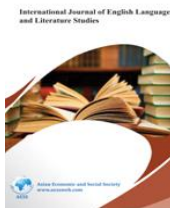




## International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies

URL: [www.aessweb.com](http://www.aessweb.com)



### FACTORS AFFECTING THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA, PAKISTAN

**Nasir Ahmad**

*Corresponding Author Assistant Professor School of Education and Staff Training, University of Swat, Pakistan*

**Farooq Nawaz Khan**

*Assistant Professor School of Education and Staff Training, University of Swat, Pakistan*

**Nargis Munir**

*MPhil (Education) Division of Continuing Education, Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan*

---

#### ABSTRACT

*This study was conducted to investigate the factors affecting the learning of English of the secondary school students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The objectives of the study were (1) To find out the factors affecting the learning of English at secondary level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; and (2) To provide a base for improvement of teaching English as a second language at the secondary school level in Pakistan. The population of the study was comprised of all the English teachers of twenty four Provincial government schools, and twenty two Federal government schools located in twenty four districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Sixteen senior most English teachers were selected for the purpose of interview. The main findings of the study were; the teachers in Provincial government schools were not sufficiently qualified and had not adequate knowledge of teaching methodologies of teaching English. The classes at both type of school system were overcrowded. The Provincial and Federal Government schools lacked audio-visual aids for teaching of English.*

---

**Keywords:** Learning of English, Factors, Teacher qualification, Teaching methods, Audio-visual aid

Received: 2 April 2013 / Revised: 18 May 2013 / Accepted: 21 May 2013 / Published: 24 May 2013

## INTRODUCTION

English is the official language of Pakistan since independence. Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, gave importance to English in the first educational conference, although he declared Urdu as the national language, but never ignored the importance of English language.

The standard of teaching English in Pakistan has deteriorated as commented by [Mueen \(1992\)](#), “English language teaching in Pakistan is almost non-existent. The functional aspect of language is totally ignored, thus resulting in deteriorating standard of English in the present generation, and signal to further decline.” [Ahmad et al. \(2011\)](#) also observed that the condition of learning English at secondary level is worse and there is need to address these problems on priority bases. Learning English language is really a subconscious process. The learners have few opportunities to absorb the language from the environment. It is not the learner who lacks the capacity to learn the language, but the total academic setting whose capacity need to be built up. ([Government of Pakistan, 2006](#))

The researches’ conducted on the learning difficulties of students by [Westwood \(2006\)](#), [Farkota \(2005\)](#), [Kershner \(2000\)](#), reported that learning difficulties of the students were due to the lack of innate or cognitive abilities, perceptual impairment, and learning disability, deficiencies in memory or poor motivation. Most of the researches focused on these fixed characteristics of students which are least controllable. [Lockheed and Komenan \(1989\)](#) observed that school characteristics have greater effect on student’s achievements. Hence there is a need to find out the school factors affecting the learning of students.

This study was conducted to investigate the factors affecting the learning of English of the secondary school students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The findings of the study will help the English teachers to identify the school factors that affect the students at secondary level. This study will also provide comprehensive information for educational planners that how they will assist the students to cope the situation. The findings of this study will provide direction and guidance in teaching of English at secondary level.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following were the objectives of the study:

1. To find out the factors affecting the learning of English at secondary level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; and
2. To provide a base for improvement of teaching English as a second language at the secondary school level in Pakistan.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The population of the study comprised of all the English teachers of twenty four Provincial government schools, and twenty two Federal government schools located in twenty four districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Sixteen senior most English teachers were selected for the purpose of interview. Two teachers were selected from each type of school system from district Abbottabad, Malakand, Mansehra and Peshawar.

## **RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

### **Interview**

Interview method was used to find out the factors affecting learning of English of Federal and Provincial government schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. An interview script was developed in order to guide the interview session. The types of questions were selected according to the research objectives, to identify the factors affecting learning of English in Federal and Provincial government schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The interview schedule had open-ended questions. Some follow up questions were also asked during the interview, for purpose of clarification.

### **Technique**

The study used 'note taking' technique while conducting the interview. Since the participants did not want the interview to be recorded, the researcher took short notes and completed the report after the interview. Interviews were conducted individually. It was an hour face to face interview, and the participants were willing to share their experiences without strain and embarrassment.

### **Findings**

The main findings of the study were:

1. The teachers in Provincial government schools were not sufficiently qualified for teaching English at secondary level. The Provincial government offers no in-service training courses for English teachers. There is no specific criterion for the selection of English teachers. They teach mathematics, science subjects and English. Due to this overburdening, the English teachers do not pay full attention to any subject including English.
2. The teachers in the Federal government schools have sufficient qualification for the teaching of English. They were offered annual refresher courses and in-service trainings. On the recruitment side there is no specific criterion for the selection of English teachers, but those having M.A English were given preference.
3. The teachers of Provincial government schools use traditional Grammar-Translation methods for teaching of English.

4. The teachers in Federal government schools used the combination of Grammar-Translation and Direct method for teaching of English. They are also aware of teaching methodologies.
5. The classes at Provincial and Federal government schools are overcrowded. Hence individual attention cannot be paid to the student.
6. The medium of instruction is English in both (Federal and provincial) types of school systems. At Provincial government primary school level, the medium of instruction is Urdu or Pashto, which is the main factor of students' difficulties in learning English. The students enter the secondary classes without having basic knowledge of English language. The teachers agreed that in the learning of English, three languages are involved i.e. the mother tongue of the students, Urdu and English. This creates hindrance in the learning of English.
7. The Provincial and Federal Government schools lack audio-visual aids for teaching of English. The schools do not provide any study material and only one Urdu-English dictionary is available in the schools.
8. The Provincial government offers no extra incentives for English teachers although. The Federal government offers teaching allowances to all the teachers

## DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to investigate the factors affecting the learning of English by the secondary school students of Provincial and Federal government schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It was found that the teachers in Provincial government schools were not sufficiently qualified and had not adequate knowledge about the methodology of teaching English. The classes in both type of school system were overcrowded. The Provincial and Federal Government schools lacked audio-visual aids for teaching of English. The findings of the present study indicate that the current scene regarding English language teaching for secondary classes, calls for special measures to be taken. There are a number of problems in English language teaching, particularly in government schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These problems of English language teaching exist since Independence. These problems create hindrances and difficulties in learning of English at the school level.

The English language teachers at school level in Pakistan were not sufficiently competent. The lack of proficiency of English teachers at secondary school level added a new dimension to the problem. In the schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa there are specialist teachers for every subject, but English is taught by non-specialist teachers. The finding of the study indicated that the teachers in Provincial government schools were not sufficiently qualified for teaching English. This finding was supported by [Jamshaid \(2003\)](#). He observed that concerned teachers were not well trained; even did not come up to the basic qualification level of an average English teacher. This finding was also supported by [Karim \(2006\)](#). She observed that 70% English language teachers thought that the

main cause of students' failure was lack of qualified teachers. The evolution in teaching methodologies has brought innovations to the methods, approaches and techniques of English language teaching, but the English teachers in Pakistan still use the traditional methods for teaching English. They also use the traditional method for all types of students. This is a factor in the students' achievements in the subject of English. The findings of this study also revealed that English teachers of Provincial government schools used traditional Grammar-Translation methods for teaching of English, and they had not adequate knowledge of methodologies of teaching English. This finding was supported by [Naseem \(2007\)](#). Her study on Analysis of Errors made by students at Matric level revealed that the errors made by Matric students in English were mainly due to L1 interface, faulty Grammar-Translation method and overgeneralization. This finding was also supported by [Adalat \(2005\)](#). She observed that 85% teachers used Grammar-Translation method and had not attended English language course. However, [Larsen \(2000\)](#) supported the role of mother tongue of the students in the classroom. Non availability of audio-visual aids is the most important factor that is affected the learning of English at secondary school level in Pakistan. It was found in the study that the Provincial and Federal Government schools lacked audio-visual aids for teaching of English, and schools did not provide any study material. This finding was supported by [Batool \(2008\)](#). Her study on the role of aural and visual aids in improving the tenses at secondary level revealed that, most of the teachers agreed that students showed interest and eagerness to use audio and visual aids while studying grammar. 45 % teachers said that students found these activities very interesting. This finding was also supported by [Nazak \(2009\)](#). He observed that audio visual aids were not supplied in the school by education department. Coloured chalks were not made available for the teachers. Majority of teachers were not familiar with the use of modern audio visual aids. It was found in this study that the classes at Provincial and Federal government schools were overcrowded and individual attention was not paid to the students. This finding was supported by [Jamshaid \(2003\)](#). His study revealed that classes at schools generally consisted of about 100 students. Teaching grammatical item to a large class was very difficult task. It was because individual interaction between students and teachers was in fact not possible. Students hardly get any chance to talk to their teachers and discuss their problems. This finding was also supported by [Light \(2001\)](#). His findings show that students found that a small class had good impact on their learning. Students thought that small classes enabled the teacher to know each student reasonably well. However [Hoxby \(2000\)](#) found that class size did not have a statistically significant effect on student achievements. The findings of this study revealed that Provincial government offers no extra incentives for English teachers, although the Federal government offers teaching allowances to all other the teachers, but no specific incentives were available for English teachers. It was supported by [Jamshaid \(2003\)](#). He suggested that the salary structure should be in conformity with the qualifications and experience of teachers. The findings of this study indicate that proper condition are not available for learning English at secondary level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and there is a need to address these problems on priority basis especially in the Provincial government schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## CONCLUSION

In the light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. It was concluded that the teachers in Provincial government schools were not sufficiently qualified and had not adequate knowledge of teaching methodologies of teaching English.
2. The classes at both type of school system were overcrowded.
3. The Provincial and Federal Government schools lacked audio-visual aids for teaching of English.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Ministry of Education may arrange in-service training and refresher courses regularly for English teachers.
2. The Federal and Provincial government may revise the selection criteria and need to recruit qualified teachers well versed with the skill of language and its teaching.
3. The audio-visual aids and other study material may be provided to Federal and Provincial government schools by the department of education.
4. The Federal and Provincial governments may offer extra incentives for English teachers, and their salary structure need to be in conformity with their qualifications and teaching experience.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Contributors/Acknowledgement: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

## REFERENCES

- Adalat, M., 2005. A study of problems faced by female english language teacher at primary level in district rawalpindi. (unpublished master's thesis). Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad, Pakistan.
- Ahmad, N., S. Ahmad, M.A. Bukhari and T.A. Bukhari, 2011. The nature of difficulties in learning english by the students at secondary school level in pakistan. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 10(2): 18-24.
- Batool, A., 2008. The role of aural and visual aids in improving the tenses at secondary level. (unpublished master's thesis). Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad, Pakistan.
- Farkota, R.M., 2005. Basic math problems: The brutal reality! *Learning Difficulties Australia Bulletin*, 3(37).

- Government of Pakistan, 2006. National curriculum for english language. Grade I-XII Islamabad: Ministry of Education.
- Hoxby, C.M., 2000. The effect of class size on students achievement: New evidence from population variation. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 4(115).
- Jamshaid, M., 2003. Errors made by students in the present perfect and simple past tenses at ssc level: Analysis and remedies. Islamabad. (Unpublished master's thesis). Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan.
- Karim, T., 2006. Test of english at ssc level in district skardu: Causes of failure and their remedial measures. Islamabad. (Unpublished master's thesis). Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan.
- Kershner, R., 2000. Developing student teachers' understanding of strategies for teaching sen children. *Education Today*, 4(50): 31-39.
- Larsen, F.D., 2000. *Technique and principles in language teaching*. New York: Oxford university press.
- Light, R., 2001. *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Lockheed, M.E. and A. Komenan, 1989. Teaching quality and student achievement in africa: The case of nigeria and swaziland. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 5(2): 93-113.
- Mueen, A., 1992. *English language teaching in pakistan*. Islamabad: National Book Foundation.
- Naseem, P., 2007. Analysis of errors made by students at matric level: A case study. (unpublished master's thesis). Islamabad: Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan.
- Nazak, N., 2009. An evaluation of effective use of audio- visual aids in govt primary schools of rawalpindi. Islamabad: (unpublished master's thesis). Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan.
- Westwood, P., 2006. *Teaching and learning difficulties: Cross- curricular perspective*. Victoria: ACER press.

*Views and opinions expressed in this article are the views and opinions of the author(s), International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability etc. caused in relation to/arising out of the use of the content.*