

Exploring Intermediate Students' Attitude Towards Learning English in Government Colleges of District Naushahro Feroze

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Abstract

This study investigates students' attitudes toward learning English in the government colleges of District Naushahro Feroze. This research follows Gardner's (1985) framework. The data is collected from 20 students enrolled in the colleges across Naushahro Feroze through semi structured interviews using a qualitative research method. The result shows that participants believe integrative and instrumental orientations are the most influential reasons for which they learn English, and that educational factors (teachers/lessons/curriculum/society) influence the students' attitudes to learn English at intermediate students in government colleges of district Naushahro Feroze either positively or negatively.

In addition, the findings of this research reveal that the majority of language learning students in colleges across Naushahro Feroze hold a positive attitude toward learning English in behavioral, cognitive, and emotional learning areas. Students recognize English as a crucial language for academic and career advancement. Moreover, they express a strong desire to improve their language skills and acknowledge the importance of English in the modern world. These findings highlight the need for implementing effective strategies to overcome challenges and create a conducive learning environment for language learners.

Furthermore, Baur's model was applied to analyze the collected data; the findings show that both male and female students have the same perception regarding language attitudes. The significance of this research lies in its potential to help policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders involved in English education in Naushahro Feroze.

Key Words: Attitudes, Integrative orientation, Instrumental orientation, Learning English, Gender Based Differences, Baur's Six Point Model, Behavioral, Naushahro Feroze

Introduction

Background of the Study

English has emerged as a global language of communication, knowledge dissemination, science, technology, diplomacy, and higher education (Graddol,2006). In the contemporary world, proficiency in English is often associated with academic success, professional mobility, and socio economic advancement. Countries where English is used either as a second or foreign language have

increasingly emphasized its teaching at different educational levels to ensure students can compete globally (Crystal, 1997). English has also become the main and the most important factor in the past few years (Masood et al., 2020; Firdous et al., 2022; Roshin et al., 2023; Shafi and Masood, 2023). In Pakistan, English holds a particularly significant position because it functions as an official language alongside Urdu and is widely used in higher education, administration, judiciary, and competitive examinations Kara (2009). At the intermediate level in Pakistan, students are at a critical transitional stage between secondary education and university studies. For Pre Medical and Pre Engineering students especially, English is not only a compulsory subject but also the medium through which scientific knowledge, textbooks, and examinations are delivered. Hashwani (2008) stated that there are many factors that affect students' attitude towards learning English. Their future academic careers—whether in medicine, engineering, or other professional fields—largely depend upon their ability to comprehend and use English effectively. However, despite its importance, English language learning in government colleges, particularly in rural districts such as Naushahro Feroze, faces numerous challenges. These include limited exposure to English outside the classroom, traditional teaching methodologies, examination oriented instruction, and socio economic constraints that collectively shape students' attitudes toward the language.

Statement of the Problem

English occupies a central position in Pakistan's educational system, particularly at the intermediate level where students prepare for higher education and professional careers Masood, M.H., Yasir, H.S.M., & Saher, A. (2025). It functions not only as a compulsory academic subject but also as a medium of instruction in higher studies, especially in disciplines such as medicine and engineering. Despite its recognized importance, many students studying in government colleges experience persistent difficulties in learning English effectively. These difficulties are not limited to linguistic competence alone; rather, they are closely associated with learners' psychological and attitudinal dispositions toward the language.

At the intermediate level in government colleges of District Naushahro Feroze, students enrolled in Pre Medical and Pre Engineering programs are expected to develop adequate proficiency in English to comprehend textbooks, attempt examinations, and pursue higher education. However, classroom observations and informal academic discussions suggest that students often demonstrate mixed or negative attitudes toward learning English. Some students perceive English as a difficult and burdensome subject, while others view it as important but feel anxious or underconfident in using it. Such attitudes may significantly influence their learning outcomes, participation levels, and overall academic performance Memon, I. P., Pathan., & Thaheem, S.K. (2019).

One major concern is that many intermediate students come from rural or semi urban backgrounds where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited. Most students have completed their schooling in Urdu medium or Sindhi medium institutions, where communicative competence in English may not have been strongly emphasized. When they enter government colleges, they are suddenly required to engage with English texts of higher complexity. This transition can create feelings of inadequacy, fear of making mistakes, and reluctance to participate in classroom discussions conducted in English. Consequently, students may develop avoidance behaviors or passive learning habits Parvaiz, A., Shah, S.H.R., & Gul, S. (2025).

Another problem relates to the dominance of examination oriented teaching practices in many government colleges. English is often taught with a focus on grammar translation methods and rote memorization rather than communicative competence. As a result, students may prepare to pass examinations without developing genuine interest or positive engagement with the language. When learning becomes merely a requirement for passing exams, students' intrinsic motivation may decline. This situation can negatively shape their attitudes toward English, reducing it to a compulsory hurdle

rather than a meaningful skill.

Furthermore, Pre Medical and Pre Engineering students often prioritize science subjects such as Biology, Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics, as these subjects are directly linked to their future professional aspirations. In comparison, English may be perceived as secondary or less critical because the weightage of English in pre medical entrance tests is reduced to only nine marks. This perception may lead to reduced time investment and limited seriousness toward improving language proficiency. If students consider English irrelevant to their core academic goals, their attitude toward learning it may become indifferent or negative. Bajwa, I., & Younas, M. (2019).

Although numerous studies in Pakistan have investigated English language learning at the school or university level, there is limited qualitative research focusing specifically on intermediate students in rural government colleges, particularly in District Naushahro Feroze. Much of the existing research relies on quantitative surveys that measure attitude through structured questionnaires. While such studies provide statistical trends, they may not capture the deeper emotional, social, and contextual factors influencing students' attitudes.

There is therefore a need for an in depth qualitative exploration of intermediate students' attitudes toward learning English in government colleges of District Naushahro Feroze. Without understanding students' perceptions, beliefs, fears, motivations, and experiences, it is difficult to design effective pedagogical strategies or policy interventions. Teachers and administrators may assume that poor performance is solely due to lack of ability, whereas underlying attitudinal factors may be equally or more significant.

Moreover, attitude is closely linked with motivation, self confidence, and willingness to communicate—key components in second language acquisition theories. If students possess positive attitudes but face structural barriers such as lack of resources or supportive environments, the solution may lie in institutional reform. However, if negative attitudes stem from anxiety, low self efficacy, or perceived irrelevance of English, pedagogical approaches must be reconsidered. Therefore, identifying the nature and determinants of students' attitudes is essential.

The core problem addressed in this study is the insufficient understanding of how intermediate Pre Medical and Pre Engineering students in government colleges of District Naushahro Feroze perceive and experience English language learning. Specifically, it seeks to investigate whether their attitudes are positive, negative, or ambivalent, and what factors shape these attitudes within their academic and socio cultural context. By conducting semi structured interviews with twenty students from four government colleges, this research aims to move beyond surface level assumptions and explore students' voices in depth. The study recognizes that learners' attitudes are not formed in isolation; they are influenced by multiple interacting factors that require careful qualitative exploration.

Research Objectives

Research objectives provide clear direction to a study by identifying what the researcher intends to achieve. In qualitative research, objectives guide the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Since the present study aims to explore intermediate students' attitudes toward learning English in Government Colleges of District Naushahro Feroze, the objectives are designed to investigate students' perceptions, experiences, and the underlying factors influencing their attitudes. The overall aim of this research is to gain an in depth understanding of how Pre Medical and Pre Engineering students perceive and experience English language learning within their academic and socio cultural context.

To accomplish this aim, the study is guided by the following specific objectives:

To explore intermediate students' overall attitudes toward learning English in Government Colleges of District Naushahro Feroze. This objective seeks to identify whether students' attitudes are generally positive, negative, or ambivalent. It aims to examine their emotional responses, level of interest, motivation, and personal evaluation of English as a subject. Through semi structured

interviews, the study intends to understand how students describe their feelings about learning English and how they perceive its importance in their academic lives.

To investigate the factors influencing students' attitudes toward learning English. Students' attitudes are shaped by multiple internal and external factors. This objective aims to explore the influences of prior schooling background, teaching methodologies, classroom environment, peer interaction, family expectations, socio economic conditions, and exposure to English outside the classroom. By identifying these factors, the study seeks to understand why certain attitudes develop among intermediate students in the selected government colleges.

To examine the relationship between students' academic streams (Pre Medical and Pre Engineering) and their attitudes toward English learning. Pre Medical and Pre Engineering students often prioritize science subjects due to their future professional goals. This objective aims to explore whether their academic stream influences their perception of English as either an essential skill or a secondary requirement. The study intends to analyze whether students from different academic groups demonstrate similarities or differences in their attitudes.

To explore students' perceived challenges in learning English at the intermediate level. This objective focuses on identifying the linguistic, psychological, and institutional difficulties that students encounter while learning English. It seeks to understand how these challenges affect their confidence, participation, and overall attitude toward the language.

To suggest pedagogical implications based on students' expressed attitudes and experiences. The final objective of the study is practical in nature. Based on the findings derived from thematic analysis of interviews, the research aims to propose recommendations for English language teachers, curriculum planners, and educational administrators in Government Colleges of District Naushahro Feroze. These recommendations will focus on improving teaching practices and fostering more positive attitudes toward English learning.

In summary, these objectives collectively aim to provide a comprehensive qualitative exploration of intermediate students' attitudes toward learning English. By focusing on students' voices and lived experiences, the study seeks not only to understand their perspectives but also to contribute meaningfully to improving English language education at the intermediate level.

Significance of the Study

The significance of a research study lies in its potential contribution to knowledge, theory, policy, and practice. The present study, which explores intermediate students' attitudes toward learning English in Government Colleges of District Naushahro Feroze, holds substantial importance at theoretical, pedagogical, institutional, and contextual levels.

First, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field of English language teaching (ELT) and second language acquisition (SLA). Attitude has long been recognized as a crucial variable influencing language learning success. However, much of the research conducted in Pakistan has focused on school level students in urban areas or university level learners. There is comparatively limited qualitative research examining intermediate students' attitudes in rural or semi urban government colleges, particularly in districts such as Naushahro Feroze. By focusing on this specific context, the study adds localized and context sensitive insights to the broader academic discourse.

Second, the study is significant because it adopts a qualitative approach using semi structured interviews. Many previous studies on students' attitudes toward English in Pakistan have relied primarily on quantitative surveys and structured questionnaires. While such methods provide statistical trends, they may not fully capture students' lived experiences, emotions, and personal meanings attached to English learning. By giving students the opportunity to express their views in their own words, this research generates rich, descriptive data that deepens understanding of attitudinal dimensions beyond numerical measurement. This methodological contribution

strengthens the qualitative research tradition in language studies.

Third, the findings of this study may have practical implications for English language teachers working in Government Colleges of District Naushahro Feroze. Understanding students' attitudes can help teachers reflect critically on their teaching methods, classroom environment, and interaction patterns. If students express anxiety, fear, or lack of confidence, teachers may adopt more supportive and communicative strategies. If students demonstrate positive attitudes but face structural barriers, teachers and administrators can advocate for improved resources and training. Thus, the study can guide pedagogical improvements at the classroom level.

Fourth, the study is significant for educational policymakers and curriculum designers. By highlighting the factors that shape students' attitudes—such as teaching methodologies, examination systems, and socio cultural influences—the research provides evidence that can inform policy decisions. For example, if students report that examination oriented teaching reduces their interest in English, policymakers may consider reforms that promote communicative competence alongside academic assessment. If students emphasize the importance of English for professional success, curriculum designers may integrate more career oriented language tasks into the syllabus.

Fifth, the study holds significance for students themselves. By participating in interviews, students have the opportunity to reflect on their own attitudes, challenges, and aspirations related to English learning. This reflective process may increase their awareness of the importance of English and encourage them to adopt more proactive learning strategies. Additionally, the recommendations derived from their voices may contribute to creating a more supportive and engaging learning environment for future students.

Sixth, this study contributes to the understanding of gender based differences in language learning attitudes within the specific cultural context of rural Sindh. By including both boys' and girls' colleges, the research explores how male and female students perceive English learning differently. These insights can help teachers and institutions develop gender sensitive pedagogical approaches that address the unique needs and challenges of both groups.

Finally, the study is significant for future researchers. It provides a detailed qualitative account of students' attitudes in an under researched context, which can serve as a foundation for further studies. Researchers may use the findings to develop hypotheses for quantitative investigations or to conduct comparative studies across different districts or provinces. The thematic analysis presented in this study offers a framework for exploring attitudes in similar educational settings.

In conclusion, the significance of this study extends beyond its immediate findings. It contributes to academic knowledge, informs teaching practice, guides policy decisions, empowers student voices, and opens avenues for future research. By exploring the attitudes of intermediate students in Government Colleges of District Naushahro Feroze, this research aims to make a meaningful contribution to English language education in Pakistan.

Delimitations of the Study

Every research study operates within certain boundaries and limitations. The present study is delimited to the following aspects:

Geographical Delimitation: The study is confined to District Naushahro Feroze in Sindh, Pakistan. It does not include colleges from other districts or provinces.

Institutional Delimitation: The research focuses exclusively on four government colleges—two boys' colleges and two girls' colleges. Private colleges and other educational institutions are not included.

Academic Level Delimitation: The study is limited to intermediate students (Grades XI and XII) enrolled in Pre Medical and Pre Engineering programs. Students from other academic streams such as Arts, Commerce, or Computer Science are not included.

Sample Size Delimitation: The study involves twenty participants, which is appropriate for qualitative research but does not aim for statistical generalization. The findings are specific to the participants and their context.

Content Delimitation: The research focuses specifically on students' attitudes toward learning English. It does not measure language proficiency, academic achievement, or teaching effectiveness directly.

Methodological Delimitation: The study employs semi structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Other methods such as classroom observations, document analysis, or questionnaires are not used.

These delimitations define the scope of the study and help readers understand the context within which the findings should be interpreted.

Literature Review

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the existing literature related to students' attitudes toward learning English, particularly at the intermediate level. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical and empirical foundation for the present study titled "Exploring Intermediate Students' Attitude Towards Learning English in Government Colleges of District Naushahro Feroze." It examines major concepts, theoretical frameworks, and previous research studies that are relevant to understanding learners' attitudes and their impact on English language learning.

The review of literature plays a significant role in research as it situates the current study within the broader academic discourse. It helps in identifying key themes, concepts, and gaps in previous research while establishing the relevance and necessity of the present investigation. By analyzing earlier studies conducted at international, national, and regional levels, this chapter aims to highlight how students' attitudes towards English have been explored and what dimensions have been emphasized by researchers.

Attitude is considered one of the most influential affective factors in second language acquisition Le and Le (2022). Scholars such as Gordon Allport define attitude as a mental and neural state of readiness organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon an individual's response to objects and situations. Similarly, Robert Gardner emphasizes the importance of attitude and motivation in second language learning through his socio educational model, which explains how learners' perceptions, beliefs, and feelings toward a language influence their learning outcomes. Abidin et al., (2012) said, Attitudes are and approach are significant to the students' because they are merged and can not be separated neatly.

In the context of Pakistan, English occupies a significant position as an official language and as a medium of instruction in higher education. Institutions regulated by the Higher Education Commission emphasize the importance of English proficiency for academic and professional advancement Jain (2014). Therefore, understanding students' attitudes toward learning English becomes crucial, particularly in government colleges where students often come from diverse socio economic and rural backgrounds, Ahmed (2015).

Since the present study adopts a qualitative research design and collects data through semi structured interviews from students of four government colleges (two boys' colleges and two girls' colleges) in District Naushahro Feroze, this chapter also reviews qualitative studies that explore learners' perceptions, experiences, and feelings about learning English. Special attention is given to gender differences, socio cultural influences, and contextual factors that shape students' attitudes in public sector institutions.

This chapter is organized into several sections. It first discusses the conceptual understanding of attitude and its components. It then examines the importance of English in Pakistan, theoretical frameworks related to language learning attitudes, and empirical studies conducted at international

and national levels. Finally, it identifies the research gap that justifies the need for the present study.

Concept of Attitude

The concept of attitude has been widely studied in psychology, sociology, and education, particularly in the field of second language acquisition Abidin et al., (2012). Attitude is generally understood as an individual's predisposition to respond positively or negatively toward a particular object, person, idea, or situation. In the context of language learning, attitude refers to learners' feelings, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies toward the target language and its speakers.

One of the earliest and most influential definitions of attitude was provided by Gordon Allport, who described attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, which exerts a directive or dynamic influence upon an individual's response to all objects and situations related to it." This definition highlights that attitudes are learned through experience and significantly shape an individual's reactions and behaviors.

Similarly, Robert Gardner defined attitude in the context of second language learning as an evaluative reaction toward the language, its speakers, and the learning situation. According to Gardner, learners who hold positive attitudes are more likely to engage actively in language learning and achieve higher levels of proficiency.

Attitude is generally understood to consist of three main components:

Cognitive Component: This refers to beliefs, ideas, or opinions that a learner holds about the English language. For example, students may believe that English is important for career opportunities, higher education, or social prestige.

Affective Component: This relates to learners' feelings or emotions toward learning English. Students may feel enjoyment, anxiety, fear, confidence, or interest while learning the language.

Behavioral Component: This involves learners' actions or tendencies in response to their beliefs and feelings. For example, a student with a positive attitude may actively participate in class discussions, practice speaking English, or seek additional learning resources.

These three components are interconnected and collectively shape students' overall attitude toward learning English. According to Al- Hafiedz, (2020) a positive cognitive belief about the usefulness of English may generate positive feelings, which in turn encourage active participation and engagement in the classroom Delic, (2020).

In the Pakistani context, particularly in government colleges located in rural districts such as Naushahro Feroze, students' attitudes may be influenced by various socio cultural and educational factors. These may include the quality of teaching, availability of resources, family background, exposure to English outside the classroom, and gender based expectations. Therefore, understanding the concept of attitude and its components is essential for exploring intermediate students' perceptions and experiences in the present study. The study by Ellis (1924) stated that the negative attitude could lead to a deterioration of relationship between teachers and students and impede the learning process.

Importance of English Language in Pakistan

English holds a significant and influential position in Pakistan's educational, administrative, and professional domains. Since independence in 1947, English has function as an official language alongside Urdu and continues to serve as a medium of communication in government offices, higher education institutions, judiciary, and corporate sectors. Due to its global status, English is often associated with power, prestige, and socio economic mobility in Pakistani society.

In the education system of Pakistan, English is taught as a compulsory subject from primary level to higher education. At the intermediate level, students are required to study English as a core subject, and it often serves as a gateway to academic success in colleges and universities. The policies and guidelines of the Higher Education Commission emphasize English proficiency as an essential

requirement for higher studies, research publications, and professional development. Most academic textbooks at the university level are written in English, making it necessary for students to develop strong reading and writing skills.

Furthermore, English plays a vital role in competitive examinations, job recruitment processes, and access to international opportunities. Many government and private sector jobs require proficiency in English communication skills. As a result, students often perceive English not merely as a subject but as a tool for career advancement and social mobility.

In the province of Sindh, particularly in government colleges located in rural districts such as Naushahro Feroze, the importance of English becomes even more complex. While English is highly valued, students often face challenges due to limited exposure, lack of language environment, inadequate resources, and traditional teaching methods. The examination system under the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education in Sindh further reinforces the importance of passing English as a compulsory subject for academic progression.

Additionally, English is associated with modernization and global connectivity. Through English, students gain access to digital resources, international scholarship programs, and global communication platforms. However, the gap between urban and rural institutions often influences the quality of English language learning and shapes students' attitudes toward it.

Considering this socio educational context, it becomes essential to explore how intermediate students in government colleges perceive and respond to learning English. Their attitudes may be shaped by both the recognized importance of English and the practical challenges they encounter in the classroom. Therefore, understanding the status and significance of English in Pakistan provides a crucial background for analyzing students' attitudes in the present study.

Students' Attitude Toward Learning English

Students' attitude towards learning English has been widely recognized as a crucial factor influencing language acquisition and academic achievement. In second language learning, attitude shapes learners' motivation, classroom participation, persistence, and overall performance (Sharma, 2022). Ong, (2021). Researchers argue that even when teaching methods and curriculum are appropriate, negative attitudes may hinder successful language learning (Starks & paltrudge, 1996).

According to Robert Gardner, learners who possess positive attitudes toward the target language and its speakers tend to demonstrate higher levels of motivation and achievement. Positive attitudes often lead to active engagement in classroom activities, willingness to communicate, and greater effort in practicing language skills. Conversely, negative attitudes may result in anxiety, lack of confidence, and avoidance of participation.

Students' attitudes toward English can generally be categorized as positive or negative.

Positive Attitudes:

Students with positive attitudes toward learning English usually:

- Recognize its importance for higher education and employment
- Show interest in improving their speaking and writing skills
- Participate actively in classroom discussions
- Feel confident and motivated to use English

Such students often view English as a means of personal and professional growth. They associate the language with global communication, academic success, and social prestige.

Negative Attitudes:

On the other hand, students with negative attitudes may:

- Consider English as a difficult or boring subject
- Experience fear or anxiety while speaking
- Avoid participating in English related activities
- Study English only to pass examinations

Negative attitudes may stem from poor teaching methods, lack of language exposure, limited vocabulary, lack of atmosphere, or previous academic failures (Al- Hafiedz, 2020). In rural government colleges, these challenges may be more prominent due to limited resources and traditional instructional practices.

Factors Influencing Students' Attitudes

Several factors influence intermediate students' attitudes toward learning English:

Teacher's Role: The teacher plays a central role in shaping learners' perceptions. Supportive and encouraging teachers can build students' confidence, whereas harsh or discouraging behavior may create fear and anxiety Pham & Nguyen, (2021).

Teaching Methodology: Interactive and communicative teaching approaches tend to foster positive attitudes. In contrast, grammar translation methods and exam oriented instruction may reduce students' interest Oroujlou & Vahedi, (2011).

Socio Cultural Background: Students from rural or less privileged backgrounds may have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Family support, environmental atmosphere, and parental education also influence attitudes toward language learning.

Gender Differences: Research indicates that male and female students may differ in their attitudes toward learning English. In some contexts, female students demonstrate higher motivation and seriousness, while male students may show more confidence in speaking. However, cultural expectations and mobility restrictions may also affect female students' opportunities to practice English outside the classroom.

Since the present study includes two boys' colleges and two girls' colleges in District Naushahro Feroze, examining gender based differences becomes particularly important. The socio cultural environment of rural Sindh may shape male and female students' perceptions differently.

Attitude and Academic Achievement

Many studies reveal a strong relationship between positive attitude and academic success in English. Learners who believe in the value of English and feel emotionally connected to the learning process are more likely to perform well in examinations and communication tasks. Therefore, exploring students' attitudes is essential for improving language teaching strategies in government colleges.

In summary, students' attitudes toward learning English are influenced by multiple psychological, educational, and socio cultural factors. Understanding these attitudes in the specific context of government colleges in District Naushahro Feroze will provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities related to English language learning at the intermediate level.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides the conceptual foundation for the present study. It explains the theories that guide the understanding of students' attitudes toward learning English and supports the interpretation of the collected qualitative data. Since this research explores intermediate students' attitudes in government colleges of District Naushahro Feroze, it is grounded in well established theories of attitude and second language acquisition. Gardner (1985) provides a basic theoretical frame work for attitude and motivation in this study. Moreover, the modified version of attitude Gardner (1985) was adapted from Ming et al. (2011).

Socio Educational Model

The Socio Educational Model was developed by Robert Gardner. This model emphasizes the importance of social and psychological factors in second language learning. According to Gardner, language learning is not only a cognitive process but also a social and emotional one. The model highlights three key components:

- **Integrativeness** – the learner's willingness to identify with or interact with the target language community.

- **Attitudes toward the learning situation** – learners' perceptions of their teachers, course content, atmosphere outside the class, and classroom environment.
- **Motivation** – the effort, desire, and enjoyment involved in learning the language. Gardner argues that students with positive attitudes toward the learning situation and strong motivation are more likely to achieve success in second language acquisition. In the context of government colleges in rural Sindh, students' attitudes may be influenced by their classroom experiences, teacher support, and societal perceptions of English. This model is highly relevant to the present qualitative study because it allows exploration of students' feelings, beliefs, and motivational patterns through semi structured interviews.

Theory of Planned Behavior

Another theoretical foundation for this study is the Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Icek Ajzen. This theory explains how attitudes influence behavioral intentions and actual behavior. According to Ajzen, three factors determine an individual's intention to perform a behavior:

- **Attitude toward the behavior** – whether the individual evaluates the behavior positively or negatively.
- **Subjective norms** – social pressure or expectations from family, teachers, or society.
- **Perceived behavioral control** – the individual's belief in their ability to perform the behavior.

In relation to learning English, if students believe that English is important (positive attitude), feel that society values English (subjective norms), and believe they are capable of learning it (perceived control), they are more likely to actively engage in learning activities. This theory is particularly useful in understanding students in District Naushahro Feroze, where family expectations, societal norms, and institutional limitations may influence students' confidence and participation in English learning.

Relevance of Theoretical Framework to the Present Study

Both theories complement each other in explaining how cognitive beliefs, emotional responses, social influences, and motivational factors shape students' attitudes toward English. Since this study is qualitative and focuses on exploring perceptions and experiences of students from two boys' and two girls' colleges, these frameworks provide a structured lens for analyzing interview data. The theoretical framework will guide the thematic analysis in Chapter Four, helping to interpret how students' attitudes are formed and how they influence engagement with English language learning.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

This section reviews previous empirical studies related to students' attitudes toward learning English. It includes international and national research to provide a broad understanding of how attitudes influence second language acquisition. The review helps situate the present study within existing scholarship and identify areas that require further exploration.

International Studies

Numerous international studies have examined learners' attitudes toward English as a second or foreign language. These studies highlight the relationship between attitude, motivation, and language achievement.

One of the foundational contributions in this area is by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert, who conducted extensive research in Canada on second language acquisition. Their studies revealed that students with positive attitudes toward the target language community demonstrated higher levels of motivation and academic success. They introduced the concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation, both of which significantly influence learners' attitudes. In addition, (Harwiana & Laili 2021; Ong, 2021; Al-Hafeidz, 2020; Zulifkar et al. 2019 Abu-Snoubar, 2017; Abidin et al., 2012; Golese 2010) said that students' attitude towards learning English affect the process of language acquisition. Positive attitude will enhance students' confidence and will broaden students' minds. Similarly, Zoltan Dornyei expanded the understanding of motivation and attitude in language

learning. His research emphasized that classroom environment, teacher behavior, and learner self confidence strongly affect students' attitudes. Dornyei highlighted that motivation is dynamic and can change depending on learning experiences.

In Asian contexts, several studies have reported mixed attitudes toward English. For instance, research conducted in Malaysia and China found that students generally recognized the importance of English for global communication and employment opportunities, but many experienced anxiety and lack of confidence in speaking. These studies often identified factors such as teaching methodology, examination pressure, and limited exposure to English as major influences on students' attitudes.

A qualitative study conducted in Turkey explored high school students' perceptions of learning English and found that supportive teachers and interactive activities positively shaped learners' attitudes. However, traditional grammar focused instruction led to boredom and disengagement among students.

Overall, international research consistently demonstrates that positive attitudes contribute to better language achievement, while negative attitudes create psychological barriers to effective learning. These studies also emphasize the role of socio cultural environment and institutional context in shaping learners' perceptions.

National Studies (Studies Conducted in Pakistan)

In Pakistan, several researchers have examined students' attitudes toward learning English at school, college, and university levels. These studies highlight the complex relationship between English language learning, socio economic background, institutional environment, and students' motivation. English occupies a prestigious position in Pakistan as an official language and as a medium of instruction in higher education. Research conducted in various provinces indicates that most students recognize the importance of English for academic success and employment opportunities. However, despite acknowledging its significance, many students experience difficulties in mastering the language due to limited exposure, lack of communicative practice, and traditional teaching methods. A number of quantitative studies conducted in public sector colleges reveal that students generally hold positive instrumental attitudes toward English. They consider it essential for passing examinations, obtaining government jobs, and pursuing higher education. However, these studies also report that students often lack confidence in speaking English fluently. Fear of making mistakes and classroom anxiety are frequently mentioned as barriers.

Qualitative studies conducted in public universities in Punjab and Sindh suggest that students' attitudes are strongly influenced by teacher behavior and classroom environment. Supportive teachers who encourage participation tend to foster positive attitudes, whereas strict or exam oriented teaching approaches create stress and negative perceptions. Students from rural backgrounds often report limited opportunities to practice English outside the classroom.

Research conducted in Sindh province indicates that students in government institutions face additional challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, shortage of trained English teachers, and inadequate language resources. These contextual factors contribute to mixed attitudes—students value English but feel frustrated by their inability to achieve proficiency.

Gender based studies in Pakistan show varied findings. Some research suggests that female students demonstrate more positive attitudes and higher academic seriousness toward English learning. Other studies indicate that male students may show greater confidence in oral communication. However, socio cultural expectations and mobility restrictions in certain rural areas may influence female students' exposure to English speaking environments.

Despite the existing body of research, most national studies rely heavily on quantitative survey methods. There is comparatively limited qualitative research focusing specifically on intermediate level students in rural government colleges of Sindh. Moreover, very few studies comparatively

explore attitudes of students from both boys' and girls' colleges within the same district. Therefore, while national research provides valuable insights into students' attitudes toward English in Pakistan, there remains a need for in depth qualitative exploration within specific rural contexts such as District Naushahro Feroze. The present study aims to address this gap by examining students' perceptions, experiences, and feelings through semi structured interviews in four government colleges (two boys' and two girls' institutions).

Research Gap

A review of both international and national studies on students' attitudes toward learning English reveals significant findings, but also highlights several gaps that justify the need for the present study.

Limited Qualitative Research in Rural Contexts: Most previous research in Pakistan has relied heavily on quantitative surveys, focusing on numerical assessment of attitudes. Few studies have explored students' experiences, perceptions, and feelings qualitatively, particularly in rural districts like Naushahro Feroze. Semi structured interviews, which allow in depth understanding of learners' perspectives, remain underutilized in this context.

Insufficient Focus on Intermediate Students: While several studies have examined attitudes at university or secondary school levels, intermediate level students—who are at a critical stage of language development—have received comparatively less attention. Understanding their attitudes is essential because this stage strongly influences future academic performance and language proficiency.

Gender Based Comparative Analysis: Although gender differences in attitudes have been mentioned in some national studies, few have conducted a systematic comparison between male and female students in the same rural district. Since this study includes two boys' colleges and two girls' colleges, it provides a unique opportunity to examine gender based similarities and differences in attitudes toward learning English.

Context Specific Research: Many studies in Pakistan have been conducted in urban or semi urban areas, while rural districts, especially in Sindh, remain largely under researched. Factors such as socio cultural expectations, limited resources, and family support in rural settings may significantly shape students' attitudes. Exploring these factors within the specific context of District Naushahro Feroze fills an important research gap.

Integration of Theoretical Frameworks: While previous research has explored attitudes or motivation separately, few studies have combined the Socio Educational Model and the Theory of Planned Behavior to understand how cognitive beliefs, emotional responses, social norms, and perceived behavioral control jointly influence students' attitudes. This integration allows a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of learners' perspectives.

Conclusion: The present study addresses these gaps by conducting a qualitative exploration of intermediate students' attitudes toward learning English in four government colleges of District Naushahro Feroze. By using semi structured interviews, the study captures students' experiences and perceptions, examines gender based differences, and considers sociocultural factors in a rural educational context. This research thus contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical implications for English language teaching in government colleges of Sindh.

Research Methodology

Population of the Study

The population of the present study comprised intermediate level students enrolled in four government colleges located in District Naushahro Feroze, Sindh. Among these four institutions, two were boys' colleges and two were girls' colleges. The names of the colleges are:

Government Mehran Degree College, Mehran

Government Boys Degree College, Tharushah
Government Girls Degree College, Naushahro Feroze
Government Girls Degree College, Tharushah

The students were studying in first year and second year classes at the intermediate level. The selection of these colleges provided a balanced representation of both male and female students. Since the study aimed to explore attitudes toward learning English, including possible gender based differences, the inclusion of both boys' and girls' colleges was essential. The target population was chosen because the intermediate level is a critical stage in students' academic development. At this stage, English becomes more complex and directly impacts their future educational and professional opportunities.

Sampling Technique

According to Al- Hafiedz, (2020) “the sample is the selection of the desired group of the students who will be the part of the study”. The study employed a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a non probability sampling method in which participants are selected intentionally based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. According to Alan Bryman, purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants who can provide rich and meaningful information related to the research problem.

In the present study, students were selected based on their enrollment in the intermediate classes and their willingness to participate in the interviews. This technique was considered appropriate because the aim of qualitative research is not statistical generalization but in depth understanding of participants' experiences and attitudes.

Sample Size and Participants

The total sample of the study consisted of twenty (20) intermediate students. Among them, ten (10) students were selected from boys' colleges and ten (10) students were selected from girls' colleges. The equal representation of male and female students ensured balanced perspectives and allowed the researcher to explore similarities and differences in attitudes across gender contexts.

The participants were informed about the purpose of the study before conducting interviews, and only those students who voluntarily agreed were included in the sample. Although the sample size was relatively small, it was sufficient for qualitative research, where the emphasis is placed on depth of understanding rather than numerical representation.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument used for data collection in this study was a semi structured interview guide. The interview guide consisted of open ended questions designed to explore students' attitudes toward learning English, their motivation, classroom experiences, perceived difficulties, and future aspirations related to English language proficiency.

Semi structured interviews were chosen because they allow flexibility while maintaining focus on the research objectives. According to John W. Creswell, qualitative interviews enable researchers to collect detailed views from participants in their natural context. The semi structured format allowed the researcher to ask follow up questions and probe deeper into students' responses when necessary. The interview questions were prepared carefully to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives.

Development of Interview Questions

The interview questions were developed after reviewing relevant literature on students' attitudes toward English language learning. The researcher focused on key areas such as:

- Students' interest in learning English
- Perceived importance of English
- Classroom environment
- Teacher influence

- Difficulties faced in learning English
- Confidence in speaking English
- Gender related perspectives (where applicable)

Both informal and formal interview questions were prepared to ensure comprehensive data collection. The informal questions were more conversational, while the formal questions included structured options for specific aspects.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was carried out in several stages. First, the researcher visited the four selected government colleges in District Naushahro Feroze. Permission was obtained from the college authorities before conducting interviews. The researcher explained the purpose and objectives of the study to the principals and requested permission to interact with students.

After obtaining institutional permission, the researcher approached potential participants. Students were informed about the voluntary nature of participation and assured of confidentiality. Those who agreed to participate were scheduled for interviews at a mutually convenient time and place within the college premises.

Each interview lasted approximately twenty to thirty minutes. The interviews were conducted in a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere to encourage students to express their views freely. The researcher used a flexible approach, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring that all key topics were covered. Notes were taken during the interviews to record participants' responses accurately.

Pilot Study

Before the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted with two students (one from a boys' college and one from a girls' college) to test the clarity and effectiveness of the interview questions. The pilot study helped identify any ambiguous or confusing questions. Based on the feedback, minor adjustments were made to the wording of some questions to improve understanding. The pilot study also helped the researcher practice interviewing techniques and build confidence in managing the interview process. The data from the pilot study were not included in the final analysis.

Data Analysis Method

The data collected through interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. The analysis followed the six step framework proposed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke:

Familiarization with the data: The researcher read the interview notes repeatedly to gain a deep understanding of the data. Important statements and meaningful phrases were highlighted.

Generating initial codes: Key ideas expressed by participants were identified and assigned initial codes. These codes represented significant concepts related to attitudes, motivation, challenges, and gender differences.

Searching for themes: Similar codes were grouped together to form broader themes. For example, codes related to motivation, fear of speaking, teacher encouragement, grammar difficulty, and career goals were organized under relevant thematic categories.

Reviewing themes: The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately reflected participants' responses and captured the essence of the data.

Defining and naming themes: Each theme was clearly defined and given an appropriate name that represented its content and meaning.

Producing the report: The final themes were presented systematically in Chapter Four, supported by illustrative quotations from participants.

This systematic process ensured a rigorous and transparent analysis of qualitative data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed

about the purpose and objectives of the study before the interviews were conducted. Their consent was obtained verbally, and participation was entirely voluntary.

The researcher ensured confidentiality by not mentioning the real names of participants in the thesis. Instead, pseudonyms or coded labels (such as Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.) were used to protect their identities.

Furthermore, the researcher ensured that no psychological pressure or discomfort was caused during the interviews. Participants were free to withdraw at any time if they felt uncomfortable.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the quality and rigor of the research, the study followed the criteria of trustworthiness proposed by Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba. These criteria include:

Credibility: The researcher spent sufficient time interacting with participants and carefully documented their responses. The pilot study also strengthened the credibility of the instrument.

Transferability: Detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures have been provided so that other researchers may determine the applicability of the findings to similar contexts.

Dependability: The research process has been explained systematically, including sampling, data collection, and analysis procedures. This ensures that the study could be replicated in a similar setting.

Confirmability: The researcher remained neutral and avoided personal bias while interpreting the data. The findings are based on participants' responses rather than the researcher's assumptions.

Data Analysis and Findings

Theme 1: Perceived Importance of English

Most participants highlighted the importance of English for future career opportunities and studying abroad. Students perceived English as essential for professional success and global communication.

Students' Quotations:

Participant 2: "English is important because it helps me go abroad and get a good job. If I do not know English I shall not qualify any test. It helps me a lot in my career."

Participant 7: "Without English, we cannot compete in modern jobs or study in other countries. Moreover, all subjects are in English."

Participant 12: "When I speak in the class, it looks like that I am an English lady. It pleases me and I feel proud of my family, parents and of me. Learning English is the need of the hour. I understand that if I do not learn English, I shall not be able to compete with the world. I can enrich my knowledge if I am good at English."

Interpretation:

This finding indicates that students' motivation for learning English is primarily instrumental, aligned with career and practical goals rather than intrinsic interest. This is consistent with Richard Schmidt, who emphasizes that students often learn a language for functional purposes such as employment or academic advancement. The responses also reveal that students associate English with social prestige and global connectivity, reflecting the influence of globalization on their aspirations.

Theme 2: Anxiety and Lack of Confidence

Many students reported feeling hesitant or afraid to speak English. The main reason was weak foundational skills from earlier schooling, which made them fear making mistakes.

Students' Quotations:

Participant 5: "I am afraid to speak English because my basics are weak, and I might make mistakes."

Participant 12: "Even when I know the answer, I remain silent in class because I feel shy as the other students may laugh at me."

Participant 11: "I try to speak but feel shy in front of others. Though I understand, I cannot speak."

Interpretation:

This theme reflects the role of affective factors such as anxiety in language learning. According to Stephen Krashen, affective filters, like fear and lack of confidence, can block language acquisition. The study indicates that classroom support and practice opportunities are crucial to reduce anxiety. The fear of negative evaluation by peers and teachers emerges as a significant barrier to oral participation.

Theme 3: Difficulties in Learning English

Students highlighted challenges including grammar difficulties, passive teaching methods, and low emphasis in tests.

Students' Quotations:

Participant 3: "Grammar is very difficult; I cannot make sentences correctly. I cannot speak because I have not been taught grammar from school level, therefore I face challenges in learning English."

Participant 4: "Teachers speak and leave. They don't ask us to speak English in class. The teaching method of the English teachers is passive rather than active. They do not involve us in speaking, therefore we cannot speak though I love English and I want to speak."

Participant 9: "Teachers speak and leave; they don't ask us to speak English."

Participant 14: "In entry tests, science subjects are important; English carries only 9 marks, so I don't feel motivated."

Interpretation:

These findings suggest that both instructional methods and curricular priorities affect students' language learning. As noted by Jack C. Richards, a student centered classroom with active participation is necessary to develop proficiency and reduce learning difficulties. The low weightage of English in entrance tests further diminishes students' motivation to invest time and effort in improving their English skills.

Theme 4: Role of Teachers

Students indicated that teachers play a limited role in encouraging English speaking. Most teachers adopt a passive, lecture based approach without interactive activities.

Students' Quotations:

Participant 6: "Teachers deliver lectures and leave; they never make us speak English."

Participant 18: "I wish teachers could encourage us to practice speaking, but they don't. Moreover, the science teachers discourage us in the class to focus on English. They say that whether you learn English or not, it does not matter. Pay attention to Science subjects including Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics because they carry large weightage in the university admission tests. This discourages the class students. However, I have positive attitude towards learning English because I know its importance at large."

Participant 18 (additional): "In addition, they always force and suggest us to go for the science subjects may be because they teach private tuition centers as the students may attend them as they could earn. It is not the case with all the college teachers but certainly a few of them are observed in Government Mehran Degree College Moro as per students' point of views."

Interpretation:

This theme highlights the importance of teacher facilitation in language learning. Harmer Jeremy emphasizes that teachers should create opportunities for students to practice and engage actively. Lack of encouragement limits students' oral practice and confidence. The discouragement from science teachers further reinforces the perception that English is less important than science subjects, negatively affecting students' attitudes.

Theme 5: Gender Based Perspectives

Gender differences were observed in attitudes toward English learning. Girls were more enthusiastic, showed pride, and actively enjoyed speaking English. Boys were comparatively less motivated and more hesitant in participation.

Students' Quotations:

Participant 4 (girl): "I love speaking English. It makes me feel proud. I listen to English speaking people who look attractive while speaking English. I want to go abroad."

Participant 11 (boy): "I try to speak but feel shy in front of others. Though I understand, I cannot speak."

Participant 12 (girl): "When I speak in the class, it looks like that I am an English lady. It pleases me and I feel proud of my family, parents and of me. Learning English is the need of the hour. I understand that if I do not learn English, I shall not be able to compete with the world. I can enrich my knowledge if I am good at English."

Interpretation:

The findings indicate that female students have higher affective motivation and confidence in English learning, while male students may require additional support to overcome anxiety. This aligns with studies suggesting that gender can influence language learning attitudes and classroom participation. Female students demonstrated greater enthusiasm and associated English with personal pride and family honor, while male students focused more on practical challenges.

Summary of Findings

The key findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

Perceived Importance of English: Students recognize English as essential for academic achievement, career opportunities, and global communication. This positive perception is primarily instrumentally motivated.

Anxiety and Lack of Confidence: Many students experience fear and hesitation in speaking English due to weak foundational skills and fear of making mistakes. This anxiety reduces classroom participation.

Difficulties in Learning English: Students struggle with grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Passive teaching methods and limited exposure to English outside the classroom exacerbate these difficulties.

Role of Teachers: Teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes. Supportive and interactive teaching approaches enhance motivation, while traditional lecture based methods and discouragement from teachers negatively affect students' engagement.

Gender Based Perspectives: Female students display higher interest, enthusiasm, and pride in learning English compared to male students. However, both genders face similar linguistic challenges.

These findings highlight the complex interplay of motivation, classroom practices, affective factors, and gender in shaping students' attitudes toward learning English.

Table 4.1: Summary of Themes, Codes, and Sample Responses

Themes	Codes / Sub Themes	Students' Responses
1. Perceived Importance of English	Career opportunities; Higher education; Going abroad; Social status; Competitive exams	"English is very important for us because without English we cannot get good jobs or go abroad for higher studies."
2. Anxiety and Lack of Confidence	Fear of speaking; Hesitation; Fear of making mistakes; Classroom embarrassment; Low self esteem	"I understand English, but when I try to speak, I feel nervous and afraid that others will laugh at my mistakes."
3. Difficulties in Learning	Weak grammar foundation;	"Our basic grammar is not

English	Limited vocabulary; Poor background schooling; Lack of practice; Translation Method dependency	strong and we mostly translate from Urdu, so it becomes difficult to speak fluently.”
4.. Gender based Perspectives	Difference in confidence; Participation level; Family restrictions; Exposure Differences; Classroom interaction;	“In girls’ colleges students hesitate less in speaking activities because they have more exposure as compared Boys.”
5.. Motivation and Future aspirations	Instrumental motivation; Personal growth; Academic Success; Self-improvement	“I want to improve my English because I want to become a lecturer in future And want to go abroad.

Discussion, Conclusion, And Recommendations

Discussion of Key Findings

Perceived Importance of English

One of the most significant findings of this study is that the majority of intermediate students perceived English as an important and necessary language for their academic and professional future. Almost all participants from the four colleges—both boys' and girls' institutions—expressed that English plays a vital role in obtaining good jobs, pursuing higher education, seeking admissions in reputable universities, and going abroad. This finding clearly reflects that students hold a generally positive instrumental attitude toward learning English.

The concept of instrumental motivation, as proposed in Robert Gardner's socio educational model of language learning, explains that learners are motivated to learn a language for practical benefits such as employment, academic success, or social mobility. The responses of the participants strongly align with this theoretical perspective. Most students did not view English merely as a subject to pass examinations; rather, they considered it a tool for economic progress and social advancement.

Many students stated that English is essential for securing government and private sector jobs in Pakistan. They believed that without proficiency in English, it would be difficult to compete in the modern job market. This perception reflects the dominant status of English as an official and professional language in Pakistan. Since English is widely used in higher education, administration, and corporate sectors, students associate English proficiency with success and respect in society.

Another important aspect of this finding is the desire of students to go abroad for higher studies or employment. Several participants mentioned that English is necessary for international communication and standardized tests required for studying overseas. This indicates that globalization and exposure to international opportunities have influenced students' attitudes. English is not only seen as a classroom subject but as a global language that connects them to the wider world. When comparing responses from boys' and girls' colleges, both groups equally recognized the importance of English for future careers. However, it was observed that students from girls' colleges emphasized educational advancement more strongly, while some boys' college students focused more on employment and financial independence. This subtle difference may reflect societal expectations and gender roles within the local cultural context of Sindh. Girls may associate English with academic empowerment and professional respect, whereas boys may link it more directly with economic responsibility.

These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted in Pakistan and other developing countries, where students generally show positive attitudes toward English due to its economic value.

However, although students acknowledge the importance of English, this positive perception does not always translate into confidence or high proficiency. This gap between recognizing importance and actual performance becomes more visible in the themes of anxiety and learning difficulties.

In summary, the findings indicate that intermediate students possess a strong awareness of the instrumental value of English. Their positive perception is primarily driven by practical goals such as employment, higher education, and international mobility. This suggests that while motivational foundations exist, there is a need to strengthen classroom practices to convert this awareness into effective language competence.

Anxiety and Lack of Confidence

Another important finding of this study is that a large number of intermediate students experience anxiety and lack of confidence while learning and using English, particularly in speaking situations. Although students recognize the importance of English for their future, many of them reported feeling nervous, shy, or fearful when asked to speak English in front of others. This indicates the presence of language anxiety, which negatively affects their participation and performance.

Language anxiety has been widely discussed in second language acquisition research. According to Horwitz and her colleagues, foreign language anxiety is a situation specific anxiety that arises in language learning contexts due to fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety. The responses of the participants strongly reflect these dimensions. Many students stated that they are afraid of making mistakes, being laughed at by classmates, or being corrected harshly by teachers. This fear reduces their willingness to speak English in classroom settings.

In the context of the four colleges involved in this study, anxiety appeared to be more related to speaking skills than reading or writing. Students reported that they could memorize answers for exams, but they struggled when asked to express their ideas spontaneously in English. This suggests that the examination oriented education system may encourage rote learning rather than communicative competence. As a result, students may pass written examinations but still lack confidence in oral communication.

When comparing responses from boys' and girls' colleges, some interesting patterns emerged. Students from girls' colleges often reported feeling shy and hesitant to speak in mixed or public settings, though within their own classrooms they felt relatively comfortable. On the other hand, some students from boys' colleges admitted that peer pressure and fear of ridicule discouraged them from attempting to speak English. In both cases, social factors significantly influenced confidence levels. Cultural context also plays an important role in shaping anxiety. In many parts of Sindh, students come from rural or semi urban backgrounds where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited. English is often perceived as a "difficult" or "elite" language. This perception can create psychological barriers, making students doubt their own ability to learn it successfully. When learners believe that English is beyond their reach, their anxiety increases and motivation decreases.

Another contributing factor identified in the interviews was the teaching methodology. Some participants mentioned that teachers primarily focus on grammar rules and textbook exercises, with limited opportunities for interactive speaking practice. When students rarely practice speaking in a supportive environment, their fear naturally increases. Confidence in language learning develops through regular use and encouragement; without such opportunities, anxiety remains high.

These findings align with previous research conducted in Pakistani educational institutions, where language anxiety has been identified as a major obstacle in English language learning. However, this study specifically highlights how anxiety coexists with positive attitudes toward the importance of English. Students value the language, yet emotional barriers prevent them from fully engaging with it.

In summary, the theme of anxiety and lack of confidence reveals a significant gap between students' recognition of English as an important language and their actual comfort in using it. Addressing this

issue requires supportive classroom environments, student centered teaching strategies, and constructive feedback practices. Reducing anxiety is essential for transforming positive attitudes into active language use.

Difficulties in Learning English

Another major finding of this study is that intermediate students face multiple difficulties while learning English. Although they recognize its importance, their learning process is affected by linguistic, educational, and contextual challenges. The interviews conducted in the four colleges revealed that students particularly struggle with grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking fluency.

One of the most frequently mentioned difficulties was grammar. Many participants reported that English grammar rules are confusing and difficult to apply in real communication. They expressed that although they study tenses and sentence structures for examinations, they often forget how to use them while speaking. This indicates that grammar is taught in a theoretical manner rather than through meaningful communication. When grammar instruction is separated from practical usage, students may develop knowledge about rules but fail to apply them confidently.

Vocabulary limitation was another significant challenge. Students from both boys' and girls' colleges mentioned that they lack sufficient English vocabulary to express their ideas clearly. Due to limited reading habits and minimal exposure to English outside the classroom, their lexical knowledge remains restricted. As a result, they frequently switch to their mother tongue during conversations. This code switching reflects not unwillingness but rather linguistic limitation.

Pronunciation and fluency were also identified as major concerns. Some students reported that they hesitate to speak because they are unsure about correct pronunciation. Fear of mispronouncing words increases anxiety and reduces classroom participation. This issue is closely connected to the earlier theme of lack of confidence. When learners feel insecure about pronunciation, they prefer silence over participation.

The findings of this study can be understood in light of second language acquisition theories such as Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis. According to this theory, language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current level of competence. However, many students in this study reported limited exposure to meaningful English input. Their interaction with English is mostly confined to textbooks and examination preparation. Without sufficient exposure to authentic language use, progress becomes slow and difficult.

Another contributing factor to learning difficulties is the educational background of students. Several participants mentioned that their schooling before intermediate level was either in Urdu medium or Sindhi medium institutions, where English was treated as a subject rather than a medium of instruction. When students suddenly encounter more advanced English texts at the intermediate level, they feel overwhelmed. This transition gap increases their perception that English is a "hard" subject. A comparison between boys' and girls' colleges shows that the types of difficulties are largely similar; however, some subtle differences were observed. Students from girls' colleges appeared more consistent in completing written tasks but reported more hesitation in speaking activities. In contrast, some students from boys' colleges showed willingness to attempt speaking but struggled with grammatical accuracy. These variations may reflect differences in classroom interaction patterns and socialization.

Socioeconomic background also influences learning difficulties. Students from rural areas often have fewer opportunities to access English learning resources such as internet facilities, language academies, or English speaking environments. Limited access to supplementary learning materials restricts their exposure and practice.

In summary, the difficulties faced by intermediate students are multidimensional. They include grammatical complexity, limited vocabulary, pronunciation issues, lack of fluency, inadequate exposure, and educational background differences. These challenges demonstrate that while students possess positive attitudes toward the importance of English, structural and pedagogical barriers hinder their progress. Addressing these difficulties requires improvement in teaching strategies, increased exposure to communicative activities, and supportive learning environments.

Role of Teachers

The findings of this study indicate that teachers play a central role in shaping students' attitudes toward learning English. Participants from all four colleges acknowledged that their interest, motivation, and confidence in English largely depend on the teaching style, behavior, and support provided by their teachers. This highlights the powerful influence of classroom practices on students' perceptions and emotional responses to language learning.

Many students expressed that when teachers are supportive, encouraging, and patient, they feel more comfortable participating in English related activities. Positive reinforcement, constructive feedback, and friendly interaction were identified as factors that increase students' confidence. On the other hand, some participants reported that strict behavior, excessive criticism, or focusing only on mistakes discourages them from speaking English. Fear of negative evaluation by teachers contributes to anxiety and silence in the classroom.

The findings of this study align with motivational theories in language learning, which emphasize the importance of teacher support in developing learners' confidence and interest. Teachers are not only providers of knowledge but also facilitators of learning environments. A classroom atmosphere that encourages experimentation and tolerates mistakes is essential for language acquisition. When students perceive their teacher as approachable and respectful, their attitude toward the subject becomes more positive.

Students believe that the lessons presented by teachers have an influential part in making English enjoyable, especially if they are accompanied with the use of technology. Teachers, because of their competencies and the way they teach, are the most important factor that can shape the students' views towards learning English and render it more enjoyable, particularly if they have a good rapport with their students.

Another important issue raised by participants was teaching methodology. Several students mentioned that English classes often focus heavily on grammar translation, textbook explanation, and examination preparation. While such methods may help students pass exams, they do not necessarily develop communicative competence. Students reported limited opportunities for speaking practice, group discussions, or interactive activities. As a result, their theoretical knowledge increases, but practical skills remain weak.

This situation reflects a traditional teacher centered approach, where the teacher dominates classroom talk and students play a passive role. In contrast, modern communicative language teaching approaches emphasize student participation, pair work, and real life language use. The gap between traditional methods and communicative needs contributes to the mismatch between students' positive attitudes and their actual language performance.

When comparing responses from boys' and girls' colleges, it was observed that in some girls' colleges, teachers were described as more supportive and emotionally encouraging. Students appreciated when teachers created a respectful and comfortable environment. In boys' colleges, some students reported that classroom discipline was stricter, and peer competition was stronger. These contextual differences may influence how students perceive teacher behavior and classroom atmosphere.

Participants also suggested that teachers should use more practical activities such as debates, presentations, role plays, and English conversation sessions. They believed that regular speaking practice under teacher guidance would reduce anxiety and improve fluency. This indicates that

students are aware of their needs and expect teachers to adopt more interactive strategies.

In summary, the role of teachers is crucial in transforming students' recognition of English as an important language into actual engagement and competence. Supportive behavior, student centered teaching methods, and encouragement can significantly enhance learners' attitudes and language development.

Gender Based Perspectives

An important finding of this study is that students' attitudes, confidence, and experiences in learning English are influenced by gender related factors. Since data were collected from two boys' colleges and two girls' colleges, it was possible to examine differences and similarities between male and female students in terms of perception, motivation, anxiety, and learning difficulties.

Attitude and Motivation: Both male and female students recognized the importance of English for academic and professional purposes. However, female students tended to emphasize the role of English in educational advancement and personal growth, while male students focused slightly more on economic benefits, such as job opportunities, passing exams, and financial independence. This distinction may reflect societal expectations in Sindh, where girls may view education as a pathway to empowerment, whereas boys are often expected to provide for their families, making career oriented motivation stronger.

Anxiety and Confidence: The study revealed gender differences in anxiety and confidence levels. Female students generally reported higher levels of shyness and reluctance to speak English publicly, even when they had knowledge of the subject. They expressed concerns about making mistakes in front of peers or teachers. Male students, while also experiencing anxiety, were relatively more willing to attempt speaking but struggled with accuracy and fluency.

More importantly, the girl students put their efforts at best to perform when encouraged by the teachers. They look more obedient as compared to boys. This is the reason that their attitude towards learning English is more positive. On the other hand, boys sometimes disobey and misbehave with the teachers when forced to participate; they look less serious in learning English. These patterns suggest that social and cultural norms, peer dynamics, and classroom participation expectations influence gendered experiences in language learning.

Learning Difficulties: Both male and female students reported similar challenges regarding grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. However, girls often relied more on memorization strategies for written work, whereas boys attempted spontaneous speaking despite errors. This reflects different coping strategies that students adopt according to gender and confidence levels. Female students may prefer cautious approaches to avoid mistakes, while male students may take more risks but with limited success.

Teacher Interaction: Teacher behavior also interacted with gender dynamics. Female students appreciated supportive and patient teachers, as encouragement reduced their anxiety. Male students reported that stricter classrooms increased competitiveness and sometimes hindered participation. These differences highlight the importance of gender sensitive teaching methods that balance encouragement with discipline, fostering an environment where all students can actively engage with English.

Implications: Understanding gender based differences can help educators design more inclusive teaching strategies. For female students, creating safe spaces for speaking practice and providing positive reinforcement may build confidence. For male students, structured speaking tasks and clear expectations may encourage more focused participation. Recognizing these differences is essential for promoting equitable learning outcomes in English language education.

Conclusion

This study explored the attitudes of intermediate students toward learning English, focusing on four government colleges, including two boys' and two girls' colleges. Using semi structured interviews,

the research examined students' perceptions regarding the importance of English, anxiety and confidence levels, learning difficulties, the role of teachers, and gender based differences. The findings provide important insights into both the motivational and emotional aspects of English language learning in the local context of Sindh.

The study concluded that students generally recognize the importance of English for academic achievement, career opportunities, and global communication. Their positive attitudes reflect instrumental motivation, where English is valued as a tool for personal and professional advancement. However, this recognition does not automatically translate into proficiency, as several barriers prevent effective language use.

Language anxiety and lack of confidence emerged as significant challenges, particularly in speaking activities. Students' fear of making mistakes, peer judgment, and teacher criticism reduces classroom participation. Additionally, linguistic difficulties such as grammar, limited vocabulary, pronunciation issues, and inadequate exposure further hinder learning progress. These challenges demonstrate a gap between students' positive perceptions and actual engagement with English.

The study also highlighted the pivotal role of teachers. Supportive, patient, and student centered teaching methods significantly enhance learners' confidence and motivation. In contrast, traditional teacher centered approaches, strict classroom environments, and an emphasis on rote learning contribute to students' anxiety and hinder communicative competence.

Gender based differences were evident in terms of motivation, confidence, learning strategies, and teacher interaction. Female students tended to associate English with academic growth and empowerment but experienced higher levels of shyness and hesitancy in speaking. Male students focused more on employment benefits, were slightly more willing to attempt oral communication, but struggled with accuracy and fluency. These findings underline the importance of designing gender sensitive teaching strategies to address different needs effectively.

Overall, the study demonstrates that intermediate students in Sindh possess positive attitudes toward English, but emotional, pedagogical, and contextual factors limit their actual language use. By addressing these challenges through supportive teaching methods, interactive learning activities, and exposure to practical language use, students' attitudes can be transformed into active competence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance English language learning among intermediate students. These recommendations are directed toward teachers, students, policymakers, and educational institutions.

Recommendations for Teachers

Adopt Student Centered Teaching Approaches: Teachers should move from traditional lecture based methods to interactive strategies that actively involve students. Techniques such as group discussions, role plays, debates, presentations, and peer to peer conversations can create opportunities for students to practice English in a supportive environment.

Provide Positive Reinforcement: Encouraging students by appreciating their efforts rather than focusing solely on mistakes can increase confidence and reduce anxiety. Constructive feedback helps students learn from errors without fear of ridicule.

Focus on Communicative Competence: Teachers should balance grammar and vocabulary instruction with activities that promote real life communication. Integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks in meaningful contexts enhances practical language skills.

Create Inclusive Classrooms: Gender sensitive strategies should be employed to ensure equal participation of male and female students. For example, teachers can organize small group activities that allow quieter students, particularly females, to express themselves comfortably.

Encourage Exposure to English: Teachers can recommend reading materials, English language media, and online resources to increase students' exposure outside the classroom. Exposure to

authentic English helps improve vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency.

Recommendations for Students

Active Participation: Students should engage actively in classroom discussions, practice speaking regularly, and avoid fear of making mistakes. Consistent effort increases both skill and confidence.

Independent Learning: Developing habits such as reading English books, watching English programs, or using language learning apps can improve vocabulary and comprehension. Regular practice outside the classroom enhances overall proficiency.

Peer Collaboration: Working in study groups or partnering with peers for practice encourages learning in a safe and supportive environment. Peer interaction also helps reduce anxiety and promotes mutual learning.

Goal Setting: Students can set achievable language goals, such as learning new vocabulary daily or participating in a short oral presentation weekly. Clear objectives increase motivation and provide measurable progress.

Recommendations for Policy Makers and Educational Institutions

Curriculum Development: Educational authorities should design curricula that integrate communicative activities, practical exercises, and culturally relevant content. Emphasis should be on skill development rather than rote memorization.

Teacher Training Programs: Institutions should provide regular professional development workshops to train teachers in modern teaching methodologies, classroom management, and gender sensitive practices.

Language Support Facilities: Colleges should establish English language labs, conversation clubs, and resource centers to provide students with additional practice opportunities and access to authentic learning materials.

Assessment Reform: Evaluation systems should incorporate communicative competence alongside written exams. Oral presentations, group activities, and interactive assessments can motivate students to apply English actively.

Promotion of Inclusive Learning: Policies should ensure that both male and female students have equal access to learning resources, extra curricular activities, and support systems for English learning.

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