

A SURVEY OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING FEMALE COLLEGE STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN DISTRICT MARDAN

Kiram Shah¹, Nasrullah Khan², Fatima Shams,³ Niaz M. Aajiz⁴, Rahat Mand⁵

Department of Education, SUIT Peshawar,
PAKISTAN.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to make a survey of the factors that are responsible for English language learning. The study was descriptive in nature. The data was collected in district Mardan from the selected 60 female students of FSc part-ii, who were randomly selected for the study. The major questions were: what are the factors affecting English language? What recommendation will be made for the improvement of English language learning? Results of the study showed that the factors that had greatest effect on learners' English learning strategy use were qualified teachers, motivation, best climate and constant practices and affecting family background, including family involvement and years of study. Results of the study suggested that, teachers' encouragement to the students for adopting the most useful and effective language learning approaches would definitely effect on students' learning and language performance. The study also recommended that there should be qualified teachers, conducive learning climate, family and parents support and the use of modern and effective teaching strategies.

Keywords: English language learning, family background, College. Female Students

INTRODUCTION

English has become the language of higher level of learning in various fields of studies like science, engineering and particularly the computers and information technology. English is assigned with the title of lingua franca of the modern world since it is one of the most commonly used languages being spoken all around the globe. English is presently being taught as a second language in various geographical locations of the world. The distinguished international status of English has made various implications for its usage, teaching and development. The non-native speakers of English have exceeded its native speakers due to which the developmental authority of this language is shifting from its owners to the new adopters.

Effective second language acquisition and learning strategies have been a major focus of researchers, while little emphasis has been given to the vocabulary learning strategies. Researchers indicated that the greatest obstacle for acquiring a second language is limited vocabulary size. According to Schmitt and Meara's (1984) study of second language students, lexical errors outnumbered grammatical errors by 3:1 or 4:1. A similar survey of L2 students taking university courses found that they identified vocabulary as a major factor that held them back in academic writing tasks (Leki & Carson.1994). Although vocabulary has recently attracted increased interest since the 1980s, language researchers and teachers continue to give less attention to it than syntax and phonology (Clece-Murica, 1997). However, factors affecting vocabulary learning is very complicated, including individual and contextual factors. Oxford (2006) proposed that many factors affect choice of learning strategies: degree of

awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality, ethnicity, general learning style, personality traits, motivation level, and purpose for learning the language. In the light of the need for information about the factors affecting vocabulary learning strategies, the major research question explored in this study is: how do learner variables, including motivation, language proficiency, and years of study, effort, family tutors, and extracurricular learning activities affect students' English vocabulary strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As Oxford (2006) indicated, factors affecting language learning are very complicated, including motivation, attitudes, language anxiety, self-confidence, language aptitude, family size, and personality variables. Motivation is one of the most important factors which affect students' language learning achievement.

Gardner (2001) also proposed that the variable, integrativeness, English vocabulary affects a genuine interest in learning the second language. A low level of integrativeness would indicate no interest in learning language in order to identify with the group, while a high level would indicate considerable interest. He also proposed that attitudes toward the learning situation, involves attitudes toward any aspect of the situation in which the language is learned, these attitudes could be directed toward the teachers, the course, the classmates, the course materials, extra-curricular activities associated with the course. In addition, integrative motivation is hypothesized to be a complex of attitudinal, goal directed and motivational attributes (Gardner, 2001).

Dornyei (2001) mentions another variable for affecting language learning motivation is instrumental motivation. Instrumental motivation is an interest in learning the second language for pragmatic reasons. In conclusions, studies suggest that the retention of motivation to language achievement whether instrumental motivation or integrative motivation, persistence in language learning, activities in the classroom which all have a significant impact on second successful language acquisition.

As the literature suggested, family background is one of the important factors affecting foreign language proficiency. Number of siblings, father's social economic status, and birth order are all included in family background factors. Blake (2004) indicated that learning resources will be diluted in the large families, including parental interaction and attention. Nonetheless, the sibsize effects decline as the social status increases which accord with the dilution hypothesis. The advantaged parental socioeconomic status should mitigate the negative effects of increasing sibsize. According to Blake's research, men come from privileged families with large sibsize would suffer less educational loss than men from less privileged families with large sibsize.

Blake (2004) indicated that high socioeconomic status results not only in more intellectual ability and better performance in school, but that high status parents provide more encouragement and support for postsecondary education than do low status parents.

Learning strategies are the basic tools for active, self-directed involvement needed for developing L2 communicative ability (O'Malley & Chamot,2006). Oxford (2006) indicated that language learning strategies can be classified, explained, and exemplified in six coherent groups. The six strategy groups are labeled memory, cognitive, comprehension, metacognitive, affective, and social. The first three groups are known as "direct" strategies, because they directly involve the subject matter, in this case the target language to be learned; the last three groups are called "indirect" strategies, because they don't directly involve the subject matter itself, but are essential to language learning nonetheless. Chamot and Kupper (2004) mentioned that successful learners tend to select strategies that work together well in a

highly orchestrated way, tailored to the requirement of the language task. These learners can easily explain the strategies they use and why they employ them (O'Malley & Chamot, 2006).

The learners of English language are increasing with enormous speed in Pakistan. A large number of institutes have been established in all major cities. These institutes are providing students with better teaching learning environment for learning of English language. The future of English in Pakistan is bright and it is an accepted fact that it is and will be utilized as a library language for good (Shahid 2006).

Lee (2009) conducted a study to examine the ways of enhancing the oral communication skills of Asian students and improving their participation in the class through combining both writing and speaking skills. His conclusion was that students' speaking skills may be improved by combining both the writing and speaking activities in teaching speaking skills.

Awan, et al. (2010) concluded that English is the so called medium of instruction at tertiary level however most of the university level students privately expressed their views that how difficult they feel when they are to speak in English in a class or during any other co-curricular activity. With respect to the language proficiency of the teachers.

Zia and Sultan (2015) conducted a research study in which they concluded that most of the students of English language faced high level of class room performance anxiety. The main reasons of this anxiety were; students evaluated their speaking skills in a very negative way, their fear of making mistakes and their worries of others' perceptions about their performance in the classroom. Most of the students were fearful about their evaluation by their teachers and their fellow student in the class room. They were also apprehensive about their teachers for correcting them in front of their class fellows and they were also fearful of losing face and getting embarrassed in front of their friends.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To know about the major factors affecting English language.
2. To provide recommendations for the improvement of English language learning in Pakistan.

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the factors affecting English language?
2. What recommendation will be made for the improvement of English language learning?

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study was a survey type research. The data was collected through questionnaire from the selected sampled female students'.

Population and Sample of the Study: The population of the study was all colleges of District Mardan. The sample was randomly selected which compromised 60 female students enrolled in class 12th district Mardan.

Research Tools

A questionnaire was to discover factors affecting students' English language learning. The data was collected and lyzed and analyzed. Mean Score was performed to examine the significance of differences among the learners.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1. Female Students Responses

<i>No</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>UD</i>	<i>DA</i>	<i>SDA</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>
1.	I can learn English by watching TV English plays.	15	27	4	5	9	3.56
2.	My teacher can improve my language learning	17	25	5	6	7	3.63
3.	My parents can improve my language learning	15	27	4	5	9	3.56
4.	My family members can improve my language learning	20	26	4	5	3	4.41
5.	I can improve my English through listening programmes on the radio.	17	25	5	6	7	3.63
6.	I can improve my English by reading English newspaper	12	14	4	15	15	2.32
7.	I often play computers games in English.	12	12	3	16	17	2.0
8.	I often participate in online English language learning programmes	10	8	5	20	17	1.90
9.	I can improve my English through reading English books	15	27	4	5	9	3.56
10.	I often review English lessons instantly right after classes	20	25	5	6	4	4.2
11.	I often memorize vocabulary by key word methods.	15	28	4	6	7	3.82
12.	I often memorize English words by mental lexicon.	20	25	5	6	4	4.2
13.	I often memorize English lexemes by associations.	20	26	4	5	3	4.41
14.	I often recognize English texts by context clues.	15	27	4	5	9	3.56
15.	I often apply English into daily lives.	17	25	5	6	7	3.63

DISCUSSION

Data indicates that female English language learners were much more devoted to extra-curricular self-initiated English language learning activities than the less proficient learners. The most popular self-initiated English language learning activities were watching English TV programs, whereas listening to English radio programs, reading English newspaper or books and playing computer games in English were also popular activities. Proficient learners participated in a wide range of learning activities than did less proficient learners. Nevertheless, it is surprising to find that respondents rarely participated in Internet English

language learning activities. Nearly ninety percent of the respondents express that the most important reason for leaning English is to pass the examination in the classes. Generally speaking, these subjects participating in this study didn't have stronger motivation for learning English. Results of the study show that students with stronger motivation participated in self-initiated learning activities than did the less motivated. Table 2 presents the information that learning motivation is found to be the paramount factor for affecting the use of English language learning strategies, followed by family involvement, language proficiency, years of study, and effort. Table further indicates that the degree to which students spent their time and effort in learning English just didn't make a significant effect on the English language learning strategy use. The results also reveal that the students who reported spending much time in learning English didn't use English language learning strategy more frequently than those spending less effort.

According to the results of the study, motivation had a paramount effect on English language learning strategy use, followed by family tutors, language proficiency, years of study and effort. Generally speaking, proficient learners had family members tutoring them than did less proficient learners. Moreover, they made better use of English language learning strategy than the less proficient learners. Another finding is that the relationship between years of study and English language learning strategy use for language learners didn't have a significant difference. In addition, proficient learners participated in a wider range of self-initiated learning activities than do the less proficient. The data showed that the factors which were supported them in learning English language included parents role, teacher's qualifications, family members role and cooperation and motivation and learning climate.

CONCLUSION

The analyses of the data showed that family support, parents help, climate, teachers qualifications, teachers and parents motivation, self-initiated learning activities and several other factors definitely have an important impact on English language learning strategies. It will be discussed in the followings: As suggested in literature, motivation plays an important role while learning a second language. Motivation is the most significant factor for learning the second language because it determines the extent of the learners' active involvement and attitude toward leaning. The respondents with high motivation used English language learning strategies more often than did the less motivated. Moreover, proficient learners devoted much time to participate in extracurricular learning activities. The data from this case study showed that most of the subjects participating in this study didn't have high learning motivation as we expected. The low learning motivation definitely has a negative effect on students' language proficiency. Instructional strategies to enhance student motivation will be an important task for English teachers. They should design learning activities focusing on the accuracy and appropriateness of application in various contexts of use, and learners must be given opportunities to participate as languages users. Then, motivation for learning English language learning will be enhanced. Another important factor affecting students' use of English language learning strategies is family background.

According to Wu (2004), family involvement plays an important role in foreign language learning. Proficient learners had more family members tutoring them in English than did less proficient learners. The results of the study indicated that those who have family members tutoring them in English made use of English language learning strategies than did the less proficient learners. In addition, proficient learners were good at using English language learning strategies with high motivation than the less proficient learners. They often participated in self-initiated learning activities for the English language learning acquisition. Moreover, the years of learning English didn't show a significant impact on vocabulary

strategy use. The training for the vocabulary learning can motivate both the proficient learners and less proficient learners. According to Oxford's vocabulary acquisition approach (2006), careful analysis of students' need, personalized instruction, providing practice in using vocabulary strategies, and a variety of vocabulary strategies should be woven into the regular classroom activities. In conclusion, motivation and family background are the main factors for affecting not only academic achievement, foreign language proficiency, but also vocabulary learning strategy. Though learners' family background can't be changed by English teachers or educational practitioners, they can provide authentic materials, and set up good language learning policy to enhance students' learning motivation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There should be properly trained and qualified teachers for teaching English language to students.
2. The parents should cooperate their children's about the learning difficulties and guide them properly.
3. The English teachers should utilize maximum time for the improvement of the English skills of the students during the class and outside the class as well. They should conduct activities in classes and students may be encouraged to come forward and participate.
4. The climate of learning should be made very effective and learners friendly so that the students can learn English very easily and should promote English learning culture.
5. Conduct further studies about the topics which focus on the importance of integrating the teaching of foreign language.
6. Modernize and develop the English language curriculum in line with the concept of linking cultural aspects with English language teaching, focusing on cultural topics as well as other English language skills.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Blake, J. (2004). *Family Size and achievement*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- [2]. Carroll, J. B. (2006). *Cognitive Abilities in Foreign Language Aptitude: Then and Now. Language Aptitude Reconsidered*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regent
- [3]. Chamot, A.U., & Kupper, L. (2004). Learning strategies in foreign language instruction. *Foreign Language Annuals*, 22: 13-14.
- [4]. Checchi, D. (2006). *The economics of education: Human capital, family background and inequality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [5]. Clece-Murica, M., & Larsen, D. (2007). *The Grammar Book: An ESL/ ENGLISH VOCABULARY Teacher's Course*. Cambridge: NewBury House.
- [6]. Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Harlow, England: Longman.
- [7]. Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1959). Motivational variables in second language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 13(4): 266-272.

- [8]. Gardner, R. C., & Symthe, P.C. (1982). On the development of the attitudes/motivation Test Battery. *Canadian modern Journal of Behavioral Science*, 22: 254-270.
- [9]. Gardner, R.C. (2001). *Language Learning Motivation: The student, the Teacher, and the researcher*. ERIC Digest (464495).
- [10]. Leleoup, J.W. (2000). *Enhancing Authentic Language Learning Experiences through Internet*. ERIC Digest.
- [11]. Lee, G. (2009). Speaking up: Six Korean students' oral participation in class discussions in US graduate seminars. *English for Specific Purposes*, 28, 142-156.
- [12]. Nation, I.S.P. (2006). *Teaching and learning vocabulary*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- [13]. O'Malley, J.M., & Chamot, A.U. (2006). *Learning strategies in second language acquisitions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [14]. Oxford, R., & Crookall, D. (2006). Vocabulary learning: A critical analysis of techniques. *TESL Canada Journal*, 7: 9-30.
- [15]. Oxford, R. (2004). *The Role of Styles and Strategies in Second Language Learning*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. Washington: DC.
- [16]. Oxford, R. (2006). *Language Learning Strategies. What Every Teacher Should Know*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Publishers.
- [17]. Rahman, T. (2002). *Language Policy and Localization in Pakistan: Proposal for a paradigmatic shift* <http://www.elda.org/en/proj/scalla/SCALLA2004/rahman.pdf>.
- [18]. Schmitt, N., & Meara, P. (1997). Researching vocabulary through a word knowledge framework: Word association and verbal suffixes. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 19:17-36.
- [19]. Shahid, S. M. (2006). *Teaching of English*. Lahore: Z.A. Printers
- [20]. Wu, L.F. (2004). The Effects of Family Background on Foreign Language Proficiency. *Studies in English Language and Literature*, 13: 65-71.
- [21]. Zia, Z., & Sulan, N. (2015). EFL Learners' Levels of Classroom Performance Anxieties and Their causes in Classroom Speaking Activities in Afghanistan, *International Journal of English and Education*