

Students' Attributions to Success and Failure in Learning English as a Second Language

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Abstract

The present study was designed to investigate the students' attributions to their success and failure in English language acquisition as a second language. The study also focused to identify the differences in attributional patterns demonstrated by students in success and failure situations. The descriptive research design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of all students enrolled at the graduate level in the public sector colleges of the Lahore district. The sample included 1358 students (1030 females & 328 males) studying in public sector colleges of Lahore district. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to frame a representative sample for the study. Two questionnaires on Attribution to Success Questionnaire (ASQ), and Attribution to Failure Questionnaire (AFQ) developed by Thang et al, (2011) were used to collect the data from the sample. Researchers revealed that the majority of students picked up activities from reading skills in which they experienced success. On the other hand, students selected an activity from reading and speaking skills in which they faced failure. Moreover, the findings of the study uncovered that in the success situation, students attributed their interest in getting a good grade, effort and the teacher's influence as the most important factors for their performance, whereas students in the failure situation ascribed their performance to their inability and task difficulty. Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that institution heads and teachers can play a significant role in modifying students' attitudes so they can understand that exerting more effort can increase the likelihood of success rather than blaming their inability and the task difficulty as the main reasons for their failure in English language acquisition.

KEYWORDS: Attribution Theory; Students' Attribution for Success; Students' Attribution for Failure.

Introduction

Among many widely spoken foreign languages such as Spanish, French, Arabic, and Russian etc., English is the most dominant language being spoken as a native or foreign language throughout the world. It has now become the language of business, technology, arts, commerce, and social

sciences. The large volume of knowledge in the world is transmitted to others by using this language because of its significance (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2000; Kachru & Nelson, 2001; Masduki, 2022; Plotnikova et al., 2020; Rao, 2019; Shohamy, 2007).

The English language is also used as an official language, especially in the countries

ruled by Britain. In those countries, it was used not only as a medium of instruction academically but also officially (Chandio et al., 2015; Sekhar, 2012). India, Bangladesh and Pakistan are examples of such countries. In Pakistan, the English language is taught as a compulsory subject from grade I to the graduate level (Government of Pakistan, 2009). A few decades ago, more emphasis on the English language was put down by the private sector by implementing the Oxford or Cambridge curriculum in the institutions. Now, the situation has changed in the public sector where most of the subjects are now taught in the English language e.i., Geography, Computer Science, Mathematics, and Economics etc.

National Curriculum for English Language (Grade I-XII, Government of Pakistan, 2006) emphasized that being an international communication language, English should reach the masses without any discrimination against the poor and rich in Pakistan, so they may get opportunities in terms of personal, professional, and economic development.

In the process of second language acquisition, the motivation of learners plays a vital role. Any kind of learning cannot be produced without the intrinsic as well as the extrinsic motivation of the learners (Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015; Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Researchers and teachers also accept the fact that motivation has a powerful influence on the success of second/foreign language learning. It cannot be forgotten that most countries in the world are multicultural and the majority of people in the world speak at least one second language which highlights the significance of the societal dimension of L2 motivation. Thus, motivation can not only become the driving force for learning a new language, but it enables learners to maintain their success. Without providing sufficient motivation, learners having remarkable abilities, appropriate curricula and good teaching

cannot assure a guarantee of success and achievement (Dörnyei, 1998; Nurhidayah, 2020; Zhou et al., 2022). The study results of Azar and Tanggaraju (2020) and Carrió-Pastor and Mestre (2014) also highlighted the importance of motivation by revealing that students' internal as well as external motivation were key factors for learning a second language successfully.

Many theorists contend that the study of individuals' causal beliefs about their success and failure is very important because it can help to predict the future performance of students while learning English as a second language. Among these theorists, Bernard Weiner's attribution theory has an influential position in an educational setting that focuses on the student's beliefs about their success and failure (Försterling, 2013; Graham & Folkes, 2014). It has now become part of the recent research conducted for knowing the attribution beliefs regarding learning a second/foreign language. The theory looks at the role of motivation which affects the present or future endeavours of learners by highlighting the causal attributions of the people; they interpret for an event they face lifetimes. How individuals explain the causes of their success and failure is of prime importance because learners' subsequent actions heavily depend on the experiences they faced in the past in similar situations (Gross & McIlveen, 2016; Steinmayr et al., 2019). Weiner's proposed attributional beliefs for an event are classified into four categories labelled as (a) effort; (b) ability(c); luck; and (d) task difficulty. In this model effort and ability are considered internal factors because they arise from inside the learner whereas luck and task difficulty are referred to as external elements which exist in the surroundings. These inner and external factors are addressed as the locus of causality by Weiner which is the first dimension of attributions for failure and success. The second dimension is stability which shows whether the component is stable or likely to be

changed in future. The third dimension is referred to as controllability which shares with those constituents which are controllable or beyond the control of the people. These dimensions have useful implications for motivation which affect the value and expectancy (Callaghan & Lazard, 2011; Fatemi & Asghari, 2012; Hutchison, 2008; Shaver, 2016).

Rubie-Davies (2010) and Woolfolk (2004) mention that Weiner's concept of inner/external locus seems to be nearly connected to the notion of self-esteem. If students attribute their success or failure to internal constituents then it would result in increased motivation, but in the case of failure, self-esteem starts to fall. As far as stability is concerned, it is connected to the expectations about failure. When learners perceive their failure as the result of the difficulty of a task that is a stable factor; then it would lead them to the expectation of failure in the future. Conversely, if the situation is adverse and they attribute the failure to unstable factors such as luck or situation then it would result in hope for more beneficial results in future. Weiner (2010; 2013) explains that the third dimension of controllability deals with inner emotions. If pupils do not assume responsibility for their failure as assuming it is the result of their lack of ability, then their future performance starts to slump. On the other hand, if they accept the responsibility for their failure as not putting effort themselves then they take more challenging tasks by doing more effort and applying appropriate strategies to improve their academic functioning.

Thus, in an educational context, where all the endeavours are done for raising the maximum learning of the pupils, the understanding of the interpretation of success or failure in a good manner is a worthwhile affair. It is seen that students despite having sufficient motivation feel hesitation and anxiety while learning a foreign language and sometimes may not be

able to achieve the desired goals. If we consider the educational outcomes of Pakistani students, this is consistently perceived that the results shown are not satisfactory especially in English (as a subject). Every year, the majority of students face failure in the subject of English and at the graduate level whereas the least number of them experience success. In the year of 2015, the pass percentage of graduate students in English subject was 47.56%, whereas 37.98% in 2014, 57.25% in 2013, and 34.73 % in the year of 2012 (University of the Punjab Gazette, 2015; 2014; 2013; & 2012). The report presented by the World Bank also highlighted the weaknesses of students in the English language (National Education Assessment, 2010). Shahzada et al., (2012) mentioned that students' achievement in English was at the lowest level as compared to other subjects during past years. Iqbal (2015) provided the reference of secondary, intermediate and graduate gazettes demonstrating a significant rate of students' failure in English. Likewise, the study results of Shah et al. (2018) revealed that 33% of students faced failure in English.

By keeping in view the role of attributional beliefs in determining students' success and failure, its relevance with future expectations and performance in second language learning, the present study was undertaken to explore the factors that students explain as the causes of an outcome and how these interpretations may become the foundation for success and failure in coming future situations.

Literature Review

The history of attribution theory dates back to the 1950s when theorists in the field of social psychology were interested in how people perceive, judge, and explain the causes of their own and others' behaviour. Fritz Heider (1958) is regarded as the pioneer who constituted the basis of the attribution theory and presented a systematic analysis of attribution structure. He believes

that the process of attribution is implicated in a person's perception, who usually makes two types of attributions for any given behaviour: an internal attribution, in which the behaviour is explained by a cause within the person (disposition such as personality, aptitude and ability) whereas, in external attribution, behaviour is manifested by a reason outside the person (such as individual's reaction towards an object, about the situation, or luck. (Antaki & Brewin, 1982; Duval et al., 2012; Gosiewska-Turek, 2017; Malle, 2011; Saks & Krupat, 1988; Yavuz & Höl, 2017). Heider's definition and analysis of attribution structure inspired other researchers and theorists to contribute significantly to the advancement of attribution theory (Basturka & Yavuz, 2010; Paker & Özkardeş-Döğüş, 2012).

While taking Heider's division of internal and external causes of behaviour, Weiner added two more dimensions to it which were stability and control. Stability refers to the propensity of people to attribute events and behaviours to constant causes. These kinds of conclusions, which strongly rely on both luck and effort, are based on past events, both positive and negative. On the other hand, control denotes whether a situation may be brought under someone's control or not. There is a possibility that individuals can change their effort, but they cannot change their luck. Moreover, a person can examine how other people attribute their successes and failures and draw conclusions and how those attributions can affect their future work (Antaki & Brewin, 1982; Goldstein, 1980; Taylor et al., 2003).

Weiner (2006) believes that certain emotional reactions are linked with various causal dimensions but rare consideration has been given to emotional reactions in the academic domain. Moreover, motivation is the result of human emotions or feelings which are governed by thoughts and cognitive processes involved in causal beliefs and a sense of responsibility. Weiner

(2000) describes the process people exhibit once an event occurs. He explains that an emotional reaction in the form of happiness or unhappiness arises in response to an event. When the results are unsatisfactory, a person is more likely to investigate the cause, which could be a combination of many factors including comparing the results with others, prior success or failure ratio, or other factors. The person finally makes an effort to identify the cause of the unfavourable result.

The study findings of Lee et al., (2018), Smith and Skrbi (2017), and Sucuoglu (2014) revealed that students' attributions had a significant effect on their achievement in second language acquisition. They concluded that the likelihood of experiencing future failure increases when students justify failure in terms of consistent factors. On the other hand, when learners perceive that the result might change in the future, it may help them stay motivated to try again and succeed. Furthermore, when reasons for success are ascribed to such factors that are internal but also tend to be controlled then feelings of satisfaction appear as the result. Similarly, reasons attributed to internal factors that are considered uncontrollable; produce the emotion of shame and guilt. Thus, factors related to the individual's thinking and emotional response determine his/her future action (Anderman & Anderman, 2009; Schmidt et al., 2001). The following figure depicts Weiner's three-dimensional scheme:

Attributions	Dimensions		
	Locus	Stability	Controllability
Ability	Internal	Stable	Uncontrollable
Effort	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Task	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Luck	External	Unstable	Uncontrollable

By keeping in view the importance of attribution theory, many researchers used this framework in the field of second language acquisition. Williams et al., (2004) provide an explanation of second language learning in an attributional context by mentioning how different individuals interpret an event's cause differently and connect their attributions to circumstances. Gomlekiz (2001) and Lovato (2011) contend that the motivation to learn English will be low if a learner believes that learning the language is particularly challenging. Conversely, if a learner believes that putting in a lot of effort and perseverance will lead to success, this belief may inspire them to pursue language acquisition. Krashen (1982) and Lai (2011) argue that while effort is entirely within the individual's control, ability is a stable factor that cannot be changed. Similarly, since tasks and luck might change over time, no one can control them. Therefore, learners who blame their inability for their failure are more likely to put in less effort while being less motivated than those who blame their lack of effort. Thus, the theoretical framework provided by Weiner might be helpful to analyse the attribution beliefs of students in the Pakistani context.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To investigate the students' attributions to their success and failure in learning English as a second language.
2. To identify the differences in the attributional patterns demonstrated by students in success and failure situations.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study were as follows:

1. What factors do graduate students attribute to their success and failure in learning English as a second language?
2. Do students attribute differently in the success and failure situations while learning English as a second language?

Procedure of the Study

The descriptive research design was used for the study. All male and female students enrolled at the graduate level in the public sector colleges of Lahore district, Punjab were considered the population of the study. The multistage sampling technique was used to frame a representative sample for the study. In the first phase; out of 40 public colleges, 18 colleges (12 for female & 06 for male) were selected randomly. Since the number of female colleges was more than male colleges in the Lahore district; more colleges of female students were included in the sample. In the second phase of sampling, 1358 students (1030 females & 328 males) studying at the graduate level were selected randomly as the sample of the study. In the final phase, male and female students were randomly selected from the cluster who want to fill Attribution for Success Questionnaire (ASQ) and Attribution for Failure Questionnaire (AFQ).

An already-developed instrument by Thang et al., (2011) was used to collect the data from the sample. Each questionnaire was comprised of two sections. A total of 679 students (515 males & 164 males) filled ASQs and 679 students (515 males & 164 males) filled the AFQs. In the first section of the ASQ and AFQ, the students were asked to choose only one activity from a list of 25 activities in which they were particularly successful or unsuccessful in their previous classes of English. These activities were divided into four skills namely, reading, listening, speaking and writing English. The second section of both questionnaires was the same. This section consisted of 12 statements. These 12 statements indicated 12 different causes for success and failure. These attributions comprised ability, effort, strategy, interest, luck, teacher influence, task difficulty, classroom atmosphere, grades, preparation, likes, and level of class.

All students were asked to rate the twelve causes for success (for ASQ) or failure (for AFQ) on a six-point Likert scale with the following response categories:(a) strongly disagree;(b) disagree;(c) somewhat disagree;(d) somewhat agree;(e) agree; and (f) strongly agree. Keeping in view the research questions to be answered, descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyse the data and obtain the result. Frequency and percentage were used to identify the activity selection preferences among the language skills

whereas mean and standard deviation were employed to examine the mean difference in students' attributions in the success and failure situations and their ranking according to their responses. To find out the mean difference between the attributions of male and female students to success and failure in learning the English language, the sample size of female students was randomly reduced (328 female students from 6 colleges) to proportionate with the sample size of male students (328 male students from 6 colleges).

Table 4.1. Preferences of Students' Selection of English Language Skills Regarding Success (n₁=679)

Skills	f	%
Reading Skills	300	44
Listening Skills	87	13
Speaking Skills	192	28
Writing Skills	100	15

Note: n₁ is used for the sample who filled out Attribution for Success Questionnaire

Table 4.1 indicates that out of 679 students, 300 (44%) students selected an activity from reading skills, 87 (13%) from listening, 192

(28%) from speaking and 100 (15%) from writing in which they experienced success.

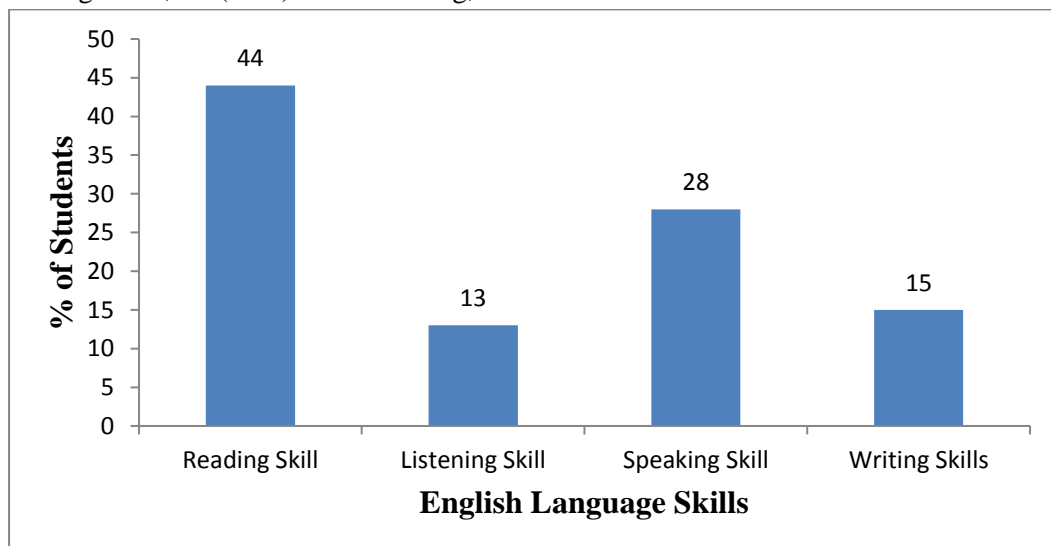


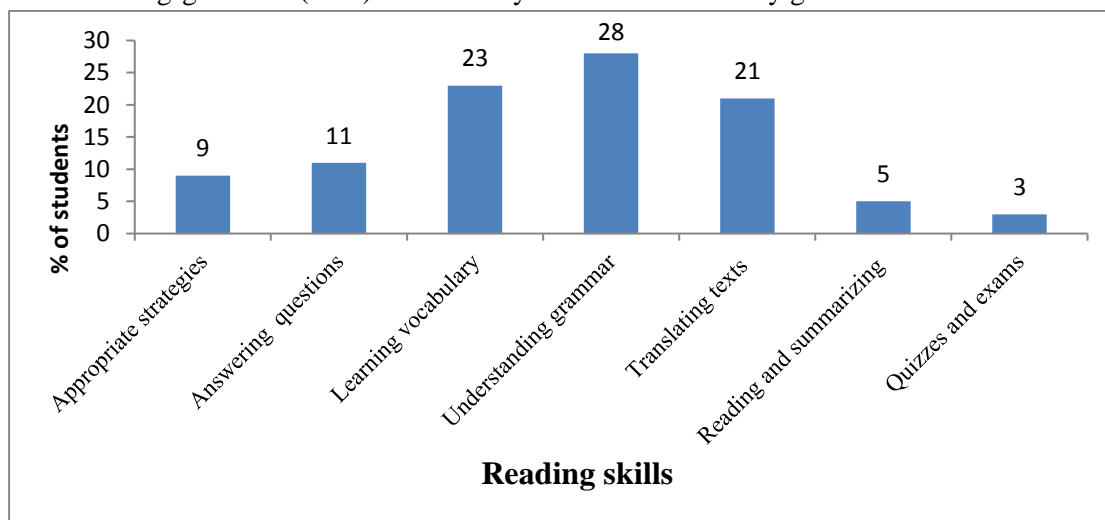
Figure 1: Graphical presentation of students' selection preferences among English language skills

Table 4.2. Responses of Students about the Selection of Activity among Reading Skills Regarding Success

Skills related to the English language	f	%
Reading Skills		
a. reading texts using appropriate strategies	26	9
b. answering comprehension questions	33	11
c. learning vocabulary	68	23
d. understanding grammar	85	28
e. translating texts and passages from English	64	21
f. reading and summarizing texts	16	5
g. quizzes and exams	8	3
Total	300	100

Table 4.2 shows that out of 679 students, 300 students selected an activity from reading skills from which a large percentage chose understanding grammar (28%) followed by

learning vocabulary (23%) and translating texts and passages (21%) from English whereas fewer selected the rest of activities in which they got success.

*Figure 2: Responses of students about the selection of activity among reading skills***Table 4.3. Responses of Students about the Selection of Activity among Listening Skills Regarding Success**

Skills related to the English language	f	%
Listening Skills		
a) understanding a passage using appropriate strategies	5	6
b) listening and repetition/dictation	11	13
c) listening and note taking	64	73
d) quizzes and exams	7	8
Total	87	100

Table 4.3 reveals that out of 679 students, 87 students picked up an activity from listening skills in which listening and note taking were chosen by the maximum number (73%) of

students while the least number opted for the remaining activities in which they achieved success.

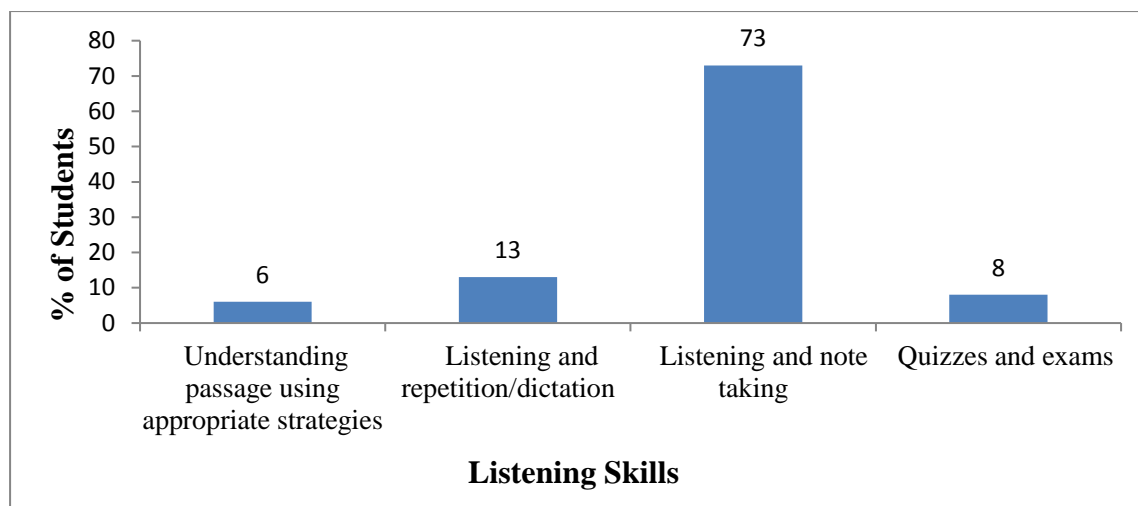


Figure 3: Responses of students about the selection of activity among listening skills

Table 4.4. Responses of Students about the Selection of Activity among Speaking Skills Regarding Success

Skills related to the English language	f	%
Speaking Skills		
a) giving a presentation and/or speech	27	14
b) role play	19	10
c) giving opinions/sharing ideas in class/groups	64	33
d) answering the teacher`s questions	75	39
e) examination	7	4
Total	192	100

Table 4.4 reflects that out of 679 students, 192 students chose an activity from speaking skills in which answering teacher’s questions (39%) followed by giving opinions/sharing

ideas in class/groups (33%) were preferred by most of the students while least number of students selected the rest of activities in which they faced success.

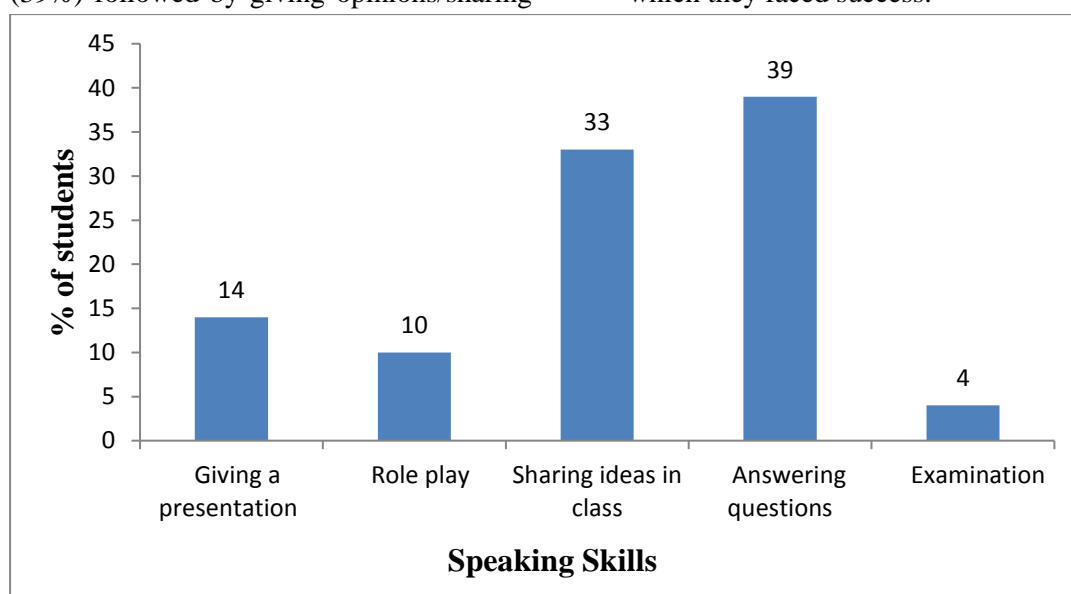


Figure 4. Responses of students about the selection of activity among speaking skills

Table 4.5. Responses of Students about the Selection of Activity among Writing Skills Regarding Success

Skills related to the English language	f	%
Writing Skills		
a) writing a summary	41	41
b) writing Paragraphs	25	25
c) writing diaries and/or portfolios	15	15
d) writing a report	11	11
e) quizzes and exams	8	8
Total	100	100

Table 4.5 demonstrates that, out of 679 students, 100 students selected an activity from writing skills in which a large number (41%) of students chose writing a summary

and writing a paragraph whereas fewer picked up residual activities in which they experienced success.

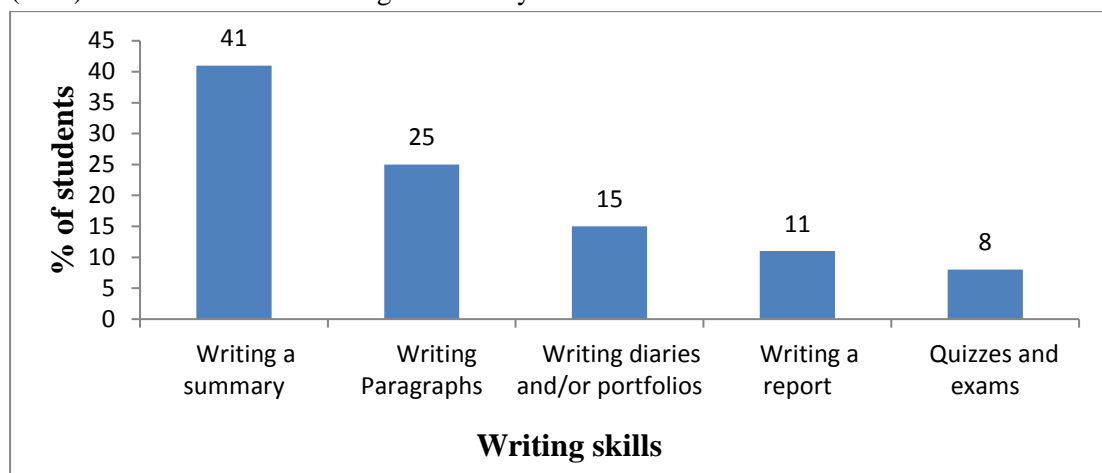


Figure 5: Responses of students about the selection of activity among writing skills

Table 4.6. Mean Scores of Students' Attributions to Success with Rank Order (n₁=679)

Statements	Factors Related to Attribution	Mean	SD	Rank
1. I have strong skills in English	Ability	3.68	1.498	11
2. I tried very hard.	Effort	4.71	1.330	2
3. I used the right study or practice methods.	Strategy	4.56	1.292	5.5
4. I had an interest in the activity.	Interest	4.47	1.410	7
5. I had good luck.	Luck	4.50	1.527	6
6. The teacher's instruction was appropriate.	Teacher	4.63	1.378	3
7. The task was easy.	Task	3.79	1.486	10
8. I liked the atmosphere of the class.	Class	4.25	1.547	9
9. I had an interest in getting a good grade.	Grade	5.18	1.316	1
10. I was well-prepared.	Preparation	4.56	1.254	5.5
11. I like English.	Enjoyment	4.62	1.425	4
12. The level of the class was appropriate.	Level	4.39	1.309	8

Table 4.6 reflects that all of the 12 success attributions fell above the scale midpoint of 3.5 which means that they all were viewed by the students as appropriate reasons for their success. In rank order based on total sample means, the most to least endorsed success attributions were: interest in getting

good grades (5.18), effort (4.71), teacher's instruction (4.63), enjoyment in studying English (4.62), strategy and preparation (4.56), luck (4.50), interest in the activity(4.47), level (4.39), class(4.25), task easiness (3.79), and strong skills in English (3.68).

Table 4.7. Preferences of Students' Selection of English Language Skills Regarding Failure (n₂=679)

English Language Skills	f	%
Reading Skills	232	34
Listening Skills	63	9
Speaking Skills	240	35
Writing Skills	144	21

Note: n₂ is used for the sample who filled out Attribution for Failure Questionnaire

Table 4.7 indicates that out of 679 students, 232 (34%) students selected an activity from reading skill 63 (9%) from listening, 240

(35%) from speaking and 144 (21%) from writing which they faced failure.

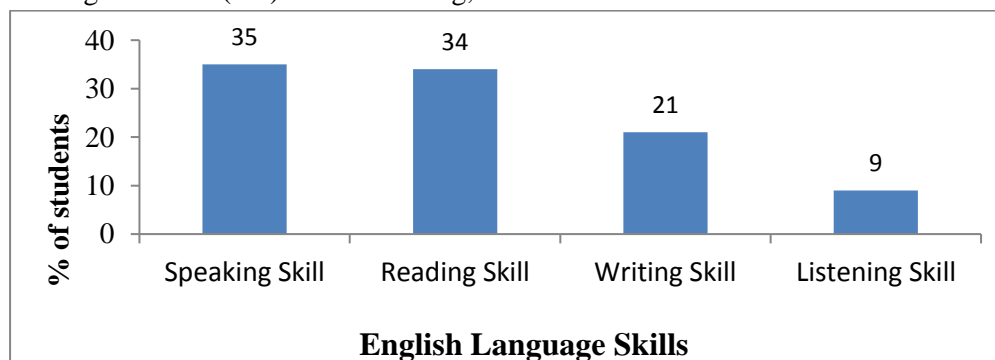


Figure 6: Preferences of the students' selection among English language skills regarding failure

Table 4.8. Responses of Students about the Selection of Activity among Reading Skills Regarding Failure

Skills related to the English language	f	%
Reading Skills		
a) reading texts using appropriate strategies	21	9
b) answering comprehension questions	20	9
c) learning vocabulary	55	24
d) understanding grammar	89	37
e) translating texts and passages from English	30	13
f) reading and summarizing texts	13	6
g) quizzes and exams	4	2
Total	232	100

Table 4.8 demonstrates that, out of 679 students, 232 students picked up activity from reading skill in which a maximum number (37%) of students chose understanding grammar followed by learning vocabulary (24%) whereas, a minimum number of students selected remaining activities in which they experienced failure.

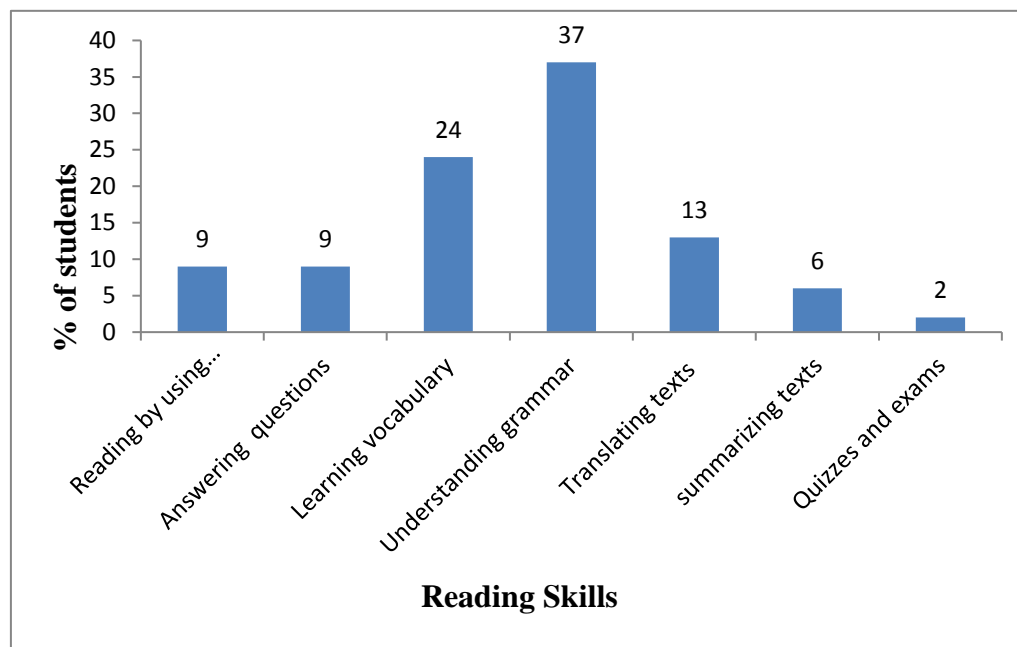


Figure 7: Responses of students about the selection of activity among listening skills regarding failure

Table 4.9. Responses of Students about the Selection of Activity among Listening Skills Regarding Failure

Skills related to the English language	f	%
Listening Skills		
a) understanding a passage using appropriate strategies	20	32
b) listening and repetition/dictation	6	10
c) listening and note taking	33	52
d) quizzes and exams	4	6
Total	63	100

Table 4.9 reveals that out of 679 students, 63 students selected an activity from listening skills. Hence large percentage (52%) chose to listen and note taking and understanding a passage using appropriate strategies (32%) while fewer students selected the rest of the activities in which they experienced failure.

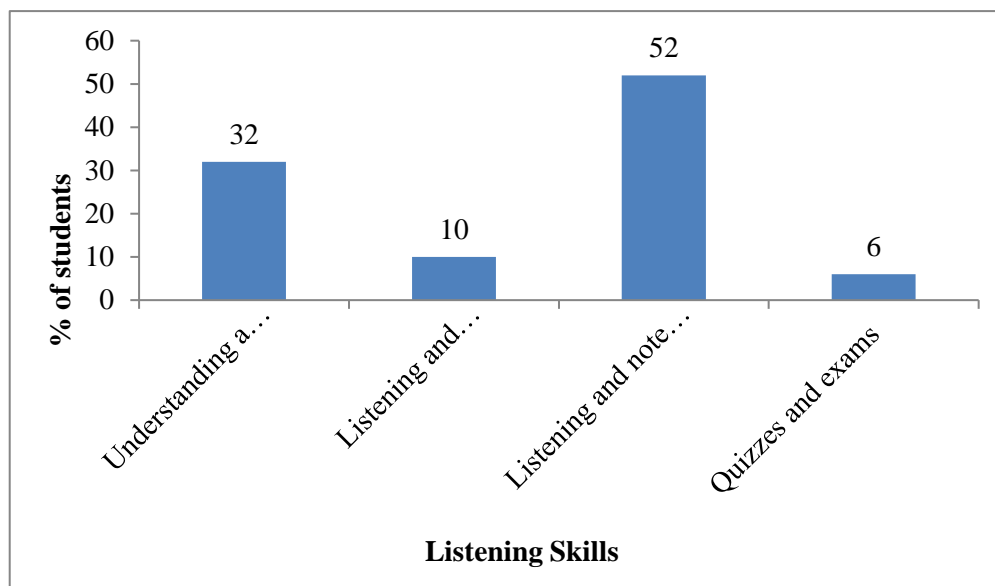


Figure 8: Responses of students about the selection of activity among speaking skills regarding failure

Table 4.10 Responses of Students about the Selection of Activity among Speaking Skills Regarding Failure

Skills related to the English language	f	%
Speaking Skills		
a) giving a presentation and/or speech	91	38
b) role play	8	3
c) giving opinions/sharing ideas in class/groups	44	18
d) answering the teacher's questions	76	32
e) examination	21	9
Total	240	100

Table 4.10 reveals that out of 679 students, 240 students picked up an activity from speaking skills in which giving a presentation and/or speech (38%) were selected by most of the students whereas only a few students opted for the remaining activities in which they got failure.

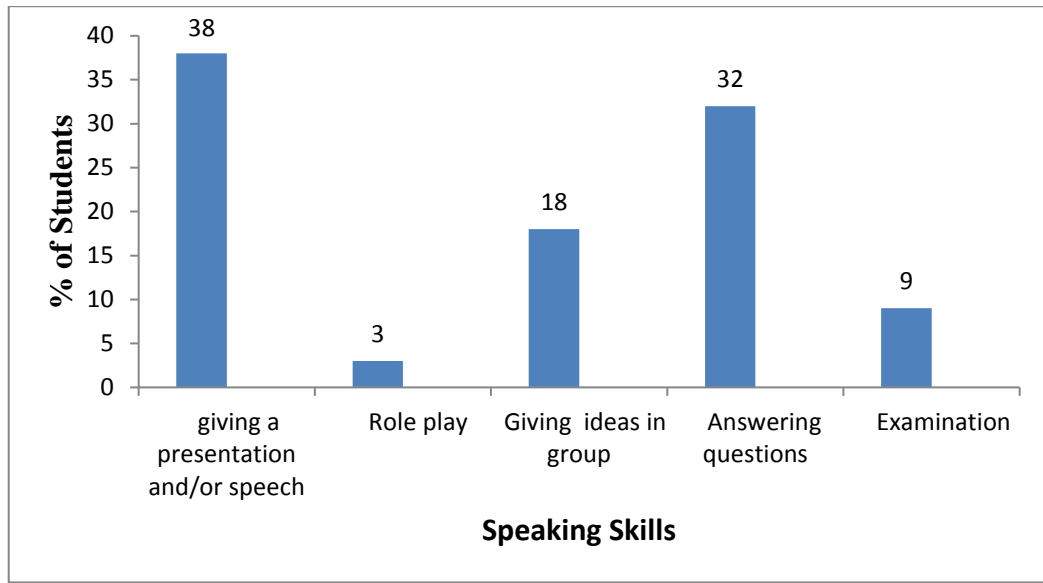


Figure 9: Responses of students about the selection of activity among speaking skills regarding failure

Table 4.11. Responses of Students about the Selection of Activity among Writing Skills Regarding Failure

Skills related to the English language	f	%
Writing Skills		
a) writing a summary	37	26
b) writing Paragraphs	76	53
d) writing diaries and/or portfolios	7	5
e) writing a report	10	7
f) quizzes and exams	14	10
Total	144	100

Table 4.11 shows that out of 679 students, 144 students chose an activity from writing skill in which writing paragraphs was preferred by most of the students (53%) while the least number of students selected the remaining activities in which they faced failure.

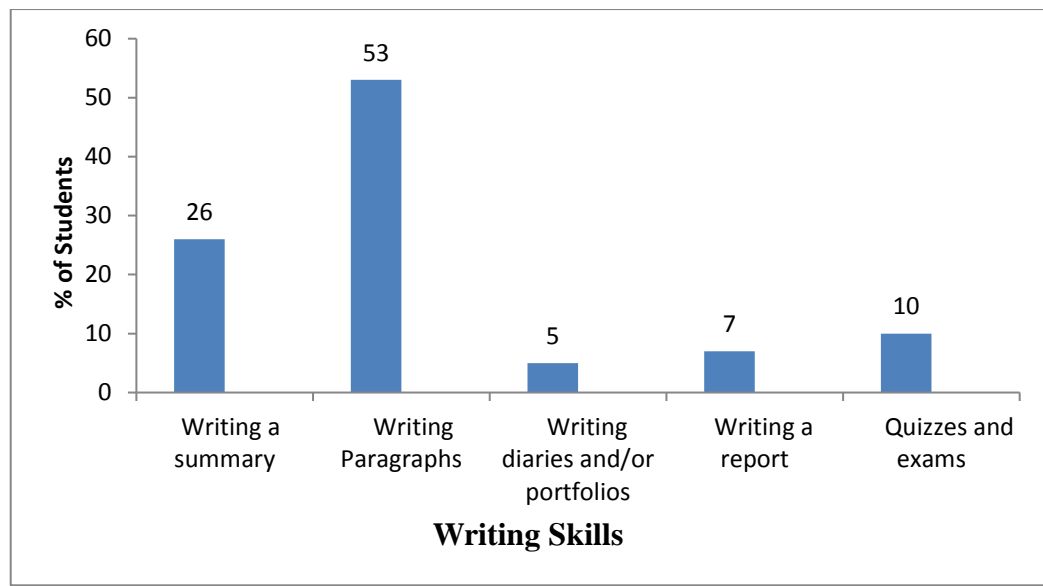


Figure 10: Responses of students about the selection of activity among writing skills regarding failure.

Table 4.12. Mean Scores of Students' Attributions to Failure with Rank Order (n₂=679)

Statements	Attributions	Mean	SD	Rank
1. I have weak skills in English	Ability	3.56	1.475	2
2. I did not try very hard.	Effort	2.89	1.474	6.5
3. I used the wrong study or practice methods.	Strategy	2.76	1.473	7
4. I had no interest in the activity.	Interest	2.70	1.692	9
5. I had bad luck.	Luck	2.75	1.594	8
6. The teacher's instruction was inappropriate.	Teacher	2.89	1.596	6.5
7. The task was not easy.	Task	3.72	1.508	1
8. I did not like the atmosphere of the class.	Class	3.10	1.657	4
9. I had no interest in getting a good grade.	Grade	1.95	1.322	11
10. I was ill-prepared.	Preparation	3.02	1.474	5
11. I do not like English.	Enjoyment	2.45	1.527	10
12. The level of the class was inappropriate.	Level	3.22	1.545	3

Table 4.12 reveals that only two of the 12 attributions means were above the scale midpoint of 3.5 which means that students did not view the remaining one as the major cause of their failure. In the rank order, the most to least endorsed failure attributions were task difficulty (3.72), weak skills in

English (3.56), class level (3.22), class atmosphere (3.10), preparation (3.02), effort and teacher's instruction (2.89), strategy (2.76), luck (2.75), interest in the activity (2.70), enjoyment in studying English (2.45), and interest in getting good grade (1.95).

Findings

- In the light of obtained data, all twelve attributes were viewed as the appropriate reasons by the students for their success. However, rank order position (based on critical value) explained the comparative preferences of the students. The attribute; of interest in getting a good grade was at the top position with the highest mean scores whereas effort at second and teacher's instruction at the third position. Similarly, enjoyment in studying English was ranked fourth, strategy at fifth, preparation at six, luck at seventh, interest in an activity at eighth, the level at ninth, class at tenth, task easiness at eleventh and ability at twelfth.
- Results showed that only two attributions :(a) inability and (b) task difficulty were considered the major reasons for failure by all the students.

Discussion

Considering the first research question, the results of the study explored that interest in getting a good grade, effort and teacher's influence was the most potential attributes by the students for their success in English language acquisition. Keeping in view the dimensions of attributions; grade (internal, stable & controllable) and effort (internal, unstable & controllable) appeared to be attributed as the prime factors in defining success in the English language. Conversely, the teacher being an external and uncontrollable factor also played a vital role as a causal attribute for success. Ascribing success to good grades and effort exhibits that students perceived learning outcomes as controllable and changeable factors. It implies that this way they can expect future success by studying hard to get desirable results. The finding related to interest in getting a good grade as an underlying factor

for getting success is consistent with the results of Thang et al., (2011) conducted in the Malaysian context whereas effort as an important reason behind the driving force for success is similar with the findings of Ishikawa et al., (2011) and Gosiewska-Turek (2017). Furthermore, the teacher's contribution to successful learning is also aligned with many studies (e.g., Mori et al., 2010; Phothongsunan, 2014; Thang et al., 2011). Researchers revealed that when students experienced failure, they just focused on two factors: (a) task difficulty (external, stable & uncontrollable); and (b) inability (internal, stable & uncontrollable) as the major causes behind their failure. Moreover, considering task difficulty as the factor behind failure also shows students' self-protective tendency which refers to blaming external factors in case of failure. This finding is congruent with the study results of Hashemi and Zabihi (2011) whereas inability as the reason for poor performance is in line with the study findings of Gülten Gençi (2016) and Soriano-Ferrer and Alonso-Blanco (2020). The results regarding failure context are noteworthy as Weiner (2000) states that students' attributions for their failure to stable factors such as task difficulty or lack of ability result in negative reactions with having a low estimation for future success. Like so, students perceive that outcomes are beyond their control and nothing can be done. Ultimately, this situation can lead the students to a state of learned helplessness. Finally, one more obvious feature of the study was the activity selection regarding success and failure situations. The majority of students picked up activities from reading skills in which they experienced success. On the other hand, activity selection from reading and speaking skills was preferred by the mainstream of the students in which they faced failure. The reason behind this might be that students were exposed more to reading or speaking skills.

Conclusion

The study explored the students' attributes; they provide for their success and failure. The most important feature identified from the results was the dimensions of the specific attributes i.e. internal or external, stable or unstable, and controllable or uncontrollable. It is obvious from the findings that students' ascriptions given for their success have the propensity to be controllable whereas the teacher being an external and uncontrollable factor can also guide the students in the right direction as students perceived him/her as a stronger factor in the achievement of success. On the other hand, findings related to failure situations are adverse because students perceived outcomes beyond their control while blaming their inability and task difficulty which are stable factors with no tendency of changeability over time. When students attribute their failure to stable causes considering them out of control as having inability or the factor of task difficulty, then they lose their hope for success in future. At this stage, the teacher can play a significant role by changing the students' hopeless attitude. Consequently, students would be able to ascribe their success to stable reasons that may produce positive expectations regarding future performance.

Recommendations

In the light of findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Proper feedback on students' assignments should be given in such a way that may produce positive feelings rather than negativity regarding the task.
2. There should be a proper counsellor for the students at the college level who can help them to give realization about the controllability of events.
3. There should be regular parent teachers meetings at every level of education that may educate the

parents for modifying the negative belief system of their children.

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