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**EXPLORING SPEAKING COMPETENCE AMONG ESL
UNDERGRADUATES: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN A
PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN PAKISTAN**



**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
2025**



Awang Had Salleh
Graduate School
of Arts And Sciences

Universiti Utara Malaysia

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Abstrak

Kemahiran bertutur merupakan aspek penting dalam penguasaan bahasa Inggeris, terutamanya dalam masyarakat berbilang bahasa seperti Pakistan yang memerlukan kecekapan komunikasi lisan untuk kejayaan akademik dan professional. Walaupun kemahiran ini penting, kebanyakan kajian di Pakistan lebih menumpukan pada kemahiran menulis, sekali gus mewujudkan jurang besar dalam pemahaman tentang cabaran dan strategi yang berkaitan dengan penguasaan bertutur. Kajian kualitatif ini meneroka cabaran dan pendekatan dalam meningkatkan kemahiran bertutur dalam kalangan pelajar prasiswazah ESL di sebuah universiti awam di Pakistan. Melalui pensampelan bertujuan, data telah dikumpulkan melalui enam belas pemerhatian bilik darjah dan temu bual mendalam separa berstruktur bersama dua orang pensyarah ESL dan dua belas pelajar prasiswazah tahun akhir. Analisis tematik berpandukan kerangka Braun dan Clarke (2006) telah digunakan untuk pengekodan manual data dan penjanaan tema utama. Dapatan kajian mendedahkan bahawa faktor utama yang mempengaruhi kecekapan bertutur merangkumi penguasaan tatabahasa, ketepatan sebutan, kefasihan, dan keyakinan pelajar. Cabaran utama yang dikenal pasti termasuk kebimbangan semasa bertutur, kekurangan latihan komunikasi, pendedahan yang terhad kepada interaksi bahasa Inggeris yang autentik, serta dinamika bilik darjah yang berpusatkan guru. Sebaliknya, strategi seperti pembelajaran berasaskan tugasan, maklum balas yang membina, kerjasama rakan sebaya, dan penggunaan alat sokongan digital didapati berkesan dalam meningkatkan kecekapan lisan. Kajian ini menekankan kepentingan penguasaan kemahiran bertutur secara praktikal dalam usaha meningkatkan kebolehpasaran graduan, pencapaian akademik, dan kecekapan komunikasi di peringkat global. Kajian ini menekankan keperluan untuk mereformasi kurikulum, melatih guru, dan mengintegrasikan Kerangka Pembangunan Kecekapan Bertutur (SCDF) bagi meningkatkan kemahiran lisan pelajar ESL secara sistematik. Dapatan kajian ini memberikan pandangan yang bernilai kepada para pendidik, pembangun kurikulum, dan penggubal dasar dalam usaha merapatkan jurang antara pengajaran bahasa Inggeris dengan prestasi sebenar dalam kemahiran bertutur di Pakistan.

Kata Kunci: Kecekapan Bertutur, ESL, Komunikasi lisan, Analisis tematik, Pakistan

Abstract

Speaking competence is a critical aspect of English language proficiency, particularly in multilingual societies such as Pakistan, where oral communication skills are essential for academic and professional advancement. Despite its importance, most research in Pakistan has primarily focused on written skills, resulting in a significant gap in understanding the challenges and strategies involved in developing speaking competence. This qualitative study investigates the obstacles and approaches related to enhancing speaking competence among ESL undergraduates at a public university in Pakistan. Using purposive sampling, data were collected through sixteen classroom observations and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with two ESL instructors and twelve final-year undergraduate students. Thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, was employed to manually code the data and generate key themes. Findings reveal key factors influencing speaking competence, including grammar mastery, pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and learner confidence. Major challenges identified include speaking anxiety, insufficient communicative practice, limited exposure to authentic English interactions, and teacher-centred classroom dynamics. In contrast, strategies such as task-based learning, constructive feedback, peer collaboration, and the use of digital support tools were found to be effective in enhancing oral proficiency. The study underscores the practical importance of developing speaking competence in relation to graduates' employability, academic success, and participation in global communication. The study emphasizes the need for curriculum reform, teacher training, and the integration of the Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF) to systematically enhance ESL learners' oral communication skills. These findings provide valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to bridge the gap between English language instruction and actual speaking performance in Pakistan.

Keywords: Speaking Competence, ESL, Oral communication, Thematic Analysis, Pakistan

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In an increasingly globalized world, English language has emerged as a dominant medium of communication and the ability to speak English fluently and confidently has become a critical skill, particularly in multilingual contexts like Pakistan, where English serves as a second language and is widely regarded as a tool for academic and professional advancement (Abdurakhmanovich & Jalolovna, 2024; Emilia et al., 2025; Khan, 2022; Neupane & Gnawali, 2023; Syed & Shah, 2025). However, many undergraduates in public universities struggle to achieve competence in speaking English, despite being not much competent in it, they keep learning its grammar, pronunciation, fluency and accuracy. These challenges stem from limited opportunities for speaking practice, dependence on traditional teaching methods, and insufficient exposure to conversational English outside the classroom (Kamariddinovna, 2024).

The current research study is intended to examine the underlying causes that hinder students' speaking proficiency and to investigate strategies that may enhance their oral competence among English undergraduates in a Pakistani Public University (Punjab University Lahore). It focuses on students' self-perceptions of their speaking abilities, classroom experiences, and the role of teaching methods in fostering speaking confidence and fluency (Zhai, Charmi & Izadpanah, 2025). Thus, there is an urgent need to explore the current state of speaking competence, the challenges faced by ESL

teacher and learners (Low, 2025; Suar et al., 2025); and the strategies that can support more effective language use in public sector universities in Pakistan (Shamim & Riaz, 2020; Raza, 2024).; hence the researcher feels the need to interrogate the speaking competency among students (Hussain et al., 2022; Jabeen, 2020). By addressing this gap, this study aims to provide insights for improving curriculum design, teacher training, and learning practices in ESL classrooms (Asif, Saeed & Kang, 2021; Nation & Macalister, 2021).

Jenkins (2019) stated that English has become a lingua franca in this global village where the strength of its non-native speakers is increasing day by day. So, to be competent in the speaking of the English language is the need of the hour (Bilal et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Shaban & Junejo, 2024). Unfortunately, the students fail to hook command at grammar, proficiency, accuracy, pronunciation and fluency in speaking. Consequently, they fail to prove their competence in speaking in real-life situations and job market (Ayub & Khaleel, 2024; Chen, 2025; Raza, 2024). Furthermore, their pronunciation, accent, discourse and power to encode and decode fail to project their competence (Hussain & Ali, 2021; Po'latova, & Yokutkhon, 2024). Therefore, improving competence to speak English language has become crucial for survival in this globalized world market (Raja, 2023). Thus, it is asserted that learning of English language has economic and social implications for both the language teachers and learners (Clement & Murugavel, 2018; Plotnikova et al., 2020). Many countries of the world have made it an integral part of their curriculum, so that they could enable their students to communicate with the diverse people belonging to

multifarious corners of the world (Nation & Macalister, 2021; Ayub & Mohammed, 2024).

In linguistics, speaking competence has attracted a great deal of attraction since the middle of the twentieth century (Maba, 2022). In 1957, Chomsky produced the revolution in Linguistics and in 1965, introduced the notion of linguistic competence which is an important contribution to understanding language and linguistics (Knisely, 2022). Chomsky (1965) defined linguistic competences as the underlying knowledge that speakers hold about their language, including grammar, proficiency and pronunciation that allows them to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences, including such they have never heard before. He said (1965) that the grammar of a language is considered a theory of competence, is an idealization, and that speakers know well the rules of the correct grammar of their language. According to Chomsky (1965):

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. (p.3)

Chomsky (1965) stated that competence in spoken language includes all the linguistic knowledge that a language user knows to use or speak the certain language that he understands well. Ibrahimova (2023) asserted that competence in spoken language is the ability of a language user to express himself understanding others correctly while speaking that language. Moreover, he claims that speaking competence is an integral

aspect in linguistics that plays a tremendous role in shaping human identity (Ibrahimova, 2023). Tarango and Machin-Mastromatteo (2017) elaborated that linguistic competence is related to the use of language through the expression and interpretation of concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts, and opinions to perform oral and written discussions. Hence, it involves a set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are interrelated and mutually supported to conduct a successful and objective communication.

Speaking competence is the ability to understand and use the grammatical system of a language effectively for communication purposes. This ability provides the structural framework for language skills to develop accurately and produce grammatically correct sentences, fluently expressed in spoken language (Kiesler, 2024). It is a multifaceted concept which refers to the actual use of language in real-world communication. Resultantly, this fundamental notion is essential for the competence to speak English clearly, fluently and accurately. Kamariddinovna (2024) stated that communicative competence includes language and speech competencies, with speaking competence involving knowledge of the language system, the effective skills to use this knowledge and speaking competence involving the norms of speech behaviour across all types of speaking activities.

In Pakistan, English is used in almost every field of man's life. Among the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) speaking holds a central role, as it directly affects learners' ability to express themselves clearly, confidently, and appropriately in both academic and real-life contexts (Plotnikove, Kondrateva & Sigal, 2020; Sharma & Rachna, 2021). It is believed that being fluent in English increases

one's chances of development and promotion in the job as well as business market. Hence, the new generation of Pakistan is highly motivated to learn English because of this overflowing demand of the modern age. As a matter of fact, it is widely accepted that knowing English well equips a person to survive in a globalised world (Raja, 2023; Zahid et al., 2018).

Evidently, it is one of today's most widely used and demanding languages, opening avenues of achievement in several industries. Rampantly, it has established itself as a language of communication, because of the growing demand for international communication and the People belonging to multitude of communities interact and speak English with one another for solid connection and mutual interests (Crystal, 2020). In fact, competent English language speakers are considered the asset to the society and country development, as this language aims to prepare students for the interaction and collaboration with others (Halim et al., 2020; Othman & Lotfie, 2019).

Certainly, it plays an integral and pivotal role for academic and professional advancement, in Pakistan and globally, because it is widely recognized as a prerequisite of success in practical fields. ESL education plays a crucial role in the education of undergraduate students, as it broadens their mental horizons, develops their emotional intelligence and increases their employment prospects (Ayub & Khalil, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024; Bilal et al., 2024; Hussain et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2024; Sadaf & Zahid, 2024). Currently, for graduates in Pakistan to compete in the international job market and pursue higher education, competence to speak English language is seen as a necessary skill and marvellous qualification. Unfortunately, though the importance of English-speaking competence is acknowledged, yet there are

certain problems obstructed in the ways of the quality of English language education in Pakistan (Channa, 2022).

Moreover, Pakistan is a linguistically diverse nation, where more than seventy languages are spoken. In fact, its four provinces have multifarious cultures and diverse languages; its being intercultural makes it unique, but linguistically it faces multitude of differences. Although Urdu is the official language of Pakistan, yet many Pakistanis do not speak it as their first language. Regional tongues like Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi are widely spoken in Pakistan but among all these languages English is a kind of language that is used here in almost every field of life and those who can speak this language competently are privileged and accommodated on priority basis (Hafeez et al., 2018).

Consequently, this study focuses on exploring the speaking competence of ESL (English as a Second Language) undergraduates in Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan. It investigates the challenges they face in speaking English and the strategies that can help to improve their communication skills (Shamim, & Riaz, 2020; Raza, 2024). Speaking competence enables students to produce accurate spoken language, it helps them to improve their receptive skills too (Barrios & Jurado, 2023; Ramos & Lambenicio, 2023). Thus, it aims at the identification of the key factors influencing their oral proficiency, grammatical structures, clarity, pragmatic understanding and fluency. Moreover, it uses the narratives of the respondents to highlight the problems obstructed in the ways of the ESL education.

Resultantly, examining these elements, the study seeks to provide insights into the current state of speaking competence and offers recommendations to enhance teaching practices, learning environments, and student outcomes. Ultimately, the findings will contribute for the understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with fostering effective speaking skills among English language learners in similar educational and sociocultural contexts. Moreover, the findings aim to support teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers in creating better learning environments where students can become more confident and competent English speakers.

1.1.1 Status of English Language in Pakistan

In Pakistan, a linguistically diverse nation, English language has a significant influence over here due to its being the official language. Pakistan gained English as one of its official languages along with Urdu after the 1947 division of British India. In 2009 Pakistan tried to shift from its monolingual Urdu emphasis to a multilingual language strategy in education (Ashraf et al., 2021 Khan, 2022; Syed & Shah, 2025). Before Pakistan got independence and got separation from the Subcontinent, the English language was introduced there and those who could speak English were preferred in the job market, still the same attitude towards English language can be observed here (Kumar et al., 2024).

According to Ahmad and Lanfeng (2024), the educational system in Pakistan falls into two main rampant categories, when it comes to studying English: Urdu medium government schools, where English is taught as a required subject, and English medium private institutions which pursue English medium education system on priority basis. However, wealthy guardians, who can pay, enrol their children in private

English medium schools, whereas deprived and downtrodden parents send their kids to underfund and failing Urdu-medium schools for traditional education (Channa, 2022). But in Pakistan, the levels of English-speaking competence vary widely, with some population segments being more competent than others.

In the same way, the students in the four provinces of Pakistan have different levels of English-speaking competence. Each province is connected to the single or multiple identities of its residents as well as the languages that are spoken there the most. Urdu, the native tongue, is only used in educational contexts and as a lingua franca, English serves those in positions of power, in the workplace and the educational environment (Ashraf et al., 2021; Ayub & Khaleel, 2024; Ayub & Mohammed, 2024; Rana et al., 2022; Shaban, & Junejo, 2024).

However, out of the four linguistically diverse provinces of Pakistan, Sindh, the second-largest province in Pakistan is situated in the southeast of the country (Khan, 2022). The educational system in Sindh is a complex amalgamation of both private and public schools, which exhibit regional and linguistic differences (Khosro et al., 2019). Like all the other provinces of Pakistan in Sindh, the native language is used to communicate as a medium of instruction. But when it comes to higher education, things become more problematic because local languages are absolutely prohibited from being used as teaching and learning media nationwide by the Higher Education Commission. Due to this policy native speakers of any language struggle greatly with limited English competence. They fail to improve their learning, and the English language becomes a burden for them and native speakers of other languages (Khanzada et al., 2021).

Pakistan's largest province, Baluchistan, makes up 44% of the country's total area. It shares borders with Iran and Afghanistan and has a 770 km long coastline (Khan, 2022). Here the main language is Balochi and with it, other languages like Sindhi, Brahui, Pashtun, Urdu and English are also spoken (Khanzada et al., 2021). The literacy rate in Baluchistan is lowest with 46 % than the other provinces of Pakistan due to multilingualism (Abbas & Hussain, 2021; Khan, 2022). But these native languages have been marginalised since English is the only language taught to pupils at every level (Rana et al., 2022). Hence, the students must concentrate on this language to complete their education and find jobs because of their marginalisation. Despite concentrating on the English language, students face problems to communicate due to the variety of languages spoken there (Ahmed et al., 2024).

The north-western province of Pakistan, formerly known as the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), was renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) in 2010. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a diversified cultural mix with the Pashtun ethnic group making up over 70% of the entire population. Among twenty primary languages spoken in the province, some are Pashto, Hindko, Saraiki, Khowar and Kohistani (Torwali, 2020). In educational institutions mainly Urdu and English are used as opposed to the household language which is one of the reasons that influence students learning (Abbas & Hussain, 2021). Students in KPK face problems in communicating, understanding, comprehending and writing in English due to its insufficient practice inside and outside of the house. They mainly make mistakes related to tense, spelling, verb and pronunciation (Khan & Rahman, 2021; Khan, 2022).

In Punjab, most people speak the Punjabi language. Due to the use of English and Urdu in academic fields, future of this language seems to be miserable and dismal. Ironically, the students bear negative attitude towards it, and they feel a need for it to shift into English. The linguistic systems of spoken Urdu and Punjabi are distinct from those of the English language, because they use the SOV (subject, object, and verb) word order (Khan, 2020) but English does not use these determiners in its parts of speech. In contrast to other languages, English contains SVO (subject, verb, and object) word order and articles that are employed to denote noun phrases (Khan & Mankash, 2022). As a result, Pakistani students who are learning English as a second language or in some other countries as a foreign language have difficulties and commit mistakes, particularly when using articles.

Moreover, students feel annoyance using wrong words, grammar and pronunciation, and just recite the material while communicating inside or outside of the classroom (Po'latova, & Yokutkhon, 2024). Fortunately, despite the difficulties in institutions, the students hold a positive attitude towards its learning and speaking it as the mark of achievement and distinction. Nevertheless, it helps learners to get knowledge of their native speaker's culture and to understand them. Learning English helps them to get good jobs in Pakistan and other countries (Ayub & Khaleel, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024; Bilal et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Manan & Hajar, 2022).

Although Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, but most of the people speak their mother tongue and aspire to get competence to speak English to achieve success in the job, academic or business market (Fatima & Nadeem, 2025). Thus, English language development in Pakistani universities has not been successful, as students and teachers

predominantly speak their mother tongue, with English limited to the syllabus (Akram et al., 2020). This hinders the student's ability to speak English fluently, correctly, clearly and competently. Evidently, as the international language, English is considered the key to success; therefore, English language departments in the universities of all the provinces are very careful about their performance. Still, they fail to bring forth the desired results which include the failure to promote English in ESL classrooms (Ramalingam et al., 2022; Yasmin, 2021).

In short, despite being multilingual country, English is considered the second language in Pakistan, which makes Pakistani universities focus more on its ESL classrooms. Therefore, it is also suggested that, to improve students' language learning, metacognitive strategies should be combined with instructional strategies, this will help learners to learn through self-regulated activities (Ni'mah, Nasihah & Munfaati, 2025; Shamim & Riaz, 2020; Salimi & Najjarpour, 2024; Raza, 2024).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The major purpose of the present work is to broaden the scope of research on the development of speaking competence among English Language undergraduates in Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan. However, both the teachers and the students are not clearly aware of the factors which can bring forth competency in speaking among the ESL undergraduates. Hence, they are utterly aware that competence in speaking bears tremendous, rather idiosyncratic role in English language classrooms and confers success upon the good learners in the academic field and job market (Ayub & Khaleel, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024; Bilal et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Sadaf & Zahid, 2024).

Nevertheless, this study also highlights a wider common problem that non-native English speakers face the complexities in achieving accuracy and fluency in speaking at undergraduate level, due to limited exposure to the English language and lack of opportunities for speaking. Consequently, such factors obstacle their abilities to communicate competently and accurately (Ahmed et al., 2024; Sadaf & Zahid, 2024; Shaban, & Junejo, 2024).

Despite sixteen years of formal education, competence in speaking English remains a significant challenge for many undergraduates in Pakistan, particularly those enrolled in public universities. Common issues include poor fluency, incorrect grammar usage, weak pronunciation, and a lack of confidence. These difficulties highlight a persistent gap between classroom instruction and real-world communication needs. The overemphasis on written grammar, rote learning, and traditional teaching methods, combined with limited exposure to spoken English and a lack of speaking opportunities make it harder for students to improve their speaking skills. Furthermore, Panhwar et al. (2020) claimed that large class sizes and outdated teaching practices make it even more challenging to foster meaningful interaction and speaking practice in ESL classrooms.

In public universities, students often face challenges in speaking English due to language barriers such as limited fluency, grammatical problems, poor pronunciation, and lack of confidence (Bilal et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Shaban & Junejo, 2024). These barriers negatively impact their ability to participate in academic discussions, deliver presentations, and engage in professional communication. Despite the critical role of speaking competence, there is a lack of comprehensive research exploring the

factors that affect English-speaking skills among undergraduates in Pakistan's public universities (Ahmed et al., 2024; Aimen & Khadim, 2024; Ayub & Mohammed, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024; Bilal et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Sadaf & Zahid, 2024; Shaban, & Junejo, 2024).

Moreover, the Universities raise big claims regarding innovations in teaching methodologies, still, GTM and other traditional teaching methods are rampantly followed in their ESL classrooms (Ramalingam et al., 2022). Ineffective teaching methods and sometimes students' unserious attitude prevents them from being competent English speakers (Clement & Murugavel, 2018; Kumar et al., 2024; Tai & Zhao, 2024). Though the Pakistani English language education systems bear tall claims regarding the promotion of this global language of communication (Crystal, 2020; Raja, 2023), yet it lacks in strengthening the competence of the learners to use it proficiently, clearly and fluently (Gordon, & Arias, 2024; Kargiotidis et al., 2023). Understanding these challenges is essential for developing effective pedagogical strategies and learning interventions to improve students' oral communication skills (Fajar et al., 2023). This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the level of competence in speaking among English undergraduates, identifying the key factors influencing their proficiency, fluency and clarity.

Evidently, standard performance of ESL teachers is one of the key factors that influence students' achievement than other factors such as class size and class composition (Alatalo et al., 2024; Ubogu, 2024; Sipman et al., 2024). It is globally recognized fact that the poor performance of teachers yields negative impact upon the students' performance. However, teachers can enlighten their students wonderfully

with their impactful pedagogy, command at their subject, (Vollmer, 2024; Vereijken et al., 2023), general cognitive abilities (Zhang & Zhang, 2023; Holen et al., 2024), and relevant experience (Arndt, Granfeldt, & Gullberg, 2023), but competency in teachers' language use is the most significant contribution to quality teaching. There is consistent evidence connecting teachers' verbal abilities and student achievement. Teacher's oral language proficiency predicts student outcomes in grammar, pronunciation, and phonological awareness (Alatalo et al., 2024).

Resultantly, despite the significance of spoken English for academic growth and career opportunities in Pakistan, English language students face several challenges in the development of effective spoken English skills in their ESL the classroom at their university (Ahmed & Pathan, 2023; Jawaid et al., 2025). If these challenges and issues remain unresolved, they may result in producing a gap between students' understanding of spoken English and their ability to effectively communicate in English language. This research is intended to unveil the self-perception of undergraduate students and their ESL teachers and the challenges faced to them to enhance their speaking competence in the Punjab University Lahore, Pakistan. In short, exploring student-centred strategies can be helpful to empower educators to create insightful learning environment cutting after the students' preferences (Ahmed & Lanfeng, 2024; Bhardwaj et al., 2025; Chaikovska et al., 2024).

In the Pakistani context, teachers speak English language only within the classroom, this practice demotivates their students and prevents them from using it outside the classroom which ultimately results in their failure (Bangash et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Marinić, & Moritz, 2024). However, the situation in respect of teaching and

learning English is quite better in the private sector as compared to the public ones where there is still a lack of competence in speaking English among the ESL students. (Rasool et al., 2021). Majority of the Pakistani graduates are weak in the use of English language communication, even though the government is spending most of its resources and time on ESL classrooms, still most of them fail to come up to the required level of competence in spoken English (Imran et al., 2024).

Consequently, the researcher is determined to explore the challenges that hinder speaking competence and identifying effective strategies to enhance oral communication skills among the ESL undergraduates of Punjab University Lahore, Pakistan, and to uncloak the factors that might be responsible for the inability of the students in respect of making effective oral communication (Gordon, & Arias, 2024; Fajar et al., 2023; Kargiotidis et al., 2023). By understanding the lived experiences of students and teachers in a public university context, this research seeks to provide practical insights for improving teaching practices, reshaping the curriculum, and fostering a more interactive and supportive ESL learning environment that can lead to meaningful and lasting improvements in English language teaching and learning.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are:

1. To explore how Pakistani participants, conceptualize speaking competence and the terms or attributes they associate with it.
2. To analyse participants' narrative and experiences of developing speaking competence in ESL classroom setting, focusing on the challenges they face,

their learning processes, and the factors that influence their speaking development

3. To identify the factors that participants believe promote speaking competence among undergraduates in ESL classrooms.
4. To propose a speaking competence development framework that integrates (cognitive, affective, pedagogical and technological factors) to enhance oral communication skills among English undergraduates in Pakistani ESL classrooms.

1.4 Research Questions

The objectives seek to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Pakistani participants conceptualize speaking competence
 - a. What are the words that they associate with ‘competence’?
 - b. Why do they relate these words to competence?
2. How do Pakistani ESL undergraduates narrate their experiences, challenges, learning processes, and key factors influencing their development of speaking competence within classroom settings?
3. What factors do the Pakistani participants identify as contributing to the development of speaking competence among English undergraduates in their ESL classrooms?
4. How can a speaking competence development framework (cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological factors) enhance oral communication skills among English undergraduates in Pakistani ESL classrooms?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The proposed study bears multifarious significant contributions in the annals of ESL education. Hence, it contributes to the knowledge on how competence is embedded in the use of spoken language among teachers and students in general, as well as the impact on the daily communication of ordinary people. In other words, in theoretical terms, the study contributes to providing awareness of the linguistic features of positive language use in the Applied Linguistics field and other practices, especially in promoting the ongoing efforts to proliferate competence in speaking in Pakistani context. Theoretically, it extends the understanding of speaking competence through the lens of communicative competence frameworks (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980), offering insights into how grammar, fluency, and discourse-level features interact in real ESL classroom settings. However, the study also contributes to enhance the sphere of social interactions and pedagogical realms stressing on improvement in grammar, pronunciation, accuracy and fluency.

In addition, the study has also practical implications for Pakistani graduates and provide deep understanding of the needs and issues faced by undergraduate students in their English language classroom. Competency in speaking English is a key requirement for good jobs in Pakistan, especially in the fields of business, academia, and technology (Ayub & Khaleel, 2024; Marinic & Moritz, 2024; Rana et al., 2022). For Pakistani undergraduate students, effective oral communication skills leads to academic success and can get better career opportunities inside and outside the country. Therefore, the study can help graduates to improve their speaking skills and increase their employability in the job market. This can also have a positive impact on

the overall economy of the country by providing skilled human resources to various industries.

Consequently, there is a need for enhancing the competency in spoken language more deeply in the schools and higher institutions. The findings of the study can provide useful insights to teachers, curriculum developers, policymakers, and future researchers who wish to explore similar topics. Evidently, it will invite the attention of the responsible authorities to equip the ESL classrooms with modern technology to impart the standard education of English language to meet the global demands of academic field and job market. Further, this study has potential to evaluate the effectiveness of current teaching methods and syllabus design. This may guide the instructors and educators to adopt more successful and effective pedagogical approaches to promote the competence of the ESL learners in speaking (Nguyen, 2019; Neupane & Gnawali, 2023).

In short, developing a deep understanding of the needs and issues faced by ESL undergraduate may help to improve oral communication skills. By investigating the self-perception of undergraduate students and the specific challenges they face (highlighted by students), this research offers valuable insights to improve learning experience and identify areas where the students need assistance. Therefore, exploring student centred strategies can stand helpful to empower educators to create a learning environment that is established on students' preferences. Thus, the students' identified methods can contribute to improve learning outcomes and effective English-speaking skills.

Moreover, the present study will also broaden the knowledge of language students in respect of speaking competency and will also offer them suggestion to make an objective analysis of their perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs toward improving English speaking skills. In short, it will encourage the use of the English language among undergraduates by giving them the realization that in this globalized era, the English language is the one that can pave the way to success for them. English has become a need of the hour to get a better education along with a lot of employment opportunities (Bukhari & Farhan, 2022; Hussain, Warsi, & Bhatti, 2022; Rana, Bhatti, & Farukh, 2020). So, they must be competent in all four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening).

Additionally, the study is also helpful for the teachers, who are supposed to be facilitators and trainers in the ESL classrooms. It enables them to analyse their level of competence because an incompetent teacher can never be able to develop competent students. Likewise, the teachers will be able to modify their teaching styles according to the advanced trends of ESL classrooms. In this modern world, ESL classrooms are taking blended learning as an effective style of teaching and improving the language skills of learners (Ramalingam et al., 2022).

Resultantly, it also impacts on the understanding of the general audience with respect to the acceptance of English as a second language. It paves the way for future researchers to pursue topics having a practical impact on their fields. The study also provides useful input to language instructors, general educators, politicians, journalists and even religious preachers to speak English in an effective and fluent way. Furthermore, the study highlights effective communication skills which focus on

cooperative work, understanding and positive feelings among religious groups. Hopefully, this study will lead to a clear understanding of how competence in speaking English language can promote teacher-student relationship and coordination not only in the universities but also in the everyday life interactions.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study explores the real experience of twelve English language undergraduates and two teachers, who were teaching and learning the competence in speaking in the ESL classrooms at Punjab University Lahore, Pakistan. They knew well the problems that affected their competence and hindered their abilities to speak English inside as well as outside their classrooms. The rationale for using a one-third ratio benchmark for choosing teachers was to ensure that the sample was representative of the entire population of teachers. However, the participants were selected through a purposive sampling based on certain criteria discussed in great length in chapter three. Their narratives are valuable, because they experienced in real what they mentioned in words and they demonstrated their emotional and real feelings, because they were present in the ESL classrooms merely to promote English speaking competence. Consequently, the study has attempted to explore competence in speaking English language both in the ESL classrooms at the public university and in real life situations. As Dahlstrom (2014) posited,

“[n]arratives offer increased comprehension, interest and engagement ... Narratives can also present themselves within larger messages as testimonials, exemplars, case studies, or eyewitness accounts” (p. 13614).

Furthermore, the justification for choosing students and teachers from Punjab University was that this institution has the diverse students and the teacher population; it will help to ensure that the findings of the study are applicable to a broader level. Moreover, Punjab University being the oldest and biggest public university accommodates the students from each corner of Pakistan and the continent. Additionally, the students and teachers of Punjab University bear diverse cultures, ethnicities, languages and thoughts. Hence, it was easier to access the participants hailing to this institution, which made data collection more efficient. On other hand, this public university appreciates research and welcomes the researchers who wish to highlight the issues hindered in the learning process and also recommends modifications for the promotion of research and enlightenment.

Resultantly, the teachers also shared their observations and practical experiences about how much competence their students had regarding English as a second language in their ESL classes in regard to speaking skills, because the researcher had also taken the teacher respondents to explore his study. The teachers and students shared their experiences regarding teaching and learning problems which they were facing in their ESL classrooms, because the whole system of learning surrounds them, and their response holds valuable status regarding the exploration of issues and challenges in developing effective speaking skills. Teaching material, syllabus, pedagogy and the strength of class room was also observed to strengthen the exploration for competence in speaking among the undergraduates studying at Punjab University Lahore.

Consequently, the respondents belonged to multifarious regions of Pakistan and their native languages and cultures were also different and their national language was

Urdu. They had a worthy narrative as they held individual voice that came out from within because competence in speaking skills has always been a debatable issue over here. The multinational companies, Private sector, online system, and public sector prefer competent graduates (Rana et al., 2022) therefore, the respondents kept a keen and microscopic focus on what did not let them get effective speaking skills in English.

1.7 Definitions of Relevant Terms

1.7.1 Speaking Competence

Speaking competence refers to a speaker's ability to use spoken language accurately, fluently, and appropriately in various contexts. It involves grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, fluency, and pragmatic awareness (Canale & Swain, 1980). This study focuses on understanding how ESL undergraduates perceive and develop speaking competence in Pakistani public university settings. It explores the components that contribute to effective spoken communication and investigates the classroom strategies that can help improve this competence.

1.7.2 Grammatical Competence

Grammatical competence refers to the ability to recognize and use the grammatical structures of a language accurately and appropriately in both spoken and written communication. It includes knowledge of syntax, morphology, word order, sentence structure, tense, and agreement (Canale & Swain, 1980). Grammar is often a major challenge for Pakistani ESL learners. This study examines how grammatical weaknesses impact students' ability to speak English clearly and confidently, and how grammar instruction can be improved to support spoken fluency.

1.7.3 Language Proficiency

Language proficiency is defined as “a learner’s ability to use the target language accurately, fluently, and appropriately across a range of real-life contexts and tasks” (Nation & Macalister, 2021, p. 45). It encompasses not just knowledge of grammar but also the ability to apply that knowledge effectively in communication. In this study, it captures the core challenges faced by Pakistani students such as lack of fluency, grammatical errors, and limited contextual appropriacy. The study seeks to enhance these aspects through practical strategies, supporting students in developing real-world speaking competence.

1.7.4 Fluency

According to Tavakoli (2020), fluency is the ability to talk smoothly and effortlessly without undue hesitation and interruption. It reflects the speaker’s ease and automaticity in language use naturally, particularly allowing for effective communication in real-time. Many ESL undergraduates in Pakistan struggle with fluency due to lack of practice, limited exposure to English outside the classroom, and speaking anxiety. The study aims to identify strategies that can enhance fluency, such as task-based learning and interactive classroom practices.

1.7.5 Pronunciation

Pronunciation refers to the production and perception of the significant sounds of a particular language to convey meaning (Derwing & Munro, 2023). This research investigates the causes and solutions to pronunciation issues and suggests how targeted instruction and technology (e.g., language labs) can improve pronunciation skills.

1.7.6 English as a Second Language

English as a Second Language (ESL) refers to the teaching and learning of English by individuals whose primary language is not English and who reside in a country where English is the dominant or official language of communication and instruction (Gass & Selinker, 2020). In the Pakistani context, English serves as a second language widely used in academic and professional domains. Understanding ESL from this perspective highlights the importance of equipping students with strong speaking competence to succeed in multilingual and English-dominant academic settings.

1.8 Summary

This chapter offers the sound picture of the whole study throwing light on the background, the objectives and the motivations behind it. In essence, the study explores the competence in speaking English among the Pakistani English language undergraduates. However, it sets the background and the rationale for the research. Consequently, the research aims at investigating the self-perceptions of the ESL undergraduates and the challenges they face in speaking English showing lack of confidence, grammar, proficiency, clarity and fluency. Additionally, it examines how undergraduates' competence in speaking impacts their professional prospects, academic success, and overall socioeconomic mobility. Further, it brings in to light the importance and need to learn English at global level and in Pakistan. Hence, it also discusses its history in Pakistan and the subtleties, methods and mandatory elements that support this research are also described here. This chapter also covers the rationale, objectives, significance, scope and the research questions which lead the research forward. Consequently, it conveys to the readers an organised and cautiously

constructed overview of its structure, that reveals the groundwork for its subsequent chapters.

1.9 Organisation of the Proposal

This thesis contains six chapters:

Chapter One encompasses the overview of the study, providing the relevant background, details of the speaking competence in speaking and its role in the real-life situations. Hence, it outlines the impacts of speaking competence in developing and enhancing confidence among ESL undergraduates to speak English using exact grammar, proficiency, pronunciation, clarity and accuracy. Further, it also highlights the factors which can pull down incompetence and improve the output of the ESL classroom to lead it to its real targets. Consequently, it discusses the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, scope and significance of the study and defines the relevant terms, summary of the chapter and the organisation of the thesis at last.

Chapter Two reviews studies concerned to the ESL classrooms and role of competence to speak English to achieve academic targets and excellence in the job market. However, it also shares the theoretical as well as conceptual framework related to the current study. Moreover, it discusses the multifarious aspects of Pakistani system of education, steps for the promotion of English language teaching and learning and the required need of English over here. Further, some discussions on the various researches in respect of ESL education, competence to speak English at global level and particularly in Pakistan have been highlighted. Consequently, the current research

study led to its way in the light of the literature review justifying its journey passing through the rampant formalities in the field of research and ended at summary.

Chapter Three offers the qualitative study approach, that contains interview protocol, the classroom observations and the in-depth interviews. Moreover, it highlights the data analysis process following qualitative discourse analytical approach. Furthermore, it projects the profiles of the respondents of the research study and ends at ethical considerations. Lastly, it reveals the ethical considerations as well as the discussions on the reliability and the validity of the findings of study and the short summary.

Chapter Four contains the findings of study, and the *Chapter Five* discusses and debates on them, sharing the sound insights into the competence in speaking and its meanings as well as the causes of incompetence among the ESL undergraduates. Finally, *Chapter Six* reaches the conclusion offering the contribution and the real implications of understanding the speaking competence in the ESL classrooms of Pakistani Public sector university that bears the students belonging to diverse cultures of the four provinces. Lastly, it describes the limitations of the study and mentions the workable areas for the future studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing literature on the speaking competence regarding the ESL contexts, with a focus on undergraduate students. However, it begins examining and analysing the rampant conceptual frameworks surrounding speaking competence, including definitions, dimensions, and the attributes commonly associated with it. Moreover, this chapter explores the specific challenges faced by students in developing speaking skills, particularly in the socio-educational context of Pakistan. Hence, factors such as teaching methodologies, classroom environments, and cultural influences are analysed to understand their role in shaping speaking competence.

Additionally, the chapter highlights the key factors that promote speaking competence, as identified in previous studies, and discusses their implications for ESL classrooms. By synthesizing relevant literature, this review aims to establish a theoretical and empirical foundation for the current study, identifying gaps and opportunities for further exploration of speaking competence among English undergraduates in public universities.

2.2 Theoretical Framework of Speaking Competence

This study draws upon Canale and Swain's (1980) Communicative Competence Framework to explore *speaking competence among ESL undergraduates: challenges and strategies in a public university in Pakistan*. Their framework emphasizes four

essential components of language proficiency: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Among these, this study places particular focus on grammatical competence as a foundational element for developing effective spoken communication.

Hence, this theory provides a comprehensive model for understanding the essential components of the competence to speak English language, offering the foundation to analyse and enhance the ESL learners' speaking skills in the context of English as a second language. Figure 2.1 shows the theoretical framework of the study.

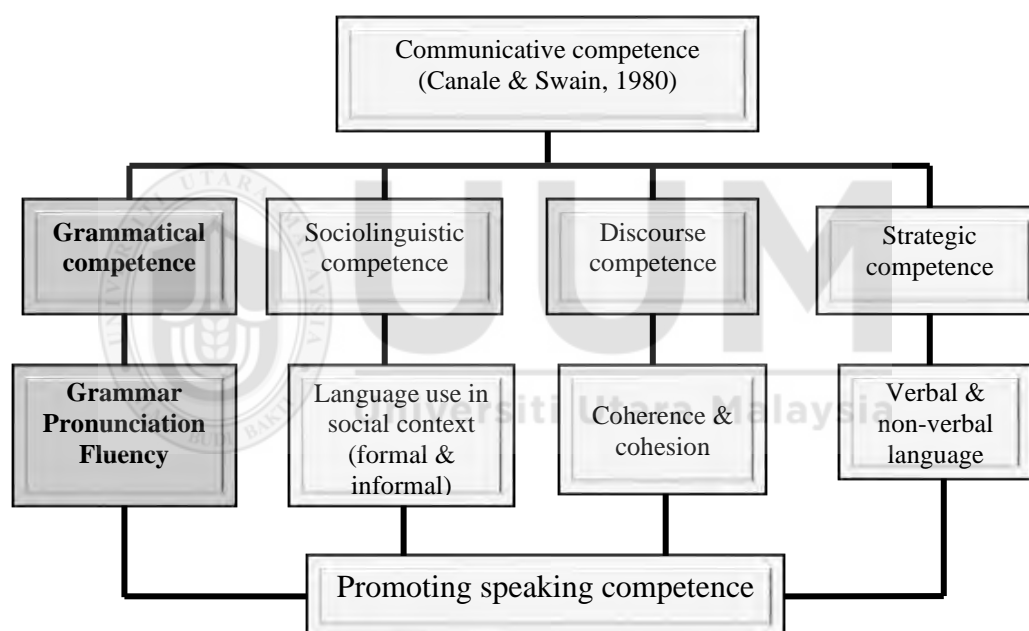


Figure 2.1. Researcher's theoretical framework of the study

Canale and Swain's (1980) theory of communicative competence provides a robust framework for analysing and improving the English-speaking skills by addressing four key components: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. The application of this theory in this study provides a deep insight in exploring competence in speaking English among Pakistani undergraduates at Punjab university.

2.2.1 Grammatical Competence: Mastery of Language Rules

Grammatical competence refers to knowledge of linguistic rules including syntax, grammar, pronunciation, clarity and fluency. The Pakistani undergraduates often face challenges with grammatical accuracy due to interference of their native languages such as Urdu, Sindhi, Pashtu and Punjabi (Knisely, 2022; Ravichander et al., 2020; Suzuki & Kormos, 2024). However, evaluating their mastery at grammatical and syntactic structures is essential for the sound assessment of their overall speaking proficiency. The application of this mastery criteria in the study contains:

- **Assessment:** Evaluation of the students' grammatical accuracy through structured speaking tasks such as prepared presentations or organized oral quizzes.
- **Intervention:** Design activities that mark and reinforce specific grammatical hinges and points which are often misused by the language students (e.g., tense consistency, subject-verb agreement).
- **Example Task:** A role-play activity where the students narrate past events, focusing on correctly using past tense and so on.

In a comprehensive approach, grammatical competence involves not just grammar but also the ability to use language effectively in different contexts and for different purposes. These dimensions typically encompass fluency, grammar and pronunciation (Duong, & Nam, 2024; Ramos & clamBenicio, 2023; Salvador et al., 2023).

2.2.1.1 Fluency

Fluency refers to the ability to speak smoothly and without frequent pauses or hesitations. However, it involves the natural flow of speech, where the speaker can convey ideas clearly and quickly without unnecessary interruptions (Feng & Guo, 2022). Fluency is important because it helps the speakers sound more natural and confident in real conversation, even bearing the minor errors. Consequently, the research suggests that the development of fluency is particularly tied to regular speaking practice and interaction in authentic contexts. Previous research suggested that occasional pauses are normal, but excessive hesitation can affect the fluency of speech (Barrios & Jurado, 2023; Ramos & Lambenicio, 2023; Tavakoli, Nakatsuhara, Hunter, 2020; Suzuki & Kormos, 2023; Suzuki & Kormos, 2024).

2.2.1.2 Accuracy

The term Accuracy refers to the correct use of grammar, exact vocabulary, clarity and pronunciation during speech. However, it involves producing and uttering language that is grammatically, pragmatically, phonologically and semantically appropriate. Hence, in speaking, language accuracy is fundamentally essential to ensure that the speaker's message is clear and understandable. However, it should not be overemphasized at the cost of fluency, as an over-focus on accuracy can hinder spontaneous communication (Knisely, 2022; Ravichander, Belinkov, & Hovy, 2020). The key elements of accuracy are grammar (correct use of sentence structure and verb tenses), vocabulary (appropriate and precise word choice), and pronunciation (correct articulation of words).

2.2.1.3 Pronunciation

Pronunciation involves the correct production of sounds, stress patterns, intonation, and rhythm in spoken language. It is crucial for intelligibility—whether the listener can understand the speaker. Pronunciation can affect a speaker’s ability to be understood, but it does not always require photocopy of native-like proficiency. Resultantly, studies show that clear intelligibility, not utmost real and native-like pronunciation, should be the pivotal focal point of teaching pronunciation (Duong, & Nam, 2024; Po’latova, & Yokutkhon, 2024). This facet involves the mastery at the structural components of language, they include:

- **Segmental features:** Individual sounds, such as consonants and vowels.
- **Suprasegmental features:** Intonation, stress, and rhythm.
- **Intelligibility:** The ease with which a listener can understand speech.

Improving speaking competence in the ESL classroom requires a balanced approach that integrates—and promotes fluency, proficiency, accuracy (grammar and vocabulary), and pronunciation (Duong, & Nam, 2024; Knisely, 2022; Ravichander et al., 2020; Suzuki & Kormos, 2024). Consequently, competence in speaking is a critical facet of language learning and its productive usage forms the roots for constructing and interpreting meaningful communication. However, its mastery is highly required and mandatory, integrating with other competencies, it ensures well-rounded proficiency in real-world demonstrations and scenarios.

2.2.2 Sociolinguistic Competence: Contextual Appropriateness

Sociolinguistic competence highlights the ability to use language effectively, appropriately and clearly across various social contexts. Hence, the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts, like politeness, formality, and cultural norms fall in its realm (Halai & Durrani, 2021; Raza, 2022). This competence ensures that speech is contextually appropriate and socially acceptable. It is essential for effective communication, particularly in diverse environments (Bakhrudinovna, 2024; Shakirjanovna, 2024). The key elements of sociolinguistic competence are

- **Register:** Using appropriate levels of formality in speech (e.g., formal vs. informal).
- **Cultural awareness:** Understanding and using culturally specific references and idioms.
- **Social appropriateness:** Adapting language based on the social relationship between speaker and listener.

In a multicultural and multilingual country like Pakistan, sociolinguistic competence is crucial for effective communication in English, especially in academic and professional settings (Bakhrudinovna, 2024; Plotnikova et al., 2020; Shakirjanovna, 2024). This study examines how students navigate cultural nuances and social appropriateness in their spoken English. The application of this competence in the study includes:

- **Assessment:** Examine students' ability to adapt language for formal and informal settings through interviews or group discussions.

- **Intervention:** Conduct role-play scenarios such as customer-service interactions, where students practice using polite language and culturally appropriate expressions.
- **Example Task:** Simulates the organization of formal meeting and the casual conversation comprising every-day English to analyse how the EL students adjust their language in real-life situations accordingly.

2.2.3 Discourse Competence: Coherence and Cohesion

Discourse competence relates to the ability to produce and comprehend coherent spoken texts, focusing on coherence and cohesion (Schoning & Mendel, 2023). The ability to produce and understand longer stretches of language, like conversations, paragraphs, or essays organizing ideas coherently (Qobilovna, 2024; Tan et al., 2024).

In the Pakistani context, students' ability to deliver structured oral presentations or to participate in academic discussions, it highlights their discourse competence. This study investigates their skill in maintaining coherence and cohesion during spoken interactions. The application of discourse competence in the study includes:

- **Assessment:** Conducts the tasks like storytelling or managing debates to assess learners' competence to construct their speech with clear beginnings, sound transitions, and conclusions (Handayani et al., 2024; Rustamovna, 2024).
- **Intervention:** Teaches the application of linking words and cohesive devices (e.g., 'therefore,' 'however,' 'meanwhile') to assist the students to connect their ideas effectively.

- **Example Task:** Asking the ESL students to narrate or describe a story or deliver a speech, ensuring that they can use appropriate transitions maintaining logical flow.

2.2.4 Strategic Competence: Overcoming Communication Barriers

Strategic competence involves the use of verbal and non-verbal strategies to overcome communication challenges, including paraphrasing, asking for clarification, or using context to infer meaning (Raza, 2024). Utilizing gestures, facial expressions, and body language to support verbal communication. This dimension helps maintain communication flow despite potential obstacles (Apridayani et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). Given the limited exposure to English-speaking environments in Pakistan, the strategic competence is mostly critical for the students to manage real-time communication challenges effectively. The application of strategic competence in research study includes:

- **Assessment:** Observes the students during spontaneous speaking tasks to identify and recognize the strategies they follow while facing difficulties.
- **Intervention:** Teaches strategies like using synonyms, body language, or calling for repetition to manage the gaps in grammar, proficiency and fluency.
- **Example Task:** Conducts the speaking exercises where the students are bound to describe an object, they are utterly devoid of or the concept, about which they do not know the exact word.

The multiple dimensions of speaking competence are interconnected, they contribute to an individual's overall proficiency in spoken English. A competent speaker must

not only produce grammatically correct and fluent speech but also navigate social interactions, use communication strategies effectively, and ensure intelligibility through proper pronunciation (Connor & Moreno, 2018). Modern language teaching increasingly emphasizes these diverse dimensions in creating holistic and functional communicators.

This theory is highly relevant to this study as it allows for a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing speaking competence among undergraduates in Pakistan. In Pakistan, English is both a second language and a medium of instruction in higher education. This dual role necessitates a high level of speaking competence among undergraduates. However, systemic challenges such as rote-based learning methods and limited interaction in English impede students' competence to speak.

This study utilizes Canale and Swain's framework to identify gaps in each component of communicative competence. *Grammatical competence* is evaluated through structured speaking tasks. *Sociolinguistic competence* is analysed via role-plays reflecting real-life scenarios. *Discourse competence* is measured by assessing students' ability to narrate, describe, or argue coherently. *Strategic competence* is observed in situations requiring improvisation, such as responding to impromptu questions. Canale and Swain's model (1980) serves as an analytical lens for:

- **Identifying Deficiencies:** Highlighting areas where Pakistani undergraduates struggle to edify their competence to speaking English.
- **Developing Interventions:** Informing well-tailored pedagogical effective strategies to address specific weaknesses or drawbacks in competence to speak.

- **Enhancing Curriculum Design:** Guiding educators to integrate activities that could promote speaking competency effectively.

Consequently, by conducting this research within Canale and Swain's framework (1980), the study aims to provide a structured understanding of speaking competence among the English language undergraduates, projecting actionable insights for the educators, policymakers, and the curriculum developers. Thus, by applying Canale and Swain's theory, this research study comprehensively assesses, enhances and improves the speaking competence of the English language undergraduates. This framework ensures that the development of speaking skills is not merely limited to grammatical accuracy but extends to fluency, cultural appropriateness, and communicative effectiveness (Knisely, 2022; Ravichander et al., 2020; Suzuki & Kormos, 2024).

2.3 Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF)

The study builds upon this theoretical foundation by integrating cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological factors to comprehensively explore how speaking competence can be developed. The study not only investigates students' linguistic accuracy but also addresses emotional factors (confidence, anxiety), classroom interaction strategies, and the role of modern digital tools, which align closely with Canale and Swain's broader view of communicative competence.

The Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF), which integrates cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological factors, can significantly enhance oral communication skills among English undergraduates in Pakistani ESL classrooms. Each of these components is briefly described below:

2.3.1 Cognitive Domain (Knowledge & Language Use)

The Cognitive Domain focuses on what learners *know* and *understand* about the English language. This includes the foundational elements necessary for effective spoken communication. In the context of ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms, developing strong cognitive language skills equips students with the tools to express themselves clearly, accurately, and fluently (Seong, 2023; Butarbutar, 2023). Participants revealed how each component supports speaking competence:

2.3.1.1 Grammar Mastery

Mastery of grammar is essential for constructing meaningful and accurate sentences in spoken English. In ESL classrooms, the emphasis is on *functional grammar*—the kind that helps students use tenses, sentence structures, and connectors effectively in real-life conversations, not just in writing (Knisely, 2022; Ravichander et al., 2020; Suzuki & Kormos, 2024).

2.3.1.2 Pronunciation Practice

Pronunciation is vital for intelligibility. Regular *phonetic drills* and *intonation exercises* help students produce sounds more accurately, reduce their native accent interference, and improve rhythm and stress patterns in speech, making their communication clearer to listeners (Duong, & Nam, 2024)

2.3.1.3 Discourse Awareness

Effective speaking goes beyond individual sentences—it requires understanding how to *structure conversations*, take turns, maintain coherence, and use discourse markers. This component helps students engage in extended spoken interaction and navigate

both formal and informal communicative situations with ease (Handayani et al., 2024; Rustamovna, 2024).

2.3.2 Affective Domain (Emotional & Psychological Factors)

The Affective Domain addresses how students feel about speaking English. This factor includes emotions, attitudes, motivation, and levels of anxiety that deeply influence students' willingness and ability to speak in ESL classrooms. Even if learners have the cognitive knowledge (grammar, pronunciation), emotional and psychological barriers can prevent them from expressing themselves confidently (Kuo, Batool, Tahir, & Yu, 2024). Each element of this domain supports the emotional readiness required for effective oral communication:

2.3.2.1 Confidence Building

Many students hesitate to speak English due to fear of making mistakes or being judged. Creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive classroom environment where students feel respected and encouraged—helps reduce this fear. Simple gestures like positive reinforcement, praising efforts, and creating opportunities for every student to speak can significantly boost their confidence (Zhai, Charmi & Izadpanah, 2025).

2.3.2.2 Speaking Anxiety Management:

Anxiety is a common barrier in ESL speaking. To reduce this, classrooms can implement strategies such as peer support (working with familiar classmates), reflective journaling (allowing students to express fears and track progress), and encouraging, non-critical feedback from teachers (Nguyen, 2025). These practices make learners feel less pressured and more at ease while speaking.

2.3.2.3 Motivation Enhancement

Motivation drives effort and persistence. When learners see real-world relevance in speaking tasks (mock interviews, presentations, or travel-related conversations) they become more interested and engaged. Adding small incentives or recognition for participation can further motivate students to take speaking risks and challenge themselves.

2.3.2.4 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a student's belief in their own ability to succeed. Promoting this involves encouraging self-assessment, set personal goals, and celebrating progress, not just perfection (Li & Zhang, 2023). This leads to more independent and proactive learners who take ownership of their speaking development. In short, the affective domain ensures that ESL students are not just cognitively prepared to speak English—but also emotionally supported, motivated, and confident enough to do so. Addressing these psychological aspects leads to a more engaged, expressive, and resilient group of language learners (Nguyen, 2019; Zhang et al., 2023).

2.3.3 Pedagogical Strategies – Teaching Practices & Classroom Activities

The Pedagogical Domain focuses on how teaching methods and classroom practices directly influence students' ability to speak English effectively. This part of the framework emphasizes how teachers teach, what they teach, and how students engage with speaking tasks in real classroom settings. According to Albina, Madeniet and Abai (2025). Good pedagogy transforms passive learning into active, practical speaking experiences. Below are the key strategies within this domain:

2.3.3.1 Task-Based Learning

This method centres on using real-life communication tasks—such as role-plays, interviews, group discussions, and presentations—to give students authentic speaking practice. These tasks allow students to apply their language skills in realistic contexts, encouraging fluency and natural language use.

2.3.3.2 Interactive Teaching

Teachers use the IRF Model (Initiation-Response-Feedback) to structure conversations that promote interaction. For example, a teacher initiates a question, a student responds, and the teacher provides constructive feedback or follow-up questions. This keeps students engaged and gives them immediate insight into how they can improve.

2.3.3.3 Peer Interaction

Collaborative activities, such as pair work, think-pair-share, or small group debates, help students learn from each other in low-pressure settings. Peer interaction builds confidence, encourages language experimentation, and fosters a sense of shared responsibility in learning (Halim et al., 2020; Othman & Lotfie, 2019).

2.3.3.4 Constructive Feedback

Timely, clear, and supportive feedback is essential in helping students identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Instead of only correcting mistakes, teachers guide students with suggestions, praise for effort, and strategies to self-correct, all of which encourage growth in speaking skills (Albina et al., 2025).

2.3.4 Technological Integration (Digital Tools & Platforms)

In today's digital era, integrating technology into ESL classrooms offers students dynamic and engaging ways to practice and improve their speaking skills. This domain focuses on leveraging modern tools and platforms to supplement in-class learning, support independent practice, and promote confidence in spoken English (Ningtyas & Amirudin, 2025). Here's how each component contributes to enhancing speaking competence:

2.3.4.1 Language Labs

Bulbula et al. (2025) proclaimed that language labs offer students access to specialized pronunciation and listening software. These tools help students refine their accent, intonation, and clarity through guided phonetic exercises. With visual and audio feedback, learners can recognize errors and self-correct, building accuracy and fluency over time.

2.3.4.2 Mobile Learning Apps

Apps like ELSA Speak, BBC Learning English, and HelloTalk give learners the flexibility to practice speaking anytime, anywhere. These apps include AI-powered pronunciation correction, interactive lessons, and conversation simulations—providing individualized learning experiences outside the classroom and encouraging consistent practice (Ibna Seraj, & Klimova, 2025; Wang, 2025).

2.3.4.3 Online Presentation Tools

Platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Flipgrid allow students to participate in virtual speaking activities, such as oral presentations, video assignments, and virtual

discussion groups. These tools simulate real-world communication, helping students gain confidence in public speaking and collaborative conversation (Ibna Seraj, & Klimova, 2025).

2.3.4.4 Learning Management Systems (LMS)

Systems like Moodle and Canvas support teachers in integrating speaking-based tasks and assessments into their courses. Students can submit voice recordings, respond to audio prompts, or participate in online discussion boards, ensuring that speaking practice is embedded throughout the learning process (Ningtyas & Amirudin, 2025, Wang, 2025).

Khursanboeva (2025) accentuated that the technological integration domain empowers students to practice speaking English in flexible, accessible, and interactive ways. By combining in-class learning with digital tools, learners can develop fluency, improve pronunciation, and gain confidence—making speaking practice more effective, consistent, and enjoyable. This domain ensures that ESL education keeps pace with global digital trends, supporting real-world readiness for communication beyond the classroom.

Thus, the theoretical framework draws from Communicative Competence Theory while extending its practical application through the Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF), offering a holistic approach to address the challenges and strategies for improving spoken English proficiency in Pakistani ESL classrooms.

2.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study

This research centres on a conceptual framework designed to improve speaking competency in English language teaching and learning. Recognizing the current issues in speaking ability, the framework delves deep into the factors influencing the student's competence to speak English. However, the study examines self-perception of the undergraduate students on the current existing strengths, issues and weaknesses in their ESL learning. By analysing, ransacking, preening and examining these aspects, the framework offers the opportunities for the sublime improvement and progress in the speaking skills of the undergraduates. As a result, it may help to explore methods and strategies to boost up the language students' confidence in speaking English. Thus, it may identify areas where speaking ability can be strengthened, coping with the ambiguities and challenges the ESL learners at Punjab university are facing.

Ultimately, the expected objective is a significant increase in students' competence in spoken English. To explain the students' narratives, this study uses the Canal and Swains theory of Communicative competence (1980). *Firstly*, the researcher highlights and identifies the real definition and the words of competence from the participants' perspectives (based on their every-day experiences) and how they regard such words as synonymous for competence, which holds relation with the first research objective.

Secondly, the researcher explores the challenges obstructed in the way of the improvement of speaking competence based on the personal practical, real ESL educational, ideological, perceptual and concrete experiences as embedded in the students' narratives which is related to the second objective. *Thirdly*, the researcher

explores the innovative strategies that assist in promoting and edifying speaking competence in daily communication among the ESL students. Therefore, to develop speaking competence in students, ESL teachers need to create a useful scenario to practice the target language.

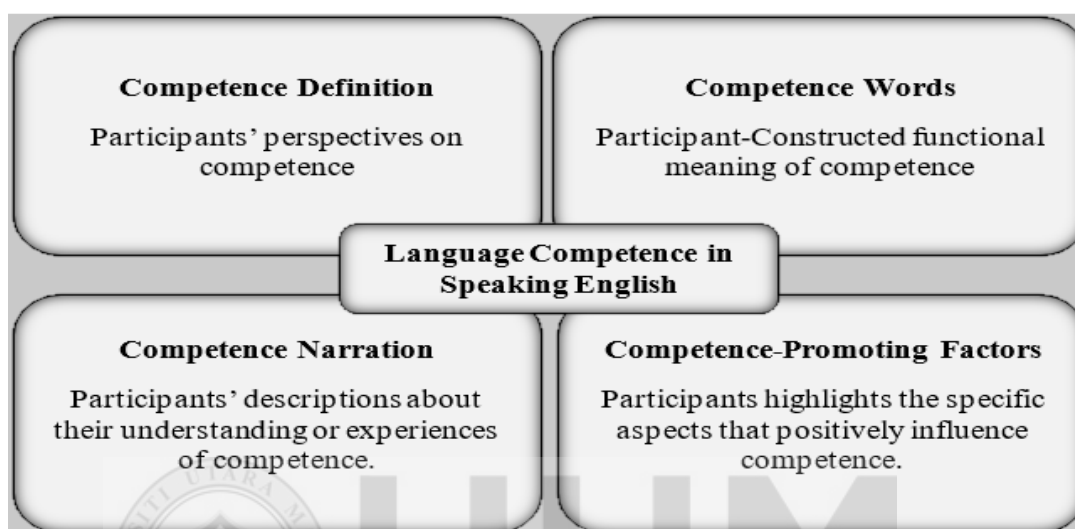


Figure 2.2. Researcher's conceptual framework of the study

Resultantly, this conceptual framework provides a clear point of view for exploring and analysing how task-based methodologies impact speaking competence, ensuring soundly structured and theoretically grounded study. Building upon this, the study adopts a Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF) designed to address the specific challenges faced by ESL undergraduates in Pakistan and to propose strategic interventions to enhance their oral communication skills. The conceptual framework is organized into four major interconnected domains: cognitive skills (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation); affective readiness (confidence, motivation); pedagogical strategies (interactive teaching, feedback); technological support (language apps, online tasks).

2.4.1 Concept of Competence

The concept of competence encompasses a multifaceted set of abilities, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable individuals to perform tasks effectively within specific contexts (Glaesser, 2019; Vitello et al., 2021). This construct is integral across various disciplines, including education, psychology, and organizational development. It stands for ability that works confidently to render impactful performance in specific sphere of life. However, it is considered the goal of teaching in the annals of education and enlightenment.

2.4.2 Definitions of Competence

The definition of competences is an essential component of the so-called competency models, which are intended to achieve systematic competence development in the field associated with operational and personal needs (Schöning & Mendel, 2023). The term competence is originated from the Latin word ‘Competentia’ that stands for “authorized as well as certified to judge” or “holding right of speaking” (Caupin et al., 2006, p. 9). However, this term has embraced the considerable attention becoming the popular research topic since the middle of the twentieth century (Shippmann et al., 2000). Multitude of definitions of ‘competence’ have been pointed out for three decades.

According to Vitello et al. (2021), “Competence is the ability and capacity to integrate and apply contextually appropriate knowledge, skills and the various psychosocial factors (e.g., beliefs, the specific attitudes, values and sound motivations) to consistently perform successfully within a particular established domain” (p.11).

Competence is regarded as the capacity to apply knowledge, experiences, skills, and attitudes confidently and effectively in diverse situations and circumstances. Thus, an individual competence is one of the grave and fruitful human resources, which enables a person to operate in his everyday life (Kiesler, 2024). This perspective emphasizes on the integration and edification of theoretical understanding with practical application (Mikhridinova, Wolff, & Van Petegem, 2024).

To study competence, empirical researchers must create situations which elicit a performance reflecting the underlying competence. Again, all of motivation, knowledge, and competence as well as more transient factors such as fatigue or distraction jointly affect and impact performance. Competence involves the combination of skills, behaviours, inclinations and knowledge that employees utilize to perform their roles successfully (Mikhrindinove et al., 2024; Kiesler, 2024; Schöning & Mendel, 2023; Vitello, Greatorex, & Shaw, 2021). It includes both technical abilities, interpersonal skills and language skills to understand and respond using sound pragmatics.

However, the multifaceted nature of competence presents challenges in its definition and assessment. Hence, it requires a comprehensive approach that considers various dimensions and contextual factors influencing performance. Competence is a dynamic and context-dependent construct that integrates multifarious dimensions of human capabilities (Boggo, 2022). Understanding its complexities and delicacies is essential for effective education, professional development, and organizational as well as individual success particularly in the annals of ESL education process.

2.4.3 Competence is a Holistic Concept

Competence is increasingly recognized as a holistic concept, encompassing a comprehensive integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that enable individuals to perform effectively across various contexts. This perspective moves beyond viewing competence as a collection of discrete abilities, emphasizing instead the interconnectedness of multiple dimensions that contribute to proficient performance. Bogo (2022) reviewed the conceptual underpinnings of competence models and the critique of this approach. He presented a model of holistic competence in social work which has important implications for university-based social work education and was tested in studies using simulation-based education. It can also guide field education.

Previous literature underscores the multifaceted nature of competence. Competence involves the synthesis of cognitive, functional, personal, and ethical components, reflecting a holistic understanding of an individual's capabilities. This approach acknowledges that effective performance arises from the interplay of various competencies rather than isolated skills and consistent performance across diverse situations, highlighting the importance of adaptability and the application of integrated competencies in varying contexts. (Bogo, 2022; Holen et al., 2024; Vitello et al., 2021; Zhang & Zhang, 2023).

Consequently, understanding competence as a holistic concept involves recognizing the dynamic integration of multiple dimensions that collectively enable effective performance (Bogo, 2022; Holen et al., 2024; Mikhrindinove et al., 2024; Kiesler, 2024; Schöning & Mendel, 2023; Vitello et al., 2021). This comprehensive approach

is essential for accurately assessing and fostering competence in both educational settings and professional practice. Therefore, the ESL classrooms are particularly supposed to focus on the competence to speak demonstrating grammatical strength, impactful pronunciation and fluency.

2.4.4 Conceptualizing Speaking Competence

The concept of ‘competence’ in speaking, particularly in the context of language proficiency and fluency, involves multiple dimensions that reflect both linguistic and communicative abilities free from ambiguities. Hence, the words associated and related with ‘competence’ are likely to reflect the blend of linguistic, cognitive, and prevalent social factors. However, the recent studies have highlighted multifarious words and the different phrases which are frequently associated with speaking competence, as individuals seek to capture the mastery of language skills required for effective and impactful communication. However, below are described some essential words associated with competence in speaking, along with recent references that illustrate their significance in language research.

2.4.4.1 Fluency

Fluency is often considered and regarded as a rampant indicator of competence in speaking, because it demonstrates the ability to speak clearly, smoothly and fluently projecting no hesitation, pauses, or errors (Suzuki & Kormos, 2024). The fluent speakers can maintain a steady flow of speech and communicate clearly avoiding disruption in their conversation. Gao (2022) emphasizes the central role of fluency in defining communicative competence, particularly in academic and professional

contexts. Smoothness and flow in speech, characterized by minimal pauses and errors, signalling ease in communication stands for fluency (Li, 2023; Li & Zhang, 2023).

2.4.4.2 Accuracy

Accuracy refers to the correct use of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Li & Zhang, 2023). It is the real strength that bears the great role to demonstrate competence in speaking impacting the listener and the speaker relation strengthening bilateral communication. Therefore, the competent speaker is supposed to prevent frequent grammatical mistakes and is believed to demonstrate precise language use. Zhang and Liao (2023) highlighted accuracy as the integral and highly pervasive component of the speaking competence, particularly in educational and motivational settings where grammatical precision is considered essential.

2.4.4.3 Articulation

Articulation is associated with articulators, it is the clear and precise production of sounds and words, ensuring that the speaker's message is understood without confusion, because imbalance in articulation brings about mispronunciation that contaminates communication. Therefore, proper articulation is often associated with higher competence in speaking. Sulaiman (2023) discusses articulation as a significant factor in academic settings, where clear pronunciation is vital for effective communication (Po'latova, & Yokutkhon, 2024). However, the clarity and precision with which thoughts are expressed, ensure that the message is communicated without ambiguity and complexity.

2.4.4.4 Confidence

Confidence in speaking refers to the self-assurance with which an individual expresses themselves feeling ready to communicate establishing strength of expression. Consequently, it is closely and strongly tied to the perception of competence, as speakers who project confidence are ever perceived as more skilled. Li (2023) Resultantly, confidence is the fundamental factor in effective and meaningful communication. Moreover, the students with higher confidence are often regarded as more competent speakers in both informal and formal settings.

2.4.4.5 Persuasiveness

The ability to persuade or influence others through impactful communication and argumentation is associated and connected with competence, particularly in professional and academic discourse. So, a competent speaker must hold ability to offer ideas convincingly and influentially. Kara (2021) elaborated persuasiveness as the real ability to influence or convince others through highly effective argumentation, tone, clarity and delivery. Moreover, he explored the connection and relation between persuasiveness and competence in public speaking and negotiations, where the sound ability to impact others is the fundamental indicator of language proficiency (Shawaqfeh et al., 2024; Tai & Zhao, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024).

2.4.4.6 Coherence

Coherence displays the organization of ideas in logical manner, presenting them in a structured, integrated and lucid manner. Hence, dispersion and disorganization break coherence and brings about ambiguities in understanding the real sense of communication. Resultantly, the competent speaker is he who is able to make his

speech cohesive as well as understandable. Ali and Khan (2022) opine that coherence is highly essential for communicative competence, particularly in academic presentations where ideas should be logically related and easy to follow.

2.4.4.7 Mastery

Mastery symbolizes a deep and highly comprehensive understanding of the language, it displays command at the language, projecting and demonstrating comprehensive knowledge of grammar, pronunciation, fluency and nuances of usage (Apridayani et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). However, the speaker who bears mastery at the language use can communicate in it effectively and clearly in a wide range of contexts. Zhang and Liao (2023) declared mastery as a critical factor for higher-level speaking competence and useful ability, particularly in professional environments.

2.4.4.8 Capability

Capability refers to the broad ability to use language appropriately in various contexts, from formal presentations to informal conversations. It suggests a versatility in speaking that encompasses a range of skills. It is considered the mark of confidence to use language in big variety of context. Hassan and Ali (2023) defined capability as the overall potential to communicate effectively and impactfully across multifarious settings, from academic discussions and debates to social interactions. However, Ali and Khan (2022) depicted capability as a broad term encompasses the overall and ultimate ability to use language impressively in multifarious contexts.

2.4.4.9 Efficiency

Efficiency in speaking refers to the ability to render messages in a concise, pithy and clear manner, preventing unnecessary hollow verbosity or irrelevant details. An efficient speaker hooks the messages quickly and effectively. Gao (2022) suggested that efficiency in conversation and communication is the ability to utter ideas succinctly, influentially and effectively, diminishing hesitation and anxiety, particularly in time-sensitive contexts like the business meetings, as a marker of speaking competence.

2.4.4.10 Expertise

Expertise reflects a high level of knowledge and skill, particularly in discussing specialized or complex topics. However, competence in speaking is often associated with the ability to convey and communicate refined ideas with authority. Cheng (2020) ransacks how expertise in a subject matter, when it is combined with language proficiency, contributes to ultimate competence in the academic and the professional communication. The expertise is the symbol of sound and comprehensive knowledge and advanced skill in using language, especially in discussing complex topics, it performs wonderful job (Vollmer, 2024; Vereijken et al., 2023) Hence, competence in speaking also needs to carry sound pragmatics to speak and respond.

2.4.4.11 Talent

Talent is the natural, rewarded and strong ability or effective inclination for impactful speaking. Hence, being not necessarily linked with the formal language learning, the individuals with a ‘talent’ for speaking may engage others with ease and confidence (Gass & Selinker, 2020; Hassan & Bilal, 2019; Khan, 2024; Po’latova & Yokutkhon,

2024; Zhang & Liao, 2023). They know well how to respond and satisfy others engaged in conversation with them. Hassan and Ali (2023) mentioned talent as an intrinsic and convincing factor that contributes to one's distinct competence in speaking, though it is commonly observed as secondary to embrace proficiency.

The association of these words with competence is shaped by a combination of linguistic, educational, and socio-cultural factors. In Pakistan, English is taught as both a second language and a medium of instruction in higher education, particularly in scientific, technical, and business fields (Akram et al., 2020). Consequently, competence is often equated with having a solid grasp of grammar, clarity and pronunciation, as these are the key areas focused on language education. In English-medium universities, students may feel that proficiency in grammar and confidence is essential to meet recognition as the competent speakers, because they are often assessed in academic settings (Zhang & Liao, 2023).

The emphasis on fluency and accuracy in English-speaking environments is influenced by societal views on how language reflects intellectual and professional standing (Bilal et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Shaban & Junejo, 2024). Since English is perceived as the language of opportunity, competence is often associated with being able to speak it fluently, clearly and accurately in public or professional settings (Suzuki & Kormos, 2024; Tavakoli et al., 2020). In job markets, particularly in urban centres, individuals who can communicate with fluency and confidence in English are often seen as more competent, for confidence and fluency become important markers for students (Aimen & Khadim, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024; Bilal et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Sadaf & Zahid, 2024).

2.4.5 Basics of Competence Orientation in English Language Classroom

According to Schöning and Mendel (2023), competence orientation in the English language classrooms emphasizes equipping learners with the necessary skills, inclinations, knowledge, and the attitudes to speak the language effectively in real-life interactions and contexts. Moreover, they unveiled that competence orientation in English language classrooms refers to the ESL learning approach that aims at developing students' ability to speak language competently in various communicative contexts demonstrating pragmatics, clarity, proficiency and fluency.

2.4.5.1 Key Components of Competence Orientation

Schoning and Mendel (2023) have presented key components of competence orientation. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of these competencies in various educational and professional settings, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to competence development (Abdurakhmanovich, & Jalolovna, 2024; Chaikovska et al., 2024; Turlybekov et al., 2024).

2.4.5.2 Social Competence

Schoning and Mendel (2023) connected social competence to the serene capacity to interact and converse effectively with other people, pursuing communication, teamwork, and the conflict resolution skills. Hence, it is essential for collaborative and mutual work environments, because it contributes to successful and understandable interpersonal relationships. Moreover, the social competence is often regarded as a fundamental aspect of practical and demonstrative competence. Muhonen et al., (2022) investigated the teacher-student relationship and students' socio-competence in relation to the standard quality of enlightening communication. In terms of teacher–

student connection and relation, intimacy is associated positively unlike conflict that bears negatively, and it mars the quality of dialogue. However, regarding the learners' social competence, impressively cooperative skills and empathy are linked positively while disruptiveness bears negative impact with high quality dialogue.

Previous studies impart new knowledge suggesting how different student-related elements might support or conflict the construction of educational dialogue and how can social behaviours as well as immigrant background may impress the quality of grave relationships with teachers and educators in the classroom (Magro et al., 2024; Muhonen et al., 2022; Zava et al., 2024).

2.4.5.3 Personal Competence

Schoning and Mendel (2023) depicted personal competence as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and the ability to reflect on one's actions. Personal competence enables individuals to manage themselves and their development proactively. It is considered a core component of action competence (Abdurakhmanovich, & Jalolovna, 2024; Chaikovska et al., 2024; Turlybekov et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).

2.4.5.4 Intercultural Competence

Keeping in view the globalized status of today's world, the competence and ability to navigate diverse and multifarious cultural contexts is crucial. Therefore, intercultural competence contains understanding appropriate response to cultural differences, which is mandatory for effective and motivating communication as well as collaboration across cultures. Thus, understanding, perceiving and respecting cultural differences for effective communication across cultures fall in the realm of

intercultural competence. Consequently, incorporating intercultural elements into ELT helps the students navigate the global relations and interactions more proficiently. (Schoning & Mendel, 2023; Wu & Tarc, 2021; Zook, 2024).

Zook (2024) conducted and arranged his research study in Malaysia for exploring the intercultural competence in the English Language among Malaysian in their ESL classrooms. The major purpose of this research study was to unveil the value of adding innovative pedagogical tools and techniques in the classrooms of Malaysia, so that their students may learn English more clearly, proficiently and efficiently. Furthermore, they can seek intercultural education to become more successful in their future careers in their real life.

2.4.5.5 Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is recognized as the ability to deliver, convey and interpret the point of views appropriately in multifarious contexts. However, the recent studies reveal the importance of mingling and integrating these competencies to edify the learners' ultimate language proficiency (Schoning & Mendel, 2023; Qobilovna, 2024; Tan et al., 2024). To add, Tan et al., (2024) sensed the sound use of metaverse-based focused activities to raise up the communicative competencies among young language learners in the rural areas. Thus, they uncloaked that the metaverse significantly upgrades and improves communication competencies, which include speaking, listening as well as the social interaction skills (Rahimi & Aghabarari, 2024). However, their study signified that metaverse-based activities bring forth more engaging and immersive enlightening environment, introducing natural, distinct and

authentic improvements in communicative abilities among the young children in the rural areas.

2.4.5.6 Methodical Competence

It refers to the real ability to exploit appropriate methods as well as procedures to perform tremendous tasks and tackle challenges. Moreover, it encompasses challenging skills such as the grave analytical thinking, problem-solving, and the application of the fruitful systematic approaches. Resultantly, Methodical competence is regarded as an integral component of professional competence (Abdurakhmanovich, & Jalolovna, 2024; Chaikovska et al., 2024; Schoning & Mendel, 2023; Turlybekov et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).

2.4.5.7 Digital Competence

In the era of technology and digitalization, competence in using digital, technical and scientific tools and sensing digital environment is highly important. Moreover, digital competence stands for the ability to utilize technology effectively for successful communication, information retrieval, solid connection, and problem-solving. (Kohnke et al., 2024; Schoning & Mendel, 2023).

2.4.5.8 Professional Competence

It symbolizes the mastery at specific branches of knowledge and the real skills related to a particular profession and field. Moreover, it motivates individuals to render great tasks to solve the problems effectively in the realm of their expertise. As in the field of grasping professional competence includes understanding and perceiving the

financial management as well as data analysis (Abdurakhmanovich, & Jalolovna, 2024; Chaikovska et al., 2024; Schoning & Mendel, 2023; Turlybekov et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).

2.5 Challenges in Developing Speaking Competence

Developing speaking competence among ESL (English as a Second Language) students presents multifaceted challenges, especially in contexts like Pakistan where English is taught as a second language but often not practiced beyond the classroom. Speaking competence encompasses a combination of grammatical accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, and the ability to interact meaningfully in real-life situations (Richards, 2022; Khan & Krishnasamy, 2024).

Limited Practice: Many students face challenges when it comes to practicing English outside the classroom. Limited opportunities for speaking hinder the development of speaking and listening skills, particularly in non-English-speaking countries (Ahmed et al., 2024; Rahimi & Aghabarari, 2024; Sadaf & Zahid, 2024; Shaban, & Junejo, 2024). Many Pakistani students, particularly those in public universities, come from backgrounds where English is not spoken at home or in social settings, which restricts their ability to practice oral communication (Ahmed & Pathan, 2023). This lack of exposure contributes to poor fluency and hinders their confidence in speaking English.

Complex Vocabulary: Academic texts often use specialized vocabulary, which can be overwhelming for students. This vocabulary is essential for reading comprehension and writing academic papers. Students may struggle to understand these terms (Bilal,

Ahmed & Lodhi, 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Shaban & Junejo, 2024; Tong, Yu, & Deacon, 2024).

Speaking Anxiety: Many undergraduates experience anxiety when it comes to writing academic papers, especially in a second language. The pressure to adhere to specific writing standards, such as grammar, citation, and formatting, can be daunting for students with lower writing competence (Ahmed et al., 2024; Nguyen, 2025). Many learners feel anxious about making mistakes in front of peers, which often results in silence during oral tasks (Bukhari & Farhan, 2022). This fear is exacerbated by overcrowded classrooms, where individual attention is limited, and feedback is often delayed or generic (Bilal et al., 2024).

Cultural Differences in Communication: Undergraduates from diverse cultural backgrounds may encounter difficulties when navigating the pragmatics of English communication, such as appropriate tone, body language, and speech conventions. Misunderstandings can arise, especially in academic discussions and presentations (Connor & Moreno, 2018; Halai & Durrani, 2021; Raza, 2022. Schoning & Model, 2023; Wu & Tarc, 2021; Zook, 2024).

Lack of Feedback: In many academic settings, students may not receive timely or detailed feedback on their language performance. Constructive feedback is vital for helping students recognize their strengths and areas for improvement (Hanaysha et al., 2023; Hassan & Bilal, 2019; Khan, 2024; Rana et al., 2020).

Teaching methodology: Traditional grammar-translation methods, teacher-dominated classrooms, and a heavy focus on reading and writing leave little room for interactive speaking activities (Ayub & Khaleel, 2024). Consequently, students may develop theoretical knowledge of grammar and proficiency but struggle to apply it in spoken discourse (Raza, 2024).

To overcome these challenges, there is a need to shift from traditional methods to student-centered, communicative, and task-based approaches that actively engage students in meaningful spoken interactions (Ramos & Lambenicio, 2023). It is necessary to implement the competence orientation demands fruitful curriculum design and the pervasive assessments with the teacher training to evidently integrate these multiple components into classroom demonstrations (Asif et al., 2021; Wong, 2020). However, ongoing research study and concrete adaptations are much essential to deal with evolving requirements of the learners in variety of contexts. Thus, adopting a holistic point of view on competence holds significant implications:

Curriculum Design: Educational programs should be formed to develop and integrate the various dimensions of competence, ensuring and vitalizing that learners are planned to usefully apply their abilities in real-world situations and scenarios (Asif et al., 2021; Ayub & Mohammed, 2024).

Comprehensive Assessment: Evaluating competence demands methods which capture the utter spectrum of a man's abilities, including his sound knowledge, real practical skills, and his attitudinal factors which provide a practical representation of his abilities and competence (Vitello et al., 2021; Wong, 2020).

By focusing and concentrating on these effective aspects, ESL classrooms can better train their students for the real-world practical communication, edifying their abilities to speak English effectively in multifarious situations. However, the above-mentioned effective components are highly interrelated and collectively contributing to an individual's natural and overall competence. By integrating and proliferating these elements, the competence projection aims at preparing learners to effectively grapple with complex and real-world situations.

Recent research underscores the multifaceted nature of speaking competence in ESL contexts (Apridayani et al., 2024; Barrios & Jurado, 2023; Ramos & Lambenicio, 2023; Salvador et al., 2023; 2024; Zhang et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). Grammatical knowledge, strategic use of language, effective teaching methodologies, clarity, proficiency and discourse competence, all of them play integral roles in developing learners' speaking abilities. However, addressing these components with sound inclinations using targeted instructional strategies can significantly promote ESL learning and speaking competence among the learners

2.6 English Speaking Competence among Undergraduates

English speaking competence among undergraduates refers to the proficiency level in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English that students possess as they engage in academic, social, and professional contexts (Wu & Tarc, 2021; Zook, 2024). As English remains the dominant global language in academia, science, business, and technology, achieving a high level of English-speaking competence is essential for success in higher education and future careers (Rana et al., 2022; Tai & Zhao, 2024; Shawaqfeh et al., 2024). However, this study focused on speaking competence which

encompasses not only basic language skill but also the ability to use oral language effectively and appropriately in academic and real-world situations.

2.6.1 Dimensions of English-Speaking Competence

2.6.1.1 Listening and Comprehension

The ability to understand spoken English in various contexts, such as lectures, discussions, and multimedia content, is crucial. Rahimi and Aghabarari, (2024) stated listening comprehension involves understanding the main ideas, details, and inferences in academic and everyday spoken English. Students need to engage with various accents, speech speeds, and terminologies related to their fields of study (Alqarni et al., 2021).

2.6.1.2 Speaking and Pronunciation

Speaking competence is the ability to express oneself clearly and coherently in English. It involves correct pronunciation, the use of appropriate grammar, and the ability to communicate effectively in formal and informal settings. Oral presentations, group discussions, and seminars are typical ways in which speaking competence is assessed in academic contexts (Ahmed et al., 2024; Ayub & Mohammed, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024; Bilal et al., 2024; Duong, & Nam, 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Po'latova, & Yokutkhon, 2024).

2.6.1.3 Reading and Textual Analysis

Reading comprehension is another critical dimension, where students must be able to read academic texts, research papers, books, and online materials. This includes identifying main arguments, analysing texts, and synthesizing information across

sources. Reading skills are essential for academic success, as undergraduates are often required to engage with complex texts across various disciplines (Tong, Yu, & Deacon, 2024).

2.6.1.4 Writing and Academic Communication

Writing competence involves the ability to organize thoughts and ideas in written form, adhering to academic writing conventions such as structure, style, and citation (Hyland, 2021). It includes composing essays, research papers, reports, and other academic documents. Effective communication requires mastery of grammar, coherence, and cohesion, as well as the ability to argue logically and critically (Zhang & Zhang, 2023).

Vocabulary and Grammar Proficiency: A strong command of vocabulary and grammar forms the foundation of speaking competence. Students should possess a wide range of academic language that helps them engage with specialized content. Mastery of grammatical structures ensures clarity and precision in both written and spoken communication (Knisely, 2022; Ravichander et al., 2020).

Cultural Competence and Pragmatics: Cultural competence involves understanding and appropriately responding to social and cultural nuances in communication. It includes awareness of cultural variations in language use, idiomatic expressions, and tone. This aspect is particularly important in a globalized academic environment where students come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Halai & Durrani, 2021; Raza, 2022. Schoning & Model, 2023; Wu & Tarc, 2021; Zook, 2024).

2.6.2 Factors Influencing English Speaking Competence

2.6.2.1 Educational Background

Students from non-English-speaking countries or regions may enter university with varying levels of English proficiency. English speaking competence levels vary across different cities and regions in Pakistan, with graduates in Peshawar reporting lower-than-expected proficiency. This is due to factors such as limited exposure outside the classroom, emphasis on rote learning, and a shortage of qualified English language teachers. Previous studies (Ali, 2021; Khan & Rahman, 2021) confirmed the low level of English-speaking competence among graduate students in Peshawar. Pre-university English language training programs, including standardized tests like TOEFL or IELTS, play a significant role in shaping the language skills of undergraduates.

2.6.2.2 Exposure to English

The level of exposure to English outside of the classroom can significantly impact a student's speaking competence. Students who actively engage with English media (e.g., books, films, online content) and interact with native speakers often develop better language skills. English language is used extensively for communication and is one of the most significant languages of the world. English speaking competence is crucial for students' academic and professional success (Gao, Zhu, & Xu, 2019). In Pakistan, many private schools and universities use English as the medium of instruction because it is the requirement for the national curriculum (Asif et al., 2021). According to Channa, (2022), English is the language of instruction from first grade to fifth grade in both public and private schools. While English and Urdu are both used as the primary languages of instruction from grades six through eight, most schools

switch to English as the main language of instruction starting in grade nine (Buglio, 2021).

2.6.2.3 Motivation and Attitude

Motivation to learn English, as well as a positive attitude towards using the language, is crucial. Previous research suggested that students who see the value of English in achieving academic and professional goals tend to invest more time and effort into improving their skills (Ayub & Khaleel, 2024; Rana, Bhatti, & Farukh, 2020). Graduates from English-medium schools tend to be less proficient in the English language than graduates from non-English-medium schools due to ineffective teaching strategies and a lack of practice opportunities. Research revealed that graduate students have poor English-speaking competence with seventy-four percent having weak abilities (Zulfiqar et al., 2021).

2.6.2.4 Instructional Methods

The teaching methods used in English language education, such as communicative language teaching, task-based learning, or grammar-translation methods, influence how students acquire and develop speaking competence. Interactive, student-centered approaches tend to foster better speaking and listening skills (Ahmed & Pathan, 2023; Chaikovska et al., 2024; Schoning & Model, 2023; Siddiqui & Ahamed, 2020; Turlybekov et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023)

- **Assessment Tools:** The type and quality of language assessments used in university settings are essential for gauging language proficiency. Standardized language tests, written exams, oral presentations, and peer assessments all

contribute to measuring and enhancing speaking competence among undergraduates (Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024; Tai & Zhao, 2024)

- ***Peer Interactions and Learning Communities:*** Peer interaction within university settings, including group work, discussion forums, and collaborative learning, offers undergraduates the opportunities to practice English in authentic contexts. Interaction with peers from diverse linguistic backgrounds promotes practical language use and intercultural competence (Connor & Moreno, 2018; Marinić, & Moritz, 2024).

2.7 Teachers' Role in Promoting Competence among Undergraduates

Education offers learning for all people, it helps man to comprehend and learn to perform, it is considered highly vital for all humans. In addition to learners, the instructor is one of the crucial components. Furthermore, the teacher is considered the key component when an institute is established to proliferate enlightenment (Harrison, King, & Wang, 2023). Thus, they are known for producing bright and talented generations to contribute for the edification of human relations and communication. The teacher is crucial in situations when students depend heavily on them, and students' school lives have an impact on the teacher's existence. A competent teacher can alter things and has the power to shape the student's behaviour and conform to social norms and scientific principles (Larasati et al., 2019).

The pedagogical methods are always evolving, and this leads to new terminologies for the duties of instructors. Teachers nowadays are under growing pressure to take an active part in achieving learning objectives. They are responsible for creating learning

exercises, materials, and surroundings, as well as planning learning activities and environments (Siddiqui & Ahamed, 2020). In line with Marinic & Moritz (2024),

“It is the teacher’s job to provide a rich environment for children’s developing minds and to be aware that children will not be able to do some tasks as well as adults. It is impossible to speed up their development, but it is possible to raise interest in something and build on the children’s current way of thinking. A good teacher observes their learners and adapts the content as they grow emotionally and intellectually” (p.6).

According to Evertson & Weinstein (2019), class management and instruction are both considered to be aspects of education that take place in the presence of the instructor in the classroom. The definition of instruction includes four unique characteristics, including teacher-student interaction, activity based on predetermined objectives, organised design with consideration for situation and facilities, developing opportunities, and facilitation of learning (Kargiotidis et al., 2023; Hanaysha et al., 2023). Class management is therefore a crucial sign that teaching is a difficult endeavour that is sometimes referred to as an “Art” The phrase “teaching is an art” typically refers to this idea. For instance, we all agree that the experience plays a key role in any activity. But it is frequently observed that the experiences have not worked in other circumstances. This implies the human relations management idea of dynamics.

In these situations, the insight is helpful since it assesses the management skills of the instructor. The degree to which a teacher is successful in managing their own

classroom, which is a unique organisation, depends on their level of skill in a variety of areas, including personality. Teachers who are successful provide work that is enjoyable and gratifying for themselves and their pupils. These educators make studying a pleasant and lasting experience (Anderson, Ozsezer-Kurnuc, & Jain, 2024; Harrison, King, & Wang, 2023).

Writing a lesson plan before teaching a lesson is a good approach for teachers to train their minds to think about the class in advance. A solid foundation for lesson preparation includes having a solid understanding of one's students, teaching context, and personal philosophy. Teachers who write reflective essays create lesson plans for the subsequent courses that are more productive (Chang, 2019; Turlybekov et al., 2024). Even if instructors have a lot of important tasks to complete after that lesson, it is crucial to conduct one more reflection. One technique to improve lesson-planning abilities for the future is to review the lesson plan to determine what transpired. Teachers also include activities in the lesson plan to engage students in the learning process (Huang, 2019; Vereijken & van der Rijst, 2023).

They are also the key components that contribute to the development of a learning environment (Fareh, 2018). A class should be learner-centred, while yet being teacher-driven and ultimately teacher-constructed. If theoretical concepts in connection to educational practises and classroom realities are thought to be neither fixed nor static (Jackson & Burch, 2017), then it is really believed that classroom practises are multidimensional and dynamic.

In other words, classroom activities frequently call for the integration and application of several ideas. Teachers can fit in when pedagogical spaces develop in classrooms where various ideas interact and play off one another and when there is disconnect between theory and practise. It is teachers that determine what to do and how to do it in class, as well as how to adjust it, assess it, and ultimately create the framework in which students may learn. While teachers have a role in creating the learning environments, leading, guiding, scaffolding, controlling, and enabling learning (Newman, 2017; Huang, 2019). Despite rarely taking centre stage in the classroom, teachers are crucial to a good learning environment. According to researchers, there is interaction between teachers, students, and learning activities in the classroom (Jackson & Burch, 2017).

Teachers always remain careful about the language they use in the classroom. The quantity of talk time is important, however Anderson et al. (2024) asserted that whether it is a good idea for instructors to spend seventy or eighty percent of class time talking will depend on the goal of a lesson and how it fits into the larger scheme or course or programme. Teachers' communication methods reveal much about their culture, and this has a bigger impact on students. Teachers cannot avoid the reality that their communication "styles" reflect their cultural upbringing (Siddiqui & Ahamed, 2020). They have been socialised in such a manner that much of what they say, how they say it, and how they interact with their pupils, parents, and co-workers have all been greatly affected. Magro et al. (2024) proclaimed that building close relationships with pupils can improve learning because; teachers who foster trust with their students will be better equipped to challenge them. Students are more inclined to go above and

beyond if they believe their professors really care about their academic and personal success and are prepared to work with them to achieve their goals (Cheng, 2020).

The researcher thinks the teacher plays a crucial role in the educational process as the foundation of both formal and informal education. In society, the teacher is also seen as a knowledgeable individual. Teachers have the power and responsibility to guide students in the same way that parents do at home since they may be thought of as the students' parents at school (Fareh, 2018). The teacher's job during the ESL process in the English classroom is to influence the student to become the competent generation capable of pursuing their goals with competent communication (Larasati et al., 2019).

2.8 Factors Affecting Teachers' Competence

One of the key elements in country's growth is education. High or low educational quality can result from both the educational process itself and from instructors' performance as teachers. Performance is the result and work attitude attained to finish the duties and obligations assigned within a specific time frame (Feng & Guo, 2022).

Scientists and the government have long regarded instructors as a key component of student education. Because in the teaching and learning activities, as well as in students' information acquisition and personality development (Gass & Selinker, 2020; Po'latova & Yokutkhon, 2024).

2.8.1 Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs towards Teaching the English Language

The most important impact of teachers' English language incompetence is on their students' academic performance. For students to succeed in several subjects, including science, math, and social studies, they must be able to read, write, and speak English

with ease. However, poor academic performance results from teachers who are unable to communicate with students clearly and effectively when they have questions (Ali & Khan, 2022). Students who have English teachers who are less competent in the English language performed worse on English exams than those who have more competent teachers (Atay & Kurt, 2019; Vereijken et al., 2023; Vollmer, 2024).

Teachers who do not speak English well also negatively affect the future employment opportunities of their students. English speaking competence is a prerequisite for many professions in today's globalized world, including business, law, medicine, and engineering. In order to pursue these careers, students who lack a solid foundation in English are at a disadvantage. Students' career prospects and English speaking competence are significantly correlated. Students who have English-speaking teachers are more likely to pursue careers requiring English than students who have English-speaking teachers who are less competent (Cheng, 2020).

Teachers' limited command of the English language may also hinder the personal development of their pupils. English is a crucial language for communication and cross-cultural exchange, and being fluent in it can open up new worlds for students and foster a global outlook. Students who lack a solid grasp of the English language may pass up chances to study abroad, take part in international initiatives, and communicate with people from other cultures. Students who have English teachers who are not fluent in the language have few opportunities to practice their language skills, which decreases their motivation and confidence in their speaking competence. Students who have teachers who are more competent in the language are more likely

to participate in activities that improve their English language abilities (Zhang & Liao, 2023).

The ESL teacher's limited English skills may have negative impacts on the language development of the language learners. The language development is essential for the students to communicate effectively comprehending the delicacies of the language they are learning. The language development of students can be hampered by teachers who are not fluent in English, because they may use inappropriate grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. The competent English teachers are more effective and fruitful for the ESL learners than incompetent ones, who are harmful and discouraging for the learners. There is a positive correlation between student language development and teachers' speaking competence (Zhou & Liu, 2021).

Teachers who are not fluent in English have a negative effect on their students' motivation to learn the language. When teachers do not struggle to involve their students in the learning process, it may lower their motivation and interest in the subject (Vollmer, 2024; Vereijken et al., 2023). This can happen when they are not fluent in English. There is a positive correlation and interdependence between students' motivation to learn the language and teachers' speaking competence. Students who have English teachers who spoke the language well are more motivated to learn it than those who have teachers who spoke the language poorly (Zhang & Ren, 2020).

2.8.2 Personal Characteristics

Personal traits such as knowledge, abilities, beliefs, and attitudes toward teaching might influence teachers' competence. Teachers with high self-efficacy beliefs,

positive attitudes about teaching, and excellent pedagogical content understanding perform better in the classroom (Nguyen, 2019; Van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2018). Furthermore, instructors' cultural backgrounds and identities might influence their teaching techniques and student outcomes (Chang, 2019).

2.8.3 Professional Development

Professional development opportunities can help teachers improve their teaching practices by providing them with new knowledge and skills. Good professional development programmes include continual support, cooperation, and reflection opportunities may make them more fruitful and effective (Gao et al., 2019). But all professional development programmes are not beneficial in increasing teachers' competency, as the quality and substance of these programmes bears importance (Duran & Gareis, 2017).

2.8.4 School Resources and Support

The facilities and services provided by their school, such as access to educational resources, technology, and administrative support, can have an impact on teachers' competence. Instructors who have access to high-quality instructional materials and technology are more effective in the classroom (Alqarni et al., 2021; Kohnke et al., 2024). Furthermore, school leadership and administrative support can play an important role in assisting teachers' professional development and growth (Goldring & Taie, 2018).

2.8.5 Social and Cultural Contexts

Societal and cultural influences can have an impact on teachers' practices and student performance in both positive and negative ways (Santos, Acedo & Mahalingappa, 2019; Orellana et al., 2020). Culturally sensitive teaching approaches can increase student results for students from various backgrounds (Gay, 2018), but others point to the harmful impact of educational systems that pursue standardised testing and accountability.

2.8.6 Relationship between Teachers and Students

Teachers' competence and ability to actively involve students in learning can be influenced by the quality of their interaction with students. Positive teacher-student connections have been pointed out in studies to boost up the students' outcomes such as academic achievement and engagement (Alatalo et al., 2024; Muhonen et al., 2022; Ubogu, 2024; Perveen & Krishnasamay, 2024; Sipman et al., 2024).

2.8.7 Class Management

Good classroom management skills are essential for instructors to establish a secure and supportive learning environment that encourages student learning. Teachers with good classroom management abilities have greater student behaviour and participation in the classroom (Evertson & Weinstein, 2019).

2.8.8 Curriculum and Instruction

Teachers' competence and capacity to enhance student learning can be influenced by the curriculum and instructional tactics they utilize (Ayub & Mohammed, 2024).

According to research, teachers who adopt evidence-based teaching practices like differentiation and formative evaluation are more effective in the classroom.

2.8.9 Teachers' Well-Being

Teacher's well-being, which includes physical, emotional, and mental health, can have an impact on a teacher's competence and ability to effectively teach students. According to research, teacher burnout can lead to decreased job satisfaction and effectiveness, as well as higher turnover rates. Hence, in the current study teachers' point of view has been highlighted to perceive the actual problems of the ESL classrooms and the learners' response strengthens the evidence (Evertson & Weinstein, 2019). As a result, the true picture of the ESL education can be witnessed keeping in view the perceptions of both the teachers and their students.

2.9 Enhancing English Language Proficiency among Undergraduates: Policies and Interventions

Pakistan introduced Waseela-Taleem programmes to enrol out of school children, Female secondary school stipend programme of 600 for each, and foundation assisted schools to meet the demand of private schooling and focusing on the curriculum development to set it on current English language requirements (Asif et al., 2021). But in spite of all these initiatives more work needs to be done as the undergraduate ESL classrooms have been found devoid of competence to enhance the speaking skill of the ESL learners. To improve undergraduates' English-speaking competence, Pakistan can use a variety of policies and interventions.

Graduates English speaking competence can be increased through language training programmes under the supervision of the highly trained ESL teachers. The students' speaking competence can be improved after a six-month intensive English language training programme, which in turn improves their academic performance and employability (Ali & Khan, 2022; Wang & Wei, 2021). Sixteen-week English language training programme can improve the speaking competence of the learners, and they will be able to mark which ways can lead them to proficiency and fluency using correct grammar and pronunciation (Al- Shehri, & Al-Shehri 2020).

Moreover, teachers' experiences of training and professional development can influence on students' speaking competence. Furthermore, workshops and training programmes can also be helpful to increase the knowledge and pedagogical skills of teachers' (Chang, 2019; Turlybekov et al., 2024). However, the teachers who take part in professional development courses that emphasize communicative language teaching (CLT) or task-based language teaching (TBLT) tend to have more favourable and motivating attitude towards teaching the English language in comparison with those who have not attended such trainings (Ahmed & Pathan, 2023).

The teacher training programmes can also assist educators in bettering their knowledge of the English language and their abilities to instruct it, because latest pedagogy focuses more on speaking competence and discourages orthodox EL methods. Additionally, ESL teachers often require more support and training in order to help them teach English effectively. They might believe that they require additional resources and opportunities for professional development or that their initial teacher

preparation was insufficient to adequately prepare them for this task (Zhang & Liao, 2023).

Consequently, programmes that place students in environments where English is the primary language can also be successful and lead to excellent proliferation of English language incurring multitude of knowledge in the minds of the learners, imbuing innovations and motivations in their knowledge to perform accurately and clearly. Interestingly, immersion programme in an English-speaking nation significantly improves students' language skills (Chen & Chen, 2020). The programmes such as giving learners' opportunities to study abroad can be motivating where they can study and interact with others. Moreover, government may facilitate the learners to connect with English language native speakers for conversational practices and cultural exchange.

The inclusion of English-speaking competence criteria in the University admission standards may also motivate students to give language top study priority. This policy guarantees that students possess the speaking competence needed to be successful in their academic endeavours that ultimately ends at their real-life performance. Resultantly, universities may provide English language instructions to help their students become more fluent in the language. Hence, such interventions can significantly boost up university students' English-speaking competence (El-Mekki, Alhamed, & Shoaib, 2021).

Additionally, application of technology to language learning is another intervention that brings forth encouraging results. The learners can use mobile apps, websites, and

online platforms to access a range of teaching resources and opportunities for language practice. Hence, using a mobile app can increase students' speaking competence more than receiving traditional classroom instruction (Alqarni et al., 2021; Kohnke et al., 2024). Moreover, peer-assisted learning (PAL) is also successful in enhancing speaking competence. PAL pairs students with different speaking competence, so that they can work together to develop their language skills (Nienaber & Prinsloo, 2021). Digital skills can help English language learners to get access to all the online resources and then use them for language practice (Kohnke et al., 2024).

English speaking competence of students can be increased by providing marginalized people with financial support. People should be provided with books, scholarship, grants and access to the audio-visual aids (Kanodia et al., 2021). Therefore, the current study explores the causes of incompetence among ESL undergraduates in Punjab university ransacking the perceptions of the ESL teachers and learners to diagnose the actual handicaps faced to the ESL classrooms over here. The teachers may have their own problems if solved, they can bring about tremendous changes in their classes. On other hands learners bear their own point of view and experiences. However, they can mark the factors which can proliferate the real objectives of the ESL education in the public university.

Although English speaking competence is widely acknowledged as being important, yet there is a significant difference between the desired level of competence and the actual level of competence existing among Pakistani undergraduates, Pakistani ESL undergraduates lack the necessary English-speaking competence (Ahmed et al., 2024). The lack of English competence among Pakistanis, especially in rural areas and among

lower socioeconomic groups, is one of the main challenges and they fail to grab more knowledge of English language being essentially incompetent in their ESL classrooms. Access to education and information, as well as opportunities for social and economic mobility, may all be limited as a result (Khan, 2024).

2.10 Previous Studies in Related Areas

Over the past few decades, Pakistan, a nation of over 220 million people, has become more and more globalized. As a result, undergraduates of Pakistan are seriously anxious for their English-speaking skills. Further, communication is the spoken or written exchange of ideas between individuals, fluency, clarity, exactness and accuracy are the multifarious requirements that competence in speaking seems to follow in this study.

Several studies have investigated English language speaking competence among Pakistani university undergraduates, identifying various challenges and factors influencing proficiency. Raza (2022) proposed a rating scale tailored to assess English speaking proficiency among Pakistani university students, emphasizing on the necessity for such tools in enhancing communicative skills within higher education. This scale was developed in response to the Higher Education Commission's emphasis on improving communicative skills and the introduction of compulsory English language proficiency courses in universities (Anwar et al., 2021; Shawaqfeh et al., 2024; Tai & Zhao, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). The study underscored the importance of tailored assessment tools to enhance students' speaking abilities.

Meanwhile, Hussain, Shahzad and Rasheed (2021) evaluated university students' understanding and perception of pragmatics in the English language. However, this study forms the views that pragmatic competence is often overlooked in language instruction, leading to communication challenges. The authors recommend integrating pragmatic aspects into language curricula to enhance effective communication skills.

However, Mahmood and Naseem (2018) identified key challenges faced by university students in speaking English, including lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and insufficient motivation. The study suggested that addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach involving curriculum development, teacher training, and constructing supportive learning environments. These studies collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of English-speaking competence among Pakistani undergraduates, pointing to the importance of tailored assessment tools, understanding students' attitudes, addressing specific speaking challenges, enhancing pragmatic skills, and revising curricula to foster better language proficiency.

Bhutto and Kazmi (2024) conducted a very comprehensive study on oral language as a helpful learning tool and a crucial communication tool that gives us power in our daily lives. Speaking and listening are two aspects of oral Communication that he valued. He explained that good verbal English communication skills involve speaking and listening. We use oral language throughout our lives, which is likely our most important instrument for Communication. Both combine their skills and aid in one another's development.

Safitri and Suntari (2024) emphasized to enhance students' speaking abilities in the English Department. According to the interviews conducted to gather preliminary information on the students' speaking abilities, the students' insufficient language proficiency was the primary cause of their speaking difficulties, which made them hesitant to talk. The several speaking exercises that helped the students' talk were unfamiliar with them. They lack speaking techniques and rely on writing to communicate thoughts. Task-based learning was modified for one-semester courses through an action research project to benefit the students. In this study, fifteen eleventh grade students took part. The information was gathered via the pre-test, post-test, interview, and observation outcomes.

The results showed that using task-based learning aids students in improving their speaking abilities for the three measured indicators: accuracy, and understanding (Knisely, 2022; Ravichander et al., 2020; Suzuki & Kormos, 2024). By engaging in various activities during the three learning phases pre-task, task-cycle, and form focus—the students can finish the tasks. They are successful in acquiring confidence and honing their speaking abilities. Students can assess their learning through group projects and pair work

Ali and Khan (2022) looked at the connection between graduates from Pakistan's universities' competence in the English language and their professional development. The study concludes that graduates' ability to communicate in English is crucial for their professional development in Pakistan. The study also highlights the difficulties undergraduates face in mastering the English language, such as little exposure to the language outside of the classroom and insufficient teacher preparation.

Siddiqui, Shah, and Karim's (2019) study looked at the connection between Pakistani job opportunities and English-speaking competence. According to the study, graduates' ability to communicate in English is a crucial criterion for determining their employment prospects in Pakistan. The study also identifies the difficulties graduates face in mastering the English language, such as insufficient teacher preparation and little exposure to the language outside of the classroom.

Jain (2019) investigated the role of English-speaking competence to enhance the employability in Indian graduates. The nature of the study was quantitative, and the findings revealed that the Indian graduates did not get enough opportunities to speak English inside and outside the classroom that's why they are demotivated towards the learning of English as a foreign language.

Ali, Malik and Riaz (2020) investigated the connection between Pakistani graduates' academic success and their command of the English language. The study discovers that among Pakistani graduates, academic success and English-speaking competence are strongly positively correlated. The study also emphasizes the need for universities to offer students more opportunities to enhance their English-speaking competence through programmes like language labs, conversation clubs, and immersion studies.

Hussain and Khan (2020) examined Pakistani graduates' attitudes toward learning the English language. The study concludes as Pakistani undergraduates bear a positive attitude toward learning English, they encounter the numberless obstacles on their path to become fluent in the English language, such as little exposure to English outside of the classroom and insufficient teacher preparation.

Jabeen (2020) highlighted the issues and solutions for enhancing English speaking competence in Pakistan. The study emphasizes the necessity for universities to implement student centred teaching strategies, offer more chances for the English language practice outside of the classroom, and enhance teacher preparation and development programmes.

Heggernes (2021) investigated the role of text in fostering Intercultural communicative competence in the English language classroom. It was drawn on the principles of critical interpretive synthesis along with qualitative paradigm. However, previous research relevant to the topic were the source of data and the findings showed that fiction texts are more consumed by students to foster the speaking competence and teachers are more focused to incorporate the dialogic and student centre activities to reach this goal. The findings further asserted that the more the teachers are aware of the affordance of different types of texts the more they are capable to mediate EL learners' process of learning suggesting various types of research studies and teaching approaches to trace the language learning problems.

Ashraf, Ashraf and Hussain (2021) evaluated the relationship between English speaking competence and the employability of Pakistani undergraduates. The study discovers that among Pakistani graduates, having a strong command of the English language is a significant predictor of employability. Additionally, results show that one of the main causes of unemployment among undergraduates in Pakistan is the lack of competence in English language.

Mahmood and Hanif (2020) held a research study within the aim to trace the perception of undergraduates relating their competence based on English language national examination results. The results of the study showed that despite getting excellent grades in English language, still there were most of the students who were weak in speaking competence asked for the university language course.

Xiuwen and Razali (2021) held their research to figure it out how TikTok videos can be helpful to enhance communicative competence among EFL students in China during Covid-19. Canal and Swain's (1980) model of competence were applied as a theoretical framework. As for as the source of the data is concerned the researchers review the studies that had been previously conducted on the videos of you tube, Facebook and some other platforms of social media. However, the findings revealed that in the world that has been rapidly changed, TikTok being latest and technological product has the compact potential to motivate the students to use such videos to embrace their academic purposes and the modern teachers should pay fruitful attention to promote the use of digital learning systems in TikTok among their students particularly in the scenario of pandemic.

Another research, Hussain and Ali (2021) looked at Pakistani graduates' attitudes toward learning the English language. The study concludes that graduates from Pakistan have a favourable attitude towards learning English language. Thus, the study also reveals that one of the biggest obstacles to learning English outside of the classroom is a lack of exposure to it.

Ayub and Khaleel (2024) examined the performance of Pakistani graduates in international job markets. The study reveals that an important component of Pakistani graduates' success in foreign job markets is their competence in the English language. The study also makes clear the need for Pakistani universities to enhance their English language curricula and teaching strategies in order to increase the graduates' competence in the language.

Armea et al. (2022) conducted the research study that focused to investigate the relationships between English proficiency and competence among major students at central Bicol state university of agriculture- Cipocot College of education. Third- and fourth-year students of the programme mentioned above were the respondents. While the method applied by the researchers was evaluative and correlational along with the quantitative paradigm. The findings asserted that majority of the students were proficient both in grammar and proficiency, but the remaining students had proficient reading and comprehension skills (Tong, Yu, & Deacon, 2024). In this way, a significant relationship was found between the English proficiency and literary competence among the students.

Qureshi, Abbasi and Mahmood (2022) conducted a systematic review of the literature to investigate the link between graduates from Pakistan who are competent in English and their employability. The study findings demonstrate that graduates' ability to find employment in Pakistan depends heavily on their command of the English language. The study also identifies the difficulties graduates face in mastering the English language, such as insufficient teacher preparation and little exposure to the language outside of the classroom.

Alejado et al. (2023) conducted a study to know the effects of Korean dramas with English subtitles on the English-speaking competence of students. The main objective was to investigate the effects of watching Korean Drama with English Subtitles on Students English speaking competence, reading speed, comprehension and communication skills. The researchers applied qualitative paradigm and analysed data through the recursive textual analysis. While the respondents of the study were the students at Negros Occidental High school. The results revealed both the advantages and disadvantages of watching dramas with subtitles. Students must pause the drama to read the speedily flashing up subtitles. But because of these subtitles they improved their pronunciation, reading speed, comprehension and listening skills (Rahimi & Aghabarari, 2024).

Munawar and Khan (2020) examined the communicative competence at the tertiary level students of public institutions. The main objective of the study was to evaluate the level of fluency while speaking English among the students and for this purpose, the researchers applied qualitative paradigm along with Canale and Swain's (1980) idea of communicative competence as a theoretical framework of the study. Teachers and students, both were taken as the respondents and questionnaire and interview were utilized as data collection techniques. While the findings of that particular research asserted that the learners were unable to communicate effectively in the target language and the main problems were poor economic and educational background and lack of practice of the communicative competence strategies by the teachers during the lectures.

To recapitulate, this study, as already explained, is an attempt to contribute to the field of applied linguistics by exploring the competence to speak among Pakistani undergraduates who have witnessed language barriers in their lives. The researcher has conducted the current research to explore how the English language teacher and students define competence, their experiences in the ESL classes and the factors hindered in the way of the edification of competence to speak English inside as well as outside the classrooms.

2.11 Connecting the Literature Review to the Study's Methodology

The literature review serves as the foundation for this study, guiding the research design, the selection of data collection methods, and the analysis process. By synthesizing existing research on second language acquisition, speaking competence, and ESL classroom practices, the literature highlights key theoretical concepts, methodological approaches, and gaps in the current understanding of speaking competence. This section explicitly connects insights from the literature review to the methodological decisions made for this study on exploring speaking competence in speaking among English undergraduates in Pakistan.

2.11.1 Guiding the Selection of Data Collection Methods

The literature emphasizes the importance of qualitative approaches in exploring subjective concepts like speaking competence, particularly in an ESL context. It highlights the need to examine students' and teachers' perspectives on competence development through reflective and interactional methods. These insights informed the selection of classroom observations and in-depth interviews as the study's primary data collection tools.

2.11.1.1 Classroom Observations

The literature on language learning underscores the role of classroom interactions in shaping students' speaking competence. Observing real-time dynamics between teachers and students provides a comprehensive understanding of how speaking competence is developed and demonstrated in an ESL setting. Studies in second language pedagogy suggest that non-verbal cues, peer interactions, and teacher feedback are essential aspects of speaking competence, making classroom observations a critical method for capturing these behaviours and interactions in naturalistic settings.

2.11.1.2 In-Depth Interviews

The literature also stresses the importance of learners' and teachers' narratives in understanding their perceptions and experiences of speaking competence. In-depth interviews allow participants to articulate their definitions of speaking competence, the factors they associate with its development, and their personal experiences in ESL classrooms. Research on language learning highlights interviews as a valuable tool for capturing individual perspectives, providing rich, contextualized data that complements the observational findings. This dual approach ensures a holistic understanding of how competence is perceived and developed.

2.11.2 Guiding Data Analysis

The literature supports the use of thematic analysis as a robust method for identifying and interpreting patterns in qualitative data. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis (2006) is particularly suited for this study's focus on understanding participants' conceptualizations and experiences of speaking competence.

2.11.2.1 Thematic Coding and Categorization

The literature highlights recurring themes in language learning research, such as the role of grammar, fluency, and confidence in defining competence. These themes guided the initial coding framework for analysing data from observations and interviews. For example, codes such as ‘associated words for competence,’ ‘teacher feedback,’ and ‘peer interaction’ reflect key areas identified in the literature. This systematic approach allows for the identification of nuanced patterns and themes that align with the research questions.

2.11.2.2 Triangulation of Data

The literature underscores the importance of triangulating data from multiple sources to enhance validity and reliability (Storey et al., 2024). Observational data provide insights into real-time classroom practices, while interview data reveal participants’ subjective interpretations. By integrating findings from these methods, the study ensures a comprehensive and well-rounded analysis of speaking competence.

The literature review is integral to the study’s methodology, providing a clear framework for selecting data collection methods and analytical approaches. By aligning the research design with insights from existing studies, the methodology addresses the research questions comprehensively and ensures the findings are both robust and contextually relevant. This alignment underscores the study’s contribution to understanding the development of speaking competence in ESL classrooms, particularly within the Pakistani context.

2.12 Summary

This chapter presents a review of the literature pertaining to the speaking competence in speaking among Pakistani English language undergraduates at Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan. It highlights the attitude and expectations of students towards the ESL learning, the quality of English language teaching and the factors which cause incompetence to speak English inside and outside the ESL classrooms in the public university. Furthermore, it discusses related studies on speaking competence in speaking among students. It also discusses the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study that can guide the researcher in examining the English language and competence based on the respondents' narratives. The researcher also examined the impacts of English-speaking competence on graduates' employment prospects and highlighted the barriers to English language teaching and learning. In particular, this chapter emphasizes the importance of developing English speaking competence among graduates for both their own personal and professional growth as well as for the advancement of the nation. Moreover, the researcher suggests various effective policies and the interventions to improve undergraduates' speaking competence, developing their pronunciation, grammar, clarity, proficiency, accuracy and fluency.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative research methodology employed to explore speaking competence among English language undergraduates at a public university in Pakistan. The study seeks to understand the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by students in developing their speaking competence within an academic context. Qualitative research is well-conformed to this inquiry as it emphasizes on in-depth sound richness and contextual understanding of the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

However, the researcher employed qualitative methods to meet the objectives of this study, including classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth data on students' language learning experiences. Hence, the open-ended nature of these tools allowed participants to articulate their thoughts confidently, enabling the researcher to uncover insights into factors that enhance or hinder speaking competence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Resultantly, this chapter outlines the research design, sampling strategy, data collection methods and analysis procedures. Moreover, ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality are also addressed to ensure the integrity, trustworthiness and credibility of the study (Mousa et al., 2024). Therefore, the qualitative approach adopted in this research not merely provides a deeper understanding of the students' perspectives but also contributes to the deeply broader discourse on improving English language instructions and pedagogy in the

Pakistani higher education context. The approaches offer in-depth understanding and sound perception of the speaking competence in speaking English in the undergraduate ESL learning system in Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan.

3.1.1 Setting the Scene

In this study, the researcher is focused to get the responses of the ESL undergraduates at Punjab University Lahore. However, it is an attempt to explore speaking competence among English undergraduates in Pakistan, as the learners belong to different linguistic and social groups and hold multitude of differences. Moreover, through this study, the researcher intends to reveal the attitude and belief system of Pakistani students in respect of competence to speak English as a second language. Furthermore, he intends to highlight the factors which enhance the competence to speak English pursuing grammatical fitness, clarity and proficiency inside and outside the classrooms.

With the intention to make sense of the linguistic construction of English language from Pakistani undergraduates' point of view, the researcher is determined to apply discourse analytical approach. In response, it enabled him to get the deep insight into not only the cultural backgrounds of the respondents of the study but also explore their experiences in terms of the competence to speak English language. Thus, gradually it added the in-depth understanding of the phenomenon ransacking the fundamental factors obstructed in the way of the competence to speak English.

Moreover, the researcher has selected this particular topic under the influence of his desire to bring a positive change towards the acceptance of the English as a second language among the undergraduate learners in Pakistan because he is convinced that

graduation is the stage when individuals take decisions about their careers and whatever career they decide to go for requires them to be competent in speaking English language because of its increasing global value. So, to have the detailed and authentic data, the researcher conducted the observations in the ESL classrooms and the in-depth interviews, believing them as the best ways to accumulate the rich information from the participants (Kumar, 2018).

Therefore, the participants of the study were invited to share their views on the obstructions and issues they encountered in developing competence to speak English obliging grammatical principles, using proper words of language and demonstrating proficiency inside and outside the classroom. In this way, they were convinced to share their issues and self-perception of competence which might bring about improvement in the speaking skills of the learners. Further, the researcher believed that it being huge responsibility on him required to create a convincing environment during the interviews and class observations where students felt comfortable, valued, and encouraged to share their feelings and experiences about their competence to speak English language in an objective and convincing way.

3.2 Research Design

This study explores speaking competence among ESL undergraduates in a public university in Pakistan, with a specific focus on identifying the challenges they face, and the strategies used to enhance their oral proficiency. To investigate these aspects, a qualitative research design was employed, as it allows for a deeper understanding of learners' experiences, perceptions, and communication practices within their natural academic environment (Othman & Lotfie, 2019).

Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for this inquiry because it emphasizes rich, descriptive data and participant-centred interpretations, which are essential for exploring the multifaceted nature of speaking competence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design aligns well with the exploratory nature of the study and the goal of capturing nuanced insights that are not easily quantifiable.

The study utilized data triangulation through two primary methods as classroom observations, and in-depth interviews with ESL undergraduate students and their instructors. These methods enabled the researcher to observe real-time interaction and understand participants' subjective experiences and reflections regarding their spoken English competence (Pamela, Routledge & Hogg, 2020).

Classroom observations provided insights into the actual use of English in ESL settings, including how students participate in oral tasks, respond to teacher prompts, and engage with peers. It also revealed external factors such as classroom environment, peer dynamics, and teacher-student interactions that impact spoken language development. However, in-depth interviews allowed participants to narrate their personal challenges in speaking English, their perceptions of fluency, grammar, and pronunciation, and the strategies they believe support or hinder their oral language learning. Unlike studies relying on software-based analysis, this research conducted manual coding and thematic analysis to interpret the collected data. This approach involved careful reading, coding, and categorizing of the transcripts to identify emerging themes related to speaking competence, language barriers, and instructional strategies (Nowell et al., 2017).

The analysis was guided by Canale and Swain's (1980) Communicative Competence Framework, with particular attention to the component of grammatical competence—which encompasses knowledge of grammar, fluency, pronunciation. The framework provided a theoretical lens for understanding how linguistic, social, and strategic competencies contribute to effective spoken English in academic settings.

In sum, this qualitative approach, supported by direct classroom observation and rich personal narratives, enabled a comprehensive exploration of the realities and complexities of speaking competence among ESL undergraduates in Pakistan. The findings aim to inform pedagogical practices, curriculum design, and policy development to improve spoken English proficiency in higher education contexts.

3.3 Role of the Researcher

In this qualitative study, the researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, fully engaging in each stage of the research process to explore the speaking competence of ESL undergraduates in a Pakistani public university. According to Creswell (2014), the qualitative researcher plays a central role in facilitating meaningful inquiry by gathering rich data, making sense of participants' experiences, and offering interpretive insights.

Operating within an interpretivist paradigm, the researcher adopted multiple interconnected roles—observer, interviewer, facilitator, analyst, and reflective practitioner. The study's focus on students' spoken competence required the researcher to pay close attention to both verbal and non-verbal cues during classroom observations and in-depth interviews with teachers and students.

Being an insider to the educational and cultural context further positioned the researcher to understand the nuanced challenges faced by ESL learners. However, this also demanded continuous reflexivity, as personal experiences and preconceptions could unintentionally influence interpretation. Drawing from Holmes (2020) and Bryman (2016), the researcher maintained a reflective journal to document insights, challenges, and decisions throughout the process.

Establishing trust and rapport was essential, particularly given the personal nature of students' reflections on their speaking anxieties, challenges, and perceptions. In line with Patton (2015), the researcher fostered an ethical, respectful environment where participants felt comfortable expressing their views, while ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and data protection.

To uphold the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, the researcher also employed methodological triangulation, combining classroom observations with interview data. This approach helped validate findings and capture multiple dimensions of speaking competence. Furthermore, detailed records of coding, theme development, and analysis were maintained to support transparency and dependability.

Through this active, reflexive, and ethical engagement (Kingsman & Davis, 2024), the researcher contributed to a deeper understanding of the sociolinguistic and pedagogical factors shaping spoken English proficiency among undergraduates, thereby offering valuable insights for the enhancement of ESL education in Pakistan.

3.3.1 Researcher Bias

In qualitative research, researcher bias refers to the influence that a researcher's personal beliefs, expectations, or cultural background may have on the various stages of the research process, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2014; Bryman, 2016). Since this study explores speaking competence among ESL undergraduates in a public university in Pakistan, the researcher acknowledges the potential for bias due to being an insider to the context—both culturally and linguistically.

As a Pakistani academic with personal experience in the same educational system, the researcher may hold pre-existing assumptions about the challenges students face in developing spoken English competence. While such familiarity offers contextual insight, it may unintentionally influence the interpretation of data, or the emphasis placed on certain themes. To address and minimize the impact of bias, several strategies were employed:

- **Reflexivity:** Following Olmos-Vega et al. (2023), the researcher maintained a reflective journal throughout the study to critically evaluate personal beliefs and remain aware of any subjective influence on data interpretation.
- **Triangulation:** Data were collected from multiple sources—including classroom observations and in-depth interviews with both students and teachers—to ensure a balanced and credible understanding of the research phenomenon (Pamela, Routledge & Hogg, 2020; Patton, 2015).

- **Peer Debriefing:** Interpretations and emerging themes were discussed with academic peers to enhance objectivity and ensure that findings were grounded in participants' actual experiences rather than researcher assumptions.
- **Use of Direct Quotations:** Participants' own words were cited extensively to preserve authenticity and reduce interpretive distortion.

3.4 Research Procedure

The researcher tried his level best to create a trustworthy relationship between him and the respondents. To ensure this, the researcher provided all the necessary details of the study prior to conduct the observation and interviews. All the interviews were conducted in the setting where the respondents were comfortable, and privacy could be maintained. The participants were felt to be very kind and helpful during the interviews and some seemed to talk independently. The respondents were informed of the interview details and procedures. The interviews were all recorded using a digital voice recorder to record the data which the researcher arranged for the research study. All the data were transcribed verbatim. The field notes were immediately written after each interview to avoid forgetting the important details of the moment.

3.5 Sampling Framework

The sampling framework for this study was carefully designed to ensure the selection of participants who could provide rich, relevant, and context-specific insights into the challenges and strategies associated with developing speaking competence in ESL classrooms. A purposive sampling approach was employed, consistent with the qualitative nature of the research and its aim to explore lived experiences and

perceptions in natural educational settings (Creswell, 2014). This sampling strategy supported the use of in-depth interviews and classroom observations as the primary data collection tools. The reason for such sampling is to capture the microscopic understanding of their perspectives about the competence to speak language using effective language, grammar, clarity and fluency. According to Kumar (2018):

Purposive sampling can be considered among one of the experts and judgemental sampling techniques. It is a type of non- probability sampling which does not believe in providing equal opportunities for individuals to be the part of the study rather encourages a researcher to apply a subjective approach in respect of the selection of the participants. Hence, it goes for the selection of a sample that can be a logical and true representative of the entire population (p. 244).

3.5.1 Target Population

Data for this dissertation were collected from a pool of volunteers and selected persons who have been teaching and learning in the same university (Punjab University Lahore). The target population consisted of undergraduate English language learners and ESL instructors at a public university in Pakistan. Two ESL teachers and their twelve undergraduate students (six from each teacher class) participated voluntarily in in-depth interviews. This group was chosen due to its direct engagement with English as a second language in formal academic settings. These students, enrolled in their sixth and eighth semesters, represent a critical stage in their academic journey, where speaking competence becomes essential for both academic success and future professional opportunities.

3.5.2 Criteria for Selecting Participants

This purposive sampling allowed the researcher to identify participants who were best positioned to discuss the real-world issues of fluency, grammar use, limitations, speaking anxiety, and pedagogical gaps impacting ESL speaking competence. The following criteria for the selection of the respondents were employed:

- (i) as the Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan consists of multilingual and multi- ethnic groups. For example, Punjabi, Saraiki, Urdu, Pushto, and some other are the local languages which are spoken inside and outside the University. Moreover, the university aims to produce highly competent graduates who should render their services for the national development and carrying leadership qualities in managing human resources may enhance intellectual capacity,
- (ii) The respondents are Pakistani ESL learners and teachers.
- (iii) they are studying/teaching in a public university in Pakistan.
- (iv) The student participants belong to different social and cultural backgrounds to gauge the speaking competence English. For this purpose, a demographic profile of the students was obtained from the department administrator' in charge.
- (v) The participants are teachers and their English language undergraduate students of sixth and eighth semester. The selected students' participants were those who could articulate their experiences based on what they had encountered personally in their ESL classrooms at Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan.

3.5.3 Classroom Observation and Interview Protocol and Design

3.5.3.1 Classroom Observation Protocol

The classroom observation protocol was systematically developed to capture authentic, real-time interactions between teachers and students, focusing on how speaking competence in speaking is developed and practiced in ESL classrooms. The scale used in the present study was adapted from Cheng and Keuk (2020), Aktay and Mermi (2022) and Iberri-Shea (2017) and modified into the present context. This scale was used to focus on speaking competence (e.g. grammar, proficiency, pronunciation, clarity and accuracy), students' participation, interactions and ESL pedagogy of the language teachers and formed the idea of endeavours focused on the competence to speak English language. Initial visits were made to familiarize the researcher with the classroom environment and participants to ensure minimal disruption. Information sheets and consent forms (Appendix B) were provided to teachers and students, detailing the study's purpose and voluntary participation.

Observations were conducted in natural classroom settings to capture genuine interactions. Each session lasted approximately ninety minutes to cover a full lesson cycle. Notes were taken during observations, and lessons were audio-recorded with prior consent. Non-verbal cues such as gestures and expressions were also documented. A pilot observation was conducted to refine the checklist and ensure its alignment with the study's objectives. Feedback from this phase informed adjustments for clarity and comprehensiveness.

3.5.3.2 Interview Protocol

The interview protocol was meticulously crafted to gather in-depth insights into participants' perceptions, experiences, and factors contributing to speaking competence in ESL classrooms. The protocol typically includes a set of questions or topics covered during the interview, as well as instructions for the researcher or interviewer on how to conduct the interview. The interviews were guided by open-ended questions derived from the study's research questions and literature review. The in-depth interview protocol was adapted from Saleh (2020) and the researcher, guided by the protocol, probed the participants for more detailed information (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

This approach allowed participants to share their thoughts freely, fostering a conversational atmosphere while ensuring the discussion remained focused on the research objectives. The interviews aim to explore i) how participants define speaking competence and the words they associate with it, ii) participants' experiences of developing speaking competence in ESL classrooms, iii) factors identified by participants as contributing to speaking competence among undergraduates.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews, allowing for flexibility to probe deeper into participants' responses. Participants were teachers and students from ESL classrooms at a public university in Pakistan. Each interview lasted twenty-five to thirty minutes, depending on the depth of responses. Participants received information sheets outlining the study's objectives, their rights, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Written consent was obtained before the interviews.

Interviews were conducted in a quiet and comfortable setting to facilitate open dialogue. The researcher began with introductory questions to establish rapport and ease participants into the discussion. With consent, interviews were audio-recorded for accuracy, and notes were taken to capture key points and non-verbal cues. Probes were used to clarify or expand on responses, ensuring comprehensive data collection.

A pilot phase was conducted to test the interview questions and protocol. Feedback from pilot participants informed refinements to enhance clarity and alignment with research objectives.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

This phase is always considered the most sensitive and delicate one because here a researcher is assumed to put his real contribution and dedications. Hence, to meet this criterion, the researcher tried his level best to ensure the availability of rich and authentic data from ESL undergraduate education at the Pakistani public university in Lahore. Therefore, to ensure the smooth success of this study, the data was collected in two phases as mentioned below in figure 3.1.

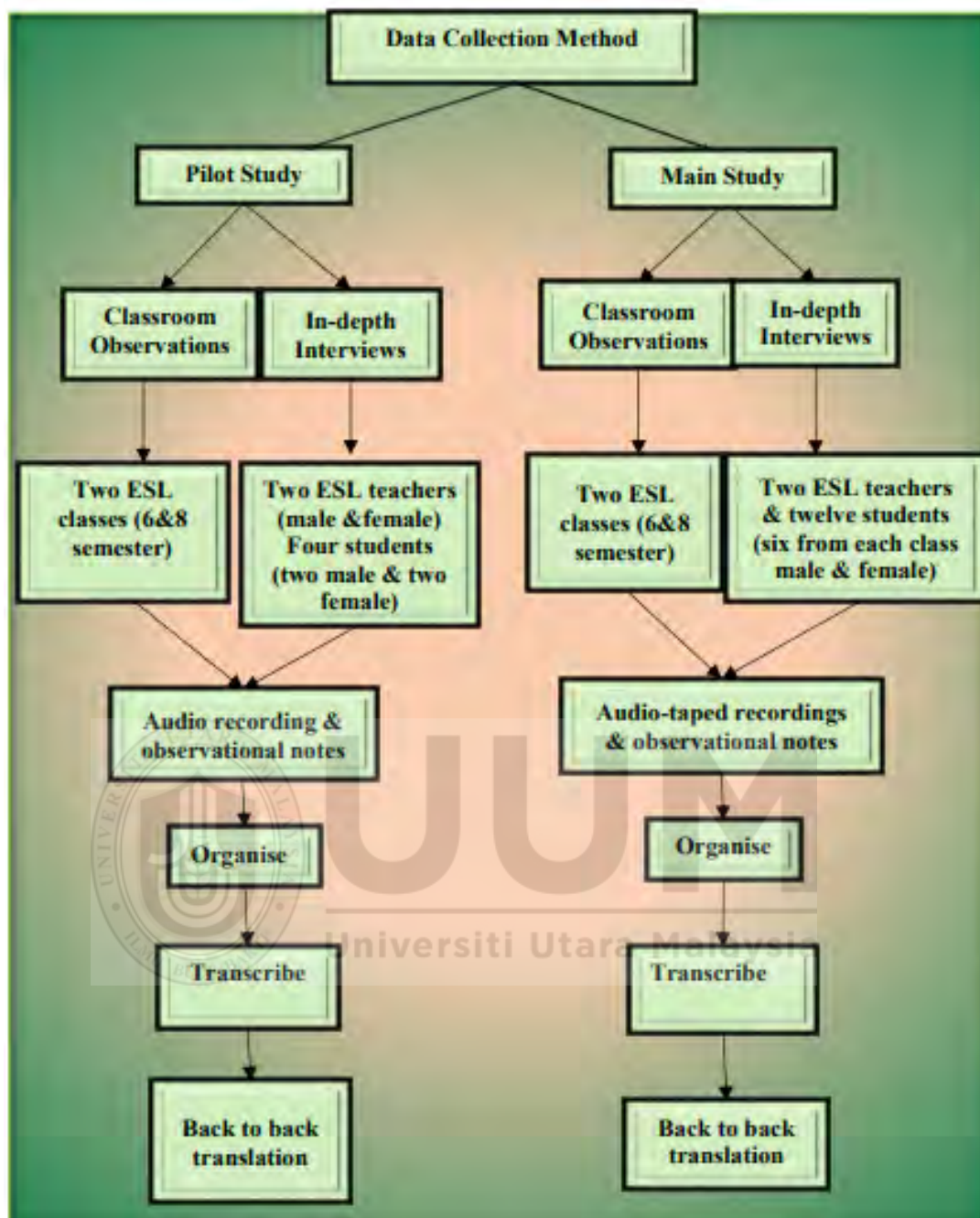


Figure 3.1. Data collection method

During the data collection process, the researcher explained the objective of the study on English language learning and teaching and established a good rapport with participants, ensuring them of confidentiality and that the collected data would only be used for research purposes. The researcher obtained their consent before initiating

the main study (Appendix B). Guided by the adapted observation checklist (Appendix F) and interview questions (Appendix D & E), two EL classroom observations and ten in-depth interviews were conducted to collect accurate data. The in-depth interviews were audio-taped to record the events cautiously and accurately in conformity with the consent of the respondents belonging to ESL learning system at Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan.

The researcher also observed and took notes to pile up rich data. From the student participants, all of respondents were positive in sharing their thoughts on the speaking practices in their ESL classroom. Furthermore, in the current study about the exploration of the speaking competence of the Pakistani undergraduates, the participation of the ESL undergraduate students who belonged to different social and geographical areas of Pakistan represented the importance of having their voice heard which tended to be lacking in the Pakistani ESL education system. The interviews were conducted at the time that was convenient and suitable for the respondents who were directly involved in teaching and learning English language. The researcher framed and followed the interviews by experiencing the classroom observations to get more data about the teacher's claims regarding the promotion of speaking in the natural setting of the ESL classroom.

Classroom observation checklist and interview protocols assisted the researcher to get rich data and a holistic picture about the engagement of teachers in developing the speaking competence of the ESL learners. All the research instruments including classroom observations and the interview questions were piloted with two of the teachers and their four students. Based on the piloting, revisions were made to avoid

ambiguities in the actual study. As suggested by Kilbourn (2006) that directions to follow and questions to ask in the pilot study usually emerge and can be developed more to achieve the ultimate targets.

During data collection process, all responses were audio-recorded and transcribed after all. Thus, the researcher endeavoured to construct a deep insight into the problem in the annals of ESL promotion system (Kumar, 2018). The researcher claims that the use of in-depth interview techniques and observation checklist are completely justified in this study, because in this way respondents belonging to multifarious social and cultural groups could reveal minute details about their perceptions, experiences and suggestions to improve the ESL learning system in Pakistan. Resultantly, it helped the researcher to investigate teachers regarding their teaching techniques and methods to enhance the speaking competence of their English language learners and to gain insights into the self-perceptions regarding speaking competence of ESL undergraduates in public university in Pakistan.

3.6.1 The First Phase: Pilot Study

The researcher conducted the pilot study to ensure the appropriateness of the planned methodology, observation checklist and in-depth interviews to enhance the strength of the research tools designed for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). According to Malmqvist et al., (2019), a pilot study is a method used to validate their data collecting instruments (e.g., observation and interview protocols, etc.), ensuring its effectiveness, accuracy, and reliability. Pilot study generally tests the interview questions' accuracy on a small number of participants, and their feedback

on the protocols are used to revise and improve the interview questions before the actual data collection process began.

For the pilot study, the researcher took six participants to trial his research design. Through piloting, the researcher embraced the clear understanding to what extent the respondents could understand the interview questions.

3.6.1.1 Classroom Observations for the Pilot Study

In pilot study, researcher observed the English language classrooms for one week. EL class is conducted twice in a week. In this regard, the researcher observed four classes (two classes of each teacher). Observation time was approximately one hour and thirty minutes per class time (lesson) and researcher observed four classes (two classes of each teacher). In this regard, overall observation duration lasts six hours (360 minutes).

Considering the classroom observations conducted during this mini-version pilot study, it became evident that students' speaking competence was hindered by limited focus on key linguistic elements such as grammar, fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. While teachers emphasized grammatical accuracy during structured tasks like reading aloud or completing textbook exercises, students lacked real-time opportunities to apply these rules in natural conversation. Fluency, defined as the smooth and spontaneous flow of speech, was noticeably low among students, largely due to their hesitation and dependence on written prompts.

Additionally, pronunciation was not explicitly taught or corrected during instruction; rather, mispronunciations were often overlooked, which may lead to fossilization of incorrect speech patterns. Most critically, students appeared to lack confidence when

speaking in English, often avoiding participation unless prompted directly. This reluctance seemed to stem from fear of making mistakes in grammar or pronunciation, and from the absence of a supportive, interactive environment that encourages risk-taking in language use. These early observations reinforce the importance of adopting student-centred, communicative strategies that not only address structural accuracy but also actively build fluency, pronunciation, and learner confidence—crucial dimensions of speaking competence in ESL classrooms.

3.6.1.2 In-depth Interviews for Pilot Study

The pilot study was done to also recheck the questions posed to the respondents. Revisions were made to avoid ambiguities in the actual study following Kilbourn's argument, "... In the course of conducting a pilot study, directions to follow and questions to ask usually emerge and can be developed and honed" (Kilbourn, 2006, p. 549). The pilot study was conducted using in-depth interviews, it helped the researcher to fine-tune the questions and the research procedure.

Ultimately, six participants participated in the pilot study that comprised four undergraduates and two teachers of the same ESL learning system. Hence, the participants belonged to the same university (Punjab University Lahore) that represents the three major language groups in Punjab (Punjabi, Saraiki and Urdu). The study utilised purposive sampling to identify potential respondents. Moreover, the researcher selected the participants who were ESL experienced teachers with more than twenty years of teaching experience at the Punjab university ELT department and their linguistically diverse undergraduate students who have been in the campus for at least six semesters. All the participants belonged to the same university, same

department, same ethnic group (Punjab) but they held different language groups and cultures. They were non-native English speakers with diverse language and ethnic backgrounds. Pseudonyms were used to refer to the participants.

Hence, this study sample proved sufficient to elucidate rigorous analysis of the given interview data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, the researcher used the same selection criteria for the pilot study that was used for the actual study after all. The researcher selected two teachers (one male and one female) and four students (two male and two female) as shown in Table 3.1 and 3.2. This table provides the background information of participants including their gender, age, status, mother tongue and mode of work.

Table 3.1

In-depth Interview Pilot Study: The Teacher Participants' Profile

Participants	Academic Qualification	Gender	Age	Years of Experience	Mode of Work
PTA	PhD	Male	52	25	Full-time
PTB	PhD	Female	48	20	Full-time

Source: The Researcher's Data (2023)

Table 3.2

In-depth Interviews Pilot Study: The Student Participants' Profile

Participants	Gender	Age	Semester	Institution
SP1	Male	24	BS(6 th)	Punjab University
SP2	Female	23	BS(6 th)	Punjab University

SP3	Male	26	BS(8 th)	Punjab University
SP4	Female	22	BS(8 th)	Punjab University

Source: The Researcher's Data (2023)

Before the execution of the main study, the researcher preferred to conduct a pilot study to ensure the authentication of the topic and appropriateness of the in-depth interviews. Hence, the pilot study was done to also recheck the questions posed to the respondents. Two teachers (one female and one male) and their four English undergraduate students (two males and two females from both classes) were selected for the in-depth interviews. Each interview was conducted in different settings and at different times. Moreover, revisions were made to prevent ambiguities in the main study. Hence, following pilot study, analysing directions and nature of interviews changes can be done to hook the real targets of research, so did the researcher to assure the strength of his tools for the exploration of competence to speak English among the Pakistani undergraduates in Punjab university Lahore. (Kilbourn, 2006).

3.6.2 Phase Two: The Main Study

Pursuing the experience realized from the completion of the pilot study, revisions were made in the research instruments to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability for the main study. Braun and Clarke (2024) evaluative tools for qualitative research need to be developed and designed in a way that allows them to be used by the research community to accomplish qualitative research on its own terms. Thus, they strengthen research quality, rather than undermining and tarnishing it. However, the main study was conducted with cautiously selected participants, utilizing the refined data

collection tools and strategies to explore the speaking competence of Pakistani undergraduates.

Consequently, researcher conducted the study in Punjab university as the access to respondents was straightforward and convenient. Moreover, the researcher utilized established academic networks and institutional familiarity to identify suitable participants for the exploration of speaking competence among Pakistani undergraduates at Punjab university Lahore, ensuring a representative sample aligned with the research objectives.

Using purposive sampling, the researcher identified potential participants based on their roles and involvement in the ESL teaching and learning system at Punjab University, Lahore. Teachers focused on ESL teaching and promotion of speaking competence were prioritized, because they were well-informed of the handicaps faced to the ESL classrooms in the Punjab university. Similarly, the students from the same disciplines and levels of study were selected to capture diverse perspectives on competence in speaking English using good language, grammatical structures and proficiency. Resultantly, total of fourteen participants two English teachers and their twelve students of ESL class (six from each class), were selected. A demographic profile for each of the participants (table 3.3 and table 3.4) is presented beneath with his background information displaying his experience in the ESL learning and teaching system at Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan.

Table 3.3

Main Study: The Teacher Participants' Profile

Participants	Academic Qualification	Gender	Age	Years of Experience	Mode of Work
PTA	PhD	Male	52	25	Full-time
PTB	PhD	Female	48	20	Full-time

Source: The Researcher's Data (2024)

Table 3.4

Main Study: The Student Participants' Profile

Participants	Dept.	Gender	Age	Semester	Institute
P1	English	Female	22	BS (6 th)	Punjab University Lahore
P2	English	Female	22	BS (6 th)	Punjab University Lahore
P3	English	Female	24	BS (6 th)	Punjab University Lahore
P4	English	Male	23	BS (6 th)	Punjab University Lahore
P5	English	Male	23	BS (6 th)	Punjab University Lahore
P6	English	Male	23	BS (6 th)	Punjab University Lahore
P7	English	Male	25	BS (8 th)	Punjab University Lahore
P8	English	Male	23	BS (8 th)	Punjab University Lahore
P9	English	Male	24	BS (8 th)	Punjab University Lahore
P10	English	Female	25	BS (8 th)	Punjab University Lahore
P11	English	Female	23	BS (8 th)	Punjab University Lahore
P12	English	Female	23	BS (8 th)	Punjab University Lahore

Source: The researcher's Data (2024)

However, the researcher initiated by gathering details about the respondents' education and their daily social interactions before exploring their understanding and experiences of the term 'competence' in the ESL classroom in Punjab university. To foster a friendly atmosphere and encourage participation, tea breaks and meals were also arranged. As the language used depends on the respondents' ability to understand the researcher's questions (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005), so the student participants preferred to use English language because their educational backgrounds hailed to English medium schooling, so they felt more comfortable in articulating their viewpoints independently.

3.6.3 Classroom Observations

In this study, classroom observation was used as a key qualitative tool to gain deep insights into the teaching practices, language instruction, and real-time student-teacher interactions in ESL classrooms at a public university in Pakistan. Observations allow the researcher to examine naturally occurring events and behaviours as they unfold in their original context (Kumar, 2018). This approach was instrumental in understanding how speaking competence—including grammar, fluency, pronunciation, and confidence—was taught, practiced, and reflected upon during classroom interactions.

In the present study, the researcher conducted the ESL classroom observations taking the written permission of the Chairperson of the ELT department of Punjab university Lahore. He adopted sound strategy to collect rich data from the research participants. In response, he observed the ongoing teaching and language learning process to hook knowledge that helped him to highlight the challenges which ESL classrooms in Punjab university Lahore face while proliferating and promoting competence to speak

English using correct grammar, sentence structures, clarity, proficiency, good pronunciation and fluency.

The researcher observed the teaching methods which were being used by the teachers to improve grammar, fluency, and pronunciation of the ESL learners. Moreover, he observed the ways of learning in ESL classroom witnessing the ongoing class as the active participant. Resultantly, he observed the content, students' participation, interactions and ESL pedagogy of the language teachers and formed the idea of endeavours focused on the competence to speak English language.

The observations were conducted over a four-week period, during which the researcher observed a total of sixteen ESL classroom sessions—eight classes each for two teachers, selected through purposive sampling. Each class lasted approximately ninety minutes, resulting in a cumulative observation duration of twenty-four hours (1,440 minutes). These observations aimed to explore how often and how effectively elements of speaking competence were addressed during instruction and practice. To systematically capture classroom dynamics, the researcher employed a triangulated observation strategy, which included:

- **Field Notes:** Detailed notes were taken during and immediately after each session, documenting the physical setting, teacher-student interactions, speaking activities, students' responses, and non-verbal cues.

- **Audio Recordings:** Selective lessons were audio-recorded (with permission) to supplement field notes and allow for further analysis of teacher talk, student participation, and pronunciation patterns.
- **Structured Observation Guidelines:** The researcher followed a predefined checklist adapted from Merriam and Tisdell (2015), focusing on specific aspects of speaking competence such as:
 - **Grammar instruction** (e.g., use of correct sentence structures, verb tenses during speaking activities)
 - **Fluency support** (e.g., opportunities for spontaneous speaking, flow and continuity in responses)
 - **Pronunciation practice** (e.g., correction of mispronounced words, emphasis on stress and intonation)
 - **Confidence-building** (e.g., encouragement, positive feedback, safe speaking spaces)

Observations revealed that most of the class time was dominated by teacher talk, with limited opportunities for students to engage in authentic speaking tasks. Although some structured speaking activities were conducted—such as question-answer sessions, pair work, and controlled discussions—they lacked consistency and depth, especially in promoting fluency and pronunciation. Teachers often prioritized grammar correction in written form rather than in spoken exchanges and rarely

provided explicit feedback on pronunciation or scaffolded opportunities to build students' confidence.

These classroom observations not only informed the design of interview questions used in the subsequent phase of data collection but also validated the relevance of focusing on speaking competence as a multidimensional construct. The findings aligned with Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence, especially highlighting the insufficient emphasis on grammatical and strategic competence in spoken interaction. Ultimately, the observation process provided a rich contextual backdrop for understanding the challenges and strategies involved in developing speaking skills among ESL undergraduates in Pakistani public universities.

3.6.4 In-depth Interviews

In line with the qualitative nature of this study, semi-structured individual interviews were employed to explore the challenges and strategies related to speaking competence among English language undergraduates in a public university in Pakistan. Semi-structured interviews are particularly well-suited for qualitative research as they allow for both consistency in questioning and flexibility in exploring emerging themes (Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This approach provided the researcher with the opportunity to elicit rich, personal narratives from participants while maintaining alignment with the research objectives (Pamela et al., 2020).

The interviews were conducted individually, allowing participants the space to share their thoughts, feelings, and lived experiences without the influence of group dynamics. Each interview session lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes,

ensuring sufficient time for in-depth discussion while maintaining participant engagement. These interviews followed classroom observations and aimed to probe deeper into the teaching and learning practices related to speaking competence in ESL settings.

The interview questions were designed based on the key constructs of the study and were informed by the literature on communicative competence, especially Canale and Swain's (1980) framework. The questions focused on participants' understanding of speaking competence, the strategies used to improve grammar, fluency, pronunciation, and confidence, and their perceptions of classroom interaction. Throughout the interview process, the researcher actively practiced reflexivity—maintaining awareness of personal biases, assumptions, and interpretations—and created a comfortable environment for participants through verbal affirmations (e.g., “yes,” “right,” “thank you”) and non-verbal gestures (e.g., nodding, eye contact). This approach helped in establishing rapport and eliciting honest, detailed responses.

All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and later transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. The use of recordings, as recommended by Roulston (2010) and Erickson (1986), allowed the researcher to revisit conversations for analysis and ensured that no valuable data were lost. The transcriptions preserved participants' original words, enabling authentic analysis and interpretation rooted in their lived experiences. In addition to capturing student perspectives, the researcher also interviewed ESL teachers to understand their instructional practices and challenges in fostering speaking competence. These interviews further supported data

triangulation and provided a comprehensive view of the classroom environment and learning dynamics.

Thus, the semi-structured in-depth interviews served as a vital tool for understanding the multifaceted experiences of ESL teachers and students. The recording assisted the researcher in explaining what he had experienced during classroom observations. Recorded data highlighted the real-life classroom practices and challenges that undergraduates face in developing fluency, grammar accuracy, pronunciation, and confidence in spoken English. Moreover, interviews in qualitative research are theme oriented which attempt to interpret and understand the meanings of the main themes in the life of the interviewees (Kvale, 1996).

3.6.4.1 Stages of Qualitative Interviewing

Kvale (1996) described seven stages in designing and implementing a qualitative interview which were followed in this study. These stages include thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying and reporting. However, this process will go through the following phases to prepare the data for analysis.

Thematizing being an important aspect clarifies the aim of the encounters, and it needs to be obvious regarding the ransack of the fundamental knowledge of the research study prior to starting the interviews. Each of the interview question conformed to the theme of the research study. In other words, it can be understood as an interpersonal relationship between the interviewer and his respondents. Here, the focus of the researcher was to make sure that all the stuff included in the ***questionnaire*** was linked to the main theme of the ESL study regarding the exploration and improvement of

competence in speaking among Pakistani undergraduates at Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan. **Interview** guide is developed with a purpose to keep the researcher focused while conducting interviews, trying his best to explore the rich data, ensuring the consistency of information. It developed confidence in the participants who got aware of the real purpose of the research and their contribution regarding its accomplishment and provided real response to the researcher regarding collection of data about their ESL classrooms.

The **Transcribing** stage is the second step that occurs after taking the interviews and it also ensures the coding and analysis of data gathered from the respondents or participants. Hence, here the focus of the researcher is to make the careful reading of data and transcribe it to draw the divergent themes emerging from the information provided by the respondents. **Analysing** being an integral issue was dealt by the researcher very early during the course of research design built on the fundamental target of the study about ESL classroom. However, following this important process, the researcher re-read the transcripts of interviews to find out themes which emerged from the narrative of the respondents in conformity with the study about their ESL classrooms in Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan.

Verifying stage includes checking the credibility of the collected data and triangulation is normally utilized to accomplish this purpose. So, here the researcher reveals the validity, reliability and generalization of the outcomes of his research study about the competence to speak English. The **reporting** stage encourages the researcher to present not only the outcomes of his research but also to clarify how particular study

(Competence in speaking and ESL classroom) is going to contribute for the future research (Kumar, 2018).

Moreover, the fundamental goal of the interviews was to explore the narrative of the respondents about the role of their ESL classroom for the development of competence to speak English language exactly, clearly, proficiently and fluently. Following the concept of subjectivity, the speakers posited themselves as subjects and revealed their point of view subjectively. They spoke about the subject matter demonstrating their personal experience in the ESL classroom and managed to reveal their real and subjective perceptions.

3.7 Data Analysis

Out the collected data from ESL teachers and learners in Punjab university, the theme of each question was coded and categorised by applying analytical discourse approach. The researcher examined the content based on any emerging themes. In coding the themes, the researcher used the thematic analysis method by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis (TA) is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Hence, TA is the organized method that urges the researcher to judge and make sense of collective understanding experiences and perception of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2014). However, the experiential approach always leads to better analysis, as it bears the subjectivity of the researcher, who keeps in mind the narratives of the participants.

Rather, it is a widely recursive process unlike linear one where the researcher could move back and forth appropriately through whole of the phases (Braun & Clarke,

2006), allowing the wide range of sound analytic options. Braun and Clarke (2017) highlighted that experiential orientations of ‘TA’ assert on what the participants speculate, feel and act are underpinned distinctly by the theoretical and organized assumption that language demonstrates reality, it can be singular universal reality as well the perspectival reality related to participant(s) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The six major phases of the thematic analysis have been mentioned below:

Table 3.5

The Six Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase I: Familiarisation with the data	Phase IV: Review themes,
Phase II: Generate initial codes	Phase V: Defining and naming themes,
Phase III: Search for themes	Phase VI: Write-up/Findings
Source: Adopted from Braun and Clarke (2006, 2014, 2017).	

3.7.1 Familiarisation with the Data

This is the initial step for the thematic analysis of collected data, it requires the researcher to raise familiarity with data. Hence, reviewing, confirming and perceiving whether that data comes up to the requirements of his research study or not. Furthermore, it convinces the researcher to unveil the types of assumptions and ideas being shared (Nowell et al., 2017).

The researcher began by manually transcribing all in-depth interviews and classroom observation notes. This process involved repeated reading and close listening to the audio recordings to ensure accuracy and familiarity with the content. Extensive field notes and observation guides were used to capture classroom interactions, including

verbal communication, student participation, and teacher strategies. This stage helped the researcher become immersed in the data, identifying potential patterns, contradictions, and notable linguistic and behavioural features related to speaking competence. At the end, the researcher observes the data to become familiar with it, observing its conformity and value and proceeds to join the other step.

3.7.2 Generating initial codes

The second phase involved manual open coding of the data. Codes were systematically assigned to meaningful segments of the transcribed text that related to the research questions. These segments included students' expressions of speaking challenges (e.g., grammar issues, hesitation, low confidence), teachers' classroom strategies, and observable communicative behaviours during ESL instruction. However, in the coding stage of the qualitative research, the course of categorization and assigning understandable meaningful labels as well as codes to the collected data is generally recognized as thematic analysis. At this integral phase, the researcher decides various codes to his data with the object to identify, recognize and summarise the vital concepts of the bits of information collected by using the various data collection methods like the observations and in-depth interviews (Braun, 2021). Codes were generated inductively (based on what emerged from the data) rather than from pre-existing theory.

3.7.3 Searching for Themes

In this phase, the researcher began grouping similar codes into broader themes. For example, codes like "lack of grammar knowledge," "difficulty forming sentences," and "fear of making mistakes" were clustered under a theme such as "Barriers to

Speaking Fluently.” Similarly, teacher-related codes like “limited feedback,” “monologic teaching,” and “lack of pronunciation modeling” were grouped under “Instructional Gaps in ESL Classrooms.” The aim was to ensure that each theme captured a distinct and meaningful aspect of the data in alignment with the study objectives.

3.7.4 Reviewing Themes

Reviewing themes is the third phase in a thematic analysis and can be defined as something important in respect of the questions of the research study. Here, the researcher ensures the availability of rich and diverse data to define each theme (Braun et al., 2016). The initial themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure internal coherence and distinctiveness. The researcher revisited the entire data set to validate that the themes accurately reflected the data content. Any overlapping or vague themes were either merged or split for clarity.

This phase requires the researcher to ensure the appropriateness of the emerged themes. Moreover, the researcher makes the comparison of the themes to confirm whether the data has capacity to develop themes or is there anything missing in the study and if he finds out some sort of problems regarding themes, he can do multiple things like to spilt them out, discarding them, combining them, discarding them within a purpose to create the accurate and more useful ones. In the current research visual mapping for the development of themes also assisted the researcher and the subthemes entailed as underneath themes. However, the subthemes lead to microscopic understanding of the central organized concept and leave bigger space for clarity.

3.7.5 Defining and Naming Themes:

At this stage, Braun, Clarke and Gray (2017) stated that the researcher strives for defining, elaborating and naming themes to clarify what he means by each emerged theme. Moreover, he explained how it will assist the researcher to understand the data of the study. Thus, the researcher narrated the story of his analysis based on the interpretation of his data presented in his write-up. Once the themes were finalized, the researcher defined and named each one clearly, providing a concise description of what the theme represented and how it contributed to understanding ESL speaking competence. Subthemes were also named where appropriate to reflect nuanced elements, such as "Pronunciation Anxiety" under the broader theme "Speaking Challenges." This stage involved refining the thematic narrative to ensure logical flow and conceptual clarity.

3.7.6 Producing the Report (Writing-up)

Writing up is called the finality or last stage in thematic analysis, it is the most important process, because here the researcher builds the analysis of his collected data that stands for his real contribution in the annals of research. This stage of research study requires a comprehensive introduction and interpretation to define the research questions, aims and approach of the study. In the final stage, the themes were integrated into a coherent analytical narrative. Each theme was described in detail using direct quotations from participants to preserve authenticity and reinforce interpretations. The findings were connected to the research questions and the theoretical framework (Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence).

The discussion included how frequently each theme emerged, its significance, and its implications for teaching and learning speaking skills in ESL classrooms.

At the end, the researcher presents the findings of each theme and explains how often each theme comes up and what it means including examples as evidence. Then the researcher sums up this chapter describing how the data has satisfied the criteria of the research questions (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Getting the permission to execute a valuable and authentic research study has ever been considered the valuable ethical matter, it becomes crucially demanding when the study needs the sensitive information regarding the thinking, feelings, ideas and beliefs of the respondents in the research study (Younas et al., 2022). However, the respondents of the current study were informed that their participation was utterly voluntary. Prior to their participation, the participants of the research study were provided the 'Consent Form' to grab their confirmation of the participation. Hence, they were regarded as partners in the research (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Furthermore, the final results of this research study can be followed in ESL education developing grammar, pragmatic, proficiency and fluency of the language learners. During the initial and fundamental stage of each interview, all the respondents were enlightened and informed about the real nature of the research study.

However, their roles were defined, clarified and the questions were answered. Thus, the respondents permitted their discussions to be recorded to proceed with the research process about the competence to speak English in the ESL classrooms at Punjab

university Lahore, Pakistan. Resultantly, the respondents got assured that there were out of any external or physical risks. Additionally, the participants were assured of being free from any breach in the data they provided and their names were promised to be left unrevealed and they also could withdraw from the research interviews for this study.

However, the pilot study which was conducted to check the authenticity of the main study maintained all the ethical requirements. Hence, before initiating the data collection, the participants were dually informed that they were to be interviewed about the competence to speak English in the ESL classrooms at their university. Moreover, they were clearly informed that their information could be included in the main study and also may be used to introduce certain positive changes in the ESL classrooms of Pakistan. Resultantly, during the whole data collection process, they were utterly informed of the nature of the current research study and the other related key issues pertaining to their rights and targets of the study.

Moreover, the main study got equal attention and sound focus to the fulfilment of the ethical criteria. Therefore, prior to initiating the study, the research participants were provided a written document meant to inform them not merely about the real nature of the topic but also discussed the objectives and the questions of the current research study. Moreover, the researcher had got their consent to record their information and responses during the process of research interviews. Thus, they were assured with commitment that their names and other secrecies would be kept anonymous and they should feel free sharing their narrative about their ESL education. Consequently, the

researcher managed to develop trustworthy and convincing environment with the participants to prevent any sort of incorrect information.

The researcher was sure of the participants being utterly aware that the information they were sharing were to be used positively, and it could be used for the promotion of ESL education. Moreover, as the topic of the study is to explore self-perceptions of competence in speaking: a study of undergraduate, each of them was visited for the interview in his natural setting. Furthermore, for the edification of their satisfaction and their due clarification, the researcher was determined to get their permission, so he observed them in their natural settings, and he promised to play back the audio tapes of each interview to maintain the trustworthy sound relationship.

3.9 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Mousa et al. (2024) claims that ensuring the validity and reliability of a study is critical for maintaining the integrity and credibility of its findings. In this qualitative research on exploring speaking competence in speaking among English undergraduates at a public university in Pakistan, strategies were employed to establish trustworthiness that entails credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Thus, it encompasses the principles of validity and reliability in qualitative research (Storey et al., 2024).

3.9.1 Validity

Triangulation is the core and heart of the validity in the research conducted on qualitative basis. Therefore, validity in qualitative research refers to the accuracy and authenticity of the findings in representing the participants' perspectives (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). Credibility is also used in the qualitative study being equal to internal validity, so were utilized by the researcher in exploring the competence to speak English in the Pakistani undergraduate ESL classrooms where the students belonging to various social backgrounds study. However, this study ensured validity through the following strategies:

Triangulation: In-depth interviews and classroom observations were used as data collection methods to corroborate findings and to provide the holistic understanding and perception of the competence in speaking English using correct grammar, exact language use, pronunciation and fluency. Lim (2024) accentuated that the triangulation diminishes the risks and enhanced the depth of the data analysis leading it to credibility, dependability confirmability.

Credibility shows the resonation of findings with the participants and also reveals the conformity of the participants' experiences, and it requires good engagement with participants, so did the researcher follow during his research on the exploration of competence to speak English in the ESL classrooms. The researcher has grabbed thick details and descriptions about the participants and context to ensure **transferability** of his research study to be applied to different contexts. Using class observations and the in-depth interviews the researcher endeavoured to represent feelings, perspectives and the sound experiences of the respondents to construct **authenticity** is the vital part of a research (Kingsman & Davis, 2024). Authenticity confirms the faithful portrayal of the participants' voices and the complexity of their views.

Member Checking: Participants were called and invited reviewing their interview transcripts and the preliminary findings to strengthen the accuracy of the data interpretation. However, this process proved that the researcher's conclusions conformed and aligned exactly with the participants' intended meanings regarding competence to speak in the ESL classrooms. Thus, consistency seemed to be found in the current research study, as the participants could witness contradiction (Koles et al., 2024), had there been any found in the interpretations and conclusions formed by the researcher.

Thick Description: Such descriptions pave the way for **transferability**, because the researchers provide the detailed accounts of the participants and the context. In this way the reader can assess the application of the findings to different other contexts (Lim, 2024). Detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences and the contextual factors influencing their speaking competence were provided. This approach enables the readers to assess the transferability of the findings to similar contexts.

Reflexivity: The researcher maintained a reflective journal to document biases, assumptions, and decisions made throughout the study. This reflexive process enhanced the validity by promoting transparency in the research process (Luoma & Hietanen, 2024). In the qualitative study, the researchers are self-aware and encouraged enough to reflect the way their personal biases and experiences impact the research process and its outcomes. While interviewing the respondents the researcher asked them in-depth questions to let them express their thoughts and knowledge spontaneously as they shared their experience about the competence to speak English

in their ESL classrooms and suggested the factors which might improve the ability of the students to speak clearly, proficiently and fluently.

3.9.2 Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research refers to the **consistency** and **dependability** of the research findings over time and across contexts (Storey et al., 2024). This study addressed reliability through the following measures:

Consistent Data Collection Procedures: A structured interview guide was developed to ensure that all participants were asked the same core questions, maintaining consistency across the in-depth interviews which were designed to hook maximum narrative of the participants directly involved to develop competence in speaking using accurate grammar, proficiency, fluency and clarity of expression (Khan & Krishnasamy, 2024). Moreover, comprehensive records of the data collection, coding, and analysis were maintained, it allows other researchers to cut after the study's processes verifying its rigor.

Peer Review: The study's methodology and findings were reviewed by experienced colleagues and supervisors to identify potential inconsistencies and validate interpretations (Xiao et al., 2024). Consequently, the exploration for the competence to speak among undergraduate Pakistani ESL learners led to credibility and the transferability to be used more in further research as sound reference.

Intercoder Reliability: To ensure consistency in data analysis, another researcher was involved in cross-checking the coding of transcripts. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion to reach consensus.

Consequently, the study's **trustworthiness** was strengthened through triangulation, member checking, and thick description, while reliability was ensured by maintaining and employing consistent data collection methods, and engaging in peer reviews (Koles et al., 2024; Novak & Jen, 2024). These strategies collectively enhance the **credibility** and **dependability** of the research findings, ensuring they accurately reflect the realities of speaking competence in speaking among English undergraduates at a public university in Pakistan.

3.10 Summary

In this chapter has been described the methodology that was applied by the researcher to lead and guide the study. However, it elaborates the sound profiles of the research respondents, the fundamental purpose of this study, in-depth research questions posed in the study, the protocol for data collection, methods for data analysis, research procedures and the ethical considerations. Consequently, this chapter discusses the strategies for ensuring trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependency, confirmability, authenticity, consistency, validity, reflexivity and reliability, including triangulation, member checking, and maintaining an audit trail. Moreover, the ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were addressed to safeguard participants' rights maintaining the study's integrity. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, which facilitated the identification of patterns and themes in participants' narratives. This

methodological approach not only strengthens the study's credibility and authenticity regarding exploration of competence to speak English among Pakistani undergraduates in Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan, but also ensures that its findings are contextually relevant and practically applicable enough for the development of English language teaching and learning practices in Pakistani Public universities.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of the study titled *Exploring Speaking Competence Among ESL Undergraduates: Challenges and Strategies in a Public University in Pakistan*. It focuses on understanding how speaking competence is developed, perceived, and practiced among Pakistani undergraduate students. The chapter explores the core elements involved in constructing speaking competence in English and highlights the challenges faced by students in a real classroom setting. The findings are organized to ensure clarity, logical flow, and alignment with the research objectives. The chapter explains how speaking competence is conceptualized by ESL undergraduates and teachers, followed by the challenges learners face and the strategies they employ or suggest for improvement.

To support the interpretation of findings, classroom observations are integrated alongside interview data. These serve as supporting evidence to validate the patterns, behaviors, and perceptions identified in participants' narratives. Observational data are presented in the form of descriptive summaries and reflective notes, highlighting real-time teaching practices, student engagement, and interactional dynamics within ESL classrooms. However, the essential focus of this chapter is to present research findings based on data gathered from Pakistani ESL teachers and their students at Punjab University in Lahore, Pakistan.

This chapter presents the findings of the study in two parts, based on the multi-method approach used for data collection—classroom observations and interviews with ESL teachers and their students. The first section reports the findings from classroom observations, while the second section focuses on insights gained from in-depth interviews. Together, these findings contribute to answering the research questions and offer valuable understanding of how speaking competence influences students' behaviour and participation in ESL classrooms. Additionally, the final section of this chapter presents insights that inform the development of a proposed framework to enhance speaking competence through cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological dimensions.

4.1.1 Setting the Scene

The researcher realized that competence in speaking is the fundamental need of the English language undergraduates who take admission in the university to achieve diverse abilities in the use of grammar, pronunciation, proficiency and fluency to speak English. Moreover, competence does not merely reflect their identity, rather it is the requirement of the job market and real-life interactions, because English as a global language demands competence to speak, otherwise lack of communication causes many barriers including failure in practical life and job market (Ayub & Khalil, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024; Bilal et al., 2024). Multitude of the Pakistani students know learning of English language can open the multifarious avenues of success for them and they also seem dissatisfied with their competence to speak inside as well as outside the classrooms (Aimen & Khadim, 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Sadaf & Zahid, 2024).

The researcher is motivated to explore the multifarious facts as how much Pakistani undergraduates are competent to speak English and what are the factors which obstacle in their ways of achieving competence to speak. However, the researcher aimed at understanding as well as exploring the hindrances proliferated in the realm of the process of achieving competence to learn English (Abdurakhmanovich & Jalolovna, 2024; Ayub & Mohammed, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024; Zook, 2024). In response, not merely may the researcher lead to sound contribution in the annals of applied linguistics, rather, can perform a great role for the expansion, elevated understanding and perception of global language in Pakistan (Crystal, 2020).

However, prior to stepping forward in the sphere of main study, the researcher conducted the pilot study to test his tools which consisted of in-depth interviews, purposive sampling and classroom observations. Consequently, the researcher conducted the main study applying classroom observations and in-depth interviews by selecting two ESL teachers and their twelve undergraduates of sixth and eighth semester (six from each semester) in Punjab University Lahore, Pakistan.

4.2 Multi-Methods Approach

In this section, the researcher minutely discussed the data arranged and organized by the multi-methods and approaches which include classroom observations and in-depth-interviews. The data unveils not merely the sound voices of the enlightened informants (teachers) and their students what they think or resolute to do, but also highlights their actual, concrete and practical roles. Firstly, researcher had the observations of the ongoing classrooms in the real natural settings, then he conducted the interviews with teachers and their students for the assurance of validity in results

(Derakhshan & Shakki, 2024). He followed methods for confirmation of the solid examination and analysis of the research questions to hook and grab effective, valid and evidence-based results to reach solid conclusion.

Hence, it seemed too intricate to observe panoramically the ongoing classes which consisted of many students bearing multitude of aspirations facing various obstructions in the way of grabbing competence in speaking in their ESL classrooms. Further, audio recording the classroom performance and jotting down the non-verbal language he collected minute and microscopic details about the performance of ESL classrooms. However, the audio recording and visual glimpses enabled him to reconstruct the whole picture of classroom, revealing its multifarious pros and cons (Beccaluva et al., 2023). Therefore, it uncloaked before him performance of the classrooms which could bring forth fruitful results, had they been set free from the blocks rampant over the whole process of learning and teaching of speaking skill.

4.2.1 Classroom Observations

Although observations of classroom seem intricate, complex and deeply sensitive course of action, because they require multidimensional judgement and innovative bent of mind, but the warm welcome by the participants, the teachers and their students mustered up the researcher to accomplish his task with microscopic attention and elevated enthusiasm. They could understand and mean this process as an instrument to collect data for the completion of a research study conducted on undergraduates to ransack the problems which did not let them become the competent speakers of

English. Despite that, the participants projected their actual strength to reveal the facts which did not let them get mastery or competence at speaking English.

Consequently, the researcher observed the ongoing ESL classroom to detect the problems hindering the speaking competency of the undergraduates and he tried utmost to find out the contrast between actual practice and claims regarding learning English language to find out the ways to facilitate the undergraduates to lead them to competence in speaking English overcoming the problems obstructing in their ways to embrace command at speaking skill.

4.2.1.1 RO 1. Conceptualization of Speaking Competence

Participants in this study described speaking competence as the ability to use correct grammar, clear pronunciation, fluency, and confidence to communicate effectively. Teachers emphasized that speaking competence also involves clarity, accuracy, coherence, and the persuasive delivery of ideas in academic and real-life conversations.

Classroom observations further supported these perceptions. Although observing the ESL classrooms was a complex and sensitive process requiring multidimensional judgment, the openness of both teachers and students enabled the researcher to conduct careful and detailed observations. Through these observations, it became evident that while participants valued speaking competence highly, several factors hindered its development.

Specifically, speaking competence was observed to encompass essential skills such as strong grammatical knowledge, accurate pronunciation, fluency, confidence, and

clarity. However, many students struggled to construct coherent sentences, often repeating limited vocabulary and showing frequent pronunciation errors. A lack of fluency and visible speaking anxiety further prevented students from expressing their ideas smoothly and confidently.

The researcher noted that although a few students demonstrated the ability to communicate ideas clearly without excessive hesitation, the majority faced significant challenges. These challenges reflected gaps between the theoretical understanding of speaking competence and the actual practice observed in ESL classrooms at Punjab University, Lahore. Overall, the findings highlighted a pressing need to bridge this gap through focused strategies aimed at strengthening grammatical competence, expanding vocabulary, improving pronunciation, and building learner confidence to promote effective oral communication.

4.2.1.2 RO 2. To analyse participants' narrative and experiences of developing speaking competence in ESL classroom setting, focusing on the challenges they face, their learning processes, and the factors that influence their speaking development

The observations conducted aimed to assess undergraduate students' experiences and narratives of developing speaking competence in a large ESL classroom setting. The focus was placed on student participation, grammatical usage, fluency, clarity, and interaction during speaking activities. These dimensions directly relate to the core challenges that learners face in achieving speaking proficiency across beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. Gaps at any level were found to negatively

influence the learners' overall competence, highlighting the interconnectedness of skill progression.

During the observation of Teacher A's classroom, students' learning processes revealed major struggles. Many participants were unable to construct meaningful, coherent sentences, indicating challenges in clarity and fluency. Although some students could form simple sentences, their expression lacked depth and perspicuity. Frequent repetition of sentence structures across tenses showed their limited grammatical flexibility. Moreover, issues of pronunciation, articulation, and reluctance to speak (often seen through code-switching and physical signs of embarrassment like hiding their mouths) emerged, indicating emotional barriers like anxiety and lack of confidence.

While Teacher A demonstrated a learner-centred approach through group activities and discussions, helping to promote a two-way interaction model, the learning process remained teacher-dominated, with students acting as passive listeners for extended periods. This imbalance likely hindered students' active speaking practice, a critical factor influencing speaking development.

In Teacher B's classroom, the challenges were even more pronounced. Teacher B's orthodox teaching methods (word memorization, isolated grammar drills, L1 dominance) failed to facilitate meaningful speaking development. Students' narratives, as observed, reflected a lack of engagement, fear of making mistakes (exacerbated by the teacher's intolerance to errors), and minimal encouragement for

participation. Teacher B's emphasis on literary content over practical speaking skills further widened the gap between theoretical knowledge and speaking competence.

Student attempts at tasks like discussions on "communication skills" revealed poor speaking ability and difficulty in forming relevant questions, illustrating gaps in both expressive and receptive speaking skills. Despite recognizing these shortcomings, the persistence of traditional methods limited positive change. Consequently, participants' experiences in both classes pointed towards several critical influencing factors such as teacher practices and pedagogical choices (teacher-centred vs. student-centred approaches); students' emotional states (anxiety, confidence issues); the learning environment (classroom management, encouragement, peer interaction opportunities)

The narrative evidence strongly suggests that the challenges faced by students in developing speaking competence are deeply tied to both their internal struggles (confidence, language knowledge) and external classroom dynamics (teaching methods, opportunities for active practice).

4.2.1.3 RO 3. To identify the factors that participants believe promote speaking competence among undergraduates in ESL classrooms.

The objective of this observation was to evaluate the types of oral activities used in large English language classrooms and assess their effectiveness in promoting engagement, fluency, clarity, and speaking competence among ESL undergraduates. During the observations, the researcher focused on identifying the factors that contribute to or hinder the development of speaking competence, according to the

students' participation and classroom dynamics. Four major competencies were observed as essential to promoting speaking skills:

Linguistic competence (encompassing grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and language proficiency); Strategic competence (involving the use of innovative strategies to overcome communication barriers); Interactional competence (the ability to interact meaningfully and impactfully with peers); Fluency competence (speaking smoothly with minimal hesitation and natural pacing).

From classroom observations, several factors emerged that promote speaking competence:

- Structured pair and group work activities organized by both teachers facilitated student interactions and encouraged peer support, helping students build confidence, correct each other, and feel less isolated when facing speaking challenges.
- Teacher A's practice of beginning lessons with discussions on global events and engaging students in structured debates encouraged critical thinking, opinion sharing, and language use, promoting both linguistic and interactional competence (Safitri & Suntari, 2024).
- Small group discussions and guiding questions provided students with organized frameworks to express their ideas, boosting their speaking willingness and enhancing participation.

- Encouragement and motivation shown by Teacher A played a positive role. Even though students exhibited hesitation and fear, teacher encouragement fostered a learning environment where students showed eagerness to participate.
- Peer collaboration during pair and group activities was another positive factor, as students helped correct each other's mistakes and showed courage in supporting weaker classmates, indicating the power of collaborative learning in promoting competence.

However, several hindering factors were also noted: that physical classroom arrangement (rows) restricted student interactions, especially during large group activities, leading to disengagement, particularly among those seated at the back. Teacher B's traditional and prescriptive methods (rote memorization, focus on isolated grammar and vocabulary) demotivated students, suppressing the speaking competence of underperforming or passive students.

Favoritism in classroom participation, where more active students were consistently selected to engage while passive students were ignored, created an unequal opportunity environment and discouraged the majority from attempting to speak. Emotional factors, such as fear, anxiety, and lack of teacher encouragement, particularly in Teacher B's classroom, were significant barriers that suppressed students' willingness to participate and develop speaking skills. Inconsistent application of strategic and interactional competencies contributed to uneven skill development among the undergraduates.

Furthermore, the researcher observed that frequent mispronunciations, grammatical errors, lack of fluency, and excessive use of fillers (“um”, “uh”) disrupted communication and reflected deeper gaps in linguistic competence, needing more systematic and student-centred intervention. Unfortunately, the mispronunciation of words and defective use of grammar also caused confusion among the teachers and the students and their fellow students. Thus, the results of the classroom observations revealed that the linguistic, strategic, interactional and fluency competencies are irregularly followed in ESL classrooms in the public university in Pakistan.

Overall, the findings highlight that student-centred pedagogical practices, emotional support, and equal participation opportunities are crucial factors believed to promote speaking competence among undergraduates in ESL classrooms.

4.2.1.4 RO 4. To propose a speaking competence development framework that integrates (cognitive, affective, pedagogical and technological factors) to enhance oral communication skills among English undergraduates in Pakistani ESL classrooms.

The focus of this observation was to evaluate and analyse patterns of speaking competence among ESL undergraduate students and to identify the effects of these patterns on overall communication skills — specifically language use, grammar, clarity, and proficiency. The observed speaking patterns revealed critical gaps, indicating a need for a comprehensive development framework addressing cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological factors to enhance speaking competence among Pakistani ESL undergraduates. The SCDF, integrating cognitive (grammar, vocabulary), affective (confidence, motivation), pedagogical (interactive activities),

and technological (digital tools) dimensions, offers a solution to the observed classroom deficiencies.

Cognitive Factors: Students showed limited cognitive organization in their speaking activities. They often struggled with vocabulary retrieval, grammatical structure, coherence, and fluency, leading to ineffective communication (Khan & Krishnasamy, 2024). Those who demonstrated better thought organization and structured arguments in discussions tended to dominate classroom activities, suggesting that cognitive scaffolding — such as teaching structured thinking, linking ideas, and appropriate language planning — is vital for speaking competence.

Affective Factors: The observations highlighted significant emotional challenges: many students experienced anxiety, fear of mistakes, and lack of confidence, especially during group presentations and class discussions. Passive students were often overlooked and disengaged, leading to feelings of boredom, frustration, and inferiority. An effective speaking development framework must therefore address emotional needs, fostering a safe, encouraging environment that builds confidence, reduces anxiety, and encourages risk-taking in speaking.

Pedagogical Factors: Teaching practices heavily impacted the speaking patterns. Both informants lacked innovative, student-centred methodologies. Classes were dominated by teacher talk, focusing on translation instead of interactive language use. Key pedagogical deficiencies included:

- Lack of explicit instruction on pronunciation, grammar, and complex language use;
 - Absence of systematic vocabulary development activities (such as working on synonyms, antonyms, or word families);
 - Neglect of weaker students in classroom engagement strategies.
- A reformed pedagogical approach must involve interactive learning, group dynamics, differentiated instruction, and equal participation for all students.

Technological Factors: Technological integration was notably absent. Classrooms lacked visual and audio aids that could significantly enhance language learning experiences. Teachers missed opportunities to incorporate multimedia tools such as projectors, internet resources, pronunciation apps, and online listening activities. A technology-enhanced framework would provide students with exposure to authentic language models, opportunities for repetition and practice, and visual reinforcement critical for building pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension.

The classroom observations clearly demonstrate that without addressing cognitive skills, emotional readiness, appropriate pedagogy, and technological support, speaking competence in ESL undergraduates remains stunted. An integrated, multidimensional framework combining cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological strategies is necessary for developing confident, fluent, and competent English speakers in Pakistani ESL contexts.

However, critical problems in coherence, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and confidence were observed. They led to consequences which impacted communication and effectiveness of English language speaking (Khan & Krishnasamy, 2024). Ironically, the teachers seemed to push back the students who did not like to join the class activities to practice speaking skill. They were supposed to muster up their courage to learn confidently taking part in all the useful activities which could let them project their real talent.

As a result, the learners lost confidence during presentations and committed critical mistakes. Consequently, very few students were found soundly engaged with their teachers and peers, they asked those questions and also provided them feedback during discussions. However, passive and quieter students were overshadowed and their disengagement in the classroom brought about anxiety and boredom in them. Only a small number of the students spoke actively in group activities and discussions and some of them struggled well with fluency during presentations. Once, the teacher gave the example of how native speakers stress on certain words to change the meanings and asked the students to see and listen it using internet, he should have used a projector for such kind of learning, because the students would repeat it together in the classroom to grab more and more competence, but the classroom was not equipped with latest tools of learning and teaching.

Ironically, the teachers gave deaf ear to the requirement of the improvement of language use and no specific activity was arranged to enhance the word-bank of the

students with new bits of vocabulary. The teacher could work on synonyms, antonyms and pairs of words instead of merely translating the English text into Urdu. Thus, due to being deficient in the use of language, most of the students seemed rolling eyes, pressing forehead and gasping to form a word to speak.

Consequently, the observations revealed the bitter realities that the teachers were less-trained, classrooms were less organized and less-equipped with modern technological aids. As a result, students were often left without the necessary grammatical knowledge, appropriate pronunciation, or confidence to communicate effectively in English.

4.3 In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews in qualitative research provide detailed and sound data about the informants' experiences and their views (Lim, 2024). However, In-depth interviews of the ESL teachers and their students provided valuable and grave insights into the comprehensive dynamics of the ESL classroom which is meant to confer speaking competence upon the English language undergraduates learning in Punjab University Lahore, Pakistan. However, by conducting in-depth interviews with both teachers and students, the researcher identified several valuable themes and found a comprehensive view of speaking competence in the English language classroom.

The findings of this study are organized under key themes identified through thematic analysis and aligned with the research questions as definitions and perceptions of speaking competence, challenges and learning processes in developing speaking skills, contributing factors and strategies that support speaking competence and the role of a

competence development framework in improving oral communication. This thematic structure ensures clarity and coherence in presenting the data and strengthens the alignment between the research objectives and empirical findings.

4.3.1 Findings out of the Teachers' Narratives

4.3.1.1 The Description of Speaking Competence

The thematic analysis of teachers' interviews revealed two distinct core themes (i.e., textual themes) and sub-themes (i.e., structural themes) of competence, they describe definition and interpretation of competence (ii) practical demonstration of competence, and the deficiencies imbedded in it. These words are identified as (i) definition of competence and (ii) competence and its related words. The former displays how the experienced informants defined the concept and perception of the speaking competence exploiting their practical experiences in the undergraduate English language classrooms. Thus, the latter has been extracted from their real perspectives of the competence projected before them in the classrooms.

Further, it also reveals competence of the students speaking English language in real life situations to participate in real-life interactions. Moreover, this phenomenon also highlights the responsible factors which hinder on the ways to competence of the students and does not let them get over it to perform well for academic and professional success. However, teachers' narrative opens the solid avenues to hook more about the competence and probe deep into such grave factors which block its growth disturbing the speaking competence of the language undergraduates in the ESL classrooms.

Figure 4.1 illustrates and explain the major serious themes and sub-themes.

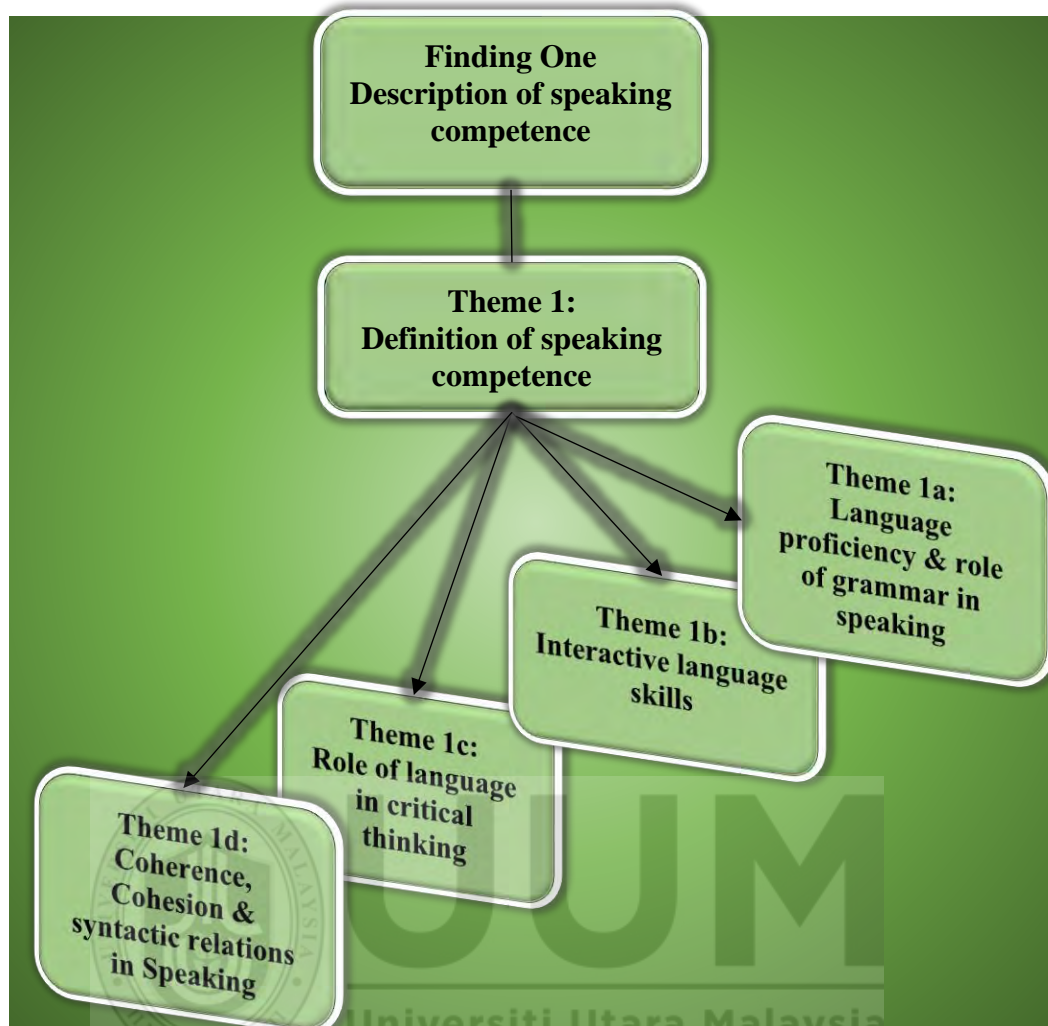


Figure 4.1. Sub-themes of speaking competence definition

4.3.1.1.1 Theme 1: Definition of Speaking Competence

The study offers a deep understanding of the first core and distinct theme that emerged out of the Pakistani ESL teachers' narratives. It reveals the sound definition of English language speaking competence that is further categorised and divided into four distinct sub-themes (figure 4.2).

4.3.1.1.1.1 Theme 1a: Language Proficiency and Role of Grammar in Speaking

The teachers opined that in English language, proficiency appears as one of the most logical and exact definitions of the speaking competence. This takes into its realm the correct practical use of grammar, logical syntactic order, effective language, and standard pronunciation. Teachers assert on the correct use of the English language that must conform to the content, context and audience. As Teacher A said:

Teacher A: *“Language proficiency bears a great role, it has essential role for effective and fruitful communication. Students being proficient in a language may speak their thoughts openly and clearly. Their communication is highly understandable, meaningful and lucid, it is free from grammatical ambiguities.”*

Hence, Teacher B brought into light the value of students’ academic success and merited language proficiency as the vital element that ensures effective communication. She recommended,

“the higher level and range of the English language proficiency connects and correlates with better and standard academic performance, but it is conditioned to be free from grammatical ambiguities.”

Surprisingly, both of the teacher participants asserted and insisted that consistent practice with exposure is the real demand for the development of language proficiency. They also asserted on grammatical fitness for accuracy. Engaging the ESL students in divergent activities like speaking, listening, reading, and writing is the integral requirement for developing competence to speak English. Nevertheless, female teacher said:

Teacher B: *“Students who get proficient and fluent in their English language skills exhibit the higher levels and volumes of confidence and elevated motivation that may lead them to marvellous participation in the classroom activities and offers them willingness to bear risks as the means of learning.”*

The results uncloaked that proficiency in English language holds the role of foundation for impactful communication in academic success. Competence brings forth confidence in the English language undergraduates that leads them to big achievements in their academic journey and practical life.

Consequently, it can be said that teachers attach a lot to proficiency in English language and consider it idiosyncratic regarding the development of confidence and motivation in the learners to participate in the class activities. However, they also see grammar as the means of perfection in the construction of sentences; they actually bear message and lead to progress of communication. Therefore, students’ being proficient and fluent stand for competent to speak English without any fear of grammatical disorder, lack of fluency, pronunciation and coherence of ideas.

4.3.1.1.2 Theme 1b: Interactive Language Skills

Interactive skills play a great role to enhance speaking competence in ESL undergraduates. Therefore, the participants regard the interactive skills as very useful, impactful and integral tools for elevation of speaking competence. They asserted on the significance of interactive skills for the strong foundation of not merely the academic brilliance and success but also for the personal, professional and social success. For instance, Teacher A opined,

“Interactive skills being the abilities enable the language learners to form effective communication for the development of collaboration in social, personal and professional success. These skills bear essential role for the development of the practical learning, art of engagement with others, maintaining discussions, and growing relationships.”

Teacher B prefers the interactive skills for active listening because it is good for developing effective speaking. She argued, *“students must bear competence to understand well and they should respond clearly to their peers.”* She added, *“Active listening stands for the real ability to concentrate devotedly, understand, perceive and finally respond thoughtfully what others mean to say. This includes not merely hearing of words and sentences but also interpretation of the non-verbal language including cues, symbols and emotions.”*

However, the participant A pointed out the vitality of clarity in learners’ speech. Adding, he advocated effective communication, as it is mandatory to encourage and boost up the undergraduates to articulate their ideas fluently, clearly and confidently. In this way, they can convey their messages successfully and maintain conversation and communication. Thus, participant B emphasized on the vitality of the non-verbal communication. She readily opined, *“the implication of the body language that depends more on facial expressions, physical gestures and symbolic impressions enhance understanding of communication among the English language undergraduates.”*

Both of the participants liked the group activities and advocated for their promotion to enhance speaking competence among the ESL learners. Consequently, they asserted on the standpoint that English speaking is not merely talking, rather it involves engagement in meaningful and useful dialogue making; that includes, raising questions, responding, and maintaining discussions displaying clarity and accuracy in the use of English language.

4.3.1.1.1.3 Theme1c: Role of Language in Critical Thinking

The participants highlighted critical thinking as the necessary component to develop speaking competence among the undergraduates at Punjab University. They endorsed that such thinking allows the undergraduate ESL learners to form thoughts logically and enable them to express their ideas clearly, effectively and meaningfully in order to maintain successful discussions, debates and presentations. Participant A claimed, *“critical thinking encourages the students to form well-reasoned and justified arguments.”* He emphasized on the significance of critical thinking insisting that this competence enables the learners to display more active participation asking different questions and raising objections when they fail to understand something. He further spoke,

“When language learners begin to think in critical style, they are motivated to raise insightful questions ransacking relevant ideas, it is wrong to suppose students to always say yes.”

However, the participant B pointed out the significant status of problem-solving competency. She says *“critical thinking is essential power for students that makes*

them analyse problems to evaluate options, articulating potential and sound solutions clearly.” She further added that the critical thinkers form their language speaking strategies keeping in view the audience reactions and their feedback. The ESL teachers appreciate such competencies, because they enhance and improve the quality of effective interactions.

The results unveiled that both the teachers considered the promotion of the critical thinking mandatory for preparing their ESL students to perform well in their classrooms and real-life communication scenarios. The students must hold opinion and the power to decide whether something is right or wrong for them and they should better be sceptic regarding acceptance of the input of language learning. In this way, based on their sound critical power they can make a lot of progress in language learning and meet competence to speak English inside as well as outside the classroom.

4.3.1.1.1.4 Theme1d: Coherence, Cohesion and Syntactic Relations in Speaking

The teachers consider speaking competence the understanding and the sound ability of effective communication that bears coherence and cohesion. However, coherence ensures the knitted ideas which are logically connected, organized and conveyed, while cohesion depends on the meaningful use of the linguistic tools for maintaining connection among ideas and syntactic relations. Consequently, such helpful elements facilitate the speakers, strengthening their competence to convey their messages in successful ways. Participant A asserted and emphasized that coherent communication involves presentation of ideas with organized and logical sequence. It makes easier and beneficial for the listeners to understand, if they begin with introduction, highlighting the major points and capping up with a summary raises clarity.

Participant A: *“Speech can be very much meaningful if it is fully arranged and follows grammatical order.”*

Consequently, both of the participants hold pithy and perspicuous statements about cohesion and coherence for the fruitful development of connections among ideas delivered during communication. Therefore, linking words, bits of phrases, and grammatical well knitted syntactic structures bear the lifeline of competence to speak English language. They enhance the unity and arrangement of ideas and messages, supporting them to flow smoothly and convincingly.

Participant B mentioned the vitality of putting conjunctions, connectors and transitional phrases for connecting sentences, opinions and ideas. She forwarded, *“the coherent and the cohesive pieces of speech help to raise understanding and flow that is easier for listeners to grasp, and sentences strongly related with one another support meaningful communication.”* (Participant B)

4.3.1.1.2 Theme 2: Words Describing Speaking Competence

This section studies such words as offer the clear concept and understanding of competence in speaking. The researcher questioned how and why research participants delivered such words and concepts with repetition to highlight speaking competence. Analysis and process on thematic content communicated by teachers in their interviews projected five main words or major themes which are counted distinct and idiosyncratic in context. Figure 4.2 represents the words that describe speaking competence from teachers’ perspectives.

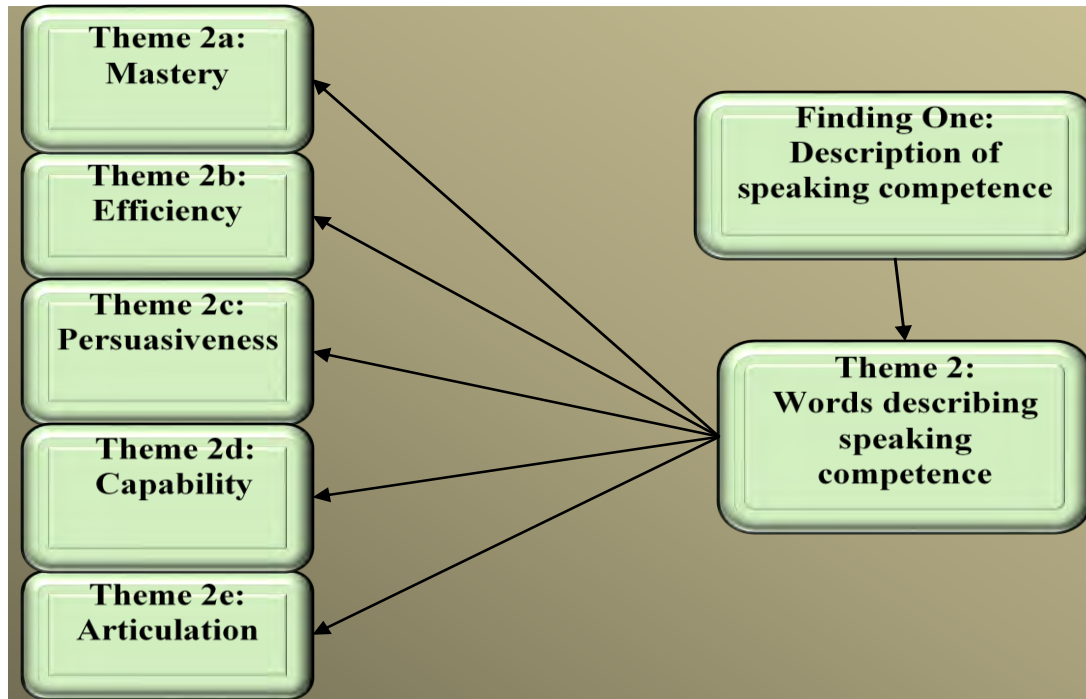


Figure 4.2. Words describing speaking competence

4.3.1.1.2.1 Theme 2(a): Mastery

Mastery stands for command, and it is considered integral root to ensure speaking competence in the ESL learners. However, the teacher participants associate this concept to the great level of fluency, proficiency, accuracy and expertise in speaking, as it elevates the competence in verbal communication. It encompasses the sound ability to communicate ideas efficiently, clearly and effectively, because it engages the audience, adopting variety of the speaking situations with concrete confidence and dignified skill. For instance, the participant A argued, “*mastery involves and includes very clear and soundly precise understandable pronunciation of the words uttered, as well as the correct delivery of tone, sound and pitch.*” He spoke that it involves the ability and competence to pronounce the English words very clearly using appropriate soft tone and standard pitch. It ensures the understanding and clarity of the audience, and they can respond the communication conveyed to them.

On other hand, the participant B asserted on clear and comprehensive meaningful language, she posited, *“the master speaker bears rich and appropriate language, and he knows well how to exploit it appropriately and effectively in various contexts”*.

Furthermore, mastery displays the great ability to design and organize thoughts systematically and logically presenting them in a connected way. Hence, mastery includes and involves storytelling, fun, humour, frolic, rhetorical devices and many other techniques for engagement of the audience. Participant A spoke,

“The master and commanding speaker appropriately employs storytelling, funny elements, humour, jokes, vocab games, word-fun and comic questions to captivate and allure the language learners.”

Engaging techniques in the process of learning and teaching set up connection with the ESL learners who are the profound listeners and are always ready to learn something new, constructing and designing the sentences which are highly impactful. Both participants presented their sound views about the mastery in excellent and comprehensive manner.

Participant B opined that a master speaker has the quality of adaptability and adjustability that promotes competence in ESL learning. She said the master speakers might adjust and innovate their style pursuing audience feedback. She posited, *“Mastery possesses the ability of one’s adjustment of speaking style as well as selection of content in conformity with response and reaction of the listeners.”*

Therefore, adaptability bears the significant role, it keeps the messages relevant which follow conformity with listeners and brings about understandable communication.

4.3.1.1.2.2 Theme 2(b): Efficiency

The participants mentioned unveiling the need of efficiency for the language learners, that it strengthens speaking competence. They mentioned that efficiency stands for the perception and understanding to communicate thoughts and ideas effectively. It pulls down misunderstandings and raises confidence in the language learners to express inner thoughts clearly and meaningfully.

Participant A opined, *“Efficiency is the fruitful ability for expression of ideas in the straightforward, lucid as well as understandable way.”* Similarly, the participant B raised the voice that meaningful communication drops down the possibilities of misinterpretation. They allow the listeners to grasp the core quickly. She also added sharply that effectiveness and exactness in communication symbolizes conciseness. She interpreted conciseness calling it *“the ability and understanding to render information with use of the fewest and minimum possible words avoiding sacrifice of meanings.”* She also explained in detail, if one is concise one can keep the audience concerned and engaged. It ensures that the key messages are not lost in unnecessary details.

Participant B also valued efficiency and denoted it to organized speech that offers logic and coherence. In contrast, participant A stressed more on the time management. He said, *“The efficient speakers value their listener’s time, with assurance that they have got all relevant knowledge without extra elaboration, interpretation or digression.”*

Consequently, efficiency is associated with the ability of the students, it determines how much fluent and capable they are. It also highlights their fluency, accuracy, exact

use of language and context. An efficient speaker can apply as well as understand the vocal sounds and gestures to communicate his message. It shows the height of competence to use English in daily life situations. According to the participants, the efficient speakers are compact, to the point and easy to understand the real panorama of communication.

4.3.1.1.2.3 Theme 2 (c): Persuasiveness

Word persuasiveness has come out of teachers' narratives, as they linked persuasiveness with speaking competence. However, they stated persuasiveness as an ability to influence and convince the listeners using impactful communication. It includes the influencing strategic practical use of the English language. It uses tone, convincing and supporting evidence to manipulate listeners' opinions or encourage them to perform an act. For instance, the participant A accentuated significance of using the persuasive language techniques, it includes strong verbs, devices of rhetoric, and multifarious sentence structures for enhancing the impact and influence of the speech. However, participant B opined:

“Effective and meaningful persuasion more often offers attractiveness and stimulations to the audience’s feelings and emotions. Applying anecdotes, sound and vivid language, or rhetorical investigation may create the significant connection and relation with listeners, making the message alluring and more compelling.”

The participant B described that persuasiveness bears a magnificent role in the improvement of speaking competence. It influences effectively on the speakers to bestow upon him the capacity to use language convincingly. She postulated, *“Persuasiveness not merely enhances the realm and effectiveness of communication*

but it also plays a remarkable role to affect opinions, engaging audiences, achieving desired results and outcomes.”

The results unveiled that persuasiveness plays a sound and pivotal role regarding improvement of speaking competence, producing trust among the speakers and the listeners; it engages the audience elevating their attention. However, Participant A shared,

“Persuasive speaking edifies clarity, impact and invulnerability of communication; concrete arguments with effective content always compel the listeners to keep on.”

In a more valid and comprehensive way, participant B revealed when speakers bring forth well-researched and worthwhile information demonstrating confidence, they get through in winning the attention of listeners. It increases the uprightness of their communication and maintain their worthiness. As she argued,

“Effective and persuasive speakers raise a credible and highly trustworthy unique environment for grabbing the attention of audience.”

4.3.1.1.2.4 Theme 2(d): Capability

From ESL teachers’ perspective, word capability is deeply connected with speaking competence, and it develops strength in maintaining healthy communication among the people. When they talk, it enriches their ability of sharing ideas clearly, objectively and persuasively. The participants showed capability as organized competence that encompasses a series of multiple skills and divergent attributes in the views of Participant A.

“Capability bears connection with skills like articulation, usage of language and grammatical perfection, all of them lead students to successful interactions and relations in academic as well as real-world contexts.”

However, Participant B views students’ speaking capabilities for determining their proficiency to determine the areas of their improvement. She regards organized and framed articulation as the fundamental components of speaking competence. She remarked,

“The ability to utter and pronounce words perfectly, clearly and distinctly assists the listeners to understand well the speaker’s object and message.”

Both participants asserted on the value of capability for the use of effective and rich vocabulary and grammatical command to build healthy communication. For example,

Teacher A: *“Rich vocabulary helps speakers to communicate fruitfully, precisely and more creatively, because it enhances their power of communication.”*

Teacher B: *“Grammatical accuracy begets clarity and strong credibility; it makes the speaker’s views and arguments more powerful and persuasive.”*

4.3.1.1.2.5 Theme 2(e): Articulation

The participants clearly declared articulation the essential tool of language that bears the role of the fundamental pillar of speaking competence, as it bears the pivotal performance to construct effective communication. Both participants observed articulation as a means for the clarity of speech, lingual-condensation, rhythm and confidence to perform. All these unique, essential and conspicuous elements set up the groundwork for commanding strong and energetic speaking competence across

multifarious contexts. For example,

Teacher A: *“Articulation emphasizes on manipulating the ability of pronouncing words more clearly and very correctly. This clarity and transparency ensure that audience able to grasp easily the speaker's conveyed message.”*

Teacher B: *“Good articulation requires applying precise language, syntactic order and grammar. Such precision enhances practical and effectiveness communication, making room for compact expression of the ideas and language.”*

Participants minutely accentuated the value, importance and validity of articulation in order to promote competence in speaking in the ESL classrooms. Participant A stated, *“articulation forms the strong ability to overcome pacing as well rhythm in the speech.”* He stated additionally that proper and suitable pacing helps in maintaining the engagement of the listeners allowing them to grab information effectively and clearly. Participant B added, *“Effective and soothing articulation consists in using the appropriate tone, sound, pitch, and volume.”*

Additionally, the participants ransacked the value of non-verbal cues and the participant B spoke, *articulation intensely encompasses demonstration of the body language as well as the facial expressions for reinforcing spoken language.* She sounds saying that such non-verbal cues raise conception, understanding and grave connection with listeners. Contrarily, participant A is convinced with confidence and assurance in speaking, because it edifies competence in speaking among undergraduate students in ESL classrooms. He said, *“Organized articulation brings*

about confidence in the speaking skill”. He said that an articulated confident speaker is able to engage his listeners to convey his views persuasively.

4.3.1.2 Narration of Competence in Speaking

This section discusses the findings placed in the second research question focusing the participants’ narration. In the real and natural environment of the undergraduate ESL classrooms in a public university Lahore, Pakistan, The ESL teachers shared their practical experiences which reveal clearly that competence in speaking English is not merely the capacity and ability to form grammatically perfect sentences; rather it encompasses comprehensive realm of skills and the attributes which generate meaningful communication.

However, thematic analysis of teacher participants’ interviews data displayed five principal themes. These themes bear roots in the experiences of the ESL teachers. Thus, the teachers in the light of their concrete practical experience suggested microscopically how to strengthen the competence to speak English among the Pakistani undergraduates. Figure 4.3 shows the themes of finding two:

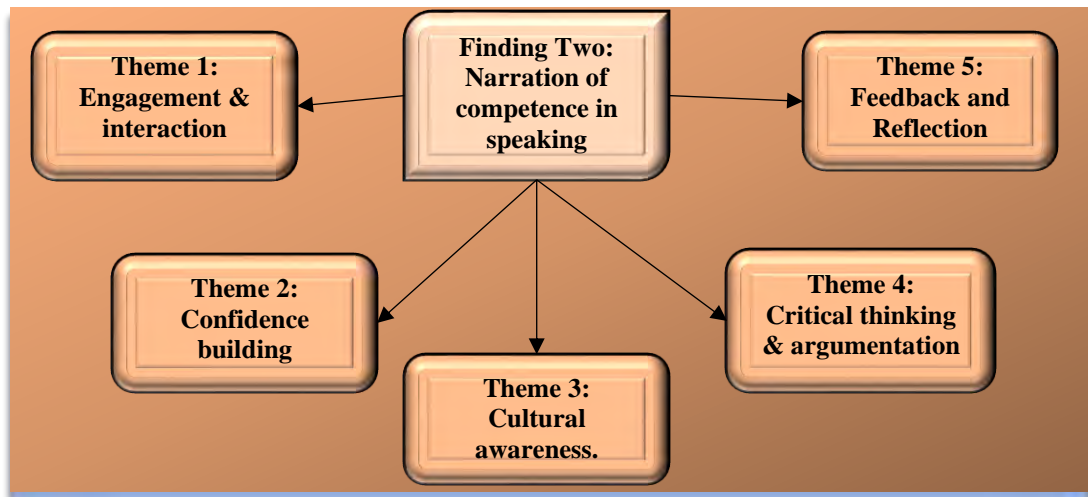


Figure 4.3. Finding two: narration of competence in speaking

4.3.1.2.1 Theme 1: Engagement and Interaction

In the light of the real experience of teaching ESL classes, the teachers argued that engagement and fruitful interactions are the vital elements for the promotion of speaking competence among the learners in the ESL classrooms. Therefore, their experiences reveal that students avoid active participation in the ESL classroom debates and discussions. They feel reluctance in speaking the English language in their language classrooms before their classmates and teachers. However, it is very necessary to offer friendly and ideal environment where the students may participate actively holding communication with their fellows and ESL teachers. Consequently, they will be able to promote their speaking competence and skills boosting up their confidence. Hence, the participants asserted on adopting effective innovative strategies to engage students.

Teacher A advocated the importance of the group work as well as collaborative learning to enhance and develop the speaking competence in undergraduate students. He argued, *“dividing the learners into smaller groups for productive discussions or*

participation projects raises collaboration. This style motivates the ESL students to get used to speaking in this zero-pressure setting and share divergent perspectives to learn from their peers.”

Moreover, participant B supported role playing activities similar to real and practical-life situation. For instance, the job interviews, discussion on myself, an interesting incident, a picnic party etc. She stated:

“Role-playing motivates students practice of English language in context, increasing fluency, proficiency and involvement in speaking.”

Furthermore, the sound debates and healthy discussions, incorporating interesting games of divergent kinds and the interactive activities shape speaking practice as enjoyable healthy activity. Teacher A added that *“hosting the structured discussions and debates or open critical conversation on multifarious topics encourage the students to speak views their thoughts.”*

Teacher B: *“Games change learning into fun motivating the students to communicate well and practising the language skills to grab more and more competence.”*

Additionally, participant B too observed peer teaching language and effective presentation being very much wonderful to engage ESL students in interaction to lead them to edification of the speaking competence. She remarked:

“Adopting peer teaching language development method enhances the understanding and upgrades confidence for public speaking and elevated presentation skills.”

4.3.1.2.2 Theme 2: Confidence Building

Confidence building being the important theme has emerged out of the teachers' narratives. However, the results unveil that building confidence in students is crucial to raise competence in speaking among ESL undergraduates. Teacher A suggested *"Fostering a convincing and supportive atmosphere which may boost up students' confidence and competence in speaking."* Teacher B added, *"Providing convincing atmosphere in which mistakes are regarded as useful learning opportunities."*

The teacher participants used their practical experience and revealed that promoting confidence is a very critical component for the development of speaking competence. When the students feel confident of their linguistic abilities, they get more engaged in speaking activities, give vent to their thoughts clearly, take many risks in communication. Teacher A postulated:

"For promotion of speaking competence, it is mandatory to create an ideal and supporting environment in which students must feel comfortable committing mistakes while expressing their thoughts."

In this stage, Teacher B spoke:

"A convincing environment prepares the students to take part in speaking activities keeping aside the fear of being judged, fostering the confidence to speak effectively."

Consequently, it has come out of the given data that the students who are confident can do better than others. They are not afraid of asking anything from their teachers and classmates. As a result, they are out of the fear of anxiety, failure in performance and threat of being mocked by their friends. In response, they keep learning focusing

their attention on the instructions of their teachers. In this way, they grab competence to speak well inside as well as outside of the classroom.

4.3.1.2.3 Theme 3: Cultural Awareness.

Cultural awareness being the third important theme plays a pivotal role to proliferate and promote the speaking competence. Understanding various communication styles and techniques, the non-verbal different cues, and multiple perspectives, the ESL students can be engaged with others effectively and more empathetically. However, the results display that the cultural familiarity and awareness not merely enhance the speaking competence of the ESL learners but also activate their judgement for meaningful and elevated interactions in the multifaceted, global society.

Teacher A: *“Divergent cultures bear unique ways for expression of ideas, emotions, feelings and politeness. Familiarity with these variations assists the undergraduate students to adjust and accommodate their style of speaking to knit various listeners, enhancing perspicuity, clarity, lucidity and effectiveness.”*

Teacher B mentioned that non-verbal ways of communication which include gestures, the facial expressions, and the body language, are utterly different across cultures. She posited: *“Recognizing, understanding and interpreting such cues can block misunderstandings and can improve the communicative experience as a whole.”*

Cultural awareness requires to build empathy, cooperation and respect; such understanding encourages the ESL students to strive more vigilantly and meaningfully in conversation and communication. It may lead them to sound and effective relations, communication and collaboration. Teacher A gave opinion, *“cultural awareness*

produces and encourages sound and active listening as well as understanding and contextual perception in conversations.”

The results and outcome unveil that the cultural perception and awareness equips the ESL students with necessary skills required to communicate usefully and effectively regarding national and international contexts, whether it is business, education and media forums, travel, mutual journey or social settings.

4.3.1.2.4 Theme 4: Critical Thinking and Argumentation

Participants shared the experience that upgradation of the students' critical thinking abilities is essential for creating effective speaking. Hence, the results show that incorporating organized debates, impactful presentations and persuasive as well as convincing speaking exercises which challenge the ESL education seekers to articulate their stake and point of view promote speaking competence in ESL undergraduate classrooms. However, critical thinking skill and power of argumentation project the unique role in the development of speaking competence. As a result, this theme emphasizes on the ability of analysing information, constructing the logical arguments, begetting engagement in thought-provoking discussions, as they are essential skills to manage the effective communication. Thus, in the light of their teaching experience to the undergraduates, they have realized that the critical thinking involves evaluation of information and sets distinction between valid effective arguments and fabricated misinformation.

Teacher A: *“By embracing the analytical skills, the English learners can utter their thoughts, understandably, clearly and more persuasively, bringing about fruitful speaking engagements.”*

Teacher B: Constructing and communicating the logical as well as impressive arguments can enhance students’ understanding to offer ideas in more convincing manner making and formulating their speech highly impressive and credible.

Teachers argued that critical thinking develops grave and inquisitive attitude, edifying the spirit of the students to meet deeper understanding, perception and clarity. The teacher B highlighted, *“ESL students who keep questioning and exploring various angles of learning get more innovative speakers, who can develop richer discussions.”*

Consequently, the participants seem to suggest that critical thinking not merely enhances the ability of the students to speak, but also makes them confident, persuasive and philosophic. Moreover, it bestows upon them logical bent of mind, accurate use of grammar and good pronunciation. Furthermore, they are ready to listen others point of view to convince them wisely and they get more articulate, eloquent and innovative.

4.3.1.2.5 Theme 5: Feedback and Reflection

Feedback builds and repairs learning, it keeps correcting and improving the learners and its absence brings about gap in getting competence. Therefore, feedback and reflection both bear the role of essential components while the learners are moving up on the ladder of development regarding their speaking competence. However, this final and mandatory theme highlights the status of focused and constructive feedback and power of self-assessment to improve speaking skill equipped with meaningful

language and transparent grammatical power in order to foster the culture of persistent improvement and distinct growth of competence. Teacher A posits:

“Providing focused and specific sound feedback on the ESL students’ speaking demonstration and performance offers assistance for identifying strengths spotting the areas of improvement.

Therefore, the participants diagnosed that the vigilantly constructive feedback motivates students to repair their learning skills, mustering up their confidence and competence to speak the English language. Teacher B spoke,

“Encouragement of ESL students to respond the feedback initiated by their peers proliferates collaborative learning. Thus, the Peer feedback develops supportive English language learning environment that offers the ESL students to meet multifarious perspectives to enhance the speaking competencies and abilities.”

Consequently, out of the extracted results, it has been revealed that motivating ESL learners to project their real speaking experiences for the formation of feedback brings forth deeper understanding and the confidence to embrace reforms to grasp English language. The Participants spoke using their experiences that reflection stimulates ESL students to internalize and mentally realize the learned lessons enhancing their response to pile up abundance of knowledge. As a result, they are ready to perform well in future, because they are learning to render their successful services in their practical life. Therefore, Teacher A gave the opinion that feedback and sound reflection can set distinguished and specific goals for the development of speaking competence. He further continued,

“Goal setting and formation of target provide the ESL students with a transparent path for betterment and improvement, it motivates them to keep tracking their development over time.”

In teachers’ point of view, consistent feedback as well as self-reflection can be observed as the vital skill for the development of competency in ESL students. Feedback creates inquisitiveness in the students to learn more and more and renounce all that spoils the beauty of their communication. However, they get more prone to learning English language and their zeal keeps them focused on their learning and improving their competence, because they get conscious of their drawbacks and they avoid repeating them.

4.3.2 Findings from the students’ narratives

4.3.2.1 Speaking Competence Description

Thematic analysis of the English language undergraduates’ in-depth interviews at Punjab University Lahore, projects a comprehensive interpretation and demonstration of essentially core and sub-themes out of the provided details, which explain speaking competence reflecting and comprehending its meanings. These words are identified as follows, (i) speaking competence and its definition, (ii) words associated and related with competence (grammar, verbal and nonverbal language, pronunciation, encoding and decoding, proficiency and fluency). The category first describes students’ definition of speaking competence, and the second one offers how the students use their derivational understanding to extract the words which symbolize speaking competence in their routine life. Moreover, it highlights the panorama of competence in broader sense including the elemental value of the factors coming under the

umbrella of the improvement of competence to speak. Figure 4.4 shows the themes from students' narratives.

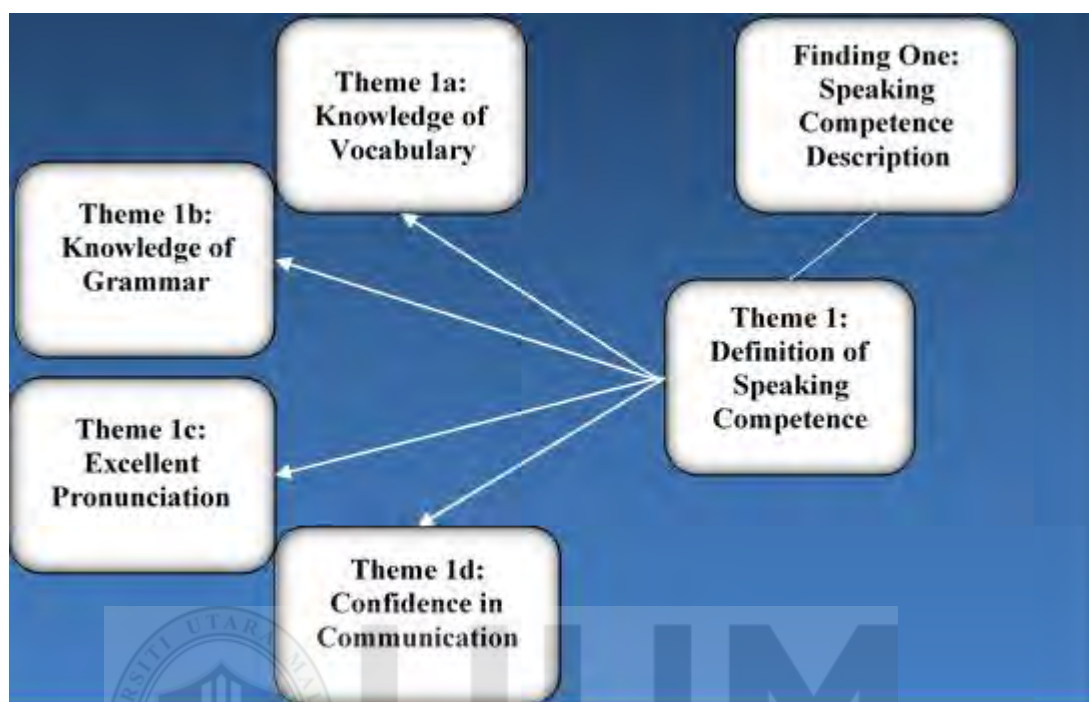


Figure 4.4. The definition of speaking competence from students' narratives

4.3.2.1.1 The Definition of Speaking Competence

The research study explains the first theme that unveils the real picture of speaking competence and offers its definition to create its real understanding adding more to the rampant one. However, its whole process is hoisted on the narrative of the English Language undergraduates studying at Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan. Thus, it pursues and is categorised into the following four sub-themes:

4.3.2.1.1.1 Theme 1a: Knowledge of Vocabulary

The undergraduate ESL participants revealed their vocabulary knowledge and displayed countless definitions of speaking competence considering it a mandatory

and soundly crucial component of the language. Moreover, they emphasised the vitality and importance of vocabulary and mentioned the tremendous role it can play in expressing thoughts and ideas. SP11 and SP10 think language relies more on vocabulary for communication and propagation of ideas in their point of view.

Consequently, a wide and meaningful range of vocabulary leads undergraduate students to successful communication of ideas and they are able to give responses precisely and more creatively. If they are less competent in the use of accurate vocabulary, they are unable to convince others. They need to have exact and understandable vocabulary, otherwise they will not be able to communicate well.

SP1 claimed “*spoken English demands the vocabulary, but we have little, little words vocabulary*”. SP4 endorsed his fellow’s claim and remarked: “*I want that is, I should speak in the English ... I don’t know many big words have for speaking on many places and teachers also do not teach vocabulary and tell vocabulary books names, no time they give in class for vocabulary*”

Both participants displayed their inability to have enough vocabulary to express their views to continue their communication. Even, they were not found able enough to express their problem in English. They could form the sentences which looked hollow without proper and suitable vocabulary. Ironically, their teachers adopt no effective measures to overcome this problem either, rather they recommend them some books to improve it. However, the students seem enthusiastic to learn it, still their teachers adopt no measures to pull down this problem. As a result, they fail to get competence to speak English.

Similarly, SP6 and SP9 spoke with strength that they are familiar with the limited and calculated range of English vocabulary, *“so, how we can get competence in speaking English, in class no lesson on vocabulary, teachers tell tips, but not vocabulary.”*

SP6 posited: *“ok, I have less vocabulary, I cannot speak long time, because my vocabulary is finished, I try with one word again and again, I think no book teachers are teaching about good vocabulary.”*

SP9: *“When vocabulary is not, we cannot speak our wishes and our thinking, but teachers not are interested in improving vocabulary”*.

The student participants are not devoid of the exact, effective and accurate use of vocabulary, they also know this deficiency in vocabulary cannot lead them to balance communication and meaningful interaction, still no fruitful steps have been taken to improve their strength of words. Moreover, they also know they need to improve it, but according to them there is no solid work being done in their classroom regarding addition in their word-power. Therefore, they have realized the fact that their teachers merely give them simple important tips to enhance their vocabulary. However, nothing tremendous is being done to lead their vocabulary to such a state that they should be able to speak long sentences and ideas proficiently.

SP10 and SP11 express their ideas about vocabulary and argue that they should hold such a magnificent vocabulary that they could speak English in all contexts because of divergent collection of words. They do not merely wish to make both ends meet, rather wish to have it sufficiently. They express their inabilities and stress more on the lack

of vocabulary, because by using words they can communicate their ideas, but their words of vocabulary are too less and insufficient. They think vocabulary can help them to understand formal as well as informal English and they can form many words out of the root words, because they can add prefixes and suffixes to lead it to newness.

Furthermore, SP5 wishes to attain the big knowledge of vocabulary, and he is unwilling to learn or collect the words merely confined to school level, they should come up to the undergraduate level. In contrast, ESL classroom has kept aside the real need of the students. It is not focused on vocabulary, but the students have got big hopes attached to the value and space of vocabulary in the process of their language learning. SP5 fails to understand grammar, because he has got very less words to use in sentences, as the formation of sentences relies on vocabulary and its different items,

SP10, *“I want to speak about many topics, but my vocabulary is too little, I want vocabulary about all different topics”. “With vocabulary I understand all type of English.”*

SP11, *If I have big vocabulary, I speak about everything, when my vocabulary finishes, I feel shame. I think vocabulary is basic need and important thing in English learning.*

SP5, *“I want to large vocabulary and many words of vocabulary, not just small or school level.”*

SP8, *I cannot understand grammar and have little vocabulary, my teachers do not tell us the words of vocabulary and teach us long translations.*

Knowing the combinations of common words (collocations) and the common phrases enhances fluency and forms sound speech, it seems natural and real. However, the ESL learners assert on the requirement to try new vocabulary items in their real-life situations, which may set their understanding as well as abilities to practise words more confidently. As SP11 stated:

“Regular practicing of new vocabulary words in classroom will help us in improving our speaking skill in daily life, but our class is big and we cannot speak more.”

The results unveil that knowledge of vocabulary is essential to enhance competence to speak, the students seem aware of the facts which do not let them get competent in the improvement of their vocabulary and speaking. However, they put the responsibility on vocabulary, because they think, it is not focused on by their teachers with great attention and is merely put aside as something worthless. Resultantly, the students are left deprived of the word-bank that is mandatory to hold in the annals of speaking English language. Ironically, the students seem more informed about the importance of vocabulary, still it has been left ignored. Hence, teachers have also been found devoid of such strategic techniques as may confer upon the students the varied words adding up their vocabulary to strengthen the spontaneous overflow in their speaking.

4.3.2.1.1.2 Theme 1b: Knowledge of Grammar

The student participants think grammar bears the status of the significant component of speaking competence because it hooks up the structural and the natural foundations which are considered important for meaningful and effective communication opine the student participant. Furthermore, SP4 argues that ideas may not hit the target if the

sentences bear no weight, and it is the grammar that brings forth effective sentences that form impactful communication.

From the undergraduate students' viewpoint, knowledge of grammar is described as the sound understanding and the implication of the prescriptive rules and principles that govern the sentence structure, tense and verb, forms of words, and punctuation. Unfortunately, the teachers concentrate more on the textbooks of their students and ignore their grammar. They ignore their sentence formation and spend maximum time on teaching textbooks and spend much time on translation. However, grammar leads to effective communication and conveys the message of the speakers in conformity with their intentions, and views SP10. In contrast, grammatical errors spoil the originality of the sentences and pull down the real objectives of the ideas and communication recommends SP7. The For instance:

SP4: *“In our class our teachers give little time to grammar and more to text book, correct use of grammar makes the clear speech and helpful speech to sending the correct message, but my teachers ignore it.”*

SP7: *“Knowledge on grammar is useful in speaking ideas and arguments by using different sentence structures, but teachers spending more time on textbooks and they do not teach grammar in detail.”*

SP10: *“Grammar knowledge is necessary for learning speaking competence, because it makes students to speak clearly, effectively, and with confidence in different situations my teachers do not teach active and passive voice, direct and indirect, and*

parts of speech.”

SP2: “Grammar helps us to speak in right way and become a good speaker, teachers do not teach it in detail, and they give small lectures on it”.

Consequently, the students seem to award vital importance to grammar, because it reflects their real thoughts and saves them from many ambiguities. Hence, it leads to clarity according to the student participants and maintains the beauty of expression. If the grammatical strength is missing, the speaker and listener both are found confused and disturbed. Moreover, the English language teachers provide thorough understanding of grammar and avoid teaching its essence. They do not teach them formation of sentence, active and passive voice, direct and indirect, mood, the use of parts of speech and article, say the students.

As a result, the English language undergraduates fall a prey to ambiguities while speaking, as they fail to form precise and compact sentences. Their teachers being too busy with textbooks do not exhaust their energies on the improvement of their grammatical knowledge, says a student participant. Hence, the negligence of teachers is adding fuel to fire, because English being the second language is already problematic for the students, therefore bilateral cooperation of the students and teachers is needed to enhance the grammatical skill of the students, so that they must demonstrate competence when they speak English.

4.3.2.1.1.3 Theme 1c: Excellent Pronunciation

Excellent, impactful and exact pronunciation is viewed as speaking competence by the English language undergraduate student participants, they consider it the definition of the competence in speaking think SP8 and SP5. The students are of the view that speaking competence empowers the ability of articulating the of words of the English language clearly, understandably and accurately, but there is no good book recommended for them in their syllabus, because teachers give it very less importance considering it a difficult task thinks SP3. As a result, effective influences on communication can be perceived, because mispronounced words effect the meanings and objectives of message says SP1. Student participants say:

SP3: *“I think pronouncing words in a way that is understood by listeners and misunderstandings, we have no good book about it, teachers also say it difficult thing, impossible work in Pakistan”.*

SP5: *“Our class is big and teachers have less time for teaching many things, good pronunciation increase confidence of students, encourage to participate activeness in conversations that form speaking competence”.*

SP8: *“I belief that excellent pronunciation increasing confidence between students to participation in classroom discussion that gives them speaking competence.”*

SP1: *“I think feel shame when I speak, because I speak in Urdu style my wrong pronunciation changes the meanings of the words”.*

Consequently, the students need to enhance their pronunciation to speak like native speakers, but they are unable to pronounce the words in the right way. They think no work is being done on the improvement of their speaking and the teachers instead of encouraging them block them saying it is hard to improve pronunciation. Moreover, nothing to improve pronunciation has been assigned by the examination board, there is no book recommended to improve their pronunciation, and listening is arranged rarely in the ESL classroom, which cannot bring forth any positive results at all. They have got enthusiasm to speak accurately, but mispronunciation causes them disgrace and they feel too difficult to speak before anyone.

SP8 thinks good pronunciation motivates the students to be confident to speak, but their teachers also speak less English and use no technical tool to teach them pronunciation. One of them says he cannot understand English on TV and Radio, because his skill to understand the words of English is too weak. Furthermore, their examination does not observe their pronunciation and they have got no compulsion to improve their pronunciation to speak, as a result, they have got less competence to speak and pronounce exactly like the native speakers.

4.3.2.1.1.4 Theme 1d: Confidence in Communication

In the views of student participants confidence is the important component in communication, it is considered the vital need of the speakers, because they cannot step ahead without attaining it. The students also know that confidence is the first step on the ladder of learning, and it brings about a climax if it is attained in time argue SP4 and SP8. However, views SP9 the undergraduates require such a system that may lead

them to comfortable and confident learning to avoid and escape anxiety that mostly obstructs their ways of learning the English language.

From the students' viewpoint, competence also relies on confidence, if the learners are confident in learning a language, they can acquire competence to speak in such a way that everyone can understand them and they can attain a lot from others endorsing SP9. As is commonly said that when somebody is sure what he is speaking about, he can communicate it well. Hence, student participants as a whole think that they bear little confidence, for they can neither convince anybody, nor they can ask their teacher a question to clear their problem. They claimed:

SP4: *“Confident students can start conversations easily and with brave way, ask questions, they can give opinions without fear, in my class we are many students and we have less time for participation for getting confidence”.*

SP8: *“The students who know that they have knowledge, they can speak using tongue, eyes, hands, head and full body, in this way they can enjoy good communication”.*

SP9: *“In our class teachers speak more and we too less speak, a brave speaker is possible to bear criticism and learn from it, in this way he improves his skills.”*

SP12: *“In our classes we have no time to improve confidence, confidence makes able the speakers to adjust their language and style, on the context and audience, for more useful interactions, in my classroom students discourage others.”*

Consequently, the student participants offer the narrative that they are less confident and this deficiency cannot let them move forward exactly and accurately, because their

competence bears no confidence and no power to bear the brunt of anything spoken wrong. However, they say courage and confidence may lead them to embrace competence to speak well. In contrast, one of the participants blames his teachers have never tried to imbue confidence in him and he is afraid when he begins to speak. Confidence in their point of view is the fundamental reality that boosts up their spirit to speak, commit mistakes, and remove them under the supervision of their ESL teachers.

4.3.2.1.2 Theme 2: Words for Speaking Competence

This core theme examines and evaluates the words that are the representative of the concept and understanding of speaking competence, it highlights the competence in a transparent, grave, magnificent, and clearer way. However, thematic analysis of the student participants' interviews and responses unveils three sound words or the key themes that bear highly effective and significant roles: (i) oral fluency, (ii) expertise, (iii) and talent. They are vitally connected with competence and with their strength, competence meets the apex that is the destination of second language learning. This achievement begets learning pleasure and globally effective power of communication to interact with diverse people.

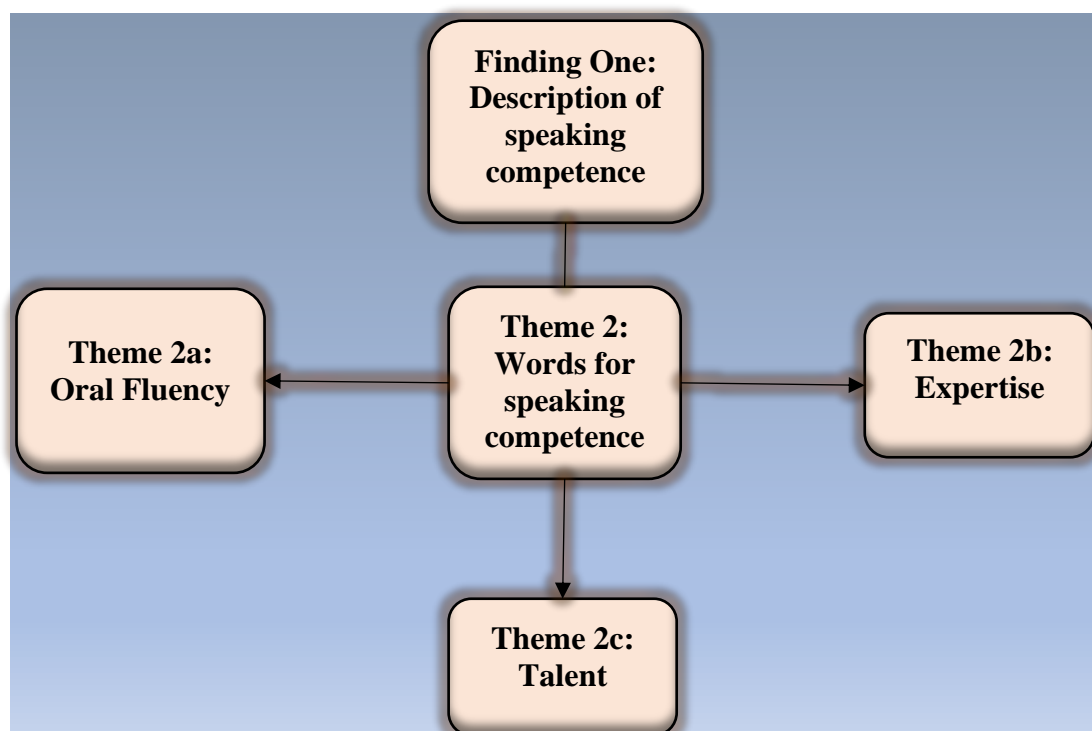


Figure 4.5. Words for speaking competence from students' perspectives

4.3.2.1.2.1 Theme 2a: Oral Fluency

Sub-theme, the oral fluency is generally considered an accurate substitute for speaking competence. The student participants connect and associate this concept of the oral fluency with impactful ability to speak, clearly, soundly, smoothly, confidently and effortlessly, creating space for clear, transparent and coherent communication. SP3 and SP5 assert on smoothness and clarity of speech and understandable fluency in the speech.

However, the student participants recommend nicely articulated and easily uttered meaningful sentences with fluency. It means the communication should break blocks and the meaningful delivery of words and sentences should create comfortable panorama of conversation and communication, says SP1. Therefore, this process

stands for competence that is associated with speaking and the man who bears this competence comes up to its one requirement. They posited:

SP1: *“Oral fluency, we say the power to speak without many pauses or stops, which is very good for pure conversation, in our classroom we read more and speak too less, because class is big and just some students speak again and again, because they can already speak.”*

SP3: *“In my class, teachers mostly read and tell Urdu translation and we do not speak, if we speak and use good pace, and make good communication and still we are understandable, it is showing we are fluent speaker.”*

SP5: *“It is ability in speak language naturally without need of thinking word of choice or structures of tenses, we need no outside help.”*

SP11: *“I think oral fluency has great linking with confidence, it is motivator for students of English for taking part in discussions without any difficulty.”*

The student participants' views about the oral fluency demonstrate that it is the second recognition of the speaking competence, because it bears significant and worthy impacts on their ability and capacity to communicate impactfully as well clearly. They think it connects them with others and develops their understanding maintaining their relations through understandable conversation. Furthermore, it seems to them natural ability that improves their confidence and makes them able to encode and decode effectively. One of them says, conversation without suitable pauses and time-change creates ambiguities in understanding.

Moreover, one of them thinks, oral fluency forms natural communication that develops understanding and meaningful association, without it one is deficient to speak competently. Therefore, competence cannot achieve its real status and form, if the oral fluency is kept aside.

4.3.2.1.2.2 Theme 2b: Expertise

The word ‘expertise’ according to the students plays a dynamic and pivotal role for competence of the students to speak English. Expertise requires multitude of strengths like interpersonal skills, grammatical command, fluency and proficiency, pronunciation, intonation and word bank. One of them says it is their ultimate target and the others endorse that many of aforementioned elements have already been left unattended (SP7). Resultantly, the students fail to achieve what they are supposed to be focused to strive for.

However, they seem ready to embrace high level of competence, but they also look aware that in many areas they have not achieved even the intermediate level. In response, their competence to pronounce and understanding of the proficient English look to them very difficult, rather impossible. Moreover, SP7 and SP10 are ambitious to speak English in their daily life situations where they wish to attain higher level of success as the competent speakers. For instance:

SP4: *“Command for vocabulary use, grammar use and tenses, and pronunciation are useful for the language students for speak nicely.”*

SP7: *“Practise regularly is helpful for the students to speak in natural way with feeling no hesitation.”*

SP10: *“Self-trust and confidence for speaking helps the English students to speak difficult things very clearly and showing a good understanding about the topic.”*

The students are well informed of what expertise is and they aspire to get it, but they look unable to achieve it, because their being deprived of the standard ESL classroom is a problem that seems to them left perpetually unsolved. However, the students know well what expertise includes in its realm and how it motivates and facilitates the learners to go in conformity with it to demonstrate competence in speaking.

4.3.2.1.2.3 Theme 2c: Talent

The sub-theme ‘Talent’ plays a notable role in speaking competence, influencing how easily and effectively individuals can communicate. Talent can shape speaking competence in many ways (SP2). According to student participants some students are naturally equipped with such qualities which make them understand diverse phrases, accents, tones, ways to speak and understanding grammar (SP1). The students narrate that some people are naturally confident to respond anyone and answer any question. Hence, they find it easy to bear the brunt of their mistakes or any wrong, because they are not shy of committing mistakes and asking their teachers the questions about what they do not know.

SP6 and SP12 think some of them bear natural vocal varieties which get them familiar with many unfamiliar things and they can easily manage to manipulate the situation. However, quick thinking is another factor that adds to their competence to perform well and convince others. The students are willing to admit that talent bears great worth and it can do wonders regarding competence to speak English language. They say:

SP1: *“Some people have understanding for language by birth, they know vocabulary, use of words and grammar, in our classroom some students have talent and many of them cannot do well”.*

SP2: *“Intelligent and talent speakers can understand new things of language quickly, yes, then make practice and show progress at speaking.”*

SP6: *“God-gifted people are able to easily get the attention of the other people and they make good communication.”*

SP8: *“Natural talent people feel happy and confident in interactions in society and give their messages in brave way”.*

SP12: *“Talent causes to many new uses of language, allows to students to speak difficult ideas in different ways”.*

Consequently, talented students are endowed with such tremendous qualities that they can understand confidently whatever is spoken before them. They have the natural talent to understand the verbal and nonverbal language and they are not shy of speaking, exploring, asking and mentioning. Even, they have got such articulators as are ready to pronounce any word without feeling any hesitation. Consequently, these God-gifted qualities bear diverse impacts, and the student participants are convinced that some people are naturally developed, they need no artificial support.

4.3.2.2 The Narration of Speaking Competence

The student participants reveal multitude of such factors as may bring about excellent success if followed uprightly and soundly. However, no other than them can narrate

what leads to loss and what elevates the competence of the students to speak. However, this portion contains the findings of the second of the research questions relying on the undergraduate participants' share of practical experience. Thus, the students try to explain what leads them to failure regarding development of competence and what can make amend for the loss they already have had. Resultantly, some of them complain of being neglected during the presentations, vocabulary development activities, grammar learning and the others are annoyed with absence of proper listening facilities. Hence, they seem to suggest how they can lead to climax of competence in speaking adopting cooperative learning, making use of feedback, being confident and avoiding anxiety. One of them says, *I know what competence is, but I do not know why I am not competent.* Figure 4.6 shows the summary of students' narration of speaking competence.



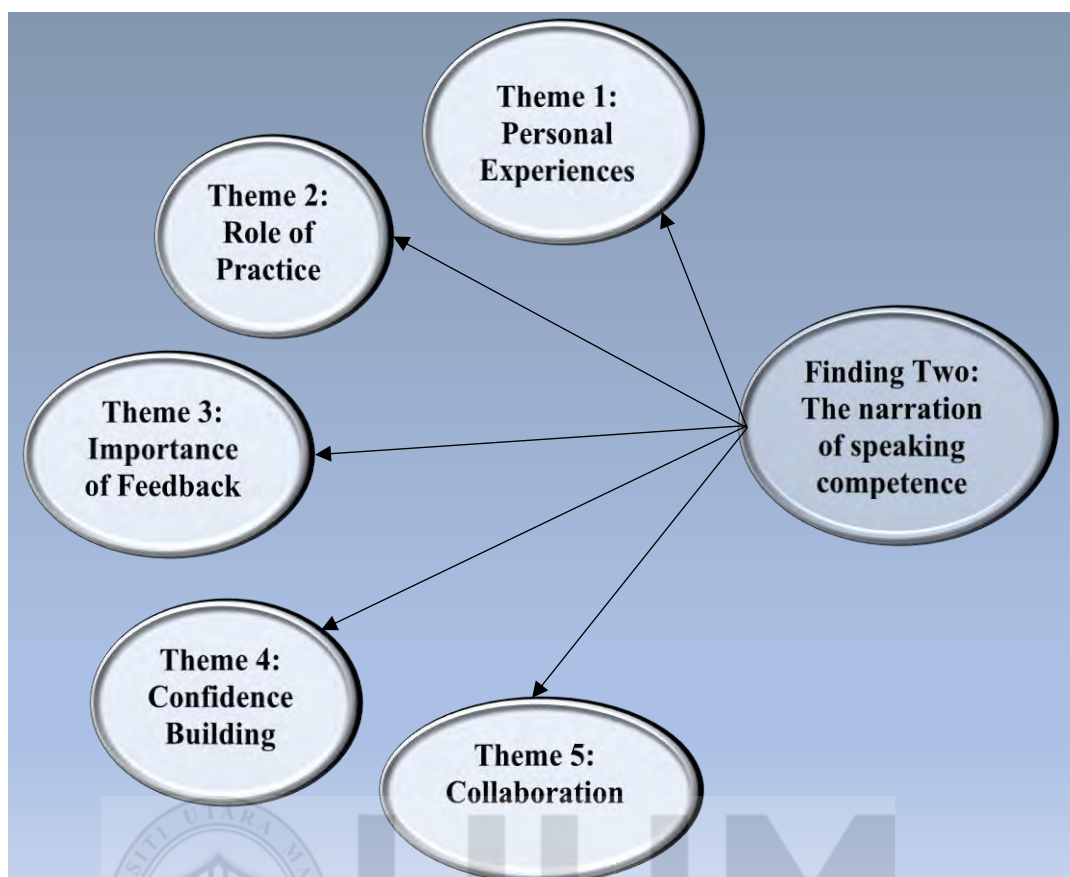


Figure 4.6. Summary of students' narration of speaking competence

4.3.2.2.1 Theme 1: Personal Experiences

The undergraduate ESL student participants shared minutely their personal practical experience in the learning process of promoting their speaking competence, mentioning obstacles and blocks like nervousness and fear before their ESL teacher and ambiguities of pronunciation. SP4 has got a lot to say, but his tongue cannot speak exactly the words which he has in in his storehouse of vocabulary. SP1 mentions his experience and shares that whenever he delivers the presentations; he gets nervous. He utters his feelings and reveals: *"In my presentation time during my ESL class, I cannot face my fellows, my voice also broke and my both hands look cold."* SP5 also describes his perceptions in the same way; he asserts,

“When I am on presentations, this time my heartbeat is very big, I feel sweet on my body, voice breaks and my legs tremble.”

SP6: “I feel that I am able and can speak in my class, but I become sad when I have teacher in my class. It is very impossible for me to control my shy condition in that situation, I also feel fear that teacher will insult me”.

SP4: I want to speak the words which I have in my mind, but my tongue cannot speak them and I become nervous also, because I have less practice in my classroom.

4.3.2.2.2 Theme 2: Role of Practice

The undergraduate student participants assert on the fact in the light of their experience that consistent and regular practice bears great strength to improve their competence to speak English using accurate pronunciation, displaying proficiency in speaking, and projecting command at grammar. They with the strength to recount their personal practical experiences in their English language classes, combined study groups, or conversational activity with peers, describe how these effective opportunities lift up their confidence, proficiency and fluency. SP3, SP8 and SP11 recommend with stress that merely the regular and consistent practice to speak English in the ESL classroom can overcome nervousness.

SP3: “If we shall do regular practice, we will finish the speaking anxiety nervousness, but our class has less time and big number of students.”

SP8: “Good preparation about the topic and also the practice can help to face the problems confidently.”

SP11: *“Taking part in debating, discussions, talks and dramas and other curricular things can reduce anxiety and make confidence for speaking, I know, but in our classroom same students speak again and again.”*

4.3.2.2.3 Theme 3: Importance of Feedback

The English language students regard the constructive, effective and organized feedback from their teachers and peers worthy and highly recommended element that keeps them innovative and inquisitive. However, specific and focused instructions on impactful pronunciation and clarity look to them more motivating, because refined communication demands competence in speaking the words as they are and any change violates the meanings of the words and spoil the real objectives of conversation. SP1 thinks, if feedback is missing, they can never renounce their mistakes and the teachers may not be well informed of their flaws.

Therefore, they will not be able to embrace any effective change to improve them more. However, feedback bears the measurement of what they know and what they ought to learn thinks SP2. Consequently, feedback facilitates the process of learning ESL and leads the students to competence in spoken English language.

Recommends SP7.

SP1: *“Positive feedback makes powerful the students and creates confidence in their abilities. When they get good for their efforts, it can encourage them.”*

SP2: *“Feedback is not available in our class, I know it helps students to understand the hopes for speaking tasks, like presentations or discussions, then they know what is required to them”.*

SP7: *“Useful feedback makes a useful learning environment and the students feel happy, they take risks and experience with language without fear.”*

SP9: *“Feedback benefits students in making good their performance, helping them in speaking, such as removing errors it can make them able to speak.”*

SP12: *“Positive feedback has effects on communication among teachers and students, creates relationships and helps for improving competence.”*

4.3.2.2.4 Theme 4: Confidence Building

Confidence plays more effective and significant role for the students' overall construction and promotion in multifarious areas, particularly academics, social interactions and cooperation and their personality development considers SP1. However, the ESL students reveal that the confident students participate in class the discussions, bear the risks in process of learning, and they hold the power to accept challenges. Hence, they muster up their courage and proceed to subdue the multifaceted obstructions hindered in their way of improving their competence.

Thus, they get used to grappling with the blocks in their way of promotion. Therefore, the student participants opine that confident students are ready to learn from their mistakes and they try to answer all questions raised by their teachers and class-fellows (SP2 and SP4). In this way, they keep learning and enhancing their competence. Even,

according to the students, the confident students are more courageous to take part in the activities which seem to the less-confident students too hard. As a result, the students think confidence boosts up their courage to become more spontaneous and quick in response.

SP1: *“Confidence is very helpful for the students of language and they can speak well in classroom and also outside of it, if we take part and engage in English conversations, finally we can improve to speak with competence, but we are not doing so in our class.”*

SP2: *“All the confident students are able for solving the problems and they are not worried for their mistakes and they can learn from their mistake, but they do not practice in our language class.”*

SP4: *“Confident students are brave and motivated and good in their learning. They like to take step, finding opportunities, and they follow their interests”.*

SP9: *“The students of brave kind participate in collective and interactive classroom, encourage others to participate well.”*

4.3.2.2.5 Theme 5: Collaboration

Student participants seem very much acquainted with the significant role of collaboration and they think it can support them well in their learning. However, the students are much informed of their sources of learning and count their peers the great facilitating support that can lead them to apex of competence. However, they are informed of the validity of group projects and cooperative learning. They think

collaboration can bring about innovations and motivate them to embrace their destination within no time, rather learning becomes a game for them think SP12 and SP3. Therefore, collaborative learning seems to the students an effort to innovations and motivations that can enhance their learning experience.

However, it enhances the confidence of the students to speak in a group and also listen to them speaking, articulating, pronouncing and using variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary says SP5. They say, in this way they can improve more clearly and get competent to speak, because practice leads to them to perfection. Participants mentioned collaboration as:

SP3: *“Collaborative learning the students of English share different elements and knowledge, understanding their topics and concepts”.*

SP5: *“Working together is helpful for students and they develop skills like communication, problem-solving, teamwork and common cooperation that is very useful for them.”*

SP12: *“Collaborative activities make the student motivation, makes learning enjoyable and mutual, it is friendly way to learning.”*

SP7: *“Collaboration create a feeling of community and protection for all students, they can easily encourage every class-fellow, to give feedback, and help each other”.*

SP9: *Working with collaboration encourage students to practise speaking and listening, making ideas in a good environment, it can boost up confidence in communication.*

SP12: *“Working in the groups is helpful for students to learn to find disagreements and find common points, promoting their ability to solve their conflicts for good target”.*

Consequently, the student participants are most optimistic, if they are provided with such opportunities which may enhance their confidence and lead them to the competence to speak fluently, proficiently and clearly. However, they feel lack of collaboration in their ESL classroom and this deficiency damages the learning process in their opinions. Therefore, they wish to have it, so that they can reach their destination by getting competence to speak in their classroom as well as in their real-life interactions.

4.3.3 Factors Promoting Speaking Competence from Students Perspectives

In the light of the information articulated by the ESL undergraduates, multitude of the factors can uplift their competence if they are potentially followed. Ironically, the teachers and the responsible authorities keep ignoring despite knowing the major causes of the academic losses, still they delay initiating and rescue the students. As the students have uncloaked what they feel and face in their English language classroom, the obstacles hindered in the ways of learning can easily be diagnosed to curb the issue. Therefore, the factors which can motivate the students to learn are given below and they can also be substituted for the remedies to solve the issue. Figure 4.7 represents the promoting factors of competence in speaking.

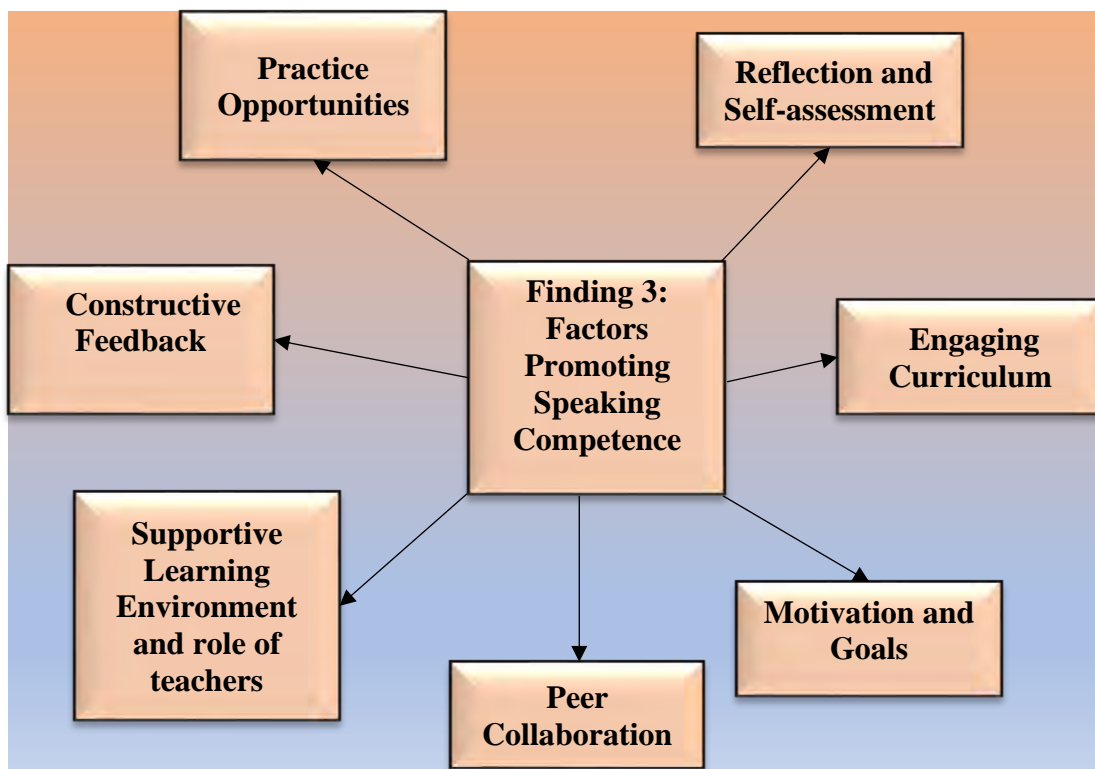


Figure 4.7. Factors promoting speaking competence from students' perspectives

4.3.3.1 Theme 1: Practice Opportunities

If the students manage to practice a lot, they can improve their competence to speak and get confidence to treat the global language as the effective means of communication. In this regard SP3 uses the word “Big powers should bring change”, he seems to suggest changes in syllabus that should offer interactive learning and only the policy makers and planners can introduce innovations in this connection. Their interaction with diverse people changes their accent, intonation and the style to speak English.

SP2 complains of the absence of listening in the learning system of his ESL classroom and he uses the phrase “No listening, no speaking”. They also improve their listening while speaking, coding and encoding, reflecting and affecting and managing the

conversational process in foreign language. Moreover, their speaking also improves and they feel no complexities begetting spontaneous response, during class discussions, topic presentations, or in informal discussions and debates. However, regular practice develops their thought process in such a balanced way that they begin to behave with language in more familiar and friendly way.

Ironically, ESL classrooms are bigger and stuffed with students in suffocated atmosphere. “No chances to speak in big class” as SP2 complains and suggests that they should have such a strength in the classroom that everyone confidence could speak. SP9 suggests the language learners should speak English outside the class too, because it is very much fruitful practice for the improvement of speaking competence. In response, the students manage to build confidence to participate in healthy debates and discussions. However, it is believed that success and achievements in real situations pull down anxiety creating self-efficacy and regular practice, because it motivates the learners to feel elation and learning aptitude.

SP9 suggests there is the absence of technological support for the improvement of listening and speaking. He uses the phrase “Just one class projector” and in rest of the classes there is no modern technology being used. Therefore, informal and formal setting modern digital resources, collaborative learning and immediate feedback in real life interactions are the helpful resources which edify the competence of the ESL Speakers. Unfortunately, SP9, SP1 and SP6 have got nobody outside the class to speak English as the people speak local and native languages in general. Consequently, if there is no practice there is no possibility to speak English language fluently and proficiently using meaningful language and standard pronunciation.

SP3: "I think big powers should change the system, they must look after our class and see our progress, then they should bring changes".

SP9: "Our people don't speak English in society and I have less chances to practice my spoken English, only one class has the projector other have not".

SP6: "My class is very big and there is no discussion and proper debates for improvement of vocabulary and clear speaking".

SP1: outside the class nobody speaks English with me, but people laugh when I try to speak.

SP11: "I and all of my friends cannot practise more and more, because most of the students speak their local languages".

SP2: "I cannot understand English and I know, no listening means no speaking and I have no chances to speak in big class".

4.3.3.2 Theme 2: Constructive Feedback

Specific, focused, and healthy feedback from the ESL teachers as well as peers facilitates the students to recognize and identify the particular areas to dynamically improve and refine their competence to speak English language. SP8 wants somebody should point out his mistakes and give him instructions to improve his competence to speak, he uses the phrase, "Judge and suggest mistakes." SP10 and SP12 complain of their classes being too big that they cannot get proper feedback for improvement, "many students in class", "less time, no feedback possible.

Moreover, targeted feedback that highlights the specific areas brings about fabulous improvement in the competence of the students, but the students in the current research complained that their teachers do not take much care of the feedback, because it is difficult for them to arrange feedback for such unmanageable class. SP2 and SP5 suggest “Vocabulary without feedback is impossible” and they seem annoyed with their teacher, because he does not give them feedback about it. Hence, targeted feedback on the specific areas like vocabulary, pronunciation, accent, grammar and fluency can work wonders.

As a result, the students start practising to focus on their target areas and manage to overcome their handicaps. However, positive reinforcement and acknowledgement of what the students know well lead to motivation among learners and they feel happy with their learning endeavours renouncing misconceptions and ambiguities. Shared experiences, group discussions on the feedback and the work to renounce the mistakes can confer upon the students the innovations to adopt excellent strategies to embrace improvement. Consequently, feedback opens new avenues of improving competence, because it works as an excellent force to construct healthy accountability system that creates realization in both the students and the teachers and without it the journey of language learning can halt and meet unamendable loss.

SP8: *“I want somebody that should judge and suggest to remove my mistake, then I can be happy and satisfied to learn English”.*

SP10: *“I have many students in class and teacher cannot give me feedback”*

SP12: “In a big classroom, we have less time, no feedback is possible, and therefore many students are less competent”.

SP2: “My teacher has no time to tell me about my vocabulary and it is very difficult if he has no time to point out this that I should improve how”.

SP5: “I want feedback about how I can use many words and how to improve the pronunciation, but my class is big and teacher has little time”.

SP4: “I want to speak clear and fast, but I do not know my problems in speaking and teacher has time just for class”.

4.3.3.3 Theme 3: Supportive Learning Environment and Role of Teachers

In Pakistan, the English language is considered the marker of professional and the academic success, therefore supportive learning is mandatory, and it can render upon the students the competence to speak English. SP6 complains “teacher snubs us”, he shows the collective behaviour of the students and suggests teachers to be cooperative and encouraging instead of being harsh towards the students when they ask the questions. However, the language classroom is supposed to create great nurturing space addressing the harmful factors in the way of the learning of the students. SP11 requires the teachers to train and direct him and provide him motivations to reach his goal. He uses the phrase “Teacher should be leader”, he wants to follow the guidelines of his teacher considering him his mentor. The ESL classroom can enlighten the learners, if it is working under the supervision of the teacher who bears the role of a leader.

SP3 and SP9 think “cooperative learning” can pull down the obstacles from their ways of learning. A language classroom bears a great role regarding learning and personality development of the students; it leads the students to innovations making them get rid of the harmful elements and hooking the gems of knowledge and wisdom. In the opinion of SP6 teachers are motivators and preachers, therefore they should change the life of students. However, the language classroom is supposed to be more energetic and dynamically ready to bless the students with proficiency and fluency. Consequently, SP1 suggests well-designed curriculum, trained teachers, organized technical tools including multimedia and loudspeakers in the classroom can perform a good role regarding improvement and enrichment of the students and their competence in speaking.

However, the student participants suggest non-judgemental atmosphere in the classroom and their exposure with English culture through English songs and movies in the classroom can also motivate the students well. Moreover, SP6 thinks the well-trained teachers always motivate their students to learn something new and never adopt harsh attitude if they commit any mistakes. However, SP3 says innovative teaching and latest pedagogical techniques can motivate the students to learn well. Moreover, SP6 thinks the supportive learning is equipped with all the possible supports which can enhance the competence of the learners and lead them to feel pleasure of language learning.

SP6: “We can learn well with our friends, but our teacher snubs us when we ask something again and again, supportive learning demand new ways to encourage the students”.

SP11: *“For good learning my teacher should be my leader, only he can support me and improve me.”*

SP3: *“I want students and teachers should cooperate with one another during English language class, teachers should guide well and their students’ study.”*

SP9: *“Well, but our teachers focus on some students and ignore others, the students and teachers should work in the team style and friendly way.”*

SP6: *“We should get motivations from our friends and the teachers. In this way we can learn English language”.*

SP6: *“I think well-trained teachers have big supportive hand and the students can learn well in their class”.*

SP3: *“Teachers should give new ideas to students and the syllabus should also be modern and helping, in my classroom I have less talking time.”*

4.3.3.4 Theme 4: Peer Collaboration

Working in group form with classmates and friends in discussions can form a sense of impactful community that may bring about collaborative learning; it can greatly enhance the competence to speak and meet successful end suggest SP2 and SP5. The former uses the phrase “learning in union” is useful and clearer than isolated one. Moreover, SP7 thinks collaborative learning fosters confidence and power to improve English trying many angles to hook new ways.

According to SP10 in such type of learning the students develop the habit to learn language in natural atmosphere as role play and class activities lead them to form

“effective attitude towards” English Language. However, SP12 thinks they with peers’ cooperation and mutual understanding keep up renouncing their mistakes embracing new ways and strategies to learn. Interesting and non-threatening atmosphere and effective guidelines in collaborative learning prove big blessings for students of ESL. Additionally, peers’ instructions are friendly and more encouraging and non-intimidating too reveals SP12. They open the new avenues of learning for the students of English language.

As a result, they can speak effectively using meaningful language, pronunciation and effective grammar. As language is natural phenomena it requires convenient learning atmosphere and the group discussion. Furthermore, class activities are based on cooperation, understanding and frankness; the learners improve themselves a lot in such convenient settings. Consequently, collaborative learning assists the learners friendly and makes them able to exploit all the opportunities offered to them in their classroom. They learn pursue after many ways like use of technology, group discussions, peers’ feedback and motivations to lead others.

SP2: When I join learning in union, I am more confident, therefore this kind of learning is always useful for my class and me.

SP5: I think learning English language is a teamwork and it is needed that students should make team like a community.

SP7: I support collaborative learning, because it creates confidence and all the students speak English for communication, but my classroom has big crowd and discipline problem.

SP10: *The students can adopt effective attitude towards English by role-play and class activities and it can become their habit after all, in our classroom time is too short and we mostly read text books.*

SP12: *Well, the students will finish idleness and follow their peers in that type of learning, my class has nothing like that.*

4.3.3.5 Theme 5: Motivation and Goals

Motivations and the clarity of goals have a crucial space to improve the competence of the ESL undergraduates to speak English suggesting SP5 and SP9. If the learners are transparently clear about their goals, they are more upright and motivated to realize them practically. However intrinsic motivation drives the English learners to cut after all the useful ways which can lead them to success suggests SP12 and uses the phrase “motivation of heart”. Motivation has an impact that musters up the courage of the students to tread ahead and meet their goals, which bear the sweetness untold.

However, SP1 recommends that teachers should assign them topics aligned with their interests, and they should put all of their energies into achieving them. Interestingly, English language learners can be more motivated, knowing that global language opens new doors of economic stability and big status in the job market. Therefore, implications of modern strategies mingled with clear motivations and big goals inaugurate the new ways of learning recommends SP9.

Consequently, big goals create big motivations, and the rampant demand of English language makes the learning process more interesting and understandable. Hence, the teachers and the language promotion system should comply with the motivations and

goals of the students to keep them more focused and concentrated on their object. Consequently, SP2 and SP12 are of the views that goals sustain the motivations and the motivations sustain goals, for both in collaboration can bring forth competence to speak.

SP5: The students can learn well, but they should know what are their goals and what are dreams and objects in life and teachers should also help them.

SP12: Students can get competence in learning if they will have motivation of heart and they are ready to follow it.

SP9: If students will not know what is their future and they also do not know anything about their future, they will not learn in good way, further the teachers should teach them in new way.

SP1: Teachers should select topics for students, and they should speak on it with great interest, in this way they can practice very much.

SP2: Big objects in life make big goals and big motivations, therefore the students also need to form big targets to workday and night.

4.3.3.6 Theme 6: Engaging Curriculum

In the views of the students, the curriculum that bears multitude of motivational material can empower the English language learners with enthusiasm to study it microscopically keeping aside their anxiety and traditional ways of learning. However, curriculum should carry the interests of the students and make them renounce their hopelessness and sluggishness to learn more suggests SP3 and he uses the phrase “idle

makers and lazy learners”. It must offer interactive learning and such activities as should involve the students’ interests and they should practise their speaking skill to get fluent using new words and pronouncing them regularly, views SP4 and speaks “routine activity” for regular hard-work.

Furthermore, SP6 suggests curriculum should bear ‘harmony with their culture’, their favourite sports should also be mentioned in it and they should have a lot of discussion portions in it. It must highlight the problems faced to the people, their historical background, their general knowledge, good work on English literature including poetry and short stories says SP8. Moreover, it should require its projection on multimedia and computer screen views SP11. Lastly, the good curriculum offers innovations in learning, and it seems interesting to the learners who are inquisitive to grasp the global language to speak it confidently.

SP3 “We read old books of stories and poems in our class, curriculum must show good knowledge and learning activities, it should not be idle maker and lazy learners, it should give new knowledge and make the students competent”.

SP8: Curriculum should show the problems of the society also their history, poetry and stories, then it will be interesting for them.

SP11: It should demand that teacher should use projector and show its reference and reality to convince the students, but our teachers tell its Urdu translation.

SP4: The curriculum should make English speaking the routine activity of the students and it should give them nice vocabulary and the ways to pronounce.

SP6: It should be in harmony with their culture, sports and life style, in this way students will learn it with interest.

4.3.3.7 Theme 7: Reflection and Self-Assessment

The student participants suggest both reflection and the self-assessment can prove to be applaud able factors for the improvement of competence among the undergraduates and lead them to proficiency and fluency. SP4 and SP7 think, that when they keenly observe their competence, they can feel both the useful and harmful things. Hence, encouraging the language students to reflect on their English language-speaking experiences and applying self-assessment to their performance can broaden their awareness and lead them to improvement.

Reflection enhances the abilities of the learners to collide with the challenges courageously and extract abilities to perform and prove their worth, even SP12 endorses and calls it a “map of my life”. As the student participants looked ready to project their talent for more and more learning of language, they also demonstrated how they could improve their fluency, pronunciation, and grammar, SP10 keeps exploring how he can get all that. They looked well-informed about their deficiencies and their self-awareness assured them what genuine faults they were trapped in, SP7 calls it “my genuine learning disease”.

Consequently, by enhancing and improving self-awareness, adopting clear goals, embracing active practice, and holding the mirror of self-corrections, they can step out to meet more and more competencies considered SP5. However, in students’ views, personal feedback, recording daily, peers’ feedback, and assessment by online apps

also work wonders and bring about effective improvement for the development of competence. Therefore, suggest the students the steps like progress tracking and adding new words, setting conversation activities with friends and highlighting the focal points of language can also make them inquisitive learners. Ironically, our system of education and language promotion is meeting constant failures avoiding latest techniques and following traditional methods.

SP4: *“Well, I believe, I can see and feel my defects and good thing well, in this way I can improve my English language speaking, but my teachers give us less time for that.”*

SP7: *“I believe, I should know myself and clear my objectives and goal, because this is like clarity, I also think about my learning disease and reason of not learning well.”*

SP5: *“I love to think about my targets, because they show me path, if I have no target, I cannot reach my goal, but our classrooms are following traditional ways and nothing like that is there”.*

SP10: *“I think about many ways and I plan that how can I improve my grammar, pronunciation and speaking.”*

SP12: *“I see my defects, collect good information and plans to do, it is like the map of my life, I also try to get guidelines and talk to my teachers.”*

Furthermore, the teachers despite being very much motivated cannot manage to concentrate on every student. One of them uses the phrase “the Lack of motivation” and he mentions confidently that they are left unmotivated and show no interest in learning English language. Lastly, the teacher talks about the “fear of using language

incorrectly". The students are much worried about their self-respect, the big classroom cannot maintain their privacies. However, they are always worried that their fellow students might make them laughing stocks if they commit mistakes. As a result, they avoid speaking English and the object of whole system of learning English declines. Teachers also need to give deaf ear to their mistakes in order to strengthen their confidence to lead them to competence to speak English. He mentioned:

PTA: The English language students fail to learn competence to speak because of the large classrooms too because in those classes they cannot learn like active participants and are found passive most of the time. When some of them wishes to speak, he feels hesitation, because of the fear of presence of many students about them. Consequently, they suffer from anxiety and the fears of getting disgraced if they commit any mistake.

PTB points out the obstructions which violate the real object of learning L2. The whole system, loaded with multiple commitments fails to yield the real objectives and the students cannot improve their competence to speak English despite spending a lot of time and resources. The major reasons being uncountable cannot be pointed out at once, still the less-qualified teachers are harming the whole process of improvement of competence among the students. Furthermore, the lack of technical knowledge and the motivation also moves the students to failure. When the students are well-trained to utilize technology, they can also perform well.

However, internet, mobile apps, multimedia and the use of computer benefit the ESL students more, if they hold command to use them. Moreover, less-qualified teachers

cannot come up to the merit that standard learning of ESL requires and the students fail to get command at their speaking skill.

PT2: yes, students face countless challenges while, earning English, they have to bear thorns. When they have no technological facilities and awareness their problems are more heinous, they need well-trained teachers and the classrooms equipped nicely. Above all, less-confident students cannot get advantage from any support.

The ESL undergraduate students cannot improve their competence to speak English and fail to achieve their real objectives due to lack of proper training, confidence, absence of suitable resources and competent teachers trained to hook the core of their subject. PTA and PTB opine that the ESL teachers should assist the students so uprightly that they should face no challenge in their speaking. To cap up, the students who have got good teachers, technological assistance, training to use modern technology and opportunities to learn as active learners can perform well and they are sure to hold competence to speak well.

4.3.4 Factors Promoting Speaking Competence from Teachers' Perspectives

This section of research examines the third objective of the current study and identifies five key themes out of the ESL teachers' in-depth interviews. Teacher participants, particularly in an academic context, often identify several key factors that can lead to competence in speaking English at the undergraduate level. Here are some of the most recognized factors (figure 4.8).

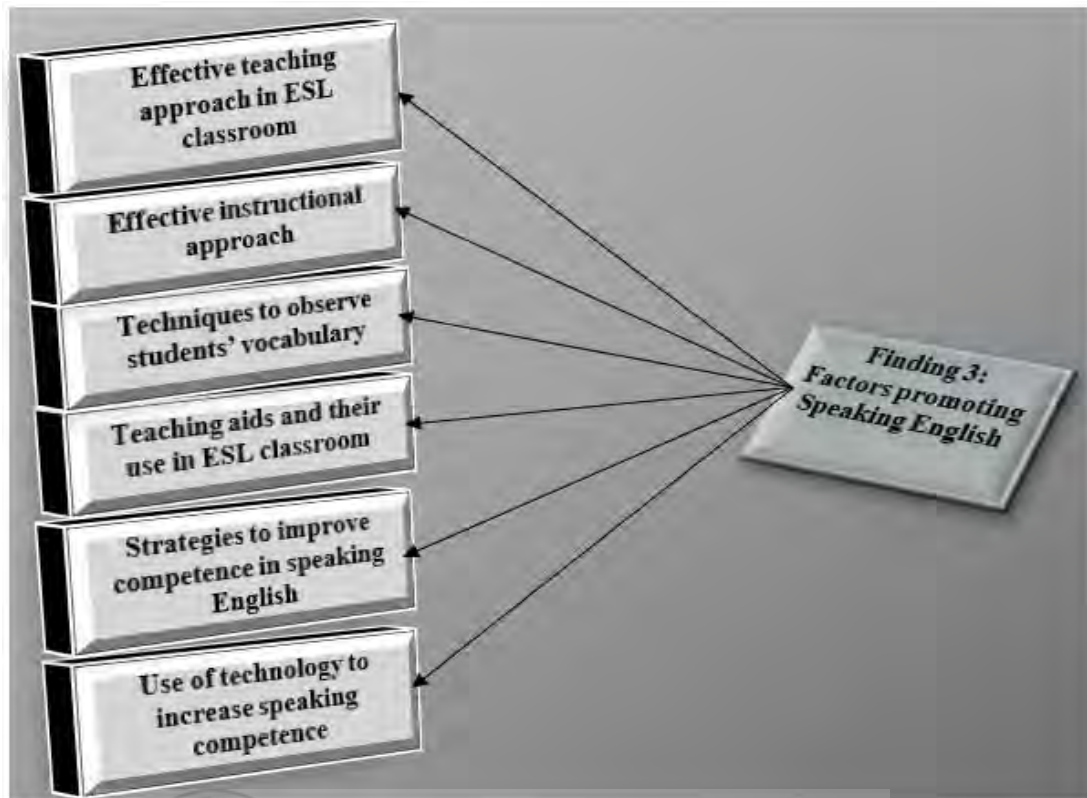


Figure 4.8. Factors promoting speaking competence from teachers' perspectives

4.3.4.1 Theme 1: Effective Teaching Approach in ESL Classroom

ESL teachers must be competent enough to speak English in such a proficient way that the students could get perfect knowledge of English language. If they empower the students with the competence to speak this language in the classroom, it will not be impossible for them to get invulnerable position in the job market and real-life interactions.

Ironically, teachers themselves fail to demonstrate excellence in their competence to speak English language. In response, the students have to face countless obstructions to achieve competence in speaking. A teacher's being competent is mandatory in the annals of ESL learning, because he is the embodiment before his followers and they get motivated seeing the concrete demonstration of what they are going to do in future.

Now the technical and scientific inventions have also led the teaching profession to unbelievable changes. Therefore, it is necessary for the teachers to be good at using modern technology in their ESL classrooms.

PTA was found more enthusiastic, but not competent enough, rather-less trained regarding the use of technology. He knew about the use of modern ways of teaching, but in his real work he looked more traditional and less informed about the share of students talking time in the classroom and he got his class teacher-oriented. Moreover, his grammatical strength seemed a bit weak as he committed mistakes in grammar, he kept repeating 'and' 'and' 'and'. Therefore, the students get less motivated and sometimes too discouraged to keep up their studies with confidence. It is good that she that students can ask questions in such ESL classes, but in this modern age the demands to contribute in the field of language have multiplied. Participant A also follows communicative approach at end of his lecture in the ESL classroom at rare basis and discussion there in his class offers great opportunities of competence to speak English language. But, the projection of traditional methods in the ESL class may not bring forth great results and the endeavours to enhance speaking competence may not meet success. Unfortunately, both of the teachers follow traditional methods to teach English despite knowing well about the valid ways of teaching to improve the competence of the students to use English.

PTA: Most often, I like to deliver my lecture pursuing traditional methodology and mostly I cut after communicative method. I keep changing and switching following the demands of the English language students. Yet, I am unsure whether they are getting

and, and, and, understanding me or not. Still, I keep trying to get good results changing my teaching methods.

PTB seemed less-sure about which method could bring forth good results regarding the improvement of students in her ESL classroom. Moreover, she stated that she follows the demands of her students and innovates her teaching methods. Unfortunately, she keeps the students' under-pressure. Hence, she uses Task-based methods if it is needed to engage the students with language activities. She points out their mistakes in the classroom and causes their insult too. It is strange to know that teacher herself is a bit incompetent and used 'if' when she was bound to use 'when'. Consequently, she needs to be trained so that she should offer positive reinforcement to her students instead of pulling down their motivation to learn ESL very confidently. As she says:

PT2: I apply multiple teaching approaches to fulfil the requirements of the topic, I follow communicative method too, but I also suggest smaller punishment if the students do not pursue me. Believe me, I ask them questions in the classroom and if they fail to answer, their friends laugh at them and they get cautious. I do not let them feel free, if are not learning well.

Both of the ESL teachers have been found less competent in teaching English speaking as well as improving the competence of undergraduates in using English language. Unfortunately, either of the two punishes the students and demotivates them. Additionally, she causes anxiety among them making them stand up as in the

classroom when they commit errors and mistakes. Surprisingly, they cannot give up the traditional pedagogical methods.

However, both of the teachers need to be trained and reorganized to teach well; embracing certain innovations. They claim of following the needs of ESL students, situations and curriculum, but actually they have been found practising traditional methods. Hence, they apply traditional methods to improve the speaking skills of their students, but pursuing orthodox methods of teaching, they cannot achieve good results at all. Ironically, they do not use modern scientific tools to improve the listening of their students. Both of them did not mention using technology to improve the competence of their students. As a result, it can be claimed that they are less competent in using modern technology to strengthen the competence of their students to use English.

4.3.4.2 Theme 2: Effective Instructional Approach

Teachers must use the fruitful instructional methods to help the ESL undergraduates in improving and enhancing their competencies to speak English. It assists the learners to edify their speaking competence. Therefore, the teachers should create multiple opportunities for the proliferation of practising opportunities and elevation of their competence to speak English language in their ESL classrooms.

PTA was also found less incompetent in using English language. He knew well about latest teaching methods, yet he committed errors repeating the word speaking it twice “but” in the phrase “indirect instruction but often at times”. His reply was clear and coherent to the question, still the grammatical disorder spoiled the beauty of his

expression. Moreover, he spoke he practised not only the direct method, but also applied the indirect pedagogical methods to impart the knowledge of English language to the ESL students. Hence, using direct method, he raises useful sort of environment for the active participation of the English language undergraduates. Through indirect methods he endeavours to motivate the students to perform in group forms, arrange discussions to solve the problems they face to improve their speaking competence. Furthermore, he delivers them lectures if it is needed. When he delivers the lectures, they keep listening as the passive listeners. Consequently, he changes the teaching style feeling the problems of the students, but in his narrative, there is no mention of the use of technical tools and latest technology. It reveals that changing her pedagogy according to the requirements of the students she tries to raise their competence and learning outcome. However, it is ridiculously critical that the teacher confides in cramming instead of equipping the undergraduates with conceptual strength of learning, for the ESL learners cannot renounce their drawbacks and embrace competence to speak English in their ESL class. He opines;

PTA: I like to render my services rather like a facilitator than merely an English teacher. Hence, I mostly I follow the indirect method, still at times delivering the lecture and following traditional method I feel easy to communicate with my students. I keep performing an active role and the students adopting the passive role are found absorbed in n my classes. Furthermore, I force them cram and learn by heart whatever I opt to teach regarding the improvement of speaking.

PT2 managed well to respond to the question with full strength about the competence regarding spoken English language very well. Direct instructional have always proved

most successful in teaching L2, therefore, she likes to apply direct method of instructions to enlighten the learners of L2. She seems very clear about direct method in his classrooms, but it seems merely the theoretical approach, because she was observed applying traditional methods in her real classroom. Moreover, she knew well about the harms which indirect method could bring about and the benefits that direct method can yield. Therefore, to improve the students' self-learning she does not suggest to use grammar translation methodology and other indirect approaches. She seems good at ELT techniques theoretically, but she seems missing it practically. She knows how to upgrade the competence of students in speaking, but she fails to perform all that in her real classrooms. As she stated:

PT2: Direct method of instruction is very useful and the most applaudable instructional and directional approach. In my point of view, indirect method of instruction blocks the undergraduates to learn well L2. Therefore, I abstain from adopting GTM, or other indirect methods to lead the students to self-learning. To improve their competence to speak proficiently, I make them speak and I also give them dialogues.

Both of the teacher participants looked different from each other and either of them seemed a bit competent in teaching and using English language in his classroom. Still, nothing out of their theoretical philosophy of teaching could be observed in the observational process of their research. Though both of them are well informed of how to improve the speaking competence of their students, yet they themselves were observed committing mistakes in grammar while teaching in their classes.

Hence, they knew well the importance of direct instructional methods, still they followed traditional methods of teaching like making the students cram the specific dialogues and follow specific language patterns. It seems to them effective and valid and cramming does not seem to them odd. Furthermore, they did not mention whether they use technology in their classrooms or not, it is ironic that teachers forget to use technology in this age of science and technical advancement. Therefore, keeping aside technology, they are not supposed to bring forth good results.

4.3.4.3 Theme 3: Techniques to Observe Students' Pronunciation

It is very much important to evaluate the competence of the learners in the ESL classrooms. If they are not able to speak well after the completion of their studies, they fail to perform effectively in their real-life situations. Moreover, evaluation paves the way for improvement in the teaching techniques and curriculum. Otherwise, nothing solid can be done to improve them, because output reveals the real picture of input. However, the evaluation leads to innovations and betterment. Therefore, many ways of evaluation can be applied to depict the real picture of learning among the ESL learners who are undergraduates in Punjab University Lahore, Pakistan.

PTA explained how he evaluates his students and how he points out their mistakes in grammar, pronunciation and fluency. He assigns them different topics to assess their competence in speaking and using variety of language. Consequently, he observes their difficulties in speaking second language. In response, he evolves his teaching style to impart the knowledge of English language in more effective and efficient way. Moreover, he tries to diagnose their flaws in the use of English language and suggests

them some effective steps and measures to abstain from them the errors and command competence in speaking.

PTA: They do not need to use long sentences while speaking in their classroom, Even, they stop and take long pauses due to poor pronunciation so they can't speak clearly and confidently, they look unable to use proper word at proper place. I am unable to understand their pronunciation too. When they begin to speak, they can just mention the name of their topic, but their language and ideas fail to hit the real object.

PT2 described how she evaluates her students and what kind of answers they give. When her students are speaking about a topic, she observes their use of language, pronunciation, grammatical strength and pronunciation. In her views, they fail to hit their real target and keep prolonging their answers creating no space to understand what they are speaking about. Poor pronunciation and incorrect use of grammar is another issue that fails them. As a result, they cannot become fluent speakers. Another problem is their misuse of pronunciation, they are devoid of pronouncing the words as it is and violate its sound making it too complex to understand. She endeavours to observe the causes of their failure to embrace competence in their speaking skill and she gives them many opportunities for practical demonstrations. Consequently, she observes them incompetent in speaking fluently demonstrating poor pronunciation and proficiency. As she states:

PT2: I try to evaluate the competency of the students by giving them various topics for speaking and also ask them questions to speak 2 to 4 minutes about that specific topic to analyse their familiarity with English as international language. Hence, also I

assign to them the speaking activities for evaluation of understanding of the English language as well as its structures.

Both of the participants can be observed using their wise strategies to analyse the competence of their students in speaking and they also can be observed how much efforts they put to ransack the causes which block the competence of the ESL learners and does not let them get fluent. Both of them asserted on the improvement of grammar, pronunciation and the power to speak efficiently and fluently. However, they give them maximum period to speak and display their learning, so that they could understand the drawbacks found in their competence. As a result, they manage to understand the poor pronunciation, mistakes in grammar and lack of proficiency. Consequently, the teachers try utmost to find out the fundamental causes regarding the deficiencies of their students, because they wish to put forth maximum no their talent to strength their competence in speaking.

4.3.4.4 Theme 4: Teaching Aids and their Use in ESL Classroom

PTA emphasised that mobile being latest technical device can work wonders for the improvement of English language among the ESL undergraduates, because it has got multitude of knowledge about grammar and language. Even, it has many ways to improve the speaking power of the students, as using mobile phones students can listen many lectures about language and they can keep repeating them unless they fully understand them.

Hence, most of the students who have got mobiles can learn English language using different apps of the mobile phones and they can improve their competence to use

English. However, mobile phones are accessible to almost every student and is used everywhere. The ESL learners can make use of its educational apps, uncountable videos and variety of lectures. Further, it assists the learners to communicate effectively with their fellows and friends forming groups. Besides, interacting with one another in various groups, arranging video calls and voice messages in groups they may confidently enhance their competence to speak English.

PTA: Mobile phone being a bliss may be used fruitfully in the English language classroom. Every student has got it and can make it more useful using it for learning. They can improve their language, pronunciation and grammar by using it. Technology rightly used can produce good results.

PTB mentioned value of the use of multimedia to enhance competence of the ESL students. It assists her in conveying her philosophy to her undergraduate students in a short span of time. She also improves the communication skills of her students' using multimedia. Multimedia presentations empower the students with confidence and equip them with latest language skills, particularly they can practise how to speak English competently. She is of the view that multimedia saves his time and confers clear concepts of English language upon her students. As a result, they get competent enough to speak English feeling no anxiety at all. Consequently, the use of multimedia seems effective to the teachers, because it enhances the confidence of the students and motivates them to speak confidently. As she said:

PTB: *“I think multimedia can perform a great role to enhance the speaking competence of the language students, as it improves the presentation skills of the students and improves their familiarity with language more and more.*

The teacher participants are fully informed of the important use of multimedia and mobile phones, they wish to edify the learning of their students, using technology. However, both mobile and multimedia are the modern technical resources to empower the students with competence. To improve the ability of ESL learners they make use of the best material like technical tools. However, it seems to them useful to exploit the latest inventions to bestow competence upon the students of ESL undergraduates of English in Punjab University Lahore, Pakistan.

4.3.4.5 Theme 5: Strategies to Improve Competence in Speaking English

PTA calls language learning a useful skill that bears deep roots of improvement in continuous and consistent practice. As it is commonly known that practice leads to perfection, so does practice with language and leads it to climax of competence among the learners. Students' language abilities may be enhanced by exposing them to a kind of environment where they are able to practise speaking to get more and more competence in it. Moreover, he recommends small language classrooms for the ESL learners, because in such kind of classes the students can have more and more opportunities to speak English. He is also of the opinion that he can give them nice feedback in the smaller ESL classrooms.

Ironically, in Pakistan most the universities bear very large and less-facilitated classrooms where the big crowd of students sits and learns English language. As a

result, they have to adopt silence, because they are offered less opportunities to speak. In response, they fall through in getting competence to use English practically in their real-life situation, also the classes being too big fail to offer them maximum opportunities to speak. As he says:

PTA: Language being an effective skill may be improved practising well with one another. This practice leads the students to better understanding of language. In a small classroom the ESL learners can grasp well and come over their difficulties in grammar and language proficiency.

PTB Using her class experience the PT2 is sure that to increase the level of competence in speaking English language, it is useful to keep students engaged in multiple spoken activities. Not merely the classroom is enough for oral activities, the language learners should also speak English out of the classroom. Furthermore, the students must maintain their courage and renounce anxiety, so the activities should hold fun and frolic. In this way, they can get more confident and familiar with learning process. As it is commonly argued that sluggishness and boredom block ones' ways to step ahead, so is happening with language learning process, because the students renounce their natural style and adopt artificial ways to learn another language.

As a result, reluctance obstacles in their ways and resists them a lot. Therefore, contrasting with traditional ways of learning, the students must adopt the modern ways to learn, and their teachers also need to perform a great role. Consequently, humorous and comic ways of exposure with English language can do wonders, because the

learners are unconsciously learning the second language and responding it confidently and they become competent to use it. As she argues:

PT2: The student's participation in oral activities inside as well as outside of the ESL classrooms integrated with fun and latest technology can produce good competence among the undergraduate students of English.

The teachers describe the ways and strategies for improvement of students' competence to speak proficient English; they mention how can English set free from grammatical mistakes and how it can project exact language. Moreover, the teacher participants fail to put forward impressive expression and nice grammatical command mingled with meaningful language. Still, they have got fruitful verbal and theoretical plan to improve the competence of their ESL students.

4.3.4.6 Theme 6: Use of Technology to Increase Speaking Competence

In modern world of technology teaching of English language has met many changes and the ways of learning have also changed. The learners of ESL are equipped with modern means and such technical resources as can be very helpful for the improvement in their competence to speak English inside and outside of their classrooms. Even, they can learn grammar, use latest vocabulary, pronunciation and accent by using different technical apps, because they have got not only the audio, but also the video lectures which may make them practice well to command competence in speak. Moreover, they are free to interact with native and non-native speakers that can add their exposure with English language and they may feel motivated to speak feeling no fear.

PTA views technology as a blessing and the gift of modern age, because it is quick in service and influence. It offers tremendous assistance to those who want to learn how to speak English, because it is not merely bound to audios, but also its videos hold more impactful demonstration. It helps students in learning grabbing help from different technical resources and material provided on the websites. Furthermore, the teacher may share the link, and the students can make use of the material, he sends. It takes no more time, and the students begin to use it. He said:

PTA: Out of any doubt! sharing a link is easy than providing the hardcopy notes and the learners can get good material to get knowledge because of modern technology. As said before, technology bears the role of a blessing. Still, many ESL teachers are untrained and incompetent enough to exploit it. Even they cannot use multimedia, as university bears very much less funds to offer modern technology and tools to teach ESL learners.

PTB also declared multimedia an effective tool for teachers as well as students as it can enhance their confidence to clear their concepts about learning English language and competence to speak it. English being the focused subject all the over the world has got a lot of material in recorded and video forms and if it is used in the classroom using multimedia, the students can meet great competence to speak English. She likes to use modern technology including multimedia in his ESL classrooms to strengthen their command and ideas about English language. Moreover, teacher's competence also improves and he becomes more effective for his students. As she views:

PTB: well, I recommend multimedia is the need of current system of language learning and the world being global village require us to follow its trends accordingly. So, I assert on using multimedia, it helps an ESL teacher very much to improve the speaking competence of the language learners and proliferates its use among undergraduates. In contrast, our ESL classrooms are less equipped with latest and modern technology. Therefore, multimedia is rarely used in the public institutes, for they fail to strengthen the speaking competence of the ESL learners.

Both ESL teachers PTA and the PTB consider technology useful source of learning for both the teachers and their language students. It offers them vast access to the rich and useful variety of material about English language, they use various digital apps, recorded lectures on language, websites and useful videos can meet competence to speak English fluently. Use of technology does not merely equip the classrooms with modern technology, it also saves the time of the teacher, as he avoids using whiteboard or making charts for the facilitation of his language students. Still, maximum of the classrooms being unequipped with modern technological tools fail to motivate the students to learn language according to new linguistic trends. Therefore, the ESL teachers have to pursue the old traditional methods to improve the competence of the students to speak English.

4.3.5 Factors Affecting English Language Learning

The results revealed the factors which create hindrances in the way of language learning and prevent the ESL undergraduates from getting competence in spoken English. As a result, they neither bear good language, proficiency, clarity, fluency, accurate pronunciation nor accent. Firstly, the teacher participant spoke the phrase like

“large classroom” due to which multitude of students are unable to grasp English language and fail to embrace competence in its use (Panhwar et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the teachers despite being very much motivated cannot manage to concentrate on every student. One of them uses the phrase “the Lack of motivation” and he mentions confidently that they are left unmotivated and show no interest in learning English language. Lastly, the teacher talks about the “fear of using language incorrectly”. The students are much worried about their self-respect, the big classroom cannot maintain their privacies. However, they are always worried that their fellow students might make them laughing stocks if they commit mistakes. As a result, they avoid speaking English and the object of whole system of learning English declines. Teachers also need to give deaf ear to their mistakes in order to strengthen their confidence to lead them to competence to speak English. He mentioned:

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PTB points out the obstructions which violate the real object of learning L2. The whole system, loaded with multiple commitments fails to yield the real objectives and the students cannot improve their competence to speak English despite spending a lot of time and resources. The major reasons being uncountable cannot be pointed out at once, still the less-qualified teachers are harming the whole process of improvement

of competence among the students. Furthermore, the lack of technical knowledge and the motivation also moves the students to failure. When the students are well-trained to utilize technology, they can also perform well.

However, internet, mobile apps, multimedia and the use of computer benefit the ESL students more, if they hold command to use them. Moreover, less-qualified teachers cannot come up to the merit that standard learning of ESL requires, and the students fail to get command at their speaking skill.

PT2: yes, students face countless challenges while, earning English, they have to bear thorns. When they have no technological facilities and awareness their problems are more heinous, they need well-trained teachers, and the classrooms equipped nicely. Above all, less-confident students cannot get advantage from any support.

The ESL undergraduate students cannot improve their competence to speak English and fail to achieve their real objectives due to lack of proper training, confidence, absence of suitable resources and competent teachers trained to hook the core of their subject. PTA and PTB opine that the ESL teachers should assist the students so uprightly that they should face no challenge in their speaking. To cap up, the students who have got good teachers, technological assistance, training to use modern technology and opportunities to learn as active learners can perform well and they are sure to hold competence to speak well.

4.4 Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF)

The findings of the study revealed that the Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF), which integrates cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological domains, provides a comprehensive and practical approach to addressing the core challenges faced by ESL learners in Pakistani public universities. Data collected from classroom observations and interviews indicated that students commonly struggle with functional grammar, weak pronunciation, and a lack of fluency and confidence. These issues are directly addressed in the cognitive and affective components of the framework, where structured grammar instruction, pronunciation practice, and confidence-enhancing strategies are emphasized.

4.5 Useful Steps to Remove Obstacles in the Way of Speaking English

PTA reveals his experience to share how we can improve the system of language learning in the classroom. Of course, the suffocated classrooms glittered with students can never yield good results, as being devoid of the real objects the students become the part of crowd and forget to achieve competence in English language learning. They need effective atmosphere that must offer convenient opportunities of progress in learning, but less facilitated classrooms and the substandard system can merely waste the time of the students. However, the modern language learning must comply with latest demand of language education that values modern technology as well as updated syllabus.

In a good classroom, the students can perform active role and they are well familiar with their teacher, who keeps observing them to improve them using his experience and keeping their problems in his mind. Furthermore, the students can get immediate

feedback in such language classrooms and the suggestions of the students can also be taken and the system of language education can be updated. He mentions:

PTA: It is better the ESL classroom should hold manageable number of students and teachers also need be trained enough to point out the flaws present in the system. If use of technology is missing, the ESL classrooms can never yield good results either. Moreover, the English language students should show cooperation to learn well and to embrace competence to speak.

PTB put forward the opinion how to make students realize the importance of English to urge them to learn it with great motivation and zeal. Being lingua-franca English can perform unsurmountable role as it has the capacity to bestow success in the real-life situations and job market. Being the language of modern science, it facilitates the ESL learners to understand well the circumstances about them, so that they could exploit vast opportunities enhancing their communication. If the learners are well informed of the importance of English language, they will be found highly motivated to grasp competence. She suggests:

PT2: “So far as I concern, ESL learners must be informed and aware of the status of English in the world and its implication in the practical professional life. No other, than an expert teacher can mention before his students how much important it is to get competence in English to exist in this age of technology and science.”

PTA and PTB initiated suggestions to improve competence in English and stressed on teachers being very much qualified and well-versed in the use of English and the

planning to lead the class to ultimate goal. However, the class size also matters and the motivated students equipped with modern facilities can get competence to speak and improve their proficiency, pronunciation, clarity and fluency too. Therefore, the system must conform to the requirements of latest demands of learning English language and the selection of teachers should cut after merit. This will help both teachers and students in learning English as a second language.

4.6 Problems in the Way of Teaching English Language

Teaching of the English language bears many difficulties, but in modern age it is not impossible to hold command at its teaching and learning, because modern technology has also got a tremendous role in this era. Moreover, equipped with latest technology, the teachers can change their strategies at the spur of the moment. Furthermore, they have got freedom to teach whatever they wish keeping in the mind the problems of students. Moreover, they bear the role of examiner and can analyse their students' performance in both the written and oral examinations. Therefore, it is necessary to select the teachers following merit, otherwise it is not possible to lead the ESL system of teaching to tremendous success at all. With the help of modern technology, they can convey their ideas and concepts to students. Thus, teachers should also be facilitated to impart the knowledge of modern language in the classroom equipped with modern facilities and latest technical tools.

Moreover, the strength of classroom should not surpass the formal limit, and the syllabus should be formed in conformity with the competence of the students to improve it gradually and naturally. Moreover, the proficiency, fluency and grammar of the ESL learners should be improved focusing on them microscopically, because

the overall speaking competence requires the elements concretely practised in the ESL classroom.

PTA complains of the difficulties hindered in his ESL classrooms. He contradicts with the classroom's being too large and stuffed with students who cannot be provided with the opportunities to speak before the teacher or interact with his classmates. Moreover, he cannot cater the requirements and demands of the ESL learners to give them feedback, so that they should improve their competence and speak well. However, students are less-motivated and less-interested, because of being less-exposed to English language. As a result, they get demotivated and sluggish feeling difficulties in improvement of competence. Furthermore, they feel impactful interference of their mother-tongue in learning the English language. He said:

PTA: Well, the major issue in ESL classroom, I teach is the big crowd of students and classrooms, not equipped well with latest facilities. The students also fall short of interest and fail to focus on learning, as their background of studies regarding ESL is weak.

PTB narrated the influence of big number of students on the academic progress of the ESL class. Being too large the classroom disturbs the learning process and the system fails to influence on the competence of the students to speak well, as the students are devoid of using effective language and syntactic combinations. As a result, the students cannot learn according to their expectations, and they fail to speak English. She also describes many students as a hindrance in the way of effective teaching and learning of English for speaking. In a short time, it is difficult for her to interact with each

student and clear his doubts related to the use of English. Indirectly, the teacher seems to suggest that class size should be decreased, and the attendance register should also be renounced adopting latest digital tools like biometric system to maintain the attendance of the students. In this way the time saved can be spent on teaching and learning English to enhance the competence of the English language learners. She describes:

PT2: *“Really, I get shocked seeing the students in such a multitude, it is not easy to evaluate each of them assigning them the task to speak in the class that already falls short of time. Attendance-register is also a headache that spoils time of the class”.*

Both of the teacher participants endorsed that teaching the multitude in a language class is not possible and if it carries on, the students may not meet competence to speak English. Such a large crowd of students in a small room also feels suffocation and uneasy to study comfortably with a great enthusiasm to go on with learning elegantly. The dearth of modern and technical facilities and numberless students in the ESL classrooms may endanger the overall progress of teaching and learning. Moreover, lack of organized discipline is also a big obstruction in the classroom. On other hand, roll-call as well as hue and cry in the classroom bring about learning loss and the students cannot get competence to speak English.

In an ideal ESL classroom, the teacher performs his services in such an effective way that the students seem to meet great success. As a result, the students get through in realizing their dreams in the job market and real-life practical situations. A well-trained ESL teacher puts his energies on his class to make his students successful learners and

perfect speakers. He keeps in mind their psychological strength and ambitions to learn and motivate them effectively to empower their competence to speak clearly leaving no flaw in their grammar. He enhances the competence of his students and makes them fluent in English. He uses multifarious methods to enhance their proficiency, grammatical strength, accent, intonation and pronunciation to facilitate them to speak competently, but he himself is supposed to have great command at English language. The whole panorama of assessment also reveals that the teachers are incompetent, and they fail to control the ESL classroom. Furthermore, they have got bookish knowledge that fails to cut after the modern demands of language learning.

Consequently, the English language undergraduates at Punjab University Lahore cannot improve their competence to speak English. Unfortunately, the responsible authorities have also failed to realize the need to open more institutes equipped with latest technology. Presently, the big population of students has been admitted in these institute which have got the capacity to admit smaller number of students. As a result, the big crowd of students sits in such a little classroom. Therefore, the process of language learning faces negative results. Thus, the suffocated and stuffed classrooms do not let the ESL undergraduates learn well. They are uneasy and much disturbed, because of humidity and noise in their classrooms. Additionally, most of the classrooms are neither air-conditioned nor fully facilitated, for the students fail to enhance their competence to speak English. In reality, in such ESL classes students have got less talk-time. In a short, it is impossible to provide every student with an opportunity to join the activities and speak and develop his competence.

As a result, the students are left as merely the passive speakers who listen the lectures of their teachers silently, projecting no performance. To improve the speaking competence of ESL undergraduates, they need to use instructional pedagogical methods in conformity with the needs and deficiency of the ESL students. Ironically, they apply traditional methods of teaching to edify the concentration as well as speaking abilities of the students. However, they adopt task-based teaching methods to promote their communication and competence (Ahmed & Pathan, 2023). To strengthen their learning skills, they also recommend to use the audio as well as visual aids, but their classes are less-equipped with modern tools of learning. Even, their projectors are out of order. Hence, they try to assign the undergraduates such activities as may boost up their confidence and proficiency level.

Ironically, the teacher participants could not reveal which effective steps they take to develop their proficiency, fluency, pronunciation and grammar (Apridayani et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023; Zook, 2024). They bear theoretical knowledge about the measures to improve the competence of the undergraduates in English, but they seem to have failed to practically apply them. Therefore, ESL classrooms are not able to yield the foreshadowed results. However, countless challenges are faced in the journey of English language teaching and learning, it includes lack of confidence among students, absence of resources, deficiency of the required facilities, large, crowded and stuffed ESL classrooms, which influence the teachers as well as students' speaking competence. Resultantly, the teachers failed to mention which strategies they adopt to curb such issues and challenges which bring about obstacles in the competence of the students to speak English in the classrooms

as well as outside. Coping with such challenges, essentially the language teachers need to perform the role of facilitators and motivators.

Therefore, they should unveil the vitality of the English language and mention how we can improve it. Consequently, training of teachers, use of modern and latest technology and manageable strength of ESL undergraduates in English classrooms can bestow upon the undergraduates the competence to speak English. Furthermore, the curriculum also needs to be set free from the drawbacks and hindrances which spoil the process of the promotion of the competence to speak English in the English language classes in the Punjab of University Lahore, Pakistan.

4.7 Summary

This chapter brings in to light the findings of the study which bear comprehensive and insightful pieces of information regarding the ESL undergraduate learners' competence to speak English at Punjab University Lahore, Pakistan. Hence, finding and results of classroom observation and the in-depth interviews of the teachers and the students fall under core themes and sub-themes. Resultantly, the core themes of both in-depth interviews of the teachers and their students were found almost similar. In the light of their experience, the participants seem to claim that the competence to speak English, being global requirement is the integral need that ESL classroom aims at, still the learners fail to come up to the merit needed to speak proficiently, fluently, clearly and exactly using standard language.

The findings indicate that the current ESL system at Punjab University faces significant challenges, including undertrained teachers, outdated curriculum, lack of

technological resources, and limited student motivation. To address these gaps, the study introduces the Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF), which integrates cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological dimensions. This framework offers a practical and holistic model to enhance oral communication skills by fostering grammar mastery, vocabulary development, emotional support, interactive teaching, and digital engagement. Overall, SCDF provides a comprehensive roadmap for transforming ESL classrooms into effective, student-centred spaces that build real-world communication skills.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter offers discussions on the findings of the current study projecting the holistic understanding and the perception of how the speaking competence is perceived and understood by the respondents. Moreover, by referring to the research questions, it reveals the factors which enhance the competence to speak English among the Pakistani undergraduates. Afterward, the chapter moves to the interpretation of the outcomes in conformity with theory and research-work in the related literature.

5.2 RQ1. How do Pakistani participants conceptualize speaking competence

The sections mentioned beneath discuss the findings of the study responding to the research questions.

5.2.1 a) Conceptualizing Speaking Competence

Competence in speaking, in general, refers to the ability to use language effectively for communication, hence regarding Pakistani participants, the definition of competence might be influenced by multitude of the factors including cultural norms, educational background, and language proficiency in multifarious languages (Shawaqfeh et al., 2024; Tai & Zhao, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024; Zook, 2024). However, it indicated the possibility for the achievement of competence in the Pakistani context. Hence, positive response is required to cut after the factors which may yield fruitful results in the ESL classrooms, provided they are dealt in organized way to pull down ambiguities obstructed in the ESL learning process.

In linguistically diverse Pakistani society, with the overflowing prevalence of multilingualism, the people can speak several languages, like Urdu (The national language), Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, and the English language. Moreover, this multilingual context unveils that competence in speaking cannot merely be considered fluency in one language, rather about the ability to keep switching among different languages understanding the sociocultural nuances of each one of them (Ahmed et al., 2024; Aimen & Khadim, 2024; Ayub & Mohammed, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024). In Pakistan, ESL learners define competence in speaking in terms of their ability to use different languages appropriately in various social settings. For instance, one might be considered competent in speaking if one can switch about languages like Urdu, English, or a regional language, depending on the social context (e.g., professional settings versus casual conversations with family or friends) (Sadaf & Zahid, 2024; Shaban, & Junejo, 2024).

In exploring the speaking competence in speaking, the Canale and Swain model of communicative competence (1980) is useful as a means of understanding the impact of circumstances through the language of the participants, particularly through their utterances, thinking, feelings and perspectives. However, applying this model to the context of Pakistan is helpful to elucidate how participants might define competence in speaking, based on linguistic, cultural, and communicative considerations. Research derived from the naturalistic inquiry takes some account of this in the sense that, it explores the nature of competence in speaking in a socially and culturally organised environment.

Canale and Swain (1980) proposed a comprehensive model of communicative competence which divides competence into several components which include grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Whereas this framework provides a clear lens through which to analyse the diverse factors involved, including Pakistan's multilingual society and the educational and social landscape, these components of communicative competence take on distinct meanings.

Grammatical competence (Canale and Swain, 1980) is crucial in both the formal and informal contexts of communication. However, in Pakistan, the emphasis placed on this competence varies. In urban settings, where English is widely used in academic and professional contexts, competence in English grammar is highly valued (Bilal et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024). For instance, participants who are proficient in English grammar may be considered more competent in speaking, especially in elite educational institutions or workplaces that prioritize English proficiency. Along with this, Yasmin (2021) suggested that English, as the language of instruction and business, plays a significant role in defining speaking competence in Pakistan, particularly in higher education. In contrast, participants from rural areas might prioritize grammatical competence in Urdu or regional languages like Punjabi, Pashto, or Sindhi.

The concept of sociolinguistic competence is especially relevant in Pakistan due to the complex social and cultural hierarchies present in the country. The ability to appropriately use language in different contexts-whether formal or informal-is a key part of how competence in speaking is defined. Khan (2022) highlighted how

participants in Pakistan often define competent speakers as those, who can switch between languages, such as Urdu, English and regional languages, depending on the audience and context. This ability to navigate different sociolinguistic spaces reflects an individual's sociolinguistic competence.

Pakistani participants often define competence in speaking based not only on grammatical correctness but also on the ability to use appropriate forms of address, honorifics, and politeness strategies based on the social context. In relation to Shamim and Riaz's (2020) study, politeness, and respect are integral aspects of sociolinguistic competence in Pakistan, as language use is heavily influenced by social norms and hierarchies. For example, in formal settings or when addressing elders, the use of respectful forms of speech (e.g., "sir," "ma'am," or appropriate pronouns in Urdu) is viewed as essential to speaking competence.

In Pakistani society, effective communication often requires an understanding of appropriate formal and informal language use, politeness strategies, and respect for elders or authority figures. In more urbanized and elite educational institutions, fluency in English is often considered an important measure of competence in speaking (Ibrahimova, 2023). English is seen not only as a medium of instruction but also as a marker of higher social status and professional success. In the context of speaking competence, participants might distinguish between fluency and accuracy. Fluency refers to the smoothness and ease with which someone speaks, while accuracy focuses on correct grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary (Apridayani et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).

Discourse competence is the ability to structure and organize spoken language effectively, ensuring that it is coherent and contextually relevant. In Pakistan, where people often code-switch between languages, discourse competence might involve switching languages in a way that maintains coherence in conversation (Ahmed et al., 2024; Aimen & Khadim, 2024; Ayub & Mohammed, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024). The ability to produce a well-organized and contextually appropriate discourse is particularly valued in formal settings, such as interviews, presentations, and public speaking engagements. In everyday conversations, however, participants may prioritize fluency and ease of communication, even if the discourse is not perfectly structured. This reflects a more pragmatic understanding of discourse competence.

Strategic competence (Canale and Swain, 1980) is the ability to use strategies to overcome communication barriers, such as using circumlocution, paraphrasing, or asking for clarification when a word or expression is unknown. In Pakistan's multilingual context, participants often rely on code-switching, non-verbal communication, and negotiation strategies to bridge gaps in understanding when interacting in different languages. Strategic competence, therefore, involves knowing when and how to switch languages or adapt one's communication style to ensure that the message is understood, even when one's proficiency in a particular language is limited. Raza (2024) supported this view, showing that many Pakistanis define competence in speaking as the ability to adapt one's speech to the linguistic abilities of the interlocutor and the context, demonstrating strategic competence.

Thus, Pakistani participants may define competence in speaking as the ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages while adhering to social norms,

maintaining coherence in discourse, and employing strategies to overcome communication breakdowns (Ahmed et al., 2024; Aimen & Khadim, 2024; Ayub & Mohammed, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024). Understanding competence from this multifaceted perspective not only aligns with Canale and Swain's framework but also highlights the unique ways in which language is used and valued in a multilingual and culturally rich society like Pakistan.

5.2.2 b) Why do they relate these words to competence

In the context of exploring speaking competence in speaking among English undergraduates in Pakistan, the participants associated the variety of words with 'competence,' which stand for multifarious aspects of speaking competency, accuracy and proficiency. However, they include *Mastery* as the sound ability to speak with exquisite command at the language, demonstrating in-depth understanding of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, clarity and the interactive usages. Hence, *Efficiency* is the ability to express ideas concisely, coherently and effectively, avoiding unnecessary pauses or wordiness, maintaining clarity and synthetic value. *Persuasiveness* convinces and influences others through well-structured arguments, appropriate tone, and confident delivery. *Capability* is a broader term encompassing the overall ability to communicate in various situations, including formal, informal, or academic contexts. *Articulation* is the clear and precise expression of thoughts, ensuring that words and ideas are conveyed effectively and understandably. *Oral Fluency* is the smoothness and flow of speech, characterized by few hesitations or errors, demonstrating comfort and ease in speaking. *Expertise* stands for high-level knowledge and skill in speaking language, is often linked to the ability to discuss

complex topics with confidence. *Talent* is the natural ability and inclination for effective speaking, it refers to the certain ease and intellectual grace in communication.

The association of these words with competence among Pakistani English undergraduates is shaped by several key factors rooted in educational, social, and professional contexts. Below are reasons why these words are linked to competence. In Pakistan, English is not merely the medium of instructions, rather a critical component of academic success (Ahmad & Lanfeng, 2024; Halai & Durrani, 2021; Imran et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024). The ESL undergraduates are often supposed to demonstrate high proficiency in speaking, particularly in academic presentations, discussions, and debates. However, the words such as mastery and expertise are associated with competence because they reflect the expectations set by the educational system, which emphasizes in-depth knowledge of language rules and usages. However, the students who are able to display mastery in English grammar and vocabulary are often perceived as competent, as it aligns with academic standards and rewards comprehensive language skills (Apridayani et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024; Zhang & Liao, 2023).

Moreover, oral fluency and efficiency are strongly associated with competence, because fluent speakers are seen as more competent in both academic and professional settings (Feng & Guo, 2022; Suzuki & Kormos, 2024). Thus, the Pakistani ESL learners often equate competence with the ability to speak smoothly out of confusion and hesitation. Adding more, efficiency is particularly valued as students are encouraged to communicate ideas concisely, especially in time-constrained academic situations (Gao, 2022; Tavakoli et al., 2020). For example, a student who speaks with

minimal hesitation and uses language without excessive elaboration may be considered more competent, reflecting the ability to communicate efficiently.

In Pakistan, articulation refers to speaking clearly and preventing ambiguity and is highly valued, especially in formal or public settings like debates and presentations. Articulation is seen as a hallmark of competence, because it ensures that listeners can easily understand the speaker's message (Li, 2023). Therefore, Public speaking is often linked with intellectual and professional success, further linking articulation to competence (Sulaiman, 2023). For example, in classroom discussions or public forums, students who articulate their thoughts with clarity and precision are often regarded as more competent speakers.

Proficiency in English is often seen as a marker of social and professional status in Pakistan. Words such as expertise and talent reflect the perception that those who speak English proficiently are more intellectually capable and socially sophisticated (Aimen & Khadim, 2024; Shawaqfeh et al., 2024; Tai & Zhao, 2024). This view is reinforced by the prestige associated with English-language education and the demand for English fluency in the global job market (Ayub & Khalil, 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024; Bilal et al., 2024; Hassan & Ali, 2023; Kumar et al., 2024; Sadaf & Zahid, 2024). A student who can discuss complex topics in English with apparent expertise may be considered more competent, as this aligns with the societal value placed on English proficiency.

Some participants view their speaking abilities through the lens of talent, which reflects a more intrinsic understanding of competence. These students may feel that

certain individuals have a natural inclination toward effective speaking, and thus they equate talent with competence in speaking (Hassan & Ali, 2023). For example, the students who find speaking English easy and engaging might associate their talent for speaking with competence, believing that language proficiency embraces naturally to them (Aimen & Khadim, 2024; Anwar et al., 2021).

Consequently, Pakistani participants associated words like mastery, efficiency, persuasiveness, articulation, oral fluency, clarity, expertise, and talent with speaking competence because these words capture the multifaceted nature of language proficiency. Hence, these associations are shaped by academic standards, societal expectations, professional aspirations and personal experiences with language use. For Pakistani students, being perceived as a competent speaker often means mastering the technical aspects of language, while also demonstrating the ability to communicate clearly, persuasively, and efficiently. Understanding these associations helps to create insights into how speaking competence is defined and valued within the Pakistani context, particularly among English undergraduates.

5.3 RQ 2. How do Pakistani ESL undergraduates narrate their experiences, challenges, learning processes, and key factors influencing their development of speaking competence within classroom settings?

Language is not merely a tool for communication, but also a process that shapes and projects how we think, understand, and interact with the people about us. The ESL undergraduate Pakistani participants narrated their experiences of developing the speaking competence in the context of various challenges, instructional practices, and personal factors. Their narratives commonly reflect both the academic structure of ESL

classrooms and the social and cultural influences that shape their language learning journeys (Gass & Selinker, 2020; Hassan & Bilal, 2019; Khan, 2024; Zhang & Liao, 2023). However, in understanding these experiences, Canale and Swain's (1980) theory of communicative competence provides a useful framework. It posits that speaking competence is multi-dimensional, comprising grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. These components are crucial for understanding how Pakistani ESL learners develop their speaking abilities and how their classroom experiences contribute to their language growth.

5.3.1 Narrating the experiences and challenges in developing speaking competence

Pakistani participants reported that ESL classrooms fail to teach grammar at advance level and the teachers also ignore it, because they spend most of the time translating textbooks and cramming notes. As a result, the students fail to develop the sentences and cannot communicate their message correctly, because they cannot construct the accurate sentences. Moreover, vocabulary is left unfocused, and it harms the competence of the ESL learners. Their teachers do not improve their vocabulary, rather prepare them to pass their examination. As a matter of fact, grammatical competence is perceived as the foundation of speaking competence, with many learners narrating their experiences of memorizing rules and practicing vocabulary to be able to speak in English (Bilal et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024). This emphasis on grammar, however, can sometimes limit their ability to express themselves freely in spontaneous conversations. In the context of Pakistani ESL classrooms. Ali and Khan (2022)

highlighted that while students may master grammar in controlled classroom settings, they often struggle with spontaneous speech in informal settings. This illustrates the tension between grammatical competence and the more dynamic aspects of language use, such as fluency and interaction. Additionally, the construction of sentences and expression of ideas is not possible without grammatical command, for the students are unable to meet the requirements of proficiency.

Furthermore, the students feel themselves inactive participants in their ESL classroom, because of being a big crowd or multitude, they are not given enough time to speak in their classes, but teachers' talking time is bigger (Perveen & Krishnasamy, 2024). As a result, they fail to strengthen their competence to speak. In the same way, technological aid, debates and discussion time in classes is also missing. Moreover, the students also need the motivating teachers, who should make them speakers allocating much talking time for them and avoiding annoyance with those, who fail to perform well (Vollmer, 2024; Vereijken et al., 2023). The participants also seemed dissatisfied with class discipline, because of big strength of students in the classroom. Further, the students speak their native languages in the classroom and fail to develop interactions with those diverse to them. Consequently, they cannot develop proficiency, fluency, accuracy and clarity in their speaking.

Sociolinguistic competence is particularly important in Pakistan's multicultural society, where learners come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Pakistani ESL learners often report challenges in adjusting their language use to different social contexts (Bakhridinovna, 2024; Shakirjanovna, 2024; Shamim & Riaz, 2020). Many participants express difficulties in using appropriate language for formal

and informal situations, which often leaves them feeling disconnected from peers or teachers. The classroom dynamics—often dominated by formal, textbook English—can hinder the development of sociolinguistic competence. Zhang and Liao (2023) noted that Pakistani learners frequently face difficulties in adjusting to the sociolinguistic demands of English, especially when they have limited exposure to native English speakers. This gap between classroom language and real-world use can make it challenging for students to develop the ability to engage in culturally and socially appropriate conversations (Halai & Durrani, 2021).

Discourse competence, which involves the ability to organize ideas cohesively and coherently, is another area where Pakistani participants often struggle. In Pakistan, ESL classrooms emphasize grammar and vocabulary acquisition over practical communication skills like discourse management (Qobilovna, 2024; Tan et al., 2024). Many students narrate that, though they can construct grammatically correct sentences, yet they find it difficult to link ideas effectively during longer conversations, leading to disjointed speech and the inability to sustain complex discussions. Li (2023) pointed out that discourse competence is often underdeveloped in traditional Pakistani ESL classrooms, where there is little focus on the skills needed to organize and connect ideas. This issue is particularly pronounced when learners need to engage in academic or professional discussions, where coherent speech is essential.

Pakistani ESL learners often develop strategic competence as an effective preventive mechanism for language gaps. When participants face difficulty in expressing themselves due to a lack of vocabulary or grammatical knowledge, they often use compensatory strategies such as paraphrasing, switching to Urdu or other local

languages, or asking for clarification. These strategies allow them to maintain communication even when their language skills are not fully developed. Kara (2021) discusses how Pakistani ESL learners frequently rely on strategic competence, such as paraphrasing and code-switching, to overcome communication barriers. While these strategies are useful in ensuring communication, they also reflect a gap in full language proficiency, which students aim to overcome as they advance in their language learning journey (Shawaqfeh et al., 2024; Tai & Zhao, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024).

5.3.2 Integration of Canale and Swain's Theory with Students' Narratives

The experiences of Pakistani ESL learners align with Canale and Swain's (1980) theory, as they often navigate the complexities of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. While Pakistani students often try to excel in grammatical competence, but they avoid grappling with the challenges in other areas, particularly sociolinguistic and discourse competence, which are crucial for effective communication inside the classroom as well as in the real-world interactions. However, their narratives also reveal that speaking competence is not solely about knowing the rules; it also involves the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts (sociolinguistic competence), to construct coherent speech (discourse competence), and to manage communication challenges (strategic competence).

Consequently, the results revealed that Pakistani students feel that traditional ESL instructions focus too less on grammar and vocabulary and overlook the practical communication skills. Hence, this neglect of grammatical competence often leaves students underprepared for real-world interactions, where sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies are just as crucial. Gao (2022) highlighted that Pakistani

ESL learners often lack opportunities for real-world language practice, which limits their development of sociolinguistic and discourse competence. This highlighted the importance of integrating communicative language teaching methods that emphasize interaction and practical language use, not just grammar.

Moreover, Pakistani students often emphasize the importance of strategic competence in overcoming communication barriers. This reflects a need for a more balanced approach in ESL classrooms that integrates all components of competence. Recent studies suggest that ESL teaching in Pakistan often focus disproportionately on grammar and vocabulary, neglecting the practical aspects of communication such as discourse organization and the ability to navigate social contexts (Gao, 2022).

In summary, Pakistani participants narrated their experiences of developing speaking competence in ESL classrooms through a complex interaction of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. Pakistani participants' experiences in developing speaking competence in ESL classrooms reflect both the strengths and limitations of traditional language instruction. Canale and Swain's (1980) theory provides a useful framework to understand these narratives, revealing that while Pakistani learners may develop a strong foundation in grammar, they often struggle with the other dimensions of communicative competence. These challenges reflect the gap between classroom-based language learning and real-world communication needs (Gass & Selinker, 2020; Hassan & Bilal, 2019; Khan, 2024; Po'latova & Yokutkhon, 2024). While Pakistani ESL learners may develop a solid foundation in grammar and vocabulary, challenges remain in fostering the ability to communicate effectively in dynamic and varied contexts. Hence, ESL classroom needs

to improve their grammar, vocabulary, proficiency, pronunciation and fluency to enable them to speak clearly (Khan & Krishnasamy, 2024).

5.4 RQ 3. What factors do the Pakistani participants identify as contributing to the development of speaking competence among English undergraduates in their ESL classrooms?

This section explores the learner participants' perceptions of factors that enhance speaking competence in ESL classrooms, with a focus on Pakistani undergraduates. They identify several factors influencing their English-speaking competence in their ESL classrooms. However, the undergraduate participants feel difficult to improve their competence to speak English in the suffocated and overcrowded classrooms where the hue and cry blocks the learning and teaching system to drastic level and the syllabus, they are taught fails to bring forth fruitful results. On other hand, their classrooms are not well-equipped with modern technical tools and with comfortable furniture.

Furthermore, students are annoyed with the attitude of their teachers towards their ESL classrooms, they are also dissatisfied with their teaching methods. The student participants seem to complain of being passive participants in the ESL classrooms, because most of the time teachers are found taking more time to speak and translate their books instead of working on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and accuracy. However, the findings examine how participants perceive these factors as essential for developing effective communication skills and fluency. The students require more speaking time, facilitated classroom, focus on their speaking activities, feedback, active learning and vocabulary.

Consequently, trained teachers, latest technical tools, standard strength of classrooms, maximum focus on interactive activities and grammatical strength seem to be demanded by the respondents. Unfortunately, the students are not taught how to interact with others using English language, as a result they fail develop their proficiency. Hence, they believe that their teachers fail to do justice with them by offering more opportunities of speaking to already active students and ignoring the passive ones. The translation of the textbooks also spoils their time and they cannot concentrate on their grammar and pronunciation because of such studies. Moreover, the students also see drawbacks in their examination system that forces the teachers to prepare them for examinations instead of improving their competence to speak.

Drawing on the communicative competence framework of Canale and Swain (1980), the findings examine how specific classroom practices, social interactions, and pedagogical strategies foster the development of effective speaking skills. These factors align with the components of competence to speak as proposed by Canale and Swain (1980), which include grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies.

Applying a Canale and Swain's communicative competence (1980) to ESL classrooms emphasizes the social and cultural contexts of learning. This approach encourages the students to engage in communicative activities, where interaction with peers and instructors serve as a medium for skill development. Canale and Swain's communicative competence theory (1980) provides a comprehensive framework to analyse the factors promoting speaking competence in ESL classrooms. However, the theory of communicative competence posits that language proficiency is

multidimensional, encompassing four interrelated components: *Grammatical Competence* is a knowledge of grammar, and sentence structure. *Sociolinguistic Competence* is an ability to use language appropriately in social contexts. *Discourse Competence* is the capacity to organize ideas cohesively and coherently. *Strategic Competence* refers to the use of strategies to overcome communication breakdowns and achieve effective communication.

5.4.1 Factors Promoting Competence in Speaking from Teachers' Perspectives

The key factors identified by teachers' participants divided into six structural themes: effective teaching approach in ESL classrooms, effective instructional approach, techniques to observe students' language use, teaching aids and their use in ESL classrooms, strategies to improve competence in speaking English, and use of technology to increase speaking competence.

The first theme represents that an effective teaching approach in ESL classrooms combines pedagogical strategies, instructional techniques, language observation methods, teaching aids and technology to enhance speaking competence (Feng & Guo, 2022; Turlybekov et al., 2024). This teaching approach emphasizes and promotes authentic communication and fosters fluency, key goals in ESL teaching. For example, activities like grammar drills, role-plays, and real-life tasks encourage sociolinguistic competence as learners adapt language to specific contexts.

Goldring and Taie (2018) proclaimed that the teachers have the leadership role and if they are equipped with latest pedagogical techniques, they can change the panorama of learning by conferring upon their students the competence to speak, cutting after the

demands of the ESL classrooms. An effective teaching approach in ESL classrooms aligns with Canale and Swain's theory by addressing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence through communicative and task-based methodologies, feedback, cultural integration, and technology (Ahmed & Pathan, 2023; Shadiev et al., 2020). By fostering these interconnected components, educators equip learners with the tools needed to communicate effectively in diverse contexts.

The second theme an effective instructional approach aligns with discourse and sociolinguistic competence, focusing on the practical use of language in real-world contexts. Ramos and Lambencio (2023) examined factors affecting oral discourse competence, highlighting that fluency, topic familiarity, and reducing anxiety are key to improving communicative competence. They emphasize creating a supportive classroom environment to encourage better performance. Thus, lessons integrate authentic tasks such as ordering food, giving directions, or presenting ideas, ensuring learners can navigate social situations effectively. Role-plays, group discussions, and debates help students to develop fluency while organizing their ideas cohesively. Li (2023) argued that contextualized communication enhances fluency and sociolinguistic appropriateness, reinforcing real-world language use. This approach allowing students to lead conversations fosters strategic competence by encouraging them to employ clarification and paraphrasing strategies when needed.

The third theme systematic observation of language development supports grammatical and discourse competence by enabling teachers to assess and address learners' lexical gaps. These help students monitor their mastery of new words and their contextual usage, building grammatical competence. Salvador et al. (2023)

explored linguistic and discourse competence among high school students, finding that students generally performed at a ‘competent’ level in grammar and oral discourse, with some variability based on academic strands and gender. Tasks requiring students to use targeted language reinforce their ability to create cohesive and coherent messages. Teachers evaluate language use in storytelling or discussions to track learners’ ability to use context-appropriate terms (Handayani et al., 2024; Rustamovna, 2024).

The theme teaching aids support grammatical and discourse competence by making abstract language concepts tangible and engaging. For instance, flashcards, charts, and videos clarify language proficiency and grammar rules, aiding grammatical competence. Listening to podcasts or recorded dialogues exposes students to diverse sentence structures, improving their discourse skills (Salvador et al., 2023). Associating words with tangible items fosters understanding and retention of language proficiency in meaningful contexts. Interactive games and apps engage students in immersive learning experiences, promoting active use of language in structured tasks. Teaching food-related language with menus or grocery items enables learners to apply language in relevant contexts, reinforcing grammatical competence. Teaching aids enhance retention and contextual application, fostering deeper understanding of language concepts.

The fifth theme strategies to improve speaking competence address all four components of communicative competence. Role-plays and interviews develop discourse competence, proficiency, situational expressions and daily language by encouraging coherent organization of ideas in dialogue (Salvador et al., 2023).

Constructive feedback helps learners refine pronunciation (grammatical competence) and overcome communication barriers (strategic competence). Barrios and Jurado (2023) provided insights into strategies for developing speaking competence as part of broader educational projects, focusing on integrating linguistic and social skills into the curriculum through interdisciplinary methods. Teachers model effective language use; which students emulate to improve grammatical and discourse accuracy. Encouraging paraphrasing and clarification strategies ensures students can maintain communication during difficulties. Canale and Swain (1980) emphasized the importance of interaction and feedback in building communicative competence.

Finally, technology enables personalized practice, addressing grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Tools like Duolingo focus on pronunciation and grammar, improving fluency and linguistic accuracy. Video conferencing tools like Zoom facilitate real-time social interactions, enhancing sociolinguistic appropriateness. Podcasts and YouTube videos expose learners to diverse accents and contexts, enriching discourse competence. Shadiev et al. (2020) demonstrate that technology enhances learner motivation and fosters autonomy, crucial for developing speaking competence.

In the light of Canale and Swain's communicative competence framework, an effective ESL teaching approach integrates instructional strategies, language observation, teaching aids, speaking strategies, and technology. Consequently, these elements support the development of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence, equipping learners to communicate effectively in real-world contexts. Recent research supports these findings, emphasizing the multidimensional nature of

speaking competence and its relevance in ESL classrooms. Together, these factors provide a holistic approach to fostering effective speaking skills among learners (Barrios & Jurado, 2023; Rao, 2019; Richards, 2022; Shadiev et al., 2020).

5.4.2 Factors Promoting Competence in Speaking from Students' Perspectives

The key factors identified by students' participants divide into seven structural themes: practice opportunities, constructive feedback, supportive learning environment and role of teachers, peer collaboration, motivation and goals, engaging curriculum, reflection and self-assessment effective teaching approach in the ESL classrooms.

Resultantly, the student participants assert on practice opportunities in their ESL classrooms, as it being the big factor can strengthen the competence to speak fostering grammatical, discourse, and strategic competence by allowing learners to experiment with language use in varied contexts. Role-plays and simulations provide realistic scenarios for learners to use new vocabulary and structures and develop the habit to keep practising it, because practice bears perfection (Barrios & Jurado, 2023; Ramos & Lambenicio, 2023; Salvador et al., 2023). Moreover, the students recommend real practice to obtain proficiency, clarity and pronunciation, if such arrangements are done in the language classroom, the undergraduates manage to perform practical role in their real-life situations and academic performance. Moreover, discourse competence, classroom debates and storytelling enhance the organization of ideas (Rustamovna, 2024; Shaban & Junejo). Hassan and Ali (2023) emphasized that opportunities for meaningful language use enhance fluency and accuracy, bridging up the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication.

The second theme constructive feedback is critical for developing grammatical and strategic competence. It enables learners to refine their language use and adopt strategies for overcoming linguistic challenges. Feedback should be timely and specific, addressing both strengths and areas for improvement. Encouraging peer feedback through collaborative tasks enhances reflective learning. Providing models of correct usage supports learners in self-correction. Hattie, Biggs and Purdie (2018) found that effective feedback accelerates language learning by offering actionable insights, leading to improved speaking competence.

The third theme a supportive environment supported sociolinguistic and strategic competence, enabling learners to experiment with language without fear of judgment. Teachers act as facilitators, creating a safe space where learners feel comfortable practicing language. Positive reinforcement boosts up learner' confidence, while collaborative activities foster peer support. However, they are teachers who model effective communication strategies, such as clarifying meaning or paraphrasing. Ushioda and Dornyei (2021) highlighted that a positive classroom atmosphere enhances student engagement and reduces communication anxiety.

The fourth theme peer collaboration develops discourse and sociolinguistic competence by exposing learners to diverse perspectives and language use in social interactions. Group discussions and pair work facilitate cooperative learning, where students negotiate meaning and refine ideas together. Peer mentoring and feedback allow learners to learn from each other's strengths. Marinić, & Moritz (2024) found that peer interaction promotes meaningful communication, improving fluency and fostering sociocultural understanding.

The fifth theme motivation is a driving force in the development of all four competencies by encouraging sustained effort and active participation. Setting clear, achievable goals helps learners measure progress and stay motivated. Intrinsic motivation is fostered through engaging tasks which resonate with learners' personal interests. Ushioda and Dornyei (2021) argued that goal-setting and intrinsic motivation are vital for sustaining language learning, especially in speaking development.

The sixth theme relates to an engaging curriculum supports sociolinguistic and discourse competence by presenting learners with authentic and culturally relevant materials. Incorporating real-world themes, such as current events or cultural topics, increases relevance and learner engagement. Integrating project-based tasks and multimedia resources stimulates creativity and critical thinking. Richards (2022) underscores the importance of contextually rich curricula in fostering meaningful language use, leading to greater speaking competence.

Final theme reflection enhances strategic competence, allowing learners to identify the areas for improvement and adopt sound strategies to overcome difficulties. Consequently, encouraging learners to evaluate their speaking performance through recordings and self-checklists, the obstructions in the ways of developing competence to speak English using proficiency, correct grammatical structures and language proficiency can be abolished. Incorporating reflective journals where students document progress and set new speaking goals. Apridayani et al., (2024) Thus, self-assessment fosters learner autonomy and helps him to develop problem-solving strategies essential for speaking competence.

In light of Canale and Swain's communicative competence framework, factors such as practice opportunities, constructive feedback, supportive learning environment, peer collaboration, motivation, engaging curricula, and reflection contribute significantly to speaking competence. These strategies, supported by recent research, provide a holistic approach to addressing the linguistic, social, and strategic needs of ESL learners, ensuring they develop into confident and effective communicators (Barrios & Jurado, 2023; Ramos & Lambenicio, 2023; Salvador et al., 2023).

5.5 RQ4. How can a speaking competence development framework (cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological factors) enhance oral communication skills among English undergraduates in Pakistani ESL classrooms?

The findings of the current study suggested that a Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF) that integrates cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological factors can substantially enhance oral communication skills among English undergraduates in Pakistani ESL classrooms. Respondents perceived speaking competence as a multifaceted skill that requires not only linguistic accuracy (grammar, language proficiency and pronunciation), but also emotional support, motivating instructional strategies, and practical use of technology.

From a cognitive perspective, students acknowledged the importance of grammar, fluency, and pronunciation in building their ability to communicate effectively. However, without regular practice and guided discourse awareness, their fluency and coherence remained limited. The framework's emphasis on functional grammar, pronunciation improvement, and phonetic training addresses these gaps.

The affective domain of the framework tackles students' emotional and psychological barriers, such as speaking anxiety and low confidence. Participants highlighted how inclusive teacher language, peer encouragement, and motivation-based classroom tasks helped reduce fear and build self-assurance. This aligns with the framework's aim to create emotionally supportive and low-anxiety environments.

From the teachers' perspective, grammar was viewed as the foundation of accurate speech. Teachers emphasized the need to move beyond rote memorization and help students apply grammar rules in real-time conversations. They reported focusing on tenses, sentence structures, and connectors to support students in constructing grammatically correct and meaningful sentences. However, students expressed that while they were taught grammar extensively, its practical application in speaking was limited. Many admitted struggling with tense usage and sentence formation during spontaneous communication, often due to a lack of speaking practice in grammar-focused lessons.

Teachers recognized pronunciation as a key factor in intelligibility. However, they admitted that time constraints and lack of resources often limited their ability to conduct dedicated pronunciation drills. Some used repetition techniques, while others relied on listening exercises to help students model native-like speech patterns. However, students voiced concerns about their pronunciation, citing it as a major source of anxiety. They appreciated the few pronunciation exercises conducted in class but expressed a strong need for more structured practice, including guidance on stress, intonation, and sound patterns.

From the teachers' viewpoint, discourse awareness involved teaching students how to manage conversations—how to open discussions, take turns, and maintain coherence in dialogues. Teachers mentioned using classroom discussions and role-playing tasks to encourage this skill. Students, on the other hand, found discourse management challenging, especially during group discussions or presentations. Many felt unprepared to maintain extended speech or respond appropriately in dynamic interactions, which highlighted the need for more structured support in this area.

On the pedagogical front, the study revealed that teacher-centred methods were prevalent, limiting interaction. The SCDF advocates interactive, task-based learning and constructive feedback, which students responded to positively in pilot activities. Incorporating such methods in mainstream teaching can significantly improve engagement and participation. Moreover, the pedagogical strategies within the SCDF—such as the IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) model, peer collaboration, and formative feedback—align with observed classroom needs for more dynamic and inclusive interaction.

The Pedagogical Strategies domain promotes a student-centered approach that turns classrooms into active speaking environments. By using meaningful tasks, encouraging interaction, and providing feedback, teachers can empower ESL learners to develop greater fluency, accuracy, and confidence in spoken English. These strategies bridge the gap between theory and practice, helping students thrive both academically and in real-world communication. Teachers and students both acknowledged that a lack of motivational teaching practices and real-life speaking

opportunities hinders oral development, validating the framework's call for task-based, interactive pedagogy and supportive classroom environments

In short, teachers revealed that pedagogical strategies like task-based learning and peer interaction are essential for active engagement. Many implement the IRF model (Initiation–Response–Feedback) to maintain classroom interaction. However, they also admitted challenges in managing large classes and ensuring equal participation. Students, on the other hand, expressed that traditional lecture-style teaching limited their speaking opportunities. They preferred group discussions, debates, and role-plays that made them practice speaking naturally. Students found constructive feedback especially valuable when it was personalized and focused on improvement rather than criticism.

Consequently, teachers acknowledged the emotional struggles students face, such as anxiety and fear of judgment. They pointed out the need to build confidence through supportive classroom environments, gentle correction, and encouragement. Many teachers try to use positive reinforcement and create opportunities where every student feels safe to speak. However, students reported that fear of making mistakes and being judged by peers hinders their willingness to speak. They valued teachers who listened patiently, encouraged participation, and acknowledged effort, not just correctness. Students also noted that real-life speaking tasks increased their motivation and helped them believe in their own progress. Confidence and self-efficacy were directly linked to how their teachers interacted with them

Finally, technological integration was identified as a missing but essential element. The use of mobile learning apps, language labs, and online speaking platforms was

viewed as highly beneficial by both teachers and students. Respondents believed that such tools could offer extended speaking practice beyond the classroom and provide real-time feedback. Subsequently, teachers recognized the value of digital tools like language labs and apps but pointed out that access and training were often limited in public universities. They expressed interest in using platforms like Moodle or Zoom more effectively for speaking tasks, especially in blended learning settings. While students were enthusiastic about using apps like ELSA Speak and YouTube channels for pronunciation and fluency practice. They appreciated the flexibility of practicing outside the classroom and felt that technology gave them a private, low-stress space to experiment with speaking. Online presentations and discussion boards were seen as helpful in building real-world communication skills.

Overall, the Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF) presents a comprehensive, practical, and contextually grounded model that effectively addresses the key challenges identified in this study. It aligns with Canale and Swain's (1980) theory of communicative competence, supports the student-centred pedagogy, and provides a roadmap for improving oral proficiency in ESL settings through cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological dimensions. By integrating these domains, the SCDF fosters learners' confidence, autonomy, and fluency, preparing them for real-world communication demands. More than a theoretical construct, the SCDF emerges as a pragmatic and adaptable tool—one that educators and policymakers can confidently employ to elevate speaking competence among ESL undergraduates in Pakistan, paving the way for academic achievement and professional success in a globally connected world.

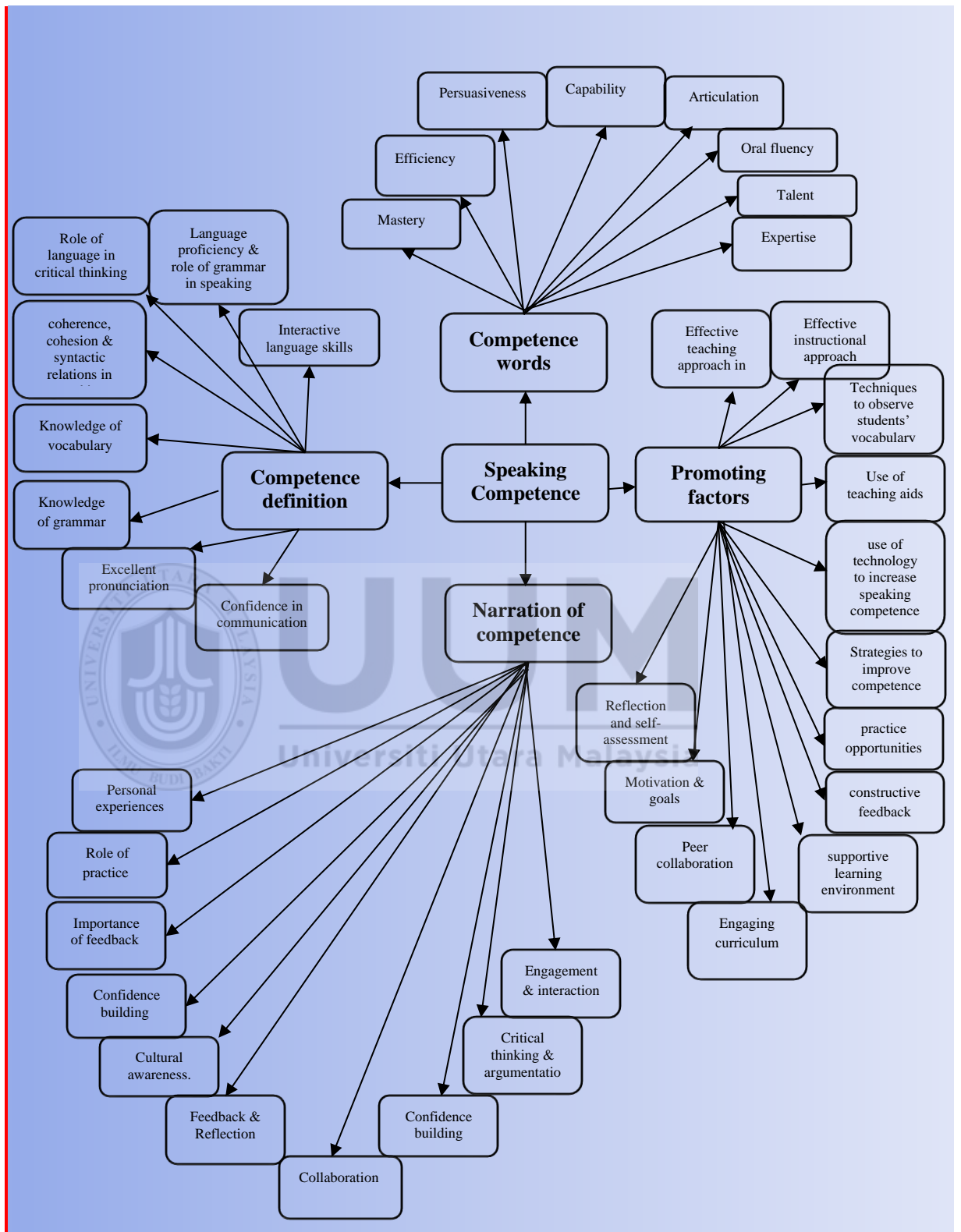


Figure 5.1 Thematic Map of the Study

5.6 Summary

The findings of the present study reveal insightful information about the speaking competence seen through the lens of Pakistani participants. Hence, the findings are categorized in to (a) description of speaking competence divided into definitions and words which reflect multifarious rampant aspects of speaking proficiency; (b) narrating the experiences of developing speaking competence emphasises on grammar, proficiency, accuracy, and fluency; they often struggle with the other dimensions of competence and (c) the factors that promote speaking competence in English language such as effective pedagogical approaches in ESL classrooms, effective instructional approach, practice opportunities, constructive feedback, supportive learning environment and role of teachers, peer collaboration, motivation and goals, engaging curriculum, reflection and self-assessment and effective use of technology in the ESL classrooms.

In addition, the results reveal certain emerging stories from the classroom observations and interview sessions that enhance the participants' competence in understanding their problems. However, the whole discussion provides a holistic picture addressing the linguistic, social, and strategic needs of ESL learners, ensuring they develop into confident and competent communicators. The following chapter provides the limitations, conclusions and implications of the present research.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Regarding the exploration of speaking competence in speaking English, it is important to understand how it functions and is interpreted, given that language serves as the primary resource for exploring competence of students' narrations in their daily communication (Barrios & Jurado, 2023; Ramos & Lambenicio, 2023; Salvador et al., 2023). The preceding chapters have aimed at demonstration that the development of speaking competence in speaking encompasses a wide scope as shared by the participants. However, it involves various linguistic, cultural, educational, and contextual factors, transcending academic and social boundaries. Thus, this chapter also reflects on the findings regarding the definitions of speaking competence in speaking, as revealed by the study, and discusses its implications and limitations. It further identifies areas for future research and concludes with a summary of the chapter.

6.2 Overview of the Study

Exploring speaking competence in speaking among English language undergraduates in Pakistan requires active investment in educational resources, constructive pedagogical approaches, and the integration of influential values into the teaching and learning process. Therefore, developing speaking competence means enabling students to articulate their thoughts clearly and effectively in interactions while being mindful of their audience's feelings. This involves fostering the use of accurate, clear,

proficient, polite and respectful language in both verbal and non-verbal communication, as emphasized by many scholars (Feng & Guo, 2022; Suzuki & Kormos, 2024; Salimi & Najjarpour, 2024). Speaking competence in speaking can significantly impact students' academic and social lives, shaping their identity and ability to engage with diverse perspectives (Atay & Kurt, 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

Linguistically, speaking competence encompasses the grammatical strength, fluency and accuracy, further it requires the sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills. These elements are mandatory for effective communication in a multilingual and multicultural context like Pakistan. Moreover, the use of appropriate language, correct grammar, and clarity plays a pivotal role in achieving communicative goals avoiding ambiguities, complexities and conflicts. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube further amplify the importance of the competence to speak English clearly, proficiently and correctly, as they bear a significant role for the edification of the development of global communication and discourse among ESL students. Factually, careful selection of words and symbols in digital communication is essential to avoid misunderstandings to promote positive engagement (Kohnke et al., 2024). Therefore, ESL students must demonstrate the difference, projecting command at pronunciation, English grammar, language proficiency and fluency.

The study highlights that developing speaking competence among undergraduates in Pakistan requires a conducive learning environment, one that supports collaboration and interaction. In this regard, task-based learning, role-playing, and group discussions have proven to be effective strategies (Ramos & Lambenicio, 2023; Li, 2023). These approaches encourage students to practice their speaking skills in real-life scenarios,

enhancing their confidence and ability to express themselves. For instance, language classroom activities that simulate interviews, presentations and debates help students navigate both formal and informal communication settings. Such practices are essential in enabling students to overcome common challenges, such as anxiety and fear of public speaking.

The researcher's focus on exploring speaking competence in Pakistan revealed insights into how students perceive and utilize the English language in their daily communication. Moreover, the participants reported that engaging in meaningful conversations with peers and instructors improved their speaking abilities. They also highlighted the importance of feedback in refining their language skills. The findings suggest that effective language instructions must address both linguistic proficiency and intercultural competence, allowing students to adapt their communication styles to various social and cultural contexts.

Moreover, the study underscores the role of educators in fostering a supportive atmosphere that encourages students to experiment with language use without fear of judgment. Thus, the teachers are encouraged to adopt a facilitative role, guiding students through constructive feedback and creating opportunities for practice (Ayub & Khaleel, 2024; Hassan & Bilal, 2019; Khan, 2024). Positive reinforcement and acknowledgment of students' efforts can significantly boost up their motivation and willingness to improve.

The broader implications of this research point to the necessity of integrating speaking competence into the curriculum of English language programs in Pakistan. Therefore,

institutions must prioritize the development of oral communication skills through innovative teaching methods and technological tools. Additionally, fostering sound understanding of the cultural and social dimensions of language use can help students to develop a nuanced approach to communication, one that respects diversity promoting inclusivity.

Consequently, findings from this study reveal the transformative potential of speaking competence in shaping students' academic and personal lives. By enabling ESL undergraduates to articulate their thoughts confidently and respectfully, the educators can prepare them for future challenges in an increasingly interconnected world. Resultantly, the journey toward achieving speaking competence is ongoing, requiring consistent effort and dedication from both students and educators. Ultimately, the ability to communicate effectively in English empowers students to navigate complex social and professional landscapes, contributing to their overall growth and success.

6.3 Implications of the Study

The study on exploring speaking competence in speaking among English undergraduates in Pakistan offers several implications for educators, policymakers, and students:

Firstly, there is a pressing need to improve the speaking competence of the students in their ESL classrooms, but despite attending these classes and studying many courses, the students are not able to speak well. In the light of the findings there is the need to redesign English language curricula in higher education to prioritize speaking skills.

By integrating communicative language teaching methods, institutions can address gaps in oral proficiency and foster practical language use among students.

Secondly, Modern age offers scientific solutions of the problems, therefore ESL classrooms can be equipped with modern technology to proliferate the knowledge of English language in exact way. However, the educators must be equipped with modern teaching techniques, including the use of modern technology and task-based learning, to effectively develop students' speaking competence. Additionally, the regular professional development latest trainings can ensure that ESL teachers remain updated with innovative and modern practices. If the latest technology is used, the students can improve their pronunciation, accent, proficiency and clarity in speaking.

Thirdly, most of the private language institutes have got their language labs, where the learners practice listening and speaking and they have good results regarding the competence of the ESL students. In reality, listening period that is known as the passive period brings forth the strong performance, if practised in language labs. Therefore, the public universities and colleges should invest on language labs, online platforms, and the multimedia tools which provide students with useful opportunities to practice and strength speaking skills in the interactive and supportive environment.

Fourthly, language learning and teaching cannot be limited to bookish reading and cramming, because its object is to enlighten the learners in such a way that they should be able to speak English in their ESL classrooms as well as outside in the real-life situations. However, there is the dire need to assert on active participation through debates and role-playing. Therefore, collaborative projects can help students to

overcome communication barriers such as anxiety and lack of confidence, the public sector universities need to cut after collaborative learning and tailoring activities to satisfy students' needs ensures more personalized learning experiences. However, classroom should work as the whole, that is ready to oblige every student.

Fifthly, Public sector universities in Pakistan admit the students belonging to linguistically and culturally diverse areas, where ethnocentric attitude of the learners is visible in the ESL classes. Therefore, incorporating the competence in oral communication topics into the curriculum, the ESL students can enhance sensitivity to diverse perspectives and feel ready to adapt their speaking styles in conformity with the practical requirement. Hence, it is mandatory to lead the English learners in a way that they should be ready to renounce their biasedness towards languages and cultures demonstrated before them. As a result, this skill is particularly valuable in a multicultural society like Pakistan. *Finally*, introducing formative assessment methods which focus on speaking performance, providing constructive feedback can motivate the second language learners to improve their competence to speak. Lastly, peer evaluations and self-reflection exercises can also enhance their awareness and recognition of the areas needing development.

Consequently, the study demonstrates that the participants were enthusiastic and ready to reveal their real aspirations and knowledge regarding the ESL classrooms in the public sector university in Pakistan. Not only did they mention the problems existing in their classes, but also described their anticipations and the suggestions to improve it. Both the teachers and the students mentioned the practically perceived problems hindered in the ways of the competence to speak English improving grammar,

pronunciation and proficiency. The responsible authorities need to take active steps regarding the improvement in teaching and learning standards of the ESL undergraduate classes, arranging efficient teachers, who should be trained enough to maintain the self-respect of the students along-with teaching, if they fail to answer their questions. They also are supposed to adopt innovative pedagogical ways to teach their students managing classroom activities, group discussions, debates, competitions, quiz and oral learning activities.

Moreover, the respondents reveal the irresponsible attitude of government regarding ESL education in the public universities, where big crowd of students learn in the suffocated atmosphere of a small room and traditional syllabus is another handicap that spoils the whole ESL learning process. Therefore, the new public universities in the far away areas can engage the big population of students, also the present classes can also be divided into many sections where standard strength of students can be accommodated.

Policymakers should recognize the importance of spoken English competence as a critical component of higher education outcomes. Therefore, support for nationwide initiatives to improve English language education can contribute to producing graduates who are better prepared for global challenges. Future studies can explore the impact of specific pedagogical strategies or technologies on speaking competence. Comparative research across different regions in Pakistan can identify contextual factors influencing language learning outcomes (Alatalo et al., 2024; Bhutto & Kazmi, 2024; Perveen & Krishnasamay, 2024). By addressing these implications, stakeholders

can significantly enhance the speaking competence of English undergraduates, preparing them for academic success and professional excellence.

Resultantly, the research data reveals that the ESL classroom equipped with latest facilities and trained teachers can produce competent speakers of English, who are free from grammatical flaws, deficiency vocabulary words and other ambiguities. However, it is the dire need of time to innovate the ESL education equipping it with latest facilities and adopting modern pedagogies to keep the whole flock of the students active. The good syllabus facilitated classrooms and motivated learners and teachers can strengthen ESL classrooms. Additionally, examination system of ESL should rely more on presentations than written examination that overemphasizes cramming ignoring innovations and concrete demonstration of competence in speaking.

6.3.1 Implication of the SCDF Framework for Contribution to New Knowledge

Proposing a new Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF) significantly strengthens the study's contribution to new knowledge. Rather than simply identifying challenges, the study offers a structured, practical solution to improve speaking competence among ESL learners. This enhances the study's originality and impact, as many previous studies highlight problems but rarely propose comprehensive frameworks to address them. A clearly developed framework can serve as a valuable guide for educators and policymakers, helping to shape curriculum design, instructional practices, and language education reforms aimed at improving oral communication skills in ESL contexts.

The application of the Speaking Competence Development Framework (SCDF) emerges as a significant implication of this study, offering a comprehensive and practical model to address the key challenges identified in developing speaking competence among ESL undergraduates in Pakistani public universities. Based on the study's findings, the SCDF provides clear directions for pedagogical reform, curriculum enhancement, and teacher training.

Curriculum and Instructional Design: The SCDF highlights the importance of integrating cognitive (grammar, vocabulary, discourse), affective (motivation, confidence), pedagogical (interactive methods), and technological (digital tools) components into the ESL curriculum. Educational institutions can apply the framework to restructure classroom activities, ensuring that oral communication is treated as a core learning outcome rather than a secondary skill.

Teacher Development and Training: The study implies that teachers should be trained to apply SCDF-based strategies, such as task-based learning, IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) models, and inclusive communication styles. Teacher education programs can use the framework to prepare instructors to manage classroom anxiety, provide constructive feedback, and implement technology-supported speaking activities.

Enhancing Learning Environments: By applying the SCDF, institutions can foster supportive, interactive, and student-centered learning environments. These environments prioritize students' emotional and psychological readiness, using real-world speaking tasks and peer collaboration to reduce anxiety and build confidence.

Policy Implications: On a broader level, the SCDF offers policymakers a research-based model to guide improvements in national ESL standards. It supports the inclusion of oral proficiency benchmarks, increased access to technological resources, and the evaluation of teacher performance based on their ability to promote speaking competence.

Future Research and Practice: As an implication, the SCDF also lays the groundwork for future research and classroom innovation, encouraging educators and researchers to explore how these four integrated domains impact speaking development across diverse ESL contexts.

In summary, the SCDF is not just a theoretical model, but a practical, adaptable framework that can be implemented to elevate ESL speaking instruction, support teacher and student development, and ultimately enhance oral communication competence in real academic and professional settings in Pakistan.

6.4 Limitation of the Study

The present study was confined to exploring the development of speaking competence in speaking English among ESL undergraduates at Punjab university Lahore, Pakistan. Its scope was limited to examining how pedagogical practices, cultural influences, and individual learner-traits contribute to spoken English proficiency in a specific educational context. Future research should consider investigating the role of cultural and social factors in shaping speaking competence. For instance, understanding how multilingualism influences English language acquisition in a diverse society like Pakistan, can provide a broader perspective (Gass & Selinker, 2020; Hassan & Bilal,

2019; Khan, 2024; Zhang & Liao, 2023). Studies could also explore the impact of sociocultural norms on communication styles, enabling learners to navigate various conversational settings more effectively; several limitations were identified, which should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Firstly, the study was conducted in specific classroom settings, with a limited sample size of Pakistani ESL teachers and students. This restricts the generalizability of the findings to other contexts, such as different educational levels, cultural environments, or institutional structures. Insights derived from English language classrooms may not fully apply to other subjects or disciplines.

Secondly, the present study primarily focused on speaking competence within the context of grammatical competence including grammar, language proficiency, clarity, pronunciation and fluency in speaking English. Thus, future research should include formal, informal discourse and other aspects of communicative competence to understand how students apply their speaking skills in everyday life. This approach can also shed light on how digital communication platforms influence language learning (Kohnke et al., 2024).

Thirdly, the use of qualitative methods, such as classroom observation and in-depth interviews, have proven valuable for gathering in-depth insights into students' experiences and perceptions of speaking competence (Taylor et al., 2015). Expanding these methodologies to include a diverse sample such as students from rural areas, underrepresented linguistic backgrounds, and varying socioeconomic statuses can enhance the generalizability of findings. Additionally, cross-cultural studies

comparing learners in Pakistan with those in other multilingual nations can provide a richer understanding of contextual factors affecting speaking proficiency.

Addressing these limitations in future studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how language and interpersonal skills shape classroom dynamics and empower students.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several areas for further exploration are identified. Future studies could also delve deep into the psychological dimensions of language learning, such as the role of anxiety, confidence, and motivation in developing speaking skills. Hence, the influence of supportive teacher-student interactions and peer collaboration on building linguistic confidence should also be examined.

This study was conducted at a single public university, with all participants drawn from the same English department at the undergraduate level. Therefore, future research should include a comparative study across government and private universities to explore differences in communication practices among ESL learners. Additionally, extending the research to varying educational contexts, such as schools, colleges, postgraduate programs, and vocational training, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how communication strategies adapt to diverse educational settings and demands.

Educators and policymakers are encouraged to focus on the development of comprehensive English-speaking curricula that address not only linguistic accuracy and fluency but also pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence. This would involve incorporating real-world communication scenarios, intercultural communication modules, and formative assessments tailored to individual student needs.

The conceptual framework resulted from this study can be used to develop a questionnaire for measuring the language use and interpersonal skills practices among a wide range of teachers in higher education. Moreover, the data collected through the semi-structured interviews and semi-classroom observations, has provided an effective multi-methods approach for gathering in-depth information about the language use and interpersonal skills. Hence, other studies can employ a similar approach to understand any complex phenomena related to teaching and learning.

Finally, future research should aim to create standardized tools for assessing speaking competence in English, providing a consistent framework for evaluating progress. These tools could be adapted for use in various regions across Pakistan to ensure that students receive targeted support in overcoming their unique challenges in spoken English proficiency. By addressing these areas and implication of the SCDF Framework, future studies can significantly contribute to the understanding and enhancement of speaking competence in speaking English, fostering better communication skills among learners and preparing them for global challenges

6.6 Summary

This thesis has discussed the research work on speaking competence in speaking English from the lens of Pakistani teachers and their ESL undergraduate students. This chapter provides a holistic picture of the whole study and addresses the challenges and limitations identified during the study. Moreover, the chapter reflects on these issues, offering a balanced perspective on the complexities of English-speaking competence. Focusing on the broader implications, this chapter delves deep into the transformative potential of English-speaking competence in education. Hence, the chapter also identifies areas for future research, such as exploring these tools across diverse educational settings and disciplines. The chapter concludes with recommendations for implementing the findings in real-world educational contexts.



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Appendix A

Invitation for Participation by E-mail

Dear Sir/Madam

I am Aziz-ur-Rehman a PhD candidate in the School of Languages, Civilisation and Philosophy in the Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). My research title is, ***“EXPLORING LANGUAGE COMPETENCE IN SPEAKING AMONG ENGLISH UNDERGRADUATES AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN PAKISTAN”***.

If you would like to participate in this study, I appreciate your assistance. Please specify a suitable time and place to meet. I will be morally obliged to you.

Thank You.

Aziz-ur-Rehman Khan

Mobile phone: +60104919307

E-mail: azizrehmankhanniazi@yahoo.com



Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

I have been invited to participate in the research study (classroom observations/in-depth interviews) on the title “*EXPLORING LANGUAGE COMPETENCE IN SPEAKING AMONG ENGLISH UNDERGRADUATES AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN PAKISTAN*”. I hereby declare that I agree to participate in an interview session conducted by Aziz-Ur-Rehman Khan. I am well informed about the purpose of the interview. However, my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw any time without any consequences or penalty and the provided data will also be removed. I am fully aware that the interview session is taped recorded and confidential.

Participant Name:

Respondent Code/Pseudonym:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix C

Profile of the Panel Reviewers

Reviewers	Gender	Educational Background	Institutio	Designation	City	Email
Reviewer 1	Male	Ph.D. Applied Linguistics	UMT	Professor Dr. Arshad Khan	Lahore	arshad.khan@umt.edu.pk
Reviewer 2	Male	Ph.D. Applied Linguistics	Riphah University	Professor Dr. Shafqat Zaidi	Lahore	Shafqatzaidi444@hotmail.com
Reviewer 3	Male	Ph.D. Applied Linguistics	Riphah university	Professor Dr. M. Saeed Akhter	Faisalabad	msaeed.akhter@riphahfsd.edu.pk
Reviewer 4	Female	Ph.D. Applied Linguistics	university of Education Lahore	Professor Dr. Fariha Shafqat	Lahore	Farihashafqat@live.com
Reviewer 5	Female	M.Phil. Applied Linguistics	Leads university	Lecturer Fakhira Niazi	Lahore	iramashraf1992@gmail.com

Appendix D

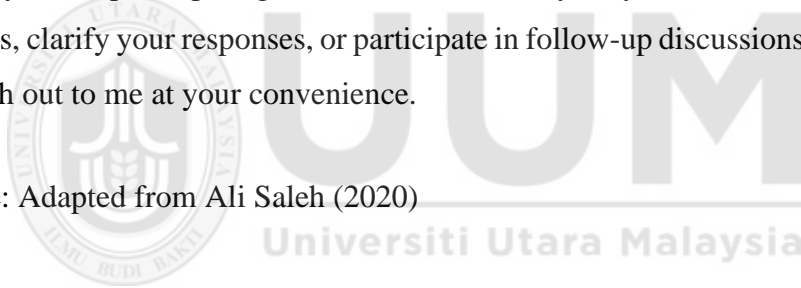
Interview Questions for Teachers

- 1. How do you define “speaking competence” in the context of English language teaching?**
 - a. What are the words that are related to “speaking competence”?
 - b. What skills or qualities do you believe characterize a competent English speaker?
- 2. What challenges do you face when teaching speaking skills in your ESL classes?**
 - a. Do students face issues like shyness, lack of confidence, or low motivation?
 - b. How do you address these challenges?
- 3. What teaching strategies or methods do you use to improve students’ speaking competence?**
 - a. How effective do you find activities such as role plays, debates, presentations, and group discussions?
- 4. How important is pronunciation, grammar, and language proficiency in developing speaking competence?**
 - a. What do you prioritize when teaching these aspects of speaking?
- 5. How do you create a supportive and motivating classroom environment for students to practice speaking?**
 - a. Do you encourage peer interaction, group work, or other collaborative activities?

- b. How do you build students' confidence to speak?
- 6. Do you think the existing English language curriculum sufficiently addresses speaking competence?**
- a. What improvements would you suggest for promoting speaking skills in the curriculum?
- 7. In your opinion, what factors are most effective in improving speaking competence among undergraduate students?**
- a. Can you recommend any approaches or resources for better results?
- 8. Do you have any suggestions or final thoughts on how to enhance speaking competence among undergraduate students in Pakistan?**

Thank you for participating in this interview/study. If you would like to add further insights, clarify your responses, or participate in follow-up discussions, please feel free to reach out to me at your convenience.

Source: Adapted from Ali Saleh (2020)



Appendix E

Interview Questions for Students

1. **How do you describe/understand/define “competence in speaking”?**
 - a. What are the words that come to your mind when you think of “speaking competence”?
 - b. Why do you associate these words with speaking competence?
2. **Can you tell me about your speaking experiences in ESL classrooms?**
 - a. How do you feel after participating in activities like discussions, presentations, or group work?
 - b. How have these speaking experiences influenced your confidence and ability to interact in daily life?
3. **Do you think it is important to conduct research on English speaking competence? Why or why not?**
4. **Do you believe that Pakistani undergraduate students can achieve competence in speaking English?**
 - a. What steps do you think are necessary for achieving this competence?
5. **What are the factors that you believe are effective in creating or promoting speaking competence among undergraduate students?**
 - a. Why do you think these factors are important?
6. **What challenges do you face when trying to improve your speaking competence in English?**
7. **Do you think teachers play a significant role in improving students’ speaking competence?**
 - a. What teaching strategies or activities do you find most helpful for improving speaking skills?

8. **What role do classmates or peers play in helping you improve your speaking competence?**
 - a. Do you prefer group activities, peer feedback, or individual speaking tasks? Why?
9. **Do you have any other suggestions, ideas, or experiences to share about achieving competence in speaking the English language?**

Thank you for participating in this interview and sharing your thoughts. If you would like to clarify any of your responses, add more insights, or participate in a follow-up discussion, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Adapted from Ali Saleh (2020)



Appendix F

Classroom Observation Checklist-I (Teachers)

Teacher's Name.....

Topic.....

Duration of class..... Date

Categories	Indicators	Agree	Disagree	Needs Improvement	Comments
Teacher's role and activities					
Encouragement of Speaking Skills	Teachers provide opportunities for students to speak (e.g., discussions, presentations, role-plays)				
	Teachers create a supportive and non-judgmental environment for speaking practice. Teachers use engaging activities that promote interaction (group discussions, pair work)				

<p>Use of Feedback and Guidance</p>	<p>Teachers give constructive feedback to improve students' fluency, pronunciation, and grammar. Teachers encourage self-reflection and peer feedback on speaking tasks. Teachers highlight common errors and provide strategies to overcome challenges.</p>				
<p>Teaching Strategies for Speaking Competence</p>	<p>Teachers use task-based learning activities such as debates, interviews, and storytelling. Teachers emphasize fluency and accuracy during speaking activities. Teachers integrate real-life speaking situations to promote authentic language use.</p>				

Student's role and activities					
Understanding of Speaking Competence	<p>Students demonstrate awareness of speaking competence (e.g., using related words like fluency, accuracy, confidence).</p> <p>Students link speaking competence with real-life communication needs.</p>				
Participation in Speaking Activities					
	<p>Students actively participate in classroom discussions, presentations, and group work.</p> <p>Students initiate or respond to classroom questions confidently.</p> <p>Students display effort in task-based speaking activities (role-play, debates, and interviews).</p>				
Fluency and Accuracy					
	<p>Students speak without frequent pauses, hesitation, or fillers (e.g., “uh,” “um”).</p> <p>Students use correct grammar structures during speaking tasks.</p> <p>Students demonstrate clear pronunciation of words.</p>				

Confidence and Attitude					
	<p>Students appear confident while speaking (eye contact, body language).</p> <p>Students engage positively with peers and teachers during speaking tasks.</p> <p>Students overcome visible anxiety or hesitation during tasks.</p>				
Interaction and Engagement					
	<p>Students listen attentively and respond appropriately to questions.</p> <p>Students collaborate effectively during group discussions.</p> <p>Students demonstrate understanding of cultural or social cues during conversations.</p>				
Teacher's Role in Promoting Speaking Competence					
	<p>Teachers provide opportunities for student-led speaking activities.</p> <p>Teachers give constructive feedback on students' speaking performance.</p> <p>Teachers encourage students to use English in real-life and academic scenarios.</p>				

Challenges in Speaking Competence					
	<p>Students show signs of anxiety or hesitation while speaking.</p> <p>Students display limited language words or struggle to find appropriate words.</p> <p>Students face difficulty in understanding or following instructions in English.</p>				

Adapted from Cheng & Keuk (2020), Aktay & Mermi (2022) & Iberri-Shea (2017)



Appendix G

Classroom Observation Checklist-II (Students)

Teacher's Name.....

Topic.....

Duration of class..... Date

Category	Indicator	Agree	Disagree	Need improvement	Comments
Student's role and activities					
Understanding of speaking competence	Students demonstrate awareness of speaking competence (e.g., using related words like fluency, accuracy, and confidence). They link speaking competence with real-life communication needs.				
Participation in speaking activities					
	Students actively participate in classroom discussions, presentations, and group work. Students initiate or respond to classroom questions confidently. Students display effort in task-based speaking activities (role-play, debates, and interviews).				

Fluency and accuracy					
	Students speak without frequent pauses, hesitations, or fillers (e.g., “uh,” “um,” etc.). They use correct grammar structures during speaking tasks and demonstrate clear pronunciation of words.				
Confidence and attitude					
	Students appear confident while speaking (eye contact, body language). They engage positively with peers and teachers during speaking tasks. They overcome visible anxiety or hesitation during different tasks.				
Interaction and engagement					
	Students listen attentively and respond appropriately to questions. They collaborate effectively during group discussions and demonstrate an understanding of cultural or social cues during conversations.				

Teacher's role in promoting speaking competence					
	Teachers provide opportunities for student-led speaking activities. Teachers give constructive feedback on students' speaking performance. Teachers encourage students to use English in real-life and academic scenarios.				
Challenges in speaking competence					
	Teachers provide opportunities for student-led speaking activities. Teachers give constructive feedback on students' speaking performance. Teachers encourage students to use English in real-life and academic scenarios.				

Adapted from Cheng & Keuk (2020), Aktay & Mermi (2022) & Iberri-Shea (2017)

Appendix H

Teachers' In-depth Interviews: English Transcript Samples

“Language proficiency bears a great role; it has essential role for effective and fruitful communication. Students being proficient in a language may speak their thoughts openly and clearly. Their communication is highly understandable, meaningful and lucid, it is free from grammatical ambiguities.” (Male Teacher Participant)

“Higher level and range of the English language proficiency connects and correlates with better and standard academic performance.” (Female Teacher Participant)

“Students must bear competence to understand well and they should respond clearly to their peers.” (Female Teacher Participant)

“Active listening stands for the ability to concentrate devotedly, understand, perceive and finally respond thoughtfully what others mean to say. This includes not merely hearing of words and sentences but also interpretation of the non-verbal language including cues, symbols and emotions. (Male Teacher Participant)

“Critical thinking is essential power for students that makes them analyse problems to evaluate options, articulating potential and sound solutions clearly.” (Female Teacher Participant)

“The coherent and the cohesive pieces of speech help to raise understanding and flow that is easier for listeners to grasp, and sentences strongly related with one another support meaningful communication.” (Female Teacher Participant)

“Mastery involves and includes very clear and soundly precise understandable pronunciation of the words uttered, as well as the correct delivery of tone, sound and pitch.” (Male Teacher Participant)

Appendix I

Students' In-depth Interviews: English Transcript Samples

SP4: *“In our class our teachers give little time to grammar and more to textbook, correct use of grammar makes the clear speech and helpful speech to sending the correct message, but my teachers ignore it.”*

SP7: *“Knowledge on grammar is useful in speaking ideas and arguments by using different sentence structures, but teachers spending more time on textbooks and they do not teach grammar in detail.”*

SP10: *“Grammar knowledge is necessary for learning speaking competence, because it makes students to speak clearly, effectively, and with confidence in different situations my teachers do not teach active and passive voice, direct and indirect, and parts of speech.”*

SP2: *“Grammar helps us to speak in right way and become a good speaker, teachers do not teach it in detail, and they give small lectures on it”.*

SP3: *“I think pronouncing words in a way that is understood by listeners and misunderstandings, we have no good book about it, teachers also say it difficult thing, impossible work in Pakistan”.*

SP1: *“I think feel shame when I speak, because I speak in Urdu style my wrong pronunciation changes the meanings of the words”.*

SP5: *“Our class is big and teachers have less time for teaching many things, good pronunciation increase confidence of students, encourage to participate activeness in conversations that form speaking competence”.*

SP8: *“I belief that excellent pronunciation increasing confidence between students to participation in classroom discussion that gives them speaking competence.”*

Appendix J

Coding Sample

TRANSCRIPT	CODING THEME
<p>In-depth Interviews</p> <p><u>Interactive skills being the abilities enable the language learners to form effective communication for the development of collaboration in social, personal and professional success. These skills bear essential role for the development of the practical learning, art of engagement with others, maintaining discussions, and growing relationships.</u></p> <p><u>“students must bear competence to understand well and they should respond clearly to their peers.”</u></p>	<p>Interactive skills enable effective communication for collaboration is the (descriptive code of speaking competence definition)</p> <p>Competence includes understanding peers and responding clearly is the (interpretation of speaking competence definition)</p>
<p>Speaking competence is the mastery.... <u>the master speaker bears rich and appropriate vocabulary and he knows well how to exploit it appropriately and effectively in various contexts.</u></p> <p><u>“mastery involves and includes very clear and soundly precise understandable pronunciation of the words uttered, as well as the correct delivery of tone, sound and pitch.”</u></p>	<p>Vocabulary: Rich, appropriate, and contextually effective use</p> <p>Pronunciation: Precise tone, pitch, and clear articulation are the (descriptive codes of speaking competence)</p>
<p><u>I think competence is the persuasiveness.... Persuasive speaking edifies clarity, impact and invulnerability of communication; concrete arguments with effective content always compel the listeners to keep on.</u></p> <p><u>“effective and persuasive speakers raise a credible and highly trustworthy unique environment for grabbing the attention of audience.”</u></p>	<p>Persuasiveness is the (descriptive code of speaking competence) it engages emotions and connects with listeners Enhances effectiveness, achieving desired outcomes is the (interpretation of speaking competence)</p>

