



## The Role of Gender in the Accuracy and Fluency of Iranian Upper-intermediate EFL Learners' L2 Oral Productions

**Ehsan Namaziandost \***

Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, Shahrekord Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahrekord, Iran

**Parisa Abedi**

Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, Shahrekord Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahrekord, Iran

**Mehdi Nasri**

Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, Shahrekord Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahrekord, Iran

### Abstract

This study tied to check the role of gender on Iranian upper-intermediate learners' speaking accuracy and fluency. Initially, out of 90 upper-intermediate learners, a total number of 25 male and 25 female learners were selected. A validated test (PET) was administered to the participants to assure homogeneity in terms of overall language proficiency and accordingly, 25 male and 25 female learners were identified as the legitimate participants who had been interviewed drawing on the some speaking tasks. The speech of the participants was recorded and subsequently analyzed by two raters based on the fluency and accuracy measurement criteria. Inter-rater reliability was established for both the fluency and accuracy (.986 and .898, respectively). Having finished the analysis of the participants' performance, the researcher analyzed the data to investigate the role of gender on speaking accuracy and fluency. The results indicated that female participants outperformed the males in terms of fluency while males were superior in terms of accuracy.

**Keywords:** gender, speaking skill, speaking accuracy and fluency

### INTRODUCTION

English as an international language has established its position as a lingua franca. As opportunities for oral communication have grown, ELT educators have become increasingly more preoccupied with finding the most effective ways of helping EFL/ ESL learners master the oral skills as an important aspect of foreign language learning. Students of a new language will not learn to speak fluently just by hearing flow of speech in a class. Although, hearing the forms of a language is an important factor in learning a new language, it is not enough. Teachers will need to give their students many opportunities to practice speaking (Namaziandost, Rahimi Esfahani, Nasri, & Mirshekaran, 2018; Nasri & Biria, 2017). Many studies have focused on the investigation of factors that

can help to improve the learners' speaking ability. The affective side of FL learning has now been recognized to play a crucial role in learning a new language. In the past, it was often considered that a learner's cognitive ability to communicate in a new language was important. By now, it is accepted that in the process of foreign language learning both cognitive and affective domains should be optimally activated.

Speaking is a productive necessary skill to communicate effectively in any language, especially when speakers are not using their native language. Language learners often think the ability to speak a language is the product of language learning; however, this skill is also an important part of the language learning process. It is worthwhile for students to know when they learn how to speak; they can use speaking to learn (Namaziandost, Rahimi Esfahani, Nasri, & Mirshekaran, 2018; Nasri & Biria, 2017).

There are some components of speaking skills which should be considered in effective English-speaking performance, such as accuracy and fluency. According to Foster and Skehan (1999), pronunciation, vocabulary, and collocations are singled out as important factors to be emphasized in building fluency for EFL speakers. Drawing on Tam (1997), providing a variety of situations and frequent speaking tasks for learners plays a significant role in the improvement of learners' fluency and accuracy in speaking. According to Roger (2008), a successful L2 speaker is one who is able to operate in all speaking situations appropriately. Richards (2006) applies Jones (1996) and Burns' (1998) proposal to categorize speech activities into three main division: talk as interaction, talk as transaction, and talk as performance. Talk as interaction, in his definition, is what normally means a 'conversation', which describes interactions with a social function; Talk as transaction is defined as a situation in which the focus is on what is said or done; and Talk as performance is defined as a public talk, i.e., talk that gives information to audience, which is made of a recognizable format and is similar to written language rather than conversational language (Nasri & Biria, 2017).

Although the role of gender and its consequences has been interesting for the researchers, to the best knowledge of the researcher very few studies are based on the empirical documentation of the gender effect on fluency and accuracy in speaking which is the result of surveying a group of subjects. By choosing the subjects from the specific level of proficiency randomly, this study can possibly push the frontiers of knowledge in order to look for justification, and also solution any kind of difference in terms of oral accuracy and fluency of male and female participants of the study. The study is deemed to be helpful for developing academic speaking instruction materials and classroom activities. This study tried to fill the theoretical gap in the literature regarding the role of gender and its effect on speaking accuracy and fluency and endeavored to unearth the possible relationship between the participants' speaking accuracy/fluency and their performance on listening comprehension tasks; this experiment's objective was to discover the potential connection between oral English skills and the role of participants' gender in this regard.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Theoretical Background

#### *Speaking Skill*

Speaking is one of the fundamental language skills that have to be acquired completely by EFL learners because of its importance and its utilization for interaction. It is very vital to be able to speak English since it is the most usually acknowledged language in the world so that it will be extremely advantageous for those who understand it not only to develop their knowledge and skills but also simpler for them to find a job (Namaziandost & Ahmadi, 2019; Nasri & Biria, 2017). More than that, they won't think that it's hard to convey and cooperate with individuals around the globe when they travel (Gard & Gautam, 2015; Namaziandost, Rahimi Esfahani, Nasri, & Mirshekaran, 2018). Besides, as indicated by Shabani (2013), speaking in the foreign language has dependably been viewed as the most requesting aptitude contrasted with different abilities, for example, tuning in, perusing and composing. This is because of the way that it includes more than knowing the phonetic parts of the language demanding skill compared to other skills such as listening, reading and writing (. This is due to the fact that it involves more than knowing the linguistic components of the language. "Obviously, information of the phonetic parts, for example, vocabulary and linguistic structures is essential however not adequate. What makes speaking not the same as different skills is that speaker needs a brisk access to all the pertinent information required to deliver the proper language in the brief timeframe, though in different abilities the student have enough time to either coordinate the contribution with the current learning "( Namaziandost, Rahimi Esfahani, Nasri, & Mirshekaran, 2018; Shabani, 2013).

Second and Foreign language learners are required to go through stages of learning to improve their speaking skill. A study conducted by Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011) focused on speech production model which is one of the strongest models of language production suggested by Levelt (1989). It is initially proposed to explain L1 production, but researchers (Namaziandost, Rahimi Esfahani, Nasri, & Mirshekaran, 2018; Nasri & Biria, 2017) have used it to account for L2 production and considered the variation of two processes. This model has enlightened many aspects of language production, and has inspired researchers in pedagogy and language teaching to include some practical steps into classroom activities. Based on this model, speakers went through three stages of conceptualization, formulation, and articulation, which in reality overlap each other (Nasri & Biria, 2017).

Many researches have revealed that students cannot succeed in their academic work without the ability to speak adequately. For instance, Agwu (2005) asserts that many students who have problems in the job market and are not able to demonstrate empathy and problem-solving skills, admit their poor performance in the speaking skill. The poor performance of students in public communication is also traced to minimal daily contact with the language (Namaziandost & Ahmadi, 2019; Namaziandost, Rahimi Esfahani, Nasri, & Mirshekaran, 2018; Oyetunde, 2003).

Producing spoken language has often meant a difficulty and an obstacle for English learners. There might arise a question why. The answer is obvious. In the natural spoken language students are required to be aware of characteristics of fluent speech, such as reduced forms, use of slang or idioms, fixed phrases, collocations and most importantly the pace of speech. All of these have to be taken into consideration while practicing conversation in class (Namaziandost, Rahimi Esfahani, Nasri, & Mirshekaran, 2018). Without these, our spoken language would sound bookish and unnatural. To avoid this, it is essential to introduce and practice “real” communication with our students within the learning process. If it is neglected, it may be a reason why students are often shocked and disappointed when using a foreign language for the first time whilst interacting in foreign environment. They have not been prepared for spontaneous communication and could not cope with all of its simultaneous demands.

### ***Speaking accuracy and fluency***

To define fluency, some researchers focus only on some features of speech such as words or syllables per minute and the length or number of pauses (Lennon, 1990). It is also defined as a multidimensional process in which sub-dimensions can be recognized (Namaziandost & Ahmadi, 2019; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005). Koponen and Riggensbach (2000), “There can ultimately be no single all-purpose definition of fluency.” They assert that fluency in language assessment is comparable to “continuity”, “smoothness”, or “evenness” of speech, without extreme breaks or hesitations (p. 8). Such aspects of fluency have been mentioned by other researchers, as well. For example, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) regard “the production of language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation” (p.139) as fluency. Hughes (2002) defines fluency as the ability to express oneself in an intelligible, reasonable and accurate way without too much hesitation otherwise the communication will break down because listeners will lose their interest. To achieve this goal, the teachers then should train learners to use their personal language freely to express their own ideas and then avoid imitations of model of some kind (Namaziandost, Nasri, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2019). Thornbury, (2005) argues that speed and pause are important factors in fluency, because speakers need to take breath.

Amazingly, researches have shown that there could be some differences in performances of males and females in language tests. Nasri and Biria state that, men generally receive higher scores on tests of spatial and mechanical reasoning. Lumley and O’Sullivan (2005) in a study to find whether there are effects on performance attributable to an interaction of variables such as the task topic, the gender of the person presenting the topic and the gender of the candidate, found that “the female students tended to slightly outperform male students, although the actual difference was not significant” (p. 434). O’loughlin (2002) who carried out a research on the effect of gender on oral proficiency testing, surprisingly did not find any significant difference in the performance of different genders. He also states that such researches have frequently met contradictory results and conjectures that the characteristics of contexts and the participants might simply be the source of this contradiction not necessarily the effect of gender in oral assessment.

Skehan (1996 b: 23 as cited in Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005) defines accuracy as referring “to how well the target language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target

language" (p. 139). The term accuracy relates to correct use of linguistic structures (grammatical accuracy), appropriate use of register (sociolinguistic accuracy), precision of vocabulary (semantic accuracy), and proper use of cohesive devices (rhetorical accuracy) (Namaziandost, Nasri, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2019; Omaggio, 1986, as cited in Stein, 1999). The interaction strategy training discussed in this part highlighted the importance of speaking in teaching and learning the foreign language. The researcher believes that teachers can help the learners to improve their speaking skill by knowing how to go about planning a second/foreign language lessons during the course of study.

### **Empirical Background**

Koosha, Ketabi, and Kassaian (2011) investigated the relationship between self-esteem, age and gender on the one hand and speaking skills on the other hand. For this purpose, based on an OPT test twenty intermediate Persian learners of English were selected from among undergraduate EFL students studying towards a B.A. in teaching English as a foreign language at Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch. Using a modified version of Farhady, et. al.'s scale (1995), measuring the five subskills of vocabulary, structure, pronunciation, fluency and comprehensibility, two raters evaluated the speaking ability of the participants at the end of the required course (Oral Production of Short Stories). The Sorensen's (2005) questionnaire for measuring self-esteem containing 50 items was also administered to the participants. The result showed a significant relationship between self-esteem and speaking skill with fluency exerting the most influence (Namaziandost, Nasri, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2019). There was also a reverse relationship between age and speaking skills. Concerning the relationship between gender and speaking skills, no statistically significant association was found.

Motallebzadeh and Nematizadeh (2011) attempted to explore the possible relationship between gender and oral performance of Iranian intermediate and upper intermediate EFL language learners. For this purpose, 429 adult students in six different institutions in Mashhad and Kerman participated in the study. After the Oxford placement test and an IELTS-format oral placement test, 160 of them were selected for a final oral interview. Finally, through a T-test, it was found out that females did better in oral performance than males, however, the difference was not that significant.

Yousefi and Kasaian (2014) aimed to investigate possible relationship between willingness to communicate and Iranian EFL learners' speaking fluency and accuracy. In this way, OPT, WTC test, fluency and accuracy test were employed. Afterwards, statistical analysis was accomplished. Consequently, the analysis indicated acceptable results. The results contain positive relationship between willingness to communicate and speaking fluency. It can be concluded that both trainers and trainees can employ willingness to communicate as one of the tools to increase fluency and accuracy level of learners speaking.

Yahay and Kheirzadeh (2015) investigated into the efficacy of students' oral presentations in improving their speaking ability in terms of accuracy and fluency. In this respect, control and experimental groups data were gathered through an oral interview. Oral pre- and post-tests were administered to both groups, comprising the total of 35

participants, while students' performance was recorded for further analysis. The recorded data was transcribed later and two measures, i.e., error-free T-units and number of correct words per minute, were used to identify students' speaking accuracy and fluency. An analytic scale was also prepared and used by an observer and a teacher as an observation checklist in pre- and post-test sessions to assess students' performance. T-tests were run to compare groups on pre- and posttests. The obtained results from observation checklists were compared with the data of two measures. The outcome of both analyses showed that oral presentation can improve accuracy and fluency in speaking ability of students and the effect size in both measures was large. In addition, the comparison between findings of accuracy and fluency measurement and outcome of observation checklists yielded the same result; both of which verified students' speaking improvement.

Toni, Hassaskhah, and Birjandi (2017) carried out a meta-analysis is an investigation into the impressibility of two dimensions of the speaking skill, namely accuracy and fluency, in relation to the experimented treatments among Iranian EFL undergraduates. Having surveyed a collected bank of 74 research reports, the relationships among the variables in the 14 included studies were examined. More specifically, the analysis involved a statistical review of 67 effect sizes (at 95% CI) calculated from studies conducted between 2006 and 2016, including 890 participants. The analysis indicated that in 77% of the experimented treatments, the students performed as well as the students in the regular programs with no significant improvement in oral accuracy. The analysis also demonstrated that 63% of the treatments did not yield significant improvement in oral fluency in comparison with the regular instruction. Moreover, the synthesis of the effects of the contextual factors showed that low-level (i.e., elementary) learners experienced a better improvement in speaking performance. The analysis also revealed that, among the experimented treatments, dialogic tasks were most effective on oral accuracy while interviews were influential in promoting the students' both oral accuracy and fluency.

Alavi and Sadeghi (2017) attempted to investigate the developmental rate of fluency, accuracy and complexity among 12 EFL learners within the framework of chaos complexity theory. To carry out this study, 6 female and 6 male participants in two levels of proficiency (pre-and upper-intermediate) were put in two classes taught by the same teacher and following the same course. Every two months (for a period of four months) they were asked to write a narrative using the pictorial sequence of a story, and they were also asked to tell the same story orally after three days. Their productions were analyzed for fluency, accuracy and complexity (lexical and grammatical). The results, compared inter and intra-individually, revealed that there was no common pattern of development among different learners with different proficiency or gender. A closer examination of the oral and written productions of these learners showed that the emergence of complexity, fluency, and accuracy could be seen as a system adapting to a changing context, in which the language resources of each individual were uniquely transformed through use and in which chaos, dynamicity, unpredictability, and self-organization were clearly observed in the participants' productions.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The following research questions will be answered in this study:

**RQ 1.** Does Iranian English learners' gender have any effect on their English-speaking accuracy/fluency?

**RQ 2.** Which one of speaking fluency or speaking accuracy can be more affected by the Iranian learners' gender?

The following null hypotheses will be formulated in this study:

**H0 1.** Iranian English learners' gender does not have any effect on their English-speaking accuracy/fluency.

**H0 2.** Speaking fluency or speaking accuracy cannot be more affected by the Iranian learners' gender.

## METHOD

### Participants

The sample of the study consisted of 25 Iranian male and 25 Iranian female Upper-intermediate EFL learners between the ages of 17 and 20 years old. They were selected among 90 students from a private English language institute. All of them were at the Upper-intermediate level of proficiency in English based on the results of Preliminary English Test (PET). The participants were selected based on non-random sampling; that is, the students were accepted based on a criterion - their scores on the PET. These participants had already received an approximate number of 200 hours of English language instruction. The course book being utilized by the institute at the time of this investigation was *Top Notch* (Ascher & Saslow, 2012) comprising 6 units, which were taught per-term (52 hours).

### Raters

In order to come up with reliable scores of accuracy and fluency, two experienced speaking instructors who had M.A in TEFL were cooperated with the researcher. One of the raters had about 10 and the other 8 years of English teaching experience at different language institutes. They had both taught to learners of different proficiency levels and age group.

### 2.3 Instruments

The materials and instruments used for the purposes of this study were:

#### *Preliminary English Test (PET)*

It was run to make sure that learners will be homogenous with respect to their language proficiency at the very beginning of the study. Preliminary English Test (PET) is a qualification in English as a foreign language awarded by Cambridge TESOL. The test which has three sections of mixed reading/writing, listening and speaking is considered a complete test of English proficiency due to the fact that it covers all the linguistic skills. PET was administered to the participants and those whose scores fell within the range of

one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected as the target participants of the study. In other words, only the participants whose scores lay under the normal curve were selected. To this end 25 female and 25 male learners were chosen.

### ***Fluency Measurement Scale***

For measuring the speaking fluency, the speech samples were transcribed and fluency was calculated in terms of the variables proposed by Kormos and Denes's (2004) Mean length of runs, Articulation rate, Speech rate and the number of silent pauses per minute.

### ***Accuracy Measurement Scale***

In the present enquiry, accuracy was measured in terms of error-free T-units (Sachs & Polio, 2007, p. 24) which were defined as the "shortest grammatically allowable sentences into which spoken or written text can be divided." A T-unit is a dominant clause and its dependent clauses; all the main clauses in addition to their subordinate and embedded clauses will be counted as T-units in this study. Inspired by Storch (2009), only those T-units that contains no grammatical, syntactic, and lexical errors were counted as acceptable T-units. To measure accuracy, the number of acceptable T-units were divided by the total number of t-units (Storch, 2009). The result was then multiplied by 100 to obtain the accuracy percentage.

### ***Interview Tasks***

Since the learners were all at the Upper-intermediate level of proficiency, the interview tasks use to assess learners' speaking accuracy and fluency were selected from the bank of PET speaking tasks. In the first part of these tasks, the examiner introduced herself and asked the participants' name and personal information and ask them to spell their names. In part two, the examiner gave the participants a picture and asked them to talk about it together. In part three, each participant was given the chance to speak alone; the examiner provided the participant with a colored photograph and asked the learner to talk about. The examiner interviewed each participant in a 15-20-minute interview.

### ***Data Collection Procedure***

First of all, out of 90 Upper-intermediate female and male learners (comprising a total of 45 male and 45 female learners), 50 students were selected. Then, PET was administered to the participants to assure homogeneity in terms of overall language proficiency. Base on the normal curve 25 male and 25 female learners were identified as the legitimate participants. Following that, each participant was interviewed drawing on the speaking tasks of PET which was chosen randomly from a bank of speaking tasks. The speech products of the participants were recorded and subsequently were analyzed by two raters based on the fluency and accuracy measurement criteria, respectively. Inter-rater reliability was established through running Pearson Correlation Coefficient Formula on the two sets of scores for fluency and accuracy and it was .986 and .898, respectively.

### ***Data Analysis***

The collected data were analyzed to test the null hypotheses of the study. The researcher used SPSS software, version 25 to analyze the data. Firstly, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S)



test was used to check the quality of data normality. It should be mentioned that it employed a quantitative research design; in addition to descriptive analysis, quantitative analyses were done to compare the performances of the groups in terms of speaking fluency and accuracy via a set of independent-samples t-tests.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The obtained results are displayed in the following tables.

**Table 1.** One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test (Both Groups' Fluency and Accuracy)

		Male Fluency	Female Fluency	Male Accuracy	Female Accuracy
N		25	25	25	25
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	10.9800	13.8000	13.0600	11.1000
	Std. Deviation	.85975	.81650	2.07826	1.06066
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.153	.237	.215	.298
	Positive	.153	.203	.215	.298
	Negative	-.127	-.237	-.185	-.150
Test Statistic		.153	.237	.215	.298
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.135 <sup>c</sup>	.091 <sup>c</sup>	.194 <sup>c</sup>	.112 <sup>c</sup>

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

Table 1 shows that the statistics of scores is normal as the results obtained from using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, version 25. In this case, the parametric statistics like independent samples t-test were used to get the final results.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of the male and female groups on the fluency test

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Fluency Test	Males	25	10.9800	.85975	.17195
	Females	25	13.8000	.81650	.16330

**Table 3.** Independent Samples T-test (males and females fluency test scores)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Fluency Test	Equal variances assumed	.121	.729	- 11.892	48	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			- 11.892	47.873	.000

As Table 3 displays, the level of significance is 0.000 which is lower than the confidence level of 0.05 leading to the conclusion that there was a significant difference between the fluency of the participants in the male and female groups. Moreover, Table 2 indicates

that the mean of the participants' scores for the female group was higher than that of the male group ( $M_{\text{Female}} = 13.8000 > 10.98000 = M_{\text{Male}}$ ). Thus, it could be inferred that female participants outperforming male participants significantly in terms of speaking fluency. Furthermore, another independent-samples t-test was employed on the accuracy scores of the study's participants to be capable of expressing a defendable answer to the first research question. Tables 4 and 5 display the descriptive statistics and the results of the mean comparison, respectively.

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics of the male and female groups on the accuracy test

Group Statistics					
	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Accuracy Test	Males	25	13.0600	2.07826	.41565
	Females	25	11.1000	1.06066	.21213

**Table 5.** Independent Samples T-test (males and females accuracy test scores)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Accuracy Test	Equal variances assumed	25.414	.000	4.200	48	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			4.200	35.708	.000

As Table 5 signifies the significance level is .000 which is lower than .05 meaning that there was a statistically significant difference between the means of accuracy scores of the male and female groups. Moreover, Table 4 illustrates that the mean of the participants' scores for the male group is higher than that of the female group ( $M_{\text{Male}} = 13.0600 > 11.1000 = M_{\text{Female}}$ ). Consequently, it could be concluded that male participants outperforming female participants in terms of speaking accuracy remarkably. Considering Tables 3 and 5, it could noticeably be inferred that the female group had a better performance in terms of speaking fluency and the male group had a better performance regarding speaking accuracy; speaking fluency was more affected by the female participants while speaking accuracy was more affected by male learners.

In general, this study aimed at examining the role of gender on Iranian Upper-intermediate learners' speaking accuracy and fluency. Additionally, the study was an effort in exploring whether speaking fluency or speaking accuracy was more affected by Iranian learners' gender. The results of statistical analysis suggested that female participants outperformed the male participants in terms of speaking fluency while male participants had a better performance in terms of speaking accuracy. It was also revealed that speaking accuracy was more affected by male and speaking fluency was more affected by female participants.

Keefe (1982) argued that the factors that determine these differences are basic physiological differences, such as differences in the development of brain, as well as

differences in higher-level cortical functions. In Banich's view (1997) males and females were somehow different in terms of their patterns of lateralization which means males are more left hemisphere dominant than females. Based on this difference, it can be argued that since the left-brain dominance has got to do with the analytical thinking (Banich, 1997; Khaghaninejad & Jaafarzadeh, 2014; Nasri & Biria, 2017). and analytical ability is important in learning grammar, the male participants in the present study were significantly better than females in terms of speaking accuracy. This enquiry's findings were in line with what Farahani and Khaghaninejad (2009) found about the difference between the speaking performances of male and female Iranian EFL learners; they mentioned that females are superior in speaking tasks than their male peers. They also proposed that males unlike females are more sensitive to grammatical structures and the accuracy of their sentences.

## CONCLUSION

The results of statistical analysis showed that female participants outperformed the male participants in terms of fluency while male participants had a better performance in terms of speaking accuracy. It was also revealed that speaking accuracy was more affected by male and speaking fluency was more affected by female participants. One of the demographic characteristics for which substantial significance has been attached to with regard to language learning is learners' gender (Cornbleet & Carter 2001; Namaziandost, Nasri, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2019; Nasri & Biria, 2017). Truesdale, 1990). With an aim of finding out whether or not there were any gender differences in students' performance concerning speaking accuracy and fluency, this study aimed at contributing to the existing literature. Based on the findings, it can be stated that gender differences do have an effect on learning different skills and their components; male and female foreign language learners show different capacities for acquiring various linguistic skills (Buck, 2001; Burns, 1998; Namaziandost, Nasri, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2019). Therefore, foreign language instructors should be encouraged to take benefit by taking this point into consideration to improve students' performance on different English language skills and sub-skills. The following instructional implications can be proposed inspired by the findings of the enquiry:

- Material developers may greatly benefit from taking the role of gender in mind when developing materials in order to strike a balance in the instructional materials so that both genders are equally treated and given similar the opportunities for learning a new language.
- Curriculum developers and educational policy makers can also gain benefits from the findings of the present study in the way that for designing curricula they may consider the role gender has when it comes to speaking accuracy and fluency and consequently design activities to compensate for the perceived weaknesses of both genders.
- The learners themselves can be given awareness in terms of how gender can be related to different areas of language learning and thus assisted in the process of language learning. To this end, the areas of strengths and weakness can be elaborated on for the learners by the teachers.

- In the light of the findings of this study, teachers may intend to consider the strengths and weaknesses of both genders in teaching a new language (e.g., English) and attempt to compensate for the weaknesses by focusing on the strengths of the learners of each gender.

Having conducted this study in the area of task and components of speaking ability, the researcher came up with other potential issues for investigation. First, accuracy, complexity and fluency are three components of speech which are not independent of each other; thus, it is more beneficial if further research consider all three components at the same time. Second, there are some factors that can affect components of speech such as pre-task activities, planning time, task repetition, the role of confidence and background knowledge. Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of these factors on speaking ability

## REFERENCES

- Agwu, S. N. (2005). *Strategies for teaching the arts and social sciences*. Enugu: Pan-African Publishers.
- Ahmadian, M. and M. Tavakoli, 2011. The effects of simultaneous use of careful planning and task repetition on accuracy, complexity, and fluency in EFL learners' oral production. *Language Teaching Research*, 15(1): 35-59.
- Alavi, S. T., & Sadeghi, K. (2017). Development of fluency, accuracy, and complexity in productive skills of EFL learners across gender and proficiency: a chaos complexity approach. *Journal of Teaching Language Skills*, 35(4), 1-35.
- and Analytic Techniques of Scoring: A Comparative Study. *Applied Linguistics Research Journal*, 3(2), 70-82
- Ascher, M., & Saslow, P. R. (2012). *Handbook of self-regulation*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Banich M. T. (1997). Breakdown of executive function and goal-directed behavior. In M. T. Banich (Eds.), *Neuropsychology: The neural bases of mental function* (pp. 369-390). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Buck, G. (2001). *Assessing listening*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burns, A. (1998). Teaching speaking. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 18, 102 -123
- Cornbleet, S. & Carter, R. (2001). *The Language of Speech and Writing*. London: Routledge
- Ellis, R. & Barkhuizen, G. (2005). *Analyzing Learner Language*. Oxford University Press.
- Farhady, H., Jafarpur, A., & Birjandi, P. (1995). *Testing language skills: From theory to practice*. Tehran: SAMT Publications.
- Foster, P., & Skehan, P. (1999). The influence of source of planning and focus of planning on task-based performance. *Language Teaching Research*, 3(3), 215-247.
- Garg, S., & Gautam, A. (2015). Learning English can change your life for the better. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, 3(2), 1-18.
- Hughes, R. (2002). *Teaching and researching speaking*. Longman, Harlow.
- Jones, P. (1996). Planning an oral language program. In Pauline Jones (ed). *Talking to Learn*. Melbourne: PETA 1996, 12-26.

- Keefe, J. W. (1982). *Student learning styles and brain behavior: Programs*. Instrumentation, research: National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- Khaghaninezhad, M. S. & Jaafarzadeh, G. (2014). Investigating the Effect of Reduced Forms Instruction on EFL Learners' Listening and Speaking Abilities. *English Language Teaching*, 7(1), 159-171.
- Koosha, B., Ketabi, S., & Kassaian, Z. (2011). The effects of self-esteem, age and gender on the speaking skills of intermediate university EFL learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(10), 1328-1337.
- Koponen, M., & Riggensbach, H. (2000). Overview: Varying perspectives on fluency. In H. Riggensbach (Ed.), *Perspectives on fluency* (pp. 5-24). Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
- Kormos, J., & Dénes, M. (2004). *Exploring measures and perceptions of fluency in the Pearson*. Allyn & Bacon publications.
- Lennon, P. (1990). Investigating fluency in EFL: A quantitative approach. *Language Learning*, 3, 387-417.
- Lumley, T., & O'Sullivan, B. (2005). The effect of test-taker gender, audience and topic on task performance in tape-mediated assessment of speaking. *Language Testing*, 22(4), 415-437.
- Motallebzadeh, K., & Nematizadeh, S. (2011). Does gender play a role in the assessment of oral proficiency? *English Language Teaching*, 4(4), 165-172.
- Namaziandost, E., & Ahmadi, S. (2019). The Assessment of Oral Proficiency through Holistic and Analytic Techniques of Scoring: A Comparative Study. *Applied Linguistics Research Journal*, 3(2), 70-82
- Namaziandost, E., Nasri, M., & Rahimi Esfahani, F. (2019). Pedagogical Efficacy of Experience-Based Learning (EBL) Strategies for Improving the Speaking Fluency of Upper-intermediate Male and Female Iranian EFL Students. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 4(2), 29-41
- Namaziandost, E., Rahimi Esfahani, F., Nasri, M., & Mirshekaran, R. (2018). The Effect of Gallery Walk Technique on Pre-intermediate EFL Learners' Speaking Skill. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, 8, 1-15.
- Nasri, M. & Biria, R. (2017). Integrating multiple and focused strategies for improving reading comprehension and L2 lexical development of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 6(1), 311-321.
- Nunan, D. (1998). *Second language teaching and learning*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers
- O'Loughlin, K. (2002). The impact of gender in oral proficiency testing. *Language Testing*, 19(2), 169-92.
- Oyetunde, T. O. (2003). *How do secondary school students process prints?* In A. Lawal, I. Isiugo-Abari, & L. N. Ohia, (Eds.). *Perspectives on applied linguistics in language and literature*. Ibadan: Stirling-Hodden Publishers.
- Richards, J. C. (2006). *Teaching listening and speaking*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. London: Pearson Education.

- Roger, A. E. (2008). Teaching the speaking skill to Japanese students' part 1: Construct & practice. *The journal of Kanda University of International Studies*, 20(1), 1-26.
- Sachs, R. & Polio, C. (2007). Learners' use of two types of written feedback on an L2 speech of second language learners. *System*, 32, 145-164.
- Shabani, M. B. (2013). The effect of background knowledge on speaking ability of Iranian EFL learners. *International SAMNM Journal of Marketing and Management*, 1, 25-27.
- Stein, M. (1999). Developing oral proficiency in the immersion classroom. *ACIL Newsletter*, 2(3), 24-42.
- Storch, N. (2009). The interaction between type of contact and type of instruction: Some effects on the L2 proficiency of learners. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 8, 181-200
- Tam, M. (1997). Building fluency: A course for non-native speakers of English. *English Teaching Forum*, 35(1), 26.
- Tavakoli, P., & Skehan, P. (2005). Strategic planning, task structure, and performance testing. In R. Ellis (Ed.), *Planning and task performance in a second language* (pp. 239-276). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Thornbury, S. (2005). *How to teach speaking*. England: Pearson Education limited.
- Toni, A., Hassaskhah, J., & Birjandi, P. (2017). The Impressibility of Speaking Accuracy/Fluency among EFL Undergraduates: A Meta – Analysis. *The Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice*, 10(21), 184-225.
- Truesdale, S. P. (1990). Whole-body listening: Developing active auditory skills. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 21, 183-184.
- Yahay, M., & Kheirzadeh, S. (2015). The impact of oral presentation on fluency and accuracy of Iranian EFL learners' speaking. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 2(5), 114-123.
- Yousefi, M., & Kasaian, A. (2014). Relationship between willingness to communicate and Iranian EFL learner's speaking fluency and accuracy. *Journal of Advances in English Language Teaching*, 2 (6), 61 - 72.