

An Analytical Study of Language Teaching Perspectives at A Public Sector University in Pakistan

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Abstract

The study aims to gain in-depth perspectives regarding language teaching practices at a public sector university in Pakistan. The study emphasizes the need to explore teaching practices to determine students' learning outcomes positively. The qualitative research paradigm was chosen in this study. The tools and instruments employed were semi-structured interviews, observations, focus group interviews, tape-recording, video-recording and note-taking. The research participants included 125 students in the first year and three teachers. The purposive sampling was employed. The site of the study was the University of Sindh, Jamshoro. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the study resulted in valuable insights which can help university teachers understand the phenomenon of language teaching practices. By doing so, they can influence the learning outcomes in their classes and transform the language teaching and learning strategies positively. The study suggests that similar studies need to be replicated to determine effective learning outcomes through effective teaching skills at the university level.

Keywords: Effective Teaching, Barriers, English language Teaching, Professional Development and Learning Outcomes.

Introduction

This study is an attempt to analyze the phenomenon of language teaching and learning at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro Pakistan (UoSJP). This study is the result of my PhD thesis chapter namely reconnaissance which deals with gaining understanding of language teaching practices at UoSJP. In this connection, the classroom occurrences have been narrated, the whole classroom environment of teaching and learning has been depicted and the phenomenon towards language teaching has been highlighted. One of the most significant issues faced by language teachers is the utilization of technology in the classroom (Chun et al, 2016). Teachers need to be sufficiently trained to influence positive learning outcomes. Similarly, barriers in teaching and

learning processes affect ESL students' learning outcomes at large (Laghari, et al., 2021). Ahmadi (2018) believes that it is the method on the part of the instructors which plays a significant role in shaping the students' learning. These days, integral and necessary components of language teaching are not traditional teaching methods and traditional tools; rather it is the modern tools that can shape effective learning on the learners' part (Richards, 2015). In this way, the phenomenon of teaching and learning requires more capacity.

In order to understand the language teaching phenomenon, the attention of the researchers is needed in this particular domain. Emphasizing on the need of understanding the language teaching perspectives, Laghari et al (2021) firmly believe that their study conducted in the same domain can lead to positive teaching and learning outcomes for teachers and students respectively. Chamba (2019) believes that the traditional teaching method does not prove effective as a vehicle of communication for the learners. In order to assist learners' communication skills, effective teaching methods can work effectively. Additionally, Laghari et al (2021) opined that studies conducted to make a significant impact on the language teaching can lead to professional development of teachers positively. Kohnke (2023:2) opines that rich input is essential for successful second language acquisition. Providing rich input is instrumental at public sector universities, but the gap existing between theory and practice stands as a barrier in effective teaching and learning (Alcón, 2004).

Investigating language learning and teaching process is a widely explored research area for many researchers (Yilmaz & SARAÇOĞLU, 2022). However, this study is an attempt to develop perceptions regarding teaching and learning process at a public sector university. Furthermore, the study describes the findings of the reconnaissance conducted to investigate the language teaching perspectives prevailing at UoSJP. This study addresses the several concerns relating to the language teaching at a public sector university. In this connection, Romero et al (2019) believe that teachers and teaching practices are challenged to propose learning situations that bring students closer to the professional reality. On the contrary, lacking professional approaches towards language teaching give setback to learners in particular and the institute in general.

Significance of the study

The study can be significant in terms of investigating the phenomenon of language teaching at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan. It is imperative for the language teachers to make their teaching innovative and effective. In this connection, the findings derived from the study can be helpful for language teachers working in public and private sector universities across the country.

Objectives of the study

This study is based on the following objectives.

To analyze the phenomenon of language teaching at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan.
To investigate teachers' perspectives towards teaching at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan.

Research Questions

The study comprises the following research questions.

What is the phenomenon of language teaching at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan?

Which are the teachers' perspectives towards language teaching at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan?

Site of the Study

University of Sindh located in Jamshoro, Pakistan was the site of the study which is the second largest university in the country. The researchers planned to gain analysis of language teaching perspectives; they chose UoSJP as the site of this study.

Literature Review

Language Teaching in Pakistan

In Pakistani educational settings, language teaching and learning practices at public universities are critical, it reflects the nation's various language landscapes and the essential communication skills in the present world. This literature review discovers numerous extents of language teaching and learning practices in this context by highlighting challenges, strategies, and opportunities for improving it. Pakistan is a linguistically diverse country. Urdu serves as its national language and English is its official language. Several regional languages are spoken across different provinces and regions, such as Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, and Balochi (Anwar, 2019). This multilingual setting brings certain challenges and some opportunities for language teaching and learning in public universities. English language proficiency is critical for educational achievement and qualified advancement in Pakistan. Although Urdu is promoted as a national language, English remains the leading source of instruction in higher education, particularly in the science and technology fields (Ali, 2018).

The quality of English language teaching diverges broadly in different universities in Pakistan. This quality influences students' communicative competencies in academic and professional life. Mehmood (2017) states prominent challenges faced by Pakistani public universities in teaching and learning the English language include insufficient teacher training, obsolete teaching practices, inadequate resources, and socio-economic disparities among students. Besides, the supremacy of memorization and exam-oriented education systems destabilizes students' creativity and development of language skills. Khan (2020) on the other hand, highlights opportunities to enhance language teaching and learning practices in Pakistani public universities. He is of the view that implementing student-centred approaches, such as communicative language teaching and task-based learning, can promote active engagement and meaningful interaction in the classroom (Khan, 2020). Moreover, in this technology-based era, integrating technology, such as online resources and language learning platforms, can supplement traditional teaching methods and cater to students' various learning styles.

Language teaching and learning practices in Pakistani context need to be explored. Krishna and Kumar (2020) indicate the defective approaches towards English language teaching and learning which affect ESL learners' learning outcomes. Consequently, their interpersonal skills also remain affected. The findings of Moeller and Catalano (2015) emphasize the need to integrate technology in learning English as traditional teaching and learning methods do not remain as effective as technology-integrated learning. In this connection, Abilasha and Ilankumaran (2014) opine that transformation is required in the domain of English Language Teaching which can lead to satisfactory learning outcomes in students' academic performances through refined teaching

strategies. Various studies have highlighted that the teaching practices are dominated by teachers. Therefore, Deggs et al (2008) staunchly believe that the direction of teaching needs to be the learners. There can be positive responses if the dimension of teaching is focused on students.

Technology-based teaching can be instrumental in terms of enhancing the learning outcomes. In this connection, Abulu (2024) highlights that the use of technology has become significant in the process of teaching and learning. Ullah et al (2023) view that employing technology which teaching English becomes instrumental in the sense it leads to purposeful interactions among the learners which reduces their fear and increases their confidence in return. Ajmal et al (2021) view that the teacher stands as a central force behind students' learning of a language. The teacher serves as a motivation who removes their barriers and pushes them for their academic as well as non-academic achievements. Additionally, Avisteva (2020) considers traditional teaching approaches as futile and emphasizes the need for innovative teaching approaches to determine positive learning outcomes on the part of the learners based on technology. Shah and Saleem (2021) point out the flaws of language teaching and one of the significant flaws is a one-man show in language teaching which needs not be practiced. They believe that learners are the Centre of discussion in any language classroom, therefore they need to be the focus and concern of language teaching and learning classes. The following section discusses the language teaching in Pakistani public sector universities.

Language Teaching at Pakistani Public Universities

Language teaching in Pakistan, particularly at the public sector university level, has been the subject of significant academic discourse. Language teaching in Public universities in Pakistan requires significant improvements. Several challenges are faced by Pakistani English teachers which fall under the domain of administration as well as academics. To cope with such challenging issues, there is a need for robust policies and practices on the part of the administration and teachers respectively. According to Raza (2019), such challenges can be positively dealt with by empowering the teachers by providing them with professional development training. Additionally, time-to-time revision in the curricula can help assist policymakers and educationists in resolving the problems ESL teachers face at public universities in Pakistan. In this connection, adopting effective teaching strategies such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can help teachers resolve the issues ESL learners encounter in the Pakistani context. Task-Based Language Teaching is also supportive in terms of resolving ESL learners' issues. Relating to this, the study conducted by Sabir and Khan (2021) supported adopting CLT and TBLT as language teaching approaches in ESL classrooms. These approaches can equip teachers to determine students' learning outcomes positively. Rule-governed teaching practices have become functional in terms of improving ESL learners' communication skills. As Umza and Ali (2018) concluded in their study Grammar Translation teaching does not result in satisfactory learning outcomes in terms of improving ESL learners' communication skills. CLT and TBLT have emerged as effective language teaching approaches which determine more effective learning outcomes than the traditional teaching approaches.

However, there is a need for greater implementation of CLT and TBLT in language teaching at public sector universities in Pakistan. The literature reviewed supports the phenomenon of language teaching at public sector university of Pakistan.

Research Methodology

We chose the qualitative research paradigm since the study is aimed at understanding teaching and learning barriers which can hardly be quantified. For this purpose, I chose qualitative method. The researchers employed the tools of observation, video-recording, note-taking, audio –recording of interviews from teachers and focus group interviews. Following is the detailed schedule to collect data regarding the phenomenon.

Table: 1 the schedule of classroom observations

SNO	Date	Time	Group	Duration	Data Collecting Tools
01	08.03.2017	2.45to 3.25	Group A	40 Minutes	Note-taking and video-recording
02	31.03.2017	10.10 to 11	Group B	50 Minutes	Note -taking
03	05.04.2017	10.10 to 11	Group B	50 Minutes	Note-taking and video-recording
04	06.04.2017	10.10 to 11	Group B	50 Minutes	Note-taking and video-recording
05	07.04.2017	2.40 to 3.20	Group A	80 Minutes	Note-taking and video-recording
06	10.04.2017	2.00 to 3.20	Group A	80 Minutes	Note-taking and video-recording
07	13.04.2017	10.10 to 11	Group B	50 Minutes	Note-taking and video-recording
08	17.04.2017	2.00 to 3.20	Group A	80 Minutes	Note-taking

Schedule Of Interviews from Teachers and Students

Table 4. 1Schedule of interviews from teachers and students

SNO	Date	Time	Duration	Group	Data Collecting Tools
01	05.04.2017	12.00 to 12.24 PM	23 minutes and 35 Seconds	Teacher A	Tape-recording
02	10.04.2017	1.00 to 1.30 PM	29 minutes and 15 seconds	Teacher B	Tape-recording
03	13.04.2017	12.00 to 12.35 PM	34 minutes and 40 seconds	Teacher C	Tape-recording

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an on-going process. Interviews were transcribed and various themes were generated soon after the analysis which was made at the completion of each observation. Teachers' interviews were transcribed to analyze the data collected during reconnaissance which was an investigative phase of the study. The interviews were analyzed using 'Discourse Analysis' method. Besides, 'Interpretive Approach' was used to understand, explain and interpret the outcomes of this probe into the phenomenon of language teaching at UoSJP. Based on interviews, focus group interviews and observations, data was analyzed through 'Interpretive Approach. The findings of the data are discussed as follows.

Findings

The study is aimed at analyzing out the phenomenon of language teaching at UoSJP. In this connection, we employed various instruments to suffice the study. The study resulted in the findings as detailed below.

Table 3: Outcomes of the reconnaissance

S.NO	Outcomes of the reconnaissance
1	Teacher's attitude towards backbenchers
2	Teacher's repeated interrogation
3	Teacher's static position
4	The role of instructions
5	Classroom management
6	Lack of lesson planning
7	Teacher dominance

4.1 Teachers' Attitude towards Backbenchers

During the reconnaissance, it was noted that teachers focused on the front-benchers and interacted with them; whereas, the backbenchers were ignored. We further found that the back-benchers were distracted from the academic tasks being carried out in the class. They did not pay more attention as teacher's voice was inaudible for them. Relating to this, the teacher showed concerns regarding the delivery of instructions which appeared as a barrier. In order to make them clear, he repeats them while standing in the middle of the class so as to make his voice audible.

Besides, classes normally remain overcrowded at the University of Sindh. This creates a challenging situation for a teacher which affects students' learning. Thus, the purpose of effective learning is hardly served in such an overcrowded classroom scenario. Related to overcrowdedness in a class, teacher C further views that large class is a real handicap in language teaching and learning process. One of the most effective ways to engage the large classes is activities which need to be monitored well. Also, in a class with that much size, many students go unattended especially backbenchers who engage themselves in other activities disregarding the teacher's input. This practice affects the process of language learning.

Given the above, back-benchers are often in problems due to the negligence of teachers. Moreover, they are not properly engaged in classroom tasks. That is why; they do not participate in the ongoing classroom activities. This remained the persistent problem and teachers did not plan any activity to redress back-benchers' concerns for their learning.

Teacher's interrogation from the students performing the assigned tasks for the first time is unlikely to encourage the students as detailed in the next section.

Teacher's Repeated Interrogation

Generally, students' participation becomes active if teacher empowers them and conducts the class on equality basis. On the other hand, after they start realizing that they are being interrupted by the teacher, they decrease their participation in the classroom activities. Whatever the task they

are assigned such as presentations, pair or group discussions, role plays or pronunciation practices, etc., they learn and enjoy if they are not being closely watched by the teacher. During the investigation, we observed that when students were assigned any discussion task, they were asked to present it in front of the teacher and their class fellows. During their participation, they were interrupted by the teacher's frequent questions on various areas of the given topic. Some students answered the questions without any hesitation; whereas the rest did not answer like some.

Besides, it was also found that they were disturbed by the teacher's repeated interrogation at the end of their presentation which became the cause of less participation in the classroom task. In such a state of confusion, many questions went unanswered. This approach rarely contributed something to the students' knowledge. This reveals that teachers were the cause of concern for students. In that particular scenario, students could not perform the way they wanted to do due to teachers' frequent interruptions.

A factor that was disturbing the students was that the teacher was interrupted while they were performing the activity. Consequently, the students performing the activity in front of the class were scared whenever they found him approaching them. At that moment, they were found to have made mistakes. I knew this from their responses. Before this, they were performing the task of dialogues on the stage confidently, but their performance was not like the previous one due to the teacher's interruption.

Next problem observed was “Gender Disparity” as discussed in the section below.

Teacher’s Static Position

Normally, teachers take a fixed position on the dais which makes them immobile. As a result, the students sitting at the back do not respond actively. By being static in the class, the teacher looks at some students sitting in front chairs; whereas they rarely watch the rest. Sometimes, the students themselves feel embarrassed when they are frequently looked at by the teacher which, in turn, diverts their focus from the on-going activity.

On the other hand, the students sitting at the back exploit this situation and keep involved in useless chats other than the on-going academic activities in the class. It is also observed that teachers, restricted to the dais, rarely show any movement: their arms are folded; sometimes locked behind and sometimes into the pickpockets. In this situation, their entire focus lies on a few students who respond to them; while the rest are not engaged. This factor on the part of the teacher did not encourage on-going learning; rather it affected students' learning which needs not be practice. Vague instruments make the process of language learning difficult for ESL learners at UoSJP as mentioned in the following section.

The Role of Instructions

Instructions play a significant role in determining the classroom learning outcomes. Clear instructions facilitate the process of teaching and learning and vice versa. In this perspective, the instructions play a significant role in making teaching easy or difficult. Teacher B and C highlight the role of instructions in learning English. In this connection, they view that the instructions need to be on-going. They need not be like lectures or detailed descriptions; rather they need to be

precise, loud and clear. It is further suggested that instructions need not be as lengthy as lectures; they need to be short, clear and audible for the students' clarity and understanding.

Arguably, vague and unclear instructions create problems for the students rather than facilitating students' learning. Whereas, clear instructions help them understand what the teacher means to say and what they need to do. Tasks are successfully performed when the teacher's instructions are not vague and ambiguous. Given the above, vague instructions affect the process of both teaching and learning. Mismanagement in the classroom also leads to problems in the process of language learning discussed in the section as follows.

Classroom Management

In a large class, it is challenging for a teacher to run the activities smoothly and ensure maximum learning outcomes. In the first-year class at the IELL, the number of students, where we conducted the study, ranged from 100 to 150 which is quite a large class, and it is, of course, a challenging task to control the class ensuring desired learning outcomes. When asked, Teacher A in his interview replied that it never happened like class going out of control. He further added that class went out of control when the teacher was blank-minded and he did not have any material or any activity to do in the class. Additionally, he cleared that if there was noise, it was needed in case of a speaking activity. If it was even a discussion activity, certainly they had to talk. And when they talked, there would be noise. Additionally, teacher B in his interview sharing his experience regarding classroom management indicated that he had to use authority to bring the class under control.

In order to manage the class properly, teachers develop authority in their own ways. According to teacher C in interview three, the teacher plays a major role in controlling the class. It is a teacher who can balance the class. He further viewed:

I don't think that the class should go out of your control. If you are active, you can control the class. Sometimes, if it doesn't, I get very harsh with them. As I see every student, so I go to every student and talk to them personally. This way, the things get balanced and normal.

The interview excerpt reveals that the teachers use the power or authority in different ways so as to control the class. If the class remains uncontrolled, the desired learning outcomes can hardly be achieved. Therefore, classroom management is one of the major components of ELT.

Additionally, class size posed a challenge for both teachers and students in the sense that the teacher could not do justice to the class in terms of giving equal time to all the students in such an overcrowded class. Consequently, the teacher was faced with several challenges emanating from large classes such as lack of discipline, noise, less proportion of learning, improper classroom management, unequal opportunities to all students, etc. There can be many other problems in large classes as well. According to teacher A, the top most problem in large classes is furniture. He further adds that some fixed furniture creates problems for him as he was not able to initiate activities of pairs and groups.

While observing a class in which students were assigned a reading passage, I found that the students who were assigned a reading task were asked to sit in pairs. After they were done with

reading the passage, they were asked to share their opinions. While performing the task, the whole class turned into a big noise. Some were calling their fellows to sit with them and some were dragging the chairs. In this way, the noise went on for more than five minutes. During the discussion, the students at the back were engaged in gossips other than the assigned topic; some were participating in the discussion and the mobile phones of some other students were ringing aloud. This created nuisance in the class. As a result, the learning atmosphere was adversely affected as it lacked discipline.

Lack of Lesson Planning

Generally, planned lessons can be more helpful for teachers in terms of making their teaching effective and meet their students' needs and necessities as compared to unplanned lessons. I found teachers unplanned in their classes. Commenting on lesson planning, teacher A in interview one viewed that he did not give that much time to his lesson planning. He just saw the topic which topic had to be covered that day.

Related to lesson planning, teachers were observed not to have planned their lessons which emerged as a concern. Well-planned lessons leave a good impact on students' learning; hence they remain engaged. When every activity is planned along with timing, it determines students' learning. On the other hand, if things are unplanned, good learning outcomes do not take place. As teacher B in interview two opined, "Since we have got a specific syllabus which is divided into units. At moment, what I do is that I have a look at the specific unit to be covered in the class."

A partial look at the contents of the syllabus does not seem to be sufficient. It was found that lessons were improperly divided in the sense that the set time for the particular task increased manifold. The reason was that there was a noise, restlessness among the students and frequent entry of late-comers. The way the teacher was going on in the class was unplanned. In a 40-minutes' class, he just went for one activity that was discussion. In this activity, he called two students to present whatever they discussed. The student participants were heaped upon many questions by their teacher which seemed to be an offence for the students. Hence, the class ended only with that activity. Teacher A emphasized on the need of effective lesson planning. Lesson planning must be there before the class starts.

When asked, the teacher C gives his point of view about lesson planning in interview three. He believes that he considers the objectives of adequate importance. Furthermore, he opines that he spares time in the lessons for the students' activities subsequently followed by discussions.

Teacher C believed that it was not necessary to have lesson planning in writing; it was fine if it was in mind. But there must be lesson planning, without proper lesson planning, the teaching would look like unplanned teaching which was devoid of any planning. Teacher dominance appears to be a hurdle in the process of language teaching at discussed in the section below.

Teacher Dominance

Teacher collaboration helps to develop a sort of working rapport between the teacher and the students which, in turn, results in positive learning outcomes. Transforming control and decisions to learners completely is not the purpose of autonomy. When teacher dominates the class form

start till the end, they rarely provide opportunities to students. In such a teaching and learning atmosphere, it becomes difficult for students to acquire learning; rather they entirely depend on teachers for learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that language teaching in public sector universities of Pakistan is predominantly traditional in which ESL learners dealt improperly which tends to be replaced by the effective teaching practices required in the public sector universities of Pakistan. As Ipek and Ustunbas (2021) have emphasized on the need of transformation in language learning, that transformation is possible through effective teaching methods. Nurie Bogale and Wale (2024) believe that teaching effectiveness and quality of teachers are two significant components. The study answers the research questions as concluded below.

What is the phenomenon of language teaching at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan? The findings of the study suggest the phenomenon of language teaching prevailing at UoSJP as given below.

Traditional approaches towards teaching English do not lead to better learning outcomes for the students. Consequently, ESL learners face difficulties during the course of learning English at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan.

Classes are dominated by teachers in which students are hardly given time for self-learning. Mostly, teachers come to the classes unplanned which results in non-satisfactory learning outcomes.

Classes are overcrowded which are poorly managed and controlled by teachers at UoS. Learner response is not encouraged which does not provide opportunities to other students to interact with teachers. It is only the front-benchers who are given response by teachers; back-benchers are ignored in the class.

The conclusions derived from the second research question ‘Which are the teachers’ perspectives towards language teaching at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan?’ are outlined below. The findings of the study revealed that teachers believed in teacher-centered approach by dominating the classes. In this pursuit, ESL learners failed to showcase their hidden skills. In order to obtain significant learning outcomes, student-centered approach needs to be adopted. In this connection, learners need to be given the due consideration and back-benchers need to be given more importance.

Learner autonomy also lacked which needs to be ensured for promising learning outcomes. Learners need to be given space and freedom to express themselves freely. Additionally, they need to be provided with substantial opportunities to interact and discuss together to remove the hesitation and fear existing among themselves.

Properly planned lessons need to be put into practice which can lead to outstanding results on the learners’ part.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and subsequent conclusion, the following recommendations are need in future studies.

Teaching needs to be based on developing learners' language learning skills. For this purpose, ESL/EFL teachers need to adopt practical approaches so that the learners learn English through practical performances.

Effective teaching methods need to be adopted for teaching English at the public universities in Pakistan as traditional approaches hardly bring any positive learning outcomes. Effective and innovative strategies push the learners to be engaged into the assigned tasks and generate useful outcomes.

The role of students needs to be enhanced in terms of participating in the classroom events. For this purpose, they need to be given the real-life situation tasks.

Lessons need to be planned in advance so that teaching may meet the set objectives. Classes need to be properly managed and monitored.

Measures need to be taken to move toward the technology integrated teaching which is a far cry at the public sector universities. By doing so, ESL learners will be able to exposed to effective ways of language learning which, in turn, can help them attain proficiency in language skills for their academic success.

Such research studies need to be conducted so as to gain in-depth perception of English language teaching methods at the university level. Practical approaches and valuable insights gained from the study need to be replicated in frequency at universities.

Acknowledgement

This paper has been extracted from the first author's PhD thesis under the topic 'Exploring English Language Problems of Undergraduate Students at University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan.

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