

## **A Study of School related Factors and their Influence on English Speaking Skill of Students**

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### **Abstract**

*This study was designed to analyze the features which are essential for the spoken skill of elementary school students in Pakistan. The data was collected by applying 640 questionnaires and 320 oral tests from four districts of South Punjab through personal visits of the researchers. Factor analysis with Varimax rotation produced school environment, Teacher related factors, school related factors, classroom environment and peers' attitude with 30% common variance explained for both the data sets. Mean, Standard deviation and percentage of responses was calculated as descriptive statistics whereas Regression analysis was employed to draw the inferences. It was found that English spoken skill of the students was considerably poor at Government schools whereas the participants at private schools were comfortable to communicate in English. The school environment was emerged as a major contributing factor in this regard. The learning environment of schools needs considerable changes to improve the situation.*

### **Introduction**

Everybody needs better communication skills for leading comfortable life. It is helpful for exchange of ideas and sharing daily life experiences. One can be recognized socially if he has the ability to express his views in an effective manner. Such type of individuals can satisfy others as per their demands. An effective communication needs at least two persons i.e., speaker and listener. A speaker is an individual who expresses his views to other in a unambiguous manner.

The person who focused the meanings of the spoken words is generally known as listener. Pragmatic approach is considered effective for learning a language (Ayres, 2009). Another important thing is the use of the common medium between the two.

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Hua and Renandya (2012) identified a close relationship between language and culture. To them it is compulsory to create an environment that facilitates the students to learn a specific language- such as English. In general factors relating to environment cannot be ignored for teaching a language (Hua, & Renandya, 2012).

Speaking is considered as an effective and productive skill for learning a language. This skill is usually known as complex and tangled in the sense of difficulty in utterances words while speaking. It indicates thinking about what is to be said. The speaking is generally reported as the way of expressing and communicating fluently and accurately in a foreign language. Although it is very hard and difficult in foreign language yet it requires social interaction accurately and appropriately. It also needs grammatically and linguistically semantic rules (Harmer, 2001).

There are number of factors which enable a student for having an effective command on a language. Fluency is an essential component of an effective command over a language through which a person can easily express his feelings and ideas to others. School environment is another important factor in this regard. Morreale, Spitzberg, & Barge (2007) noted the significance of the medium of instruction for learning English as a second language.

It is common observation that teachers generally do not bother about the environmental factors while teaching a language. They consider grammar and vocabulary sufficient for the effective learning a language which appears as a major hurdle for students to learn a particular language. Only due to the above mentioned teachers' behavior the students hardly develop confidence in them and feel it difficult to communicate with others. This behavior of the teachers needs special attention. Use of learning activities through demonstration method in the class may be helpful for teaching a language. Particularly for teaching English to the students it should be made mandatory for the students to speak as much as English as they can both inside as well as outside the class. Active participation from students side is essential for making this move (Ayres, 2009; Baker & Westrup, 2003).

For the teaching learning process, it is an established fact the professionally qualified teachers can teach more effectively as compared to the professionally unqualified teachers. Professional training is very essential for the teachers especially for language teaching. The most common difficulty while communicating in foreign language is the confusion about the responding locality and that led to faulty method of interaction. This situation can be overcome by exact judgment of the responding locality and by using suitable vocabulary and also accurate pronunciation. The style of expressing our view point with others is also a key factor for communication. Continuous effort should be made to improve vocabulary. Peer groups can help in this regard. Student can speak English within peer group without any hesitation. Comprehensive feedback and appreciation from the teacher side is very helpful in this

regard. Participatory observations along with interviews are considered as effective tool for judging the speaking ability of students (Alsagoff, McKay, Hu, & Renandya, 2012).

The acquisition of foreign language is not easy task for students without the proper guidance and practice. Even both teacher and taught feel hesitation for speaking English language at school. Generally, this is neglected and least practiced skill at educational institutions. The teachers teaching English usually use drill or grammar method to teach in classroom. They do not involve students in speaking practice whereas one can easily learning spoken English through speaking as compared to listening and reading. That is why the students feel hesitation to speak English in classrooms. They seem much troubled and worried about having listening and speaking tests. They can read and write but unable to speak without hesitation and accuracy (Parker, 2003). Therefore, it was considered necessary to conduct research on the above mentioned problem.

### *Procedure of the Study*

Looking at the nature of problem descriptive method was considered appropriate for the study. It is convenient for the researchers to collect data from the diversified sampling through survey method. Both the oral test and questionnaire were employed for data collection. Elementary school students in the province of Punjab considered as population of this research.

Multistage sampling technique was used to identify the representative sample from the population. Initially random selection of four out of eleven districts was made. Once again random sampling was exercised to identify four schools from the clusters of government and private elementary level located in each district. Then ten students from 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> classes of the elementary schools were picked up randomly from each school included in the sample. Gender (male/female) and locality (rural/urban) were given equal representation in the sample. Total sample size was 640 participants for questionnaire survey. Fifty percent (320) of the respondents of the questionnaire survey selected were selected for oral test through random sampling technique. 640 students handed over the filled questionnaires. 48.9% male and 51.1% females responded to the survey questionnaire. As far as age of the respondents is concerned 31.7% participants falls in 10 to 12 years whereas 68.3% in 13 to 15 years age bracket.

### **Analysis of Data and Findings**

Five factors (school environment, Teacher related factors, school related factors, Classroom environment and peers' attitude) with 30% common variance explained was accepted for both the data sets. Factor loading along with variance explained, agree/disagree frequency and percentage on each item of the factor was calculated. The results are given in the following tables:

Table 1  
*Students' perception regarding their school environment*

Sr.#	Statements	Factor loading	Variance explained	Cronbach Alpha	A+SA %	Undecided %	DA+SDA %
1	English speaking is the part of my school environment	.783			34.7	5.6	59.7
2	My speaking skill improved with the effect of school environment	.739			53.2	10.9	35.9
3	Speaking skill is one the most important part of my school environment	.718			51.6	8.9	39.5
4	Reading material of school library is very helpful to enhance the ability of speaking	.671	11.076	.724	56.6	04	39.4
5	Students can read books to improve the speaking skill in school	.659			56.5	12.3	31.2
6	Library period is the part of my school time table.	.651			30.1	11	58.9
7	Competitions like English debate most of the time apprehended in my school.				57.2	9.1	33.7
8	Participation of student in English debates is encouraged from school teachers.	.551			55.6	9.2	35.2
9	Speaking skill of students improved by their participation in English debates	.513			53.5	12.3	34.2

More than 53% elementary school students said that their school environment is very much effective regarding to improve their speaking skill because speaking skill is the essential part of school discipline. Almost 56% students said that there is sufficient reading material on speaking in their school library that helpful to improve their English speaking skill. Competition like English debates apprehended in their schools and more than 55% students said that they were encouraged to participate in English debates that enhance their English vocabulary and improve their speaking skill. Almost 59% students agreed that English speaking environment is not the essential part

of their schools. More than 58% students said that library period is not part of their school timetable.

Table 2  
*Students' perception regarding their elementary school teachers related factors*

Sr.#	Statements	Factor loading	Variance explained	Cronbach Alpha	A+SA %	Undecided %	DA+SDA %
1	English speaking skill enhanced with the help of modern technology i.e. internet, audio recording etc. by school teacher.	.953			29.3	9.4	61.3
2	Students response always in English otherwise receive punishment from teacher.	.913			31.3	6.3	62.4
3	Students can speak in English with their teachers confidently.	.837			59.6	6.9	33.5
4	Mother tongue used by teacher in English teaching.	.717			34.3	4.2	61.5
5	Students encouraged by the teachers as they response in English.	.678	6.562	.812	59.5	3.8	36.7
6	Teacher gives answer in Urdu as students ask question in English class.	.638			57.6	0.5	37.4
7	Teacher communicate in English with students in classroom.	.617			34.5	3.9	61.6
8	Medium of instruction between teacher and student is English.	.606			35.6	2.0	62.4
9	My teacher is well trained for teaching English language to my class.	.595			61.7	3.8	34.5
10	My teacher always confident to present lesson before class.	.505			63.4	0.3	36.3

More than 59% students agreed that they can speak English with their teachers confidently as they encouraged their students to response in English not only inside but outside the class but at the same time students claimed that their teachers give answers of their questions by using Urdu language. More than 61% Elementary school students agreed that their school teachers are well trained in order to teach and improve their speaking skill. They also said that their teachers always confident to present lesson

before them. More than 61% students admit that their English teachers do not use modern technology during the learning period of speaking skill and not punish their students as they respond in other than English language. Most of the students admit that their English teacher not always uses English language inside or outside the class also he/she never use mother tongue in classroom.

Table 3  
*Students' perception regarding factors related elementary school students*

Sr.#	Statements	Factor loading	Variance explained	Cronbach Alpha	A+SA %	Undecided %	DA+SDA %
1	I cannot speak English confidently	.953			34.7	05	60.3
2	I can speak English fluently because of sufficient vocabulary.	.823			41.1	5.7	53.2
3	I can express my views effectively as I have sufficient command over English grammar	.627			59.9	5.6	34.5
4	I try to speak in English in my classroom.	.537			61.2	7.1	31.7
5	I try to busy myself for the enhancement of speaking skill in school time.	.717	4.592	.702	57.9	12.7	29.4
6	I used English language with my friends on cell-phone conversations.	.675			35.4	1.5	63.1
7	I used English language in my class presentations.	.567			36.7	9.1	54.2
8	I can effectively put my ideas in English without the help of translation.	.514			33.6	13.3	53.1

More than 57% students admit that they can express their view effectively because of command over grammar. Almost 61% students claimed that they remain busy in practicing English speaking skill not only classroom but also out outside the class. On the other side more than 53% students said that they are not confident to speak and have no fluency in their spoken because of insufficient vocabulary. These students hesitate to use English language on phone conversations and cannot effectively made presentation by the use of effective English vocabulary. As elementary school

students do not have sufficient vocabulary so that more than 53% students used translation method in their spoken.

Table 4  
*Students' perception regarding classroom environment*

Sr.#	Statements	Factor loading	Variance explained	Cronbach Alpha	A+SA %	Undecided %	DA+SDA %
1	Students can effectively perform speaking related activities due to comfortable seating arrangement of English class.	.933			53.2	7.6	39.2
2	In English class students can be seated properly.	.823	4.541	.902	51.5	12.6	35.9
3	English teacher uses different activities for the purpose of teaching of English in classroom.	.737			59.1	8.2	32.7
4	Teacher makes sure that every student participates in classroom activities held by English teacher.	.617			55.4	3.5	41.1
5	Large number of students is a big hurdle in the learning of speaking skill in English class.	.527			34.2	9.1	56.7
6	Strength of students is suitable for the learning of English language in English class.	.514			53.7	10.5	35.8
7	Teacher teaches English language in language lab.	.505			34.2	11.1	54.7

More than 51% students said that seats were comfortable to perform classroom activities. More than 55% students claimed that their teacher held different classroom activities for the enhancement of speaking skill at the same time teachers make sure that every student of class actively participates in class room activities. 53.7% students agreed that strength of students is appropriate in order to learn English effectively in the presence of teacher. More than 54% students said that they have no facility of English lab in their school. These students agreed that large number of students is a big hurdle to learn English language and perform classroom activities effectively.

Table 5  
*Students' perception regarding the attitude about their peers*

Sr.#	Statements	Factor loading	Variance explained	Cronbach Alpha	A+SA %	Undecided %	DA+SDA %
1	I often communicate with my class-fellows in English language	.933			34.6	9.7	55.7
2	I received criticism from my peers as I used English language in my communication	.823			39.8	6.6	53.6
			3.513	.832			
3	I cannot remain confident as I speak English with my class-fellows.	.617			37.6	5.6	56.8
4	I often get appreciation from my peers while speaking in English	.527			54.5	10.3	35.2
5	My peers avoid speaking in English in gathering.	.507			41.2	6.5	52.3

More than 53% students admit that they can confidently speak in English with their peers. Elementary school students avoid criticizing each other as they use English language in Communication. That is the reason they can speak confidently with their classmates. 54% students agreed that they get appreciation from their classmates while speaking English but not always they used this language in their communication.

Table 6  
*Comparison of Elementary schools both (Government and Private) about the analysis of School related factors that influence speaking skill of students*

Demographic Variable	Type of schools	N	Mean Score	S.D	T-value	Sig.
Type of School	Government	320	3.1235	.51773	-2.325	.031*
	Private	320	3.2135	.56382		

$\alpha = .05$

Results showed that P-value (.031) is less than .05 that is considered as the level of significance. This means that opinions of Federal/provincial and public sectors regarding the influence of factors (School) on students' speaking skill. As mean score (Federal/provincial M= 03.1235, public sectors M = 03.2135) shows that influence of Private schools is more than Government schools. Private schools gave more positive response as compared to government schools about the influence of (school related) factors.



Table 7

*Gender wise comparison of students of elementary level*

Classification	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Significance.
Boys	316	3.1384	.51761	1.627	.104
Girls	324	3.2075	.56673		

$\alpha = .05$

Above table concludes that (.104) is greater than level of significance that is .05. This shows that there is no difference between the opinion of elementary school students (male and female) regarding the influence of different factors in the environment of school, on English speaking skill.

Table 8

*Elementary school students' scores in speaking skill*

Ratings %	f	(%)
1-40	180	28.2
41-70	407	63.7
71-100	053	8.1

(f=frequency, %= Percentage)

Table shows students' grades in their speaking. Four hundred and seven (407) were highly respond and get 40 to 70 percent marks. Only fifty-three students responded in the range of 70 to 100 grades with 8.1 percentages. One hundred eighty students get marks in the range of 1 to 40 with 28.2 percentages. Overall speaking skill of elementary school students is good enough as they showed their response in above table.

Table 9

*Elementary school students' grades in the basic elements of speaking*

Grades%	A	P	F	V
1-40	129	76	154	165
41-70	176	153	152	142
71-100	15	91	13	14

(A= accuracy, P= pronunciation, F= fluency, V= vocabulary)

Table shows students grades in four basic elements of speaking skill i.e. accuracy, pronunciation, fluency and vocabulary. Results shows 41-70% grades received 176 students in accuracy, 153 in pronunciation, 152 in fluency and 142 in vocabulary. Ratio of students in other grades like 1-40 and 71-100 were less than 41-70%.

Table 10

*Analysis of environment of school that influence verbal language*

$\beta$	Std. error	t	Sig.	f	r	r Square
2.760	.139	17.315	.000*	7.063	.104	.011

Dependent Variable of the study is students' ability in speaking skill,  $\alpha = .05$

Above table concludes value of correlation that is .104 is positive that means positive and significant correlation the spoken of learners and different elements of school environment. Value of  $f(f=7.063)$  and  $p(p=.000)$  shows that there is linear and significant correlation. This also concludes that there is influence of different elements of school environment on the spoken language of school learners.

### **Discussion**

Spoken language of leaners that studied in elementary level schools influenced in school environment in which different factors gives their contribution. Spoken of elementary learners and school environment correlate with each other. It is necessary to enhance school environment as they demand students' speaking skill. In the present study teacher is one of the most important factor that influence students speaking skill. If teacher is important element in the learning process speaking skills than she/he should be well trained and have command over her/his subject. Results of this study showed that teachers apprehended different classroom activities and encourage their students to participate in these activities because they are confident and well trained. Ben Knight gives assessment criteria of teachers' performance. He concludes that teacher should be aware about assessment criteria and held activities for students by keeping in mind some defined and essential elements of speaking skill (Knight, 1992).

So many elements are there that may influence students' speaking. In this regard Bashir (2011) gives different factors that influence students' speaking skill but she does not gives importance to school related factors unlike current research. Teacher is a common factor in both researches. Bashir concluded that teachers used English language in his communication and try to develop students speaking skill unlike present research teacher used Urdu language while giving answer to students of their questions. But at the same time teacher encourages students to speak in international language in school environment.

There are some elements that affect the speaking of students. Hamad in his study conclude that teachers do not pay attention to apprehend activities for the improvement of speaking of student. They simply pay attention to teach their subject not to implement it practically. In Saudi colleges students and teachers communicate in Arabic language. These factors negatively affect the seeking of students and they were unable to speak confidently before society (Hamad, 2013). In current research students

were not punished in case of not responding in English. Teacher also uses Urdu language while giving answers to their answers. As teacher's role cannot be ignored in the personality development of students so that flexibility in rules from teachers' side is responsible of less fluency in speaking of students. Both studies gives importance to teachers' role in the development of speaking of students but present study takes it as an essential factor.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Finding based conclusion shows that lack of facility of library and its lecture, uses of Urdu language as a way of communication between teachers and students, flexible school rules regarding English speaking are some key problems regarding less command over spoken language of elementary level learners. Results of both research tools i.e. questionnaire and oral speaking test are very different. According to the investigation of rating scale learners are self-confident because of school environment which was helpful to improve their speaking skill but on the other side investigation of speaking test exposed that learners are not so competent in the spoken of international language. They have no command over accuracy, fluency, vocabulary and pronunciation of English language. Private schools' students' speaking skill highly improved with respect to these four basic elements (fluency, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation) than students of government sectors because of strict environment regarding English communication in private school both for teacher and students, not only inside but outside the class.

In the light of findings of the study, following recommendations are made:

- 1) Current study was to examine school environment that influence the speaking skill of students. The findings linked with school environment exposes that library facility is missed in most of the schools. If this gap can be filled with the facility of library period for all learners of elementary levels.
- 2) Second factor of the study was teacher related factors show that there are some main deficiencies about poor English vocabulary of students belong to elementary schools. These problems can be solved changing the teacher attitude towards strict rules regarding English communication with students inside and outside the class.
- 3) Classroom environment is also one of the most important factors of this study. Students perception showed that they felt uncomfortable in large number students. This is a big hurdle for them in learning process. This issue can be solved by making different section so that students can effectively participate in different classroom activities.
- 4) Speech competition not only improves speaking skill but also remove shyness in personality of students. Participation in these activities improve their vocabulary

and also develop reading skill and they can effectively make their presentation in English language without the help of grammar translation method.

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