

**AN EVALUATION OF CLASSROOM
INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES
AND THEIR EFFECTS ON LEARNERS'
READING PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PAKISTAN: A CASE
STUDY**

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**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA
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A CASE STUDY**

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AV	African Village
BSE	Board of Secondary Education
BIE	Board of Intermediate Education
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CD ROM	Compact Disc Read only Memory
CP	Custom of various Regions of Pakistan
CSR	Collaborative Strategic Reading
DCAT	Developed Comprehension Assessment Tool
ESRA	Education Sector Reform Assistance
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GCI	Global Competitive Index
GTM	Grammar Translation Method
HHHS	Happy Home High School
HSSC	Higher Secondary School Certificate
MCHS	Montessori Complex High School
MoE	Ministry of Education
NEP	National Education Policy
QAR	Question Answer Relationship
RRSG	RAND Reading Study Group
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
SPELT	Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers

SCT	Socio Cultural Theory
TRCT	Teachers' Reading Comprehension Test
WB	World Bank
UN	United Nation
WHGS	White House Grammar School
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- Khan, I., Pandian, A. & Rozina, R. R. S. (2009, October). *An Investigation of Grade 10 Pakistani Secondary School EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension Performance to Ascertain Learners' Main Idea Retrieval in L2*. Paper presented at sixth international conference on literacy LITCON conference, Penang, Malaysia.
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ABSTRAK

PENILAIAN PENGAJARAN DI BILIK DARJAH DAN AMALAN PENILAIAN DAN KESANNYA TERHADAP PRESTASI BACAAN PELAJAR DI SEKOLAH TERPILIH DI PAKISTAN: SATU KAJIAN KES

Pertamanya, kajian ini bertujuan menyelidik cara pembacaan / bacaan diajar kepada pelajar *EFL* Gred 10 di beberapa buah sekolah menengah terpilih di Pakistan. Yang keduanya, menyelidik amalan penilaian bacaan yang dipraktikkan oleh guru-guru di sekolah berkenaan untuk menilai kefahaman bacaan pelajar. Pada akhirnya, kajian ini meneroka sejauh mana arahan bacaan yang dijalankan mampu menyediakan pelajar bagi *DCAT* (*Developed Comprehension Assessment Tool*). Kajian kes ini menggunakan pendekatan reka bentuk bercampur (*mixed design approach*) untuk mengumpul data kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Tiga buah sekolah swasta bukan elit yang terletak di sebuah bandar di Pakistan dipilih. Jumlah responden kategori pelajar yang terlibat dalam kajian ini adalah seramai 116 orang. Daripada jumlah tersebut, 35 orang adalah pelajar lelaki dan 81 pelajar perempuan. Di samping itu, dua orang guru lelaki dan seorang guru perempuan turut terlibat. Dalam kajian ini, lapan buah kelas membaca dipantau atau diperhati di setiap sekolah. Jumlah pemantauan atau pemerhatian adalah 24 di tiga buah sekolah berkenaan. Responden guru diminta menyediakan ujian kefahaman bacaan bagi menjawab persoalan kedua penyelidikan. Setiap responden guru daripada setiap sekolah berkenaan diminta menyediakan tiga ujian kefahaman bacaan. Bagi menjawab persoalan ketiga penyelidikan, *DCAT* dibangunkan berdasarkan Taksonomi Bloom (1956) dan Barrett (1972). Dapatan daripada ‘pemerhatian di bilik darjah’ dan ‘temu bual’, menunjukkan bahawa guru menjelaskan serta memparafrasa teks kepada pelajar. Matriks senarai semak arahan

bacaan menunjukkan bahawa guru tidak menggunakan sebarang strategi arahan bacaan untuk membantu pelajar membangunkan kemahiran bacaan yang tinggi. Terdapat juga bukti bahawa guru tidak pernah menggunakan sebarang bahan atau strategi tambahan semasa mengajar bacaan. Mereka juga tidak pernah menggunakan strategi prabacaan bagi membolehkan pelajar meramal atau menganggar kandungan sesuatu teks. Malahan, mereka juga tidak pernah merangsang skemata pelajar untuk membantu pelajar memahami makna leksikal dan teks. Daripada Ujian Kefahaman Bacaan Guru (Teachers Reading Comprehension Test, TRCT), didapati bahawa daripada 75 soalan yang ditanya semasa penilaian kefahaman bacaan, hanya 22 (29.3%) soalan digunakan untuk menentukan kefahaman inferensial pelajar. Tambahan pula, daripada 75 soalan, 53 (70.7%) soalan dirangka untuk menentukan kefahaman literal pelajar dan tiada bagi kefahaman kritikal ditanya oleh ketiga-tiga guru berkenaan. Dapatan ini menunjukkan bahawa ujian bacaan mengandungi 1.3 % soalan berbentuk ya/ tidak, 5.3% soalan terbuka dan 93.3% adalah soalan-Wh yang diolah untuk menentukan kefahaman bacaan pelajar. Sebagai tambahan, guru tidak pernah menilai pelajar berdasarkan domain dapatan idea utama, fakta dan pendapat, saringan maklumat, banding dan beza, dan pengenalpastian ayat utama. Dapatan kuantitatif daripada *DCAT* menunjukkan bahawa pelajar *EFL* Gred 10 kurang mahir dalam domain kefahaman 'literal', 'inferensial' dan 'kritikal'. Pelajar juga tidak kompeten dalam 'dapatan idea utama', 'pengesanan fakta dan pendapat', 'saringan maklumat', 'banding dan kontras', dan 'pengenalpastian ayat utama'

ABSTRACT

AN EVALUATION OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON LEARNERS' READING PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PAKISTAN: A CASE STUDY

The purpose of this study is firstly to investigate the manner in which reading is taught to Grade 10 EFL learners in selected secondary schools in Pakistan. Secondly, it is to investigate reading assessment practices carried out by secondary school teachers in the selected schools to assess Grade 10 EFL learners' reading comprehension. Finally, the purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which the current reading instruction prepares Grade 10 EFL learners for the Developed Comprehension Assessment Tool (DCAT). This case study uses a mixed design approach in order to gather quantitative and qualitative data. Three private non-elitist secondary schools from one city in Pakistan were selected. The total number of student respondents was one hundred and sixteen. There were thirty-five male and eighty-one female students' respondents who participated in this study. In addition, two male and one female teacher respondent had also participated. In this study, eight reading instruction classes in each school were observed. The total number of observations was twenty-four in three selected secondary schools. Secondly, the teacher respondents were asked to prepare reading comprehension tests in order to answer research question two. Each teacher of the three selected schools was requested to prepare three reading comprehension tests. Thirdly, in order to answer the third research question, DCAT was developed based on Bloom's (1956) and Barrett's (1972) Taxonomy. From the results i.e. 'classroom observations' and 'interviews', it was found that teachers explained and paraphrased the text to the

learners. The Checklist Matrices of reading instruction show that the teachers did not use any of the reading instruction strategies to assist learners in developing their reading and higher-order skills. It was also evident that teachers never used any additional materials or strategies to teach reading. Teachers also never used pre-reading strategies to enable learners to predict the content of a text and they never stimulate learners' schemata to help learners understand the meaning of the lexical items and the text. It appears from Teachers Reading Comprehension Test (TRCT) that out of 75 questions asked during the assessment of reading comprehension, only 22 (29.3%) questions were employed to examine learners' inferential comprehension. Moreover, out of the 75 questions, 53 (70.7%) questions were framed to examine learners' literal comprehension and no questions for critical comprehension were asked by the three teachers in the selected schools. The results revealed that the reading tests contained 1.3% yes/no questions, 5.3% open-ended questions and 93.3% were Wh- questions designed to examine Grade 10 learners' reading comprehension. In addition, teachers never assessed learners on the domains of main idea retrieval, fact and opinion, scanning information, compare and contrast and topic sentence identification reading competency tasks. The quantitative findings yielded from Developed Comprehension Assessment Tool (DCAT) revealed that Grade 10 EFL learners were less proficient on the domains of 'literal', 'inferential' and 'critical comprehension'. Secondly, learners were also not found competent in 'main idea retrieval', 'fact and opinion recognition', 'scanning information', 'compare and contrast', and 'topic sentence identification' reading competency tasks.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

The key contributory factor in the national development of any country is the quality of its education. Therefore, the current education policy (1998-2010) focuses on this issue intensively in Pakistan. Ministry of Education (henceforth, MoE) (2005) in a report states that by monitoring learners' achievements and their evaluation may improve the quality as well as the national development of the country that suffers both on the account of quality and quantity. Raphael and Au (2005) observe that "Promoting high levels literacy for all children is a core responsibility for today's teachers" (p.206) and "Learning to read is one of the greatest accomplishments in childhood because it is the foundation for learning and academic achievement" (Paris, 2005, p.184).

The low quality of education, poor assessment techniques, emphasis on traditional learning, and teacher-directed instruction is the usual practice in most schools. Thus, the conditions under which English is taught are not conducive to teaching and learning the language in Pakistan (Arif, 1995; Warsi, 2004; Christie and Afzaal, 2005). In a language class in Pakistan, students are engaged in a very limited range of activities such as listening, reading, writing, and labelling. This narrow range of activities is the obstacle in developing a learning situation where children can question gather and assess information and draw valid conclusions. Therefore, instead of adopting the said pedagogy, teachers must "organize a variety of learning opportunities where students will be able to improve the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing and reconstructing understanding" (Nayyar, 2006,

p.15). In addition, teachers should equip learners with the skills of purposeful reading and should enhance learners' cognitive and affective domains in order to enable them to think critically and creatively (MoE, 2006). It has been observed that the study habits of students and their interests play an important role in their educational process, however, Pakistan's educational system depends on rote learning that is confined to only one textbook (Shah and Saleem, 2010). In Pakistani schools teachers dominate the discourse while learners rarely participate in classroom discussion. Students faithfully follow the teacher and absorb facts, figures, information, and knowledge without considering them and without engaging in independent thought. Teachers do not realize that the focus on knowledge transmission and their authoritarian teaching style impede students from playing their role (Hafeez, 2004; Khan, 2006; Dean, 2005).

Mastropieri & Scruggs (1997) (as cited in Klingner, Vaughn, and Boardman, 2007) state that learners can improve and develop their comprehension if teachers:

1. Teach strategies that have been documented as effective in promoting reading comprehension.
2. Design instruction that incorporates effective principles of direct instruction and strategy instruction.
3. Provide modeling, support, guided instruction, practice, attributional feedback, and opportunities to practice across text types.
4. Monitor students' progress and make adjustments accordingly. (p.4)

In addition, text comprehension strategy instruction helps learners to become independent and active readers who are in control of their own reading comprehension and above all, learners can use specific comprehension strategies such as, planning and setting of specific steps that good readers use to understand the text (Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn, 2003). In this vein, Carrell (1988) points out that "without solid reading proficiency, second language readers cannot perform at levels they must in order to succeed, and they cannot compete with their native English-

speaking counterparts" (p.1). Pandian (2006) also points out that "Teacher's expertise or what teachers know and can do affect all the core tasks of teaching ... their skills in assessing their learners' progress depend also on how deeply they themselves know the content and how well they teach" (p.204). In terms of reading, Pandian (1999) states that "creating a generation of active readers ... is an uphill task but nevertheless it is a fundamental one that can work towards the betterment of society" (p.99).

The varied issues that exist in the field of secondary education motivated the researcher to explore the manner in which reading is taught to Grade 10 EFL learners in selected secondary schools in Pakistan. The purpose of the study is to investigate the current reading instruction and secondary EFL learners' achievement in multiple reading competency tasks (for instance, main idea retrieval, scanning information, fact and opinion recognition) after receiving formal instruction from their teachers in three selected schools.

This chapter gives an overview of the present study and its organization. It is hoped that a brief sketch of Pakistan's education system and a discussion on English language teaching and its assessment would assist the reader in understanding the teaching-learning process within the context of secondary education in Pakistan. Chapter one covers the topic of research background, an overview of socio-linguistic of Pakistan and its education system, current teaching practices, reading instruction, assessment methods, and status of English to help contextualize pertinent issues related to English language in the country. Moreover, this chapter also incorporates statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, definition of key terms, limitations and significance of the present study.

1.1 Background to the Study

This section provides the background of education and literacy in Pakistan, instructional practices in past and current scenario, structure of education system, assessment practices in educational institutions, teaching of English in Pakistan and so forth prior to describing the statement of the problem, the objectives, research questions, and significance of the study.

1.1.1 An Overview of Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The conventional title of Pakistani state is the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Geographically it is located in Southern Asia, bordering the Arabian Sea, between India on the east and Iran and Afghanistan on the west and China in the north having an area of 803,940 sq kms. To be more specific, it has five provinces; Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province and Azad Jammu Kashmir. The capital/federal city is Islamabad. The estimated population until July 2009, as cited by Central Intelligence Agency (henceforth, CIA), is 176,242,949. Islam is the official religion of Pakistan whereby the Muslims constitute 95% (Sunni 75% and Shia 25%) of the population and the Christians, Hindus and other minorities make up the remaining 5% (as cited in CIA, world-fact book: 2009). According to CIA's factbook (2009), Pakistan's population comprises of six ethnic groups: Punjabi (44.68%), Pashtun (Pathan) (15.42%), Sindhi (14.1%), Saraiki (8.38%), Muhajirs (7.57%), Balochi (3.57%), and others (6.28%). Since the country is multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual in nature, various languages are spoken in addition to its national (Urdu) and official (English) language. These languages include Punjabi 48%, Sindhi 12%, Siraiki (a Punjabi variant) 10%, Pashtu 8%, Urdu (national) 8%,

Balochi 3%, Hindko 2%, Brahvi 1%, Burushashki and others 8%. In the following section the general quality of education and level of literacy are discussed.

1.1.2 The Quality of Education and Literacy in Pakistan

Education plays a crucial role in the development of people as individuals and collectively as a society. Quality education is considered as the bases for social and economic growth of a country as well as a source for enhancing human potential. However, the current Pakistani educational system is under criticism, made by educationists, policy makers, and the government itself. The Economist Intelligence Unit (2007) currently documents in Ministry of Education (henceforth, MoE) (2009) that, “Pakistan’s education system is among the most deficient and backward in Asia” (p. 16). Primary education which is considered to play a dominant role in building the socio-economic development of the country is unsatisfactory in this particular context. The situation is so serious that over six million children are not enrolled in school and out of those who attend, 45 per cent drop out before completing their primary education (UNESCO’s EFA Global Report, 2008, as cited in Rahim, 2008).

As a result, Pakistan’s literacy rate is not only low but also very poor in terms of quality. The adult literacy rate of total population is 49.9% wherein male were 63% and female were 36% out of the total population. The World Bank (henceforth, WB) in 2007 reports that this figure is lower than the literacy rate for countries such as: Sri Lanka 90.7%, Iran 82.4%, Indonesia 90.4%, Vietnam 90.3%, Egypt 71.4% and India 61%. Moreover, Education Sector Reform (henceforth, ESR) (2006; 2007) reports that 2.5% of the GDP were utilized on education i.e. for public sector, whereas, 0.5% is estimated to be the contribution of the private sector. The

contribution of both private and public is 3% of the GDP which spends on education. This low priority on education sector is relatively less than in countries like: Iran 4.7%, Malaysia 6.2%, Thailand 4.2%, South Korea 4.6%, India 3.8%, and Bangladesh 2.5% (as cited in TWB, 2007). Consequently, it is apparent that the low GDP i.e. 2.5% for public sector spending on education is not adequate and needs to be increased in order to augment the literacy rate of the country. Regardless of the existing problems in Pakistan, if education is considered and given major focus in terms of quality and GDP the facts and figures will undoubtedly be improved. The subsequent section will further highlight the structure of the education system in Pakistan.

1.1.3 Structure of Educational System

In Pakistan, education is organized into five levels: Primary (Grades one through five) from age five to ten, middle (Grades six through eight) from age 11 to 12, high (Grades nine and ten, culminating in matriculation) from age 13 to 14, intermediate (Grades 11 and 12) from age 15 to 16, leading to diplomas in arts or sciences, and university programs leading to undergraduate and advanced degrees (UNESCO, 1994). In Pakistan's context, the major English-medium schools are divided into three types: state-influenced elitist public schools, private non-elitist schools, and private elitist schools, whereas the vernacular-medium schools are the non-elitist Urdu, Sindhi or Pashto-medium government schools (Rahman, 2001). However, Coleman (2010) observes that Pakistan has four categories of school-level education: private elite English medium schools, private non-elite 'English medium' schools, government Urdu medium schools and dini madaris (madrasas). Coleman (2010) further explains these four categories of school-level as follows:

The number of private elite English medium schools is very small. They are extremely expensive and provide education for the children of a small and powerful elite section of the population. Private non-elite schools charge modest fees which are affordable by the lower middle class. They are attractive because of their claims to offer 'English medium' education. Government schools, all of which are Urdu medium, are available almost everywhere throughout the country, in both rural and urban locations. Dini madaris or madrasas offer an Islamic-oriented education, usually free of charge. They also provide food, accommodation and other necessary care for their students. They are therefore particularly attractive to very poor families, especially in areas where government schools are difficult to access. (Pp. 10-11)

For public examinations two different boards conduct exams: one for secondary education known as the Board of Secondary Education (henceforth, BSE) and the examination is called Secondary School Certificate (henceforth, SSC) conducted at the end of Grade 10; the other is the Board of Intermediate Education (henceforth, BIE) and the examination is called Higher Secondary School Certificate (henceforth, HSSC) conducted at the end of Grade 12. These aforesaid Boards run only in Karachi. However, throughout the country and for Pakistani citizens living abroad, the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education conducts examinations (Shah and Afzal, 2004). In general, three sectors broadly execute and run education system: 'public sectors' i.e. run by MoE; 'other public sectors/institutions' i.e. run by other than MoE or provincial/regional department; and private sectors that are solely independent bodies (MoE, 2005-06).

1.1.4 Instructional Practices in Past and Current Scenario

Over the past two decades reading instruction and assessment practices to measure learners' reading performance have been criticized by Pakistan's educationists and researchers such as (Bashiruddin, 1986; Mansoor, 1990; Ilyas, 1992; Arif, 1995; Saif, 1996; Rizvi, 2000; Rehmani, 2003; Warsi, 2004; Nazim,

2005; Dilshad, 2006; Essa, 2007; Ahmed-Khurram, 2007; and Zaidi, 2008ijk). Since the process of teaching and learning holds a pivotal place in building a quality educational system, it eventually affects the socio economic growth of the country. In order to progress towards the development of the country this aspect should not be ignored. Since the time of Pakistan's independence in 1947, seven different education policies have been implemented in the country. The main thrust of all these policies is to promote quality education and the improvement of teaching-learning process. Yet, the improvement in these areas has not been achieved and is quite unsatisfactory (Rizvi, 2000). MoE (2005) documents that the key to achieve progress, prosperity and national goals is in the hand of young minds imbued with knowledge, attitudes, skills and competencies to shape the future destiny of Pakistan. However, the current teaching practices are not up to the mark from many perspectives. For instance, Siddiqui (2007) observes that teaching practices are still based on traditional method where teacher is dominant and his/her students are passive and this is mostly seen in public schools. She goes on to state that the assessment practices do not measure higher cognitive skills and only concentrate on reproduction of facts.

Furthermore, the most significant reason of the low literacy rate of Pakistan is the weakness of the teaching-learning process and without improving this process the literacy rate of Pakistan cannot be improved. The education sector is considered to be one of the most powerful vehicles for global competitiveness. It enhances the ability to respond to national and global challenges and leads to sustainable growth in all fields. However, Pakistan ranks on the lowest rungs of the international ladder as far as education is concerned (Raja, 2005).

In particular, the key priority of any school, college, or university is to provide children and young people the foundations of life-long learning so that they become productive citizens that can contribute to society. These institutions should maintain a curriculum that fits students' expectations and is revised based on their needs (Siddiqui, 2006). However, in Pakistan students are taught a prescribed curriculum in rigidly structured classrooms where teacher centered approach is employed throughout the teaching session (Faiq, 2005). In addition, Greaney and Hasan (1998) observe that students use single textbook for examination preparation.

Notwithstanding this vision, no significant methods have been utilized for effective teaching and as a consequence “Pakistan’s education system, far from being a cohesive national system ... has performed poorly on the criteria of access, equity and quality” (MoE, 2009, p.18). MoE also documents that the poor quality of teaching in the public sector is overwhelming due to an absence of pre-service and in-service training. Consequently, there is a need to focus on five elements which contribute to the improvement of the education sector. These five pillars are: ‘curriculum’, ‘textbooks’, ‘assessments’, ‘teachers’, and ‘the learning environment’ in an institution. Above all, the most important pillar is ‘teacher’ and therefore “significant action is required in improving the teaching resources” (MoE, 2009, p.37). The next subsection will highlight how assessment procedures are carried out in Pakistan’s educational settings.

1.1.5 Comprehension Assessment Practices in Educational Institutions

Assessment systems can be used to evaluate the overall system’s efficiency as well as student’s performance. Secondly, it provides feedback for improvements at all tiers “starting from changes in the classroom to improvements in the national

systems” (MoE, 2009, p.41). In addition, keeping in view the crucial role in determining the impact of teaching as well as learning, public examinations in Pakistan has more demerits than merits (Rehmani, 2003). Moreover, modern assessment techniques are not being used to measure student's achievements and hence dependency on traditional learning processes yields low quality of education in the country (Christie and Khushk, 2004). In this accord Rehmani (2003) states that:

Examination questions are repeated at least every three to five years and hence questions can be predicted. There are ‘model papers’, or ‘guess paper guides’ available in the market with readymade answers based on the question papers of previous five years. Teachers and students tend to rely on such guides and put their content to memory. Regurgitation seems to be the only key for students to pass the examinations rather than creative thinking and independent analyses. The irony is that those students who can reproduce better score higher marks. This leads to lecture method and curriculum based teaching approaches. (p.4)

It is apparent then that even the examination questions can be predicted since they are repeated every three or five years and can be easily accessible in the market generally known as ‘guess paper guides’ and ‘model papers’. Moreover, Rehmani (2003) cites Gipps's (1994) suggestion that the major purpose of assessment is to support the teaching and learning process. However, in Pakistan only few teachers have had proper training in designing tests and modern approaches to assessment (Mirza, 1999, as cited in Rehmani, 2003). The existing system awards the memorizing learner best in Pakistan.

The rationale of the Examination Boards i.e. SSC, BIE, and HSSC as defined in section 1.1.3, is to promote, select, and certify the students. For stakeholders such as schools the objective is to “pass the examinations with good Grades and to bring good name to school [and] for some schools, teachers, and students, passing examinations with highest positions becomes a question of prestige” (Rehmani, 2003, p.3). Rehmani (2003) goes on further to say that “teachers teach for testing,

rather than for learning. The examination system reinforces approaches to teaching that reward memorization. The better the reproduction, the better and higher are the scores or marks awarded by the examiners” (p.3).

Whereas, MoE (2009) documents that:

Student performance shall be based on assessing competence in a specialised area that requires a given skill set. There shall be periodic reviews of the assessment system. Multiple assessment tools in addition to traditional examinations shall be explored, to ensure the right balance between the uses of formative assessment approaches combined with the summative approach of high-stakes examinations. (p. 41)

Accordingly, it is suggested by MoE that students’ performance based on specific skills have to be measured through multiple assessment techniques. However, in Pakistan, assessments do not judge real competence or genuine educational accomplishment of the student. Instead, Pakistani educational system encourages those who can best reproduce what they have learnt in class and fails those who are unable to do that. It seems as if the whole system of education revolves around exams (Khan, 2006). In Khan’s perspective, such type of assessment and evaluation is narrow in scope. According to Warsi (2004) assessing the English language in Pakistan is subjective in setting in such a manner that it measures pupils’ knowledge of the language rather than their performance in it. However, the MoE (2006) has stated that language teachers should employ both formative and summative forms of assessment. Secondly, teachers should explore the cause of students’ strengths and weaknesses and provide helpful and effective feedback to them. Moreover, in constructing an English reading comprehension test teachers should primarily decide on the purpose of the test and the objectives. Furthermore, the teachers should do an item analysis to find out the validity and reliability of the test (MoE, 2006).

Khan (1996) observes that “The research in testing highlights the decline in examination system, its ineffectiveness, and unreliability in diagnosing students’ weaknesses and assessing their abilities” (p.6). He reiterates that the “design and content of the test papers is such that students only have to rely on their memories, and do not have a beneficial effect, on syllabi and teaching practice” (p.6). Above all, tests lack validity and reliability (Khan, 1996, as cited in Imran, 1998). Similarly, Ali (1994) also notes that “... testing is not viewed as a vital component of teaching and is considered quite distinct from teaching and learning as well as practice” (as cited in Imran, 1998, p.6).

In context of reliability and validity of assessment procedures, Rehmani (2003) points out that “Reliability and validity of examination papers in terms of coverage of curriculum, selection of paper setters, lack of training or otherwise of the paper setters and examiners, marking system and preparation of results, are considered dubious” (p.3). Moreover, SPELT (1986) also points out that textbook materials are prescribed by the teacher for their learners “to be learnt and explained word by word and sentence by sentence” (p.12). Due to this approach of teaching and learning students become passive recipients of prescribed content knowledge of the textbooks. Khan (1995) also states that the questions after each lesson of the textbook are based on literal level that measures only low order thinking skills. She (1995) goes on to reiterate that:

Comprehension questions are useful for checking understanding particularly if they are of the type which requires the students to actively seek out the answer and formulate it themselves, rather than simply repeat a section of the text – moreover the questions do not encourage the personal involvement of the learner which is an important factor in motivating students. (p.11)

Accordingly, it is presumed that in order to measure students’ comprehension, question types have to be high order instead to low order thinking

skills. This will not only require students to simply locate the answer from the texts using only low order skills, but also to read between and beyond the lines in order to become independent and proficient readers. In addition, they will become proficient to interact with text, such as, narrative, expository, argumentative, persuasive, and informative or a combination of text types. The next subsection will outline the significance and status of English in Pakistan's education setting.

1.1.6 The Significance and Status of English in Pakistan

In defining the significance and status of English, Hussain (1986) states, "Today it [English] has spread so widely over the globe and proliferated into so many varieties that English language has come to be looked upon as the international link language" (p. 8). Besides, Mansoor (1990) highlights the use of English in a following manner:

The only language other than Urdu that is spoken to some extent in all parts of the country is English, which remained the official language of Pakistan till 1970. It has been publicly recognized by the government as the nation's second language and serves as the chief medium of communication with other countries. A very small of the population use it in their homes but an estimated 1.4 million commonly speak it and almost twice as many claim to be able to read it. It is the language of government, business and higher education. (p.4)

It is apparent that English is an official language of Pakistan and the second language which functions as a main medium of communication. MoE (2006) justifies this status of English in Pakistan in these words:

English is the language of international communication, higher learning and better career options. It should, therefore reach the masses so that there is no discrimination amongst the rich and poor in Pakistan in terms of opportunities for personal professional and economic development. (p.1)

Hussain (1986) also notes that there is a need for English in Pakistan's context in terms of participation in international deliberations, political, economic,

academic, dealing with United Nation Organization agencies and other activities of international relations. English has a dominant place in Pakistan as a lingua franca; however, students despite studying English for about 6 or 8 years in schools and colleges may not achieved proficiency in English and may lack communicative competence (Warsi, 2004). Similarly, ESRA (2002; 2006) reports that English as a second language (henceforth, ESL) is used in Pakistan to teach literacy training, communication technology, and pedagogy based applications. Pakistani learners need to learn English primarily for reading advanced technical literature, taking lecture notes in university classes, traveling abroad, access to international books and journals, and getting good jobs (Mansoor, 1993). The desire to learn English is progressively rising in Pakistan. According to Imran (2006) in order to converse or write well in social sciences, chemistry, law, medicine, engineering, or even technical courses a good grasp of the fundamentals of English language is essential. According to Mansoor et al., (2005) and Rahman (2002) “In Pakistan, English has traditionally been used by the ruling elite as a gatekeeper for entry into prestigious public sector organisations such as the army and the civil services, and for highpaying jobs in the growing number of foreign banks and multinational companies in the country” (as cited in Shamim, 2006, p. 243). In addition, Siddiqui (2006) states that though English has been in use in Pakistan for years, it was only a few decades back that people felt the need to be well versed in it. Various English language-teaching centers equipped with specialized programmes and courses are mushrooming all over the country. The following section will discuss the manner in which English is taught in Pakistan.

1.1.7 English National Curriculum of Pakistan

This section highlights English National Curriculum's of Pakistan objectives and benchmarks established for teaching and learning. The National Curriculum (2006) identifies five 'competencies' incorporated with eight 'standards' for key learning areas, for instance, reading and thinking skills, writing skills, oral communication skills, formal and lexical aspects of language, and appropriate ethical and social development. Moreover, National curriculum (2006) points out that "The new curriculum aims to provide holistic opportunities to the students for language development and to equip them with competencies in using the English language for communication in academic and social contexts" (p.1). With a particular focus on reading, the National Curriculum (2006) documents that:

Better readers are the ones who are equipped with the skills of purposeful reading. These skills can be developed through awareness raising and practice activities. The aim should be to use the texts to teach reading, and not reading to teach texts. Written texts that deal with common human experiences, contemporary information and issues are proposed as the context for the learning of processes skills and strategies, but the approach of the curriculum goes beyond reading. In fact, the reading component serves as a spring board for the development of integrated language skills, and for enhancing cognitive and affective domains, enabling the students to think critically and creatively. (p.7)

Accordingly, for purposeful reading, learners ought to develop their reading skills whereby they enhance their cognition in order to become independent and proficient readers. Therefore, the learners have to read and practice extensively with the intention to improve and increase their reading skills. Furthermore, learning outcomes for Grade 10 EFL learners are shown in Appendix (B3).

1.1.8 Teaching of English in Pakistan

The teaching of English and its position according to the National Curriculum has been clearly stated in the National Education Policy, in 1979 that English is to be taught in schools as a major foreign language (as cited in SPELT, 1986). In this modern and scientific era where pedagogy in any discipline is executed and viewed in a sophisticated manner, in Pakistan, teaching of English is carried out in a traditional method. In context of teaching of English, Zaman (1986) states:

Teaching of English and for that matter any foreign language is not an easy task. Nevertheless English has become a part and parcel of our educational system. Unfortunately it is not done well and results in an all-round lowering of educational standards, ...The rigid courses of studies, the over-crowded class-rooms, the unmotivating method of instruction and the out-dated system of examination have all stood in the way of teaching and learning a difficult foreign language. (p. 1)

In section 1.1.4, it is discussed how teaching and learning is performed in both public and private sectors. The products of both sectors in view of educationists in section 1.1.4 are not up to the mark. However, “The students of the ‘English Medium’ [private] schools have a slight edge over their government school counterparts because of their proximity to English texts which they often resort to memorizing” (Sultan, 1986, p.20). Zaman (1986) observes the teaching of English which was rigid and with out-dated method of assessment, however, in a current situation Iqbal (2008) notes that:

The traditional way of teaching English encourages students to memorize the text; as a result, they learn the subject but not the language as a whole. In Pakistan, English is taught in such a way that students get ready made things like notes on text questions and answers, compositions on different topics etc., (p.4)

It is noticeable that English is taught in a traditional manner which unable students to be fluent in a target foreign language. From Zaman’s and Iqbal’s

observations it is also revealed that since 1986, there has been no significant difference found in teaching of English. In the similar context, Bashiruddin (1986) points out that, “The mishandling of the problem of English language teaching is ruining the careers of thousands of young people who are otherwise intelligent and capable and ready to learn” (p.12). The fixed curriculum, graded structure, fragmented school timetable, biased and subjective assessment, and evaluation process should have to change to improve the current education system of Pakistan (Bano, 2005). In Pakistan, English teaching is said to be rigid and limited in its scope and lacks innovation. The deterioration that is obvious in language learning class is because English is not being taught using current pedagogical approach (Larik, 2005). Teacher’s main objective in classroom is to lecture and give the students prepared notes to finish the course in time and 'prepare' the students for exams (Khan, 2006). Student can only be the active participants in the teaching-learning process, if they really understand the value of learning and therefore teachers ought to encourage their students to become active participants rather than passive listeners. For this reason, there should be a very clear purpose and benefit for the students to be set in order to enhance teaching-learning process in Pakistan’s education setting (Raja, 2005). Moreover, Khand (2004) notes that the teaching methods of English in the educational institutions of Pakistan do not coordinate with the needs and the purpose of the learners. Moreover, Dean (2005) also observes that:

The teacher is the sole authority in the class and the students have no choice in what or how to learn. Teachers do not realize that the focus on knowledge transmission and their authoritarian teaching style impedes students from playing their role as citizens of the class. (p.49)

According to Dean (2005) when teacher controls his/her class with minimum interaction among learners it impedes the possibility of developing a learning environment. With respect to English language teaching, Warsi (2004) notes:

The conditions under which English is taught in Pakistan are not conducive to teaching and learning the language. Courses are taught without specific curricular objectives; English language teachers are not equipped with efficient pedagogical tools; most English language teachers rely on obsolete teaching techniques; inappropriate textbooks are chosen to teach English as second language. (p.7)

Similarly, Khan (2006) also notes that students faithfully follow instructions of the teacher and absorb facts, figures, information, and knowledge without considering them. He further states that this transfer of factual knowledge, regurgitation, and indoctrination seems to be the sole aim behind the establishment of Pakistani schools. Teachers of English language lack the ability to help their students in teaching critical reading and thinking strategies because they are either untrained or poorly trained teachers. In addition, English language facilities in educational institutions lack audio-visual aids, which are proven to be conducive to language learning (Jatoi, 2008; Warsi, 2004). In this regard, Faiq (2005) states, that active learning relies more on understanding rather than transmission of information. Traditionally, in Pakistan the English language class in secondary education depends on the grammar-translation method. Mostly, students are expected to understand and memorize lists of vocabulary, phrasal verbs, idioms, grammar rules etc., Due to such practice in acquisition of second language, many students even after graduation are unable to communicate at even a basic level (Shareef, 2006).

In English compulsory classes mostly from class one to B.A and B.Sc level teachers overwhelm the class discussions and the learners rarely get a chance to participate in teaching-learning process. In Pakistani schools, learners drill through many reading and writing exercises in order to prepare only for their exams and

mostly different learning skills are never focused (Hafeez, 2004). In most of the schools and colleges in Pakistan only teachers are the active transmitters of knowledge and students are passive listeners. Therefore, students permanently become passive, inactive, quiet, and still. Conversely, if students participate in a lecture or in a discussion it will nurture their critical thinking. Thus, the enduring silence of these learners kills the fondness of learning and creativity (Faiq, 2005; Arif, 1995). In context of teaching English, Mansoor (1990) states:

English is taught as an academic subject confined to textbooks only, i.e., a content knowledge based rather than skills based subject. There is heavy emphasis on structural drilling and explanations of texts. The courses consist of a number of textbooks with a large literary content. Student participation is generally non-existent and relies heavily on rote learning and guide books. (p.28)

This is also currently observed by Essa (2007) who points out that in English medium schools the teaching methods are still traditional since teachers are either less qualified or have lack of competency. Essa suggests that language teachers ought to be trained to adopt Communicative Language Teaching approach.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Pakistan's education setting most of the teachers are not properly trained in designing examination questions and prefer close-ended questions which have a single correct answer. The system of evaluation does not require reflection, understanding, or critical thinking on the part of students (Faiq, 2006). The present system of assessment is based on assessing factual knowledge rather than students' critical thinking and analytical skills as well as their understanding and comprehension (Rehmani, 2003). In addition, there are not any implications of modern assessment techniques to measure student's achievements (Christie and

Khushk, 2004). Poor readers are unable to cope with the university examination system, and learners adhere to rote memorize the contents. Pakistan's educational system only emphasizes factual knowledge whereas its application aspect is overlooked (Shah and Saleem, 2010).

Moreover, MoE (2009) points out that, "Assessment system currently suffers from several deficiencies in promoting quality education. Efforts have to be made to address this issue and need for inculcating critical and analytical thinking skills for producing life-long independent learners" (p. 41) and learners' "performance shall be based on assessing competence in a specialised area that requires a given skill set" (p.41). According to Warsi (2004), assessment of English in Pakistan is subjective in nature. It measures pupils' knowledge of the language rather than their performance on it. In this vein, Iqbal, Azam & Abiodullah (2009) state that existing assessment "aims at grading and ranking students with little or no concern for improving students' learning is prevailing in our classrooms" (p.47). In Pakistan's education context, no serious action has been taken to improve reading instruction. Learners' deficiency in reading skill hamper their academic progress and no efforts are made to systematize the process of teaching reading, to introduce students to reading sub-skills. In addition, reports on literacy show that "the educational careers of a large numbers of children are imperiled because they do not read well enough to ensure understanding and to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive economy" (Ahmed-Khurram, 2007, p.30). With a specific focus on reading instruction, Dilshad (2006) goes on to state that there is an "urgent need for a radical reappraisal of objectives and strategies in our education system with particular reference to teaching reading" (p.1).