

## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES: HIGHLIGHTING IMPORTANT AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

*The perspectives of teachers and students regarding the challenges of learning English among secondary school pupils are compared in this study. The study examines differences in four fundamental language skills—reading, speaking, writing, and listening—using a survey design with a sample of 400 students and 50 teachers. Teachers typically rate difficulties in these areas higher than students, especially for speaking and reading, according to t-test results, which show considerable perception discrepancies. Furthermore, gender disparities among educators show that male and female teachers place different levels of attention on reading challenges. These results highlight how crucial it is to match the viewpoints of teachers and students in order to establish a more productive learning environment. Developing focused skill-support programs, encouraging open communication between educators and students, and implementing gender-sensitive teaching techniques are some of the recommendations. This strategy seeks to close perception gaps and enhance instruction in English language learning environments.*

### INTRODUCTION

English is a highly valued language in Pakistan, where it is used as language of instruction in government offices, business, and higher education. Even though English and Urdu are both recognized as official languages, learners frequently face substantial obstacles, especially in school and college. English proficiency is now a prerequisite for both academic and professional success, making it a vital skill for career advancement. However, a lot of Pakistani students struggle to become proficient in English, which can hurt their academic performance and future employment opportunities. Teachers, who serve as the main facilitators in helping students go through the learning process, frequently notice and resolve these challenges. Developing ways to overcome these obstacles requires an understanding of the

varying viewpoints that teachers and students have about these language acquisition difficulties.

The purpose of this study is to compare the perspectives of educators and learners regarding the challenges encountered by English language learners in Pakistan. Fewer studies have used a dual approach by combining perspectives from teachers and students, even though many have concentrated on student performance or English language teaching methodologies. Combining different points of view enables a more comprehensive understanding of the problem, illuminating particular areas in which students face difficulties as well as instructional strategies that may mitigate or worsen these difficulties.

Macalister and Nation (2020) mentioned that importance for both professional and academic

achievement, English proficiency is becoming more and more necessary. However, a number of factors, including limited exposure to the language outside of the classroom, limited access to high-quality teaching resources, and the difficulty of learning a language that is very different from their mother tongue or the regional languages spoken at home, often cause students, especially those from rural or lower socioeconomic backgrounds, to struggle with learning English. Teachers, on the other hand, struggle to overcome these obstacles to language acquisition because of crammed classrooms, out-of-date curricula, and a lack of opportunities for professional growth.

Reading comprehension, grammar usage, pronunciation, and vocabulary development are some of the main areas where pupils' English language proficiency is lacking. Teachers frequently lament their pupils' poor pronunciation, low vocabulary, and incapacity to understand basic grammar rules, all of which undermine their self-esteem and communication skills. However, the intricacy of the language, the speed at which it is taught, and the absence of real-world application in learning activities sometimes leave pupils feeling overpowered (Avery, Ehrlich, & Goddard, 2014). The English language curricula of public and private schools in Pakistan differ greatly from one another. Public schools, particularly those in rural regions, are frequently limited by a lack of resources and a teacher shortage, whereas private schools frequently provide a more robust and immersive English language environment (Ha & Murray, 2021). Students from diverse origins may have wildly varying levels of English proficiency as a result of this discrepancy in educational quality. Public school teachers and pupils may have different difficulties than those in private schools, and these discrepancies call for more research.

In order to pinpoint crucial areas for improvement, this study aims to investigate how teachers and students perceive the difficulties associated with learning English. This study will advance knowledge of English language learning challenges in Pakistan and offer viable approaches to enhancing language instruction by analyzing the parallels and discrepancies between their points of view.

### Literature review

English has a special place in the curricula of educational institutions such as colleges, universities, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) schools. It is also a widely used language for communication. For students to participate in vital life skills, learning English as a second language is critical. According to Nguyen (2019), pronunciation is one of the biggest problems that language learners encounter. For many EFL students, correctly pronouncing words can be a barrier to efficient communication.

Furthermore, Berry (2021) emphasizes the significance of pronunciation in spoken communication, emphasizing that verbal communication may be significantly impeded and insufficient without appropriate pronunciation. Pronunciation training has seen a discernible increase in interest and attention in recent years. Pronunciation in EFL contexts has been the subject of numerous studies (Alharbi, 2019). Despite the fact that these studies are being carried out, more research in this area is still required in EFL schools throughout Asia.

According to Reed and Levis (2019), language is conceived and spoken in a variety of systems. The articulatory system is a set of speech units that pupils need to be able to pronounce clearly and precisely. These speech components are typically assigned to vocabulary. Students should use the word correctly when speaking. The meaning system that students use to convey meaning through words is called grammar. English language learners must master both tactics because they are interchangeable. If L2 pupils wish to properly communicate their ideas, they must all understand the systems. These linguistic aspects are taken into consideration and should not be disregarded by the majority of language programs that employ English as a foreign language.

EFL is currently mandated for pupils in educational contexts due to its broad appeal. Most kids have poor reading comprehension skills, have trouble pronouncing words correctly, and can't participate in normal conversations in English. Additionally, Alshehri (2020) looked into these problems. He states that "pronunciation is vital for the EFL learners in terms of understanding oral material and pronunciation intelligibility." They

are insecure when interacting with their peers and teachers.

### **English as a Foreign Language (EFL)**

Over the last ten years, researchers have looked into the phonological learning barriers that EFL learners have while pronouncing words correctly. Al-Rubaat & Alshammari (2020) found that EFL learners had trouble correctly pronouncing both the first three and the last three clusters of English consonants. They came to the conclusion that students frequently used methods like reduction, replacement, or deletion to mispronounce these clusters. Increasing students' awareness of the value of pronunciation training is the primary goal of the EFL curriculum, which was introduced at the secondary level with a focus on teaching speaking and listening. The significance of listening to sound systems was emphasized as a means of enhancing pronunciation and communication in English.

This point is further emphasized by Elumalai (2021), who confirmed that pronunciation of English is a sub-skill of speaking modules during a second language learning process. Since it helps students distinguish between good and poor English, exposure to pronunciation is crucial for EFL learners to improve their language proficiency (Abker, 2020). Speech that is intelligible to the average person is one definition of "good" speech. "Bad" speech is defined as speech that is hard for most people to understand. Additionally, (Khaleghi, Batobara, & Saleem, 2020) looked at the pronunciation problem. He said that top-notch training in English phonetics would be provided to adult EFL learners in Saudi Arabia. Following that, the pupils would acquire more accurate pronunciation of the English phonemes.

### **Lack of Students' Interest**

Another issue, according to Kissling (2018), is a lack of student interest. Although improving one's writing abilities can be difficult, it can also be a fun endeavor. However, because there are so many things they must understand in order to generate high-quality work, some kids lose interest in writing. Punctuation, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and sentence structure are some of these components. Incongruent ideas between teachers

and students may have negative effects, but congruence can improve learning outcomes and processes (Ha and Nguyen, 2021).

Therefore, educators must be clear about their own beliefs regarding language learning, learn about their students' beliefs, help them identify and evaluate their own beliefs, and resolve any differences between their own and their students' belief systems (Levis, 2018). Comparatively little research has been done on teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Considering that pronunciation "permeates all spheres of human life, in which the speaker and the hearer work together to produce and understand each other's utterances," it is crucial for effective communication (Marull, & Kumar, 2020). Pronunciation problems prevent English learners from understanding oral communication effectively, even if they have excellent grammar and vocabulary (Shih, & Chang, 2020).

Previous research shown that students thought studying pronunciation was a crucial part of learning English (Sinatra, Heddy, & Lombardi, 2015). Many linguists and scholars who focus on second language acquisition (SLA) claim that speakers of many languages have similar pronunciation issues with English, however the causes vary depending on the language background. Since Pakistani languages are among them, we will examine some of the elements that affect learning a second language (L2) in this section, with a focus on English pronunciation, and attempt to pinpoint the precise causes of these mistakes. Lastly, we will look for effective methods and techniques that could assist students become more proficient at appropriately pronouncing English words (Rotgans, & Schmidt, 2014).

Learners may find it challenging to comprehend written English literature, such as books, articles, and scholarly papers, because of complicated sentence structures, cultural allusions, and new language. Writing in English necessitates proficiency in vocabulary, grammar, and organization. Spelling, punctuation, and properly and succinctly conveying their ideas might be difficult for learners. Understanding cultural quirks and colloquial idioms can be difficult for English language learners, which might hinder their ability

to interact with native speakers. It can be intimidating to learn a new language, and learners may go through phases of irritation, unhappiness, or self-doubt that impede their progress. Effective teaching strategies, regular practice, exposure to the language in a variety of settings, and peer and teacher support and encouragement are frequently needed to overcome these obstacles.

People may run into a number of obstacles when learning English, which could hinder their progress. Particularly in areas with fewer educational resources, access to high-quality learning resources including textbooks, online courses, and language learning applications may be restricted. Learning might be hampered by inadequate teaching strategies or a shortage of trained teachers. Individual student needs may not be met by ineffective education, nor may there be enough opportunities for practice. Limited opportunities for students or language learners to utilize English outside of the classroom can hinder their capacity to practice and reinforce what they have learned in authentic settings. Learners' language development may be hampered by their fear of shame or making mistakes, which keeps them from fully participating in speaking and writing exercises.

### Specific Secondary Students Issues

When learning English, secondary students have certain difficulties that can vary based on their degree of skill, educational background, and learning environment. Some typical issues secondary school students have when studying English. Secondary students frequently struggle with the complexities and challenges of English grammar, such as word order, sentence structure, and verb tenses. It might be difficult to comprehend

and accurately apply grammar rules, which can result in mistakes when speaking and writing. Developing a large vocabulary is essential to communicating well in English. However, learning and remembering new words, particularly ones with complex or abstract meanings, can be challenging for secondary pupils.

In reading, writing, and speaking assignments, a limited vocabulary can impede understanding and communication. If secondary students are not exposed to native speakers or real-world English language contexts, they may struggle with English pronunciation and intonation. Clear communication and comprehension depend on precise pronunciation and intonation, although students may find it difficult to differentiate between identical sounds or create sounds correctly. Research question: How do instructors and students view the English language issues that secondary school pupils experience differently?

### Methodology

To examine the disparities between teachers' and students' impressions of the difficulties secondary school pupils have when studying English, this study used a survey research design. The statistical significance of these disparities across the four language domains—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—was evaluated using a t-test methodology. Four hundred students and fifty teachers participated in the poll, which gathered their opinions on each of these issues. The study also looked at gender differences among teachers and discovered that, in comparison to students, male and female teachers had different perspectives. All things considered; the survey approach successfully found perception gaps that could affect teaching methods. The detail of data analysis and findings is given below:

**Table 1.**

Teachers' and students' perceptions of the reading difficulties that secondary school students have while learning English

| Perception of Respondents | N   | M     | S. D. | p.   |
|---------------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|
| Teachers                  | 50  | 3.750 | .521  | .000 |
| Students                  | 400 | 3.357 | .618  |      |

Teachers' and students' perceptions of the reading challenges faced by secondary school English language learners differ significantly ( $p < 0.000$ ), according to the findings of the Table 1 t-test. Teachers perceive reading hurdles at a mean score of 3.750, while students experience the same obstacles at a mean score of 3.357. This suggests

that teachers place a higher value on reading difficulties than do pupils. The findings highlight the necessity for effective communication and understanding between educators and language learners in order to address language learning concerns, as teachers and students have different perspectives on reading difficulties.

**Table 2.**

Teachers' and students' perceptions of the speaking difficulties that secondary school students have while learning English

| Perception of Respondents | N   | M     | S. D. | p.   |
|---------------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|
| Teachers                  | 50  | 4.205 | .502  | .000 |
| Students                  | 400 | 3.664 | .701  |      |

Table 2 displays the results of a t-test that compared the opinions of teachers and students regarding the speaking challenges faced by secondary school students learning English. The study demonstrates a significant shift in perception ( $p < 0.001$ ). Students give speaking difficulties a mean score of 3.664, while instructors give them a

mean level of 4.205. This suggests that instructors place a higher value on speaking challenges than do students. The findings indicate that teachers and students have different perspectives on speaking barriers, and bridging this divide is essential to effectively addressing language acquisition challenges.

**Table 3.**

Teachers' and students' perceptions of the writing difficulties that secondary school students have while learning English

| Perception of Respondents | N   | M     | S. D. | p.   |
|---------------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|
| Teachers                  | 50  | 3.594 | .550  | .006 |
| Students                  | 400 | 3.317 | .649  |      |

The results of a t-test comparing teachers' and students' perceptions of the difficulties secondary school English language learners have when writing are shown in the table. A statistically significant difference in perception is found in the study ( $p = 0.006$ ). Instructors score writing barriers at 3.594 on a mean scale, while students rate them

at 3.317. This implies that instructors value writing assignments more than students do. The results demonstrate that teachers and students view writing difficulty differently, highlighting the necessity of clear communication and comprehension to get over obstacles to language acquisition.

**Table 4.**

Teachers' and students' perceptions of the listening difficulties that secondary school students have while learning English

| Perception of Respondents | N   | M     | S. D. | p.   |
|---------------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|
| Teachers                  | 50  | 3.875 | .667  | .000 |
| Students                  | 400 | 3.391 | .686  |      |

The findings of a t-test comparing how teachers and students perceive the listening difficulties that secondary school English language learners

encounter are shown. A statistically significant variation in perception is revealed by the study ( $p < 0.001$ ). Instructors assign a mean level of 3.875

to students with hearing issues, whereas students assign a mean score of 3.391. This implies that teachers place a higher priority on listening challenges than do pupils. The results highlight the

significance of comprehending and successfully addressing hearing challenges in language learning environments by demonstrating the disparities in perceptions between teachers and students.

**Table 5.**

Teachers' and students' perceptions of the overall difficulties that secondary school students have while learning English

| Perception of Respondents | N   | M     | S. D. | p.   |
|---------------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|
| Teachers                  | 50  | 3.856 | .404  | .000 |
| Students                  | 400 | 3.427 | .535  |      |

The results of a t-test comparing teachers' and students' perceptions of the general difficulties secondary school pupils have when learning English are shown in the table. A statistically significant variation in perception is revealed by the study ( $p < 0.001$ ). The average score for instructors' assessment of the overall obstacles is 3.856, while the average score for students is

3.427. This implies that teachers give the general difficulties of learning English a higher priority than do pupils. The results show that instructors and students have different perspectives on the overall difficulties, which emphasizes the necessity of good teamwork and communication to effectively handle these issues.

**Table 6.**

Male teachers' and students' perceptions of the difficulties that secondary school students have while learning English

| Perception of Respondents | N   | M     | S. D. | p.   |
|---------------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|
| Teachers                  | 27  | 3.604 | .553  | .025 |
| Students                  | 205 | 3.373 | .617  |      |

The results of a t-test comparing the opinions of male teachers and students about the difficulties faced by secondary English language learners are shown in the table. A statistically significant change in perception is found by the study ( $p = 0.025$ ). Students perceive reading difficulties with a slightly lower mean score of 3.373, while male teachers perceive them with a mean score of 3.604.

This suggests that male teachers place a slightly higher value on English proficiency than do students. The results show that male teachers and students have different perspectives on difficulties, underscoring the necessity of improved communication and comprehension in order to address these issues successfully.

**Table 7.**

Female teachers' and students' perceptions of the difficulties that secondary school students have while learning English

| Perception of Respondents | N   | M     | S. D. | p.   |
|---------------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|
| Teachers                  | 23  | 3.826 | .619  | .025 |
| Students                  | 195 | 3.396 | .613  |      |

The findings of a t-test comparing the opinions of female teachers and students about the difficulties secondary English language learners encounter in

reading are shown in the table. According to the study, there is a statistically significant difference in perception ( $p = 0.025$ ). Students perceive

reading barriers with a significantly lower mean score of 3.396 than do female teachers, who perceive them with a mean score of 3.826. This implies that reading challenges are somewhat more important to female teachers than to students. The findings, which show disparities in how children and female teachers view reading issues, emphasize the need for clear understanding and effective communication in order to properly address these concerns.

### **Main Conclusions:**

- **Teachers Place More Emphasis on Reading challenges:** Teachers believe that students have more reading challenges than students themselves report in a variety of ability areas, including reading. This suggests that the two groups may not be prioritizing or comprehending reading difficulties in the same way.
- **Notable Disparities in Perceptions of Speaking Challenges:** Table 2 shows that speaking difficulties are valued more highly by teachers (mean of 4.205) than by students (mean of 3.664). This highlights how crucial it is to address speech difficulties with more concentration and specialized assistance.
- **The Teacher-Student Perception Gap Must Be Considered When Handling Writing Challenges:** According to Table 3's findings, teachers believe writing is more challenging than students (mean of 3.594 versus 3.317). This emphasizes how important it is for educators to comprehend the viewpoints of their students in order to work together to overcome writing challenges in English language learning.
- **Notable Perception Differences Regarding Listening Skills:** Table 4 shows that teachers assess listening difficulties far higher (mean of 3.875) than students (mean of 3.391), indicating that in order to successfully promote students' listening comprehension, this perception gap needs to be closed.
- **Teachers Perceive Overall Challenges More Strongly:** The significance of coordinating teacher and student perspectives to handle learning issues holistically is highlighted by Table 5, which shows that teachers perceive

the general difficulties in learning English as more intense (mean of 3.856) than students do (mean of 3.427).

- **Compared to male students, male teachers place a greater emphasis on reading difficulties.** Table 6 shows that male teachers saw reading as a more important barrier than male students, with male teachers rating reading challenges higher (mean of 3.604) than male students (mean of 3.373). Differentiated techniques may be necessary for effective communication due to this gender-specific perspective.
- **Reading Difficulties Are Severe for Female Teachers Compared to Female Students:** According to Table 7, female teachers have a higher mean rating of reading problems (3.826) than female pupils (3.396). This implies that female teachers place a higher priority on these issues than do female pupils, and the observations emphasize the necessity of candid conversations to better comprehend a range of viewpoints.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ **Encourage Reflective and Collaborative Conversations:** Plan frequent meetings where educators and students can freely talk about their struggles and perspectives on learning obstacles, especially when it comes to speaking and reading. This can promote a more collaborative approach to language acquisition by encouraging students to share their experiences and enabling teachers to better match their support with the requirements of the real students.
  - ✓ **Establish Customized Assistance Plans for Skill-Specific Difficulties:** Create targeted support programs that target particular skill areas, including as speaking, writing, listening, and reading, taking into account the opinions of both teachers and students. For instance, design specialized speaking and listening workshops that directly target the real-world difficulties students have while taking into account the distinct objectives and insights of teachers.
- Use Gender-Sensitive Methods in Language Teaching:** Use gender-sensitive techniques in

reading support tactics since male and female teachers emphasize reading issues differently than students of the same gender. Workshops or group exercises aimed at overcoming these perceptual gaps and promoting understanding between male and female educators and students may fall under this category.

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