

Effectiveness of Private English Medium Schools in the Development of English Language Skills

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Abstract

The overall purpose of the research was to study the effectiveness of private English Medium Schools in development of English language skills. The scope of the study was limited to the private institutions of district Khairpur. The study specially focused on English language skills at the intermediate level. A major hypothesis was formulated. The extensive literature review was done. The overall strategy was survey. The population of study was comprised of English language teachers of private and public institutions imparting education up to the 12th grade, affiliated with the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Sukkur. Stratified random sampling was chosen. The overall sample size was 60 English language teachers. A questionnaire and an interview protocol were designed as research instruments. Data were analyzed and it was concluded that effectiveness of Private institutions in developing English language skills was commendable. The success of private institutions lies in the fact that their students were exposed to English language frequently. The effective and modern teaching methods were being used in private institutions. It paved the way for their overall success in the examinations. Almost every year the students of private institutions are top scorer, leaving behind the public institutions.

Key Words: Effectiveness, English Medium Schools, English language Skills.

Introduction

There is no exaggeration to say that English is one of the most important languages of the world. It is believed by Shankar (2003) that incredible advancements in modern science and technology have shrunk the world to a global village and made the countries frontier-less. The communication in English has made it possible for the peoples to be the citizens of the world and English is thought as the linking language between the peoples of the world. John Adams, the second President of America once foretold that one day the English language would be the most esteemed language of the world and it would be universally read and spoken language in the whole world. Italy's most famous university, the **Politecnico di Milano** announced in 2012 that its classes had to be international and for that purpose all the subjects in the university would be taught in English by the year 2014 as Dyer (2012) reported in Dawn newspaper. Keeping in view the global importance of English, it has been given the status of official language in Pakistan. All the state documents as well as the most sacred document of government i.e. the constitution are written and preserved in English. The air and military communications, and the law of the land are also codified in English. English acts as communication vehicle in international trade and commerce. It is a mark of social distinction and a symbol of honour in Pakistan. In schools, colleges and universities English is used as the medium of instruction.

For raising the standard of education in Pakistan English language must be taught and learned effectively. The English language teachers play a vital role as far as development of English language is concerned but Bhatti (2005) points out that public schools have disappointed the students, parents and people alike. Owing to such disappointment students

at all levels are unable to use English effectively for their academic and social needs. The echo of ghost teachers and ghost schools is the talk of the town regarding public sector education. Seeing 25 million school-going children out of schools educationists propose education emergency. The rapid growth of private schools has created a sense of some relief among the people and it is thought that ills of education might be washed away by this swift replacement of private schools where English is being taught from kindergarten and language skills are effectively developed with the use of modern audio-visual aids. This effectiveness comes from the fact that students of private institutions are exposed to English at a greater extent. These days, private schools are no more the elite phenomenon. The mushrooming of private schools in the nook and corner of Pakistan is perhaps the result of parents' reliance upon private schooling. Although it pinches their pockets, parents are rushing towards private education. Hundreds of the students are enrolled in the private institutions of district Khairpur. These institutions use English as medium of instruction and it has become imperative to study the effectiveness of these private institutions in the development of English language skills. This leads to the overall purpose of the study. One major hypothesis was formulated and it was found that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of English language teachers of Private and public institutions regarding the development of English language skills in the private English medium schools.

The study would be a little addition in the present knowledge in this field. It would suggest some concrete steps that might be helpful in making the public schools more useful effective for all the stakeholders. It is hoped that in the light of suggestions the authorities would utilize all existing resources and efforts to pay the way for the effective development of English language skills.

The scope of the study was limited to all the private English medium schools of four towns of district Khairpur, Sindh, i.e. Gambat, Ranipur, Khuhra, and Hingirja. The English language teachers are the part of the study.

Following were the few assumption on which the study founded:

It has been observed that students up to the level of intermediate specially belonging to the public schools feel difficulties in communicating English purposefully for academic and social needs real situation. Moreover, parents are much more inclined to send their children to private institutions.

The extensive literature review was done. English language has got the paramount position in Pakistani Education System. English is thought as a wonderful tool for getting power, prestige and privilege. English is thought as a window to the outside world and has got the status of *lingua franca* as expressed by Aslam (2003). According to Rahman (2005) the private English medium schools no doubt, function as passports to privilege. Rahman (2002) in another article stated that private school students' considerable exposure to English everywhere guarantees their success. Unlike students of public institutions, the students watch English movies and have easy access to world media. The viable knowledge of four language skills plays a supreme role in quality education.

Listening Skills

The modern technologies and research have brought tremendous changes in language learning and teaching processes. The second International Association of Applied Linguistic Conference of 1969, focused upon the **four** dominant themes of foreign language learning. The educationists emphasized the following points: (i) the individual learners and their individuality; (ii) in learning process listening and reading are proved to be active, receptive, and complex methods; (iii) in the process of language learning, listening comprehension is thought as the basic skill; (iv) use of real language in a real everyday situation is considered

as an appropriate model for class room. No doubt, the modern trends have affected all the aspects of language skills but it has enormously influenced the listening comprehension.

Richards (1983: 407) introduced two different strategies; the **Bottom-up** (text based strategy) and the **Top-down** (listening based strategy). The listener, in the Bottom-up strategy, highlights the message of the language, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammatical aspects which in turn help the learners in creating meaning. The background information is utilized in the “Top-down” strategy to comprehend the meaning contained in listening comprehension. The background information acts as a heart and soul for the learners. It opens the doors of expectations for learners and helps them extract meaning from what they have heard. It leads them to foresee what will come next.

Reading Skills

The new research focused on acquisition of second language reading pedagogy skills. The language experts and researcher like Kenneth Goodman and others made a considerable contribution in this field. Reading is a Psychological guessing game as observed by Goodman (1970). In this game, a learner samples the text material and develops a hypothesis, accepts or rejects it and goes on developing new hypotheses and so on. It is noted here that not the text but the reader plays a central part. Later on, the linguists, cognitive psychologists, and psycholinguists put forward the Schema theory, which explained that all knowledge is organized into different units and information is stored within schemas (units of knowledge). Simply, schema is the system of understanding knowledge or it is how knowledge is represented and how it can be used. The essence of Schema theory lies in the fact that it is not the text only that embodies the meaning but it is the reader who adds information, knowledge, emotion, experience and culture to the text. That is why the schema theory is of a high value in second language acquisition. It is thought that relevant background knowledge is much more important for a second language learner than his or her knowledge of grammatical complexity. It is noticed that in the cognitive view, the top-down approach is in contrast with the bottom-up approach. But the psycholinguistic approaches of reading and top-down strategy are exactly in harmony as opined by Nunan (1991) and Dubin & Bycin (1991). The cognitive view of reading and the schema theory are usually considered as the two sides of the same coin. The modern research proposes that not only bottom-up (language based process) decoding strategies but also the top-down (knowledge based process) strategies of reading must be used for the development of learning reading skills and the integration of both, is a must for effective reading.

Speaking Skills

No doubt, speaking skill has provided the foundation for other three language skills. That is the reason speaking is known as the most important interactive process. It is both the complex and dynamic skill. It is used in making the meaning and understanding information. Various processes such as cognitive, social and physical are simultaneously at work in speaking skill. It is one of the spontaneous processes and the challenging aspects of language learning. In this connection, the transactional and interactional functions of a language were introduced by Brown and Yule (1983: 03). The transfer of information is being carried out by transactional function whereas the interactional function of language is being used to maintain the social contact. Nunan (1989) went forward to introduce the monologue and dialogue in speaking kills. The difference between motor perceptive skill and interactional skill was made conspicuous by Bygate (1987). The motor perceptive skills are used to focus on sound and structure of a language whereas interactional skills emphasize upon the communication development. The modern research has given weight and value to direct

communicative interaction and the bottom-up and top-down approaches should be used simultaneously for effective learning of speaking skills.

Writing Skills

whether it is first or second language, writing with fluency and effectiveness is one of the most difficult jobs for a learner. It is right to say that a physically normal child learns to understand and speak his or her mother tongue first. Writing is quite an unnatural process in the view of White (1981, p. 2). A tendency for speaking a language is naturally found in normal people. Writing is the skill which is to be taught; it won't come to them naturally. Writing can be made simple but it should be kept in mind that it is a complex cognitive process. When a learner starts writing sentences, it is necessary for him that he should have the command over the content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. But if he attempts to write larger texts or paragraphs, the writer must have the mastery to develop formal structures and he should have ability to integrate knowledge in logical and organized paragraphs or texts. In these modern times, two approaches are being used for the development of writing skills: (a) The Product Approach (b) The Process Approach. Gabriellatos (2002, p.5) has commented on these two approaches very clearly. He writes that a product approach is very much like a traditional approach of grammar-translation method. The learners in such techniques are encouraged to copy or imitate the model text. The learners are required to produce or reproduce what they have learnt. It surely promotes rote learning. Whereas the Process-Approach develops creativity among the learners as they go forward. Kroll (2001) has emphasized upon the Process-Approach and calls it an umbrella for developing writing skills. The Process Approach is quite different from the Product Approach. Under the process approach, the learners are going through variety of writing and rewriting processes. They are getting feedbacks from peers and teachers and developing creativity and fluency in writing skills slowly and gradually.

Methodology

The overall strategy of the study was survey. The population of the study included all the private English medium schools and the government institutions of four towns. The 14 government institutions and 34 private institutions are functional there.

The stratified random sampling design was adopted for the study. The overall sample size was sixty English language teachers.

Table: Distribution of English Teachers by Socio Economic status

CONTROL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Urban Areas Teachers	30	50
Rural Areas Teachers	30	50
Total	60	100

The table shows that fifty per cent of the respondents from each group represent the sample.

The questionnaire and interviews protocols were developed. The data were analyzed with the help of descriptive and statistical techniques.

Testing of Hypothesis: (Concentration on Development of Basic Language Abilities)

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural Areas teachers regarding the development of Basic English language skills in the private English medium schools.#

Analysis of the Problem

1. $H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$
2. $H_1: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$
3. $\alpha = 0.05$
4. Test Statistics: t
5. Decision Rule

Reject H_0 if computed $t \geq$ tabulated t

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	108.5	106.9
Variance	14.39195	47.81724
Observations	30	30
df	29	
t- Statistics	1.10	
t- Critical two-tail	2.04	

Conclusion

Referring to table of t at $\alpha = 0.05$ with $df = 29$, the tabulated $t = 2.04$ which is greater than the computed $t = 1.10$. Therefore the null hypothesis is upheld and it could be concluded that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of English language teachers belonging to urban and rural areas regarding the development of Basic English language skills in the private English medium schools.

Graphical Analysis:

Item: Private institutions concentrate on the development of basic language skills.

Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, U= Undecided, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree.

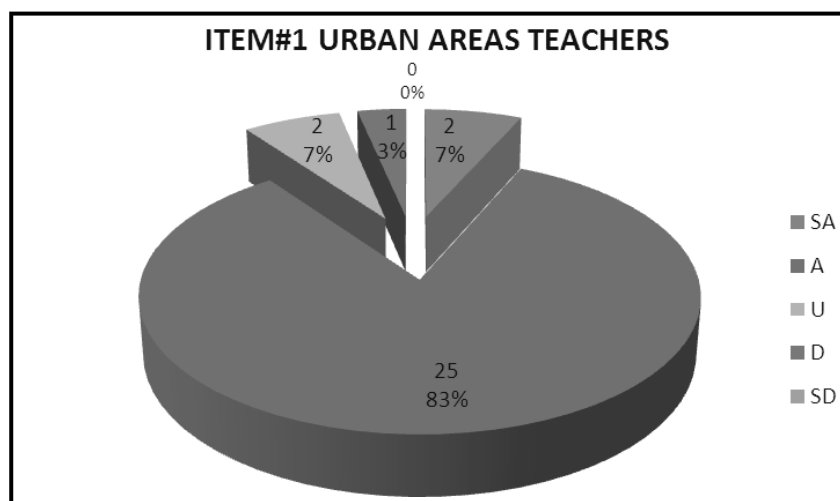


Figure 1. Responses of Urban Areas Teachers for item

The figure shows 7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 83% agreed, 7% remained undecided, 3% disagreed with the item. No response was found in the category of strongly disagree.

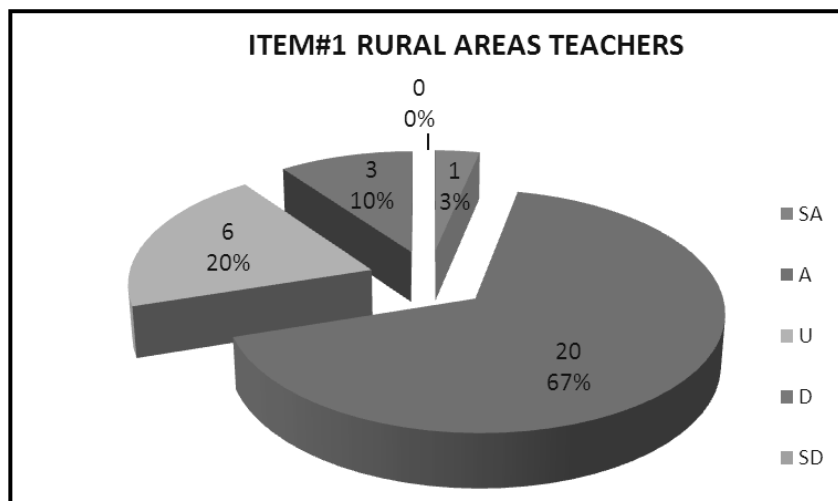


Figure 2. Responses of Rural areas Teachers for Item

The figure shows 3% of the respondents strongly agreed, 67% agreed, 20% remained undecided, 10% disagreed with the item. No response was found in the category of strongly disagree.

It was found that English material regarding development of basic language skills was practiced in private schools from the very beginning. It was made effective with the help of audio-visual aids because the teachers were frequently sent to attend seminars and training programs. Teachers were encouraged and supported by the administration of private schools if they used modern teaching methods in the class. The use of modern teaching methods helped to infuse creativity and strategic competence among the students. The students' greater exposure to English in and outside the class played an important role in the overall success of the students.

The study has made a significant contribution so far as the effectiveness of the private English medium schools in the development of Basic English language skills is concerned. It was found that there was a well-organized and stringent system of check and balance. Students and teachers' regularity was strictly checked. A highly organized co-ordination between the parents, teachers and the students of private institutions has paved the way for the overall personality development of the students.

In the light of above findings, it is recommended that a strict check and balance system should be introduced in public institutions to set them on the track of success. The heads of the public institutions should be appointed on merit and without political favoritism. They must possess leadership styles and introduce and encourage the teachers' participation in decision-making processes. The devoted teachers should be provided and encouraged to use audio-visual aids. The teachers should be given freedom in using modern teaching methods in the class. Modern teaching methods would be of no use if teachers are not properly trained that is why pre-service and in-service teachers training programs should be introduced in government institutions. The smooth and successful running of the educational institutions lies in the fact that they should be free from political influences.

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