

Early English Immersion and Literacy in Sindh, Pakistan: A Case Study of Sindh University Students

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Nowadays, English is a widely recognized language that is given more weight at the regional, national, and international levels in the majority of the world's nations. English is often associated with rank and power. Even if one is ignorant about the relevant field, speaking in English is seen as a mark of prestige. With the exception of Sindhi and Urdu, the majority of subjects taught in Sindhi, including science, math, social studies, Pakistan studies, religion, and civics, are taught in English. For students studying at university education, English becomes a challenging instructional medium. This study looks into the difficulties faced by Sindh University Students have understanding subjects taught in English. In order to solve the problem, the study used a qualitative technique that involved interviewing government sector Sindh University students who take science, math and other topics in English. According to the survey, students in university education have less proficiency in the English language, which makes it difficult for them to comprehend the subject matter. In English, they are not communicative. They struggle with reading, comprehending, and producing innovative writing on these topics. Given that understanding the social and natural worlds is the ultimate purpose of education, the study suggests that these courses be taught in the students' mother tongue. When taught in their home tongue, students learn the most. Furthermore, teaching English as a language is preferable to teaching it as a subject.

1. Introduction

In Pakistan, the English language is very important. It is the language of the courts, government, media, and schools. English is the primary language of communication in these institutions. English is widely used in education, particularly in the curricula that are required for schools, colleges, and universities. Language and identity are interconnected. Without language and identity, learners cannot learn any language in the world. Our language develops as a result of the constant changes in our environment and influences our identity, culture, and way of thinking (Pathan et al. 2024).

The reason for this is the status that English has due to its global historical relevance. However, Pakistan's increased emphasis on English in the classroom has led to numerous issues with subject comprehension. The topic of the current study is how learning English can be hampered by its language. This leads to a linguistic barrier that affects Sindhi students in Pakistan in both school, college and university settings (Lynch et al. 2023). The majority of the time, students in Sindh, Pakistan, are found studying English. They rote-learn these things in order to pass exams because they are difficult to understand due to the complicated vocabulary used in science subjects. Even though English is widely accepted, there are still issues with the educational system in places like Pakistan.

In order to comprehend scientific concepts, there is an increased demand for culturally sensitive education. It is evident that the children have the greatest command of and comfort level in speaking their native tongue in general perception (Darvin & Nortin, 2022). Children may find school to be burdensome when they have to pick up a new language of instruction. Most children in Pakistan view school as a nuisance, and they lack motivation to learn new things. Many blame Pakistan's majority of children's educational burdens on English as a foreign language.

One could argue that English is an international or global language. According to Crystal (2021), the two main causes of English's current global standing are the United States' rise as the world's most powerful economy in the 20th century and the British colonial empire's ongoing expansion towards the end of the 19th century. Since the era of colonialism, English language teaching (ELT) has been seen as a value-free endeavor that provides access to both material advancement and wealth in a globalized society. Its imperialist and hegemonic nature hasn't been given enough attention in classroom settings in peripheral regions (Khan et al, 2016).

According to Philipson (2020), learning English has global ramifications for politics, the economy, the military, and culture. Today, ELT is a trillion-dollar industry, according to Philipson. There have been claims that the English language has facilitated international communication in an impartial manner. In addition, it is thought to be impartial in disputes involving languages and ethnic groups. This idea of English as the "lingua franca" places it in a neutral, unrelated realm apart from politics, culture, and economics (Petrenas et al. 2019).

According to Philipson (2018), English serves a number of unique functions on a global scale. Philipson states that English is a *lingua emotiva* (in Hollywood, popular music,

consumerism, and hedonism), lingua academica (in research publications, at international conferences, and as medium of content), lingua economic (in business and advertising, the language of corporate neoliberalism), and lingua emotiva (in Hollywood, popular music, consumerism, and hedonism).

English-speaking countries and bearers of their cultures), a lingua bellica (the language of state-to-state conflicts), and most significantly, a lingua Americana (because of the USA's enormous influence on the world's economies, cultures, and militaries).

Thus, the area of English Language Teaching (ELT) must be viewed not as a lingua franca but rather as the carrier of unique goals in many societal sectors. Beyond being the primary language, English has a greater cultural and economic significance in Pakistan.

The majority of schools, colleges, and universities in Pakistan offer English as a topic, and the language plays a significant role in both the public and private sectors. According to Rehman (2002), the easiest way to understand English instruction in Pakistan is to think of the institutions that teach the language as a topic or as the primary language for classroom instructions. These establishments consist of: (a) Madrassas; (b) English-medium Schools; (c) Vernacular-medium Schools; (d) English Language Teaching Institutions; and (e) Higher Education Institutions.

English has a distinct function in each of these institutions. English-medium schools and state-run vernacular-medium schools provide a significant disparity (Marsh, 2016). In the former, the learner's mother tongue is used for the majority of the instruction. Science textbooks, as well as those for other courses including computer science, social studies, and Pakistan studies, are offered in both the learners' native tongue and English. Nonetheless, those in English are given greater weight. While these courses are taught in English in metropolitan areas, several schools in rural Sindh still teach these subjects in Sindhi. In private schools, on the other hand, everything is taught in English from the start, with the exception of Urdu and Sindhi language. Private publishers publish these textbooks.

1.1 Research Questions

1. *What issues do students at University Level have when studying social sciences and natural sciences courses in English?*
2. *Whether or not students understand the social science and natural science textbooks written in English?*

2. Literature Review

The language of instruction in schools, colleges, and universities is increasingly being taught in English. Deaden (2014) carried out a study for a British Council project that supports the idea that the use of English as a teaching language is becoming more and more commonplace worldwide.

In the majority of nations nowadays, academic courses are taught in English. There have also been doubts raised about the validity of using English as a teaching language.

The professors, on the other hand, disagree with the students' rankings of the most crucial language skills and believe that reading is the most crucial ability, followed by writing, speaking, and listening. This may have happened as a result of teachers being aware of their students'

deficiencies and needs in language learning as well as the fact that reading is crucial to their academic work and affects how well they do on final exams (Memon, 2007).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that learning information in a language other than a child's mother tongue, such as English, obstructs their ability to comprehend concepts.

According to a UNESCO report written by Buhmann and Trudell (2008), when kids are taught a language they don't use at home or don't hear people in their community speaking, it makes it far harder for them to learn basic concepts and become literate.

In a global complaint for education, Mackenzie and Walker (2006) report that 221 million students in developing nations enter the classroom unable to understand the language that they are being taught. The majority of nations educate their kids in a national, international, or dominating language that they are not very conversant with. This makes it difficult for them to understand scientific and other academic concepts.

The students are placed in a setting where they are unable to comprehend the lessons being taught. According to Pinnok (2009), if students are unable to comprehend their teachers' or the textbooks' foreign language, they will not be able to study. The research goes on to say that children are educated in a language other than their own in the majority of nations. There is usually tension between a child's home language and their language at school.

But school language starts to have a significant impact on kids' overall academic achievement. When kids go to school, they typically find that the teachers are speaking to them in a language that is incomprehensible to them. As a result, they just mimic the teachers and commit numbers and other lessons to memory. Most of the time, students retake their classes because they are unable to memorize the material.

According to a study done in an African setting by Tshotsho (2013), children should be taught the majority of cognitively demanding skills in their mother tongue for a longer amount of time in order to profit from it.

The students' rank-ordering of the four language skills is another noteworthy discovery. Speaking and writing were voted first and second, respectively, by students, while reading and listening were ranked third and fourth. These results supported their prior preferences regarding the relative significance of the four language skills' sub-skills for literacy and learning abilities. This could be as a result of Pakistani schools typically placing less emphasis on these useful abilities. Additionally, these are the more difficult skills for those learning a second language (Hulst, 2022).

Even with the numerous attempts made in Africa to replace English with native tongues, there is still a dearth of information available in those languages. Pakistan has also carried out similar investigations. Ahmed (2011) carried out a study on Pakistan's educational medium and noted that the country is multilingual and that English is the primary language used for knowledge transmission. Every academic endeavor, including curriculum development, revolves around English. An example of this is the current study's findings, which reveal varying opinions about how difficult it is to learn English in Pakistan.

3. Research Methodology

The topic is being addressed in the current study through a qualitative method. In order to learn more about the topic of interest, qualitative research collects a large amount of narrative material. The coding of data and the creation of narratives or descriptions are both components of data analysis. According to Ian Dey (1993), the phrase "qualitative research" has grown popular and can be applied to any approach other than survey research.

It covers the gathering of documentary materials, group and unstructured interviews, participant (and non-participant) observation, and similar activities. According to Chauhan (2012), qualitative research aims to comprehend the interpretations that individuals make of their actions and social phenomena. The current study is qualitative since it adheres to the concepts and key features of qualitative research.

3.1 Data Collection Tools

Twenty students who are studying at University of Sindh, Pakistan, participated in semi-structured interviews for the purpose of this study. For ethical considerations, the name(s) of the institute and the participants have not been disclosed. According to Creswell (2008), interviews give researchers detailed information since participants share their firsthand observations of a particular occurrence. Interviews can be conducted in a variety of ways.

These consist of in-person or one-on-one phone interviews, focus group interviews, and email interviews conducted online.

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews are the primary method used in this study to gather data from the students who were each contacted individually and assured of their confidentiality. These semi-structured interviews employ a set of open-ended questions that are tailored to the subject matter the study intends to investigate. It is necessary to prepare questions in advance for this type of interview. Throughout the interview, the researcher formulates additional questions based on the subject under investigation.

3.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling was utilised in this study in order to find research participants. Purposive sampling facilitates the researchers' ability to select participants based on their own expertise and judgement that best fits the study's objectives. Ten participants in all ($n = 20$) were chosen from University of Sindh, Jamshoro. Five participants were selected evenly from the First Year class and five, five from the higher semester classes class. In addition, the gender ratio was equal. The participants, who were presently based in Hyderabad were from overall province of Sindh.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

One-on-one sittings were employed for qualitative interviews in this study. The conversations were videotaped. We recorded them after hearing them multiple times. In order to aid the researchers categorise and split the descriptive data into themes, the study employed content analysis to analyse the data (Creswell, 2008).

4.1 Finding and Discussion

Twenty university students ($n = 10$) in Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan, provided the data. Before the interview even started, the students were aware of the main questions that the current

researchers had prepared. As a means of delving deeper into the study, the other questions were derived from these primary ones.

Table No 1:

Option: 01: English as a barrier to comprehension in social science	
Understanding in concepts	I cannot understand all things
Language of Non-Native	English is problematic for me
Weak Language	Previous classes could not provide opportunity
Option: 02: Problems in Language	
Symantec Problem	Words and meanings are difficult
Syntactic issues	Problem in complex structures
Issues in Morphology	
Option: 03: Knowledge and Nativeness	
Mother Tongue of Student	I feel easy in Sindhi language
Access on understanding	Local language is more easy

4.2 English as a Barrier to Comprehension in Social Science

The incomprehensibility of social science concepts is attributed to the English language. The majority of participants (n=20, 90%) concurred that they have trouble understanding English-language content found social science textbooks. The majority of pupils (n=20) expressed worry that they are not proficient in English and that it is a foreign language to them.

4.3 Problems in Language

The participants (n = 20) experienced morphological, syntactic, and semantic language difficulties. The subjects felt that the availability of complicated terminology and meanings, as well as the intricacy of sentence structures, are the reasons why they are unable to comprehend the information found in textbooks.

They encounter unfamiliar terms in sentences, and because of their limited language exposure, they are unable to comprehend the meaning of the sentences. As a result, individuals become more confused and eventually resort to rote learning in an attempt to pass the test.

4.4 Knowledge and Native Behavior

The majority of participants (n = 20, 90%) supported learning in their mother tongue. They reasoned that since they are accustomed to speaking in their mother tongue, they will find it easy to comprehend scientific issues in that language. The language of Sindh, or Urdu in the case of Sindh Pakistan, is used to aid in learning. However, depending on each student's linguistic proficiency and learning style, this differs.

5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The English language is essential in today's global marketplace. The majority of daily activities, including as employment and school, are conducted in English. In addition, speaking English is seen as a mark of honor and status. But when it comes to schooling, most developing nations' students find that English is a barrier. The majority of topics, including social studies,

physics, chemistry, biology, algebra, computers, and basic science, are taught in English in University Sindh, Pakistan. The students come from a variety of educational backgrounds. The students who have taken previous English language sessions find it easy to understand these subjects in English.

Conversely, the majority of students in this public sector university struggle with the English language, which makes it harder for them to comprehend the material. According to the report, the majority of university students struggle with their English. They find science subjects difficult to understand due to the language, structures, and pronunciations that are sophisticated. When taught in their home tongue, people find it easier to absorb information.

The current study is crucial for Sindh's Ministry of Education, educators, policy makers, and course designers. The use of language is essential to comprehending any topic. A child grows tired of learning in a language different than his own if they are taught in it. He starts to lose motivation due to language barriers. Sindh is currently dealing with a serious problem. Students' burdensome language and educational requirements discourage them from learning and making contributions to the fields of science, technology, and education. The globe is expanding more quickly.

We require a policy that guarantees our involvement in the global economy in order to keep up with it. When our students possess knowledge in the humanities, arts, and sciences, this can be accomplished. Only when students receive instruction in their native tongue will this information be possible. Only by enhancing the pedagogical methods used in Pakistani schools and institutions would it be feasible to comprehend knowledge in English.

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