral communication course from being achieved (Ahsan, 2017).

This study delves into the multifaceted elements contributing to anxiety in this scenario. Public university students in Bangladesh, learning English as a second language, grapple with anxiety stemming from linguistic,

sociocultural, psychological, and pedagogical factors. The objective is to comprehensively identify and analyze these variables, shedding light on the specific challenges faced by students in this context. Beyond the immediate educational implications, addressing anxiety in English learning is crucial for fostering confident and competent individuals capable of thriving in a globalized world. By pinpointing the root causes of anxiety, this research seeks to propose effective strategies and interventions that public universities in Bangladesh can adopt to create a more supportive environment for English language learners. In doing so, it aims to contribute to the enhancement of English language education in public universities, ultimately empowering students to harness the potential benefits of English proficiency.

## **2. Research Objectives**

The study analyzes the factors leading to anxiety in public university students in Bangladesh regarding the learning of English as a foreign language. The objectives are:

- a. To examine the causes underlying the anxiety experienced by students in public universities.
- b. To identify effective strategies to alleviate or minimize anxiety levels among public university students engaged in learning English as a foreign language.

## **3. Literature Review**

There are several academic studies, papers, and articles about learning English. However, there is a lack of research on 'Learning English as a Foreign Language and the Causes of Anxiety about it among the Students of Public Universities in Bangladesh,' particularly addressing the challenges faced by students who should learn English as a second language and conduct their higher education studies in English.

Elaldi and Senel (2016) conducted a study on Turkish students' fear of learning a foreign language while studying English language and literature. The goal of this study was to determine how anxious students were about learning a foreign language when they were in preparation class and when they were in fourth grade at Cumhuriyet University in Sivas, Turkey. Additionally, it was intended to investigate the impact of gender on students' foreign language anxiety. The study involved 98 kids (57 of whom were female), who continued in preparatory school through fourth grade and freely participated in the study first and second phases. Through the Foreign

Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, research data were gathered. Although students' anxiety levels about foreign languages were found to be moderate in both the preparatory class and fourth grade, students' anxiety levels in fourth grade were marginally greater than those in the preparatory class. Males were shown to have higher levels of foreign language anxiety than females, nevertheless. However, the study was significant for the situation and environment in Turkey. The situation is different in Bangladesh, and it requires a thorough analysis to improve English proficiency and reduce anxiety. Upon reviewing the relevant literature, it is evident that a comprehensive study is essential to understand the reasons behind the anxieties experienced by public university students. Additionally, devising concrete solutions for these issues within the current context of Bangladesh is imperative.

Similarly, Alsowat (2016) conducted a study on a framework for effectively reducing foreign language anxiety (FLA) in higher education. This study examined the anxiety levels Saudi English major students at Taif University when learning a foreign language, along with the factors contributing to their anxiety. It also investigated how gender and academic standing influenced this anxiety. Additionally, it explored how fluency in Arabic and anxiety relate to one another. A total of 373 English major students, consisting of 205 men and 168 women, were administered a modified version of the FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) and the IFLAF (International Foreign Language Anxiety Scale). The findings revealed that Saudi students majoring in English experienced a moderate level of anxiety. The most anxiety-inducing factors for these students included concerns about the consequences of failure, forgetting items they knew, and feeling uneasy during language tests. The study also found a significant inverse relationship between Language competency (grammar, speaking, writing, reading, and GPA) and language anxiety. In the current study, gender had no discernible effect on linguistic anxiety. However, the fact that students' academic standing did not affect their anxiety levels demonstrates that all students experience a similar level of fear, regardless of their class standing. The study recommended using an EFL practical model to reduce the harmful consequences of anxiety. However, the study did not focus on the opinions of non-major English students, which does not reveal the true extent of anxiety among the general student population.

In addition, Al-Saraj (2014) conducted a study on anxiety related to foreign languages among Arab women learning English. The study investigated the

experiences of female college students studying English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, where the language is gaining becoming importance amidst cultural shifts. The research employed a case study methodology and examined ten individuals: five from the college's initial English program (Level 1) and five from the more advanced level (Level 3), all of whom reported moderate to high levels of anxiety. To gain deeper insights into the students' perspectives and behaviors, a multimethod approach was utilized, including surveys, individual and group interviews, and field notes from classroom observations. Special attention was given to the viewpoints of the students regarding their anxiety experiences. Each participant's experiences were individually analyzed, compared, and evaluated within the context of previously published research studies. While some elements, such as interactions between teachers and students and instructor behavior, appeared to cause anxiety in nearly all participants, other factors differed between those in the initial and later stages of the study. The study exclusively focused on female students.

Mei and Masoumeh (2017) conducted a study investigating factors influencing students' English-speaking abilities, emphasizing the significance of honing effective communication skills, particularly in spoken language acquisition. Mastery of speaking poses a considerable challenge for language learners, often hindering their ability to express themselves verbally in a foreign language. This essay underscores the crucial role of spoken English fluency in today's communication-driven world. It explores various aspects, including the definition of "speaking," the importance and characteristics of speaking performance, common speaking problems, and factors affecting speaking proficiency. The literature assessment indicates a need for enhanced focus on proper speaking instruction to address learners' priorities. While the study by Mei and Masoumeh (2017) concentrated solely on speaking skills, it provides valuable insights for teachers and researchers to cater to language learners' speaking demands in English education.

Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009) conducted a significant study addressing foreign language speaking anxiety in English classrooms, highlighting conceptual challenges and practical suggestions. The research reveals that English teachers in Greece often encounter students experiencing language anxiety but may misattribute their symptoms to low performance or lack of motivation. This paper contributes to understanding language anxiety and offers educators practical methods to alleviate students' concerns about judgment and low proficiency in speaking a foreign language. It includes a qualitative, classroom-based case study evaluating anxious students' traits

and proposing interventions to reduce their speaking anxiety. The study assesses the effectiveness of these interventions, discusses the pedagogical implications of the findings, and emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing language anxiety in English language education (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009).

In a similar vein, Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) conducted a study examining factors influencing linguistic anxiety. The intricate nature of anxiety linked to acquiring a foreign language has been shown to be a predictor of proficiency. The study involved 210 university students and identified seven variables, including age, academic achievement, foreign travel history, high school experience with foreign languages, expected overall average for the current language course, perceived scholastic competence, and perceived self-worth. These variables significantly contributed to predicting foreign language anxiety through stepwise multiple regression analysis. Freshmen and sophomores reported the lowest anxiety levels, while anxiety increased linearly with each subsequent study year. The study suggests future research directions and educational implications for enhancing foreign language learning and understanding anxiety in this context (Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999).

Notably, there has been a lack of specific research investigating the causes of anxiety among Bangladeshi public university students learning English as a foreign language. The author contends that there is a scarcity of studies serving as models for understanding English learning and the reasons behind anxiety among students in Bangladesh's public universities. While existing studies have primarily focused on various aspects of language learning, none have delved into determining optimal strategies for studying English and overcoming fear, particularly in the context of Bangladesh's public colleges. Given the contemporary global landscape, addressing this gap is crucial. This study aims to enhance students' productivity, fluency, and alignment with the dynamic demands of the global community by focusing on promoting English learning, addressing associated anxiety, and proposing techniques to overcome English learning-related fears.

#### **4. Theoretical framework**

Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, Monitor Model, and Affective Filter Hypothesis have been used in the study to analyze and elucidate factors contributing to anxiety among public university students in Bangladesh. Krashen distinguishes between language acquisition and learning, noting that

acquisition is unconscious and stress-free, while learning is conscious and effortful. He argues that second language acquisition can occur naturally, but learning in a classroom setting can lead to anxiety. Krashen's input hypothesis suggests that optimal learning happens when new information is just slightly more difficult than what was previously learned. This model indicates that anxiety affects both processing and output stages, hindering language production. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis suggests that factors like anxiety act as mental barriers, impeding language learning (Krashen 1985).

## **5. Materials and Methods**

The study employed a mixed methodology, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches in an exploratory fashion to achieve its objectives. Survey data was gathered through a mixed technique, facilitating the integration of conventional quantitative and epidemiological research methods with qualitative data such as semi-structured interviews, observations, and focus groups to enhance translation. Various methods were employed to assess effectiveness and gather information on the "who" and "what." The use of mixed techniques simplified logical analyses and descriptive statistics. Data for the study's goals were compiled from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through in-person interviews with students from various public universities in Bangladesh, using standardized questionnaires. In-depth interviews (IDIs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted to extract information from significant informants, especially teachers in the research sites. A standardized questionnaire was employed in interviews with randomly selected participants, involving 62 students from different public institutions. Additionally, 7 IDIs and 3 KIIs were conducted. Field notes and observations were taken during KIIs and IDIs. Secondary sources, including books, scholarly publications, journals, news, reports, and websites, were consulted. The collected data were analyzed using the "MS Excel" tool. Ethical considerations were meticulously observed to maintain a balance between the potential benefits and anticipated risks of the study.

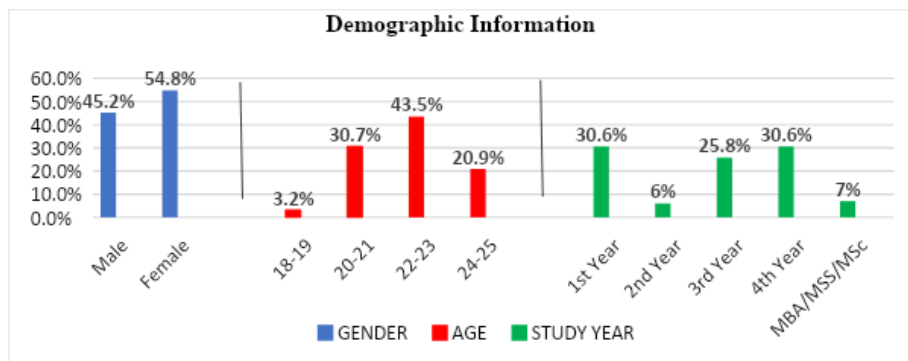
## **6. Findings**

### **6.1 Demographic Information of the Respondents**

Demographic data is important for comprehensive research, offering valuable insights into individuals' overall welfare and societal status. However,

evaluating respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, study year, and university, is helpful.

**Figure 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents**



(Source: Field Survey, 2023)

In exploring the dynamics of this study, it is evident that a slightly higher proportion of female respondents, comprising 54.8% (n=34), actively participated. On the other hand, male respondents, accounting for 45.2% (n=28), also played a significant role in shaping the diverse perspectives reflected in the research. This gender distribution forms a crucial aspect of the inquiry into the factors influencing English language learning anxiety among students in public universities in Bangladesh. The above figure shows that most respondents (n=27, 43.5%) were aged between 22 and 23, while 30.7% (n=19) belonged to the 20-21 age group. Additionally, some respondents participated in the 24-25 age group (n=13, 20.9%), and the 18-19 age group (n=3, 3.2%). To guarantee a representative sample, participants in this study on anxiety factors among Bangladeshi public university students were carefully classified. Notably, 30.6% (n=19) of respondents were first-year students, illustrating the difficulties these students encountered throughout their initial academic year. The third-year cohort, making up 25.8% (n=16) of participants, shed light on how individuals dealt with mid-degree problems. The 30.6% participation of fourth-year students was also relevant, revealing the worries of individuals about to finish their undergraduate degrees. Students with an MBA/MSS and an MSc constituted a separate category in this study, accounting for 7% of participants. Considering the specific nature of their academic endeavors, this subgroup's perspective provides useful insights. The final group of participants, the second-year group, contributes to a comprehensive understanding of anxiety triggered during this middle stage of their academic careers.

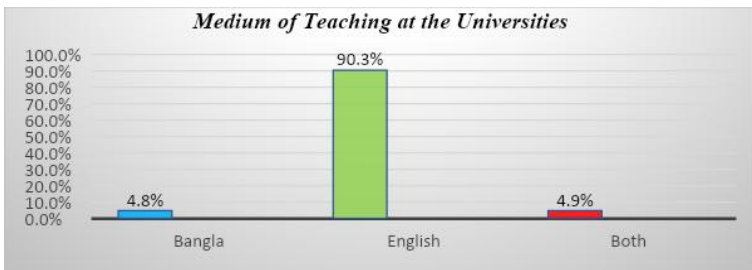
**Table 1:** Universities of the Respondents

University Name	Total Respondent	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University	44	71%	71%
University of Dhaka	7	11.3%	82.3%
Bangladesh University of Professional	1	1.6%	83.9%
Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology	1	1.6%	85.5%
University of Rajshahi	2	3.2%	88.7%
University of Chittagong	3	4.9%	93.6%
Jahangirnagar University	2	3.2%	96.8%
Begum Rokeya University	1	1.6%	98.4%
University of Barishal	1	1.6%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100%</b>	

(Source: Field Survey, 2023)

The table above clearly indicates that the majority of respondents (n=44, 71%) are students of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, a reputable public university in Bangladesh. The higher representation from this university is attributed to its accessibility. Additionally, 11.3% (n=7) of respondents participated from the University of Dhaka, and a few (n=3, 4.9%) joined from the University of Chittagong. The survey results reveal a similar participation rate from other institutions.

**6.2 Medium of Teaching at the Universities**

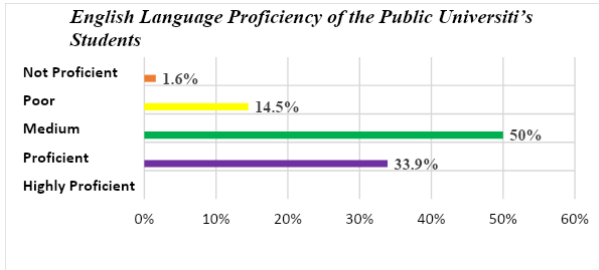


**Figure 2:** Medium of Teaching at the Universities (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

Based on the gathered data, 90.3% of respondents expressed that the exclusive language of instruction at their institution is English. Among the remaining respondents, 4.8% indicated Bangla as the primary teaching language, while the rest (4.9%) mentioned a dual use of Bangla and English as mediums of instruction in their institutions. This outcome highlights the

prevalence of English as the main teaching language in public institutions in Bangladesh, suggesting a potential connection between this practice and the anxiety faced by students learning English as a second language.

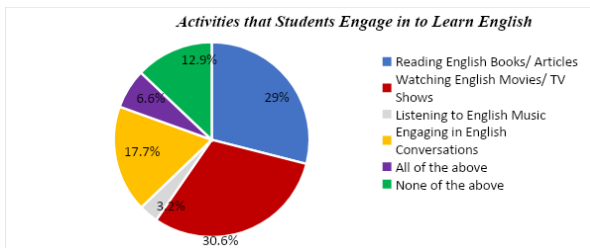
### 6.3 English Language Proficiency of the Public University’s Students



**Figure 3:** English Language Proficiency of the Public University’s Students (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

This diverse range of competence levels provides a nuanced perspective on English language proficiency among university students, laying a crucial foundation for understanding factors contributing to anxiety in studying English as a foreign language. The study revealed that 50% of respondents (n=31) perceived public university students as having a moderate level of English proficiency, indicating a mediocre command of the language. However, 14.5% of respondents (n=9) asserted that students struggle with poor English competence, signaling significant difficulties in language learning. A substantial portion of respondents (n=21, 33.9%) claimed proficiency in English. Regrettably, only 1.6% (n=1) expressed the view that a few students lack proficiency, with no respondents indicating highly proficient students in English.

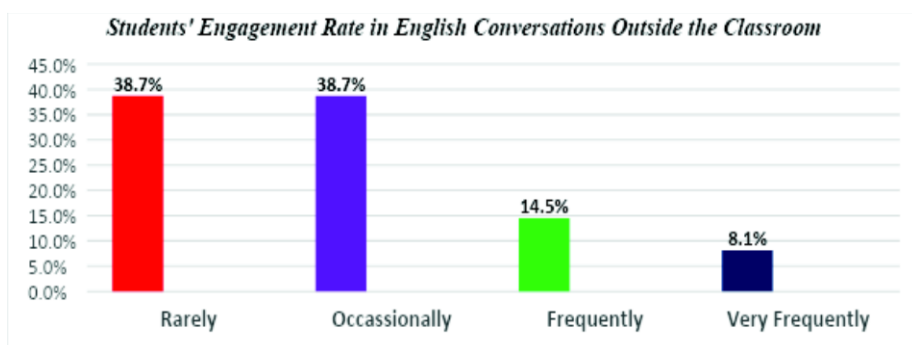
### 6.4 Activities that Students Engage in to Learn English



**Figure 4:** Activities that Students Engage in to Learn English (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

In this section, the study aims to understand the various practices Bangladeshi university students employ to enhance their English language skills. Approximately 29% of survey participants indicated regular reading of English books and articles, underscoring the significant number of students who prioritize reading and writing for language acquisition. Additionally, a substantial 30.6% reported using English films and television programs as part of their language-learning approach, emphasizing the popularity of visual media in language learning. Conversely, about 17.7% of respondents mentioned engaging in regular English conversations with peers, highlighting the importance of peer interaction in language development, albeit with a smaller percentage compared to other activities. Notably, some participants reported practicing all the aforementioned techniques.

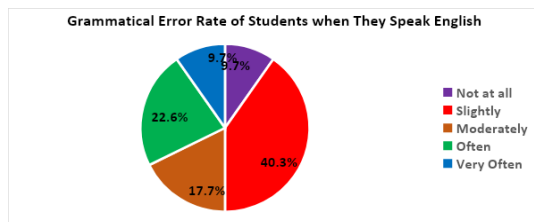
### 6.5 Students' Engagement Rate in English Conversations Outside the Classroom



**Figure 5:** Students' Engagement Rate in English Conversations outside the Classroom (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

The study investigates the frequency of students having English conversations outside the classroom. The information provides a clear overview of this engagement. When asked about their frequency of engaging in English conversations outside the classroom, a substantial 38.7% of the respondents (n=24) mentioned they seldom did so. Another 38.7% stated sporadic involvement, suggesting regular exchanges. In terms of a more consistent pattern, 14.5% of students indicated frequent involvement, demonstrating a higher level of participation. Additionally, 8.1% of respondents reported extremely frequent interaction, indicating a more intense and consistent participation in English discussions.

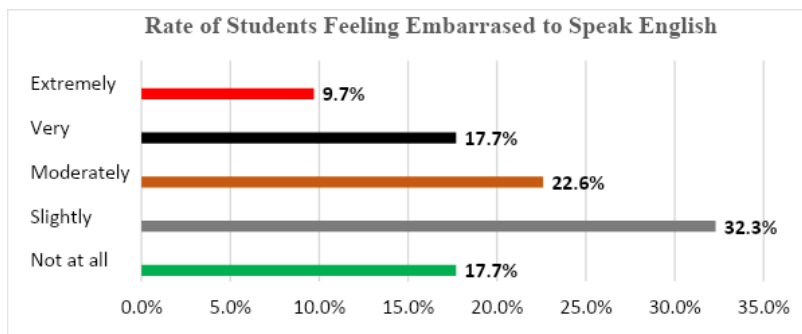
## 6.6 Grammatical Error Rate of Students when They Speak English



**Figure 6:** Grammatical Error Rate of Students when They Speak English (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

Only a negligible 9.7% of students believe their spoken English is practically error-free, with grammatical mistakes only occasionally occurring, indicating a high level of self-assurance in their language abilities. The majority, 40.3%, acknowledge making simple grammatical errors while speaking in English, considering them insignificant and having little impact on overall comprehensibility. Additionally, 22.6% admit to using a lot of grammatical errors, potentially hampering vocal clarity. This group aligns with the initial 9.7% in perceiving an excessively high number of grammatical errors in their spoken English, highlighting significant challenges in maintaining grammatical accuracy while speaking.

## 6.7 Rate of Students Feeling Embarrassed to Speak English



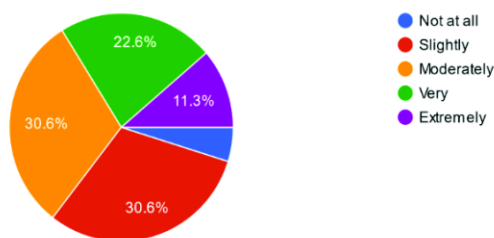
**Figure 7:** Rate of Students Feeling Embarrassed to Speak English (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

According to the results of the study poll, students may experience a range of emotions when speaking English. An important finding was that a substantial 17.7% of students indicated they never feel ashamed to talk in English, showcasing their effective communication skills and confidence in the language. On the other hand, a significant percentage, 32.3%, reported

occasionally experiencing a mild sense of self-consciousness when speaking in English. While they may still feel some self-consciousness, these sentiments are likely minor and may not severely limit their ability to interact in English. Consistent with the findings, 17.7% of students reported feeling just a little ashamed when speaking in English, suggesting a detectable amount of anxiousness that may hinder fluency and expression.

### 6.8 The Rate of Students Feeling Pressure due to Lack of Vocabulary and Struggling to Find the Right Words while Speaking English

The rate of students feeling pressure due to a lack of English vocabulary and struggling to find the right words while speaking in English  
62 responses

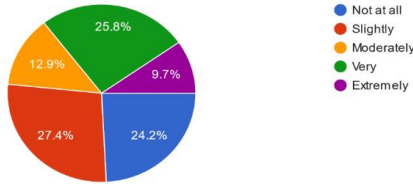


**Figure 8:** The Rate of Students Feeling Pressure due to Lack of Vocabulary and Struggling to Find the Right Words while Speaking English (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

This section of the survey aims to gauge the pressure students feel due to their limited English vocabulary and difficulty finding the right words when speaking. Approximately 30.6% of students reported feeling little to no pressure in this area, indicating a significant proportion with a strong grasp of the language. A similar percentage (about 30.6%) acknowledged a moderate level of strain, suggesting some difficulty with vocabulary and word choice but not finding it overly taxing. A somewhat lower percentage (about 22.6%) reported feeling significant pressure, indicating that finding the correct words in English is a notable source of stress, likely associated with significant vocabulary difficulties. The smallest group, 11.3% of students, reported feeling a lot of pressure, struggling greatly to express themselves in English, potentially exacerbating anxiety and hindering effective communication.

### 6.9 The Rate of Students Experiencing Mockery from Their Peer Groups

The rate of students experiencing mockery from their peer groups.  
62 responses



**Figure 9:** The Rate of Students Experiencing Mockery from Their Peer Groups (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

The results reveal that just over a quarter (24.2%, n=16) of respondents ensured they had never been made fun of by their peers for their efforts to learn English, suggesting a generally encouraging and supportive peer environment. A significantly larger percentage (27.4%, n=17) admitted to occasionally being teased by classmates, but these instances were often not particularly distressing. A smaller portion (12.9%) reported experiencing mild ridicule, indicating a more intense level of teasing that doesn't seem to significantly impact their motivation or confidence. A sizable percentage (25.8%) reported feeling often ridiculed by their peers, highlighting noticeable effects of social pressure and mockery on their language learning experiences. A lower percentage (9.7%) of respondents described the environment as exceedingly mocking, suggesting a particularly challenging setting with common peer criticism and ridicule.

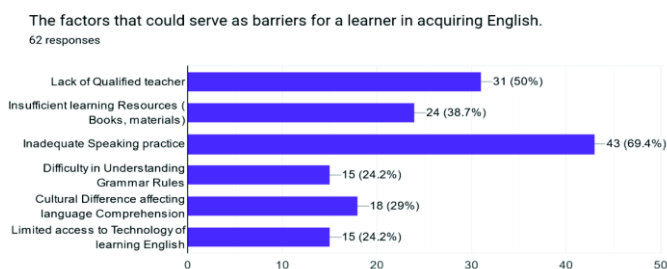
### 6.10 Strategies Employing to Alleviate Anxiety while Learning English



**Figure 10:** Strategies Employing to Alleviate Anxiety while Learning English (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

The result clarifies that the majority of respondents (41.9%) engage in various English language practices to reduce anxiety by practicing more, indicating it as a popular method for boosting self-assurance. A significant 16.1% of students deal with their concern about learning English by avoiding uncomfortable situations. An important 24.2% chose to seek help from friends or lecturers when feeling anxious about studying English. The significance of mental and emotional health in language acquisition is highlighted by the 8.1% who use mindfulness and relaxation techniques to reduce worry. Additionally, 9.7% of respondents engage in another program to alleviate anxiety.

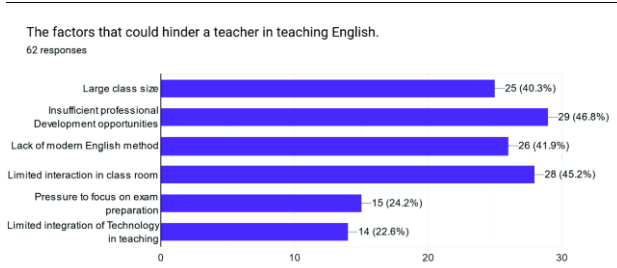
### 6.11 The Barriers for a Learner in Acquiring English



**Figure 11:** The Barriers for a Learner in Acquiring English (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

This study aims to identify various factors hindering Bangladeshi public university students from acquiring English as a second language. Notably, 50% of respondents expressed concerns about the lack of qualified teachers, highlighting the pivotal role of well-educated instructors in facilitating efficient language learning. Additionally, 38.7% cited the absence of adequate learning resources as a challenge, emphasizing the need for a conducive learning environment. A significant 69.4% identified a deficiency in speaking practice as a major obstacle, underscoring the importance of providing opportunities for spoken English. Furthermore, 24.2% found English grammatical norms challenging, emphasizing the necessity for focused instruction in this area. Cultural variations were noted by 29% as potential impediments to language understanding, emphasizing the importance of considering cultural differences in language instruction. The study also revealed that 24.2% of respondents reported inadequate access to technology as a hindrance to learning English, highlighting the growing role of technology in contemporary language acquisition.

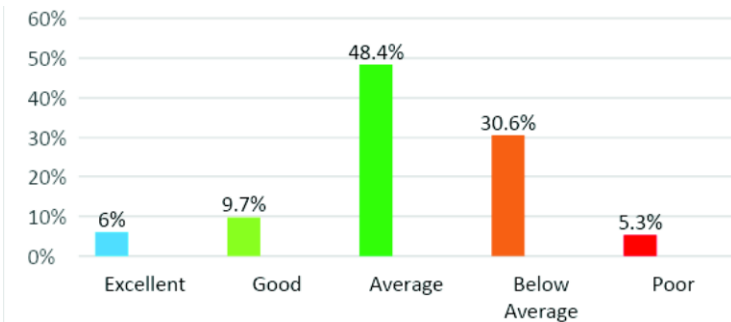
### 6.12 The Challenges Creating Barriers to Teaching for Teachers



**Figure 12:** The Challenges Creating Barriers in Teaching for Teachers (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

Notably, 40.3% of respondents identified large class sizes as a hindrance to effective English language training, highlighting the challenges of managing a sizable student group in a single classroom. Additionally, 46.8% named the lack of opportunities for professional growth as a key barrier, emphasizing the need for educators to receive comprehensive training and support to enhance their teaching abilities. Another 41.9% expressed concern about the absence of cutting-edge teaching techniques for English language learning, underscoring the importance of updating teaching methods and curriculum. Over 45.2% voiced worry about limited classroom interaction, indicating potential for improvement in this area, as active conversation and engagement are crucial for effective language learning. Furthermore, 24.2% identified pressure to prioritize test preparation as a hindrance, suggesting that an excessive focus on tests within the school system may hinder comprehensive language learning. Lastly, 22.6% viewed the restricted use of technology in the classroom as a difficulty, emphasizing the importance of leveraging technology to enhance language training.

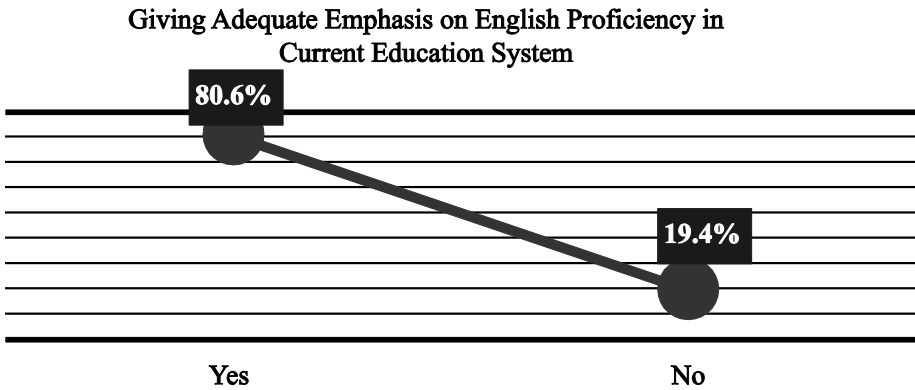
### 6.13 The Overall Quality of English Education in Bangladesh



**Figure 13:** The Overall Quality of English Education in Bangladesh (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

The survey clearly indicates that the majority of respondents believe the overall quality of English education in Bangladesh is average, revealing a moderate condition of English. A substantial number of participants (30.6%) perceive the condition as below average. Conversely, 9.7% of survey participants rated the level of English education as "Good," suggesting a modest yet significant percentage with a favorable opinion. Additionally, 5.3% of respondents gave the quality a "Poor" rating, signifying a small but notable number strongly dissatisfied with the standard of English teaching. The remaining respondents rated the quality as "Excellent," indicating satisfaction with the standard of English instruction.

### 6.14 Giving Adequate Emphasis on English Proficiency in Current Education System



**Figure 14:** Giving Adequate Emphasis on English Proficiency in Current Education System (Source: Field Survey, 2023)

A significant majority of respondents (80.6%) indicated that the current educational system adequately emphasizes English language competency in response to the research question. This suggests a high level of emphasis on English language instruction within the existing educational framework. Conversely, 19.4% of respondents expressed the opinion that the current educational system lacks sufficient emphasis on English language skills. This divergence in perspectives underscores the need for further research into the variables influencing attitudes about the focus on English language education within the context of Bangladesh's public universities.

## 7. Discussion of the Study

The main aim of the study was to explore the process of learning English as a foreign language and investigate the causes of anxiety among students in public universities in Bangladesh. Proficiency in English is considered

crucial for global communication, offering significant advantages in commerce, education, and development programs. While most public universities in Bangladesh use English as the medium of education, many students experience anxiety about learning English, as they typically come from a Bangla medium background. The survey revealed that 90.3% of universities use English as the medium of teaching, but nearly half of the students (50%) have a medium-level proficiency, while approximately 33% are proficient, and the rest struggle with English. Furthermore, 30% of the respondents watch English movies and TV programs to enhance their language skills, while a similar number read English newspapers and articles, practices commonly followed in Bangladesh to improve English outside the classroom. However, the survey highlighted that students do not consistently combine various strategies to improve their English skills. According to the survey results, 38.7% of students rarely participate in English conversations, while only 14.5% engage frequently to overcome anxiety. The study also found that 22.6% of students make grammatical mistakes when speaking English, and nearly 40% make slight errors. Additionally, 32.3% of respondents feel a little embarrassed, 22.6% feel moderately embarrassed, and 18% show no embarrassment, reflecting varying levels of confidence in English proficiency. Moreover, the results indicate that almost 31% of students feel pressure due to a lack of vocabulary, and nearly 23% experience significant pressure in this regard. Unfortunately, almost 76% of students face mockery from their peer groups while speaking English. Consequently, students employ various strategies such as avoidance, seeking help from peer groups and teachers, engaging in English practice, and using relaxation techniques to cope with the anxiety they feel.

Conversely, based on the survey data, the research has identified various challenges in learning English and overcoming anxiety, including a lack of English practice, insufficient learning materials, a shortage of qualified teachers, cultural and environmental differences, difficulties with grammatical rules, limited modern learning access, lack of professionalism, and a sole focus on examinations. In this context, the majority of respondents (69%) believe that inadequate speaking practice is a significant obstacle to learning English and overcoming anxiety. Additionally, nearly 50% identified a lack of qualified teachers and professionalism as another primary issue, among other challenges. The insights provided by respondents offer valuable feedback for addressing these obstacles and promoting English learning while overcoming anxiety. Most respondents recognize the importance of implementing better teaching methods and encouraging

students to practice English more to address the challenges of learning English and overcoming anxiety, among other concerns. According to the findings, although a significant proportion of respondents (80.6%) claimed that the current education system adequately emphasizes English proficiency, it is essential to ensure various aspects for achieving world-class English learning while overcoming anxiety.

## **8. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study on English learning and anxiety in public universities in Bangladesh identifies causes of anxiety and suggests ways to address them. Despite English being the medium of instruction, many students lack proficiency and experience anxiety. The study offers strategies to improve English skills and reduce anxiety levels.

- **Emphasize Practice Sessions:** Prioritize regular practice sessions in English reading, writing, and speaking to enhance fluency and comfort, thereby aiding students in overcoming anxiety associated with English learning.
- **Encourage Participation:** Authorities should actively encourage students to participate in various English programs and create more opportunities for them to present their English learning experiences. This will help foster a genuine interest in the language among students.
- **Integrate Modern Learning Tools:** Incorporate modern learning tools and technologies into educational institutions to improve students' access to high-quality English resources. This will enable them to engage more effectively with the language.
- **Restructure Teaching Methods:** Revise teaching methods to ensure they are more student-centered, interactive, and conducive to language learning. Innovative approaches can be explored to make learning English more enjoyable and effective.
- **Initiate English Education at an Early Age:** Start English education at an early age to lay a strong foundation for language proficiency. Early exposure to the language can help students develop better language skills over time.
- **Recruit Proficient Teachers:** Hire trained and proficient English teachers who can inspire students and create an engaging learning environment. Teachers play a crucial role in motivating students and fostering their interest in learning English.

- **Implement Assessment and Feedback System:** Establish a systematic assessment and feedback mechanism to evaluate students' language proficiency levels and provide them with constructive feedback. This will help students track their progress and identify areas for improvement.
- **Establish English Clubs:** Set up English Clubs in every institution to provide students with a platform for practicing and improving their English language skills. These clubs can organize various activities and events to promote language practice and peer interaction.
- **Introduce Incentive System:** Introduce an Incentive system for English proficiency to motivate students to excel in their language learning efforts. Rewards and recognition can serve as effective incentives for students to actively engage in English language learning activities.

These recommendations aim to address the challenges faced by students in learning English as a foreign language and help them overcome anxiety associated with language learning. By implementing these measures, public universities in Bangladesh can contribute to creating a more English-proficient workforce and enhancing global communication skills in the country.

## 9. References

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