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RESEARCH PAPER

Factors Affecting Speaking and Listening Skills of English Language Learners at Secondary School Level in Sindh, Pakistan

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
	The aim of this study is to explore the factors negatively affecting speaking and listening skills of English language learners at secondary school level in Sindh, Pakistan. Speaking and listening are considered primary and foremost skills in English language learning process. Regretfully, these very basic skills are often neglected by the students and are less emphasized by the teachers in Pakistani context. The research underlines the factors hampering the progress of students in improving their speaking and listening skills of English language at the secondary school level. A qualitative method of research was employed for the collection of required data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, based on random sampling technique and the data was analyzed thematically. The findings of the study indicate that due to pronunciation, accent, vocabulary, the influence of mother tongue, second language learners face problems in improving speaking as well as listening skill. The results of the study would be an invaluable source for decision-makers of academic sectors, parents, people, teachers, and other stakeholders respectively. The study recommends some dynamic and practicable solution to the problems of students learning English as foreign language at the secondary school level.

Introduction

Human beings are only dumb animal without language. It is the human ability to communicate through words that makes it different from an animal. However, facial expressions and gestures or non-verbal ways of communication that helps to share emotions, thoughts, feelings, and desires are also helpful in communication. Words are a source of interpretation for human ideas. Communication is the trade of thoughts between individuals either orally or recorded as a hard copy. In this exploration, communication is taken in the feeling of familiarity and exactness. Previous researchers have suggested appropriate use of language as an essential need in communicating both linguistically and phonologically (Alam 2013). They concluded, communication happens within the sight of the speaker and audience because the audience react to the speaker's communication. As Murphy (1991)characterizes, "Oral communication is a two-way process between the speaker and the audience includes the ability to speak. It is viewed as supportive in improving learning as Kubler (2014) states, "I accept that oral language is significant not just as an essential specialized instrument that enables us in our day by day lives yet in

addition as an important approach to learn". Kurita (2012) noted that students do not respond to the questions in listening comprehension. They do not have a complete understanding of actual meaning with the contextual speaking process. Asmari (2015); discussed that due to oral ability restrictions EFL students don't have the necessary capability in English speaking and listening skills in oral communication. Students do not use English language for their presentations. The students and teachers use Urdu or the local language to communicate inside the class, and practically there is no usage of the targeted language. Dimitriadi (2006), stated that teaching of speaking, and listening has been ignored. These language specialists have reasoned that training is ignored given practicing usual and old techniques for language teaching. Indeed, even in assessment, there is no specific judgment rule to assess language learning skills as per The National Curriculum (NC) for English Language-2006 . As, English language has also become a "lingua franca" among speakers of languages that are not mutually intelligible. Furthermore, to survive in modern life and the era of "Globalization", the interdependence of people and countries creates a need for a global language and no language qualifies for this better than English. English is considered an important subject in Pakistan. It is almost taught from grade-1 to university level in education sectors. It is a compulsory subject for all classes to be taught to improve the speaking and listening capabilities of second language learners. The purpose of this research was to examine different challenges to learning speaking and listening skills of English language which were faced by Pakistani learners at the secondary school level. Learning L1 or mother tongue acquisition got performed in a natural setting. Nevertheless, learning a second language is not a very easy task especially for some language learners in particular situations as they must face a lot of language learning problems. Speaking and listening skills are the important skills in a language (NCLRC, 2004). Further, various changes had been considered in their language learning since they must use them to speak with others in natural conditions (Hedge, 2000). Thirdly, teaching speaking and listening capacities are critical destinations for second language classes. The teaching of speaking and listening skills of the target language is not considered an essential task. This is seen in the light of their complicated nature which impairs learners' language skills. Latu (2007), speaking skills are the main source of the learning process for language students and these very basic skills are the main concerns of language specialists as well. In opinion of linguists, listening skill which is developed with speaking context gives the foundation to the second language expressions. The practice of listening has a significant role during the language learning process whether it is a first or second language. Listening is a fundamental component of being able to interact with others. Youngsters normally refrain from the language verbally expressed around them during securing the main language. They include in the action of listening for around one year directly from birth, and afterward, they effectively participate in the phonetic culture wherein they belonged. Hussain (2015) indicates that in second language acquisition (SLA) among all four-language skills listening is used more frequently than any other skill. Zhang (2015) indicates that it includes words as well as images and emotions that go with the expressed words on the grounds in English speaking and listening activity. He suggested that speaking and listening are not restricted in verbal communication. He further characterizes this as a natural procedure, where two communication operators for example Sender (S) and Receiver (R) are engaged with the procedure. Sonmez (2019) defines that listening comes in the psychological aspect which appears in people's minds in accordance with the environment. Further, he mentioned that it developed through communication between the masses and society. Meanwhile, it can be corporate with phonological aspects and speaking skills. According to Muamaroh (2009), it demonstrated that male and female students have more problems in English vocabulary which is a basic need to speak and understand English language. Male students had a higher rate for this situation. The level of elocution and the level of punctuation dominance among male and female students was nearly the same. As for emotional elements, both male and female students express that nervousness was the biggest issue for them to communicate in English. Female students got

a higher rate in full of feeling factors than male learners. Finally, the answer to the issues for both male and female students is to improve vocabulary.

Literature Review

A few hypotheses of active integrative listening learning suggested that speaking and listening skills were balanced at the same level in communication. Listening is possible into certain means of action when communication takes place ordinarily between people. The speaking possibility is measured to apply the listening model, esteem listening viability, and actualize new objectives in listening action to understand the capacity of listeners to speakers. Liu (2015) says, there are three stages of listening comprehension: perceptual processing, analyzing, and utilization. First, listeners use his/her language knowledge to understand the fluent meaning of new words, store them in his/her short-term memory, and then compare those new words in his/her background knowledge to finalize the understanding of the listening process. New learners would pay more attention to language details, while for listeners with advanced language proficiency, such processes might increasingly be combined and technically they start putting more effort into the understanding of the relevant situations. Weimer's (2012) theory of learner-centered teaching (LCT) is an approach that encourages learners to deal with difficult and complicated work. LCT includes explicit learning skill instructions and uses collaboration to get students engaged in learning. The LCT classroom empowers students by giving learners some control over their learning process and promotes students' reflection and takes care of what learners are learning. The LCT classroom is a learning community. In the community, learners and the teacher share the learning agenda. Learners who have been actively exposed to cognitive, meta-cognitive, and social strategies for listening tasks, perform better. The theory of LCT provides support to the current research, if learners are taught in a threat-free and collaborative learning environment, they would have better chances to improve these very basic skills more easily. In this regard, the role of a teacher as a facilitator is very important.

Listening

Ryczek (2012) pointed out that listening is the expertise of understanding communication. Listening is fundamental expertise; present in a large portion of the exercises we complete for the duration of our lives. As Lindsay and Knight show that melody into a wide collection of things which has sound, and somebody ears to listen to it. Listening comes in the psychological aspect which appears in people's minds following the environment. Further, he mentioned that it develops through communication between the masses and in society. Listening is considered a complex process that needs more effort to understand to teach it. Meanwhile, it can be corporate with phonological aspects and speaking skills. Dehaam (2016) indicated that "the definition of listening continues to be in the developing stage". Even though listening is viewed as intricate to be characterized, Lynch (2008) gave another definition drawing in the function of communication in the listening cycle between the sender and the beneficiary, "listening to a language can be defined as the ability to receive and decode oral communication by processing a language sample. Listening is a two-way process, involving reception, or the decoding of input, and producing, involving, predicting and compensation."

Speaking

Speaking is characterized as an intuitive cycle of the building that includes creating, accepting, and preparing data. He further explained that language structure is an important subject to the setting in which communication takes place. Mariyanti (2020); suggests that speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-

verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts". Speaking skills are the ability that enables us to impart fluency into speaking language successfully. These skills permit the speaker, to pass on his message in an enthusiastic, nice, and persuading way. Speaking skills likewise help to guarantee that one won't be misjudged by the individuals who are communicating. Asmari (2015) suggests that speaking is a creative and active process that comprises receiving, constructing, and conveying meaning in the form of spoken words. Abda (2017) in the subject, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners must pay attention to speaking and listening skills. Learners should participate in examining exercises toward identifying oral skills; Teachers address explicit goals as indicated by class level and students' English capability. Normally, students learn certainty through communicating in the L2 language. Afshar (2016), the discoveries of the investigation uncovered that a significant number of the speaking abilities issues were normally shared by Iranian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) first-year trainees and seniors. Besides, the above-mentioned study also indicates that was no greater difference between Iranian EFL beginners' and seniors' views of their speaking skills issues' (2013) indicates that are some specific language learning approaches i.e., turns, activities, behaviors which are used by the students to improve their second language skills. Oral language learning strategies are complex procedures that individuals apply to tasks, consequently, they may be represented as procedural knowledge acquired through cognitive associative and autonomous stages of learning. Renukadevi (2014) has stated that without listening abilities, language learning is unnatural.

Material and Methods

Qualitative research is a research method used for collecting data from a predefined group of respondents to gain information and insights into various topics of interest. They can have multiple purposes, and researchers can conduct them in many ways depending on the methodology chosen and the study's goal. A qualitative method is a method of research in which participants answer a series of statements or questions in an interview. The qualitative method focuses on some populations, people who are the focus of research. Since the population is usually quite big, the research will target the sample which is a part of the population (Research Methodology: Approaches & Techniques, 2016).

Population of the Study

The population is defined as a set of individuals, data, or items from which a statistical sample is taken. The population in research work is a whole group of people, items, plants, or animals who have one common element in which the researcher is interested. Population in the research field can be defined as the whole group of people who share at least one feature in common and the population can be of any size, and it varies from problem to problem and field to field. The researcher has selected the students of secondary classes. The total population of secondary classes of 9th and 10th is approximately 500 students. However, out of that only 25 students from different schools were selected to collect data for this research.

Sampling Technique

De Vaus (2001) says that the formal way to provide equal chances of selection is to use the principle of random selection. This contains listing all participants of the residents and selecting some of them. It means that a random pattern of a group or community has an equal chance of being selected for everyone in the community. The basic premise of this method is that the choice is based entirely on possibility and opportunity, thus reducing the effect of any external or factors. As a result, a large population should include subjects that are like the population (DonYei, Z. (2007). The main purpose of random sampling is that it can claim statistical representation, which allows it to promote extrapolation from the study sample to the target population.

Instruments

Data collection tools refer to the instrument/tools used to gather data, such as questionnaires, interviews, case studies, surveys, and observations are all tools used to gather data. It is important to choose the device/tools for data collection as research is done differently and for different purposes. In this research, the researcher employed semi-structured interviews as data collection tools.

Data Analysis

After collection of data through interviews research strategy questions and collected the target sample of twenty-five students to collect data qualitatively through open-ended questions based on interviews in all selected schools. Then, the data were analyzed with the help of "Themes" to find out the overviews of participants' responses.

Participants' Interviews

Interviews can be defined as a qualitative research technique that involves in-depth individual interviews with a small number of respondents' views on a particular idea, program, or situation and ask one or more participants, in general, open-ended questions and record their answers. Audiotapes are often used to allow maximum duplication. Particularly in qualitative research, interviews are used to find the meaning of key topics, and the main task in the interview is to understand what the interviewee's mean. The researcher made prepared questions for interview protocol to get responses from participants. The researcher has included the answers to the student's feedback on English language abilities and the hindrances they face in both speaking and listening. Semi-structured interviews from the students were conducted and there were 15 main questions.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Responses of the Participants Related to Students' speaking skills

Theme	Responses of Participants
Factors Affecting Improving Listening Skill	Total 1 to 25, students' opinion is that they have difficulties in improving listening skills.
	Out of 25 respondents 8 students face difficulty due to lack of vocabulary, grammar, practice of listening, and listening communication.
	Total 13 students having view that their listening comprehension is weak due to no practice of listening communication.
	Total 4 students are of the view that their listening is not good because they have not access to understand ascent and little use of communication at schools and excessive use of mother tongue due to local language impact.

In the above given question, we see that the response of the students among **25** students in which **8** students suggested that they do not have listening comprehension and group discussion in the class which is the great source to improve listening skills. However, **13** students agreed to have English speaking environment in the institution, but they do not focus on listening skills and the use of local or regional languages. Due to these factors, their English listening ability is affected. Whereas **4** students responded that video programs and debate competitions are useful method to enhance the listening ability and medium of

instruction and communication in the classes and schools must be in English in all subjects. Hence, the use of local languages in different schools is main hindrance in improving listening skills and widely communicated local languages in institutions everywhere in the city affect learning of L2 listening skills of the students. Moreover, some of the students have mentioned that lack of language laboratory where students can be tested for their language listening comprehension level. There should be availability of audio-video usual classes in which students can practice on listening skills. There should be special language teachers so that students can enhance their English language speaking skills. On the other hand, students have mentioned that the severe use of local languages in school environment remain a main obstacle in learning listening skills.

Table 2
Response of the Participants Related to Students' speaking skills

Theme	Responses of Participants
Factors Affecting Improving Speaking Skills	Total 1 to **25**, students shared the view that they have difficulties in improving speaking skills in second language environment due to excessive use of mother tongue during delivery of lectures. Total**8**students of the view that they have difficulty in improving speaking skills due to excessive use of mother tongue at school. Apart from that vocabulary, pronunciation, communication barrier, and no practice of English is fundamental problem in improving speaking skills. Total **10** students respond that they have grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary problem. Total**7**students are of the view that they have pronunciation and environment problems.

In the above theme we see that the response of the students. The total number of **25** students was interviewed by the researcher at various schools. He came up with the view after getting feedback from the students about the factors negatively impacting speaking skills. Total number of **8** students' opinion is that they have major issues in speaking skills which are vocabulary and pronunciation. Further, they viewed that they have above same problem in speaking skills. Hence, **10** students shared their views that they have pronunciation, grammar issues in improving speaking skills. They face these problems while communicating English language. Apart of that, **7** students opined that their speaking skills were being affected due to no communication and interaction among students while lectures and they did not have access to practice speaking skills and environment which was greater cause or factor of students' week communication skills. Moreover, use of mother tongue is factor affecting their speaking skills.

The findings of the data show that students had some difficulties in learning speaking and listening skills which are very important for learning English language. The students responded that their speaking and listening skills can be improved by overcoming these variables i.e., pronunciation, accent, intonation, mother tongue influence, use of regional languages, and vocabulary. As the participants were told that their local environment does not support the students to communicate in English accurately. English is not native language, most secondary school students are curious to learn this language and they want to speak it fluently, but they could not get command over it due to the above-mentioned issues. The second cause, students could not speak English and communicate properly in it is that English language is not widely spoken in their regions. The third cause lies in school environment, the respective educational institutions do not support the students to give presentations or to pay more emphasis on the learning of the English language.

Discussion

In the Pakistani educational system especially in the government sector, it is a usual practice to neglect the second language learners' speaking and listening skills. Second language learners usually indulge in the tedious ways of learning which are not effective in the way that even after studying English as a compulsory subject throughout the sixteen years of education; sometimes, students are not able to speak and understand a single sentence properly. Poor speaking and listening are not only the problem of students who are poor in the academic achievements, but it is equally the problem of brilliant and efficient students as well. Even at the secondary level, the students are in the practice of cramming the definition and textual-based learning to pass the exam. There is no practice involved in the whole teaching-learning process. Even in the Pakistani educational policies, it is recommended that theory and practice both are equally important for learning but there is no actual activity available in the ESL learning classrooms.

As Khairpur District is concerned, its educational system is progressive. The administration of the institutions does not give serious attention to the student's English language learning. Due to lack of facilities, they do not give proper attention to the education system. The educational authorities and stakeholders do not bother about students that whether they have learned all the subjects and relevant skills properly or not, they just focus on the reputation of the institutions. If there is well planned educational team of teachers or instructors, every student may be focused on learning for his/her bright future and students might be focused on learning English speaking and listening skills. The major problem for students is that without significant improvement in their speaking and listening skills, they cannot move easily to foreign countries for getting a good job. So the reasons behind these critical issues are less capable teachers, the desperation of preparing system and evaluation structure, school condition, nature of the class, less qualified instructors, usage of Urdu and Sindhi language similarly as essential language in the classroom and less demonstration of language structure. However, there must be language specialists like other subjects who teach students properly and pay attention to the performance of the students. This is the easiest way to inculcate among students a confident and intellectual approach for learning English speaking and listening skills.

Conclusion

Present research work was based on the investigation of the factors affecting speaking and listening skills of the secondary school learners in Sindh, Pakistan. It is concluded that the speaking and listening skills in the second language learning environment are affected widely due to the factors which were highlighted in this research that is challenging task for learners. However, as a language-based activity, speaking and listening have stronger relationships in communication. If a student is unable to understand the speaker and context in which discussion would have been done, it becomes challenging for listeners to comprehend the meaning. So, speaking and listening are important to improve English language skills. It comes from the collected data that a speaker infers the meaning after listening to communication. For this, prior knowledge about the communication in which communication takes place is necessary to comprehend listening skills. Secondly, speaking is a factor shown to relate positively in speaking communication. In the present study, when the affective factors were regressed onto speaking and listening, the most important is to learn vocabulary, pronunciation, accent, the intonation of the native speakers. Additionally, both extrinsic learning and study habits had statistically significant indirect relationships with speaking and listening skills.

Recommendation

A strong vocabulary is a key component of speaking and listening to the second language. Students can learn vocabulary and pronunciation through instructions and improve listening skills through TV programs, movies, talk shows, and speeches. Students are advised to practice speaking and listening skills frequently. The students should be guided that how communication is buildup at the sentence level that can help them in getting meaning from passages and from entire communication. The students must be guided to build knowledge through conversations, movies, and TV programs of English news. Life experiences, speaking and listening activities can also be potential helpers if shared and focused by the teachers with the students. There must be language laboratories, special teachers, syllabus, and audio-video tablets for speaking and listening to the English language for students, where they can improve their language and grasp ascent and pronunciation of the native speakers.

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