



RESEARCH PAPER**Language Policy and its Implementation: A Case Study on the Primary Level of Dera Ghazi Khan**

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ABSTRACT

This case study endeavored to investigate such difficulties, challenges and issues that are generally faced by the English language teachers operating at the primary level in Dera Ghazi Khan. It tried to find out the causal relationship between the adverse impact of the challenges to teachers and the implementation of the state-owned language education policy at the primary level. A qualitative study approach coupled with convenient sampling techniques was employed for collecting data from 14 primary school teachers (7 males & 7 females). The data, mainly recorded through semi-structured interviews and class observations, was subjected to thematic analysis. The results exposed challenges like poor English foundations, crowded and diverse classrooms, insufficient teacher training, and lack of parental involvement which hamper the way of proper policy implementation and cause probable acts of linguisticism. Study recommends continuous specialized training and modern resources for the teachers. Additionally, it recommends proper restructuring in the existing (macro-micro) level language in education policy to accommodate more of teachers' agency for having plurilingualism/ multilingualism in classrooms.

KEYWORDS Language policy, Linguicism, Plurilingualism, Multilingualism Primary Level

Introduction

Language and society have an integral relationship. This relationship is inherently bi-directional; that is, the social structure in a community both influences and determines linguistic structure and behavior, and vice versa (Meyerhoff, 2018). The more linguistically rich a country is, the more culturally diverse it tends to be. Multilingual communities therefore engender egalitarian societies where there is plurality of ideas and multiplicity of intellectual growth. Pakistan is home to a multilingual society with a diversity of cultures that have been peacefully coexisting for the last several centuries. However, since Pakistan's independence, English has served as the official language in all domains of authority, including government, judiciary, military, education, business and entertainment industry (Mahboob, 2009). It is thus seen as a passport to social and economic mobility, privilege, and status in Pakistan (Khan, 2018). It serves as the primary language for advanced academic pursuits, facilitating access to both local and worldwide resources, ultimately leading to personal growth and professional achievement (Gu& Tong, 2020).

In the context of Pakistan, the existing state-dictated LEP substantially accommodates English and Urdu languages, with negligible attention to the encouragement and use of indigenous languages within the confines of the classroom. Such a treatment to students' mother tongues leads to what Skutnabb-Kangas (1998) referred to

as linguisticism, a phenomenon where, on the one side, regional languages and mother tongues of students are discriminated against mainly by discouraging their use, and on the other side, forces teachers and learners to conduct all practices of literacy either in English or in Urdu. Such “either-or” situation leaves little theoretical and implementation spaces for the teachers to use their agency, as pointed out by Johnson (2013).

One such rural region where both teachers and students are struggling manifolds to carry out English language literacy is Southern Punjab. The area has traditionally remained under-developed, and so is its education system. More importantly, no substantial study has ever looked into the issues especially being faced by the primary school teachers in the rural area of Southern Punjab. Therefore, this study has an objective to explore the pertinent issues or problems being faced by the English language teachers in Southern Punjab alongside to suggest a handful of measures for improving the standing situation.

Literature Review

Prior researches related to our study found several concerns relating to the loopholes in the effective implementation of LEP at primary level. The situation becomes even more challenging when it links to English literacy at the aforementioned level irrespective to mention about Pakistan or otherwise. However, our focus will be to include a brief review of those studies which are related to the concerns that our study is trying to address, that is, the problems, challenges and the issues that are fundamentally inherent to the English language literacy of ours, and that those can be well-thought-out as a “subset” of the overall implementation of language in education policy of Pakistan.

Moreover, (Chaka, 2021) grabs our attention to another aspect where teachers often face the issues of having limited access to the materials they need. Resources include the physical and intellectual tools that support the process of teaching and learning (Tomlinson, 2012). Insufficient time allocation hinders teachers from providing detailed explanations. This conclusion also aligns with the results of Songbatumis’ (2017) study, which revealed that teachers faced difficulties due to insufficient time available for their teaching assignments.

In rural areas and for that Southern Punjab has no exception; students cannot communicate even in the national language(s) of their country. The research outcomes of Linneberg, and Korsgaard, (2019) highlight that there exists insufficient communication and understanding between the students and their teacher because the latter face difficulties in effectively interacting with students in their native language or sometimes vice versa.

As result of previous studies, we come to a deduction that a further insight is needed to excavate the issue of existing language in education policy implementation especially the subset of it; the English language literacy in Southern Punjab specifically to investigate the main issues being faced by the English language teachers in primary education. And on the basis of this excavation, how our research cans may suggest groundwork or an underpinning, though at small scale, for the improvement of English language literacy (especially English language teaching) at Primary level in Southern Punjab. Moreover, the findings may give some insight to the language in education policy makers in order to equip primary school teachers of English to execute more agentive role of theirs.

Theoretical Framework

While reviewing the proper implementation of language in education policy at the primary level in Dera Ghazi Khan, the study adopted the main postulate of the research work of Al-Sobhi and Preece (2018) as a theoretical framework since their experiential framework suggests an analogous correlation between the policy implementation and the individuals (teachers, learners & parents) with their innate or inherent cultural backgrounds and environment. The study also tried to observe to what an extent, the following four stages or levels of English language literacy (as shown in the illustration) were in reality adhered to by the teachers of English language operative at primary level.

A brief detail of all four stages is as under:

Stage 1: Teachers encounter confusion while immersed in many linguistic and cultural contexts. (Lowest level)

Stage 2: Teachers conceal their language and habits, feigning similarity between their own language and culture and those of the schools.

Stage 3: Teachers squeeze the new practices in schools that they consider to be the most effective in serving as their models.

Stage 4: Teachers' enhanced ability to communicate without a glitch or a transition between different languages and cultures. (Highest level):

Furthermore, keeping the experiential framework of Al-Sobhi and Preece (2018) in focus, the researcher also remodeled the four stages as four levels of "experiential happenings" which are socially inherent and culturally correlated with the language teaching-learning process. The following remodeled illustration briefly depicts how in practical terms do the English language teachers at primary level generally face these "experiential happenings" level-wise.

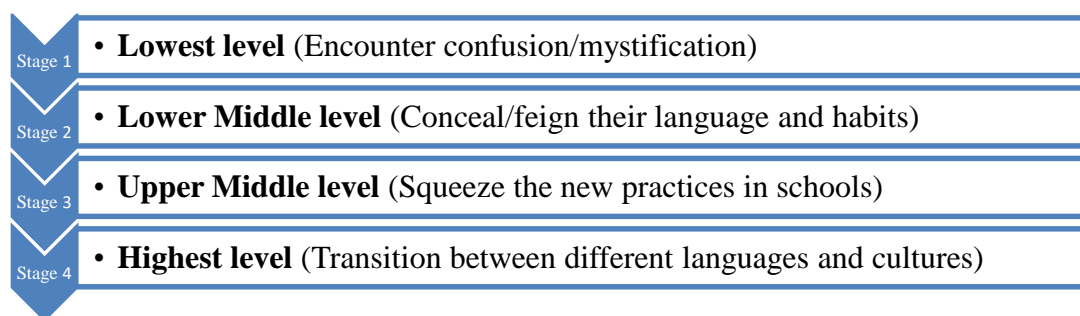


Figure 1: Experiential happenings (Step-Wise)

Material and Methods

Study Design

The study used a qualitative methodology, including semi-structured interviews and informal classroom observations to gather extensive data that provides in-depth insights and detailed information. Due to the time-consuming nature of reaching all rural schools in Dera Ghazi Khan, a simple-sample-strategy was used to collect the data.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher has addressed all ethical considerations to safeguard the well-being of the study participants. These considerations include the prevention of any detrimental

impacts on participants and the preservation of their dignity and privacy. All interviews and class observations were conducted with the subjects' consent.

A total of 14 teachers (7 males & 7 females) were randomly selected from various primary schools.

Table 1
Demographic details of the selected school teachers

Category	N	%
Gender		
Male	7	50.0
Female	7	50.0
Age		
30-35	7	50.0
35-40	7	50.0
Education		
Master	7	50.0
M. Phil	7	50.0
Teaching Experience		
2-5years	5	27.7
6-10 Years	9	72.2

The interviews were conducted through in-person interaction with the researcher and were recorded with the teachers' permission. The interviews had the duration of around 20-30 minutes, and the language used was tailored to the participants' convenience. In addition, followed by the interviews, the class of each participant was observed for the duration of 'two days' utilizing the observation checklist.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and were subjected to a process of double inspection by another researcher. Afterwards, the data was analyzed using the methodology proposed by Manan, and Tul-Kubra, (2022). The interviewees' replies were categorized based on the initial coding categories.

Results and Discussion

Outcomes of Interviews

The table highlights these difficulties, challenges and issues in the form of themes & sub-themes. Against these themes and sub-themes are given the frequencies and percentages based on the replies of the all 14 participants of the interview sessions conducted for them in stipulated time.

Table 2
Analysis of English learning challenges

Sr. No	Themes (I to VI)	Sub-Themes	F	%
i.	English Language Background	Poor background of English language	3	16.6
		Weak in reading	6	33.3
		can't understand English	8	44.4
ii.	Linguicism Barriers	Students from diverse language backgrounds	3	16.6
		Students speak their mother tongue	7	38.8
		Parents only speak their mother tongue	6	33.3
iii.	Lack of Teachers Training	Inadequate workshops	6	33.3
iv.	Crowded Classes	A large number of students	1	83.3

v.	Shortage of English language teachers	Lack of skilled & consistent teachers	4	22.2
		Empty classrooms	5	27.7
		multi-grade teaching	4	22.2
vi.	Lack of Parents' Interest	Low attention of parents	4	22.2
		Low motivation from parents for students	5	27.7
		Parents are not literate	3	16.6

Following is the detail of valuable views of all 14 participants given on the six major themes of the study as are also highlighted in the table above. Though all the participants provided their comments/inputs on all six themes, however, only those comments/inputs are used over here which represented the content of major theme in detail along with addressing their respective sub-themes.

Theme-I: English Language Background

The primary obstacle often come across by the teachers was related to the **Theme-I**, that is, a deficiency in English language proficiency, particularly in terms of reading comprehension where **44.4%** of the participants thought that their students were literally unable to understand English language. Similarly, a majority of **33.3%** participants reported that students they teach were weak in reading comprehension (Mearns, et al., 2020). As a result, students lack familiarity with Basic English vocabulary and are hesitant to use English terms. In addition, **16.6%** participants considered that their family setting exclusively facilitates communication in their own language. As a result, their English vocabulary is restricted, making it difficult for them to comprehend sentences spoken by the teacher in English. As per the opinion of the educators in our study:

Participant 1: "The students in fifth grade have a low proficiency in English; their reading skills are inadequate, and they do not meet the requirements for this class."

Participant 2: "Their reading proficiency is significantly deficient, resulting in a limited ability to retain information from notes."

Theme-II: Linguicism Barriers

Multilingual classrooms are the educational settings in which a diverse range of native languages are spoken (Michell, 2021). Approximately 92% of teachers consider the bilingual classroom to be of a significant problem because a majority of students use their native language in the classrooms and they struggle to comprehend instructions presented by teachers either in English or in Urdu. The present study depicted more or less the same deplorable situation related to **Theme-II** as **38.8%** of the participants gave verdict of students' use of mother tongue even during the most essentially English language classes what to speak of other subjects. Some **33.3%** participants linked the aforementioned issue due to their parents at home who use other tongue at home during almost all the communication and interaction with them. The issue further exacerbates if a teacher lacks the ability to effectively communicate or understand students in their own native language as only **16.6%** of the participants understood that their students belonged to diverse linguistic backgrounds and that they needed to play their agentive roles for a more plurilingual and multilingual classroom interactions.

Participant 3: "The majority of students are fluent in Saraiki; however, I am unable or less able to instruct in Saraiki. I use Urdu or low-level Saraiki language for instructional purposes, and I have seen that students have difficulty in comprehending the lesson."

Participant 4: “Though the linguistic diversity is present among students in classroom, they have difficulty comprehending instructions provided especially in both English and Urdu languages.

Theme-III: Lack of Teachers Training

A supplementary problem arises from the fact that about 70% of teachers is not provided with the chance to improve their pedagogical abilities by means of school-arranged programs. Similar views were recorded from the participants of the current study where 33.3% of them credited lack of teachers’ training workshops as the main culprit behind. Consequently, they encounter several challenges in the process of teaching and are unable to efficiently impart knowledge (Nguyen, 2022). As a result, teachers are unable to see their shortcomings. How this issue is seen by the participants of the study let’s see:

Participant 5: “We lack any supplementary teaching materials apart from textbooks. In my opinion, it is essential for the schools to provide at least one multimedia device in order to facilitate successful learning for students.”

The same participant also stated: “I possess proficiency in English; however, my pedagogical abilities are lacking. If (somehow) I get training from the school’s administration, I will be able to teach effectively. However, there is currently no provision for trainings or workshops for teachers here.”

Participant 6: According to another participant, “Struggling learners need more time to achieve advancement, whether it is via individual or group settings. Unfortunately, they are not given more time and the quantity of English classes is restricted. As a result, teachers are unable to provide sufficient guidance to bridge the learning gap.”

Participant 7: “The time for English language class lasts for just 40 minutes each day, which makes it difficult to provide detailed explanations or revising the course.”

Theme-IV: Crowded Classes

According to Raza (2022), the optimal number of students in a primary class for effective learning should be limited to 17 students (more or less) and that an over-crowded class refers to a situation when the number of students exceeds this recommended limit. Approximately 83.3% of the participants identified the issues, problems and challenges of the overcrowded classrooms as a sure hindrance to provide a personalized attention to each student. This entails to loud learning environment, an approach that emphasizes collaboration and interaction of more students for a task of learning (McLaren, 1995).

However, as per the accounts of some participants in the study: **Participant 8:** “The courses are huge and the classrooms have a significant student population. Consequently, it is challenging for me to provide individual attention to every kid in the class.”

Participant 9: “Time is squandered on class discipline, resulting in insufficient opportunity for detailed explanations.”

Participant 10: “The coursework is excessively extensive, making it challenging to complete within the allocated timeframe.”

Participant 11: “The lessons contained in their textbooks are exceedingly challenging.” The learners find it challenging to comprehend and assimilate the teachings due to the intricate jargon used.

Theme-V: Shortage of English Teachers

Approximately an overall **72.1%** of the respondents (by merging the opinions of all three sub-themes coming under **Theme-V**) indicated a significant scarcity of English teachers. Due to the schools’ distant locations, it is problematic rather challenging to locate any teachers there. As a result, highly skilled educators are recruited for urban regions leaving the rural ones deprived. Consequently, many classes remain vacant for extended periods, with just a few of teachers overseeing the whole student body by consolidating them into a single classroom (Sultana, et al., 2022).

Participant 12: “There has been a lack of English language teacher(s) at our school for some months. Managing both units single-handedly is a tiring, boring and perhaps, a challenging task for me. Unfortunately, due to the high student population, I am unable to provide personalized attention to each student at all.”

Theme-VI: Lack of Parents’ Interest

By relating the views of all three sub-themes under **Theme-VI**, an overall **66.5%** of the teachers/respondents in the current study noticed a barrier in the form of parents’ lack of interest for their children’s schoolwork and their proficiency in learning English language. Doubtlessly this sheer indifference on the part of parents plays a significant impact on the academic success of their children like one of the participants of the study indicated:

Participant 13: “Students frequently fail to complete their homework largely because they are not instructed, helped, forced and motivated by their parents at home. More than we expect, we find such parents who actually disregard their academic pursuits, rather making them work in the fields or somewhere else to earn living. This parental attitude also reduces students’ enthusiasm for studying English language.” To this participant of our study the above issue is primary issue to be addressed.

Participant 14: “It is challenging to instruct students who lack motivation and demonstrate indifference towards the teacher’s guidance.”

Outcomes of Classroom Observations

On the subsequent phase of the interviews with the participants of the study, the researcher directly observed the classes of all 14 participants keeping all six major themes and sub-themes in focus. The observed results, though devoid of statistical corroboration, exhibited a considerable degree of correspondence and similarities. Class room observations established that the children in the classes exhibited little responsiveness, indicating a lack of attentiveness and an inability to grasp the teacher’s directions. Merely a handful of students responded to the teachers’ inquiries.

Discussion

A Stage/Level-wise Qualitative Analysis (based on theoretical framework)

While analyzing how language policy is put into practice in rural Southern Punjab, particularly in Dera Ghazi Khan, the researcher observed that teachers had to go through

a complex process of adjusting themselves in a culturally and linguistically diverse environment. At first, teachers were observed to experience confusion/mystification (**Stage-1/lower level**) as they were to deal with or to experience with the significant differences between the academic or bookish language variant of the English language as given in the curriculum they are supposed to teach and that of the available or more practicing local dialects of English language which they mostly use to in their local settings. Theoretically speaking, this stage-1 of **confusion/mystification** arises when an educational system is not in synchronization with the linguistic backgrounds of the local learners. In practical terms, the current study also recorded the same challenge of stage-1 experiences of **confusion/mystification** among the participants which exponentially hampers their capacity to conduct efficient teaching and thus they experience sheer confusion/mystification during real settings.

Observations also revealed that the teachers were found as “forward-looking by **feigning** the role of English language teachers”. At this stage of their teaching, they often **concealed** their own linguistic identities and cultural practices and feigned to practice in line with the recognized norms of English language and culture (**Stage-2/lower middle level**).

As far as the next stage is concerned, that is (**Stage-3/upper middle level**), a few teachers were found anxious of **squeezing** or experimenting with the new teaching practices. They were found identifying and integrating such teaching techniques or strategies as could have been effective in the local settings. They were found concerned to strategically chose such approaches that might enhance their students’ engagement and comprehension like: using multilingual teaching methodologies, or creating an appropriate environment of plurilingual interactions, or including culturally relevant communications.

As per proper implementation of language policy at primary level, the ultimate objective for the teachers operating at this level should have been to interact and shift effortlessly between the target language (English here) and the local language(s) (Urdu & Saraiki here) and to experience **transition across the diverse cultural settings** associated with the two as (**Stage-4/high level**) suggests. However, attaining of this degree of expertise posed extremely challenging and problematic for the teachers in the current study. They were largely found unaware or even unable to practically incorporate their English language instruction with the diverse linguistic landscape of Dera Ghazi Khan, Southern Punjab because to achieve this (**Stage-4/high level**) of English language literacy requires a set of interlinked collaborative endeavors like: conducting rigorous teacher trainings, having regular curriculum modifications, giving more spaces for teachers’ agency, and allocating ample resources to foster a conducive teaching/learning atmosphere that may value and tailor the substantial role of indigenous language(s), socially inherent atmosphere and the cultural reservoirs.

A General Qualitative Analysis (based on generally observed issues)

In conjunction with the detailed discussion over the main issues, challenges and problems conforming to six key themes and sub-themes, the study also recorded some analogous concerns given as under;

- Researcher of the current study observed some extremely little exposure of both teachers and students to the English language environment. Teachers exhibited less motivation and enthusiasm to engage or expose themselves to their major subject of English language literacy. This conclusion of the researcher is consistent with the research conducted by Uekusa, (2022) which suggests that the limited exposure to the

English language is the main cause for the insufficient acquisition of English skills. According to Mearns, et al., (2022), the insufficient use of the English language both by teachers & learners within their households and communities has a detrimental impact on learners' learning outcomes.

- Researcher also noticed prior to doing the classroom observations, that teachers lacked enough preparation or planning for their lessons before entering the classrooms for presenting/conducting a lesson.
- The observations of the researcher highlighted a teacher-centered approach of the majority of participants (14 in number) of the current study where students remained largely docile and obedient, simply agreeing with what was being taught. However, modern interactive standards of teaching suggest teachers to engage students in their lessons by asking various questions or prompting them to undertake diverse actions, since students are to drawn to captivating activities of learning.

Conclusions

Based on the varied perspectives of the participants/teachers collected through their interviews and the subsequent observations of their classroom observations, it is evident that both teachers and children in rural primary schools in Dera Ghazi Khan have to face many difficulties as far as English language literacy is concerned.

- The primary issue is linked to the linguistic background of learners, which restricts their ability to communicate only in their native language, resulting in restricted exposure to English outside of educational institutions. This issue continues to be a prominent obstacle for students and educators in classrooms to comprehend one another. To address this difficulty, it is essential for teachers to get training on aligning their teaching methods with the social contexts of students' communities, hence facilitating practical learning (Ajayi, 2014).
- Though the teacher's attitude towards implementing the English language policy at the primary school level lacks the obligatory seriousness, however, it would be unfair to hold them solely responsible for the inadequate implementation of the language policy and the poor existing situation of English language literacy. Other factors such as parents, environment, and the facilities provided at schools are also contributive to this insufficiency which ultimately hampers the learning process.

Recommendations

- It is recommended to organize remedial sessions aimed at reinforcing the fundamental aspects of English. Additionally, students should be motivated to include English vocabulary into their classroom discussions, and the instructions should also be provided in the local language in order to enhance comprehension (Wilson et al., 2018). In this regard, Issa, (2021) asserts that English should be taught as a language, rather than as a topic. Current study strongly recommends that teachers may implement Language policy by adopting a pragmatic approach and using instructional activities to actively engage students in the learning process.
- Teachers should get training to acquire a set of effective teaching skills and develop an understanding of the language policy and its significance especially when it comes to their hands and agency. While the Punjab government is making efforts to implement its policies, it lacks awareness of the practical challenges being faced by the teachers

(Wilson et al., 2018). That's why, teachers, operating at the micro level of language in education policy implementation, have to find such theoretical and implementation spaces where they can exert their agency, innovation and creativity (Johnson 2013) in order to partake a more interactive, plurilingual/multilingual facilitation of English language learning without putting their regional and local language at the sideline. Moreover, the quality of teachers' training in public sector falls away short as compared to the private sector, where teachers are more dedicated owing to enjoying an array of lucrative incentives, perks and privileges. Teacher training programs must undergo substantial enhancements to provide teachers with the necessary language proficiency and pedagogical techniques to effectively handle the unique difficulties of teaching English in a multilingual and multicultural environment. These programs should prioritize on teachers' capacity to successfully traverse and bridge the divide between diverse language and cultural frameworks. In this regard rigorous teachers' trainings, workshops, symposiums, case studies and researches are recommended to make policy implementation effective on ideological, structural and functional basis as put forward by Spolsky (2004).

- As many of the students at public primary schools come from economically disadvantaged and socially marginalized households, they do not get the same level of respect as other well-to-do-families get. This is also the reason why parents of students are not basically interested in education, therefore failing to motivate their children to pursue education. Parents prioritize their children's money above purchasing school supplies such as notebooks and pencils.
- Teachers should be provided with hardship region allowances, accommodations, and transportation amenities in order to encourage their retention in schools.
- Schools should organize parental awareness sessions to foster their involvement in their children's English language acquisition and it will directly involve another ignored micro-level actor, that is, the parents who in turn would engage in framing or restructuring their family language planning which in turn would have significant contributive impact on the implementation of national language in education planning at micro level.
- As this research was done in the remote parts of Dera Ghazi Khan due to the scarcity of resources so in order to delve further into the matter, it is necessary to carry out an additional investigation at the provincial level (Manan, & Tul-Kubra, 2022).

Implications

- The results of this research are anticipated to provide valuable insights to the current body of English language literacy as the outcomes of the study may be beneficial for the educators, teacher training institutions, administrators, curriculum creators, and policymakers. Given the current obstacles, it is possible for the policymakers to devise an effective framework of improving the existing state of English language literacy at primary level of education.
- This research is especially valuable for the parents who may understand their own role in fostering the significance of English language literacy among their children.
- This study highlights the need of aligning educational policies with the linguistic and cultural contexts of specific settings, particularly at primary schools in rural Southern Punjab, when it comes to effective implementation of English language policy. The

research emphasizes the language difficulties, challenges, issues that teachers have in their class rooms and the vis-a-vis effect of those on the students from different language and cultural backgrounds. It argues for the creation of such language education framework that highlights the ability to understand and appreciate other cultures and ensure that language learning is accessible to all students.

- There is a significant need for such educational programs that should align with the cultural backgrounds of pupils, in addition to specialized teacher training that prioritizes multilingual teaching techniques and cultural awareness. These stages are essential for converting teachers into skilled facilitators who can successfully bridge language and cultural gaps, therefore improving the educational experience by playing their agentive role at the micro or end level of language policy implementation.

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