

## **Exploration Of Problems In Acquisition Of Second Language Proficiency In District Gujrat**

**Sehrish Mushtaq<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Muhammad Tanveer Afzal\*<sup>2</sup>, Nazia Shehzadi<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Tooba Saleem<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D Scholar National University of Modern Languages H-9, Islamabad.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Science Education Faculty of Education Allama Iqbal Open University H-8, Islamabad Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup>Ph.D Scholar Allama Iqbal Open University H-8, Islamabad Pakistan.

<sup>4</sup>Department of Secondary Teacher Education Faculty of Education Allama Iqbal Open University H-8, Islamabad Pakistan.

---

### **ABSTRACT**

Performance in English by students has persistently been poor. The major purpose of the study was to explore the problems in acquisition of second language proficiency in District Gujrat and to suggest remedial measures to overcome these problems. The study was descriptive in nature and survey was conducted. The population of the study comprised of all secondary school students and teachers in district Gujrat. Thirteen hundred students were randomly selected from by applying systematic sampling technique. One hundred and thirty English teachers were selected by using simple random sampling technique for the purpose of data collection. Two types of questionnaires were developed (one for secondary school English teachers and one for students of 10<sup>th</sup> class) to collect the data. The questionnaires were distributed personally among the one hundred and thirty English teachers and thirteen hundred students of 10<sup>th</sup> class. The data obtained were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted in the light of the objectives of the study. To analyze and interpret data, mean, percentages and graphs were used. On the basis of the findings, a model was proposed as a remedial strategy. The major findings of the study were that the secondary level students found learning difficult words, complex sentences, lengthy courses, uninteresting course material and its little applicability to real life situation. The teachers were not sufficiently qualified and had not adequate knowledge about the methodology of teaching English. The classes were overcrowded and disappointingly lacked audio visual aids for teaching English. It was found that the habit of copying bookish material, singular attention to spoon feeding and their lack self reading, observing basic skills of language

learning, slavish focus on exam-oriented activities was a great hindrance in achieving their desired goal.

**Keywords:** Learning English, Teaching English, Problems in teaching and learning, remedial measures

### **Introduction**

Second language acquisition (SLA) refers to learning languages in addition to the native tongue. Second language acquisition (SLA) particularly that of English has been the focus in all non-English speaking countries, like Pakistan. Extensive work has focused on learning theories and methodologies rather than contextual and other factors which effect the language development. Particularly in Pakistan most of students feel anxiety even during the teaching learning process, may be due to fear created by the society or due to higher learning demands of teachers. Recognizing the indispensable need of second language, English has got compulsory place in the syllabus in Pakistan. But students are facing severe problems in acquisition of English language even after extraordinary efforts by the teachers. The results of the boards and the examination bodies reflect this reality. The failure rate of the students is increasing which is discreditable. The failure in this subject means the failure in the public examinations. The concerns about the situation can be observed by all the stakeholders. The recent study is an attempt to probe into the alarming situation that has been conducted in the male schools of public sector of District Gujrat Pakistan. This study deeply looks into the problems faced by secondary level students in learning English. While addressing the problems in SLA many factors pertaining to the learner on the one hand and the English curriculum content and teachers' role on the other has been explored in this research.

### **Literature Review**

English has undoubtedly become a very important language to be learnt in present day. Knowledge in English earns us fame and reputation in our society and we can have a good job owing to being well versed in English. In spite of the aforementioned fact our visits to the higher secondary level school are dismal experiences in respect of teaching and learning English. The student at secondary level does not possess the knowledge of English which is supposed to have because of the educational standard. The most important factors responsible for student's lack of knowledge in English maybe absence of educational atmosphere, students' perception about English, pedagogy and content of curriculum. A study conducted by Ahmad (2011) dealing with the nature of difficulties in Learning English by Students at Secondary School Level in Pakistan has highlighted the similar kind of facts, and suggested a rigorous approach to improve the teaching learning situation. Many other attempts have been made by the provincial governments like the training of teachers, content revision, but still the situation is alarming.

Ahmad (2011) examined the problems of 645 secondary school students of both Federal and provincial setups. Eight schools from each setup were selected for the purpose of data collection. The data was collected thorough test and analyzed to answer the

questions raised by the researcher, it was found that students in provincial government schools are not that lucky as those at federal government schools in respect of the difficulties they face in learning English. Other similar kind of attempt was made by Akram and Qureshi (2012) particularly addressing the Problems in Learning and teaching English Pronunciation in Pakistan. Teachers' comments and opinion were gathered using survey as method of research. In this regard a questionnaire was developed by the researchers to address the problems in pronunciation. Data collected were analyzed that generated results leading to recommendation that there is the requirement of special training of teachers in sound recognition and the problems in producing and expressing these sounds. It was also emphasized at the end that a teacher's knowledge of the student's weakness and strength is highly required in teaching them English pronunciation. In this respect a teacher has to prove himself to be a role model for students. A study in respect of the problems in Speaking English with L2 learners of Rural Areas School of Pakistan was conducted by Bilal and others (2013). To pinpoint the problem a questionnaire was formulated. The data they collected from the both male and female students belonging to higher secondary level schools is evidence of the student having difficulty in Speaking skill. A student's eleven years continuous study at school does not do him/her any good in Pakistan. The students have little confidence in speaking English during informal talk. The only thing they do is to cram the critical appreciation of the given writer only to pass the exam. In existing syllabus only, the forms of linguistics are taught with little attention to the development of students' creativity. The study recommended with conviction that there should be a well-planned syllabus taught by well trained teachers providing students a good speaking environment. They recommended overall reforms in teaching of English to overcome the problems of language learning in Pakistan.

Specifically writing skill development need a full attention of the learner along with expertise of the teacher in rhetoric and linguist skills. In case of writing less research has been carried out that highlight the difficulties in teaching and learning of this skill rather it emphasized methodological approach. There are many aspects of writing which cannot be dispensed with at any cost and these are the topic determination, Editing, revising etc. Eclectic approach is considered to be more viable than genre approach in respect of providing an individual with an opportunity to give his creativity a full display. Because English has many irregularities in itself it becomes trying for an individual learning it as second language learner. In learning a foreign language our first language affects adversely. Grammar is unavoidably important. However, with little skill in grammar and the correct use of vocabulary takes its toll on the learners. Farooq et.al. (2012) made a thorough study regarding Opinion of Second Language Learners about Writing Difficulties in English Language in Lahore. There were 24 male students from one group of two colleges and 121 female students from another group of two colleges. The universal method of providing questionnaires to the students was used. In this process it came out that the aspects of language in which students faced problems were spelling, vocabulary, and correct use of grammar. In addition to this it appeared in the study that one of the most important things a teacher should do is to his/her students to realize the difference of syntax between L1 and L2. Teaching grammar using traditional methods with little or almost no attention to

practice are responsible for the nagging problems of students in this respect. Knowledge about applied linguistics is something foreign to the teachers in Pakistan at almost all levels of school education. As a result, students disappointingly become addicted to cramming.

An Explanatory Study of Organizational Problems Faced by Pakistani Student Writers with Learning Difficulties (LD) in EFL writing was carried out by Haider (2014). It was an attempt to highlight the organizational problems. The study employed questionnaire followed by interviews to triangulate the responses to explore the organizational problems of essay writing. The important thing that came up in the study was that students lacked confidence and motivations in dealing with the problems of writing anxiety. Instead of being motivated the students were made to learn by rote learning method and in case of arousing an skill they were kept intact to reproduce. Proper arrangement of thoughts in writing require skill in semantics, clarity. In this respect skill classes of Pakistani schools are teacher based not student based i.e., a teacher is active in the class instead of the students. Students fail to comprehend the teachers' words in large classes owing to the distance between them and the teacher. Apart from this there are other socioeconomic problems are also responsible for the problems faced by students in their learning process. One example of them is a child's fear of not living up to their parents' expectations and their apprehensions about the punishment in case of expanding their needs.

The above said problems and difficulties of the students affect students academically as well as well as professionally. A study was conducted concerning the English learning difficulties in rural areas of Sargodha. For research purpose sixty students aging between 13 and 18 years were selected. The analysis was carried out by providing them questionnaires and the data about the problems which exercise their effect in learning English in rural areas. In order to look into matter the questionnaires were handed over to the students. At the end of the day, it was found that suitable environment singularly made learning possible. It was concluded that in case of the parents' encouragement and support the students felt an urge to learn English.

The work at analyzing the challenges lying in teaching and learning of English at secondary level schools by Teenovo (2011) highlighted many aspects that relate to our context of teaching and learning English also. For this purpose, eleven English teachers comprising seven male and four female coupled with seventy students (forty male and thirty female) were selected as sample of the study. With them four male and two female experts were selected. He involved teachers and students in focus group discussion and administered questionnaires and experts were interviewed. The study concluded that teachers had no proper training in teaching English. It also revealed that proper facilities were not provided and curriculum was not up to the needs of the students. According to research, these reasons create flaws in teaching and learning process.

This entire context of teaching and learning English as second language led us to rethink and reform our scenario of English teaching. therefore, the present study is an attempt to explore the problems in acquisition of second language.

## **The Problem**

The students at Secondary level are facing many problems in acquisition of second language proficiency. They desire to achieve competency in language and they try hard; but they cannot remove these hurdles in way of their progress. In spite of so much effort, the result in learning this subject is dismay. The failure in this subject means failure in whole and all subjects at Secondary level. In spite of the considerable and immense efforts for the teaching of English, the results are deplorable. The study was aimed to explore the problems in acquisition of second language proficiency in District Gujrat and to suggest remedial measures to overcome these problems. This study will be helpful for the learners to look into their odds and problems in its way of learning; and then furthermore they would be motivated to study English with zeal and enthusiasm.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives.

- i. To find out the problems faced by the students in acquisition of second language at secondary level.
- ii. To analyze the role of teachers in teaching English subject at secondary level.
- iii. To study the difficulties in English curriculum content taught at secondary level.

### **Research Questions**

The researchers formulated the research questions as under.

- i. Why the students find problems in acquiring second language that is English?
- ii. What is the role of English teachers in the acquisition of second language at secondary level?
- iii. What are the difficulties in English curriculum contents taught at secondary level?

### **Research Design**

In this study investigators have employed descriptive survey method to explore the problems in acquisition of second language proficiency at secondary level in District Gujrat. The survey method was applied to take the views of teachers and students. The researchers designed two questionnaires one for English teachers and one for students of secondary 10<sup>th</sup> grade explore the problems in acquisition of second language proficiency at secondary level in District Gujrat.

### **Population and Sample of the Study**

The population of this study was all the secondary school students and their teachers teaching English as a subject in public schools in District Gujrat, Pakistan. whereas the sample of the study consisted of 1300 students and 130 English teachers selected from the public schools in the District Gujrat using the simple random sampling technique. The first stage involved the random selection of 65 public boys' schools. The next stage involved the random selection of ten students per teacher from each of the selected boys' schools. Two

teachers from each school were selected on the basis of availability on the day of visit. In all, thirteen hundred students and one thirty English teachers were used for the study.

### **Research Instruments**

To carry out the research, the researchers used Teachers' Questionnaire on the Teaching of English language and students Questionnaire on the learning of second language so as to have a balanced result. The constructs were identified through literature review, initial pool of items was developed by the researchers which then were formulated to adjust in 5-point Likert scale type of Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). Each respondent was made to tick the appropriate option.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instruments**

To establish and assure the construct validity of the instruments table of specification for the identified constructs were developed and followed. For face validity instruments were established by using expert opinion. Four experts of different universities responded and to both tools. Having corrected all ambiguities in the instruments, these were pilot tested to establish the reliability. The instruments were administered to 50 students and 20 English teachers of public schools in Tehsil Kharian outside the sample used for the study. After piloting data were entered in SPSS and the Alpha values calculated showed the evidences of the reliability. The instruments yielded a co-efficient alpha 0.794 for Students' Questionnaire and 0.775 of Teachers' Questionnaire and was therefore adjudged to be reliable for the study.

### **Administration of the Instruments**

For data collection from the respondents through the above-mentioned instruments, the researchers visited sixty-five (65) sampled schools and administered the questionnaires to the sample students (who have passed the 9<sup>th</sup> class examination from their Board) and their teachers who taught them at 9<sup>th</sup> class. The process of filling up the questionnaires was thoroughly highlighted by the researchers before the respondents. All the questionnaires were distributed personally among 1300 students and 130 teachers of the sampled schools. They were requested to complete and return it as soon as possible.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected for the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency and ranks. Results were used to develop a model, findings and conclusions.

### **Findings of the Study**

The study was an attempt to explore the problems in proficiency of second language learning and it has been brought to light that there are problems in learning English. Through the data collected, it has been revealed that the students are facing problem in learning English. The study conducted shows that all teachers and students have reported that students are facing problems in learning English. Major findings of the study are ranked

according to the percentage in descending order. The analysis was performed as per constructs identified from the literature for both the students and the teachers data. The construct wise analysis is given as under.

The content of the English was the first construct placed in the questionnaires of the students and teachers. The data collected was analyzed by using percentage and ranks is given in table below.

**Table No. 1: Common Ranking of the students and teachers' responses about content of English**

S. No	Statements	Percentage	Ranking
1	Content is not compatible with the local culture	81.0 %	1
2	Frequent use of difficult vocabulary	77.7 %	2
3	Complicated sentences in textbook	73.0 %	3
4	Translation of content is focused	67.7 %	4
5	Focus on important content only	66.1 %	5
6	Uninteresting Course Material	63.0 %	6
7	Lengthy syllabus	58.7 %	7

The table indicates that 81% of the responding students and teachers were agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that content provided is not aligned with local culture, whereas its alignment with the culture may help to enhance understanding level of the students. Similarly, vocabulary is considered difficult by the students and teachers as it is ranked second most serious problem in learning of English as second language. Complicated sentences, focus on translation and important of content were ranked as 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> most important problem in the content area.

Pedagogy in English as second language was the second construct placed in the questionnaires. The data collected was analyzed by using percentage and ranks is given in table 2.

**Table No. 2: Common Ranking of the students and teachers' responses about Pedagogy of English**

S.No.	Statements	Percentage	Ranking
1	Use of GTM	80.8 %	1
2	Difficulty in understanding English as a foreign language	80.4 %	2
3	Priority to marks instead of actual proficiency	77.0%	3
4	Bunk of classes by students	72.2 %	4

5	Posing English as a difficult subject	70.0 %	5
6	Priority to completion of syllabus	68.5%	6
7	Conventional teaching methods	67.7%	7
8	Lack of productive activity	58.2 %	8
9	Substandard assessments	57.7%	9
10	Reluctance of teachers to respond to questions of students	51.4 %	10
11	Dull and uninteresting class activities	51.1%	11

The table 02 highlights that 81% of the respondents were agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that teacher use Grammar Translation Method, which may cause hindrance in understanding of English language. Whereas understanding, focus on marks and Bunk of classes are ranked 2nd, 3rd and 4th in the list of pedagogical problems in the views of both teachers and students. Dull and uninteresting activities although ranked low but is considered an important factor in pedagogy.

Resources and Aids for Teaching of English as second language was the third construct placed in questionnaires for teachers and students. The data collected was analyzed by using percentage and ranks is given in table 3.

**Table No. 3: Common Ranking of the Teachers and students' responses about Resources and Aids of Teaching English**

S.No.	Statements	Percentage	Ranking
1	Non existence of language lab	100 %	1
2	Lack of refresher courses	76.2 %	2
3	Lack of opportunities for local area students	65.7 %	3
4	Lack of linguistics teacher	61.7 %	4
5	Habit of copying bookish material	51.1 %	5
6	Use of guide books by teachers	46.0 %	6

The table 3 describes nonexistence of language lab in all schools of Gujrat lack of teachers training, lack of opportunities for students for participation were ranked as 2nd and third problems. Whereas teachers use of guide book as resource material also was considered a problem by both teachers and students.

Perception about English as second language was the fourth construct in questionnaires. The data collected was analyzed by using percentage and ranks is given in table 04.

**Table No. 4: Common Ranking of the students and teachers' perception about English Subject**



S.No.	Statements	Percentage	Ranking
1	Focus on exam-oriented activities	71.4 %	1
2	Memorizing of important content only	66.0 %	2
3	Students require extra coaching	59.4%	3
4	Learning English by cramming	58.7 %	4
5	Negligence in material preparation	52.2 %	5
6	Lack of reading habit	51.7 %	6
7	Lack of attention to learning basic skills like listening and speaking	46.5 %	7
8	Lack of access to real life situation of the native language	38.9 %	8

Table 04 depicts that students' and teachers consider exam as an important factor, memorization, extra coaching and cramming maybe helpful in their views in learning of English. Lack of attention and lack of development of reading habits are perceived as problems in learning of English.

### **Preparation of Model**

The researchers proposed a model for teaching of English as second language that may help to reduce the problems of both teachers and students and may make the acquisition easier. the following stages were followed by the researchers for the model development.

1. Firstly, components for the model were drawn from the findings of this analysis.
2. Secondly, present situation was analyzed thoroughly and it was found that that there are problems in acquisition of proficiency in English
3. Thirdly, these components were discussed with the experts of English subject.

### **Components of Model**

The present study was aimed at exploring the problems in acquisition of second language proficiency. In order to develop a model, the responses of the respondents collected through separate questionnaires were taken into consideration. The model consists of four constructs as identified in the literature and measured through questionnaires.

1. Pedagogy
2. Content
3. Teaching aids/Resources
4. Perception about English

### **Frame work of Developing a Model**

The proposed model is meant for the students of secondary level and English teachers. The development of the model was based on the exploration of problems in acquisition of

second language proficiency and formulation of suggestive measures for the improvement in the situation.

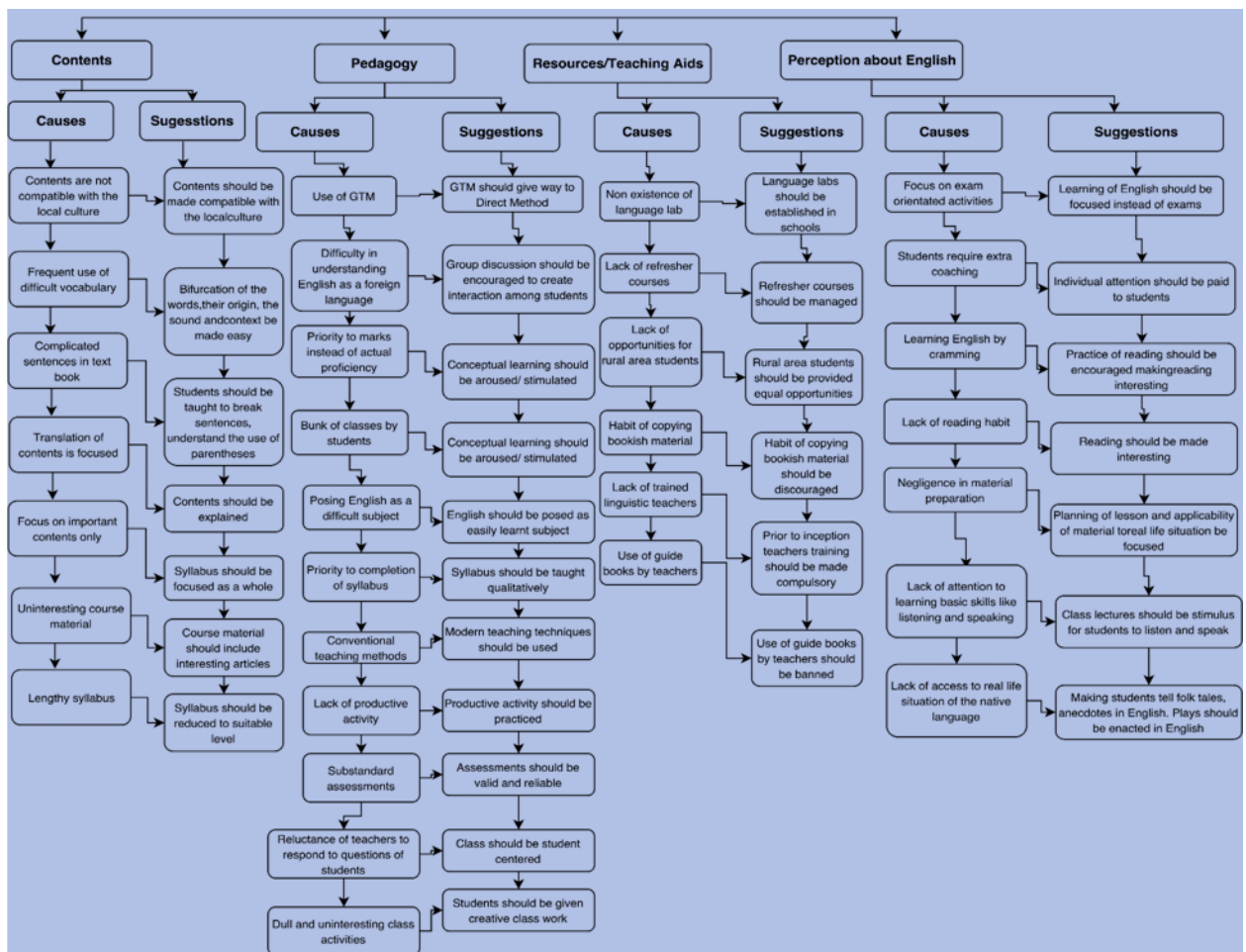
### Objectives

The main objectives of this proposed model are as under;

1. To develop the strong communication skills among students.
2. To contextualize the teaching learning activities and align it with the learning environment.
3. To make students aware of the usefulness of what has been learned in real life situation.
4. To make the teaching more effective and the students will be able to get command over English as second language.

### Pictorial Representation of Model

**Model For Improvement Of proficiency In Acquisition of Second language.**



### Conclusions

Exploration of problems in acquisition of proficiency in second language is a daring venture to expose many issues. The study has come to the conclusion that there are problems in learning English at secondary level male students of the public sector schools in our

country. It is concluded that the secondary level students found learning difficult words, complex sentences, lengthy courses, uninteresting course material and its little applicability to real life situation. The teachers were not sufficiently qualified and had not adequate knowledge about the methodology of teaching English. The classes were overcrowded and disappointingly lacked audio visual aids for teaching English. It was found that the habit of copying bookish material, singular attention to spoon feeding and their lack of self reading, observing basic skills of language learning, slavish focus on exam-oriented activities was a great hindrance in achieving their desired goal. Therefore the researchers proposed a model for teaching of English. The model implementation in the secondary level classes may help to improve the situation. The training of the teachers for the model implementation is prerequisite.

## References

Ahmad, N. Ahmed, S. Bukhari, A. M. & Bukhari, A. T. (2011). The Nature of Difficulties in learning English by the Students at Secondary School Level in Pakistan. *Journal of Education & practice*, 2(1), 18-20.

Akram, M. & Qureshi, H. A. (2012). Problems in Learning and Teaching English Pronunciation in Pakistan. *Int'l Journal of Research in linguistics & Lexicography*. 4(1), 43-48.

Bilal, H. A. Rehman, A. Rashi , C. H. A. Adnan, R. Abbas, M. (2013). Problems in Speaking English with L2 Learners of Rural Area School of Pakistan. *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 24(1), 1222-1228.

Farooq, M. S. Hassan, M. U. Wahid, S. (2012). Opinion of Second Language Learners about Writing Difficulties in English Language. *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, 27(1), 185- 194.

Haider, G. (2014). An Exploratory Study of Organizational Problems Faced by Pakistani Student Writers with Learning Difficulties (LD) in EFL Writing. *International Journals of English and Education*, 3(1), 127-145.

Tariq, A. Bilal, A. Sandhu, M. Iqbal, A. & Hayat, U. (2013). Difficulties in learning English as a second language in Rural areas of Pakistan. *Journal social sciences and humanities*. 4(6). Hassan, T. & Sajid, A. (2013). ICTs in learning: problems faced by Pakistan. *Journal of Research and Reflections in Education*, 7(1), 52-64.

Teevno, R. (2011). Challenges in teaching and learning of English at secondary level class x. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*. 1(2).