

DISCOVERIES FROM FEELINGS, EXPERIENCES, AND DESIRES OF INTERMEDIATE LEVEL LEARNERS OF ENGLISH IN KARACHI, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the factors which affect on interest of the students for learning of English language. The conceptual framework of the study was that learning is directly proportional to the interest. It has been highlighted by number of scholars that students' interest varies for subjects as well as for four language learning skills, basic language learning skills i.e. listening and speaking are completely ignored by the teachers and the students but it is an ultimate reality that a good listener will become a good speaker, therefore the school administration/teachers need to focus on these two basic skills from the very early. For the purpose phenomenological research method, which is one of the qualitative approach was used. Ten open-ended questions were asked from the participants (Intermediate level students). Their responses were grouped and it is concluded that number of factors like, teachers' attitude, teaching methodologies used by the teachers, contents given in the textbooks etc are affecting on the interest of the students, which is directly proportional to the outcome (leaning). It is recommended that the teachers/administrators/authorities need to pay attention while selecting a textbook and should give due consideration to their attitude, teaching methodologies, etc.

Keywords: . Listening, speaking, learning skills, language

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is country where the majority of students are learning more than two languages at a time. Therefore English could be 3rd or 4th language for them. Moreover, if we analyze the population of Karachi called mini Pakistan we will find that people belonging to different religions, races, nations or regions are living in this city. Therefore environment of schools or classrooms is multicultural. The general trend among parents in Pakistan is to send their children to English medium schools or colleges where the teaching or instructions are given in English language. There are number of such so called English medium schools and colleges in Karachi, where the teachers themselves do not meet the required standard of proficiency in English language skills i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing and ultimate their English language competency is affecting on the learners, liking and disliking for English language. It has been observed that although students study in English medium schools/colleges but they do take interest in English as a subject. It has been highlighted by number of scholars, that interest has been found to play a key role in influencing student learning, behavior and intention to participate in the future (Chen, 2001; Solomon, 1996; Xiang, Chen, & Bruene, 2005)

Educators have long acknowledged the importance of promoting children's interest since Dewey's (1913) groundbreaking work on the role of interest in learning. Interest also has been found to play an energizing role on cognitive functioning (Hidi & Anderson, 1992; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Piaget, 1981). Additionally, Hidi and Renninger (2006) assert that

“The level of a person’s interest has repeatedly been found to be a powerful influence on learning” (p.111). It is well said by number of scholars that learning is directly proportional to the interest. Listening plays a vital role in learning a language. Listening is a skill that allows for comprehension of the sound heard by a person. Listening skills are an important part of communication, although they haven’t been given as much focus as speaking, reading or writing. However it takes a good listener to a good speaker (Jones, 2012). Listening skills are important for advancement in any career. Children need to focus on learning these essential skills, especially in grade school (Jones, 2012). This comment of the scholar is indicating the importance of the Listening skills in the practical or future life of the students, moreover a language is always learnt by listening, and those who improve these skills the other skills become easy for them. It is based upon the concept that a baby starts speaking after listening to the words parents and other adults or children say to the infant. Despite its obvious importance to language learning, the listening skills were for a longer time neglected to a marginal place in foreign language curricula. However, listening is not yet fully integrated into the curriculum and needs to give more ‘prime time’ in the classroom as well in the given home task (Gilman & Moody, 1984)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

It has been highlighted by number of scholars that interest of a learner plays a very vital role in teaching and learning process and the researcher has observed in his 20 years teaching career that the students of intermediate in Karachi comparatively take less interest in subject English, when are compared with the other subjects. Moreover, if we critically analyze we find that the feelings of the students somehow dislike subject English.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following research questions were raised to solve the problem:

1. Which factors are affecting on the interest of the students about the subject English?
2. What are the causes behind the disliking feelings of students about the subject English?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Phenomenology is widely regarded as a set of methods where ‘there is more than one legitimate way to precede with a phenomenological investigating’ (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Phenomenological method designed in this research is the research to elicit rich texts as well as thematic and structural understanding of the feelings English language learners of level-12.

This study utilized phenomenological strategies developed by Giorgi because the nature of the research lends itself to Giorgi’s approach to phenomenological analysis of gathering both thematic and structural understanding of experience or phenomena.

Choosing Phenomenology as the Research Approach

To research is ‘to search again or in a new way’ (Becker, 1992). This is particularly true of phenomenology, which is the study of human phenomena, of things or events in the everyday world. Phenomenologist takes an experiential view toward understanding such phenomena, highlighting human experience as not only valid, but of great importance to understand human existence. Phenomenologist investigates people’s experiences of life events and meanings these events have to them; as such it is particularly relevant to exploration participants’ experience as a learner of English language.

Phenomenological research based on two premises. The first is that experience is a valid, rich and rewarding source of knowledge. Phenomenologist does not view human experience as unreliable source of data; rather they see it as the cornerstone of knowledge about human phenomena. The assumption in this study is those participants' feelings, who are English language learners of level-12 in Pakistan which is considered equal to A-level.

The second premise of phenomenological research lies in the view that the everyday world is a valuable and productive source of knowledge, and that we can learn much about ourselves and reap key insights into the nature of an event by analyzing how it occur in our daily life.

Phenomenologist is interested in addressing, identifying, describing, understanding and interpreting the experiences of people have in their day-to-day lives. The English language learners of level-12 expressed their feeling about English language that during learning English language they feel uncomfortable, worried, impressed, proud etc.

A. Description of Phenomena of Interest by the Researcher

The researcher involves the exploration of literature to examine research about English language learners' feelings about the language and to define and describe this phenomenon in the light of that literature. As with all phenomenological inquiries, the investigation focused on the lived experience of the participants. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to add to our understanding and description of the experience of English language learners of level-12. The initial interest about this topic started because of the researcher's own observations during taking classes of English language learners of this level that majority of learners were having facial expressions of disliking, unable to understand or uncomfortable feelings etc.

B. Collection of Participants' Description of the Phenomenon

All of the English language learners of level-12 or intermediate level enrolled in one of renowned college of Karachi Pakistan were included in the sample. They major subjects were science subjects but they had to take English as a compulsory subject. All were asked to comment on the asked ten questions mentioned under during their leisure time without mentioning their name on the responding sheet. The posed questions are as follow:

Class: _____ SSC Percentage Marks: _____ HSSC-I Percentage Marks: _____

1. Which subject is your most favorite subject?
2. Rank the subjects you study as per your liking.
3. Express your feelings about English textbooks.
4. Write any incident/experience of your school/college life, related to English class.
5. Who was your favorite English teacher and Why?
6. In which skill, you feel yourself more confident/comfortable: Listening, Speaking, Reading or Writing.
7. What are your feelings, when you are talking with others or someone is talking with you in English?
8. What are your feelings, when you are listening with others, talking in English?
9. What are your feelings, when you are asked to read English text in your class?
10. What are your feelings, when you are writing something in English?

C. Data Analysis Involved Deep and Repeated Reading of All Data and Used Analysis

Quality Assurance Strategies

The customary evaluation criteria of validity, reliability, generalize-ability and objectivity in quantitative research are not applicable to phenomenological research (Higgs, 2001). Therefore the criteria adopted in this research were credibility, soundness, and ethical conduct.

Credibility

A study is credible, when it presents faithful descriptions, and when readers or other researchers confronted with experience can recognize it (Koth, 1994). Every effort was made to stay faithful with the participants' words and descriptions throughout the analysis and development of model, without changing the meaning or intent of descriptive passages. The transcripts were discussed with colleagues and supervisor for continued conformation of credibility.

Soundness

One of the ways research can be shown to be sound as for the research process to be clear, so that another researcher can understand the methods and process of the researcher and research (Koth, 1994). Aside from methodological steps used for research several other aspects were considered i.e. note on data collection, ethical conduct, data analysis and insights into the topic areas.

Ethical Conduct

Approval to conduct research was obtained from the head of the intermediate college. All the participants were asked to respond if they feel free. They were also informed about the purpose of the study and were guaranteed the privacy and confidentiality of each participant.

PROCEDURE

Quality Assurance Strategies

To understand the feelings, desires, and experiences of the students, 580 students of a reputed intermediate college / higher secondary school were randomly chosen for data collection. The customary evaluation criteria of validity, reliability, generalize-ability and objectivity in quantitative research are not applicable to phenomenological research (Higgs, 2001). Therefore the criteria adopted in this research were credibility, soundness, and ethical conduct.

Data Analysis

The data analysis approach adopted in this research followed Giorgi's (1985) approach and included seven steps:

- I. Read entire description to get the sense of the whole.
- II. Reread description.
- III. Identify the transition units of experience.
- IV. Clarify and elaborate the meaning by relating constituents to each other and the whole.
- V. Reflect on the constituents in the concrete language of the participants.
- VI. Transform concrete language into language of concept science.

VII. Integrate and synthesize the insight into a descriptive structure of the meaning of experience.

This research has explored areas beyond the reach of statistics. The focus is on the areas which affects the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language and subsequently affects on liking or disliking attitude for the subject.

Qualitative research plays an important role in illuminating the meaning of lived experience. Phenomenology is a valuable qualitative approach to study human experience. "Learning and understanding people's subjective experiences has an obvious and multifaceted importance, as well as very practical application" (Crotty, 1996).

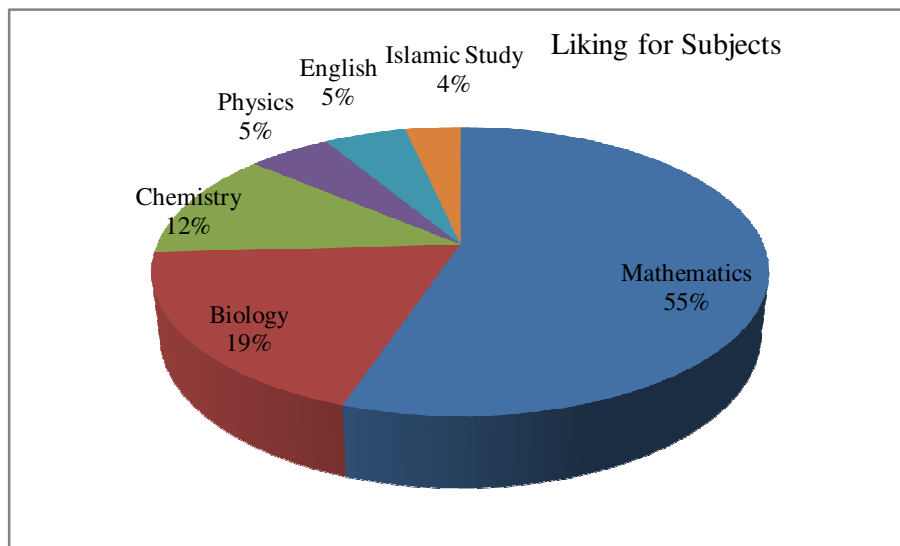
The richness of information gathered by getting written answers of imposed questions.

The responses of the above questions were analyzed and it is founded:

1. Majority of students declared that Mathematics is their favorite subject, while only 30 out of 580 students showed their liking for the English. The liking feelings for subjects is as under:

Table 1

<i>S. No</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	Mathematics	320	55.17%
2.	Biology	110	18.96%
3.	Chemistry	70	12.06%
4.	Physics	30	5.17%
5.	English	30	5.17%
6.	Islamic Study	20	3.44%
7.	Pakistan Study	00	0%
8.	Computer Science	00	0%

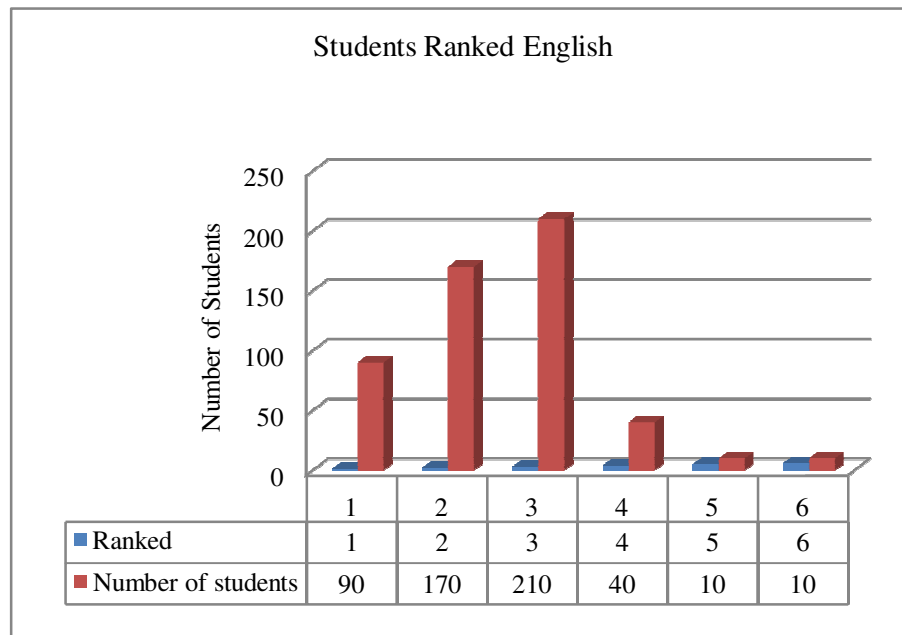


Graph 1

2. The students were asked to rank English as per their liking for it. Majority of students ranked 3rd to English as per liking for the subject. Only 90 out 580 students ranked 1st to English as per their liking for the subject.

Table 1

<i>Ranked</i>	<i>No of Students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	90	15.51%
2	170	29.31
3	210	36.21%
4	40	6.89%
5	10	1.72%
6	10	1.72%

**Graph 2**

3. In response to the five posed question students were having different reasons for liking feelings for the teachers of English. Majority of students declared that they liked their English teacher only because of their teaching style or their teaching methodology. Different students used different reasons for the liking feelings for their teachers. The words used by the students were simplicity, attractive personality, attitude of the teachers with the students, cooperative nature, intelligence, smartness or beauty, strictness, appreciation for students, nature of the teacher, dressing of the teachers, voice of the teachers, knowledge of the teachers, dedication of the teachers, teaching sense in a teacher, hair style of the teacher, smile of the teachers, friendly nature of the teachers, soft attitude of the teachers, and caring nature of the teachers.

Table 3

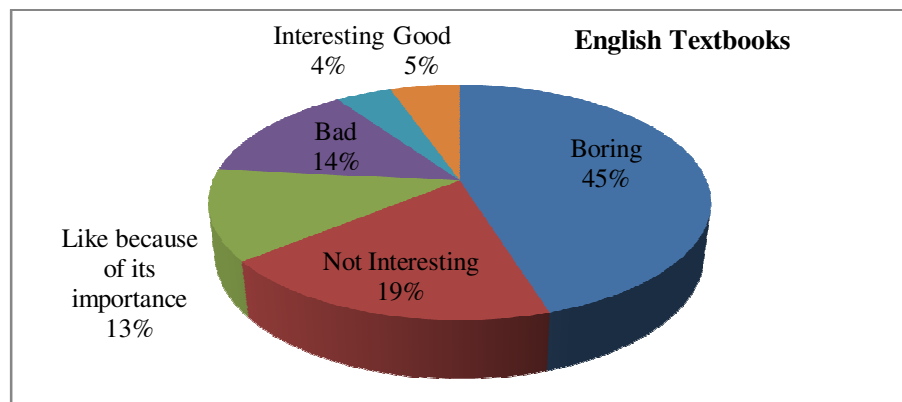
<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Reason for Liking</i>	<i>No of Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	Methodology	95	16.38%
2.	Cooperative Nature	62	10.69%
3.	Intelligence	55	9.48%
4.	Appreciating students	55	9.48%
5.	Knowledge of the teacher	53	9.14%
6.	Good nature of the teacher	50	8.62%
7.	Attitude of the teacher	35	6.03%
8.	Dedication of the teacher	32	5.52%
9.	Teaching sense in the teacher	25	4.31%
10.	Friendly nature of the teacher	21	3.62%
11.	Caring nature of the teacher	20	3.45%
12.	Smartness/Handsome	15	2.58%
13.	Voice of the teacher	15	2.58%
14.	Teacher's way of talking	13	2.24%
15.	Strictness	12	2.07%
16.	Simplicity	10	1.72%
17.	Attractive Personality	6	1.03%
18.	Dressing of the teacher	3	0.52%
19.	Hair style of the teacher	3	0.52%
Total		580	

4. In response to the third asked question, the students expressed their feelings about English textbooks in different way. Few of students expressed no feelings about English textbooks but number of students used different sentences/words for expressing their liking feelings for English as a subject; boring, not interesting, like because of its importance in present era, bad, interesting subject, and good.

Table 4

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Feelings</i>	<i>No of Students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	Boring	262	45.17%
2.	Not Interesting	110	18.96%
3.	Like because of its importance	72	12.41%
4.	Bad	80	13.79%
5.	Interesting	25	4.31%
6.	Good	31	5.34%

Graph 3



5. In response to the asked question about any incident happened in the classroom which affected on their liking or disliking for English as a subject, different reasons were discovered from the responses of the target students. Few of the students used the statement that they scored good marks in the subject and later on they started taking interest in it. Some of the students responded that they started liking the subject because their teachers personality. Number of students also mentioned that they dislike English because of their teachers' teaching method, a student also pointed out that one of my teacher punished me and after that I started disliking the subject. Few of them also having no reason or started liking English because of the teachers' accent.

Table 2

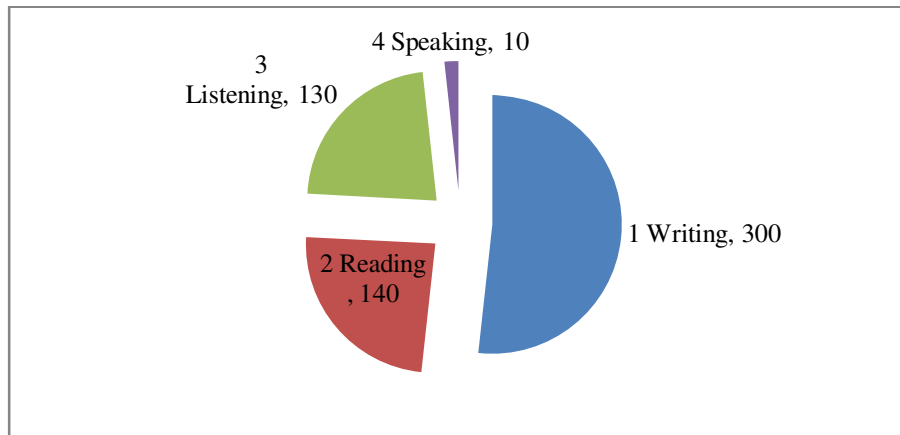
S. No.	Responses	No of students	Percentage
1.	Scored good marks and later on started taking interest.	67	11.55%
2.	Started liking subject because of teacher's personality.	55	9.48%
3.	Disliked English of teachers' teaching method	20	3.44%
4.	Disliked, because a teacher punished me.	36	6.20%
5.	No reason for disliking feeling for English.	323	55.68%
6.	No reason for liking feeling for English.	79	13.62%

6. In response to the question about their confidence level in language learning skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, majority of students marked writing skills while the least marked skill was speaking skills. The collected data is as under:

Table 3

S. No.	Specific Skill	No of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Writing	300	51.72%
2.	Reading	140	24.14%
3.	Listening	130	22.41%
4.	Speaking	010	1.7%

Graph 4



7. In response to the question about their feelings when they find others talking in English, majority of students used the word good but other student different words to express their feelings about listening skills i.e. Enjoy, comfortable, superior, proud, confident, normal, like, great, interesting or lack of confidence, surprised, nervous, shy, uncomfortable, confused, hesitant, worried, and boring. Some also said that they are impressed by the accent of the speaker.

Table 4

S. No.	Specific Skill	No of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Enjoy	15	2.58%
2.	Comfortable	22	3.79%
3.	Superior	13	2.24%
4.	Proud	22	3.79%
5.	Confident	14	2.41%
6.	Normal	11	1.89%
7.	Like	13	2.24%
8.	Great	7	1.20%
9.	Interesting	8	2.41%
10.	Lack of confidence	98	16.89%
11.	Surprising	110	18.96%
12.	Nervous	123	21.20%
13.	Shy	68	11.72%
14.	Uncomfortable	23	3.96%
15.	Confused	18	3.1%
16.	hesitant	11	1.89%
17.	Worried	2	0.34%
18.	Boring	2	0.34%

8. In response to the question about speaking English with other people, the words used by the students to express their feelings were dislike, guilty, surprised, wish to

speak, confused, nervous, worried, ashamed, and embarrassed. Some of the respondents also used some of the positive words i.e. normal, interesting, happy, good, confident, proud, and cool.

Table 5

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Specific Skill</i>	<i>No of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	Dislike	256	44.13%
2.	Guilty	85	14.65%
3.	Surprised	13	2.24%
4.	Wish to speak	75	12.93%
5.	Confused	66	11.37%
6.	Nervous	45	7.75%
7.	Worried	9	1.55%
8.	Ashamed	20	3.45%
9.	Embarrassed	11	1.89%

9. In response to the question about their feelings when they are asked by the teachers to read the text given in the books, the respondents were having different opinions i.e. normal, confident, good, happy, like, interesting, and some used the words like bad, strange, shy, confused, not good, irritated, or hesitant.

Table 6

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Specific Skill</i>	<i>No of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	Normal	67	11.55%
2.	Confident	35	6.03%
3.	Good	16	2.75%
4.	Happy	13	2.24%
5.	Like	25	4.31%
6.	Interesting	25	4.31%
7.	Bad	110	18.96%
8.	Strange	60	10.34%
9.	Shy	36	6.20%
10.	Confused	56	9.65%
11.	Not good	55	9.48%
12.	Irritating	66	11.37%
13.	Hesitant	16	2.75%

10. In the responses to the asked question about their feeling when they are asked to write something in English, they expressed their by using words i.e. normal, confidant, good, comfortable, happy or well and some other used lack of confidence, bad, not good, awesome or hesitant.

Table 10

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Specific Skill</i>	<i>No of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	Normal	62	10.68%
2.	Confidant	35	6.03%
3.	Good	17	2.93%
4.	Comfortable	17	2.93%
5.	Happy	25	4.31%
6.	Well	26	4.48%
7.	Lack of confidence	189	32.58%
8.	Bad	75	12.93%
9.	Not good	80	13.79%
10.	Awesome	31	5.34%
11.	Hesitant	23	3.96%

DISCUSSION

At intermediate level in Sindh the students are asked to choose the subjects of their choice but public intermediate colleges, students are having variety of choices but private intermediate colleges offer only limited variety of subjects which are listed in the table-1. The offered subjects fall under the groups i.e. Pre-medical, Pre-engineering and Computer Science group.

1. In response to the first question, which was about their favorite subject, only 5.17% students indicated that English is their favorite subject but highest number of students gave favors to Mathematics.
2. When the students were asked to rank the subjects as per their liking, then only 15.51% students ranked 1 to the subject English while 36.21% students ranked it number three as per their liking feelings for the subject (Table-2).
3. In response to the question three students used different statement/words to express their feeling about the subject. Those statements/words were grouped into nineteen heads and are ranked in Table-3. The table elaborates that 16.38% students indicated that they like their English teacher because of their teaching methodology. While lowest percentage (9.14%) was given to the knowledge of the teacher.
4. In response to the question about students feelings for English textbooks 45.17% students declared English textbooks boring one. While 4.31% declared it interesting (Table-4).
5. In response to the question related to any incidents, which could have affected their liking or disliking feelings for the subject English. 55.68% students said that they

dislike English without any reason and 13.62% said they like English without any reason (Table-5).

6. In response to the question related to their level of confidence in language skills 51.72% showed confidence in writing while least confidence was shown in speaking skills (Table-6).
7. In response to the question, when other are talking in English 21.20% students expressed that they become nervous when they see other talking in English. If we group the feelings of the students into negative and positive, if we sum together we find that majority of students expressed negative feelings (table-7).
8. In response to the feelings, when themselves talking in English with other 44.13% said they dislike to talk in English, while 14.65% used the word guilty feeling while talking in English with others (Table-8).
9. In response to the reading text among number of other responses, comparatively a big majority 18.96% used the word bad for expressing their feelings, when a teacher asks them to read the text given in English textbooks (Table-9)
10. In response to the question related to the writing skills activities 32.58% used the word lack of confidence.

CONCLUSION

1. From the responses of question 1, 2 & 4, it is concluded that if a teacher uses a right teaching method, which fulfill the needs of the students then surely students will take interest in the subject and will not have such responses as of questions 1, 2 & 4.
2. The response of question 6, 7, 8, & 9 the students' least confidence in speaking skills, and nervous feelings when other are talking in English are related with the response of question 5. Such feelings (least confidence, nervous feelings dislike, & bad) always affects on liking or disliking feelings of people.
3. It is also concluded that the students are not only weak in speaking skills; they are weak almost all in all skills (listening, speaking, reading, & writing).
4. From responses of students about question 3, it is concluded that the students do not take interest in subject English because the contents of the textbooks are not interesting or not fulfilling the needs of the students of present era of modern technology or not meeting the standards of textbooks, which could be used to teach English as a foreign/second language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings, followings are the recommendations:

1. Professional development courses must arranged for the teachers teaching English.
2. Teachers need to focus on speaking from the very lower level so that students feel confident in that skill.
3. All language learning skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing must be considered while teaching English language.
4. The textbooks contents need to be changed or upgraded as soon as possible.

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