

Communication Problems in Second Language Learning at Federal Government Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to analyze the development of listening and speaking skills in English at secondary level. The purpose of the study was to examine factors because of which students of Federal Government schools Sihala sector (F.A) Islamabad are not proficient in listening and speaking skills in English language. The objectives of the study were: to analyze the present situation of development of listening and speaking skills at secondary level, to examine those factors because of which our students are not proficient in listening and speaking, to suggest recommendations for subsequent improvement. The research finding shows deficiency in specific syllabus and period allocation for the development of listening and speaking skills. The teacher should design activities, dialog, presentation and group discussion so that they can enhance the listening and speaking skills in students. Teachers should provide chances of free speech to student they should keep friendly environment in class so that the students may not feel hesitation and shyness in speaking English.

Keywords: Communication skills, Listening skills, Speaking skills, English

INTRODUCTION

English language is considered as one of the widely spoken language of the world which a rich repository of knowledge skills and values. It has taken place of a global language as statistics display a very true picture. A large majority of the people (470 million) speak English throughout the world. More than forty five (45) nations use it as their official language. There is no doubt that it is mother tongue of sixty (60) million people in the world. It spread far and east during British exploration of the world, colonizing the different nation, building empires in different regions of the globe during 17th and 19th centuries when British rule over the world. Presently English language has become the first language of 228 million people of United States of America, 16.5 million in Canada, 17 million in Australia, 3 million in New Zealand and 15 million others in Africa and Asia. This huge expansion across the globe has made it more important than any other language of the world as it is so widely scattered and used as a medium of communication and source of information. The United Nation that is a common forum of the entire nation in the world uses English as one of the official languages and source of information for UNO activities and proceedings. (*The Columbia Encyclopedia*)

English language is considered one of the most widely taught foreign language in the world. Among more than 100 countries like China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt and Brazil Pakistan, Bangladesh, a large majority of the schools teach English as compulsory subject at secondary level. Although they have slight modification and have made a new variety of English. According to David Crystal almost a quarter of the world population have got

command and fluency in speaking English language and this population of English speaking community is growing very fast pace surpassing other competitive languages of the world. This English speaking community has arisen up to 1.5 billion in 2000, leaving Chinese language behind at 1.1 billion. (*David Crystal 2003*)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN PAKISTAN

English language arrived in sub continent with British invasion. The British used English in this region as their state language so people of the subcontinent have to learn it to get jobs and communicate with English People. They have set up state schools where English was a compulsory subject. Since Pakistan came into being in 1947 it does not have its own local system so they have to follow British Education system, even after 66 years our system of education could not be changed and English language became a stronger language as it became a medium of instruction in schools and colleges including higher education. It became a language of pride and got a status symbol of its speakers. Today we see newspapers, research journals, radio and TV programs in English language. All competitive examination, entry tests, employment tests and interviews are mostly conducted in English language. It has got national language status in an unofficial way. Now it has been made compulsory subject from class one up to graduate level. (*Abdul Hafeez 2004*)

Learning of English language is a difficult task for most of the Pakistani students. Although teaching and learning of this language is given due emphasize but the desired results have not been achieved. The final analysis is that in order to make our name and place in the committee of nations we have to learn it as a language of communication and not as a language of colonizers.

Theories of Second Language Acquisition

In order to facilitate the teachers and students in teaching and learning second language, linguists have developed different theories of second language acquisition. The well known theories of second language acquisition are as follow:

Naturalistic Approach and Creative Construction

Certainly the approach and techniques can rely on some assumptions, the above mention approach also assumed that the language acquisitions is innately determined because human beings are born with a certain system of language that can be called on later stage, Chomsky added that this mechanism (language acquisition device) usually governs and regulate the human language and determines the possibility of the language format that may takes place later. Altenaichinger Alexandra (2002),

The Monitor Model

The monitor model was developed by Krashen during late 1970s which throws light on overall theory of second language acquisition. This model has essential implications for language teaching approaches. It developed five main hypotheses for language acquisitions.

- a. The acquisition versus Learning
- b. The Monitor
- c. The Natural order
- d. The input
- e. The affective filter

The Inter Language Theories

Selinker (1969) used 'inter language' first time for description of the linguistic stage that second language learner go through in the process of mastering the target language. Later on Selinker (1972) define inter language as temporary grammar consist on systematic and composed rules which are the product of five main cognitive process.

- a. Overgeneralization
- b. Transfer of training
- c. Strategies of second language learning
- d. Strategies of second language communication
- e. Language transfer

Cognitive Theories

Cognitive view point says that language acquisition is mostly dependent on two things, the first is development sequencing on prior cognitive abilities and secondly it more of function which is more general nonlinguistic abilities. (Berman, 1987:4)

Multidimensional Model

In this model the learner's stage to acquire the target language depends on two dimensions that include learner's developmental stage and learner's social psychological orientation. The first one is defined by accuracy orders and development sequences; mostly here the learners may have differences because of their social psychological orientation that is dependent of developmental stage. The derogative learner who is more prone to fossilize as compared to integrative learner at this stage because the later has more positive attitude to learning the target language and he has a better chance to do it. (Clahsen, Meisel & Pienemann, 1983)

Acculturation/ Pidginization Theory

Schumann (1978) stated that the second language acquisition in just one aspect of the acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to target language group will control the degree to which he/she acquires the second language.

ENGLISH TEACHING METHODS

In Pakistan the education is three tiers, elementary, secondary and tertiary. English is a compulsory subject at all levels because the authorities realized the importance of English for future development and human resources management. English is taught as foreign language. Various methods are being used by teachers at different level, depending on teachers' skills competency and their academic. No one method or approach can guarantee success but the effective use of the methods and approach and particularly the method focusing on students speaking rather than other skills can produce desired results. (*S.M. Shahid 2002*). The following are some of the method that can be made more effective by teachers in the class.

- a. Grammar Translation Method
- b. Direct Method
- c. Audio-lingual Method
- d. Communicative Approach

The above mention methods do not represent their effective usage hierarchy but they display their historical hierarchy. Each of them has some good points as well as weakness but teacher can make a difference by using eclectic approach.

Role of Teacher in Teaching Listening Skill

The teacher must: a) Make it a point to expose the pupils to a “good “model because the pupils are required to produce or generate the language, b) Bear in mind that listening is as important as speaking, c) Making listening activities interesting and informative, d) Remember that listening activities should cater directly to the communicative needs of the learners, e) Associate language items with their own culture and activities depending their environment, d) Pay more focus on language use rather than usage and on functions rather than forms, and e) Remember that oral ability involves both listening and speaking, also that listening should give rise to speaking by the learners. This implies that the teacher must facilitate listening comprehension. This is possible even if the listeners have a limited amount of language, by understanding the appropriate gestures or facial expression that the teacher make while speaking. (Carl, Smith. B 2003)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study has been designed to identify the communication problems in second language at secondary level.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were:

1. To analyze the present situation of communication skills at secondary level.
2. To find out problems faced by teachers in developing communication at secondary level.
3. To find out the weakness in teaching of listening and speaking skills.
4. To suggest recommendations for subsequent improvement.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There is no doubt that communication skills are vital in all sphere of life but it is mandatory while learning a language. The study is likely to be useful for teachers, students and administration for implementing the strategies to improve communication skills of the teachers and students.

A teacher should be clear about the aims and objectives of teaching any subject. While teaching English one of the main aims of teacher should be to enable the students to express themselves in second language because skill to express requires the ability to listen carefully and cautiously that may contribute in students’ practical life which he is going to assume soon. Keeping this in view listening and speaking skills should be developed at secondary level because it provides base for higher education. It is need of the time pay focus on the development of both listening and speaking skills at secondary level.

The findings and recommendations of this study will be very significant and helpful for students, teachers, administrators, policymakers and curriculum developers. It will uncover the existing weaknesses to overcome them. It is hoped that this study will give a clear picture of teacher and students problems in relation to teaching & learning environment of listening and speaking skills. The concerned authority will consider all the issues and take steps to rectify the situation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to examine those factors because of which students of Federal Government schools Sihala sector (F.A) Islamabad are not proficient in communication skills

in English language. For this purpose a research study was developed and accomplished according to the objectives of the study.

The population for the research study was consisted of all the teachers and students of Federal Government schools Sihala Sector (Federal Area) Islamabad. The population taken as sample was 25 teachers and 50 students of Federal Government schools Sihala Sector (Federal Area) Islamabad.

In order to conduct the research two questionnaires one for teachers and other for students were developed. The questionnaire for teachers consisted of 29 questions. 25 of them were devised to collect quantitative data and 4 were for the collection of qualitative data. The questionnaire for students consisted of 26 questions from which quantitative data was collected.

The researcher personally visited the selected schools of Federal Government Sihala Sector (Federal Area) Islamabad. For the collection of both qualitative and quantitative type of data the fifty questionnaires to the students and twenty five to the teachers were distributed. In order to analyze the data codes were assigned to different options of questions. Then data was tabulated by using codes. Each option was transferred into percentage form by using statistical package MS Excel so that the analysis could be made. Then at the end analysis of each table were presented.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Communication Skills: Analysis of Questionnaire (Teachers)

1. Which teaching method is used by you for teaching English language?

Table 1. Use of different teaching methods

<i>Grammar Translation Method (GTM)</i>	<i>Direct Method (DM)</i>	<i>Audio-lingual Method (ALM)</i>	<i>Communicative Approach (CM)</i>
70%	15%	10%	05%

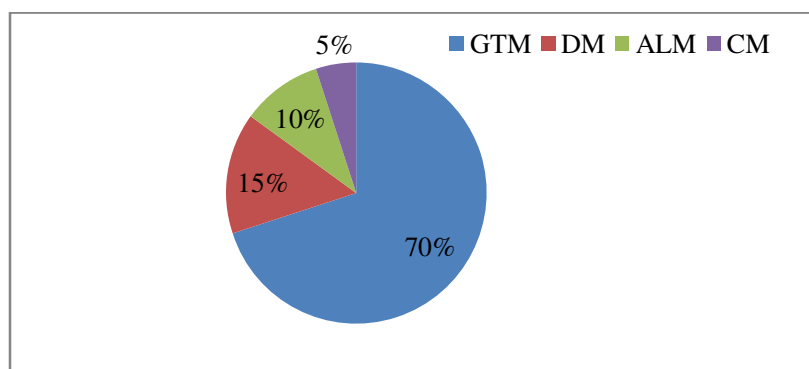


Figure 8. Use of different teaching methods

Table 1 indicates that 70% teachers use traditional Grammar Translation Method for teaching English. 15% teachers use direct methods, other 10 % use Audio lingual Method and only

05% teachers' use communicative approach for teaching English. This shows that teachers have not changed their teaching methodology with the changing demands of the time.

2. Are you satisfied with the attitude of students towards their studies?

Table 2. Teachers' satisfaction with the attitude of students towards their studies

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Do not know</i>
30%	68%	02%

Table 2 refers that 68 % teachers are not satisfied with the attitude of the students towards their speaking skills in English. 30 % responded that they are satisfied with students speaking skills, while only 2% do not responded it. This is quite alarming because without the involvement of students teaching learning process is not successful or even possible.

3. Do you always speak English with your students?

Table 3. Speaking English with students

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>To Some Extant</i>
04%	36%	60%

Table 3 shows that only 04% teachers speak English with their students and 60% speak English to some extent and 36% teachers do not speak English with their students. The number of teachers who speak English should be increased for the improvement of students speaking skill.

4. How often your students ask questions in English?

Table 4. Question asked by students in English

<i>Always</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
0%	72%	28%

Table 4 refers that 72% students rarely ask questions in English and 28% never ask questions in English. Teachers should encourage the students to ask questions because question – answer session helps a lot to improve the speaking & listening skills.

5. Which of the following resources do you have access to in the classroom?

Table 5. Access to different recourses in the classroom

<i>CD-player</i>	<i>Computer</i>	<i>Internet</i>	<i>Radio/TV</i>	<i>Others</i>
0%	04%	0%	60%	36

Table 5 indicates very alarming situation in respect of teacher's access and usage of new technology i.e. computer, internet etc. Majority of teachers have only access to basic requirements i.e. blackboard and textbooks. A quite reasonable number of students 60 % have access to radio and TV but it is not used for educational purposes

6. Which of the following points is given emphasis by you in English language class?

Table 6. Points that are given importance in English class

<i>Learning of rules in order to enable the students to pass the exams</i>	<i>Ability to use these rules for appropriate use of language in everyday living situation</i>
20%	80%

Table 6 mentions that 80% teachers give emphasis on appropriate use of language in everyday living situation this a good sign as for as listening and speaking skills are concerned.

7. Do you allocate sometime for the improvement of student's Listening and Speaking Skills?

Table 7. Allocation of proper time or the improvement of student Communication skills

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>To Some Extent</i>
36%	16%	48%

Table 7 refers that 36% teachers do allocate some time for the improvement of students listening and speaking skills in English language. These numbers need to be increased if teachers give priority to these two skills

8. Do you give chances of free speech to your students in English class?

Table 8. Giving chance of free speech

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Seldom</i>
36%	08%	56%

Table 8 indicates that 56% teacher seldom gives the chance of free speech to their students. This is quite satisfactory but this demands more attention because students always be given the chances of free speech as it will improve confidence and speaking power.

9. Do you design activities or tests for the development of listening and speaking skills in your students?

Table 9. Activities and tests for the development of listening & speaking skills

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Seldom</i>
36%	40%	24%

Table 9 shows that 40% teachers do not design activities or tests for the development of listening and speaking skills in their students. This is quite satisfactory but the number can be increased by the effort of the teachers.

10. Do you think that present English course is inadequate for the development of Listening and Speaking Skills of students?

Table 10. Inadequacy of present English course for the development of listening and speaking skills of students

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>To Some Extent</i>
40%,	44%,	16%

Table 10 indicates that 40% teachers think that the present English course is inadequate for the development of Listening and Speaking Skills of students. Syllabus designers should pay attention to this and make necessary changes in the present English course.

11. Were you appointed as English Language teacher?

Table 11. Appointment as English language teacher

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
28%	72%

Table 11 indicates that only 28% teachers were appointed as English language teacher. English language teachers can better teach listening and speaking skills. Thus English subject specialist should be appointed for teaching English.

12. To what extent you are satisfied with your present job and designation?

Table 12. Job satisfaction level of teachers

<i>Fully Satisfied</i>	<i>To Some Extent</i>	<i>Not At All</i>
04%	76%	20%

Table 12 refers that only 04% teachers are totally satisfied with their job. This is quite alarming because job satisfaction is an important element that affects teachers' motivation level and performance.

13. Have you ever got training in teaching Language Skills?

Table 13. Teacher's training in language skills

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
60%,	40%,

Table 13 indicates that 60% teachers have got training in teaching Language Skills which is quite satisfactory.

Analysis of Questionnaire (Students)

1. Do you take interest in English class?

Table 14. Interest in English language class

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Do not Know</i>
35%	60%	05%

Table 14 mentions that 35% students take interest in English class, while a vast majority 60% of them does not take interest in the class. This is not a positive feedback from the students because their teachers may not be able to make the class interesting which is prerequisite for effective teaching learning.

2. Do you think that your syllabus of English language is difficult?

Table 15. Difficult syllabus of English

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>To Some Extent</i>
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50%	35%	15%
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Table 15 refers that 50% students think that their syllabus of English is not difficult while only 35% think that their syllabus is not difficult, another 15 consider it as difficult to some extent so which means they do not understand it properly and they do not have proper practices in the classrooms

3. Does your teacher speak English in class?

Table 16. Speaking English in class

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>To Some Extent</i>
24%	50%	26%

Table 16 shows that 24% students agree that their teachers speak English in class, but a large majority of them 50% claim that their teachers do not speak English in the class, other 26 % claim that their teacher speak English to some extent. It is the teacher who determines the learning environment of the class. When teachers speak English in class students also make efforts on their part to do better.

4. How does your teacher teach listening skill?

Table 17. Different ways of teaching listening skills

<i>By reading aloud</i>	<i>By playing tape recorder</i>	<i>By using radio or computer</i>	<i>By any other way</i>
94%	02%	0%	04%

Table 17 indicates that the only way of teaching listening skill is reading aloud by the teacher. In order to develop the interest of the students' teachers should make use of other resources also.

5. In order to check you're listening and speaking skills does your teacher design tests?

Table 18. Designing tests by the teachers

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Seldom</i>
86%	08%	06%

Table 18 shows that 86% students opine that their teachers design tests and activities In order to check their listening and speaking skills which is a healthy sign as far as the development of listening and speaking skills is concerned.

6. Which activity is used by teacher for improving your speaking skill?

Table 19. Use of different activities for speaking skill's improvement

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
22%	2%	0%	56%	20%

Table 19 mentions that according to 56% students their teachers use Question-Answer session to improve their speaking skill. Teachers do not make use of dialogues and presentations.

7. In order to improve your speaking skills which of the following suggestions are given by your teacher?

Table 20. Suggestion given by the teachers

<i>Try to speak English with your class fellows</i>	<i>Read English news paper and books</i>	<i>Listen English news</i>	<i>Any other suggestion</i>
56%	28%	08%	08%

Table 20 indicates that 56% students agree that their teachers suggest them to speak English with their class- fellows. This is a good suggestion as practical use of the language helps a lot in improving speaking skill.

8. Does your teacher give emphasis to correct pronunciation of each word?

Table 21. Emphasis on correct pronunciation

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>To Some Extent</i>
78%	06%	16%

Table 21 refers that 78% teachers give emphasis to correct pronunciation of each word.

9. How much emphasis is being given to speaking and listening skills in the classroom?

Table 22. Importance given to speaking & listening skills in the classroom

<i>Too Much</i>	<i>Appropriate</i>	<i>Little</i>
44%	46%	10%

Table 22 indicates that 46% students think that appropriate emphasis is being given to speaking and listening skills in the classroom. But in order to get the desired results too much emphasize should be given to speaking and listening skills in the classroom.

10. To what extent your teacher encourages you to speak English?

Table 23. Encouragement by the teachers to speak English

<i>Always</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
58%	34%	08%

Table 23 refers that 58% students opine that their teachers always encourage them to speak English, 34% opine that teachers rarely do this and 08% opine that they do not encourage them.

CONCLUSIONS

- Through my study I have come to the teachers know that do not have specific syllabus and period allocation for the development of listening and speaking skills.

2. The teacher should design activities, dialog, presentation and group discussion so that they can enhance the listening and speaking skills in students.
3. Teachers should provide chances of free speech to student they should keep friendly environment in class so that the students may not feel hesitation and shyness in speaking English.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations will be helpful for policy makers, syllabus designers, workshop conductors, teachers and students:

1. listening and speaking skills should be given equal importance as reading and writing is given during designing syllabus. Listening and speaking skills should be tested by the teachers. Students should be provided chances of listening speeches, dialogues and presentations in English.
2. Master degree holder in related field and trained teachers should be appointed to teach secondary level students. English Language teachers should speak in English with students inside and outside the class rooms. Students should be encouraged to make small sentences and their efforts be appreciated by the teachers. Teachers must make efforts in building confidence level of students. Teachers should design activities and provide opportunities to students to speak, whatever they can, in the class room.
3. Instead of Grammar-Translation Method, Modern and communicative approach be used in teaching English. Vocabulary building exercises should be started at primary level. New teaching techniques to be employed for teaching listening and speaking skills. A.V aids be provided to teachers for designing activities.
4. Specific period and syllabus for the practice of listening and speaking skills should be allocated. Reading habits should be developed in students as this will improve their vocabulary and exposure to English language. Teachers may encourage if students try to speak English. Mistakes and fluency may be preferred over accuracy when students try to speak English. Chances of free speech and conversation should be provided to every student of the class.

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