

Factors Affecting the Speaking Skills of ESL Students in Rural Areas of Pakistan

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Abstract: The objective of this research is to examine the barriers to the English Language speaking strength of the students from the Sargodha district of Punjab studying at the Matriculation (SSC) and Intermediate (HSSC) levels. In Punjabi-speaking communities where students are already speaking Punjabi fluently, students find difficulties in understanding the concepts of English as L2 (Second Language). By having semi-structured interviews with the Fifty (50) students in the age group of 13 to 19, a significant language awareness of L2 was observed. The results reveal the significant inhibiting factors in speaking English including the educational system, students' abilities to learn English correctly, and parental linguistics attempts. Moreover, this study also finds certain lacks as far as two things i.e. teaching and learning are concerned. It also finds the complexities as far as academic and professional language usage is concerned. In addition to this, this awareness also informs how a system can be introduced that purely focuses on learning the speaking skills of the English language in a conducive environment. So, by identifying such inhibiting factors in speaking English, the persons who are involved in policy-making, teachers, scholars, and educationists can overcome the problems faced during English speaking in the rural areas of Pakistan. Therefore, about the discussion above, this analysis will explore all the issues related to learning English Speaking skills in the countryside areas of Pakistan.

Keywords: Barriers, Speaking Hindrance, Rural areas, Questionnaire, Survey

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1. Introduction

Proficiency in English is crucial for academic, professional, and personal development in the modern world, especially in nations like Pakistan where it is an official language and is widely spoken, written, and understood in government, business, and education Rahman & Durrani, [1]. Nevertheless, despite its significance, learning English—especially speaking it fluently—is

extremely difficult for students in Pakistan's rural areas, especially in the Sargodha district of Punjab. Strong speaking abilities are difficult to develop in rural areas due to the linguistic environment, which is dominated by languages like Punjabi and Urdu. This limits students' exposure to understanding the basics and practices with English outside of the classroom Khan, [2] Raza, [3].

The traditional educational system, which primarily emphasizes rote learning and reading and writing skills, leaving speaking and listening components underdeveloped, further impedes English language acquisition in these areas Fahad, [4]. These problems have been made worse by the dearth of communicative teaching strategies and opportunities for real-world language use outside of the classroom, which leaves students with theoretical knowledge of English but lacking the self-assurance and proficiency to speak it fluently Rauf, [5]. Additionally, a lot of students in rural areas don't get enough help from their families because parents frequently don't speak English well enough to help their kids learn the language Gulzar & Hussain, [6].

The purpose of this study is to examine the obstacles that impede the matriculation (SSC) and intermediate (HSSC) levels of students in rural Punjab, particularly in the Sargodha district, from developing their English-speaking abilities. The study aims to determine the main obstacles that students encounter when they try to speak English and investigate how the educational system, instructional strategies, parental participation, and sociocultural elements all play a role in these obstacles through semi-structured interviews with fifty students between the ages of 13 and 19.

By tackling these obstacles, this study will offer important new perspectives on how to enhance English-speaking instruction and learning in rural school settings. The study's ultimate goal is to provide useful suggestions for improving English language proficiency in rural Pakistan for educators, legislators, and community stakeholders Zahid & Iqbal, [7].

Language is a basic element and an important feature that serves as a necessary source for communication in society, shaping interactions and facilitating the expression of ideas and thoughts. Without language, the social fabric cannot function effectively. Mastery of the local language (L1) provides native speakers with a supportive environment and cognitive advantages from an early age, promoting seamless communication in daily life. However, learning an (L2), such as English, requires conscious effort and acquaintance with effective (SLA) practices. Numerous aspects influence the procedure of acquiring a new language, together with assertiveness, self-assurance, inspiration, classroom situations, environmental influences, familial upbringing, the conscientiousness of students, and the obtainability of qualified

educators Raja & Selvi, [8]. Now in Pakistan, students from rural backgrounds often struggle to communicate effectively in English despite having undergone formal education. Geographically, Punjabi predominates as the medium of communication among these students throughout their primary and intermediate education. However, upon entering higher educational institutions, they encounter an English-medium curriculum where instructors primarily use English to deliver lectures and interact with students. Despite being enrolled in English-medium programs, many students find themselves unable to articulate even simple sentences without grammatical errors Shah & Rahman, [1]. Research indicates that students often approach English learning solely to achieve good grades, neglecting the development of practical speaking skills. Effective communication in English requires consistent practice both within and outside of the classroom, emphasizing the importance of interactions with teachers, peers, and family members. Thus, to foster proficiency in L2, students must engage in regular, meaningful practice that extends beyond academic assessments. To improve educational outcomes effectively, there is a dire need to do needful for ESL students in the rural zones of Pakistan so that they become able to learn and improve their English language skills.

1.1 Problem Statement

It is also pertinent to mention here that there has always been an immense challenge of the literature gap or its unavailability for the ESL students of rural areas at (SSC) Matriculation and (HSSC) Intermediate level of studies. Background studies of families are not taken care of. It is usually observed that such students are those who are eager to learn new skills, first of all, they will observe this from their family setup. It is also really sad to discuss that most of the reliable and valuable contexts of studies are either shifted toward urban neighborhoods or are not transferred toward countryside areas. Subsequently, students belonging to rural areas are often deprived of getting quality education. This is a basic gap of this study that circles towards the students of rural areas of Sargodha district. By addressing these gaps, this study may improve the English teaching practices and students' overall performance in understanding English language proficiency in rural areas.

1.2 Research Questions

1. Why are the students at (SSC) Matriculation and (HSSC) Intermediate levels not found to be fluent at speaking English in the rural areas?

2. What are the strategies being opted to remove the obstacles and barriers in speaking a Second Language (L2)?

2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have identified the various factors that impair rural students' speaking abilities at the SSC and HSSC levels. According to historical research, students in rural areas encounter many challenges when they talk in English as a second language, such as inadequate teacher preparation, a lack of resources, and little opportunity to practice speaking English outside of the classroom Bashir & Iqbal, [9]. This is especially true in areas where everyday communication is dominated by regional languages, like Punjabi in Sargodha. Speaking, which is frequently the most difficult skill for L2 learners, is often the result of students' lack of opportunity to practice English in authentic contexts Khan, [2].

It is impossible to overestimate the influence of the educational system and instructional strategies on students' development of English language proficiency. Traditional, rote-based approaches that emphasize grammar and vocabulary over real-world language use, especially when speaking, are frequently used to teach English in rural areas like Sargodha Rahman & Durrani, [1]. Research indicates that as these approaches do not give students the chance to actively use and practice speaking skills, they are ineffective in promoting fluency and communicative competence Rauf, [5]. Students' ability to learn effectively is further hampered by the fact that teachers in these areas frequently lack proper professional development in English language teaching (ELT).

A student's language development greatly benefits from parental support, particularly in rural areas where English is not the primary language spoken at home. According to research, parental participation in language learning is frequently low in rural Pakistani households, especially when it comes to exposing children to English through conversation or reading materials Muneer, [10]. Given that the home environment is a crucial setting for language practice, this lack of support further hinders students' ability to become proficient English speakers Gulzar & Hussain, [6].

Students' attitudes towards learning English have a major impact on whether they succeed or fail at becoming proficient in the language. English is frequently seen as a source of academic achievement and social mobility in rural areas, which can put pressure on students while

simultaneously encouraging a strong desire to learn Zahid & Iqbal, [7]. But even with this understanding of the value of English, students frequently feel overpowered by the challenges of learning a completely new language in a setting where Punjabi, their first language, is so widely used Raza, [3]. This awareness can occasionally cause anxiety in students, especially when it comes to oral communication, as they may worry about making mistakes or not being able to communicate clearly in English.

The significance of creating a supportive environment for language learning, especially for speaking abilities, has been underlined by recent studies. An engaging and encouraging classroom setting can greatly improve students' English-speaking abilities as per research by Malik, [11]. Peer interaction, collaborative learning, and activities that promote language use in everyday situations are all opportunities that are frequently absent from rural classrooms. Furthermore, it has been determined that one of the most important factors in raising general English proficiency is the requirement for a system that is especially geared toward improving speaking abilities Chaudhry & Jamil, [12].

It is commonly acknowledged that tackling these issues through policy and educational reforms is crucial. According to recent research, the curriculum should incorporate communicative language teaching (CLT) techniques that emphasize speaking and listening abilities in addition to reading and writing Zahid & Iqbal, [7]. Furthermore, suggestions include expanding opportunities for teacher training, enhancing the availability of English-language materials, and incorporating parents in the process of language acquisition Fahad, [4]. It is recommended that policymakers create plans that address the unique obstacles that rural students encounter, such as limited exposure to the language and speaking practice opportunities Nadeem & Saeed, [13].

Considering this fact, there is also a big challenge of the literature gap or its unavailability for the ESL students of rural areas at the Matriculation and Intermediate levels. Contextual studies of families are not studied properly. If the students are keen to understand and learn new skills, first of all, they will observe this from their family setup. It is also a tragic situation that most of the reliable and valuable contexts of studies are either shifted towards urban localities or are not shifted to countryside areas. Students belonging to rural areas are often deprived of getting quality education. This is a basic gap of this study that revolves around the students of rural areas of Sargodha district. By fulfilling these gaps, this study may improve the English teaching practices and students' overall performance in understanding English language proficiency.

The basic and important framework of this study is to focus on English English-speaking fluency among Pakistani students of (SSC) Matric and (HSSC) Intermediate classes in rural areas. These elements are divided into three main parts i.e. individual, familial, and institutional factors. Individual or personal level speaks about how an individual learns English showing his interests and motivation. As signified in the literature term, motivation and devotion play an important role in learning language awareness. On the other hand, a lack of confidence or demotivation leads to unhealthy speaking circumstances. Family-related matters like a supporting end from parents also play a solid role as far as students' educational issues are concerned. Students will be more devoted if necessary support from family members is provided. Moreover, such families who focus on speaking English more proficiently usually develop an English-speaking environment in the home comparable to those families who speak their local languages more at home. The use of local language creates a hurdle for producing English speaking environment. As far as institutional elements are concerned, in this case, course framework, active participation, and approaches of the teachers are very important. Efficient communication of English language speaking must be available in the classrooms so that fluency in the language may be developed.

The theoretical framework of this study is mainly focused on the Sociocultural Theory and the Interactionist Perspective to gain language learning. The sociocultural theory establishes that language can only be learned by social aspects. If we talk about Pakistan, it is obvious that in this country local language is more merged than any other language. These things disturb the students who want to speak English fluently. So, to overcome this, local language usage be avoided or limited in classrooms for observing an English-speaking environment. Furthermore, interactionists emphasize the role of language communication in understanding the language. This theory focuses on how students can learn much in the company of senior instructors, teachers, and mentors. The more they practice in the company of such mentors, the more they become fluent in learning speaking skill of English language. In rural areas, it is the saddest aspect of life that students are not provided with the opportunities that they can talk in English Language knowing the fact that they can speak English. They are more focused on speaking their local language i.e. Punjabi. By highlighting, sorting out, and understanding these frameworks, English proficiency can be made more effective in rural areas of Pakistan with the deepest understanding.

The literature currently in publication shows that learning to speak English is extremely difficult

for students in Pakistan's rural areas, like Sargodha. These difficulties are caused by several things, such as the shortcomings of the educational system, poor teaching strategies, a lack of supportive parents, and an unfavorable learning environment. The literature makes a compelling case for educational reforms that prioritize speaking abilities, improve teacher preparation, and give students opportunities to practice English in real-world situations to address these problems. The obstacles to English language learning in rural Pakistan can only be removed by these all-encompassing initiatives, allowing students to succeed academically and professionally.

3. Methodology

It is guided that a Mixed-Method approach is carried out in this research. By collecting the joining of 20 Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were conducted to collect students' perspectives. Data collection was done by taking 50 students from various countryside areas admitted to Dar ul Huda School, The Harvard School, Dar e Arqam School, The Superior College Kotmomin, The Reader College Kotmomin, and including Government Degree College for Boys and Girls. The collected views were then analyzed by using different stats i.e. table drawings, bar charts, and by using pie chart diagrams. Also, these results were demonstrated by giving percentages. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 of the selected students, focusing on three key questions: 1) What difficulties do you face when talking in the English Language? 2) How are you moved to speak English Conversation? 3) Whatever strategies have you used to overcome these challenges? Additionally, the researcher observed students' language capabilities during classroom sessions. The composed statistics were categorized into reasons, tests, and explanations, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the difficulties and their underlying factors. Throughout the study, the researcher was actively engaged in data collection, investigation, and interpretation.

3.1 Limitations

The research focused on students from rural areas of Sargodha who were studying at the SSC and HSSC levels.

3.2 Data Analysis:

Responding the Q. No1 information is examined as follows:

- **Q1. What is the strong point of the lexis in English?**

Language Skill	No. of students	%
Listening	18	36%
Speaking	08	16%
Reading	09	40%
Writing	05	18%
In all skills	10	20%

Table: 1 Strong point of the Lexis in English Linguistic

Lexis(word)boundary	Number of students	%
Upto150Words	22	44%
150-300Words	13	26%
300-500Words	09	18%
500-800Words	05	10%
800andaboveWords	01	2%

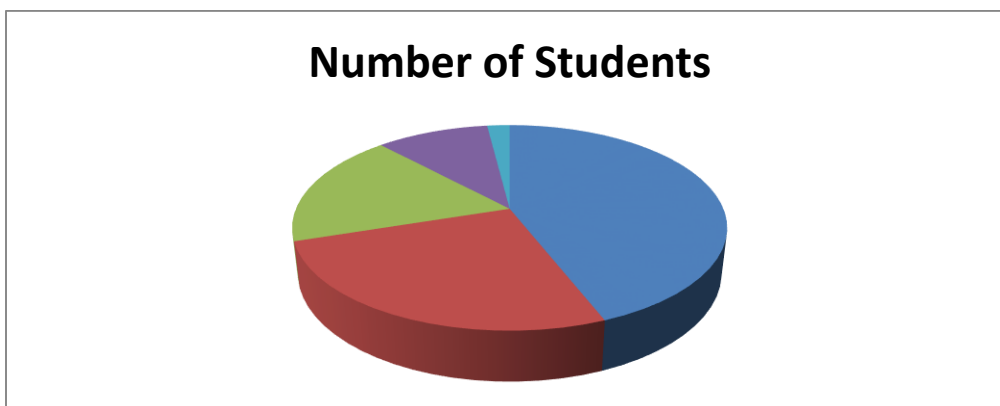


Figure 1: Students' vocabulary stock

Table 1 and Diagram 1 illustrate the vocabulary range of SSC and HSSC students from rural areas. The data shows that these students generally have a limited vocabulary. Approximately 44% of the students possess a vocabulary of up to 150 words. About 26% have a vocabulary range of 150-300 words, 18% have 300-500 words, 10% have between 500-800 words, and only 2% have a vocabulary exceeding 800 words.

The vocabulary ranges of SSC and HSSC students from rural areas are limited, with many students using only a small number of words and very few exceeding 800 words.

- **Responses for Q No. 02 and its statistics scrutiny**

Which type of language learning ability do you find the greatest difficult?

Table 2 Difficulty in learning language skills

Language Proficiency Skill	Number of students	Percentage
Listening	06	12%
Speaking	21	42%
Reading	03	06%
Writing	15	30%
In all skills	05	10%

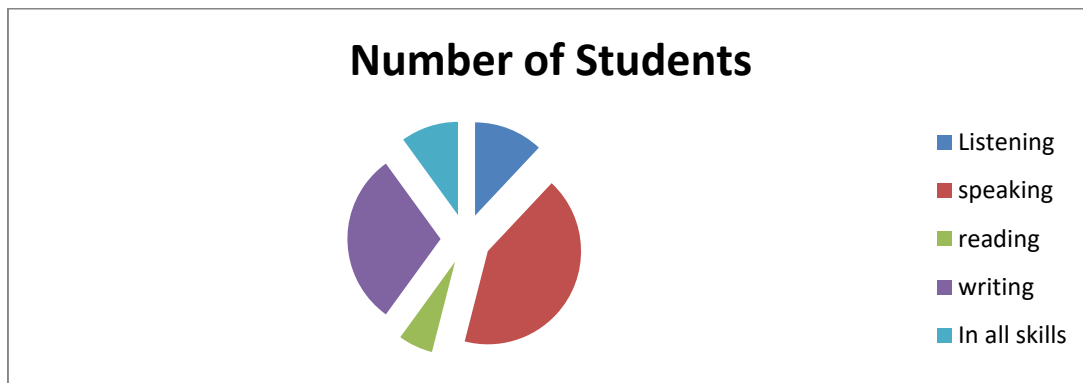


Figure 2 Difficulty in learning language skills

Table 2 and Diagram 2 illustrate the opinions of rural students regarding difficulties in learning English language skills. Among the 50 students surveyed, 21 (42%) identified speaking skills as the most challenging. Fifteen students (30%) reported difficulties with writing skills, while 6 students (12%) found listening skills particularly tough due to the non-native nature of the language. Additionally, 5 students (10%) experienced challenges across all language skills, and 3 students (6%) indicated that reading skills were their primary struggle.

The opinions of rural students reveal that speaking skills are perceived as the most challenging aspect of learning English, followed by writing and listening, with some students facing difficulties across all language skills.

- **Q. No. 03 to 08 Replies and facts examination**

Usage of dissimilar languages with diverse individuals in culture

Table- 3 No. Students use different languages from others.

Language Use	Punjabi	Urdu	English
Siblings	40	10	0
Father and Mother	37	13	0
Family Members	33	17	0
Friends	36	12	2
With Instructor n Class	32	18	0
With Other instructors in the institute	38	12	0

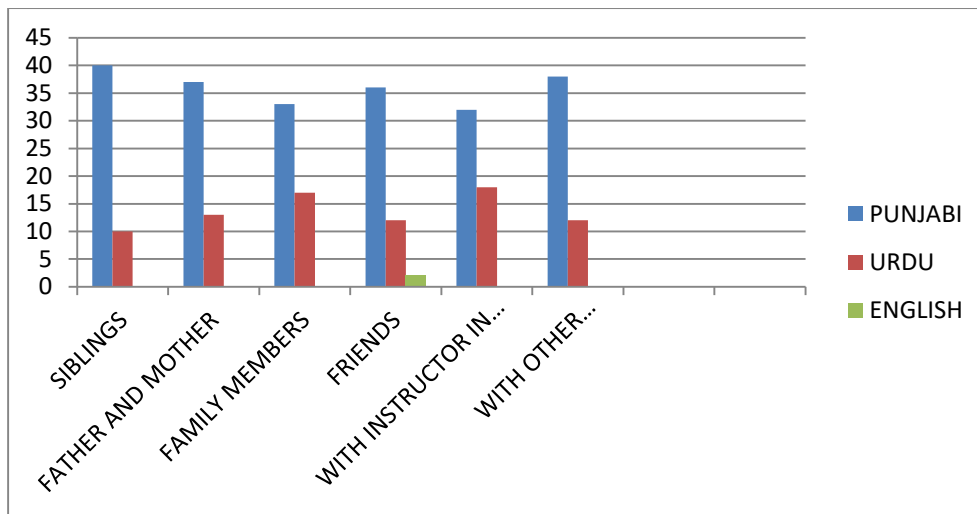


Figure 3: Use of different languages with others

The data presented in Table 3 and Figure 3 indicate that students from SSC and HSSC levels in rural areas show limited proficiency in speaking skills. Most of these students predominantly use their native language (Punjabi) to communicate with family members, peers, and teachers, both in and out of the classroom. They generally avoid using English (L2) for communication, which impacts their development of English-speaking skills. Figure 3 highlights that nearly 99% of students from Sargodha's rural areas use Punjabi with family members. Interestingly, only 4% of students try to speak English through their parents at home. During interviews, these two students mentioned their desire to recover their English language assistance for future opportunities but admitted that they feel shy and hesitant about creating errors with their teachers and peers, which hinders their use of English.

The study reveals as it is only 10% of students prefer and try to speak Punjabi in the lecture hall with their teachers. However, 26% (13 students) use English to answer questions posed by the

instructor. Meanwhile, 56% (28 students) avoid using both Punjabi and English in the classroom due to a lack of confidence and hesitation. Additionally, 9 students expressed a desire to ask questions in English to clarify concepts and enhance their English-speaking skills, according to interview responses. Overall, hesitation and lack of confidence are significant barriers to effective English communication, and insufficient attention to listening skills further impedes improvement in this area.

Students from SSC and HSSC levels in rural areas demonstrate limited proficiency in speaking skills, primarily communicating in Punjabi, which hinders their English-speaking development, with significant hesitation and lack of confidence noted as barriers to effective communication.

- **Q. No 9 Response and Data Analysis-Educational background of students’ family**

Table 04 No. of Instructive Contextual of the Household Members

Household Participants	Educational Results	Un-educational Results
Father	22(44%)	28(56%)
Mother	18(36) %	32(64%)
Bother	35(70%)	15(30%)
Sister	34(68%)	16(32%)

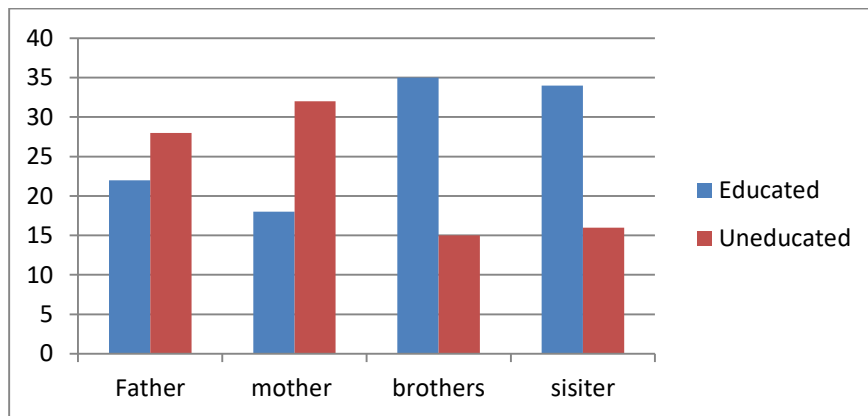


Figure 4: Percentage of Instructive Contextual of the Family

Table No. 04 and Character No. 04 show the knowledge rates of pupils ‘domestic backgrounds. The low educational levels of parents (44% for fathers and 36% for mothers) negatively impact students' speaking skills, as parents are often the primary educators during early childhood. In contrast, the literacy rates among the current generation of siblings are higher, with brothers at 70% and sisters at 68%. However, these siblings are generally not present at home due to

marriage or job commitments, as noted in the semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that a family's poor literacy background can be a significant barrier to developing English speaking skills.

The literacy rates of students' family backgrounds show that low parental education negatively affects students' speaking skills, while higher literacy among siblings, who are often absent due to commitments, highlights a significant barrier to English language development.

- **Q. No. 10 - 13 Demonstrate the statistics study about the persistence for studying advanced training.**

Table 5 Perseverance for Studying Instruction:

Purpose of education	%
Receiving a respectable job in career life	23(46%)
Forgetting a degree in the speculative year	09(18%)
To secure a reasonable standard in our society	11(22%)
For the betterment and enhancement the English proficiency	07(14%)

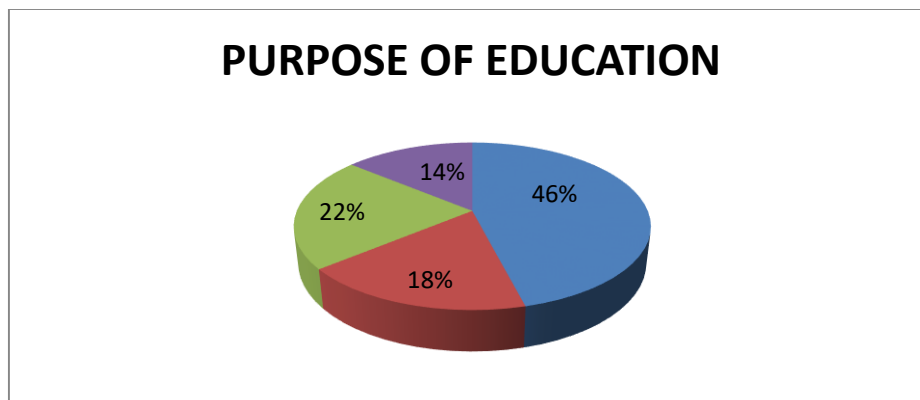


Figure-5 Purpose for study education:

In diagram No.05, an investigator presents the views of different students from the countryside zones who are currently studying at SSC and HSSC levels. Among the 50 students surveyed, 23 (42.5%) stated that their primary goal for pursuing education was to secure good job opportunities. Nine students (18%) indicated that their main objective was to obtain a degree within the current academic year. Additionally, 11 students (20%) aimed to achieve a higher

social status through their education. Seven students expressed that their educational goal was to improve their language expertise. The study reveals that (45%) of students are not focusing on seeking English as a second language to improve their communication abilities. These students need to recognize that without developing their English-speaking skills, they may not achieve their future goals.

The views of rural students indicate that while many pursue education for job opportunities and social status, a significant majority do not prioritize learning English as their second preferred language, which may hinder their ability to achieve their future goals.

• **Q. No. 14-19 Replies and statistics breakdown:**

Problems faced in Communicating the English Language?

Table: 6. Estimations about problems speaking English 11

Difficulties	No. of opinions	percentage
Absence of lexis usage	14	28%
Nonexistence of grammar guidelines	13	26%
Deficiency of getting ability in constructing sentences	04	8%
A kind of fear of speaking with others	06	12%
Absence of Eagerness in Speaking	02	4%
Overall	11	22%

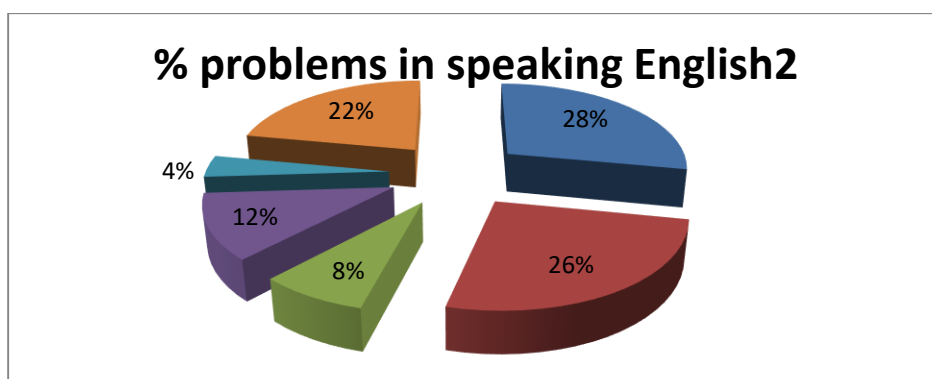


Figure-6 Percentage of problems speaking English:

The above Diagram No. 06 explains the barriers that hinder speaking English like the absence of lexis usage, grammar instructions, syntax buildings, and the absence of eagerness to speak when they speak the English language. Deficiency in lexical structure is the major obstacle confronted by the students of the countryside zones of Sargodha at the SSC and HSSC level which is about

28%. Lack of grammar (26%) is observed as the second major inhibiting factor in speaking English. 22% of students expressed the overall problems that are inhibiting factors in speaking English.

A kind of terror of speaking with others and deficiency in the skill of constructing sentences contribute 20% to English speaking problems. Inspiration is a very vital part for the students of the countryside to improve and speak fluently L2. Students in rural areas have a dire need to arrange special English classes to improve this skill.

The barriers to speaking English among SSC and HSSC students in rural Sargodha include a lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, along with fear of speaking and difficulties in sentence construction, highlighting the need for special English classes to improve their skills.

- **Q. No. 20 Answers and Information Study**

Which of the academic years is a base for English Medium Studies?

Table 7 the foundation to learning the English language as L2;

Class	
Starting from Playgroup to Class Five	10
Class Six to Nine	17
From Intermediate	23

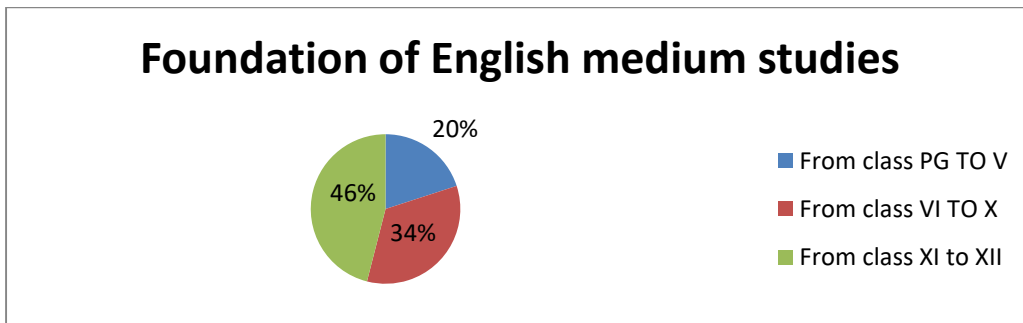


Diagram No. 07 Basis of English Standard Education:

Diagram No.07 illustrates an introduction to English Instructions education for apprentices from the countryside. According to the reading, only 20% of these students began English instruction education from playgroup school owing to constraints related to domestic instructive and economic circumstances. Meanwhile, 34% of students transitioned to English instruction

education at the secondary school level. A significant issue arises when 46% of students, who have completed their schooling, advance to intermediate and higher educational institutions where English-medium instruction begins. At this stage, many students face challenges in understanding and communicating in English. They are essentially diving into the complexities of the language, struggling to improve their speaking skills.

The introduction of English-medium education for rural students reveals that many begin their education in this medium later, leading to challenges in understanding and communicating in English as they progress to higher educational institutions.

4. Discussion

The findings from this research highlight several critical barriers and challenges that students in rural areas of Pakistan, specifically from the Sargodha district, face when trying to develop English speaking skills at the Matriculation (SSC) and Intermediate (HSSC) levels. The issues explored in this study revolve around the linguistic environment, the educational system, parental involvement, teaching methodologies, and the broader cultural context, all of which play a substantial role in shaping students' ability to learn English as a second language (L2).

The results of this study shed light on a number of significant obstacles and difficulties that students in Pakistan's rural areas more especially, those in the Sargodha district face when attempting to improve their English speaking abilities at the Matriculation (SSC) and Intermediate (HSSC) levels. This study examines several topics that significantly influence students' capacity to acquire English as a second language (L2), including the linguistic environment, the educational system, parental involvement, teaching methodologies, and the larger cultural context.

The linguistic environment in which students reside has a significant impact on their acquisition of the English language in rural Pakistan. Students frequently don't have many opportunities to use English outside of the classroom in communities where Punjabi is the primary language. This leads to a lack of practice, particularly in speaking abilities, which are essential for second language fluency. Rural students are frequently surrounded by an environment that supports their native tongue, which deters frequent English-language interaction and leaves a gap in their ability to speak the language with confidence, according to research by Khan, [2].

Even though many students are aware of how important English is for their success in school and the workplace. They frequently struggle to use the language in everyday situations. This lack of

exposure severely impedes the development of English proficiency, especially in oral communication, as Raza, [3] pointed out. Students feel constrained by their limited vocabulary use and fear of making mistakes. This is consistent with the findings of the study that students frequently struggle in speaking English because they don't interact with it much outside of the classroom.

Significant flaws in the educational system were also found by the study, especially in rural schools. Reading and writing are frequently given precedence over speaking and listening skills in traditional teaching methods, which are frequently centered on rote learning and grammar drills. Despite the importance of carrying speaking practices, this emphasis on grammar rules does not adequately prepare students for English communication in the real world. According to Rahman and Durrani, [1] communicative competence—which is essential for students to become fluent speakers—is not fostered by rote learning.

According to the study, many of the teachers in the Sargodha district lack the knowledge and training needed to instruct English communicatively, which is consistent with these findings. Effective language instruction is lacking in rural Pakistan because teacher preparation programs frequently undervalue the value of fluency in English. According to Rauf, [5] this disparity is made worse by students' lack of exposure to contemporary communicative language teaching (CLT) techniques that emphasize active student participation and language use in everyday situations. Students' speaking abilities continue to be underdeveloped in the absence of a focus on speaking and interaction in the classroom, which exacerbates their general difficulties with fluency in English.

The role of parental support in language learning is another important topic covered in this study. Many parents in rural Pakistan struggle to speak English, which makes it difficult for them to help their kids learn the language. According to Muneer, [10] parental involvement is an important component of a student's language development, but it is frequently low in rural areas. According to the study participants, their parents' lack of encouragement to practice English at home further hampered their ability to become more proficient speakers. According to Gulzar and Hussain, [6] one factor contributing to the larger difficulty of learning English is the absence of a supportive home environment for language acquisition.

Given how crucial parental involvement is to kids' education, this disparity in support is indicative of the larger sociocultural setting in which rural students reside. Students are further isolated from opportunities to practice the language in authentic settings when parents fail to

recognize the importance of English or are unable to assist their children with English language assignments. To improve English proficiency in rural areas, educational reforms must address this crucial factor.

The results of this study point to the need for a more favorable learning environment to promote the development of the English language. To help students, overcome their fears and insecurities related to speaking English, a classroom environment that is encouraging, interactive, and communicative is crucial. Giving students the chance to participate in debates, discussions, and group projects can greatly improve their speaking abilities, according to Malik, [11]. In rural areas, where there are few opportunities for informal language use outside of the classroom, this is particularly crucial.

The study also finds that the way English is taught in rural schools needs to be changed systemically. The implementation of instructional strategies that emphasize communication over rote memorization has the potential to greatly increase students' proficiency in the English language. Students will be better prepared to communicate in English both academically and professionally if language learning technologies are integrated, peer interaction is encouraged, and real-world applications of the language are highlighted.

The gap between present English language proficiency and the intended level of fluency could be closed, as suggested by Zahid and Iqbal, [7] by developing a thorough, student-centered language program that prioritizes speaking abilities. At the national and local levels, this would necessitate policy changes like curriculum revision, teacher professional development, and expanding opportunities for students to practice speaking English outside of the classroom.

The study's conclusions have important ramifications for Pakistani educators and policymakers. Reforms in both policy and practice are needed to address the difficulties that rural students encounter in learning or speaking English. Legislators ought to fund teacher preparation programs that prioritize communicative approaches to language instruction and give priority to English-speaking abilities in the curriculum. Additionally, resources that support active language use—like language labs, digital tools, and extracurricular activities that foster English communication—should be made available to schools in rural areas.

Programs for community involvement and awareness are also required in order to assist parents in realizing the value of assisting their children's language development. Parents' involvement in the educational process, particularly in rural areas, may give students the extra support they require to gain confidence when speaking English.

The current study reveals that 44% of rural students have a vocabulary of up to 150 words, which aligns with earlier findings by Raja and Selvi [8] that indicated students from similar educational backgrounds often face vocabulary limitations. However, this contrasts with Verghese, [14] who noted that early exposure to English can enhance vocabulary acquisition. This discrepancy may stem from many participants in the current study starting their English education later, highlighting the need for early intervention strategies to support vocabulary development.

When assessing speaking skills, a notable 42% of students identified speaking as the most challenging language skill. This aligns with Verghese's, [14] emphasis on how limited practice opportunities contribute to speaking anxiety among ESL learners. As in the contradictory end, the studies which were done in the past, particularly by Raja & Selvi, [8] indicated that there were specific hurdles for learners to understand listening due to the different methods of English teaching and methodology. These studies paved further ways to explore the elements involved in the proficiency and understanding of speaking English language in rural zones. The predominant use of Punjabi, with 99% of students communicating in their native language, reinforces findings from previous studies that students often revert to their first language when interacting with family and peers Verghese, [14]. This reliance on Punjabi indicates that limited opportunities for real-life English practice significantly hinder speaking skills. The current study supports earlier research emphasizing the importance of social language use in developing English proficiency.

Regarding family educational background, the findings reveal a concerning trend: high rates of uneducated parents negatively impact students' English proficiency. This supports earlier research by Raja and Selvi, [8] which highlighted the influence of parental education on language acquisition. However, unlike some studies suggesting that siblings can serve as language role models e.g., Verghese, [14] the current findings indicate that the absence of siblings due to job or marriage commitments limits support for English language learning. This highlights the need for targeted interventions to address familial gaps in educational support.

Furthermore, the study found that 90% of students do not prioritize improving their English-speaking skills, which aligns with previous research indicating that students often focus on grades rather than language proficiency Raja & Selvi, [8]. This disconnection underscores the urgent need to reshape students' perceptions of education, emphasizing the development of practical language skills over merely achieving academic milestones.

The barriers identified in this study, particularly the lack of vocabulary and fear of speaking, corroborate earlier findings by Verghese, [14] Raja & Selvi, [8] which also noted similar fears

and vocabulary deficits among ESL learners. However, the current study's lower percentage (4%) of students citing a lack of motivation contrasts with previous studies that emphasized motivation as a key barrier, suggesting that other factors may be more significant in the current rural context.

Finally, the finding that 46% of students begin their English-medium education only at the intermediate level echoes concerns from earlier studies about the timing of English instruction. It is further elaborated by Verghese [14] that those students who learn English late or in later stages find it difficult to absorb language awareness fully. So, these wordings solidify the above discussion. The key difference lies in the educational context; while previous studies primarily focused on urban settings, this research highlights the unique challenges faced by rural students transitioning to English-medium education.

In the concluding remarks, this study is designed with such mode of discussions which truly speak about English speaking hurdles in rural zones indicating lexical reasons, problems of communication skills as well as family background footprints. Moreover, many other aspects like students' motivational level and their non-understanding of learning English Speaking skills, especially in the rural background arose in eagerness to make this research more important. So, in a nutshell, educators and trainers can construct more effective plans after taking a thorough glimpse of the past and present studies mentioned.

5. Conclusion

The study's conclusions have important ramifications for Pakistani educators and policymakers. Reforms in both policy and practice are needed to address the difficulties that rural students encounter in learning or speaking English. Legislators ought to fund teacher preparation programs that prioritize communicative approaches to language instruction and give priority to English-speaking abilities in the curriculum. Additionally, resources that support active language use—like language labs, digital tools, and extracurricular activities that foster English communication—should be made available to schools in rural areas.

Programs for community involvement and awareness are also required in order to assist parents in realizing the value of assisting their children's language development. Parents' involvement in the educational process, particularly in rural areas, may give students the extra support they require to gain confidence when speaking English.

- **Suggestions and Recommendations for Further Study:**

Several suggestions can be made to address the difficulties students in Pakistan's rural areas, especially those in the Sargodha district, have in improving their English-speaking abilities in light of the research's conclusions and discussions. These recommendations are meant to promote increased community and parental involvement, improve teaching methodologies, and improve the overall environment for learning English.

Changing the curriculum to prioritize the improvement of English-speaking abilities is one of the most important suggestions. The development of oral communication is often neglected in favor of reading and writing in the current curriculum. Communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches that emphasize speaking and listening abilities should be implemented by educational authorities. More interactive exercises that demand meaningful use of English by students, like role plays, debates, discussions, presentations, and group projects, can help achieve this.

Students' speaking abilities could also be improved by incorporating language learning technologies, such as podcasts, apps, and online platforms that promote speaking practice. Due to the lack of opportunities for exposure to natural language outside of the classroom, this can help close the gap.

According to the research, there are large gaps in teacher preparation that lead to inefficient teaching strategies, particularly in rural areas. Teachers must have access to professional development opportunities that emphasize contemporary, student-centered teaching methods like communicative and task-based language instruction. Programs for teacher preparation should give instructors the tools they need to design more dynamic, interactive classrooms that encourage speaking and listening. Additionally, teachers should receive training on how to use authentic materials that expose students to a variety of English-speaking contexts, such as news articles, audio recordings, and real-world videos.

The study finds notable deficiencies in teacher preparation that lead to improved teachers' proficiency with technology and interactive teaching tools can improve the educational process even more.

A child's language development greatly benefits from parental involvement, particularly in rural areas where parents might not speak English well enough to help their kids directly. Programs

that inform parents of the value of learning English and motivate them to actively assist their children's endeavors should be introduced by schools. This can entail planning workshops, seminars, and informational sessions to show parents how to facilitate language learning at home in easy ways, like promoting English reading, watching English-language educational programs, and having basic English conversations.

The home-school relationship can also be strengthened and a more encouraging learning environment for students can be created by giving parents the chance to engage with teachers and participate more in the educational process.

Creating an environment that encourages English language practice is essential to improving speaking skills. Schools should work to establish a vibrant, student-centered classroom where learners can express themselves in English without fear of criticism. It is necessary to encourage peer interaction and group learning to develop fluency and confidence. Teachers can use role-playing games, group projects, and discussions to simulate real-world scenarios where students must use English. To help students practice the language in informal, non-academic settings, schools could also establish debate societies, language cafes, or English-speaking clubs. Thanks to these extracurricular activities, students will have more opportunities to engage with English in a casual and authentic environment.

There is a growing opportunity to use technology to support English language learning, especially given the current global reliance on digital platforms for learning. To support language learning through online platforms and apps, schools in rural areas should be outfitted with digital resources like computers, tablets, and internet access. Students can access interactive lessons and speaking practice exercises by integrating websites, YouTube channels, and language learning applications (like Babbel and Duolingo) into the learning process. Additionally, students can practice speaking with native or fluent English speakers by setting up online conversation partners or virtual language exchanges. They would gain exposure to the real world and have the opportunity to become more fluent as a result.

One effective strategy for developing a positive language-learning environment is community engagement. To raise awareness of the value of learning English, especially speaking it, for success in school and the workplace, local education authorities should work with local organizations and community leaders. By highlighting English's contribution to upward social mobility, these campaigns can help change the way the community views the language. To give students a chance to use English in real-world situations, like internships, community service

projects, and local gatherings where English communication is necessary, schools should also work with nearby companies and associations.

At the policy level, the government ought to provide rural schools with additional funding so that they can have access to cutting-edge teaching resources. The development of educational infrastructure, such as interactive learning-equipped classrooms, multimedia resources, and language labs, should be funded. Policies requiring schools to implement more adaptable and student-centered teaching strategies with an emphasis on English language competency should also be implemented. To determine the efficacy of English language instruction programs in rural regions and make sure that quantifiable gains in speaking abilities are being made, monitoring and evaluation systems should also be put in place.

Targeted support programs should be arranged for rural students to overcome the particular difficulties they face, especially due to their limited exposure to English. These initiatives might take the form of intensive language classes that emphasize speaking and listening skills development, summer language camps, or after-school English clubs. Students would benefit from more practice and exposure to these extracurricular activities, which would offer more learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom.

Focus on expanding vocabulary daily by reading newspapers, learning new words, and incorporating them into conversations will improve fluency.

Advocate for a supportive learning environment that prioritizes the development of English language skills, emphasizing the importance of students' career success.

Assess the English proficiency of rural students on the first day of class and motivate them to help them enhance their speaking skills.

Conduct training in additional Engineering Colleges to explore variations affecting speaking skills for encouraging the use of modern technology, like language-learning apps, and to enhance English proficiency among rural students.

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