

TEACHING SPOKEN ENGLISH IN PAKISTAN: AN OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an overview of spoken English in Pakistan. Teaching, learning, and assessment of Spoken English have been a subject of debate among linguists, curriculum planners, and the Ministry of Education and language policy. This research aims to investigate the phenomenon of teaching English regarding spoken proficiency. It discussed both theoretical and practical perspectives in the Pakistani multilingual context through a follow-up of research papers and reports published in the past decade (2010-2020). The researcher observed the findings of 10 research papers in light of Coleman's report (2010). The researcher used the Creswell model of a mixed method for this analysis. Findings of research papers and reports were analyzed in terms of the frequency of the discussion of common problems in the past decade. A revisiting of previously published research shows a consistent warning of low proficiency levels due to the problems discussed earlier in Coleman's report (2010). Data was consistent throughout and no change was observed in the situations highlighted by Coleman in 2011. Finally, the researcher used a mixed method (Creswell 2011) to conduct an in-depth analysis of research findings and draw the attention of language policymakers and course designers toward practical aspects of the phenomenon. All findings were gathered, analyzed, and compared with current trends. It was observed that all paper confirms the findings of Coleman's report (2010) and no progress has been observed since then. English Proficiency Index EF 2019 of Pakistan shows a decrease in 2019.

Keywords: spoken English proficiency, language teaching, language attitudes, speaking deficiency

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum design is a continuous process that keeps the requirements of students in mind. The demands of learners are constantly evolving. A curriculum design is a written plan outlining the values, information, and abilities that students will acquire in school as well as the methods by which they will be evaluated. (Richards, J. C., 2001). When executing the programs, courses that are created following a thorough needs analysis can be very beneficial and successful. As a result, examining the demands of students as well as their social needs has

come to be seen as a crucial component of curriculum development as well as an essential method of teaching and learning. The expanding importance of English as a global "Lingua Franca" has propelled the advancement of Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) in nations such as China, Vietnam, and Korea. Additionally, the list also includes countries in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Central Asia (Wright, 2010).

In Pakistan, teaching English has been a subject of debate, since partition. Researchers tried their

best level to identify problems and their causes and discussed findings in their reports and articles. Coleman's report (2010) is considered one of those authentic reports leading toward policy dialogues among stakeholders. Coleman focused on historical perspectives and presented his suggestions in light of those discussions. Later Capstick joined the team and observed language teaching phenomenon in a case study. Both researchers advocated the use of home language in the early years and capacity building of language teachers through linguistic sources, TESOL and ELT grounding, and regular training. These recommendations were for teaching English in general and there was no trace of recommendations in terms of norms of spoken English. However, their thorough study and research are still helpful in realizing the language proficiency of Pakistani students. In contrast, it has been observed that educators in general and language educators in Pakistan specifically are unable to achieve the requirements set by the Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan (Mansoor, 2005). For their professional growth, foreign language and second language teachers require a variety of skills (Curtain & Pesola, 1994: 241 cited in Peyton, 1997).

This study covers research of the last decade on teaching English in terms of spoken language, learners' attitudes towards speech problems, and the latest trends of CLT. The findings of these research papers are analyzed and compared with the findings of Coleman's report. Training of language teachers is the most important matter. (Chan, 2003). The study describes perceptions of teachers and students and their necessities. In light of research from the last decade, the study highlights ground realities that are directly affecting the teaching of oral communication and spoken English. A significant part of the report and discussions are the needs of teachers and learners and future implications concerning the historical perspectives of language in education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Q.1 What are the main problems of teaching spoken English identified by researchers over the past few years?

Q. 2 How can we eradicate problems of teaching spoken English in Pakistan?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Need analysis can be very effective in the course design process. Since its origin in 1980, has played an important role in informing about needs and providing feedback. Its focus gradually shifted from English for general purposes to identifying learners' language needs to that of learning needs (Hutchinson & Water, 1987, p.56). Recently need analysis is in use to determine the needs of course design or course materials (Tarone & Yule, 1989, p.23). Focus of need analysis is shifting from analyzing needs in TESOL, ESP, or EGP curriculum. Syllabus design maintains a significant position in the developmental history of curriculum design. Syllabus design carries specifications of curriculum design in its framework. All teaching and assessment contents are listed in the content sections of the design. Different processes of syllabus design include need analysis, teaching strategies, materials, and finally assessment aids for the evaluation of the language program. Different models of language curriculums were developed by researchers over the past few decades. Tyler's linear model was the result of the evolution of a few models. This model was concluded from natural aspects and processes of curriculum design by Tyler in a book that brought about a revival in curriculum studies throughout in 1950s (Tyler 1950).

Tyler's (1951) Linear Model of Curriculum Design
Needs → Aims and objectives → Content → Organization → Evaluation

Evaluation remains at the final stage of Tyler's model and thus it gives rise to the model proposed by Brown (1989). Brown's model was based on systematic curriculum development where need analysis was the first component. After need analysis, five other processes were included: "goals and objectives", "language testing", "material development", "language teaching", and "program evaluation". Program evaluation is in the whole design of this model, and it received great appreciation from curriculum designers. Now these processes are central elements of language teaching curriculum designs.

This super-complex age of technology has increased pressure on society and the economy and now knowledge, skills, and attitudes are exploited to cope up with these pressures. Higher education commissions are now designing courses to train teachers to think in terms of the future not of today's

students. Learner-centered courses are more in demand than teacher-centered, traditional classrooms. Need-based language courses are the talk of the town and are thus considered a logical first step in a language course.

Linguist Braj Kachru (1997) identified three concentric circles of World English, with the outer circle representing a nation-state where English was initially introduced as a colonial language for administrative purposes. It was believed that these nations developed English for internal administrative needs. One of the "outer circle" nations where English was "institutionalized" and "nativized" is Pakistan. These nations have produced an English variety that shares many of the core traits of the Inner Circle varieties of English but also differs from them in specific lexical, phonological, pragmatic, and morphosyntactic innovations (Brown, 1995).

A review of the conditions of English was conducted by Hywel Coleman in a project that was supported by the British Council. Though the report was an internal document for the British Council, its broader linguistic context drew the attention of several stakeholders in Pakistan. Through this report, several recommendations were addressed for the government policymakers. Later Tony Capstick joined the project when Coleman was finishing his final report. This report was developed after careful public scrutiny through three policy dialogues, public radio, phone-in sessions, and discussions with ministries. Panel experts reviewed draft reports and recommendations and then there were more policy dialogues and consultations for multilingual education to establish what relevant research was already in progress in Pakistan and to identify research training needs.

Recommendations regarding the development of policy for language in education in Pakistan have been formulated. These recommendations are based on the policy dialogues, the case study, and the analysis of research strengths observed so far. Coleman was an advocate of using native language for instructions at the primary level. He remarked that educational outcomes are very limited in this situation where the home language is not used in school. After this report, the British Council presented detailed proposals for a comprehensive

language policy and plan of action for teaching English.

Capstick's recommendations were modest in contrast to the dream policy of Coleman.

Coleman considered the ethical implications and complex social and educational context of Pakistani multi-linguals. It argues that the teaching of English cannot be considered in a vacuum. In contrast, Capstick's report has identified five categories:

Need for future research

Thorough scrutiny of research findings from parents to policymakers

Awareness raising and advocacy to correct misconceptions

Establishment of working groups to establish to address issues

Research-based training programs

After this report, there were several other reports and research papers on trends in teaching English that confirm all those aspects discussed in Coleman's report. The teaching of English in terms of pedagogy, language assessments, and proficiency levels has been the subject of debate since partition. Furthermore, in the last decade, there has been an urge to focus on a learner-centered approach to improving the spoken proficiency of students.

Capstick (2012) identified five categories of research gaps and they are; 1) Lack of policy research 2) Early childhood education 3) School practices 4) Teacher education and 5) Community practices. Data was collected from applied linguistics research, literature, and language research.

A report (EF EPI trends, 2019) confirms a slight decrease in language proficiency in

Pakistan. This lower ranking of Pakistan in comparison with neighboring countries shows structural challenges being faced by the education system in Pakistan. Although English is used as a language of instruction, most students are unable to listen or speak English. Again, policymakers advocate the need to teach in native languages to support the teaching of English. This policy can further help learning English in the long term with comprehension of other core subjects. A large number of students find it difficult to speak English and thus spoken proficiency has become an attraction for hiring agencies. Teaching reforms are the need of the hour and a sound curriculum can be

very helpful in this regard. Curriculum design should be further perfected by making it socially orientated. Ali (2019) conducted a study on the motivational orientations of the ESL Pakistani learners studying English at public and private schools. The findings of the study show that promotion is the most influential motivational factor of the public sector students. Whereas, the private school ESL students mostly exhibits the intrinsic motivation as they learn English for their positive attitude to the target community or the general interest in its culture or a wish to affiliate with the natives.

Asad (2020) carried out a qualitative study contrasting Punjabi speakers' pronunciations of English in rural and urban areas. The study concentrated on variations in the pronunciation of consonant clusters at the ends of English words. Six native Punjabi speakers were included in the sample of 27 participants for data validity and reliability. Participants completed word elicitation activities and passage readings to collect data. By using the CV phonology theory, researchers were able to determine that urban Punjabi speakers frequently added syllables to consonant clusters in order to conform to the phonotactic requirements of Punjabi. Conversely, speakers from rural areas demonstrated L1 interference, indicating a significant impact of their mother tongue on their pronunciation. On the other hand, the study indicated that practice and listening could reduce L1 interference. They found that this study offers educators, teachers, and English language learners' insightful information about recognizing and resolving pronunciation issues.

Ahmed (2016) used survey and quasi-experimental study techniques to examine the pragmatic competency of Pakistani ESL learners in Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP). Eighty undergraduate students participated in the study, which was organized around Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1990, 1993, 1994, 1995). It sought to investigate their motivation, the impact of pragmatic competence instruction on learning outcomes and motivation, and the relative merits of explicit vs implicit teaching approaches.

Ahmed (2023) explored the needs of English language speaking and writing proficiency skills for effective professional communication of the engineering students from school of engineering,

University of Management and Technology, Pakistan from the learners' perspective. The results show that the learners realized that they would be required to use English language in professional settings including but not limited to official correspondence, face to face interactions, and field works during meetings and social interactions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is a follow-up study and the researcher has used a mixed-method approach to collect and analyze data. However qualitative framework is used for data analysis. The researcher analyzed previous research on spoken English and then compared findings with Coleman's report (2010). After comparing the findings, the researcher analyzed the findings through comparison and contrast. Creswell's model of mixed method is used to collect and analyze data. The selected research papers were then carried forward for in-depth scrutiny and comparative analysis against the data collected earlier for Coleman's report. A manageable number of papers were selected after careful filtration and quality assurance process.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher reviewed 10 research papers published in the past 5 years and then analyzed their findings.

Table 1
Coleman's Report 2010

Part 1 Types of schools Position of Urdu Indigenous languages	Part 2 Policy and plan of action Mother tongue in earlier years	Dream Policy Home language in the beginning of school years teacher Urdu in Year 3 teacher English in Year 6
High prestige English	Pre-service education	
Language policy Home Language	In-service development Linking Madaris Local Collaborations International collaborations	3 language policy in high school Functional competence

Table 1 shows two parts of Coleman's report and the dream policy suggested after the analysis of this report.

Coleman was an advocate of including all three languages for entrance examinations and other employment domains. This strategy can be very helpful in realizing the potential of multilingual and

at the same time give prestige to local languages as well. Candidates should demonstrate functional competence along with theoretical knowledge and this requirement should be for elite schools as well where functional ability in Urdu or any other language is not considered important. He further contributed that Pakistan is on the borderline facing risks in the failure of language in education policy.

Table 2
Hywel Coleman and Tony Capstick 2012

Findings Applied research	Linguistics Language research	and literature	Future Implications
Policy and plan of action	Lack of research	Conflicts of Punjabi	Home language at the beginning of school years
Mother tongue in earlier years	Teaching of Urdu		Urdu in Year 3
Pre-service teacher education	Prestige of English	CLT for Elite	English in Year 6
In-service development teacher			3 language policy in high school
Linking Madaris			Functional competence in three languages
Local Collaborations			
International collaborations			

Table 2 shows the final report with findings and future implications. These findings are a window into the current situation of language policy in Pakistan.

Capstick further proposed three parallel processes. Identifying language use and language in education. Advocacy of the usage of mother tongue among stakeholders.

Defining roles of English, Urdu, and other local languages in the development of country and education.

Faced with the problems in designing a language policy and saving a place for Urdu, the Pakistani government put forward a judicial order in 2018.

Table 3
Follow up of research in the last decade

Author	Year	Focus	Findings
Parveen, S., & Mehmood, A	2013	Attitudes towards varieties	Standard English has more prestige than Pakistani English.
Alam, Q., & Bashir Uddin, A	2013	Improving oral communication	Exposure to oral Communication.
Gul, S., & Aziz, S	2015	Teachers' proficiency level	Average in pronunciation, deficit in grammar and

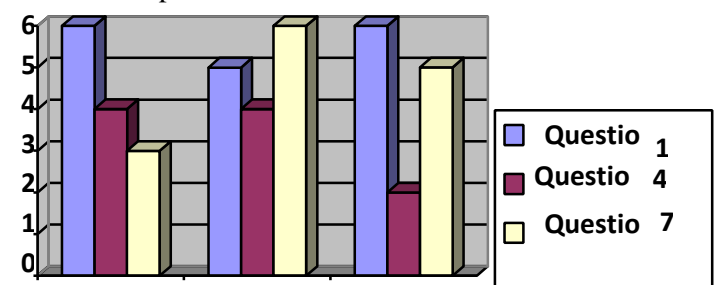
			Vocabulary.
Gulzar, R., Abbas, A., Khan, Y., & Akhtar, M. T	2015	Task-based courses	Task-based language teaching is more effective.
Esmail, A., Ahmed, M., & Noreen, S	2015	Reluctance in speaking	CLT can help reduce reluctance.
Nawaz, H., Amin, M., & Tatla, I. A	2015	Motivational factors	High motivation in both genders.
Kang, O	2015	Perceptions pronunciation	Idealized spoken norms.
Perveen, A	2016	Synchronous and asynchronous e-language learning	A blend of both methods for an ideal paradigm.
Majoka, M. I., Khan, M. J., & Khan, M. I	2016	Teaching pronunciation	Lack of knowledge, training, and teaching methodologies.
Ahmed, N., Pathan, Z. H., & Khan, F. S	2017	Causes of speaking anxiety	Anxiety in EFL classrooms is common in both genders.
Akram, M	2017	Predicaments and Solutions	social, academic, and administrative issues in language teaching and learning.
Abbasi, A. M., Channa, A., Ali, R., M	2017	M. Kakepoto, I., & Mehmood,	Phonological variations Pakistani English variations.
Fareed, Awan, S S., M., Jawed, &	2018		Practices and problems Lack of training and appropriate materials.
Riaz, Haidar, S., N., & Hassan	2019		Enforcing testing criteria Assessments can play a vital role in teaching spoken English.

A comparison and analysis of previous research shows the need for a model of teaching English regarding spoken proficiency. Research papers confirm unique characteristics of Pakistani English and various sub-varieties of South Asian English have been in the limelight since Kachru's concept of world Englishes (Kachru, 1983). These varieties are heterogeneous in terms of their geographic, socioeconomic, educational backgrounds, and multilingual insights.

Mutually exclusive work needs to be done in these areas.

Figure 1
Do you agree with the suggestions presented in the questionnaire? Why? Or why not?

Coleman Report



(2010) Follow-up studies
 Follow-up (2010-20 Report(2012)

Interview results confirm that previous reports and studies still confirm the same issues and problems highlighted by Coleman in 2010.

Analysis of research papers shows that there is a need to compile all data and design a model for teaching spoken English. Though these varieties are acceptable in testing domains somehow when it comes to the level of proficiency in speaking, learners are assessed on standard grounds devised by test administering organizations. The same structures are used all over the globe.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This follow-up study was very helpful in analyzing the needs of Pakistani students in terms of spoken English. One of the research findings shows that students find the IELTS listening test most difficult in terms of preparations and getting the band from 7 to 8 and the speaking test comes next. Perfectly spoken videos and IELTS test formats are often used in courses targeting the speech proficiency of learners. Hughes (2003) sets a criterion for the assessment of spoken ability. He was an advocate of setting appropriate tasks that represent the population. Besides validity and reliability and making schemes need to be considered. Data analysis of research papers and reports confirmed that a sound policy is the need of the hour and educational organizations should sit together with the Ministry of Education, to decide on that. Akram (2017) identified social, academic, and administrative problems in making English difficult for learners. Abbas (2019) observed that English is accepted in Pakistan and enjoys a better position in academic and professional settings, in comparison to Urdu or other languages.

A low level of proficiency is the result of the lack of trained teachers, less awareness of language teaching strategies, and low levels of motivation. Being in the outer circle, Pakistan and India have a long history of power domains that are connected to English. (Kachru 1985) At the beginning of the 21st century, there was an urge to develop a sound language policy for both English and Urdu. For this purpose, many organizations were involved in presenting their reports. Coleman (2010) observed that EFL courses and teacher training programs lack practicality and have no clear objective. The history and culture of a country remain important factors

when considering educational effectiveness in terms of language policy. Teaching English can be very effective for optimal learning if these reports and findings on socioeconomic and are considered in language in education policy. (Puett, 2016). HEC-ELT reforms project guides language teachers in their venture of language teaching. EF global ranking shows Pakistan on 54th Number whereas India stood 34th. English proficiency can be very helpful for students and professionals. Everyone seems to be convinced about the role of English in global communications but hardly has any idea how to get there.

The validity and reliability of speech testing organizations are often questioned (Karim, 2014) by researchers. IELTS interviewers maintain a dominant position and candidates find themselves in a position where they are bound to answer what is asked, only. Furthermore, it is focused on only one aspect of speaking, others are ignored purposefully. This is following what Hughes (2003) points out as a weakness in a speaking test.

CONCLUSION

It can be remarked that this study can inform future researchers as a follow-up of research is discussed in great detail. Data provided an understanding of the problems and their root causes leading to other risk factors. Coleman's report (2010) and Capstick's case study provided insight into the history and socioeconomic factors of language in education in Pakistan. Though these reports did not discuss spoken English in particular, their approach and involvement of all stakeholders still make this report an authentic source for reference in research. The main problems were less exposure to the language, traditional teaching practices, lack of knowledge, training and teaching methodologies, and other social and administrative issues that are already highlighted in Coleman and Capstick's report (2012). Though language anxiety is found in some forms, motivation and a desire to learn native-like pronunciation are also rooted. Language testing services can play a vital role if considered in policy-making or curriculum design. Ongoing need-based research can be very helpful in identifying needs in current educational and professional settings.

Research-oriented position underlying the need for further research, dissemination, datamining, and advocacy - are in no way mutually exclusive.”

A survey of need analysis identified a total of 15 major problems for consideration (see Appendix 1). Global change forces are always informed by local conditions. Policy changes can be very risky, and there is always a danger of widespread literacy (Fauzia Shamim 2008). At the moment English is an elitist preserve and a stumbling block for all other Pakistanis. At the same time, it is the language of social media. Too much emphasis on English teaching, English might counteract the growing religious and cultural intolerance in Pakistan. Furthermore, as a widespread and evenly used medium of instruction all over Pakistan, it can bring people closer and function as an empowering device and a liberalizing influence in the country. Tariq Rahman (2001) Pakistani English is distinct from British/American English and has some unique features. Detailed studies of Pakistani English are desperately needed and I hope that this paper will generate sufficient interest in Pakistani English to encourage new studies of this variety of English. Mehboob (2003) described some features of Pakistani English phonology, syntax, morphology, and lexis. Pakistan should join the International Student assessment and devise plans to effectively implement suggestions recommended in reports and research articles. Pakistan’s most influential report ASER is reflecting on reading and arithmetic only. Many organizations hardly consider spoken English proficiency in student assessments. However, they report on letter identification in terms of language proficiency.

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APPENDIX A RESEARCH PAPERS SELECTED

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