

# Investigating the Factors Causing Poor English Language Learning at Zahir Shahi and Temoor Shahi High Schools

Ahmad Anwari  
Kandahar University  
Kandahar, Afghanistan  
E-mail: ahmad.anwari1398@gmail.com

## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors causing poor English language learning at high schools mainly; Zahir Shahi and Temoor Shahi high schools. Furthermore, the quantitative approach applied in this study and the data have collected by Questionnaire, which had 11 items and made from the literature review and the data is analyzed with SPSS (Version 21) and clarified the mean and standard deviation. Based on the findings of this research, the main causes have been included namely; first, the lack of skillful teachers of English language at schools. Secondly, the lack of standard textbooks. Thirdly, lack of effective strategies for teaching this language.

**Keywords:** Poor English language Learning, Zahir Shahi and Temoor Shahi High Schools

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays English is the international communication language around the world, it is the language of media, internet and the language of science, activities, computer, technology, diplomacy, and tourism, so learning English language is important for socialization entertainment and jobs. Many countries use English as a second or native language. According to Sneddon (2003) as a global language, it is obvious that English plays an important role in international interaction. International interactions include the economic relationship among countries, international business relationship, global trading, and others (Hege, 1993). English is not only used as an official language in many nations but also has influences on many different cultures in a large number of countries; it is the central language of communication in the worldwide (Susanna, 2007). It is clearly bruised when a lot of people in a country speak English as the first language such as in the United States of America, Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and others (Braine, 2005) The expansion of the English language has rapidly increased the needs to gain better communication English throughout the world because the attitude to use English is very much needed for further studies, journeys in other countries as well as for social and professional global contacts of different kinds (Hashemi, 2011)

In Afghanistan especially at Kandahar province, many students have been learning English since 2003, and now it has become more popular and included in the educational curriculum. Students study English language from fourth class until 12<sup>th</sup> class 4 or 3 times a week, while they graduate from school they are not able to speak, in English language, and while the students want to enter university first they want to go to the English language center for the preparation of the university subjects and have contended that, although students spend nine years studying English in schools, most of them graduate with a low level of English competence (Rajab, 2013).

Some of the students who go to school, their speaking of English is very weak than other subjects, in every midyear exams, they become fail in English subject. And some of the other students who go to university, their English skills are so poor and they would face many challenges at university. According to Sahibzada, Saeedi, and Hussaini, (2018) Explored that 44% of students, when they enter the University of Kandahar, they have many challenges in their speaking skills.

In regardless of all the researches that have taken place according to this field of study, in all over the world and one research have conducted at Kandahar University according to poor four skills (Sahibzada, Saeedi & Hussaini, 2018). Still, the need is required to conduct research in Kandahar city high schools, because other researches have been conducted in other countries with a different system of education and with ESL/EFL learners of other countries with different cultures.

## 2. Significance of the Study

This research will help the teachers, who teach English in high schools of Kandahar city. So the teachers will change their plans accordingly, as well they will use different approaches and methods for teaching this language. Although the student will change their ways of learning English. They will try different ways, and as well the government will bring changes in this English course curriculum, all over the country, not just in Kandahar city. And this research will also help the ministry of education that they will bring changes in the educational context.

### 3. Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to identify the major causes of poor English language learning at Kandahar city's two high schools.

- To be more specific, the objective of this study is:
- To figure out the major causes that caused students to be poor in their English language learning.

*Similarly, the Research question is*

- What are the factors that caused students to become poor in their English language learning?

### 4. Literature Review

In this part of the study, the authors illustrated the finding and result of other scholars accordingly to the issue. Furthermore, A study that conducted at Kandahar University by Sahibzada, Saeedi and Hossaini (2018) they have conducted a study about the causes of literature students' poor English skills, in the result of their study they have figured out the causes that limit EFL learners' poor English skills: lack of professional teachers in school and non-standard textbooks of school these two have been identified as major factors that cause EFL learners to become poor in four skill.

With the regard to the study of Souriyavongsa, Rany, Abidin & Mei (2013) at University of Laos, with the problem of English language weaknesses, and claimed in his study that the major factors, which causes students to be weak in their English language are numbered as follow: first, the majority of students stated that the English teachers are not well-trained. Secondly, students lack English foundation background. Third, students lack confidence to use English because they are afraid of mistakes and shy feeling. Fourth, the curriculum is inappropriate for helping students to improve their English proficiency.

A study that has conducted by Alderman (2004) and investigated problem an exploration of the causes that caused EFL learners weak in their English language learning; the researcher have explored the difficulties of EFL students, especially adults, to learn English as a foreign language appropriately, based on the findings of the study, the researcher states to the students' poor performance of language learning are affected by a lack of effort and lack of effective learning strategies.

The causes of weak English learning have been widely investigated by Lei (2011) the result of the research have figured out the factors that caused EFL learners weak in English language is: the lack of motivation for which, in general, motivation is recognized as one of the most significant factors affecting students' performance of second language and foreign language.

A study has been conducted at the University of Glasgow by (Tanveer, 2007), on the investigation of the factors that cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners in learning speaking skills and the influence it casts on communication in the target language found difficulties of language learning, differences in learners' and target language cultures, the difference in social status of the speakers are the factors that affect the students' weakness of language learning.

According to Hashemi (2011) has conducted on Language Stress and anxiety among the English language learners at Iran and identified that students' weakness in English is due to the differences of social contexts and cultural environments. Surveys such as that conducted by Normazidah, Koo, & Hazita (2012) presented the factors that impact the EFL learners to have poor performance in English language learning as follows: English is regarded as a difficult subject to learn. Learners depend on English teachers as authorities. There is a lack of support to use English in the home environment and the community. Learners have insufficient or lacking exposure to the language as there is a limited opportunity to use English outside the classrooms. Lack of motivation for learning or the negative attitude towards the target language (Stevens, 1980). A study that has been conducted at China by Chang (2010), indicated the reasons cause students' weakness for English language learning derived from learners' laziness, lack of efficiency of the school, and insufficient of parents' promotion are the major factors of weak English learning.

Qahtani (2018) has conducted a study on the same issue and examined the problem in learning English as a second language in Shaqra University. Part of this problem is attributed to the poor background of the students, part to the lack of labs and other appliances and part to the absence of skilled instructors.

Al-Johani (2009) stated that, during English classes, teachers spend most of the time illustrating and explaining the items of the new lesson verbally or writing on the board, while students are passive listeners and their responsibility is to record what has been taught and copy from the board. Furthermore, Al Rabai (2014) further added that teachers' dominance of English classes caused students to be receptors, memorizers, and reproducers, which apparently encouraged them to participate ineffectively in the learning process. Therefore, this teacher-centered approach has led to students' lack of opportunity to interact and participate in a class or even to do a minimum of English practice.

### 5. Method

#### 5.1 Research Site

The most two popular high schools in Kandahar city namely; Zaher Shahi and Temoor Shahi high schools.

#### 5.2 Research Approach

In this study, descriptive quantitative survey has applied to collect the data. Descriptive quantitative approach

examines the phenomenon by collecting the data numerically. Moreover, “Survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population” (Creswell, 2012).

### 5.3 Sampling Method

Stratified sampling method, 60 students from Zaher Shahi and 40 from Temoor Shahi high schools, the number of samples will be from twelfth classes. In a stratified sampling method, the researcher divides the population on some specific characteristics, then use simple random sampling (Creswell, 2012, P, 144). The sample size was 100 male students of these two high schools.

### 5.4 Research design and Instrument

Questionnaires have improved to collect the data from these two high schools, the design was a quantitative approach. The questionnaire has completed through the items of literature review and self-experiences of researchers and comprised of two parts; first, demographic information and the answer for the research question.

### 5.5 Validity and reliability of the Questionnaire

Before the dividing of the instrument (questionnaire) among students, for the establishment of the questionnaire’s validity, the researcher consulted with supervisor and instructor lecturer for creative feedback and comments. The lecturer advised for the structure, statements and Likert scales of the questionnaire. After entering the data to SPSS, the consistency of the questionnaire items was 0.72 Cronbach’s alpha. It seems that the questionnaire was reliable.

### 6. Data Analysis procedure

In order to answer the research question, data were performed in SPSS (version, 19) in which researchers calculated means and the standard deviation to determine the causes of poor English language learning.

#### 6.1 Findings

The following table 1 shows the demographic information of participant in the categories of gender, age, native language, and school names.

**Table 1:** Demographic information

|                        | Characteristics          | No of Participations | Percentage |
|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Gender                 | Male                     | 100                  | 100%       |
| Age of participants    | 15-20                    | 92                   | 92%        |
|                        | 21-25                    | 18                   | 8%         |
|                        | 26-30                    | 0                    | 0%         |
|                        | upper30                  | 0                    | 0%         |
| Native language        | Pashto                   | 92                   | 92%        |
|                        | Dari                     | 6                    | 6%         |
|                        | Other                    | 2                    | 2%         |
| School of participants | Zahir Shahi High School  | 60                   | 60%        |
|                        | Temoor Shahi High School | 40                   | 40%        |

The question “What are the factors that caused students to become poor in their English language learning?” was employed as the research tool in this study has attempted to identify the possible factors that find during students’ poor English language learning. Table 2 below presents the factors that cause students weak in English language learning. However, these cases cannot be generalized to all students, but it does represent a majority of the learners.

**Table 2:** The causes of poor English language learning in High schools.

| Statements   | Mean           | STD. Deviation |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Lack of proficient teachers affected our English language learning                   | <b>4.41*</b>   | 0.93           |
| Lack of standard textbooks of school   | <b>4.23**</b>  | 1.11           |
| Lack of effective learning strategies  | <b>4.12***</b> | 1.22           |
| Lack of self-confidence for learning the English language                            | 3.96           | 1.37           |
| Lack of motivation for learning or the negative attitude towards the target language | 3.66           | 1.40           |
| Lack of interests with the English language  | 3.63           | 1.40           |
| Students have a limitation of vocabulary   | 3.60           | 1.32           |
| Materials are not always available for learning English                              | 3.40           | 1.49           |

|   |      |      |
|---|------|------|
| There is a lack of support to use English in the home environment and the community | 3.35 | 1.32 |
| I learn depends on the English teachers as authorities                              | 3.30 | 1.50 |
| English is regarded as a difficult subject to learn.                                | 3.73 | 1.21 |

**Likert scales: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree**

Note: \*=Highest, \*\*= second highest, \*\*\*= third highest

The result of the above table 2 shows the causes of weak English learning on EFL learners at High schools, which highest cause is Lack of proficient teachers affected our English language learning, it means that teachers of English language are not well-trained and proficient (M=4.41, SD=0.93). Furthermore, the second highest cause is Lack of standard textbooks of school, means that the books which made from the side of the Ministry of Education are not suitable for learning them as a foreign language (M=4.23, SD=1.11). Moreover, the third cause is Lack of effective learning strategies, means that principles of schools wouldn't plane different strategies for the learning process (M=4.12, SD=1.22). The factors with low mean are as follow; there is a lack of support to use English in the home environment and the community (M= 3.35, SD=1.32), I learn depends on the English teachers as authorities (M=3.30, SD=1.50) and English is regarded as a difficult subject to learn (M=3.73, SD=1.21).

## 6.2 Discussion

The finding of the research question emerged the major factors of poor English language learning and described as follow; the lack of proficient teachers of schools adversely affected the learning of English language, it means the directorship of education at Afghanistan don't care about the employment of teachers and the teachers are not well trained. Likewise, the finding is in line with the findings of Souriyavongsa, Rany, Abidin & Mei (2013) and Sahibzada, Saeedi, and Hossaini (2018). Furthermore, the second major cause of weak English learning is the lack of standard textbooks for English learning, it means that curriculum of High schools aren't standard and the students couldn't learning English as well as possible. Similarly, the finding is in line with the finding Sahibzada, Saeedi, and Hossaini (2018). Moreover, the third major cause of English language learning is the lack of effective learning strategies, it means that the teachers and principals of the schools wouldn't plane different strategies for learning. The finding is in line with the finding of Alderman (2004).

## 7. Conclusion

The present study was designed to determine the Factors Causing Poor English Language Learning at Zahir Shahi and Temoor Shahi high schools. The study had shown that there were three highest factors that caused low English learning at two central high schools in Kandahar city. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study that students have responded was the lack of proficient teachers in English subject in their schools. The second highest cause that students stated was the lack of Standard English books of the curriculum in their schools. And the third highest factor or cause that students declared was the lack of effective learning strategies or approaches. The study had also found that there are three lowest factors that caused poor English learning at two central high schools of Kandahar. The first lowest factor was the lack of support to use English in the home environment and outside in the community. The second main lowest finding was that students felt that their English learning depends on their English teachers` authorities. And the third important lowest finding was students' concerns that they have responded which was English is a difficult subject to learn.

## Recommendations

The following solutions could be addressed by this study in order to solve the problems of learners in learning English language:

- The government should prepare the preparatory courses for the students to train them in scientific subjects to get good results in final exams of high schools.
- Parents have the responsibility to support students economically and spiritually.
- Qualified teachers should be hired for every subject at schools by the government.
- Further study may be conducted to explore the causes of low English learning of Students in High Schools.

## 8. Limitations

Looking to the facts and reality, almost every study has its own limitations, which may cause the research to become slow down, so during the conducting of this research the researcher faced the following limitations.

- Deficiency of the knowledge, during writing the review of the related literature the researchers could not find enough researches, which were conducted in this geographical location, it made us compel to refer online data for the completion of our related literature review comparing to our research site.
- Unawareness of the advanced technology for the data analysis process.

## References

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| No | Statement  | Strongly disagree | disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree |
|----|--|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| 1  | English is regarded as a difficult subject to learn.                                 |                   |          |           |       |                |
| 2  | I learn depends on the English teachers as authorities                               |                   |          |           |       |                |
| 3  | There is a lack of support to use English in the home environment and the community  |                   |          |           |       |                |
| 4  | Materials are not always available for learning English                              |                   |          |           |       |                |
| 5  | Students have a limitation of vocabulary   |                   |          |           |       |                |
| 6  | Lack of self-confidence for learning English language                                |                   |          |           |       |                |
| 7  | Lack of motivation for learning or the negative attitude towards the target language |                   |          |           |       |                |
| 8  | Lack of proficient teachers affected our English language learning.                  |                   |          |           |       |                |
| 9  | Lack of standard textbooks of school   |                   |          |           |       |                |
| 10 | Lack of interests with the English language  |                   |          |           |       |                |
| 11 | Lack of effective learning strategies  |                   |          |           |       |                |

**Appendix Two**

**پوښتنیپاڼه**

**د څیړني عنوان:** د ظاهر شاهي او تیمور شاهي عالي لېسو د هغه عواملو څیړل چی د شاگردانو د انگرېزي ژبې په زدکړي کي د ضعيفتيا سبب گرځيدلي دي.

**گرانه برخه اخستونکي:**

ددې څیړني هدف دادی، چیهغه عوامل او علل په نڅینه کړي چی د کندهار ښار په دوو مرکزي عالي لېسو کي دانگلیسي ژبه د زدکړي د ضعيفتيا سبب گرځيدلي دي؛ نو همدا پوښتنیپاڼه په دي موخه جوړه سوي ده، چید بادي ستونزي په اړه معلومات راټول، تحلیل او تجزيه سي. ستاسي راکړل سوي معلومات به زموږ سره د دي څیړني د هدف په لاسته راوړلو کي مرسته وکړي؛ ستاسي د رضاکارانه برخي اخستني څخه د زړه له کومي مننه کوو.

**د څیړنکو نومان:** احمد انوري، عزيز الله هڅاند او صابر احمد صديقي.

**اوله برخه:** شخصي معلومات

د مکتب نوم:  ظاهر شاهي  تیمور شاهي

جنسیت:  نارینه  ښځینه

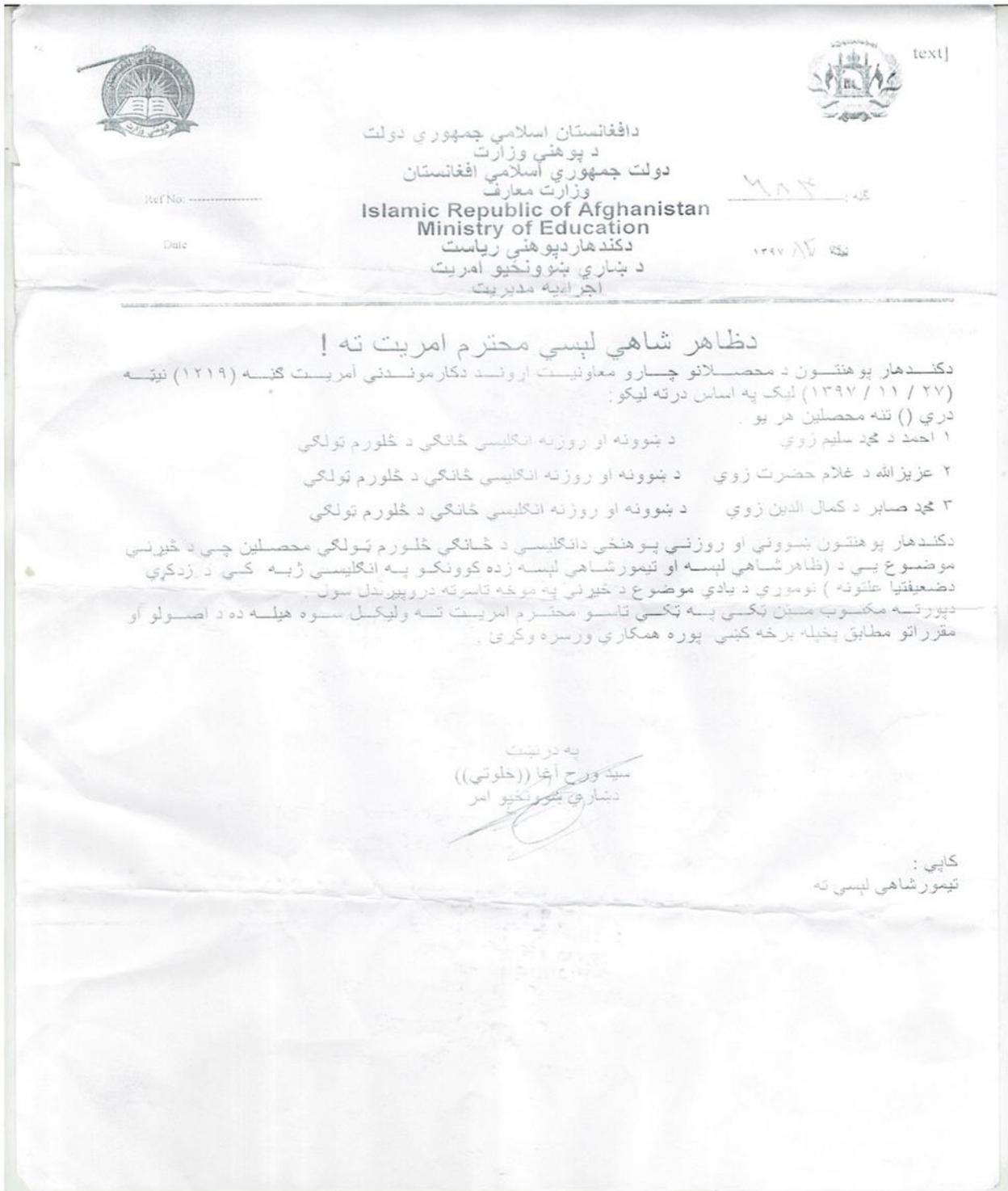
مورنی ژبه:  پښتو  دري

عمر: ۷-۱۴ ۱۵-۲۰ ۲۱-۳۰ نور..... تر ۳۰ لور

**دوهمه برخه:** لاندې جملې په غورسره ولولئ! د هرې جملې له پاره پنځه (5) انتخابه درکړل سوي دي؛ تاسي خپل نظر په صحیح علامه په لاندې جدول کي په نڅینه کړئ.

| شمبره | بیاني  | کاملاً ناموافق یم | ناموافق یم | تصمیم نلرم | موافق یم | کاملاً موافق یم |
|-------|--|-------------------|------------|------------|----------|-----------------|
| ۱     | انگریزي د زدکړي لپاره ډیر ستونزمن مضمون دی                 |                   |            |            |          |                 |
| ۲     | زه په غیر مستقل ډول د استادانو تر واک لاندې زدکړه کوو.     |                   |            |            |          |                 |
| ۳     | د انگریزي ژبي د استعمال نشتوال په صنف، چاپیریال او کور کي. |                   |            |            |          |                 |
| ۴     | د انگلیسي ژبي د لوست و موادو کمښت                          |                   |            |            |          |                 |
| ۵     | د انگریزي ژبي د لغاتونو د ذخیري محدودیت.                   |                   |            |            |          |                 |
| ۶     | پر ځان د باور نشتوالی د انگریزي ژبي په زدکړه کي            |                   |            |            |          |                 |
| ۷     | د تشویق نشتوالی او منفي برخورد د انگلیسي ژبي په مقابل کي   |                   |            |            |          |                 |
| ۸     | د باتجربه استادانو نشتوالی                                 |                   |            |            |          |                 |
| ۹     | د مکتب کتابونه پر معیار نه برابری والی                     |                   |            |            |          |                 |
| ۱۰    | د انگریزي ژبي و زدکړي ته د علاقې نشتوالی                   |                   |            |            |          |                 |
| ۱۱    | د زدکړي ستراتیژي د موثریت نشتوالی                          |                   |            |            |          |                 |

Appendix Three



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