



*Asesorías y Tutorías para la Investigación Científica en la Educación Puig-Salabarría S.C.
José María Pino Suárez 400-2 esq a Lerdo de Tejada, Toluca, Estado de México. 7223898475*

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TÍTULO: El papel de las actividades efectivas de habilidades receptivas para mejorar las habilidades productivas de los estudiantes de ESL en la Universidad de Agricultura Faisalabad.

AUTORES:

1. PhD. Wasim Hassan.
2. PhD. Mamuna Ghani.
3. PhD. Noreen Saba.

RESUMEN: El artículo describe las formas en que las actividades efectivas de habilidades receptivas pueden ayudar a mejorar las habilidades productivas de los estudiantes de ESL en la Universidad de Agricultura Faisalabad. La investigación es útil para los maestros encontrar las mejores actividades posibles de habilidades receptivas para los estudiantes de ESL. Los datos fueron recolectados mediante cuestionario y observación no estructurada. Se pidió a los participantes que respondieran las preguntas en función de sus experiencias de aprendizaje de habilidades receptivas y productivas en las clases de ESL en la Universidad de Agricultura Faisalabad. La investigación incluye las actividades apropiadas en habilidades receptivas y sugerencias para profesores y estudiantes que pueden mejorar las habilidades productivas de los estudiantes de ESL.

PALABRAS CLAVES: actividades efectivas, clases de ESL, habilidades receptivas, habilidades productivas.

TITLE: The role of effective activities of Receptive Skills to improve Productive Skills of ESL learners at University of Agriculture Faisalabad.

AUTHORS.

1. PhD. Wasim Hassan.
2. PhD. Mamuna Ghani.
3. PhD. Noreen Saba.

ABSTRACT: The article describes the ways in which effective activities in receptive skills may help in improving productive skills of ESL learners at University of Agriculture Faisalabad. The current research will prove very helpful in improving productive skills. It will also be useful for the teachers to find the best possible activities in receptive skills for ESL learners. The data was collected through questionnaire and unstructured observation. The participants were asked to answer the questions based on their learning experiences of receptive and productive skills in ESL classes at University of Agriculture Faisalabad. The research includes the appropriate activities in receptive skills and suggestions for the teachers and students which can bring an improvement in the productive skills of ESL learners.

KEY WORDS: effective activities, ESL classes, receptive skills, productive skills.

INTRODUCTION.

Receptive and productive skills are inseparable to each other. So, good experience in receptive skills results in improved productive skills. Listening and reading are models of speaking and writing. People speak and write various bits of communication; e-mail, documents, business letters, academic essays, speeches, debates, conversation, dialogues and chit chat etc.

In writing, no face to face interaction is committed between addresser and addressee while in speaking face to face interaction is also done. In writing, one should possess the skills of arranging one's thought and ideas and then exactly deliver them to the reader while in speaking when ESL learners meet their friends in real life situation, they speak freely and fluently because in speaking they don't bother about sentence structure, grammar or spellings. The whole focus is on delivering the ideas or information fluently and with native-like pronunciation and accent. The listeners of one's utterances can identify the mistakes made on the part of the speaker and suggest ways to improve on the spot. In writing, it is difficult to correct one's mistakes after one has written on the page.

In ESL classes, speaking is improved through listening comprehension and writing through reading exercises. It is, therefore, necessary that ESL teachers provide effective listening and reading materials to improve speaking and writing skills. This research is aimed at finding good listening and reading experiences which will ultimately improve speaking and writing skills.

DEVELOPMENT.

Research Problem.

The students find problems in productive skills (writing and speaking skills) of English language.

Research Questions.

- a) What are the problems of ESL learners in learning English?
- b) Which activities of receptive skills are the most effective to improve the productive skills of ESL learners?

Purpose of Research.

The purpose of research is to find out the most useful activities in receptive skills to improve the productive skills.

Literature Review.

Along with the national language i.e. Urdu many regional languages are spoken and understood in communication in Pakistan. English is one of the most frequently used languages in Pakistan. It is official language in Pakistan.

According to Warsi “English plays a prominent role in Pakistan as a lingua franca - a common means of communication - besides Urdu and a host of regional languages and numerous dialects - as a global language, and an easy medium for science and technology” (2004:1). English is widely used and adopted by the Army and bureaucracy and the people who idealize the bureaucrats and Army officers wish not only to be like them but also to speak like them that is reason why English is used more now than it was used a few decades ago. Second language (L2) learning has almost the similar processes like first language (L1). In case of the L1 acquisition, learners can naturally learn oral language by being exposed to the language through environment, but they can learn written language by intensive reading and instructions because written language has different acquisition processes from oral language.

When someone writes some words and sentences in foreign language, it means that he/she can read them and understand their meaning. When the ESL teachers teach speaking skill, they focus on more fluency than accuracy because the purpose of speaking is communication. If they teach writing skills, they focus on the accuracy same as fluency because the purpose of writing is the expression of the writer's intention without understanding (Dash, 2004). According to Nancy “The 4 main channels of communication are: a) reading b) speaking c) writing d) listening. Information comes TO a person by listening and reading. Information goes FROM a person by speaking and writing” (1996:28).

Listening is the first language skill that a child comes across when learning L1 and it should be the focus of the language teacher in L2 teaching. Listening is a receptive skill because unlike speaking it involves a process of reception instead of producing some piece of language in the form of spoken

content. There is a difference between hearing of general nature and listening with attention. Language learners not just hear but listen attentively to whatever they are exposed to through different listening comprehension exercises.

Broughton et. al describe two types of listening exercise as “Both extensive and intensive listening practice should be part of the armoury of a language teacher” (66:1978). According to Broughton et. al. intensive listening means to listen to recorded texts which may contain the text relevant to the exercises on different chunks of language like the correct use of verbs and prepositions and similarly it may contain practice on idiomatic expressions and grammar. On the other hand, extensive listening means to listen the longer texts with an aim of getting the gist of the text instead of using the texts for a gathering a peculiar kind of information that is performed in intensive listening. Listening to the radio broadcast, movies, talk-shows and news, etc., are some of the exercises used in extensive listening.

Speaking is the second skill that a first language learner has to work on. Teachers of L2 expose the language learners with speaking skill according to the need of the situation and after a careful need’s analysis. It is productive skill because it involves a conscious effort on the part of the speaker to speak something and it involves more energy of the speaker. Similarly, it is based on production of spoken texts instead of reception of written or spoken texts.

Jordens quotes Burns and Seidlhofer to describe the function of a speaker of a language. “This process requires speakers to make decisions about why, how and when to communicate depending on the cultural and social context in which the speaking act occurs” (139:2006). By describing cultural and social context Burns and Seidlhofer mean to highlight the importance of communicative competence instead of linguistic competence. Different speaking activities like imitation of word, phrase or sentence, stories-telling, speeches, interviews and presentations are used for teaching speaking skill according to whether the students are taught through guided or free stage.

According to Duffy “Reading is a visual task” (187:2009). Reading is a receptive skill because it involves reception of idea, information, feelings and emotions of the writer, because it involves reading and understanding that is why it becomes critical to understand the concepts written by the writer. Different readers can grasp the meaning of one piece of writing differently according to their own background, qualification, cultural and world knowledge. Wyse and Jones put it in the following way “reading process needs to be thought about as something that involves ‘people’ learning to read in a social ‘context’ and that reading is part of an inter-connected process that includes the learning of writing, talking and language” (46:2001).

Writing is the visual representation of the symbols in the form of letters, words, phrases, clauses, sentences and discourse. Writing skill is the fourth language skill in the order of learning. There is need of following the writing norms in structures of language and structures of formatting to be followed in writing skill compared to the speaking skill where vulgarism and jargonism are frequently in use. Written records of manuscripts, documents, scriptures, letters and reports etc. are kept in the written form for a reference in future so the effect of writing is lasting. According to Walsh “Writing is an essential skill and used both at higher education and at workplace. Without it, it is too hard for students to be able to communicate with anybody in academia as it is used a lot in professional and educational life (2010:35).

Reading-based writing tasks encourage students to read like writers and to write like readers. The most effective writers learn to image readers' attributes and to use those attributes to assess their own writings. Such tasks may include reading for meaning, reading for details, drawing an inference, predicting, skimming, scanning, critical reasoning, journalizing and so forth (Kneale, 2001). Anker (2007) wrote a writing course book for college students including reading section because reading essays help the college students to develop writing abilities. By reading and looking over how someone else states main ideas, provides supporting details, organizes ideas, they gain better senses

of how they write their own essays. Also, reading the essays help students to choose various writing topics because there are many diverse topics: making money, investing, starting your own business, finding a job, raising a family, buying a cat at the best price, or protecting yourself from unfairness. The researchers are interested in improving writing skills. They look for the effective way to improve students' writing skills.

Evidently, reading and writing are related to each other, and so teachers suggest the ESL learners to read for writing. There are many different reading materials and reading activities which students choose and experience, but teachers do not suggest specific reading activities related writing. Thus, it needs to research which reading activities are more effective in improving writing skills. Hyland asserts: "Reading and writing abilities are highly correlated; however, correlations do not mean casual relations; particularly in the direction from writing to reading. What will be suggested here is: (1) that the relation between reading and writing is nor close enough to assume full development of abilities in one from the other and (2), by extension, that ESL students cannot learn to read by learning to write, by learning discourse grammar only, or by any purely "intensive" approach to reading-since all such approaches assume the reading-writing relationship consists only of converse manifestation of the same process" (2003:33).

There is an experimental research about teaching writing through reading. *Anastacio* tried to help the students to improve their writing skills through reading tasks. The students are not ESL learners but the middle school students. At first, he prepared a lot of reading materials, such as new and old literatures, realistic and fanciful literatures, and prose and pieces of poetry. Through the processes of transcribing, translating, paraphrasing, condensing, and imitating, students read and reread some works, learned which were good or bad writings, and practiced with writing sentences following the models which they read. Finally, the students could reproduce the other writer's thoughts by daily writing practices and wrote their own creative writings (Anastacio, 1979). It indicates reading

activities supply good sources of writing contents and good models of writing formats. Ferris and Tag (1996) have made a research on “Academic Listening Speaking Tasks for ESL Students” problems, suggestions and implications” at California State University Sacramento.

This research is limited in the respect that it mainly takes an approach where the subjects are not studied directly rather the view of the ESL teachers is used to investigate the problems of ESL learners in listening and speaking skills.

In view of the limitations in the above-mentioned literature review regarding the topic of research it requires a more broadened and to the point research on effective activities in receptive skills to improve productive skills.

Methodology.

Following methods have been used for the collection and analysis of the data for the current study:

Participants.

For this research, the researcher selects 90 ESL learners, all of them studying English in ESL classes in University of Agriculture Faisalabad. Their purposes of studying in ESL classes were to qualify to apply to academic courses in undergraduate and graduate colleges. The classes are face to face lectures and include listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar. The students attend classes from Monday to Friday. The instructors teach the courses with textbooks and other supplementary materials.

Measures.

For this research, the researcher designed a questionnaire in which the participants were asked to answer the questions based on their learning experiences of reading and writing skills in the ESL classes at University of Agriculture Faisalabad. The main questions are divided in the form of “relation between reading and writing and listening and speaking.

The researcher used the intensive and extensive listening comprehension exercises in the form of cassettes and CDs suggested by BBC learning English and IELTS Cambridge for Pakistani students. It was observed that the learners of English in ESL classes at University of Agriculture Faisalabad had practiced either no or very rare listening activities. Further, it was observed that there was a marked improvement in speaking due to better listening exercises.

Data Collection.

For data collection, the researcher visited 4 ESL classes. At first, the researcher explained the purpose of the research and what the students do for the survey. The researcher delivered the questionnaires to the students. The students answered the questions in the questionnaire. During the survey, the researcher was in the classroom and guided them to take part in the survey. The students asked some questions which they could not understand. After data collection, the researcher put all of the data in the Microsoft Excel Program and presented descriptive statistics describing the results.

The data collection for listening-speaking skills was observed structurally and non-structurally in the form of general introductory questions about the subjects and conversation on different issues. The focus in structural observation was vocabulary and syntax while in non-structural observation the main focus was on fluency and pronunciation.

Results.

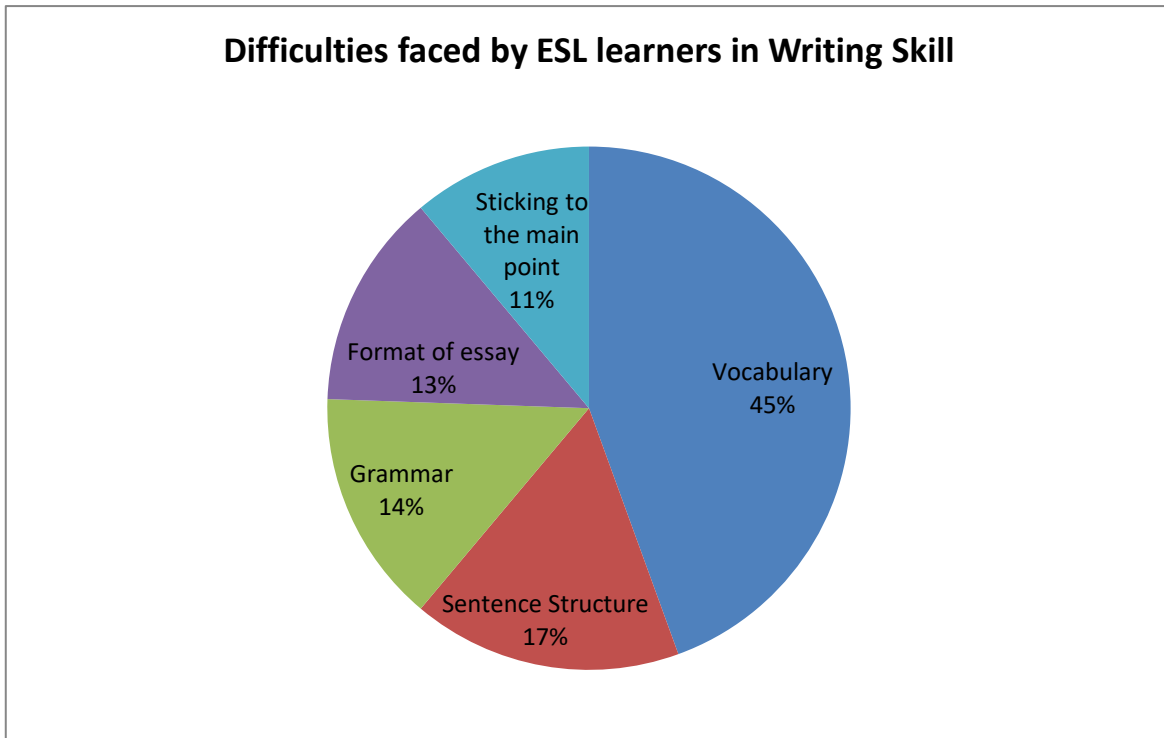
The purpose of the research is to find out the most useful activities in receptive skills to improve productive skills. For this research, 90 ESL learners in University of Agriculture Faisalabad answered the relation between reading-writing and listening-speaking. The results of reading-writing relationship are derived through questionnaire while listening-speaking relationship is observed on the basis of structural and non-structural observation and inferences due to the non-availability of any language laboratory at Faisalabad.

Relation between Reading and Writing.

The ESL learners find it difficult to cope with vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, format of the essay and sticking to the main point while writing an essay. It is evident from the data in Table No. 1 that the problems of ESL learners are related with writing skill.

Table no.1.

Problems related with writing skill	Percentage (%)
Vocabulary	45%
Sentence structure	17%
Grammar	14%
Format of essay	13%
Sticking to the main idea	11%

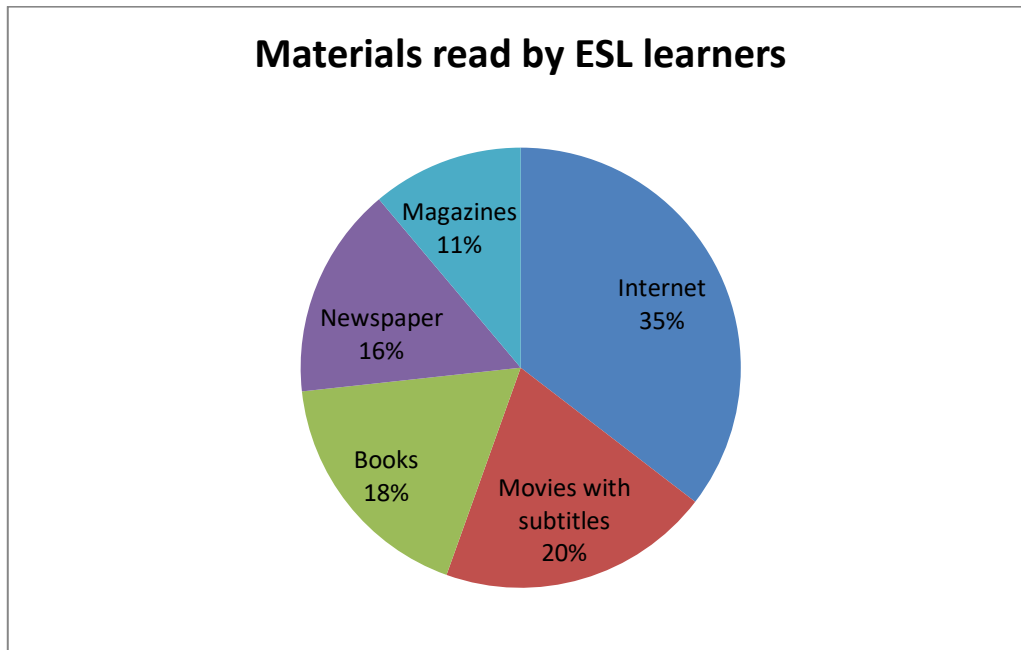


Graph 1. What makes Writing hard for you?

Vocabulary was the biggest hurdle that the ESL learners come across as 45%. ESL learners responded that vocabulary was the main problem in writing skill whereas sentence structure was the second biggest hurdle to the ESL learners as 17%. ESL learners responded that sentence structure was a problem in writing. Almost the same number of students responded that grammar, format of the essay, and writing to the point were their problems in writing skill. Those ESL learners who replied that grammar was the biggest hurdle when they wrote a piece of text were 14% whereas format of the essay was a difficulty to 13% of the ESL learners and writing to the point on the main given topic was a hurdle to 11% of the ESL learners.

Data in the Table No. 2 shows that ESL learners avail themselves of many kinds of reading materials in their life. In the classroom, in the hallway or in the library, they can use lots of reading materials. Reading materials which the ESL learners like to read and have easy access to in daily life are web sites, subtitles on movies or TV and story books. ESL learners read many kinds of reading materials like internet was used for reading by 35% of the ESL learners while movies and sub-titles were used by 20% ESL learners. Books were used by 18% ESL learners. 2% lesser ESL learners read newspaper than those who read books. The ESL learners who read magazines were 11%.

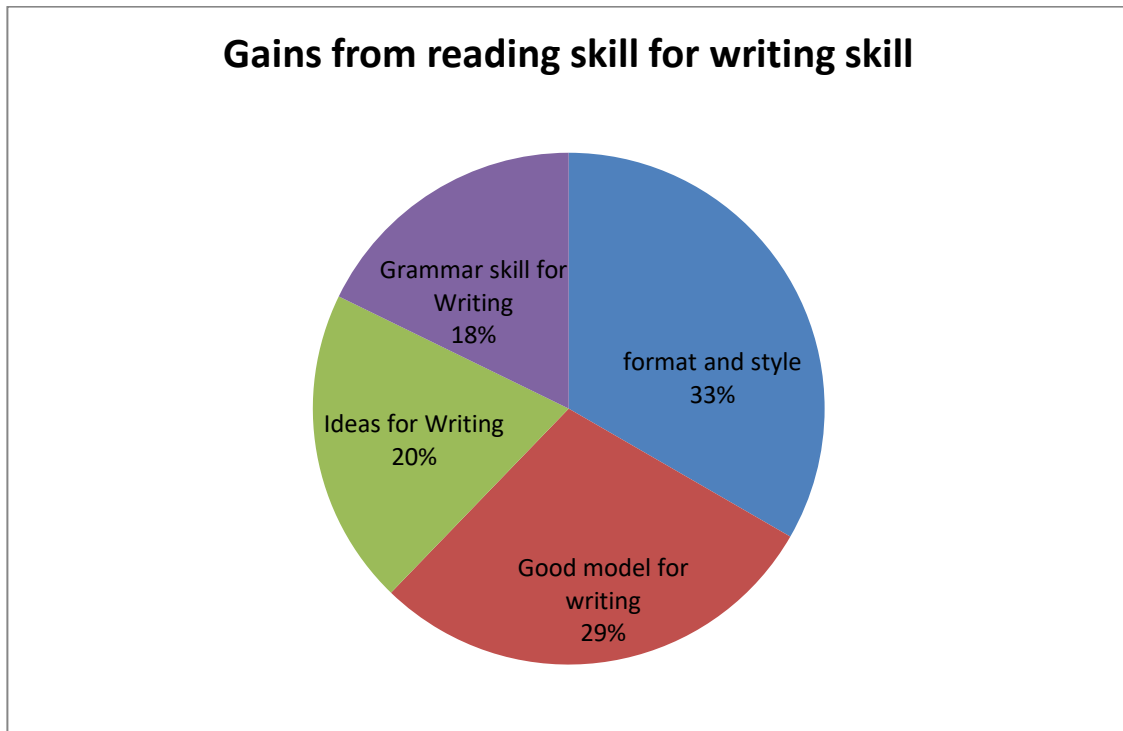
Materials available for reading of S learners	Percentage (%)
Internet	35%
Movies with subtitles	20%
Books	18%
Newspapers	16%
Magazines	11%



Graph 2. What Kind of Materials have the ESL Learners Read?

Data in the Table No. 3 illustrates that through reading activities, the ESL learners get lots of useful things for their writing. Especially, they attain good writing formats and style, good model for writings, and good ideas for writing content from reading. According to 33% ESL learners they got writing format and style for writing skill through reading skill while 29% receive good sample for writing skill through reading. According to 20% ESL learners they received ideas for content of writing while 18% ESL learners said that they receive grammar skills for writing through reading skill.

Gains from Reading for Writing	Percentage (%)
Writing format and style	33.33%
Good model for writing	29%
Ideas for writing content	20%
Grammar skills for writing	18%



Graph 3. What do The ESL learners gain from Reading for Writing Skills?

Relation between Listening and Speaking.

Data in the table No. 4 illustrates the problems in listening skills for the ESL learners. The data shows that the students of ESL find difficulty in the following features of spoken content: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary and pronunciation.

Problems related with listening skills	Percentage (%)
Pronunciation	37%
Fluency	30%
Vocabulary	18%
Stress Pattern	15%

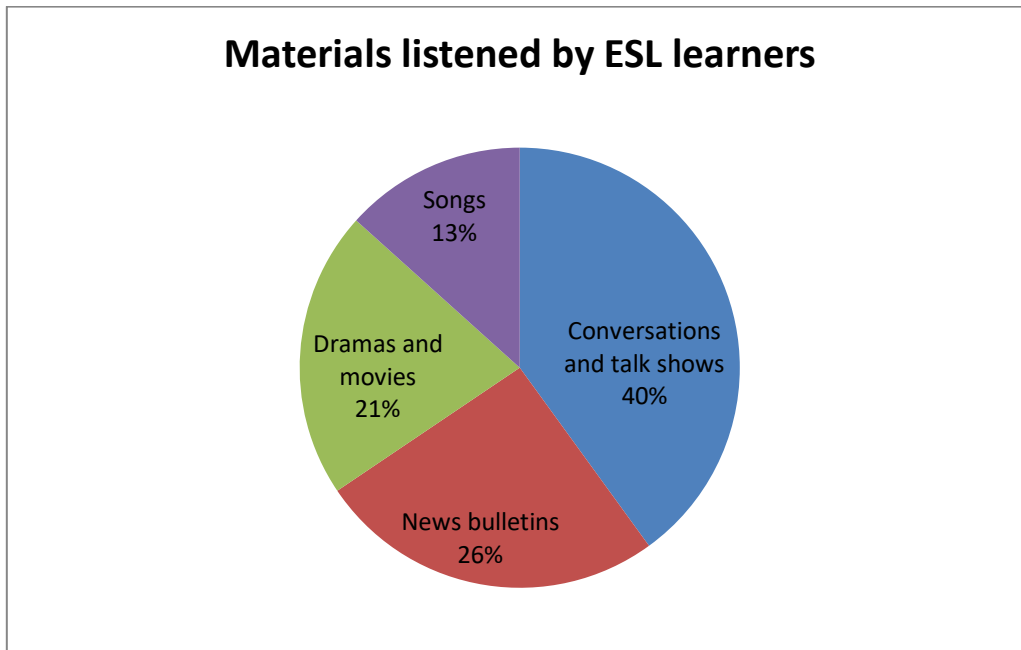
According to 37% of the respondents they found trouble in listening and understanding the pronunciation used in the recorded texts or in the real-life situations while 30% of the respondents said that fluency created most of the problems to them when they listen to the recorded chunks of language or when they listen to the ESL teachers' lectures.

There was a marginal difference between the number of students who found vocabulary and stress pattern as the most difficult items to understand in listening comprehension. According to 18% respondent's vocabulary was their major problem while to 15% respondents said that stress patter of English language caused most of the hurdle in language learning when going through listening comprehension exercises.

Table No. 5 shows that the students were given intensive practice in listening comprehension, during the listening activities, the ESL students were provided conversations and talk shows, news bulletins, Dramas, movies and songs with their lyrics written on the paper. These materials in listening comprehension have proved quite helpful in their listening comprehension.

According to 40% respondents they used conversations and talk shows for improving listening skills while news bulletins were used by 26% ESL learners, as compared with this, dramas and movies were used by 21% respondents. 13% respondents said that they used songs to improve the listening skill of English language.

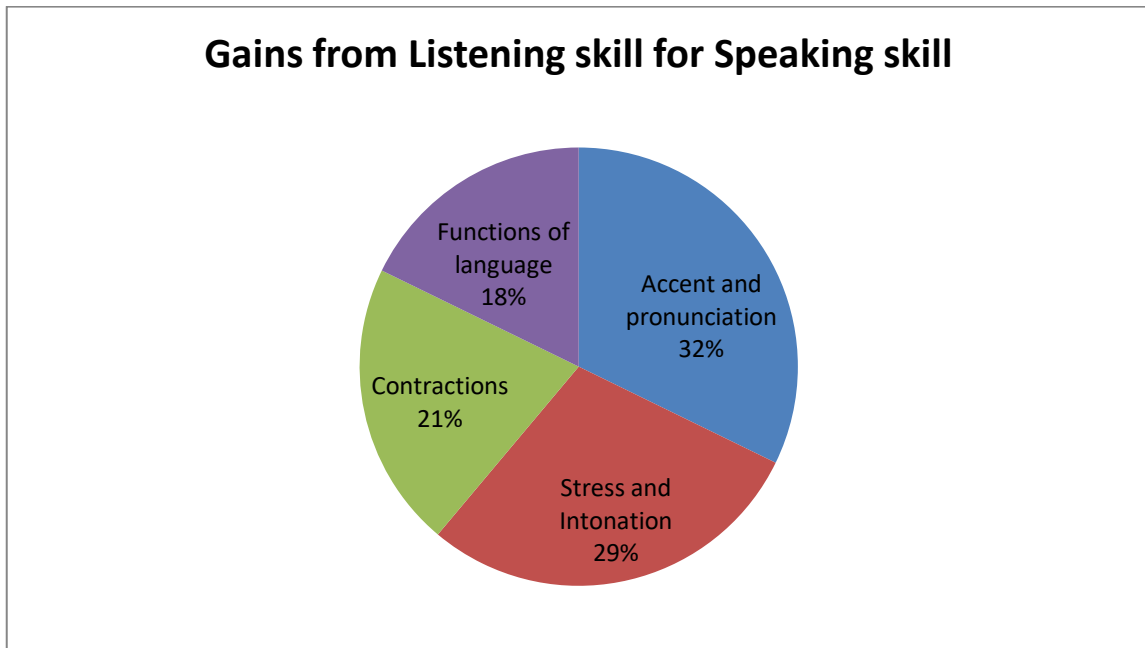
Materials Available for Listening of ESL	Percentage (%)
Conversations and talk shows	40%
News bulletins	26%
Dramas and movies	21%
Songs	13%



Graph 5. What materials have the ESL learners listened?

Table No. 6 shows that the practice in listening comprehension is quite helpful for the students of ESL and it brings improved accent and pronunciation, use of stress and intonation, contractions and functions of language that are considered to be the most important elements of speaking English.

Gains from listening for reading	Percentage (%)
Accent and pronunciation	32%
Stress and Intonation	29%
Contractions	21%
Functions of language	18%



Graph 6. What do ESL learners gain from Listening for Speaking Skills?

According to 32% respondents through listening they got accent and pronunciation to be followed when speaking while 29% respondents said that stress and intonation pattern were received by them that they followed when they spoke English language. Third element of language that the respondents received through listening comprehension for speaking was the use of contractions as 21% of the respondents said that they received the pattern of English contractions from listening skill. Because contractions are normally used by the native speakers, so the ESL learners follow the model of contractions as used by the native speakers in the recorded text or used by ESL teachers during lectures. 18% respondents replied that they learnt functions of language through listening comprehension exercises.

CONCLUSIONS.

The research has focused on the problems which the ESL learners face in productive skills and the ways to improve their productive skills through effective activities in receptive skills. Most of the ESL learners agree that receptive and productive skills are related to each other.

As far as the relationship between reading and writing is concerned, it is through reading activities that the learners gain good writing formats and styles, good writing models and ideas for writing. Most of the ESL learners can improve their writing skills through reading by themselves or through reading activities in reading and writing class. For improving writing skills, reading materials should be simple and formal so that the students can focus on the form and meaning. These materials can be short stories, news articles or journals etc. Also, reading materials such as websites or TV programs and movies, should be reflected in ESL learners' interests and lifestyles.

Each ESL learner has different reading experiences that improve their writing skills. Thus, it is very difficult to decide which activities are the most effective reading activities in improving writing skills. Even though the results show that some reading activities are more effective than others in improving writing skills, it depends on each student's interests, hobbies, reading habits and reading purpose.

The young adults are interested in watching TV and movies, reading interesting news and reports in newspapers and magazines. Among many kinds of reading material, they agree that reading formal works, such as reports in magazine of newspaper, articles in academic journal, are more effective in improving writing skills. The instructors need to be aware of the students' lifestyles and topics of interest. The ESL teachers can use those kinds of supplementary reading materials in ESL classes.

If the ESL learners are interested in improving their writing skills, they should try to read more as well as practice writing. For effective reading for writing, they can begin to read from different levels; word level or sentence levels from the websites or subtitles on TV. In reading classes, the ESL learners can perform activities of learning key words or summarizing the contents after reading. Like reading and writing skills, activities of listening and speaking skills are also interlinked. The ESL teachers can improve speaking skills by making intensive practice in listening skills. There are many ways to improve speaking skills of the learners of ESL.

Effective activities of listening skills help in improving the speaking skill. The natural process of first language acquisition can be born in mind while teaching listening and speaking skill. The natural process is that a child keeps listening to the sounds around him till he reaches the babbling stage and for the further stages of his language development he speaks broken structured words or disordered words. The ESL teachers should provide intensive practice of listening skills to improve the speaking skills of their ESL learners.

According to the analysis of data listening comprehensions can be developed at two stages. Firstly the graded activities (where the learners come to know about the separate bits of phonetics and grammar like vowel and consonant sounds, stress pattern, intonation, functions of language, question tags, contractions, fluency, tenses and vocabulary building exercises) and secondly non-graded activities where the bits of phonetics and grammar are taught in the natural way without any graded activities. The non-graded stage in listening comprehension is natural listening practice that may consist of listening talk shows, news bulletins, songs, debates and long conversations.

This research has several limitations. First, this research is limited to specific ESL learners in university, so it is not generalized to all of ESL learners. Second, this research draws conclusions from the ESL learners' responses, not experimental survey. This research suggests more experimental research about the effective activities of receptive skills to improve the productive skills in real language classes. Also, it suggests more survey on reducing the ESL learners' difficulties in learning and improving productive skills.

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DATA OF THE AUTHORS.

1. **Wasim Hassan.** Lecturer in English, National Textile University Faisalabad, Pakistan. He is also a PhD Candidate at The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: meemash504@gmail.com
2. **Mamuna Ghani.** Incharge, Faculty of Arts/Director, Advanced Studies and Research Board, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.
3. **Noreen Saba.** Visiting Lecturer in English, National Textile University Faisalabad, Pakistan. She is also a PhD Candidate at The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

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