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## SOCIOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Gap between acquired and required English learning objectives for the primary school students: Empirical evidence from Sargodha (Pakistan)

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**Abstract:** English is most frequently used language in the global communication and considered to be the key to success. In spite of the efforts made by the government to achieve acquired level, the failure rates in English in Pakistan is very alarming. In order to investigate this problem, this study was aimed to unveil the gap between the learning objectives of English and the actual condition of primary school students in Sargodha (Pakistan). A random sample of 180 students from six primary government schools of Sargodha district was selected. The data were collected through an achievement test based on contents set by the Punjab textbook board. The collected data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and ANOVA. The results revealed a gap between the required SLOs (students' learning objectives) and the students' acquired competency level in English at primary level. Further, the variables; teachers' content knowledge, gender of the students; type of school and parents' education found significant factors that affect students' competencies in learning English. The study recommended that every school should possess an environment where facilities of teaching language skill are provided keeping in view the above factors.

**Subjects:** Middle School Education; Primary/Elementary Education; Study Skills; Childhood; Classroom Practice

**Keywords:** English language; learning objectives; primary school; teaching language skill

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### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

English is most frequently used language in the global communication and considered to be the key to success. In spite of the efforts made by the government to achieve acquired level, the failure rates in English among Pakistani's students is very alarming. In order to investigate this problem, this study was aimed to unveil the gap between the Learning objectives of English and the actual condition of primary school students in Sargodha (Pakistan). It was found that conceptual gaps in all four competencies (reading, writing, comprehension and speaking) at earlier stage cause continuous deterioration in students' English language competency in later years. Possible reasons behind this situation were found that the deficiency of learning environment for English language and teachers' methodology for teaching English language which make the learning objectives unrealistic for the primary school students.

## 1. Introduction

Communication is one of the most important features of human life (Thompson, 2003). It is the process of communication that brings different communities and societies closer to one another. Language works as a crucial mean of communication for humans (Fried, 1995). Being an international language, English is used as a major vehicle of communication in the modern world (Shahid, 2006). The status of English these days could be judged from the fact that even before 1960s more than 85 percent international organizations officially made use of English language for communication in Asia and the Pacific and now almost in every international organization including Europe use English as communication language (Ahmad, 1968; Bailey & Gorlach, 1982; Berns, 1995; Trudgill & Hannah, 2017).

Urdu is known as a national language in Pakistan and according to the Constitution of Pakistan (1973), it was declared as the official language and “arrangements shall be made for [Urdu] being used for official”. However, it was not implemented until in 2015, it was declared as an official language in the decision made by Supreme Court of Pakistan in parallel with English language. Though Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, but English has been used for official communication since the birth of Pakistan in 1947 and thus becomes most preferred language as the medium of education which makes it as second national language of Pakistan or English as the second language (ESL) like in India, Kenya, Nigeria, Singapore (Pennycook, 2013; Trudgill & Hannah, 2017). Almost all Governments of Pakistan since 1947 till today have been aiming at introducing better and effective education policies. The government of Pakistan has developed 11 education policies (1947, 1951, 1959, 1966, 1969, 1970, 1972, 1979, 1992, 1998, and 2010). There has been a main flaw in the earlier years as English language had introduced at primary but ultimately the Ministry of Education understood the faults in education policies. As a result, in 1990s, the teaching of English was introduced as a language from grade one and would be used as a medium of teaching across the curriculum of different subjects. Recently the efforts are being made to review the policy and to make it realistic in accordance with Pakistani situation.

Furthermore, keeping in view its global importance and to bring the uninformed education system in Pakistan, government of Punjab declared English as the medium of education initially in 12,000 public schools<sup>1</sup> of the province Punjab in April 2010 (“Interface”, 2014, para 1). The compulsory subjects, that is, Mathematics, Science are taught in English language in these schools. On the parallel, government also initiated the English language training workshops and refresher courses for public school teachers to upgrade them (GoP, 2009).

Moreover, the system of education in Pakistan consists of six levels (i.e. pre-primary, primary, middle, high, higher secondary and higher education along with professional and technical education). At every level, the students’ performance is evaluated through examination system which means an assessment of ability to perform in a subject (Page & Thomas, 1978). Instruments of assessment in Pakistan encourage those who can best reproduce what they have learnt during lessons and fail those who are unable to do that. Research claims that such types of assessment and evaluation at all levels are narrow in scope (Khan, 2006). At primary level, in particular, assessments are conducted by the respective schools for each grade (from I to V). However, at the end of the fifth year of the primary stage, a public examination is conducted by the Education Department for promotion to the next grade. Similar terminal assessment is practiced at the middle and the subsequent levels (UNESCO, 2007). However, it is argued that the assessment system in Pakistan is defective due to numerous factors (Ahmad & Malik, 2011; Rehmani, 2003). These factors can be categorized into internal and external ones. External factors include environment, relationship, context of reward/punishment and methods, whereas, internal factors include perception, emotion, attitude, ability, motivation and memory (Malik, 2005).

Teaching methodology plays a key role in the teaching learning process. However, there are different teaching methods for teaching different subjects depending on the nature of a language these different teaching methods and approaches are used to clarify the concepts (Holt, 1964). While many discussions about learning a second language focus on teaching methodologies, little

emphasis is given to the contextual factors (individual, social, and societal) that affect students' learning (Mackay, 2002). These contextual factors can be considered from the perspective of the language, the learner, and the learning process (Larsen-Freeman, 2001).

## 2. Emergence of research questions

In Pakistan, the learners of English are increasing enormously even then the failure rates in English in Pakistan at every level are very alarming (Shamim, 2008). Due to which many students give up their studies and the dropout rate in Pakistan's schools is very high among the Asian countries (World Bank, 2013). Research studies indicated that high failure rates at matriculation, intermediate and degree level is due to students' failure in achieving desired learning objectives as well as the desired level of proficiency in English (Khattak, 2012). Therefore, the current study was intended to fill this literature gap by addressing the following objectives: (i) To analyze the gap between the required learning objectives of English and acquired competency level of students at primary level, (ii) To investigate the gender effect on the English learning competency of primary school student, (iii) To examine the impact of parents' education on the student's English competency at primary level, (iv) To examine the impact of fathers' job on the student's English competency at primary level, and (v) To identify students' perception about their English teacher's teaching method.

## 3. Literature review

Primary education is a basic stone in the educational career of a student. It gives direction to the future lines of a child's educational years. It is a pivotal stage in the child's educational development and helps in grooming his/her personality to form a social being. But effective learning demands effective communication between a teacher and a student. Language is a basic source of communication throughout the world. However, learning in second language rather than the mother tongue is a problem for students in different countries as well where medium of education is English rather than the mother tongue. Different researchers (Kovelman, Salah-Ud-Din, Berens, & Petitto, 2015; Mehmood, UzmaPerveen, Shakoor, Hussain, & Ali, 2012; Park, Klieve, Tsurutani, & Harte, 2017) affirm the concept of mother tongue implication for learning and acquiring different skills. Research has addressed English teaching skills quite well, but very few studied the gap between the acquired and required level of English language competency, particularly at primary level.

Khan (2011) conducted a case study on Jaddah Community College revealing the problems of English teaching and learning. He is of the view that in spite of proper planning, equipped teachers and effective administration; the teaching-learning process does not seem to be fruitful in the country when the actual skill development is not up to the mark. Students face the problems in the areas of teaching techniques, focused EFL, strict evaluation system and lack of proper convincing. While teachers are facing hurdles in this regard being a bilingual teacher, teacher-student interaction in Arabic language and psychology of their students. In a study, Alhabahba, Pandian, and Mahfoodh (2016) highlighted the deteriorating condition of English language learning in Jordanian schools and reviewed that students lack necessary concepts required for further engagement in mastering new concept and knowledge. Concerning classroom environment, absence of active and collaborative learning, and teacher centred methodology without creativity serves as the catalyst in already declining situation and thus hampering the future of learners.

In this regard, Teevno (2011) conducted a study related to the challenges in Teaching and Learning of English at secondary level by using quantitative and qualitative techniques. It is a case study of Taluka, District Nushero Feroz, Sindh Pakistan. The study explored the issues of lack of teachers training of English language even not when there is change in syllabus. They are unaware of communicative teaching methods and do not develop English reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in the classroom. Inappropriate planning, inadequate time management, modification of English syllabus with no teacher training and improper evaluation are the challenges which enhance the problem of English teaching and learning at secondary level. Moreover, Tariq, Bilal, Sandhu, Iqbal, and Hayat (2013) carried out a research regarding difficulties in learning English as a second language in the

rural areas of Pakistan at secondary level. They found that several factors create a hurdle in learning English in the rural areas. Agriculture as a main source of income, uneducated and poor parents, and their lack of interest towards child education are the key factors in this regard. Rural atmosphere has a deep impact on English learning of the students at secondary level. The environment change can enhance the learning efficiency of the students. Dealing with reading motivation and academic achievement in English as second language, Kirchner and Mostert (2017) studied the 402 Namibian primary school students. They identified teachers' lack of training of English teaching, parents low level of education and income along with the absence of English speaking environment as key indicators of students poor reading skills and thus achievements in English.

A study regarding Communication Problems in Second Language Learning at Federal Government Secondary Schools, Islamabad was conducted by Mehmood et al. (2012). The study moves around the factors due to which students in the urban area of Islamabad are not proficient in speaking and learning English language. They are of the view that teaching methods like traditional grammar-translation method and reading English aloud, no verbal English communication in the class-rooms, difficult English syllabus, and improper management are the factors which create hurdles in English Language Communication. Similarly, Panezai and Channa (2017) investigated the situation of primary school teachers and English textbooks in Pakistan. They explored the dissatisfaction of the primary teachers for English curriculum of grade 1 to 5 specifically the difficulty level of vocabulary and the grammar. In addition, less time allotted for teaching English and lack of proper training for teaching English language were major problems in government public schools of Pakistan. Concerning the poor competency level of students and their failure in English, it was found that weak English background of students in previous grades and English content beyond the understanding level of the parents even worsen this situation.

Based on the existing literature, the study "Gap between Acquired and Required English Learning Objectives for the Primary School Students: Empirical Evidence from Sargodha (Pakistan)", generally still far from over. In the existing literature, there is hardly any study which is based on the empirical analysis which has analyzed gap between acquired and required English learning objectives for primary school, especially with reference to a specific area or region in the Pakistani context. Therefore, the current study fills the literature gap by addressing the students' perception about their English teacher's teaching method as well as analyzing the gap between the required learning objectives of English and acquired competency level of students at primary level.

#### **4. Data and methodology**

The current research is primary in nature and survey method was used for data collection. Government primary schools for boys and girls of district Sargodha were taken as the population of this study. The reason for choosing district Sargodha as the study population is basically its geographical and cultural unique characteristics. Situated in the centre of the Punjab province, rich in agrarian fields of sugar cane and world's best citrus production, it is called as the California of Pakistan, where most of the people's economy depends upon the agriculture and Citrus export business. Being the agricultural and industrial business hub, even small scaled farmers do need education, especially communication in English, in order to export their agriculture products. In this study, convenient sampling technique was used for selecting the subjects for the present study. A total six Government primary schools (2 boy's primary schools, 2 girls' primary schools and 2 co-education schools) were selected randomly for this study. A sample of 180 students was drawn from existing fifth graders of selected schools (Equal number was taken from each School). Prevailing content list of English books published by Punjab Textbook Board (English Text book for grade 2-5, 2015) till primary level are divided into seven major core areas such as; (i) sentence structure, (ii) formal and lexical aspects of language, (iii) vocabulary, (iv) comprehension, (v) writing skill, (vi) oral communication skill, and (vii) reading skill. Therefore, keeping these areas in view, an instrument was developed (see Appendix) to investigate the students' competency in English. It was comprised of multiple-choices; fill in the blanks, short answers upon reading a paragraph, reading paragraph and oral communication section. In order to explore the acquired level of English learning of 5th class students, the test items were developed to measure the students'

language competency up till grade two, three, four, and five. Generally, four or five questions from each category, mentioned above, were constructed. The test was administrated to the selected sample through their respective teachers with the help of researchers. Equal time and chance were given to all students to show their learning outcomes in English. All students were informed of the very purpose of the test. Answers were scored by blank marked paper. Correct answer was given one mark and wrong answer was given zero marks. Moreover, the analysis part was done into three sections such as; first one is the analysis of demographic matrix, second deals with students' perception about their teacher's methodology and last section deals with the investigation of students' language competency and group differences with respect to demographic variables. To analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistics through tests like t-test and ANOVA, were used through SPSS v.20 software.

### 5. Descriptive analysis of demographic matrix

Demographic information serves in two ways; first, it assures that selected sample is the true representative of the target population and second, it provides the opportunity to explore the moderation in studied phenomenon due to various independent variables present in demographic information (Abbas, 2011). In the present study, basic demographic information on students' gender and school type were asked. To explore the effect of home environment and parents' involvement in developing English language competency among students, questions related to parents' level of education and father's source of income were asked. In the same section, students' perception of the active learning environment in English class was inquired.

Information on demographic variables was quantified in the form of categories. There were two levels of gender (Male and Female), three types of schools (boys', girls' and co-education schools), four levels of parents' education (no education, primary, matric/FA, BA and above), four levels of father's job status (Death, Worker, Government employee, Business), while students' perception of their teacher's methodology (who teaches better?) was asked in the form of checklist containing two options (School teacher or home private tutor). In this connection, Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages of respondents responded to the above-mentioned demographic variables. There were 180 students (Girls = 86 & Boys = 94), means 52% participants were males whereas 48% were females. Moreover, total six schools were included in this study which consisted of two boys' schools (60 students), two girls' schools (60 students) and two co-education schools (60 students). Regarding the variable of father's education, 61 (34%) students reported that their fathers did not have any formal education, 57 (32%) students' fathers got only primary education and 44 (25%) students' fathers were having ten years of schooling. Only 15 (9%) students' fathers were graduates.

**Table 1. Demographic information of the variables of the study**

Demographic variables	Values	Demographic variables	Values
(1) Gender		(4) Taking private coaching	
Male	94 (52%)	Yes	47 (25%)
Female	86 (48%)	No	133 (75%)
(2) Schools		(5) Father's job	
Girl's schools	60 (33%)	Death	15 (8%)
Boys schools	60 (33%)	Low wage worker	119 (66%)
Co-education schools	60 (33%)	Govt. job	28 (16%)
(3) Father's education		Business	17 (10%)
No education	61 (34%)	(6) Mother's education	
Primary	57 (32%)	No education	76 (43%)
HSSC <sup>1</sup>	44 (25%)	Primary	64 (35%)
BA <sup>2</sup> and above	16 (9%)	HSSC	30 (17%)
		BA and above	8 (4%)

<sup>1</sup>HSSC is Higher Secondary School certificate, 12 years of schooling.

<sup>2</sup>BA is bechelor of Arts or Sciences, it is graduate degree program.

Regarding mother’s education, 76 (42%) students described that their mothers did not have any formal education, while mother of 64 (36%) students was having only primary education. Mothers of 30 (17%) students were matriculates and only 8 (4%) students’ mothers were graduates. These statistics showed that more than one third of the sample of the study were belong to such families where parents were not literate, while other one third of the sample belong to families where parents had primary level of education. These statistics where confirm the low literacy rate in adults, particularly in less urbanized city Sargodha, there, these also indicate the possible reason for low competency level of pupil, especially in English subject.

In addition, regarding the variable of father’s job, 15 (8%) students said their fathers were died, whereas 119 (66%) students reported that their fathers belong to low wages work fields. While 28 (17%) students’ fathers were government servants and only 17 (10%) students mentioned their fathers own business as profession. This stratification of sample (73% of the parents) supports the fact that in our society, parents with low socio-economic status send their children to government schools. Moreover, in order to explore the fact that whether schools are catering the need of education fully or not, a question was asked about the private coaching after school time. One fourth (25%) of the total sample responded that they take private coaching after school time, while three fourth of the sample (75% students) don’t take private coaching.

**5.1. Students’ perception about active learning environment**

Educators believe that students actively participate in learning, build their understanding and develop their skills in an active learning environment (Abraham, 1997; Hill, 2003). Active learning environment is the result of active teaching based on five teaching strategies; Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate (Bybee, 1990; Duran & Duran, 2004). To investigate the students’ perception of active learning environment for English learning, a part of the questionnaire consisted on the questions investigating the student’s perception about teaching techniques used by their English teachers was asked by the researchers. There were total seven strategies grouped in 5 E’s listed as, (i) pre-questioning before starting the lesson (Engage), (ii) Teacher-student & Student-Teacher interaction (Explore), (iii) use of AV aids during teaching (Explain), (iv) giving examples (Explain), (v) conducting class activities like role play, group work etc. (Elaboration), (vi) post questioning (Evaluate), and (vii) assigning homework (Evaluate). In this connection, Table 2 presents the frequency distribution of students, which depicts that 67% of the students were agreed upon any five techniques which their teacher demonstrate during lesson. While 25% of the students were of the view that their teachers practiced in total six techniques. Only 8% confirmed all seven techniques during lesson delivery including use of AV aids. When data was analyzed separately for each technique, 139 (77%) of the students mentioned absence of AV aids and 77 (43%) reported absence of activities during lesson.

**5.2. Acquired level of English language competency**

The third axis of the current research was focused on investigating the acquired level of fifth grade students in English. Research tool was consisted in the items measuring English language competency from grade 2 to grade 5. Obtained scores for each grade were computed in Table 3 in order to explore the gap between the acquired level and required level of English competency of the fifth graders.

In this connection, the Table 3 concerning the variable of English competency, shows that 14 (8%) students in grade two couldn’t have the conceptual clarity of English and hence did not achieve the

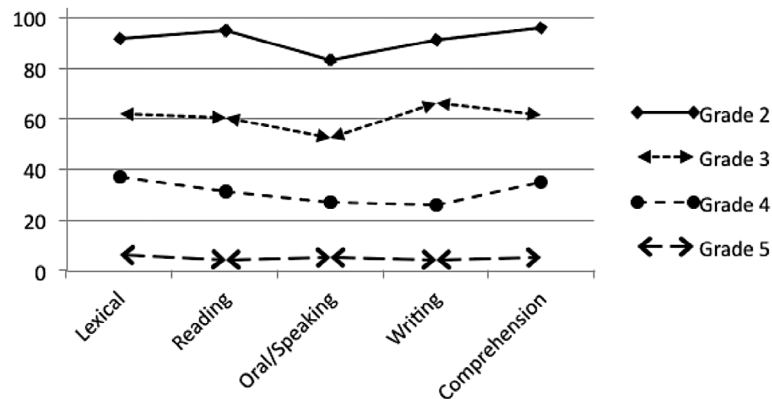
**Table 2. Frequency distribution of teaching techniques**

No. of techniques	No. of techniques	Percentage (%)
4	50	28
5	70	39
6	45	25
7	15	8

**Table 3. Conceptual clarity in sentence structure, vocabulary & comprehension in grade 2–5**

Clarity of concept	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Couldn't acquire	14 (8%)	69 (38%)	114 (63%)	141 (94%)
Acquired	166 (92%)	111 (62%)	66 (37%)	11 (6%)

**Figure 1. Acquired level in English language at grade 2–5 and in various skills.**



required level of English. While 166 (92%) students had the conceptual clarity required for grade two. Moreover, 111 (62%) students had clear concepts of English language of grade three, whereas, 38% of students did not achieve the average level of English competency at this grade. In grade four, the percentage of the students having average competency level further decreased to 37%. This trend of decrement continues in grade five too, where only 6% of fifth graders could demonstrate average competency in all skills of English language required for grade five. It shows that 94% of the fifth-grade students do not possess English language competency required for fifth graders, this depicts that the gap between the acquired and required level continues to widen to higher grades too which consequently confirms the failure in English in exams.

Moreover, this competency level of English was studied into five major dimensions. These included; Lexical (Formal & Lexical aspects of language) competency, reading skill, oral communication skill & fluency, writing & punctuation, and comprehension skills. Figure 1 presents the graphical description of the acquired level in above-mentioned five skills from grade 2 to grade 5. Moreover, it can be observed that the students in fifth grade could acquire the competency in all five skills required for grade three. However, this competency level in all skills decreased with such a tendency (as the required level increased for grade 4 & 5) that on average students could not achieve more than 10 points in each mentioned skill.

### 5.3. Group differences

The third objective of the current study was to investigate the effect of gender, parents' education level, father's nature of job on the development of English language competencies among the fifth graders. Inferential statistics, *t*-test and ANOVA were used to identify the group differences in following subsections.

### 5.4. Gender differences in English learning from grade two to five

To evaluate the gender difference in the English language competency at all four grades; from grade two to grade five, a *t*-test was calculated. Before applying parametric test, it is worthwhile to check the normality of the distribution, visually by plotting P-P plot or statistically, like Shapiro-Wilk test. It is documented that large sample sizes (>30 or 40), the violation of the normality assumption should not cause major problems (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012, p. 486). In SPSS, to check the normality, the values of skewness and kurtosis should be near to zero (Field, 2009) as this software computes the

**Table 4. Gender difference of various grades in English learning concept**

Grades	Gender	Means	S.D.	t-value
Grade 2	Male	3.49	0.77	-3.02**
	Female	3.79	0.56	
Grade 3	Male	2.64	1.217	-0.425
	Female	2.71	1.004	
Grade 4	Male	1.99	1.102	-1.160
	Female	2.16	0.879	
Grade 5	Male	1.52	1.276	-0.407
	Female	1.59	1.067	

\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

formula  $kappa^4/kappa^2$ -square (George & Mallery, 2010). Statisticians argued the acceptable range of the values between -1.5 to +1.5 (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Therefore, skewness and kurtosis values were calculated in SPSS for all sample sets and found as G2 (sk = -0.21; Krt = 0.6), G3 (Sk = -0.06; Krt = -0.13), G4 (Sk = 0.01; Krt = -0.5) and G5 (Sk = 0.42; Krt = -0.5). These values affirmed the normality condition to apply the t-test. Table 4 shows mean scores, standard deviation and respective t-values for male and female students.

T-test results in Table 4 indicate that on average, girls were showing better average score in all language skills as compared to boys, however, this difference was found significant for the grade 2 only. For competency level for grade 3, 4 and 5, girls achieved little higher score than boys, however, these values were not found statistically significant at 5% level of significance.

**5.5. Differences between the school types across the grades two to five**

To investigate the hypothesis that students belong to different school types perform equally in English language competency, in Table 5, an ANOVA test was computed for three types of schools.

Table 5 indicates that the students from three school types showed significantly different competency level of English at grades 2, 3 and 4 (at  $p < 0.01$  &  $p < 0.001$ ). However, at grade 5, differences among the school types were not found significant [ $F(2, 177) = 2.77, p = 0.06$ ]. In order to explore which sets of schools were significantly different, a bonferroni *post hoc* test was applied. Mean

**Table 5. Mean scores and standard deviations of groups of students w.r.t. types of schools**

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F
G2	Between groups	4.300	2	2.150	4.669**
	Within groups	81.500	177	0.460	
	Total	85.800	179		
G3	Between groups	41.478	2	20.739	20.149***
	Within groups	182.183	177	1.029	
	Total	223.661	179		
G4	Between groups	26.844	2	13.422	15.560***
	Within groups	153.217	177	0.866	
	Total	180.061	179		
G5	Between groups	0.7544	2	3.772	2.772
	Within groups	240.900	177	1.361	
	Total	248.444	179		

\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .



difference of girls' school ( $M = 3.8$ ,  $S.D. = 0.59$ ) and Co-Edu school ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $S.D. = 0.56$ ) with boys' school ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $S.D. = 0.85$ ) were found significant at grade 2 [Mean Diff<sub>(G,B)</sub> = 0.35\* & Mean Diff<sub>(Co,B)</sub> = 0.30\*]. In addition, for grade 3, mean difference Co-Edu school ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $S.D. = 0.78$ ) with girls' school ( $M = 2.37$ ,  $S.D. = 0.92$ ) and boys' school ( $M = 2.3$ ,  $S.D. = 1.28$ ) were found significant [Mean Diff<sub>(Co,G)</sub> = 0.98\*\*\* & Mean Diff<sub>(Co,B)</sub> = 0.50\*\*\*]. Similarly, for grade 4, mean difference Co-Edu school ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $S.D. = 0.85$ ) with girls' school ( $M = 1.98$ ,  $S.D. = 0.87$ ) and boys' school ( $M = 1.65$ ,  $S.D. = 1.05$ ) were found significant [Mean Diff<sub>(Co,G)</sub> = 0.6\*\* & Mean Diff<sub>(Co,B)</sub> = 0.93\*\*\*]. Though for grade 5, no significant difference was found among the three types of schools but Co-Edu school ( $M = 1.82$ ,  $S.D. = 1.09$ ) like previous pattern, depicted better score than the girls school ( $M = 1.53$ ,  $S.D. = 0.18$ ) and boys school ( $M = 1.32$ ,  $S.D. = 1.3$ ).

### 5.6. Effect of parents' education on the students' language competency in English

The last objective of current study was to explore the effect of parents' education and fathers' job status on the language acquisition of students at primary level. To evaluate the effect of father's education level on the students' language competency, an ANOVA was calculated for four levels of father Education. Levene's test values ( $P_{G2} = 0.12$ ,  $P_{G3} = 0.4$ ,  $P_{G4} = 0.6$  &  $P_{G5} = 0.3$ ) fulfilled the assumption of homogeneity of variances for ANOVA. ANOVA results demonstrate that the students belonging to four groups of father's education level have performed differently in their competency level of English, however no significant difference was found [ $F_{G2}(3, 174) = 0.921$ ,  $p = 0.432$ ;  $F_{G3}(3, 174) = 0.152$ ,  $p = 0.928$ ;  $F_{G4}(3, 174) = 1.323$ ,  $p = 0.268$ ; and  $F_{G5}(3, 174) = 1.329$ ,  $p = 0.267$ , respectively].

Further, the mother's education was subdivided into four groups, however, the fourth group of graduate level of education having 8 sample size was found as significant outlier, therefore, omitted for the ANOVA test. Therefore, to test the hypothesis that the students belong to mothers with three levels of education (No education, Primary & HSSC) performed same in all levels of students' language acquisition, one-way ANOVA was calculated in Table 6.

F-values indicated that the groups of students belonging to mothers with different education levels were not found significantly different for their grade 2 level of competency [ $F_{G2}(2, 167) = 1.549$ ,  $p = 0.216$ ]. For grade 2, 3 and 4, a significant difference among the groups of the students was found with respect to their mothers' education [ $F_{G3}(2, 167) = 9.211$ \*\*\* and  $F_{G4}(2, 167) = 6.743$ \*\* and  $F_{G5}(2, 167) = 3.896$ \*].

**Table 6. ANOVA results for group differences of student's w.r.t. mother's education**

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-statistic
G2	Between groups	1.430	2	0.715	0.878
	Within groups	77.094	167	0.462	
	Total	78.524	169		
G3	Between groups	20.622	2	10.311	9.211***
	Within groups	186.931	167	1.119	
	Total	207.553	169		
G4	Between groups	13.181	2	6.590	6.743**
	Within groups	163.225	167	0.977	
	Total	176.406	169		
G5	Between groups	10.337	2	5.168	3.896*
	Within groups	221.552	167	1.327	
	Total	231.888	169		

\* $p < 0.05$ .

\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Further, Bonferroni *post hoc* test was applied at 5% level of significance, to explore the significant mean differences between the groups. Students who mentioned their mothers with no education were found to have significantly low competency level in English as compare to the students belong to educated mothers [G3: Mean Diff<sub>(Pr, No Edu)</sub> = 0.64\*; G4: Mean Diff<sub>(Pr, No Edu)</sub> = 0.51\* & G5: Mean Diff<sub>(Grd, No Edu)</sub> = 1.28\*]. While for grade 5 level, students belong to graduate mothers significantly showed better English language competency as compare to those students whose mothers were having primary and HSSC level of education [Mean Diff<sub>(Grd, Pr)</sub> = 1.07\* & Mean Diff<sub>(Grd, HSSC)</sub> = 1.45\*]. These results confirmed that parents' education has positive impact on the students' language acquisition. Moreover, this effect becomes more significant and valuable on student's performance in case of educated mothers.

Lastly, in order to explore that how far father's job nature has an impact on the students' English language skills, ANOVA was calculated. It was revealed that *F*-values for grade 2 to grade 4 didn't confirm any significant difference among the groups of the students. Whereas, groups of students gained the level of English competency for grade five were found significantly different [ $F(3, 174) = 3.007, p < 0.05$ ]. It shows that father's job had no impact on students' English competency level at earlier grades but it occurred in later grades.

## 6. Conclusions and discussion

This research was focused on investigating the gap between the students acquired level and required level set in the light of SLO's proposed by the Education department, Punjab (Pakistan) in English language skills. In this regard, primary objective was to measure the students' competency in four basic skills (reading, writing, comprehension, and speaking) of English language. Out of 180 primary students, 141 (94%) were not able to achieve the English language competency level of fifth grade. Results indicated a continuous deterioration in students' competency in all skills, especially in speaking skill, as difficulty level increases to grade five. It may be concluded that either the student's learning objectives (SLO's) of English are not aligned with the possible competency level of the students at primary level, that is, curriculum designed at primary level was not according to the competency level of students at primary level. Or there is deficiency in delivering process such as, teaching methodology, teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and content knowledge itself as mentioned in other research studies (Alhabahba et al., 2016; Al-Issa, Al-Bulushi, & Al-Zadjali, 2017; Day, 1999; Kirchner & Mostert, 2017). However, results also showed that majority of the students (94%) indicated their perception that their teachers used A.V aids and other teaching techniques like; asking pre-questioning, questioning during lesson, post questioning, etc. students also reported that their English teacher performed class room activities related to the topic and assigned home work (Heidari-Shahreza, 2018).

In such scenario, expected explanation may be culture and environment of the community that surrounds the children. The adult literacy rate in Sargodha is low and majority of the population, especially more than 35 years old, is illiterate (PSLM, 2012) therefore, for a student being a part of such community is a great hurdle for him/her to acquire English Language competency. Regarding the group differences results, it was found that gender played role in English language competency. The findings demonstrated that girls were better in language competency than boys, further, boys from single sex school showed low level of language competency in English as compared to co-education school. These findings confirmed the previous research scholarship that girls perform better in language as compared to boys (United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2006) and boys perform better in co-education as compare to single sex schools (Khan, 2006; Khattak, 2012).

Finally, the axis of the current research was to explore the impact of parents' socioeconomic status in terms of their education level and their financial situation on students' English language competency. It was revealed in results that parents' education level had positive influence on the student's English competency. Moreover, more mother's than father's education was found to have significant positive effect on the student's competency and conceptual clarity in all skills of English language. The possible reason may be that mothers at home used to have more contact hours with

children than fathers thus have more chance to communicate with children and hence help children in language acquisition. In addition to it, father's job was also found positive impact on student's English competency, though it wasn't found in earlier grades (grade two to four), however, for grade five it showed significant relation. These findings strengthen the belief that "higher the education level, better the SES<sup>2</sup> of parents and hence better the quality of education for kids".

## 7. Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the current research, it is recommended that English curriculum should be devised according to competency level of students. Cheating should be discouraged at every cost to get the clear picture of student's ability as it was observed that in order to send the fake image of "all is good" and explanations on "poor performance", teachers in government schools are used to dictate the correct answers to the students during annual examination. Government should give training to teachers for English teaching. If they fail in teaching they should be given warning to improve themselves. This study showed that students did not know even the fundamental concepts of English language. Therefore, government should appoint highly qualified teachers at primary level for the purpose of bridging this gap. In the current study, most of the students belonged to the poor households. They could not afford learning aids. Therefore, government should give scholarship to students on the bases of poverty not merit. It is strongly recommended for the class teacher to arrange at least two periods in a week for teaching communication skills to the students.

There should be arrangement of some co communication classes in government schools on monthly basis, as it was evident in results that boys performed better in learning English in coeducation. The school environment has impact on the primary school students in learning English, therefore workshops for the parents can be planned with the support of community members to inculcate the tips and techniques of learning English language to help out students as well as parents. In this way, the school environment would be more supportive and will enhance the students' capacities. Government and private school association together initiate for a platform where the students from different socio-economic classes, private and government schools share their English learning experiences regularly with each other. In addition, through this platform, students would be provided the opportunity to participate in different seminars, focused group discussion, and buzz group session especially designed to enhance English learning competencies.

Furthermore, due to some constraints, the sample of the study was not sufficiently large so, therefore, it should be large enough to generalize the inferences. For future research, it is recommended that this type of research should be conducted on cross-sectional sample. It is further suggested that a longitudinal study should also be conducted on one, two, three and four class students. It is recommended that the research should be conducted to analyze the competency of students in other subjects too at primary level. It is recommended that the research should be done in other districts of Punjab province in order to have a picture of ground reality. It is further proposed that teachers' training programs, particularly for the English, should be reformed.

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### Notes

1. A Public School in Punjabi is also called Urdu medium school because of Urdu as the medium of education.
2. SES stands for Socio-economic status.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire

#### Demographic Information (to be asked from head teacher and parents)

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ School name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:  Male  Female

Q1. Your brothers: \_\_\_\_\_ Your sisters: \_\_\_\_\_

Q2. what is education level of your father?

No education  Primary  Matric/F.A  B.A  M.A

Q3. what is education level of your mother?

No education  Primary  Matric/F.A  B.A  M.A

Q4. What does your father do? \_\_\_\_\_

Q5. What does your mother do? \_\_\_\_\_

Q6. Do you go to tuition?

Yes  No

Q7. Do have computer in home?

Yes  No

Q8. Do you use computer?

Yes  No

Q9. Does English teacher use black board in the class?

Yes  No

Q10. Does English teacher ask question before starting the lesson?

Yes  No

Q11. Does English teacher ask question during the lesson?

Yes  No

Q12. Does English teacher ask question after end of lesson?

Yes  No

Q13. Does English teacher give you examples related to topic?

Yes  No

Q14. Does English teacher perform any activity in the class?

Yes  No

Q15. Does your English teacher give homework?

Yes  No

### English Language Competency of students

(1) Use “like” and “carrot” in one sentence

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Use the words “drink” “hot” “cup” in one sentence

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

(3) Use the words “yesterday” “school” “close” in one sentence

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

(4) Use the words “fat” “brother” “happy” in one sentence

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

(5) Encircle noun in given words.

(a) Ali (b) he (c) good (d) kind

(6) Pronouns this

(a) We (b) Wet (c) And (d) At

(7) Identify uncountable nouns

(a) Schools, colleges (b) Cites, Countries (c) Gold, silver (d) Students, teachers

(8) Group of the words all adjectives is

(a) High, tall, tell (b) Little, sad, weep (c) Good, small, cow (d) Small, tall, high

(9) Write names of two fruits

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

(10) Write names of two months

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

(11) Write two words which ends at “ing”

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

(12) Write two words that rhyme with “sing”

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

**Read the sentence and answer the given question**

(13) The capital of Pakistan is Islamabad. Pakistan has four provinces.

Q: Where is capital of Pakistan?

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

(14) Traffic lights or pedestrian crossings are the safest places to cross.

Q: What are the safest places to cross a road?

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

(15) Environment means the air, food, water, plants, animals and other people around us.

Q: What does environment mean?

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

(16) After the death of Hazrat Abu Talib the Quraish were creating serious difficulties for the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Therefore the Holy Prophet (PBUH) decided to go to Tiaf to preach Islam.

Q: 17 Where did the Holy Prophet (PBUH) decided to go? Why?

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

Q: 18. Write a paragraph on “My mother” with the help of given mind map

Like      Name      food  
dislike      My mother      love

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Oral questions

- (19) What is your name?
- (20) In which school do you study?
- (21) How old are you?
- (22) How are you?
- (23) What does your father do?

### Reading

#### Read the following lines:

- (24) He lived with his mother. One day, she said to Meeco, "Don't go outside.
- (25) Mr. Abbas has two sons, Furqan and Noman. Both the boys are hard working.
- (26) Karachi, the capital of sind, is the biggest city of Pakistan.
- (27) Instead of accepting his call to Islam, they asked him to leave Taif.



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