



Vol. 3 No. 3 (March) (2025)

## **Barriers for Rural L2 Learners at Primary Level in Sahiwal; A Teacher's Perspective**

Zoya Rasheed

M.Phil Linguistics, University of Sahiwal

Email: zoyajutt359@gmail.com

Iqra Anam

MPhil English Linguistics, Riphah International University, Lahore Campus

Muhammad Munir Atif

Student, MPhil English Linguistics, University of Education, Lahore

Email: muniratif@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

This research examines the impediments experienced by rural primary-level second language (L2) English learners in Sahiwal from the instructors' point of view. Utilizing a qualitative case study research design, the study examines the major impediments, such as poor motivation, excessive anxiety towards error apprehension, limited exposure to English, and sociocultural factors. Data was gathered through classroom observations, interviews, and written examinations, with an emphasis on two students from rural and urban origins. Findings are that rural learners face more barriers as a result of lacking enough English practice situations and having lesser self-confidence, impacting their motivation and language acquisition negatively relative to their city-based peers. The research identifies teachers' vital roles in overcoming such challenges through friendly classroom environments and engaging pedagogy. Recommendations for policymakers and practitioners in education focus on enhancing teacher training and incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices to maximize L2 learning results in rural communities.

Keywords: Rural L2 Learners, Primary Level, Second language, English

### **Introduction**

In the last several decades, English has emerged as a world lingua franca, indispensable for global communication and post-secondary education. In Pakistan, English is used as an L2 language, but the problems of rural L2 learners are still great. The current research identifies the obstacles faced by rural L2 learners at the primary level in Sahiwal, with specific emphasis on the teacher's point of view. These obstacles, such as insufficient confidence, apprehension of committing errors, and inadequate exposure to English, are common in public and private educational institutions.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is the process of acquiring a language that is not the native language (Cook, 2016). It entails several theories and approaches that support the way learners learn a second language (L2). L2 learners are those who are acquiring a language aside from their mother tongue, usually for communication, study, or business (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

English is an invaluable language of communication and education in Pakistan, since it is inherent to most fields of academic and career life. There are always



## Vol. 3 No. 3 (March) (2025)

efforts to reform teaching English in the rural setting, but still, there exist stumbling blocks toward L2 acquisition. Lack of enough exposure to the English language beyond the class room, inadequate motivation, and influences of the culture are important impeding factors that affect the learning process (Akbari, 2015). These are made worse by teaching practices that do not necessarily reflect the requirements of rural students.

Motivation for language learning is the desire to participate in learning processes and attain language proficiency (Dörnyei, 2005). In rural areas, demotivation can arise from a host of factors, including the irrelevance of English for everyday life and future opportunities (Gardner, 1985).

Language Anxiety, especially anxiety about error, is yet another prevalent hindrance in SLA. It is affected by the classroom situation, where students are self-conscious or apprehensive to use a second language, particularly in cultures that stigmatize errors (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). In Sahiwal, anxiety results in students' hesitancy to respond in class, further slowing language acquisition.

English exposure is the time that learners spend in contact with the language outside of the classroom, and it is a key factor in SLA (Krashen, 1985). In rural settings, restricted access to English media, native speakers, and functional use of the language result in low exposure and limited language acquisition.

Notwithstanding these problems, this research aims to determine the specific obstructions that prevent L2 learning in rural areas and propose potential solutions to counteract them, in particular, by highlighting the teachers' role in confronting them.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the key barriers faced by rural L2 learners at the primary level in Sahiwal.
2. To explore the role of teachers in overcoming these barriers.
3. To analyze how the barriers impact students' confidence, motivation, and language acquisition.
4. To provide recommendations for improving L2 teaching practices and learning outcomes in rural areas.

### **Research Questions**

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the major barriers faced by rural L2 learners in Sahiwal at the primary level?
2. How do these barriers affect the learners' language acquisition and overall performance in English?
3. What role do teachers play in overcoming these barriers?
4. What strategies can be implemented to address these challenges and improve L2 learning outcomes?

### **Research Gap**

Although previous studies have concentrated on diverse aspects of L2 acquisition in Pakistan, not much has been explored regarding the particular obstacles confronted by rural learners at the primary level in Sahiwal. The majority of studies have targeted L2 learning in urban areas, where access to the language



## Vol. 3 No. 3 (March) (2025)

and resources is comparatively more available. Thus, this research fills an important gap in the literature by concentrating on rural students, shedding light on how socio-cultural aspects, few resources, and regional attitudes towards English influence language acquisition in rural schools. The results are expected to contribute to the knowledge of L2 acquisition in under-resourced contexts and inform future educational policy and practice.

### Literature Review

This section explores fundamental concepts and SLA theories. Behaviorism, which focuses on observable behavior, proposes that learning is achieved by stimulus-response operations, with L2 errors most likely resulting from L1 interference. Positive transfer occurs when there is similarity between L1 features and L2, while negative transfer occurs where there are sharp differences, with the need for additional drilling and instruction to surmount.

The "Interlanguage theory" suggests that L2 learners develop an intermediate language system when they are nearing the target language norms (Lowen & Reinders). Such an interlanguage is systematic despite the fact that the target language structure is unlike it. The "Monitor Model" by Stephen Krashen (1982) is founded on Chomsky's theory of first language acquisition, albeit criticized by White (1987). Universal Grammar, the initial theory trying to account for language acquisition, was subsequently supplemented by cognitive theory, which deals with psychological processes such as memory, perception, and problem-solving.

Ellis (1985) distinguishes between "acquisition" (unlearned learning) and "learning" (learned study). SLA theories tend to ignore the facts of large class sizes, which influence the learning context. For example, large classes generate an environment where local dialect gains prominence over the target language, and it is hard to implement new methods and theories.

Cultural difference also has a major contribution towards SLA, such as in educational systems, teaching practices, learning dispositions, and occupational language needs. Ghrib (2004) explained that problems faced by Tunisian students resulted from weak vocabulary, grammar, and phonological competence. Akbari (2015) pointed out limited exposure to English-speaking environments and excessive focus on grammar as some of the largest obstacles in Iran.

In Western societies, L2 learners are less apprehensive about speaking and committing errors than their Sahiwal counterparts, who tend to keep quiet out of fear of making mistakes. Cultural influences, including proverbs discouraging verbal communication such as "Silence is golden" and "Think before you speak," also fuel these fears. Physical punishment and negative reinforcement in schools further fuel these fears.

Soner (2007) posited that various factors, such as the absence of qualified instructors, obsolete pedagogical approaches, and inadequate language materials, contribute to L2 learning failures. In Sahiwal, there are some teachers who continue to employ obsolete approaches, and students are not motivated and exposed to practice English outside the classroom. These hindrances can be overcome if students are more at ease and the pedagogical approaches are modified.

L2 learning at the primary level is of paramount importance. Misinterpretation



## Vol. 3 No. 3 (March) (2025)

between the teachers and the students is a significant hindrance. Untrained L2 teachers at the primary level are creating problems in a majority of the schools in Sahiwal, even though a few lower-secondary teachers possess better language command. Teachers need fast-track training for enhancing their command over the language and ultimately facilitating better learning among the students.

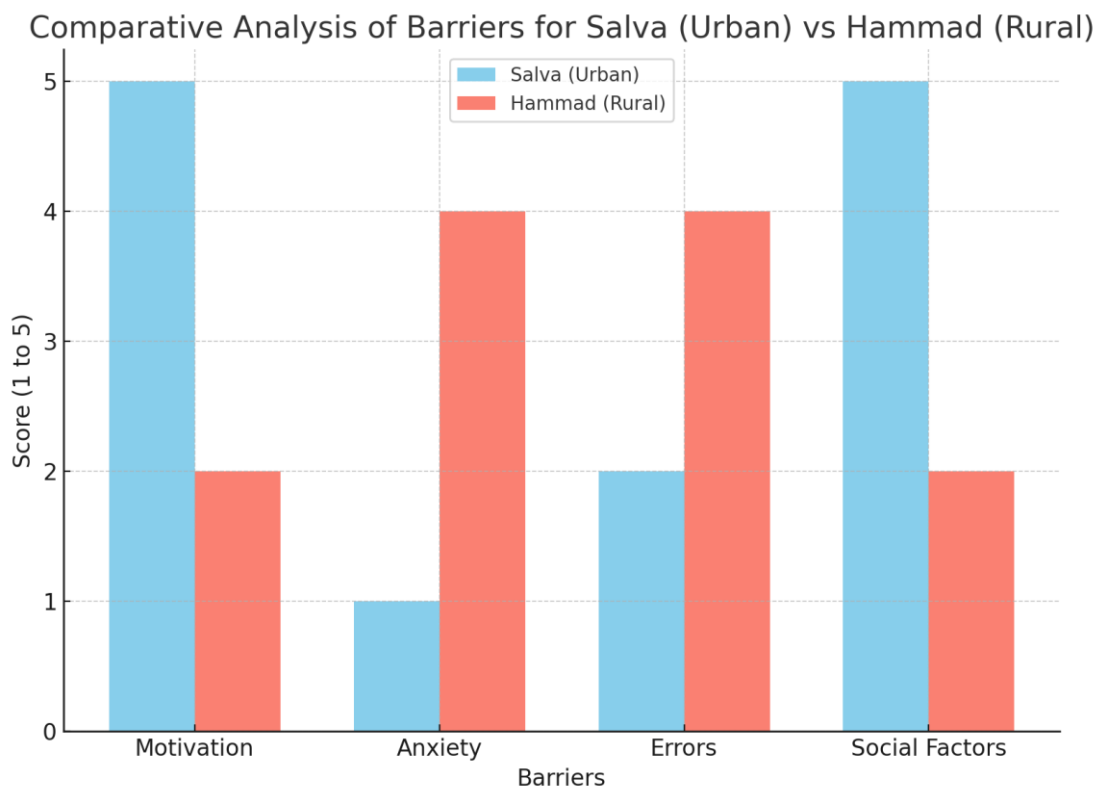
### Research Methodology

This research takes a qualitative case study method to examine the obstacles experienced by rural L2 learners in the primary level. Data collection was conducted via observations, interviews, and written examinations. Two subjects, Hammad Yameen and Salva Naveed, were chosen based on their different backgrounds: Hammad comes from a rural background, whereas Salva is from an urban background. Both students are enrolled in private schools in Sahiwal, but their English exposure differs significantly.

The process of data collection included the observation of the learners' classroom behavior, interviewing them to know about their experience with L2 learning, and a written test to evaluate their grammatical accuracy. The mixed-method approach is intended to offer a complete analysis of the determinants of L2 learning in rural settings.

### Analysis

#### "Comparative Analysis of Barriers to English Learning: Salva (Urban) vs Hammad (Rural)"



The bar graph contrasts obstacles to learning English for Salva (urban) and Hammad (rural). Salva demonstrates more motivation and less anxiety, whereas Hammad exhibits more anxiety and more errors. Salva is helped by more



## Vol. 3 No. 3 (March) (2025)

exposure to English, as evidenced by higher scores for social factors. Hammad, on the other hand, has more difficulty with everything. The graph points up the dramatic effect of urban vs. rural backgrounds on L2 learning.

### **Motivation**

Salva showed strong motivation to learn English, as indicated by her eagerness to practice speaking and find ways to apply the language. Hammad's motivation was more instrumental; he saw learning English as a means to an end, that is, to get a job, and not as a pleasurable or satisfying activity.

### **Anxiety**

Anxiety was a major hindrance for Hammad. He frequently avoided speaking English in class because he was afraid of committing errors. This was not the situation for Salva, who was confident and fluent in her spoken English. The disparity in the anxiety levels of the two learners can be explained by their self-esteem and the level of comfort they have in speaking English.

### **Errors Analysis**

Both students made mistakes, yet the type of their errors varied. Hammad's mistakes typically stemmed from L1 rule overgeneralization, whereas Salva's mistakes occurred less often and were more of a vocabulary kind than structural nature.

### **Social Factors**

The learning environments of the learners significantly influenced their L2 learning experiences. Salva's urban environment exposed her to more English, whereas Hammad's rural environment restricted his practice opportunities outside school.

### **Conclusion**

This case study presents the major hindrances for rural L2 learners in Sahiwal, based on motivation, anxiety, and social issues. It is evident that rural learners, such as Hammad, have more challenges to learn English as a result of a lack of motivation, inadequate exposure, and fear of mistakes. However, urban learners, such as Salva, have more advantages from proper exposure and greater motivation.

To fix these problems, it is advisable that teachers pay attention to establishing a low-anxiety and supportive learning environment, promote increased interactive speaking activities, and incorporate cultural dimensions of English into teaching. Additionally, policymakers need to invest in teacher education to ensure teachers have the abilities to meet the various needs of L2 learners.

### **Referances**

- Akbari, E., Pilot, A., & Simons, P. R. J. (2015). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in foreign language learning through Facebook. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 48, 126-134.
- Allen, L., & Kelly, B. B. (2015). *Child Development and Early Learning*. Nih.gov; National Academies Press (US). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK310550/>





## Vol. 3 No. 3 (March) (2025)

- Anburaj, P., & Christopher, P. (2015). Barriers in Teaching English. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 20(9), 67–70. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-20966770>
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press
- Cook, V. (2008). *Second language learning and language teaching*. (4th ed). London & New York: Routledge.
- Cook, V. (2016). *Second language learning and language teaching*. Routledge.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2006). Individual differences in second language acquisition. *AILA review*, 19(1), 42-68.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. (No Title).
- Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. (No Title).
- Lightbown, P. M. (2016). From language learner to language learning researcher. In *Becoming and being an applied linguist* (pp. 175-212). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Methods and results in the study of anxiety and language learning: A review of the literature. *Language learning*, 41(1), 85-117.
- Second language acquisition/ learning Introduction to Linguistics -LANE 321  
Lecturer: Haifa Alroqi. (n.d.). [https://www.kau.edu.sa/Files/0008718/files/16804\\_lecture%2017.pdf](https://www.kau.edu.sa/Files/0008718/files/16804_lecture%2017.pdf)
- Zephie Andrada. (2015, November 20). *Hallmark of language development*. [https://www.slideshare.net/niah\\_cute008/hallmark-of-language-development](https://www.slideshare.net/niah_cute008/hallmark-of-language-development)