



RESEARCH PAPER

Perception of Elementary School teachers and 8th Grade Students regarding English as a Medium of Instruction at Elementary Level

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ABSTRACT

The current study is focused on finding out how 8th grade students and teachers regard the use of English as the language of instruction (EMI) in elementary schools. The objective behind this study is to inquire into the conceit of teachers and students of 8th grade regarding EMI at the elementary school level, as well as to evaluate EMI's effect on what students learn and investigating how teachers and students in D. G. Khan district, Pakistan feel about using English as the main language of study. This study targets 501 elementary-level students of 8th grade and 617 elementary school teachers teaching in 38 elementary schools situated in district D.G. Khan. Out of convenience, the participants in this study group were selected as 224 students and 85 teachers. Separate questionnaires were designed for each group respectively. It was found that both teachers and students like using English as the main language for learning at elementary school. Basing its recommendations on findings and conclusions, this study advises all Punjab schools to switch to using English as the main language for teaching due to globally accepted language and provision of government-supported teachers' training programs to teach effectively in English medium classrooms. This study also suggests that EMI have positive impacts on students' learning and both teachers and students are willing for its implementation at elementary level.

Keywords: English as a Medium of Instruction, Student's Perception, Teachers' Perception, Elementary Level

Introduction

Today, a shared and universal language is pivotal for people to interact with each other regardless international boundaries as world have been shifted into global village. So, it is necessary that people can communicate smoothly and affectively across different places. Many consider it a controversial choice to use English as the main language of instruction since it is accepted in the education world. The medium of instruction exerts a substantial influence on the entire educational process (Lewis, 2009). This research highlights that in Dera Ghazi Khan District; Pakistan, the practice of English as a medium of instruction significantly impacts on the progress of students at the elementary level. It equips them with improved and advanced communication skills and empowers them to attain superior educational outcomes (Lewis, 2009).

This research study investigates “Teachers’ and students’ perception towards use of English as a Medium of Instruction in Elementary Schools”. A number of schools have started replacing the use of native languages with English in social studies, science, mathematics and similar fields. For this reason, I decided to look into teachers’ and students’ viewpoints about this new approach to language. In Pakistan, Urdu, as the national language, predominates in major urban areas and is employed as a medium of instruction in both government and private schools (Rahman, 2006). The survey conducted in 1998 revealed that nearly 8% of Pakistan’s population identifies Urdu as their mother tongue. How English is used as a language of instruction at elementary schools shapes teachers’ and students’ opinions which makes it a topic that deserves utmost attention in education circles.

Initially, in Pakistani elementary education system, both Urdu and English were used as a medium of instruction while English language predominantly used as a primary language for teaching science subjects. Consequently, students hailing from Urdu-medium backgrounds often encountered challenges in comprehending English instructions. This underscores the critical role played by the medium of instruction, particularly in the context of modern trends in the teaching-learning process. In 2009, Punjab Government made a significant reform by mandating English as the medium of instruction for mathematics and science across all public educational institutions. This decision aimed to empower students with the essential skills required for favorable educational outcomes to thrive in the modern era, fostering new educational trends and enhancing their prospects for unlocking brighter future. In her study, Zainura (2019) stated that the language the teacher uses for teaching and learning is the basis for instruction. The English subject is obligatory in some places and taught to students at certain educational levels. Almost every primary school in Asia does not teach English and it is only made part of the curriculum from second through twelfth grades (Huang, 2015). For instance, an individual studying in an English-medium university is extremely skilled in English and knows its rules very well; they could work abroad or study in another country due to their excellent communicating skills which is likely beyond the reach of people whose English language ability is weaker. So, importance of English language can’t be denied because it may be the single language having ability to connect whole world together across cultural and geographical barriers so, this power makes it truly a universal language. According to Rahmadani (2016), he found that exposing students to the target language matters a lot, mainly in places where English is unusual outside of school such as Indonesia. Dearden (2013) explained that using English as the main language in school to teach subjects is known as EMI which takes place when English is different from the main language spoken by the people in the country. There are multiple factors that make English important. These types are mentioned below:

- **Correspondence:** English serves as a standard language for all correspondences between offices and political leaders provide seamless communication among various contraries.
- **Travel:** English language offers a global connectivity while a person travelling to another part of the world for tourism or any other personal, educational or official motive and has to face language barrier. In these circumstances, English language helps people to cope with a quite unfamiliar environment and communicate effectively with local citizens. It acts like a universal language.
- **Education/studies:** To study abroad has become a rising trend as well as it is a source to fulfill the contemporary educational requirement in modern era so

English as a universal language is considered crucial for educational pursuits. It also serves as a binding bridge between native and non-native speakers. Therefore, the importance, requisite and prevalence of English language are increasing day by day.

- **Internet:** Although, internet has extended to diverse languages but still English occupies a dominant place in digital world. Because of internet dominance, English is becoming more significant in electronic commerce as well as in education and this trend does not show signs of letting up.

This shift of instructional language from national language to English can create a chaotic and challenging learning environment that can affect student's learning, lead to difficulty in understanding as well as selection of suitable teaching strategies by teachers although proves to be helpful in achieving good grades. Not only do students feel shy, but so do teachers, when using English for teaching. Specifically, primary level students in district Dera Ghazi Khan feel hesitation and confusion to adopt English language as a medium of instruction and had to struggle to adjust with this instructional shift in language. They can benefit from additional help, instructions and new ideas from both parents and teachers in choosing a good field of study.

Literature Review

The Digital Edition of Collin English Dictionary defines "perception" as the act of using your senses to notice something. Perception, perceptio and percipio come from the Latin language. In Schacter's words, representing and understanding the environment is done by identifying and processing the sensory information we receive.

Types of Perception

Robbins discussed three 3 types of perception as follow:

Person Perception

Person perception describes the means by which we perceive people, consider their characteristics and form an impression related to them.

Social Perception

The process of social perception is trying to figure out someone's role in society such as an athlete, a politician, a criminal, a defendant, an entertainer or simply someone close to us which challenging.

Perception of Situation

Social psycholinguists study situations and notice the social reasons behind a person's actions or responses at a given place and time. What we do and think depends on the context, time and space around us.

Teachers' Awareness Regarding English as Medium of Instruction

In Pakistani educational institutes, English language is predominantly used as medium of instruction ranging from school to universities either in private or public sector. Since this type of teaching comes with its own issues, teachers must use a range

of creative and effective strategies to solve them. Raman (1999) saw that there are two different educational systems in Pakistan with one basing its instruction in English and one using Urdu. This bilingual educational system is characterized by its own distinct features, challenges and issues for educators.

Students' Awareness Regarding English as Medium of Instruction

Rahman (1999) mentioned that motivated skills help improve people's abilities to read, listen to, write and speak English and do better in religious institutions. Some teachers suggest that EMI makes it easier for people from various places to communicate which could ultimately help create peace and prosperity globally (British Council, 2014). Having English as a skill supports students in many parts of life such as, their education and workplace ambitions (British Council, 2014).

Power and Usage of English in Public Space

In Pakistan, five prominent indigenous languages exist; Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Saraiki and Balochi. Urdu serves as a national language and is the main medium of instruction but English dominates over all other language due to colonial influences including domains of power as used by high bureaucracy and military institutions same as it was during the British rule. In Pakistan, this lingual hegemony and discrimination persists as elites are educated in English-medium schools while the masses are educated in Urdu nationwide.

English, in today's modern world occupies a vantage ground as it acts as a linking bridge among speakers of diverse linguistic and geographical backgrounds which help them to cope with lingual barriers, fostering communication and uniting people at a single platform. English helps form bonds important to several domains such as schooling, politics, economic activity, science and technology, the military, the entertainment industry and tourism. People are highly passionate about using English language consciously or unconsciously in Pakistan. Thus, it is gaining high prestige, popularity, attention and acceptance day by day as it symbolizes power and global recognition and stature.



Figure: 1



Figure: 2

The pictures in Figures 1 & 2 were captured at Dera Ghazi Khan, Pakistan, at the College of Nursing and at a government school. Despite both being controlled by the government, both the institutions have not made Urdu their main language, but focus on English being co-official.

Different Countries and Their Medium of Training

Bangladesh

Bengali; in Bangladesh occupies dominant position and recognized as an official language, used for administration and management objectives in Bangladesh and serves as a native language of 98% of the population. Bengali language is also used as a medium of instruction in both public and private sector at every level.

China

An authorized body of linguists in China has picked Mandarin Chinese as their official language and other languages are also used. In various areas, regional tongues are used to teach students.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is characterized by three diverse official languages Dari, Persian, and Pashto. In the present time, actions are being taken to offer mother language programs in schools. The private sector's educational system is now putting a greater focus on the English language due to an increasing use of it in many educational settings.

English is a Mother Language in United Kingdom

Across the United Kingdom, teachers normally use English to instruct students at every stage and level. Even so, languages besides English such as Welsh, Gaelic and Cornish, are used for educational purposes as well (Afridi&Ghaffar, 1999).

Turkey

According to the Directorate of Education, Turkish is prominent language of instruction and is used in approximately 85% of mathematics and science subjects. Although, some schools are employ EMI for academic success and professional growth which clearly reflects English as a prestigious and most demanded language of this era.

India

Most Indian schools use several languages during teaching and learning, with Hindi and English being the most common. Initially, the focus is on making the learning environment safe and supportive through using students' native languages and later, Hindi and English are added from class 5 as teaching methods. After class 8, most lessons take place in Hindi and English is most commonly used for studying in colleges and universities. Hence, this gradual lingual transition enables learners to equip for brighter future despite of having various lingual disparities.

Previous Studies

It is stated by Zainura (2019) that the language teachers' use in instruction is known as the medium of instruction. She adds that teachers should pay attention to the language chosen for students in school because this will assist students' learning and academic performance.

Uppadhaya states in his M.Ed thesis from 2011 that students' mother tongues are highly efficient for teaching grammar (named "The Effectiveness of Learners' Mother Tongue in Teaching Grammar"). The author suggests that using their mother tongue while learning English can improve learners' grasp of grammar, so the use of mother tongue is advisable for the greatest results. Hence, by blending learners' native language with English as instructional language; a smooth, supportive, encouraging and innovative classroom environment is possibly generated.

According to Sumiati (2018), the research named "Students' View on English Used as Instruction by English Teachers in IAIN Palangkaraya," little more than 10% of students found concerns, while almost all students regarded English as vital, even the lecturers choosing English to guide or explain difficult things to them. Roijmans (2017) carried out the research through a survey on the Internet in his paper titled "Students' Perception of English-Medium Instruction at Dutch Universities." Based on this result, it can be said that students feel positively about English Medium of Instruction. Other than that, students generally thought their teachers had fewer competencies with the English language.

According to Belhiah and Elhami (2015), in the United Arab Emirates, six universities were examined and both teachers and learners generally approved of EMI. Hengsadeekul et al. (2010) found that students had both good and bad views regarding learning through EMI. According to the study, using English helps students learn the language better and improves career security when they get better job offers, but it can sometimes be hard for them to understand the subject matter. According to Rahmadani (2016), making sure students interact with the target language from the beginning is very important in a nation such as Indonesia, where people mainly use English in class and not for other purposes. He adds that when students use the target language, they become familiar with it by doing tasks with it, not only learning facts about it.

In various countries, English is taken as a mandatory subject to be taught and studied at different level from primary to graduate to post-graduate. In most Asian areas, children do not study English in primary schools; it is taught to them only in secondary schools (Huang, 2015). It goes on to state that English as a medium of instruction (EMI) means English is used in teaching across countries where people don't generally speak it as a first language and this allows students to improve in their academic skills, subjects and communication as well.

Owu-Ewie (2015) showed that language skills play an important role in students' achievements in different subjects. This means that individuals who manage the language instruction well usually excel in other subjects that use that language. This approach significantly highlights a strong bond between the role of English language comprehension and its impact on academic accomplishments and educational outcomes.

Norrahman looked at the study "The students' Perception on English Usage as a Medium of Instruction Used by English Teachers at SMAN-1 Palangka Raya" in 2016 to learn about students' views on teachers teaching in English. Data was obtained from the students in this study through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods with a sample of 47. To address the first issue of the study, the researcher decided to interview 2 teachers who taught in the selected classes. The first finding comprises negative answer or unwillingness about the use of EMI in the class practically due to the difficulty or in ability in comprehending teacher's explanation. However, in second

finding 38 students favored the use the national language for the classroom instruction rather than any other non-native language. It is concluded that a balanced use of English as the language of instruction by the teachers is necessary to bring the best results in education.

Shukla and Singh (2018) conducted a study on Mumbai to examine how India's multi-language environment works. About 400 images of signs were obtained by conducting quantitative research through the streets of south Mumbai. The main focus was to analyze the number of languages there are, the movements in language use and the way a multilingual setting is formed under today's language policies in India. The study also examined changes in LL appearing in public areas, for instance, in advertising, billboards, posters, road signs made by the authorities and those placed by people and so on. This deeper and careful investigation helps to understand the relation between language, culture and society and their impacts on each other.

Material and Methods

Research Design

The study used descriptive quantitative research and a survey method in which people were given a survey to record the opinions, behaviors, attitudes or characteristics of the population. Kuluski et al. (2013) defines descriptive research as a method that systematically collects and studies data to summarize and explain the existing circumstances of people in a certain situation.

Population and Sample

In his book, Ary (2010) explained that population stands for all members of a specific group, set or kind of events or objects. In other words, you are studying the whole population. In context of above statement, the population of this study includes all the subjects of interest who pertains to district Dera Ghazi Khan. All in all, our data was collected using 617 female teachers, 501 female 8th-grade students and 38 Government Girls Elementary Schools in district Dera Ghazi Khan. The researchers gathered the information from the District Education Officer's office. The detailed and comprehensive population data of students and teachers from elementary schools can be seen below in tabular form.

Table 1
Population

School Type	Number of Schools	Female Teachers	Female Students (8 th Grade)
Government Girls Elementary Schools	38	617	501

Sample of the Study

Sample is part of the population and not the entire population. The sample is made up of a group of people taken from the population that are to be observed for a study and who comprises all the characteristics of the population as a whole.

In this study, convenience sampling technique was utilized by researcher which refers to choosing participants for study on the basis of their availability and accessibility. Convenience sampling cannot be made about the entire population but can only be made about the sample itself (Jager, Bornstein,&Putnick (2017). The sample

consisted of 85 female teachers and 224 female students of 8th grade from elementary school district D. G. Khan, who are considered to be true representative of entire population and were helpful to provide a great insight into research problem.

Table 2
Sample List Based on Convenience Sampling Technique

Sample Group	Number of Participants
Female Teachers	85
Female Students	224

Instrument for Data Collection

Survey research relies on questionnaires, as they are considered the top and preferred way to collect proofs needed for analysis. Arikunto (2006) describes a questionnaire as a sequence of questions presented to participants for them to respond according to what the user wants. In this study, researchers designed and used two separate questionnaires that they created in collaboration with the supervisor to collect data from both group; teachers and students. Each type of questionnaire was made specifically for teachers or for students. Usually, the 5-Likert scale consists of these five choices: 1 for Strongly Agree, 2 for Agree, 3 for Neutral, 4 for Disagree and 5 for Strongly Disagree. So, questionnaires were designed to indicate research problem with an aim to be responded by participants.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

A test is said to be valid when the results help you make reliable and fitting interpretations (Donald, 2010). It refers to the degree to which a researcher is able to draw an accurate, meaningful, and informed measurement of what is intended to measure. A systematic and rigorous review was carried out to ensure the validity of both questionnaires. Both questionnaires were examined by supervisor, two experts, and senior subject specialist. Their feedback and suggestions for its improvement were taken into consideration and mandatory modifications were made.

To test if the study tool would be reliable, a few participants were invited for a pilot study. Information from the pilot tests was processed in the statistical software SPSS version 21 and reliability of the questionnaires was checked using Cronbach Alpha tests. According to the reliability scores (0.91 and 0.83), the questionnaires used were shown to be reliable for data collection in the main study.

Table 3
Reliability Statistics

Respondents	Cronbach Alpha Reliability Tests Value
Students	0.91
Teachers	0.83

Results and Discussion

Researchers took data for this study by surveying female teachers from elementary schools and students of 8th grade in district Dear Ghazi Khan. All the data was arranged, shortened and put together in a table. When all the data was summarized, it was transferred to SPSS Version 21 to use both descriptive and inferential statistics. Since the data is organized in detailed rows, the length of each cell's agreement is as listed here:

Table 4
Lengths of Cells

Degree of agreement	Scale
Very low	1-1.8
Low	1.8-2.6
Moderate	2.6-3.4
High	3.4-4.2
Very high	4.2-5

Students' Perceptions on EMI

The students in the 8th grade have specific views, beliefs and attitudes about the use of EMI in Govt. Girls Elementary School; district D. G. Khan. To reveal their perspective and attitude towards the utilization of EMI, a well-defined questionnaire was designed which comprises 18 questions. Following analysis of the received responses, the details are presented below in table 5 with mean, standard deviation and the significance of 18 items. The table gives a detailed and useful overview about students' opinions on studying in English.

Table 5
Students' Perception of EMI

Questionnaire Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	T	SIG.(2-TAILED)	Level
1.	3.89	1.09	0.59	5.31	0.000	High
2.	3.87	1.01	0.43	4.34	0.000	High
3.	3.91	1.04	0.47	4.29	0.000	High
4.	3.71	1.03	0.44	4.39	0.000	High
5.	3.84	1.07	0.43	4.25	0.000	High
6.	3.88	1.37	0.26	1.78	0.074	High
7.	3.74	0.99	0.31	3.42	0.001	High
8.	3.86	1.37	0.54	3.99	0.000	High
9.	2.79	1.09	-0.47	-4.85	0.000	Moderate
10.	2.86	1.28	-0.05	-3.39	0.001	Moderate
11.	4.03	1.59	0.62	3.88	0.000	High
12.	3.71	1.64	0.28	1.59	0.121	High
13.	4.00	1.51	0.61	3.94	0.000	High
14.	3.90	1.52	0.49	3.07	0.005	High
15.	3.59	1.78	0.23	1.35	0.224	High
16.	3.87	1.87	0.45	2.48	0.018	High
17.	3.96	1.85	0.55	2.97	0.006	High
18.	4.64	1.84	1.12	6.46	0.000	Very High
Total	3.78	0.71	0.41	5.39	0.000	High

As can be seen in Table 5, the total mean score for Students' Perception about EMI is 3.78. Since the P value is 0.00, this mean is seen as significant and is classified as high. It suggests that students tend to have a positive look at EMI in general. However, the results of the students' survey are not fully reliable since items such as 6, 12 and 15 do not represent any statistical significance. Item 9 and item 10 are scored to have moderate agreement on using EMI. Number 18 has the highest mean (4.64) and it is also statistically significant which means it is seen in a very positive manner, followed by number 11 with a mean score of 4.03 regarded as the second highest. Among the items, number 9 had the lowest mean score of 2.79 and number 10 scored 2.86 considered as a moderate level of agreement.

Teachers' Perceptions on EMI

Elementary school teachers in Govt. Girls Elementary School of district D. G. Khan hold diverse perception in the light of their observation and experience regarding the implementation of EMI. An organized data was gathered through questionnaire to analyze their perception about EMI in classrooms. Table 6 offers important highlights about the perception of EMI from teachers.

Table6
Teachers' Perception of EMI

Questionnaire Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	T	SIG.(2-TAILED)	Level
1.	4.42	0.61	1.06	12.12	0.00	Very High
2.	4.31	0.72	0.89	10.36	0.00	Very High
3.	4.35	0.65	0.92	10.86	0.00	Very High
4.	4.38	0.67	0.96	11.19	0.00	Very High
5.	4.41	0.68	1.07	11.94	0.00	Very High
6.	4.25	0.73	0.86	9.55	0.00	Very High
7.	4.22	0.76	0.81	8.66	0.00	Very High
8.	4.27	0.73	0.87	9.14	0.00	Very High
9.	4.18	0.78	0.74	7.78	0.00	High
10.	4.12	0.75	0.68	7.57	0.00	High
11.	4.13	0.81	0.74	7.04	0.00	High
12.	4.17	0.77	0.78	7.74	0.00	High
13.	4.10	0.73	0.69	7.01	0.00	High
14.	4.14	0.75	0.73	7.38	0.00	High
15.	4.19	0.82	0.78	7.53	0.00	High
16.	4.15	0.81	0.75	7.59	0.00	High
17.	4.11	0.84	0.71	7.05	0.00	High
18.	4.19	0.82	0.79	7.03	0.00	High
Total	4.22	0.15	0.82	36.63	0.00	Very High

The study illustrates teachers' opinions clearly about using English as a medium for teaching in schools. The table (Table 6) shows that the overall average is very high when compared to the statistical significance of cells. In addition, each item's score is either high or very high which reflects that teachers tend to look positively and strongly at using EMI. On top of that, the value of significance level is 0.000 which is very significant. Thus, teachers tend to view EMI positively when it comes to elementary schools. The highest mean score comes from item number 1 at 4.42 and item 13 has the lowest mean score of 4.10 that is still a sign of a very positive attitude towards EMI.

Conclusion

Sahito&Vaisanen (2018) concluded that the competency and proficiency in English language has a huge motivational power with aim to create interest among teachers and students to work hard for the accomplishments and success of instructional objectives. It also encourages lifelong learning to increase the potential and to improve and enhance the quality of education. When making the decision, teachers need to carefully review the needs, skills and goals of the students and the curriculum involved. It is necessary to use EMI so students learn concepts and develop language, instead of only aiming to get high scores on tests (Lee, H. 2022). Thus, by implementing EMI approach in classroom at elementary level schools in district D. G. Khan, teacher can develop linguistic proficiency, academic growth, sufficient communication skills, personal growth and excellence in learning environment.

This study looked at students' and teachers' opinions about using English materials in class at Govt. Girls Elementary School in D. G. Khan. In this study, 8th graders and their teachers from Govt. Girls Elementary School in district D. G. Khan, Pakistan were the main participants. It was found through the study that students and teachers in 8th grade view EMI favorably when implemented at elementary schools. Thanks to the global importance and recognition of English, students and teachers enjoy many career chances because of their skills in the language. For this reason, using EMI is appreciated by students in elementary classes. Still, it was clear that teachers formed a much stronger opinion about EMI than students did. Teachers and students both agree and endorse the high importance of knowing English. Using Urdu made learning and understanding the content easier for most students in EMI classes. It was also noticed that English was used in their education, so it eventually affected their language and culture.

Recommendations

Basically, the findings mentioned above promote the following suggestions:

- The concerned group should arrange for teachers to take part in or attend workshops, seminars and training programs on using English at school to help them become better professionals.
- The schools should obtain official approvals to facilitate their teaching staff from Ministry of Education to run English as medium of Instruction.
- The students should be encouraged and motivated to develop positive attitude towards English and its use in classroom as well as outside of classroom to enhance communication skills.
- The experts in curriculum, syllabus design, writing and methodology should develop the syllabus, write the textbooks and pick the best approaches for English medium teaching.
- Regular monitoring, assessment and feedback system should be designed and implemented to evaluate the impacts of implementation of EMI and remedial measures should be taken for further improvement.

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