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English as Second Language Challenge Faced by Students: Comparative View of Public and Private Sector Students

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Abstract: *The present study diagnosed English reading difficulties faced by students among primary school learners in public and private sector schools. To investigate the problem, teachers' perceptions were taken to find out the prevailing situation. A survey study was conducted using a rating scale instrument. Data analysis highlighted significant differences in pronunciation problems, with public school learners encountering more problems. On the other hand, public school learners also experience more problems regarding speed, but the difference between both sectors was not significant. Comprehension problems are comparable between the two groups. Gender-based disparities show that male students in public schools encounter more pronunciation challenges, though overall reading problems are significant for both genders in public schools. Recommendations include targeted programs for pronunciation improvement and enhanced comprehension instruction. This study contributes valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers aiming to address English reading challenges in diverse school settings.*

Key Words: English Reading Difficulties, Primary Grade Students, Public and Private Schools, Teachers' Perceptions

Introduction

English as a Second Language (ESL) reading is of paramount importance as it serves as a gateway to academic, professional, and social integration in English-speaking environments. Proficient ESL reading skills enable individuals to comprehend and communicate effectively, fostering academic success and career advancement. In an interconnected world where English is a global lingua franca, ESL reading proficiency facilitates access to a vast repository of information, diverse cultures, and international opportunities. It empowers individuals to participate fully in academic pursuits, navigate professional landscapes, and engage meaningfully in cross-cultural interactions. ESL reading proficiency is not merely a linguistic skill but a key to unlocking doors of knowledge, communication, and global connectivity.

Takac (2008) states that even when English language learners understand the importance of a word during retention, they frequently encounter difficulties. Jargon learning challenges can be solved with the aid of drilling, cards, and other crucial tools that include the fundamental components of the target words. Some students have their own strategies for handling word recall. The use of unnecessary methods causes a lot of obstacles to students' academic presentations.

Children who do not know the basics of words may find it difficult to read, speak, and acquire other language-acquisition abilities related to the English language (Elttayef & Hussein, 2017). According to Walter (2004), jargon is an important component of all languages. Words have a crucial role and serve a variety of purposes, including reading certain messages and recording information in physical copy. Words are very helpful in letting the reader know what the writer has written.

Arias (2003) asserts that jargon should be committed to memory, which calls for a gap between words. A few principles, including repetition, dispersal, pacing, mental profundity, picturing, and recovery, are

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characterized by the memory exam due to the lack of rules that ensure that the words will never again occupy a place in a person's mind. According to Thornbury (2006), these guidelines consider the commemoration cycle while partnering words collectively.

According to Zare (2012), "Students' significant role during language learning has been repeatedly confirmed by second language securing" (p. 162). Similarly, Ravindran (2016) suggests that "to make their English learning more successful, students ought to take on different learning draws near, methods, and modes." Lee (2010) stated that students "can assist understudies with learning all the more effectively and foster their learning independence" regarding learning approaches.

The world has become a smaller, more interconnected place where innovation has changed everything, including the way English is taught as a second language (Ravindran, 2016). Numerous techniques for language learning, such as second language acquisition systems, have been developed and are now commonly acknowledged as innovative means of instruction. According to Koondher (2015), browsing is an ongoing, thoughtful, and dynamic activity that allows students to construct new knowledge from what they already know. Unmistakably, the text shows a shift in focus from language acquisition approaches to instructional systems as understanding is concerned with the cognitive domain where critical thinking has been focused as twenty-first-century skills in different studies in Pakistani context (Jamil & Muhammad, 2019; Jamil et al., 2020; Jamil et al., 2021a, 2021b; Jamil et al., 2022).

Due to this shift, language-learning systems are now said to have a focal situation in second language acquisition (Liyanage, 2004). Most Pakistani schools still teach English using the antiquated punctuation interpretation method; language learning systems are rarely taken into consideration (Warsi et al., 2011). The focus of second or unknown dialect advancements these days is less on teaching techniques and more on how teachers and students achieve their goals.

According to O'Malley & Chamot (1990), language-learning systems are particular factors or behavioral patterns that people engage in to comprehend, acquire, or even retain information. It takes more than just scanning and detachedly comprehending sentences to read with cognizance. Children require a broad vocabulary of terms that they can appropriately use and understand to label their experiences and insights. The foundation of proficient reading is laid by the depth and breadth of a child's vocabulary. According to Tomlinson (2007), spoken jargon makes references to words that are used in reading.

If a child has even a passing knowledge of jargon, even those with unusually vast vocal vocabularies may struggle greatly when reading words on paper. Kelly (2006) argued that elocution raises two important difficulties. It is not immediately disregarded; rather than being firmly organized, it will typically be responsive to a particular subject that has come up in the study hall. He clarified further that the negative impacts of neglect that elocution will typically face may not be the result of teachers' disinterest in the subject but rather their feeling of ambiguity about how to teach it.

The primary diagnosis made by the study was of the pupils' reading problems. The study was carried out quantitatively, using a rating scale in the data gathering form. Every elementary school in the Gujranwala district served as the study's population. The accessible population for this study consisted of all primary school instructors. Multistage random sampling was employed to select a representative sample. Teachers were given access to a self-structured 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was distributed for data collection after being verified by experts. The gathered information was examined, and the findings are listed below:

In the Pakistani context, there are different studies conducted likewise in this context like English textbooks analysis used in state schools (Khokhar et al. 2022), English language teachers' attitudes towards instructional policy in public secondary schools (Muazzam et al. 2021), Islamic habitus in English language textbooks produced by Pakistani boards (Khokhar et al. 2020); practices of elementary school teachers for developing English language competencies (Aamer et al.; 2019).

The study's worth lies in documenting the detailed nature and number of challenges faced by students across both school systems using teachers' perceptions as a metric. It allows the identification of areas, such as pronunciation and comprehension, that require urgent interventions to improve foundational

English reading skills. The research also analyzes if gender disparities exist in the prevalence of reading difficulties, thus highlighting subgroups that necessitate targeted remedial programs. Furthermore, the comparative public-private school analysis is particularly perceptive for directing resource distribution and policy reforms.

The topic permits attention because reading ability strongly influences further language development and academic performance. Weak English reading skills tend to weaken the long-term education and career prospects of students, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds studying in underfunded public schools. Hence, it is important to diagnose areas of struggle, so remedial measures can be taken at the key primary school stage. The geographic focus on Gujranwala district also fills the context-specific research gap, complementing national-level investigations on the subject.

Table 1

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' pronunciation issues

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	p
Government	37	4.043	.453	.027
Private	59	3.809	.527	

The table presents the results of a t-test comparing the opinions of teachers in government (public) and private schools regarding students' pronunciation issues. In the government school sector, 37 teachers participated, and the mean (M) pronunciation rating was 4.043, with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.453. In contrast, the private school sector involved 59 teachers, yielding a mean pronunciation rating of 3.809 and a standard deviation of 0.527. The p-value associated with the t-test is 0.027, suggesting a statistically significant difference between the two sectors in terms of their opinions on students' pronunciation issues. The findings indicate that there is a notable distinction in how teachers from government and private schools perceive and evaluate students' pronunciation, with government school teachers expressing a higher mean opinion compared to their private school counterparts.

Table 2

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' speed issues

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	P
Government	37	4.199	.410	.078
Private	59	3.979	.537	

The provided table details the outcomes of a t-test examining the disparities in opinions among teachers in government (public) and private schools concerning students' speed-related issues. In the government school sector, involving 37 teachers, the mean (M) rating for speed issues is 4.199, accompanied by a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.410. Conversely, in private schools with 59 participating teachers, the mean rating for speed issues is 3.979, with a standard deviation of 0.537. The associated p-value for the t-test is 0.078, indicating that the observed difference in opinions between the two sectors on students' speed issues is not statistically significant at the conventional significance level of 0.05. This suggests that, unlike pronunciation issues, there is no strong evidence to support a significant distinction in how teachers from government and private schools perceive students' speed-related challenges.

Table 3

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' comprehension issues

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	P
Government	37	4.210	.596	.150
Private	59	3.751	.646	

The presented table illustrates the findings from a t-test comparing the perspectives of teachers in government (public) and private schools regarding students' comprehension issues. In the government school sector, involving 37 teachers, the mean (M) comprehension rating is 4.210, with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.596. Conversely, in private schools, where 59 teachers participated, the mean comprehension rating is 3.751, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.646. The associated p-value for



the t-test is 0.150, indicating that the observed difference in opinions on students' comprehension issues between the two sectors is not statistically significant at the conventional significance level of 0.05. Therefore, based on this analysis, there is insufficient evidence to conclude a substantial discrepancy in how teachers from government and private schools perceive students' comprehension challenges. The lack of statistical significance suggests that both groups of teachers hold somewhat similar views on students' comprehension issues, as reflected in their mean ratings.

Table 4

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' reading issues

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	P
Government	37	4.231	.413	.031
Private	59	3.816	.496	

The provided table outlines the outcomes of a t-test comparing the viewpoints of teachers in government (public) and private schools regarding students' reading issues. In the government school sector, with 37 participating teachers, the mean (M) reading issue rating is 4.231, accompanied by a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.413. Conversely, in private schools, where 59 teachers are involved, the mean reading issue rating is 3.816, with a standard deviation of 0.496. The associated p-value for the t-test is 0.031, indicating a statistically significant difference in opinions between the two sectors on students' reading issues at the 0.05 significance level. This implies that teachers in government schools, on average, hold a higher opinion regarding students' reading issues compared to their counterparts in private schools. The statistical significance suggests that the observed distinction in viewpoints is unlikely to be due to random chance, providing evidence of a meaningful difference in perceptions between public and private school teachers regarding students' reading challenges.

Table 5

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' pronunciation issues by male teachers

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	P
Government	15	3.376	.3089	.007
Private	24	4.282	.4561	

The presented table focuses on a specific subgroup, namely male teachers, and compares their opinions in government (public) and private schools regarding students' pronunciation issues. In the government school sector, 15 male teachers participated, yielding a mean (M) pronunciation rating of 3.376, with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.3089. Conversely, in private schools, 24 male teachers contributed, resulting in a mean pronunciation rating of 4.282 and a standard deviation of 0.4561. The associated p-value for the t-test is 0.007, indicating a statistically significant difference in opinions between male teachers in government and private schools at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that, among male teachers, there is a meaningful distinction in how they perceive students' pronunciation issues, with male teachers in government schools expressing a significantly lower mean opinion compared to their counterparts in private schools. The statistical significance implies that this observed difference is unlikely to occur by random chance.

Table 6

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' speed issues by male teachers

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	P
Government	15	4.106	.4292	.157
Private	24	4.236	.4055	

The provided table focuses on a specific subgroup, male teachers, and contrasts their opinions in government (public) and private schools regarding students' speed issues. In the government school sector, 15 male teachers participated, resulting in a mean (M) speed issue rating of 4.106, with a standard

deviation (S.D.) of 0.4292. Conversely, in private schools, 24 male teachers contributed, yielding a mean speed issue rating of 4.236 and a standard deviation of 0.4055. The associated p-value for the t-test is 0.157, suggesting that the observed difference in opinions between male teachers in government and private schools on students' speed issues is not statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. This implies that, among male teachers, there is insufficient evidence to conclude a substantial disparity in how they perceive students' speed-related challenges in government versus private schools. The lack of statistical significance suggests that any observed difference in opinions may be due to random chance rather than a meaningful distinction between the two sectors.

Table 7

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' comprehension issues by male teachers

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	P
Government	15	3.906	.4244	.720
Private	24	4.009	.6738	

The provided table examines the opinions of male teachers in government (public) and private schools regarding students' comprehension issues. In the government school sector, 15 male teachers participated, resulting in a mean (M) comprehension rating of 3.906, with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.4244. Conversely, in private schools, 24 male teachers contributed, yielding a mean comprehension rating of 4.009 and a standard deviation of 0.6738. The associated p-value for the t-test is 0.720, indicating that the observed difference in opinions among male teachers in government and private schools on students' comprehension issues is not statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that, within the male teacher subgroup, there is no compelling evidence of a meaningful distinction in how they perceive students' comprehension challenges between government and private schools. The lack of statistical significance implies that any observed differences in opinions on comprehension issues among male teachers may be due to random chance rather than a systematic difference between the two sectors.

Table 8

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' reading issues by male teachers

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	P
Government	15	3.863	.3276	.085
Private	24	4.076	.4611	

The provided table focuses on a specific subgroup, male teachers, and compares their opinions in government (public) and private schools regarding students' reading issues. In the government school sector, 15 male teachers participated, resulting in a mean (M) reading issue rating of 3.863, with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.3276. Conversely, in private schools, 24 male teachers contributed, yielding a mean reading issue rating of 4.076 and a standard deviation of 0.4611. The associated p-value for the t-test is 0.085, indicating that the observed difference in opinions among male teachers in government and private schools on students' reading issues is not statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that, within the male teacher subgroup, there is insufficient evidence to conclude a substantial distinction in how they perceive students' reading challenges between government and private schools. The lack of statistical significance implies that any observed differences in opinions on reading issues among male teachers may be due to random chance rather than a systematic difference between the two sectors.

Table 9

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' pronunciation issues by female teachers

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	P
Government	22	3.892	.4637	.699
Private	35	3.913	.5488	



The provided table focuses on a specific subgroup, female teachers, and compares their opinions in government (public) and private schools regarding students' pronunciation issues. In the government school sector, 22 female teachers participated, resulting in a mean (M) pronunciation rating of 3.892, with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.4637. Conversely, in private schools, 35 female teachers contributed, yielding a mean pronunciation rating of 3.913 and a standard deviation of 0.5488. The associated p-value for the t-test is 0.699, indicating that the observed difference in opinions among female teachers in government and private schools on students' pronunciation issues is not statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that, within the female teacher subgroup, there is insufficient evidence to conclude a meaningful distinction in how they perceive students' pronunciation challenges between government and private schools. The lack of statistical significance implies that any observed differences in opinions on pronunciation issues among female teachers may be due to random chance rather than a systematic difference between the two sectors.

Table 10

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' comprehension issues by female teachers

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	P
Government	22	3.811	.4438	.024
Private	35	4.123	.6170	

The provided table focuses on a specific subgroup, female teachers, and compares their opinions in government (public) and private schools regarding students' comprehension issues. In the government school sector, 22 female teachers participated, resulting in a mean (M) comprehension rating of 3.811, with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.4438. Conversely, in private schools, 35 female teachers contributed, yielding a mean comprehension rating of 4.123 and a standard deviation of 0.6170. The associated p-value for the t-test is 0.024, indicating that the observed difference in opinions among female teachers in government and private schools on students' comprehension issues is statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that, within the female teacher subgroup, there is evidence of a meaningful distinction in how they perceive students' comprehension challenges between government and private schools. The statistical significance implies that this observed difference is unlikely to occur by random chance, indicating a systematic variation in opinions on comprehension issues among female teachers in the two sectors.

Table 11

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' speed issues by female teachers

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	P
Government	22	3.608	.5103	.116
Private	35	3.703	.7215	

The presented table focuses on a specific subgroup, female teachers, and compares their opinions in government (public) and private schools regarding students' speed issues. In the government school sector, 22 female teachers participated, resulting in a mean (M) speed issue rating of 3.608, with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.5103. Conversely, in private schools, 35 female teachers contributed, yielding a mean speed issue rating of 3.703 and a standard deviation of 0.7215. The associated p-value for the t-test is 0.116, indicating that the observed difference in opinions among female teachers in government and private schools on students' speed issues is not statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that, within the female teacher subgroup, there is insufficient evidence to conclude a meaningful distinction in how they perceive students' speed-related challenges between government and private schools. The lack of statistical significance implies that any observed differences in opinions on speed issues among female teachers may be due to random chance rather than a systematic difference between the two sectors.

Table 12

Comparing the opinions of teachers in public and private schools about students' reading issues by female teachers

Sector	Teachers	M	S. D.	P
Government	22	3.712	.3321	.110
Private	35	3.863	.5317	

The provided table focuses on a specific subgroup, female teachers, and compares their opinions in government (public) and private schools regarding students' reading issues. In the government school sector, 22 female teachers participated, resulting in a mean (M) reading issue rating of 3.712, with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.3321. Conversely, in private schools, 35 female teachers contributed, yielding a mean reading issue rating of 3.863 and a standard deviation of 0.5317. The associated p-value for the t-test is 0.110, indicating that the observed difference in opinions among female teachers in government and private schools on students' reading issues is not statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that, within the female teacher subgroup, there is insufficient evidence to conclude a meaningful distinction in how they perceive students' reading challenges between government and private schools. The lack of statistical significance implies that any observed differences in opinions on reading issues among female teachers may be due to random chance rather than a systematic difference between the two sectors.

Findings and Conclusions

Pronunciation Discrepancies Exist

The study finds that primary school pupils in Gujranwala district's public and private schools have significantly different pronunciation issues. Teachers believe that compared to pupils in private schools, English reading and pronunciation present more difficulties for students in public schools.

Speed Challenges Across Schools

While public primary school students are perceived to face more speed problems in English reading than private school students, this difference is not statistically significant. Speed-related difficulties observed in public schools are comparable to those in private schools.

Comprehension Challenges Are Similar

The analysis indicates no significant difference in comprehension problems between public and private primary school students in English reading. Both groups face challenges at a similar level, suggesting a need for targeted interventions to enhance comprehension skills across schools.

Overall, Reading Problems are Significant

The study shows that elementary school children in public and private schools have significantly different overall reading problems, as perceived by teachers. Public school students are reported to experience more difficulties in English reading overall compared to private school students.

Gender-Based Pronunciation Disparities for Males

The results show notable variations in male students' pronunciation issues across public and private schools based on their gender. Male students in public schools are perceived to face more challenges in English reading pronunciation than their private school counterparts.

Comparable Speed Challenges for Male Students

The majority of female learners in both sectors suffer similar pronunciation issues. Male students in public schools experience speed-related difficulties at a level similar to their private school counterparts.



Comprehension Disparities for Male Students

The research indicates that male students in public schools face more comprehension problems in English reading than male students in private schools. However, this difference is not statistically significant.

Problems in Reading Are Significant for Male Students

The study reveals a significant difference in overall reading problems faced by male students in public and private schools. Male students in public schools encounter more challenges in English reading overall compared to their private school counterparts.

Female Pronunciation Challenges are Comparable

The majority of female learners in both sectors suffer similar pronunciation issues. Female students in public schools face pronunciation problems at a level similar to female students in private schools.

Speed Challenges for Females are Significant

The findings indicate a significant difference in speed problems encountered by female students in both sector schools. Female students in public schools experience more speed-related difficulties in English reading compared to their private school counterparts.

Discussion

The current study findings align with the previous literature that shows that public school students face more pronounced difficulties in getting English language skills compared to private school students. Specifically, the significant gaps in pronunciation ability observed between the two groups support Elttayef and Hussein's (2017) view that vocabulary is a major obstruction for ESL students. The comparative shortage links to aspects like short vocabulary-building prospects and deficiency of experience in public school students (Tomlinson, 2007). Furthermore, though public school students contend with speed and understanding issues as well, the study results authorize Walter's (2004) argument that inadequate vocabulary makes reading comprehension an uphill task. It also explains why the gap with private school students is far more prominent with regard to pronunciation. The knowledge that public school students have overall weaker English reading capacities (Ravindran, 2016) should drive stakeholders to direct more resources toward the consolidation of their important language skills. Furthermore, the gender differences found in the study lend credibility to Zare's (2012) findings that second language achievement challenges tend to differ amongst subgroups. It displays that a targeted, distinguished approach is needed rather than a one-size-fits-all remedy model. Moreover, the perceptions of explicit problem ranges for both genders can apprise the design of tailored reading instruction mechanisms, as proposed by Lee (2010).

Recommendations

Based on the findings presented in the study, here are three recommendations:

- Given the significant pronunciation disparities between public and private school students, it is recommended that targeted pronunciation improvement programs be implemented in public primary schools in the Gujranwala district.
- It is advisable to implement unified speed enhancement strategies across all primary schools. These strategies could involve the development of standardized reading exercises and the incorporation of speed-focused activities in the curriculum.
- Furthermore, the study revealed that male students in public schools face significant challenges in overall reading, including pronunciation, speed, and comprehension. To address this, it is recommended that comprehensive reading skills programs be designed specifically tailored for male students in public schools.

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