

Barriers of English as Medium of Instruction at Secondary Level in Public Sector Institutions of Gujrat

Iftikhar Haider Malik¹ Usman Ahsan² Tehseen Sarwar³

ABSTRACT: In the world of scholars and academicians English language is used at its top level. During the last decade, English has enjoyed its true status at all levels of learning in Pakistanis institutions. However, the teaching and learning English has not been satisfactory. This research study probes the barriers to executing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) at the secondary level in public sector institutions of Gujrat City. The aim of the study is to explore the barriers that teachers faced while teaching the subjects in English. Findings show that that writing in English and conveying the concepts in English to students is a barrier for the teachers whereas students feel difficulty to comprehend the content in English. As English is not the native language of teachers therefore, speaking and reading are also a barrier. The study underscores the need for targeted teacher training, curriculum reform, and resource development to enhance the effectiveness of EMI policies. Recommendations are provided to bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring equitable access to quality education through EMI. The study points out the factors and the barriers faced by the teachers. The inspiration of the study comes from the problems of elementary students which they are facing in learning English. It is a quantitative study, and survey was conducted through questionnaire. The data was collected from the female teachers of government girls and boys secondary school located in Gujrat City.

KEYWORDS: English Medium Instruction, Language Barriers, Elementary Education, Curriculum, Public Schools, Teacher Training

¹ Associate Professor, Department of English, Mukabbir University (Proposed), Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan.
Email: dr15ihmalik@yahoo.com

² Head QEC, Mukabbir University (proposed), Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan.
Email: Cvpost1@yahoo.com

³ Freelancer
Email: tehseen012@gmail.com

Corresponding Author:

Iftikhar Haider Malik
✉ dr15ihmalik@yahoo.com

Introduction

English language holds a dominant place in Pakistan. People of Pakistan especially students are well aware of its importance as it is known as Lingua Franca. In Pakistan, it is used as an official language. Many schools, colleges and universities use English as the medium of instruction (Hussein, 2003, p.6). It has become requirement for higher level jobs, better livelihood, social prestige and academic discourse, while there are some hurdles and barriers that make teachers reluctant to use English in daily routine and to teach it properly in the classrooms. Public sector schools were Urdu medium; the Punjab government had brought sudden change in 2010 and had declared all the primary and elementary and secondary schools as English medium. A notification (2010) was issued including all districts of the province that there would be no Urdu medium

classes in government schools from the next session starting from April 2010. The subjects in English have made teachers as well as students confused. The teachers have expressed reservations against the English as medium of instruction in public sector due to not being proficient and having deficiencies in the subject. Rashid et al. (2016) said that the primary teachers can teach English as a subject after some training, but they cannot teach mathematics and science in English.

It has been observed that teachers of secondary level in public sectors face so many difficulties during teaching because English is a foreign language and our teachers have no command on it. There are many reasons behind this hurdle of not being able to teach English adequately, there is lack of training to English teachers, their own weakness in the subject regarding four skills as reading, writing, listening and speaking. Secondly students are also not used to of practicing these skills in their homes as well as school environment.

The manner in which English is taught in our country is a serious hindrance to the development of a student. They spend most of the time on rote learning without having the clarity of concepts. It is teacher's duty to bring clarity in their concepts from early classes. Unfortunately, many teachers are not well grounded in English language. They have little understanding about this language, in Pakistan. Gorsuch (2000) is of the view that students who learn English are unaware of the culture of the British people. They only learn it through its literature hence they cannot achieve linguistic excellence which is core to its literature. Most of the teachers themselves have learned English subject in the old traditional way and from the textbooks only, without the use of any A.V aids. Their basic concepts related to English and teaching it as a subject properly are weak. Therefore, they commonly have no exposure to new methodology of teaching English and adequate use of A.V aids. They find it difficult to change their teaching techniques even after having sufficient training.

The study is aimed at knowing the barriers of English which are no more than a stress on the elementary and secondary teachers while teaching in classroom. It is to identify the barriers and to find out solution for removing them. The study points out the factors and the barriers faced by the teachers.

The objectives of the study are to investigate the barriers of English language among the secondary school teachers. Second objective is to identify the effects of the barriers on teachers. Third objective is to find out the ways that can be helpful in reducing or eliminating barriers. Fourth objective is to increase the effectiveness of the system by institutionalizing in-service training of teachers, teacher trainers and educational administrators. The final objective of this study is to determine fifth, and last objective is to create a similar association between the need and quantity of educators.

This research study will benefit in number of ways. The study will help teachers to improve their working conditions by removing the barriers after realizing their weak areas. It will also give some suggestions how to overcome the effects of the barriers. The study may make the master trainers to think over their training strategies. The teachers may overcome their shortcomings and students may work hard to achieve the goal after realizing the importance of English and after eliminating the barriers lying in the way of acquiring international language. Pakistan is a developing country, and its national language is Urdu, but its practicing official language is English. It is also considered important in education system. In private institutions, mostly teachers use direct method (DM) of teaching in their classes. On the other hand, teachers in public schools teach through Grammar Teaching Method (GTM) and use their local language to teach English which sounds unnatural. The discrimination has occurred owing to weaknesses of public sector teachers.

Oxford dictionary has described barrier is a hedge or hurdle etc. which averts the motion or open entree. Its substitutes are railing, balustrade, blockade, hurdle, bar, blockade etc. It may be a situation or obstacle which creates a distance among the speakers to communicate easily. (www.oxforddictionary.com). The barrier that stops or blocks communication is known as a language barrier. Communication in English is a barrier at a place of work that prevents active interchange of ideas or thoughts. The barriers contain differences of culture, biases, and the structural surroundings.

Stoddart (1986) has mentioned that at elementary/ secondary level in public sectors in Pakistan, teachers are not much qualified. They do not focus on the importance of teaching English. The main reason for weak standard in English is that teachers are not given formal and adequate training for teaching English (p.21). Similarly, Lotbiniere (2010) has described that Pakistan's assertion of denoting national language i.e., Urdu to teach their students in public institutions with the intention to expand right of entry to English language teaching are generating barriers to effective education, restraining economic flexibility and lowering social consistency. Children learning Urdu as a second language face major problems, mainly in their initial years, which can range from milder development in reading and writing because of lack of backing from parents who also fight with Urdu. He also suggests a rearrangement of English in the curriculum. English has reserved to the country's elite class who get education privately in English-medium schools and they can make an easy conversion into English-medium higher education and higher-paid government jobs that based on English-language proficiency.

Conversely, Chatel (2002), referencing Kasper (2002), outlines four distinct dimensions of literacy, each representing a different aspect of how individuals engage with and interpret written language. (a) practical, (b) academic, (c) critical, and (d) electronic. Practical literacy is the skill to use the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) to gain information. Academic literacy is the capability to gain knowledge by reading and retorting to scholarly materials. Critical literacy is the skill to judge the rationality and dependability of a media source. Finally, electronic literacy is the capability to use non-print media to gain knowledge along with the understanding of patterns (p.3). Therefore, teachers should be experienced in these four categories.

According to Ernst-Slavit et al. (2002), teachers can only be truly effective when they have a clear understanding of the stages of language acquisition and cultural adaptation. These stages typically include: (a) preproduction, (b) early production, (c) speech emergence, and (d) intermediate fluency. During the preproduction phase, students primarily observe, listen, and communicate using minimal verbal expressions such as "yes" or "thank you." Teachers can reduce learners' anxiety during this period by avoiding pressure or excessive demands, especially in group settings. As students move into the early production stage, they begin to grasp English language patterns and rules, gradually becoming more capable of speaking. With consistent practice, they eventually reach a stage of intermediate fluency. It is crucial, therefore, that educators receive appropriate training to support students through each of these phases (p.121).

Grant and Wong (2003) identified two primary challenges in the teaching and learning of English. The first issue is the inadequate preparation of teachers in colleges to effectively instruct students who are learning English as a second language. This gap in training is significant. Research indicates that 30–40% of sixth-grade students struggle with reading comprehension in English and continue to face difficulties even at the university level. Those who successfully develop proficiency in the four core language skills—listening,

speaking, reading, and writing—are more likely to achieve academic success. The second major obstacle is the limited availability of scholarly research on English language education, particularly in developing nations (p.3).

In contact with this, Ahn (2000) says that the major problem in the way of successful teaching English at school level is the lack of using English by the English teachers in the class. He further says that although students spend maximum time to learn English in as well as outside the classroom but still, they are unable to speak English in an effective way. (p.49). Here Wilkins (1976) states that it is unwise to assume that an educator who himself is unable to speak English fluently how effectively can he devise the objectives of target language. p.54).

There are so many suggestions from the part of department to introduce authentic material in public schools but unfortunately these suggestions have no practical move. Proper books for the same move are either unavailable or serve no real purpose. Again, there is dearth of proper visual aids with full material in such schools. Public sector schools are not equipped with well-furnished libraries. Then there is no motivation for the students to join the library. Not to speak of library even proper blackboards and audio-visual aids are not available in these schools. Blackboards Hussein (2003) is of the view that the lack of these facilities is serious hindrance in the improvement of English teaching and learning. Many of English teachers in Pakistan demonstrate inaccurate and inappropriate pronunciation while speaking therefore they need a specific teacher training course related to English language to create proper environment in the classroom (p.7).

The above provided literature review clearly shows that to teach English subject is difficult for teachers at secondary level because of not acquainted with proper teaching techniques. It is challenge for some who has accepted and hurdle for others who have not accepted the importance of English.

Procedure

This portion is normally consisting of Research Design, Target Population, Sample of the study, Research Tool etc. The study followed a survey research method. Population of the research study was grounded on one tier of female educator from middle or secondary schools. Sample comprised of 109 teachers. For the purpose of data collection Purposive sampling was used. The study was delimited to the secondary female teachers of public sectors in the city of Gujrat. Rural and Urban schools were included in the study. A quantitative questionnaire was prepared to get the data in which twelve (12) statements were given to gain objective answers, and two (02) open ended questions were given in the end to receive different views and suggestions from teachers. The data is presented in the form of tables, and the explanation is provided after every table. The result of twelve objective statements is given in tables 1 to 6.

Table 1

Teachers are Short of Vocabulary (N=109)

	Agree				Neutral		Disagree			
	SA		A		N		D A		S D	
	F	% age	F	%age	F	%age	F	%age	F	%age
Teachers are short of vocabulary	21	19.1	52	47.3	15	13.6	18	16.4	3	2.7

Table 1 reveals that majority ($19.1+47.3=66.4\%$) of teachers are agreed that teachers have short of vocabulary. While 19.1% are disagreed with the statement.

Table 2

Teachers and Students are not Frequent in Speaking English in Their Daily Life (N=109)

	Agree				Neutral		Disagree			
	SA		A		N		D A		S D	
	F	% age	F	%age	F	%age	F	%age	F	%age
Teachers are not frequent in speaking English	41	37.3	53	48.2	5	4.5	8	7.2	2	1.8
Students are not frequent in speaking English	74	67.3	19	17.3	7	6.4	7	6.4	2	1.8

Table 2 shows that greater part ($37.3+48.2=85.5\%$) of respondents thought that teachers and students are not frequent in speaking English whereas 9% disagreed. On the other hand, mass ($67.3+17.3= 84.6\%$) of teachers agreed that students are not frequent in speaking English while 8.2% disagree.

Table 3

Concepts Development and Understanding of Terms is Difficult in English (N=109)

	Agree				Neutral		Disagree			
	SA		A		N		D A		S D	
	F	% age	F	%age	F	%age	F	%age	F	%age
Concepts are usually developed in native language	51	46.4	35	31.8	6	5.5	12	10.9	5	4.5
Understanding of terms in English	43	39.1	47	42.7	12	10.9	5	4.5	2	1.8

Table 3 reveals that mass ($46.4+31.8=78.2\%$) of respondents are indicated that concepts developed in native language, but 15.4% respondents were deviated the statement. Opinion about understanding of terms in English indicated that majority ($39.1+42.7=81.8\%$) of teachers agreed but 6.3% disagreed.

Table 4

Teachers are Deficient in Skills (N=109)

	Agree				Neutral		Disagree			
	SA		A		N		D A		S D	
	F	Pct.	F	Pct.	F	Pct.	F	Pct.	F	Pct.
Speaking skills	18	16.4	49	44.5	22	20.0	20	18.0	5	4.5
Listening skills	27	24.5	51	46.4	22	20.0	8	7.3	1	.9
Writing skills	14	12.7	39	35.5	19	17.3	27	24.5	9	8.3

Table 4 shows that according to majority ($16.4+44.5=60.9\%$) of respondents, teachers are deficient in speaking while 22.5% denied the statement. Majority ($24.5+46.4=70.9\%$) of teachers were of opinion that teachers are

deficient in listing skill but 8.2% disagreed. Opinions about writing skills indicate that (12.7+35.5= 48.2%) of teachers agreed with the statement whereas 32.8% disagreed in this regard.

Table 5

Teacher training in Pakistan did not Focus on the Training of English (N=109)

	Agree				Neutral		Disagree			
	SA		A		N		D A		S D	
	F	Pct.	F	Pct.	F	Pct.	F	Pct.	F	Pct.
Preservice Teacher training	38	34.5	40	36.4	12	10.9	15	13.6	4	3.6
In-service teacher training	46	41.8	36	32.7	14	12.7	10	9.1	3	2.7

Table 5 indicates that large number (34.5+36.4=70.9%) of teachers confesses that preservice teacher trainings did not focus on English. On the other hand, 17.6% disagreed with this point of view. Whereas the views about in service training indicates that majority (41.8+32.7=74.5%) of teachers agreed with the statement while 11.8% disagreed.

Table 6

Material for Teaching of English is not Available (N=109)

	Agree				Neutral		Disagree			
	SA		A		N		D A		S D	
	F	Pct.	F	Pct.	F	Pct.	F	Pct.	F	Pct.
Material for Teaching of English is not available	60	54.5	35	31.8	6	5.5	5	4.5	3	2.7
Use of A.V aids is missing	65	59.6	30	27.5	4	3.66	6	5.5	4	3.66

Table 6 reveals that majority (54.5+31.8=86.3%) of respondents agreed that material for teaching of English is not available while few teachers 7.2% are disagreed. Majority of the teachers (59.6+27.5=87.1) agreed that use of A.V aids is missing part in the secondary education in public sectors while 9.16 are disagreed with this statement. There are two open ended items in the questionnaire. One is to find out the major problems and second is to gather suggestions from the teachers. The data received through open ended questions is as under:

Major Problems in Teaching English

Table 7

Problems	F	Percentage
Short of vocabulary	45	41%
Less understanding of grammar	23	21%
Low living level and illiterate family background	13	12%
Lack of A.V aids	13	12%
Pronunciation	17	15.59%
Hesitation in speaking	14	12.84%
Basic concepts are not clear	16	14.67%
Lack of Reading, Writing and listing skills	20	18.84%

Problems	F	Percentage
Student's lack of interest/response in English	26	23.85%
No reading culture at home	5	4.58%
English is not native language	16	14.67%
Difficult words used in English	11	10%
Teachers are not ready to learn English	4	3.66%
Lack of fluency in English	14	12.84%
Lack of parent's interest	4	3.66%
Understanding of concepts/terms is difficult	25	22.93%
Lack of learning environment	9	8.25%
Lack of teacher training for English	12	11%

The above provided data shows that the majority of teachers as 41% are of the view that shortage of vocabulary is the major problem in teaching subjects in English. 23.85% say that student's lack of interest in English creates problem whereas 22.93% say that understanding of concepts in English is difficult for students. There are several other problems come across after analyzing data. Though they are not considered as major problems, yet they cannot be denied. The problems mentioned by teachers are less understanding of grammar, illiterate family background, lack of A.V aids, lack of competency in four skills, having no clarity in various concepts, having no learning environment at homes, lack of teacher training programs in English and many other almost similar problems that are hurdle in teaching and learning.

Suggestions to Overcome the Stress of English

Table 8

Solution	F	Percentage
Teacher training for English teaching	40	36.69%
Subject specialist English teacher must be in every school	4	3.66%
Provision of A.V. aids	24	20%
Encouragement for speaking English	27	24%
Compulsory English at all levels	7	6.42%
Separate teacher for each class	6	5.50%
Basic concepts should clear at early classes	7	6.42%
Parents must be motivated	6	5.50%
English should be simplified	8	7.33%
Development of learning environment and reading habits	25	22.93%
Short syllabus for English	8	7.33%
Use of teaching techniques	5	4.58%
Increase vocabulary	25	22.93%
Develop interest in English through activities	11	10%
Development of skills (reading, writing, speaking)	15	13.76%
Teaching English at primary classes	6	5.50%
Speaking practice must during English class	17	15.59%
Wattage of marks for speaking English	6	5.50%
Basic English courses for teachers and students	7	6.42%

The above given data comprises of high percentage of (39.69%) teachers who suggest that training for English subject should be made compulsory. (24.77 %) teachers are of the view that students should encouraged to learn subjects in English. (22.93%) teachers suggest that learning environment and reading habits should be developed in students. Beside these suggestions some other opinions also come on the surface like use of translation method should be focused, learned teachers from early classes should be appointed who can bring clarity in students' concepts from early levels, parents should be motivated, easy and short syllabus should be developed for students, activity-based learning should be encouraged etc.

Discussion and Conclusion

Teaching and learning English is considered tough in most of the public sectors in Pakistan. The analysis of the data conveys an idea that English is a subject which is difficult for students as well as for teachers to comprehend. It is not easy for every person to attain competency in other languages besides our own mother tongue or local language. In the light of research, it can be safely said that concepts can be well described in the language which is understandable for learners. Similarly, Lotbiniere (2010) said that teachers can explain the things, terms in their local language more effectively. The results of forcing L2 (English as second language) can be detrimental (n.p). Students may lose their abilities of comprehending the things and only focus on cramming which is almost practiced in most of the institutions of our country. Unluckily in our country there is always dearth of rigorous In Pakistan there has been a lack of systematic inquiry, discussion and debate regarding core issues of learning English at different levels.

Many studies have referred that there is a gap between the unwritten language policy and practice of the teaching learning of English in Pakistan. This had led to a situation whereby the majority of school and university graduates from public sector institutions enter the job market with only limited literacy skills in English (Hussein, 2003, p.7). Private schooling in Pakistan, particularly at the primary level is a large and increasingly important sector, both in absolute terms and relative to public schooling. The important reason is that government teachers are considered sluggish and dull because of their old teaching methodologies, whereas parents prefer private institutions for having practice of new teaching techniques there and secondly for good English skills.

The New London Group (1996) highlighted the importance of precision in classroom instruction (Karkar Esperat, 2024). They stressed that students should learn to use modern technological tools for meaningful purposes, engage with diverse modes of communication enabled by digital platforms, and take part in collaborative, interactive learning environments (p. 46).

Reflecting on various studies and insights in the field of ESL, it becomes clear that a truly effective teacher must consider both the learners and the language in a holistic manner. Teaching should go beyond merely imparting knowledge of English; it must focus on developing literacy skills. As Gorsuch (2000) pointed out, achieving literacy is what ultimately allows English language learners to fully participate in English-speaking communities and become socially integrated (p. 78).

In brief, there is a great need to appoint well trained English teachers in schools and to emphasize on the other teachers to bring clarity in their own concepts through attaining training programs. Fareed et al. (2022) suggest that the progress of "Literacy Specialists" depend upon suitable training. Only proper training

regarding the usage of material accurately can reduce the problems in teaching the subject (p. 386). The results relate to Hashmi (2019) who is of the view that the learners are more motivated to learn the target language if they take a great pleasure in learning it. The motivational aspects should be emphasized. The student-teachers are not motivated in the training courses to have a grasp over the communicative language abilities. This study clearly suggests that there should also be some orientation and motivation programs included in the training courses (p.234).

It is a bitter reality that our nation cannot gain progress without adopting progressed language which is English. Historically speaking Barbarian tribes invaded and settled in France and infused old French which was an established language at that time, with Germanic words and sounds, they took hold over there. Similarly, Muslims have adopted the language of Greeks to set themselves as established nation. Then Europeans have learnt the basic concepts and language to take hold in Subcontinent. Therefore, it is obvious that to become progressed nation instead of progressing one, we should focus on removing the hurdles and barriers that are creating confusion in learning subjects in English.

After concluding the research work and getting insight into the problem, following recommendations can be proved fruitful in certain ways.

1. Teachers should be guided properly and trained specifically in English teaching.
2. Secondary teachers should enhance their vocabulary and focus on the four basic skills.
3. School authority should give rewards to the hardworking teachers for encouraging them.
4. Teachers should use various teaching activities to bring clarity in their concepts and subjects.
5. Similarly, it is highly recommended that future researchers should probe the problems regarding English teaching methodology at secondary level.
6. A close bond of learning should be created between pre- and in-service teacher training programs. Selection criteria should be purely merit-based for the selection of teachers for their training.

References

- Dash, P. (2002). English only (EO) in the classroom: Time for a reality check. *Asian EFL Journal*, 4(4), 1-20.
- Chatel, R. G. (2002). New technology, new literacy: Creating a bridge for English language learners. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 38(3), 45.
- Dash, P. (2002). English only (EO) in the classroom: Time for a reality check. *Asian EFL Journal*, 4(4), 1-20.
- Ernst-Slavit, G., Moore, M., & Maloney, C. (2002). Changing lives: Teaching English and literature to ESL students. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 46(2), 116-128. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40015434>
- Fareed, M., Khan, M. Y., & Ghangro, A. S. (2022). English as Medium of Instruction at School Level in Pakistan: Challenges and Solutions. *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjer.v5i2.572>
- Gorsuch, G. J. (2000). EFL educational policies and educational cultures: Influences on teachers' approval of communicative activities. *TESOL quarterly*, 34(4), 675-710. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587781>
- Grant, R. A., & Wong, S. D. (2003). Barriers to literacy for language-minority learners: An argument for change in the literacy education profession. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 46(5), 386-394. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40017793>
- Hashmi, M. A., Tahir, A., & Akhter, M. S. (2019). Pedagogical and learning challenges in implementing English as a medium of instruction in rural area public schools. *Erevna: Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 3(2), 42-56. <https://doi.org/10.1234/ejll.v3i2.112>
- Hussein A (2003). *Pakistan National Human Development Report 2003: Poverty, growth, governance*. UNDP Pakistan: <http://www.un.org.pk/nhdr>
- Karkar Esperat, T. M. (2024). Multiliteracies in teacher education. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. Oxford University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1890>
- Kasper, L. F. (2002). Technology as a tool for literacy in the age of information: Implications for the ESL classroom. *Teaching English in the two-year College*, 30(2), 129-144. <https://doi.org/10.58680/tetyc20022048>
- Lotbiniere, M. D. (2010). Pakistan facing language 'crisis' in schools. *The Guardian*.
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multilateralism: Designing social features. *Harvard Education Review*, 66(1), 60-92.
- Rashid, A., Muzaffar, I., Dar, F., & Butt, S. (2016). The issue of English as a medium of instruction in primary schools in Pakistan: Learning English, mathematics or science? In *Human rights in language and STEM education: Science, technology, engineering and mathematics* (pp. 179-204). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Stoddart, J. (1986). The use and study of English in Ethiopian schools. *Addis Ababa*.
- Wilkins, D. A. (1976). *Notional syllabus*. London: Oxford University Press.