



### Informal Learning and Its Impacts on Students English Language Proficiency

Bakht Zada<sup>a</sup>, Dr. Zahoor-ul-Haq<sup>b</sup>, Dr. Muhammad Khalil<sup>\*c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>M.Phil Education , Department of Sociology, Political Science & Education, Bacha Khan University Charsadda.

<sup>b</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Political Science & Education, Bacha Khan University Charsadda.

<sup>c</sup>Assistant Professor, FGEI(C/G) Rawalpindi.

**\*Email: [khalilmathematics1977@gmail.com](mailto:khalilmathematics1977@gmail.com)**

---

**Abstract:** The aim of the study was to study the impacts of informal learning on students' English language proficiency. The study was based on the following objectives:(a) to find out the frequency and duration of informal learning that takes place weekly and its association with English language proficiency;(b) to compare the relationship of the frequency of informal learning with the forms of informal learning, and (c) and to study the effect of informal learning on students English language proficiency at grade 12.This design of this study was quantitative in nature. A sample of 270 out of 900 (Grade-12 students) were selected from public high school Charsadda. Data was collected through questionnaire. The Pearson's correlation test was used for determining association between independent and dependent variables. The analysis resulted in positive correlation between frequency of informal learning and students' English Language proficiency. The results highlighted the importance of informal learning for learning English Language. The study showed that if the time and frequency of informal learning increases, then proficiency of students in English language also increases. Similarly, reading stories books, novels and plays have very positive impacts on students' ELP (English language proficiency).Similarly, using different forms of IL(Informal learning) have positive impacts on students' ELP, so students must utilize informal forms of learning English through reading out other English Language's books besides curricular books and especially getting help from modern technologies such as internet, cell phone, Facebook, YouTube etc. The results can be utilized by the students as well as teachers of English Language. It is highly recommended to government and high authorities to establish a language lab in all public sector schools in Pakistan, having all the facilities of informal learning as in public sector schools.

**Keywords:** Informal learning, Frequency of informal learning, forms of informal learning, English language proficiency.

---

## 1. Introduction

Informal learning refers to attainment of knowledge through ways and techniques which are neither formal nor non-formal. It is a continuous and lengthy process whereby every student gains attitude, values, experiences and understanding from day to day happenings in his or her environment. Informal Learning never pursues a planned syllabus or curriculum and is never intentional from the learners' standpoint. It is never planned pedagogically [1]. Non-formal learning refers to a learning process which is planned and intentional. It has specific timetable and syllabus. It is delivered by educational intuitions and academies. Degrees and certificates are awarded to the successful candidates. These degrees are duly recognized by the educational authorities of the country. Such kind of education is conveyed through webinars, workshops and courses. Usually, it's timetable is a bit relaxed .Informal Education, at the end, is a common phrase for learning which occurs beside a planned and standard curriculum. Informal Learning encircles students' interests within a curriculum in a regular classroom, but is not limited to that setting .It take place through dialogue between students to students and students to some other members of the society. Informal Learning is accidental. It brings very relevant and useful information. It brings the school life closure to the home life [2].

The next study, the researchers are going to review here, has been conducted by Sayer and Ban [3]. It is about different ways of informal education in Mexico. His population was 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade students. They had started a nice program in which English had been taught at earlier stages in schools. They interviewed 511 students from 20 diverse schools in Mexico. The students belonged to different families. Their financial and living conditions were contrary to one another .The researcher questioned the learners about their ways of learning English in classes and at homes. He also enquired about learning and utilizing English in their leisure times through games and plays. He also got data from teachers and parents on the subject. Their finding revealed that according to teachers, the students English learning took place through formal education while the parents opined that the students learnt English, a great deal, in their leisure time informally. At the same time students argued that they learnt English through problem solving i.e. in video games. They also utilized sports commentaries and plays for learning English. The students learnt a great deal of English through movies, music, videogames, and other electronic devices. The result suggests that not only informal learning is assisting formal students 'learning but also motivating students to learn English for their own objectives. It is also helped them to understand educational videos well [4].

Van Marsenille [5] stressed the importance of informing students about their informal learning and that teachers should be aware of what they are doing to enhance informal language learning for students. Teachers can then encourage informal learning by providing appropriate materials and methods. The study provides an overview of the importance of informal language learning in the formal education system and the recognition of its role in it. Similarly, Uzunoma., Lim, and Kim [6] find in their study that the results of their study provide a strong foundation for promoting informal learning in organizations, to ensure the exchange of knowledge between the younger and older generations and to reduce knowledge and financial loss for organizations. Furthermore, Coffield [7] states that

states that although training is often formally related to educational institutions, most people tend to learn informally. He supports that informal learning is just as important as formal learning, and that “basic, necessary and valuable in itself”.

Chik and Briedbach [8] argue without teacher guidance. So can teachers support learning informal language without students? Do you feel like their place is being attacked? More research will be needed help us better understand the role of teachers in informal and formal settings. Trinder [9] states that certain measure should be taken for language learning such communicating, certifying and promoting informal language learning, informing people about the use of unused materials, assessing the reasons for their use and disposal, and promoting the culture of the use of digital technology.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Informal learning in language acquisition, especially in learning English language is neither well realized by students nor it is emphasized by the teachers. Informal learning is a self-directed learning or learning from experience. It plays paramount role in gaining proficiency in English language. In formal learning of English, more focus is given to memorization of grammar rules of the language. There is limited time for speaking and reading practice. Through using English informally, we can improve our English language proficiency side by side with other activities. The present study aims to determine, realize and highlight the effectiveness of informal English language learning at higher secondary level in Charsadda.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Research**

- I. to find out the frequency and duration of informal learning that takes place weekly and its association with English language proficiency at grade12
- II. to compare the relationship between the frequency of informal learning with the forms of informal learning at grade 12
- III. to study the effect of informal learning on students English language proficiency at grade 12

### **1.3 Hypothesis**

- Ho1. The frequency of informal learning on weekly basis has no relationship with English language proficiency of the students.
- Ho2. The increase of frequency of informal learning has no relationship with the increase of form of informal learning.
- Ho3. Informal learning has no effect on the students' English language proficiency.

## 1.4 Significance of the study

This study will be very significant because it will realize the students and learners of English Language the paramount importance of informal learning. It will highlight the different ways and forms of informal English language learning and their role in students' proficiency and course grades. The informal learning is not given due focus in our country especially in our Pakhtun belt because English is taught as second language in Pakistan. The learners are usually shy in speaking English informally. We learn English in classrooms but not practicing it at home in informal discussion. The results of the study are realizing the learners the same importance.

### Conceptual Framework:

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable
The frequency and duration of Informal learning on weekly basis.	Students English language proficiency and Grades
Different forms of informal learning(Reading novels, newspapers, stories books (Modern technology) internet, cell phone, television, etc.	

## 1.5 Theoretical Framework

It has been now well realized that informal learning is equally important side by side with formal learning. It should not be regarded inferior to formal learning. It must be regarded basic, very important, necessary and worthy in its own place. Sometimes, it directly affects our formal learning and sometimes indirectly. Educationists all around the globe agree on the point that education programs for elders and aged ones have shown great affection and attraction for informal learning. He states that in all the fields of lifelong learning, the concentration is on formal provision, qualifications and assessment. At the same time, it is cry of the hour to investigate learning outside of the class room [6].

## 2 Research Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design:

The framework and design of this research is based on quantitative approach, i.e. it is quantitative in nature. A survey questionnaire has been used for data collection. A closed ended questionnaire was used for this purpose.

### 2.2 Population

Male students at Higher Secondary level of Public Higher Secondary schools (Grade: XII), was the population of this study. The Net Enrolment Ratio of male students at Grade: XII in total eighteen Higher Secondary Schools of District Charsadda is 900 [10].

### 2.3 Sample

A convenient sample of 270 students of Grade: XII had been selected from 6 higher secondary schools from three Tehsils of district Charsadda. According to Sekaron sampling sheet, the approved sample size for a population of 900 students from six higher secondary schools, selected randomly, comes 269 students. The confidential level is 95% and a margin of error (degree of accuracy) is 5%. The researchers used the following formula to select sample size and through proportion sampling method.

$$n_1 = N_1 / N_i * n_i$$

Where

$N_i$  = 1<sup>st</sup> strata sample size

$N_1$  = 1<sup>st</sup> strata population

$N_i$  = total sample size

The conveniently selected six Higher Secondary Schools' (Grade:12) population and their sampling size framework (District Charsadda).

S.No	Name of School	Number of students (Grade:12)	Sample size
01	Govt.S.S.Alam, HSS Nisatta	60	48
02	Govt. HSS Boobak	47	41
03	Govt. HSS Batagram	46	40
04	Govt. HSS Hasan Zai	56	47
05	Govt. HSS Sherpao	65	51
06	Govt. HSS Umar Zai	54	43

### 2.4 Research Instrument

There are different methods which are used to collect data. The most commonly used instrument is questionnaire [11]. Questionnaire is a popular data collection tool because it is easy to construct and able to collect information rapidly [12]. Keeping this in view as a guide, the investigators have utilized a standard questionnaire as a survey tool for research in hand, having five points Likert scale (i.e. not at all, very little, some, much and very much). The survey tool was framed and composed after studying the relevant literature with the cooperation of respected supervisor and external co-supervisor. There were 30 items in the questionnaire; items (1 to 10) were related to frequency of informal learning, items (11 to 20) were related to different forms of informal learning that students can utilize in their daily lives, and items (21 to 30) were related to students English language competency.

The questionnaire had some general questions regarding backdrop knowledge and awareness, like participants' age and family /parents qualification. This study had been totally pseudo because it did not disclose any data, which would disclose the identity of the students who participated in research. The survey questionnaire had been framed in such a way that it met the aims of the research. The questions had relationship with the aims of the research. By responding the questions, the investigators got the desired data/information which was extremely important for the study.

## **2.5 Pilot Testing Instrument**

The main objective of the pilot testing is to refine the questionnaire and highlight the drawbacks and complications of the questionnaire if there exist any. The researcher has selected students for the pilot testing questionnaire. The questionnaire had been administered to obtain reliability and validity of the instrument. As mentioned by Downing, [13] accuracy of the research tool is called validity. For the validation, opinion of the supervisor, teachers and subject specialists had been consulted. The questionnaire has been finalized after taking feedback from experts on the subject. Their suggestions and corrections have been incorporated accordingly.

## **2.6 Validity**

Validity refers to the amount to which a research gives standard statistics and conclusions by Creswell, [14]. To decrease the menace of inner as well as outer validity, some pitfalls were examined in thoroughly. The inner validity of a research has usually roots in coherent links between the hypotheses examined and the statement of the research tool. Content validity of the instrument was approved by the supervisory committee. The content validity of the instrument was also checked and reviewed by three experts and educationists. Further, the subject and language experts also confirmed the validity of the instrument.

## **2.7 Reliability**

Reliability refers to the trustworthiness and solidness of an instruments' computation or the amount to which a tool compute alike every time it is utilized , if no change occurs in the conditions as well as in the measurement tool by Colwell [15]. Briefly, it indicates the consistency of the test and examination. According to Livingston [16], a test and measurement is accepted as reliable if an individual's marks on the same contents are correlated deeply. The inner consistency of the survey tool was established by making comparison among responses to the questions of the same kind. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha = .833$ ) indicated that the thirty items questionnaire had high internal reliability.

## **2.8 Analysis of the Data**

The data collected from the sampled students were fed into statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), and interpreted, analyzed by applying Pearson's correlation test.

### 3 Result and discussion

**Table:1**

**Ho No1: The frequency/occurrence of informal learning on weekly basis has no association with English language proficiency.**

**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
FIL	3.0847	.79919	270
ELP	3.2953	.91721	270

**Correlations**

		FIL	ELP
FIL	Pearson Correlation	1	.735**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	270	270
ELP	Pearson Correlation	.735**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	270	270

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Two Hundred and Seventy students of higher secondary schools were surveyed about the Frequency of Informal Learning (M= 3.0847, SD= .799) and Students English Language Proficiency (M= 3.2953, SD= .91721). The correlation coefficient 0.735 shows that the two variables Frequency of Informal Learning (FIL) and Students English Language Proficiency (ELP) were positively correlated. The correlation result suggests that if the Frequency of Informal Learning increases then the Students' English Language Proficiency will also be increased. On the basis of above correlation result the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table: 2**

**Ho2. Frequency of Informal learning has no association with various forms of informal learning.**

**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
FIL	3.0847	.79919	270
FormsIL	3.1847	.89911	270

**Correlations**

		FIL	FormsIL
FIL	Pearson Correlation	1	.652**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	270	270
FormsIL	Pearson Correlation	.652**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	270	270

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Two Hundred and Seventy students of higher secondary schools were surveyed about the Frequency of Informal Learning (FIL) (M= 3.0847, SD= .79919) and Forms of Informal Learning (FormsIL) (M= 3.1847), SD= .89911). The coefficient of correlation of 0.652 shows that the two variables Frequency of Informal Learning (FIL) and use of Forms of Informal Learning (FormsIL) were positively, moderately correlated. The correlation result suggests that if the Frequency and duration of informal learning increases then the Students’ usage of forms of informal learning will also be increased. On the basis of above correlation results, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table:3**

**Ho 3. Informal learning has positive effect on the students’ English language proficiency.**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
						F Change	df1	df2		
1	.720 <sup>a</sup>	.518	.515	.63874	.518	180.484	1	268	.000	2.030

a. Predictors: (Constant), IL  
 b. Dependent Variable: ELP

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.615	.205		2.995	.003
	IL	.855	.064	.720	13.434	.000

a. Dependent Variable: ELP

$$ELP = .615 + .855 IL$$

(.205)                  (.064)    (Std. Error)  
 (2.995)                  (13.434)    (t- Statistic)  
 (.003)                          (.000)    (p- Value)

F= 180.484 (p=000)      R<sup>2</sup>=.518      R<sup>2</sup><sub>Adj</sub> = .515      N = 270

The estimated model is statistically significant (F = 180.484; p = .000) and constituted variable Informal Learning (IL) is found statistically significant (t = 13.434; p < 0.00). The Informal Learning contributed statistically significantly in a positive way towards students’ achievement (here, students’ English Language Proficiency). Informal Learning (IL) contributed 13.434 units in dependent variable Students’ English Language Proficiency (ELP).



## 4 Discussion

To check the impacts of FIL on ELP, we made correlation of both variables and used Pearson's correlation test. It was found that FIL had positive and significant impacts on students ELP. The correlation result suggests that if the Frequency of Informal Learning increases then the Students' English Language Proficiency will also be increased. The more they gave time to learning English informally; the more their proficiency of informal learning increased. As far as location is concerned, informal learning can occur in different places by Lafraya [17]. Similarly, the correlation result suggests that if the Frequency and duration of informal learning increases then the Students' usage of forms of informal learning will also be increased. According to Kovumki [18], students utilize different forms of Informal Learning while learning English informally. It is evident from the Table 2 that all forms of IL have been answered by the respondents. The forms of informal learning which remained popular amongst the students are: 1). Learning of English through listening stories.2). Reading novels.3). Reading plays; as mean of these alternatives was well above 3. On the other side, the alternatives which were not too popular amongst the participants were:1). Reading newspapers.2). Watching movies; similarly, the use of modern technology was meagre and there were no sufficient facilities in schools or home to get access to these technologies. The form of informal learning which had the largest distribution amongst the respondents is teaching English through listening stories as its standard deviation stands at 4.644. Similarly, The Informal Learning contributed statistically significantly in a positive way towards students' achievement (here, students' English Language Proficiency). The results of the study revealed that informal learning provides an opportunity to enhance contents' knowledge of the students. Informal Learning has a very positive impact on students' English Language Proficiency. It has also a very healthy impact on students' course grades also. The students who gave more time to informal means of learning English, the more their course grades were high. Van Marsenille [5] also stresses on the importance informal learning provides students with workplace conditions that enable them to grasp well their formal learning in the class. This statement has been proved here through the results of the study. These findings indicate that informal learning has a significant potential for aiding a great number of students to gain more rewarding and desirable fluency and course grades in English as a language and compulsory subject.

### 4.1 Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed the following conclusions:

1. It is evident from the analysis of the data that there is positive correlation between Frequency of Informal Learning and students' English language proficiency.
2. There is positive correlation between utilizing different forms of informal learning and students' English language proficiency.
3. The majority of the respondents of understanding the concept of informal learning.

4. Majority of the students were utilizing different forms of Informal Learning.
5. The participants were speaking English informally with siblings and parents.
6. Most of the participants were of the view that they were speaking English informally with their friends.
7. The most frequently used and the most popular forms among the respondents were reading novels, reading plays and listening stories.
8. Reading newspapers and watching movies were the most rarely used forms of informal learning and more specifically
9. The findings of the independent variable, Frequency of informal learning (FIP) and its correlative analysis with English Language Proficiency (ELP) correlated positively significant. The results suggest that there is strong and positive relationship between frequency and duration of informal learning with English language proficiency of the students. The more time given to informal learning of English, the more increases the English language proficiency.
10. The nature of informal learning is quite enjoyable. It is not boring and overexerting. Learners enjoy as well as take interest in learning English language informally.
11. The findings of the research suggests that taking benefit from forms of informal learning such as listening stories and reading novels is making students more competent and diverse.
12. The findings of the study show that Informal learning is very close and aids a lot to formal education. It helps in achieving high grades.

### **4.3 Recommendations**

As the analysis of the data suggest that frequency of informal learning is positively and directly proportional to the English Language proficiency of the students. Similarly, using different forms of informal learning have positive impacts on students' English language proficiency. So, on the basis of conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents and teacher should create an environment at home and school in such a way that there kids and students must utilize their leisure time by speaking, reading and writing English informally, it will enhance their language skills.
2. As using different forms of IL have positive impacts on students' ELP, so students must utilize informal forms of learning English through reading out other English Language books besides curricular books. It is extremely important.

3. Students must read English novels and plays. School library must be equipped with such books which help students to learn English informally.
4. Government of Pakistan should invest more in education and especially providing modern technology in institutions. Policy maker should plan such a strategies for informal learning in formal institution.
5. Pakistani public sectors schools lack well equipped language lab. At least, a well-furnished language lab with all modern technology will motivated English language learners to learn English informally.

## References

1. Macià, M., &García, I. (2016). Informal online communities and networks as a source of teacher professional development: A review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 55, 291-307. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.01.021>
2. Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press
3. Sayer, P. and Ban, R. (2014). Young EFL students' engagements with English outside the classroom. *ELT Journal*, 68(3), 321-329. DOI: 10.1093/elt/ccu013
4. Takamaa, Jesse (2017). *Difference between formal and informal learning*. Bachelor's thesis. University of Jyväskylä. Department of Language and Communication Studies. Finland.
5. Van Marsenille, A. (2017). Informal learning activities for learners of English and for learners of Dutch. In Q. Kan & S. Bax (Eds), *Beyond the language classroom: researching MOOCs and other innovations* (pp. 141-152). Research-publishing.net. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2017.mooc2016.677>.
6. Uzunoma, O., Lim, D.H. and Kim, W. (2021). The mediating role of informal learning on work engagement: older workers in the US public sector. *European Journal of Training and Development*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-04-2020-0062>.
7. Coffield, F. (Ed.). (2000). *The necessity of informal learning*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
8. Chik, A., & Briedbach, S. (2014). 'Facebook me' within a global community of learners of English: technologizing learner autonomy. In G. Murray (Ed.), *Social dimensions of autonomy in language learning* (pp. 100-118). London: Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137290243\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137290243_6).
9. Trinder, Ruth. (2017). Informal and deliberate learning with new technologies. *ELT Journal*, 71, 401-412. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccw117>.
10. EMIS. (2019). Government of KPK, Elementary & Secondary Education Department, retrieved on 25th August 2019, <http://www.kpese.gov.pk/home/view.cfm?MenuID1>.
11. Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
12. Dornyei, Z. (2010). *Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction, Administration, and Processing*. 2nd Edition, Routledge, London. <http://www.zoltandornyei.co.uk/>
13. Downing. (2013). Can the internet serve as a useful toll in Learning English? University of Jyväskylä. *British Journal of Educational Technology*.

14. Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed ). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.
15. Colwell, R. (2006). *Handbook of Research Methodologies*. Oxford University Press.
16. Livingston, S. A. (2018). *Test reliability—Basic concepts* (Research Memorandum No. RM-18-01). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
17. Lafraya, S. (2012). *Intercultural learning in non-formal education: theoretical frameworks and starting points*. Council of Europe ed. Strasburg: Council of Europe Publishing.
18. Koivumäki, J. (2012). *Can the Internet serve as a useful tool in learning English? A case study*. Unpublished Pro Gradu Thesis. University of Jyväskylä, Department of Languages.