



Exploring the Challenges and Pedagogical Approaches of English Language Teachers in Government and Private Schools

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Abstract

The paper explores challenges and pedagogical approaches of English language teachers in government and private schools of district Karak, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This particular study used qualitative research methods and data was collected through interview guide. The research used purposeful sampling techniques and data was stopped based on saturation points from 17 participants. The qualitative interviews were semi-structured, and data was analyzed through thematic analysis. In conclusion, interaction among teachers and students increases spoken English skills because students do not feel any hesitation when they speak with each other. English language interaction is helpful for students' communication in the classroom. The study is limited to the teachers interviews and no other staff or students were interviewed. It is recommended that teachers use English more often with their middle school students in class.

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Introduction

The study explores challenges and pedagogical approaches of English language teachers. As Ahmad, Siddique, and Arshad (2020) highlights, students frequently give up trying and look directly at their instructors for answers in English language. In many schools, students often exhibit a high level of dependency on their teachers, seeking constant assistance even when faced with simple tasks. This reliance can become a significant challenge in the learning process. If students continually receive corrections for incorrect answers without being encouraged to think critically, this pattern may turn into a habit, ultimately stunting their ability to learn independently and diminishing their cognitive growth.

One of the most common obstacles that English language teachers face is students' persistent use of their first language, often Urdu, during classroom communication. When students default to their native language, it becomes increasingly difficult for teachers to foster an immersive English language environment. The challenge intensifies when students are reluctant to speak in English and use their first language as a safety net, hampering their language development.

Moreover, students in rural areas tend to exhibit a lower level of participation due to a lack of confidence. As Coşkun (2022) observes, motivation and confidence are key factors in language learning, but students in these areas are often hesitant to engage in English language activities. Their fear of making mistakes and their reluctance to speak in English leads to minimal interaction, which directly impacts their learning progress. Teachers

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struggle to create an environment where students feel comfortable enough to practice and develop their language skills.

Additionally, students exhibit varying levels of learning capabilities, with some being quick learners and others struggling to grasp new concepts. Sofyan, Widyantoro, and Adoma (2023) explains that this diversity in learning abilities poses a challenge for instructors, who must cater to the needs of each individual student. Balancing the pace of instruction to accommodate both fast and slow learners often proves difficult, requiring teachers to adopt personalized strategies that can address these disparities without compromising the overall classroom dynamic.

In private schools, various teaching strategies are employed to enhance spoken English skills, with the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) being one of the primary approaches. Introduced in the 16th century to teach Latin and Greek, GTM has been adapted to teach English. Sadegi and Maddahian (2018) notes that this method helps students understand basic grammar, which is essential for learning English. However, it is often criticized for its limited effectiveness in developing speaking skills, as the majority of activities focus on writing and translation exercises. While GTM aids in memorizing cognate words, it does little to promote active verbal communication in English, a crucial component of language learning.

On the other hand, the Direct Method (DM) is increasingly favored for teaching spoken English, as it encourages students to communicate directly in English, without relying on translation. According to Griffiths and Parr (2001), the Direct Method has proven to be more effective in enhancing speaking skills compared to GTM. This approach incorporates interactive techniques based on speaking loudly, drawing maps, conversation practice and exercises. By fostering an English-only environment, the Direct Method helps build students' confidence and fluency in speaking. While both GTM and DM are widely used in private schools, the overall effectiveness of each method depends on the teaching context and the students' needs. The challenge for teachers in both government and private schools is to determine the most suitable pedagogical approaches that can address the unique learning barriers in district Karak.

Problem Statement

Students in district Karak face several challenges in learning English, which significantly impact their language development. One of the major issues is student dependence, as many rely on teachers for answers, hindering their ability to learn independently (Ahmad et al., 2020). Additionally, the dominance of their first language, such as Urdu, limits the use of English in classroom communication, further obstructing language acquisition. In rural areas, low participation and confidence levels among students negatively affect their engagement in English language activities, as observed by Coşkun (2022). Furthermore, students' diverse learning abilities create challenges for teachers in balancing the needs of both fast and slow learners (Sofyan et al., 2023). While teaching methods like the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) are effective for grammar understanding, they fail to develop speaking skills. In contrast, the Direct Method, which encourages direct communication in English, has proven to be more effective in improving spoken language proficiency (Griffiths & Parr, 2001).

Literature Review

Peña Maldonado (2020) has revealed several ways instructors improve students' speaking skills. Role play, speeches, and discussions are common activities; however, discussion is considered one of the most effective for teaching English speaking skills. In this activity, a student is given a

topic from a videotape, listening passage, or reading, then discusses it with peers and presents a solution. Students are more motivated when given topics of personal interest.

Instructors also use the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) while instructing students in the English language. This approach is used for fast outcomes in English language learning and helping techniques in memorization of vocabulary and dialogue memorization (Rashid & Islam, 2020). In contrast to ALM, many educators also rely on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) when teaching English. This teaching method is widely recognized and improves students' communicative proficiency in the English language classroom. The teachers employ linguistic systems efficiently and responsibly for the school students. Qasserras (2023) notes that researchers have also constructed other aspects of communication abilities.

Pronunciation activity is largely used by private school teachers as compared to public school teachers. According to Malik, Ahsan, and Sarwar (2025) that teachers in private schools are using pronunciation activity as compared to fifteen percent in the public sector. The instructors at private schools apply transformational drill to teach English language grammar to their students. Grammar gaming is often used by language educators to instruct primary-level students in their learning. Role play activities are regarded as an efficient means of enhancing pupils' verbal abilities (Rogers, 2017).

Methodology

The research design divided the methodology into two phases. This qualitative study addressed two main research questions: (1) What hurdles do teachers face in teaching the English language in private and government schools of the district Karak? (2) How successful is social interaction theory in teaching the English language in private versus government schools of the district Karak? The study population comprised private and government middle schools in Karak, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Sample and Sampling Strategy

Purposeful sampling was used for qualitative data collection. Respondents had main experiences with the central issue. Teddlie and Yu (2007) noted that purposive sampling is suitable in qualitative research. Seventeen interviews were conducted with teachers from the mentioned schools in the district of Karak. These interviews explored teachers' experiences and the hurdles in acquiring English.

Data Collection Tools

Open-ended instruments were used to collect qualitative data. The main tool, the interview guide, was considered the most appropriate for collecting this type of data.

Assessment tools

For qualitative data analysis, the researcher used description and thematic text analysis. Codes and categories were used to present descriptions with real verbatim.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics is important in social research. During the study, the researcher followed ethical protocols throughout, beginning with obtaining informed consent after clearly explaining the purpose of the research. Anonymity of respondents, documents, and recordings was maintained, and pseudonyms were used throughout the report.

Qualitative Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section is crucial to the study. The study employed a theoretical framework grounded in relevant literature. Its central aim was to identify challenges teachers encounter when teaching

English and difficulties students face in learning English in private and government schools. These challenges were analyzed separately with corresponding sub-themes and emergent themes. The study utilized thematic analysis on data collected from 17 participants. Participants were encouraged to be candid in sharing information. The researcher also asked follow-up questions when responses lacked detail. This approach facilitated the collection of substantial data, ensuring depth and rigor. Collecting more descriptive information enabled deeper insight into the perspectives and thought processes of the interviewees (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023). A standardized thematic analysis procedure was applied. During coding, several themes and sub-themes emerged. Most themes appeared across the majority of interviews.

Table 1

Master, Sub-ordinate and Emergent Themes

Super-ordinate Themes	Sub-ordinate Themes	Emergent Themes
Improving Speaking Skills	Interactive activities: Learner acquire language	Interactive activities increase
		Freedom of speech is achieved
	Interactive activities play the role of a facilitator	Facilitation for students in school
	Two type of communications	verbal and other is nonverbal communication
Spoken English Teaching Strategies	Self-expression chances given to students	Acting and role-playing activity
Communication Language Teaching	CLT is effective for language learning	Assists the learners of English
		Enhancing English language of students
Effective Activities to develop communicative proficiency	Deliver lecture in second language not first language	encourage to initiate conversation in class
Interpersonal Skills	Interaction with other individuals	communicative language teaching method
Recommendation for developing interpersonal communication skills	Prefer interpersonal communicative skills	proper training for new and old teachers

Description of Themes

The above table discusses all themes in proper sequence. These themes are transcribed for richer details. With the help of these rich details, we were able to know each respondent's viewpoint on particular questions.

Brief Description of Respondents

These interviews were arranged in the private and government middle schools of the district Karak. Most of the members were 25-55 years old. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers regarding hurdles faced by them in teaching English pedagogy. Occupationally, they were all teachers of government and private middle schools. To further elaborate on the research, some important questions asked by teachers are mentioned below:

Question 1: To what extent you as a teachers improve English language speaking skills of students in the classroom?

Question 2: In your opinion, are spoken English teaching strategies good for classroom?

Question 3: What is your perception of communicative language teaching (CLT)?

Question 4: Which activities do you find most effective for developing communicative proficiency?

Question 5: Is interaction practice play a good role in students English language learning?

Question 6: What recommendations do you have for developing interpersonal communication?

Improving Speaking Skills

Respondent 1 (Naseem) said that interactive activities increase communication a lot because the right is given to students to speak without fear. When they are given the freedom to speak, a massive result will be achieved. His real verbatim is as follows...

"Hello students! I hope that you are all fine. Please repeat this sentence with each other".
(Naseem)

Respondent 3 (Afzal) said that interactive activities help students develop communication skills with their classmates and increase their potential for speaking English in class.

"I understand that confidence-building among students is due to interactive activities in this school. We groom our students for real-world challenges because English understands one problem, which can be improved with interactive activities". (Afzal)

Respondent 14 (Fazil) insisted that students get better knowledge through interaction, and she described that students have more chances to learn from interactive activities.

"I personally observed students during interactive activities, and they feel very productive when I am interacting with students". (Fazil)

Respondent 5 (Nowsheen) claimed that interactive activities are more beneficial for students in class. Respondent 2 (Waqas) responded that interactive activities, led by teachers, involve students in instruction and improve their learning process. *"I think teacher-student interaction and other side student-student interaction, as well as hands-on demonstrations and exercises, are very necessary. Personally, I am doing well in the class, and I don't know other teachers"* (Waqas)

Respondent 16 (Maaz) stated that encouraging students in class and make them active member of the class is also interactive activity. She made some suggestions that interactive activities also increase students' own thinking, students' brains are used, which further enables them for long-term memory retention. He used really verbatim...

"These interactive activities will not just improve students' knowledge, but they will also put interest in gaining knowledge, and on the other hand, allow students to express their freedom of expression". (Maaz)

Respondent 17 (Sir Nadir) said that students learn through their active participation in the attainment of knowledge. It is also an interactive activity that gathers information from them and then mentions their right and wrong answers. This is the process of solving problems in English sentences.

Verbal and Non-verbal Communication

We all know that there are two types of communication, one is verbal and other is nonverbal communication. Speaking is included in the verbal type. Whenever we want to communicate our ideas to the opposite person, we need language to convey, and language is always spoken. So speaking is yet again helping a lot in this regard. (Sir Nadir)

Spoken English Teaching Strategies

Respondent 1 (Naseem) replied that spoken English teaching strategies increase the self-expression of the students. For example, acting and role-playing activities are very helpful for students. Her real verbatim as follows...

"I am Naseem. "I believe that spoken English teaching strategies are good for the self-expression of the students. Sometimes, I indulge myself with students and play their role."

Such as, Respondent 1 (Naseem) and Respondent 3 (Afzal) said that spoken English teaching strategies develop interaction skills among the students. Sometimes, teachers present a personal essay and story. Sometimes interviews are conducted with the students. Respondent 14 (Fazil) insisted that teachers show their intelligence and invoke the talent of learning in them.

Respondent 5, Nowsheen; Respondent 2, Waqas; Respondent 6, Maaz; and Respondent 7, Sir Nadir, all stated that spoken English teaching strategies are very necessary because they increase participation of students and teachers in the classroom. Students are able to share their problems of understanding and suggest some easy vocabulary for spoken English. On the other hand, teachers solve their problems.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Respondent 1, Naseem, said that CLT is always helpful when it comes to effective communication. Respondent 3, Afzal, replied that CLT is very important for students and is the best method often used for student speaking. Respondent 4, Fiza, insisted that communicative language teaching is necessary for English but not for Urdu because Urdu is known to every Pakistani student. Furthermore, Respondent 5, Nowsheen; Respondent 2, Waqas; Respondent 6, Maaz; and Respondent 7, Sir Nadir, communicated that CLT is used in their schools and that they are trained by the school administration. They are fully trying to use CLT in the classroom during lecture delivery.

Effective Activities to Develop Communicative Proficiency

Respondent 7, Sir Nadir, communicated that students' communication skills develop when they are more self-confident. This self-confidence comes with role-play and other activities that make them confident. Respondent 6 (Maaz) described that reading aloud is a good activity because it involves good listening among native speakers and is a dialogue activity used to increase students' speaking.

Respondent 2, Waqas, said that students should be encouraged to initiate conversation. Secondly, modeling active listening and reflection is very necessary to develop communicative proficiency among students. Respondent 5 (Nowsheen) showed that children listen very carefully and they feel listening is a very easy way. Teacher should use repeating of the sentence and then ask a relevant follow-up question from the student it is also a way of improving communication efficiency.

Respondent 1 (Naseem) said that I do not about how to develop communicative efficiency. Respondent 3, Afzal, claimed that repetition of sentences is very necessary for students in class. Similarly, Respondent 14, Fazil, gave a similar response but added that she received training about effective ways of communication and is applying it.

Commendation for developing interpersonal communication skills (ICS)

Respondent 10 (Tahir-10) said that the 21st century is going on, and the school system is changing fast day by day. Interpersonal communication skills are very necessary for teachers.

"I am Fazil. "I believe that we must pay heed to developing our interpersonal communication skills so that we can cope with the world, and our students will be more practical." "(Respondent 14, Fazil) and Respondent 1 (Naseem) recommended that we prefer ICS and trains our new and old teachers for better teaching practice. With great interpersonal communication of teacher's student speaking skills would develop."

Respondent 5, Affan, delivered that as a teacher, everyone improves understanding of students and should listen to them more. Affan also recommended that non-verbal communication should be adopted by teachers in school. Respondent 3, Afzal, claimed that an interpersonal communication seminar should be launched in the school for improving teachers' abilities. Similarly, Afzal added that teachers should be practical in interpersonal communication with students. Respondent 6, Maaz, said that as a teacher, one should have a full grip on communication skills. As the head of the school, Maaz tries to communicate with students in a better way. Maaz believes that the word of a teacher is very important-if he or she communicates well, the lesson will be memorable for the students. Respondent 2, Waqas, stated that she does not give any recommendations. Similarly, Respondent 17, Sir Nadir, has also replied the same.

Pashtun students' hurdles in pronunciation

Analysis of the Pashtun students at the middle school level, and the difficulty in pronunciation due to the poor concept of the role of English vowels in pronunciation.

Table 2

Pashtun students' hurdles in pronunciation (N=17)

Vowel	Word	Pashtun pronunciation
/l/	Mountain	/maʊnte:n/
/i:/	Immediate	/imidiət/
/eə/	Parents	/pærənts/
/ə/	Police	/pɔ:li:s/
/æ/	Natural	/ne:ʃrəl /,

The target pupils consistently make mistakes while pronouncing the /l/ vowel in English. When they want to pronounce certain vowels instead of /l/, they utilise the Pashto sound /e:/ or the RP sound /e/. The words 'Mountain', 'Women,' 'Enough,' 'Glitter,' and 'Except' are all pronounced differently by them.

/i:/ The /l/ sound in the word instant becomes /imidiət/ due to the long vowel. Pronounced as /Kri:ʃə/, /evil/, /disaiv/, and /dʒeniəs/, respectively, are the words creature, evil, deceive, and genius. The pupils then uttered the words using their spellings. They have no idea how to pronounce vowels properly.

Some of the target pupils have made mistakes pronouncing the diphthong /ə/. This is spoken with a /r/ sound, which is not used in British English. The way they say "parents" is /paerənts/. The correct pronunciation of aeroplane is /rəple:n/, dear is /deər/, scarce is /Skeərs/, and bare is /Beər/. For Pashto learners, Schwa sound is another obstacle. L1 has an impact on the creation of this sound. The words "Police" sound like /pɔ:li:s/ when spoken. A balloon is pronounced as /bælΛ:n/, essential as /krΛ:Həl/, agree as /ægri/, and table as /te:bΛ/. * /æ/ The pupils have difficulties due to the noise. In the words that were chosen, the sounds /e:/, /e/, and /a:/ take its place. Natural, Photostat, and Platform are pronounced as /ne:ʃrəl /, /fɔ:tɔ:ste:t /, and /Ple:tfam/, respectively, by the students using the Saraiki phoneme.

Table 3

Pashtun students' hurdles in pronunciation (N=17)

Vowel	Word	Pashtun pronunciation
/ʊ/	Cuckoo	/kʌkʊ/
/ɑ:/	Heart	/hʌrt/
/ɔ:/	Normal	/nɑ:rməl/
/ʊ:/	Truth	/trʊθ/
/ɜ:/	Search	/sʌrtʃ/

The /ʌ/ sound may be confusing for pupils when it comes to long vowels, as they often mistakenly believe that the 'oo' letters are utilised for these vowels, which is not the case. Instead of this sound, the pupils use the sounds /ʌ:/ and /b/. The pronunciation of the terms Brooklet, wool, and soot is incorrect since it uses the sound /ʌ:/. Words like "bʊsəm" and "kʌkʊ" are pronounced as "bʊsəm" and "kʌkʊ," respectively.

The /r/ sound is not produced in British English when it follows a vowel sound, as in the sound /ɑ:/. Despite the fact that the sound /r/ is silent in all of these words, the students speak them as written. For example, spark is pronounced as /spa:rk/, martyr as /mertər/, heart as /hʌrt/, clerk as /klʌrk/, and laugh as /lʌf/.

For Pakistanis, the sound /ɔ:/ is very perplexing. The pupils managed to pronounce "normal," "orbit," and "sword" as /nɑ:rməl/, /ɑ:rbit/, and /Rrbit/, respectively.

The sound /ʌ:/ is challenging for students. The sound /ʊi/ is pronounced as /rʌɪn/ in the word ruin, /trʌʔ/ in truth, /aʊ/ in wound, /fljʌ:/ in flew, and /θ/ in tomb. They take cues from the words spoken around them and try to mimic them.

Because of the effect of Urdu and Saraiki languages, all of the evaluated kids pronounce the long vowel sound incorrectly in the chosen words. This is because in Pakistan, /ɜ:/ is substituted with /ʌr/. The pupils use vowels while pronouncing the sound /r/. Pronounced as /firm/, /fjɪr/, /sʌrtʃ/, /pʌrpəs/, and /mʌrdʒ/, respectively, are the words chirp, firm, search, purpose, and merge. The spellings bring these words to life.

Table 4

Pashtun students' hurdles in pronunciation (N=17)

Vowel	Word	Pashtun pronunciation
/ʌ/	Dozen	/dɔ:zʌn/
/b/	cough	/kʌf/
	Sweat	/swi:t/
/e/		
/eɪ/	Data	de:tə/
/iə/	Fierce	/fi:ərs/

In the words that were chosen, the vowel sound is substituted by the sound /ʌ/. The sound in the word "Dozen" is pronounced as /dɔ:zʌn/ by the participants. Southern as /sʌlðən/, Flourish as /flɔ:rɪʃ/, and Bulk as /bulk/. The absence of direction from educators causes them to mispronounce words.

The pupils also have issues with the sound /b/. Vowel sounds vary in each word that makes this sound. These chosen words use the sounds /ʌ /, /ɔ:/, /æ /, and /ɑ:/: donkey (pronounced /dʌŋki/), cough (pronounced /kɒf/), photographer (pronounced fɔ:tɔ:grɑ:fə/), wander (pronounced /wændə/), and because (pronounced /bɪkɑ:z/). The kids pick up these societal expressions and try to mimic them.

The pupils have chosen words that have the /e/ sound spoken incorrectly. Instead of /e/, they substitute /i:/, /ʌ /, /e:/, and /æ / sounds. The pronunciation of the words "sweat," "bury," "breakfast," and "preface" is /swi:t/, /bʌri/, and /pri:fe:s/, respectively. Joyful pronounced /mæri/. The right way to pronounce these words eludes them.

For Pashtun pupils, the diphthong /eɪ/ might be difficult. They substitute the vowel sound /e:/ for this diphthong. Every single one of the pupils has spoken this sound wrong in the words that were chosen. The /ɑ:/ sound is used incorrectly because it is similar to the word 'Bath,' which is itself mispronounced. The sounds /de:ndʒə/, /de:tə/, /e:prɪl/, and /le:tə/ are incorrect pronunciations of the words Danger, Data, April, and Later. "April" is pronounced as /ʌpre:l/ by certain pupils. People from Pakistan with advanced degrees often replace /eɪ/ with /e:/.

/iə/ Although most students correctly pronounce the diphthong as /r/ in the words they've chosen, a small number of students pronounce it as /eə/ with /r/. Pronounced as /heər/, 'Here', 'Beard', 'Fierce', 'Mere', and 'Inferior' are all sounds in their own unique way.

Conclusion

The major objective of this study was to explore the challenges and pedagogical approaches of English language teachers in government and private schools. In addition, teachers face challenges during their teaching in the English language: government schoolteachers faced higher issues in the acquisition of the English language than private school teachers. Furthermore, spoken English teaching strategies are made for students, in which students share their lesson complexity with their teachers, and the teachers solve their students' English language lesson problems. In a nutshell, interaction among teachers and students increases spoken English skills because students do not feel any hesitation when they speak with each other. Similarly, English language interaction is helpful for students' communication in the classroom. The role of English language interaction among students is more productive in the school and very important for the teachers as well.

Research Limitation and Recommendations

The teachers have a limited understanding of research and were unsure how to answer the six interview questions. In this case, the researcher helped them translate the statements and conduct the interviews, which may have introduced bias into the research.

Another important limitation of the study is that only teachers were interviewed; no other staff or students participated.

It is recommended that teachers use English more often with their middle school students in class.

Teachers are also advised to prioritize understanding students' challenges with English communication in the classroom.

Future Direction

However, the cause of this problem is unclear. Future research should explore how social interaction between teachers and students affects English language learning in schools.

The main finding of the study is that government school students encounter significantly more hurdles in acquiring English language skills compared to private school students.

Author Contributions:

The Conception and design of the paper is done by Muhammad Owais. Corresponding Author
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