

The Impact of Inhibition on EST/EFL Learners: an Analysis of the Feedback of the Learners at the Tertiary Level in Bangladesh

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Abstract: Study on learners' affective factors is very important because affective factors are directly connected with learners' achievement in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Mohseni and Ameri, 2010). In other words, for effective teaching-learning of English, the teachers must have awareness about learners' state of affective factors like self-esteem, motivation, inhibition, risk-taking ability and so on. Among these wide ranges of affective factors inhibition is very important since this particular factor is closely related to some other important factors like risk-taking, self-esteem and anxiety which leave a great impact on SLA. The present study focuses on the role of 'inhibition' in learners' achieving English presentation skills or in particular, English speaking skill. The data have been collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among the teachers and questionnaire survey among the learners. Data analysis software SPSS 20 has been used..Findings have been tabulated and discussed and at the same time some recommendations have been presented to help learners overcome their inhibition to achieve effective speaking skill.

1. Introduction

Being bilingual or multilingual is a common struggle for individuals in this global world. English is mostly learned as a second or foreign language in the periphery countries of the world. In Bangladesh, English is taught as a foreign language since learners' childhood schooling. However, learners after successful completion of 12 years schooling, when they come at undergrad level they cannot exhibit the desired command over the four skills of the language (Abedin, 2012). Because of the assessment based teaching-learning pedagogy, basically learners' writing skill is developed here. English speaking skill is one of

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the neglected skills in teaching-learning situation in Bangladesh. Due to the lacking of English speaking skill in the learners, when they come to the undergrad level, they face huge problem since at this level learners' four skills are sought for the proper development or success. Surprisingly, in such a problematic situation, even some learners attain proficiency in English speaking, other may not. In this regard, Mohseni and Ameri (2010: 39) say that in spite of having satisfactory command over English, some foreign language learners cannot use the language for conversational purpose because these learners do not have control over their emotional state of mind. Krashan (1981 in Hedge, 2000:21) focuses on Affective Filter and proclaims that when the emotional state of learners overpowers them, learners' rate of input is hindered, for example, when the learners are tired, tense or anxious "the input is prevented from being processed." So, this is an area which needs light to focus on to find out the reason that inhibits the learners from speaking English in communicative situation.

2. Significance of the Study

Inhibition is one of the factors of the affective domain which is influential behind the lagging behind of the learners in the speaking skill attainment. In simple terms, inhibition affects learners by hindering them from participating in the learning process. A learner forms his/her own self image to exhibit before other. He/she is the greatest admirer of his/her self created image which he/she cherishes, supports, cares for, protects and nourishes. If the learner find him/her in such a situation which might risk his/her good image in front of others, he/she adopts the strategy of defense to protect the ego-boundary so that his/her good image may not be spoiled. The learner fears if he /she makes any mistakes, he/she might be humiliated or other people might mock at him or her, in such a teaching-learning situation, the learners do not take part in the learning process actively, and as a result, they lag behind in the development of different language skills. So, it is very important to diagnose the influence of this important affective factor in learners' second language learning process. In case of speaking, the learners will stop participating in any conversational communication soon as he/she sense any risk of his or her ego. The negative factors both inside and outside of the class room

may affect the language learners' intention to take part in the conversational setting in the class even in the natural setting (Han, Engin and Kaya, 2010). If inhibition is identified in learners' learning strategy, then by giving positive feedback the learners can be encouraged to form positive self-concept and break the ego-boundary to take risk in producing conversational language avoiding the hindrance of inhibition (Mohseni and Ameri, 2010: 39). From Bangladesh context, if this pitfall in the speaking skill development process gets focused and thereby, the learners are encouraged to overcome defensive attitude to protect self-ego, then this will be an endeavor in the SLA research to encourage their successful journey of SLA.

3. Study Purpose

The purpose of the study is to find out to what extent inhibition influences the English presentation skills or in particular English speaking skill of the students of the tertiary level.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Part : Theoretical framework

4.1.1 Affective factors and the importance of study on individuals

Concentrating on human learning and cognition, Hilgard (1963:267) asserts that without association of affectivity, cognitive theory of learning does not carry weight. Teachers need to shed light on both the linguistic and emotional goals for the good of the students (Heyde,1979). Giving emphasis on affective factors in SLA research, Brown (1994: 134) says that it is the demand of time to study learners' or human personality in relation to second language learning and teaching research.

It is not so easy to define the term 'affective' within definable limit since a large number of emotional states are the components of the affective territory (Brown, 1994: 134). So, it is important to subdivide and categorize the different state of complex human mind and then address each of them individually (Brown, 1994: 134). According to Crystal (2003), 'Affective' refers to 'emotive' and 'attitudinal'. On the other hand, Brown (1994: 134) says:

Affect refers to emotion or feeling. The affective domain is the emotional side of human behavior, and it may be juxtaposed to the cognitive side. The development of affective states or feelings involves a variety of personality factors, feelings both about ourselves and about others with whom we come into contact.

Expressing opinion on the difficulties of separating 'affect' from 'cognition' and 'cognate, Ortega (2011: 193) says:

Although traditionally affect was thought of as encompassing temporal and emotional aspects of personality (and perhaps some aspects of volition), psychologists nowadays believe that affect both influences and is influenced by cognition as well.

The teachers should address the students individually. It is true that in the class room learners are taught in groups but each learner learns individually. So, naturally, learners' personality, culture and social settings are encountered with the learning process. In this regard, Cook (1991:95) says:

Teachers usually have to deal with students in groups rather than as individuals; it is what all the class do. However, language is not learnt by groups, but by individuals...Features of the learner's personality or mind encourage or inhibit L2 learning.

4.1.2 Inhibition and related affective factors

The dictionary-meaning of 'inhibition' is 'a feeling of embarrassment or worry that prevents individual to say or do something what he/she wants (Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary, 2005: 657). This is one of the factors of the affective domain which is closely related to other affective factors, for example, self-esteem, risk-taking, anxiety etc. Maram Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary (2000) explicates 'inhibition' as, discouraging from free or spontaneous activity, expression or functioning, through the operation of inner psychological impediments or of social controls (in Mohseni and Ameri, 2010: 40). Richards and Schimidt (2002: 37) identify 'inhibition' as one of the four subsystems of 'attention' which means the ability to concentrate on some things ignoring other and define 'inhibition' as 'deliberate ignoring of some stimuli.

Mohseni and Ameri (2010: 39) define 'inhibition' as 'self-imposed restraint on or abstinence from learning due to academic and non-academic variables such as culture, gender, psyche, extreme emotion, etc.' Mohseni

and Ameri (2010: 39) further say that this affective factor has a link with Language Ego Permeability Hypothesis (LEPH) which proposes that inhibition acts as an influential factor in restraining achievement in L2 acquisition. Mohseni and Ameri (2010: 39) state that because of this emotional state of mind, the learners cannot practice the target language with spontaneity, and consequently they feel threatened to make mistakes. According to Mohseni and Ameri (2010: 40), inhibition generates egocentricism which forces to increased self-consciousness and greater inhibition. They again say, "Inhibited learners demonstrate diverse moral overtones and undertones. They may be under-stimulated, stubborn, uncooperative, neurotic, suspicious, defensive, secretive, fearful, anxious, reflective, preoccupied, capricious, vulnerable, etc." (Mohseni and Ameri, 2010: 40).

4.1.3 *Self-esteem*

According to Brown (1994), self-esteem, risk-taking, extroversion, introversion, anxiety and other related factors are closely connected with affective factor of 'inhibition'. He further says that some degree of self-esteem, knowledge about one's self, beliefs about one's own capability and self-confidence is a must for successful cognitive or affective activity.

Coopersmith (1967: 4-5) defines self-esteem as,

By self-esteem, we refer to the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself; it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which an individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that the individual holds towards himself. It is a subjective experience which the individual conveys to others by verbal reports and other overt expressive behavior.

4.1.4 *Risk-taking*

Beebe (1983: 39) defines 'risk-taking' as "a situation where an individual has to make a decision involving choice between alternatives of different desirability; the outcome of the choice is uncertain; there is a possibility of failure." On the other hand, according to Rubin and Thompson (1982), in language acquisition, risk-taking is the capability to make intelligent conjecture, and it is an important trait of a good language learner. While inhibition acts as a bar in the way of SLA, risk-

taking aptitude facilitates SLA (Brown: 1994). Learners have to break the barrier of self-created defense round the ego and take risk of being incorrect in language production before others in a communicative situation to acquire language successfully (Brown, 1994).

4.1.5 Anxiety

Scovel (1978: 138) explicates 'anxiety' as, "a state of apprehension, a vague fear...." Brown (1994:141) says that interconnected with 'inhibition' and 'risk-taking', affective factor 'anxiety' plays a crucial role in SLA, and this complex construct is linked with "feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension or worry." Brown (1994:141) mentions two levels of anxiety as:

At the deepest, or global, level trait anxiety is a more permanent predisposition to be anxious. Some people are predictable and generally anxious about many things. At a momentary or situational level, state anxiety is experienced in relation to some particular event or act.

4.1.6 Extroversion and Introversion

Extroversion and introversion play significant role in SLA (Dawaele and Furnham, 1999). Brown (1994:146) defines extroversion and introversion in the following words:

Extroversion is the extent to which a person has a deep-seated need to receive ego enhancement, self-esteem, and a sense of wholeness from other people as opposed to receiving that affirmation within oneself. ...Introversion, on the other hand, is the extent to which a person derives a sense of wholeness and fulfillment apart from a reflection of this self from other people.

Extroverts are outgoing and spontaneous and on the other hand, introverts are meditative, calm, shy and reticent (Zafar and Minakshi, 2012: 643). The extroverts tend to engage themselves in outside activities and keep busy with solitary activities (Zafar and Minakshi, 2012: 643). So, naturally it can be said that since the extroverts persons are outgoing in nature, they are to take part more in speaking-communication-situation overcoming the barrier of inhibition.

4.2. Part 2 Related Researches

Mohammadpur and Ghafourni (2015) have focused on the effect of foreign language anxiety on reading comprehension through their research. They have conducted research on 100 Iranian BA students

who were doing General English course. Through their study they expose that there is a negative relationship between the students' reading level and reading anxiety. This study is very significant in that it helps both the teachers and the curriculum planners to reduce the affective filters and weakening factors in language learning environment to improve language learners' reading ability.

Naghipoor and Abedini (2013) have investigated the effect of two personality factors, tolerance of ambiguity and risk-taking on translation. They have conducted survey on 140 EFL students, and show that the participants have a positive viewpoint about the use of translation.

Mohseni and Ameri (2010) show through their studies the dynamism of inhibition and its ramification through a qualitative investigation. They show the state that these approaches have connection with humanistic education which addresses such issues as, personal development, self-acceptance, and acceptance by others.

Han, Engin and Kaya (2010) through their study on risk-taking focus on the links between learners' risk-taking ability and level of achievement of second language acquisition. Their study has three phases, firstly, a general overview of learners' risk-taking ability and language acquisition process; secondly, the effect of the risk-taking ability of the learners on their achievement and thirdly, the advantages and disadvantages of risk-taking on second language teaching.

Beebe (1983) studies on why the L2 learners expose themselves as shy or reserved personality around peers or classmates in the classroom. Through his study, Beebe (1983) show that when the learners are in their peer groups or among the students they consider speaking as a low-risk activity and high gain situation.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Design

This research has followed mixed method approach since both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been followed to collect the data. To address the objective of the study the researcher has needed both qualitative and quantitative data. That is why the mixed method approach has been followed.

5.2 Sampling

Non-probability sampling (purposive) technique has been used for collecting data. The data has been collected from three universities (2 private and 1 public). 100 students of English Honors from different trimesters and 15 English teachers were selected.

5.3 Instrument:

Data have been collected through a questionnaire consisting of 10 close-ended questions. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) agenda were used to conduct FGD session with the teachers. SPSS 20.0 software was used to analyze the data.

6. Findings and Analysis

6.1 Findings and Analysis from the questionnaire survey

Table: 1 Male or Female * Feeling comfort in mixed language Cross tabulation

		Count		Total
		Feeling comfort in mixed language		
		yes	no	
Male or Female	male	26	12	38
	female	50	12	62
Total		76	24	100

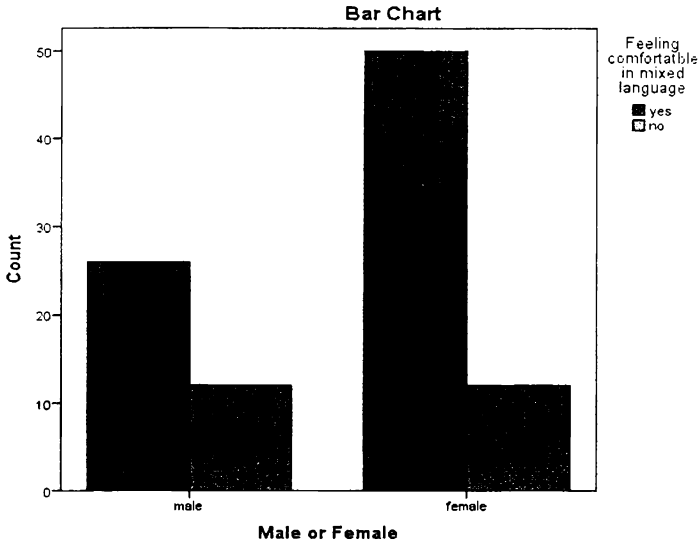
Table: 2 Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.930 ^a	1	.165		
Continuity Correction ^b	1.318	1	.251		
Likelihood Ratio	1.894	1	.169		
Fisher's Exact Test				.228	.126
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.911	1	.167		
N of Valid Cases	100				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.12.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Graph: 1



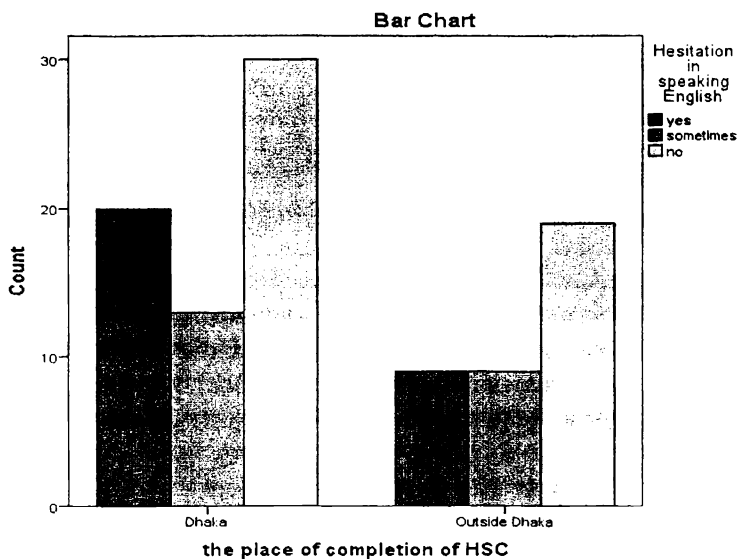
The graph 1 highlights the result of male and female learners’ feeling of comfort in mixed language. On the other hand, the Table 2 shows the cross-tabulation between two variables ‘gender’ and ‘feeling comfort in mixed language’ and from the Chi-square test, it is understood that there is no significant relationship between these two variables ‘gender’ and ‘feeling of comfort in mixed language’ as the observed P value is 0.165 which is more than the customary significant level (0.05). So, it can be said from the above analysis that the learners, whether male or female, feel comfortable in mixed language.

Table 3: The place of completion of HSC * Hesitation in speaking English Cross-tabulation

		Count			Total
		Hesitation in speaking English			
		yes	sometimes	no	
the place of completion of HSC	Dhaka	20	13	30	63
	Outside Dhaka	9	9	19	37
Total		29	22	49	100

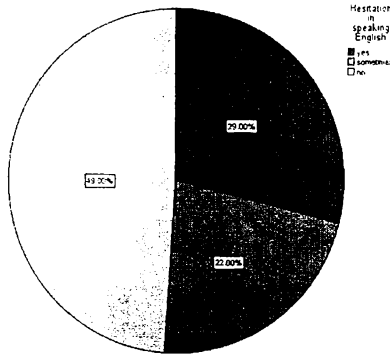
Table 4: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.653 ^a	2	.721
Likelihood Ratio	.662	2	.718
Linear-by-Linear Association	.388	1	.533
N of Valid Cases	100		

Graph: 2

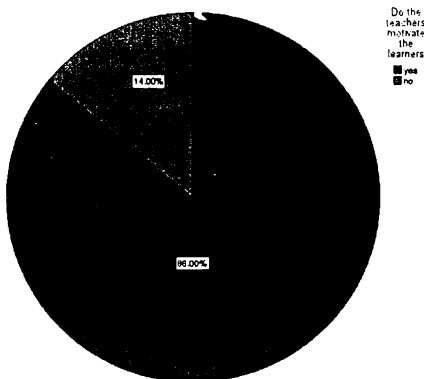
The Tables 3 and 4 show the cross-tabulation between 'the place of completion of HSC' and 'hesitation in speaking English' and the Chi-square tests show that the observed P value is 0.721, which means that it is more than the customary 5% level of significance. So, it can be said that whether the learners complete their HSC from Dhaka or outside Dhaka, most of them feel hesitation in speaking English. Though, the students who completed their HSC from Dhaka, almost 30% of them have said that they do not feel hesitation in speaking English, and in case of the students who completed HSC from outside Dhaka, less than 20% of them have said that they do not feel hesitation in speaking English (shown in the bar graph 2).

Graph 3



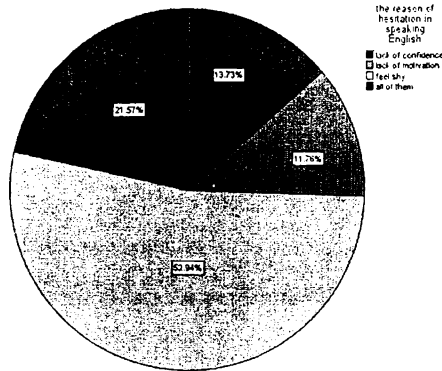
The pie chart (Graph 3) shows the answer of the question (No.2) set whether the learners feel hesitation in speaking English or not. From the pie chart, it is found that 29% learners have said that they feel hesitation in speaking English and 22% have said that they sometimes feel hesitated in speaking English and 49% of the learners say that they do not feel hesitation in speaking English. Though the number of the learners (29%+22%=51%) feeling hesitated in speaking English is more than the number of the learners (49%), who do not feel hesitated in speaking English. The distance is very marginal, and it is understood that the respondents do not feel like admitting that they do hesitate in speaking English as the analysis of other questions (no. 6, 7 and 8) reveals that the rate of hesitant learners in speaking English is actually much higher than it is projected in this particular answer.

Graph: 4



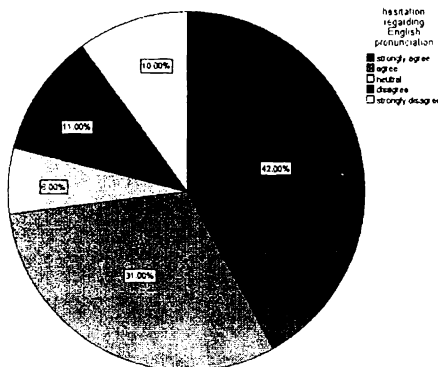
The question no.5 was set to know if the teachers motivate the learners to speak English or not. From the graph: 4, it becomes clear that majority of the learners have admitted that teachers motivate them to speak in English.

Graph 5



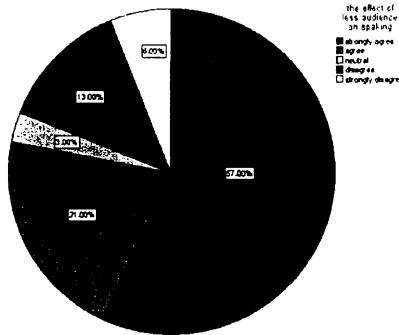
The Graph 5 shows the responses provided by the respondents regarding the reasons of their inhibition (shyness) in speaking English. The graph shows that majority of the respondents (52.94%) have identified shyness as the root reason of their inhibition for speaking English. Lack of confidence and lack of motivation are identified by 13.73% and 11.76% respondents respectively; other 21.57% respondents have identified all the reasons together as the root cause of their inhibition.

Graph: 6



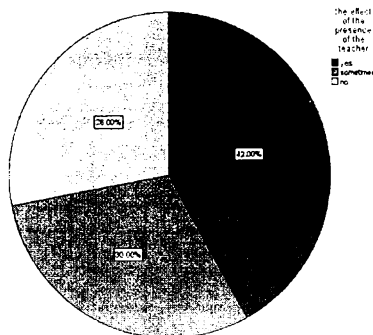
The Graph 6 shows the importance of pronunciation in speaking English. If the graph is analyzed, it is found that majority of the respondents, that is, 73% (42% strongly agree +31% agree) have replied that they feel hesitated in speaking English for their distorted pronunciation. Other 27% (strongly disagree + disagree and neutral) have said that they do not feel hesitated for their English pronunciation.

Graph: 7



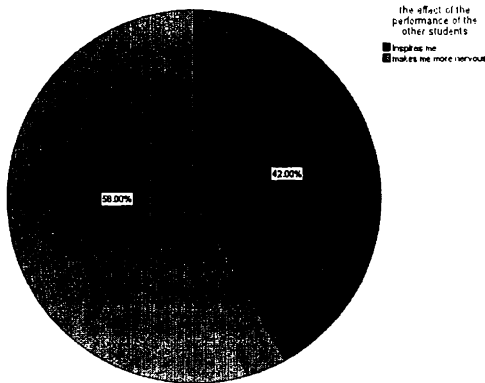
The Graph 7 shows the responses of the learners regarding the effect of the number of audience on the speaker. The graph shows that majority of the learners that is, 78% (57% strongly agree+21% agree) have replied that if the audience is less in number, the presenters feel more comfortable, and other 22% (3% neutral+13% disagree+6% strongly disagree) have replied that the number of audience leaves no effect on them.

Graph: 8



The Graph 8 shows the responses of the learners regarding the effect of the presence of the course teacher during their presentation. Interestingly, as shown in the graph, total 72% (42% yes+30% sometimes) of the respondents have said that there is some effect of the presence of the course teacher on their presentation, and rest of the respondents 28% have replied that presence of the course teacher leaves no effect on their presentation.

Graph: 9



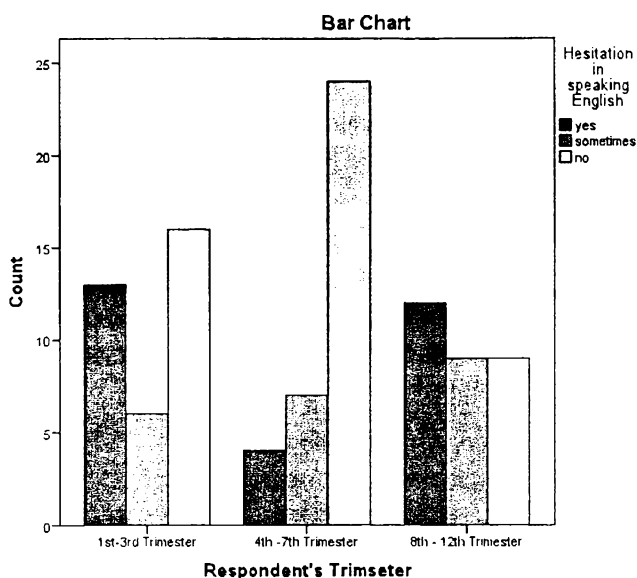
The graph 9 shows the responses of the learners regarding their reaction to the other students’ better performance on individual’s presentation. Here, interestingly the graph shows that 58% learners have replied that they feel more nervous if others give better performance and 42% learners have replied that they feel inspired if somebody else gives better performance (show students’ better fluency in presentation).

Table 5 : Respondent's Trimester * Hesitation in speaking English Cross tabulation

		Count			Total
		Hesitation in speaking English			
		yes	sometimes	no	
Respondent's Trimester	1st-3rd Trimester	13	6	16	35
	4th -7th Trimester	4	7	24	35
	8th - 12th Trimester	12	9	9	30
Total		29	22	49	100

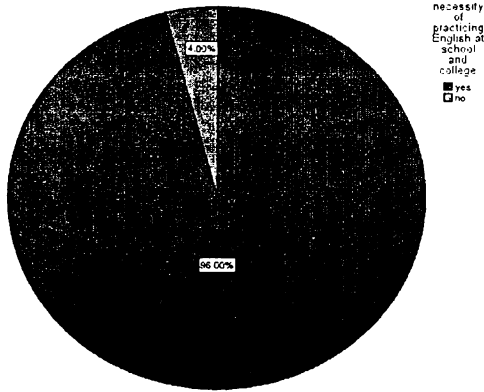
Table 6: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.113 ^a	4	.017
Likelihood Ratio	13.036	4	.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	.517	1	.472
N of Valid Cases	100		

Graph: 10

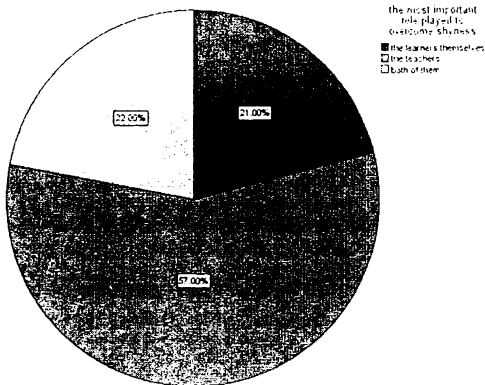
The Table: 5 shows the cross-tabulation between two variables that is, 'respondents' trimester' and 'hesitation in speaking English' and from the next table (Table: 6), it is understood that the observed P value is 0.017 which is less than the customary significance level 0.05. So, it can be said that there is a significant relationship between the learners' maturity (respondents' trimester) and their state of hesitation in speaking English. In the graph 10, it is found that in the 1st 3 trimesters, hesitation regarding speaking English is pretty high and in the next 4 trimesters 4th – 7th trimester, hesitation among students decreases and finally, among the students of 8th -12th trimester, it is reflected that there is a mixed response about the hesitation in speaking English

Graph: 11



The Graph 11 shows the response of the learners in the case of the necessity of starting the practice of speaking English at school and college levels, and from the graph, it becomes clear that most of the learners (96%) believe that the practice of speaking English should start from school and college levels. It is also understood that if the practice of speaking English starts from the school and college levels, the learners will gradually be able to overcome the inhibition or shyness they face in speaking English.

Graph: 12



Another question (No.10) is set to know the agents that can play the most important role to overcome the shyness (inhibition) among the learners. The pie chart (graph 12) shows the percentage of the

respondents. Here, it is found that 21% learners believe that learners themselves can play the most important role in overcoming the shyness in speaking English; 57% learners believe that it is the teachers' responsibility and 22% affirm that both the learners and teachers together can play the most important role in this case.

6.2 Findings and analysis from the FGD with the teachers

Table 7 Findings from the FGD session with the teachers

Agenda for FGD	Summary of the discussion
Speaking skill and hesitation	Students do hesitate to speak English
	Sometimes even the teachers hesitate to speak English
	Through practice students can overcome the hesitation
The role of teachers to motivate the learners to overcome inhibition in speaking English	Teachers should motivate the learners to speak English
	Motivation really works for the improvement of the learners about speaking English
Speaking skill and English pronunciation	Correct pronunciation is important for communication. Correct pronunciation should be emphasized.
Speaking skill and assessment	The assessment of speaking skill is necessary. Syllabus, materials, teacher training, logistic support are also important.
Practicing speaking English beyond the classroom overcoming inhibition	Parents can play a vital role in guiding them; English clubs, debate can help the learners to develop their speaking ability.

From the FGD session it gets focus that the common learners feel a sort of hesitation in speaking English. Even sometimes the teachers feel hesitated in speech communication in some situation. The teachers believe that practice of oral presentation may be an effective solution to overcome this hesitation. Since all the teachers believe that motivation can help the learners to overcome inhibition, the teachers

themselves should motivate the learners to speak English overcoming their inhibition. The teachers give emphasis on the importance of learning correct pronunciation since they believe that correct pronunciation is a prerequisite for effective communication. According to the teachers, the learners do not come forward to develop their English speaking skills at the Secondary and the Higher Secondary levels since they have no assessment on this basis. As a result, when the learners attend the grade level, they lag behind in the performance of this skill. So, the teachers believe that there should be assessment of English speaking skill in the testing part and at the same time syllabus should be developed with a special focus on this issue. In this regard, the teachers mention that material development, teachers' training and provision of logistic support should be in tune with the development of the English speaking skill of the learners. The teachers believe that parents can also play significant role in this regard. They can guide the learners to overcome inhibition by joining English clubs, debate club, English language club and the other like. The parents can also encourage the learners to participate in different English speaking activities through which they can develop their English speaking ability.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In order to help the learners overcome inhibition the teachers should be easy with the learners' in removing their (learners') shyness and hesitation by frequent practice of conversation with them and appreciating their argument. Keeping the context in mind, the teachers have to allow the learners to use Bengali to express their viewpoint, and after that, the teachers can translate for them to show how easily something can be transformed from Bengali to English. Teachers should introduce interesting topic so that the learners can take part in the conversation spontaneously.

The more mature the learners are the more confident can they feel to speak English. As a matter of fact the learners get option to experience practice of oral presentation in different semesters. Practice of oral presentation, no doubt, is a very effective solution to help learners overcome their inertia and mental block to come forward to speak in English. Students feel insecure or nervous observing other learners' good oral presentation but learners who feel threatened at the sight of good performance of other learners may think otherwise by taking the

good performers as role models. The personalities of both the teachers and the audiences should not be threatening. The learners should be given the impression that both the learners and the teachers are on a platform of knowledge sharing. In other words, nowhere the learners are tested rather they are in an advantageous position of gaining knowledge. Since gender does not play significant role in presentation of speaking skills (from the findings), the teachers need not take special care focusing on this issue. As far as pronunciation is concerned, the learners should be encouraged to get a good command over correct pronunciation, and at the same time, they should be made aware about mutual intelligibility.

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Appendix

Topic: The Impact of Inhibition on EST/EFL Learners: an Analysis of the Feedback of the Learners at the Tertiary Level in Bangladesh

This questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and the data will be kept confidential.

Basic Information:

Please give tick mark on the appropriate option

Please specify your gender: Male Female

The trimester you belong to: 1st – 3rd 4th -7th 8th -12th

1. You completed the HSC from the college situated in Dhaka
 Outside Dhaka.
2. Whenever you are asked to speak in English, do you feel hesitation in speaking English? Yes No Sometimes
3. If your answer is yes/sometimes in the previous question, why do you feel hesitated in speaking English?
 Lack of confidence
 Lack of motivation
 Feel shy
 All of these
4. If you are allowed to speak in mixed language (Bangla and English) in classroom, do you feel comfortable?
 Yes No
5. Do your teachers motivate you to speak in English in the classroom?
 Yes No

6. Sometimes I feel hesitation with my pronunciation of English
- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly disagree
7. If the audience is less in number, I feel more confident
- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly disagree
8. Does the presence of the teacher in the classroom make you nervous while giving presentation?
- Yes No Sometimes
9. Do you think that speaking English practice should start from school and college level?
- Yes No
10. Who can play the most important role in overcoming the shyness in speaking English among the learners?
- The learners themselves The teachers Both of them

Agendas for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the teachers

1. Speaking skill and hesitation
2. The role of the teachers to motivate the learners to overcome inhibition in English speaking
3. Speaking skill and English pronunciation
4. Speaking skill and assessment
5. Practice speaking English beyond the classroom overcoming inhibition