



CONSEQUENCES OF POOR PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT- This qualitative study was aimed to explore the consequences of poor performance of students in English language at secondary level. The study also identified ways and means for improving students' performance in English at secondary public schools. The objectives of the study were: i) to identify the consequences of poor performance of students in English language at secondary school level. ii) to identify ways and means for improving students' performance in English at secondary school level. The target population in this study consisted of students and teachers of the public schools and the sample of the study consisted of 11 teachers of English and 11 secondary school students studying in public sectors schools in district Abbottabad. Semi-structured interviews were developed to collect data and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that negative attitude toward English language, lack of interest in the study, dropout, lack of confidence, poor performance in sciences subjects, lack of participation in the school program, rude behavior, fewer opportunities for higher education or job were identified as consequences of poor performance of the students in the subject of English language at secondary level.

The study also explored the ways and means for dealing with the poor performance of the students in English language at secondary school level. The study has important implications for teachers, students, policymakers, and education researchers.

Keywords: Poor Performance, Consequences, Secondary School, Dropout, School activities.

I. INTRODUCTION

A language is a communication system consisting of a set of signs and a set of system or sentence structure that regulates the manipulations of these signs. These symbols communicate new information and make a distinction between language and other forms of message (Rahamneh, 2012). English is a vehicle of thought and lack of command over it is bound to make thoughts inexpressible. Only those who can understand any language can express themselves in that language (Al-khairi, 2013).

English has also been the official language of Pakistan. In the first educational meeting, Quaid Mohammad Ali Jinnah, despite proclaiming Urdu as the national language, still never disregarded the significance of English. Ahmad, Ahmad, Bukhari, & Bukhari (2011) commented that the use of English in Pakistan is well enriched. It is a prerequisite for employment in the public and private sectors. English is the language of science and technology; its importance can never be denied nor ignored. The recent revolution in the field of information technology is almost entirely based on English. Therefore, to remain in step with the expanding frontier of human knowledge, the use of English in Pakistan needs to be actively sponsored by the educated and patronized by the policymakers.

English has been one of the compulsory school subjects in Pakistan. This subject has also been considered as one of the difficult school subjects in Pakistan. ELT investigations in Pakistan reveal that the majority of the learners who complete high school education and join various public and private higher education institutions are not capable to use language to meet their social, individual, academic, and vocational needs (Al-Issa, 2009). The literature reviewed for this study reveals an array of consequences of poor performance of students in English as a school subject. Many Pakistani students drop out of school because of their repeated poor performance in English. It is important to explore the consequences of poor performance of students in this important curricular subject in the Pakistani context in depth. Therefore, the current qualitative study aimed to examine the consequences of poor performance of the students in English language at secondary school level in Abbottabad, Hazara Division. This study revolved around the following research questions:

1. What are the consequences of poor performance of students in English at secondary school level?

2. What are the ways and means for improving students' performance in English at secondary school level?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

English is a major school subject in many countries around the globe. Globalization will increase the power of English because it will open up more jobs for those who know it. These employments will be constrained by the worldwide arrangement of government, United States, IMF, and World Bank, and so on, which have begun work continuously more in English (Skutnab, 2000). As Mueen (1992) states that no one can reject the value of English in the present world. Its value is not limited to students and professionals only but it is also very essential for common public. The use of English in Pakistan is well enriched. It is a prerequisite for employment in public and private sectors. English is the language of science and technology; its importance can never be denied nor ignored. The recent revolution in the field of information technology is almost entirely based on English. Therefore, in order to remain in step with the expanding frontier of human knowledge, the use of English in Pakistan needs to be actively sponsored by the educated and patronized by the policymakers (Khan, 2013).

English Teaching in Pakistan at secondary level

A generally believed fact is that without being aware of the aims of any task, its desired result cannot be achieved. To make learning much effective and systematic, teachers should be clear about the long-term goals and specific aims of teaching English (Richard, 2008). The aims of teaching English at secondary level are manifolds, such as to equip learners with the four language skills; listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Listening is considered to be the very basic and important skill of any language. Listening provides a base for other language skills. According to Ali, (2002, p. 210), "Listening is a process which involves perceiving that there is a systematic message, in a continuous stream of sound and then apprehending and identifying within this stream bounded elements the listener has never heard in exactly this form before". It suggests that listening skill requires a profound knowledge of phonology or sound system of the language. Listening exercises must be constructed carefully and step-by-step (Broh, 2000). There is a strong argument for spending more time training pupils' listening skills before we introduce them to more complex oral exercises (Barton & Appleby, 2008). The teacher should also ensure that the learners know the words happening in the listening activity. The students should be told about the reason or the purpose of the activity i.e. what they are supposed to do after listening and why they are given this training. Hanapiah (2004) notes that a good teacher enters the classroom with teaching and learning materials available, knowledge, capability, and the ambition to take one more child up to the standard than he/she did yesterday. This implies that the quality of education is directly related to the quality of instruction delivered by teachers in classrooms.

The Consequences of Poor Performance in English

There is a lot effect with those factors mentioned above as caused on the pupils' academic career such as examination malpractice, low thinking ability, low rate of research making and low good standard of living. However, Orgunsi (2009) views examination poor performance of pupils in secondary school English in Nigeria. Here, the pupils thinking of alternatives after several times of doing a particular examination, and the pupils passed all other subjects but failed only English and this is what makes many of them engaging in one form of malpractice or the other examination mal-practices. This examination malpractice includes buying question paper before the examination. Moreover, many of these pupils enter secondary school under struggle even to pass their examination to tertiary institution is another problem entirely.

Importantly, the socio-cultural and psychological adjustment of students might be influenced by their English proficiency, which might impact their academic success. For example, Yan and Jin (2007) highlighted the role of English self-confidence in the process of socio-cultural and psychological adjustment to an English-speaking academic environment. Further, Takase (2007) reported that weak English language skills were perceived as one of the reasons why international students were isolated from local students and faculty members. These findings indicate that English proficiency is indirectly associated with the academic performance of international students through its impact on other factors in the socio-cultural and psychological dimensions.

Students' Low Standard of Living

Amitava (2010) view that effect of poor performance in English also affects or cause low standard of living as an individual, many people find it difficult to manage or use, the little available resources, many believed that until they are getting or collecting big salary or income before they could take good care of themselves simply because of poor foundation they had in English right from primary level. Even those who are collecting big salary or income cannot just make a simple scale of reference on their little income to satisfy their want all because of lack of knowledge of English.

Barton, Ivanic, Appleby, Hodge, and Tusting (2007) viewed that students' poor performance in English language has negative effects on the attitudes and motivation of the learners. Similarly, Van Lier (1996) argues that language use and language learning are the parts of the world in which learners live, therefore, any activity undertaken in the classroom must be understood in context, and has its effect on the learners' beliefs, attitudes as well as their shaped behavior. Traditionally, language and literacy have been viewed through a deficit lens as a set of skills. Barton et al. (2007) suggest that literacy and language need to be seen in use and be approached as a set of social practices. This takes the learning and teaching of literacy beyond a restricting range of skills, into the use of language and literacy across people's wider (beyond learning contexts) lives.

Effects of Poor Performance in English on Students Academic Record

Research findings in different parts of the world reveal that students can be disadvantaged in their performance at school, college and university because of their poor proficiency level in English. To buttress this, many researchers have investigated the effects of English language proficiency on the academic performance of students. Zughoul (1987) for example, argues that inadequate mastery of the four language skills; namely listening, speaking, reading and writing hinders the progress of Arab students at university level. Warsi (2004) agrees with Zughoul's point of view in questioning the linguistic competence of incoming freshmen students. Furthermore, Ghrib (2004) states that university students are unable to use English Language correctly and appropriately both inside and outside the classroom when dealing with academic and everyday topics. Similarly, in a study conducted by Sivaramana, Al Balushib, and Rao (2014) on students at a college in Oman, it was reported that the lack of proficiency in English does affect their performance in engineering courses. Other research findings at two tertiary institutions in Oman also show a strong, positive relationship between English Language performance and academic achievement (Roche & Harrington, 2013). In addition, the results of a co-relational stucco-relational by Sahragard and Baharloo (2009) on Iranian university students majoring in English Language and literature found that students who are more competent in English Language are more successful in their classes. Furthermore, in an attempt to determine whether there was a significant relationship between Iranian college students' language proficiency and their academic achievement, the results of a study conducted by Sahragard and Baharloo (2009) indicated that the students who scored higher on the language proficiency test had better academic achievement scores. Research findings from school contexts have been reported. For instance, the results of a study conducted by Ahmad and Rao, (2013) at a secondary school in Pakistan illustrated that the more proficient students are in English the better they are in academic subjects. Not much research literature is available in the Pakistani context related to the consequences of poor performance of students in English language. The present study aimed to fill this gap by exploring the consequences of poor performance of the student in English.

III. METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research was adopted for the study as this design is generally used for understanding the perceptions of research participants in detail regarding educational/social phenomena. Qualitative research is generally flexible and evolves during the research process. It is used to attain comprehension of underlying reasons, perspectives, and inspirations. Qualitative research involves a procedure known as induction, whereby information is gathered relating to an area of study (Burgess, and Mimeo 2006).

The population of the study consisted of 178 English teachers teaching in government secondary schools in district Abbottabad and 3750 students of class 10th studying in government secondary schools in the session 2017-18. The sample of this study consisted of 11 secondary school English teachers (one from each school) and 11secondary school students (one from each school).

A purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. The main reason for the purposive sampling was the qualitative nature of the study. The purposive sampling technique is one of the most widely used techniques in qualitative interview studies (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

IV. DATA COLLECTION

The data for the study was obtained from two main sources:

1. Interview (semi-structured) with teachers.
2. Interview (semi-structured) with students.

These interviews were used keeping in view the requirement of this study to obtain detailed views of the respondents regarding the issue. A semi-structured interview is a valuable tool for social science data collection, as it is flexible and helps researchers gain insight into the information, attitudes, values, and beliefs of an individual (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The researcher applied for a permission letter to research sample schools from the office of District Education Officer Abbottabad. After obtaining a permission letter researcher visited the sample schools to select days and times for data collection. The interview was personally conducted with the sample students and teachers. The interviews were administered after seeking and getting the consent of the participants. The researcher also ensured the selected students and teachers that the information is collecting for research purposes and that their care will be taken of their confidentiality and anonymity.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

The data was analyzed by using thematic analysis. First of all, the researcher translated the interviews into English. Before transcribing the researcher listened to each interview many times. To avoid ambiguity each set of interviews was translated and transcribed within two or three days it was conducted. It was a fundamental starting stage in increasing an outline of the information. After the process of transcribing and interpreting the interviews, the next stage was reading and re-reading the data to make sense of the data. The next step was the identification of themes, a thematic chart was developed at this stage, and extracts of relevance from coded data were compiled into themes. These thematic charts enabled the understanding of the main themes and sub-themes. By the time all thematic charts were formed, each thematic category grouped the coded pieces. Significance classifications were grouped into themes and sub-themes. The last step was the refining of themes and the formation of explanations, at this point all the coded excerpts were carefully read and re-read for the themes refinement. It was noted that some sub-themes were found overlapping others, such themes were collated according to their relevance to other themes or sub-themes. Then themes were arranged in line with research objectives and each theme was given a title name and was duly supported by relevant quotes from the interviews.

Findings Based on Objective 1 (Consequences of poor performance of students in English)

Theme 1: Students related consequences

The finding indicated that the negative attitude of the learners toward English was a major consequence of poor performance of the students at secondary level. The study showed that the flaw of students in science subjects at secondary school level was also one of the major consequences of students' poor performance in English subjects. Finding also revealed that most students failed in the board examination due to their poor performance in English language at secondary school level. The following quotations from the respondents' interviews elaborate on this theme.

Participant 1 stated that: In my point of view, most of the students have depressing attitudes toward English language due to their poor performance in English language.

Participant 5 shared that: I think that poor English performance of students substantially reduces their interest in study and chances of school completion or college entrance.

Participant 3 shared as Another consequence of poor performance in English that I want to share with you is the pessimistic approach of the students toward English.

Theme 2: School-related consequences

The finding showed that some of students in the public schools were out of school (dropout) because of their poor performance in English subjects. Findings showed that students' lack of participation in school activities or events conducted by the school was also a result of poor performance of the student in English at secondary level. The finding of the study also showed that difficulty in getting admission to college was also one of the major consequences of poor performance of the student in English at secondary level. Moreover, an aggressive and ignoring attitude of teachers and parents was a result of poor performance of students in English language. Finding of the study also revealed that teachers' and parents' frustration about their children was also one of the main consequences of poor performance of students in English at secondary level. The following quotations from the respondents' interviews elaborate on this theme.

Participant 7 stated: Well, I think that students' dropping out of school is also a result of their poor performance in English language. Due to poor English performance, students not only leave their studies incomplete but also switch their focus from important things to some unimportant things.

I think students' lack of participation in school activities is also one of the major consequences of the weak performance of the students in English language. (Participant 4)

Theme 3: Psychological consequences

The findings of the study revealed that the shyness and rudeness of the students were a result of their poor performance in English language. The findings of the study showed that students lost their self-confidence due to their poor performance in English language. Finding also revealed that students' negative attitude toward English language was one of the major consequences of poor presentation of the students in English language. Some quotations from respondents' interviews regarding this theme are as below:

Participant 6 stated that: I think Poor performance of the students in English also has negative effects on students' behavior.

Well, in my point of view due to poor performance in English students are not able to speak or read even a few sentences in English language with confidence. (Participant 3)

Findings of the Study Based on Objective 2: (Ways and means for improving students' performance in English language)

Theme 1: Teachers' related improvement

The study showed that conducting in-service training or refresher courses for the English teachers was one of the ways to boost the performance of the students in English at secondary level. The current study suggested that English subject specialists should be provided to all the public secondary schools to improve the performance of students in English. The finding showed that activity-based English language teaching in the classroom had a very positive effect on the performance of the students in English language at secondary level. It was also found that teacher's quality had a lasting effect on students' learning, so teachers should be trained and competent. Similarly, finding of the study revealed that punishment needed to be banned and discourage at the secondary level in order to improve students' performance in English language. Some quotations from respondents' interviews regarding this theme are as below:

Participant 11 shared as: Teachers should be trained and be aware of the modern innovations in the teaching-learning process. For this purpose, refresher courses should be conducted for English teachers.

There should be adequate training given to the teachers. In-service training or refresher courses should be conducted in order to improve the presentation of students in English. (Participant 7)

I think, all the facilities regarding teaching and learning should be provided in the schools in order to make the teaching and learning process effective and interesting. (Participant 8)

Theme 2: Students/school-related improvement

The finding of the study revealed that the duration of English language period should be extended in order to enhance the performance of the students in English at secondary level. The study also revealed that the number of students in the classroom should be decreased in order to improve students' performance. Similarly, the system of setting textbooks ought to be revised in such a way that students were encouraged to read more than mere textbooks. The finding of the study revealed that provision of facilities regarding English language in the public school was also one of the ways to increase students' success in English language. Moreover, findings showed that participation of the students in co-curriculum activities should also be encouraged to enhance the performance of the students in English language. Some quotations from respondents' interviews regarding this theme are as below:

Participant 9 stated that: Well. I think extra time should be provided for English classes to order to increase the learners' presentation in English.

In my point of view, classrooms should also be spacious where students can do practice more to speak, listen, read and write. I think for this purpose number of the students in English language classroom ought to be less than 40. (Participant 6)

Participant 2 stated that: I think the syllabus should be revised and updated. It should also be standardized and according to the mental level of the students.

Theme 3: Parents related improvements

This study showed that students improve their performance in English language when they were financially, academically, and socially supported by their parents. Furthermore, extra coaching for children should be conducted to increase their performance in English language at secondary school level. The following quotations from the respondents' interviews elaborate on this theme.

Participant 1 stated that: I think parents should financially support their children in academic and social ways to help children study with morals. They should encourage their children to learn English language.

Of course, to ensure teachers are successful, parents and guardians must support their efforts. This cooperation will create a sense of discipline and responsibility on the part of the students and improve the learning accordingly. (Participant 5)

VI. DISCUSSION

The study also identified some consequences of poor performances of students in English language at the secondary school level. The respondents reported that in the public schools' performance of the students in English subjects is not good as a result they start hating to learn English language and their attitude toward English language becomes negative. The study revealed that due to this attitude students feel nervousness, remain absent in the class and want to get rid of learning English language in school. It is an attitude as stated by Eggen and Kauchak (2010) who stated that some of the negative attitudes are more visible with students who present worse levels of apparent make sentence. They further responded that poor performance in English language makes the students weak in sciences subjects and poor-performing performance of school fulfillment and college entrance. It was found that poor performance of students in English language results in the big hurdle of the secondary level students in the way to achieve good result in the board examination. Due to poor performance in English mostly students lose their interest in the study. Similarly, Marshall (2008, p. 5) states that lack of interest "robs our class of the passion and enthusiasm that we aspire to create in our students". Similarly, students' lack of participation in school activities, lack of confidence, dropout, unsatisfactory academic results is found consequences of poor performance of students in English at secondary level.

The study also explored some ways and means for improving students' performance in English language at secondary level. The study revealed that teacher is a vital part of the teaching-learning process. The performance of the students in English language is directly related to the teaching quality of teachers. To improve performance of students in English language, the teachers have to be recruited on merit. Moreover, instead of traditional methods of teaching, scientific teaching methodology has to be adopted to

enhance the performance of the students. Studies by Ekpoh, Oswald & Victoria (2013) show that teachers who attend in-service training perform effectively in their work concerning knowledge of the subject, classroom management, teaching method, and evaluation of students. Participants of the study described that time for English class should be extended in order to enhance students' performance in English. Patall, Cooper, & Allen (2010) who concluded that expanding school time could be a particularly effective means to support student learning for students who are most at risk of school failure supported it. Similarly, the study revealed that the number of students in the English classroom should be small and parents should also be involved in learning process of their children. The current study also indicated that participation of students in co-curricular activities is a helpful tool for improving their performance in English. Moreover, the availability of appropriate educational and infrastructural facilities, a well-balanced curriculum, and an effective examination system was also the ways and means of improving the performance of students in English at secondary level.

Conclusion Based on objective 1: Consequences of poor performance of students in English

It is concluded that all the science subjects in public secondary schools are in English medium. Therefore, it is difficult for students to perform well in science subjects due to their poor performance in English. In the race of modern technology, students need to have command over English language to use and understand. Thus, it was also concluded that poor performances of the students in English reduce the chance of getting admission to college and handsome job. In the present study majority of the students have lack of confidence and stay away from participating in school activities/programs due to their poor performance in English language.

Conclusion Based on objective 2: Ways and means for improvement of students' performance in English

In-service training is an essential part of the improvement of teacher's professionalism linked to the teachers' idea to develop the quality of their job. English educators are not academically competent to educate it. Therefore, appointment of the English language teachers' should be on English subject-based. A comparatively small class gives the teacher chance to do well and consequently monitor the advancement of the students. So, if there is any difficulty in the learning procedure it could be tackled at the primary stage. Moreover, a small number of students in the class facilitates the instructor to simply deal with them. Similarly, school facilities enable the teacher to achieve his task and help the students to learn English language. It was concluded that current syllabus of English language needs to redesign by including different language activities exercises in order to improve performance of students in English language at secondary level. Similarly, the study concluded that learners are more successful when their parents are involved in their learning process.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The government may organize in-service courses and seminars for English teachers so that they are updated on new approaches and methodologies for teaching at secondary level. District administration may provide schools with the needed teaching and learning materials to facilitate the teaching and learning process at secondary school level in Abbottabad. Principals/headmasters may take the opportunity to encourage parents to be actively involved in their children's education at secondary school level. Parents may create an atmosphere that would facilitate home learning of the English language. It could be done by making a small home bookstore and setting study time for the children. The examination system at secondary level may be improved. The number of students in a class may not exceed forty at secondary level school. Encourage all students to take part in extra-curricular activities that will give them the opportunity to develop self-confidence and positive self-esteem.

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