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Enhancing English Speaking Skills of Underprivileged 8Th Grade Students Through Edutainment

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the effectiveness of edutainment in improving English speaking skills among underprivileged 8th grade students. With English being pivotal for academic and professional success, this study focuses on addressing the challenges faced by students with limited access to quality language resources. Utilizing a action research, the study analyses to evaluate the impact of integrating audiovisual media, specifically English songs, into language instruction. The study adopts 13-15 8th grade students from a semi-government school where English is taught but not the primary language of instruction. The research findings are anticipated to reveal significant improvements in pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar in the experimental group compared to the control group. Increased student engagement and motivation are expected, with positive feedback on the use of edutainment tools. However, limitations such as the small sample size and potential technological constraints may affect the generalizability of the results. The study aims to offer insights into how modern educational tools can enhance language learning for underprivileged students, promote educational equity, and inform future teaching practices and policies. Recommendations include investing in audiovisual media, training teachers in edutainment strategies, and addressing technological barriers to improve educational outcomes

1. Introduction

Early exposure to English, as highlighted by Lenneberg's (1967) "critical period" theory, is essential for effective language acquisition. Integrating audiovisual resources, such as English songs, can enhance learning by making it more engaging and stimulating. Research supports that such tools can improve language skills, especially for auditory learners who benefit from musical contexts (Dewi et al., 2023). Effective teaching strategies, including the use of drills and multimedia, are crucial for developing students' speaking abilities. By incorporating these methods, educators can create a supportive and engaging environment that fosters better language skills. The term "edutainment" refers to a blend of education and entertainment. It originated in the 1990s and describes the fusion of educational content with engaging, entertaining elements (Colace et al., 2006:74). Language is essential for communication and plays a key role in intellectual, social, and emotional development. English, in particular, is crucial for accessing educational and professional opportunities. In Pakistan, proficiency in English is vital for career advancement and international engagement, reflecting a broader global trend.

Given the constraints of the issue, the research question can be framed as: "How can speaking skills be improved using audiovisual media for eighth-grade students and underprivileged students?" "The primary issue addressed by this research is the challenge of improving English speaking skills among eighth-grade students from underprivileged backgrounds. These students often face significant barriers to language acquisition, including limited access to quality educational resources, lack of exposure to English outside the classroom, and socioeconomic factors that affect their learning environment.

Despite the recognized importance of English proficiency for academic and professional success, traditional teaching methods may not fully engage or meet the needs of these students. There is a need to explore alternative teaching strategies that can make language learning more effective and accessible.

This research aims to investigate how integrating audiovisual media and education can enhance the speaking skills of these students. Specifically, it seeks to find out the effects of using technology to enhance speaking and listening skills.

1. To examine the potential benefits of education in learning language skills.
2. To identify the challenges educators face when implementing edutainment techniques in classrooms with underprivileged students and to develop strategies for mitigating these challenges.

Research Questions guided the study are listed below:

1. How does the integration of audiovisual media impact the speaking skills of eighth-grade students from underprivileged backgrounds?
2. How do underprivileged students perceive the use of audiovisual media in their language learning process compared to traditional teaching methods?
3. What challenges do educators face when implementing edutainment techniques in classrooms with underprivileged students, and how can these challenges be mitigated?

The significance of this study lies in its potential to address critical educational challenges faced by underprivileged eighth-grade students in developing their English-speaking skills through innovative methods. This research is crucial as it is helpful to improve the outcome of language proficiency, especially for underprivileged students. Edutainment and audiovisual media have the potential to make learning more engaging and enjoyable. This study highlights the importance of creating motivating learning environments that capture students' interest and

encourage active participation. By understanding the impact of these methods on student motivation, educators can better address issues of disengagement and apathy in the classroom.

2.Literature Review

Language is a fundamental tool for communication and plays an integral role in every individual's life. Among the many languages, English holds a pivotal position as it supports intellectual, social, and emotional development, significantly enhancing learning outcomes across various fields of study. To ensure that individuals can effectively use language in diverse contexts, English is systematically integrated into educational curricula at all levels.

In Pakistan, proficiency in English is essential for accessing high-quality jobs, participating in international business, and staying abreast of cutting-edge scientific developments. Historical figures such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan advocated for the importance of English education among Muslims, aiming to improve their interactions with British rulers. Similarly, in Indonesia, English is introduced as a foreign language starting in elementary school. Early exposure to English is crucial for young learners. According to Lenneberg (1967), there is a "critical period" for language acquisition a neurologically determined phase when mastering a language is most effective. This "sensitive period" typically concludes around puberty, making it an optimal time for language learning. To support language acquisition during this critical phase, incorporating educational entertainment such as audiovisual resources can be especially effective in developing speaking skills and keeping students engaged.

Instructional Strategies in English Language

Reiser and Dick (1996) argue that teachers can employ a variety of instructional strategies to achieve educational objectives. Cole (2008) emphasizes that teachers must create effective plans and strategies to meet students' educational needs, with the primary goal of fostering communication in the target language. This means that educators need to apply suitable teaching methods to encourage students to practice speaking English. Understanding the goals of teaching is vital for selecting appropriate methods and materials. Educators must be clear about their lesson objectives to ensure that the content is both useful and provides meaningful experiences for students. Educational media should align with students' intellectual, emotional, and linguistic development. Audiovisual media, in particular, can positively influence learning by making the process more engaging, stimulating creativity, and enhancing imagination. Hence, integrating audiovisual media into teaching practices is highly recommended. The aim of English instruction at this level is to improve students' communicative abilities across the four main language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking, as well as vocabulary and grammar. Through engagement with English texts, students gain and apply factual, conceptual, and procedural knowledge related to various topics via activities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Kurniasih, 2011). To enhance speaking activities in the classroom and improve students' speaking skills, the researcher employed effective teaching methods by fostering a supportive classroom environment. Specifically, the researcher used audiovisual aids such as English songs to create a motivating and engaging learning atmosphere. Auditory learners, who benefit from musical contexts, find that singing can enhance their English pronunciation (Dewi, N.S., Hartiwi, J., Yani, N.A., & Sutiwi, S., 2023). Steinberg (2001, p. 134) noted that "the melody, repetition, and rhyme in songs serve as a traditional method of language teaching." Papa and Lantoro (1979, p. viii) argued that "introducing songs into the classroom can address many motivational issues. Singing generates enthusiasm and provides a friendly, stimulating approach to learning a foreign language." This view underscores that songs in education are mainly used to practice speaking.

Students can engage with this practice both inside and outside the classroom by listening to their favorite songs at home or elsewhere.

Additionally, the writer incorporated strategies related to linguistic intelligence into classroom activities. Speaking, as a productive oral skill, is complex and involves more than just correct pronunciation. It is a crucial skill that must be developed alongside other language abilities. Richard (1999) notes that "Speaking in a second and foreign language has often been considered the most challenging of the four skills." Speaking is fundamental as it enables individuals to express ideas, feelings, and opinions, achieve specific goals, and maintain social interactions. Brown (2001:131) describes drills as a teaching technique focusing on one or two language forms, such as grammatical structures or phonology, through various types of repetition. Drills, which can include repetition, substitution, and slot substitution, are typically brief and can be particularly beneficial for students with lower language proficiency. They help these learners recognize structural patterns, rhythms, and aspects of pronunciation. Drills in speaking can help reduce anxiety and increase engagement among language learners by employing effective methods and media. Consequently, to improve speaking skills, students need to focus on key elements like vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar to enhance their communication abilities in English.

Gardner, as cited in Campbell et al. (1996:2), considers language as a prime example of human intelligence, suggesting that language use reflects the brain's capabilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Gardner also proposed that linguistic intelligence begins to develop even before birth. Linguistic intelligence, a component of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, involves the ability to effectively use both spoken and written language. This type of intelligence includes the capacity to express thoughts and understand others using one's native language and possibly additional languages. Therefore, linguistic intelligence is rooted in complex cognitive abilities, and students can enhance their language skills by practicing and applying their linguistic intelligence.

"Audio-visual" tools use a combination of sound and images to improve learning. As noted by Kinder, S. James in Gambari (2013), these technologies, including TVs, computers, and music videos, make lessons more engaging and concrete. They help teachers explain concepts more clearly and make lessons more practical and enjoyable. Incorporating audiovisual media into teaching not only enhances the learning process but also makes it more interactive and dynamic, benefiting students' overall educational experience.

Edutainment in English Language

In 2024, Linkhome and Tapin investigated the use of edutainment as a method for teaching English to EFL learners. Their study focused on improving the English abilities of low-achieving students covering listening, speaking, reading, grammar, and vocabulary while also aiming to develop more positive attitudes toward learning English. The research adopted a quantitative design and employed target sampling to select 22 undergraduate students who had re-registered for the English Communication course in the second semester of the 2022 academic year. To examine the impact of using edutainment with adult English language learners in a reading and vocabulary class, it is essential to explore the key components and practical applications that support effective language acquisition. Sibold (2011) states that vocabulary instruction can significantly enhance students' comprehension of textbook material. Teachers often aim to build students' vocabulary across different subjects in the curriculum. Sibold (2011) highlights that numerous studies link limited academic language proficiency to poor academic achievement.

The Global Education Monitoring Report Team (2023) noted that technology is advancing at a pace faster than it can be effectively assessed. Barr et al. (2012) stress that vocabulary instruction should employ diverse, complementary approaches that examine the relationships among words, including their structure, origin, and meaning. Barr et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of comprehension strategies such as predicting outcomes, summarizing, clarifying, questioning, and visualizing. They also highlight that frequent prose writing, along with daily exposure to diverse texts, can significantly enhance English language learning. Furthermore, Barr et al. (2012) explain that language input plays a crucial role in determining the rate at which students acquire vocabulary. Their study found that words with strong affective value are generally easier to learn. To promote independent learning, teachers should provide opportunities for students to select and study vocabulary on their own. At the same time, key vocabulary must be taught explicitly, while struggling readers should also be given opportunities to acquire vocabulary incidentally. Cáceres et al. (2020) recommends that teachers integrate technology both inside and outside the classroom to enhance learners' critical thinking skills. The need to learn complex content, combined with the availability of innovative media in schools, has driven the creation of educational environments that motivate learners and actively engage them in developing skills (Bertacchini et al., 2011). Researchers further highlight that motivation is closely linked to positive learning outcomes (Logan et al., 2011). Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have provided innovative tools and strategies for presenting educational content in engaging and entertaining ways (Bilotta et al., 2008). such as through game-based learning applications (Kiili, 2005). (Dahlan, 2025) argued that edutainment creates a dynamic learning environment in which students interact with language learning materials more enjoyably and engagingly, resulting in greater motivation and retention. Edutainment aims to promote learning by integrating educational content with engaging activities that stimulate participation, emotion, interaction, and motivation. It makes use of visual and digital resources such as images, videos, television programs, video games, films, websites, and computer software to facilitate the learning process. Within language teaching, edutainment addresses learners' needs by combining information technology with modern pedagogical methods. By transforming abstract content into more comprehensible and engaging formats, this approach enhances both understanding and retention (Fatima & Khan, 2022).

3.Methodology

This study adopts an action research methodology to explore and improve the speaking skills of eighth-grade underprivileged students through the integration of audiovisual media and edutainment strategies. Action research is cyclical, participatory, and improvement-oriented (Altrichter et al., 2002). It enables the teacher-researcher to plan, act, observe, and reflect within the classroom context, ensuring that the intervention is responsive to students' needs and rooted in real-life practice.

The guiding philosophy combines pragmatism, constructivism, and a participatory approach. Students are viewed as active participants in constructing their own knowledge, while teachers act as facilitators who continually reflect and refine instructional strategies to ensure equity and engagement.

Action Research Cycles

The study will be conducted through three iterative cycles, each consisting of the steps of planning, action, observation, and reflection.

Cycle 1: Baseline and Planning

- **Planning:** Identify current gaps in students' speaking skills through pre-assessment. Select suitable audiovisual and edutainment resources (songs, interactive games, short videos). Develop lesson plans integrating these tools.
- **Action:** Introduce students to selected audiovisual materials in short, engaging sessions.
- **Observation:** Record students' initial responses, levels of participation, and challenges through teacher field notes and rubrics.
- **Reflection:** Analyze which tools capture students' interest and which challenges emerge (e.g., vocabulary difficulty, hesitation in speaking). Refine lesson plans for the next cycle.

Cycle 2: Implementation and Adjustment

- **Planning:** Adjust lesson strategies based on reflections from Cycle 1 (e.g., include simpler songs, use scaffolding techniques for vocabulary).
- **Action:** Conduct regular classroom sessions integrating audiovisual and edutainment resources. Facilitate group discussions, role plays, and games that emphasize pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary usage.
- **Observation:** Collect data through classroom observations, audio recordings, rubrics, and student feedback.
- **Reflection:** Review pre- and mid-cycle assessments, noting improvements in confidence, vocabulary use, and interaction. Identify persistent challenges (e.g., grammar accuracy, pronunciation issues). Adapt strategies further.

Cycle 3: Consolidation and Post-Assessment

- **Planning:** Finalize instructional design by focusing on strategies that proved most effective in previous cycles.
- **Action:** Implement refined sessions emphasizing fluency, grammar, and interactive speaking tasks.
- **Observation:** Conduct post-intervention assessments using the same rubrics and tests as in the baseline. Collect student reflections on their learning experience.
- **Reflection:** Compare pre- and post-intervention results, analyze student perceptions, and document overall improvement. Derive actionable recommendations for teachers working in similar underprivileged contexts.

Participants include 13–15 eighth-grade students from a semi-government school where English is taught but not the primary medium of instruction. Students are directly involved in the cycles as co-participants, with their voices shaping the refinement of strategies. For the purpose of this action research, multiple data collection tools were employed to capture both the progress in students' speaking skills and their perceptions of the intervention. Speaking assessments, including standardized tests and teacher-designed rubrics, were used at the baseline, mid-cycle, and post-cycle stages to evaluate pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. Classroom observations and field notes were maintained by the teacher-researcher to document patterns of participation, engagement, and challenges during lessons. Audio and video recordings provided further evidence of students' oral performance and enabled detailed analysis of improvements across the cycles. In addition, student feedback was gathered through short reflection sheets and informal interviews, which offered insights into their enjoyment, difficulties, and overall learning experiences with audiovisual media and edutainment strategies. Together, these tools provided a rich mix of quantitative and qualitative data that supported both measurement of learning outcomes and ongoing reflection for instructional refinement.

4. Findings

The findings of this action research are presented cycle by cycle, reflecting the iterative process of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Across the three cycles, students demonstrated progressive improvement in their speaking skills as well as increased motivation and engagement with English learning through audiovisual media and edutainment strategies.

Cycle 1: Baseline and Initial Implementation

During the first cycle, baseline assessments revealed that most students struggled with pronunciation, limited vocabulary, and lack of confidence in speaking English. Lessons incorporating songs and short videos were introduced, but observations showed mixed responses. While students enjoyed listening activities, many were hesitant to speak and needed additional scaffolding. The researcher noted initial challenges in balancing interactive tasks with curriculum requirements and in ensuring access to technological resources. Reflection at the end of this cycle emphasized the need for simpler, more repetitive materials and structured support to encourage oral participation.

Cycle 2: Adjustment and Engagement

In the second cycle, lesson plans were refined to include more interactive language games, role plays, and repetition-based speaking tasks. Students became noticeably more engaged and began participating more willingly in class discussions. Observation notes indicated improved pronunciation and early signs of fluency, with several students attempting to use new vocabulary introduced through games and songs. Student feedback reflected greater enjoyment of lessons and a sense that English learning had become less stressful. However, some students still expressed difficulty with grammar and sentence construction. Reflection at this stage highlighted that while motivation and participation had increased, more focused practice on grammar was required in the final cycle.

Cycle 3: Consolidation and Confidence

The third cycle focused on consolidating learning by combining audiovisual tools with structured speaking drills and guided group discussions. Post-assessments showed clear improvement across all four domains: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. Students demonstrated greater confidence in initiating conversations and were able to use vocabulary more accurately and spontaneously. Classroom dynamics also shifted positively, with students collaborating more actively, supporting peers, and taking risks in speaking English. Researcher reflections confirmed that audiovisual media not only enhanced language development but also created an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Although challenges such as limited access to devices persisted, the overall benefits outweighed these constraints.

Cross-Cycle Reflections and Implications

Analysis across the three cycles indicates that iterative adjustments based on reflection were key to student improvement. Initial hesitation gave way to higher levels of engagement and confidence, with edutainment tools proving particularly effective in sustaining motivation. The combination of quantitative gains in speaking assessments and qualitative evidence from observations and feedback confirmed that audiovisual media had a transformative impact on student learning.

This action research suggests that:

- Audiovisual edutainment strategies are effective in improving speaking skills, especially in pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary.
- Active student participation increases when learning is interactive, fun, and contextually meaningful.

- Iterative reflection allows teachers to refine strategies and address persistent challenges, such as grammar accuracy.
- Classroom dynamics improve as students gain confidence and take ownership of their learning

5. Conclusion

This action research study set out to improve the English speaking skills of eighth-grade underprivileged students through the use of audiovisual media and edutainment strategies. Across three iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, the study demonstrated that integrating songs, videos, and interactive games into classroom practice significantly enhanced students' pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and confidence in speaking English.

The findings revealed that while students initially struggled with hesitation and unfamiliarity with new methods, they gradually adapted and became more enthusiastic participants in the learning process. The cycles showed clear evidence that when learning is interactive and enjoyable, students are more motivated to engage and practice language skills both inside and outside the classroom. Importantly, the study also highlighted challenges such as limited access to technology and the need for balancing innovative strategies with curriculum demands. Despite these constraints, the benefits of improved speaking skills, heightened motivation, and positive classroom dynamics strongly support the integration of edutainment into English language teaching.

This research underscores the potential of action research as a practical tool for teachers, enabling them to adapt teaching strategies based on continuous reflection and feedback. It also contributes to promoting equity in education by demonstrating that underprivileged learners can thrive when provided with creative, engaging, and accessible learning opportunities.

Improving Educational Outcomes for Underprivileged Students: English proficiency is a gateway to academic and professional opportunities. For underprivileged students who face barriers such as limited access to quality educational resources and minimal exposure to English outside the classroom, this study's focus on edutainment and audiovisual media can provide a valuable alternative to traditional teaching methods. By enhancing speaking skills, students can gain confidence and improve their academic performance, which may positively influence their future educational and career prospects.

The research explores how audiovisual media, and education can transform traditional teaching methodologies. By integrating engaging and interactive tools, educators can create more dynamic and inclusive learning environments. This study contributes to the field of education by offering insights into effective strategies for language acquisition, potentially leading to the development of best practices that can be adopted across diverse educational settings. Although there is considerable research on language acquisition and the use of audiovisual media, specific studies focusing on the combination of these tools with education for underprivileged students are limited. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how these approaches can enhance speaking skills, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of their effectiveness and practical applications. By focusing on underprivileged students, the research addresses issues of educational inequality. The findings could help in designing interventions that are tailored to the needs of disadvantaged learners, thereby promoting greater equity in education. This aligns with broader educational goals of ensuring that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have access to high-quality learning experiences. The outcomes of this research can inform educational policy and practice by providing evidence-based recommendations on the use

of multimedia and education in classrooms. Policymakers and educational leaders can use these insights to allocate resources more effectively, develop professional development programs for teachers, and implement innovative teaching strategies that cater to the needs of underprivileged students.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and reflections from this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Sustain Use of Audiovisual Media:** Teachers should continue integrating songs, videos, and interactive games into English lessons to sustain student engagement and speaking practice.
2. **Focus on Grammar Scaffolding:** While fluency and vocabulary improved significantly, more targeted scaffolding is needed to address persistent challenges in grammar accuracy.
3. **Teacher Professional Development:** Training programs should be designed to equip teachers with skills to effectively integrate edutainment strategies into their lesson plans.
4. **Institutional Support:** Schools should invest in basic technological infrastructure—such as projectors, speakers, and reliable internet access—to enable the use of multimedia tools in classrooms.
5. **Student-Centered Reflection:** Teachers should regularly seek feedback from students to refine lesson strategies and ensure that activities align with learners' interests and needs.
6. **Broader Application:** Future cycles or studies should be conducted in different schools and with larger groups of students to test the adaptability and scalability of these strategies across diverse contexts.
7. **Equity and Policy Considerations:** Policymakers and educational leaders should prioritize equitable access to digital and edutainment resources for underprivileged schools to reduce disparities in language learning opportunities.

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