



A Comparative Study to Evaluate ESL Learners' Proficiency and Attitudes towards English Language



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Abstract: The research aims to determine the proficiency of intermediate-level ESL learners regarding the English language and to know the attitude that was shown by them toward the English language. The population of the study includes all government colleges of district Khairpur Sindh, and the selected sample size was 150 ESL students from both genders and locations. For the purpose of evaluating ESL learners' proficiency and attitude, a comparison was made by the researchers. The results demonstrated that intermediate-level ESL students of district Khairpur Sindh have a normal level of English language. The results also displayed that becoming an expert and proficient in English is linked to the learner's attitude. The present research showed that ESL learners of both rural and urban areas were inclined to learn the English language and there is no significant difference in the proficiency and attitude of male and female ESL learners of district Khairpur Sindh.

Key Words: ESL Learners, Learners' Proficiency, Learners' Attitudes, Standard English Language, Intermediate Level

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Introduction

English is a global language used in the whole world as a fundamental source to communicate with each other on an international level (Jeevan, Maitlo & Jalbani, 2023). English language is used abundantly in the fields of global relations, business, baking, learning and mainstreaming the social order. The association of this language being one of the most important factors for success in day-to-day life is acknowledged

widely. English language teachers need to plan their training and learning activities while the factors of behaviour and dependence are kept in mind. One of the key points to consider as an important concept is imitation which can be used to understand the behaviour of humans and is also considered a psychological state in which beliefs and emotions are incorporated. Language is a tool by which every individual portrays his/her habits, ideas, and feelings. Communication has also been done in the

past using verbal, well-defined images or conventional means. However, it is still considered wise to be well aware of the language structure if he is well educated. (Colomeischi, 2015). English has taken place as a conversation medium all over the world. One cannot deny its importance as an international language because this language is spoken globally. Al-Qahtani (2013) said that English is the language that most people want to learn and try to speak; that is why it is spoken globally. The increase in joblessness among graduates is because people lack English speaking skills and interpersonal skills also, and this gap is increasing day by day. That is why the graduates, even being able and intelligent, cannot get the jobs and training they desire. In Pakistan English is educated in government schools as a compulsory subject from primary to graduation (Ahmad, Iqbal, & Rao, 2023). However, students learn the English language from class one till their graduation, yet they are not able to master the language. English is only taught in Pakistan for learning purposes; that is why the students are unable to communicate correctly with natives and non-natives. Students cannot compete with the world if they lack the required skills in the English language. English is now spoken in most countries, and many countries of the world have made this language a medium of instruction at the primary level (Maitlo, Tumrani & Ali, 2022).

The government of Pakistan is already spending a large amount of money to promote the English language in Pakistan, and ESL speakers are quickly in Pakistan (Farhat, 2019). Language capability means a person's ability to utilize a language properly so that he can explain and clearly transfer the point he wants to mention. When a person is a native or local, he must be familiar with the words that range from twenty thousand to forty thousand appearing in the dictionary. If a person just wants to be conversational, he

must be familiar with at least three thousand words. Word learning is the basis for creating capability in learning a new language. When a child is of one year, he gets to know his first words, and when a child is almost three years old, he knows about nine hundred words which he utters in front of the people who are associated with him. When language capability is improved, then a person will also see improvement in his ability to convey. Communication is the key to learning a language. If you want to learn English, you must try to communicate in this language, in this way, you will learn new words and make sentences from them. It is better to learn a whole sentence rather than just learning a word. In this way, your vocabulary will be enhanced, and you will have plenty of new words to speak. Choudhary and Gupta (2015) explained that learning English is vital and Pakistani students try hard to learn this language for a long time. In general, teachers and second or foreign-language teachers complain about students' inability of using the English language. Efforts have been made to examine the learning capabilities of the students properly (Moskovsky & Goranov, 2001). Several ESL language developments and learning research have shown that the most significant aspect of second language acquisition is the application of language learning methodology. The instructors and analysts give importance to the techniques of language learning rather than paying more attention to the methodologies used in learning a second language. Colomeischi and Colomeischi (2015) described that the studies conducted have shown that methodologies of language learning include several things such as the capability level of English, learning settings, attitude of students, and instructive foundations and cultures.

Statement of the Problem

The English language is not only the language of native-speaking countries, but it is also spoken all over the world, and its

importance is increasing day by day. The English language has greater importance related to people of different spheres i.e., teacher, pupil, seller, purchaser, doctor, patient, a jobless person, or an employed one. Even people who are uneducated or common people also need to know the basic skills of the English language if they want to use technology such as in the form of mobile phones. However, as our education system is concerned, our learner cannot move to the next class unless he/she passes the English subject. Even though, our learners start learning the English language from grade one; however, they are not able to become proficient users of English. The current research aims to investigate the language proficiency of students and their attitudes regarding English language learning.

Research Questions

- I. To compare ESL learners' proficiency level in the English language regarding gender?
- II. To compare ESL learners' attitude level of English language regarding locality?

Significance of the Study

Intermediate level education has much importance because it leads to higher education so the English language has immense importance on this level. It is not the national language of Pakistan, yet government officers use this language as their official language. Therefore, it is recommended that students should learn this language if they want to get government employment. Generally, students, despite being intelligent and brilliant, get failed in their exams because they remain poor in English subject. Therefore, the current research examined the problem which is related to the proficiency level of students in learning the English language and the attitude they have regarding the English language.

Literature Review

The key purpose of the literature review is to provide information about the current research study from the previous works which is why it is important (Ahmad, Maitlo & Rao, 2022) moreover it helps in providing entire indications of the study context and unveils previous works provide new concepts related to current research (Maitlo, Tumrani & Farhat, 2023). Fulcher and Davidson (2007) performed their study and found that pupils have not been taught the English language properly and neither has any sufficient assessment been done in the form of appraisals. This evaluation system needs to be revised and emphasis must be given on subject matter guidance to specification level guidance. In the study by Rahman (2004), he observed and stated that after the independence of Pakistan from British India, there were around 97% of the Muslim population was aware of around 69 languages. Among 97% Pakistani 10.53% were proficient in Siraiki, 44.15% were aware of Punjabi, 14.10% knew Sindhi whereas 3.57% were able to speak Balochi. Additionally, 15.42% of the Muslim population was able to communicate in the Pashto language and only 7.57% of people practised and knew about the Urdu language.

In these modern days, English is being learnt rapidly as a means of communication in the sphere of business, public and private sectors as well. In order to be accepted by this ever-changing world, the English language is being utilized to a greater extent at various levels. Not enhancing the skill set in English has led to an increase in unemployment for the youth of the nation of Pakistan who might even be graduates. Due to the abandonment of the English language, it is found that the graduates are not empowered enough to pursue their aspirations and dreams of landing a good stable job. In almost all government-funded schools, it is observed that English is indeed being taught as a mandatory second language throughout Pakistan. It seems that the learners of the

English language have no command over it to make them able to do correspondence in general as per the findings from Bashiruddin (2003). The teachers as well as the pupils use the Urdu language instead of English for communication purposes inside the classrooms (Khan & Khattak, 2011). A study from Memon (2000) shows that the reality of the state-funded schools within Pakistan is that the supervisors and teachers adopt a non-serious attitude towards the perspective on education. Additionally, it is also found that instead of using the English language for listening, speaking and enhancing soft skills, it is just used as a medium to pass the English subject rather than improving the English language. In the study of Rubin (1975), it was observed that in the 1980s teachers were more prone to using convoluted and instant techniques in order to have their pupils learn about various languages.

However, with the passage of time, these approaches turned into more expressive and emotional classifications. Additionally, over the years, numerous studies have been done on English as the international language with the focus being primarily on the language learning systems (LLS; Wong & Nunan, 2011). Quite a few of these studies have confirmed that learning the language makes the students feel more empowered which leads to increased productivity and it also makes the students pursue this art further for improvement once the students leave the school (Wong & Nunan, 2011). The majority of the teachers and instructors who teach a second language to the enrolled students may be learning it as a second language or maybe international students. This has led the analysts to deep dive further into the subject matter to come up with much-needed improvements. Most of the performance is focused on the ways in which English can be taught properly (Choudhary & Gupta, 2015). The language of English has become a powerful tool to be used in today's world and is globally used as per the study conducted (Shahzada, Ghazi & Khan, 2012).

They observed that in order to proceed further as a successful nation, it is absolutely required to have knowledge and command over the English language.

Some Previous Related Studies

Karahan (2007) studied the language attitude of Turk EFL learners of the English language in the Turkish setting. Ming, Ling & Jaafar, (2011) analysed attitudes and motivations of school students to ESL learning in the context of Malaysia and found the learners have positive attitudes towards English language learning. Zeinivand, Azizifar & Gowhary conducted research (2015) and analysed the connection between attitudes and speaking talent of English language students in the Iranian context and found learners optimistic. In the national context Khan & Khan (2020) conducted research on the perception of ESL learners and instructors about learners' proficiency in the English Language in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, while Muhammad (2016); Rasheed, Zeeshan & Zaidi (2017) conducted their research studies in the context of Baluchistan these studies are related to current topic. Soomro, Bango & Mahesar, (2018) conduct research in district Sukkar on the attitudinal study of English as a foreign language but no research is conducted on the current topic, so researchers find this gap and make an effort to fill this gap by conducting a comparative study as Sharif, et. al. in (2021) conducted comparative study although the topics were different comparison was made in a similar way.

Research Methodology

The systematic study of the process is named research methodology (Ahmad, Maitlo & Rao, 2022), the technique employed by the researcher for composing information about the research (Ahmad, Farhat & Choudhary 2022). Research methodology comprises research design, population, sampling, instrumentation, data collection and data

analysis. The Positivist paradigm has been used in the current research. Data was collected with the help of a survey, and a quantitative approach has been used. This study has a correlation between the proficiency level of English language learning of students and the attitude they have regarding the English language.

The research population is described as a vast cluster of people for the aim of the research study (Ahmad, Shahid & Farhat, 2023). The population for the current research contains all government colleges of district Khairpur Sindh, and the sample size was selected by using a random technique. The 150 research participants from different government colleges of district Khairpur Sindh take part as research contributors. The 75 ESL students belong to female and 75 belong to male genders, similarly, the 75 students belong to urban and 75 belongs to rural areas of district Khairpur Sindh.

Maitlo, Soomro & Lashari (2023) pointed out that research tools are the source to compose information. For the present research study two kinds of research tools have been used in this research first one is the “English Language Proficiency Test

abbreviated as (ELPT) and the second tool which was used named “the Students’ Attitude towards English Scale” abbreviated as (SAES).

For the present research data was collected by using an online questionnaire the research contributors were sent this online questionnaire by using social media sources, especially through WhatsApp and email. The composed data was analysed by using SPSS software. Moreover, to analyse the demographical information researchers used the descriptive analysis method. The mean value of the proficiency level of ESL students and their attitude concerning the English language was also observed. The mean score was equated by an independent sample t-test. Data was presented in tables in numerical form. The current research was directed to point out the aptitude of the ESL students studying in government colleges of district Khairpur Sindh.

Demographic Information

The demographic information includes the gender and locality of the research contributors.

Table 1

Genders and Locality

Genders/Location	Contributors/Areas	Number	Percentages	Total
Genders	male	75	50%	A total of 150/ (100%) participated in the research.
	female	75	50%	
Locality	urban	75	50%	
	rural	75	50%	

A total of 150 ESL students of government colleges from urban and rural areas of district Khairpur Sindh Pakistan participated in this research work as research contributors.

These contributors belong to both genders and both locations' details are presented in table number one above.

Table 2

Comparing ESL learners’ Language Proficiency in English Regarding Gender

Gender	N	M	SD	T	P	95% CI	
						lower	upper
male	75	7.450	.724	-3.862	.093	-.829	.625

Gender	N	M	SD	T	P	95% CI	
						lower	upper
female	75	5.631	.434	-2.859	.092	-.821	.632

An independent sample t-test was employed to estimate the average value of the proficiency of the ESL students regarding the English language from the viewpoint of gender. It is observed that the average value between the females and males is almost

similar in nature. From these results, we can conclude that the average values of the proficiency of ESL students regarding the English language are not much different from the gender perspective.

Table 3

Comparing ESL Learners' Attitudes to the English language regarding Gender

Gender	N	M	SD	T	P	95% CI	
						lower	upper
male	75	6.912	.605	-3.611	.087	-.459	.344
female	75	6.914	.602	-3.616	.081	-.455	.332

The average value of the attitude of ESL learners with regard to the English language from the viewpoint of gender. It is observed that the average value between the females

and males was similar to the base of the results presented in Table number three above.

Table 4

Comparing ESL Learners' Language Proficiency in English Regarding Locality

Gender	N	M	SD	T	P	95% CI	
						lower	upper
urban	75	5.943	.624	1.013	.251	-.125	.342
rural	75	5.911	.541	1.002	.239	-.113	.349

Table four shows the average value of the proficiency of the ESL learners with regard to the English language from the perspective of

ESL learners' locality. It is observed that the average value between the urban and rural is almost parallel.

Table 5

Comparing ESL Learners' Attitudes to the English Language regarding Locality

Location	N	M	SD	T	P	95% CI	
						lower	upper
urban	75	5.498	.621	.712	.200	-.221	.168
rural	75	5.592	.659	.723	.193	-.265	.145

Table five displays the average value of the attitude of the ESL learners regarding the English language from the viewpoint of ESL

Learners' locality. It is observed that the average value between the urban and rural is almost alike.

Discussion

The research findings which have been presented in the above tables revealed that the intermediate-level ESL students of district Khairpur Sindh had an optimistic attitude to acquire the English language and these findings also showed that both the female and male ESL learners have almost equal proficiency levels in the English language and their attitude was also similar. Moreover, the research also revealed that the locality has no impact on the proficiency and attitudes of ESL learners of district Khairpur Sindh. The results and findings of this research study matching with the results and findings of many previous research studies conducted by different researchers at different times in their home country settings.

Conclusion

The present research study was an exertion to make a comparison among proficiency and attitude of intermediate ESL students regarding the learning of the English language. The findings of the current study indicate that ESL students possess an average level of proficiency with respect to the English language. But these students showed a willingness attitude to learn the English

language. The results also concluded that the attitude towards the English language can be moderately correlated with proficiency in the language and it is highly positive. The results are also able to portray that the variation in the average values of the ESL learner's proficiency in the English language is due to the students' locality and gender.

Recommendations

- On the base of these findings, a couple of guiding principles have been provided in order to conduct future research studies by other researchers.
- The existing theory and study are only concerned with the proficiency and attitudes of ESL learners of district Khairpur Sindh but can be expanded on other levels and areas because researches upsurge the rationality of learners and increase thinking by providing profound evidence related to the theme (Rao, Jeevan, & Ahmad, 2023).
- It is distinguished that other proficiencies could be combined as part of further research by future researchers which may have a positive effect in order to represent the singularity in a whole depiction.

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