

EXPLORING THE CAUSES OF STUDENTS' FAILURE IN ENGLISH SUBJECT AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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Abstract

Present research was designed to look into the causes of students' failure in English subject at secondary school level. In hand research was conducted in Lahore district. Researcher adopted descriptive research design by following survey design in nature. Data were collected from 479 pupils who were enrolled in selected secondary schools in the session of 2021-2023 by applying systematic random sampling techniques via self developed questionnaire. The collected data were entered into computer after its arranging and coding. SPSS (V. 25) software was used to analyze the data by generating mean, Std, and sig values by applying independent sample and one sample t-test. Factor analysis was also done to find factor wise causes of students' failure in English subject. The results unveiled that gender and locality wise no significant difference was found in the opinion of respondents responses regarding the causes of students' failure in English subject. Moreover, it was recovered that there were students, mother tongue, curriculum, teachers, method of teaching, and classroom environment related causes of students' failure in English subject at secondary schools level. It is recommended that school administration may appoint English skilled teachers so that they can motivate students to create interest in learn English and create such environment in the classroom in which students speak English by adopting up to date teaching techniques. Parents also may develop such environment at home which encourage students to learn English. Curriculum developer may also design such English syllabus which develop students other cognitive skill rather than just improve their reading and writing skills.

Keywords: Causes, Failure, Students' failure in English Subject, Secondary School

Introduction

English is a worldwide, global, and intercultural language. English is typically referred to as the second language. Although English is a second language, it is the official and native tongue of Britain, Ireland, North America, Australia, and the majority of the former British colonies, particularly Nigeria and the subcontinent (Graddol, 2016: 110). This linguistic diversity encourages the use of the English language, which has long served as a tool for domestic and international communication. With the growth of English imperialism, the English language became more significant. English became the official language in several former English colonies, including the American continent, the Middle East, Africa, and Australia. Because of the English language's dominance in science and technology thanks to the contributions of Europeans, particularly the English, no one can develop in domains of modern knowledge without it. English has long been the world's most frequently used language. While some people would rather keep speaking their own language and forego learning English, the benefits of doing so go well beyond one's own country. (Ahmad & Rao, 2019)

In response to the shifting global order of English, third-world nations are reevaluating the significance of English and altering their language and English become the language of educational policies. So, English spreads around the globe (Tsui & Tollefson, 2017). Such answers frequently lead to English being given more room in the national curriculum: English may be made a subject that is required, when it was previously merely an elective, or it may be offered in earlier grades, in accordance with the adage "the earlier, the better" (Medgyes, 2015: 276). Thus, more English must be included in the curriculum due to

its restricted space (Kaplan, 2018), and more resources must be shifted to support its teaching and learning, potentially at the expense of other curricular elements. (Ayaz & Jamil, 2021)

Like elsewhere around the world, such step was taken in Pakistan and space was provided to English as a compulsory subject in education. In Pakistan, English has always been one of the core academic courses. As one of the most challenging subjects, this one is likewise recognised as such (Shah and Khan, 2021). However, while being a significant and required subject, English has also historically been regarded by both students and instructors as one of the more challenging courses to acquire. This frequently causes pupils to do poorly in the topic of English throughout all educational levels, but notably at the secondary school level. (Gill & Anwer, 2022)

According to Britannica (2015), secondary education is regarded as a significant subsector of the broader educational system. Middle-class individuals are contributed to the economy in one way, while higher education is supported in the other. The level of higher education is determined by the quality of secondary education, which is intended to produce top-tier professionals in a range of areas of life in the country. As a result, secondary school must be organised in a way that will both help students to effectively integrate into their everyday lives and prepare them for pursuing further education (Bhatti, 2021). In light of this, the two years of secondary education provide ideal opportunity for educators and education specialists to develop and execute programmes that introduce students to suitable forms of conduct and attitudes, which ultimately lead to a good, productive, and peaceful existence. (Govt of Pakistan, 2018). (Griffer & Sattar, 2022)

According to Khan (2021), Pupils' low performance in English as compulsory subject effect by numerous factors, including student related elements, e.g. pupils poor educational foundation, mother or near by language intervention, and forefather economic and social ground, as well as teacher-centered issues like their lack of adequate professional training as language teachers and commitment on the part of teachers (Bukhari, 2019). The assessment method also has problems since it rewards rote learning more than genuine learning. On a larger scale, there are problems with course assignments and curricula that appear to have been prepared insufficiently and frequently fail to represent the significance of the English language in a functional sense (Mansour, 2020). In Pakistan, a large percentage of secondary school pupils fail the English language arts course. With this backdrop in mind, the current research study's goal was to exploring the causes of students' failure in English subject at secondary schools level in Lahore district. (Rehmani, 2023)

Statement of the Problem

It has been seen since long time that students performed poor in English Exam and are being failed in high quantity in English subject. The government, parents, professors, and even the students themselves have all expressed worry over the inadequate English proficiency of Pakistani children. Students' performance is influenced by both the instructors' execution of their tasks and the efficient management of the learning environment in the classroom (Ajao, 2019). Additionally, it has been noted that Pakistan's educational systems and those throughout the world are paying appropriate attention to school-related issues. Students' academic progress in English is influenced by a variety of school aspects, including the classrooms, libraries, technical workshops, labs, instructional spaces, infrastructural spaces, instructors' qualifications, school administration, teaching strategies, peers, etc. (Ajayi, 2019 and Oluchukwu, 2021). Hence, other than school factors, there are many causes of students' failure in English subject such as students interest and motivation etc. To explore these factors, the research worker elected the title of study as "Exploring the Causes of Students' Failure in English Subject at Secondary School Level". (Mansur & Rabani, 2022)

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the causes of students' failure in English subject at secondary school level;

2. To find out demographic variables wise differences in the opinion of respondents regarding the causes of students' failure in English subject

Research Question

1. What are the causes of students' failure in English subject at secondary school level?

Research Hypotheses

H₀1: No significant difference exist demographic variable wise among the opinion of respondents regarding causes of students' failure in English subject at secondary school level.

Literature Review

Urdu is our official language, as stated in Section 251 Part 1 of our constitution. In its second section, it is stated that until plans are made to switch to Urdu, English would continue to be used in official capacities. Even more intriguing is the third section, which implies that Provincial Assemblies will pass legislation to support regional languages. Speaking of supporting regional tongues, no real attempt has been made to displace Urdu with English; instead, English has been so vigorously supported and patronised that it has come to represent success. Only English-medium qualified instructors are preferred in "A" category English medium schools. Generally, they have to oversee the creation of the Urdu media system. Teachers employed under this arrangement are compelled to enrol in the same cycle of Urdu-medium schools. (Ahmad & Bukhari, 2019)

The results of the studies demonstrate that English-medium schools produce superior results than Urdu-medium schools. When compared to Urdu medium schools, English medium schools like Beacon House, LGS, and American School get greater outcomes due to the quality of education, instructors, facilities, and methods. The results of the O-level (General Certificate in English at Ordinary level) are better than those of the SSC (Secondary School Certificate), according to a study by Bahloch (2017). It is due to well paid and qualified staff, and expert administration in these schools, instructors' proper direct and encouragement their pupils. (Muhammad & Sattar, 2018)

According to Waheed's (2016) research, Secondary School system promotes cramming whereas O-Level programmes foster writing abilities. Programmes at the SSC level are deficient in concept-based learning courses. Umbreen (2018) claims that preparing lessons in advance of class, encouraging students to ask questions in class, and extolling their O-Level confidence lead to improved performance. She also asserts that the key to improved outcomes is instructors' contentment with the classroom's amenities and its small class size. However, due to a shortage of resources and an increased enrollment, concept-based learning was not encouraged in SSC level programmes. Students end up failing the exam as a result. There are several reasons why pupils fail in English subject in exam:(Muhammad & Sattar, 2018)

Causes of Failure in English

Students' Attitude

First of all, pupils from all backgrounds have a negative attitude towards studying English. The majority of Pakistani pupils are not motivated to study English. In addition, a lot of pupils are negative towards English as a foreign language. They consistently believe that studying English is unnecessary because it is a foreign language in this country. They simply want to succeed on the tests. Then, all students need to do is memorise a few answers to pass the examinations. (Khan & Khan, 2020)

Phobia of Difficulty

Some pupils are hesitant to study English because they believe it to be a particularly tough subject. In addition, many students believe that their struggle with English will all in van due its toughness. So, they do not make an effort to solve this issue and believe that

learning English is really challenging. They thus generally perform poorly on their tests. (Khan & Khan, 2020)

Shortage of Skilled English Teachers

It is a reality, Pakistan lacking qualified English instructors. They haven't been able to come up with the best method for teaching their pupils to acquire English. Most lecturers highlight a few key questions that students should memorise in order to succeed in the test. The textbooks are poorly thought out, constructed, and written. But learning a language is something very different from teaching it for just test preparation. (Iqbal & Shehzada, 2019)

Trained Teachers

Teachers lack the necessary training to correctly set questions. In order to write sentences freely and accurately to communicate thoughts and ideas from the relevant topic, a student must understand the definition and proper usage of each word as well as how to construct a sentence. However, instructors still teach English using the conventional manner. Students are not sufficiently prepared to convey their thoughts and ideas in sentences in a free and accurate manner. Therefore, the majority of secondary school teachers urge their pupils to commit certain answers to memory and use those answers to complete the questions on response scripts. Few English instructors at the secondary stage make an attempt to foster their pupils' individuality and creativity. (Gill & Anwer, 2022)

Teaching Method

In Pakistan, English language has received increasing attention from the government and other relevant agencies due to its importance. At secondary school stages, English teachers also employ a conventional approach of instruction. The majority of them use the same teaching strategy as instructors in other topics adopt. To use the same teaching style with pupils is really suicide. As a result, English language learners are unable to improve their English proficiently. However, the teacher does not make an effort to understand that teaching English is different from teaching other topics since it is a language. Additionally, the majority of educational institutions have extremely few facilities and an unfavourable environment for pupils to learn English. (Ranjha, 2021)

Improper English Teachers' Training

A key component of excellent teaching is providing instructors with the appropriate training for the position. It has been stated that teacher preparation is necessary to raise educational standards. Teachers must have enough training in order to fulfil all of their tasks. Teaching may be made better with practise and training. As a result, having qualified instructors in the classroom is crucial to raising student success. For students to succeed, they need capable instructors who are motivated and well-trained (Rehmani, 2013). Additionally, they pointed out that effective teachers prosecute and inspire pupils by assuring that they grasping the subject and helping those who struggle with learning. (Mansour, 2018)

Facilities Lack for Teaching English

If the curriculum is effectively developed and delivered with the use of appropriate audiovisual materials, teaching learning gains influence. According to research by Qasim and Arif (2014), inadequate facilities and basic instructional aids frequently lead to poor teaching quality. A recurring problem linked to subpar language instruction in schools has been discovered in research studies as the absence of suitable facilities. According to Bista (2017), by effectively easing the instructing procedure via incorporating AV, aids, we may combat the emerging failure of pupils in English subject. In many circumstances, ill-equipped learning settings in language courses lead to ineffective instruction and subpar student outcomes.

Mother Tongue

The interference of the mother tongue is another issue that break in the procedure of English learning. Yankson (2016) asserts that a person learning a second language may mistakenly or actively transfer characteristics from his Urdu language system to the English Language system. As a result, certain L2 mistakes could be linked to negative L1 effects. According to Rehmani (2019), studying English as a second language is given a lot of importance in Pakistan. Despite the fact that English is important, the mother language continues to have a significant impact on students' thinking. Ahmad (2021) draws the conclusion that mother tongue interference significantly affects how well kids learn English. (Sajjad, & Waheed, 2021)

Memory Based Examination System

Rehmani (2018) makes the case that the Pakistani test system prioritises memorization over true language acquisition based on cognitive comprehension. According to Ahmad (2019a), teachers frequently assign information for tests and to make pupils memorise it rather than to advance their abstract apprehension and encourage autonomous learning when it comes to studying the English language. According to Ahmad et al. (2019b), English instructors and students are now more exam-focused and less concerned with the actual teaching and learning of the language. Teachers and students are frequently discouraged from engaging in actual learning because of test anxiety and the pressure to perform well on the exams. According to Khan (2018), assessment in Pakistan typically consists of a pen-and-paper exam given at the conclusion of each academic year with the aim of passing or failing students. (Manshoor & Sunday, 2022)

Research Methodology

Descriptive research design was employed in the present research. Researcher personally visited selected school to gather data from the respondents in single point in time in existing phenomenon. The source of data were students of grade 10. The population of in hand research was comprised all government secondary schools which were situated in Lahore district. Data was collect from 479 students of grade 10 who were enrolled in randomly selected 21 secondary schools by applying systematic random sampling technique. To collect the data from the respondents, researcher used self-developed questionnaire which was consisted on 26 statement regarding causes of failure in English subject. All statements were based on five points Likert scale. By engaging 40 pupils of grade 10 and 10 English instructors, tool was pilot tested. They were not included in the sample. The Cronbach alpha value of the provided tool was .89 which is evident of highly co-relatedness of items in the tool. The gathered data were arranged and coded. After that it was entered into computer for analysis. SPSS (V. 25) software was used to analyze the data by generating mean, Std, and sig values by applying independent sample and one sample t-test. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to know the factors involved in failure of students in the examinations of English. The results are shown under below:

Results and Findings

Table 1:

Demographic variable wise analysis to find the differences in the teachers' awareness regarding components of quality assurance

Demo Variables		N	M	Std	t	df	sig
Gender	Female	211	76.59	4.672	2.875	477 460.248	.065
	Male	268	76.21	4.909			
Locality	Rural	198	75.06	4.052	1.162	477 469.574	.082

Demo Variables	N	M	Std	t	df	sig
urban	281	77.30	5.076			

Above table 1 reveals that gender wise calculated t -value (2.875) > than table 1.965 at df (477) and calculated sig (.065) > than critical value ($P=0.05$), the calculated locality wise t -value (2.162) > than table 1.965 at df (477) and calculated sig (.082) value > than critical value (0.05), accepted the null hypothesis which was no significant difference exist demographic variable wise among the opinion of respondents regarding causes of students' failure in English subject at secondary school level. It indicates that no statistically significant difference between gender and locality wise respondents means score. So, concluded that gender and locality wise respondents had the opinions regarding causes of students' failure in English subject at secondary school level.

Table 2a

Descriptive Analysis to find out frequency and percentages of the responses of the Respondents (479) regarding causes of failure in English subject. (The responses range is 5-1, strongly agree to strongly disagree)

Sr.#	Statements	Mean	Std.	Sig
01	Learning English as compulsory subject is useful for my future	4.51	.754	.000
02	English as second language is very easy subject	1.67	.575	.000
03	I have interest learning English	4.25	1.046	.000
04	I pay my proper intention on learning English as compare to other subject	3.99	1.034	.000
05	My parents have interest in me to learn English	2.62	.827	.000
06	My mother tongue create problems in learning English	3.96	1.228	.000
07	My society encourage metolearn English language	2.16	1.302	.000
08	English syllabus at secondary level is based on just to improve my reading skill	3.56	.790	.000
09	English syllabus at this level is based on just to improve my writing skill	3.19	.918	.000
10	English syllabus at this level meet the need of my future learning	1.99	1.064	.000
11	My teachers teach me English by creating conducting learning environment in the class	1.59	1.187	.000
12	He/she used AV., aids while teaching English	2.70	.966	.000
13	My teacher provide interesting English learning materials to develop my interest in learning English	2.47	1.232	.000

Above table 2 reveals that generated mean value of statements 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 9 (4.51, 4.25, 3.99, 3.96, 3.56, and 3.19) and computed sig value for all these statements is .000 which are less than $p=.05$. It indicates that the computed mean value of all statements is significantly higher than the cut point (3). It is evident that majority of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with statements that learning English as compulsory subject is useful for their future and they have interest learning English at this level. They also pay their proper intention on learning English as compare to other subject but their mother tongue create problems for learning English. Moreover, designed English syllabus at secondary level is based on just to improve their reading and writing skill.

The generated mean value of statements 2, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, and 13 (1.67, 2.62, 2.16, 1.99, 2.70, and 2.47) and computed sig value for all these statements is .000 which is less than $p=.05$. It indicates that the computed mean value of all statements is significantly lower than the cut point (3). It is evident that majority of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed with these statements which are English as second language is very easy subject for them and their teachers teach them English by creating conducting learning environment in the class. Their teacher provide interesting English learning materials to develop their interest in learning. English syllabus at this level meet the need of their future learning and their teachers used AV., aids while teaching English. Moreover, their parents have interest in them to learn English or their society encourage them to learn English language.

It is concluded that according to majority of the students, learning English as compulsory subject is useful for their future and they have interest in learning English at this level. They also paid their proper intention on learning English as compare to other subject but their mother tongue create problems for learning English. Moreover, designed English syllabus at secondary level is based on just to improve their reading and writing skill. English as second language is difficult subject for them and their teachers do not teach them English by creating conducting learning environment in the class. Their teachers do not provide them interesting English learning materials or do not use AV., aids while teaching English to develop their interest in learning English. English syllabus at this level do not meet the need of their future learning. The most cause of their failure in English subject at secondary level is neither their parents have interest that their kids learn English nor their society encourage them to learn English language.

Table 2b

Descriptive Analysis to find out frequency and percentages of the responses of the Respondents (479) regarding causes of failure in English subject. (The responses range is 5-1, strongly agree to strongly disagree)

Sr.#	Statements	Mean	Std.	Sig
14	My teacher teach me English as teachers of other subject teach me (Traditional Method)	3.98	.887	.000
15	My teacher teach me English just to pass the examination	4.30	.878	.000
16	My teacher is not competent for teaching English at this level	4.25	.932	.000
17	Teacher does not pay attention on me to motivate me for learning English	4.13	.918	.000
18	My English teachers encourage me when I write English	2.05	1.131	.000

Sr.#	Statements	Mean	Std.	Sig
19	I grasp whatever my English teacher teach me	4.42	.660	.000
20	My teachers provide me opportunity to speak English in the classroom	1.64	.895	.000
21	During English class, my teacher speak English with me	1.92	1.217	.000
22	I speak English with my class fellows	1.68	.902	.000
23	I am satisfy with the method of teaching of my English teacher	1.58	.703	.000
24	My teacher helps me for learning English	1.95	.673	.000
25	My teacher guide me after class time if I have any problem	1.92	.938	.000
26	I am interested to learn English at this level if English subject teach me as it should taught	3.91	1.027	.000

Above table 2 reveals that generated mean value of statements 14, 15, 16, 17, 19 and 26 (3.98, 4.30, 4.25, 4.13, 4.42 and 3.91) and computed sig value for all these statements is .000 which are less than $p=.05$. It indicates that the computed mean value of all statements is significantly higher than the cut point (3). It is evident that majority of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with statements which are their teacher teach them English as teachers of other subject teach them (Traditional Method). They teach them English just to pass the examination and their teachers are not competent for teaching English at this level. Moreover, they agreed that their teachers do not pay attention on them to motivate them for learning English. They grasp whatever their English teachers teach them and they are interested to learn English at this level if English subject teach them as it should taught.

The generated mean value of statements 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 (2.05, 1.64, 1.92, 1.68, 1.58, 1.95, and 1.94) and computed sig value for all these statements is .000 which is less than $p=.05$. It indicates that the computed mean value of all statements is significantly lower than the cut point (3). It is evident that majority of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed with these statements which are, their English teachers encourage them when they write English. Their teacher speak English with them and he/she provides them opportunity to speak English in the classroom during English class. They speak English with their class fellows. Moreover, they are satisfied with the method of teaching of their English teacher. Their teacher helps them for learning English by guided them after class time if they have any problem.

It is concluded that according to majority of the students, their teacher teach them English as teachers of other subject teach them (Traditional Method). Due to non professional skill, they teach them English just to pass the examination and they were not competent for teaching English at this level. Moreover, although their teachers do not pay attention on them to motivate them for learning English yet they grasp whatever their English teachers teach them. They are interested to learn English at this level if English subject teach them as it

should taught but their English teachers did not encourage them when they write English. Neither their teachers speak English with them not provide opportunity to the students to speak English in the classroom during English class to speak English with their class fellows. Moreover, they are not satisfied with the method of teaching of their English teacher as they do not helps them for learning English by guided them after class time if they have any problem.

Table 3

Factors wise Causes of students' failure in English Subject at Secondary School Level

Factors	Statements
A. Students' Related Causes	<p><i>Students Interest:</i> students have no interest in learning English</p> <p><i>Phobia:</i> Phobia of English as second language is very difficult subject</p> <p><i>Intention:</i> Students not pay proper intention on learning English as other subject</p> <p><i>Parents' Interest:</i> Parents have interest in me to learn English</p>
B. Mother Tongue	<p><i>Society:</i> Society encourage metolearn English language</p> <p><i>Mother tongue:</i> Mother tongue is hinder on the path of learning English</p> <p><i>English syllabus:</i> English syllabus at secondary level is based on just to improve students' reading skill</p>
C. Curriculum Related cause	<p><i>English syllabus:</i> English syllabus at this level is based onjust to improve students' writing skill</p> <p><i>Students Need:</i> English syllabus at this level do not meet the need of students' future learning</p> <p><i>Non-Professional:</i> Teachers teach students English by not creating conducting learning environment in the class due not being professional</p> <p><i>Lacking in Provision of Material:</i> Teacher do not provide interesting English learning materials to develop students' interest in learning English</p>
D. Teacher Related Causes	<p><i>Teacher's Competence:</i> Teachers are not competent for teaching English at this level</p> <p><i>Paying attention:</i> Teacher does not pay attention on me to motivate me for learning English</p> <p><i>Students' Encouragement:</i> English teachers do not encourage students when they write English</p> <p><i>Provision of guidance:</i> Teacher do not guide students after class time if they have any problem</p> <p><i>Exam Perspective:</i> teacher teach English to the students to just pass the examination</p> <p><i>Provision opportunity for speaking:</i> Teachers do not provide opportunity to the students to speak English in the classroom</p>
E. Classroom Environment	<p><i>Speaking English:</i>During English class, teacher does not speak English with students</p> <p><i>Classroom environment:</i> Teachers fail to create such environment in the in which students speak English with their class fellows</p>
F. Teaching Method	<p><i>Traditional Method of teaching:</i>Teacher teach English a</p>

Factors	Statements
	teachers of other subject teach to the students
	<i>Use of Technologies:</i> Teachers do not used technologies as a AV, aids while teaching English
	<i>Students Satisfaction:</i> Students not satisfy by adopted method of teaching of their English teacher

Conclusion and Discussion

Present research was designed to explore the causes of students' failure in English subject at secondary school level. In this regards conclusion is drawn from the findings. It is concluded that students' interest, students' phobia, proper intention, mother tongue, English syllabus, non-professional teacher, non-competent teachers, teaching method, not using technology, classroom environment, curriculum, teachers' behaviour, and parental interest are the causes of students' failure in English subject at secondary school level. Lots of research scholars had different opinions and proved different causes of students failure in English at secondary school level. Shaukat, (2018) found in his research that parent' interest and students phobia regarding English subject are the causes of students failure in English at secondary level. Khan and Hameed, (2019) found in his research that traditional method of teaching and appointment of untrained teachers at secondary level are the causes of students failure. Habibullah, (2021) stated that classroom environment and size play an important role in students' success in English. Khan and Khattak, (2017) found that students phobia regarding English as second language at secondary level is the most factor which reduced students interest of learning English, present research also found that students phobia regarding English is the cause of students failure in English at secondary level. in the present research demographic variables wise no statistically significant difference was found. Iqbal and Ranhja, (2021) conducted his research and significant difference found that rural and urban students' causes of failure in English. They stated that the causes of rural areas students' are parental background, their interest, societal interest, students phobia, untrained teachers, school environment, teachers' behaviour while classroom size, students' interest and their intention, along with others factors become the causes of urban students' failure. The present study also found the causes of failure of students of both locality are the same. It is recommended that school administration may appoint English skilled teachers so that they can motivate students to create interest in students to learn English and create such environment in the classroom in which students speak English by adopting up to date teaching techniques. Parents also may develop such environment at home which encourage students to learn English. Curriculum developer may also design such English syllabus which develop students' other cognitive skill rather than just improve their reading and writing skills. The government may make solid policy of recruiting English teachers. School Administration also arrange teachers' training program to enhanced teachers' professional skill so that they can use AV.aids by using technology in teaching English to enhanced students' learning. Teachers should provide allied interesting learning material to create students interest in learning English. While teaching, teachers should speak English in the classroom to encourage students to speak English with each other to reduce the students phobia.

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