

A Study to Highlight the Factors Affecting Implementation of Planned English Language Learning Outcomes at Secondary Level in Punjab, the Province of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the factors creating hindrance to attain intended language learning outcomes in the national curriculum 2006 of Pakistan at secondary level. The data collected from the public, private and semi-government schools using non-probability sampling to investigate learning and teaching practices in classrooms, and its assessment in classrooms as well as in Board Examinations. Mixed method approach was used for the said purpose; questionnaires from 300 students enrolled at Matriculation level and interviews from 15 teachers teaching for at least three years to the selected level. The findings bring forth the fact; due to use of Grammar Translation Method and Urdu as a medium of instruction, the pool of Urdu speakers is increasing though it is the mother tongue of only 8% population. Moreover, assessment system is a tool to test cramming ability of the student rather than language skills. Due to highlighted deficits in language teaching and assessment, English language is considered as boring and difficult subject by the learners.

Keywords: National Curriculum, Grammar Translation Method, Medium of Instruction, Second Language Acquisition, Mixed Method Approach

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Introduction

This paper investigates that in Pakistan, although English Language is taught from Grade 1 but most of the learners are not proficient in its use. It is observed that even after reaching to Matriculation Level, students are not comfortable with English Language. Asif

(2013, p.33-34) points out that in Pakistan the students who are enrolled in Matriculation classes have “poor understanding of the sentence structure and subject-verb agreement, spelling mistakes and focus on rote learning, ignoring self-writing and speaking skills.” Siddique (2007, p. 149-152) explains that the requirement for English is increasing

but its teaching in Pakistani schools is far from satisfactory. There is a continuous decline in English Language Teaching as Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is still in use; moreover English textbooks give least emphasis on listening and speaking skills. Likewise when we come to the evaluation process it is memory driven; certain set of questions connected to the textbook are most likely to appear in the exam. Such questions need the memorized material of the textbook. Thus the textbooks provide the learners with a “short cut to pass the examination.” Kiran (p.9, 10, para. 1.3) believes that English teaching in Pakistani schools cut a sorry figure as it is not yet producing fluent English speakers, which is the primary goal of language teaching. Students are being trained to translate the text into Urdu using GTM and memorize the answers word by word from helping books. Little attention is given to their creative abilities as teachers adhere to the “grammar-based syllabi” using the grammar translation method.

Therefore, the proposed research uncovers the factors that are inhibiting students’ acquisition of language. It is important to explore that why English Language learning and teaching facing discrepancies, despite the fact that the current English Language Curriculum of Matriculation aims to develop the competency in all the four skills of language; reading, writing, listening and speaking that have been integrated into

the revised version of English Textbooks for Paper A.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

- 1: To highlight the factors that influence Matriculation students’ learning of English language.
- 2: To evaluate effectiveness of teaching methodologies for English language in Secondary classes.
- 3: To discover the practices that can facilitate in accomplishing English language learning outcomes at Matriculation level.

Significance of the Study

The study is really significant in the field of English language teaching as it brings into spotlight the reasons that are creating problems in attaining proficiency in English language by Matriculation students. The results of this study might help to improve the textbooks and Board Examinations system of Secondary classes.

Literature Review

Poulson (1998, p. 5) points out that English is a vital subject in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools. Due to which there are many debates and controversies regarding its syllabus and teaching methodologies. Richards (2001, p. 2) explains that

language curriculum development is a broader aspect of educational activity. Curriculum development determines what skills, knowledge, values and experiences are to impart to the students during an educational course. Moreover, it states the intended learning outcomes, teaching methodologies to be followed and evaluation system to measure the success of the program. Johnson (1989, p.26) believes that language curriculum holds much importance as language learning is a subject that has a tendency to be different from other disciplines. Secondly, teaching of second language is typically defined “as a kind of applied linguistics rather than as a kind of education.”

Pakistan’s Matriculation Curriculum of English Language

Jamil (2009, p. 2) states, “Curriculum reforms have been underway since 2001 in Pakistan after a long period of neglect and stagnation. In 2005-06, curriculum of all grades and subjects underwent a comprehensive reform. Spolsky and Sung (2015, p. 175) believe that with the help of current curriculum of English Language, students will be able to communicate effectively in formal and informal settings. This will be taught to them through interviews, group and individual oral presentations and setting formal and informal environment in the class. They will understand and articulate proper pronunciation, intonations and stress patterns of English Language for good communication.

Approaches to Teach English Language in Pakistani’s Classrooms

Many approaches have been developed by the linguists to improve ESL learning. Siddique (2007, p.149) states that in most of the mainstream schools of Pakistan, English is being taught using GTM. But in the modern world, Communicative Approach is considered to be the effective way of teaching second and foreign language.

Grammar Translation Approach (GTM). Tetzner (2006, p.1) states that grammar translation method remained as the dominant method from the mid-nineteenth century to teach foreign languages and this method is still in use. Flowerdew and Miller (2005, p.4) explain, “ The grammar-translation approach viewed language as a descriptive set of finite rules that, once learned, gave access to the language. A grammar-translation syllabus consisted of two components: grammar and lexical items.” Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.5, 6) list the essentials of its syllabus; its main goal is to make the learner comprehend the literature of target language, its focus is on reading and writing, meanings of vocabulary taught by translating into the first language of the learner or vice versa. In addition the medium of instruction is L1.

Byram and Hu (2013) explain the fact, “Criticism of the Grammar-translation method by language teaching theorists focus on its emphasis of the

mental, intellectual, disciplinary and memorization orientation while ignoring the speaking and listening communication aspect of the foreign language being learned/taught.” Leaver and Willis (2004, p.9) highlight that previously grammar was the centre of attention for ESL learning but now with the new trends in language learning lexical area of language is considered more important than it.

Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT). Raman (2004, p. 95) believes in communicative approach learners do not learn the grammar rules and linguistic structures but learn the functional use of the language. Patel and Vyas (2009, p.45) state that the goal of CLT is to prepare the learners for communication in the target language. Murcia (2001, p.27) notifies that CLT is not just concerned with face to face communication but its principles are equally applicable on reading and writing skills.

In *National Curriculum of English Language* (2006, p. 65) it is clearly instructed to use communicative approach in English classes where teacher’s role should be of a facilitator and students as an active learner. It has also been instructed to induct such activities, the target of which is to encourage them to cooperate with each other, thus get more chances to communicate in the target language as well. It will prepare the students to use second language in real life situations.

English Language Matriculation Textbooks in Pakistan. In *English Language Curriculum of Pakistan* (2006, p.160) it is stated to write a good textbook, an insight into the learning and teaching conditions and objectives and evaluation process is required. Moreover, textbooks should have enough material for the sufficient practice of the language concepts. Sahu (2004) believes that major source of teaching in the classrooms is textbook because the language acquisition is much dependent on it. English language textbook should have exercises that cover the four skills of language (as cited by Nawab, 2012, p. 107).

Asif (2013, p.33) highlights that English Matriculation textbooks usually have grammar exercises, comprehension, vocabulary building and translation of the text into Urdu or vice versa. H. Khan (2011, p.114) points out that the textbook of Paper B (English Grammar and Composition) has not been updated or revised. It has some essays and stories that are always given in English language paper of Board Examinations for testing students’ creative writing and they memorize them to avoid the chances of mistakes and errors.

English Language Assessment at Matriculation Level in Pakistan. Khattak (2012, p.6) defines, examinations and assessments are an integral part of pedagogy which determines the destiny of students’ learning for their life career. Siddiqui (2007, p. 187) asserts, ‘in Pakistan the impact of assessment is

conspicuous. It is an assessment system that has emerged as an omnipotent force that is calling the shots in the educational scenario of Pakistan. Each new government claims to realize its significance but hardly takes any practical, meaningful, holistic, and sustainable steps towards streamlining the system’.

H. Khan (2011, p.113) brings into spotlight that Lahore Board Examination system lacks the factors of reliability, validity, authenticity and practicality, the factors that foster the usefulness of an English language assessment. Her study highlights the fact that the students who are good in cramming the content secure good grades in the board exams. Even the teachers are under pressure as only those are appreciated whose students receive A grades in exams rather than those who focus on the creative abilities of the learners. Nawab (2012, p.107) believes that assessment system of Pakistan is the major hindrance in teaching of English language. It is due to the outdated exam system that teacher cannot flourish her students’ language skills. Teachers prepare the students according to the exam pattern so they can attain appropriate grades.

Learning Outcomes of Pakistani Students at Matriculation Level.

Khattak (2013, p.6) writes that since the emergence of Pakistan, ministry of education has executed seven different educational policies to improve the quality of education but the results are

unsatisfactory; assessment system is “narrow in scope” as it does not evaluate students genuine competency but it cheer them to write the memorizing content of the lessons and those who fails to do that, unable to score remarkable marks in the exams. Rehmani (2003, p.3) asserts that the main aim of teaching in Matriculation classes is attainment of higher grades that encourages rote learning by the students. Thus, their learning outcomes are totally neglected by such type of examination system but yes the testing of memorization is “measured extensively.” Coleman (2010, p.19) highlights that in Pakistan the main function of English teaching is to prepare the students for exams as English is a gateway to “white collar jobs.”

Problems of Pakistani Matriculation Students in Acquiring English Language.

Capstick and Coleman (2012, p.15) assert that Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and the medium of instruction in state schools. Asif (2013, p. 33-34) states that in Matriculation classes of Pakistan, there is use of mother tongue, untrained teachers, assessment system that focuses on rote learning, ignoring self-writing and communication skills. Ahmad et al (2013, p. 97-99) believe that Matriculation students are facing problems due to the factors that teachers are not much qualified and trained, they teach language the way they teach science and math subjects thus it lower the graph of students’ motivation. There is no availability of audio and visual aids and

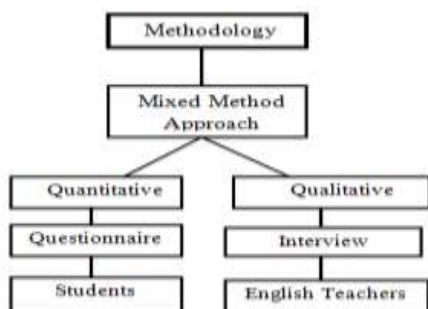
any other material other than textbooks to develop their' interest in the target language. Moreover, the frequent switching use of L1 by teachers during the instructions in the class, miss the students' chances of absorbing the language even in the classroom premises.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Mixed-method approach was used for the current study in which the researcher used quantitative and qualitative methods; questionnaires and interviews.

Figure1. Methodology Used in the Research



The interviews were conducted from 15 teachers teaching English to Matriculation students for at least three years in some public, private and semi-government schools of Lahore - Pakistan, following non-probability sampling.

Table 1. Sample Size for Interview of English Teachers

Sr#	Group	Sample Size	Percentage
1	Public Schools	5	33%
2	Private Schools	5	33%
3	Semi-Government Schools	5	33%
	Total Population	15	100%

Data from 300 students have been collected who are enrolled in Matriculation class, out of which 156 are male students 52% of the selected population and 144 female subjects, 48% of the population.

Table 2. Sample Size for Questionnaire of Matriculation Students

Sr#	Group	Sample size (male and female)	Percent-age	Total Percent
1	Public School: (male students)	56	19%	34%
	Public Schools: (female students)	45	15%	
2	Private Schools: (male students)	50	17%	31%
	Private Schools: (female students)	43	14%	
3	Semi-government schools: (male students)	56	18%	35%
	Semi-government schools: (female students)	50	17%	
	Total Population	300	100%	

Data Analysis

The reliability statistics of quantitative data is 0.96 (Cronbach Alpha). The quantified data containing frequency, percentage and cumulative percent is organized in tabular form. The findings of the qualitative data are displayed by the headings, presenting the various responses that have been received for a question and analyzed descriptively. Moreover, the findings gathered from both the approaches are merged under the single heading where teachers and students views are similar. The reliability and validity of the current study is supported by the literature review. During the research, the researcher has found the same aspects that are highlighted by various studies in regards to Matriculation students. The merger of quantitative and qualitative method helped in deducing a comprehensive outcome of the research.

Results and Discussion

Table 3. Qualification of Teachers

		Freque ncy	Perc ent	Cumula tive Percent
Val id	M.Phil	2	13.3	13.3
	Master s	10	66.7	80.0
	Gradua tion	2	13.3	93.3
	Others	1	6.7	100.0
	Total	15	100. 0	

From the collected data it has been deduced that 7% teachers have not received their master degrees and there are 13% teachers who have not done Masters in English but they are teaching English to secondary school students, a grade to step towards higher studies. For this grade it is necessary that the teachers themselves are proficient in English and fully equipped with the modern teaching methods to make teaching learning process effective.

Language of Instruction in Class

While teaching English in classroom premises, 20% of the participants reported to use English as a language of administration, and 73% use Urdu.

Table 4. Language of Instruction in Class Reported by Teachers

		Freque ncy	Perce nt	Cumulat ive Percent
Val id	Engli sh	3	20.0	20.0
	Urdu	11	73.3	93.3
	Punja bi	1	6.7	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	

Table 5. Language of Instruction in Class Reported by Students

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid English	46	15.3	15.3
Urdu	241	80.3	95.7
Punjabi	13	4.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

It is perceived that even in classrooms the graph of the use of Urdu language is ascending rather than English. It highlights one of the factors of incompetent ESL learners that they are getting input from their English teachers in Urdu language thus, not able to grasp aroma of English language which triggers by the listening process.

Pedagogy of Teaching English Language

Table 6. Teacher Uses Activities in Textbook Reported by Students

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Never	200	66.7	66.7
Rarely	66	22.0	88.7
Sometimes	17	5.7	94.3
Mostly	11	3.7	98.0
Always	6	2.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	

The activities to enhance language skills are essential component of acquiring language but 8 teachers reported they *“don’t conduct such activities because they are not being assessed in the Board Examination.”* One of the teachers explained *“just take the feedback about the text.”* 3 teachers have the view, *“we only focus on those points while teaching that are assessed in Board Examination, and there is no need to waste time on such activities that are not fruitful for them in exams. Further, students take much time in learning the translation of the text and other content that they have to learn by heart to score good grades in exams that no time left for other activities.”* This hypothesis further reinforced by the responses of interviewee: we *“focus more on Grammar Translation Method because to translate the text into Urdu is one of the compulsory questions of Paper A and B in the Board Exams”*. The participants’ responses revealed that there is difference between the planned curriculum by the ministry of education and implementation of it in the classrooms. In the curriculum, it has mentioned to use Communicative Approach but most of the teachers are following the traditional method of teaching.

Matriculation Textbooks of English

In the question regarding English textbooks of Matriculation level, 60% teachers explained that they *“don’t make the learners proficient in English as various exercises for practice of grammar*

rules are not given, so whenever students encounter the same concept in different way, they are not able to attempt it”, some others complained, “English textbooks need to be revised, they have lot of grammatical mistakes. When the book itself is not perfect so how it would help the learners to be proficient in English language”

From the received responses, researcher perceived - most of the teachers are not satisfied from the current English textbooks and they think these books should be revised to induct such activities that help their learners to become a proficient user of English Language.

Class Assessment of English Language

Assessment is necessary to evaluate the performance of the learners. It helps the teachers to assess not only the progression of the learners but also their weak areas. Interviewer asked the question from teachers that how they assess English Language in classrooms. 40% teachers reported that

“they focus on reading and writing skills as only these skills are assessed in the internal and external exams. They assess reading by asking the students to read the text in the class and for writing they use to take written test related to the text”. 27% teachers also reported “they focus on writing only but it is also limited to memorisation of the content.” 20% teachers explained they

“assess listening, speaking and reading skills of the learners while delivering the lecture and writing after their lecture in the form of short test.” 13% teachers reported “assess listening and speaking activities by asking various questions regarding the text, for reading we select the students randomly to do the reading of the text and for writing they are asked to write answers of the questions given in the exercise. In Board Examination mostly questions from exercises given at the end of each unit are given, so we want students to get full marks in them.”

This view of the teachers have been notified by the students also that 11% of the assessments are never and rarely according to the Board pattern, 18% of the assessments are sometimes design according to it, 22% have opted the option of mostly and 38% selected that their assessments are always reflects Board pattern.

Table 7. Assessments according to Board Pattern

	Items	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	34	11.3	11.3
	Rarely	34	11.3	11.7
	Sometimes	54	18.0	18.7
	Mostly	65	21.7	21.3
	Always	113	37.7	37.0
	Total	300	100.0	

So teachers focus is to prepare their students for the final examination so in the class such pattern follows by the teachers that train their students well for it.

Encouragement of Memorization in Board Examinations

The question regarding the encouragement of memorization in the Board Examinations, it has been observed that 1% students think it never encourages us for rote learning, 4% stated it rarely does, 71% said that sometimes it do encourage, and 101% responses for the options mostly and 123% for the option always has been received.

Table 8. Encouragement of Memorization

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	1	0.3	0.3
	Rarely	4	1.3	1.3
	Sometimes	71	23.6	23.6
	Mostly	101	33.6	33.6
	Always	123	41.0	41.0
	Total	300	100.0	

Through the responses of the participants researcher has perceived the reason that why teachers encourage their students to memorise the content of the textbook; to score good marks in the Board Examinations. It has been observed

the assessment of English Language is also not as per the prescribed way of national curriculum, where it is stated to add such questions in the paper that add to students' critical thinking.

Conclusions

English is not the first language in many countries but it is a compulsory subject in almost all schools of the world. It is due to its prestigious position of a Global language. Same is the case in Pakistan, English is taught here from primary level till graduation as a compulsory subject. Moreover, it's the official language here but the problems face by the educational system of Pakistan is incompetency in it. English is not only required to gain higher education, it is also an essential tool of communication at international level. The research has highlighted English classrooms lack the culture of communicating in English, students as well as the teachers both use Urdu language most of the time. Most of the teachers are doing the practice of simply translating the text from English to Urdu and then writing the answers of the comprehension questions on the board, the role of the students is to just copy the answers into their copies and memorise them. The students who are good in memorization, they are the high scorers in the class.

Although the National Curriculum of Pakistan 2006 has set high models for learning English Language but the evaluation process has not been yet

established to judge students learning according to the set benchmarks. Most of the questions in exams demand rote learning from the students and translations from Urdu to English and vice versa. Thus, not only teaching system but the evaluation process as well encourages learners to focus on memorisation of the content. Therefore, teaching, learning and evaluation cycle hinders the critical and analytical thinking of the students, thus leaving them to feel helpless when they enter into the practical fields for high standard jobs.

Another aspect related to teaching English to Secondary classes of Pakistan is the use of only one book; English textbook and in the whole year students and teachers focus in the preparation of it because at the end of the year they are assessed in Board Examinations in relation to Punjab Textbooks only. The other learning aids that will help learners to enhance their language are totally ignored. Besides, teachers also focus on such pedagogies that help their learners to attain good scores in exams. The study of English language in English Matriculation classes is just like other science disciplines; learning of the grammar rules like the chemical formulas of any substance. Similar to it, unaware about the implementation of the grammar rules in the context, thus, make the English learning process stagnant and boring.

In the English language curriculum and Textbooks the benchmarks for English language learning

are set according to the modern trends but as far as implementation is concerned it's contradict to each other. One of the major reasons of it is the criteria of assessing English language. In the curriculum of English Language it is mentioned to take formative and summative assessment for the students, in these assessments students are only being assessed in their writing skills, other skills are completely being ignored. Even in writing skills most of the questions simply ignore creative skills of students as questions related to the text are always been taken from the exercises given at the end of each chapter. The compositions are also those that are given in the grammar books of the students. So what students simply do, they memorise all the content to avoid the chances of errors or mistakes in their written expression to score good grades. It is also important to notify here that in the curriculum it is mentioned that the teachers use Communicative Approach; a modern methodology of teaching English language but in the question paper a compulsory question of translating the given text into Urdu is given, thus promoting the use of Grammar Translation Method in the class. The grammar section is also based on such exercises in which the students have to translate the given lines from Urdu to English or vice versa. The English paper is attached in Appendix: I to support the researcher observations and views.

In a nut shell, it can be concluded that intended learning outcomes for

English language are not been met and the main reason of incompetency of second language learners is the traditional learning and teaching process that is followed in most of the schools of Pakistan. However, the current educational system is the source of promoting the use of national language-Urdu in Pakistan. Even those whose mother tongue is not Urdu they are now the user of it.

Recommendations

- Ministry of Education in Pakistan should make it sure that the teachers teach in the schools following the set patterns of the National Curriculum. For it teachers' training programs should be conducted, appropriate teaching guides should be published for teachers help and all the teaching aids should be provided.
- Educational Teams should be made to visit the schools, time to time to investigate whether effective pedagogies are followed by the instructors and feedback should be taken from the students to judge their learning of language and their satisfaction from the learning process.
- Current English books should be revised considering the modern demands of the world and other reading materials should be inducted in the syllabus to enhance students' learning.
- Modifications should be done in the Board Examinations that help to evaluate English Language on the set benchmarks of the curriculum.

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