# Effectiveness of English Teaching as a Foreign Language (ETFL) in Pakistani Educational Institutions: Exploring Methods and Strategies to Address Challenges

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**Abstract:** *This study delved into the effectiveness of English Teaching as a Foreign Language (ETFL) in various educational institutions across Pakistan, with a focus on schools in Lahore, Punjab. The qualitative research method was employed, and interviews were conducted in three different schools. The teachers and students were selected by purposive sampling to gauge the current methods and strategies employed in English language instruction. The initial phase involved posing identical questions to both teachers and students to ensure a comprehensive understanding of perspectives. Subsequently, the inquiry narrowed its focus, repeating the questions for the students exclusively. The research revealed explanatory implications, shedding light on the beliefs and attitudes of language instructors towards the teaching and learning English as a second language. Additionally, the study proposed practical strategies for students to overcome challenges encountered in their language learning journey. A comparative analysis of urban and rural educational institutions in different regions of Pakistan might be investigated for future research. Further, potential variations in teaching methods, resources, and challenges faced in diverse educational settings might be explored.*

***Keywords***: *educational institution, English language teaching, English language learning challenges, practical strategies, teaching strategies*

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## Introduction

Pakistan is a multilingual nation with at least 25 different languages (Mansoor, 2005), with English as the official language and Urdu as the national language (Yasmin et al., 2023). Before the partition in 1947, Pakistan was a British colony; as a result, there was a conceptual class divide in Pakistani culture, and English was prioritised above other regional languages. With its widespread use as an instruction

language in numerous official and educational institutions, English has managed to elevate its status as a significant official language of Pakistan. English continues to be widely used in government, higher education, the judiciary, and official business despite several initiatives to promote Urdu, and it is regarded as a key to success in obtaining jobs and social standing. Despite their tireless efforts, Pakistani EFL students are unable to become proficient in English as a second language. Past research has linked Pakistani EFL students' failure to a severe lack of desire (Krishnan & Pathan, 2013). Due to the widespread use of the English language, which is inevitably growing to address this issue, it is now not only the state's but also the responsibility of EFL teachers to inspire students to study effectively. Numerous studies have examined motivation as a crucial component of learning foreign languages (Crookes et al., 2005). Higher Education Commission (HEC) established the English Language Teaching Reform (ELTR) project for that

reason in 2004. Phase I of the project cost PKR 38.39 million, while Phase II cost PKR 53.67 million in 2010 (Ahsan & Anjum, 2012). 2,798 people have received training from ELTR's workshops for English instructors as of 2016 (source: official website of HEC).

It should be noted that these workshops have yet to include Language Acquisition as a goal. The current study implies that by filling in this knowledge gap, we may see how techniques in the classroom that teach communication skills across disciplines could be increased and improved. Since a few years ago, there has been a growing understanding of the value of incorporating literature, grammar, and computer-assisted activities like videos and audio in EFL/ESL curricula, but sadly, only in private schools, even though this should be done in public/government schools as well.

This study aims to investigate how effectively and efficiently English is taught. However, most EFL teachers in Pakistani classrooms lack the required fundamental training, and there may be

inconsistencies in the way that textbooks and other audio-visual aids are used. English language instruction in Pakistani classrooms is similar to that in the rest of the nation's institutions. Being an "English Medium" school is a badge of honour for every school, but does the English being taught have any value?

## Research Problem

The study addresses the overarching problem of evaluating the effectiveness of English Teaching as a Foreign Language (ETFL) in Pakistani educational institutions, specifically focusing on schools in Lahore, Punjab. The research aims to uncover the current methods and strategies employed in English language instruction and explore the challenges teachers and students face in the language learning process. Additionally, the study seeks to understand the beliefs and attitudes of language instructors towards the teaching and learning of English as a second language. The identified challenges and perspectives will contribute to the development of practical strategies for students to navigate and enhance their language learning journey. Furthermore, the study proposes future research directions, emphasising the need for a comparative analysis of urban and rural educational institutions in various regions of Pakistan to understand potential variations in teaching methods, resources, and challenges faced in diverse educational settings. This research problem is crucial for advancing our understanding of the dynamics of ETFL in Pakistan and guiding the development of effective language teaching practices.

## Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are given below:

1. To analyse English language teachers' teaching methods to facilitate learning English as a foreign language.

2. To examine the influence of first language in the development of second language (L2) proficiency

3. To investigate the challenges students face in the learning experience of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

**Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are given below:

1. How do English teachers employ various teaching methods to facilitate learning English as a foreign language?

2. To what extent does the first language influence the development of second language (L2) proficiency?

3. What are the perceived challenges for students in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning experience?

**Literature Review**

Many institutions now have departments of applied linguistics, and ever since the founding of the Higher Education Commission in 2005, rigorous researches have been carried out in English language instructions. It is more plausible that Pakistan's educational system has been split into two parts. It not only has an impact on the entire educational system, but it also slows down or completely stops language development. There are differing views in Pakistan regarding the positive sentiments of the new generation towards the English language. English was kept as Pakistan's official language until plans were made to replace it with Urdu, the national language, according to the constitution of 1973. Due to the shifting trends in both private and public institutions, Pakistan's educational system is deeply divided. However, the gap between highly proficient and less proficient students educated at government-run institutions has grown since the introduction of private elite schools and army-run schools in Pakistan. As a result, this rising divide is also caused by the textbooks used in both private elite schools and public or government schools. In 2012, Yaqoob and Zubair conducted research into Pakistan's public and private elite schools using textbook analysis. The study compared books recommended by regional textbook boards and those published by Oxford University Press. The comparison also highlighted the stark contrasts in the cultural values portrayed in the texts. Barua (2022) supported the idea that the texts required

for public schools by the regional textbook boards differed from those given in the private elite schools' textbooks in terms of cultural values.

Consequently, it would never be incorrect to presume that the two concurrent but dissimilar educational systems produce two distinct and opposing classes of pupils. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), research demonstrates that mutually successful learning occurs when learners and teachers are actively involved in the learning process. In this setting, which fosters autonomy, students were shown to be motivated and active participants. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), one prescriptive technique may not be appropriate for all learners' requirements and cultures because we live in the post-method era. According to him, language teachers cannot be taught to employ a particular technique that might not apply to all situations (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Khan and Akhter (2017) contend that promoting "explicit knowledge of grammar" (p. 2) for second language acquisition is the best strategy to raise the standard of English in Pakistan. In a Pakistani classroom, the teacher plays the role of a leader or someone who directs and everyone immediately complies. The majority of educators are informed about some pressing social and political concerns. A casual discussion of such topics could land the teacher in a difficult situation. For instance, in a nation with a supreme leader, language teachers are not permitted to discuss social or political issues in class. Siddiquah et al. (2021) suggested that a more effective English Language teaching method might be attained if professors encouraged students to voice their opinions on current social or political events in the language. This would give them the freedom to speak up wherever they wish.

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the effectiveness of English Teaching as a Foreign Language (ETFL) in Pakistani educational institutions. Qualitative methods allow for an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and practices of both teachers and students.

## Sampling

The participants include teachers and students from three different schools in Lahore, Punjab. Purposive sampling is utilised to select participants with diverse experiences in English language instruction.

## Instrumentation

In-depth interviews are conducted with both teachers and students. The initial phase involves posing identical questions to ensure a comprehensive understanding of perspectives. Subsequently, the focus narrows, repeating questions exclusively for students. The interviews are audio-recorded to capture nuances and facilitate accurate transcription.

Document Analysis: Course materials, teaching resources, and relevant documents are analysed to provide additional context and insights into the methods and strategies employed in English language instruction.

## Data Collection

The primary source of data collection was the EFL teachers in the private sector. Three different leading English medium schools as follows were visited:

1. Beacon House School Valencia Town Campus
2. The Pride School
3. Lahore Grammar Public School

The rationale behind the selection lies in the extensive teaching expertise of the faculty members at these schools, who had previously taught at other educational institutions in Lahore before their appointment here. The inquiry encompassed various aspects of language instruction, including methods and techniques employed, the variables influencing the selection of these strategies, the utilisation of course books, and the instructor's position within the classroom setting. Subsequently, the identical inquiries, along with several supplementary ones, were posed to the children under the tutelage of the aforementioned educators. The conclusion was formulated subsequent to a comprehensive examination and comparison of the responses provided by the participating teachers and the academic performance of their respective students.

## Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns, themes, and categories in the qualitative data. Coding was applied to segment the data into meaningful units, and recurring themes were identified to address the research questions.

## Findings

The following section discusses the results drawn from the primary data of the respective research.

### Teachers' Response

This study was conducted based on the following easy questions with 5 participant teachers of English Medium private sectors in Lahore:

a) What teaching methods are you using to teach English as a foreign language?

b) Does the first language play any role in the development of L2 in your class? How effective and efficient can the learning of L2 be for the speaker of L1?

c) Are there any flaws in learning EFL? If yes, how can they be omitted or resolved?

According to the information collected, two teachers (A and B) responded to the first question by stating that one of the goals of their foreign language instruction is to help students communicate fluently in the target language. Effective Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a general approach to speaking and writing utilised to achieve the goal of learning a second language. However, they also included grammar to help pupils improve their communication skills. The opinions of the other three teachers (C, D, and E) differed. They claim that their approach to teaching differs significantly from that of the others and consists of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Therefore, they primarily focus on the L2's listening phase. During this phase, a student develops an ear that effectively understands and responds to what is spoken in the second language. Milestone is the initial stage. If it is accomplished, the professors claim that the other phases will be more straightforward for the students to complete.

Language instructors in underdeveloped nations must create pedagogies appropriate for their students' learning styles and cultural norms (Canagarajah, 2002). If learners view the culture of the target language as an essential component of L2, the study examines English instruction as a foreign language in Pakistan. Here, we have the solution to our second query; as per the teachers, the objectives of better L2 acquisition, with high pronunciation and fluency, can be attained by engaging the students in activities related to the culture of the target language. According to Panhwar et al. (2017), every classroom is generally a promising environment for combining classroom learning with real-world experiences. Therefore, L1 usage in an ETFL classroom needs to be kept to a minimum.

Teachers think that the foundations around which the entire L2 learning system is built are flimsy and hollow. Either the entire L2 learning system needs to be replaced with contemporary methods, or significant changes need to be made. They also believe that students only spend about an hour a day in classrooms where English is taught; the rest of their time is spent with their families, friends, and the locals, who speak L1 virtually exclusively. This is one of the causes of the sluggish fluency and comprehension development of L2 learners. The fundamental requirement for learners is language proficiency for communication, which necessitates the use of grammar, conversation, and other similar techniques.

**Students' Response**

The questions asked by the students of the same teachers are mentioned below.

a) What teaching methods your teachers are using to teach you English as a foreign language?

b) Does the first language play any role in the development of L2 in your class? How effective and efficient can the learning of L2 be for the speaker of L1?

c) Are there any flaws in learning EFL? If yes, how can they be omitted or resolved or improved?

d) Which course book are you using? How practical are the contents of that

course book for developing English language proficiency and accuracy?

The consensus among all participants seems to be that communicative language teaching (CLT), which does not depend on improving students' accuracy and English proficiency, is the best approach. Participants also noted that relying just on CLT did not produce the necessary fluency in English language learning. A small number of pupils also placed a strong emphasis on studying English grammar before moving on to other phases. Which, while technically accurate, would undercut the objective of achieving fluency. Similarly, pupils value mastering grammar rules and fluency and see language as a means of expressing meaning, comprehension, and vocabulary. Through form-based instruction and activities as well as competency through meaning-based activities, they all appear to enhance their accuracy, grammar, and fluency. In order to acquire accuracy and proficiency, students were recommended to add extra readings and audio-visual aids to the course materials.

The majority of students expressed concern for their communication abilities and the belief that their personal speech only measured up to the books and was inadequate. Regardless of age group or student grade (class), they are using all of the student recommendations for the changes to the current syllabus, including the inclusion of the communication skills course along with video aid, literary texts, materials in the form of short films, movies, and short stories, and the use of picture books in particular. By demonstrating how the usage of children's picture books fits into the present methodological methods used for second language training, this study aims to improve our understanding of second language learning. It also explains why picture books should be a teaching tool (Sullivan, 1994). The availability of picture books as a teaching tool without the need for further curriculum preparation is another benefit. Few kids who already speak English at home express more satisfaction with the teachers' methods of instruction (C, D, and E). Although their methodology was more systematic, sadly, neither was it

used frequently nor was the majority of students in favour of it. Students find it tedious to listen to a teacher or another student speak nonstop in a language they do not understand.

## Discussion

English language instructors have always had an "ideal method" for helping pupils improve their English, and this approach works for all L2 learners (Islam, 2020). Similar to how EFL instructors in Pakistan appear in this study, they employ the most effective techniques. This study focuses on gathering information on a limited scale to analyse the various teaching techniques and approaches used by EFL teachers in Pakistan. Teachers in society as a whole continue to employ prescriptive techniques with their own adaptations to effectively cater to the requirements, aspirations, and aims of their pupils. Banerjee (2023) affirms that methods remain relevant and indispensable, as they are not rendered obsolete and will persist indefinitely.

Teaching Methods: The teachers' responses indicate a divergence in their approaches to teaching English as a foreign language. While two teachers emphasise effective Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), focusing on speaking and writing, the remaining three teachers prioritise listening, speaking, reading, and writing, giving particular attention to the listening phase. This variation underscores the diversity in pedagogical approaches and the need for tailored strategies that align with students' learning styles and cultural norms. Another vital element is teacher training. Anxious, incompetent students were also being produced in schools by a lack of qualified and educated teachers. It is found that encouraging and upbeat teachers keep EFL students at ease and inspired to perform orally.

Role of First Language: Teachers recognise the importance of incorporating the culture of the target language in L2 acquisition. They assert that engaging students in activities related to the target language's culture contributes to better L2 acquisition, emphasising high pronunciation and fluency. Limiting the use of the first

language (L1) in an English Teaching as a Foreign Language (ETFL) classroom is deemed crucial, aligning with the idea that language and culture are intertwined in language acquisition.

Flaws in EFL Learning: The teachers express concerns about the existing L2 learning system, considering its foundations as weak. They propose the need for a substantial overhaul of the system or significant modifications. The limited time spent in English classrooms, coupled with extensive interactions in L1 outside the classroom, is identified as a contributor to slow fluency and comprehension development. Language proficiency for communication is considered fundamental, necessitating the incorporation of grammar, conversation, and other techniques.

**Students' Response:**

Teaching Methods: Students exhibit a consensus in favour of communicative language teaching (CLT) but note its limitations in developing necessary fluency. Some students emphasise the importance of studying English grammar before progressing to other phases, highlighting the tension between achieving accuracy and fluency. They express a preference for a balanced approach that incorporates both form-based instruction and meaning-based activities to enhance accuracy, grammar, and fluency. The English language teachers need to put in a lot more work, and the learners can only provide positive outcomes. Implementing innovative techniques like those used in public and private schools in Canada and the USA would be highly beneficial.

Role of First Language: similar to teachers, students acknowledge the role of CLT but perceive it alone as insufficient for achieving fluency. The majority expresses a desire to enhance their communication abilities, recognising the inadequacy of their speech in comparison to written proficiency. Psychological strain associated with L2 learning was another element that was noted. Effective second language acquisition requires promoting communicative language teaching (CLT). They recommend additional readings, audio-visual aids, and activities to augment course materials, emphasising the need for a

comprehensive language learning experience.

Flaws in EFL Learning: Students express concern about their communication abilities, feeling that their speech falls short of written proficiency. During the conversation, it was discovered that a small number of students perceive English communication to be stressful due to psychological and sociocultural factors. Because they fear being teased by their classmates, most L2 students either choose not to participate or avoid responding to the teacher. The situation can be made better by obstructing such a stereotypical society. Another reason is that private English-medium schools in Pakistan cater mainly to the higher class, whereas Urdu-medium schools cater primarily to the lower class (Shamim, 2011). They recommend changes to the current syllabus, advocating for including communication skills courses along with video aids, literary texts, short films, movies, and picture books. The students' suggestions align with their desire for a more dynamic and engaging language learning experience.

**Conclusion**

The study highlights the diversity in teaching methods and student preferences within the context of English Teaching as a Foreign Language (ETFL) in Pakistani educational institutions. Teachers' and students' responses reveal the ongoing relevance of methods, emphasising the adaptability of approaches to cater for students' needs and aspirations. The findings stress the importance of a balanced approach that integrates cultural aspects, addresses weaknesses in the current L2 learning system, and promotes innovative techniques. Teacher training emerges as a crucial element, and the study suggests that fostering positive teacher-student dynamics can alleviate the psychological strain associated with language learning. Additionally, addressing sociocultural factors and implementing communicative language teaching (CLT) are vital for effective second language acquisition. The study concludes by advocating for the incorporation of innovative techniques inspired by

practices in countries like Canada and the USA.

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