

Problems in Speaking English with L2 Learners of Rural Area Schools of Pakistan

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Abstract

L1 (Punjabi) is used as a mode of communication in most of the rural areas schools in Punjab. The students face a lot of problems in speaking English as L2. This study would investigate the problems (fears/hindrances) in using L2 as a speaking tool. The questionnaire as a tool for data collection has been used. The data has been analysed statistically and graphically. The population consists of the students of SSC and HSSC level from age group of 12 to 18 years. Sample of 30 male and female students belonging to rural areas of Sargodha has been selected randomly. This paper may also help the researchers who intend to investigate the same issue.

Key Words: communication, speaking problems, rural areas, questionnaire

Introduction

Pakistan is a developing country. Its literacy rate is not praiseworthy and is at the low level in the ranking list of literate countries (57%, ranking 160th out of 177: sources www.literacyz.blogspot.com/2012/06). The situation is even worse in rural areas. (Dr.R.Kannan, 2009) (ESP World issue 5 V-8) Said that the students, even after twelve years education are unable to get command over English Language. He further said that Bi- lingual method is used in language class that supports only slow learners. In Pakistan, different languages/dialects are used as L1 according to the geographical boundaries. Punjab is the largest province of Pakistan. As compared to other provinces the literacy rate in Punjab is a little better (www.ilm.com.pk/pakistan-information/pakistan-literacyrate/). The students in high/ higher secondary schools (SSC/ HSSC) use L1 (Punjabi) as a mode of communication. However, in some developed villages or the villages that are near the cities and have the teaching faculty that belongs to cities use L2 (Urdu) as a communication tool.

Urdu also enjoys the status of National language of the country and within the country it is also used as lingua franca. Dr. R Kannan (2009, ESP World, www.esp-world.info/issue 5(26) Volume8, para.5) says that in schools students study English as international language, this language requires constant practice and patience. Although they are studying English yet are not able to produce a single sentence without grammatical errors. This shows that they study it only for examination point of view.

L2 (English) also has the status of an official language of Pakistan. Therefore, it is being dealt as a compulsory subject. Students have to read it to pass the examination. Without passing it they

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are unable to get certificate/degree. So they read it only to pass the examination and not for improvement of their speaking skills. According to Dr. Kannan (2009, ESP World, para.5) “Our examination system makes the students rote memorization rather than testing their analytical and creative skills”. Students’ speaking skills are at a pitiable state. Not to talk the weak students even bright students who get high scores in English written examination are unable to speak English language properly.

Various factors may be responsible for the present situation which this study has tried to point out. The English teachers are helpless in this regard as they have to cover a lot of syllabus within a very short period of time. Our examination system is also not favorable to the spoken environment because there is nothing in it, related to language. On the other hand if we consider their general living environment, about 100 % of these students belong to villages in which the environment of spoken English is unfavorable. Another factor that adds fuel to fire is that in most of the rural areas the students do not have proper access to the media due to unavailability of cable net work and Internet facility.

The problem of shortage of the qualified English teachers is also there to adverse the situation. In this research paper we have discussed all these factors and their effects on the English language speaking environment. We prepared a questionnaire to collect the data which helped to find out the problems with English speaking skills. These questionnaires were distributed to the sample population of high and higher secondary schools of rural areas both male and female students.

Problem Statement

Students at Intermediate and Secondary School level in rural areas of Sargodha do not speak English as Second Language; neither in the schools/colleges nor in their everyday life.

Hypothesis

100% students at SSC level and HSSC level in rural areas of Sargodha only prefer to pass the examination for jobs or to get admission for higher studies. They do not take interest in learning English for improvement in their speaking skills.

Research Questions

Q.1 What is the percentage of students who get education for the improvement of their Speaking English skills as L2?

Q.2 What is the percentage of students who get education only to pass the examination for job or to get admission in higher education?

Q.3 What major factors create hurdles in speaking English as L2?

Literature Review

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(Lyylinan, 1985) Said that we use language to express our feelings and attitudes and for establishing coordination and controlling our relations with others. (Smith, 2004) Said that majority of people in this world are going to be a bilinguals. (Tayyab Alam Bokhari, 2011) Said owing to the important status in the world English has also got a privileged status as second compulsory language in Pakistan. It is taught as a compulsory subject from class I to graduation. (Rahman, 1999) in his survey of different school deduced result that English learning desire is produced in all type of students including religious school that are considered Fundamentalist in Pakistan. (Dr. Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin, 2006) Found that even after learning English about eleven years especially rural areas students are incompetent in language and unable to communicate the target language. (Muhammad Younas, 2013) Said that motivation and self confidence play an important role in EFL Learning. (Haider, 2012) referred Siddiqui (2007,pp.168) who said that in Pakistan we see short stories, poems, novels, plays etc in the name of English and recently it is realized that functional English should be important to the students. Unfortunately our students can learn critical appreciation of great writers like Shakespeare, Milton and Chaucer but are unable to communicate in an effective way. (Hywel Jones, 1997, P.91) Referred to Don Byrne's Book "Teaching Oral English" in which he presented 3 stages of speaking as:

- i) The Presentation Stage: students are introduced to the new language which they are about to learn.
- ii) The Production Stage: in this stage we know if the students have learnt the new language so successfully that they can actually use it.
- iii) Accuracy and Fluency Stage: understanding and production of language by the students.

According to (Warsi, 2004) the Pakistan English syllabus emphasizes correct linguistic form instead of developing creative thought in students. Therefore, the students of schools and colleges especially rural areas' students are unable to communicate with ease and success even after studying 6 to 8 years in schools. (AIOU, 1997, pp. 68,69) "The typical English language learning experience in Pakistan is almost devoid of any speaking practice at all, and indeed, this is reflected in the examination system, which has no provision for the examination of oral skills.

Research Methodology

Data Collection

The tool of questionnaire is used for data collection in which 26 questions prepared to get the responses of the students. With the help of these responses of the students the collected data processed into grouped form for further analysis.

Population: Sample of 50 students was selected randomly. Sample population consisted of both male and female students. The area of population was high and higher secondary schools of rural areas of Sargodha.

Tool: Statistical methods were adopted to analyse the data in the form of tables and diagrams. Simple bar diagrams, multiple bar diagrams and pie diagrams are used to show the results. Percentage of the respondents used in compiling the results.

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Delimitation: the research was delimitise to rural areas of Sargodha and to the students studying in classes SSC and HSSC within age limit 12 years to 18 years.

Data Analysis

In response to Q.1 the following data is prepared for analysis.

Variables of Vocabulary Bank

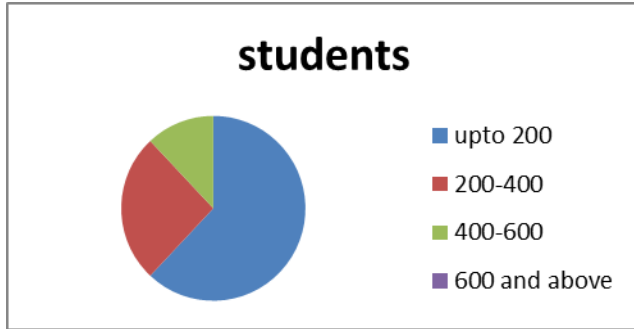


Table.1

Diagram-1

Words	Frequency	%age
Up to 200	31	62%
200-400	13	26%
400-600	6	12%
600 and above	0	0%

The table/diagram 1 shows that most of the students have a very less vocabulary bank. About 62% students have only up to 200 words, 26 % students have vocabulary words ranging 200 –400 , only 12 % claim to have words 400 to 600 and 0% more than 600. Whereas up to secondary level the word treasure of all the students for text should be from 8000 to 9000 words and for spoken text its range is 6,000 to 7000 words(.I.S.P Nation . The Canadian Modern Language Review (2006:p.59). Moreover

according to recent studies from Shaffield University “teenager who can barely talk has only 800 words vocabulary”.(www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1242056/teenspeak p.1) So this is one of the problems of students’ weak level in English.

Data Analysis of the Responses Received from Q.2

Variable of Students’ Understanding English

Responses	No. of students	percentage

not at all	8	16%
a little bit	33	66%
reasonable	9	18%
good	0	0%

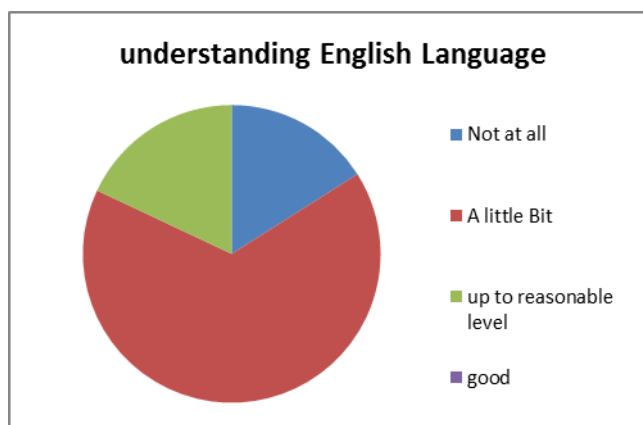


Table 2

diagram 2

As Dr. Kannan (2009) said that the students even after 10-12 years schooling are unable to get command over English, this statement supports the present study as only 18% students claimed to have the understanding of English language up to reasonable limit, no student claimed to have a good understanding in English. For improving the situation, a special planning is required.

“Use of Various Languages in Various Situations” responses of Q.3 to Q.9

use of language	Punjabi	Urdu	English
with brothers/sisters	100%	0%	0%
with parents	100%	0%	0%
with relatives	76%	24%	0%
in class	64%	36%	0%
with friends	58%	42%	0%
teacher while general conversation	70%	15%	0%
teacher while explaining concepts	12%	44%	0%

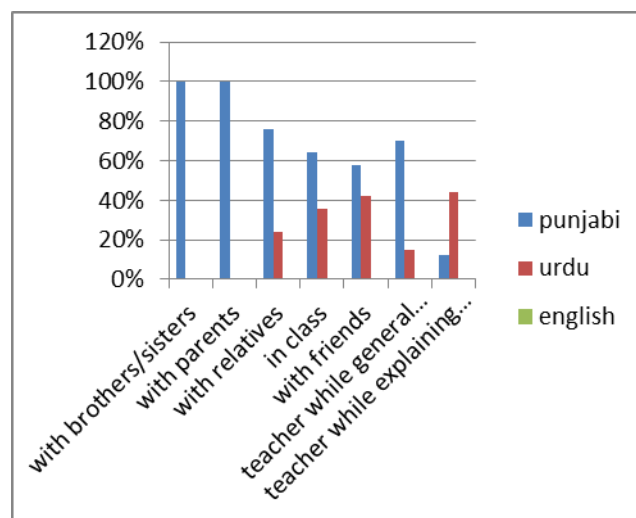


Diagram-3

Table-3

Speaking any language is entirely based on practice. Its example is just like a bicycle. Every person knows how to run a bicycle but not every person can run it by himself. Only those persons can ride it that has enough practice. This diagram speaks that in rural areas of Sargodha, 100% students speak Punjabi with their parents, brothers/sisters. However, it is

interesting to note that although all these students use Punjabi at their homes, but 24% students use Urdu language with their relatives, 36% use Urdu in the class and 42% with their friends. This shows that element of prestige language is also affecting the situation. This study shows that even 70% English teachers use Punjabi language while general conversation and 44% teachers use Urdu language but 0% teachers use pure English language within the class. Owing to poor listening skills (input) the speaking of the students (output) is also weak.

Data in responses of Q.10 and Q. 11

Variable of Family Educational Background

	Educated	uneducated
father	36%	64%
mother	24%	76%
sister	54%	46%
brother	66%	34%

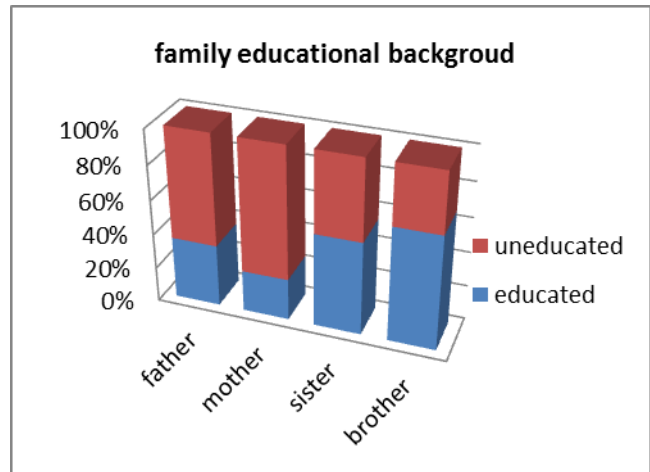


Table-4

Diagram-4

This table/ diagram shows that in the past literacy rate was very low as the percentage of educated fathers was 36% and educated mothers was just 24% but the situation is getting better now. In new generation it is 66% in brothers and 54% in sisters (future fathers and mothers). This result shows that the home atmosphere with present family educational background is not friendly for spoken English environment.

Variable “ purpose of getting Education” Q.12

Categories	Response %age
to pass the examination	56%
to get the job	34%
to improve the English skills	6%
to have a good status in the society	4%

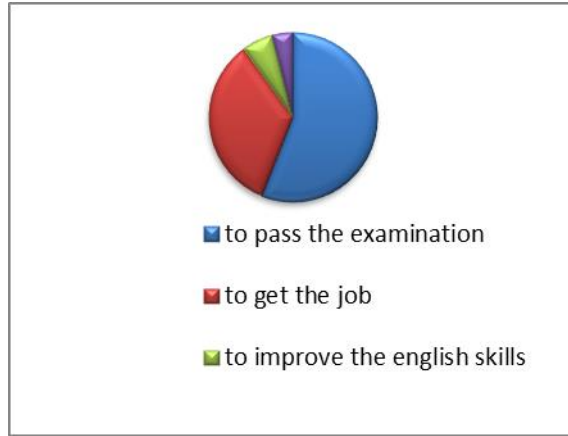


Table-5

diagram-5

This interesting study shows that the purpose of getting education for the improvement of English skills is only 64%. 34% students are getting education to get a job and 56% students are getting education just to pass the examination. As mentioned in (AIOU: MA (TEFL) book p : 68,69) “in Pakistan, many students who learn English especially at the earlier stages, are unlikely to have much real need for the language except for passing school examinations” this study also reflects the same situation that about 94 % students are not learning with the target to improve English language.

“Variables that cause hindrances in studies” the responses of Q.13

fear of punishment	4%
subject of Mathematics	26%
subject of English	44%
Poverty	6%
Both subject of math. and English	20%

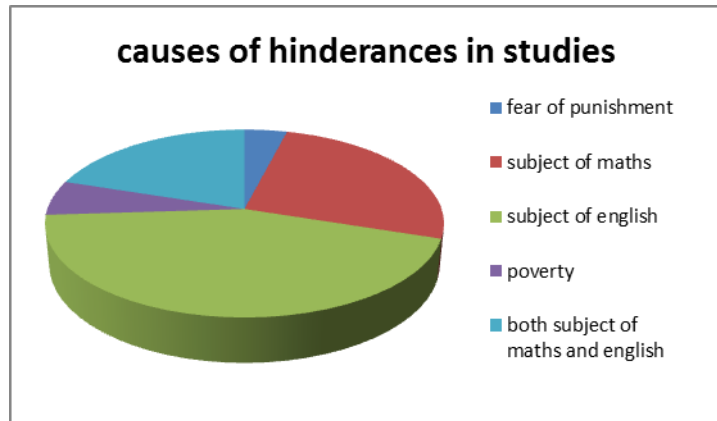


Table-6

Diagram-6

This data speaks that about 64% (44% +20%) students consider English as a main hindrance in the continuation of their studies. This is definitely a wrong concept that is prevailed in their minds. Through motivation, proper facilities and careful planning we can change it in to friendly atmosphere. Muratab Ali (2013) said that motivation can play an important role in education.

“Portion of spoken English/functional English in examination” responses of Q.14 to Q.17

Responses	yes	No
is there separate English spoken classes in the institution	0%	100%
is there specialist English teachers to teach English	30%	70%
should there be 100% English while teaching	20%	80%

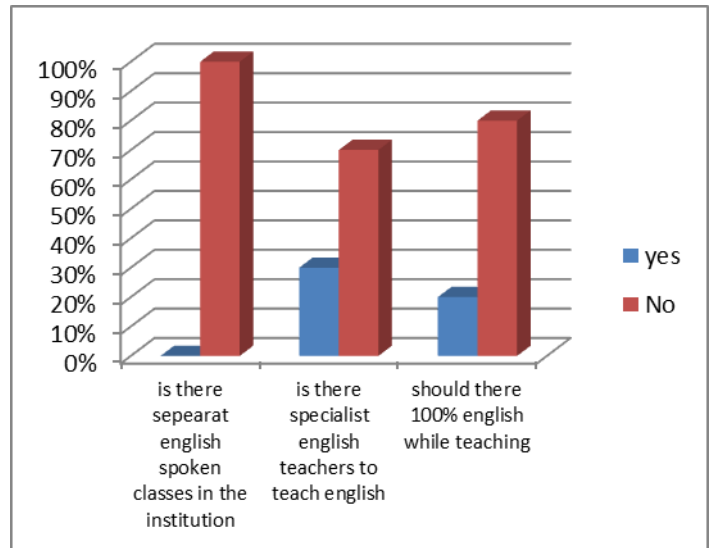


Table-7

Diagram-7

In this study 100% students respond that there is no focus given on speaking skills as there is no special classes in the school regarding language improvement, 70% students say that there is no specialist English teachers. Owing to this situation ultimately the interest in learning English has also decreased which is presented through the response of 80 % students who don't wish that there should be 100 % communication in English language within the class. If we change the first two situations the third would ultimately be changed.

“Personal attitude towards ESL” in the light of responses of Q.19 to Q.22

	Punjabi	Urdu	Use of English alphabets but language is Urdu
language in which you want to watch dramas and movies	6%	90%	4%
medium of instruction you want to get education	0%	82%	18%
you send or receive SMS in language	8%	12%	80%

Table-8

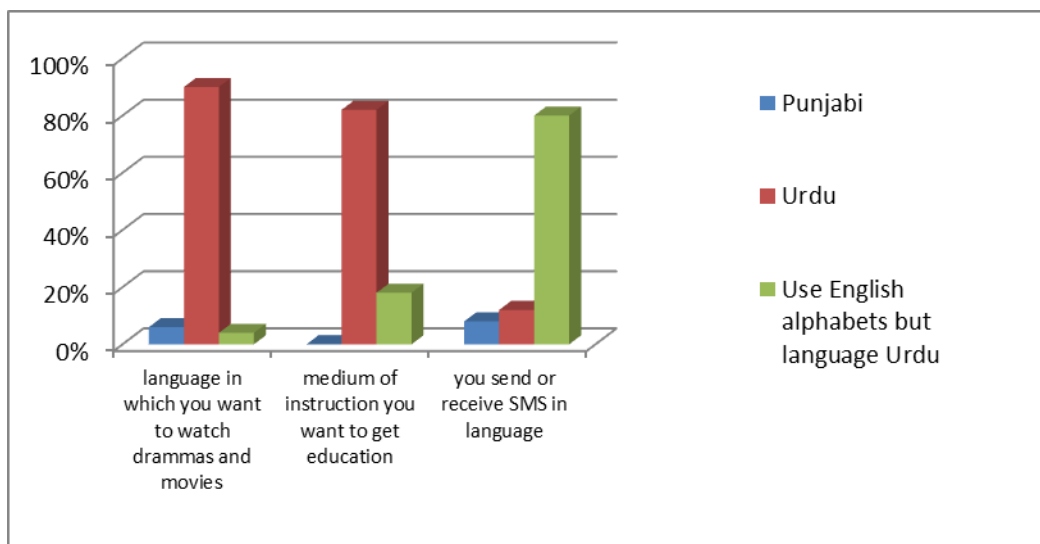


Diagram-8

This diagram shows the personal attitude of the ESL learners. It is quite clear that most of the students (80% to 90%) use L2(Urdu) instead of L2(English). Even than while writing messages in Urdu language they use English alphabets. 82 % want to get education in Urdu Medium. Again there is a need to change the thinking style of the students through motivation and media.

“Variables of personal problems” responses of Q.18

low vocabulary	12%
fear of people responses	16%
lack of competence of constructing sentence	0%
grammatical problems	0%
lack of Courage to speak	0%
all the above	72%

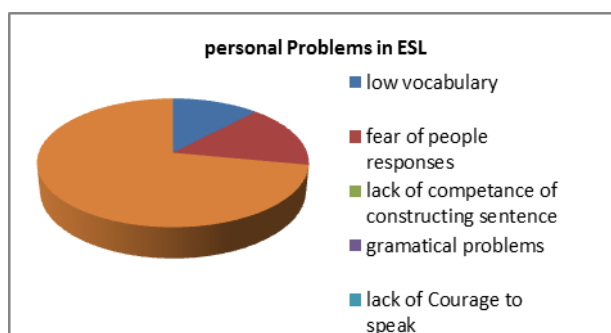


Table-9

Diagram-9

This diagram shows that 72% students have allied problems of low vocabulary, fear of people’s hooting/laughing, lack of competence in sentence structure, grammatical problems, lack of courage etc. while speaking a sentence. There is a need to boost their confidence with sufficient practice/drill and motivation.

“Variable of Facilities factors helpful in building English language” responses of Q.23 to Q.25

	yes %age	No %age
cable Net Work	14%	83%
internet facility	0%	100%
cell phone	66%	34%

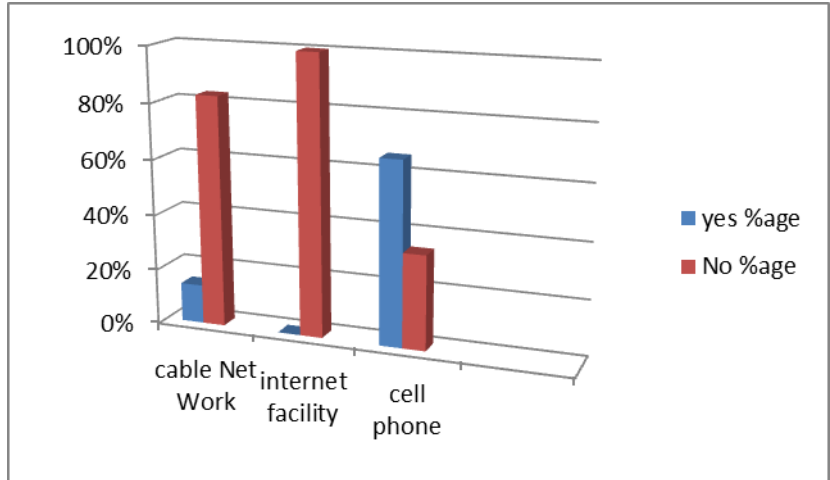


Table-10

Diagram-10

This data shows that in rural areas students are missing basic A.V Aids that may be very supporting in language building activities. 83% students don't have cable net work facility, and 100 % students don't have any access to internet facility. However 66% students have their own cell phones. A separate department may be established who register the students having their own cell phones and send them quotations, jokes, news headlines, sports news, entertainment news in English language.

“Foundation/starting of learning ESL Stage” responses to Q.26

From Class Nursery	22%
From Class I to V	10%
From Class Vi	68%

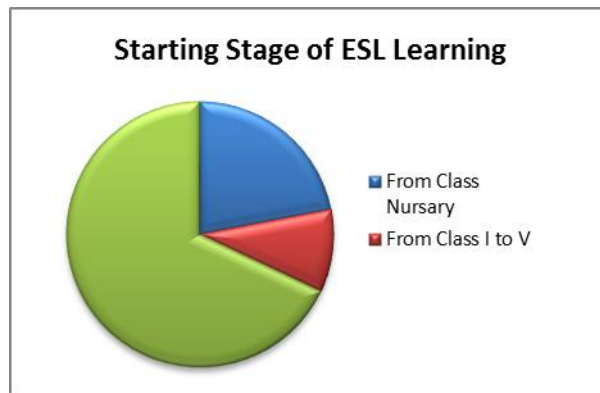


Table-11

Diagram-11

Starting Stage of English Language

Another problem with ESL learners is that 68% students started their learning English at Elementary level, i.e., from Class VI. They have very short period of 3 years to cover a lot of syllabus before reaching the secondary level. Suddenly they are thrown in the sea of English in which they feel a lot of difficulties to swim properly without proper skills. So they become fearful from English.

Conclusion

In Pakistan, the spoken skill of the students is at pitiable level. The educational system focuses on reading/writing skills only. The purpose of getting education of most of the students is to pass the examination rather than to improve their speaking skills. Students reach secondary school level after 8 to 10 years of schooling but are unable to speak English reasonably. There are various problems/hurdles in speaking English as L2. The problems as are reflected from this study are: low vocabulary bank, poor listening facilities, domination of L1's (Punjabi) effect, unavailability of the environment that helps to speak English at home or in school, family's low educational back ground, lack of interest to improve language skills, educational system without any focus on speaking skills, no provision of separate English spoken classes in the schools, unavailability of specialist English teachers. In such circumstances it seems very difficult to improve the situation.

Suggestions to Improve the Situation

A lot of efforts are required from policy level to execution level. A properly planned syllabus with practical spoken portion may be included in the English syllabus and examination. Functional English with vocabulary development activities may also be added to the syllabus. The Government may appoint specialist English teachers in the schools. They should be bound to use Direct Method to teach English and to create proper spoken environment in the class. Government should start an additional Channel on PTV with suitable portion of Programmes in English language.

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