

PERCEPTION OF HIGH SCHOOLS PRINCIPALS' ABOUT THE WEAK ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL OF TEACHERS IN DISTRICT PESHAWAR

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ABSTRACT

This was a descriptive study. The main purpose of the study was to find out the difficulties faced by the teachers' of Government High Schools in spoken English in District Peshawar. The objectives of the present study were: To know about the difficulties faced by English Teachers at High School and to make Recommendations for the improvement of speaking skill of teachers at high school. The research questions were: What are the difficulties of English Language Teachers at High school? & what are the learning difficulties of spoken skills in English Language in general? The Population of the Study was All Principals, Government Higher High Schools of District Peshawar and Sample of the Study were 10 Principals from the selected schools (05 male and 05 female). Research Instruments was Questionnaire for principals. Majority of the principals agreed that English competency is necessary for the students of high school. They realized that English at high school is essential since at this level students have to decide whether to go for higher education or to join any professional field. In both the cases, proficiency in English is a crucial requirement. English language laboratories may be established in every school of the district and teachers should be trained for the effective utilization of these set ups. The audio-visual aids and other study material may be provided to the school teachers by the department of education.

Keywords: English language, speaking skill, difficulties, secondary level

INTRODUCTION

English has become an international language as well as Lingua Franca across the globe. It is no longer the exclusive possession of English race any more. English has become the language of higher level of learning in various fields of studies like science, engineering and particularly the computers and information technology. English is assigned with the title of lingua franca of the modern world since it is one of the most commonly used languages being spoken all around the globe. English is presently being taught as a second language in various geographical locations of the world. The distinguished international status of English has made various implications for its usage, teaching and development. The non-native speakers of English have exceeded its native speakers due to which the developmental authority of this language is shifting from its owners to the new adopters.

Teachers need excellent communication skills to succeed in their profession. Listening, interpersonal, written and oral communication skills are required by teachers to facilitate the learners in their academic programmes. Teachers are constantly gathering, sorting, analyzing and explaining information to learners for which advanced communication skills are required in every aspect of the teaching process. The development of these skills not only enhances the teachers' potential, but will also improve the quality of students produced. Teachers must possess highly developed oral and writing skills to communicate with management, learners and co-workers effectively.

A good mastery of English language is required by students in order to do well in higher education, which is conducted through the medium of English. Recently established science and technology universities use English as their medium of instruction and viva voice examinations of almost all higher education studies are conducted in English. Yet, after twelve years of schooling and studying English, a large number of students fail in English in the HSCE exam, while those who pass, mostly earn very poor marks. As a teacher of English in Pakistan, the researcher has observed over the years that the students who pass secondary/high school examination can neither speak nor write correctly. Considering important role of English in the global economy, this poor performance will affect both the economic and technological growth in Pakistan.

The need for learning English has become basic and keeping it in mind, the Pakistani educationists have introduced it as a compulsory subject, and been very keen to find out the expected outcome that is the practical use of English by the learners. Yet, the primary objectives of English language teaching are not being achieved and students are not learning English according to expectation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present study were to:

1. To know about the difficulties faced by English Teachers at High School.
2. To make Recommendations for the improvement of speaking skill of teachers at high school.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the difficulties of English Language Teachers at High school?
2. What are the learning difficulties of spoken skills in English Language in general?

RELATED LITERATURE

Rakesh (2001) observed that this increase in the usage of English is due to two diasporas. Initially it was utilized in the English speaking community but later on it was adopted as an official language by non-English countries along with their national languages. English has now a large number of native and non-native speakers and these are spread in all geographical locations.

Hammer (2001) is of the view that behind the rise of English, the major elements are the trade and the rise of United States as the world's largest economic power. Jackendoff (2002) holds that as like air and water, language is also necessary for the survival of societies. It is the sole medium through which human beings interact, conduct business transactions, and arrange the process of teaching and learning. It is the most important means of preservation of the cultural heritage of a civilization. The survival of societies largely depends on the strength of the languages they are using. As Crystel (2003) says that a language can only obtain a real global status when it reaches a special place where it is recognized in every country. Presently English is one such language which has achieved this status because it is being used by a huge number of native as well as non-native speakers. Western countries have advanced and effective education systems. A large number of students from non-English countries, mostly from the East, travel to the Western countries for getting higher education. Different studies have revealed this fact that the students'

educational and social backgrounds affect their performance during their education in the countries where the language of education is English.

Andrade (2006) conducted a study in which he concluded that English proficiency of the international students is one of the main factors affecting the academic achievement and excellence of the non-native students in universities of English speaking countries. He recommended that non-native students must improve their language skills particularly the English speaking skills in order to achieve academic excellence and better education. If they would lack these skills, it will be compulsory for the universities to make them go through the English language courses for improving their language skills before the start of their main study programs.

Rask (2006) concluded in his study that both speaking and listening skills can be gradually developed with the help of clear visual and solid learning experiences in the educational perspectives. It was further concluded that high standard of speaking and listening skills have direct impact on students' academic achievement.

The learners of English language are increasing with enormous speed in Pakistan. A large number of institutes have been established in all major cities. These institutes are providing students with better teaching learning environment for learning of English language. The future of English in Pakistan is bright and it is an accepted fact that it is and will be utilized as a library language for good (Shahid 2006).

Teachers' focus on writing skills of the students is one of the major causes of students' weak spoken skills. Researches show the same fact where teachers' teaching practices neglected the development of the students' speaking skills and attention was only given to the writing skills (Shughri, 2007). In the same study, it was also concluded that students were reluctant to speak in English due to some other reasons like fear of making mistakes, lack of opportunities to speak English and the fear of being laughed at by the fellow students. Consequently students spent much time in doing the reading and writing tasks of the text book and the same was the focus of the teacher as well. He found that there was no separate session for development of the spoken skills during the school time. Finally he termed it an exam-oriented teaching/ school culture.

Lee (2009) conducted a study to examine the ways of enhancing the oral communication skills of Asian students and improving their participation in the class through combining both writing and speaking skills. His conclusion was that students' speaking skills may be improved by combining both the writing and speaking activities in teaching speaking skills.

According to Khunnwut, (2009) in his study concluded that students are unable to command English as a second language even after secondary education. He further concluded that in most of the schools bi-lingual method is adopted for teaching of English which only support the slow learners. In Pakistan various native languages (L1) are used in teaching learning process according to the geographical locations. Bashir, (2011) concluded in their study that teachers must emphasize English as a means of communication especially in the English language class. They should resort to interactive techniques while teaching English in the class room and they must promote the English speaking culture within the complete school environment. She further suggested that students may be given confidence, they should be encouraged to speak English with their fellow students and they should respond to teacher in English.

Khattak, et al. 2011) are of the view that apart from the writing assignments, speaking English in front of class mates or subject teacher is a gigantic task for the students. Such expectations are right to a certain level because the students get approach to a higher level

university programme after learning English language for minimum seven years and going through pre-admission examinations.

Khunnawut (2011) reported that students’ speaking anxiety originates from their negative assessment from their fellows and their thinking about low scoring in the exams due to poor performance. He further concluded in the study that students’ language anxiety adversely affected their speaking skills to great extent as they were conscious of making mistakes and making grammatically weak sentences.

Zia and Sultan (2015) conducted a research study in which they concluded that most of the students of English language faced high level of class room performance anxiety. The main reasons of this anxiety were; students evaluated their speaking skills in a very negative way, their fear of making mistakes and their worries of others’ perceptions about their performance in the classroom. Most of the students were fearful about their evaluation by their teachers and their fellow student in the class room. They were also apprehensive about their teachers for correcting them in front of their class fellows and they were also fearful of losing face and getting embarrassed in front of their friends.

RESERCH METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of the study was to find out the difficulties which are faced by the students of Government Higher High Schools (male and female) in spoken English in District Peshawar.

All Principals of Government High School of District Peshawar were included in population of the study. Ten Principals of the selected schools (05 male and 05 female schools) was selected as sample of the study.

Questionnaire for principals of Government Higher High Schools was used as research instruments.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 (Part-I). Status of English Competency of Teachers in Opinion of the Principals

<i>S</i> <i>No</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
		<i>Yes</i> <i>%</i>	<i>No</i> <i>%</i>	<i>Yes</i> <i>%</i>	<i>No</i> <i>%</i>
1	Do you agree that spoken English competency is necessary for HSS students?	30	20	50	0
2	Do you realize that English is better medium of instruction?	30	20	40	10
3	Do you direct your English teachers to speak English during their class?	30	20	40	10
4	Have you arranged any course of “teaching speaking of English” for your teachers?	10	40	10	40
5	Do you encourage your teachers to use interactive techniques while teaching English?	20	30	40	10
6	Do you urge upon your teachers to use participatory techniques of teaching English?	40	10	30	20

Table 1(Part-II). Status of English Competency of Teachers in Opinion of the Principals

S No	Statements	Male		Female	
		Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %
7	Do you interact with students to evaluate their English speaking skills?	30	20	30	20
8	Do you interact in English with your teachers?	30	20	30	20
9	Do you direct your teachers to encourage the students to speak English in the class?	50	0	30	20
10	Do you promote English speaking environment at your institute?	30	20	40	10
11	Do you discourage your teachers from using mother-tongue while teaching English?	30	20	40	10
12	Do you ensure the availability of AV aids for the enhancement of speaking skill of the students?	30	20	30	20

Discussion

Item 1 shows the positive response of the respondents. 80% of the Principals were of the view that competency in spoken English is necessary for the students of HS level. 80% of the Principals of the selected schools emphasized the importance of the spoken skills for the HS students. Item 2 depicts that 70% of the HSS Principals agreed that English was the better medium of instruction at the HSS level. Majority of the principals were of the view that English was to be adopted as medium of instruction in all government HSS schools since the higher level studies are in English and students were to be prepared beforehand. Item 3 depicts that most of the Principals (70%) advise and direct their teachers to speak English with the students in the class rooms. Item 4 shows that a very minimal number of principals (20 %) have ever conducted any course or workshop on the topic of “teaching speaking of English” for their teaching staff. It shows that teachers are not trained to the level they ought to be trained in order to develop the speaking skills of the students. Item 5 show that 60 % of the principals acknowledged that they encourage their teachers to use interactive techniques during teaching in the class. Item 6 depicts that 70% of the Principals urge upon their teachers to involve the students in the learning processes. But in the same way, they argued that classes are overcrowded with students and in such scenarios participation on the part of the students become much time consuming and it becomes difficult to complete the syllabus in time. Item 7 shows that more than fifty percent of the principals (60%) visit the class rooms and interact with the students. They informed the researcher that they converse with the students in English language in order to make them confident in speaking of English. Item 8 shows that more than 50% of the principals interact or try to interact with their teachers in English which is a positive attitude towards English language. The fact is a positive sign towards developing the English speaking environment at the schools. However, it is not present at all the schools as 40% of the principals were of the view that for effective communication related to the schools they communicate in the native language with their faculty members. Item 9 shows the very positive response to the question that whether the principals of the schools direct their teaching staff to encourage the students for speaking English in the classes. Item 10 shows that 70% of the principals promote English speaking environment at their schools. They want their faculty to be conversant with English speaking. Item 11 shows that majority of the sample GHS principals discourage the teachers from using

mother tongue while teaching English. It shows their concern about the significance of the English language teaching. They also added that since most of the students have poor academic background, it is very difficult for the teachers to make them understand a topic completely in English. Item 12 in the table depicts that 60% of the principals try to ensure the availability of AV aids at the schools for better teaching of the subjects particularly English.

FINDINGS

Following were the main findings of the study:

1. Majority of the principals agreed that English competency is necessary for the students of high school.
2. Large number of the principals realized that English was the better medium of instruction at high school.
3. (70%) of the principals directed and encouraged their English teachers to speak English with the students during class.
4. Teachers of English are not properly and adequately trained for developing the speaking skills of the students since they have no qualification pertaining to the teaching of speaking skills of the English.
5. 70% of the principals urged their English teachers to use participatory techniques while teaching English in general and speaking English skills at particular.
6. The academic background of the students pertaining to the speaking of English is very weak and it is hard for them to receive and comprehend the instructions in English.
7. Principals and teachers encouraged the students to speak English in the class. This response was supported by 48% of the students as well. However, 52% of the students said that they were not encouraged for speaking of English in the class.
8. The spoken English competency of the teachers is not up to the mark due to which they use mother tongue while teaching English in the class.
9. There are no such contents in the syllabus of the high school in which spoken skills are emphasized.
10. A.V aids for developing the spoken skills are not available in the schools. There is no language laboratory in any of the higher High School..

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn in the light of the analysis and findings of the study:

1. It was concluded that the teachers of high school realized the significance of English speaking skills but they faced major difficulties in speaking of English. They lack confident and face cultural constraints.
2. It was concluded that teachers of high school feel shyness and they are under-confident to speak English with their teachers or fellow students.
3. It was also concluded that the students did not support their fellows in speaking of English rather they ridicule at the students who tended to talk in English language during the class. It is very common observation that students are not

supporting each other in the speaking of English. It may be due to several reasons like jealousy, sense of deprivation or any other reason.

4. It was also concluded that the teachers in government High Schools were not sufficiently trained for developing the speaking skills of the students and had not sufficient knowledge of teaching methodologies of teaching speaking of English.
5. The classes of most of the schools were overcrowded with students which is a reason due to which interaction could not be done between the teacher and students. It should be considered and the number of students should be not more than 30 students in a class.
6. The schools lacked audio-visual aids for teaching of English. There was no language lab or other gadgets which could be used as a support for teaching the speaking of English language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made in the light of the findings and conclusions of the study:

1. Emphasis may be given to the speaking skills of the teachers by the teachers. The teachers and students should focus on activities in which the students can build their vocabulary and improve their fluency English language.
2. The teachers of English should improve their own speaking skills and teaching methodologies. All the teachers may be trained to adopt interactive teaching methods especially for the improvement of the spoken language skills. They should involve the students in the lesson by improving the students talking time (STT) during the class. Furthermore, they should conduct activities like group discussions, role play in the English class.
3. The school administration may encourage and ensure the English speaking environment at the schools by pushing all the teaching and non-teaching staff to use English during the school time. The language inside the class and outside the class must be English.
4. The provincial education department may also concentrate on the English subject of primary and middle levels and teachers of these levels may also be trained through workshops and seminars so that they can prepare the students for the studies of secondary/ higher High School levels.
5. The English teachers should utilize maximum time for the improvement of the English speaking skills of the students during the class and outside the class as well. They should conduct activities in classes and students may be encouraged to come forward and participate.
6. The provincial government may arrange special courses on “teaching of speaking skill” for the teachers of English. These courses may be included in the in-service teacher trainings.
7. Principals of the Higher High Schools should promote collaborative learning environment among the nearby located schools of the districts. This can also be arranged in making clusters of the school.
8. Principals have handsome funds on their disposal which are not audited by any other agency. They may approve some amount from these funds and locally arrange spoken language courses for the faculty of the school.

9. Assessment of the speaking skills may be included in the examination system. Handsome marks may be allocated to the oral performance of the students.
10. English language laboratories may be established in every school of the district and teachers may be trained for the effective utilization of these set ups. The audio-visual aids and other study material may be provided to the schools by the department of education.
11. It is also recommended that teachers of other subjects may also be encouraged and motivated to adopt English as medium of instruction for their subjects since the contents of their subjects are also in English.

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