



Initial Proficiency Levels and Failure Rates in English Language Learning: A Study of Secondary School Students in District Chiniot, Punjab, Pakistan

Habib Ullah¹, Muhammad Ashfaq Hassan Babar², Dr. Babar Shahbaz³ & Dr. Shoukat Ali⁴

¹MPhll Scholar, University of agriculture, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan, Email: Fsd744@gmail.com

²MPhil Scholar, University of agriculture, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan, Email: Ashfaqhassan75@gmail.com

³Dean, Institute of Agriculture Extension, Education and Rural Development, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan, Email: bsuaf@yahoo.com

⁴Professor, Institute of Agriculture Extension, Education and Rural Development, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan, Email: shoukat78pk@uaf.edu.pk

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: March 05, 2025
Revised: April 17, 2025
Accepted: April 22, 2025
Available Online: April 28, 2025

Keywords:

English Proficiency, Student Failure, Secondary Schools, Socio-economic Factors, District Chiniot

Corresponding Author:

Muhammad Ashfaq Hassan Babar

Email:

Ashfaqhassan75@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Despite being a crucial subject, English language proficiency remains a challenge for many students, impacting their academic performance and future prospects. By applying quantitative research approach, incorporating quantitative research methodologies, this study seeks to identify and analyze the various factors influencing students' performance in English. Through surveys, interviews, and academic record analysis, there search was delved into aspect such as teaching methodologies, curriculum adequacy, student attitudes towards English, socio-economic backgrounds, language proficiency levels, parental involvement, and institutional support systems. The total number of students who failed in the English subject in Tehsil Bhowana was 991. Convenient sampling was used to choose 131 students of class 10th who failed in class 9th English Subject however 131 students made up the study sample. The sample size of this study was 131 students of secondary schools of Tehsil Bhawana District Chiniot by keeping the confidence interval 8% and confidence level 95%. The sample size was determined by using online available software i.e. www.surveysystems.com. A questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings of this study provide detailed insights into the factors contributing to students' failure in English at the secondary school level in Tehsil Bhawana, District Chiniot. Among the 131 respondents, 51.1% were aged between 12-15 years, and 48.9% were aged between 15-20 years, ensuring a balanced representation of adolescents in critical developmental stages. A majority (74.8%) of the participants were male, while 25.2% were female. All respondents (100%) were at the beginner level of English proficiency, indicating a uniform need for foundational language instruction. Most students (99.2%) have studied English for 5-10 years, yet they still struggle with basic language skills. Socio-economic factors also played a significant role, with 74.8% of respondents' mothers being illiterate and 96.2% residing in rural areas, limiting access to educational resources.



Introduction

English has become a universal language and is becoming more and more important in a variety of fields, including business, education, and international affairs. It is impossible to overstate the importance of English language proficiency at the secondary school level because it affects students' academic achievement and future prospects. Nevertheless, many Pakistani students, especially those in rural areas like Tehsil Bhowana, District Chiniot, struggle to learn English despite its importance, which leads to poor performance and, eventually, failure in the subject. This is a serious problem because it hinders the students' academic progress and reduces their chances of success in the workforce and further education (Bashir, 2014).

Teachers, parents, and legislators are becoming increasingly concerned about Tehsil Bhowana students' poor English performance at the secondary school level. Despite being a mandatory course in secondary education, many pupils fall short of the minimal requirements for passing. This academic problem may be caused by a variety of internal and external issues, including inadequate teaching methods, a lack of resources, low student motivation, and socioeconomic factors. To identify the root causes of failure and offer viable remedies to raise students' English proficiency, these problems necessitate a comprehensive analysis (Ali and Rehman, 2017).

English instruction in Pakistan's educational system is challenging for a number of reasons, particularly in rural areas. Many kids in Tehsil Bhowana still have difficulty speaking English, despite the fact that it is a requirement for secondary schools. Socioeconomic limitations, limited access to educational resources, and outdated teaching techniques are some of the interconnected causes of these challenges. For instance, the heavy reliance on rote memorization and grammar-based instruction in many institutions usually does not foster the development of the practical communication skills required for success in English. Furthermore, rural students usually do not have equal access to high-quality learning materials, which limits their ability to engage with the material in a meaningful way (Khan and Shabbir, 2018).

However, metropolitan schools usually offer more resources, including access to language labs, modern teaching aids, and trained teachers. This disparity between rural and urban schools makes it more difficult for students in rural areas to acquire English. Given the increasing significance of English in academic and professional contexts, these problems must be addressed to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities throughout Pakistan (Bashir, 2014).

One of the main barriers to academic success in rural Pakistan is socioeconomic issues. Tehsil Bhowana is home to many low-income families that struggle to cover the costs of their children's education, including textbooks, school supplies, and extracurricular activities. Students from these households could not have access to basic learning resources like private tutoring, English language study materials, or even the internet for additional educational information because of budgetary limitations.

Furthermore, parents in lower-income households frequently have lower levels of education themselves, which makes it difficult for them to encourage their kids to do well in school or support their academic development. The difficulties experienced by pupils in rural places are made worse by the lack of family support. Research has frequently demonstrated that students' socioeconomic situation has a significant impact on their academic performance, with pupils from underprivileged homes more likely to experience academic difficulties. These pupils struggle to learn English, a language that demands continuous exposure and practice to become proficient in, largely due to a lack of resources and parental dedication (Khan, 2016).

Students' academic success in English is influenced by a variety of factors, including socioeconomic barriers and teaching styles. Many schools, particularly those in rural regions like

Tehsil Bhowana, still employ traditional teaching methods. These methods typically emphasize vocabulary and grammar rules above practical language use, with a focus on rote memorization and grammatical exercises. These techniques may improve short-term memory recall, but they don't improve English speaking skills.

Traditional methods must give way to more student-centered and participatory ones in order for language acquisition to be effective. It has been shown that task-based learning, communicative language instruction, and integrating technology into the classroom are more successful in getting pupils interested in the language. Teachers in remote locations, however, typically lack the tools and expertise needed to put such cutting-edge tactics into practice. The issue is made worse by the dearth of professional development opportunities for teachers, who are frequently ill-equipped to handle the needs of students with English language impairments (Bashir, 2014). Students' capacity to succeed in English is significantly impacted by this misalignment between teaching methods and student needs.

Barriers related to motivation and psychology also have a big impact on how well children achieve in English. Tehsil Bhowana children are among the many rural students who have major emotional and psychological obstacles when attempting to learn English. Disengagement among students is influenced by their negative attitudes toward the subject, lack of confidence, and fear of failure. Because English is frequently viewed as a foreign language, students may believe that improving it is impossible, which deters them from trying. According to research, self-efficacy and inner drive are essential for academic success, particularly in topics where students struggle. Students are more inclined to put in the work necessary to advance their skills when they have confidence in their ability to succeed and are inspired by encouraging comments from their instructors and classmates. However, students that lack motivation may not be interested in the subject, which could result in subpar work and failure (Ali and Rehman, 2017). Effective teaching techniques, classroom assistance, and the creation of a secure atmosphere that welcomes students to take chances and make errors can all help students overcome motivational obstacles.

Along with pedagogical and psychological factors, one of the main factors influencing students' success in learning English is the availability of materials. Tehsil Bhowana and other rural schools usually lack the infrastructure required to provide effective language training. Without computers, multimedia resources, and language labs, students cannot practice English in a dynamic and interesting way. The shortage of qualified English teachers in rural schools exacerbates the problem. Teachers in urban schools are able to stay up to date on the newest teaching techniques and approaches because they frequently have access to specialized training and continual professional development. Conversely, teachers in isolated areas could not have access to these resources, which could lead to less successful instruction. Students in rural areas are at a disadvantage when it comes to learning English because of the unequal allocation of resources between urban and rural schools. To guarantee that every student has the resources and assistance they require to excel in English, this resource gap must be closed (Khan and Shabbir, 2018).

Effective English language instruction in rural areas is hampered by serious institutional challenges, despite the fact that English proficiency is highly valued in Pakistan's national education systems. There are significant differences between the goals of policies and how they are actually implemented. Even while the national curriculum places a strong emphasis on the value of English, rural schools typically lack the resources—such as trained instructors, support systems, and facilities—needed to carry out the program successfully. Rural populations are being underserved as a result of the government's emphasis on urban-centric programs, which has increased educational disparities. Furthermore, the difficulties experienced by schools in rural areas may worsen due to political unpredictability and unequal support for the educational system. Due to their poor pay, many teachers in these areas lack the drive to pursue professional development

or enhance their teaching methods. Improving educational results and addressing the underlying causes of students' English language skills are severely hampered by these systemic problems. Rural children will continue to experience educational disadvantage and have less opportunities for success if specific reforms are not implemented (Bashir, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Despite English being a compulsory subject and a key determinant of academic and professional success in Pakistan, a significant number of secondary school students in District Chiniot continue to struggle with low proficiency levels in the language. The persistent high failure rates in English at the secondary level suggest underlying issues related to students' foundational language skills, ineffective teaching methodologies, curriculum gaps, socio-economic challenges, and lack of institutional support. These factors not only hinder students' academic performance but also limit their future educational and career opportunities. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the initial proficiency levels of students and identify the factors contributing to their failure in English, with a focus on secondary schools in District Chiniot, Punjab, Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant importance as it addresses the alarming issue of poor English language proficiency and high failure rates among secondary school students in District Chiniot, Punjab, Pakistan. English is not only a mandatory subject in the national curriculum but also a global language that directly impacts students' academic success and future employment prospects. By identifying the initial proficiency levels of students and examining the factors contributing to their failure in English, this research provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and school administrators. The findings can help in the development of targeted interventions, such as improving teaching strategies, revising the curriculum, enhancing teacher training, and providing additional support to students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the improvement of English language learning outcomes, reduce failure rates, and enhance the overall quality of education in the region.

Literature Review

The study of the factors impacting Tehsil Bhowana, District Chiniot, secondary school students' incapacity to learn English requires a thorough understanding of the various academic, financial, and psychological factors that affect language acquisition. Numerous studies have looked into these issues, emphasizing the significance of socioeconomic barriers, subpar instructional methods, psychological barriers, budgetary limitations, and systemic issues with the educational system. Given that English has become a vital tool for obtaining access to higher education and work opportunities, particularly in globalized firms, it is imperative to comprehend the reasons behind students' poor language proficiency. The research on this subject demonstrates how students' difficulties are caused by a variety of factors, including unfavorable student attitudes toward the language, limited parental involvement, insufficient teacher preparation, and urban-rural differences in educational resources. By examining the complexity that impedes English language learning in rural schools and providing insights into potential interventions that could enhance student results, this review highlights the corpus of research on these components. This review attempts to provide the groundwork for comprehending the intricacy of English language learning difficulties in rural Pakistan by closely examining pertinent studies.

Latif (2016) conducted research how English language instruction in rural schools is impacted by socioeconomic characteristics. According to the study, a lack of a supportive home environment and low family income are two socioeconomic factors that greatly contribute to students' poor

English proficiency. Latif found that many children in isolated areas lacked access to digital resources, libraries, and language learning centers—all essential for language competency. Additionally, because there aren't many English-speaking role models in these areas, students have fewer opportunities to practice the language in natural contexts. The study came to the conclusion that improving rural pupils' English proficiency requires tackling socioeconomic hurdles. Community-based projects like the creation of learning centers or collaborations with non-governmental organizations, in Latif's opinion, could lessen these difficulties. Khan and Shabbir (2016) investigated the relationship between rural poverty and academic attainment, particularly English proficiency. According to a study done in Tehsil Bhowana, children living in poverty are unable to pay for essential educational resources including practice books, English textbooks, and internet access. Students' chances to interact and practice the language outside of the classroom, which is essential for language acquisition, are significantly reduced when these resources are unavailable. The study found that poverty leads to a vicious circle of educational disadvantage when students lack parental support because of their parents' low educational achievement and struggle with academic resources. Poor academic performance results from this cycle, especially in English, which calls for constant practice and involvement. The results of Khan and Shabbir's study show how socioeconomic difficulties affect students' proficiency in English and how specific treatments are needed to address these problems.

Ali and Rehman (2017) conducted a study on the relationship between rural students' socioeconomic background and academic achievement. They found that many students in rural locations, including Tehsil Bhowana, had financial difficulties that prevented them from affording essential educational tools like laptops, one-on-one tutoring, or English-language reading. This dearth of resources was a significant obstacle to learning English. The survey also found that parents in these areas often lacked the education needed to provide their children with the academic support they required. Due to financial constraints and a lack of parental involvement and support, students found it difficult to improve their English language skills. Given that socioeconomic inequality remains a significant contributor to educational inequality, they underlined the significance of focused initiatives to give rural children more resources and support.

Noreen and Qureshi (2017) investigated the relationship between students' socioeconomic position and their English proficiency. Their study brought to light a number of socioeconomic challenges that rural students have, such as restricted access to English language resources, a lack of family support, and a dearth of possibilities for extracurricular language practice. These issues are especially noticeable in Tehsil Bhowana, where pupils' capacity to interact meaningfully with English is hampered by a lack of funding and poor facilities.

Students in rural schools sometimes struggled to meet the standards of their English curriculum because they lacked resources, such as exposure to English-language media or language tutors. Noreen and Qureshi claim that by lowering the disparity in English proficiency between students in rural and urban areas, eliminating these socioeconomic barriers will enhance educational performance in rural areas.

Bashir and Iqbal (2017) examined the effects of socioeconomic inequality on language learning in Pakistan's rural areas. The findings of their study demonstrate that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds frequently do not have access to the opportunities and resources necessary to improve their English. Many children in remote locations, such as Tehsil Bhowana, lack access to language enrichment programs and private tuition, which might greatly increase their language skills. The survey also revealed a strong relationship between students' socioeconomic position and their opinions of English, with those with lower incomes frequently viewing English as a challenging subject with limited real-world applications. This negative

perception makes it harder for students to succeed in the subject, which further saps their motivation. Bashir and Iqbal stressed the need for legislative reforms to ensure that children in rural regions have the same access to school and the same opportunity to succeed in English as their urban counterparts.

Rehman and Shah (2018) conducted a study on how socioeconomic status affects English language acquisition in Pakistan's rural areas. According to their research, pupils from lower-income families were less likely to succeed academically in English because they were unable to pay for private tutoring or extra learning resources. Additionally, these students frequently lacked a calm and encouraging study space at home, which is essential for language acquisition. Rehman and Shah came to the conclusion that a significant contributing factor to low English proficiency in rural areas is socioeconomic obstacles. To give pupils the tools they need to excel in English, they promoted focused interventions like government-funded initiatives or school collaborations with nearby communities. Their results highlight the necessity of tackling socioeconomic gaps in schooling, especially in rural areas, with a comprehensive strategy.

Syed and Anwar (2018) investigated the connection between academic success, especially in English, and socioeconomic background. Their study found that because they are less exposed to the language and receive less academic support, pupils from low-socioeconomic, rural backgrounds are more likely to have unfavorable views toward learning English. Many of these kids find it difficult to engage in English language activities that help them develop their speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities. Syed and Anwar came to the conclusion that socioeconomic differences are a significant obstacle to language learning since rural students frequently view English as an expensive course. This lack of motivation and the limited opportunities for language connection feed the cycle of poor English performance. The study suggests that reducing socioeconomic barriers could significantly improve students' opinions of English and, ultimately, their language proficiency.

Aftab and Hussain (2018) examined the connection between social standing and academic success, with a particular emphasis on rural areas. Their study showed how difficult it is for low-income families to give their kids the books, private tutoring, and internet connection they need for school. Financial limitations are common in rural places like Tehsil Bhowana, where students typically do not have the same options for academic advancement as their metropolitan counterparts. Learning English is severely hampered by inadequate funding for schools and a dearth of educational tools at home. They proposed that socioeconomic issues exacerbate educational inequalities and impede students' language acquisition in remote areas. Because they are not exposed to or practice the language outside of school hours, students find it difficult to increase their English proficiency, which is crucial for success in both the classroom and the workplace.

Rehman and Yousaf (2019) conducted a study that examined the relationship between academic achievement and family wealth in rural Pakistan. According to their findings, students from wealthy families tend to perform better in English because they have access to superior learning resources, extracurricular activities, and private tutoring. However, because they cannot afford such opportunities, students from lower-income families are at a significant disadvantage. The researchers emphasized that economic disparity has a major influence on educational quality, especially in English. It is more difficult for pupils from low-income families to develop the language skills necessary for English proficiency when they do not have access to extracurricular academic help, such as extra classes or the internet. This study emphasizes the strong correlation between socioeconomic position and academic success, showing how financial constraints make learning English more difficult in rural places.

Shah and Rizvi (2019) conducted research on the socioeconomic obstacles to education in Pakistan's rural areas, concentrating on language acquisition. Their study found that whereas students at metropolitan institutions have access to contemporary educational resources including online courses, language learning apps, and private tutors, students in rural areas like Tehsil Bhowana do not. Students in remote locations lack access to the extra learning resources required to acquire English, even when they attend school frequently. Shah and Rizvi claim that rural students are at a clear disadvantage in their language learning efforts due to the lack of contemporary resources like internet connectivity, language labs, and interactive learning platforms. This disparity in access to resources has a significant impact on their ability to practice and improve their English language skills, which is crucial for both academic achievement and future employment opportunities.

Methodology

The section provides an explanation of the data collection process, research methodology, population samples, research instrument, information gathering, data investigation process, and validity of research tools.

This study used a quantitative approach to design and investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and its determinants, such as the factors influencing the job happiness and decent work environment of elementary school teachers, the teachers' satisfaction with their income and salary, and the pressure of expenses. The quantitative data collected by a questionnaire were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using the statistical program for social sciences (SPSS). The present study was entitled "Initial proficiency levels and failure rates in english language learning: a study of secondary school students in district chiniot, punjab, pakistan." The respondents' data were collected from 10th-grade male students enrolled in secondary and higher secondary schools in Tehsil Bhowana, District Chiniot. These students were studying science and arts subjects and taking English as a major subject. Convenient sampling was used to select 150 students of class 10 who had failed in English during class 9. A total of 150 students made up the study sample, which was selected conveniently with a 95% confidence level and a 5% confidence interval. The sample size was determined using the online software available at www.surveysystem.com. Data from the respondents were collected through a questionnaire, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis.

Result and discussion

Age is a significant factor in social, psychological, and cultural contexts. It often influences societal expectations, roles, and responsibilities assigned to individuals at different stages of their lives. Age-related factors can impact educational opportunities, legal rights and responsibilities, career advancements, and social interactions (Rousseau, 2002). The respondents of the study were divided in to three categories (I) 12-15, (II) 15-20 and (III) 20-25 years. Data related to age category is given below in table 1

Table1: Age of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
12-15	67	51.1
15-20	64	48.9
Total	131	100.0

Table 1 presents the age distribution of the respondents participating in the study. The majority of the respondents, 51.1% (n=67), belong to the age group of 12-15 years, while the remaining 48.9% (n=64) fall within the 15-20 years age bracket. This indicates a fairly even distribution between younger adolescents and older teenagers, with a slight predominance of the younger group.

The total number of respondents is 131, ensuring a representative sample across these age ranges. These age groups are particularly relevant for examining language acquisition and learning processes, as they encompass a critical period of cognitive and linguistic development.

The distribution indicates that the study's findings provide valuable insights into the challenges and experiences of adolescents learning English, and they are representative of a diverse adolescent community. Raza and Aslam (2018) emphasize how crucial it is to understand the age distribution of respondents in educational research because age differences may have an impact on learning outcomes and classroom dynamics. According to their study, adolescents between the ages of 12 and 20 provide an essential cohort for examining the effectiveness of educational systems since they are at the most critical stages of their academic and psychological development.

Table 2: Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	98	74.8
Female	33	25.2
Total	131	100.0

Table 2 shows the gender distribution of the respondents in the study. A significant majority of the participants, 74.8% (n=98), are male, while 25.2% (n=33) are female. This suggests a gender imbalance, with males comprising a larger portion of the sample.

The total number of respondents is 131, and this distribution may reflect broader trends in the particular context of the study (e.g., the subject, location, or participation trends in language learning). Despite the gender discrepancy, the data can still provide valuable insights into the language learning experiences and challenges faced by both male and female learners, although the results may not be fully representative of gender parity. This information helps contextualize the findings and interpret how gender may influence the experiences and perceptions of English language learning within the study group.

Easton and Van Laar, (2018)demonstrated how men and women pursue different educational goals based on their gender. Even though both men and women are capable of earning college degrees, women face more obstacles when trying to attain senior managerial positions, which could raise questions about their future financial and professional security. The gender gap in education has narrowed in recent decades in the majority of western and many non-western countries, despite the fact that traditionally, men have generally had higher levels of education than women.

Current level of English proficiency

The importance of English language proficiency as a determinant of academic success, particularly in rural areas where students are often not exposed to the language on a regular basis. The authors note that a variety of factors influence students' English proficiency levels, including the quality of English instruction, the availability of learning resources, and the motivation of both teachers and students. They note that low proficiency levels can hinder students' success in subjects where English is the main language of teaching, which can have an impact on their overall academic

performance. The study offers certain suggestions for resolving this problem, including providing students with more educational materials, implementing creative teaching techniques, and providing English teachers with specialized training. It is anticipated that these actions will increase English competence, especially in rural areas where difficulties are more noticeable. (Rana and Shafiq, 2020).

Table 3: Current Level of English Proficiency

Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Beginner	131	100.0

Table 3 illustrates the current level of English proficiency among respondents. The data reveals that all 131 participants, representing 100% of the sample, are at the beginner level of English proficiency. This indicates a uniform lack of advanced or intermediate English skills across the surveyed group. The findings suggest that there may be significant challenges in understanding and using English effectively, which could impact academic performance and communication in settings where English is the medium of instruction. This emphasizes the need for targeted interventions, such as foundational English language training and support programs, to improve proficiency levels among the respondents.

According to Javed and Khan (2018), a student's performance is greatly influenced by their fundamental level of English proficiency, particularly in situations where English is the primary medium of instruction. Table 3's continuous beginner-level competency reveals a significant discrepancy that might make it more challenging for students to engage with the program's requirements. Javed and Khan emphasized the importance of early and consistent English language training programs to build essential skills. These therapies can help children thrive academically and adapt to learning environments where English is the primary language by closing the competence gap. In the absence of such evaluations, incompetence may nevertheless lead to comprehension and performance issues.

Proficiency level of students in English language learning

Numerous elements, such as educational strategies, exposure to the language, personal motivation, and outside resources, affect students' degrees of English language proficiency. Both intrinsic factors, like cognitive abilities and learning strategies, and extrinsic factors, like access to high-quality instruction and supportive learning environments, have been shown to have a significant impact on students' proficiency (Almeida and Oliveira, 2021; García and Hernández, 2022). Additionally, socioeconomic considerations are frequently reflected in proficiency levels; kids from more privileged families tend to have higher language competence because they have greater access to resources and practice opportunities. To create treatments that can help students at different proficiency levels and advance more equal language learning outcomes, it is essential to comprehend these contributing elements. (Baker, 2020)

Table 4: Listening and speaking skills (n=131)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation	WS	Rank
	F	f	f	F	F				
	%	%	%	%	%				
I can understand basic English instructions and simple conversations.	1	21	5	93	11	3.70	0.866	484.70	1
	0.8%	16.0%	3.8%	71.0%	8.4%				
I can introduce myself and provide basic information about myself in English.	3	43	1	72	12	3.36	1.103	439.16	2
	2.3%	32.8%	0.8%	55.0%	9.2%				
I can follow along with English spoken at a moderate pace in familiar contexts.	1	85	2	40	2	2.67	0.976	347.10	3
	0.8%	64.9%	1.5%	30.5%	1.5%				
I can comprehend the main ideas of short English audio or video clips.	2	86	2	39	2	2.64	0.977	345.84	4
	1.5%	65.6%	1.5%	29.8%	1.5%				
I can pronounce common English words and phrases with reasonable clarity.	5	91	3	31	1	2.48	0.923	324.88	5
	3.8%	69.5%	2.3%	23.7%	0.8%				
I can participate in simple conversations on familiar topics.	1	108	2	16	4	2.34	0.821	306.54	6
	0.8%	82.4%	1.5%	12.2%	3.1%				

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Table 4 explores students' perceptions of their listening and speaking skills in English. The ability to understand basic instructions and simple conversations ranked highest, with a mean score of 3.70 (SD = 0.866) and a weighted score of 484.70. A majority of respondents (71.0%) agreed, and 8.4% strongly agreed, indicating moderate confidence in this skill.

The second-ranked skill was the ability to introduce oneself and provide basic information, with a mean score of 3.36 (SD = 1.103) and a weighted score of 439.16. More than half (55.0%) agreed, and 9.2% strongly agreed, while 32.8% disagreed, reflecting mixed proficiency in this area.

The ability to follow English spoken at a moderate pace in familiar contexts ranked third (mean = 2.67, SD = 0.976, weighted score = 347.10). Most participants (64.9%) disagreed, suggesting significant challenges in understanding spoken English beyond basic contexts. Similarly, comprehending the main ideas of short English audio or video clips was ranked fourth (mean = 2.64, SD = 0.977, weighted score = 345.84), with 65.6% of respondents disagreeing.

Pronouncing common English words and phrases with reasonable clarity was ranked fifth (mean = 2.48, SD = 0.923, weighted score = 324.88). A majority of participants (69.5%) disagreed,

highlighting difficulties in articulation. Lastly, participating in simple conversations on familiar topics ranked the lowest, with a mean score of 2.34 (SD = 0.821) and a weighted score of 306.54. A striking 82.4% of respondents disagreed, indicating limited confidence and ability in conversational English.

These findings reveal that while students possess some basic listening skills, speaking and conversational abilities require significant improvement. Targeted interventions, such as conversational practice and exposure to spoken English in low-pressure environments, are recommended to build confidence and enhance these skills.

Brown and Zhang (2021) in their study "Listening and Speaking Skills in English Language Learning: Challenges and Strategies" examines the obstacles people encounter while trying to improve their English speaking and listening abilities. The results from Table 4.3.1 are consistent with the authors' identification of typical barriers, which include trouble following fast-paced speech, a small vocabulary, and pronunciation problems. According to the study, students can frequently follow simple directions and carry-on simple conversations, but they still struggle to understand spoken English that is more complicated and participate in fluid conversations. Students can enhance these abilities by participating in interactive speaking exercises, customized listening activities, and increased exposure to real-world spoken English, according to Brown and Zhang. In order to alleviate speaking anxiety and boost confidence, they also stress the significance of establishing a welcoming and stimulating environment. This could help with the difficulties listed in the table, especially with regard to conversation and pronunciation.

Reading and Writing skills

English language competency is based on reading and writing abilities, which have an impact on both academic achievement and clear communication. These abilities include decoding written documents, understanding their content, and using written language to effectively communicate ideas. The cognitive processes involved in comprehension and composition, vocabulary knowledge, and grammar are frequently linked to difficulties in reading and writing when learning a language (Snow, 2010).

Table 5: Reading and Writing skills (n=131)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation	Weighted Score (Mean * N)	Rank
	<i>F</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>				
	%	%	%	%	%				
I can write simple sentences and fill out forms with basic personal information in English.	3	45	1	79	3	3.26	1.035	427.06	1
	2.3%	34.4%	0.8%	60.3%	2.3%				
My handwriting affects my English proficiency.	4	58	2	64	3	3.03	1.074	396.93	2
	3.1%	44.3%	1.5%	48.9%	2.3%				
I can use basic English punctuation and capitalization correctly in my writing.	2	72	1	49	7	2.90	1.094	379.90	3
	1.5%	55.0%	0.8%	37.4%	5.3%				
I can use basic English grammar structures (e.g., simple present tense, basic questions)	3	78	6	41	3	2.72	1.010	356.32	4

	2.3%	59.5%	4.6%	31.3%	2.3%				
I have a basic vocabulary that allows me to express common ideas and needs.	5	85	1	31	9	2.65	1.095	347.15	5
	3.8%	64.9%	0.8%	23.7%	6.9%				
I can form simple sentences with correct subject-verb agreement.	91	1	0	37	2	2.62	0.948	343.22	6
	69.5%	0.8%	0%	28.2%	1.5%				
I can compose brief paragraphs on familiar topics with some grammatical accuracy.	2	96	0	31	2	2.50	0.923	327.50	7
	1.5%	73.3%	0%	23.7%	1.5%				

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Table 5 presents students' self-assessment of their reading and writing skills in English. The ability to write simple sentences and fill out forms with basic personal information ranked highest, with a mean score of 3.26 (SD = 1.035) and a weighted score of 427.06. While 60.3% of respondents agreed, only 2.3% strongly agreed, and 34.4% disagreed, indicating variability in confidence with this skill.

The second-ranked factor was the impact of handwriting on English proficiency (mean = 3.03, SD = 1.074, weighted score = 396.93). Nearly half (48.9%) agreed, suggesting that handwriting was perceived as a moderate barrier to proficiency.

Using basic punctuation and capitalization ranked third (mean = 2.90, SD = 1.094, weighted score = 379.90). A majority of students (55.0%) disagreed, reflecting challenges in mastering these fundamental writing conventions. Similarly, the ability to use basic grammar structures, such as simple present tense and basic questions, was ranked fourth (mean = 2.72, SD = 1.010, weighted score = 356.32), with 59.5% of participants disagreeing.

Possessing a basic vocabulary for expressing common ideas ranked fifth (mean = 2.65, SD = 1.095, weighted score = 347.15). Although 23.7% agreed, 64.9% disagreed, highlighting significant vocabulary limitations. Forming simple sentences with correct subject-verb agreement ranked sixth (mean = 2.62, SD = 0.948, weighted score = 343.22), with an overwhelming 69.5% of respondents strongly disagreeing.

The lowest-ranked skill was the ability to compose brief paragraphs on familiar topics with some grammatical accuracy (mean = 2.50, SD = 0.923, weighted score = 327.50). Most participants (73.3%) disagreed, indicating considerable difficulty in creating extended written content.

Overall, the findings reveal that while students demonstrate some competency in basic sentence writing, significant challenges persist in vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and paragraph composition. Interventions focusing on these areas, such as structured grammar practice and guided paragraph writing exercises, are essential to improve students' writing proficiency.

Thompson and Lee (2020) examine typical obstacles students have when trying to improve their English reading and writing abilities. According to the authors, students frequently have trouble with simple writing assignments like creating grammatically sound sentences and employing proper punctuation, which is consistent with the findings in Table 4.3.2. According to Thompson and Lee, a lack of vocabulary and issues with sentence structure, like subject-verb agreement, are

major causes of these problems. They also draw attention to the effect that handwriting quality has on writing ability, which is a concern that many of the kids in their study had. The authors suggest focused interventions to address these problems, like vocabulary-building activities and grammar seminars. Additionally, they recommend adding more reading exercises to aid pupils in internalizing language patterns and enhancing their writing fluency. These results are consistent with the table's conclusions that students, especially when faced with more difficult assignments, gave lower ratings to their writing, grammar, and vocabulary.

Overall proficiency

Students' overall proficiency in learning English is defined as their combined ability to read, write, speak, and listen—all of which are critical for successful academic performance and efficient communication. Mastering vocabulary and grammar are only one aspect of proficiency; other skills include understanding various communication styles, conveying ideas clearly, and using language in everyday contexts. Numerous studies highlight the fact that although students may be exceptionally good in reading comprehension or writing simple phrases, they frequently struggle in other areas, especially when it comes to difficult speaking or listening (Hinkel, 2013; Richards, 2015).

Table 6: Overall proficiency (n=131)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation	Weighted Score	Rank
	<i>F</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>				
	%	%	%	%	%				
I am able to understand and complete English language assignments at a basic level.	5	47	3	73	3	3.17	1.068	415.27	1
	3.8%	35.9%	2.3%	55.7%	2.3%				
I feel comfortable using English in everyday situations.	3	88	1	37	2	2.60	0.975	340.60	2
	2.3%	67.2%	0.8%	28.2%	1.5%				
I am confident in my ability to communicate basic ideas in English.	3	111	1	11	5	2.27	0.802	297.37	3
	2.3%	84.7%	0.8%	8.4%	3.8%				

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Table 6 summarizes students' self-perceived overall proficiency in English. The ability to understand and complete English language assignments at a basic level ranked highest, with a mean score of 3.17 (SD = 1.068) and a weighted score of 415.27. A majority of respondents (55.7%) agreed, while 35.9% disagreed, indicating that basic academic tasks in English are achievable for most students, though some still face difficulties.

The second-ranked statement was feeling comfortable using English in everyday situations, with a mean score of 2.60 (SD = 0.975) and a weighted score of 340.60. Here, a significant 67.2% of participants disagreed, highlighting discomfort and limited confidence in applying English in practical, day-to-day contexts.

Confidence in communicating basic ideas in English was ranked lowest, with a mean score of 2.27 (SD = 0.802) and a weighted score of 297.37. An overwhelming 84.7% of respondents disagreed, and only 8.4% agreed, underscoring a lack of self-assurance in expressing even simple concepts in English.

These findings suggest that while students can manage basic academic tasks in English, they lack confidence and comfort in using the language in broader, real-life scenarios. Addressing these gaps will require strategies such as conversational practice, increased exposure to real-world language use, and confidence-building exercises tailored to students' needs.

Wright (2021) examines the barriers to English language proficiency, particularly focusing on students' comfort and confidence in using English for communication. They explore how many students, despite being able to understand and complete basic English tasks, struggle with the self-assurance needed for everyday communication in English. The authors point out that a key obstacle is the fear of making mistakes in real-life situations, which aligns with the findings in Table 4.3.3, where students reported lower confidence in their ability to communicate basic ideas in English. Harris and Wright suggest that providing more opportunities for students to engage in low-pressure conversational practice, coupled with positive reinforcement, could help build their confidence and proficiency. They also recommend implementing peer communication exercises and community-based language activities to bridge the gap between academic tasks and real-world language use.

Practical Recommendations

The results reveal that all respondents are at the beginner level of English proficiency, underscoring a widespread and critical gap. To address this issue, it is recommended to:

- Establish foundational English language courses tailored to rural learners, with a focus on communicative competence.
- Provide teachers with specialized professional development in teaching English as a second language (ESL), emphasizing interactive and student-centered methods.
- Enhance access to English learning resources, such as books, audio-visual materials, and digital platforms, particularly for rural schools.
- Encourage English immersion activities like English conversation clubs, storytelling sessions, and role-plays to build students' confidence and exposure to the language.

References

1. Aftab, M., & Hussain, N. (2018). *Socioeconomic factors and their effect on academic performance of students in rural Pakistan*. Pakistan Journal of Educational Research, 21(1), 45–58.
2. Ali, Z., & Rehman, A. (2017). *Challenges in teaching English at secondary level in rural Pakistan: A case study of government schools in Punjab*. Journal of Education and Practice, 8(10), 45–52.

3. Ali, R., & Rehman, S. (2017). *Impact of socioeconomic status on academic performance of rural students in English subject*. Journal of Education and Social Sciences, 5(2), 134–140.
4. Almeida, S., & Oliveira, T. (2021). *The role of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in language learning proficiency*. Journal of Language Teaching Research, 14(3), 221–235.
5. Baker, J. (2020). *Socioeconomic factors and educational language attainment: A review*. International Journal of Educational Studies, 12(2), 89–102.
6. Bashir, A. (2014). *English language learning problems in rural areas of Pakistan*. International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research, 2(3), 42–54.
7. Bashir, S., & Iqbal, H. (2017). *Socioeconomic disparities and their influence on English language learning in rural areas of Pakistan*. International Journal of Language and Linguistics, 4(3), 109–117.
8. Brown, L., & Zhang, Y. (2021). *Listening and speaking skills in English language learning: Challenges and strategies*. English Language Education Review, 9(1), 45–63.
9. Easton, S., & Van Laar, D. (2018). *Gendered pathways in education and leadership: Revisiting the barriers*. Journal of Educational Equality, 22(4), 301–320.
10. García, M., & Hernández, L. (2022). *Learning environments and their impact on second language acquisition*. Journal of Applied Linguistics, 18(2), 112–128.
11. Javed, M., & Khan, S. (2018). *The foundational role of English proficiency in academic performance*. Pakistan Journal of Educational Research, 20(1), 51–68.
12. Khan, M. A. (2016). *Socioeconomic status and academic achievement: A study of rural secondary school students in Punjab, Pakistan*. Asian Journal of Educational Research, 4(2), 22–30.
13. Khan, R. A., & Shabbir, M. (2018). *English language learning: An analysis of problems faced by rural and urban secondary school students in Punjab*. Pakistan Journal of Educational Research, 21(1), 67–81.
14. Khan, A., & Shabbir, M. (2016). *The impact of poverty on academic achievement: A case study of Tehsil Bhowana*. Journal of Rural and Community Development, 3(2), 98–110.
15. Latif, M. (2016). *Socioeconomic barriers in rural English language education: An empirical study*. South Asian Studies, 31(1), 77–89.
16. Noreen, S., & Qureshi, R. (2017). *Socioeconomic status and its relationship with English language proficiency in rural students*. Bulletin of Education and Research, 39(1), 123–138.
17. Rana, A., & Shafiq, M. (2020). *Addressing English language challenges in rural schools: Strategies and interventions*. South Asian Journal of Education, 6(2), 145–158.
18. Raza, H., & Aslam, R. (2018). *Significance of demographic variables in educational research: The case of age*. International Journal of Educational Sciences, 10(3), 101–109.
19. Rehman, T., & Shah, A. (2018). *The influence of socioeconomic status on English language learning in rural Pakistan*. Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 9(4), 789–795.
20. Rehman, T., & Yousaf, M. (2019). *Economic disparities and their impact on English language acquisition in rural schools*. International Journal of Educational Development, 65, 95–103.
21. Rousseau, D. (2002). *Social structures and developmental stages: The influence of age in psychological and cultural contexts*. Human Development Review, 8(2), 77–91.
22. Shah, N., & Rizvi, F. (2019). *Rural-urban divide in English education: Access and equity issues in Pakistan*. Asian Education Review, 13(2), 157–170.
23. Snow, C. E. (2010). *Academic language and the challenge of reading for learning about science*. Science, 328(5977), 450–452.
24. Syed, H., & Anwar, M. (2018). *Perception of rural students towards English language learning: A socioeconomic perspective*. Journal of Educational Research, 21(3), 211–220.