Issues of English Language Learners in Communication at Intermediate Level in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The students have to face lot of problems in speaking English as a second language (ESL). This study investigates the problems, fears and hindrances in using English language as a speaking tool in and outside class room. The population consists of the students of Intermediate/HSSC level from age group of 16 to 19 years. The study determines the causes of poor communication in English language among higher secondary school students. The descriptive survey design was used and questionnaire was used as a tool in collection of data. Responses were obtained from students and teachers in two higher secondary schools. The study sample was 60, in which 30 were students and 30 were teachers. Frequency and simple percentage were used in the analysis of data. The findings of the study led to the conclusion that the dominance of mother tongue, less qualified teachers of English language, negative attitudes of students toward speaking English language, improper use of method in enhancing English language speaking and no access to instructional media, A.V aids and other facilities, are the reasons behind the poor English language communication of the students. The study also found out that provision of qualified teachers of English language, using the right approach to the spoken ability of English language, engaging of students in debating and listening to English programs are some of the ways that can improve secondary school students' performance in spoken English communication.

KEYWORDS: Issues, ELT, ESL, communication, English language learners, Higher Secondary School (HSSC),

INTRODUCTION

Language is considered the most important and foremost for learning. It is a primary tool which allows teachers to mediate source for students to access the whole curriculum. Medium of instruction in Pakistan is English language from basic level till higher education. Although the relationship between English-language skills and academic performance among ESL students has been established yet the fact is that it is a multilingual country and has a rich traditional history and it becomes very difficult for students to get competency over it especially students from lower socio-economic groups. Strictly speaking, due to social hierarchies and uneducated backgrounds students are having bad results not only in reading but also in speaking to the extent they cannot even utter some sentences in English. Proper echniques and methods are not strongly followed resulting into failure of students in this subject as well.

This paper investigates about English language learners' problems which they face during their education cause of failure in getting goals in English language teaching (ELT) would be given high importance. My research will try to explore how students face too much difficulty due to lack of competency in English. Reasons, suggestions, steps and role of basic levels of learning of English language are focused in my research. Wrapping up, this study suggests that English language acculturation, was not sufficient to ensure successful transition into the academic environment in Pakistan. There are many studies that focus on poor language communication skill/ability of students.

Doughty and Pica (1984) compared language use in teacher-fronted lessons, group work, and pair work. They noted that significantly more negotiation for meaning, which is believed to enhance second language acquisition, occurred in groups (66% of total talk) and in pairs (68%) than in the whole class setting (45%). Also within an

input/interaction framework, Pica (1987) reported on research involving low-intermediate level adult ESL students engaged in two types of classroom activities in a teacher-fronted setting and in small groups of four. It was found that the teacher-directed participation pattern generated a relatively small amount of modified interaction in both activities. In recent years, a significant concept has emerged as cooperative learning in the field of second language education and learning.

The speech production model of Levelt (1989) is considered the most prominent theory regarding the research on second language acquisition and processing. He says that there are three processing components called conceptualizer, formulator and articulator. During speech production each works and helps in speech production. The conceptualizer task is to conceptualize the message, i.e., generating and Monitoring messages; the formulator functions as formulating the language production, i.e. giving grammatical and phonological shape to messages; and the articulator works in articulating the language, i.e., retrieving portions of internal speech and executing the message.

The Bachman's influential discussion of communicative language ability (Bachman 1990,Bachman and Palmer 1996)the cognitive elements which are important in speaking language in a given situation are knowledge of second language and knowledge of how to overcome communication difficulties.

Many researchers (Littlewood, 2007; Li, 1996, Carless, 2006) are of the opinion that in Asia secondary school teachers do not have enough confidence to conduct any communication activity in schools because they themselves do not consider themselves proficient to engage with students in communication according to their needs. As a result attention has been paid to the pedagogical implications of English language in second language classrooms (Long & Porter, 1985) (McGroarty, 1989 Coelho, 1992, 1994; Cohen, 1994; Holt, 1993; Kessler, 1992;). The teacher should talk on learner's level of comprehension, that is, the learner should be able to understand what the teacher is saying (Richards & Lockhart, 1994:184) Mohammed, (1998) observed that the teaching of English language is bedeviled with many problems such as inadequate period of teaching, method of teaching and lack of adequate and useful resources. Therefore, it is clear to us that inadequate infrastructural facilities leading to large class sizes and inadequate as well as obsolete teaching resources or media lead to poor performance in English language in our secondary schools.

Marinova-Todd (2003) concludes from reviewed studies that the availability and the access to good L2 input and instruction produce the best outcomes in L2 and ensure native-like proficiency. Strategic competence is a general ability that enables an individual to use available resources by regulating online cognitive processes in accomplishing a communicative goal (Phakiti, 2008).

Further, one of the most pertinent theories informing this study is that of S.D. Krashen who found that the essential ingredient for L2 acquisition is comprehensible input through teacher talk. Teaching English is not merely transmitting information to the learners rather it is to enable them speak, read and write fluently (Patil, 2008)

However, to facilitate language acquisition through communicative approach, the teachers' competency and students' confidence as well as motivation plays an important role. The studies conducted in Asian contexts reveal that learners in most Asian countries feel shy and nervous while using English (Patil, 2008). Abdullahi, (2003), Sa'ad, (2007), Abdulganiyu, (2010) and Usman, (2012) were of the view that provision of enough instructional media/materials, qualified teachers as well as conducive classrooms will assist a lot in improving the performance of secondary school students in English language. Purpose of language has given rise to communicative approach which could help the students grasp how to use target language to communicate appropriately, fluently and effectively by being more concerned with students' initiative and interaction rather than simply with teacher centered direction (Demirezen, 2011).

Rathod (2012) narrates in his article, that there is a relationship between social class and L2 achievement. Most of the studies show that children from lower socio-economic groups are less successful in L2 learning than children from higher groups.

RSEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives are following:

1: To find out that process mostly used in English language communication and find how much successful or failed or not implied.

2: To find out the reasons of student's failure in English language communication.

3: To find out issues that prevent in getting competency over communication

HYPOTHESIS

English language learning in communicative purposes is too difficult to achieve at the Intermediate level in Pakistan.

REAEACH QUESTIONS

To address the basic hypothesis, the research puts forward the following research questions.

1: What is the cause of least or poor communication in English?

2: What are views, standards and generalizations of students regarding English language communication?

3: What are the ways of improving English language communication of the Intermediate students.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The design that is used in this study was descriptive survey. It is used because it permitted the researchers to study small sample and later generalized the findings to the whole population. This involves the collection of data that will provide an account or description of individuals, groups or situations. Instruments that are used to obtain data in descriptive studies include:

1: questionnaires, 2: Interviews ,   3: Observation

Tool of data collection

Questionnaire is tool of data collection from students and teachers. Qualitative approach is crucial to examine language learning process. English language learners are selected from Intermediate class of English. Questionnaire from teachers would also have a contribution in result orientations.

Sample size

30 Students of Intermediate class are focused for questionnaire distribution. It would be face to face research from student and teachers by the researcher and at the end observation tool is also implied regarding observed environment. In this study, 30 College teachers also used in order to reveal their existing perceptions towards English language communication skill.

Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling technique is used in selecting the sample for this study. It was random selection among students. This is because it allows the researcher to have representation from both the average and good students. 30 students are randomly selected from the class of 40 students in order to get questionnaire results.10 male and 10 female teachers are taken for results

Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected was analyzed using numbers, frequency and simple percentage.

Data Presentation and Analysis of Results

The focal point of this segment is presentation and analysis of the data composed from the respondents plus the discussions of results. After getting results from students the data is described in order to have justifications and generalizations of research.

Research Question 1:

What are the causes of least or poor communication in English.

Table 1: Responses of the Respondents to the research question 1.

No.	Questions	YES/%	NO/%
1.	Do you prefer to speak English to your mother tongue in school.	6(20%)	24(80%)
2.	Does your mother-tongue cause problem to you in speaking English?	21(70%)	9(30%)
3.	Are there available instructional and multimedia to improve English communication in your school?	5 (16%)	25(84%)
4.	Are there available qualified English language teachers in your school?	21(70%)	9(20%)
5.	Is there any method used by teacher to improve English communication in teaching English language in your school?	7 (24%)	23(76%)

In table 1 above, only 6 students of percentage20% prefer speaking English language in school. But 24 students of having 80% prefer speaking their mother-tongue and other local languages than English language. However, 21 students of 70% were of the view that mother tongue causes problem to them in learning English language while 9 students representing that 30% were disagree with this view. Only 5 students said that there was facility of multimedia in least circumstances.25 students viewed that they are taught only through books and they are having no facility of multimedia and A.V aids. 26 students representing 70% said that they have qualified teachers of English language in their schools while 9 of 20% were saying that there were not enough qualified teachers of English language in their schools. Only 7 students of 23% said that teachers used proper methods of teaching while 23 students of 76% said that the teachers of English language do not use proper methods to improve their English language communication.

As a final point, it is clear to us that the main causes of poor and least communication among the students of secondary schools include:

- Students' lack of giving importance in English language communication
- Dominance of mother tongue even in schools
- Insufficient instructional media and facilities
- Using improper methods in English language teaching and lack of multimedia and audio video aids

Research questions:2

What are the ways of improving English language communication among Intermediate students.

Table 2: Showing the answers by teachers on Research Question two.

No.	QUESTIONS	YES/%	NO/%
1.	Do conditions and appropriate use of instructional media as well as facilities improve learning of English language in your school?	20(66%)	10(34%)
2.	Can employment of qualified teachers of English language improve communication of it in your school?	21 (70%)	9 (30%)
3.	Do you think the use of consistent strategy or activity of communication can improve speaking problem of English language in your school?	24(80%)	6(20%)
4.	Do you think if there is the facilitation of multimedia audio lingual aids can improve the communication of English language in your school?	26 (86%)	4 (14%)
5.	Do you think listening to any English audio or Program by the students can improve their speaking of English language in your school?	27(90%)	3 (10%)
6	Do you think organizing debates, speeches, meetings in your school can improve the learning and performance of students in English language?	28(93%)	2(7%)
7.	Do you think social and economic stratification has a role in student's communicative abilities of English language?	7(23%)	23(77%)

In order to find out the results of research question no 2, questionnaire is used and the details of their responses are given. In table 2 above, 20 teachers showing 66% were of the view that appropriate use of multimedia can improve student's English language speaking competence as well as the performance of secondary school students in communication . 21 respondents representing 70% were of the view that provision of qualified English language teachers can improve the speaking performance of students. Again, the 24 respondents were of the view that use of consistence and appropriate methods of teaching can improve the performance of students in English language in secondary schools. 27 teachers of 90% were of the view that applications of audio lingual aids for speaking practice of English language can improve the performance in secondary school students while 3 teachers of 10% were against this view. 28 teachers of 93% were of the view that debate competitions and open conversations are also helpful if they are done under arrangements but 2 teachers of 20 % said that due to non-serious attitude of students these activities can bring no remarkable results.7 teachers said that student's social environment also determines their communicative competence. But 23 teachers responded that it matters in least circumstances and its individual capacity of communication in target language and their matter of motivation and personal interest matters. Most of the teachers of HSSC said that spoken English classes are crucial to get the goal in communicative competence of students. It is because schools most often do not pay concentration to the spoken aspect of target language they just try to achieve the load of syllabus of target language and spoken aspect remains consistently ignored.

Research questions 3

What are views, standards and generalizations of students regarding English language communication?

Table 3: Showing the responses on Research Question 3

No.	QUESTION	YES/%	NO/%
1.	Do you like English as subject in your opinion?	25(83%)	5(17%)
2.	Do you like to speak English with your fellows?	6(20%)	24(80%)
3.	Do you talk to your friend in English sometimes?	22 (73%)	8 (27%)
4.	Does Your teacher teach you in English or in mother tongue?	9(30%)	21 (70%)
5.	Teacher encourages you to speak in English language inside the class??	4 (13%)	26(87%)
6.	Do you think your syllabus can enhance your communication level in English?	8 (27%)	22(73%)

Table 3 consists of views of students what they think and what standards they have regarding English language speaking and its benefits. This questionnaire will help to overcome student's problems and we shall come to know about their attitudes approach, outlook, mindset and assessment which they individually present regarding communicative aspect of English language. Questions were asked through interview as well as questionnaire.25 students said that they have a little interest in speaking English but 5 said that they even don't want to take interest.6 said that they try to speak English with their fellows and 24 said that due to the irresponsive behavior and mockery by others they often shirk and don't try.9students of 30 said that it is very rare that they are taught in English and 21 said that teacher does not teach in English rather they are addicted to have lesson in their mother tongue and it becomes very uncomfortable for them when teacher switches from their usual language to English. Only 4 students were of view that they are encouraged by their teacher to speak in English but 26 of view that they are neither motivated and encouraged neither by teachers nor from their environment. Only 8 students value syllabus in getting speaking competency in English and 22 said that their syllable is not enough and sufficient and not fully equipped with activities exercises and is based on examination perspective.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Research Question One

The results of the investigation of research question one finds that supremacy of mother tongue, unqualified teachers of English language, not enough facilities and media, no motivation factor, discouragement in speaking English,lack of giving importance to English speaking ,negative attitude of students toward learning of English language and improper use of methods of communication in teaching are some of the causes of poor communication in English language among senior secondary schools.

The findings of this study relates with the findings of Usman, (2012), Roger, (1981), Sa'ad, (2007), Mohammed, (1998), Abdullahi, (2003), who were of the view that the dominance of mother tongue or home languages, not enough qualified teachers of English language, inadequate facilities and instructional media, use of instructional media, negative attitude of students toward the learning of English language communication and improper use of method of teaching are some causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students.

Research Question Two:

The results of the analysis of research question two shows that availability of instructional media or materials, availability of qualified English language teachers, right use of teaching methods, availability of same standards in teaching for all students irrespective of their social stratification , and students' participation in debates can help to improve the performance of senior secondary school students in English language communication.

The findings of this study tally with the findings of Abdullahi, (2003), Sa'ad, (2007), Abdulganiyyu, (2010) and Usman, (2012) who were of the view that provision of enough and relevant instructional media/materials and qualified teachers of English language improve the performance of secondary school students.

The findings also match with findings of Udumah (1987) stated that students should be taught correct pronunciation in English language to minimize the effect of first (Urdu) language on the second (English language) and students should be encouraged to communicate in English language in and outside the classroom.

Research question 3:

The findings of research question three are based on students personal observations and opinions what they think about enhancing and commanding over communicative competence of English language. The analysis shows that they are not so much found of improving their communication .They feel more relax in their mother tongue and are used to it. Neither they are accompanied by their fellows in communicating in English nor their teachers encourage them. The lecturers often consist of their mother tongue and it makes for them difficult to understand whenever teacher suddenly switches from their language to English language. The study also finds that their syllabus is not enough in a sense that it lacks o have focus on speaking skill of students.

After brief and through study of all research questions it's important to find out whether research objectives are achieved or not.

First objective was to find out that process mostly used to improve English language communication and find how much successful or failed or not implied. It is found that due to traditional set patterns of syllable there are no patterns goals that are followed and there is no attention that is paid to the communicative abilities of students. They carry on cramming having fear of being failed in examination and results are obvious, no outcome in communication of target language

The second research objective was to be familiar with Reasons of student's failure in English language communication. The analysis showed that no desire to speak English, mother-tongue interference causes problem, lack of available instructional and multimedia, no organizing of debates, speeches, and meetings.

The third research question aimed at finding out issues that prevent in getting competency over communication in target language. It is concluded that students have to face the following issues:

They are not provided A.V aids and other instructional material, syllabus is exam restricted and they are confined to do according to written exam pattern, there is no encouragement by teachers and neither they are guided to participate in competitions and debates in their target language nor their educational environment have any planning and arrangements regarding communicative ability of students.

RECOMMENDATION

Secondary schools competition in area of debate and other academic activities should be organized by authoritative. This will positively improve the spoken aspect of English language among the senior secondary school students. It will motivate students as well as teachers. All the possible equipment should be provided to teachers so that they may use appropriate methods and activities to improve the student's ability of communication.

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