

The Language Learning Journey of an EFL Student: A Case Study of Taha at Kabul Education University

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Abstract: Learning English as a foreign language is crucial for students at public and private universities across Afghanistan. English is the lingua franca of business communication, technology, medicine, and social sciences. Adult Afghans learn English to secure scholarships and enhance their competencies through academic English. However, learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is challenging for Afghans due to limited resources in social and educational environments. This research was conducted through a qualitative case study of adult students in the English Department, Faculty of Languages and Literature at Kabul Education University. Using standard rubrics, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and essay evaluations. The study examines a participant's foreign language learning process in a non-English speaking community, particularly investigating the strengths and weaknesses of the English language learning process in Afghanistan. It reveals how the participant overcame challenges while learning English as a foreign language and demonstrates their strengths in receptive and productive English skills. The study also highlights that EFL learners acquire English by making mistakes and errors in the initial stages of learning and that confidence in making mistakes assists adult EFL students in improving their English language proficiency.

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INTRODUCTION

English language proficiency is a fundamental requirement in 21st-century education systems. Antic (2007) reported that EFL learners must acquire English to fulfill their academic and professional needs. Similarly, Bagheri and Andi (2015) stated that English is essential for every college student as it is accepted as a medium of instruction in educational institutions worldwide. While English has been taught as a foreign language in Afghan schools and

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universities, students often struggle with effective communication due to limited practice opportunities inside and outside the classroom.

EFL students aim to learn English to utilize technology and study at overseas universities. This case study focuses on Taha, a 19-year-old native Pashto speaker living in Kabul. Taha, who grew up in a literate family, is studying English at Kabul Education University. Before joining the English department, he studied at private institutions in Kabul. Taha began learning his second language, Dari, at age four when he enrolled in kindergarten and started studying English in fourth grade. His parents and teachers praised his language-learning efforts. Additionally, Taha learned some Urdu by watching Indian movies and Urdu videos, although he cannot speak them fluently or accurately.

Taha transferred to KEU from Sayed Jamaludin Teaching Training College, passing the college entrance exams with a 92 percent score. While teaching academic writing to junior students, the researcher randomly selected Taha as a participant for this case study from among sixty students. Taha consistently provided accurate, coherent, well-structured paragraphs and essays, submitted assignments on time, and actively participated in class discussions. His work was notable for its fresh ideas about 21st-century education, peace, technology, and other modern topics. Taha consistently strives to lead his group and the entire class.

Many adult EFL students struggle with short speeches and error-free paragraphs due to weak reading comprehension. Jamoom (2021) noted that writing is a complex skill for EFL learners. As Juel (1988) stated, "Poor readers appear to become poor writers" (p.442). Conversely, students who engage in extensive reading or listening comprehension activities tend to write more effective paragraphs and essays.

The primary objectives of this study are to investigate the significant factors that assisted Taha in learning English as a foreign language, explore possibilities for further developing receptive and productive language skills in the EFL context, and identify barriers that hinder the participant's foreign language learning process.

The case study addresses the following three research questions:

1. How did the student (Taha) learn English in the EFL context?
2. What social factors affect the learning process of an English as a foreign language student?
3. What learning strategies and styles help Taha develop listening, speaking, and writing skills?

Zia and Sulan (2015) noted that English is used and learned globally, increasing its international value. In Afghanistan, English is taught and learned as an EFL. While Afghan EFL students can often read and write English, many struggle with fluent and accurate spoken communication. Lodhi et al. (2018) emphasized that English is the language of communication and is utilized as a language of education worldwide.

Non-native teachers typically teach English as a foreign language. Experienced teachers employ various methods and strategies when instructing adult students. Teachers are responsible for creating situations that benefit visual learners. Spada and Lightbown (2006) stated that students who effectively use their metalinguistic knowledge, problem-solving skills, and memory strategies best comprehend EFL/ESL instructions. Teachers must develop pre- and post-assessment activities to reveal learners' strengths and weaknesses, which inform the design of reliable and supportive materials and activities. According to Stephen (2010), effective integration of reading and writing fosters personal development. Teachers should combine diverse methods and techniques for teaching reading and writing skills.

Comprehension-based learning is particularly beneficial for intermediate-level learners (Spada & Lightbown, 2006). Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) advocated incorporating active listening activities, total physical response, and critical reading in the classroom. Students' pair work and conversation practice are vital for communicative development. Activities that combine beginners, intermediate, and advanced students in pairs or groups can be especially effective. Rahmayana et al. (2024) emphasized that motivation and eagerness to learn English are essential for adult EFL students.

Spada and Lightbown (2006) highlighted that clarification and elicitation feedback improve communication. Clarification feedback involves asking students to reformulate incorrect sentences, while elicitation feedback is implemented through direct elicitation and information questions. These feedback methods help students overcome pronunciation challenges.

Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) noted that technology enhances language learning experiences and broadens learners' understanding of language as a dynamic, evolving system. Technology provides learners with access to abundant target language information. Learners can utilize various digital platforms such as blogs, social networking sites, wikis, and YouTube to interact and practice their language skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted through a qualitative case study. The researcher employed semi-structured interviews, oral and written image descriptions, questionnaires, participant paragraphs, and essays reviewing data collection tools to collect comprehensive data regarding the case study. The data were analyzed thematically. Peel Karen (2020) asserted that thematic data analysis is an effective approach in the qualitative research paradigm because it helps researchers understand the main ideas of the study.

Data Collection Tools

These data collection tools enabled the author to extract valid and reliable data. Both primary and secondary data were utilized in this descriptive study. The questionnaire was adapted from the Tutor Trainer's Manual to determine the participants' learning styles and personality types. It comprised thirty questions classified into three major sections. The first section

examined the participant's visual modality, the second examined the auditory modality, and the last examined the kinesthetic/tactile modality. Upon completing the questionnaire, the participant prioritized the visual style-related statements.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher taught academic writing to junior class students. While teaching, he identified many active and organized students in the class. The author discussed the case study project with one of them, informing the student (Taha) about it. When Taha recognized the value of the case study, he voluntarily signed the agreement letter and demonstrated commitment to the project. Taha was particularly motivated to master English language skills, and participating in the case study allowed him to understand the factors that facilitated or hindered his English language learning. While teaching compare and contrast essays at KEU, the author noticed some unique assignments with fewer mistakes than others, one of which was Taha's.

The author utilized a semi-structured interview as a data collection tool, which consisted of twenty-four questions (Appendix). These questions focused on various areas, such as the participant's educational background, strengths and weaknesses, factors impeding the foreign language learning process, and factors assisting the participant in developing productive and receptive language skills. The interview lasted forty minutes and was recorded on a cellphone. To evaluate the participant's oral communication strengths and weaknesses, the author provided three images and asked Taha to describe two that best aligned with his interests within five minutes. The author recorded Taha's voice and used a rubric to assess his oral communication. This section of data collection was completed in fifteen minutes.

The author received three assignments written by Taha. These assignments (paragraphs and essays) were prepared for the integrated academic writing and grammar course. These educational pieces were assessed using rubrics with various sections, including organization, punctuation and capitalization, content, and vocabulary. The first academic piece focused on narrative paragraphs; Taha narrated the story well, although there were some issues with content and organization. Additionally, the author obtained one compare and contrast essay written by Taha.

Data Analysis

The author transcribed the participant interview information and then analyzed and interpreted it thematically. The interview transcript was prepared immediately after the interview was conducted. The data was coded and combined thematically.

The participant's written English paragraphs and essays were analyzed using a standard rubric. The analytical rubric included organization, mechanics, punctuation, and word choice sections. The questionnaire was analyzed as follows: Taha often marked (3) for statements such as "I remember information better if I write it down" and seldom marked (1) for statements like "I have trouble following lectures." The remaining statements were ranked using numbers (1, 2, 3). In the end, Taha scored 20 on the visual style questionnaire. However,

his responses to the auditory-style questions in the second portion of the questionnaire indicated that he was not exclusively a visual learner.

FINDINGS

The study explored the EFL student's learning styles, learning strategies, motivations, and challenges while learning English. The research was conducted using a case study design. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, assignments were assessed using rubrics, and the participant's learning styles were identified with the help of standard questionnaires. The findings were categorized, evaluated, analyzed, and synthesized thematically, addressing two main questions in the current case study.

Language Learning History

Taha is a nineteen-year-old junior student at Kabul Education University. His family includes both educated and uneducated members. Although Taha's mother was illiterate, she held favorable views on education and inspired her children to pursue it. Taha's father, who obtained a bachelor's degree from the Military University in Kabul, speaks Dari, Urdu, and English. He acquired Dari through societal interactions and schooling. Living among Dari speakers facilitated his language acquisition, enabling him to speak fluently and accurately. The primary factor in his Dari learning was immersion among native speakers.

Taha's father can also speak Urdu because he has lived in Pakistan for many years, where native Urdu speakers surrounded him. Although he did not attend formal Urdu language courses, he became fluent through immersion. Taha studied English at various academic institutions in Pakistan and learned the language in an educational environment. His father laid the foundation for learning English as a foreign language, becoming a role model for other members.

Additionally, Taha's older brother, a medical doctor who graduated from Kabul Medical University, speaks Pashto, Dari, Urdu, English, and Arabic. While studying at university, he translated medical terminology using English dictionaries and thesauruses. Beyond his academic studies, he mastered English through interactions with native English speakers while working in Kabul.

Taha acquired Dari from the community, where most residents were native speakers of the language. As a child, he had numerous Dari-speaking friends. Long (as paraphrased in Spada and Lightbown, 2006) "agreed with Krashen that comprehensible input is necessary for language acquisition" (p.43). Although his family members speak Pashto at home, Taha attempts to converse in Dari with them. He began learning Dari at the age of four. As he mentioned, family members helped him speak Dari like a native speaker. His parents, brothers, and sisters encouraged him to talk to Dari inside and outside the home until he mastered the language skills. He was motivated by his family members and teachers. Outside of school hours, he practiced speaking Dari with teachers and classmates. During that time, learning Dari was essential for his pursuit of science and arts subjects at school.

When Taha advanced to fourth grade, the English language was introduced as a subject in the school curriculum. Although initially challenging, he was compelled to learn it as he was a top student in his class. English was new to the fourth-grade active learner (Taha), but he had facilitators around him at home and school. Instead of focusing solely on Dari and Pashto, family members encouraged the young child to learn English. They recognized the value of the English language and provided opportunities for Taha at home. In addition to his intrinsic motivation, they actively facilitated English language learning for their youngest family member. The family's motivation revealed no cultural or social barriers to his English language learning. Pranawengtias (2022) reported that motivation enhances EFL students' talent. Similarly, Spada and Lightbown (2006) stated that motivation is one of the most crucial factors leading learners toward sustainable and prosperous second language learning.

It is worth noting that when Taha first saw the new subject on his class timetable, he felt apprehensive, but this concern made him an even more committed student. As one of the creative students in fourth grade, he was always seated at the front of the class. According to Shamim (1996), students sitting in the "attention zone" of the class receive more attention from the teacher and are provided with more opportunities. Taha concentrated on the teacher's instructions, observed the whiteboard, and actively participated in class discussions. The teacher monitored students' work efficiently, which helped Taha gain confidence in speaking and asking questions about the lessons. This monitoring motivated Taha to prepare for class and study previous and new lessons at home with his father. He strived to surround himself with talented and well-disciplined learners.

Moreover, Taha's father enrolled him in one of Kabul's English language institutions. He began learning English at the primary level. At the institute, teachers employed modern approaches to teaching English, integrating various language skills. In addition to studying English at school and the institute, Taha continued to develop his English language skills at home. He had equipped a home library and read English books with his family. He listened to English radio broadcasts and followed academic English speeches. Taha organized a folder on his computer for English language learning and teaching materials containing videos, academic movies about English learning, and books. He incorporated technology into his English language learning process, developing his speaking skills through active listening. He had facilities for active listening in his study room, including a radio at home through which he listened to BBC English news.

Moreover, his brother and father provided academic speeches and videos available to download online. Arora (2012) mentioned that active listening develops student insight, paves the way for good speech, and makes students active participants in learning. Within one year, he completed the institute's program and could proficiently speak, read, write, and listen to English.

According to Taha, when he sat with his older family members, they encouraged him to select a book from the cupboard shelf and read it, which appealed to him. They allowed him to choose a book without pressuring him to read for extended periods. They introduced him to

reading books and methods to enhance self-study. During the reading process, he consulted his brother or father whenever he encountered obstacles. Over time, the scope of his self-study and reading broadened, and he often no longer required their assistance. He resolved English book vocabulary issues using monolingual and occasionally bilingual dictionaries available in the library. To comprehend the themes of academic texts, he employed various effective reading strategies, such as skimming, scanning, summarizing, and note-taking. He read purposefully and set specific goals for extensive and intensive reading. One of the secrets behind his successful reading was carrying a notebook everywhere to record new and complex words. Ediger and Bhashara (2007) indicated that objective-based reading fosters student vocabulary and involves comprehension skills.

Taha is a talented student who understands both the micro and macro skills of the English language. He can speak, write, read, and listen very well. Furthermore, he possesses a productive and receptive vocabulary, which he utilizes in receptive and productive skills. Taha identifies sentence structures and implements them in his writing. For example, he comprehends parts of speech, sentence structures, and many other essential grammar concepts.

Social Factors

Numerous factors assisted Taha in learning English, including social factors. He lived in a society that facilitated the English language learning process. At school, he was in a class with compassionate female teachers. The teachers motivated students by inviting them to the front of the class to engage in dialogues and conversations in English. As the youngest child in the family, everyone encouraged Taha to study and learn. There was no pressure; he was mentally and physically prepared to learn the English language. He did not face any cultural challenges because he grew up in a family and society with a rich cultural background.

Furthermore, when Taha graduated from high school, he worked diligently to find a way to attend university. He was drawn to the English language and literature discipline, recognizing that English is the language of modern education. The English language helps Afghans acquire modern computer science, management science, and international relations education. Enrolling at Kabul Education University made the challenges more accessible to Taha. He encountered professional lecturers who implemented various theories in the classroom. Many lecturers introduced new approaches and teaching techniques. The variations in teaching methods, lessons, and tasks paved the way for the junior student (Taha).

Nevertheless, three skills still require development. Taha aims to enhance his speaking fluency and accuracy. He struggled to organize his speech using transitions while describing designated images and had numerous fillers or pauses during oral descriptions. Additionally, pronunciation was another challenge that hindered his ability to communicate fluently and accurately. It is evident that many students at Kabul Education University faced difficulties with academic writing, and Taha was among them. On the other hand, Goctu (2016) stated that reading is a source of understanding for readers to achieve academic success, gain

cultural information, find solutions to problems, and facilitate vocabulary and grammar acquisition. Reading for pleasure helps students develop other significant language skills (speaking, writing, and listening).

Taha has been mastering the English language through various activities. These included variations in activities, learning objectives, study schedules, and learning strategies. He took advantage of small opportunities, whether they were intended for first- or fourth-year students. According to Taha, he attended conferences and seminars organized for university students. He believed that exceptional students had objective-based study plans. He created a timetable by prioritizing tasks and activities. He carried a small notebook everywhere and recorded new words, ideas, and challenges that impeded genuine learning throughout the day. He articulated these words and ideas before studying them. He also discussed challenges with professors at the university.

Similarly, Thakore (2012) advised, "Have breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and dinner like a beggar" (p.43). Daily exercises contribute to a healthy body, and the dominant organs of a healthy body are a calm mind and heart. These two organs require effective physical, spiritual, and psychological practices.

Learning Strategies, Styles, and Personality Types

Growing up in an educated family prepared Taha to develop a unique personality. He is a brave and autonomous learner who strives to participate actively in group activities. He also possesses the endurance to overcome mistakes. The researcher found Taha to be one of the students who engaged in diverse group discussions and class activities. Therefore, the data revealed that he had an extroverted personality. He never succumbed to anxiety and stress, which often accompany learning a new language. Instead, he endeavored to find solutions for complicated tasks and played the role of problem-solver within his group. According to Spade and Lightbown (2006), anxiety is not always problematic; there is anxiety that can have a positive effect on the learning process. For instance, anxiety can motivate students to challenge themselves in preparing for exams and delivering academic presentations. Moreover, Taha had a positive attitude toward the English language learning process and believed in his talent and skills. His primary goal was to learn English systematically and sometimes dynamically.

In addition, Spade and Lightbown (2006) stated that 'learning style' refers to absorbing new information and skills. It deals with an individual's natural and customary acquiring and learning new concepts. To examine the participant's learning style, the author used thirty statements, with each statement ranked as often (3), sometimes (2), and seldom (1). The questionnaire contained ten statements for visual style, ten for auditory style, and ten for kinesthetic/tactile style. Visual learners benefit from colorful books, charts, graphs, and film strips. Auditory learners benefit from lectures, as well as video and audio materials. Kinesthetic/tactile learners benefit from note-taking, body movement during lesson learning, and rewriting class notes. Taha scored 22 in the auditory section of the questionnaire,

indicating he is a strong auditory learner. He learned lessons through lectures and video and audio tapes. In the kinesthetic style section, which had ten questions, Taha scored 17.

These findings suggest that Taha is a strong auditory learner for several reasons. He grasped lessons through listening. For instance, he listened to lectures enthusiastically but struggled to take notes simultaneously. Listening to the radio and watching videos enhanced his English speaking skills. In the second category, he exhibited the characteristics of a visual learner as he remembered lessons he had read. He appreciated colorful and well-organized textbooks but sometimes struggled with books containing small, poor-quality text. For successful implementation of the visual learning style, there are effective strategies that guide learners toward success. These strategies include memory-related, compensatory, and affective approaches. Oxford (2001) described affective strategies as recognizing learners' mood and anxiety levels. Affective strategies help students perform without hesitation and become more self-assured learners of English as a second language.

The data demonstrated that Taha is also a visual learner. He learned the language by watching movies with attractive colors and clear sounds. The author recommends jigsaw and dramatic activities focusing on listening and speaking competence. These activities facilitate learning the English language through listening and watching. Think-pair-share activities are also practical for auditory learners. Given that students in Afghanistan often learn in large classes, providing lectures can assist auditory learners in acquiring English.

Learning Oral Skills

The oral skills assessment addressed the listening and speaking proficiencies of the targeted candidate. Efficient utilization of listening skills accelerates fluent and accurate speaking. Taha's oral skills were assessed using three pictures. The author employed an oral presentation rubric to evaluate his oral skills. The rubric included sections for delivery, word choice, pronunciation, and content. There were three pictures, and the interviewee was asked to describe two. The candidate described the first picture thoroughly using descriptive words. However, while he confidently described the images, certain obstacles, such as stress, intonation, rhythm, and word choice, hindered his fluency and accuracy.

The participant successfully described the first picture without preparation time, explaining it perfectly. Taha spoke for over two minutes while describing the first picture, which depicted a library, utilizing approximately 200 words in proper sentences. The speaker employed various types of sentences, including simple and compound structures. This variation demonstrated the speaker's proficiency. Many conjunctions connected ideas, helping the speaker maintain the flow of speech.

Taha made pronunciation mistakes and had numerous pauses in his speech. These frequent pauses made his speech tedious for listeners. After each simple sentence, he paused for two to three seconds. For example, he said, "Hhhm this, hhhhhmm in the name of Allah hhhh, I think this is a hhhhhmm car hhhhhmm, and hhh someone hhhmm made it like a book store or

library and there are some books, and hmmm library is replaced that how we should study a lot hhhhmm because hhhhmmmm." The correct form would be: "In the name of Allah, I think this is a car, and somebody gave the library shape to the car. There are some books, and these books motivated us to study a lot." There was no connected speech, meaning he did not consider linking words or using transitions. Instead of utilizing transitions, he used unnecessary pauses.

Additionally, Spade and Lightbown (2006) mentioned that "Some aspects of first language influence second language learners' phonological development" (p.104). Furthermore, Taha did not focus on word and sentence stress. As stress is a vital pronunciation feature, the observer did not detect appropriate word and sentence stress during the participant's speaking. Lack of stress sometimes disrupts the flow of speech. Taha also ignored intonation while describing images. Arora (2012) noted that besides realizing sounds, many other factors, such as intonation and stress, require attention.

Moreover, Taha made a few grammatical mistakes, as he did not use coordinating conjunctions properly. He used sentences that lacked clear meaning and structure. For example, "Yes, hhhh I think this is a hhhhamm this lady or girl hhhh, and she is hhhh a poor family hmm and she is hhhmmm. And in a bad situation and she also ...hhhhh".

There were several reasons behind these mistakes, some of which were related to transfer sequences. For instance, one of the reasons was that Taha had been living in a non-native English-speaking society, and many of his English teachers were non-native speakers. Limited opportunities to listen to native speakers presented another challenge for him. He did not practice effective pronunciation and speaking in class. Rahmayana et al. (2024) explained that adult EFL students can use films to develop speaking skills, enhancing their vocabulary. Similarly, Ediger and Bhashara Rao (2007) stated that "Dramatic activities can help pupils progress in the oral use of language" (p.74).

He requires more effort in the areas of pronunciation and vocabulary. A shortage of productive vocabulary was one of the causes of his short speech. He did not describe the second picture because he lacked productive vocabulary. Spada and Lightbown (2006) mentioned that the storage of vocabulary and the incorrect use of words in the proper place impede communication. Likewise, Krashen (as paraphrased in Spada and Lightbown, 2006) mentioned that extensive or pleasure reading is the best source for developing vocabulary in EFL/ESL students. He also requires practical knowledge of sentence structures to become a fluent speaker.

The researcher assessed Taha's oral skills with the help of the described rubric. He asked the candidate to describe two pictures. Taha described the pictures very well and utilized accurate and fluent sentences. However, he had problems with pauses and pronunciation; the author recommends that the candidate work on pronunciation and sentence structures. He needs to increase his academic vocabulary.

Learning Writing Skills

Jamoom (2021) discussed that EFL learners overcome the challenges of writing skills by mastering various skills such as grammar, reading, and writing style. Writing is a sophisticated skill requiring practical skills and theoretical insight. However, it is a complicated skill for students, implemented in every segment of academic life. The author assessed Taha's written skills from various angles. The researcher used well-written rubrics to evaluate the written skills of the candidate. The analytical rubric assessed content, organization, language structure, punctuation, capitalization rules, APA (American Psychological Association) format, and words. The current study author received the essay for one of his writing subject assignments. In the written essay, the author found strengths in how the writer implemented comparing and contrasting essays; the researcher also found some mistakes that prevented the clarity and flow of Taha's essay.

The author reviewed Taha's compare and contrast essay. He wrote the essay for the Integrated Academic Writing and Grammar course. The essay had perfect organization. It had an introductory paragraph, supporting paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. The introductory paragraph involved a hook, background information, and a thesis statement. The writer utilized simple, compound, and complex sentences in the essay. In the sentences, he utilized dependent and independent clauses; he considered variation among sentences. The essay had a subject-verb agreement. The author believes that Taha is a native speaker of Pashto and has the same SV (Subject-verb) sentence structures. He misses run-on sentences and sentence fragments.

On the other hand, Taha committed mistakes in his written essay. He used some fragments and run-on sentences, which made it challenging for the reader to understand the concept of the essay. He was not able to prevent the usage of fragmented sentences. For example, he stated, "This generation has many people of all ages which are becoming more obese these are all because they are always outside busy with their works and they are using from restaurant food or fast food that they may contain high fat, sugar and salt having a regular health diet plan helps up to keep away from many health problems." The researcher found three or four lines of sentences that depicted run-on sentences; some sentences had subject-verb agreement challenges. It is possible to write simple sentences instead of very complicated sentences which do not have a clear meaning. For instance, he can write sentences like these: "The new generation of the twenty-first century has people of all ages. Many people are overweight because they usually eat outside of the home. They ate the food at the restaurant that contained sugar and high fat". Sometimes, he could not place proper punctuation marks. I found many mistakes in the usage of commas in the essay. For example, he wrote, "In today's society, our people are getting used to fast food rather than home food, and it's a terrible habit to show your children that fast food is alright to eat rather than home food." The correct form of the sentence is, "In today's society, people have been eating fast food rather than home food, and eating fast food at restaurants paves the ground for the children to follow their parents." As Spada and Lightbown (2006) stated, "According to the

Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, errors were often assumed to be the result of transfer from learners' first language" (p.79). Furthermore, the author read some mistakes that seemed the author committed intentionally. He made mistakes because he did not implement the writing strategies effectively.

Additionally, while the researcher assessed his essay, he found that Taha did not consider the principles of academic writing skills. Taha's essay did not have unity, coherence, and cohesion. For instance, the supporting paragraphs did not support the thesis statement correctly. Some of the supporting paragraphs did not have an effective organization. This means that the paragraphs lacked topic sentences that supported the thesis statement. Transition words were not punctuated accurately. He indicated, "In fast foods, they usually use the cheap oil and the fries, everything which is very bad for our health and it causes a lot of problems for our health; home foods are healthy, and it's not always fried they are so healthy for our health if have time to make home foods." There were no commas after transitions. The content of the essay had semantic and mechanical problems. He could not illustrate the written thesis statement in the essay's body paragraphs. This means that the essay's purpose was confusing and problematic for readers. The given examples in the essay were irrelevant, and there was a lack of details. For instance, he did not add facts and vivid evidence to support the thesis statement.

Furthermore, the written essay had words that were not allowed and seemed inappropriate in academic writing. The problem came from his developmental sequences. He is a native speaker of the Pashto language and the Pashto language has capitalization rules and sophisticated rules for punctuation. The paragraph organization issues occurred due to developmental sequences. On the other hand, he did not receive proper feedback and a model of academic paragraphs during school and college. Krashen (as paraphrased in Goctu, 2016) discussed that spending time on reading is more valuable than providing the opportunity to learn vocabulary. Finally, reading paragraphs and essay samples helps to deal with the challenges of writing skills.

Taha's compare and contrast essay had positive points. He proved that the academic essay he had written was good. He needs to strive to improve various elements of his scholarly writing skills. To further develop academic writing, he has to increase the number of academic words and phrases. A large number of receptive vocabulary items assists him in writing an effective essay on various educational topics. Spada and Lightbown (2006) discussed that realizing enough vocabulary paves the ground for learners in different contexts. Krashen (as paraphrased in Spada and Lightbown, 2006) mentioned that extensive or pleasure reading is one of the best sources for the development of vocabulary of EFL/ESL students. He also requires practical knowledge of sentence structures to develop paragraph and essay writing.

The author checked Taha's essay using a rubric. Based on the written rubric, he pointed out some perfect points in his essay. In addition, numerous mistakes require correction and improvement in the future. The author recommends improvement in three areas. He ought to know the syntax, writing styles, and academic words. Taha should focus on reading

comprehension skills to develop writing skills. As Arora (2012) mentioned, "Just as reading makes a full man, writing makes an exact man" (p.32).

DISCUSSION

Taha is an active student who has managed to learn major and minor skills in languages, and he is a young student who has been progressing in his studies at Kabul Education University. He has experience teaching EFL and ESL languages. The participant started learning English when he passed fourth grade. Also, he learned English for his career and selected the English language as a major for his upcoming career. According to Pranawengtias (2022), English is compulsory for college students. Therefore, Taha required progression in English speaking and writing. Taha's parents played an active role in his education, especially in learning the English language.

Taha started learning the English language long ago. He studied English in a non-native speaking environment, and his effective writing and natural conversation demonstrated that he had acquired and learned the English language very well. He realizes the English language through constant practice inside and outside the classroom. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivations were the two significant factors that accelerated Taha's English language learning process. Also, according to Rahmayana et al. (2024), motivation is one of the main factors in learning the English language. When Taha did not speak English correctly, no one corrected him on the spot; they facilitated learning English through motivation.

This study participant prepared mentally and physically for learning from childhood. Some social and psychological factors, such as motivation, functional materials (oral and written), and attending academic institutions, supported him in learning English. Alqurashi (2019) reported that motivation played a pivotal role in the educational achievement of English majors in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. Similarly, Rahmayana et al. (2024) revealed that learning strategies that match students' needs develop their language competencies. It is worth mentioning that he was not marginalized at home and school. This social factor led him to participate in various types of communicative activities which occurred in society.

On the other hand, one social factor that prevented him from being fluent and accurately speaking like a native English speaker was the absence of native speakers. He did not live in a society where people communicate in the English language. This caused challenges in pronunciation, too. He learned English within an academic environment. He was psychologically prepared to learn the English language. For instance, he always had a positive attitude regarding learning English and teaching. Furthermore, Taha had personality traits such as self-esteem, talkativeness, and dominance. Alrabai (2017) revealed that self-esteem and self-awareness help learners overcome challenges and achieve their academic goals.

The first salient point regarding learning style was that Taha was a visual learner. He learned English by watching videos, listening to lectures, and reading colorful textbooks. Additionally,

he learned English by reading texts and drawing pictures in the margin of the textbook, and he prefers colorful books and videos. These insights indicated that Taha is a visual learner. Taha had an extroverted personality. He liked to speak in front of the class and be an active group member. Taha always participated in group discussions and joined active students. He took the role of representative during class discussions. Alrabai (2017) stated that executing various teaching and learning strategies and techniques facilitates learning English.

Moreover, the oral and written skills assessment process showed that Taha had strengths and weaknesses in these skills. He mispronounced content words during speech. The mispronunciation of words was because of transfer sequences. He learned English from non-native English speaker teachers who committed pronunciation mistakes. The teachers who taught at the primary school were not professional. Therefore, Taha had problems with fluency and accuracy of oral skills. For example, in some words, he pronounced the phoneme /p/ as /f/ and /θ/ as /ð/. Furthermore, he was challenged by the usage of minimal pairs: two (or more) words that differ only by a single sound in the same position and that have different meanings, such as "s/f: [mɛsi] 'messy' vs. [mɛʃi] 'meshy' and i/ɪ/ɛ: [fi:l] 'feel' vs. [fɪl] 'fill' vs. [fɛl] 'fell.'" For development in oral skills, he should consider pronunciation. For instance, he should focus on word and sentence stresses, rising and falling intonations, and speech fillers while speaking to friends. On the other hand, Pranawengtias (2022) stated that experienced teachers and equipped classrooms and learning environments help students learn English.

Also, Taha could not compose practical and concise paragraphs. In contrast, the researcher was reading the paragraphs that he wrote, which had many run-on and fragmented sentences. He wrote an entire section in one sentence because he did not have enough information about the fundamentals of the paragraph. The author did not recognize the topic sentence, supporting and concluding sentences in the participant's paragraph. For example, He stated, "This generation has many people of all ages which are becoming more obese these are all because they are always outside busy with their works and they are using from restaurant food or fast food that they may contain high fat, sugar and salt having a regular health diet plan helps up to keep away from health problems." It is possible to write simple sentences instead of complicated ones with unclear meaning for the reader. For instance, he can write sentences like these: "The new generation of the twenty-first century has people of all ages. Many people are overweight because they usually eat outside of the home. They ate the food at the restaurant that contains sugar and high fat". In addition, writing requires many strategies for reading. Skimming, scanning, and summarizing strategies help him improve his writing of essays and articles. The author suggests metalinguistic feedback. This type of feedback is perfectly sound for Taha's writing skills development. This type of feedback stimulates students to point out their mistakes by themselves.

Sajid and Siddiqui (2015) mentioned that EFL students can learn writing skills through practice and performance. He knew English through the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) approach. Communicative language teaching and situated methodology are the methods for

teaching the English language to intermediate and advanced EFL learners in Afghanistan. According to Jamoom (2021), students need writing skills during college and after graduation.

The modern version of CLT assists Taha in learning effective writing and fluent speaking skills. Integrating language skills is also a conducive strategy. He can overcome speaking challenges through listening skills. Similarly, the participant can cope with academic writing challenges with the help of extensive and intensive reading. There were robust learning activities that assisted Taha in developing English language proficiency. He can utilize jigsaw activities to advance his reading comprehension. Taha must continue journal writing inside and beyond the classroom. The journal accelerates the process of learning new vocabulary. In addition, dramatist activities are the best option for speaking fluent and accurate English. The author suggests integrating technology with the lesson to facilitate learning English. EFL students can get merit through these sorts of written and oral technology. Technology is applicable within the Afghan context because it is available for college students. Nowadays, every teacher has a computer. They can use computers and PowerPoint slides in the classes to improve students' learning. In addition, teachers play audio and video for students in the classroom to learn English Language. Technology has made the job of teachers and students easier across universities in Afghanistan. Teachers have to motivate students to learn English. Pranawengtias (2022) reported that motivation helps students have positive attitudes toward learning the language.

CONCLUSION

The participant in this study is a visual learner who acquired English language skills through perseverance and practice. Motivation was the primary factor that enabled Taha to overcome English language challenges. An appropriate learning environment at home was another crucial element that helped Taha become a fluent speaker and academic writer. Taha's English language learning process had both strengths and weaknesses. He learned English in an educational environment from non-native English speakers. English-related videos and audio excerpts facilitated his language acquisition. However, specific barriers impeded his progress in effective essay writing and fluent speaking. A limited vocabulary was one of the obstacles that hindered his writing and speaking proficiency.

Additionally, Taha required intensive development in pronunciation and syntax to enhance his English proficiency. Receptive skills in the English language enhanced his knowledge and pragmatic abilities. Both extensive reading and academic writing proved beneficial for Taha. For future research, it would be advantageous to conduct a longitudinal study. Due to time constraints, the author could not observe the participant's reading and listening skills in detail in the current study. The researcher recommends that novice EFL educational researchers conduct qualitative studies through narrative research, case studies, and ethnography.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Appendix A: Interview Question

Oral Communication Portion (Semi-Structured Interview)

Instruction: The purpose of an interview is to receive in-depth information about the interviewee's learning process. Whether the interviewee requires time for guessing, he can feel free to think about the question. Besides honesty, please consider effective speaking (fluency and accuracy) skills in the interview. The following are the questions the researcher asked during the interview.

1. Could you please introduce yourself?

2. Could you please briefly describe your qualifications?

3. What is your job?

4. When were you born?

5. What is the secret behind your fluent English speaking?

6. How did you start learning the second language (Dari)?

7. Did you face any obstacles while learning the Dari language? If yes, what kind of barriers?

8. Who assisted you while learning a second or foreign) language?

9. Are your parents educated? What is the level of their education?

10. How did your parents' education help you learn a second language?

11. Where did you travel? Which country did you travel to? When?

12. Did the trip help you learn the English language?

13. When did you start learning a second language (Dari)?

14. How do you start learning the English language?

15. When did you start learning the English language?

16. How did you start learning the Dari language?

17. When did you start learning the Dari language?

18. Did social factors prevent you from learning the Dari and English languages? How

19. Which skill of the English language is still complicated for you?

20. How did you overcome the problem you faced in English?

21. What English skill (s) do you practice and learn outside the school?

22. How many hours did you practice the English language out of school?

23. Have you experience teaching any language (Pashto, Dari, or English)?

24. Did the culture, ethics, and social factors help or prevent you from learning Dari or English?

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Learning Styles Modality Preference Inventory

Often (3) Sometimes (2) Seldom/Never (1)

Visual Modality

- _____ I remember information better if I write it down.
- _____ Looking at the person helps keep me focused.
- _____ I need a quiet place to get my work done.
- _____ When I take a test, I see the textbook page in my head.
- _____ I need to write down directions, not just take them verbally.
- _____ Music or background noise distracts my attention from the task at hand.
- _____ I don't always get the meaning of a joke.
- _____ I doodle and draw pictures on the margins of my notebook pages.
- _____ I have trouble following lectures.
- _____ I react very strongly to colors.
- _____ Total

Auditory Modality

- _____ My papers and notebooks always seem messy.
- _____ When I read, I need to use my index finger to track my line placement.
- _____ I do not follow written directions well.
- _____ If I hear something, I will remember it.
- _____ Writing has always been difficult for me.
- _____ I often misread words from the text- (i.e., "them" for "then").
- _____ I would rather listen and learn than read and learn.
- _____ I'm not very good at interpreting an individual's body language.
- _____ Pages with small print or poor-quality copies are difficult to read.
- _____ My eyes tire quickly, even though my vision check-up is always fine.
- _____ Total

Kinesthetic/Tactile Modality

- _____ I start a project before reading the directions.
- _____ I hate to sit at a desk for long periods.

_____ I prefer to see something done and then do it myself.

_____ I use the trial-and-error approach to problem-solving.

_____ I like to read my textbook while riding an exercise bike.

_____ I take frequent study breaks.

_____ I have a difficult time giving step-by-step instructions.

_____ I enjoy sports and do well at several different types of sports.

_____ I use my hands when describing things.

_____ I must rewrite or type my class notes to reinforce the material.

_____ Total

Total the score for each section. A score of 21 points or more in a modality indicates strength in that area. The highest of the 3 scores indicates the most efficient method of information intake. The second-highest score indicates the modality which boosts the primary strength. For example, a score of 23 in the visual modality indicates a strong visual learner—such a learner benefits from the text, filmstrips, charts, graphs, etc. If the second highest score is auditory, the individual would benefit from audio tapes, lectures, etc. If you are strong kinesthetically, taking and rewriting class notes will reinforce information.

Adapted from the Tutor Trainer's Manual, Tyler Junior College