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OBSTACLES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT GOVERNMENT GIRLS HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF TEHSIL FAISALABAD CITY

Amara Ramzan¹, Muhammad Nasir Raza¹, R. M. Amir¹, Hafiz Ali Raza^{1*}, Sabahat Gul², Inam Irshad³

¹Institute of Agri. Extension, Education and Rural Development, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan

²Department of Psychology, Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, Pakistan

³Institute of Soil and Environmental Sciences, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

English is taught as a compulsory subject from primary to graduation level in Pakistan. Even then, the failure rate of students in English subject is alarming, and communication skills in English are poor. This study was conducted to analyze the obstacles faced by students in learning English language, and to suggest possible solutions to overcome these obstacles. This study was conducted in girls higher secondary schools of Tehsil Faisalabad City. There were total 36 girls higher secondary schools in District Faisalabad. Nine girls higher secondary schools are in Tehsil Faisalabad City. From these nine schools, three girls' higher secondary schools were selected through simple random sampling. There were 17 English teachers who were teaching in these schools, then all the 17 teachers and 958 students were taken as population. All 17 English Subject teachers were the respondents, whereas the sample size for students was calculated 274 through online software with a confidence level 95% and confidence interval 5%. A proportionate sampling technique was used to select the respondents from students. For collecting data, a well-structured questionnaire was developed. The collected data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics i-e percentages, means and standard deviation through computer software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for interpretation and discussion of results. The results revealed that students are facing many problems in learning of English language (EL). It is suggested that the students should be provided EL learning facilities in schools as well as at houses.

Keywords: English learning; Obstacles; Higher secondary school; Pakistan.

**Email: razaa0617@gmail.com*

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INTRODUCTION

The word obstacles can be explained as hurdles, problems, barriers, difficulties and issues. Obstacles in learning English can be described as those hurdles problems the students faced during learning of English language (EL). Language is the most significant source of communication. Through language one can express one's thinking and ideas. English is very important for Pakistani students. It is not only international language, but also a compulsory subject in Pakistan. It enjoys the status of second language in our country. Every class of our society has the desire to learn and speak English. In Pakistan, official messages are conveyed in EL (Pinon and Haydon, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to be skillful and expert in EL. Besides official usage, EL is also necessary for educational purpose. It is frequently used in our educational institutions (Khan et al., 2017). In our country, most of the people are living in rural areas. The literacy rate is very low in these areas. The reasons of this low literacy rate are lack of educational institutions, poverty and over-population. Moreover, discrimination in the plans of the rulers are also cause of low literacy rate (Tariq et al., 2013). People are unable to communicate in English language even after studying.

EL is the language that has travelled the whole world. This language is pushing back the other languages of the world and countries and snatching their status (Evue, 2013). The world has been globalized where different people live and speak different languages. These languages enable people to break geographical borders, and forget all their ethnic and national biasnesses. But English still holds the position of second and foreign language. The Pakistani students and teachers are facing issues in learning and teaching English language (Khan and Khan, 2016).

In this multidimensional study it is attempted to find out barriers and obstacles in the process of EL learning. The students are facing different problems in learning of EL in the whole world (Khan et al., 2017). There are many obstacles that affect the learning of EL such as: behavior of learner, interest and motivation, condition of classrooms, uncomfortable environment, background of families and unavailability of competent teachers (Teevno, 2011). Pakistan is a country where various languages are used for communication in different areas. These are also many problems in learning EL. Language controls all the activities of human beings. It is also the carrier of culture. The teaching and learning of language is concerned with all four language skills i.e. speaking, reading, listening and writing. So, all these skills are necessary for its learning. These skills should also be given equal emphasis. These skills are connected to each other. EL is taught in schools from 9 to 10 years, the students of schools cannot speak and write single sentence without mistakes (Elttayef & Hussein, 2017).

Culture plays an important role in polishing the language learning skill of students. A favourable background of students may enhance the English language learning capacity whereas unfavourable culture plays its role in otherwise direction. The lifestyle of students may be a hurdle in learning foreign language. The distinction found in culture may create misconception and confusion. The students have to face issues due to differences found in culture (Rhalmi, 2014). Teachers and students belong to different socio-economic background. These social and economic elements are considered important but these issues are not took into account while preparing curricula and related policy. The result may come in the form of a hurdle in teaching and learning English (Khan and Khan, 2016).

Most of the teachers are not aware about how to present new language according to their interest. Teachers are themselves confused to help students to understand the features of foreign language, specifically those teachers whose context of subject is not English but they have to teach English in schools. The children who are in rural areas, they have to guess the attitude and competency of teachers which is the basic hurdle in learning English (Raja et al., 2011).

Interest is an important element that affects students learning English. Interest can create the thirst to get knowledge, can motivate them to learn and can be a reason to work hard to learn English language. If the students of primary level have an interest in learning English, so they may learn it easily (Qian, 2018). Interest has close relation with concentration. Interest is a thing which is displayed by students that they will participate and learn efficiently. It means teachers should motivate students so that their interest may be developed in teaching and learning process (Saswandi, 2014).

In Pakistani context, grammar is the spirit of teaching a foreign language. The main activities of this method are the rules of grammar and exercises used to make practice. Students are taught in their mother tongue or national language instead of teaching in foreign language (Parveen et al., 2021). The teachers prepared a list of selected words and the students have to memorize these words. The students have to learn vocabulary with their meanings, students are also taught tenses with their structures. Teaching learning environment is greatly affected by the teachers' teaching style (Wang, 2013). Teachers should use different methods for teaching and learning of EL. The focus should not be only on teaching elements of language but also on four language skills (Elmayantie, 2015).

Mother tongue has advantages and disadvantages for students to learn second language. Mother tongue helps in improving reading skill and vocabulary but it is not helpful in speaking and writing skill

(Kheirabadi, 2015). The major problem in learning English is crowded classrooms. The teachers are not happy with the large number of students in the class. Each class is consisted of 80 or more students. The major quality of public school is crowded classes without the availability of teaching process and other facilities (Parveen & Tran, 2020). Teachers are afraid of their poor results. They only prepare students to pass examination. Their efforts are directed towards examination purpose only (Ghorbani, 2009).

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in girls higher secondary schools of Tehsil Faisalabad City. There were total 36 girls higher secondary schools in District Faisalabad. Nine girls higher secondary schools were in Tehsil Faisalabad City. From these nine schools, three girls higher secondary schools were selected through simple random sampling. All the teachers of English subject were selected purposefully because there were 17 English teachers who are teaching in these schools. In this research, all the 17 English Subject teachers and 958 students were selected as population. All 17 English Subject teachers were respondents whereas the sample size for students is calculated 274 through online software with confidence level 95% and confidence interval 5%. For collecting data, a well-structured questionnaire was developed. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics i.e., percentages, means, and standard deviation, through computer software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) for interpretation and discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the responses of teachers about factors affecting on students learning of EL. More than forty one percent of the respondents (41.2 %) strongly agreed on financial position of parents is affecting the students, almost thirty percent of the respondents (29.4%) agreed that life style of students had an effect on learning of English. The responses on availability of English reading materials show that majority of the respondents (52.9%) agreed with the statement. The responses on social position of parents reveal that majority of the respondents (52.9%) strongly agreed, majority of the respondents (52.9%) agreed that parents skill in English language is a hurdle in learning English. More than twenty three percent of the respondents (23.5%) agreed that language spoken at home had an effect on learning of EL, slightly more than forty seven percent of the respondents (47.1%) agreed that evaluation system is a hurdle in learning language skills. slightly more than forty seven percent of the respondents (47.1%) agreed that teaching methods had an effect on learning EL, one third of the respondents (35.3%) strongly agreed that class size affects students as well teachers' performance.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents with respect to factors affecting on EL (Teachers).

Factors affecting EL learning	1		2		3		4		5	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Financial position of parents	7	41.2	5	29.4	0	0	1	5.9	4	23.5
Life style	2	11.8	5	29.4	5	29.5	4	23.5	1	5.9
Availability of English reading materials	1	5.9	9	52.9	4	23.5	2	11.8	1	5.9
Social position of parents	1	5.9	9	52.9	3	17.6	0	0	4	23.5
Parents' skill in EL	2	11.8	9	52.9	1	5.9	5	29.4	1	5.9
Language spoken at home	1	5.9	4	23.5	5	29.4	6	35.3	1	5.9
Evaluation system	5	29.4	8	47.1	1	5.9	0	0	3	17.6
Teaching methods	1	5.9	8	47.1	1	5.9	4	23.5	3	17.6
Class size	6	35.3	5	29.4	0	0	5	29.4	1	5.9

Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Undecided=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents with respect to factors affecting on EL (Students).

Factors affecting EL learning	1		2		3		4		5	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Financial position of parents	263	96.0	8	2.9	0	0	1	0.4	2	0.7
Life style	260	94.9	10	3.6	3	1.1	1	0.4	0	0
Availability of English reading materials	115	42.0	107	39.1	32	11.7	13	4.7	7	2.6
Social position of parents	91	33.3	90	32.8	60	21.9	17	6.2	16	5.8
Parents' skill in EL	132	48.2	102	37.2	26	9.5	13	4.7	1	0.4
Language spoken at home	71	25.9	186	67.9	16	5.8	1	0.4	0	0
Evaluation system	84	30.7	118	43.1	34	12.4	25	9.1	13	4.7
Teaching methods	266	97.1	6	2.2	1	0.4	0	0	1	0.4
Class size	124	45.3	83	30.3	26	9.5	20	7.3	21	7.7

Table 2 depicts the responses of students on factors affecting on EL learning. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (96.0%) have strongly agreed with response on financial position of parents, vast majority of the respondents (94.9%) strongly agreed that life style of students had an effect on their EL learning, more than forty percent of the respondents strongly agreed on availability of English reading materials, slightly above than one third (33.2%) of the respondents have agreed with response on social position of parents. Approximately fifty percent (48.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed with parents' skill in English language is an obstacle in students' learning of EL, majority of the respondents (67.9%) highly agreed on language spoken at home, more than forty percent of the respondents (43.1%) agreed that evaluation system had an effect. The vast majority of the respondents (97.1%) agree on the effect of teaching methods on EL learning, more than fort five percent of the respondents (45.3%) strongly agreed that class size is a hurdle in learning English language skills.

CONCLUSIONS

EL learning is essential for all students. Parent's lack of skill in English is a hurdle to their child's learning. They are busy in their own life. They cannot provide proper guidelines to their children. It is concluded that due to low income and poor family background, they cannot provide better EL learning facilities to their children at home. Their home environment, language, and attitude do not support their child learning EL. Their students do not have support from their peers. The teachers, their teaching methods, use of AV-aids can be helpful to make EL learning situations somewhat better. Because it was found that in higher secondary schools old methods are used, AV-aids are not available. Students are not motivated. Their interest in learning EL is not developed. The majority of the respondents were agreed that failure in English is because it is taught as subject in schools. If these are linked in a better way, the performance of students in EL can be improved.

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