

## DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN RURAL AREAS OF PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

*Pakistani students face many problems and difficulties in learning English as a second language (ESL). This study aims to sort out some factors which affect learning English as a second language in Pakistan. The target population for this study would be Government Secondary schools in rural areas of Tehsil Sargodha. Sample of 60 students (male and female aging between 13-18 years) would be selected from 10<sup>th</sup> grade. A survey would be conducted using a questionnaire for collecting data about family factors affecting learning English as a second language. The data would be analyzed statistically to comprehend the problems. The study assists English teachers, curriculum developers and education policy-makers of Pakistan to overcome these problems which are a constant source of threat for rural area students.*

**Keywords:** English as a Second Language (ESL), rural areas, curriculum

### INTRODUCTION

Sub-Continent had been ruled by the Great Britain. Owing to the rule of British, English language became the official language of this territory. After independence, English language maintained its status as official language in Pakistan. Our society is multilingual society. Our official, instructional and institutional languages are English and Urdu. Battle & Lewis (2002) says that education plays a vital role in the development of human capital and is linked with an individual's well-being and opportunity for better living. Pakistan is one of those countries where English is fast spreading. According to Parveen, S. (2013) in her article "A Study on Attitudes towards Varieties of Spoken English in Pakistani Context" referred to Bolton (2008, as cited in Raza, 2008), out of 180 million population, 11% speak English in Pakistan making it the third largest Asian country with 20 million (Approx) speakers.

The purpose of this research is to highlight the external factors which affect the learning English as second language. Mann says in his article *Macmillan students encyclopedia of Sociology*, 1985 that the formal investigation about the role of these factors rooted back in 17<sup>th</sup> century and J.H. Ballatine (1993) says that these factors are usually discussed under the umbrella of demography. A lot of efforts have been made to improve the standard of education in Pakistan. Many research studies have been made to find out the reasons and factors which affect the learning English as a second language. These studies concluded that there are various factors which have bad impact on the learning. The previous studies (Factors which affect Language learning and Language learning process by Saptawulan Hening Nariswariatmojo-2011) classified two significant factors named as internal and external factors that affect the learning process. According to M.S.Farooq, A.H. Chaudhry and M. Shafique (2011): Factors Affecting Students' Quality of Academic Performance: A

case of Secondary School Level (University of the Punjab) these factors may be termed as student's factors, family factors, school factors and peer factors. This research is a little effort to probe into the family factors affecting the learning of English as a second language to the students belonging to the rural areas of Pakistan.

The importance of this study is that it would give further explanation with respect to the specific area of study which is problematic. It would be helpful to the researchers to find the solution to minimize the effects of the family factors. Methods can be devised to address them at optimum level.

Learning is a continuous process. We can divide it into two major categories (a) Natural learning and (b) systematic (institutional) learning. In this study we would focus to the institutional learning in which English as a second language is our target language. In Pakistan ESL (English as Second Language) learning is considered a problem both for students and teachers. The failure ratio in the subject of English as compared to other subjects is very high and discouraging. The dropout rate up to secondary level is very high. No doubt there may be other factors responsible for this dropout rate.

This study would sort out the external factors especially the family factors that are major cause of students' dropout. English is considered the most prestigious and dominating language in the world. Without its learning no country in the world can imagine to compete the pace of development as it is essential in the field of business, commerce, trade, communication, science & technology and especially in education. Keeping in view the importance of ESL, government has introduced many policies to learn English as compulsory subject at all levels. But no reasonable improvement has been observed in this regard.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Pakistan is a poor country. Most of the population of Pakistan is living in rural areas. The main cause of low literacy rate is poverty and ignorance. Saptawulan Hening Nariswariatmojo (2011 Surabaya, Indonesia) in his research discussed internal and external factors in Indonesia in the perspective of *Language Learning and Language Learning Process*. According to him family background, social relations and school factor play an important role in learning English as ESL.

Narendra Rathod (on 5th November, 2012 in an international conference on Global English) narrates in his article, social factors in second language acquisition, that there is a relationship between social class and L2 achievement. Most of the studies show that children from lower socio-economic groups are less successful in L2 learning than children from higher groups.

M.S. Farooq, A.H. Chaudhry, M. Shafiq (Journal of Quality and Technology Management Volume VII, Issue II, December, 2011, Page 01 - 14) discussed that the home environment also affects the academic performance of students. Educated parents can provide such an environment that suits best for academic success of their children.

Muhammad Arshad, Zafar Hayat Attari and Ehsan Elahi (Published: February 13, 2012 International Journal of Learning & Development ISSN 2164-4063 2012, Vol. 2, No. 1) argued in their article that parents' socio-economic status has direct impact on their children's learning (Jerrim, 2009) in the form of providing educational resources. According to a Report to the Department of Education and Training Australia in 2010 gap of scores attained by students whose parents were poor and prosperous was observed. Parents pass on a measure of their advantages or disadvantages to their children that affect their children's educational outcomes.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is quantitative in nature and statistical methods have been applied to analyse the data. Questionnaire has been used as an instrument to collect the data from the selected population. Collected data is based upon the questionnaire responses of 60 students (both male and female) from rural area of Tehsil Sargodha. All the students responded voluntarily. Sample population was selected from 10<sup>th</sup> grade. They were selected randomly from different secondary schools from rural areas of Tehsil Sargodha.

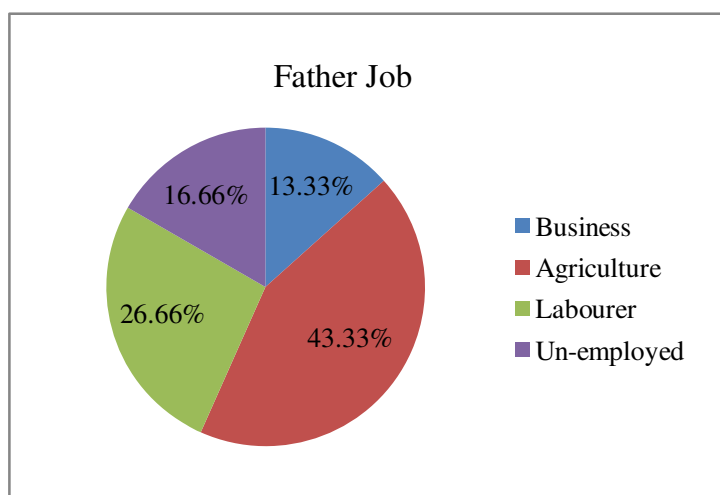
Participants were guided orally by the researcher how to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire was framed with twenty questions and these questions were divided in six variables: Family's income (1-3), Family's background (4-5), Relatives (6-7), Parent's education (8-9), Parent's interest in learning ESL for their wards (10-14) and Home atmosphere (15-20). The questionnaire is designed simply to be understood easily. It mainly consists of close end questions and MCQs. Results after data analysis have been presented in percentage and graph system.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Students participated in this study were 08 in 13-14 years, 40 in 15-16 years and 12 in 17-18 years age group. The data collected through the questionnaire was arranged accordingly into tables and analyzed statistically in form of simple bar diagram, multiple bar diagrams and pie charts. Data in tables show the quantity (frequency) of the students and their percentages. But data only in Percentages are shown in charts (bar & pie). Each factor has been discussed accordingly at their respective category as under:-

**Table 1. Family's Income**

<i>Father Job</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%age</i>
Business	08	13.33%
Agriculture	26	43.33%
Labourer	16	26.66%
Un-employed	10	16.66%



**Chart 1. Family's Income**

In rural areas most of the people directly or indirectly related to agriculture. Above Table & Chart-1 shows that 43.33% parents are directly concerned with agriculture and 26.66 % are indirectly getting their income from agriculture. More over 16.66% parents are unemployed.

**Table 2. Status of income**

Question Content	Yes Frequency	Yes %age	No Frequency	No %age
Sufficient Income	24	40%	36	60%
Student’s Financial Needs	34	56.66%	26	43.33%

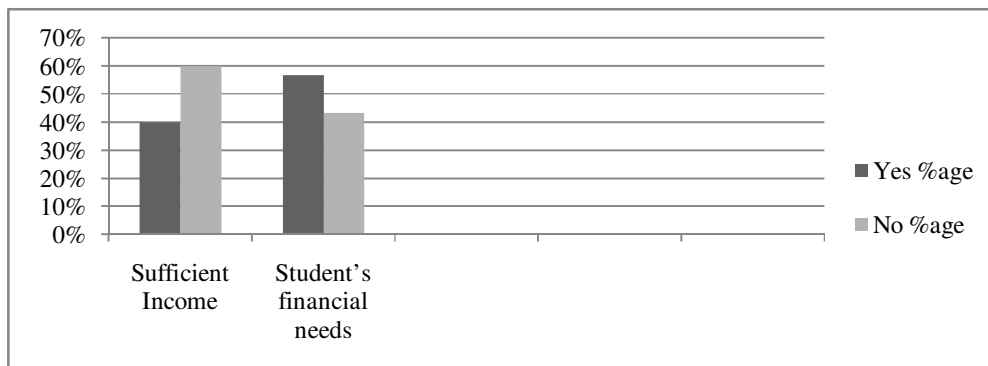


Chart 2.

The above data given in Table & Chart-2 shows that most of the students responded that their parent have not sufficient income i.e. 60%. The students opted the option that their parents do not understand their financial needs i.e. 43.33%.

**Table 3. Family’s Background**

Question Content	Yes Frequency	Yes %age	No Frequency	No %age
Educated Background	16	26.66%	44	73.33%
Joint Family System	52	86.66%	08	13.33%

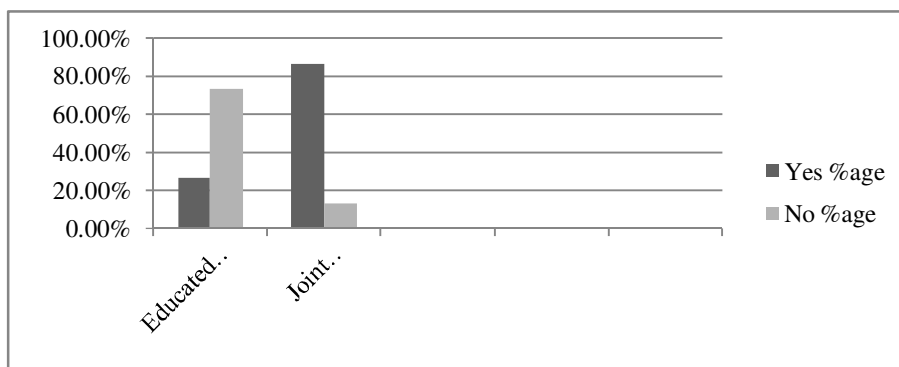


Chart 3. Family’s Background

Data given in Table & Chart-3 depicts that most of the students responded that their family is not having educated background i.e 73.33%. In case of joint family system 86.66%students

gave opinion that they have joint family system.

**Table 4. Relatives' Background**

<i>Question Content</i>	<i>Yes Frequency</i>	<i>Yes %age</i>	<i>No Frequency</i>	<i>No %age</i>
Educated Background	14	23.33%	46	76.66%
Support in Learning	10	16.66%	50	83.33%

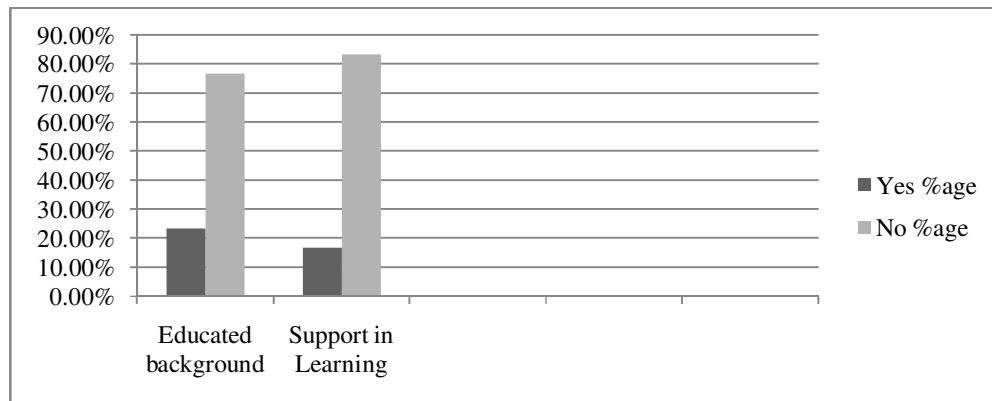


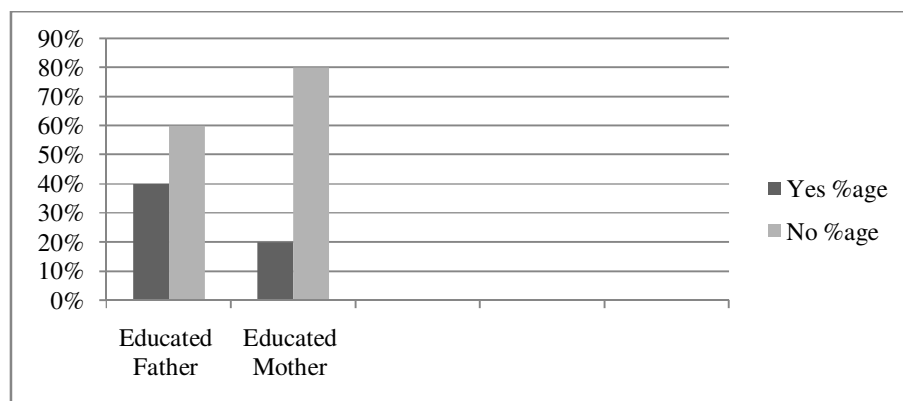
Chart 4.

**Analysis**

When students asked about relatives' educated background here again majority of students responded that their relatives are not having educated background i.e. 76.66%. In the case of second question was about relatives support in learning, the ratio is 83.33% which do no help them in learning.

**Table 5. Parent's Education**

<i>Question Content</i>	<i>Yes Frequency</i>	<i>Yes %age</i>	<i>No Frequency</i>	<i>No %age</i>
Educated Father	24	40%	36	60%
Educated Mother	12	20%	48	80%



**Analysis**

Parent's education is an important aspect and source of inspiration, guidance & motivation

for their children. Data in Table & Chart-5 is about the education of parent (Father & Mother). Figures represent that the 60% fathers and 80% mothers of students are uneducated.

**Table 6. Help of parent in studies to their children**

<i>Parent help in studies</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%age</i>
Do not help	42	70%
Help Partially	14	23.33%
Help thoroughly	04	6.66%

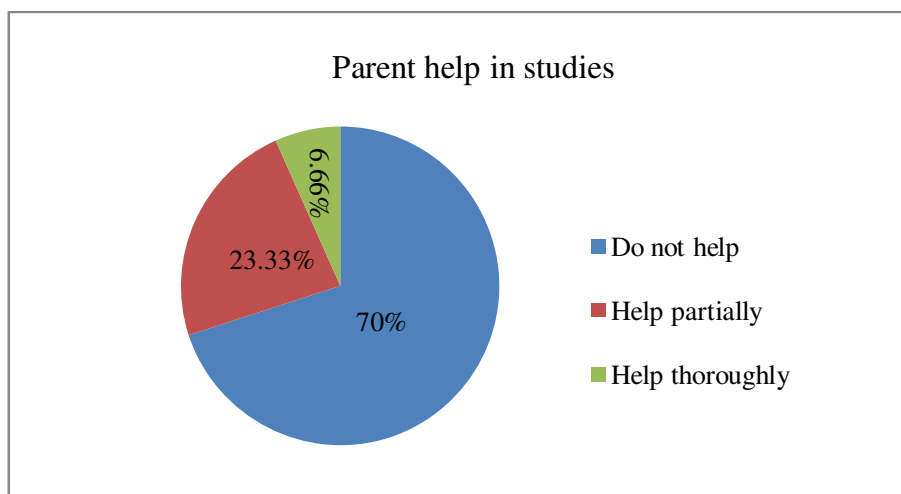


Chart 6.

### Analysis

This question was about the help of parent in studies to their children, most of the 70% students responded that their parent do not help them in studies. Partially help ratio is 23.33% and rest of the students gave opinion that their parents help thoroughly in studies i.e. 6.66%.

**Table 7. Parent's interest in learning ESL for their children**

<i>Question Content</i>	<i>Yes Frequency</i>	<i>Yes %age</i>	<i>No Frequency</i>	<i>No %age</i>
Parent interest	16	26.66%	44	73.33%
Parent motivation	16	26.66%	44	73.33%
Understanding the problem	08	13.33%	52	86.66%
Parent facilitation	20	33.33%	40	66.66%
Preference to English	04	6.66%	56	93.33%

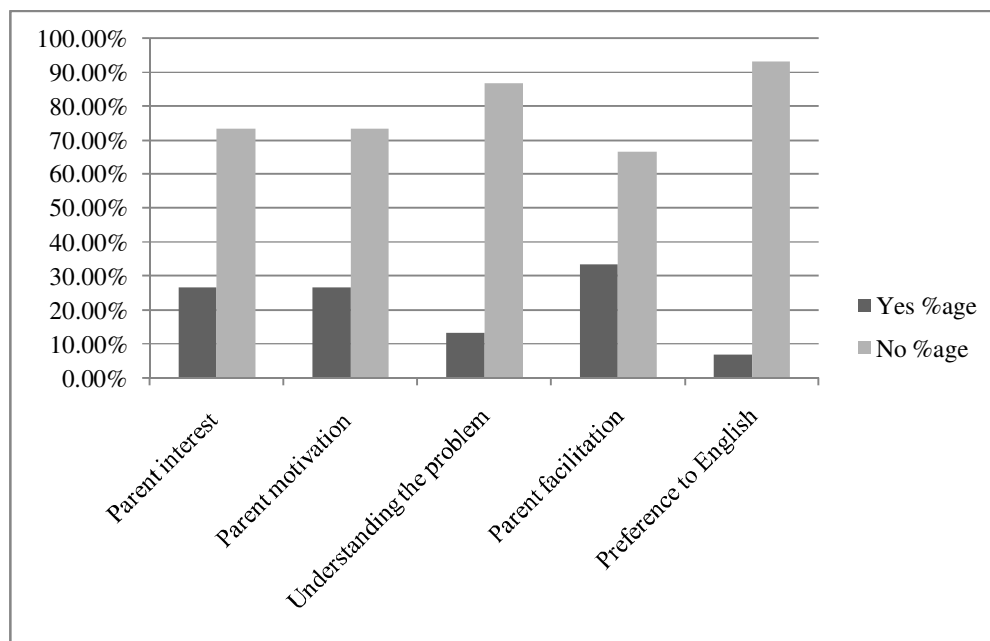


Chart 7. Parent's interest in learning ESL for their children

Data in above Table & Chart shows that 73.33% parents do not take interest of their wards in ESL learning and the same percentage do not motivate children to learn ESL. The ratio of parent which do not understand the problems faced by their children during learning English language is 86.66%. In the same way 66.66% parents do not facilitate in learning English language and 93.33% parent do not give preference to English language.

Table 8. Home Atmosphere

Language used by parent at home	Frequency	%age
Punjabi	60	100%
Urdu	Nil	0%
English	Nil	0%

This factor belongs to the language used at home. Due to uneducated and rural background 100% parents speak in native language Punjabi at home. Conversation with children all the time in native language affects their children English learning process. (Table 8)

Table 9. Language used by student at home

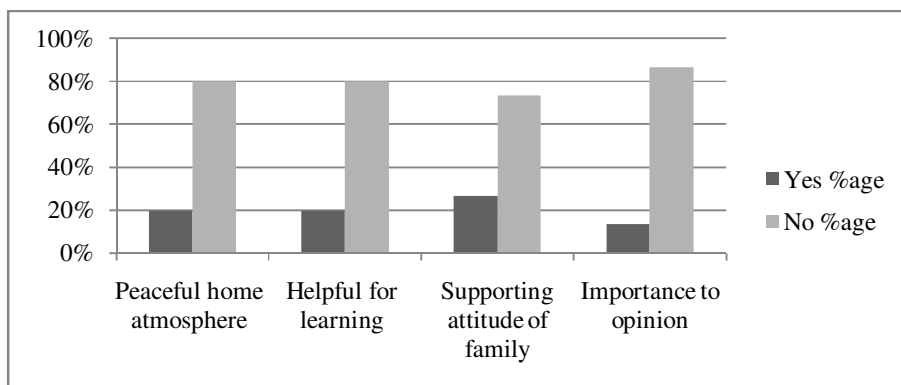
Language used by student at home	Frequency	%age
Punjabi	60	100%
Urdu	Nil	0%
English	Nil	0%

When asked by the students which language they used at home 100% students responded that

they speak Punjabi at home. If students use English in their conversation, their hesitation would be removed and they can confidently learn English language. (Table 9)

**Table 10. Home Atmosphere**

<i>Question Content</i>	<i>Yes Frequency</i>	<i>Yes %age</i>	<i>No Frequency</i>	<i>No %age</i>
Peaceful home atmosphere	12	20%	48	80%
Helpful for learning	12	20%	48	80%
Supporting attitude of family	16	26.66%	44	73.33%
Importance to opinion	08	13.33%	52	86.66%



**Chart 10. Home Atmosphere**

Data in above Table & Chart is about the home atmosphere. 80% students responded that their home atmosphere is not peaceful and not helpful for learning. 73.33% students opted the choice that they do not have any supporting attitude from their family. 86.66% students expressed that their parent do not gave importance to their opinion.

**CONCLUSION**

ESL learning is only possible when the environment is suitable and helpful. In rural areas no factor is helpful for the students learning. All the factors to some extent were against learning. Due to rural, agricultural, un-educated background and poverty parent do not give any importance to the education of their wards. Most of the parents do not show any interest in ESL learning of their children. Rural and uneducated environment has a bad impact on learners. If the learners are living in area or society where people of the area are well educated, students learning efficiency would be increased (Shamim, 2008; Hywel, 2010). Parents’ education, interest, family background and home atmosphere are crucial for ESL learning. If these factors would play positive role, learning would be enhanced. The parents do not realize the importance of English language that is a key to success in present era. But English is considered a language of elite class and officers (Rahman 2006; Shamim 2008). Moreover English helps them in reading the modern books related to engineering, medical, agriculture, zoology and literature. English language also helps to understand the latest technology. English language provides the way to progress. Now world becomes a global village and the language of communication with international community is English.

Researchers selected family factor because it is basic step for learning. If students are not encouraged and motivated at home their abilities & qualities remained dormant. Due to rural



background and unsupportive attitude of parents greatly affect the ESL learning process to the students of rural areas.

### LIMITATIONS

This study like other studies has some limitations. There are many external factors which affects the learning of English language. The researchers' only discussed the family factor that is one of the external factors. Many other external factors are closely associated with family factor e.g. neighbours, student friends, environment of the area. Electronic & print media, cable networking, mobile phones and internet are external sources and are closely linked to home atmosphere. The homes having these facilities, the awareness of the children would ultimately be increased. The children of these homes watch different programmes on TV, talk shows, literary activities and NEWS. Their understanding level is increased which motivate them towards learning. Internet connects them with the whole world. They have an easy access to area of their interest. Internet is a great ocean of knowledge. In short, a comprehensive study of external factors closely connected to family factor depicts the true picture.

### APPLICABILITY

This study can be applied to all rural areas of in province Sindh and Punjab. In KPK, FATA and Baluchistan have different cultural background. In these areas, Tribe Chiefs/Feudal Lords and some religious leaders are against the general education, the English and language. Majority is against the females education.

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