



RESEARCH PAPER

Hindering Factors in the Learning of English at Elementary Level: A Case of Dera Ghazi Khan

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to find out the factors that hinder in the learning of English at elementary level. The study was descriptive in nature with quantitative design. The target population was all the students of seventh grade in Public Elementary Schools situated in D.G. Khan. Sample was drawn from 55 government elementary schools. Cluster random sampling technique was adopted to draw the sample of the study. Ten boys and eight girls' elementary schools were taken as a cluster for the study. A questionnaire was developed as a research tool. The validity and reliability of the tool was also determined through pilot testing. The collected data were analyzed by the application of inferential as well as descriptive statistics. The overall results of the study showed that the mother tongue and the school environment were the main hindering factors in the learning of English. The establishments of the Language labs in all the elementary schools were recommended in this study

Introduction

Education is a continuous process which helps the generations in building up their characters and to make them a powerful and responsible Nation. Education is a triangular process which revolves around the teachers, students and the curriculum (Zahra, 2002). Education plays an important and leading role in human development. It promotes productive citizens and creates opportunities for the rest of their life. Education makes them more conscious about their personal

and social lives problems and the ways to handle them amicably. Education is the most effective source of human's moral, mental and physical development.

In the Education system of Pakistan, learning of English is compulsory from the primary classes to graduation level. English as a language is considered a second language in Pakistan. English has been serving as the language of instruction almost in all higher education institutions since the years (Mansoor, 1993). The implementation and learning of English at elementary level is considered the foundation level that shapes the basics of students' personality. The major goal of elementary education is achieving basic literacy and numeracy amongst all the elementary level students. Elementary education also makes foundations of students in science, geography, history, social sciences and languages (Tomar and Srivastava, 2005). Elementary level serves as a foundation for the accuracy in learning the fundamental concepts of English like part of speech, grammar, pronunciation for better communication in that language. In Pakistan, elementary education starts from grade 6th and ends up at grade 8th. It is a brilliant time to learn a second language like English. English is a foreign language, so the student could learn it at elementary school to avoid difficulties at secondary level for the better understanding of English language. Students can get the advantages of learning English for the better and easier lifestyle. English has become a crucial tool for continuing education, employment and social status.

There are a lot of challenges and hindrances in the learning of English in native countries. In Pakistan, the severity of the problem gets more involved due to many local problems. According to Rasul (2006) teachers used mix language while teaching English. Difficulties in teaching and learning English exist in students all over the Pakistan (Ahmad, 2011). It is also reported by many researchers (Akram and Quershi, 2012; Ahmad, 2011; Tariq, 2013; Naseer. M, 2010) that in schools, there are difficulties and serious issues in learning English pronunciation. According to Nawab (2012) learners hardly get proper "Language Development Environment" in the class rooms.

The learners have lack of interest towards foreign languages especially English language and feel burden to learn it (Souriyavongsa, 2013). Due to this attitude many students get fail in the subject of English from elementary to graduation level. It is considered that learners would not be able to perceive English or the

teachers remain unable to teach properly. Although, English is compulsory subject from primary to graduate level but the situation of English learning is so pathetic. It is a fact that learners learn mother tongue in natural environment while they learn the second language in artificial environment. The sound and spelling system of mother tongue or the national language also disfigure the shape or form of the word that distorts the pronunciation (Akram, 2010). Basic structure of mother and national language has deep impact on the acquisition of English phonetics.

Tariq (2013) conducted a study on "Difficulties in learning English as a second language in rural areas of Pakistan", and reported that uneducated environment effects negatively the accommodation of English language in children. Akram and Quereshi (2012) conducted a study on "Problems in Learning and Teaching English Pronunciation in Pakistan". They reported that the English teachers may also be the part of learning environment and mostly demonstrate inaccurate pronunciation. Tahir (2012) conducted a study on "Analysis of Grade Three Students Performance in the Subject of English in Pakistan". The researcher observed that large numbers of students are not able to learn and write English. Hussain, Iqbal and Akhtar (2010) conducted a research on "Technology Based Learning Environment and Student Achievement in English as a Foreign Language in Pakistan". The researcher found that there was significant difference between the mean score of the students in pre and post-test. He also found that use of the latest technology in learning environment had a great impact on students learning and achievement.

Rasul (2006) study on "Language Hybridization in Pakistan as Socio-cultural Phenomenon: An Analyses of Code-mixing Linguistic Pattern" found that teachers used mix language in the process of teaching. Zehra (1995) conducted a research on "Causes of Failure of students in the subject of English in the Secondary School Certificate Examination in Lahore District". She noted that urban school students were better than the rural areas students in the learning of English. In the rural areas, school students have unbidden fear of English subject and feel it hard to learn. Sherani (1995) in his study "Utility of Direct Method for the Development of Language Teaching" reported that it is not possible to teach the students with direct method in overcrowded classes and in the rural areas therefore, he suggested English should be taught only in small groups in class.

English language is used as a communicative tool around the world. It is used for business, diplomacy and political concern among the leaders at national as well as international level. English is used in higher education as a medium of instruction and source of information. Therefore the social scientists and researchers felt a great need to investigate the problems faced by the students in the learning of English, especially in those countries where it is not entertained as a native language. The modern world has become a global village and the communities of the world are getting closer to each other through English as worldwide communicative tool (Ahmad, 2011).

Objectives

The following were the objectives of study.

1. To determine the hindering factors in the learning of English at Elementary level.
2. To compare the problems faced by the male and female students in the learning of English
3. To compare the problems faced by the students from urban and rural schools in the learning of English

Hypotheses

This study was carried out in order to test the following null hypotheses.

H₀₁: No significant difference exists between the opinion of male and female students regarding the problems in the learning of English.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the rural and urban students regarding hindrances in the learning of English.

H₀₃: No significant difference exists between the male students of rural and urban areas regarding hindrances in the learning of English.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference between the female students of rural and urban areas regarding hindrances in the learning of English.

H₀₅: No significant difference exists between the opinions of male urban students and female urban students regarding hindrances in the learning of English.

H₀₆: There is no significant difference between the opinion of male rural and female rural students regarding hindrances in the learning of English.

Methodology

The study was delimited to 7th grade students studying in Government Elementary schools in Tehsil Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab-Pakistan. The population of the study was comprised of 55 Government Boys and Girls Elementary schools located both in Rural and Urban area of Tehsil Dera Ghazi Khan. Cluster random sampling technique was used in order to draw the sample from the Population. Sample size was drawn keeping in view the Research Advisors Table that was found 231 respondent students. The sufficient sample was drawn from the randomly selected schools by using the table of random number. The ten Boys and eight Girls schools were selected as cluster for data collection. A questionnaire was developed as a research tool after a thorough review about the related topics and thoroughly reviewing the other relevant questionnaires. The questionnaire was initially prepared and discussed with experts of the relevant field and the supervisor. The pilot testing was also done on the subjects other than the target population. After pilot study, the questionnaire was discussed again with supervisor for validity and reliability. The reliability was found .93 by applying Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Questionnaire was personally distributed in the desired sample. The collected data were analyzed by using mean, standard deviation and Z test statistics with the help of SPSS Version 20. The norm score for this study was fixed three (3) because a five point scale was used in it to determine the factors creating hurdles in the learning of English at elementary level. The mean score less than three on different aspects of the questionnaire was declaring that aspect as a hindering factor. The Mean Combine value at the questionnaire of the study was less than three showing that the aspects of the questionnaire indeed had become the hindering factors. An Open ended questionnaire comprising only two questions; the first one comprising about the factors that may hinder in the learning of English and the second was about their precious suggestions to improve the learning of English. The main purpose of this questionnaire was to include the opinions of the respected teachers under their valuable experience and observations about the problem.

Analyses of data

Table No. 1

Sr #	Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	Z
1	Male	121	75.0	7.1	0.4
	Female	110	74.6	8.9	
2	Rural	141	75.2	7.3	0.5

	Urban	90	74.7	9.9	
3	Male Urban	41	71.9	6.6	4.0
	Male Rural	80	77.0	6.9	
4	Female Urban	49	76.2	6.1	1.5
	Female Rural	61	74.5	5.8	
5	Male Urban	41	71.9	6.6	3.2
	Female Urban	49	76.2	6.1	
6	Male Rural	80	76.9	6.6	2.4
	Female Rural	61	74.5	5.8	

Results and Discussion

After the application of Z-test statistics the H_{01} , H_{02} and H_{04} were accepted while; the H_{03} , H_{05} and H_{06} were rejected. The calculated Z-statistic value was found 0.4 for Null hypothesis one. Therefore, the H_{01} was accepted and no significant difference was found between the opinion of male and female students regarding hindrances in the learning of English at Elementary level. The calculated Z-statistic value was found 0.5 for Null hypothesis two. There was no significant difference found between the rural and urban students' regarding hindrances in the learning of English and the H_{02} was accepted. The H_{04} was also accepted after the Z-test statistic. It was calculated $Z=1.5$ and found insignificant difference between the female students of rural and urban areas regarding hindrances in the learning of English.

A significant difference was found between the male students of rural and urban areas regarding the learning problems in English at elementary level. In case of H_{03} the Z test statistic was found 4.0 so, the H_{03} was rejected. The H_{05} was rejected after the Z-test statistic. It was calculated $Z=3.2$ and found a significant difference between the opinions of male and female students belong to urban areas' schools, regarding hindrances in the learning of English. The calculated Z-statistic value was found 2.4 for Null hypothesis six. Therefore, the H_{06} was also rejected and a significant difference was found between the opinion of male rural and female rural students regarding hindrances in the learning of English.

The results of the study showed that male rural ($\bar{X} = 77$) and female urban ($\bar{X} = 76.2$) students were facing more hindrances than male urban ($\bar{X} = 71.9$) and female rural ($\bar{X} = 74.5$) students in the learning of English at elementary level. Analyses of data revealed that

male rural ($\bar{X} = 77.0$) students are facing more hindrances than the female rural ($\bar{X} = 74.5$) students. The result showed that Mother tongue creates more problems in the process of learning second language. The results of present study were in line with the results of the study conducted by Akram (2010) who found that sound and spelling system of mother tongue disfigure the shape or form of the word that distorts the pronunciation of English. Group activity has a great impact on the students' learning in English. The results were in line with finding of prior study that described teachers mostly demonstrate inaccurate pronunciation (Bibi, 2002).

Use of multimedia has a valuable effect on the learning of English. It was in line with the results of the study on "Problems in Learning and Teaching English Pronunciation in Pakistan" conducted in 2012 by Akram & Quereshi. The results of this study were also in line with the findings of Hussain, Iqbal & Akhtar (2010) whose were reported that it is not possible to learn a second language easily in overcrowded classes. It was also parallel to the study on "Analysis of Grade Three Students' Performance in the Subject of English in Pakistan"(Tahir, 2012). Teachers use native language during teaching and give importance to the mother tongue as compared to English being taught. The similar results were also found out by Kazi (1984) after a study "A Practical Approach to Spoken English to Pakistani undergraduate: In an English language teaching, Rawalpindi" and Rasul (2006), study on "Language Hybridization in Pakistan as Socio-cultural Phenomenon: An Analyses of Code-mixing Linguistic Pattern.

Conclusions

Following conclusions were drawn from the findings. The Factor Language was found a major factor in the learning of English because most of the students of this area were Saraiki and even cannot speak Urdu properly. So, the mother language of these area students was found as a hindering factor in the acquisition of English Language. The second factor was the School as well as Home Environment that did not support the students regarding the learning of English. The third one factor was non availability of the Language Labs in the schools where the students may learn properly the English Language. The position of the female students and the students from rural areas was worsened as compare to the students from urban areas and male students. The English teachers were rarely using audio

visual aids during teaching. Team Teaching Method was not being used at elementary level. The Grammar Translation Method was mostly being used at elementary level. The family members were not interested in learning of English by their children. There was not even a single Language Lab available at any Government Elementary Schools situated in Tehsil DG Khan. Debates, discussions and seminars in English language were not being conducted by teachers in these schools. Students in Government Elementary Schools were not encouraged to communicate in English with their fellows therefore; the school environment was not supportive for the students to learn English.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were suggested in the light of the drawn conclusions.

1. The Language labs should be established in all the Government Elementary Schools.
2. Digital dictionaries should be provided to the elementary level students in order to best correct the students pronunciation as well as to enhance their vocabulary.
3. Well trained English teachers should be recruited in the far flung areas with special Allowance.
4. Teachers Training programs should be launched every year in the subject of English regarding pedagogical and communication skills.
5. Direct Teaching Method should be encouraged at Elementary Level.
6. Seminars should be conducted in the schools about the importance of English language in order to better aware the parents of the students.

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