

**CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF PRIVATE  
ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOLS IN THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The overall purpose of the study was to critically analyze the role of private English Medium Schools in the development of English speaking skills. The scope of the study was limited to the private institutions of district Khairpur, imparting education up to the intermediate level and affiliated with the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Sukkur. The study specially focused on English speaking skills of students studying in class IX, X, XI, and XII. One major hypothesis was formulated. The extensive review of the literature was done. The overall strategy was survey. The population of study was comprised of all English language teachers of private and institutions teaching English up to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Stratified random sampling was adopted and overall size was 60. Two research instruments - a questionnaire and an interview protocol were designed and data were collected. It was found out that private institutions focused on Basic English language skills especially English speaking skills with help of audio-visual aids and a lot of practice was done in the class. The private institutions were much more successful than public institutions in imparting English language skills and their performance in the examination is much more spectacular than that of public institutions.

**Key Words:** Role of Schools, English Speaking Skills

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## Introduction

The monumental importance of English cannot be denied. Shankar (2003) believes that modern science and technology has reduced the world to a global village and communication in English makes people the citizens of the world. English is thought as the easiest highway of communication between the peoples of the world. The second President of America predicted that one day English language would be the most respectable and universally read and spoken language in the world. It was decided in 2012 by Italy's most famous university, the *Politecnico di Milano*, that all the subjects in the university would be taught in English by the year 2014 because its classes would be international as Dyer (2012) writes in Dawn newspaper. If Urdu is Pakistan's national language, English is the official language. All the government documents, military communication, constitution and the law of the land are in English. International trade and commerce is done in English. English is a sign of social distinction and nobility in Pakistan and the medium of instruction in schools, colleges and universities.

Little knowhow in English is believed to be one of the major stumbling blocks in raising standard of education in Pakistan. Bhatti (2005) writes that public schools have disappointed much so far as knowledge of English is concerned. The students at all levels are unable to use English effectively for their academic and social purposes. The echo of ghost teachers and ghost schools is talk of the town in public sector education. The private sector schools have swiftly replaced the public schools where English is being taught from kindergarten and speaking skills are basically developed emphatically with modern audio-visual aids. Students are exposed to English at a greater extent in private institutions. The tremendous response from the parents has paved the way for mushrooming of private schools in the nook and corner of Pakistan. People are rushing towards private schooling even it pinches their pockets. They are satisfied with teaching methodology used in private schools focusing upon the development of basic language skills. There are a large number of private English medium schools with hundreds of students in district Khairpur. There is an acute need to study the role of these private institutions in the development of English speaking skills. The overall purpose of this study was to critically analyze the role of private English medium schools in the development of English speaking skills. The study specially focused on how English speaking skills in private institutions are enhanced. One major hypothesis was formulated that there was no significant difference between

the mean scores of senior and junior English language teachers regarding the development of English speaking skills in the private English medium schools.

Study would help in advancement of knowledge. It would provide guidelines for making the public schools more effective and the authorities would take appropriate measures for development of English language skills.

The study was delimited to all private schools educating up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, of four towns of district Khairpur, Sindh, i.e. Gambat, Ranipur, Khuhra, and Hingirja and the English language teachers of these schools are the part of the study.

The study was based upon the following assumptions:

The Intermediate students of public schools hardly communicate in English purposefully for academic and social needs but all the private schools of district Khairpur impart education in English that is why their students' language skills are much better than that of public schools.

Parents are much more inclined to send their children to rapidly growing private institutions where basic language skills especially the speaking skills are developed effectively.

The literature review provided the deep insight into the study. The English language has got the towering position in Pakistani Education System. It acts as a powerful tool for getting prestige and privilege. English is seen by Rahman (2005) as a window to the world and the private English medium schools act as passports to privilege. To Rahman (2002), the success of private schools lies in the fact that their students are exposed to English everywhere i.e. at school, at home and at play ground. They watch English movies and have access to international media. Unfortunately government institutions lack in such exposures.

The knowledge of four language skills plays essential part in learning and teaching process. English language teachers play an important role in acquisition of four language skills. Ansari (2014: 08) quoting Francis Bacon opines that they act as pillars in formation of one's personality.

**Listening Skills:** The modern world has brought changes in theory and practice of language teaching and learning. In 1969, the second International Association of Applied Linguistic

Conference concentrated on the **four** dominant themes so far as trends in second/ foreign language learning are concerned. The educationists focused on the following points: (i) individuality and individual learners; (ii) listening and reading are active, receptive, and complex processes in learning; (iii) listening comprehension as the fundamental skill in learning a language; (iv) the use of real language in a real situation as a suitable class-room model. These modern trends affected all aspects of language teaching and learning but it has influenced the listening comprehension very much. Asher (1977) calling listening as active skill encouraged the learners' oral response in language learning process.

The two strategies, the *Bottom-up* (text based strategy) and the *Top-down* (listener based strategy) were introduced by Richards (1983: 407). In the Bottom-up technique the listener focuses on the message of the language, its pronunciation, words and grammar which help him/her in creating meaning. This strategy is usually used in academic studies. Whereas the "Top-down" strategy intends to use the background information to understand the meaning contained in speech. The background information is of high value for learners. It provides a set of expectations for them which in turn help learners to extract meaning what is heard and it guides them to anticipate what will come next.

**Reading Skills:** All the research till 1970s was focused only on first language acquisition so problems and solutions were limited to why the learners could not read. Later the language experts like Kenneth Goodman and others began introducing second language reading pedagogy skills. Goodman (1970) called reading as a Psycholinguistic guessing game in which a learner samples the text material and makes a hypothesis, upholds or rejects it and goes on to make new hypotheses and so on. The reader, not the text, stands in the centre in this guessing game. After that Schema theory was introduced by linguists, cognitive psychologists, and psycholinguists. Its main purpose was to show that all knowledge is organized into units and information is stored within schemas (units of knowledge). It means that schema is a system of understanding knowledge or simply how knowledge is represented and how it is used. It is the hallmark of Schema theory that it is not the text only that carries the meaning itself but the reader who puts forward information, knowledge, emotion, experience and culture to the text. The schema theory plays a pivotal role in second language acquisition. Nunan (1984) expresses that relevant background knowledge is more significant for high school second language learners than their

knowledge of grammatical complexity. In the cognitive view, the top-down approach is in contrast with the bottom-up approach. Nunan (1991) and Dubin & Bycin (1991) are of the opinion that psycholinguistic approaches of reading and top-down strategy are exactly concordant. The schema theory of reading has likeness with cognitive view of reading. The contemporary research shows that not only bottom-up (language based process) decoding strategies but also the top-down (knowledge based process) strategies of reading should be utilized in learning the reading skills. Stanovich (1980) suggested the integration of both, bottom-up and top-down strategies for effective reading.

**Speaking Skills:** Speech is the most striking skill of man. It has raised human civilization to the wonderful heights. It is correct to say that speaking skills perhaps provide the basis for other three language skills that is why it is called the most important interactive process. It is complex and dynamic skill. It is used in constructing meaning and producing, receiving, and processing information. Such ideas are expressed by Brown (1994) and Burns & Joyce (1997). In speaking various processes are active at once such as cognitive, social and physical. It is one of the challenging aspects of language learning as it is spontaneous process. Brown and Yule (1983: 03) introduced the transactional and interactional functions of a language. Transfer of information is done by transactional function while interactional function is used to maintain social relationship. The monologue and dialogue were used by Nunan (1989) in speaking skills. Bygate (1987) introduced the difference between motor perceptive and interactional skills. The function of motor perceptive skills is focused on sound and structure of a language while interactional skills highlight on communication development. The modern research says that the learners can best improve their language skills through direct communicative interaction in the class. For the improvement of speaking skills bottom-up and top-down approaches can be used simultaneously to get the best results.

**Writing Skills:** Writing effectively and fluently is perhaps one of the most difficult jobs for the learner of a language no matter whether it is the first or the second language. Physically normal children learn to understand and speak their mother tongue naturally. White (1981) called writing skill an unnatural process. Mentally and physically normal people have natural tendency to speak a language but they are all taught how to write. Bell and Burnaby (1984) described writing as simple but a complex cognitive process. The writer should have mastery over the content,

format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation when he starts writing sentences. If he is trying to write larger texts or paragraphs he must have the ability to develop formal structures and integrate knowledge in logical and organized paragraphs and texts. For the development of writing skills two approaches are used in this modern age. They are: (a) The Product Approach (b) The Process Approach. Gabrielators (2002: 05) writes that a product approach is called a traditional approach in which learners are encouraged to mimic or copy the model text and it tends the learners to produce or reproduce what they learn. The Process Approach on the other hand encourages creativity in the learners. Kroll (2001) terms the Process Approach as an umbrella for writing courses. Quite unlike the product approach, under the Process Approach the learners go through variety of writing and rewriting processes by getting feedbacks from peers and teachers.

### Methodology

The overall strategy of the study was survey. A survey is used to record opinions as voters. It is simply an instrument used with questionnaires and interviews. The overall population of the study consisted of all the private English medium schools along with the government institutions of four towns of district Khairpur imparting education up to the intermediate level, affiliated with Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Sukkur. There are fourteen government institutions and thirty-four private institutions. The stratified random sampling design was adopted and the overall sample was sixty English language teachers.

#### The distribution of English language teachers on the basis of experience

EXPERIENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Senior	30	50
Junior	30	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The sample is evenly distributed i.e. 50% of respondents equally represent the sample.

Two instruments were designed for the collection of data – a questionnaire and an interview protocol. The data was analyzed through descriptive and statistical techniques.

**Testing of Hypothesis:** (English speaking Skills Development)

**Hypothesis:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of senior and junior English language teachers regarding the development of English speaking skills in the private English medium schools.

**Analysis of the Problem**

1.  $H_0 : \mu_1 = \mu_2$
2.  $H_1 : \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$
3.  $\alpha = 0.05$
4. Test Statistics: t
5. Decision Rule: Reject  $H_0$  if computed  $t \geq$  tabulated t

**Application of t-test**

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	106.53	108.86
Variance	53.98	31.42
Observations	30	30
df	29	
t- Statistics	-1.90	(ignoring the sign)
t- Critical two-tail	2.04	

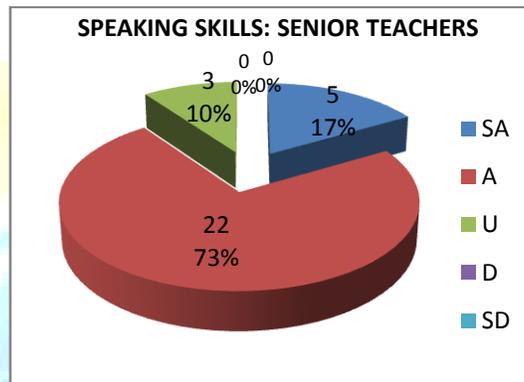
**Conclusion:**

Referring to table of t at  $\alpha = 0.05$  with  $df = 29$ , the tabulated  $t = 2.04$  which is greater than the computed  $t = 1.9$ . Therefore the null hypothesis is upheld and it is concluded that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of senior and junior teachers regarding the development of English speaking skills in the private English medium schools.

**Graphical Representation:**

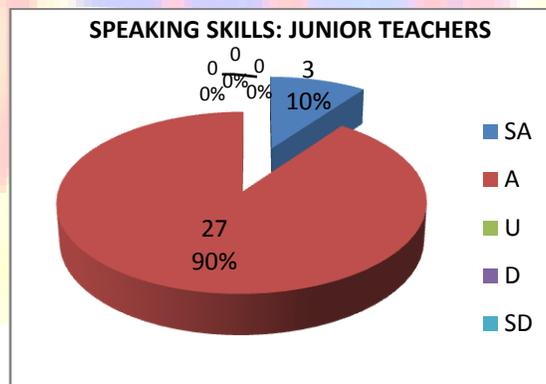
**Item:** *English Speaking skills in private institutions are developed through audio-visual aids and lot of practice in the class.*

**Key:** SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, U= Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree.



**Figure 1. Responses of Senior Teachers for the development of speaking skills**

The figure shows that 17% of the respondents strongly agreed, 73% agreed, 10% remained undecided with the item, whereas no response was found in the categories of disagree and strongly agree.



**Figure 2. Responses of Junior Teachers for the development of speaking skills**

The figure shows that 3% of the respondents strongly agreed and 90% agreed with the item, while zero response was found in the categories of undecided, disagree and strongly disagree.

### Findings:

It was found that a lot of practice of English material with the help of audio-visual aids in the class is done and students' exposure to English in and outside the class have developed English speaking skills among the students of private institutions. Teachers are free to use modern teaching methods that have infused the creativity and strategic competence in the minds of students.

The study made a significant contribution so far as the role of private English medium schools in the development of English speaking skills was concerned. It was found that a well-organized and stringent system of check and balance in the private institutions have paved the way for their overall success especially in English speaking skills.

### Recommendations:

It is recommended that a strict check and balance system be introduced in the public sector institutions. The head of the institutions should adopt leadership styles and introduce and encourage the teachers' participation in decision-making process. Teachers should be provided and encouraged to use audio-visual aids and modern teaching methods in the class freely. Pre-service and in-service teachers training programs should be introduced in government schools and politics should be kept at bay there.

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