

Practices of English Language Teaching at Government Institutes-Colleges & Universities in Karachi

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Abstract:

In Karachi (Pakistan), English is taught as a compulsory subject to students at intermediate and graduate level to enhance and improve their English language skills, but they prefer to go to private English language institutes to learn English language. This research aims to investigate the practices of English language teaching at government institutes--colleges and universities. It is a qualitative research in which the data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews followed by non-participant observations. 30 students were selected from three English language institutes of Karachi for semi-structured interviews through purposive sampling. Six teachers from three government institutes were also selected for the interviews. After interviews, 12 classes from three English language institutes and eight classes from two government institutes were also observed. The findings of this research show that government institutes do not provide favourable environment; they follow traditional method of teaching, have untrained and uncooperative teachers, focus on syllabus, use improper aids and have no use of modern technology, etc. Hence, the results can be useful for language policy makers to bring great improvement in English language teaching at government institutes.

Keywords: college students, university students, private English language institutes, government English language institutes

Introduction:

This chapter explains the nature of how this study is conceived as a result of my observations as an English language teacher at English language institutes. I have been teaching English language for 18 years at different renowned English language institutes in Karachi. In addition, I have been teaching English as a compulsory subject to the students of BS/BA/BSc/B Com for almost ten years. It was mainly observed that college and university students, who study English as a compulsory subject, were also joining English language institutes to learn English language. In Pakistan, English language has become very important for a bright future, higher studies, good jobs, etc., and for learning this language, people join English language institutes. In Karachi (Pakistan), English is taught as a compulsory subject at government institutes up to BA/B

Com/BSc from class I whereas at private English language institutes, different courses of different durations are offered which range from 3 months to 1 year—3 hours a day and 5 days a week, 2 hours a day and 5 days a week and 1 hour a day and 5 days a week. In Karachi, a large number of English language institutes are functioning from morning to night, teaching English as a second language, English for specific purpose, etc., but unfortunately, English language is not taught effectively in most of the colleges and universities and sometimes students do not pay attention. Moreover, many other reasons were also identified.

The purpose of this study is to identify the practices of teaching English language at colleges and universities as a compulsory subject. It is clear that the most important reason for the success of English is naturally the historical role of England as a colonial power. English has become the language of the legal system, higher education, regional administrative network, science and technology, trade and commerce—either because the indigenous languages are not equipped for these roles and English has been provided for a convenient vocabulary, or because the use of English is considered to be prestigious and powerful. English language has gradually become a major tool for gaining knowledge in the sciences and the humanities. It also represents modernization and development and a link language. It is of course playing a role of an international language over the years.

1.2 Main Research Question:

What are the practices of English language teaching at government institutes—colleges and universities in Karachi?

Review of Literature

1.1 Teaching of English language at government institutes and private English language

In Karachi (Pakistan), English is taught as a compulsory subject at our government institutes up to BA/B Com/BSc from class I, while English is taught from Nursery at private institutes; all the subjects are taught in English except a few subjects even then students face problems in speaking English language. The factors which create problems for students to study English at government institutes have been discussed in this study. Students from all classes, backgrounds and community go to learn English at English language institutes.

1.2 English Language Policy in Higher Education:

Mansoor, (2005) states that the lack of a clear language policy in higher education has made the teachers and administrators confused about the need to provide English language support to their students for being able to cope with their higher studies and future employment. The weak proficiency in English of our students and teachers is influenced by the fact that English is not stressed in the official education policy as much as Urdu. The government, especially, the Task Force in Higher Education (2001), the Steering Committee (2002), and the Higher Education

Commission (2002) realize the vital role of English in contributing to academic proficiency in higher education that will be necessary for a modern and progressive Pakistan.

1.3 Factors leading to English language spread:

Many researchers have tried to specify the main factors that influence language maintenance and language shift (Kloss, 1967; Fishman, 1972 and Haugen, 1972). The concept of 'ethnolinguistic vitality' in particular is considered important by sociolinguistics (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977). Other factors include status and prestige, urbanization and modernization, as well as societal attitudes. Studies have also shown that English language spreads due to a highly positive attitude to English as an international language displayed by students and teachers, and other factors such as mass media, information technology, commerce, etc. An earlier study on attitudes and motivation of students and teachers had indicated the same trend (Mansoor, 1993) Students show a strong desire to study English as a medium of instruction and as a compulsory subject for mainly instrumental reasons. They also make use of English in both informal and formal domains, despite their limited proficiency in the language (Mansoor, 2005). Another important factor in language spread is the relative economic, political and linguistic prestige of the language. The choice of Urdu as the national language, where Urdu is seen as a symbol of national identity and national integration, has given a great boost to Urdu. In the case of the spread of English it is the high status it enjoys. It has been the second official language, and is used along with Urdu for all official purposes. English is also the medium of education in the country and a compulsory subject. A major incentive to learn a language is income. In Brudner's terms (1972: 36):

Jobs select language-learning strategies. Wherever jobs are available, people learn the languages required to access them. In Pakistan, the most lucrative jobs require proficiency in English. English is also seen as very useful for higher education as all material is in English.

1.4 English proficiency of teachers:

According to (Mansoor, 2005: 328):

In government institutes, the English language proficiency of both students and teachers is considered to be weak. Students in the public sector consider that only half of their subject teachers possess high spoken (57%) and written competency (63%) in English, and in the private sector the difference is only marginal.

In terms of various provinces, it is seen that the English proficiency of subject teachers in the public sector is lowest in the case of Balochistan in both spoken (37%) and written competency (44%). Likewise, in Khaibar PakhnunKhuwan also the rating of spoken competence is lower (50%) than Sindh (57%), Punjab (67%), and the federal capital (75%). In the case of written competence in English of subject teachers it is also reported as lowest in Balochistan, followed by Sindh, Punjab, and then the federal capital. It means one-third of all subject teachers (public and private) lack high spoken and written competence in English (Mansoor, 2005). Rahman

(2002: 541) strongly recommends that English be taught to all children so as to give them access to the liberal-democratic world-view and the possibility of international mobility', and suggests that informal exposure to living English be provided to all students through the media, at state expense.

1.5 Significance of the Study:

The study examines practices of English language teaching at government institutes like government colleges and universities in which English is taught as a compulsory subject. It, to a great extent, reveals some very important facts about students' preference for joining English language institutes to learn English language. It also identifies the problems students have in regard to learning English at government institutes. It also discloses the techniques, teaching methods, teachers' attitude, skills which are focused, etc of government institutes such as colleges and universities.

Methodology

It was a qualitative research which is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (i.e., non-numerical) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest. Observations, interviews, questionnaires, phone calls, personal and official documents, photographs, recording, drawings, journals, email messages and responses, and informal conversations are all sources of qualitative data. For this research study, semi-structured interview was selected followed by the non-participant observation. Semi-structured interview was selected because there was data which could be gathered by structured interview and some data could be covered by the unstructured interview, and hence best, for my research study, was the semi-structured interview that is the combination of both structured and unstructured interview. It allowed me sufficient freedom to collect the data from the target respondents. After interviews non-participant observation was used to ensure that the data I had collected earlier was accurate. 10 participants were interviewed from each English language institute. The interview was individual interview and took much time. It took seven to eight months to collect the data by interviewing the chosen 30 participants from three English language institutes of Karachi. Having conducted interviews of 30 students I visited there government institutes and interviewed two lecturers of English subject [six lecturers from three government institutes] from each government institute.

In this study, the purposive sampling was used because according to (Gay, et al. 2015) many potential participants are unwilling to undergo the lengthy demands of participations. They further say that sampling in qualitative research is almost always purposive. The researcher depends on experience and insight for selecting a sample; randomness is seldom part of the process.

Table 1 Private English Language Institutes

01	No of Private English Language institutes	03	-	-
02	Total no of students interviewed	30	-	-
03	English language institutes	English Language Institute 1	English Language Institute 2	English Language Institute 3
04	No of students interviewed	10	10	10
05	No of female students interviewed	03	08	01
06	No of male students interviewed	07	02	09

In order to obtain more information about the practices of English language teaching at colleges and universities, where English is taught as a compulsory subject, the following government institutes of Karachi were selected.

Table 2 Government Institutes (College & Universities):

01	No of Government Institutes	03	-	-
02	Total no of teachers	06	-	-
03	Government Institutes	University 1	University 2	College 3
04	Total no of Teachers interviewed	02	02	02
05	No of female teachers interviewed	01	00	00
06	No of male teachers interviewed	01	02	02
07	Teacher's Subject	English compulsory	English compulsory	English compulsory
08	Classes	BS/BA/B Com	BS/BA/B Com	Intermediate & BA/B Com

These government institutes were selected because many students of English language institutes were from such government institutes.

In order to authenticate the collected data, observation as an instrument was also used. Through nonparticipant observation 05 classes were observed from each of the above three English language institutes. In total 15 classes were observed and very important data was obtained. In addition to private English language institutes, 10 classes of two government institutes were also observed in order to acquire more accurate data.

Table 3 Private English Language Institutes in which classes were observed:

01	No of Private English Language institutes	03	-	-
02	Total no of classes observed	15	-	-
03	English language institutes	English Language Institute 1	English Language Institute 2	English Language Institute 3
04	No of classes observed	05	05	05
05	No of female students present	15	18	09
06	No of male students present	10	10	19

Table 4 Government Institutes in which classes were observed:

01	No of Government institutes	02	-	-
2	Total no of classes observed	10	-	-
03	Government institutes	University 1	College 3	
04	No of classes observed	05	05	
05	Total no of female students	75	-----	
06	Female Students usually present	40-46	-----	
07	Total no of male students	60	75	
08	Male Students usually present	15-18	10-15	

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews by interviewing 36 participants—30 students from different campuses of 3 private English language institutes and 6 teachers from 3 government institutes in which English is taught as a compulsory subject. The data was first transcribed then the transcribed data was analyzed carefully for emerging themes. The following themes were obtained.

Themes: English Language Teaching at Government Institutes

- 1) Traditional methods of teaching English Language
- 2) Focus on syllabus
- 3) Focus on writing and reading
- 4) No teaching aids and use of modern technology
- 5) Untrained language teachers

The important themes which were obtained from the analysis of the data were then critically discussed in the light of the existing literature and my [the researcher's] insight of Pakistani context. The data that was collected through observation was also included during analysis as it was related to my nonparticipant observation. I tried my best to avoid premature judgment and find out the answers to the following research question after examining the data0 carefully.

Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

This chapter explains the nature of the data that has been analyzed. First of all, all interviews through which data was collected were transcribed and then the data was coded for the purpose of establishing categories. A large number of codes or sub-themes were found. Categories were also made of subjects selected on the basis of different groups. Then sub-themes were merged into main themes. In addition, theme analysis was also established to facilitate data analysis. Since the interview questions were semi-structured, the results were prepared to report descriptively (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2015-16). Now I am going to interpret the themes which emerged from the analysis of the collected data.

4.1 Practices of English language teaching at government institutes like colleges and universities in Karachi.

4.1.1 Traditional Methods of Teaching English Language:

We have prescribed books which we use in the class. Besides this we use newspapers and magazines very seldom because books which we have are sufficient for students, containing pair work and group work activities that help teachers a lot in dealing with such students. We also use board. We teach them through the books and then give them exercises which are in the books. (T-1 T-2)

The above-mentioned data was collected from two government teachers teaching at a college English as a compulsory subject. According to them, teaching methods play a vital role in teaching any language. Unfortunately, in Pakistan the teachers are still using old and traditional method of teaching [grammar translation method] which is ineffective. In a study investigating English Language teaching in the context of Chitral, Nawab (2012) has concluded that the teaching of English was not much different from other subjects like social studies or history. Lack of relevant academic qualifications of teachers may be one of the reasons why teaching of English is not considered different from other subjects. Our students study English as a compulsory subject from the very beginning and spend 10 to 14 years, but even then they cannot communicate to each other in English. Unfortunately, no one bothers about it. Majority of the teachers are not aware of new researches in this field; they do not attend seminars and workshops on language teaching. Hence they rarely use any other teaching aids except the prescribed books and the board in the class. According to Kizibash (1998: 103) the education of Pakistan's teacher in the public sector in the last 50 years has remained traditional and status quo.

The nonparticipant observation also reveals that teachers are still using old traditional method of teaching English. They do not bother about it as their jobs are fully secure. They do not want to attend any seminars and workshops, nor do they want to take any ELT short course or do MA English Linguistics.

Grammar is taught there to teach English as a second language. Indirect methodology is used there. Usually topics related to grammar and composition are taught to them. Some of the text books are taught there, but written skills are given more focus. Unfortunately, spoken skills are not given sufficient time in our colleges and universities. Students hardly ask any questions from their teachers. Though we design syllabus according to our own convenience, yet we have some problems such as speaking activities are not included in the syllabus because at the end we see that their performance is assessed by written not spoken test. (T-3 T-4, ST-6 ST-8 ST-11 ST-12 ST-17 ST-23 ST-24 ST-25)

It has been found from the above analysis of teachers' interview that grammar is still focused to teach English language by using indirect methodology. Grammar topics and compositions are given to students and students' performance is assessed by written tests. Written skills are focused more, rather than spoken skills. Some text books are still widely used. Students do not

ask questions from their teachers. The books which are used to teach English language do not include up-to-date speaking activities (Malik, 1996). All these things indicate that there is no proper language planning and research upon language teaching in Pakistan. Hence traditional method of teaching English is still being followed producing no effective result. According to Kizibash (1998: 103) Pakistan's teacher education in the public sector in the last 50 years has remained traditional and status quo. The observation, which I have made, also shows to a great extent that teachers are still focusing more on grammar and students' performance is also assessed by written tests. Teachers make students read the text and then tell them the meanings of some words. After it they give some exercises and that's all. Such method has badly failed in modern era.

4.1.2 Focus on Syllabus:

In schools, colleges and universities attention is focused on certain syllabus and English is taught according to a fixed syllabus, but in a language centre mainly two skills [speaking and listening] are highly focused. (ST-6 ST-8 ST-9 ST-11 ST-16 ST-17 ST-19 ST-24 ST-25 ST-27 ST-29)

As can be seen from the above theme a very important reason why students go to language centres rather than studying it at government institutes is that the syllabus, which is designed to teach English does not necessarily fulfill all the requirements, is focused and efforts are made to teach English as per the syllabus. On the other hand, English language is taught without focusing any particular syllabus at private English language institutes. That's why private English language institutes are successful in satisfying the needs of the students.

(Mansoor, 2003) states that students are not satisfied with the English language support provided to them, as only one-third of all students rate the overall quality of these courses as high, in all aspects including syllabus (36%), texts and materials (35%), teaching methods (41%), and test and examinations (38%). Many teachers are not satisfied either with the overall quality of the English courses offered in their institutions and only 60% consider them of high quality. Despite the fact that there are almost twice as many teachers from the private sector (71%), as compared to teachers from the public sector (34%), who rated the quality of the English courses as high, there are a fair number of teachers who remained dissatisfied. My study of nonparticipant observation also reveals that teachers mainly pay more attention to complete their syllabus rather than to enable students to have good communication skills. Teachers try to complete their course at all costs. They have a fixed syllabus to teach which they give more importance.

4.1.3 Focus on Writing and Reading skills:

In government institutes, there is only reading or writing, no speaking or conversation practice. English is taught as a subject, not as a language. Secondly, the teachers of government institutes are very qualified, but they focus more on their timings rather than students. (ST-3 ST-9 ST-15 ST-13 ST-16 ST-18 ST-19 ST-22 ST-25 ST-30)

This research also reveals that in government institutes, writing and reading skills are focused, rather than speaking and listening skills. The teachers are qualified but lacking training and awareness of new research. Rahman, (1990) says that since the strength of the class is high and students from different backgrounds are found enrolled in the same class, teachers teach from a specific syllabus which focuses on reading and writing, rather than speaking and listening. In this way, students memorize many language items, but cannot speak English language and after sometimes they forget what they learn.

The nonparticipant observation also reveals the same fact that in government institutes writing and reading skills are paid more attention and speaking and listening skills are paid hardly any attention or these skills are forgotten. Malik, (1996) says that since teachers have no such equipment or language aids and they are not trained themselves, they have no planning to give students speaking and listening practice. Above all, teachers focus more on writing and reading skills because the test system also focuses on writing and reading skills, rather than speaking and listening skills.

4.1.4 No proper teaching aids and use of Modern Technology:

Teachers do not pay much attention. They are not cooperative and helpful. They do not use modern technology and have a proper planning. They just teach to complete their prescribed syllabus. There are no AV aids, no projectors, multimedia system etc. Since these aids are not available how can they be used? So students get deprived of modern technology. (ST-4 ST-7 ST-9 ST-10 ST-11, 14, 15, 18, 19, 22, 23)

From the analysis of the above theme it has been understood that teachers, in government institutes, do not pay much attention to students. They are not cooperative and helpful. The most important thing we have learnt is that teachers do not get the advantages of modern technology in their classes. Rahman, (2003) states that nowadays in private English language institutes, many things are used for teaching English language such as computers, projectors, AV system, internet, etc, but unfortunately these things are not found in government institutes. They have a prescribed syllabus which they prefer to complete.

My observation also reveals that government sectors are most of time deprived of modern technology. We know it very well that modern age is the age of science and technology. Without using technology it is extremely difficult to succeed in any field especially in ELT, but unfortunately things like computer, projectors, internet, etc are normally not found in government institutes. Teachers only focus on the syllabus and try to complete it as soon as possible. On the other hand, things are totally opposite in private English language institutes.

Well, if we talk about teaching aids we see that teachers use black board, white board, chalks, prescribed books, etc for teaching English subject as a language. There is no language lab, OHB, multimedia, etc, and if these things are available, teachers are unable to use them. (T-4 T-6 T-5 T-3 ST-7 ST-11 ST-13 ST-16 ST-18 ST-22 ST-25 ST-27)

It has been observed that visual system also plays a very important role in ELT, TESL, ESP, etc. It is, therefore, in the interest of the learner if teachers rely on ancillary audio-visual aids in the classroom to tweak the learner's linguistic and visual systems and accelerate the learning process. From the above-mentioned theme it has been understood that teachers use black board, white board, chalks, books for teaching English in the class, but unfortunately there is no use of modern technology such as language lab, multimedia, projectors, AV system etc neither do teachers know how to use them. They only focus on the prescribed books and try their best to complete them at all cost (Bashiruddin & Qayyum, 2014).

4.1.5 Untrained Teachers:

We see that the teachers of colleges only come for earning money. They have no proper planning, training and no proper system. Since they know that their job is secure, they do not worry about students' performance. They are not trained from language teaching perspective as can be found the teachers of private English language institutes. They are a little arrogant, unfriendly and impolite. (ST-5 ST-9 ST-10 ST-14 ST-20 ST-22 ST-27)

Another big reason why students go to language institutes to learn English is untrained teacher at government institutes. Mansoor, (2003) states that lack of teacher training is one of the foremost reasons for low education standards. In Pakistan, teacher training is not a prerequisite for entering higher education institutions. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, no teacher training is required for teaching English language, even at many English language institutes it has also been observed that non-professional teachers are hired for teaching English language because they are paid low salaries as compared to professional teachers (Bashiruddin & Qayyum, 2014). Sometimes these teachers become arrogant, unfriendly and impolite and make things difficult for the learners.

The observation also reveals that the teachers in government sectors are not trained and have very little knowledge of linguistics. There are very few teachers who are MA English Linguistics, otherwise majority of the teachers are MA English Literature. MA English Literature means that they have little knowledge of ELT. For teaching English as a language the knowledge and the degree of MA Linguistics which also includes courses of ELT are very essential (Mansoor, 2005).

Conclusion:

In short, at government institutes, English is not taught as a language, but as a subject. Teachers only try to complete their syllabus. They do not bother about students' communication skills. They are usually not trained from ELT point of you. They do not use modern technology, and nor do majority of them know about the use of modern technology. They normally use grammar translation method which has badly failed in achieving the intended result. There is no test of spoken and listening skills.

Recommendations:

- At government institutes, teachers should be cooperative, hardworking and regular.
- Teachers should change their teaching techniques and methodologies.
- Teachers should have some linguistics background by doing at least some short ELT courses or one-year program so that they can effectively teach English language to students.
- Government colleges and universities should be provided with teaching aids and neat and clean rooms with comfortable seats and good environment.
- Teachers should be provided training with the passage of time and they should also attend different workshops, seminars and programs on ELT.
- Their primary goal should be to improve students' spoken and listening skills rather than writing and reading skills.
- They should avoid traditional method of teaching.

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