

The Impact of English Language Proficiency on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance

Noor Fatima^a, Mubeen Akbar^b, Syeda Sakina Hussain Kazmi^b

^aPhD Scholar, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan

^bMPhil Scholar, Kinnaird College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan

Corresponding Email: noorashique6@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examines how students' proficiency in English affects their comprehension, engagement, and overall academic success. It involves the demerits in learning English language, use of modern teaching methodologies, and the role of both social and economic factors students face. To the context of research methodology, a mixed-method approach was implied. A survey research design was made applicable to run out an authentic research through secondary school students. Meanwhile, teachers and school administrators were interviewed to acknowledge the remarks surrounding around pedagogical challenges and student management. Furthermore, the findings uncover the aspect about an interconnection between English language proficiency and academic achievements as it improves their critical thinking skills along with analytical reasoning. On the other hand, students from public schools face major drawback of traditional pedagogical and teaching skills, short consultation times, and less attention to the test assessments of students. In addition to this, psychological issues such as language anxiety, low self-esteem, and peer pressure further narrow down the students' way to success. In a nutshell, the study aims to provide productive strategies for the betterment of educational system and improvise English language proficiency in secondary schools.

Keywords: English language proficiency, secondary schools, pedagogical, and teaching techniques.

Introduction

Language plays a key role in shaping instruction along with communication in daily lives. In the contemporary world, English is predominantly and widely used for official purposes in most parts of the world i.e. banking, commerce, trade, law,

political papers, education systems etc. English is used as a main medium of instruction in many countries beside being a second language. At secondary school level, English is interconnected with the better academic performance, career opportunities, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning of students. In countries where English is not a first language, students often face difficulty in acquiring it as a second language since there is a less number of medium to learn from. The understanding of English language can enhance their capability of science, mathematics, and even Arts subjects. Additionally, the capitalist world has become successful in leading English as a major global language which is deeply integrated in the office use, education system, political works, meetings, and other important areas. Consequently, one has to be proficient and fluent in English language to access greater opportunities both nationally and internally.

This research depicts significance for many reasons. It explains the secret behind the implications of English language proficiency on students' overall academic performance, especially at secondary school level. Studies foreshadow that students who face difficulty in learning English as a second language also face difficulty in other subjects that are taught in English i.e. science, mathematics, etc. This study helps out in finding the actual reason behind the connection of poor English language fluency and poor academic performance. It also suggests the recommendations to fight through these challenges. The other major factor highlights the socio-economic factors affecting the overall academic performance linked with English language proficiency. In most of the counties, English is considered as a prestigious language providing better job opportunities and higher seats. Subsequently, students who doesn't pay attention in acquiring English as a second language face difficulty in future regarding better opportunities.

Moreover, the study highlights the major points holding the difficulties faced by students while learning or acquiring English language. These difficulties are further sugarcoated by traditional pedagogical skills, less consultation times, non-integration of English acquiring activities in schools, and carelessness towards acquiring it. The research provides the methodologies necessary for learning English language within a multilingual or bilingual environment.

English plays a vital role in secondary schools by providing opportunities and better academic evaluation outcomes. The study aims to provide a number of prospects by investigating the needs behind learning English and providing productive strategies to educators, curriculum designers, teachers, and stake holders. It enhances the effectiveness of English language proficiency by actual implementation of the strategies provided and converting them to the policies required. Ignoring the fact that English is an important aspect leading to a successful life can snatch the better

opportunities from the students as compared to the ones who would be good at speaking it.

Statement of the Problem

The problem statement revolves around the fact that despite the growing importance of English language, the educational institutes at secondary level face drawback in fully implementing the essential policies or strategies within the system. There are not proper checkups of the implementation of current and modern techniques by replacing the traditional ones. The use of technology and its integration within the education system has become a challenge for most of the educational institutes established at secondary level. Low level of funding, shortage of skilled and professional staff, and lack of attention towards this vital purpose seems to be the major causes of the failure of students at acquiring English language.

Furthermore, there is a growing concern that an overemphasis on acquiring English language can affect the proficiency of students in their native language. Studies have suggested that students with bilingual or multilingual backgrounds mostly face difficulty in choosing the vocabulary while interacting with people on common grounds. This issue cannot be ignored due the delicacy of the mater.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the effect of English language proficiency on students' academic performance at the secondary school level.
- To identify the issues faced by secondary school students in learning and using English effectively.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of current English language teaching methods.

Research Questions of the Study

- What is the effect of English language proficiency on students' academic performance at the secondary school level?
- What issues are faced by secondary school students in learning and using English effectively?
- How English language teaching methods can be improved?

Scope of the Study

This study highlights the importance of acquiring English language at academic level which can further lead to future endeavors and better academic experiences. It uncovers the ways English improves the intellectuality and overall performance in

their academic subjects such as science, mathematics, etc. It foreshadows the issues surrounding around academic failure due to poor performance in learning English language and provides productive strategies for it. These issues involve traditional or outdated teaching methodologies, low exposure towards English learning environment, and socio-linguistic barriers.

The study further provides the workable solutions to provide a better and productive environment to students at secondary level. These solutions revolves around the integration of technology in academic activities, use of modern teaching and pedagogical skills, greater exposure and providing better English environment to the students.

Significance of the Study

The study signifies the need of addressing the challenges within secondary schools to enhance the capability of students in English language proficiency. Due to the vast need and importance of English language, students should be provided with the suitable environment to evolve their communication skills. Improving the overall academic performance through learning English as a second language is vital since English is a global language and it is integrated within major fields of the world i.e. baking, commerce, trade, law, etc. it can further lead to greater career opportunities and better positions as it is considered a prestigious language in most of the countries. Students need to enhance their English speaking skills from secondary level to be good at their employed age. Furthermore, the study suggests the productive policies for curriculum developers, stake holders, teachers, and educational personnel to provide a suitable environment to students at secondary school level.

Literature Review

English language has become global language and is being predominantly spoken in most part of the world. It is indulged in many important fields and can lead to academic achievements. In secondary schools, English proficiency acts as a significant role in shaping students' educational achievements and future opportunities. This literature review underscores the previous research on the role of English in education, it's effect on students' academic performance, challenges in learning English, teaching methodologies, and socio-economic effects.

The Role of English in Education

English is the most widely used second language globally, often acting as the primary language of instruction in many secondary schools. According to **Crystal (2003)**, English has become the prominent language in international education, scientific research, and business, leading to maximum emphasis on English language

proficiency in non-native English-speaking countries. In many nations, English is either the medium of communication or a compulsory subject in school curricula (**Kirkpatrick, 2010**).

The role of English in education is especially important in post-colonial communities, where it acts as a link between local and global knowledge systems (**Phillipson, 2009**). In Pakistan, for example, English is a predominant subject in secondary schools and is often linked with better academic and professional aspects (**Shamim, 2008**). Although, while English facilitates access to global knowledge, it can also create hurdles for students who scuffle with proficiency, particularly in subjects that require complicated mental engagement (**Rahman, 2020**).

Impact of English Proficiency on Academic Performance

Research consistently dictates a strong interconnection between English proficiency and academic performance, particularly in non-native English-speaking countries. **Cummins (2000)** argues that students who are proficient in English act better in science, mathematics, and social studies, as comprehension and critical thinking in these subjects often rely on language skills. A study by **Abella, Urrutia, and Shneyderman (2005)** in the United States found that students with minimum English proficiency had majorly lower academic achievement than their fluent colleagues.

In South Asian contexts, including Pakistan and India, students studying in English-medium schools usually outperform those in vernacular-medium institutions due to greater exposure to academic English (**Rahman, 2019**). However, researchers such as **Brock-Utne (2007)** showcases that students who are forced to learn in a second language without adequate support may experience cognitive overflow, leading to poor comprehension and academic scuffles.

Challenges in Learning English at the Secondary Level

Despite the advantages of English proficiency, many secondary school students face major issues in learning and using English effectively. One major challenge is the lack of qualified English teachers, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas. **Shamim (2011)** indicates that many teachers in developing countries face the absence of necessary training in English language pedagogy, leading to ineffective instruction.

Another critical challenge is limited exposure to English outside the classroom. In many countries, students primarily use their native languages in daily

communication, pinpointing their opportunities to practice English. According to Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, language acquisition is most effectual when learners are exposed to comprehensible input in meaningful contexts. On the other hand, in many secondary schools, English is taught as a subject rather than used as a medium for broader learning, minimizing students' ability to progress fluency.

Socio-economic factors also play a role in students' priority to learn English. Coleman (2010) depicts that English is often linked with elite education, posing disparities between students from wealthy backgrounds and those from lower-income families. Many secondary schools in developing countries face the of necessary tools, such as textbooks, digital learning materials, and language labs, to help effective English learning (Ngugi, 2018).

Teaching Methodologies for English Language Instruction

The effectiveness of English language instruction at the secondary level largely depends on the teaching methodologies used. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been widely promoted as an effective approach, emphasizing interaction, speaking skills, and real-world language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). However, in many secondary schools, particularly in South Asia and Africa, traditional grammar-based methods remain predominant, depicting heavily on rote memorization and written exercises rather than practical communication (Shamim, 2008).

Studies show that task-based learning and technology-assisted instruction significantly improve students' engagement and learning results. Warschauer (2000) found that students who used digital tools, such as online learning tools and language apps, demonstrated higher levels of motivation and language retention compared to those who relied solely on textbooks. In contrast, rigid curricula and outdated teaching practices often hinder language acquisition (Pennycook, 2017).

Teacher training also plays a critical role in English language instruction. Fullan (2007) emphasizes that well-trained teachers who incorporate interactive learning policies, such as group discussions, role-playing, and problem-solving projects, are more effective in exploring students' language skills. Although, many secondary schools lack access to continuous professional progress for teachers, resulting in stagnant and ineffective teaching strategies.

Socio-Economic Implications of English Proficiency

English proficiency has far-reaching socio-economic outcomes, affecting students' career perspectives, higher education opportunities, and social mobility. Graddol (2006) argues that English has become a "basic skill" for employability in the global job market, with many multinational fields requiring fluency in English. Countries with strong English language strategies often see higher rates of economic progress due to greater participation in international trade and business (Kachru, 1992).

However, the predominance of English can also lead to linguistic incompetency, as students from underprivileged histories may scuffle to compete with their more elite counterparts who have better access to English education (Pennycook, 2010). In Pakistan, for instance, students from privileged English-medium schools often mature better job opportunities compared to those from government-run Urdu or regional-language schools (Rahman, 2019). This disparity raises concerns about equity in education and the need for integrative language policies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology depicts an overall research structure to carry out research through different methods and techniques. These include research design, instrumentation, sampling, population size, qualitative or quantitative analysis, etc. These figures are important for a healthy data analysis.

Research Design

The study is based on mixed method approach i.e. both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The quantitative analysis will be carried out to judge the interconnection of English language proficiency and overall academic performance of students. Meanwhile, the qualitative analysis will be carried out for deeper understanding of the thoughts of both students' and teachers' perspectives surrounding around English language proficiency.

Target Population and Sampling

The target population involves students and English language teachers of secondary school level. A stratified random sampling will be applied to select the secondary schools keeping in mind the factors like linguistic histories, socio-economic backgrounds, and the type of schools i.e. public or private.

The sample size involves 100 students and 25 teachers. Stratification will revolve around the elements like Urdu vs. English medium schools, demographic factors including gender representation, and urban vs. rural schools for a proper study.

Data Collection Methods

For a guided study, survey questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations will be held. Students and teachers will fill different forms of questionnaires including questions according to their expertise.

- **Student questionnaire:** Aims on English proficiency, academic performance, learning challenges, and language attitudes.
- **Teacher questionnaire:** Fosters teaching methodologies, issues in English instruction, students' language difficulties, and curriculum effectiveness.
- Conducted with selected teachers to gain in-depth prospects on teaching strategies, instructional challenges, and student development.
- Semi-structured format to permit flexibility in responses while maintaining aim on key fields.
- Real-time indications of English lessons will guide analyze teaching methodologies, student engagement, and language consultation.
- Observations will be written using a structured rubric to make sure consistency in data collection.

Data Analysis

- Data from questionnaires will be judged using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).
- Descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, percentages, and mean scores) will provide an overview of student and teacher responses.
- Inferential statistics (t-tests and regression analysis) will be utilized to get to know the relationships between English proficiency and academic performance.
- Thematic analysis will be mentioned to interview responses and classroom observation points.
- Emerging themes related to teaching issues, student learning experiences, and policy effects will be identified.

Ethical Considerations

Following ethical guidelines are necessary before carrying out the study:

- **Informed consent:** Participants will be completely informed about the purpose of the research, methodologies, and potential outcomes.
- **Confidentiality:** Personal information and responses will stay anonymous and used strongly for research purposes.
- **Voluntary participation:** Participants will have the right to exclude at any stage without outcomes.
- **Objectivity:** Researcher bias will be decreased by maintaining neutrality in data collection and analysis.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

To enhance the **credibility and accuracy** of the study, the following steps will be taken:

- **Pilot testing:** The questionnaires and interview questions will be pre-tested on a small scale before full-scale data collection.
- **Triangulation:** Findings from questionnaires, interviews, and observations will be cross-verified to make sure consistency and accuracy.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis section indicates the interpretation of the collected data using both quantitative and qualitative strategies. The study explores statistical and thematic analysis to assess the effect of English language learning at the secondary school level, describing students' academic performance, teachers' perspectives, and classroom interactions. The analysis aligns with the research objectives and methodology to make sure a comprehensible understanding of the subject.

The quantitative research involves the questionnaires and interviews. Both were placed and analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for better results. It involves descriptive, inferential, and correlational analysis to learn the inter-relation between overall academic performance and English language fluency.

- The mean digits for students' English fluency level depict the level of confidence they have in using English language in academic field.
- Frequency of students' academic performance in English-taught subjects provide key points into the effect of English proficiency on their annual marks.

- Teachers' responses about their instructional strategies, challenges, and students' language difficulties are judged to determine the link between common teaching strategies and student learning behaviors.

Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistical tests are taken place to lead out the relationships between English proficiency and academic performance.

- A t-test compares the academic ability of students with high English proficiency to those with low ability, assessing whether English skills significantly affect students' subject performance.
- Regression analysis is implemented to get to know the extent to which English proficiency predicts overall academic success in English-medium subjects.
- Chi-square tests are placed to analyze categorical data, such as whether students from public or private institutions show differences in English proficiency and academic results.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient is measured to calculate the strength and compassing of the relationship between students' English language proficiency and their performance in English-medium subjects. A strong positive connection would depict that higher English proficiency is linked with better academic outcomes. This analysis guides determine whether English language skills directly influence academic achievement or if other factors contribute essentially.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data from structured teacher interviews and classroom observations is analyzed thematically to expand recurring patterns and deeper pinpoints into the issues and benefits of English language learning at the secondary school level.

Thematic Analysis of Interviews

Interviews with teachers are changed and coded for common topics related to English language instruction. Key themes emerging from the interview responses involve:

- **Teaching methodologies and strategies:** Teachers pinpoints the instructional perspectives they use to improvise students' English

proficiency, involving communicative language teaching and grammar-based communication.

- **Challenges in English language instruction:** Teachers detail challenges such as students' limited vocabulary, lack of exposure to English outside the classroom, and inadequate teacher training fields.
- **Students' learning progress and difficulties:** Teachers provide key points into students' strengths and weaknesses in learning English, recognizing common errors and learning hurdles.

Classroom Observation Analysis

Data from classroom observations is analyzed to understand how English is taught and used as a medium of communication. Observational notes are reviewed to recognize common teaching practices, student engagement levels, and the frequency of English language use.

- The level of student participation in classroom discussions is explored to determine their confidence in using English.
- Teachers' use of interactive teaching techniques such as group discussions, role-playing, and multimedia tools is assessed to evaluate the effectiveness of different instructional strategies.
- Observations of student-teacher interactions help examine whether teachers specifically use English or switch to local languages to facilitate learning.

Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Schools

A comparative analysis is conducted to assess differences in English language learning experiences between public and private institute students. Key areas of comparison involve:

- Differences in students' English proficiency levels based on school type and exposure to English.
- Variation in teaching methods and the extent to which English is used as a medium of instruction.
- Disparities in learning tools, such as access to English books, digital learning resources, and well-trained English teachers.

Interpretation of Findings

The data analysis findings are interpreted in relation to the study's objectives to draw meaningful outcomes. The research examines the role of English proficiency in academic performance, assess the effectiveness of teaching methodologies, and recognize key issues faced by students and teachers. The combined analysis of quantitative and qualitative data gives a well-rounded understanding of these problems.

- The statistical analysis identifies whether English proficiency majorly affects academic performance, confirming the hypothesis that better English skills lead to improvised academic results.
- The thematic analysis pinpoints instructional issues, student learning barriers, and possible solutions suggested by teachers.
- The comparative analysis between public and private schools provide key insights about the reforms needed within the institutes for better results.

Findings and Discussion

The study provides a comprehensible understanding of the relationship between English language proficiency and overall academic performance linked with the career opportunities. The research analysed both qualitative and quantitative data collected from students and teachers about their specific perspectives. The outcomes finally reveal the key trends in English language learning at the secondary school level, uncovering its significance in shaping students' academic success and also mentioning the issues faced by both learners and educators.

The quantitative analysis showcases an inter-relation between academic performance and English language proficiency through questionnaires. Students who showed better performance in speaking English language were also found good at their academic results. Since English is majorly involved in science subjects i.e. science, mathematics, etc. On the other hand, students who struggled with speaking English language with greater fluency also struggled with their academic performance, especially in subject comprising English language. The statistical results overall showcased that the students with better fluency in English language were also good with their academic grade. Hence, this quantitative analysis witnessed the fact that English language proficiency is compulsory for good performance at school.

Meanwhile, qualitative data involved the interviews of both English teachers and students to get to know about their perspectives surrounding around English language proficiency. Firstly, teachers shared that the students faced challenges with current vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, verb forms, etc. The use of traditional and outdated teaching techniques further disturbed the learning of students as they were not provided with the proper environment to learn English language. On the other hand, students highlighted the fact about remote learning and memorization within schools. It badly affected their overall learning as they could not relate or speak during the real-life situations. In public schools, the teachers did not provide much exposure to the students as the environment and interaction with native speakers is the most important thing to learn English. The four important elements to learn English language were ignored i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Another important finding links to the teaching methods employed in secondary institutions. The study uncovers that teachers dominantly use a traditional, grammar-based perspective to teaching English, focusing on rote learning and textbook exercises rather than interactive and communicative language teaching methodologies. Classroom observations dictate that while teachers encourage students to speak in English, the lack of interactive activities, such as debates, group discussions, and role-playing exercises, limits students' ability to practice spoken English. Many teachers address to code-switching between English and the native language to facilitate comprehension, which, while helpful in the short term, minimizes students' exposure to immersive English learning experiences. Furthermore, teachers in public schools often scuffle with inadequate training in modern pedagogical strategies, making it difficult for them to implement effective language-teaching policies. The traditional teaching methods are a major challenge in secondary school levels. Teachers mostly focus on rote learning and grammar-based perspective to teach English. They don't go out of the box to make students learn new things. While students are asked to speak in English, mostly in private secondary schools, they face issues due to lack of interactive lessons and activities. The exposure of students to native speakers is compulsory but the challenge still persists.

Additionally, the comparative analysis between public and private schools reveals major challenges faced by both. In public schools, traditional teaching methods, lack of exposure to the students, absence of the teaching of current trends in English, absence of wide range of resources, and academic tools undermine the learning of students. This is the reason why they don't perform well in their studies. They need a proper environment and balanced approach to handle the academic performance

and English fluency. On the other hand, in private schools, the situation is bit better as compared to the public schools. The students are provided with the resources, tools, exposure to proper learning environment and modern teaching techniques. However, the disparities still remain as they are not properly exposed to the environment essential for interacting with the native speakers so they can become more fluent in English language.

Most important factor mostly being ignored within the studies and previous researches the psychological effect of English language fluency on the students. Many students, especially from low economic background and studying in public schools face anxiety and low self-esteem as compared to the ones who are good at speaking English language. They also feel the stage anxiety, speaking or presenting in front of class and staff members. Proper communication skills are necessary for make the anxiety fade away but it takes time and secondary schools do not provide students with such activities or environment.

In addition, students mostly face lack of funding programs for English learning. Those students who belong to low-economic backgrounds and a will of learning English language face economic issues as the English learning programs are bit expensive in the institutions. They face a number of decreased activities and lack of resources to get help from. They government initiatives are not much dominant in helping those students. Along this challenge, the people, including students, who apply for visa abroad, face issues with the IELTS test. This test is compulsory to get a visa for the western countries like United States of America and United Kingdom. Therefore, the challenges within the system persists as it gets years for these students to be fluent in English language.

In a nutshell, the findings provide essential insights about the system of public and private schools, the perspectives of English teachers and students, lack of resources and English learning activities, the psychological factors such as anxiety and funding issues. All these issues can be addressed by providing productive strategies and essential solutions to them. As modern problems require modern solutions, the outdated techniques need to be replaced with the current ones. The presence of particular resources, activities and trained staff is also important for English language learning. These factors cannot be ignored if one thinks of changing the system.

Conclusion

In conclusion, majorly, the study revolves around the significance of English language proficiency within the education system of secondary school level. English is a compulsory factor to enhance grades in other science based subjects as the study exemplifies that the students with greater fluency in English are better academically as compared to the ones who struggle with speaking English language. Moreover, the traditional teaching methods were addressed to enhance the English learning of studies by providing them specific environment and activities. The exposure to the native or natural environment is important for students to be fluent in English. The remote learning or memorization was criticized for a point that it does not enhance any learning.

Secondly, the integration of technology within the teaching methods is as important as providing the proper environment for learning. These tools and resources are necessary for the exclusion of rote learning. It leads to helping out students in real life situations where they can make use of their critical thinking skills as compared to already memorized stuff. To overcome the psychological barriers, it is necessary to provide students with the presentations and questions so that they can practice overcoming their stage fear. It only happens with proper practice and guidance which can be provided with in classroom environments at secondary school level. At the end, the government needs to take initiatives for a better outcome and funding the deserved students so that they can continue with their English learning.

Recommendations

Following recommendation based on the study can be beneficial in providing a better environment for students at secondary school level:

- Use of current and modern teaching methods in the classrooms
- Exclusion of memorization or remote learning and replacing it with critical thinking and analytical reasoning.
- Integration of technology along with traditional classroom resources for a better environment
- Providing counselling to students who face psychological issues such as anxiety or fear regarding stage fear or speaking English in front of other class members.

- Initiatives of government to provide funding to the deserved students so they can enhance their learning skills accordingly
- Communicative Language Teaching CLT are important to provide a safer and interactive environment to the students so they can learn naturally instead of forcefully.

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