

Teaching Practices of English Language in The Schools of Lasbela District, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study critically analyses the teaching practices of English language in the context of Lasbela district, the southern district of Balochistan, a province of Pakistan. The survey method was applied to collect data through classroom observation, Checklist and interview protocol from randomly selected secondary public schools in Lasbela district were applied. The research demonstrated that Translation Method of Teaching was adopted instead of Direct Method of Teaching. It also revealed that the manner of teaching the English Language was similar to the teaching of other subjects, such as Pakistan Studies, General Science. This teaching approach is teacher-centred and students are not provided with the opportunity of developing language skills through practice in classrooms. This research also identifies that the factors responsible for this approach of teaching the English language are lack of capacity building programs/courses for language teachers, overcrowded classrooms, teachers' workload, poor infrastructure, examination system and inefficient monitoring mechanism. This study recommends that teachers of English language must be trained accordingly prior to embarking on the language teaching profession.

Keywords: *Teaching Practices, English Language Skills, Secondary Schools in Lasbela*

INTRODUCTION

The importance and need of English language in this age of globalization cannot be denied. Learning English as a second language is an important requirement of the day to survive in the global community and international economy. The demand for English as a second language has increased (Paik, 2008). Besides the need and importance of English language in the modern world, it is also observed that having strong English background always not only supports the candidates for entry into the higher education institutions but also assists them to have better jobs opportunities as well. From this perspective, Ahmad (2016) points out, "English is acknowledged passport to better education and employment opportunities. English

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language plays a crucial role to weave the world into a single thread. English has a status of a second language in almost all the countries where it is not the first language” (p. 478).

According to Jimenez and Rose (2010), students without continuous and systematic efforts cannot succeed to have good command in the English language. It is true that the English language, in the context of Pakistan, is one of the means of success or failure. Zeegers (2005) provided the same point of view. According to him, the English language is a tool to facilitate learners in all fields of academia and learning failure is language failure. On the other hand, Sarwar, Bhamani, and Ahmad, (2017) figure out that a wide range of parents in Pakistan often consider the education in the English Medium Schools as an opportunity for economic success.

The different methods of teaching to facilitate learning the English language may play a different role in the promotion of English language. Nevertheless, academicians and practitioners have concerns regarding the teaching of English, as it is to not only transmit the knowledge of the subject to the students but also to develop their skills in reading, writing and speaking fluently (Patil, 2008). According to Tuzela and Akcanb (2009), merely a teacher is not the one and only responsible stakeholder for the two mentioned factors i.e. transmission of knowledge and development of other skills. Considering this factor, Sarwar, Bhamani, and Ahmad (2017) developed a scale, in line with factors play different roles in developing English language learning, can be used as a self-administrator. Nevertheless, Tuzela and Akcanb (2009) put more stress on the pre-service teacher education programs and teacher training that are not integrated to introduce strategies and techniques that might be useful in teaching four skills of English language.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to explore the current instructional practices and know the reasons behind these instructional practices at the secondary schools of Lasbela District Balochistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study revealed that teachers of English language are not properly trained as language teachers (Sarwar, Ahmad & Hyder, 2017). The curriculum is not fulfilling the needs of language learning and a shortage of basic facilities is also observed. These are the reasons which render the learning of English as second language ineffective (Teevno, 2011). According to an international survey conducted in 89 countries from all over the world about the qualifications and training of English language teachers, language teachers are not specially trained to teach English (Emery, 2012). The findings of the study conducted by Emery (2012) reveals that the issue is not merely concerned with a specific country or a region rather can be found throughout the world. According to Ahmad, Ahmed, Bukhari, and Bukhari, (2011), students from schools of the provincial government are facing more difficulties than those of the federal government in learning the English language as second language. In the same way, the study conducted by Ali, Ahmad, Manzoor, and Naseer (2014) reveals the same findings. “The main findings of the study were; the students of Provincial government schools faced more difficulties in learning of verb forms, narration, conjunctions, prepositions, articles, sentence arrangements and reading comprehension. The students of both types of schools systems faced

same difficulties in learning voices” (Ali, Ahmad, Manzoor & Naseer, 2014, p. 25). Research studies proved that the students of English language face problems in recognition of sounds, pronunciation and expression. A wide range of researchers recommended that teachers should be aware of the students’ problems, particularly regarding the pronunciation and they should present themselves as a role model for the students (Akram & Qureshi, 2012).

Another research study was conducted by Bilal et al (2013) in which it was concluded that the students from the secondary schools of rural areas of Pakistan faced problems in speaking skills and they were lacking confidence while speaking English to express themselves. According to Songsiri (2007), “The teacher is one of the main factors to promote students’ confidence in language learning. Therefore, it is very important for a teacher to know theories about psychology, adult learning, learning styles and language teaching” (p. 6). Nevertheless, students had to learn English to pass examination while the existing examination system does not bother to test oral skills of students in English language test. It was also recommended that the syllabus of English language and examination system must be revised accordingly in order to focus all four skills of language. It is also urged that the school administration should provide a speaking environment in schools and motivate students to communicate in English in classroom, schools and at home as well (Watkins, 2007).

Research in Asian countries reveals that a traditional authority-based question from students and transmission mode of learning is in place. Active participation in exploring knowledge and attitudes is expected from students (Littlewood, 2001). Students do not have any kind of autonomy to initiate some topics of their interest by which they might enhance their skills and knowledge and participation (Xie, 2009). The tradition of translation method in teaching English is observed where teachers do not bother to experience something innovative for learning English as a second language because they do not want to take a risk and spare extra time and energy for such out of box activities. They rely on translation method, which is comparatively easy but it is helpful to develop language skills (Stern, 1983).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is descriptive in nature and thus utilizes the mixed method approach for the development of the report. Through observational checklist, the quantitative approach of research was required to identify classroom practices during teaching English as a second language, while interview protocol was administered to find out the reasons behind these instructional practices as the qualitative approach of research. From this perspective, 10 high schools were selected randomly out of 36 high schools in the district but during the selection of these schools, it was ensured that sample should represent the whole population. Hence, two schools were selected from each tehsil of the district. The data was collected during personal visits of one secondary class 8 in each school and English teacher of the same class was consulted for interview protocol. During the process of teaching and learning, two lessons were observed by employing classroom observation checklist followed by an interview to each participant (teacher). The collected data was arranged and analyzed accordingly.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

During classroom observation, it was found that most activities in the class of English

language were based on 'reading activities of text and its translation'. It is also found that teachers were recommending their students for more reading activities from different books. Students were asked to read out after the reading and translating the text by the teacher. Moreover, learners were urged to read aloud so that their pronunciation might improve. However, some teachers were not in favour of this approach. They wanted to focus on other language skills besides reading skills of the students. They believed that reading is one of the language skills and it helps to collect ideas and knowledge but we need writing and speaking skills to express ideas in writing and speaking form.

The second most focused area in the teaching of English language was 'Grammar'. For this purpose, separate periods/ classes were assigned and in which students have to study English Grammar only. It was observed that the most classroom time is being spent on reading and translating the text but teachers do not bother to develop other language skills i.e. listening, writing and speaking. None of the teachers engaged the students in speaking activities while writing skills were somehow focused in school set up compared to listening and speaking skills. Nevertheless, the independent practices of writing need further re-consideration of teachers. Students are not guided about improving their writing skill.

Discussion

Practice is the best way to learn any language because skills are involved in the acquisition of any language and skills never develop without practice. Teachers of English language should arrange interesting activities that could expose skills of learners. Dobinson (2001) describes 'learners can learn language through exposure and learning opportunities in practical situations'. It is unfortunate that during this study no such activity and practices were observed in order to develop language skills of students in classroom practices. The role of the teacher was not more than 'to transfer information' and students were passive listeners.

According to Nikolov (1999), in the teaching and learning of English language, students have to involve in practical activities and learners could be motivated in learning a foreign language if they would be engaged in interesting activities and material. Research in Asian countries reveals that a traditional authority-based question from students and transmission mode of learning is in place. Active participation in exploring knowledge and attitudes is expected from students (Littlewood, 2001).

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CONCLUSION

The current approaches of teachers, to develop English language skills of students, are not satisfactory. However, the teacher is not as one and only responsible stakeholder for mal-practices but various factors are involved in the existing poor system. Pre-service teacher education programs and teacher training are not integrated to introduce strategies and techniques that might be useful in teaching four skills of English language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on findings of the study the following recommendations have been made for improvement in the field of Teaching of English Language as a second language in Pakistan.

- The curriculum should be re-visited in order to align it with needs of English language learning (to develop language skills).
- English language teachers may be trained to teach English as a language rather than as a subject.
- Assessment and examination tests should be designed to test the skills of learners rather than knowledge.
- Teachers should encourage students to use English as a medium of communication not only in the class but also at home.
- Efforts should be made to promote all four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) of English language in the classroom.
- School Administration should encourage teachers to make sure the use of English as a medium of communication in the class.
- Students should be encouraged to watch and listen to English programs on television and radio respectively. Students should try to use internet for learning English.

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