

**INTEGRATION OF SPEAKING AND WRITING
SKILLS FOR BETTER GRADES: PERCEPTION OF
GRADUATE STUDENTS IN PAKISTANI PUBLIC
SECTOR COLLEGES**

By

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ABSTRACT

The world is squeezed now and became a global village, so a single language is required to communicate with everyone. Many languages have claimed this status but only a few retained it. English is one of those languages which have now become a lingua-franca. Though this language has no large number of native people, if we compare it with e.g. Chinese, yet it is understood across the globe. It has the largest disruptive community in the world. It is spoken as first, second, third, foreign, language or a language of a need. English is also taught in Pakistan as a foreign language from many decades but still our students lacks native fluency. As ours is a country where assessment and evaluation is based upon writing skill and our graduates mostly unable to fulfill this standard, failed. This study has been conducted to find out whether the integration of both productive skills have, any effect positive or negative, on students grades. Simple random sampling was used to get the representative samples for this study and the number of sample was 150 participants (75 male and 75 female students). A research made questionnaire has been used to collect data and descriptive statistics was used to get the results. For the concerns of validity, a thorough pilot study was conducted and as per the results of pilot study the questionnaire was accordingly corrected. The reliability score was 0.67 for the current questionnaire. As per the analysis, it was concluded that the integration of both productive skills (writing and speaking) can give better grades to the students, and there is a significant difference in the perceptions of male and female students.

Key words: Speaking Skill, Writing Skill, Integration, English as a Lingua Franca, ESL

1. Introduction

English is taught as a foreign language to the children from the 4th standard to graduation in Pakistan (NEP, 2009). Even after reading English as a compulsory subject for fourteen years, students are not capable to speak well and creating a good piece of English writing (Farooq, Uzair & Wahid, 2012; Butt & Rasul, 2012). Pakistani academic process is totally based on writing skills and student's weak writing skills is a main cause behind their low grades.

Foreign language learning is a very complicated and difficult process but writing skills is the most complex part of L2 learning. Speaking and writing both are productive skills. In second language learning speaking is as important as writing is. Mostly a specific pattern is used for teaching L2 language, starts from listening then speaking, reading and writing. Writing skill is considered a difficult skill and time taking as well. According to (Mackey, 1965), students spent their time only 9% to writing, 16% to reading, 30% to speaking, 45% to listening. Mostly students write only during the examination or for making assignments and speak only during the class if it is necessary. Grabe and Kaplan (Grabe W. &., 1996) said that world's half population does not create a good piece of writing.

Teachers and students have a general perception that the mastery in grammar rules is a key to good writing and speaking but they ignore the other aspects of writing skills such as drafting, revising, editing, etc. and speaking practice even outside the class. Resultantly, students fail to speak fluently and to produce mistakes free writing, which caused their low grades.

2. Literature Review

Grades play a vital role in student's academic career as well as in their future plans because it is grades, which decide the future dimensions of their academic field. In

Pakistan, whole education system is based on grades and student's ability is analyzed through written examination. Speaking is considered less important in academic process, even not evaluate in any stage. Although Pakistan's National Language is Urdu, yet official language is English. English as a second language is being taught from the very first class to the students as a compulsory subject in Pakistan. Unfortunately, it has often been noticed that most of the students do not perform well in their writing process as well as in speaking even after twelve to fourteen years of learning, which can be regarded as a main reason behind their low grades in examination.

As compared to first language, second language teaching and learning is a very complex process. Mackey (Mackey, 1965) writes about the simplicity of L1 and the complexity of second language learning. He says that normally the same pattern is followed for the first language learning everywhere but the learning of second language follows different patterns. Lado (Lado, 1971) said that L2 learning is much more than the learning of its description. Speaking and listening process not only involve linguistic and psychological process but also some other element too.

Speaking and writing are productive skills but Writing skill is the most difficult among four skills. For L2 mostly teachers start with listening and then focus on speaking, after that give attention to reading and then start writing. According to Hedge (Hedge, 2000), writing is the highly difficult and complex skill to master even for the native speaker because students spend less time in writing as compared to other skills. He says that students use 30% of their energy for speaking skill, only 9% for writing while 45% of their energies for listening and 16% for reading skills.

Grabe and Kaplan (Grabe W. &, 1996) highlighted the complexity of writing by saying that half population of the world does not know how to write accurately and

mistakes free paragraph. Actually speaking and writing both are difficult to learn but learning of writing is the most difficult skill in L2 learning. Nunan (Nunan, 2000) agrees with this factor that speaking skill is easy to learn while writing skill is difficult either it is first language learning or second language learning.

The learning of skills is a hard nut to crack because it requires hard work, enough time, appropriate guidance and lot of practice. Learning L2 requires four skills mastery, first is listening, second is speaking, then reading and last is writing and no one can ignore the importance of these skills in education system because our whole academic system is based on them. Richards and Renandya (Richards, 2003) argued about this matter and said that mastery in writing skill is not so easy. Writing is the most difficult skill among the four skills of second language learning.

Mostly students of English language get confused between the two element of language, one is Grammar and the other is writing style. Leki (Leki, 1997) discussed that learning of grammar gives them a sense of security that they can write a language. Means most of the learners think that mastering of grammar rules is the key to write a good piece of writing, but the main issue is that they ignore the other aspects of writing such as planning, editing, revising and drafting etc. Harmer (Harmer, 2007) discussed the writing process. He mentioned that writing process follows four main elements, first is planning, second is drafting, third is editing and fourth is draft. The basic problem behind poor writing is that students do not have the ability that how they could connect and organized the information and ideas to produce a good piece of writing. in other words, students are unaware of cohesion and coherent piece of writing. Nunan (Nunan, 2000), said that production of coherent piece of writing is a big challenge because it is very difficult to write a fluent, mistakes free and excellent piece of writing.

Poor performance in speaking and writing skills lead to poor grades which affect the whole academic process of students because they could not perform well in their papers which completely based on writing and memory. Students memorize the text books data and try to copy it on the paper. In this whole process the students do not give sufficient time for creative writing and fluent speaking skills hence they fail to write a good piece of writing in the high level classes such as graduation level. In Pakistan, speaking is being neglected in the whole study period which also affects the writing ability of students.

This study will focus on the integration of speaking and writing so that students can achieve good grades by using both skills. Effective speaking skills help the students to communicate outside the classroom and overall comprehension of the language in daily life which interns promote their writing ability and help them in achieving good grades in their academic records.

3. Aim of the Study

The current study aims at the exploring student's perceptions regarding whether the integration of speaking and writing skills can boost the grades at graduate level in Pakistan.

4. Research Question

The current study will answer the following question:

- What do graduate students think about the integration of speaking and writing skills and its relation with their final grades?
- What are the perceptions of graduate students in Pakistan regarding whether their grades can be uplifted in case of integration of speaking and writing skill?

- How the perceptions of male and female graduate students are different from each other?

5. Research Objective

The research has an objective of

- To get the perception of graduate students regarding integration of speaking and writing skills for boosting of their grades in annual examination in Pakistan.
- To know the opinion of male and female graduate students about the relationship of writing and speaking skills with their final grades.
- To assess whether the opinions of male and female students are different are not regarding the integration of productive skills for uplifting the grades.

6. Significance of the Study

This research will be fruitful to students for improving their writing ability and their final grades. The integration of speaking and writing skills will enable the students to write a well-organized and mistake free piece of writing. Their speaking skills will not only help them in their writing process but also effects their speaking ability in the classroom as well as in their daily life. Moreover, they could enjoy a better prestige in society.

This research may be helpful for the teachers so that they could simultaneously emphasize on speaking while teaching writing ability, because both are productive skills and needs hard work and require long time efforts. The parallel efforts on both ends give a healthy response and put a high impact on student's grades.

It may also be possible to bring some kind of changes in the program, the methods, and the evaluation process so that future students as well as teachers could be facilitated.

7. Nature of the Research Design

The current research is quantitative in nature, because the data collected through questionnaire will be quantified into numerals to be used in Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The research always requires a particular set of people for population, so that the result can be generalized to particular set of people. The current research is limited in its scope, so it can be easily generalizable for the students of BA in the public sector colleges of Kasur City only. The target population was two public sector colleges of Kasur: Government Islamia College Kasur, and Government Degree college for Women Kasur. The current research has used random sampling framework to choose 150 samples, out of which 75 are male and 75 are female students.

8. Instrument

The researcher has used a close-ended questionnaire. To meet the questions of validity and reliability, a comprehensive pilot study is conducted and the result of pilot study is accommodated in the questionnaire.

9. Data Analysis

Data collected through questionnaire was codified to be used in SPSS and for further descriptive analysis was used to interpret the perception of the graduate students. Independent sample t test was used to get the difference of opinion of male and female students.

10. Discussion

In the tool there were only 30 questions which were used to get the perceptions of graduate students, in which 10 questions were regarding speaking skill, 10 were about writing skill and the 10 were about the integration of both skills and their effect on their

grades. When they were verbally asked about it all the participants were very enthusiastic about the integration of both productive skills.

After the data collection, it was got to know that yes almost 50% students were enjoying the writing and they were of the opinion that actually they were not been teaching as per the standard and that is why they are unable to produce good writing pieces. Some students agreed that they are unable to speak while in public, but they can write a good paragraph. They are hankering after the vocabulary as their opinions are varying regarding the level of active and passive vocabulary. Though they have ideas to speak and write on but vocabulary produce a hampering block for them while in public and in the examination room. They also spend much less time for their personal grooming.

They most of the time felt hesitation speaking in public and also speaking in the classroom as some of them were shy and some were thinking speaking in English language is useless even but the number of respondents regarding this idea were the least. They also thought that if they could be provided with abundant writing practice in the classroom and a bit of practice regarding speaking they could perform good in the final examination.

Most of the respondents were of the view that speaking and writing had a strong relation and if a student has the ability to fluently speak in public, s/he may be good in writing as well. Some of students also were against this view of relation of speaking and writing regarding their grades. That may be due to their inability of speaking.

A question was also asked from the respondents that what they think about their knowledge of the mechanics of writing is helpful regarding their speaking skill and most of the students are of the opinion that yes if they have amply been taught regarding

grammar, punctuation, and other peculiarities of writing skills they could outperform in speaking as well. Yet, they sometimes feel their knowledge of writing is inadequate for their speaking, as if their listener is unable to understand them, they cannot be able to change the structure to accommodate their listener.

Mostly males were in the favour of teaching speaking and writing integration but female students were asking for the separate classes of speaking in the colleges, yet both genders were positive about the relation of productive skills with their examination grades. It means there is no doubt in graduate students' opinion that if both productive skills were integrated in the normal teaching time, their grades can be good. Definitely this question can be treated by the higher ups in the education field and the policy makers of the state that whether they want to integrate the skills in single class or separate module of speaking be included in the curriculum.

Moreover, there should be one constraint of time that has not been tackled in this research, so it would depend upon the decision makers that how they deal with it.

11. Findings

This is the personal observation of the researchers that most of the students are well versed in speaking and they get good grades. This was the basic notion upon which the research was initiated to know the perception of the students. The data was collected and analyzed to check this idea that what students are saying, if speaking and writing are integrated they can get good results. Findings are as under:

- Findings show that Most of the students enjoy writing skills when they write on any topic.

- Research shows that students can write English paragraph but on the topic where they have been informed and creative writing is a bit weaker than their controlled writing.
- Students are able to produce various ideas and words fairly quickly and freely on any topic in writings.
- It has been found that most of the students spend more time on writing skills than on their speaking skill.
- Research also show that most of the students feel shy while speaking in public, and even when they ask for speaking in the classroom they have the same effect.
- Research result indicates that most of the students practice their speaking skills out of the class but only with their mates.
- A large number of students are able to convey their message in different grammatical structure when their listener is not able to comprehend their message.
- It is also shown that speaking skills must be taught in separate classes, and in any case that must be included in the overall teaching parameters of public sector colleges.
- The research also show that there is no significant difference in the opinions of male and female students regarding their perception of integration of speaking and writing skills for the betterment of their grades at graduate level.
- Findings of the research questionnaire show that according to students, integration of speaking skills with writing would helpful in achieving good grades.
- According to the response of the research sample, writing and speaking has a strong connection with each other.

- Students have to prepare speaking and writing skills so that they achieve good grades.

The findings show that integration of speaking skills with writing skills would be helpful for students in achieving good grades. Their speaking and writing skills would help them to generate a well versed English paragraph. Due to the integration, their writing would be more coherent and cohesive and they will get better grades.

11.1 Recommendation for future Research

This study focuses on integration of speaking and writing so the students achieve good grades at graduation level. There are many other aspects on which future researcher can be done such as:

- The integration theory of productive skills should be implemented on different levels.
- The current research was about the perception of graduate students using a survey method but further experimental method can be used to ascertain the results.
- For the implementation of integration on productive skills, a well-planned program and teaching methodology should be developed according to the needs.
- Future research ought to address this issue by conducting a cross-grade level, a cross-regional or cross-national study using both variables in teaching cadre.
- This module should be included in the teacher training programs around the country so that teacher should better be able to integrate the productive skills for the good grades of their students.

11.2 Concluding Remarks

Although English is being taught in Pakistan for decades but still graduates students are not capable to use language fluently. Neither they can speak fluently nor

write effectively as can be desired from a graduate student. This is an alarming situation in this scenario where most of the factors are present for effective learning of English as second language such as proper and effective administration, good curriculum, well composed books, educated and trained teachers and appropriate environment.

Listening and reading skills are equally valuable as speaking and writing so students have to develop equally these four skills during the whole academic process. Whenever the four skills are taught or taught separately the result is most of the time negative and students themselves are not able to integrate them without well planned practices. It is the duty of teaching cadre and the policy maker to join their efforts and promote integrated teaching.

Speaking and writing skills are as important as listening and reading. English language learners are ought to develop those four skills equally. Students should give more attention to the productive skills (speaking and writing) so that they produce a well versed and mistakes free writing. Integration of productive skills helps the students in achieving good grades.

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