

EVALUATING THE NEED OF DESIGNING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE MATERIALS FOR DEVELOPING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

1. **Ms. Quratulain Arshad,**

PhD Scholar, Hazara University Mansehra

Email: qurat.arsh@gmail.com

2. **Dr. Ghani Rahman**

Assistant professor Hazara university

Mansehra, Pakistan Email: Ghani_saba@yahoo.com

Abstract

This research is aimed to evaluate the need of designing culturally appropriate materials for developing English speaking skill at undergraduate level. The study is a qualitative in its approach and takes insight from thematic analysis by using non probability sampling of 15 students and 5 teachers from public universities in southern Punjab, Pakistan. The participants are interviewed by semi structured technique and an assessment of the speaking materials utilized in undergraduate-level courses based on teaching materials and teacher-made tasks and lesson plans. The investigations of interviews and document examination reveal four main themes regarding the necessity of culturally appropriate teaching materials for English speaking development at the undergraduate student level. They are cultural relevance and inclusion, cognitive and linguistic scaffolding, language skill development, and confidence building and student engagement. Finally results from undergraduate students and instructors along with material evaluations show that culturally disconnected speaking tasks create major impediments to student participation and acquisition of oral proficiency and communicative ability.

Key Words: Cultural Appropriateness, Materials, Speaking Skills, Graduate Level.

Introduction

English speaking capability remains a core learning target inside the ESL educational systems throughout Pakistan (Li & Akram, 2023, 2024). The educational resources used within classrooms mainly overlook students' cultural environment, communicative requirements, and social language patterns, especially in undergraduate programs. The cultural mismatch in language instruction throughout postcolonial and multilingual nations results in poor oral skills and eliminates student self-confidence and their natural connection to learning activities (McKay, 2005). The paper needs to develop specific speaking resources that adapt to undergraduate-level English learning needs for academic-professional-social abilities while respecting heritage cultural principles.

Language forms an unavoidable connection with culture since it demonstrates cultural identity characteristics while molding it. Kramsch (1998) explains that communication emerges from a cultural setting, so language instruction becomes successful when teaching approaches include materials that relate to student life experiences. Numerous undergraduate-level English-speaking curricula use imported instructional materials that lack cultural relevance despite their linguistic quality (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022), reducing the learning effectiveness and practical application (Hamid, 2024). When instructional content fails to match learners' everyday experiences, there is a high likelihood of surface-level learning that will not apply to real-life conversations.

Advanced students need to navigate specific linguistic requirements because of their academic standing (Ramzan et al., 2020, 2023). Students must first learn conversational English and academic discourse competency while acquiring professional presentation skills and context-specific communicative strategies (Hyland, 2014; Ramzan & Khan, 2024; Nawaz et al., 2021). The current materials disregard the native circumstances and typical interaction

patterns of their users. Education materials based on Western holidays with customs or institutional examples frequently confuse South Asian students and those studying in the Middle East and African countries. Under these conditions, learners experience difficulties with authentic communication and fluid speech rather than vocabulary or grammatical problems due to mismatched context and content (Canagarajah, 2005; Ramzan et al., 2021, 2023).

When learning materials align with learners' cultural backgrounds, these materials help students better understand language, develop critical thinking skills, and improve speaking abilities (Andleeb et al., 2022; Ramzan & Javaid, 2023). Research indicates that students become engaged learners while taking linguistic chances when materials present things that align with their personal experiences, including local festive events, familial matters, academic settings, and current political discussions. Cultural appropriateness as a principle excludes the idea that it must lead to isolation from other cultures. Global English norms have become an essential component of pedagogy, and teachers blend them with classroom communication needs, resulting in adaptable and fluent language speakers (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

The worldwide understanding regarding culturally responsive teaching has been achieved, but material development opportunities persist as a significant challenge, particularly within undergraduate-level speaking skills instruction. Modern textbooks focus mainly on reading and writing while ignoring speaking as a secondary aspect regardless of cultural etiquettes and multilingual competency or pragmatic considerations (Alptekin, 2002). Students aiming for international careers or undergraduate research and global collaboration must deal with serious challenges because the requirements include precise language use and cultural competence. This paper examines the essential requirement of creating culturally specific materials for English-speaking skill enhancement among undergraduate students. It explores the current instructional resources that lack proper representation of learner cultural characteristics. It views the educational advantages of tasks focusing on local speech and incorporating cultural discourse elements.

Literature Review

Bearing pedagogically valid and culturally relevant characteristics are essential for materials that help under graduate students develop their English speaking abilities (Taylor & Sobel, 2011). Language and cultural components lie inseparable from one another which establish cultural sensitivity as an essential component of English Language Teaching (ELT). Learning materials featuring cultural sensitivity allow appreciation of different student backgrounds which creates an open learning space that works better for all participants (Kurel, 2016). Muxlisaxon (2024) describes that ESL material development requires teachers to use materials which display sensitivity toward diverse cultural viewpoints while maintaining respectful content. The method delivers two educational benefits by sustaining student interest as well as developing their understanding of target language culture (Bucholtz et al., 2017). When instruction emphasizes student cultural experiences during learning it results in better academic performance as well as enhanced student engagement (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). They explore methods for building learning spaces which recognize and appreciate the cultural backgrounds of English language learners (ELLs). This study demonstrates why educational success depends on teaching methods that respect cultural backgrounds together with peer-based learning opportunities and training students to listen and communicate politely.

Students need evaluations for cultural content in their English language textbooks to determine if learning materials work well for different student backgrounds. The research

evaluating Indonesian ESL textbook cultural content demonstrated ineffective language instruction takes place when cultural elements are omitted from language education. According to research culture must become an essential part of student education to enhance their ability to learn English (Ayu, 2020). English language educators recommend authentic materials as resources created by native speakers because such materials expose learners to natural speech patterns alongside cultural nuances found in real-life language use. Castillo et al. (2017) reveals how authentic materials allow ESL students to improve both their communicative competence and their understanding of cultural elements. Exclusive usage of authentic materials during speaking classes helps teachers provide students with educational experiences which duplicate natural communication situations (Ayu, 2020).

The critical nature of cultural content in ELT materials emerges as an obstacle for delivering proper implementation. Spack (2002) demonstrated that educational materials neglect native students' cultural roots from spreading English norms from America. Learners often lose their attention because the education material does not conform to their cultural frameworks. Material developers together with educators should adopt new approaches which give cultural relevance center stage. The material selection process should involve learners as well as the implementation of local examples and contextual understanding and cultural sensitivity awareness throughout all stages (Yalcinkaya, 2008). Lafayette (1978) presented five cultural strategies for teaching that demand the incorporation of student cultural references throughout all educational content. Under graduate-level development of English speaking abilities requires culturally appropriate materials to act as a basic requirement instead of an additional component. Research shows striking similarities between student cultures within educational resources helps students gain comprehension while upgrading their language proficiency. Educational materials for language learning should embrace cultural relevance because this will create meaningful learning experiences that lead to effective bilingual education outcomes (Cheng et al., 2004).

Statement of the Problem

Many under graduate-level curricula at non-native English-speaking universities depend too much on standardized Western materials that fail to represent students' cultural backgrounds despite worldwide interest in communicative competence and intercultural communication in English education. The materials present social norms along with idioms and interaction patterns which students find unfamiliar thus creating learner alienation when they struggle to speak English naturally. The inability to convert written skills into spoken skills becomes a significant challenge for under graduate students because they need proficiency in confidence combined with cultural sensitivity and pragmatic skills for academic and professional settings. The absence of speaking materials align with cultural norms results in major gaps between language content and cultural context which dismantles student interest and affects their performance quality and study motivation. The current lack of speaking materials poses serious challenges to under graduates who need to participate in seminars while giving presentations professionally in English. The immediate requirement exists to develop speaking materials that align with their cultural contexts and follow pedagogical best practices.

The Significance of the Study

The research advances the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) through its recommendation to develop applicable speaking materials that maintain accurate language structure and cultural precedence for deep learner immersion. Research findings will help material developers together with language instructors and curriculum makers understand why student cultural backgrounds require integration in language education to make more inclusive learning methods effective. Using familiar local cultural references enables learners

to gain empowerment when expressing themselves in English while keeping their cultural identity intact within postcolonial societies that are multilingual. International learning environments demand fluency development through culturally appropriate teaching methods to create both communication skills and intercultural abilities which students need locally and globally.

Rationale of the Study

The most efficient method of language acquisition happens when instructional content presents meaningful learning experiences for students. According to research in applied linguistics and sociocultural theory the acquisition of language does not rely solely on cognitive processing because it involves social practices that reflect learners' cultural roots and personal experiences and their identities (Vygotsky 1978, Kramsch 1993). Studies of ELT speaking materials commonly fail to recognize language as a cultural tool for communication instead presenting it as a universal linguistic skill. Academic and professional communication demands students who have achieved language proficiency to advance their abilities toward this level of sophistication during their under graduate education period. Instructional methods that use standardized speech techniques apart from contextual cultural practices will fail to achieve goals concerning relevance as well as confidence and fluency for students. The study justifies its objectives to analyze current instructional practices while detecting cultural inconsistencies in speaking resources and creating content that matches the linguistic requirements and cultural context of under graduate students. The research addresses an ongoing challenge in ESL education while helping to achieve decolonized English language teaching and learner-oriented equity through its findings.

Research Methodology

1. Research Paradigm

This investigation adopts the interpretivist paradigm because it understands knowledge emerges from social construction and depends on specific contexts. The use of interpretivist research method proves appropriate for under graduate-level English language education since it focuses on understanding teachers and learners' individual backgrounds and experiences. The research provides in-depth understanding regarding the impact of relevant and irrelevant cultural content on teaching materials on speaking ability acquisition.

2. Research Design

A qualitative exploratory design was chosen because it works well in studying under-researched educational problems when traditional theories and solutions are insufficient. This design is selected to evaluate the attitudes of both learners and teaching staff members. It further evaluates the cultural deficiencies present in current educational materials used for teaching. The researcher needs to comprehend how cultural elements influence both student speaking performance and student engagement.

3. Participants and Sampling

Sampling Strategy:

The research employs non-probability purposive sampling to select participants who either teach or study English at under graduate student level. Participants are from the English language courses at the under graduate level contained between 15 students and 5 English language instructors at private universities. Curriculum developers and academic coordinators who work on material selection and textbook development may be included as option participants.

Inclusion Criteria:

Those who participate in this study must enroll in undergraduate English language classes at present or finished their studies within the last twelve months. Each instructor should demonstrate at least 2 years teaching experience in the fields of communicative skills and English language proficiency.

4. Data Collection Methods

a. Semi-Structured Interviews

Data collection involved students as well as faculty members. The participants discussed their personal views about existing speaking materials along with cultural suitability and the obstacles in implementing them.

b. Sample questions include

The students should rate their level of understanding regarding speaking tasks and topics presented inside their learning materials.

What was the cultural mismatch experience you had in your speaking lessons?

c. Document Analysis

An assessment of the speaking materials utilized in under graduate-level courses based on textbooks and teacher-made tasks and lesson plans.

Assessed for:

Cultural content and relevance.

Representation of local values, settings, and communicative practices.

Students receive genuine circumstances that support effective speaking practice.

5. Data Analysis

The six-phase thematic analysis of (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is used to code interview transcripts during the data analysis phase.

Familiarization with the data.

Generating initial codes.

Searching for themes.

Reviewing themes.

Defining and naming themes.

Producing the report.

A repeated analysis of these patterns will be the main point of study:

Cultural mismatch or relevance.

Learner motivation and fluency development.

Suggested improvements for local material design.

6. Trustworthiness and Validity

The study implements various strategies to establish credibility and transferability in addition to dependability and confirmability. Members will receive interview summaries for evaluation of interpretation accuracy during member checking. Researchers use triangulation methods which combine the analysis of interviews and document research findings to obtain cross-verification. The researcher presents thorough background information about participants' answers to make results transferable between different contexts. Throughout the research development phase the researcher will perform reflexive journaling to evaluate both their positionality and assumptions.

7. Ethical Considerations

The study will provide entire participant awareness regarding its objectives alongside information about data utilization together with a clear explanation regarding withdrawal options. Dependent data storage methods and pseudonym use will protect participant confidentiality. An ethical approval from the host institution or university will be acquired as

part of institutional approval processes. What is the need of designing culturally appropriate materials for developing English speaking skill at the undergraduate level?

Results

Investigations of interviews discussions and document examination revealed four main themes regarding the necessity of culturally appropriate teaching materials for English speaking development at the under graduate student level. The following section displays the study results through participant quotes which support critical observations.

1. Cultural Relevance and Inclusion

The analyzed codes revealed Cultural Inclusion as well as Sense of Belonging and Motivation within the data. The participants stated that tasks which linked to familiar cultural elements from their local context created stronger feelings of belonging and better participation motivation. Through inclusive content delivery students could establish stronger connections to their work which helped them become more participative during English discussions. I felt enthusiastic and proud to communicate whenever we studied local customs or family traditions inside the classroom. This experience made me feel that my words had worth. Student Participant 4 Students demonstrated unsuccessful English delivery while discussing Western themes and events such as Halloween parties and baseball matches since their contributions were limited to mechanical memorization.

2. Cognitive and Linguistic Scaffolding

The strategy of using L1 combined with reduced cognitive workload proved effective for teaching purposes. The educational practice of employing L1 in strategic fashion to make complex concepts more understandable emerged as a central teaching approach. The teaching implementation of L1 explanations along with examples succeeded in lowering students' mental workload thus helping them better understand complex subject matter and convert it into English practice. I start each task by delivering an Urdu explanation to students particularly when the subject involves cultural sensitivity. Students become confident English expressers when they completely understand the target information. Instructor Participant 3 Students transformed their ideas more effectively through scaffolding during three major speaking activities which demanded storytelling and role play or debate approaches.

3. Language Skill Development

The speech improvement code merged with comprehension vocabulary development code and sentence structure grammar code. The research data showed conclusively that materials based on local cultural content can positively affect language growth in various aspects. When language tasks matched what students knew from their daily life the students developed better fluency together with vocabulary learning and improved their ability to form sentences. Students testified that they expressed themselves freely using full sentences while discussing things which they knew well. The discussion about festivals at our area assisted my ability to remember new words. The familiarity with my subject matter made me complete my statements naturally without pausing for long. Student Participant 6 Teaching staff observed students maintain continuous spontaneous speech as well as demonstrate better acquisition of grammar and understanding when studying familiar content.

4. Confidence Building and Student Engagement

Culturally responsive approaches in teaching methods produced immediate results by building stronger confidence levels and higher classroom involvement in students. The students avoided speaking English before started leading oral activities and asking questions while freely contributing in discussions. Previously I remained silent since I dreaded showing errors to others. The topics we discuss about authentic cultural items now bring me both comfort and enthusiasm when I speak. Student Participant 2 The educational environment

changed with students who typically remained quiet starting to express their thoughts and school morale rising especially in student-led speaking activities.

Document Analysis Results

The analysis of three widely used English speaking textbooks revealed:

- Minimal representation of South Asian or local cultural content.
- Speaking tasks heavily focused on Western holidays, hobbies, and travel.
- A lack of scaffolding for culturally appropriate academic discourse, such as debate, seminar discussions, or research presentations common in under graduate settings.

This reinforces participants' concerns and validates the inadequacy of current materials in meeting under graduate learners' real-world communicative needs.

Summary of Key Findings

Serial Number	Potential Theme	Related Codes	Description
1	Cultural Relevance and Inclusion	Cultural Inclusion, Sense of Belonging, Motivation	Incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into lessons to foster a sense of belonging, upsurge enthusiasm, and brand erudition further relevant.
2	Cognitive Linguistic Scaffolding	Use of L1, Reducing Cognitive Load	Allowing the use of L1 and other strategies to reduce cognitive strain, facilitating smoother language acquisition.
3	Language Skill Development	Fluency Improvement, Comprehension and Vocabulary, Sentence Structure and Grammar	Improving various language skills, including fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary, and sentence structure through culturally relevant content and scaffolding.
4	Confidence Building and Student Engagement	Confidence Building, Motivation	Strategies aimed at boosting students' confidence and enthusiasm for learning through culturally responsive teaching practices.

Discussion

This investigation confirms that materials adapting to specific cultural contexts function excellently to increase English verbalization competencies specifically among university

degree students facing demanding professional challenges. The four themes Cultural Relevance and Inclusion, Cognitive and Linguistic Scaffolding, Language Skill Development, and Confidence Building highlight both the linguistic and psychological dimensions of language learning in a multicultural context. The subject of cultural inclusion demonstrates the language's cultural nature according to Kramsch (1998) because language expressions develop because of context and identity. According to Stqre (2024), learners develop motivation to speak through feeling a sense of belonging similarly to the findings in this study. Their work established that culture remains essential for communicative competence. The research expands previous work by showing identity validation in course material creates greater speaking output alongside critical thinking development. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory finds support in the second theme's exploration of L1 and contextual cues which provide cognitive scaffolding for students. The instructional techniques used for graduate students help decrease anxiety levels while simultaneously helping them become more competent. Exploratory research has verified that controlled L1 utilization generates L2 performance improvements since this method increasingly appears in modern teaching approaches (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Student language proficiency grows strongest when subjects intrigue the learners. Subjects with familiar material develop their language skills more effectively than they do with generic or irrelevant content because familiar themes provide essential meaning they need to build their grammar and words. Research within genre-based pedagogy (Hyland, 2006) shows that authentic learning contexts lead to native language expression. Culturally appropriate materials have a profound psychological and emotional effect on students according to the last theme. The acquisition of learner confidence functions both through practice and through valid experiences of being observed and listened to. Students who receive validation are more inclined to try communicating in English mainly because communicative risks lead to fluency development (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). The study outcomes prove culturally appropriate teaching practices enable stronger educational environments that empower all learners.

The research findings demonstrate how suitable cultural materials transform English speaking education for graduate-level students. Teachers have demonstrated that language development remains cultural in nature while being emotional because relevance combined with supportive environments and student inclusion impacts learning. Postcolonial education settings and multilingual communities require ELT to evolve toward teaching methods which respect cultural backgrounds and base their practices on learner interests.

Conclusion

The research investigated whether culturally tailored materials should be developed for under graduate students learning English speaking skills and conclusively supported their necessary creation in an urgent manner. Research results from under graduate students and instructors along with material evaluations show that culturally disconnected speaking tasks create major impediments to student participation and acquisition of oral proficiency and communicative ability. Separating speaking materials from students' real social environments creates feelings of alienation in learners even though they have mastered grammatical and lexical aspects. The use of familiar materials which depict local customs together with educational or workplace practices creates better speaking conditions for learners who become more fluent and confident and authentic in their speech. The influential nature of cultural familiarity plays a significant role in language learning particularly in oral communication since students need spontaneity and seamless identity negotiation. The research reveals critical educational shortcomings of standardized Western-dominated textbooks because these materials neglect the specific sociolinguistic requirements of non-native English under graduate students. Standardized educational materials typically neglect to train students for actual academic

presentation tasks along with research discussions and cross-cultural work communication requirements. The research demonstrated that educational establishments did not provide sufficient backing for material adaptation so teachers had to perform content transformation independently without official support or necessary resources. The study demonstrates how English speaking material must be redesigned using cultural sensitivity to achieve better learning outcomes. The production of suitable speaking materials requires joint work from educators and developers together with policymakers to design materials that will align with local cultures and maintain academic standards while meeting practical needs. These measures will improve student speaking performance while upholding their cultural backgrounds to make the English learning process at the under graduate level more accessible and meaningful for their academic career development.

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