Teaching Practices in English as a Second Language at Secondary Level: Opportunities and Threats

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ABSTRACT

The main intention of this study was to identify the opportunities and threats in teaching English as second language at secondary Level. Specifically, its focused on external factors (opportunities and threats) encountered by English language teachers in the four primary language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. To achieve the objectives of this study, a quantitative descriptive survey design was employed, using structured questionnaire to identifying opportunities and threats in instructional practices in English as a second language at secondary level. All public secondary school English teachers of the School Education Department of Punjab, Pakistan were considered as the population of the study. In this study stratified random sampling technique was used for sampling and selected 301 (187 male and 114 female) secondary school English teachers. The data was analyzed through frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, t-tests and one-way ANOVA test. The results and findings of this study revealed the opportunities such as teaching trainings, use of technologies, apps, software and speaking with natives can improve teaching effectiveness. Threats investigated like lack of audio and video equipment, insufficient time, rigid curriculum, large class sizes, inadequate technology-related training, and lack of finance.

Key words: English as a second language, Opportunities, Threats, Instructional practices

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as the primary medium through which humans convey thoughts, emotions, and ideas, playing a crucial role in societal and cultural development. It enables individuals to articulate complex concepts, facilitating mutual understanding and collaboration. Without language, humans would be unable to express their experiences effectively, distinguishing them from other species. In addition to verbal communication, non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and gestures significantly enhance the conveyance of emotions and intentions, enriching interpersonal interactions (Maitlo, et al. 2022).

Language serves as a fundamental tool for humans to convey ideas, information, and knowledge, facilitating effective communication and fostering mutual understanding. A common language, both at the national and international levels, is essential for effective communication, unity, and progress. While national languages unify countries internally, an international language like English connects nations, enabling them to collaborate and thrive in a globalized world (Jositta (2020; Dutta 2019). In Pakistan, English is widely used and has a significant influence on students' futures. In Pakistan, English is considered an official language. English is a compulsory subject for all students countrywide till graduation (Mushtaque et al., 2022) and regarded as a second language in Pakistan (Fareed et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2023).

Most students in Pakistani schools, colleges, and universities do not become fluent in English; it is taught as a subject rather than a language there. The secondary education (SE) gives the students a particular bent (Arain, 2019). Therefore, in this sense, secondary education is absolutely important for the structure of the educational system. Despite the importance of English and compulsory subject still language learners have to face challenges in vocabulary, grammar, speaking, writing, listening, and reading. (Dar & Khan, 2015).

Students in Pakistan have poor English language proficiency owing to a variety of causes, the most prominent of which is improper instructional practices at the secondary school level. English language teachers frequently fail to get the required results because they adopt out-of-date instructional approaches that are unsuitable for the global demands and needs for teaching English. These traditional techniques reduce student involvement and hinder the students engagement and limit their ability to develop essential language skills effectively (Tariq et al., 2019; Jameel and Muhammad, 2019; Ahmed et al., 2020). English is quite valuable in Pakistan in many different ways, however teaching at the secondary level brings certain challenges such as time duration for teaching English, lack of tools like technologies in the classroom environment. Many professors still utilize the conventional teaching methods, like memorizing, instead of involving interactive exercises meant to help students grasp and apply English in practical settings. Teachers' main job in the English teaching process is to help and interact with their students in their daily life so that they could become proficient in English instead of being limited by it (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017).

Opportunities are positive external factors that businesses may leverage to achieve their objectives and increase profits; these opportunities often arise from changes in the external environment, such as market trends, technological advancements, and shifts in consumer behavior. Organizations may gain an advantage over their competitors and accelerate growth by finding and maximizing the opportunities (Benzaghta et al., 2021). On the other hand, threats are negative outside elements that might affect the performance or goals of a company. Therefore, identifying these threats is essential for developing strategies to mitigate potential risks. Developing plans to reduce such hazards depends on an awareness of these concerns (Phadermrod et al., 2019). (Phadermrod et al., 2019).

There are many reasons and factors behind the poor progress in ESL but foremost is to seek the new opportunities and overcome the threats in teaching English. Unfortunately in Pakistan current practices for teaching English as ESL is not up to global demands. To improve English language skills in the students there is necessity to think about the current instructional practices challenges in the current practices so that maximum possible opportunities could be get to make teaching more effective to develop English language skills.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to analyze the opportunities and threats in current ESL instructional practices at the secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan.

Research Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the opportunities in instructional practices of teachers in English language at secondary level as perceived by teachers.
2. To find out the threats in instructional practices of teachers in English language at secondary level as perceived by teachers.
3. To ascertain the difference between teachers' perspective on the base of demographics i.e. gender, locality, academic qualification and professional qualification?

Research Questions of the Study

1. Which are the opportunities in instructional practices of ESL at secondary level as perceived by teachers?
2. What are the threats in instructional practices of ESLat secondary levelas perceived by teachers?
3. Is there any difference between teachers' perspective on the base of demographics i.e. gender, locality, academic qualification and professional qualification?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language is the primary way through which humans express their thoughts, emotions, and opinions, and it is vital to social and cultural evolution. English is the most widely spoken language in the world as Jositta (2020) emphasized the value of English as a worldwide language, particularly in education, business, and social contact. English serves as a common language that allows people from multilingual backgrounds to communicate efficiently, promotes professional progress, and can offer up novel opportunities globally. Numerous research studies have emphasized the significance of English as a foreign language. in enhancing global affairs, communication, economic growth, and social development (Abbas et al., 2020).

Niyozova (2020) examined the global status of the English language. English serves as a lingua franca, facilitating interaction among individuals from diverse backgrounds. It impacts global trade, education, travel, and communication, among other domains. The widespread utilization of English in media, technology, and education has augmented learning and career opportunities for individuals globally. English language instruction (ELT) is of paramount significance in contemporary life. Globally, employment, education, and international communication all rely on English. In contemporary economy and society, proficiency in English is essential for success (Mehmood et al., 2023).

English is the prevalent language in Pakistan and has a significant impact on students' futures. English is considered a second language and an official language in Pakistan, and it is taught as a mandatory course from basic to graduate levels (Anwar, & Zaki, 2022; Fareed et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2023; Mushtaque,). Furthermore, the Government of Pakistan is prioritizing English. English is highly valued in Pakistan because of its significance in education, administration, science, and technology (Aimen & Khadim, 2024; Yang & Du, 2024). It serves as the principal medium of instruction in most schools, colleges, and universities nationwide (Hussain et al., 2023). In Pakistani educational institutions, English is taught as a subject rather than as a language, resulting in most students not achieving true proficiency until they complete their English diploma degree. Secondary Education (SE) encompasses grades 9 and 10 within the public education system of Pakistan. SE not only perpetuates students' education but also emphasizes a specific path (Arain, 2019). Secondary education is the pivotal stage of learning; it imparts diverse abilities and consequently influences the future development of individuals. The pedagogical approaches for teaching English fail to satisfy worldwide requirements, since educators predominantly employ conventional methods, which are inadequate (Shazadiy, 2018).

Even though the Pakistani government claims that teaching English is the top most educational goal but language learners continue to face challenges in vocabulary, grammar, speaking, writing, listening, and reading (Dar & Khan, 2015). Despite the significance of English, instructional practices at this level encounter various problems and dangers, including insufficient resources and outdated teaching methods that impede the efficacy of ESL education. Ultimately, surmounting these challenges requires an adaptation to more dynamic and interactive pedagogical approaches, alongside fostering an ESL classroom setting that inspires the pupils to confidently practice their language abilities. The English

language teachers in Pakistan fail to yield the anticipated outcomes, and other factors contribute to learners' inadequate English language competency (Chohan & Rana, 2016). This occurs because educators employ antiquated pedagogical techniques to engage twenty-first-century pupils (Tariq et al., 2019; Jameel & Muhammad, 2019; Ahmed et al., 2020).

Secondary education (SE) is an important stage that not only extends students' education but also prepares them for future academic and professional endeavors (Arain, 2019). Despite its importance, the quality of English education in public schools remains inadequate, this makes it difficult for learners to develop the requisite language skills. Outdated educational techniques, limited resources, and a lack of teacher training all contribute to these challenges. To improve English instruction, English teacher must implement the modern pedagogical approaches, incorporate technology, and provide professional development for instructors.

Innovative and contemporary educational approaches are implemented globally. Teaching English to pupils requires more than only imparting knowledge, it also entails facilitating the learners into proficient speakers, writers, and readers of the language (Fareed et al., 2018; Akram et al., 2022). In the process of teaching English, educators' foremost duty is to support and engage with their students in daily contexts to facilitate fluency in English, rather than allowing it to be a limitation (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). In Pakistan, English language instructors at the school level exhibited fundamental incompetence. The research revealed that English language educators lack the requisite training to qualify as language instructors (Mohammad et al., 2018; Akram et al., 2020). Ibrahim and Ali (2021) examined that certain educators continue to employ antiquated ways and stressed the necessity for contemporary pedagogies to address student requirements. Ibrahim and Ali (2021) discovered that although certain educators continue to employ antiquated techniques, there is a transition towards contemporary, efficacious pedagogical strategies. The research underscores the necessity for ongoing implementation of contemporary teaching methods to address student requirements.

The Pakistani government has been working to make major reforms in education, particularly in English over the past ten years to meet global demands, quality education and resources to improve advanced English Language Teaching (ELT) at the grassroots level (Khushik & Diemer, 2020). Despite the emphasis on English in Pakistani schools, pupils keep having trouble with reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar, demonstrating the gap between policy and practice (Dar & Khan, 2015). The dearth of skill-based language teaching at the SSC level is due to both instructors and students prioritizing syllabus completion and board test preparation instead of skill development.

Ali (2023) asserts that Pakistani teachers in schools rigorously adhere to traditional methodologies. Traditional pedagogical methods are diligently employed, with no indication of contemporary technological tools in educational settings. Conventional pedagogical approaches are evolving with the advent of new technology, rendering English language acquisition more interactive and globally accessible. Online platforms, AI-driven language applications, and virtual classrooms significantly improve teaching and training, effecting transformative changes in the global acquisition and utilization of English (Ammade et al., 2020). A multitude of educators shown reluctance to adopt innovative pedagogical methods, thereby hindering their ability to cultivate a conducive learning environment. The circumstances for English instruction and acquisition in Pakistan are inadequate (Amir, Kang & Saeed, 2018). Notwithstanding years of English instruction, the bulk of Pakistani students are incapable of proficiently communicating in English. They have deficiencies in all four primary linguistic competencies: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Amir, 2022). This indicates that the existing pedagogical approaches are flawed and do not fulfill the objective of communicative competence (Amir, Kang & Saeed, 2018).

The research advised stakeholders to confront these difficulties and execute enhancement initiatives. Amin et al. (2020) performed a qualitative case study in Northern Iraq to examine the influence of social media on English language acquisition. Through written interviews with educators, ESL instructors, secondary school students, and other stakeholders, numerous opportunities and risks were identified. Similarly, Matyakubov (2023) examined the application of contemporary technology in English language training, highlighting the primary advantages, limitations, opportunities, and risks associated with its implementation. Corral-Robles and colleagues Talebzadeh et al. (2024) analyzed the online English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum in Iranian high schools and identified notable weaknesses and risks, such as restricted access to technology and inadequate teacher training, alongside strengths and opportunities, including enhanced flexibility and potential for technological integration.

In his research on the professional development strategies for secondary school English teachers, Zhao (2023) underlined the numerous possibilities and hazards connected with including digital platforms and supporting worldwide cooperation in teacher training programs. These results suggest that advised including technology into teacher preparation courses would help to take advantage of possibilities and minimize obstacles. By allowing access to internet resources such applications, interactive exercises, and multimedia content catered to all skill levels, technology has improved English learning (Yang, 2023).

Examining Video-Based Learning (VBL) in language instruction, Galendez and Ong (2024) found both advantages and drawbacks. Examining how technology affects English language education in Pakistan, Razzaq (2023) underlined its part in increasing student participation and learning. The review of current research helps one to grasp how contemporary technology instruments promote successful teaching strategies. Various all research investigations shown the enormous requirement of using various possibilities including creative technology, apps, approaches and methods in English as a second language.

Ibrahim and Ali (2021) looked into the strategies English teachers in Pakistan applied. The study sought to pinpoint the difficulties teachers have and chances to encourage the application of contemporary teaching strategies in English classes. The results showed that although many educators still rely on antiquated techniques, there is a rising trend toward using modern, more successful teaching approaches. The study underlined the need of always changing instructional strategies to more meet the demands of the students.

Schools in central Punjab, Pakistan, were phenomenological mixed-methodologically investigated by Imran et al. (2024) to look at the instructional strategies and difficulties experienced by English language instructors. Among the major difficulties the study found were insufficient professional training and credentials among teachers, packed classrooms, cultural and social obstacles, restricted availability of current tools and technologies, and poor parental collaboration. The researchers advised going back over professional development programs with an eye toward creative teaching strategies, including technology into language instruction, and creating classroom materials in order to handle these problems.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study employed a quantitative descriptive survey design to investigate the Opportunities and Threats of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) at the secondary level, as Creswell (2014) stated that quantitative descriptive research allows for a detailed understanding of trends and patterns by utilizing numerical data that can be statistically analyzed. The chosen survey technique guarantees thorough understanding of the teaching strategies of ESL teachers in Punjab, Pakistan by allowing a wide and methodical gathering of data from a sizable population. Examining data collected during a particular period and offering a glimpse of a given occurrence, the cross-sectional survey is one of the most often used type of observational study (Zaman, et al., 2024). Taha and Nawaiseh (2023) claim that since the

method addresses the attitudes, knowledge, and perceptions underlying population behavior, it is fit for a wide spectrum of study aims in the social sciences and healthcare. Thus, a cross-sectional survey method was applied to do this research. For this study, all public secondary school English teachers working under the School Education Department in Punjab, Pakistan constituted the target population.

A stratified random sampling technique was applied to ensure that the sample represented variations across gender and geographical locations. In the first stage, the province of Punjab was divided into 3 strata i.e. Southern Punjab, Central Punjab and North Punjab (Zaman, et al., 2024) and then selected 3 schools from Southern Punjab, 3 from North Punjab and 4 from Central Punjab. The sample consisted of 301 secondary school English teachers, including 187 male teachers and 114 female teachers. This sample size was considered appropriate to provide reliable and generalizable findings. In this study a structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was reviewed by experts in educational research to ensure content validity. A pilot study was conducted with separately 40 (Twenty Male and Twenty Female) participants to test the reliability of the instruments which were not included in the data analysis. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient 0.78 was calculated to ensure the consistency of the survey items. In this study, the collected data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics such as t-tests and one-way ANOVA were used to investigate the significant differences in responses based on gender and experience levels.

Results

Table 1

Demographic Detail of the Sample Participants (N=301)

Demographic Variables		Participants Response	
		Frequency	%age
Gender	Male	187	62.1
	Female	114	37.8
Locality	Urban	194	64.5
	Rural	107	35.5
Academic Qualification	BS	5	1.7
	MA/MSc	191	63.5
	MS/MPhil	98	32.6
	PhD	7	2.3
Professional Qualification	B.Ed	144	47.8
	M.Ed	123	40.9
	MA/MS	34	11.3

Education

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the sample participants. The data indicates that 62.1% of the participants were male, while 37.8% were female. Additionally, 64.5% were chosen from urban and 35.5% were from rural. In a similar vein, 1.7% of the sample teachers classified their academic qualifications as BS, 63.5% as MA/MSc, 32.6% as M.Phil and 2.3% as PhD. The participants classified their professional qualifications 47.8% as B.Ed., 40.9% as M.Ed. and 11.3% as MA/MS Education.

Opportunities in Instructional Practices

Table 2

Statement Wise Analysis of Teachers Regarding Opportunities in Instructional Practices (N=301)

Sr#	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev
1	Online listening activities can boost listening skills.	3.98	1.08
2	Active listening activities are good strategies to enhance listening skill.	4.02	1.05
3	Audio can be very useful to improve the listening quality.	4.09	1.05
4	Task-Based Learning exercises can be useful in active listening.	3.49	1.20
5	YouTube channel is very effective to improve my instructional practices.	3.15	1.24
6	Professional development is a key opportunity to improve teaching.	3.85	1.31
7	Online videos can enhance speaking, but I did not use them properly.	4.30	1.02
8	Speaking online with natives is essential to improve effective teaching.	4.18	1.18
9	Skimming and scanning strategies can improve reading comprehension.	3.41	1.40
10	Reciprocal teaching method can improve reading comprehension.	3.49	1.26
11	To create pleasure for reading, extra books like novels can be used.	3.12	1.32
12	Teaching with phonics can be helpful for me to improve pronunciation.	4.23	1.06
13	Speaking skills can be improved by using the Speech-to-Text tool.	3.32	1.23
Overall		3.74	1.18

Table 2 explains the statement wise mean on opportunities in instructional practices in ESL. Overall statements mean was 3.74 and SD=1.18. It shows secondary school teachers of ESL perceived that online listening activity, audio, task-based learning exercises; YouTube channels, professional development, speaking with natives, scanning strategies, reciprocal teaching methods, and using phonics can enhance listening skills. Professional development and speaking with natives can improve teaching effectiveness. Additional books and the speech-to-text tool can also enhance reading comprehension.

Threats in Instructional Practices of ESL

Table 3

Statement Wise Analysis of Students Regarding Threats in Instructional Practices of ESL (N=301)

Sr#	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev
1	I face difficulties in teaching language skills due to lack of audio and video equipment.	4.26	1.08
2	There is insufficient time for teaching and practicing language skills.	3.30	1.32
3	Rigid curriculum prevents me from using modern language activities.	3.38	1.26
4	Large class sizes make it hard to focus on each individual.	3.86	1.24
5	Government policies for English teaching are major hurdles.	3.80	1.22
6	I lack training to use technology in my teaching English language.	4.21	1.09
7	Lack of finance is the major problem in facilitating the English teachers.	3.68	1.37
	Overall Mean	3.78	1.22

Table 3 explains the statement wise mean and standard deviation of the responses of participants on "Threats in Instructional Practices in ESL". Over all mean of statements were 3.78 which were above average. It shows that secondary school teachers of ESL faced threats with teaching language skills due to lack of audio and video equipment, insufficient time, rigid curriculum, large class sizes, government policies, lack of technology training, and lack of finance.

Difference between respondents' Perspective regarding opportunities and threats in instructional practices in ESL

Table 4

Difference between Male and Female teachers' Opinions

Variables	Category	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	Sig.
Gender	Male	187	3.7767	.24408	298	.732	.755
	Female	113	3.7549	.26169			

Table 4 illustrates the perspectives of male and female teachers. The average number of male teachers (3.7767) is greater than that of female teachers (3.7549). Nonetheless, the computed significance value was the score of .755 is greater than the established significance value of 0.05, indicating there is no statistically significant disparity in teachers' perspective on the base of gender.

Table 5

Difference between Teachers' Opinions by locality

Variables	Category	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	Sig.
Locality	Urban	194	3.7616	.25272	299	.591	.968
	Rural	107	3.7794	.24696			

Table 5 illustrates the variance in teachers' perspective by locality. The computed significance value of .968 exceeds the specified significance level of 0.05. This signifies that there is no statistically significant disparity in teachers' perspective on the base of locality i.e. urban and rural.

Table 6

Difference between Teachers' Opinions by Academic Qualification

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.010	26	.116	.353	.999
Within Groups	89.954	274	.328		
Total	92.963	300			

Table 6 demonstrates the variation in teachers' viewpoints according to their academic credentials. The computed significance value of .999 exceeds the specified significance level of 0.05. This signifies that there is no statistically significant disparity in teachers' perspective relative to their academic degrees. The assertion is further corroborated by the F value (.353).

Table 7

Difference between Teachers' Opinions by Professional Qualification

Variables	Category	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	Sig.
Professional Qualification	B.Ed	144	3.7437	.27475		1.420	.082
	M.Ed/MA /MS Edu	157	3.7886	.23512	301		

Table 7 demonstrates the variation in teachers' viewpoints according to their professional credentials. The computed significance value of .082 exceeds the specified significance level of 0.05. This signifies that there is no statistically significant disparity in teachers' perspective relative to their professional degrees.

CONCLUSIONS

First objective of the study was to identify the opportunities in instructional practices of teachers in English language at secondary level as perceived by teachers. Results of the study revealed secondary school teachers of ESL perceived that online listening activity, audio, task-based learning exercises; YouTube channels, professional development, speaking with natives, scanning strategies, reciprocal teaching methods, and using phonics can enhance listening skills. Professional development and speaking with natives can improve teaching effectiveness. Additional books and the speech-to-text tool can also enhance reading comprehension.

Second objective of the study wasto find out the threats in instructional practices of teachers in English language at secondary level as perceived by teachers. The study revealed that secondary school teachers of ESL faced threats with teaching language skills due to lack of audio and video equipment, insufficient time, rigid curriculum, large class sizes, government policies, lack of technology training, and lack of finance.

Third objective of the study was to ascertain the difference between teachers' perspective on the base of demographics i.e. gender, locality, academic qualification and professional qualification. Results revealed that there was no significant difference between teachers' perspective on the base of demographics i.e. gender, locality, academic qualification and professional qualification.

DISCUSSION

Results of the study revealed secondary school teachers of ESL perceived that online listening activity, audio, task-based learning exercises; YouTube channels, professional development, speaking with natives, scanning strategies, reciprocal teaching methods, and using phonics can enhance listening skills. Professional development and speaking with natives can improve teaching effectiveness. Additional books and the speech-to-text tool can also enhance reading comprehension.

Similarly recent studies highlight various opportunities for enhancing English language instruction at the secondary level. Teachers perceive online listening activities, audio resources, task-based learning, and YouTube channels as effective for improving listening skills (Panthee, 2024). Professional development and interactions with native speakers are seen as crucial for enhancing teaching effectiveness (Kryukova et al., 2024). To improve reading comprehension, additional books and speech-to-text tools are recommended (Shapaka, 2024). However, challenges such as non-techno-friendly classrooms and untrained teachers persist, particularly in community schools in Nepal (Panthee, 2024). The necessity of technical infrastructure and audio-visual aids in enhancing listening habits is underscored (Panthee, 2024). Despite recognizing the necessity of professional development and its impact on student outcomes, they face challenges such as restricted access to quality materials and time constraints (Kryukova et al., 2024). Enhancing reading comprehension proficiency relies on the implementation of several instructional strategies (Shapaka, 2024).

Lack of audio and video equipment, insufficient time, strict curriculum, big class numbers, government policies, lack of technology training, and lack of cash exposed secondary school ESL teachers with threats with teaching language skills. The studies taken together show the several difficulties English language teachers at primary and secondary levels in Pakistan and Nepal have. Outdated curricula, lack of resources, poor teacher preparation, and big class sizes—Khan et al., 2024; Junejo et al., 2018; Imran et al., 2024—are common problems. Particularly in teaching listening skills, technological restrictions include non-techno-friendly classrooms and inadequate audio-visual equipment compromise successful language training (Panthee, 2024; Imran et al., 2024). Teaching efficacy also suffers from cultural and social hurdles, poor parental collaboration, and varying degrees of student engagement (Khadija et al.,

2024; Imran et al., 2024). To handle these issues, the studies advise changing professional development programs, enhancing technological infrastructure, and stressing creative teaching strategies (Panthee, 2024; Imran et al., 2024). Furthermore recommended as possible remedies include changing teaching strategies to fit certain classroom environments and using technology into language instruction (Imran et al., 2024).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Technology should be focused in teaching English as second language in secondary schools of Punjab, Pakistan to enhance the learning of students.
2. Functional English should be included in curriculum of English at Secondary level.
3. Language labs should be established at secondary schools.
4. Teachers should focus innovative teaching methods for teaching English at secondary level.
5. Teachers' trainings should be arranged in true letter and spirit for teaching English as Second Language.

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