Coping with challenges in teaching English speaking skills in Quetta, Pakistan: A study of college teachers' views

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Abstract

Out of four language skills, listening and reading are receptive skills whereas speaking and writing as productive skills. Among these, speaking has a pivotal role in learning a second or foreign language. In spite of its superior status, Pakistani students cannot speak English language effectively due to some social, academic and administrative barriers or due to reasons such as the way it is taught, or the focus is done on reading and writing skills. Therefore, teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging task in Pakistan. This paper aims to find some possible solutions to cope with challenge EFL teachers face in teaching English speaking skills in Quetta, Pakistan. The qualitative study is employ in the current study with eight EFL teacher. The purposive sampling is employed to select research participants. The study suggested some possible suggestion in order to enhance speaking skills and teaching quality to overcome teaching speaking challenges such as by providing all teaching and learning equipment and recruiting specialist English teachers.

Keyword: Speaking skills, Pakistani learners, Teaching speaking challenges, Solutions

Introduction

Out of four language skills, listening and reading are receptive skills whereas speaking and writing as productive skills. Among these, speaking has a pivotal role in learning a second or foreign language (Brown & Lee, 2015). When we try to think what it means to know a foreign language, the first ability that comes to mind is that of speaking. Despite the fact that knowing a language and being able to speak it are not same (Thornbury, 2005), many people consider the ability to speak freely as the measure of knowing a language (Bashir, Azeem, & Dogar, 2011). Nunan (1991) claims, "success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language." Learners assess the effectiveness of their English language on the basis of having fluency on speaking skills. In a foreign language speaking has been considered as the most important of language skills. There are many

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English foreign or second language learners for whom speaking is first priority (Kawai, 2008; Richards, 2008). People around the world are learning English because the ability to use English for oral communication is a key reason (Sadeghi & Richards, 2015; Shumim, 2002).

Speaking as a productive skill is an important aspect of a foreign language teaching as well. Teaching speaking abilities to interact in a foreign language explicitly and effectively adds in the achievement of the students in academies and life as whole. Ignoring its importance for decades, teachers have been teaching speaking as a ratification of dialogues that has underestimated the pedagogy of speaking skills. According to Lazaraton (2001) In a second/ foreign language pedagogy oral skills have not always figured so centrally. Speaking has come to surface as branch of teaching, learning and assessment in its due place in previous couple of years (Bygate, 2001).

However, teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging task in foreign countries in general and in Pakistan in particular. The challenges existing in postcolonial countries are also a part of education system in Pakistan (see literature review). The pedagogical and infrastructure shortages remain significant barriers to teaching English speaking skills. English language teachers teach English without effective circular objectives, adequate pedagogical tools, outdated teaching methods, low standard textbooks and shortage of latest audio-visual teaching aids. Furthermore, the education system has a defective examination system lack of monitoring and feedback indicate the poor performance of educational institutions in Pakistan (Memon, 2007 & Warsi, 2004).

Even though teachers play a major role in student achievement, the educational authorities have never attempted to highlight the concern of resources distribution and teacher's ability level in English for the purpose to develop teaching and learning English speaking skills (Shamim, 2008). Additionally, there are some other factors that can affect both positively and negatively the acquisition and learning of a second language. Therefore, teaching speaking is worrying teachers at all levels of educational institutes. Moreover, this is also an ignored area of investigation in Pakistan in general, and Balochistan province in particular. Therefore, the current study aims to fill the gap in order to better understand the solutions of the challenges teachers may offer.

Literature Review

English as a lingua franca has led to the belief that students need to achieve more effective communication skills including speaking, reading, writing and listening. But at the same time, the acquisition of a foreign language is a

complex activity in classroom conditions (Epstein, 1996; Dakowska, 2005). Al-Sobhi & Preece (2018) conducted a research to highlight the barriers, in the Saudi school in Kuala Lumpur in teaching English oral proficiency, and the prime objective of the study was to determine common challenges that affect the teaching of English speaking skills to Arab students. The findings of the study inferred that teachers faced several challenges when teaching oral skills for instance absence of speaking assessment and missing teaching facilities; next, learners inadequate linguistics knowledge, practice of L1 and lack of confidence were some prime causes which created troubles for students while acquisition of English language.

Sadeghi & Richards (2015) aimed to determine the challenges and difficulties in teaching oral English in Iran's private language schools. The researchers were interested in learning the resources that English teachers used to teach oral English lessons, the problems they encountered in teaching speech, and the type of help they felt needed to be better prepared for such classes. Iranian instructors reported the challenges they encountered while teaching oral skills were teaching mixed-level of classes, developing accuracy and fluency, finding appropriate topics and encouraging students to speak up in class. Furthermore, the date gained through interview disclosed learners' low proficiency, low background knowledge, learners' shyness before class, anxiety to making mistakes and students' lack of vocabulary were some other obstacles teachers experienced while teaching English speaking skills. The results of the investigation also showed that there was no understanding of the nature of the interaction of oral English. Teachers and curriculum developers had poor understanding of genres of oral interaction and spoken English. Higher education and teacher training institutes provided outdated and insufficient education of pedagogical content knowledge to teachers' capacity building about conceptions of spoken English. Teacher and their trainers were unable to differentiate between communication and spoken skills. It seemed that every school was concerned with raising the results in speaking. Learning to speak was a complex, developmental process.

Similarly, Behroozi & Amoozegar (2014) explored the barriers faced by teachers in teaching English in Iranian secondary schools. Analysis of study revealed that in addition to external limitations like insufficient teaching time and limited learning resources, English-language teachers were frustrated with their low proficiency in using technology while speaking English and teaching.

Furthermore, Copland, Garton, & Burns (2014) performed a study to uncover the challenges English teachers lived for young students at the background of the global rise of the English language. A mixed method approach, which included the element of quantitative and qualitative, was

applied in the study. The finding of the study uncovered several challenges including motivation, differentiating learning, teaching large number of learners, discipline, and teaching writing and grammar; however, a great discovery, most likely, to teach speaking was considered extremely difficult for many teachers.

Moreover, Chen & Goh (2011) discussed the problems teachers come across in teaching spoken English in higher education in China. The findings displayed that despite the exception of external constraints from students and context such as resistance to verbal participation, inadequate full-fledged language atmosphere, limited teaching resources, large classes, and inadequate teaching time.

Research Objective

- To find some possible solutions to cope with challenge EFL teachers face in teaching English speaking skills in Quetta, Pakistan.

Research Question

- What are some possible solutions to cope with challenge EFL teachers face in teaching English speaking skills in Quetta, Pakistan.

Research design

The qualitative case study was appropriate to use for this research since aim of the study was to figure out the opinions, to cope with challenges, of EFL teachers encounter in teaching speaking skills, and because it "implies a direct concern with experiences as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone" (Sherman & Web, 1988, p.7).

Research sample

The aim of the study was to explore the challenges EFL teachers face teaching speaking skills. I recruited eight English language teachers teaching English as a foreign language in different public colleges of Quetta city. Table 5.1 illustrates the demographic information of the research participants. They were selected from the governmental colleges in because these were the main colleges where English teachers, population were ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse. The researcher ensured every participant's confidentiality throughout the research. The participants' opinions, thoughts, ideas, responses toward challenges of speaking skills instruction have not affect their teaching careers. Also, the information was not shared and no details were given which could reveal the participants identity as suggested by Lune and Berg (2017)

Table 5.1

Demographic Information of the Participants

Participant	Age	English Language Teaching Experience	College
Participant 1	37 years	14 years	A
Participant 2	48 years	23 years	A
Participant 3	34 years	5 years	A
Participant 4	37 years	10 years	B
Participant 5	38 years	13 years	B
Participant 6	42 years	15 years	C
Participant 7	38 years	9 years	D
Participant 8	36 years	8 years	E

Research instruments

The tool a researcher uses in the study to collect information is called research instrument (Creswell, 2017). The semi-structured interview was employed in the study because it carries open ended questions and help respondents to give their perspective in depth related to topic (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Johnson, 2002). In addition, the reason to choose semi-structured interviews was that it is a compromise between structured and unstructured interviews (Creswell, 2017). An interview protocol was designed for the research by reviewing past literature (Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018; Behroozi & Amoozegar, 2014; Chen & Goh, 2011; Copland et al., 2014; Farooqui, 2007; Sadeghi & Richards, 2015). It was containing 9 descriptive questions applied to investigate solutions to overcome teaching speaking challenges. In addition, some other probing questions were generated by the interview process in order to maximize the detailed disclosure from each participant.

Data collection procedure

The researcher asked for official permission from heads of the colleges, time before researcher recorded the interview content. The respondents were briefed about interviews audio-taped for transcription and analysis. In a convenient place in the institutes the question answer sessions were carried out in English in a relaxed environment.

Data analyze

The data in the current study was accumulated using semi-structured in-depth interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to inquired participants about the possible solutions to cope with teaching English speaking skills challenges. According to Collazo (2015), qualitative data analysis includes four key steps: data collection, transcription, codification, and integration of information for the creation of categories.

Following the guidelines by Creswell (2017) and Collazo (2015), all the recorded interviews were transcribed. The researcher used Microsoft Word 2013 documents for the transcripts of the audio recordings of the interviews in a quiet room. On the same day of data collection the interview was transcribed (Berg & Lune, 2017). Additionally, the researcher listened to the tape recorder several times as an attempt to understand all what the participants said. This helped researcher in transcribing the recordings in order to keep track of the data and emerging understandings.

After several readings of the transcripts, data codifications and creation of sub-themes and themes were generated. Thus, the researcher read the various parts of the transcription well and allocated code based on the meaning of the researcher in the text sections (Berg & Lune, 2017). All the codes were assigned using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is lucrative to understand and discover the unexplored patterns in the data (Cresswell, 2014). The codes also help the researcher to emerge the potential leading themes in the data. Moreover, all the themes and sub-themes were presented in the table forms (see Table 6.1). To establish the rank and order of leading themes, all the emerging themes were categorized based on their occurrences and percentages.

Findings

This category defines the findings of the research question on solution of challenges English teacher face teaching speaking skills. A total of 74 responses were extracted. Additionally, these responses were categorized under three sections. Each section was further defined into specific categories.

    i.   The role of Government, Administration & Colleges

    ii.   The role of teachers

    iii.   The role of students

Table 6.1

Percentages of recommended solutions to teach English speaking skills

Teaching speaking Challenges/solution/Theme	Categories	N	Percentages
The role of government, administration & colleges	Provide facilities & equipment	11	14.8%
		8	10.8%
	Provide trained & specialist teachers	8	10.8%
	Create conducive speaking environment	7	9.4%
		6	8.1%
	Provide relevant textbooks	2	2.7%
	Reduce & enlarge class size	2	2.7%
	Increase teaching time	1	1.3%
	Control load shedding	1	1.3%
	Classified students into two sections	1	1.3%
	Assess speaking skills	1	1.3%
	Teach English as a language		
	Semester should replace annual		
Total		**48**	**64.8%**
The role of teachers	Encourage & motivate learners	08	10.8%
	Teach in target language	04	5.2%
	Should be students centered class	03	4%
	Perform activities	03	4%
	Adopt appropriate teaching method	03	4%
	Reduce anxiety	02	2.7%
Total		**23**	**31%**
The role of students	Utilize stander and online source	02	2.7%
	Improve listening skill	01	1.3%
Total		**03**	**4%**
Grand Total No of Responses		**74**	**100%**

A). The role of government, administration & colleges

In order to solve the challenges which teachers encountered, the researcher grouped them into three categories. The role of government, administration &

colleges emerged as very first major category. In this category the prime sub-themes were divided into eleven sections. The government, administration and colleges' heads are supposed to provide facilities and equipment, for instance lab, audio visual ads microphones and speaker.

> The provision of equipment that are needed in order to improve speaking skills. The equipment I suggest audio visual ads are there. They should provide labs, the microphones, the speaker (P.5).

> *The government needs to build more and more colleges. The availability of more colleges means, the students will have more options to go and the number of students for class will decrease. And when the number of per class students decrease, so it is going to have a very positive impact. (P.5)*

The participants asked authorities to equip educational institutes with all facilities needed to teach English speaking skills. Furthermore, they asked authorities to initiate new colleges in different part of province which was best to encounter large classes. Afterward, that would be a conducive atmosphere to teach English speaking skills.

> There must be training for the teachers where they should be trained to use modern instruction strategies in their teaching. Teaching methodologies must be taught to them (P.8).

> It is the responsibility of administration to recruit specialist teacher for speaking skills. When a teacher comes, and he is specialized for speaking, so the students will have an atmosphere speaking in the class, so; therefore, there should be a separate teacher for writing and speaking skills. (P.5)

Respondents demanded for training opportunities to advance their knowledge and teaching instructions. They proposed after every five months teachers should be trained regard up to date teaching instruction. They demanded to recruit specialist teachers for teaching speaking skills because a specialist would teach speaking skill more effectively.

> Teachers need conducive spoken environment to improve the spoken English, definitely students won't learn until do not have environment (P.1).

Respondents mentioned teachers needed conducive environment. If they had chance to collaborate and share ideas in order to create positive learning, they would be able in a better position to teach speaking skills in a much better way.

> The textbook contents and lessons given in the textbooks, should meet the speaking skills criteria. It should contain the grammatical structures for speaking. The contents should be based on

communicative based so that the teacher may make the student focus on the speaking skills. If the contents are irrelevant, and there is no related structure which are required for the speaking skills then the contents are useless. The purpose of the speaking skill or the objectives of speaking skills cannot be achieved. (P.3)

Respondents proposed convenient contents and material of speaking skills in English speaking textbooks. Interviewees suggested to revised textbooks and include contents on speaking skills. The textbooks must contain relevant speaking exercises and activities.

The standard class should consist of 36 students. When the number of students become around about 36 or 40 students, then the students will get time for speaking skill, listening their lectures asking questions. And it will be easy for teachers to teach a small class size. So, the number of students should not increase. (P.7)

Participants suggested by reducing the strength of class, teacher would keep discipline in the English speaking class. Therefore, the number of learner must not cross to 30. Effective teaching was always challenging for teachers to work in a larger class size, such as, to conduct activities, make discussion and group work, or there was less amount of time to address their needs. Whereas teachers, with smaller class sizes, could been able to get adequate amount of time to improve speaking skills of students.

The time should be increased. 40 minutes class is not enough for teachers to teach properly or explain speaking skills. So, it should be 2 hours class (P.6).

Participant believed that if teacher get sufficient time it will be enough for teacher to focus all language skill particularly speaking skills. Respondents elaborated 40 minutes were not enough to teach all language skills and requested authorizes to increase 40 minutes into 2 hours.

Load shading, even if they are providing, audio-visual aids, if there is no electricity, so it will be completely futile. So, load shedding should be controlled, or even if it can be done, the timing of the load shedding should be after the college hours. (P.5)

Some of the recommendations appeared in the study was not emerged in the previous study; interviewees suggested to controlled load shedding or the timing of the load shedding should be after the classes' duration. He warned otherwise the presence of audio-videos aid could be useless.

The student should be classified into different sections on the basis of their proficiency level (P.5).

Teachers proposed by categorizing learner in to two different categories (low and high proficiency) would be easier for English teacher to teach speaking skills.

> *Speaking assessment should be done in exams. Accordingly, everywhere across the world are doing. Let's have the example of IELTS/TOEFL. If you appear in IELTS/TOEFL; definitely, they assess spoken level. If you are spoken level is so poor; definitely, you come up with few marks. (P.1)*

Teachers recommended along with writing skills, similar to IELTS/TOEFL pattern, English speaking skills should be assessed in exams in Quetta city colleges.

> *Do not teach English as a subject in colleges just like physics, chemistry, biology et cetera. This idea should be changed (P.4).*

A participant proposed English is a language. Therefore, teachers were advised to teach English as language but not as a subject.

> *The annual system should be replaced by semester system which will be better for students to get enough time while speaking (P.6).*

Respondents suggested in annual system learners would not get sufficient time to practice communication skills; thus, semester system should be introduced in colleges.

B). The role of EFL teachers

The role English foreign language teachers emerged as the second dominant theme to solve teaching English speaking challenges. This category is divided into six sections; in first category respondent advised that teachers should motivate and encourage the learners while performing the activities and try to develop their confidence.

> *Motivation and encouragement is very necessary the part of teaching, and teachers feel comfort when learners are motivated (P.6).*

Participant suggested by motivating and encouraging learners and by performing different oral English activates could motivated learners. Or could accelerated their speaking proficiency. Then it could be easier to stay in the target language.

> *If target language is English, the entire communication should take place in English (P.4).*

Participants asked to make it mandatory for all teachers to teach in the target language and engaged students in activities in the target language.

> *Teacher must involve the students in the activities more and more. They develop such activities where only the students get chance and engagement of the activities. If a student gets good opportunity and activities they express themselves, they listen to each other their moral will be increased and there is speaking skills will also develop. (P.8)*

Interviewee recommended teachers to give enough opportunities to learners and made their classes students centred. When a classroom operates with student-centered instruction, students and instructors share the focus. Instead of listening to the teacher exclusively, students and teachers interact equally. Group work was encouraged, and students learn to collaborate and communicate with one another.

> Certain activities should be provided to learners to perform tasks and achieve his purpose (P.3).

Participants recommended teachers to look forward for an approach that would use various oral activities and tasks by involving learners. They believed by doing that teaching English speaking skills would be more effective.

> The old GTM method. It has died it is no more in use, and we should avoid it. We should come to direct method and we should focus CLT (P.4).

Since grammar translation approach focused more on writing skills; therefore, Interviewees proposed CLT method in instruction while teaching English speaking skills.

> It is the job of teachers to remove anxiety and to create confidence among students (P.6).

It was proposed by a teacher to reduce anxiety among learners. Anxiety is an element, learners failed to mastered courage and speak English in the class. It affects language acquisition and performance to teach English speaking efficiency.

C) The role of students

Respondents believed online resources would help learners to enhance English speaking skills. Watching international news and English programs were being suggested to learners.

> They should seek support from internet VOA. Voice of America provide good exercises good ways. BBC itself is a good source. CNN is a good source. Al Jazeera one of the best sources. But I prefer VOA. VOA special programs are there teachers should be benefited themselves and they should let's students be benefited. (P.4)

In response to interview question finally a interviewee advised learners to follow web based learning and fallow stander online sources which were specially designed to enhance speaking and listening skills, such as, BBC, Cable news network (CNN) or other related sources. Learning' would be more efficient through web based learning suggested by a respondent.

Discussion

In order to fix these challenges which teachers face in teaching speaking skills, the researcher categorises them in to three categories. These categories are organised according to the responsibilities of: (1) The government, administration and colleges (2) EFL teachers (3) EFL students.

In order to improve the speaking proficiency of learners, the government, administration and colleges should provide teachers with necessary teaching materials; in addition, teachers require adequate equipment for example language laboratory, audio visual ads, microphone and speaker. Modern techniques including audio-visual aids should be provided to colleges (Akram, 2017). Hughes (2011) posited there was a small number of ELT staff around the world, who had luxury of time and training, and a much larger, difficult, often non-native speaker instructor community needed the latest publications to support the development of speaking skills. There should be trainings opportunities for teachers to advance their knowledge and teaching instructions. Findings in this study were congruent with findings in (Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018; Chen & Goh, 2011). Another finding which was in line with Fareh (2010) suggested instructors to create conducive environments of learning. The environment plays an influential role in developing a learner's language. Once a learner receives a lot of exposure to a second language and communicates with the people in the surrounding area, his acquisition of the target language is expected to be highly possible (Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018). Besides, a demand appeared in the study was that textbooks must contain relevant speaking exercises and activities. The study was line up with the study of Akram (2017) who recommended English books should be redesign.

Effective teaching is always challenging for teachers to work in a larger class size, such as, to conduct activities, make discussion and group work, or there is less amount of time to address their needs. Whereas teachers, with smaller class sizes, wouldn't be able to get adequate amount of time to improve speaking skills of students. The findings of Chambers (1993) has revealed due to large class size the teachers are unable to give proper feedback; students in overcrowded classrooms do not get equal opportunities and proper feedback. Consequently, these factors demotivate to further their interest in English language learning. Long & Porter (1985), Ur (1991), Wheeler (1994), and Nunan (1999) cited students would get sufficient opportunities to exercise the target language if they have chance to work with few number of learners in the class. Morrissette (2001) findings supported this argument that reducing class size facilitate students to interact with teachers successfully; in addition, small-sized classrooms pave a way for an effective L2 teaching and keep L2 students motivated and focused in performing assigned tasks.

When the objective of teacher is that students accelerate speaking proficiency, he should motivate and encourage learners, perform different oral English activates and should make their classes students centered. According to Dörnyei, (2018) teachers and researchers commonly accepted motivation as one of the important element that influence the rate and success of language learning. Because teachers are on key position to shape classroom life. If a teacher is motivated, his/her class is likely to follow suit. The teacher motivation is that it is highly contagious: it has the potential to infect the students and to generate in them an attractive vision of language learning. The findings supported Al-Sobhi & Preece (2018) study whereby researcher suggested to motivate and encourage students while conducting speaking activities. Furthermore, research conducted in Puerto Rico (López, 2006; Rodríguez Feliciano, 2000) has revealed a serious lack of speaking skills among Puerto Rican public school students. Findings of the study suggested the need for more oral activities. Beside, this study findings are in the line with Farooqui (2007) findings that teachers should make it mandatory for all learners to speak in English in the class.

The findings of the study suggested learners to utilize online resource which are designed to achieve effective oral skills for instance Voice of America (VOA), Cable news network (CNN) and Al Jazeera; students should improve their listening skills. Furthermore, the study by Al-Sobhi & Preece (2018)also conformed in order to achieve perfect speaking skills students should seek support from internet channels and programs for example Voice of America (VOA) BBC World Service which are meant to polish listening and speaking skills.

Conclusion

The prime purpose of this study was to figure out some possible solutions of challenges that ESL and EFL teachers face while teaching English speaking skills in public colleges in Quetta city Balochistan, Pakistan. It was an appropriate to gain first-hand knowledge on teachers' perspective in relation to teaching English speaking challenges solutions; these would help devise possible remedies to help students enhance their speaking skills. In order to obtain this objective, the study suggested some possible suggestion to enhance speaking skills pf learners and teaching quality to overcome teaching speaking challenges such as by providing all teaching and learning equipment and by recruiting specialist English teachers.

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