



OBSTACLES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) AMONG PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF DISTRICT MIANWALI (PAKISTAN)- A PAKISTANI CASE STUDY

By

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Abstract

Failure in learning English as a second language (ESL) is a serious problem in Pakistan. This failure is attributed to many factors. Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to the non-speaking students is a dilemma. The researchers agree that English teachers are facing many challenges and problems which attribute to their teaching this language (i.e. Abbas, 1998; Mansoor, 2003). This study is an attempt to explore these obstacles in way of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to the Pre-University Students of Colleges among English teachers of District Mianwali (Pakistan). The researcher has conducted qualitative multiple case study as suggested by Yin (2012) to explore and describe the phenomenon of obstacles faced by the English teachers. Semi-structured interviews with four English teachers, two males and two females, have been conducted. The findings of this study have shown that there are certain obstacles being faced by the English teachers. Finally, this study has recommended suggestions to remove these obstacles and conduct of future studies.

Keywords: Obstacles, ESL, Pre-University Students, Intermediate Students, Teaching English

1. Introduction

According to Mansoor (2003), Pakistan is a multilingual country with the diversity of languages. There are many problems and difficulties in teaching as well as learning in English. There are many reasons as lack of stability of language and educational policies in higher education. However, according to Abbas (1998), the main problem is a flawed pedagogy in teaching English which attributes to the declining standard of examination results. As English is a compulsory subject at Pre-University level in Pakistan so failure in this subject means failure in all subjects at this level (Mansoor, 2003). The result in English is poor in spite of a huge efforts put in teaching and learning English (Abbas, 1998). This failure in English deprives the students from getting honorable jobs as

well as this failure creates inferiority complex among them (Malik, 1996). On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that English is an international language. The teaching and learning English in Pakistani context is of much significance because this is one of the major compulsory Pre-University subjects, medium of instruction and also enjoying a status of a Second Language (ESL). This is the language which besides Urdu, national language, being used as an official language throughout the country. Learning of English has become a “socio-political” demand (Mansoor, 2003, p. 21). Therefore, this is necessary for language proficiency and academic success at all levels of educational system in Pakistan.

Now in modern time, English is not only of its natives but it has crossed the barriers and become “the most widely taught, read, and spoken language that the world has ever known” (Kachru and Nelson 2001: 9). This is spreading and using in internal and external affairs of the countries of the world. According to Warsi (2004), the teaching of English in Pakistani context is unsatisfactory. This is fact that English is being taught and learnt from Grade 1 to onward to higher education but somewhere flaws lie due to which results in English are very poor. This flaws lie in flawed pedagogy (Abbas, 1998; Mansoor, 2003; Warsi, 2004). According to Khan and Khan (2016), students are facing obstacles in learning English at Pre-University level mainly due to insufficient teaching and learning materials in English and also due to flawed pedagogy in this subject.

2. Background of the study

There are the studies and knowledge which have emphasized upon the learning of English as a Second Language (ESL). Majority of these studies have focused upon the learning of English or second language among small children. According to Varela, Polo, Garcia and Mertinez (2010), English language teaching is getting a dynamic role in education which is highly contributing to the development of the learners in the world. The significance of English in teaching and learning cannot be ignored. According to this idea, English language has reached turning point after 1970 due to its contribution to the development of academic performance in education. But this teaching and learning process has been facing many challenges (Teevno, 2011). According to this study, the governments of Sindh and Pakistan have provided a lot of facilities and materials for teaching and learning English in the public sector educational institutions in recent years. But the result or output in this subject, English teaching and learning, is still disappointed. According to Abbas (1998) and Mansoor (2003), in spite of so much efforts and input in this subject, the results are poor in teaching and learning English in Pakistan. English teaching and learning is not only an important part of psycholinguistics but also vital element of socio-linguistics (Norton, 2010). This means that social factors are responsible for its teaching and learning. We cannot deny the importance of English teaching because now it has got status of “World Englishes” (Matsuda, 2002).

According to Hişmanoğlu (2005), nowadays, the English teachers are teaching English through literature for which in spite of having lot of modern teaching materials, still they are facing numerous problems to teaching English to adults. In Pakistan, at almost all levels, in public sector colleges, English as a Second Language (ESL) is being taught through literature. These teachers are facing challenges in teaching English to the students of pre-university levels in Pakistan. Seeing the poor performance in English skills among “school leavers”, Evue (2013, p. 1), has conducted a study to determine the factors for poor teaching in English in Aniocha South Local Government Area of Delta, State Nigeria. The findings of this study has pointed out many factors as poor pedagogical approaches in teaching English among the English teachers. The scholars of Pakistan (i.e. Mansoor, 2003; Rahman, 2004) agree that there are some issues and obstacles among Pakistani English teachers for teaching English in educational settings.

3. Statement of the problem

English as a Second Language (ESL) is being taught to the Pre-University Students to the public sector colleges of Pakistan. The status of this subject, English, is multidimensional in this educational setting. This is enjoying a status of compulsory, official language and medium of instruction in the country. The role of English teacher is very important in this context. Many empirical studies have been conducted to investigate the issues related to teachers in Pakistani context (i.e. Ali, Khan, & Atta, 1972; Rehmani, 2006; Dilshad, 2010; Gujjar, Naoreen, Saifi, & Bajwa, 2010). Majority of these studies have explored the teachers' training issues and their performance in various educational context. These studies have addressed the teachers' issues in their teaching perspectives. Many empirical studies have been conducted among Pakistani universities teachers which have investigated their job performance, job satisfaction, their commitment to jobs and other related issues in the various universities of Pakistan (i.e. Shahzad, Bashir, & Ramay, 2008; Chughtai & Zafar, 2006; Tahir, 2008). However, such studies have not been extended to address the obstacles being faced by English teachers to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) to the Pre-University Students in Pakistani context. Therefore, the current study has dared to explore these problems and issues in the collegiate context of District Mianwali (Pakistan) where the English teachers are teaching English to the pre-university students.

4. Context of the study

District Mianwali is the remotest area of province Punjab, Pakistan. This land is very rich in contributing much in the development of the country. The researcher has selected purposefully four English teachers, two from Government College (B), Mianwali and two from Government College (W), Mianwali as the participants of this study. Professor Abdul Ghaffar Khan Khattak and Professor Muhammad Nasir Iqbal are two male English teachers from Government College (B), Mianwali and two female teachers, Miss. Saima Naz, Lecturer in English and Miss. Sumaya Nishat, Assistant Professor of English are female teachers who are participating in this qualitative multiple case study. They all are teaching English to the pre-university students of male and female colleges of the District Mianwali (Pakistan). Pre-University Level is also referred to the Intermediate (First Year & Second Year) level in public sector colleges of Pakistan. Therefore, the researcher has used Pre-University and Intermediate simultaneously in this study.

5. Objectives of the study

This case study has focused on the following two objectives.

1. To determine the obstacles in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to Pre-University students of District Mianwali.
2. To provide suggestions to remedy these obstacles in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to Pre-University students of District Mianwali.

6. Research questions

This study has proposed two research questions as following.

1. What are the obstacles in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to Pre-University students of District Mianwali?
2. How these obstacles can be removed for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) among the Pre-University students of District Mianwali?

7. Significance of the study

This study is possibly valuable both for teachers and the institutions as following.

1. Findings of this study are expected to help inform the English teachers to teach English better in their respective contexts.

2. This study will also guide the institutions to help teachers working in better educational environment.

8. Scope of the study

This study, through the conduct of qualitative case study, has following to explore the obstacles in teaching English. The data have been collected through the conduct of semi-structured interviews with open ended question items with four participants of the study.

9. Review of literature

9.1 Obstacles

Obstacles here in this study are referred to the difficulties, problems and issues by English teachers in teaching English as a second language (ESL). This study is an attempt to explore these obstacles while being faced by English teachers in teaching English as a second language (ESL) in Pakistani context. ESL teachers are facing challenges and problems in teaching English in various contexts of the world. Verala, Polo, Garcia and Martinez, (2010) have reported that there is concern for low rate achievement in English usage skills among the students of Spain Autonomous Community, Galicia. They have ventured to develop new curriculum but ultimately they have encountered the issues that ESL teachers are actually facing many problems and obstacles due to which they cannot impart in teaching to the students. The English teachers have to face obstacles in teaching because there are varieties of English language (Matsuda, 2002).

9.2 Obstacles in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL)

According to Hişmanoğlu (2005), the English teachers are concerned with the difficulties in teaching. These difficulties are arisen because there is lack of competency and training among teachers to teach to the students of various socio-economic backgrounds in the educational settings. The students have different cultural and historical perspectives to which according to Hismanoglu (2005), the teachers are unable to understand. In most of the countries, the teachers have to teach English language through literature. The English teachers are facing problems because whether they have no better or reasonable background knowledge about the culture of target language or due to ethnic issues among the students, pedagogy ultimately fails in an effective teaching. The English teachers are facing challenges in teaching English (Evue, 2013). This is the reason that these problems faced by the teachers affect the learning process of the students. According to Evue (2013), the teachers are inefficient and demotivated for which they cannot impart and contribute positively to teaching.

The teachers and learners bring certain socio-economic backgrounds to their classrooms (Journal & Dogancay-aktuna, 2016). These social factors need to be considered but the teachers and learners both have to face problems in teaching and learning because these factors are not kept in view in developing curriculum and other related strategies. Besides this issue, English teachers also face problem in class management (Salem, 2011). This classroom management is considered to be essential in effective teaching. The institution which have not better facilities cannot play a better role in both teaching and learning. This classroom management is also referred to a disciplined management to which all students are bound to abide by for their learning process (Marei and Mustafa 2009).

Numerous contemporary studies on teaching training quite widely focus on the challenges confronted by English languageteachers and how they upset several features of teacher education. For instance, according to Thomas (2006) who places of interest in the language, cultural (variety) and environmental obstacles practiced by four American teachers in Central Asia and how they have managed with success in acquisition of valuable understanding during their teaching practice. In views

of Pomerantz and Pierce (2004) who have also lead a survey into the challenges experienced by the teachers in their everyday life routine and the level of their preparation to teach their courses to the students. The findings of this survey enable them to understand the environment and teaching practice. This survey also makes them aware about the environment and socio-economic backgrounds of the students which is important for them for their teaching practices. These pieces of re-considering and re-examining the obstacles in fact allow them to develop a different knowledge and renovating of current knowledge through various mollification processes of resolving problems and difficulties throughout teaching preparation. Chung (2002) observes the encounters of increasing effective education approaches of teachers through quality comments from supervisors. She accomplishes that the negotiations that they have to facilitate knowledge construction and encourage cooperative, among teachers and students, consideration on individual teaching practice to expand the appreciative practices of teaching. By using such discussions between teachers and students, Chung (2002) maintains that teachers are capable of assisting the learners in recognizing and appraising the different obstacles in learning and ultimately the teachers are able to fill this wide gap. Therefore, the possibility of refining teaching is massive experience in terms of the various advanced ways and circumstances in which new knowledge can be formed, created and recreated, and advanced for positive, significant learning practices (Kabilan, 2005).

9.3 Obstacles faced by Pakistani Teachers

English as the language for progress has conquered the governmental and official education in Pakistan as in other emerging progressive countries for a long time now. Further in recent times, the place of English in education for all people with the increase in the use of English in the worldwide arcade have further contributed to a universalistic height to the teaching-learning of English in Pakistani context, therefore creation of it a complex policy issue predominantly for resource spreading and achieving quality in English language education. English is being considered to be a valid passport for the development and survival among the nations of the world. This is also being considered to be a major key for the national development. More prominently, this triteness reflects the awareness of many people (Shamim, 2011).

Pakistan is a country of which a majority of the population consists of people who live in the remotest and far away areas of Pakistan. These people have to survive in enduring circumstances. Majority of this population is living in the rural areas of Pakistan. According to Tariq, Bilal and Sandhu (2013), the low rate in literacy in Pakistan is due to poverty and ignorance. This ignorance is referred to lack of proper facilities available to these people. There has been a discrimination policy by the stakeholders or the rulers of the time since after the existence of Pakistan with the people of these areas. There is also short of clear-cut linguistics policy in the country since after 1947. Pakistani students and teachers are facing dilemma of controversy between English and Urdu, the national language. There are also many other local and regional languages which are creating obstacles for Pakistani students and teachers (Rahman, n.d.). This is the obvious reason that according to Rahman (2016), one of the major group of Pakistani society, elite, after having realized the empowering factor of English language, adopted English medium for their own children while as a policy makers, they have drawn a line of discrimination in setting up public sector educational institutions in the country. "The craving for excellence in English language as a tool for a more successful life is not confined to the city elites but has penetrated the army, the air force, and the naval branches of a country that has frequently been ruled by army generals" (Rahman, 2016, p. 24). But according to Rahman (2016), in spite of the existence of many problems and difficulties in way of teaching and learning English in Pakistan; the status of English is being empowering for the better development of future of Pakistan. These are the reasons as empowering factor of English language; every Pakistan is in pursuance of mastering this language.

9.4 Obstacles due to short of clear-cut linguistics policy

Since after 1947, there is no clear cut policy regarding to teaching and learning English in Pakistani context. English has been “supposed to continue as the official language of the country till such time that continues as the official language of Pakistan till such time that the national language (s) replaced it. However, this date came and went by as many other dates before it and English is as firmly entrenched in the domains of power in Pakistan as it was in 1947. The major reason for this is that this is the stated but not the real policy of the ruling elite in Pakistan. The real policy can be understood with reference to the elite’s patronage of English in the name of efficiency, modernization and so on”(Rahman, 2004, p.5).

According to Mansoor (2003), in spite of huge inputs and efforts in teaching English, the results are very disappointed. She seems to be agreeing with Abbas (1998), that this failure in this subject, English or overall results of university is due to flawed pedagogy. The teachers especially ESL teachers are facing numerous obstacles in teaching English in Pakistani context.

9.5 Obstacles due to lack of motivation

Motivation plays a vital role in teaching and learning a second language. According to Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), motivation for learning second language is a process which develops with the process of time. According to this model, motivation is affected by certain factors. According to Dornyei (2001), motivation plays very important role in learning a second language, English, when this subject is being taught or learnt as a compulsory subject in an educational setting.

There are numerous empirical studies conducted in various educational Pakistani contexts which have highlighted the significance of motivation for learning English as a second language (ESL). Majority of these studies have concluded the vital role of motivation(i.e. Ahmed & Gill, 2014;Sheikh, Bibi, & Nawaz, 2014;Yaqoob, Ahmed, & Arshad, 2014;Ullah, 2013). According to Khan and Khan (2016), the students of District Mianwali and Bhakkar (Pakistan) are motivated to learn English but the English teachers of these two remotest areas are demotivated to teach English for certain reasons. This demotivation is creating obstacles in way of their teaching. Therefore, this current study aims at exploring these obstacles in way of teaching English among these teachers of the areas.

10. Research Methodology

This study has followed the qualitative case study as suggested by Yin (2012). According to Yin (2012, p. 5), a case study is required to answer “a descriptive question” or “an explanatory question”. Keeping in view this idea, the researcher has conducted this qualitative case study to know what are “happening” in case of obstacles in teaching English with teachers and to know its “explanations”. This issue has become a social educational phenomenon which needs to be addressed. Therefore, this case study has ventured to know this phenomenon because “the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009a, p.18). This is multiple-case study because the researcher has studied two organizations i.e. male and female students of District Mianwali. This is very difficult to conduct than single-case study “but the ensuing data can provide greater confidence” (Yin, 2012, p. 7).

10.1 Participants

Creswell (2013) has recommended 4 to 5 samples size for a single case study. The researcher has selected 4 English teachers on the basis of purposeful sampling because this purposeful technique “can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). These four (4) English teachers, two (2) from Government College

(B), Mianwali and two (2) from Government College (W), Mianwali are the participants of this case study.

10.2 Research instrument

The researcher has conducted semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions with the four (4) participants of the study to know the obstacles in teaching English to Pre-University students of District Mianwali.

10.3 Ethical considerations

The researcher has observed the ethical considerations for this case study. According to Creswell (2012), there are certain ethical considerations for the conduct of qualitative case study. Therefore, the researcher has considered these ethical considerations from the very beginning of this study to all the process of conduct of this study. Creswell (2012) recommends to get permission from the concerned to conduct the study. Therefore, the researcher has got consent of the participants for this study.

10.4 Data collection

The researchers have used interviews in qualitative studies. The numerous scholars have given many steps in the conduct of qualitative interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The researcher of the current study has followed the rules of the conduct of interviews as recommended by Creswell (2013). According to Creswell (2013), the questions should be “open-ended, general, and focused on understanding” the dominant phenomenon (P. 163). Through the conduct of semi-structured interviews data have been collected. The interviews have been recorded and then these interviews have been transcribed according to the content analysis. Before the conduct of interviews, the researcher has followed the interview protocol as suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). For this purpose, the researcher has prepared a protocol guide on a white page. This protocol procedure consists of time of interview, date, place, name of interviewer, name of interviewee, briefly description of current study and questions to be asked.

10.5 Data analysis

Patton (1980) has suggested that a qualitative researcher always manage obtained data systematically. Agar (1980) also has recommended that a qualitative researcher reads the transcripts several times to understand what the participants say. Having kept all these ideas, the researcher has followed the data analysis procedure as suggested by Creswell (2013). The researcher has prepared a spiral to describe, classify and interpret data. First of all, the transcripts of the interviews have been coded and then these codes have been given various themes. Finally, the researcher has prepared them in series of the themes which are being presented in the section of findings of this study as following.

11. Findings

Following are given the findings as obtained through the data. The findings are being presented under in various themes as found in the data. As this study has two research questions (i.e. First, what are the obstacles in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to the Pre-University Students of the District Mianwali, Pakistan). The second research question is (i.e. How these obstacles can be removed for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to the Pre-University Students of District Mianwali, Pakistan). This is clear that there are two parts, therefore, the following are giving findings in two part. First part deals with the “obstacles” as expressed by the participants. Second part deals with recommendations as presented by the participants to remove these obstacles.

11.1 Part One of Findings (Obstacles):

1. Inconsistency in linguistics policy

The interviews have pointed out that most of the English teachers are facing obstacles in teaching English to the pre-university students in District of Mianwali (Pakistan) due to the inconsistency in the introduction and implementation of linguistics policy of the country. These are of the views that teachers and students both are confused about the status of English in the educational institutions. Prof. Abdul Ghaffar Khan Khattak.

Prof. Muhammad Nasir Iqbal Head of the English Department Government College (B) Mianwali is also in a view of such ideas adding that each day Pakistani students and teachers have to face obstacles due to inconsistency in our national educational and linguistics policies.

However, the female teachers have expressed such ideas but their approach is different. Saima Naz, Lecturer in English of Government College (W), Mianwali has told that they have to face obstacles in teaching English to those female students who come from the families where there is no use of English language among their members. However, Sumia Nishat, Assistant Professor of English of Government College (W), Mianwali agrees that all obstacles arise due to inconsistency in our linguistics policies.

2. Teachers' training

Training in service plays a vital role in teacher development. The participants of the study have told that due to unavailability of training, the teachers of English have to face many obstacles in teaching English to the students. Prof. Abdul Ghaffar Khan Khattak, one of the participants, has informed that nowadays the college teachers are kept deprived of the teaching training. Therefore, Prof. Muhammad Nasir Iqbal HOD (Head of Department) of Government College (B), Mianwali has agreed with Prof. Khattak and claimed that he has never attended any teacher training. Saima Naz, Lecturer in English, Government College (W), Mianwali has expressed regret that female college teachers usually do not take interest in attending such college teachers' training because they cannot afford living away from their families. Sumia Nishat, Lecturer in English, Government College (W), Mianwali has told that she has never got any opportunity for such training.

3. Role of motivation

Role of motivation is very important for teaching as well as learning. About role of motivation for teaching English, Prof. Abdul Ghaffar Khan Khattak has told that our college teachers are demotivated for the reason that in spite of holding the highest degree, they cannot get such deserving salaries and facilities as compared with other government official in Pakistan. Prof. Muhammad Nasir Iqbal of Government College (B), Mianwali has expressed his dissatisfaction over the salaries and facilities of college teachers. Saima Naz of Government College (W), Mianwali says in this regard due to the existence of various social factors, female college teachers are demotivated. But, Sumia Nishat of Government College (W), Mianwali emphasizes that we, being teachers, should be motivated.

4. Participation in pressurized extra activities

All these teachers have told that they feel happiness in teaching; but they have been asked to perform various duties for which they have no interest. This has been common with the teachers' community that besides teaching they have to participate unwanted extra duties which have no particular purpose. They have been got employed for teaching but the various departments compel them to participate unnecessary campaigns and walks etc.

11.2. Recommendations

In the light of the participants' interviews, following are being presented the remedies to remove these obstacles as shown and found among the participants for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to the Pre-University Students of District Mianwali (Pakistan).

1. There should be clear cut linguistics policy in the country.
2. There should be proper and compulsory teaching training.
3. Motivation among teachers should be enhanced by various incentives.
4. The teachers should be made responsible for only teaching. They should not be compelled to participate unwanted unnecessary un-academic activities by the authorities.
5. Proper teaching materials and facilities should be provided to the English teachers.
6. The teachers should be posted at their home station or near the family stations.
7. Syllabus should be kept being revised in accordance with the dynamic needs of time.
8. Flaws in the examination system should be removed.
9. The teachers should be able to teach to the students of various social backgrounds.
10. The English teaching should be improved at our school levels.
11. Unexpected and undeclared holidays in the educational institutions should be maximum avoided.
12. Salaries of the teachers should be made reasonable.

12. Discussion

This current qualitative case study has tried to explore the obstacles in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to the Pre-University Students of District Mianwali (Pakistan). Through the conduct of the semi-structured interviews, the researcher has found that this study has consistency with the previous conducted studies in abroad and in Pakistan. The study conducted by Kabilan (2008) has shown that Malaysian teachers are facing challenges in their English teaching class room practices. This study has presented suggestions to cope with these challenges. In this way, this current study also has found the obstacles and challenges faced by the English teachers in their class room practices. This study also like the study conducted by Kabilan (2008) has presented remedies. Another study conducted by Usop (2013) also has analyzed the job performance and satisfaction among teachers. The current study also shows consistency with this study in this regard.

This study also has shown consistency with Pakistani studies conducted by Abbas (1998) and Mansoor (2003) regarding the problems faced by the teachers and students due to inconsistency with the linguistics policies.

This study presents following recommendations.

1. Like this study, this is recommended that the challenges faced by school teachers in Pakistani context should be conducted.
2. Also this study recommends that the current case study has been limited to only District Mianwali, (Pakistan); there is a need to conduct such study in other parts of the countries.
3. Also such studies are required to be conducted at various other academic levels among other students as University level or Professional levels. By conducting such study this might bring different results.
4. There is also need to conduct a country wide survey which might explore the obstacles faced by the teachers of the country.

13. Conclusion

This study has explored the challenges being faced by the English teachers in Pakistani context. This study has investigated these obstacles in an attempt to examine the education of the country. The English teachers have been shown facing many problems as ambiguity related to linguistics policies, demotivation factors, unrest among the teachers and lack of teaching materials in the institutions. This study has provided the recommendations for futures' studies, too. The study has been conducted among College English teachers; therefore, this study can guide to the futures' researchers to conduct the studies other than English teachers in any educational context.

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