

TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES AND
CHALLENGES IN SECONDARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE
EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY AT GHARAAN HIGH
SCHOOL IN ISHKASHEM DISTRICT OF AFGHANISTAN

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A thesis submitted to the BRAC Institute of Educational Development in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement

BRAC Institute of Educational Development
BRAC University
April 2025

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing the degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material that has been accepted or submitted for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Ethics Statement

To the best of my knowledge and awareness, I affirm that this study is my original work. This work, entitled “Teaching and Learning Practices and Challenges in Secondary English Language Education: A Case Study at Gharaan High School in Ishkashem District of Afghanistan,” is authentic, and findings are reported without any manipulation or misrepresentations. I have consciously prevented any kind of bias, personal view, and prejudice to keep a completely natural position during the research process. The thesis was conducted, including ten participants: two English language teachers (male and female), and eight secondary students from Gharaan High School, a rural area in the Ishkashem district of Afghanistan. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with secondary English language teachers and 12th-grade students. One Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held with other lower secondary grade students. This study has the privilege of maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the research participants, and for ethical concerns, the written consent was designed and signed by participants. The thesis is a first-hand paper and is not submitted or published by a third party. The main sources used in this study are appropriately acknowledged following the standard and accurate APA referencing style. I also declare that this paper has followed all ethical and legitimate standards and policies of the institution and followed and maintained all possible codes of conduct.

Abstract

This study investigated the English language teaching and learning practices, challenges, and effectiveness at Gharaan High School in the Ishkashem District of Afghanistan. The research aimed to provide insights into the perspectives of English language teachers and secondary students regarding current instructional methods, barriers faced in language acquisition, and strategies for addressing the pressing challenges. I utilized a qualitative approach, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with two English language teachers and eight students across various secondary grades. Findings relatively show the predominance of teacher-centered methods, with limited implementation of student-centered practices, which hinders student engagement and proficiency in speaking and listening skills. Participants reported significant challenges, including resource limitations, overcrowded classrooms, and varying proficiency levels among students, which complicated effective English language teaching and learning. English language teachers expressed a commitment to utilizing collaborative learning and formative assessments; however, the effectiveness of these strategies was inconsistent due to time constraints and inadequate resources. This study highlights the urgent need for educational reforms that address the disparities in teaching practices and resource allocation, emphasizing the importance of professional development for teachers. By identifying the gaps in English language education in this remote area, the research contributes to the broader discourse on improving educational outcomes in Afghanistan, particularly in enhancing the quality of English language teaching and learning practices in secondary education.

Keywords: English Language, Teaching and Learning Practices, English Secondary Education, Gharaan High School, and Pedagogical Approaches

Dedication

I dedicate the thesis to my parents, who are the source of unconditional love and support for me. They were the most concerned and suffered from the distance during my master's program.

Acknowledgement

Firstly, I am profoundly grateful for all the support and knowledge I have gained from the BRAC Institute of Educational Development in Bangladesh. Throughout one year of education at the Educational Leadership and School Improvement Program, I found all the teachers, professors, and staff supportive and helpful. In addition, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Ms. Hridita Islam, who provided me with technical and individual assistance throughout my thesis journey. I appreciate her patience due to all the particular efforts she made to organize my work, despite her heavy workload at BRAC IED and the University. In addition, it is essential to express my deepest acknowledgment to the Institute of Ismaili Studies and its pioneer program (STEP) for their financial, educational, and technical support from the beginning of my Master's program to the end. Moreover, I am in debt to all my family members, especially my senior brother Ibn Amin Zafari, whose advice introduced me to the PGPP and Brac University. Reaching this place was impossible without his significant contribution. Finally, I am grateful to my study participants who dedicated their time and patience to me despite the cold winter in the Ishkashem district and long distances. Writing the narrative result of this study was impossible without their participation.

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List of Acronyms

CBS Columbia Broadcasting System

ELLs English Language Learners

FGD Focus Group Discussion

MoE Ministry of Education

NA Not Applicable

p.nd Page Not Determined

TPD Teacher Professional Development

UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ZPD Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

In an interconnected world, communicating effectively in the English language has become essential in facilitating student opportunities. Proficiency in the English language contributes to acquiring education, effective communication, and opening international business. For instance, an article by Leppänen & Nikula (2007, pp.347-351) highlighted that English is the medium of instruction at schools in Finland and has been used in business transactions. As the second most spoken language globally, English serves as a bridge for communication among diverse cultures and nations (CBS Team, 2024). Regarding the importance of the English language in global communication, English Plus (2024, p.2) adds that in the realm of international communication, the English language plays a pivotal role; with the advent of the internet and the digital revolution, English language has become the de facto language of the online world. Despite the importance of English language teaching and learning, this language has historically and now is being taught in classic methods in particular places around the world. For instance, according to Applebee (1974), the elementary reading instruction developed in American colonies goes back to the Council of Mainz, which was linked to the religious instruction of teaching. It is stated that the tradition after seven hundred years carried through the translation of the books (Applebee, 1974, p.3). The dominant history of the English language in South Asian countries goes back to the British colony and World War II. According to Kachru (1978), the history of English in South Asia has undergone a significant transformation, particularly post-World War II, and was initially viewed as a symbol of British colonial power and often regarded as a sub-standard language by both locals and the British.

The English language in most of the South Asian countries uses a medium of instruction in the education landscape. For instance, Baumgardner (1996, p.37) stated that the English language holds dominance in postgraduate university education and the medium of instruction at schools in particular countries of South Asia. Teaching practices in South Asian Countries vary according to the curriculum updates. For instance, in Bangladesh, a South Asian country, the Ministry of Education (MoE) decided to replace the grammar-translation method and ensure the development of teaching and learning in this country (Rahman, M et al, 2019, p. n.d.). However, despite the implementation of the reform according to Ali et al., cited in Rahman et al.'s article (2019), the promises have not been implemented as intended.

In Afghanistan, another South Asian country, according to Alimyar (2015, pp.4-8), neither English language is the first language, nor is it taught as a second language, but it is the third circle, which is used as a tool for communication, trade, business, and travel. Historically, the teaching of English as a foreign language in Afghanistan's education system started in the late 1930s from grade seven of junior high school with basic teaching and learning materials (Alimyar, 2015, pp.4-8).

Teaching the English language in Afghanistan has been practiced in traditional methods, which have hindered the students' learning abilities. Despite the importance of the English language, teaching-learning practices have faced several challenges, such as traditional teaching practices. According to Samadi (2022), traditional teaching practices in Afghanistan often prioritize memorization over comprehension, limiting students' ability to engage meaningfully with the language. Furthermore, questioning techniques dominate English language instruction in Afghanistan, yet they often prioritize memorization over meaningful engagement. Modaser (2015, p.nd) found that most teachers use questioning as the main approach, and many instructors assign little time to asking and answering questions in English language learning in this country.

This study aimed to explore the current practices and challenges associated with English language teaching in secondary education within the Gharaan High School in the Ishkashem District in Afghanistan. By investigating the perspectives of both teachers and students, the research sought to identify effective strategies for overcoming the barriers to successful English language acquisition. The insights gained from this study will enhance teaching practices, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for students in the region.

The significance of this research extends beyond the local context; it aims to inform educational policy and practice in Afghanistan and similar settings. By addressing the unique challenges faced at Gharaan High School of Ishkashem District, the study provided valuable recommendations for educators and policymakers, advocating for reforms that align teaching methodologies with the needs of students and the realities of their environment. Through this exploration, the research aspires to contribute to the broader discourse on English language education in challenging contexts, emphasizing the importance of adapting teaching practices to foster effective learning experiences.

1.2 Research Topic and Title

In this study, my research topic is “English Language Teaching Learning Practices and Challenges”, and my research title is “Teaching and Learning Practices and Challenges in Secondary English Language Education: A Case Study at Gharaan High School in Ishkashem District of Afghanistan”. Throughout this study, I explored the perspectives of English language teachers and secondary students from Gharaan High School, one of the public schools in Ishkashem. There were some invaluable reasons for conducting this research. The foremost reason I have chosen English Language Teaching Learning Practices in Secondary Education in Afghanistan is that I wanted to add to the literature of the local area in terms of English language teaching and learning practices and challenges. There are insufficient studies in

remote areas of the country, especially in the Badakhshan districts of Afghanistan, in the sphere of teaching methods and approaches. Then, I want to focus my studies on that particular area. Secondly, I have selected English Language Teaching and Practices because of its worldwide importance. The widespread emergence of this language made it necessary in different aspects such as business, education, and diplomacy. For instance, Leppänen & Nikula (2007, pp.347-351) highlighted that English is used as the medium of instruction at schools in Finland and has been used in business transactions. The ability to communicate in the English language provides opportunities to communicate in the global job market. As noted by Graddol (2006), the English language is becoming an essential requirement for many professions. Therefore, teaching the English language is of foremost importance in an interconnected world. Finally, doing a study on aspects of English teaching practices and challenges is an area of interest. Learning the English language is a global need, and it is my passion to know how this language is currently taught to students through instruction and current situations in the classroom, particularly in Afghanistan.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The effectiveness of teaching English language and learning practices in secondary education in Afghanistan has faced crucial challenges that have affected the learning proficiency of this language. Samadi (2022) stated that the English language in Afghanistan's schools is taught through traditional grammar-translation methods. Teachers have an authoritative role in the classroom, and the English text is translated into the native language (Dari or Pashto). Additionally, Samadi (2022) stated that grammar is the main focal point, and most of the explanations are in the native language of the students. Thus, the classic method of teaching is an old method that only helps the students to memorize the bookish sentences and structure.

As Ali (2009) cited from Menon, Care International (2008), the traditional teaching and learning nature involves listening, discipline, obeying, repeating, and reproducing. According to this description from traditional teaching and learning, the English language is taught in the same way in Afghanistan. For instance, Cannon (2009) stated that the traditional practices of teaching are frequent in the Afghanistan context, particularly in secondary schools. According to Cannon (1963), cited in Ali's study (2009), about half of the English classes in Kabul province were taught by native speakers with Bachelor's degrees in English. The grammar translation method has been used with a fixed curriculum and special textbooks. In different provinces, some teachers had British or American textbooks, while others had none. Poor resources and inadequate teacher training led to ineffective learning and hindered students' ability to communicate in English and develop reading skills.

Furthermore, questioning strategy dominated English language instruction in Afghanistan, yet memorization is often prioritized over meaningful engagement. Modaser (2015, p.nd) found that most teachers use questioning as the main technique, and many instructors assign little time to asking and answering questions in English Language learning in Afghanistan. Teachers spend most of their time this way, relying on memorization (Modaser, M, 2015). Gharan High School is located in the Ishkashem district, which is in the northeastern part of Afghanistan. The selected school presents a unique case for study due to its distinct socio-cultural and educational landscape in terms of English language teaching and learning practices. Teaching and learning the English language have faced certain challenges in this region, requiring multiple studies to find authentic gaps. In rural areas like the Ishkashem district, research is scarce, and it has enlarged the gap in highlighting the English language teaching and learning practices and problems.

1.4 Research Questions

Q1: What are the current teaching-learning practices embodied by secondary English language teachers in Afghanistan?

Q2: How do students and English language teachers in Afghanistan perceive the effectiveness of the current English language teaching and learning practices in secondary school?

Q3: What challenges do English language teachers and students face in teaching and learning the English language in secondary school in Afghanistan?

Q4. What strategies are perceived as effective for improving English language teaching-learning practices in secondary English language education?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explore and understand the current practices and challenges of teaching and learning the English language in secondary education within the Gharaan High School of the Ishkashem District in Afghanistan. This study identified the challenges, practices, and effectiveness of English language teaching and learning in secondary education in that school. Additionally, the study provided insights that could help improve English language teaching practices and outcomes for secondary students in that particular region.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study has several significances, particularly highlighting the practices and challenges of teaching and learning the secondary English language education in remote areas of the Ishkashem district and broadly contributing to the educational policy and practices of Afghanistan for local areas of the country. First, this study further examined the current teaching-learning practices and challenges, provided recommendations for the areas that need to be improved, and contributed to highlighting quality English language teaching and learning

in the Ishkashem district, especially at Gharaan High School. The findings of this study unveiled the current teachers' and students' teaching-learning practices and challenges regarding teacher professional development and their special academic needs at Gharaan High School. By addressing the teaching practices, challenges, and strategies in addressing the barriers, the study would help teachers increase awareness of the need to improve their pedagogical skills and lead to better student outcomes in that district.

In addition, the findings of this study contribute to the educational resources in the area of teaching and learning practices and challenges in Afghanistan. By enhancing the understanding of current practices and challenges, the research provided insights and resources that can inform future improvements in teaching and learning the secondary English language education in Afghanistan. This addition to the knowledge base will aid educators, policymakers, and researchers in developing more effective educational strategies and policies to improve English language teaching and learning practices, particularly in secondary education in remote areas. Moreover, the findings of this study highlighted the importance of reforming the educational policy according to the traditions and local values. By analyzing the challenges and the potential strategies to address them, the study helps to inform the development of the policies that address the secondary English language teaching and learning problems at the national and local levels.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces a comprehensive literature review on current English language teaching and learning practices, related challenges, and factors that broadly influence English language learning effectiveness, particularly in the context of Afghanistan. The explorations begin with teaching-learning practices highlighting the need to shift from traditional teacher-centered approaches to student-centered ones, which prioritize the participation and active engagement of students. As Jones cited in Chandraja (2024, P.66), (Sarangapani, 2020), the teacher qualification and competencies in South Asian countries present the disparities between public and private institutions. The disparities signify that the quality of English language teaching is affected by many educators who rely on traditional teaching methods, such as memorization, in the context of Afghanistan as cited by (Tracy Wilichowski & Francisco Lagos, 2020, p.15-23).

According to the literature, the environment of the class plays a significant role in teaching the English language. According to Haidari et al. (2020) and Wilichowski & Lagos (2020), despite the efforts of teachers to create a supportive classroom atmosphere, there are barriers, such as overcrowded classrooms and a lack of resources to compensate for them. This situation, of a high number of students in a class, affected the students' engagement in learning. In addition, several factors, including resource limitations, teacher competency, and textbooks affect language learning among the students effectively. The availability of relevant resources can reinforce English language learning effectively. Mackey et al. (2007) state in their article that access to quality learning resources, such as textbooks and technology, is vital in improving

the English language significantly. Regarding the practical acquisition of a language, Tomlinson (2011) indicated that putting diverse material in education exposes the learner to real-life language use, which is fundamental for improvement. Moreover, there are certain challenges in the aspect of English language teaching and learning practices. The main problem in this domain is traditional teaching practices, and the other barriers that come along with it are resource inadequacy, large classrooms, and a multilingual environment. To address the traditional teaching and learning practices, various strategies have been proposed. Hu (2024, p.217) emphasizes the implementation of cooperative learning to foster collaboration among students, while Tomlinson (2011) advocates for the development of low-cost, locally sourced teaching materials. Additionally, teacher professional development and resource allocation are considered effective in enhancing the quality of teaching practices.

Furthermore, the conceptual framework in this chapter presents the interconnected components of effective English language learning. This framework gives a roadmap for this research on studying the effectiveness and challenges of English language teaching and learning practices in the Gharaan High School of the Ishkashem District in Afghanistan. Throughout the framework, the study aimed to inform the improvement of English language teaching and learning practices in Afghanistan, especially in the focused region of the study.

2.2 Teaching-Learning Practices

Teaching learning practices contain pedagogical approaches such as student-centered, blended learning, teacher-centered, assessment, and collaborative learning. For example, the student center prioritizes the students in learning and active participation. According to Jones, cited in Chandreja et al. (2024, p.66), student-centered learning is one of the modern pedagogical approaches, which is influenced by constructivist theories, inquiry-based approaches, and experiential learning. Teacher competency and qualification in some South Asian countries

vary from place to place. According to Bêteille et al. (2020, p.140) cited in Yusuf Sayed et al.'s article (2020), in India, one of the South Asian countries, the proportion of trained teachers increased from 78% in 2007 to 82% in 2015. In Pakistan, the percentage of untrained teachers decreased from 87% in 2009 to 94% in 2015, and in Sri Lanka, the percentage of untrained teachers decreased from 4.1 % in 2007 to 1.2% in 2016. According to the facts, it seems that state school teachers tend to obtain more qualifications than private school. For instance, according to Sarangapani (2020), 93% of public school teachers have professional qualifications compared to private schools, which is around 70%. Overall, the pedagogical approaches in South Asian countries include both traditional and modern methods. According to Sarangapani (2020), the Indigenous concepts of pedagogy in South Asian countries, such as storytelling and community-based learning, are being incorporated into contemporary approaches such as student-centered learning and technology provision. The English language teaching and learning practices in South Asian countries are affected by the historical socio-economic and political conditions of these countries. English language teaching and learning practices vary across India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan. For example, according to Duncan and Tasnim (2022, pp.36-37), the medium of the English language in Bangladesh is Bangla and English, which are two different mediums. Regarding teaching qualification and training, according to Duncan and Tasnim (2022, pp.36-37), in Bangladesh, there are about 96,000 who are working at the secondary level and English language teachers receive training similar to other subjects, but teacher language proficiency and resource accessibility remain problematic in teaching competency and practices.

The current teaching and learning practices in Afghanistan's secondary education system, characterized by traditional instructional methods and significant challenges, require a comprehensive examination to understand their impact on student engagement and educational outcomes. In Afghanistan, secondary education teaching and learning practices are deeply

rooted in traditional methods such as rote memorization and grammar translation (World Bank, 2020). Additionally, Wilichowski & Lagos (2020, pp.15-23), regarding the instruction method of teachers in Afghanistan, stated that teachers have struggled to conduct instruction well overall. On average, the participants scored 2.3 points out of five, meaning teachers were moderately effective in facilitating lessons and somewhat effective in checking the students' understanding, but poor at developing critical thinking in students. Regarding English language teaching instruction, Alamyar cited from Hikmat (2017), teaching and learning the English language in Afghanistan is grammar and audio-visual-based, and other traditional methods like teacher-centered have been incorporated by instructors for many years. However, teaching methods are essential in teaching quality as well. According to Azizi, cited by Amini (2024), shifting from a teacher-centered to a student-centered method shows the teaching quality method. This highlighted that teachers in the last years were at the center of lectures; however, some qualified teachers in Afghanistan brought positive changes in this aspect.

In addition, assessment is one of the essential parts of teaching and learning a language. According to Linn and Miller (2005), as cited by Noori et al. (2017), assessment is the integral and systematic process of gathering information about students' progress toward learning. In Afghanistan, English language secondary education is followed by certain difficulties. For instance, Atif & Pathak (2019) highlighted the critical problem of assessment in secondary education is the lack of alignment with the curriculum and student improvement. Furthermore, he mentioned that the teachers do not get adequate training for implementing the formative assessment and providing instrumental feedback. Hence, the education system in Afghanistan has experienced certain challenges in terms of teachers' support and feedback assessment to students. Noori (2024), in his study, stated that the assessment strategy in Afghanistan is following the traditional way, such as standardized tests, which hinder the students' ability. Additionally, he emphasized the critical importance of formative assessment and teacher

continuous feedback in students' learning improvement.

Furthermore, regarding the English language classroom environment in Afghanistan, students struggle to benefit from a safe classroom environment. According to Wilichowski & Lagos (2020), teachers in Afghanistan are skilled at creating supportive environments but are slightly less effective at setting positive behavioral expectations. On the other hand, these teachers score around the medium range in facilitating lessons and checking for understanding, but are much less skilled at providing feedback and promoting critical thinking. Lastly, Afghan teachers are around the medium range in promoting student autonomy, but are poor at fostering perseverance and social and collaborative skills. Therefore, the teachers in Afghanistan need to follow the positive classroom features; for example, Hattie (2012) pointed out that effective teachers try to incorporate a supportive relationship with students and build a safe environment inside the classroom where students can share their ideas explicitly. However, many studies in Afghanistan pointed out the positive clues of teacher behavior in the classroom. For instance, Sayed et al. (2019) pointed out that respect and authority follow the classroom culture relationship between teachers and learners in Afghanistan. Teachers are at the center of the class and try to reinforce the positive classroom environment and keep an authoritative manner as well.

2.3 Factors Affecting English Language Teaching-Learning Effectiveness

Several factors, such as the availability of resources and facilitations, affect language acquisition. The availability of relevant resources can reinforce English language learning effectively. Mackey et al. (2007) state in their article that access to quality learning resources, such as textbooks and technology, is vital in improving the English language significantly. Then, the accessibility to the necessary resources contributes to employing different teaching strategies. Regarding the practical acquisition of a language, Tomlinson (2011) indicated that putting diverse material in education exposes the learner to real-life language use, which is

fundamental for improvement.

In this sphere, the learning facilitation and environment come along as invaluable factors for acquiring a language. Vygotsky (1978) in "Mind in Society" introduces the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), emphasizing that effective facilitation by teachers can significantly enhance language acquisition. Teachers who understand their students' ZPD can provide appropriate support to help them progress.

In the context of Afghanistan, Various factors, including teacher competency, textbook content relevancy, and lesson facilitation, influenced the effectiveness of English language teaching in secondary education. Some literature has highlighted the poor effectiveness of teaching competency in the English language in Afghanistan. For example, Hikamt Ali (2009) stated that teachers are not professionals and have not graduated from the English department but are teaching secondary education in Afghanistan. In addition, Ali's research cited (2009) from the Care International report (2008) that the majority of secondary English language teachers do not understand the textbook, which deteriorates the quality of proficiency of students. Ali et al. (2017), in their study, have discussed several essential qualities for English language teacher educators, such as strong content knowledge, empowering educators, advocating justice in the classroom, and accountability, which shows a poor connection with English language teaching quality in Afghanistan.

In addition, regarding effective English language teaching, learning textbooks and content is fundamental for effective learning. Ebrahimi et al. (2017) highlighted that textbook content serves as the primary resource for both teachers and learners. The study (2017) stated that well-designed textbooks facilitate structured learning, provide essential language input, and contribute to enriched learning. Regarding the relevancy and effectiveness of the English language textbook in Afghanistan's schools, Rahmany (2023) discussed that the content of the book was designed for local purposes, but the main drawback of the English textbook in

secondary education is the neglect of listening skills, which was not incorporated in textbooks. However, the effectiveness of English textbook content is not enough in the aspect of instructional materials since there are multiple types of resources such as non-printed materials, which make the content effective.

Effective lesson facilitation is critical in English language teaching, significantly influencing student engagement and learning outcomes. For instance, according to Yusuf (2013, p.23), teaching facilitation, such as material, is the main component to determine the success of teaching and learning. Modern classrooms emphasize the role of teachers as facilitators who provide necessary resources, support students, and create an environment conducive to exploration and collaboration (Gagné, 1985). Additionally, Barron & Darling-Hammond (2008) indicated that well-facilitated lessons enhance student participation and better educational outcomes.

However, in Afghanistan's schools, external resources such as UNICEF and UNESCO supported facilitation, and many problems still exist. In one of its reports, UNESCO indicated to Herat, one of the provinces of Afghanistan, that girls' schools benefited from the library. Still, there are so many issues related to the insufficiency of resources that challenge the effectiveness of teaching-learning (UNICEF, 2021). More broadly, Safi (2019) stated that infrastructure and facilities in Afghanistan schools present a gloomy picture; for instance, there is a lack of library laboratories and the publishing of updated textbooks. In addition, he (2019) reported from the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (2014) that Afghan schools use blackboards and chalk as the only learning material. Even the teachers were not able to conduct the textbook activity according to the required facilitation. The effectiveness of the English language depends on the materials, such as the adequacy of textbooks, paper, and all relevant learning resources. To enhance the students' language learning, Richards (2011) in Curriculum

Development and Language Teaching highlights the essential importance of different resources from diverse materials in improving the learning style and comprehension improvement. For improving language acquisition, it is essential to provide supplementary resources. Regarding this fact, Hedge (2000) has given the invaluable suggestion that supplementary materials such as workbooks and physical or online resources can support English language learning and provide additional practices to reinforce language retention.

2.4 Complex Challenges in English Language Teaching and Learning

The challenges in English language teaching and learning are complex and interconnected, involving socio-cultural factors, resource limitations, teacher practices, pedagogical approaches, and technology integration. Different cultural context have their influence on the course of learning a language. For instance, Kramsch (1993) emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural context into language instruction, highlighting that neglecting cultural relevance can hinder learner engagement and comprehension. In addition, resource limitation is the omnipresent problem of learning the English language in developing countries. Richards (2011) notes that inadequate resources, such as textbooks, technology, and trained personnel, significantly affect the quality of language education. In many developing countries, including Afghanistan, these limitations are pronounced. Still, the pedagogical approach in many countries relies on traditional practices, according to several kinds of literature. For example, in India, the national curriculum framework is highly structured, with a focus on core subjects such as mathematics, science, and language arts (Goswami et al. (2024). The structured curriculum follows a rigid way, which is unchangeable to update strategies.

Regarding English language teaching and learning in South Asian countries, despite the significant role of the English language, there are particular challenges across teaching and learning in educational settings. According to the Khadka (2024, p.187) article, the medium

of instruction in some of the South Asian countries, like Pakistan, for lower and higher education is the English language. According to him, the English medium of instruction has created linguistic barriers, especially in rural and multilingual areas. The English instruction medium presents the unique challenge of inequality in teaching and learning in South Asian countries. Due to the fact, the over presence of the English language dominates the indigenous languages in South Asian countries like India. Bangladesh is one of the South Asian countries where the English language is the medium of instruction in lower and higher education, and in some cases, this country also presents the unique challenge of English teaching and learning practices. According to Rahman et al. (2019, pp 13-14), the Ministry of Education has decided to replace the traditional Grammar Teaching Methodology and reform the English curriculum, methodology, textbooks, and assessment system to ensure the improvement of the English language across the country. The English Language Learning and Teaching Improvement Program implemented reform and changes with the support of the Ministry of Education and the British Council. Despite the intention and beginning according to Chowdhury & Kabir (2014), the intended program did not progress according to the planning expectations, and several issues remained in the methodology and practices. In addition, the curriculum for English development and improvement is a top-down process in the context of Bangladesh, and the teachers' needs were ignored, according to Rahman & Kaur et al. (2018), cited by Rahman, M et al (2019).

2.4.1 Challenges of English Teaching and Learning Practices in Afghanistan

Several challenges exist in Afghanistan's context, such as resource limitations, large classrooms, and multilingual environments for English language teaching and learning.

2.4.1.1 Resource Limitation

Resource limitations are one of the prominent barriers to English language teaching and learning in secondary education in Afghanistan. Haidari et al. (2020), regarding the lack of materials, highlighted that there is a significant shortage of textbooks along with other educational resources in Afghanistan schools, which hinders English language teaching and learning. Additionally, he cited (2020) Karlsson & Mansory (2007) about the low quality of textbook content with visible errors, which affects the quality of language learning. Additionally, many researchers have emphasized the importance of resources in learning a language effectively. Egbert and Petrie (2003) highlight that limited access to resources such as technology significantly hinders the language learning process. In addition, according to Moran et al. (2001), the availability of quality educational resources is vital for effective language instruction.

2.4.1.2 Large Classrooms

In conjunction with resource limitations, large classrooms for English language teaching and learning are another issue in secondary schools in Afghanistan. Rohini (2013), in a study of teaching English language in large classes in Afghanistan, has written about several significant challenges. The research (2013) conducted in secondary schools in the Kunduz Province of Afghanistan shows that large class sizes negatively affect teaching and learning. He (2013) highlighted that teachers in large classrooms have difficulty with classroom management and control, which also affects students' learning. Another study by Emmer & Evertson (2013) adds that controlling larger classes can be challenging for teachers, leading to behavioral issues and less time for conducting activities. This can disrupt the learning environment, making it difficult for students to engage in language practice and collaborative activities that enhance language skills. The interplay between resource limitations and large classrooms creates a compounded effect on the learning environment. For instance, when

resources are scarce, teachers struggle to implement effective teaching strategies that cater to diverse learning needs. In this regard, Blatchford et al. (2003), cited in Evertson et al. (2006), show that larger class sizes often lead to less individualized attention for students. Resource limitations and large classrooms contributed to the low quality of teaching a language. According to Rivkin et al. (2005), when both resources and class sizes are the challenge, the teacher-student interactions decline and negatively affect language-learning outcomes.

2.4.1.3 Multilingual Environment

Furthermore, Afghanistan has a multilingual environment in most places, which has been identified as a challenge for learning the English language as a second and third language. A multilingual environment is a place where different languages are spoken. The benefits and challenges of a multilingual environment are studied from different angles. Hirosh & Degani (2018) highlighted that individuals who communicate in different languages and want to learn other languages enhance their cognitive skills compared to monolinguals. However, learning a language in a multilingual environment is challenging as well. For instance, Ren (2024) states that these problems have been identified in several main aspects, such as language input, language output, and language confusion. These difficulties happen when learners have difficulty switching between languages, which affects their fluency and confidence. Afghanistan is a country with multiple languages, which makes the learning of a foreign language, especially the English language, difficult to teach (Coleman, 2019). Coleman, a senior scholar on language and education policy, wrote a report (2019) regarding the mother language of the speakers they speak daily and that shows a multilingual environment in Afghanistan. In his findings (2019), he reported that in Afghanistan's schools, the situation of the English language emerges in a low practical way among the local languages, and the use of Dari and Pashto is often in English language learning classes.

2.5 Strategies to Address English Language Learning Shortcomings

Addressing the multifaceted challenges in English language teaching and learning requires a comprehensive approach that integrates socio-cultural relevance, resource optimization, innovative pedagogical practices, effective technology use, and strategies to enhance learner motivation. According to the World Bank (2020), secondary education teaching and learning practices in Afghanistan are deeply rooted in traditional methods such as rote memorization and grammar-translation. Certain studies provide strategies to address traditional teaching and learning practices. For instance, Hu (2024, p.217) in a study highlighted that teachers can actively implement cooperative learning strategies to enhance the ongoing collaboration among learners. Through course learning, students develop comparable cognitive abilities in their brains and acquire the skills to effectively employ this cognition in problem-solving. Additionally, he adds that cooperative learning is significant, since it facilitates the shift from individual competition among students to group competition and also enhances the learning efficiency (Hu, 2024). In addition, teachers and students need to have access to essential materials in terms of learning English language teaching and learning to address the traditional teaching and learning practices. Tomlinson (2011) recommends the development of low-cost, locally sourced teaching materials that are contextually appropriate. By involving teachers in the materials development process, schools can create resources that meet the specific needs of their students. Pedagogical approaches also need to be modernized in order to harness traditional practices. Goswami (2024) highlights the need for flexibility in the curriculum. Educational authorities should encourage a less rigid curriculum framework that allows teachers to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Addressing the traditional teaching and learning practices in Afghanistan still requires different approaches. Noori (2025, pp.82-86) highlighted that Teacher professional development (TPD) is considered a major factor in supporting school achievements, teaching quality, and students' learning outcomes, as it supports the teacher's knowledge to teach better. Moreover, a shift from a grammar-focused curriculum to one that emphasizes collaborative learning is necessary in Afghanistan. Zarif & Rafi (2022) suggest integrating local contexts into the curriculum to make learning more relevant and engaging for students. This approach can enhance motivation and facilitate better learning outcomes.

In addition to minimizing the challenges of teaching the English language for secondary education in Afghanistan, the provision of resources is necessary. Haufiku et al (2022), in their study, found that providing the essential resources addresses the prominent challenge of teaching and learning English in schools. Participants of his study (2022) emphasized that the resources for learning English as a foreign language are not limited to textbooks but include computers, printers, the internet, and many other requirements that reinforce the learning system. In this way, resource allocation, teaching aids, and materials should be allocated more to remote areas where the accessibility to English language learning is limited. Research by Hattie (2012) emphasizes that essential resource allocation, including the provision of quality textbooks and digital materials, significantly enhances language-learning outcomes.

In addition, the large classroom size is a big issue for learning a language and has to be addressed in Afghanistan's secondary education. Haufiku et al. (2022) discussed the class size that should suit the teacher-learner ratio and highlighted the effectiveness of small classroom sizes in teaching and monitoring English language in secondary schools. Throughout their study (2022), participants raised the role of the government in employing more teachers to the ratio of students. Research by Blatchford et al. (2003) points out that the teacher-student ratios facilitate more personalized instruction. In learning a language, this allows teachers to tailor

their approaches to individual students' needs, providing targeted feedback and support, which is crucial for language acquisition.

Furthermore, interactive lessons can significantly contribute to the student's engagement by developing opportunities for active learning. Learners soak up the required knowledge whenever engaging lessons are incorporated. For example, Martin (2021) stated that interactive learning requires the learners to be more engaged in classroom activities and projects. He (2021) further mentioned the importance of a student-centered approach and project-based learning that provide students with more hands-on activities and engagement in the classroom. Laura Baeher was cited in Suwastini et al. (2021) about the essential role of differentiated learning in addressing the multiple needs of English Language Learners (ELLs). He pointed out that differentiated learning requires the teacher to adjust the teaching instruction to the diverse backgrounds and needs of the students (Suwastini et al., 2021).

2.6 Conceptual Framework for English Language Teaching-Learning

Practice

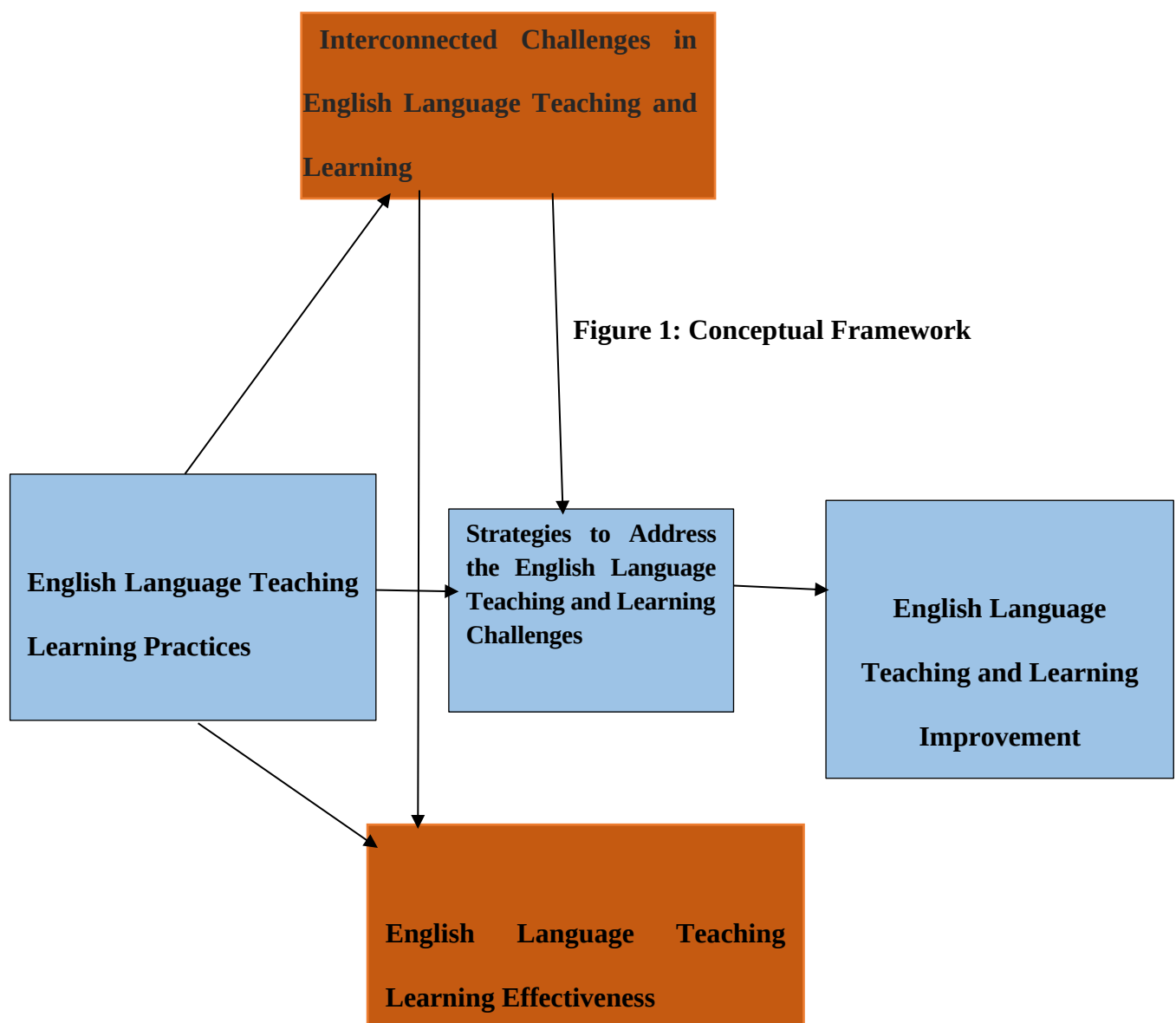
This conceptual framework aims to illustrate the interconnections among key components of English language education, emphasizing the central theme of English language teaching-learning practices. At the heart of this framework is the concept of English Language Teaching-Learning Practices, which is the foundation for all other elements. This theme encompasses several critical factors such as instructional techniques, assessment, feedback, and classroom facilities. The instructional strategies employed by teachers significantly influence how students engage with the material and absorb the content. Research indicates that diverse teaching methods, including communicative and task-based approaches, enhance student participation and understanding (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The second factor is the Effectiveness of English Language Teaching and Learning, which is determined by several interconnected elements such as teaching-learning practices and allocated time for learning the English language. Regarding the challenges of English language teaching and learning, several challenges hinder the process of effective English Language teaching and learning, especially in the context of Afghanistan. The first challenge is resource limitations for language learning. For instance, Haidari et al. (2020) highlighted that there is a significant shortage of textbooks along with other educational resources in Afghanistan schools, which affects English teaching and learning in secondary education. Overcrowded classrooms are another issue that can limit individual attention from teachers and reduce opportunities for student interaction, thereby affecting engagement and learning. In the aspect of barriers, the multilingual environment of teaching also complicates the learning and teaching system.

Several strategies and supports could be implemented to address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of English language teaching. For instance, employing interactive methods, such as group work and peer teaching, can foster collaboration and engagement among students, making learning more dynamic (Johnson E & Johnson T, 1999). In addition, ensuring adequate resources, including updated textbooks and access to technology, is essential for effective language instruction. Maintaining a manageable teacher-to-student ratio allows for more personalized instruction and support, enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes.

Therefore, this conceptual framework for English language teaching-learning practice aligns with my research purpose and questions by illustrating the interconnected components essential to English language Learning in secondary schools in Afghanistan. For example, at the core of this framework is the concept of English language teaching-learning practices, which encompasses instructional strategies that significantly influence student engagement, directly

addressing the research question (Q1) about the current practices among teachers. Additionally, the importance of constructive feedback and assessment ties into research question two (Q2), exploring perceptions of the effectiveness of these practices. Identifying barriers such as resource limitations and overcrowded classrooms aligns with (Q3), while the proposed strategies for improvement, such as interactive methods and resource adequacy, come with research question four (Q4). Overall, this alignment underscores the study's aim to explore and understand English language teaching and learning in the Ishkashem District, providing valuable insights for improving the educational outcomes in the region.



Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative research methodology focused on English Language Teaching and Learning Practices at Gharaan High School in the Ishkashem district of Afghanistan. I have selected the qualitative approach to gather the direct perception and experiences of the secondary English language teacher and students from Gharaan High School regarding English teaching, learning practices, challenges, and effectiveness. Conducting qualitative research enabled me to directly ask about the challenges of the English language and the significant strategies incorporated to address the barriers in the required research site through the participants' views. As Denzin & Lincoln (2018) mentioned, through a qualitative approach, the researcher is in direct communication with participants and can get insights into different dynamics. Mixing the quantitative possibly could not provide me with the flexibility of asking about multiple sides of an issue. According to Creswell (2018), through a quantitative approach, a researcher establishes patterns and relationships through a survey, which could hinder me from going into the depth of the matter. Furthermore, the qualitative approach aligned with my research questions and purpose, which I have established about teaching and learning practices.

I have chosen the Gharaan High School as the research site for study as the region is known for its geographically local and socio-economical barriers. The study participants, including English language teachers and secondary-level students, represent the Gharaan High School in Afghanistan. Their selection was careful due to the purposeful consideration of the study, and they significantly contributed to the data collection process. I employed the semi-structured

interview guide to elicit the perspectives of the English language teachers and 12th-grade students and FGD with lower secondary-grade students.

This research is not void of barriers. For example, there are some limitations such as equal gender representation, technological accessibility, and remoteness of the research site. However, as the limitations are part of any research, I am aware of the barriers and have already proposed a strategy for addressing the potential issues. Through this methodology, the study aimed to state the research structure and contribute to significant data collection on English language teaching in Afghanistan.

3.2 Research Approach

I have chosen the qualitative approach to study English language teaching and learning practices at Gharaan High School in the Ishkashem district at the secondary level. Qualitative research allowed me to gather in-depth insight into teaching-learning practices, challenges, and perceptions of teachers and students. Unlike quantitative or mixed methods, which focus on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research provides rich, contextual, and straightforward insights that are essential for understanding the complex dynamics of language education in this specific cultural and geographical context. Through the qualitative research method, I could explore students' and teachers' feelings, perceptions, and personal experiences of the participants; in contrast, according to Creswell (2018), through a quantitative approach, a researcher establishes patterns, and relationships through a survey, which hinder the researcher to follow-up to the depth of an issue.

Furthermore, conducting qualitative research enabled me to ask about the challenges of English language teaching and learning practices in the context of Afghanistan and what strategies are incorporated to address the barriers directly from the participants' views. Thus, as Denzin & Lincoln (2018) mentioned, through a qualitative approach, the researcher is in direct

communication with participants and can get insights into different dynamics. Mixing the quantitative possibly could not provide me with the flexibility of asking about multiple sides of an issue. The quantitative approach follows a rigid structure and does not allow for the flexibility of the researcher or participants in communication.

Therefore, there were significant alignments between the qualitative approach and the structure of my research questions. The alignment of the research approach and questions ensures that the research yields meaningful data that addresses the specific concerns in the region (Tisdell, 2015).

3.3 Research Site

The study focused on the Ishkashem District of Badakhshan Province, a region known for its mountainous nature in Afghanistan and remote areas, which is significant to study. I have selected one public school from the Ishkashem district for the case study. The school I have selected is Gharaan High School, which was founded in 1985 in a remote area of the Ishkashem district and is one of the significant high schools in the remote area of the Ishkashem district of Afghanistan. The Gharaan High School has hosted about 400 students (male and female) and has employed 20 staff members, but according to the school's closure policy for females, it has 250 male students with females from the primary level.

I have selected Gharaan High School because the particular school represents the local challenges and practices of the English language in that region and hosts the majority of students from remote areas across the Ishkashem district. At the same time, students of this school come from mixed villages. For example, Gharaan High School is located in a remote area of Ishkashem, which covers half the villages of this district. In addition, other primary school students from faraway villages join to continue their secondary education at Gharaan High School. Therefore, the data gathered from this school represents a holistic view across

the remote areas of the Ishkashem district. Moreover, I had access to the diverse participants in this school, which was essential for the research process. Providing the diverse participants from the region was time-consuming, but eventually, it supported a diverse representation of the students and teachers. Therefore, Gharaan High School was essential to exploring English language teaching and learning practices and challenges in secondary education within rural areas of Afghanistan. English language is part of the curriculum in this school, where I conducted my research. The insights gained from this site contributed to understanding how local context and challenges influence language acquisition and pedagogical approaches, ultimately aiding in the development of more effective teaching strategies tailored to the needs of Afghan students.

3.4 Research Participants and Sampling

The overall participants for my research were ten people, among whom two were secondary English language teachers and eight were students from various Secondary grades of Gharaan High School. The teachers were a mix of genders, the male teacher's age was 50 years, and the female teacher's age was 32. Students aged between 14 and 21, as this age frame is normal in Afghanistan at the secondary level. The students for this study include male students, as the current educational situation in Afghanistan does not allow girls to go to school at the secondary level. These students are studying in grades 8, 9, 11, and 12. Among the six grades, only grades seven and ten are left to study. There were rationales for selecting the aforementioned grades over the seven and ten. First, my study was qualitative, and for conducting it, I could be selective while choosing from among the majority of the students. Second, gathering the data from all the grades due to the remoteness of the area and limited internet accessibility was impossible. For example, as a limitation, the participants did not have internet facilities, and I organized them in one of the Agha Khan Education Services. Then selecting grades eight and nine could respond fluently and contributed to the richness of the

result, while grades seven and nine, due to the large age gap, might not have given the same result. Similarly, selecting eleven and twelve grades over ten could provide the logical consequence. In my study, there were two participants from each grade, and this represents an equal participation of the aforementioned grades. I should confess that the student's English language proficiency level was not good enough to interview them in English. To address the proficiency level of the students and avoid discrepancies in data collection, I translated the questions into their local language, which is Persian. I translated the questions from English into Persian, but later double-checked the meaning of the words one by one in English. Thus, I rephrased the particular words while translating them into the English language to convey the concrete meaning.

Additionally, after translating the questions into their language, I conducted an initial interview with students from grades eleven and twelve and they introduced the other participants from the lower grades. I have developed the guidelines and oriented the students to introduce the diverse participants from the other two grades. Then, I smoothly designed the guideline and questions to tailor the various grades of secondary level. Under this approach, students from various levels could identify the purpose and contribute to discussions, which was very important to me in order to elaborate on the various viewpoints in the findings.

However, I had female participants from the teacher's side, but still, on the student side, the female participants were missing. Currently, it is an unwanted situation for any researcher in Afghanistan, as secondary schools have been banned for girls for the last three years. This missing piece affected my findings and conclusion. For example, from the students' side, my research findings do not present the unique perception of female students regarding the teaching and learning practices and challenges. This situation, at the same time, presents the challenge of female education in Afghanistan throughout my findings, since I acknowledged their absence and barriers. Additionally, I was aware of this issue in my research to avoid any

inadvertent and inadvertent bias in selecting the participants. Moreover, I advocated for the rights of female students throughout the findings and discussion chapters by highlighting their absence in the educational landscape and raising it to policymakers.

The number of participants was enough to conduct qualitative research at Gharaan High School. In qualitative research, I was looking for the necessary data, and the number of teacher and student participants was adequate for that. In Gharaan High School, there were no more English language teachers, and the selection of two instructors presents an adequate number of secondary English language teachers. For example, Gharaan High School had two English language teachers, and I chose both of them. Henceforth, a combination of 10 participants from Gharaan High School answered my study's questions.

The participant selection was followed by purposeful and snowball sampling, both of which are qualitative methods. For choosing the English language secondary education teacher, the selection method was purposeful due to their direct experience, insights, and interaction. The English language teachers' selection was non-biased since the two main teachers from the secondary level participated, and there were no more English language teachers to employ other types of sampling. To recruit the student participants for secondary education, I have employed snowball sampling. This method helped me to identify the essential population, of which I was unaware. The sampling began with a small number of students from twelve and eleventh grades at Gharaan High School, and then I requested them to introduce the other students according to the research's expected characteristics from secondary education. The selection process continued until secondary students represented a diverse group and met the criteria of the entire population for my study. The snowball technique of sampling contributed to addressing the bias as an insider researcher in my study. Therefore, a combination of secondary English language teachers and students contributed to a holistic data collection from a diverse population, which was suitable for my research purpose.

Field Plan

No	Research Tools	Date	Participants	Spent Time	Strategy
1	Semi-Structured Interview	13.02.2025	Abdul Annis	25 minutes	Google Meet
2		30.01.2025	Abdul Baqi	30 minutes	
3		12.02.2025	Haidar	35 minutes	
4		12.02.2025	Aziza	35 minutes	
5	Focus Group Discussion	11.02.2025	Waris	1 and 30 minutes	
6			Naweed		
7			Aqil		
8			Saleh Mohamad		
9			Feriadoon		
10			Arash		

Table 1: Research Field Plan for Study

3.5 Data Collection Methods and Tools

In the study of English language teaching-learning practices, I have used two qualitative methods for gathering the perceptions of English language secondary teachers and secondary students. The first method was one-by-one interviews with secondary English language teachers and twelfth-grade students from different grades of Gharaan High School. The interview method allowed me to conduct an in-depth exploration of the teachers' and twelfth-grade students' experiences, pedagogical approaches, and challenges in teaching and learning the English language. The second method I incorporated to collect the students' responses from grades 8, 9, and 11 was focus group discussion (FGDs). I conducted the FGDs method to collect the students in a group setting and encouraged participants to interact and build on each other's responses. This method helped me to reveal students' collective attitudes and experiences

related to English language learning practices, challenges, and effectiveness. The FGD took one and a half hours to gather the information from students via Google Meet. Through one-on-one interviews and FGD, I have tried to facilitate a comfortable environment for participants to express their thoughts freely, leading to richer data.

3.5.1 Semi-Structured Interview Guide

As I have conducted interviews with teachers and twelfth-grade students, my data collection tool was a semi-structured interview. I developed two semi-structured interview guides with open-ended questions tailored to secondary teachers and secondary students to elicit detailed responses about teaching and learning practices, effectiveness, challenges, and student engagement. The interview guide followed the structure of designed questions and contributed to responding to my research inquiries.

Additionally, there were specific challenges in conducting the semi-structured interview guide. One challenge was the diversity of responses, as it contributed to the inconsistency in analyzing the questions since the interview guide questions were open-ended, which sometimes allowed participants to discuss differently. However, I smoothly developed the questions and clearly explained the purpose of the study to the participants. I tried to manage the interview according to the research purpose and gather the necessary responses. In addition, there were a few disconnections due to the internet, but there was also backup internet, which connected the participants quickly.

I developed qualitative research methods and tools in alignment with my research questions and objectives. Through my study purpose and questions, I investigated the current English language teaching and learning practices, challenges, and effectiveness at Gharaan High School, which was the exact purpose. The interview method and guide had the structure to

delve into the investigation of the diverse perceptions, which is going to be aligned with my research aims.

To ensure the reliability and consistency of semi-structured interviews, I have considered some strategies. Firstly, I refined the interview questions by establishing open-ended and closed-ended questions in alignment with my study objectives. This strategy helped me to navigate the same process from the participants to keep on track. Secondly, I kept a record of the responses to transcribe the consistent data of participants' views. I have conducted interviews online and recorded the diverse views with their permission to maintain the objective of the research questions. I conducted Interviews with participants via Google Meet, which was a convenient tool for both the participant and me. Recording features were utilized (with consent) to ensure accuracy in data capture. It took 25 to 30 minutes to gather the data from each participant.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Regarding the use of tools for gathering data from lower-secondary students, I used an FGD guide with a structure that outlined the key topics to facilitate the discussion. The nature of my research questions was qualitative, and the FGDs guide provided me with diverse data from the student perspective to get answers to my questions. Similar to the interview, I could find and establish the alignment of the FGDs with my research purpose and questions. The FGD method and guide's purpose was to gain the collective response of the participants, and it helped me to ask them about their collective perception of teaching-learning practices, challenges, and effectiveness. The research purpose was also to find out the current practices embodied by English language secondary teachers, challenges, and how they are dealing with the dominant barriers at Gharaan High School. Establishing the specific FGD guide helped me to delve into the purpose of my study from the students' angle.

To keep the consistency and reliability of the FGDs, I assured the participants understood the core aim of the discussion purpose of the study and contributed to the discussion accordingly.

However, conducting the FGDs guide was not empty of challenges. For example, in my FGDs, there were multiple participants from different grades, so some participants from higher grades were more fluent in expressing their thoughts. Then, I was in the loop of the issue, and every time elicited the responses through grade eight.

3.6 Role of the Researcher

As a researcher, I had several essential roles: The first and foremost role was to design the interview guides as accurately as possible. I ensured that my research tool stayed focused and allowed the participants to express their views. As Creswell (2014) stated, a researcher is actively involved in listening, promoting further discussion, and managing the flow of conversation among all members.

Secondly, I had the role of keeping the essential participants' views as records and taking note of them where necessary. Through record-keeping and note-taking, I could enrich the data, which supported me while analyzing the diverse perspectives. Then, I translated the participants' views and transcribed the data for coding and thematic analysis. As Braun & Clarke (2006, p.77) said, the analysis should be objective and minimize the biases in interpreting participants' views. I had the role of interpreting whatever the participants' responses were according to the interview question guide. I had the responsibility of handling potential biases and maintaining the objectivity of my study. For instance, in analyzing various perspectives, I adhered to the research questions and purpose while maintaining the collected views. In addition, to avoid the skewness as the insider researcher, in selecting the students for data collection, I minimized my personality in sampling and left it to certain students. For

example, students from higher grades could introduce their schoolmates. This process contributed to the diverse representation of the participants across the school.

Finally, the ethics of conducting research as rigorously as possible were considered. Throughout the research, I respected the participants' views, ensured they felt safe, and protected their participation. I needed to obtain their consent, maintain the confidentiality of data, and be aware of any bias or potential harm. Some of the participants are far more comfortable being mentioned throughout my thesis, and I used pseudonyms for a few of them.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data I collected through my study was qualitative, and to collect it, I conducted one-on-one interviews with secondary English language teachers and twelfth-grade students and FGD with other grades regarding their teaching and learning practices, challenge, and their perception of English language learning effectiveness. Overall, in the data analysis process, I was looking for pedagogical strategies regarding the English language teaching methods employed by teachers, the effectiveness in the classroom, and the challenges of secondary English teachers and students in teaching the English language.

I analyzed the collected data thematically, which was suitable for a qualitative study as it allowed for the identification of pattern insights and themes and provided a rich understanding of the participants' views. To avoid research bias in thematic analysis, I have followed several procedures. The first interaction with data was reading the transcripts precisely to immerse myself in the content. According to Braun & Clarke, the interaction step with data is crucial for understanding the context and nuances of the data (Braun V. & Clarke V., 2006). The next step was to have a rigorous thematic analysis, which started by transcribing the Persian data into text. As my data was collected in Persian, which was the participants' native language, I translated it into English and read it line by line. As I had to translate the Persian text into

English, there was a possible loss of meaning. However, my data was academic and smooth rather than poetic and cultural phrases, and I still applied certain strategies to mitigate the possible loss of meaning. One effective approach I used was to compare similar sentences and parallel text in both Persian and English. Toury (1995) highlighted that comparing and the use of parallel sentences contribute to the translation methodology. Additionally, I employed the online glossaries while translating the technical words. Employing dictionaries contributed to the precise translation process and substituted wording.

After that, I generated codes out of the transcriptions and translations. According to Braun & Clarke (2013), a systematic coding of data reduces the potential bias in thematic analysis. Moreover, I have sought my colleagues' review to check for alternative perspectives. It acted as a triangulation to enhance the credibility of the data. Furthermore, keeping detailed records of coding, theme development, and any changes made during the analysis contributed to reducing any biases. All the measures taken led to the writing of a narrative report on my participants' views, and as a result of my research.

Table 2: Sub-Themes and Themes

Sub-Themes	Themes
Instructional Techniques Student Engagement and Collaborative Learning Formative and Summative Assessment Feedback and Error Correction	Teaching Methods and Approaches Assessment and Feedback

Utilizing Available Resources and Teaching Materials English Language Textbook Resource limitation Addressing Resource Shortage	Teaching Resources and Materials
Classroom Size and its Influence on Learning Strategies to Address the Crowded Classroom	Class Size and Classroom Management
Varying Proficiency Levels Providing Support and Addressing the Different Proficiency Levels	Varying Proficiencies and Teacher Support
English Language Teaching Effectiveness Teaching and Learning Time Constraints	English Language Teaching-Learning Effectiveness

3.8 Ethical Issues and Concerns

To ensure ethical treatment, I have obtained informed consent from all participants, including parental or guardian consent for students from grades eight and nine whose ages ranged between 14 and 16. Participants were thoroughly informed about the research purpose, significance, and their role, as well as how their responses would be utilized.

Maintaining participants' privacy is crucial, and I have ensured that their identities and confidentiality will be protected. I also respected their perceptions, backgrounds, and beliefs. I have recognized that responding to certain questions may cause stress or insecurity for participants. To mitigate this, I assured the participants of the confidentiality and the purpose of the study for academic purposes. Some of them were also comfortable mentioning their names in my findings section accordingly.

Additionally, I was cautious to avoid misinterpreting participants' perceptions during interviews and discussions. To address this, I refined my questions for clarity and explained the intention of the queries to participants smoothly. During the interviews, a few participants asked me to repeat the questions, which they could not understand. Then, I rephrased the questions, and they expressed their thoughts clearly.

3.9 Limitations of the study

As limitations and potential barriers are natural in every study, I also faced some particular challenges. First, despite the incorporation of female participants on the teachers' side, my study lacked gender-inclusive viewpoints from secondary school students. According to the secondary school closure for females, this study could not incorporate the perspective of the female participants, which affected the findings. For instance, the findings of the study lack the generalizability of the results to all genders in the particular region. To address gender inclusivity, I acknowledged this situation as a prior challenge in my study and discussed the rights of English language learning for all genders in my study. Second, I had to conduct the interview guides through an online platform that required stable internet connectivity and technological accessibility. I acknowledge the poor technological accessibility of my participants. For example, for a more convenient interview, not all teachers had personal devices, but I could use authentic resources to provide a proper laptop to my participants.

The third issue for this study was the remoteness of the Ishkashem district and Gharaan High School. The Gharaan High School is geographically placed in a remote area of that district, which affected the data collection schedule. However, I had some reliable resources such as local authorities and agencies to facilitate the process and prevent the time from being somewhat. The findings of the study can only be generalized within the remote area of Gharaan High School and the village.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present my research conducted at Gharaan High School. The findings and study focus on the current English language teaching and learning practices, their challenges, and their effectiveness in that region. The insights gathered both from English language teachers and secondary school students illustrate an understanding of teaching approaches, student participation, assessment strategies, resource availability, classroom atmosphere, and the effectiveness of teaching practices. Teaching methods are significant in influencing the students' language acquisition and learning experiences. This chapter, through the qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, identifies the extent to which student-centered and teacher-centered approaches are employed. Additionally, the chapter delves into the various assessments that English language teachers apply in their classes and the feedback, shedding light on how they contribute to students' understanding and mastery of the English language. Moreover, the findings address the pressing issue of resource limitations, which details how the lack of adequate teaching materials and facilities affects the effectiveness of English language instruction. Finally, this chapter presents the crowded classroom and varying proficiency among the students, and the strategies applied by English language teachers to support the needs of students. The findings of this chapter aim to provide the current situation of English language education at Gharaan High School, which contributes to the practice of English language teaching and learning practices in the region and broader contexts.

4.2 Teaching Methods and Approaches

English language teaching methods and approaches are fundamental to the research purpose and questions. In this aspect, participants in this research were asked to demonstrate the current English language Teaching and Learning Practices at Gharaan High School. Research participants, including the Secondary English language teachers and students, have explained that the current English language teacher at Gharaan High School is mostly student-centered, but the teachers try to incorporate different collaborative learning methods as well.

4.2.1 Instructional Techniques

The instruction techniques that English language teachers incorporate in the class vary according to the interview participants. First, I would like to delve into the teachers' views regarding instructional techniques. For instance, Aziza, the current English language teacher at Gharaan High School, expresses her opinion:

I mostly use the student-centered method. The books I teach in grades seven, eight, and nine focus on speaking, writing, and listening skills. I try to utilize this method more often to keep the students engaged. Group work and pair work are also part of my teaching approach (Aziza, Interview, 14.02.2025).

Teacher Aziza's commitment to student engagement through group and pair work shows a recognition of the need for active participation in the learning process. This aligns with contemporary educational theories that advocate for student-centered learning. However, Teacher Haidar introduced a critical dimension by highlighting the importance of the classroom environment.

I try to use student-centered methods and divide the students into different groups in ten, eleven, and twelve grades so that they can learn English better.

The proper teaching placement plays a crucial role in the teaching of the English

language, and we do not have a suitable environment in our classrooms (Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025).

It seems the teacher Haidar mentioned the different points of view that the suitability of the class environment is important for properly incorporating the various teaching strategies, while Aziza emphasized the student-centered method in class. Now, I would like to expand the English language teaching instruction from the students' perspective.

Following the teacher's responses about the current teaching approach, students expressed similar and different perspectives. For instance, Aqil, a student from grade nine, emphasized that their English language teacher uses the student-centered method occasionally. Despite using student-centered learning occasionally, Aqil claims: "However, one thing that I should mention in our English language class is that the teacher gives more opportunities to those students who are good at reading, while those who are less capable are told to listen" (Aqil, FGD, 11.02.2025). This observation reveals a theme of inequitable participation in the classroom. While the intention may be to engage students actively, the reality is that not all students receive equal opportunities to participate, which can lead to feelings of disengagement and frustration among those who struggle.

On the other hand, the students from the 12th grade explained slightly different perspectives about the teaching methods of English language teachers in their class. For example, Abdul Anis, one of the students in grade 12, mentioned, "In my view, the teaching methods of my English language teacher are about 90% teacher-centered and 10% student-centered. This is because our teacher sometimes gives us homework and involves us, but mostly, it is teacher-centered" (Abdul Anis, Interview, 13.02.2025). This perception reflects a predominance of a teacher-centered approach in English language classes.

Then, the majority of the participants believe that current English language instructions in class mostly revolve around the teacher-centered method, but the student-centered method is quite visible in their responses as well. The teaching approaches can be more solidified through student engagement and learning activities as well.

4.2.2 Student Engagement and Collaborative Learning

The participants were asked about how the students are encouraged to participate in class and what engaging activities motivate the students toward learning the English language. According to the English language teachers, there are particular activities that they implement in class to promote the students' engagement. For example, Haidar, one of the English language teachers, regarding the encouragement and engagement of the students in class, expressed, “To help students learn English better in class and encourage them, we use motivational questions. Moreover, in the literature of any language, effective books are necessary, and every sentence requires an explanation” (Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025).

It seems that teacher Haidar, in order to engage the students in class, uses encouraging queries, but still, the reading activity is not inclusive for all abilities. Regarding the engagement of the students in class, Aziza, as an English language teacher, had a relatively the same statement:

To teach students and motivate them to learn English, I primarily use pair work. This includes exercises and activities from the textbook, which I implement according to the activities provided in class. Another method is the question-and-answer approach, executed in pairs in the classroom (c, Interview, 14.02.2025).

While these methods encourage interaction, the effectiveness of these strategies appears to be inconsistent across different grade levels, as highlighted by students. On the other hand, grade 12th students talked about the shortage and ineffectiveness of the activities in their class. For

instance, Abdu Baqi shared his experience, “The activities that English teachers implemented are gradual and occur once or twice, such as group work to help the students learn” (Abdul Baqi Interview, 30.01.2025). This comment indicates an insufficient frequency of collaborative activities, which suggests that while some activities exist, they are not integrated consistently into the curriculum. In this regard, eleventh-grade students in the interview were required to add their openings. For instance, Waris, one of the 11th-grade students, remarked about the participation of the students and activities:

Our English teacher conducts various activities and exercises in our class. For example, he divided the class into several groups. Some students are asked to work on reading, while others work on grammar, and then at the end, he evaluates their opinions and sees how much the students participated (Waris, FGD, 11.02.2025).

This perception highlights that when collaborative activities are implemented effectively, they can foster a sense of participation among students. However, the variability through experiences across grades suggests a lack of standardized engagement practices. The eighth-grade students regarding the activities in their English language class expressed a different experience. Feriadoon, one of the students in grade eight, stated that:

The activities that our English teacher conducts in class include writing, where he tells us to write down some sentences in our notebooks. He also emphasizes speaking and listening skills. For example, he stands up two students to engage in conversation during the lesson (Feriadoon, FGD, 11.02.2025).

The given insight reflects a positive area of engagement through practical language use, yet it also shows the need for more diverse and frequent collaborative activities to enhance overall language proficiency. According to the English language teachers and students, there are

minimal activities and efforts to engage the students in the class. There are particular activities such as motivational questions, pair work, and group work in English language classes. Indeed, collaborative activities and efforts to create a learning environment are essential, but going ahead to assessment and feedback is also an essential part of teaching and learning in English language classes.

4.3 Assessment and Feedback

This theme is the pivotal understanding of the different assessments and feedback that English language teachers organize in Gharaan High School. According to the insight gathered from teacher and student perspectives, this part delves into the diverse assessment methods teachers utilize in English language classes and shows how they contribute to learning despite certain challenges. Additionally, insights were gathered regarding the feedback of English language teachers on students' homework and different sections to improve.

4.3.1 Formative and Summative Assessment

Teachers Haidar and Aziza have provided significant strategies for the current formative and summative assessments in their classes. It underlines the significance of assessment for English language teachers in teaching and learning. Teacher Haidar mentioned the special notebook, which he carries in class, to keep a record of students' comprehension and portfolio. He states:

I have daily assessments in English classes; for instance, I have a specific notebook for daily evaluations. We fill this notebook daily based on the Activities and lessons of the students, and afterward, we collect it monthly to evaluate the overall performance of students in the annual exam (Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025).

Additionally, he conducts other forms of assessment, which are called mid-term and annual exams, which focus on the written skills of students, oral, and practical evaluation to ensure a

holistic assessment of the students. However, the reliance on a notebook for recording assessments creates questions about the depth and breadth of the assessment. While it gives a structured approach, it may not fully capture the diverse learning experiences and abilities of all students. Delving into teacher Aziza's strategy of conducting the daily assessment in class. She explained, "In English classes for grades seven, eight, and nine, I assign a lot of homework and divide the students into different groups based on the class size. In the next lesson, I evaluate one group from the previous lesson" (Aziza, Interview, 14.02.2025). It ensures that assessment is holistic in her class, and this method illustrates the formative nature of the assessment she conducts in the class. Both of the English language teachers incorporated the different types of assessment and evaluations in classes, despite talking about the effectiveness of that in this section.

In addition to the teachers' views about the assessment in English language class, there are different opinions from the students' side as well. The students' perspective regarding the assessments in their English language classes is, to some extent, similar to the teachers. Students of lower secondary grades have varying ideas about the current structure and effectiveness of assessment in English language classes, but are still kind of similar to what the upper grades illustrated. Arash, a student from grade eight, in an interview, clarified, "The assessments conducted by our English language teacher in class vary. For example, sometimes he gives difficult words to capable students to find their meanings and then explains them to the rest of the class" (Arash, FGD, 11.02.2025). According to this grade, it seems the teacher focused on vocabulary memorization to expand the students' learning. This reflects a focus on vocabulary acquisition, which is essential for language development. However, it also suggests that the assessments may not be uniformly challenging for all students. There is another similar claim from grade 9 students. Aqil, a student in the ninth grade, said:

There are several new words that the teacher tells us to memorize and learn to read and write, which he will ask us in the next session. The following day, our teacher asked us about the vocabulary we had already worked on for homework. For instance, he asks for the meaning of English words, and we translate them into Persian, or he asks in Persian, and we convert it into English (Aqil, FGD, 11.02.2025).

While memorization is a fundamental aspect of language learning, the emphasis on rote learning may limit opportunities for deeper understanding and application of vocabulary in context. According to these participants, there are both formative and summative assessments in English language classes. However, participants presented challenges such as limited evaluation of the students due to the class size, along with the variety of assessments. Formative and summative assessments provide a structured framework for evaluating student learning, and the effectiveness of these assessments is enhanced by timely and constructive feedback, which addresses individual learning needs.

4.3.2 Feedback and Error Correction

In this section, participants were asked about feedback and how the students receive feedback on their learning and homework. The participants believe that the feedback mechanism is an essential part of the learning process. Teacher Haidar stated the significance of providing feedback during the daily lessons. He mentions, “For students who need help, in addition to the daily lesson, I provide corrective feedback. In this regard, I can use external books aside from the English textbook in class, which enhances the knowledge and learning of the students” (Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025). However, another teacher, Aziza, adopts a collaborative approach to provide feedback to students. For instance, in an individual interview, she discussed that topics in each class vary, so she divided the class into two or three groups. Then, after completing their task, she asked the representative of each group to present the

group. Furthermore, she discussed the constructive feedback that she provides for students and homework. Thus, she stated:

After their activities, I constructively provide feedback so that students do not feel they misunderstood the lesson or activity. In other words, I ensure they do not feel that the topic I presented was incorrect, and I help them not to feel humiliated among their peers (Aziza, Interview, 14.02.2025).

This strategy may foster a collaborative classroom environment; however, it also indicates a potential challenge in maintaining consistency in feedback across different groups. Students of different secondary grades revealed that they receive feedback from their English language teachers, and it supports what was expressed about the feedback mechanism. The students of the twelfth grade have mentioned their insights about teacher feedback, especially on their homework, and appreciated it. For instance, Abdul Annis explained that:

The teacher's view regarding our homework and daily activities is that when we complete a homework assignment or activity, he signs it and encourages us based on our performance, which boosts our learning motivation. After the results of the final exam, if I score 90 out of 100, the teacher tells me that I have truly received an excellent score and encourages me to keep working hard (Abdul Annis, Interview, 13.02.2025).

This indicates that positive feedback can contribute student motivation and engagement. However, overemphasizing and praising every single effort of the students without constructive feedback might lead to their complacency. Regarding the detailed feedback of the English language teacher to correct the grammatical errors, Saleh Mohamad, a student in grade 9, elaborated that:

Our English teacher instructs us on where to place question marks and where to use commas and dots; it means helping us correct our spelling issues. Furthermore, he pays attention to whether we have used uppercase and lowercase letters correctly in our writing or not (Saleh Mohamad, FGD, 12.02.2025).

This highlights the technical side of feedback, which is crucial for language learning. The insights presented by teachers and students underline the role of feedback in the learning process and show that the students' mistakes are considered part of learning. Both English language teachers and their students acknowledge the essential role of feedback in learning, but focusing on the technical aspect of feedback could be essential. English language teachers provide constructive feedback, mostly on homework. As we transition to the next theme, it is necessary to recognize that while feedback plays a vital role in enhancing student learning, the resources and materials available for teaching are also significant.

4.4 Teaching Resources and Materials

All of the participants shared various perspectives regarding the English language teaching and learning material at Gharaan High School. The insights indicate the significant barriers and limitations both students and English language teachers are dealing with in terms of resources and facilities. The insights particularly discuss the current resource utilization, the effectiveness of English language textbooks, resource limitations, and strategies for addressing the shortages.

4.4.1 Utilizing Available Resources and Teaching Materials

At the Gharaan High School, secondary English language teachers have stated that there is a significant shortage of resources to utilize in teaching. Teacher Haidar mentioned, “In terms of resources and facilities, we are very weak and lack important materials (Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025). Despite the insufficiency of resources, the teacher tries to utilize his resources to gather the necessary information. For example, he explained, “I specifically use my phone, especially a dictionary, to find the meanings of English words” (Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025). It shows that teacher Haidar employs his individual ability to minimize the challenge of resource inadequacy. Conversely, Teacher Aziza acknowledged the availability of some of the resources for teaching and learning the English language at Gharaan High School. She claims:

The resources I use in English classes include charts used in the grammar section. In lower grades, I explain the images in the book, and drawing the pictures is part of that. In grades seven, eight, and nine, we utilize charts to explain vocabulary and English sentences (Aziza, Interview, 14.02.2025).

Teacher Aziz utilized the available resources in an English language class, but teacher Haidar incorporated his ability, such as utilizing the smartphone and a soft dictionary in class. On the other hand, regarding the available resources to support the English language and utilizing them in class, some students expressed their frustration, which reflects a disparity between teachers’ perceptions of resource effectiveness and their experiences. For instance, Abdul Baqi from twelfth grade talked about the ineffectiveness of current resources. He stated, “These currently available resources are ineffective in learning the English language because the teacher focuses solely on the textbook, reading lines, and conducting brief assessments in the next lesson” (Abdul Baqi Interview, 30.01.2025). This sentiment highlights that while teachers believe they are delivering effective instruction,

the reliance on traditional methods and materials may not resonate with students, who often seek more engaging and interactive learning experiences. Despite the twelfth grade, Eleven-grade students remarked that the English language teacher utilizes the available resources in their class. Naweed stated:

In our class, the English teacher uses current resources such as the blackboard, which is wooden, along with chalk. Since there is no whiteboard, he only uses markers on charts. Chart paper is another material that the teacher uses when we have group activities, but using charts in our class is limited (Naweed, FGD, 11.02.2025).

It seems the current resources in English language classes are not that professional and effective. This old resource streamed across all grades. Therefore, according to the participants' insights, there are at least some basic resources available at Gharaan High School, but not being used properly. Despite the available resources being outdated, utilizing them is not practical for learning the English language. The English language textbook is one of the commonly available resources at schools, which I underline below.

4.4.2 English Language Textbook

The insights gathered from participants show that the English language textbook used in Gharaan High School highlights the challenges associated with this textbook. According to the perspectives, it mismatches the students' abilities. A common sentiment among teachers and students is the mismatch between the textbook content and the students' ability. For example, teacher Haidar emphasizes, "The English books I teach are useful, but they do not match the students' abilities. The current book content is above the understanding level of our students" (Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025). Additionally, regarding the full skills of learning English, he adds, "Among the four skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing, there is a high focus

on listening in lower grades, but in higher grades, such as grades seven to twelve, there is more focus on reading” (Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025). The situation reveals an uneven focus on all the learning skills, which destroys effective learning among the students. Teacher Aziza talked about the effectiveness of the exercises through the English language textbook. She mentioned, “The exercises and skills in these books vary based on different topics. Each lesson has its specific exercises, some of which we assign as homework for the students to work on at home. Solving these exercises can be beneficial” (Aziza, Interview, 14.02.2025). However, English language teachers acknowledged the complexity and ineffectiveness of English exercises in textbooks.

In addition, students from different grades acknowledged that the current English language textbook does not match their comprehension, and a few of the students who attended the other courses could not absorb the text. Regarding the full skills of the English language textbook, twelfth-grade students stated:

Among the four language skills, speaking skills are entirely absent in Gharaan High School, and the teacher communicates in Persian, which is our native language, rather than in English. The only skills that receive significant focus in Gharaan High School are writing and grammar. Listening skills are also completely absent in our class and textbooks (Abdul Baqi Interview, 30.01.2025).

Grade eleven, in addition to acknowledging the absence of speaking and listening skills in their classes, said that the textbook is outdated. For instance, Naweed stated, “The contents and lessons available in our English books are outdated and not very relevant to today's world” (Naweed, FGD11.02.2025). This observation underlines a critical gap in the curriculum, where the lack of emphasis on speaking and listening skills affects students'

overall proficiency in English. Therefore, there are significant problems with the current English language textbook at Gharaan High School. Participants stated the mismatch of content with comprehension, outdated textbooks, and less effectiveness of exercise.

4.4.3 Resource limitation

The insights gathered from participants at Gharaan High School reveal a stark reality regarding resource limitations that significantly hinder the educational experience. Both teachers and students consistently highlight the inadequacy of teaching materials, which is a critical barrier to effective learning. For example, teacher Haidar said:

In secondary English language classes, we face a significant shortage of teaching materials. For example, the most important resource we have is the textbook. We did not have a dictionary, which is an important resource for teaching, for a long time, but now I use a soft dictionary on my phone (Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025).

He further discusses the negative effects of these limitations on learning. Students', along with teachers' perceptions, revealed similar challenges; for instance, both of the students from the 12th and 11th grades confirmed the insufficiency of the resources and their impact on learning effectively. Naweed, an 11th-grade student, said, "We do not have enough books and materials in school. While we have at least some books, they are often insufficient for larger classes, and we lack other necessary materials for learning" (Naweed, FGD, 11.02.2025). It seems they not only deal with insufficient resources but also the current textbooks are worn out and missing important pages. Arash, a grade 8 student, confirmed the shortage of books and resources: "In grade 8, we have few books, and our current materials are insufficient (Arash, FGD, 11.02.2025). Therefore, the resource limitations at Gharaan High School present significant challenges that hamper both English teaching and learning. The insights from teachers and

students uncovered a pressing need for improved access to diverse and adequate educational materials. Addressing these resource gaps is necessary for fostering a more effective and engaging learning environment and enabling students to achieve their full potential in language acquisition.

4.4.4 Addressing Resource Shortage

The insights collected from participants illustrate some of the approaches that teachers incorporate in the classroom to compensate for the shortage of textbooks and resources. To mitigate the issue of limited resources, Haidar pointed out:

I use books that are available outside the school, such as a book called Azerakhsh, to compensate for the lack of grammar materials in class. I also use my books, in addition to dictionaries and mobile phones. The phone is a very good resource for either teaching or learning. We have no other facilities in the school to use (Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025).

It means the teacher uses his ability to manage the insufficiency of the resources in the class. This observation illustrates that English language teachers at least apply an effective strategy to mitigate the shortage of textbooks. However, this strategy in the long term might not be so effective in significantly eradicating the potential barrier. In addition to the teacher's approaches to address the shortage of English language books, students are also reminded about their approaches. For instance, Feriadoon, an 8th-grade student, stated:

Certainly, the challenge I face due to the lack of books and resources is that some pages of my books are missing or torn. I borrow a book from a friend or classmate to take important notes, and later, I read from my notebook (Feriadoon, FGD, 11.02.2025)

These insights gathered from English language teachers and students represent their effort to address the shortage of English language textbooks and resources, but it seems their focus is on addressing the issue of the English language textbook, not on all the resources. The resources for teaching and learning the English language are not limited to the textbook or other traditional frameworks, but also incorporating technology in class is important.

4.5 Class Size and Classroom Management

The majority of perspectives underscore the potential challenge of crowded classrooms at Gharaan High School, which impose a negative impact on English language teaching and learning. The lower secondary grades experience a manageable class size.

4.5.1 Classroom Size and Its Influence on Learning

According to the collected insights, class size is one factor influencing English language teaching and learning practices at Gharaan High School. First, two English language teachers expressed the different experiences of their classes. Teacher Haidar emphasized that the class sizes are large, especially in grades ten to twelve. He expressed:

The number of students in the secondary classes I teach, from grades ten to twelve, is very high; For example, the current number of students in grade ten is 35, which is not a suitable number for accommodating so many students (Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025).

Additionally, the teacher mentioned the negative effects of the high number of students in the English language class: “When the number of students in a class is high and the classroom environment is cramped, I cannot use any group activities or pair work, and I cannot engage all students” (Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025). Despite the teacher Haidari’s experience, teacher Aziz expressed a different insight. She said, “In some classes I teach, the number of students is not high. From my perspective, in my classes, the number of students is

not so high as to create difficulties in teaching English, and their numbers are balanced (Aziza, Interview, 14.02.2025). She mentioned that the absence of girls in secondary education is one of the critical reasons for low class size, but despite teacher Haidar, she is teaching in grades 7-9, which is several students.

Students keep the perspective that the number of students in their English language classes is fluctuating. Abdul Baqi thinks, “The class size is neither too large nor too small, and sometimes we have 30 students in a class and other times 35” (Abdul Baqi, interview, 30.01.2025). It acknowledges the English teachers' view about the fluctuating number of students in English language classes. However, Abdul Annis, in the interview, considers the number of students in a class, stating about their English language class size and its influence on learning:

Our class size is 35 students, which is not conducive to learning, especially for language acquisition. This large class size has a significant negative impact on learning; for instance, we cannot participate in group work, and the teacher cannot check all of the students' homework (Abdul Anis, Interview, 13 02.2025).

The number of 35 students in a language learning class is not normal to be engaged in class meaningfully. Arash and Feriadoon, 8th-grade students, shared about the difficulty they have faced in learning due to the 30 students in a class, which is a similar sentiment to the 12th grade. For example, Arash stated the experience of his class:

The number of students in our class is quite high, making it difficult for us to learn easily. For example, during a lesson that the teacher explains, the students talk among themselves, preventing us from hearing the teacher clearly. There are about 35 students in our English class (Arash, FGD, 11.02.2025).

This high number of students in a class damages the learning environment of the class and leads to the dissatisfaction of the learners. However, grade nine, like other classes, does not have a large class size. For example, Saleh Mohamad stated as a grade 9 student, “The number of students in our class is small, and we are 16 students in the English class”. Therefore, based on these perspectives, the English language class size at Gharaan High School is moderately high and negatively influences students’ participation and effective learning, which prompts the need for effective strategies to address the challenges posed by crowded classrooms.

4.5.2 Strategies to Address the Crowded Classroom

There are varying perspectives of the participants regarding the English language teacher's strategy to address the issue of crowded classrooms. As a teacher, Haidar has confirmed that in classes where he is teaching, the number of students is high. Then, when I asked him about what kind of initiatives, he mentioned, “One method I use to manage a populated classroom is that excellent students read half of the lesson, and another student reads the other half, after which we conduct a superficial evaluation of three or four students”(Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025). However, this approach may not fully address the needs of all students, particularly those struggling with comprehension, as it places considerable responsibility on the more capable learners. Despite the teacher Haidar, teacher Aziza is not dealing with the large number of students; as she mentioned, the number of students in her class is balanced and manageable. This disparity highlights the importance of class size in shaping teaching practices and student engagement.

The situation of teacher classroom management from the students’ angle is varied and opposite. Abdul Baqi and Abdul Annis shared their class experiences. Abdul Annis expressed that:

The teacher does not have a specific method in this regard. For example, some students who sit in the front rows usually hear the teacher better, while those sitting in the back cannot concentrate properly on the lesson. In this regard, the teacher tends to pay more attention to the more active students (Abdul Annis, Interview, 13 02.2025).

This observation uncovers a critical theme of inequity in student engagement, where seating arrangements and teacher focus can create disparities in learning opportunities. On the other hand, grade-8 students Feriadoon and Arash revealed another perspective. Feriadoon has expressed, “Our class has many students. Our English teacher sometimes conducts group work and occasionally teaches us the environment outside the classroom” (Feriadoon, FGD, 11.02.2025). It indicates that the English language teacher occasionally takes the students outside the classroom to do the activities, but it still needs attention to conduct the activities effectively. Henceforth, the majority of the students from different grades, except grade 9, explained that their class sizes are big and uncomfortable for learning, and the strategies that English language teachers use are a handful to avoid the learning issues in crowded classrooms.

4.6 Varying Proficiencies and Teacher Support

This theme highlights the challenge of varying proficiency levels for learning the English language at Gharaan High School, faced by teachers and students. Insight collected from participants reveals the significant disparities in English language skills; some students are good at reading, while others excel in other skills such as writing, speaking, and listening. These variations make the learning process complicated, and English language teachers make an effort to address them.

4.6.1 Varying Proficiency Levels

Insights are gathered from both English language teachers and students. These insights indicate that there are varying proficiency levels in the English language among the students, which presents a challenge in the teaching and learning of this language. As teacher Haidar highlighted, “The levels of learning proficiency among my students vary. Especially from grade ten upwards when students from another school merge with ours” (Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025). This perception shows the impact of student mobility on the classroom, where the merging of different students can exacerbate existing disparities in proficiency. Such fluctuations can prevent the teacher’s ability to create a cohesive learning atmosphere tailored to the needs of all students. On the other hand, teacher Aziza confirms that there are varying proficiency levels in her English language class, and the difference is that there are more students with higher proficiency levels than lower levels in her class. To prove her claim:

The students in my classes have varying levels of learning, comprehension, and proficiency level, but the fundamental issue is that in the classes I teach, the students with higher proficiency levels are usually more capable than those with lower abilities. A small number of students have lower proficiency levels due to various reasons (Aziza, Interview, 14.02.2025).

This finding gives a potential imbalance in the classroom, where higher-achieving students might dominate discussions and learning opportunities, and marginalize those who lag. Eleventh-grade students regarding varying proficiency as a challenge in learning echoed that there are different variations of English language levels, but extend to specific skills as well. Naweed in the individual interview said, “In our class, my classmates have different proficiency levels. For instance, one student may excel in reading, another in writing, and yet another may be better at speaking” (Naweed, FGD, 11.02.2025). The varying preferences for material coverage based on proficiency levels illustrate a critical need for differentiated

instruction. Grade 9 and 8 confirm that there are various proficiencies in their English language classes and further discuss the critical challenge it creates in learning. For instance, Saleh Mohamad stated, “The Proficiency difference creates significant challenges, as students with higher abilities grasp the material better and complete their homework, while those with lower proficiency ask the teacher to explain the lessons more simply” (Saleh Mohamad, FGD, 12.02.2025). This statement underlines the inequity in learning experiences, where students with lower proficiency levels require additional assistance and simplified materials to keep pace with their peers. Therefore, according to the participants’ insight, there are significant variations in proficiency levels among the students in English language classes. By any means, they confirmed the critical issue of teaching and learning among different proficiency levels, and it calls for strategies that add to the challenge of learning in a crowded classroom.

4.6.2 Providing Support and Addressing the Different Proficiency Levels

Despite the challenge of managing varying proficiency levels, English language teachers make efforts to manage diverse learning. Both of the English language teachers in Gharaan High School implement different strategies to pay individual attention to students. For example, teacher Haidar encourages peer assistance among the students. He said, “I make every effort to assist these three types of students simultaneously. I help them myself, and students with higher abilities collaborate with their classmates” (Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025). This strategy reveals the importance of peer-assisted learning, where capable students are encouraged to support their peers. However, it raises concerns about the sustainability and effectiveness of relying on higher-achieving students to assist their classmates. On the other hand, teacher Aziza incorporates groups to facilitate learning among students of different abilities. She explained her method:

To manage different abilities in the classroom, I use group work so that students can share their ideas through it. Through group work, students share their

opinions, allowing those with lower abilities to learn from the perspectives of more capable peers. I typically employ this method in my English classes (Aziza, Interview, 14.02.2025).

It seems that English language teachers apply small strategies to address the critical challenge of diverse proficiency levels. On the other hand, students of different grades think similarly, but are not satisfied with the consistency of the strategy. For instance, Waris, an eleventh-grade student, emphasized, “Teacher groups a student who is good at reading with four others who need to strengthen that skill. He organizes similar groupings for other skills, but these arrangements do not occur consistently” (Waris, FGD, 11.02.2025). This situation indicates that the inconsistency of the group activities suggests a potential gap in the systematic implementation of differentiated instruction. Such variability may lead to missed opportunities for targeted support, as students may not receive the consistent reinforcement needed to improve their skills. Arash and Feriadoon explained the group work and pairing as a critical strategy, which English language teachers employ in the class. According to Feriadoon, “Our English teacher manages to create pairings between students with strong writing skills and those with good reading skills to help each other” (Feriadoon, FGD, 11.02.2025). Such targeted pairings can be effective in addressing specific skill gaps, yet the overall challenge remains in organizing diverse abilities within crowded classrooms.

4.7 English Language Teaching-Learning Effectiveness

The theme of English language teaching and learning effectiveness at Gharaan High School delves into the insights of English language teachers and students. It encompasses the effectiveness of teaching strategies employed in English language classes, and time constraints limit the effectiveness of teaching learning.

4.7.1 English Language Teaching Effectiveness

Different points of view have been collected from English language teachers and students. There are similarities and differences in insights. English language teachers asserted that the teaching methods in their classes are effective. Teacher Aziza asserted, “The methods I use for teaching are, in my opinion, effective based on the available resources in the school. Overall, the methods I teach have had a positive impact on the students” (Aziza, Interview, 14.02.2025). This assertion indicates a common trend among teachers to view their methodologies positively. However, this perspective may overlook the nuanced realities faced by students in the classroom. Despite the teachers' beliefs, students think differently about the teaching methods and their effectiveness in learning the English language. For instance, Abdul Annis mentioned

In my view, the teaching methods of my English teacher are about 90% teacher-centered and 10% student-centered. This is because our teacher sometimes gives us homework and involves us, but mostly it is teacher-centered, which means we lack speaking and listening skills in class (Abdul Annis, Interview, 13 02.2025).

This claim shows the short-term use of the student-centered method. The predominance of teacher-centered approaches can limit opportunities for student participation, particularly in speaking and listening skills. Similarly, another student from grade 11 shared the same perspective about the low effectiveness of English language teaching methods. For instance, Waris stated:

The method the teacher uses in our class is not that effective. This method might be 40% effective because the teacher's pronunciation of English words still resembles the old style, which is not that effective. The teacher's pronunciation changes in some sections compared to the past (Waris, FGD, 11.02.2025).

The grade nine and eight students mentioned the same sentiment that the quality of teaching and learning is average in their English language classes. To illustrate, here is a view from one grade 8 student, “Our English teacher, who is teaching in grade eight, is not that effective in learning. For example, he uses little teaching material, and the things we learn in another English language course differ from what we learn in school” (Arash, FGD, 11.02.2025). This statement emphasizes the necessity of teaching materials and curriculum alignment. The inadequacy of resources and the disparity between different English language courses contribute to a feeling of disconnection in the learning process. Therefore, while English language teachers at Gharaan High School believe in the effectiveness of their teaching methods, students' feedback reveals concerns about engagement, quality of instruction, and resource availability. Moreover, the effectiveness of English teaching and learning is compounded by the time constraints faced in teaching and learning the English language at Gharaan High School.

4.7.2 Teaching and Learning Time Constraints

Students and teachers have shared their experiences about the time scheduled for teaching and learning English language subjects at their school. They are concerned about the limited time to teach and learn effectively. Both of the English language teachers asserted that the amount of time is not sufficient to cover the book. Teacher Haidar said:

The volume of the books I teach in secondary school is large. For example, we have a book in grade eleven that contains 170 pages, but we only have two class hours a week, and each class hour is 45 minutes (Teacher Haidar, Interview, 12.02.2025).

This sentiment reflects a critical theme of curriculum overload. The extensive content that needs to be covered is limited to teaching time, which leads to potential gaps in student

learning. Teacher Aziza also confirmed that the time of teaching is limited: “We organize the duration based on the lesson plan, which I believe is somewhat short and limited. Since the designated time is 40 minutes, we cannot focus on listening, speaking, and reading all at once” (Aziza, Interview, 14.02.2025). She still tries to manage the time, as she stated, “However, I try to ensure that this time does not become an obstacle for teaching, and I employ different methods that allow me to convey the essential topics and points to the students” (Aziza, Interview, 14.02.2025). Similar to the English language teacher, students also expressed their concern regarding the limited time for teaching the English language. Naweed and Aqil presented the sentiment that 40 minutes is not enough for comprehensive learning and converging listening and speaking. To reference this claim, Aqil, a student in grade 9, explained:

The time allocated in our class schedule for learning the English language is insufficient. When the teacher comes to class, he spends about half of the time taking students’ attendance and checking homework. As a result, if the teacher focuses on reading, other aspects like speaking are left out, which makes this duration unsuitable for learning English (Aqil, FGD, 11.02.2025).

This comment reveals the inefficient use of class time. This inefficiency exacerbates the challenges posed by the already limited instructional time. Additionally, Arash, a student in grade 8, mentioned the negative consequences of having only two days of English language class in a week. He said, “In our class, when the teacher teaches two days a week, it is not enough. For example, the teacher assesses us on reading and grammar, leaving the speaking and listening unaddressed. The teacher has to skip some sections” (Arash, FGD, 11.02.2025). Arash’s observation underscores the disparity in all skill development. The lack of consistent exposure to all language skills may lead to imbalances in students’ proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening. The analysis of teaching and learning time constraints at Gharaan High

School reveals significant challenges faced by English language teachers and students. While educators try to deliver effective instruction within limited periods, students express concerns about the adequacy of their learning experiences. Addressing these time constraints is essential for enhancing the quality of English language teaching and learning practices.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I delve into the study's findings on English language teaching and learning practices at Gharaan High School and compare them with the literature. The data collected from both English language teachers and secondary students provide remarkable insights into the current educational landscape, highlighting the teaching approaches, challenges faced, and the overall effectiveness of English language instruction. In analysis, it becomes evident that the traditional teacher-centered approach remains in classroom practices despite teachers' attempts to incorporate more collaborative and student-centered strategies. This chapter explores the complexities surrounding the teaching and learning of the English language, emphasizing the disparities in student engagement and the varied proficiency levels among the students. Additionally, I discuss the significant challenges posed by resource limitations, large class sizes, and the need for effective assessment practices. By synthesizing these findings, the study aims to uncover the issues affecting English language education at Gharaan High School and propose actionable recommendations for improvement.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 English Language Teaching Approaches

The data I have collected from English language teachers and secondary students from Gharaan High School indicate that most participants emphasize that the teaching method is dominantly teacher-centered. This finding resonates with Alamyar, who cited Hikmat (2017), who said that English language teaching and learning in Afghanistan is grammar-based, and teachers have conducted other traditional methods, such as teacher-centered. However, English

language teachers in this study stated that incorporating group activities and pair work is a teacher-centered approach. Still, it somehow contradicts the majority of students who believe that the teaching methods in their English language classes are mostly teacher-centered. For instance, students from various grades report a predominance of teacher-centered approaches, particularly in the 12th grade, where students noted that the methods are approximately 90% teacher-centered. This contradiction raises several questions about implementing student-centered learning effectively in English language classes. Teachers most likely think that engaging the students through group work activities is a student-centered approach. The strategies that teachers incorporate in English language classes do not address the needs of different students. While the term of students student-centered has been used, it is still unclear about the effectiveness of implementing it. For instance, according to Ho Tang (2023, p.72), a student-centered teaching method is where the instructor assigns projects to the students, and students work on projects, such as community and scenarios. In addition, they add (2023) that student-centered learning is a variety of activities and at the same time close to technology. The students' feedback indicates a sense of disengagement and absence of technology in teaching and learning the English language at Gharaan High School. In group activities, students may feel overshadowed by stronger peers, and teachers are required to organize them effectively across all the group members. Meanwhile, the students think there is a disparity in engaging all the students accordingly. This finding calls for the attention of the teacher to all of the students while incorporating any teaching strategy. For instance, McLeod (2024, p.2) cited Vygotsky's theory that when a student is sitting in the zone of proximal development or engaging in a task, providing proper assistance is essential to boost knowledge and learning. Therefore, English language teaching and learning are currently characterized by the traditional system at Gharaan High School, despite the efforts of teachers in incorporating the student-

centered method. One dominant reason for that, according to the students, is that not all of them learn through group work.

In addition, Wilichowski and Lagos (2020, pp.15-23), regarding the instruction and teaching methods of teachers in Afghanistan, stated that teachers might struggle with conducting different strategies in the classroom. This study's findings indicate that English language teachers emphasized that they use collaborative learning activities such as motivation questions and group work. Students also echoed that particular activities are insufficient and ineffective. On the other hand, researchers explain that increasing attention and effective school engagement cater to the variety of abilities in class (Fredricks et al, 2004).

5.2.2 Effectiveness of English Language Teaching and Learning Practices

The findings gathered regarding the English Language teaching and learning practices from Gharaan High School show that there are particular concerns about the effectiveness of English language teaching and learning practices. The teachers express the efficacy of their pedagogical approaches, while students express dissatisfaction regarding the teacher-centered approach and the dedicated time to learning the English language. However, effective teaching and learning depend on several things, for example, teaching and learning facilitation and environment. Regarding this issue, Vygotsky (1978) in "Mind in Society" introduces the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), emphasizing that effective facilitation by teachers can significantly enhance language acquisition. Teachers who understand their students' ZPD can provide proper progress. Nevertheless, teachers in another discussion confirmed the poor equipment in their classes and schools. Then, their teaching and learning, due to insufficient facilities, might be less effective, particularly in English language classes. Furthermore, according to the literature, there is poor effectiveness of teaching competency and facilitation in the context of Afghanistan, which affects the teaching-learning effectiveness. For example, Hikamt Ali (2009) highlighted that teachers are not professionals and have not graduated from

the English department but are teaching secondary English language education in Afghanistan. In addition, Ali's research cited (2009) from the Care International report (2008) that the majority of secondary English language teachers do not understand the textbook, which deteriorates the quality of proficiency in students. Regarding the poor facilities, Safi (2019) stated that infrastructure and facilities in Afghanistan schools present a gloomy picture; for instance, there is a lack of libraries, laboratories, and the publishing of updated textbooks.

5.2.3 English Language Teaching and Learning Challenges and Strategies

The findings from Gharaan High School show the prominent challenges of resource availability for teaching and learning practices in English language classes. In this study, both English language teachers and students asserted their concerns about inadequate resources, such as updated textbooks, technology, and equipment. According to the literature, inadequate resources can hinder the significant learning of a language. Richards (2011) highlighted that inadequate resources, such as textbooks, technology, and trained personnel, significantly affect the quality of language education. Resource limitation is a vulnerable problem in Afghanistan as well. For instance, Haidari et al. (2020), about the lack of adequate resources, stated that there is a significant shortage of textbooks and other educational resources in Afghanistan schools. This shortage determines English language teaching and learning. The majority of the students expressed that the current English language textbook is misaligned with their proficiency levels in Gharaan High School. According to Ebrahimi et al. (2017), the textbook and its content are the primary resources for teaching and learning, which contribute to the learning process. Regarding the issue of textbook relevancy in the context of Afghanistan, Rahmany (2023) discussed that the content of the English language is designed for local purposes, but the main drawback of the English language textbook in secondary education is the neglect of listening skills, which were not incorporated in textbooks. It aligns with the perspective of students who expressed that listening was ignored through the English language

textbooks. To address the resource limitations, both teachers and students try to show resilience and manage the situation. For instance, English language teachers use their individual abilities, utilizing group work and charts to engage the students. The strategies used by the English language teachers at the secondary level at Gharaan High School to address the limited alignment with the Secondary English teachers in Nepal. For instance, according to Singh (Jan 2024), English language teachers, in the absence of sufficient teaching materials, utilize innovative strategies such as phones, audiovisual aids, and alternative strategies, including group work. In addition, Tomlinson (2011) recommends the development of low-cost, locally sourced teaching materials that are contextually appropriate. Therefore, the English language teachers' strategies in Gharaan schools are still creative in addressing the resource barriers.

Moreover, the findings from Gharaan High School illustrate that the large class size significantly influences English language teaching and learning. For instance, teacher Haidar highlighted that in grades ten to twelve, he deals with 35 students, posing a hindrance to effective teaching. The students also reported a similar number of students in their English language classes. The issue of crowded classrooms was reported for Nepal as a south-Asian country as well. Singh (Jan 2024), found that students deal with crowded classrooms, and the overcrowded situation of the class significantly affects their performance and classroom management. According to the studies, there are overcrowded classrooms in Afghanistan, which affect English language teaching and learning. For instance, Rohini (2013) conducted a study in secondary schools in the Kunduz Province of Afghanistan, which shows that large class sizes negatively affect teaching and learning. He (2013) stated that teachers in large classrooms have difficulty with classroom management and control, which also affects students' learning. The study resonated with participants' views that the situation of the overcrowded classroom hinders their meaningful class participation and influences the classroom environment and learning process. In addition, a study by Baker and Westrup (2000)

listed several issues associated with crowded classrooms, which confirms the participants' perspective. The issues teaching with large classes include fixed or hard-to-move desks and chairs, students occupying tightly arranged rows, limited space for the teacher's mobility within the classroom, thin partitions separating classrooms, and noise disruptions affecting neighboring classes. Therefore, a welcoming and engaging environment is necessary for teachers to meet students' requirements and accomplish learning objectives (Bakret and Westrup, 2000). However, Aziza, as the lower secondary English language teacher, reported that she is not dealing with the crowded classroom that much, but still, grade eight reported a crowded classroom. Despite the challenges associated with a crowded classroom, teacher Haidar employs the reading text strategy in class to minimize the issues. However, when students read the text in turn, it is possibly not very effective in addressing all of the problems of overcrowded classrooms.

According to Spencer Kagan (1994), cooperative learning is a strategy to control the classroom. He emphasized that in cooperative learning, students choose different friends and interact with each other, which contributes to controlling the classroom. In addition, Haufiku et al. (2022) discussed the class size that should suit the teacher-learner ratio and highlighted the effectiveness of small classroom sizes in teaching and monitoring the English language in secondary schools. The insights gathered from participants, including English language teachers and students, reveal the complexity of learning the English language at Gharaan High School at diverse proficiency levels. Both teachers and students asserted the difficulty of learning the English language at diverse levels. For example, they explained that the proficiency level of a few students is higher, while the majority are slow learners. This situation makes learning complicated for teachers and students. A study by Mithun & Manjula (2023, p.243) in art and science classes in India shows that the students in each class have different ranges of interests, English language skill levels, and study speeds. According to this study, a

few students in the courses finish the activities quickly within the assigned time, while the slow learners find it challenging to complete them in the allocated time. (Mithun, S & Manjula, A, 2023). Students asserted that studying in diverse proficiency levels affected their skills, such as reading, writing, and speaking. The students' perspectives resonate with a study by Ramesh Bahadur (Jan 2024). The study indicates that weak proficiency levels in students in Nepal hinder effective communication between teachers and students, specifically when assigning presentations Ramesh Bahadur, Jan 2024). English language teachers at Gharaan High School make efforts to support their students with varying proficiency levels. They highlighted peer work and group work as noteworthy in their English language classes. According to a study by Elisabeth et al (2014), group work may not solve all the challenges in a diverse group, but it is an instrumental tool when the students have various kinds of achievement and language proficiency skills. In addition, the article emphasizes that using group work is effective for heterogeneous classes and contributes to classroom management as well (Elisabeth G. & Rachel A., 2014). Furthermore, according to Guo (2012), cited in Budiman et al. (2023, p. n.d.), incorporating authentic materials into the curriculum can significantly enhance students' English language proficiency. Materials refer to real-life resources such as newspapers, magazines, videos, and podcasts that reflect a language. Teachers can use multifaceted approaches to enhance the comprehension of different proficiency levels in their classes.

5.3 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore and understand the current English language teaching and learning practices, effectiveness, challenges, and strategies to address the difficulties in secondary education within Gharaan High School in the Ishkashem District of Afghanistan. Based on the comprehensive literature review about the “English Language Teaching Learning Practices” in Afghanistan and other similar contexts, teaching and learning the English language is more complicated due to the shortage of resources, pedagogical approaches, and curriculum, particularly in the context of Afghanistan.

This study, through direct data collection from secondary English language teachers and students, identified the current English language teaching and learning practices, challenges, and effectiveness in secondary education within Gharaan High School. The findings of this study uncover the predominance of teacher-centered learning, despite the teachers’ efforts to incorporate collaborative and student-centered approaches. However, the data indicate that English language teachers recognize the crucial value of engaging the students in in-group work and peer activities, but there are many dissatisfactions from students regarding the adequacy and efficacy of these activities. The discrepancy illustrates the real intention of pedagogical attention and actual classroom activities. The finding through the students' angel illustrates that teaching and learning the English language at Gharaan High School are not significantly effective in enhancing all their learning skills.

Moreover, the research underscores the challenges and pressing need for improved resources and addresses the English language teaching and learning needs within the Gharaan High School. English language classes are dealing with insufficient teaching and learning facilities. Furthermore, the English language classrooms are overcrowded and the allocated time for the

class is limited to cope with everything. English language teachers and students try to manage the issue, but as far as they explain, the essential addressing of the problems needs the cooperation of multiple stakeholders, such as the Department of Education and relevant organizations. Therefore, this study addressed the critical questions of the current situation of teaching and learning the English language at Gharaan High School and explored the study's purpose accordingly.

In addition, through this study, I have deepened my understanding of English language teaching and learning in the context of Afghanistan. Despite the current challenges of teaching-learning practices at Gharaan High School, teachers, along with students, are striving to navigate the challenges. Additionally, this study always reminds me of the importance of inclusivity in conducting research. The absence of female students due to the school closure is dominant in this conclusion and affected the gender generalizability of the findings. Understanding the perspective regarding English language teaching and learning at Gharaan High School requires further research in this field, and this study will help to create a more comprehensive understanding of the situation.

The insights gathered from this study are valuable for the stakeholders who aim to improve the English language teaching-learning practices in the region. This study offers the local perspective of English language education in Afghanistan and contributes to the literature of remote areas. Another implication of this study focuses on the professional development of teachers. There is a pressing need to provide training programs for the Gharaan English language teachers to implement the student-centered approaches wisely. Additionally, education authorities must evaluate the necessary resources for teaching and learning the English language, including updated textbooks, teaching materials, and technological equipment.

The English language teachers should also make efforts to provide an inclusive educational environment in which all participants can participate meaningfully. This study would help the teacher to identify the gaps in a detailed way. Addressing the current English language teaching and learning at Gharaan High School requires a multifaceted approach and the attention of authorities in promoting equitable education for all. This study reminds the authorities and teachers of a burning need to support the inclusive learning of the English language in Afghanistan.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of my study regarding the English language teaching and learning practices at Gharaan High School, the following recommendations are required. These recommendations, firstly, prioritize urgency in addressing challenges and needs of learning the English language in a local area, and further contribute to the improvement of educational settings in Afghanistan.

1. English language teachers need professional development training on pedagogical approaches in public schools in Afghanistan. They attempt to incorporate the student-centered approaches but require the assistance of the Education Department and the Ministry of Education to provide the technical training for teachers to be more effective.
2. Allocate more resources and facilities, such as updated textbooks, technological tools, and a budget to support English language teaching and learning.
3. Authorities and stakeholders must support inclusive English language learning education for all genders and abilities. In this case, differentiated instruction should be incorporated into the classroom to deliver the lesson to the entire class.

4. In addition to this study on English language teaching and learning practices in a local area of Afghanistan, further research needs to be conducted. Future studies should try to include females in their studies.

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Appendix A

Consent Letter

Name: Farjad Zafari

Your Address: Dhaka City, Bangladesh

City, State, Zip Code:

Email Address: farjadzafari23@gmail.com

Date

Participant's Name:

Participant's Address:

City, State, Zip Code:

Dear Participant,

I am eager to request that you participate in a research study titled "Teaching and Learning Practices and Challenges in Secondary English Language Education: A Case Study at Gharaan High School in Ishkashem District of Afghanistan." This study is being conducted as part of my Master's degree in Educational Leadership and School Improvement at BRAC University, Bangladesh.

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the current practices, challenges, and effectiveness of teaching English language in secondary schools within the Ishkashem District of Badakhshan Province. The study aims to identify the challenges, practices, and effectiveness of English language teaching in secondary education, ultimately providing insights that could enhance teaching strategies in the region where you are part of that.

Your participation in this study will involve answering a series of questions regarding your experiences and perceptions related to English language teaching and learning. I will use the collected information only for academic purposes and contribute to the educational landscape in Afghanistan.

I am assuring you that your responses are safe and confidential under my research. I will keep the data known and the responses will be used within this study not in publications or reports. Hence, your participation in this interview/FGD is voluntary and you have the open option to

respond or not. Now, if you are comfortable and have consent, please sign this letter. If you have any questions or hesitations, please contact me at farjadzafari23@gmail.com.

Thank you for your contribution to this study, and your thoughts and insights are invaluable to this research.

By signing below or agreeing to participate in this research study, you confirm that:

You have understood the purpose of the study.

You voluntarily agree to participate in the study

You have the right to withdraw at any time without providing any reason.

You understand that all data will be collected for research purposes, and your information will remain confidential.

Kindly sign below and show your agreement to be part of this study

Signature: _____

Date: 11/02.2025

Thank you for your participation in this interview, and we appreciate your time and dedication for this purpose.

Sincerely yours,

Farjad Zafari

Master of Education in Education Leadership and School Improvement

Brac-IED- Brac University-Bangladesh

Appendix B

Research Tool 1: Interview Guide for English Language Teachers in Secondary Education

I am Farjad Zafari, a master's student in Educational Leadership and School Improvement at BRAC University, Bangladesh. This interview aims to collect information and your perspectives on the methods and challenges of teaching and learning the English language at Gharaan High School (secondary level). Any responses you provide for this research will be kept confidential and will be used solely for research purposes.

Thank you for your participation in this interview. Are you ready to begin?

Section 1: Current Methods of Teaching and Learning the English Language

Question 1: Please explain what teaching methods you use to engage students in the English language classroom. Do you have examples of using different teaching methods in your English language classes? Please provide them.

Question 2: What activities do you use to motivate students to learn the English language?

Question 3: What types of assessments or exams do you use to evaluate your students' understanding and learning of the English language? Do you have examples of how you use these assessments, such as daily, monthly, or annual evaluations? Please provide details.

Question 4: How do you provide feedback to your students in English language classes? Can you share an experience of yourself in this regard?

Question 5: What strategies or methods do you use to create an effective learning environment where all students feel comfortable in your English language classes?

Section 2: Effectiveness of Current Methods of Teaching and Learning the English Language

Question 1: What types of resources do you use for teaching in the English language classroom to ensure effectiveness for students? How do you define the effectiveness of the facilities and teaching resources you use at your school? How do you utilize the available facilities in your English language classes?

Question 2: What is your perspective on the effectiveness of the English language teaching methods you employ in the English classroom?

Question 3: How beneficial are the English language textbooks you use in meeting the educational needs of your students? Do English language textbooks contain practical exercises to enhance students' learning skills? Please explain how students engage with these exercises and learn. How are the skills of writing, reading, listening, and speaking addressed in the English language books you teach?

Section 3: Challenges in Teaching and Learning the English Language and Strategies to Address Them

Question 1: Do you face a shortage of teaching resources in your English language classroom? If yes, please explain how these shortages affect your teaching ability.

Question 2: If you encounter shortages of resources and facilities in your English language classroom, what innovative methods do you use to address them? Please share an example from your classroom.

Question 3: In your opinion, is the number of students in your English language classes too high or too low? If it is too high, does this affect the quality of your teaching? Please provide examples from your classes.

Question 4: If the number of students in your English language class is high, how do you manage it? If you have such experience, please share your insights.

Question 5: When students in your English classes have varying levels of English language proficiency, what challenges do you face in teaching? If you have experience teaching students at different levels, please share your insights from the English language classes.

Question 6: What are the best techniques you use to distribute classroom activities and engage all students of different levels in your teaching the English language?

Question 7: Is the allocated time for learning the English language enough in the class where you are teaching? How does that time constraint/ sufficiency influence your teaching abilities? How do you manage it?

Appendix C

Research Tool 2: Interview with Secondary School Students

I am Farjad Zafari, a master's student in "Educational Leadership and School Improvement" at BRAC University, Bangladesh. This interview/FGD aims to gather information and your perspectives on the methods and challenges of teaching and learning the English language in Gharaan High School (secondary level). Any responses you provide for this research will be kept confidential and will be used solely for research purposes. Thank you for your participation in this interview!

Current Methods of Teaching and Learning the English Language

Question 1: What is the teaching style/method of your English language teacher? For example, does the teacher proceed through lectures or through group activities and student-centered methods?

Question 2: What types of activities and exercises does your English language teacher implement in the classroom? Can you explain with an example?

Question 3: How does your English teacher provide feedback on your homework and English exams?

Question 4: What types of assessments (written exams, Q&A, projects) are used in your English language classes? For example, daily, monthly, or annual assessments?

Question 5: How does your English language teacher make English lessons interesting and engaging using various educational materials?

Question 6: How does your English language teacher help you when you encounter difficulties in learning English? Can you provide specific examples of support you have received from your teacher? When you have questions to ask, can you ask them comfortably in English language class? Please share your experiences from the classroom.

Effectiveness of English Language Teaching and Learning Methods

Question 1: How effective is your English language teacher's teaching method? Can you provide an example of how your English teacher has been effective or ineffective in teaching the English language?

Question 2: In your opinion, how much do the activities organized by your English language teacher enhance your learning level? Are these activities interesting and engaging? Why or why not?

Question 3: How do the various assessments and exams that your English language teacher conducts in class assist your progress in learning English?

Question 4: Do you think the English language textbooks at your school are relevant and aligned with your English language level, learning needs, and learning methods? Please share examples of English textbooks that have been helpful or unhelpful. How is the effectiveness of English language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) in your school's English books, and how effective are they in learning English?

Question 5: How does your English language teacher utilize the current school facilities to enhance your English learning?

Challenges of Teaching and Learning the English Language and Solutions

Question 1: Do you have sufficient books and materials for effective English language learning at school? How did these resources (whether plentiful or scarce) influence your learning abilities?

Question 2: If there is a shortage of English language resources and books in your class, how do you and your teacher compensate for this lack?

Question 3: How does the number of students (whether large or small) in a classroom affect your effective learning of the English language? Do you have experiences from your English language classes where the number of students affected learning? Please share your experiences from the English language class regarding this.

Question 4: What creative strategies or methods does your English language teacher use to manage the classroom and engage all students during teaching? How do these strategies/methods affect your participation in lessons?

Question 5: Based on your experiences, how difficult does it become to learn the English language when students have different proficiency levels of understanding?

Question 6: What methods does your English language teacher employ to address the needs of students with varying proficiency levels of English language skills in the classroom?

Question 7: Is the allocated time for learning the English language in your class enough? How does that time constraint/ sufficiency influence your learning of the English language? How does your English language teacher address it?