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Lost in Translation: A Critical Analysis of the Disconnect Between National English Language Policy and Classroom Implementation in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The critical review is based on the unceasing disjuncture between the policy of the national English language to be applied and the practices of the classroom in Pakistan. The paper will rely on a review of the current literature on modern literature to investigate how past legacies, socio-political ideologies, socio-economic disparities, and institutional constraints systematically influence English language education in Pakistan. Although policy frameworks are promoting communicative, inclusive, and learner-centered practices, the real practice that takes place in classrooms shows a lack of preparedness of the teacher, lack of resources, strict evaluation, and the top-down execution of policies that cannot cater to multilingual and heterogeneous differences in learning. The analysis brings out the manner in which Anglo-normative conceptions of proficiency and deficit ideologies give advantages to elite learners at the expense of lower socio-economic status students, which strengthens educational inequities. Comparative experiences of other developing settings also testify to the fact that the same policy-practice gap could be addressed by using participatory governance, long-term teacher professional development, context-driven curriculum and strategic introduction of digital technologies. The review comes to a conclusion that significant change should be an approach of adopting receptive and particular ways of policy concerning the classroom alongside starting to tackle discussions related to local reality and the manner in which they assist in achieving them. To enhance English language proficiency, educational equity, and greater socio-economic development in Pakistan, national policy goals should be aligned to pedagogical practice.

Keywords: English Language Policy; Classroom Implementations; Policy-Practice Gap; English Language Education; Educational Equity; Teacher Preparedness; Multilingual Classrooms

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INTRODUCTION

The English language education policy in Pakistan has got a strong background in its colonial history whereby it was during the colonial rule that English was adopted as a form of administration and higher learning. The use of English as a medium of education, government, and business remained a legacy of linguistic imperialism and the ongoing socio-political power of English in Pakistan since the independence of this country (Gul et al., 2023). The existing national policy on English language focuses more on promoting English language as a medium of instruction in most of the learning institutions and as a core competency to academic achievement and socio-economic mobility. This policy can be defined by the top-down approach in which the elite groups establish educational goals that uphold language hierarchies and add to the uneven access to English proficiency and corresponding opportunities (Gul et al., 2023; Syed, 2024). English has generally been considered as an essential instrument in the socio-economic life of Pakistan where it not only provides access to profitable jobs, education and business opportunities both locally and globally. Learning English is one of the most important factors affecting career opportunities and socio-political position of an individual, which further increases the need to learn the English language (Gul et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the policy and teaching practice have been criticized as continuing to propagate deficit ideologies promoting Anglo-normative standards of English and supporting socio-economic and linguistic inequalities. The advocates of reform propose a more inclusive and multilingual approach to English language teaching that acknowledges the linguistic differences in students and questions the status quo of socioeconomic differences (Syed, 2024). Overall, the policy surrounding the use of the English language in Pakistan has a long-standing history of colonialism which, now, is impacted by political and economic interests that regard English proficiency as a key to individual progress and national growth, but additionally, it is embedded in the socio-cultural and power struggles that define who has access to education and who does not (Gul et al., 2023; Syed, 2024).

Statement of the Problem

In Pakistan, there is a large gap between the policy as regards the national English language and the actual practice in the classroom. Even though there are policies that promote the use of English as a medium of instruction and where proficiency in English is a priority, it is common in the policies to be not translated efficiently into teaching situations because of a set of systemic issues (Gul et al., 2023). Ideological and socio-cultural barriers, unequal resource access, inadequate teacher training, and hard, top-down implementation of policies that fail to accommodate the linguistic diversity and multi-lingual realities of the Pakistani classrooms are among these challenges (Syed, 2024). There is one more problem connected to the translation of policy to practice because of the deficit ideologies internalized within the educational discourse that construct the definition of English proficiency in monolingual, Anglo-normative ways, by sometimes rejecting the multilingual capabilities of learners. This limits the power of pedagogy and reinforces the socioeconomic differences by giving superiority to the elite students with more opportunities to access the education in English medium, whereas those in the lower strata of the socioeconomic structure

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have less opportunities to reach the proficiency criteria (Gul et al., 2023; Syed, 2024). Also, the instability of approach to teaching methods does not consider a diverse range of linguistic students, and fails to deliver the learning of the English language effectively in most scenarios (Ojong and Addo, 2024). The effect of these issues leads to the overall low level of proficiency in English language among Pakistani students that restricts their academic achievement and competitiveness in the local and international employment markets. The lack of English fluency has an overall impact on the educational performances of students, such as understanding the subject matter when taught in English, which subsequently affects their motivation and academic self-esteem (Gul et al., 2023; Ojong and Addo, 2024). This policy-classroom disparity highlights why there is an urgent need in policy reforms which are more inclusive, context-specific and supportive of various learners in order to effectively promote English language proficiency throughout Pakistan.

Objectives of the Review

These are the main purposes of this review to critically examine the current gap in the national policy of English language and its application in classrooms in Pakistan and how these differences impact the outcome in language education. It tries to establish the multidimensional aspects of the causes of this disconnect such as socio-political, ideological, economical and pedagogical deficiencies that do not allow proper conversion of policy into practice. Besides, the review aims at suggesting informed and context-friendly solutions that can be applied to the enhancement of the policy to foster equity in the provision of the English language education and overall proficiency of Pakistani students. These strategies can involve the promotion of inclusive pedagogy, teacher education, curriculum modification and policy changes that will respond to the linguistic and socio-economic realities of students.

METHODOLOGY

Literature search strategy mostly entails identification of the relevant databases and sources, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to narrow down on studies used, as well as specifying a specific time frame on which the literature will be surveyed. As an example, a review of denture bases compared traditional PMMA and 3D printed resins based on a search using databases PubMed, Scopus, and Embase, including the literature published in the years 2018-2021. A total of 42 articles were found to meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria, targeting those studies that were related to conventional and 3D printed technology regarding removable dentures (Dimitrova et al., 2022). The other one evaluated post and core restoration CAD/CAM fabrication technologies in a search of PubMed, Web of Science, and Embase databases that included articles published between 1993 and 2023. Following the use of exclusion criteria, 73 articles containing relevant information were found in 168 initial confirmed titles (Dimitrova et al., 2024). It is a systematic review of generator AI and academic integrity in higher education based on databases such as ABI/INFORM, ACM Digital Library, IEEE Xplore and JSTOR and sources published January 2021 to December 2024. Strict inclusion and exclusion criteria were used in this review to identify 41 studies (Bittle and El-Gayar, 2025). On the same note, one systematic review of the adaptive clothing available to individuals with disabilities

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considered 51 articles in three academic databases with special keywords and establish specific inclusion/exclusion criteria (Rana et al., 2024). The literature review based on incorporating the microlearning/social media identified seven databases, such as, Scopus, Web of Science, ACM, EBSCOhost, PubMed, ProQuest, and IEEE, with no particular date limitation but with a filtering of English-language only publications. Of the original articles, 16 were chosen based on the use of inclusion/exclusion criteria, namely, 2312 articles (Denojean-Mairet et al., 2024). implementation usually covers such aspects as fidelity to the objective of the policy, effectiveness, engagement with stakeholders, a clear communication system, and infrastructure. Quality is also assessed in terms of rigor of development, applicability and independence. The quality and relevance of guidelines and implementations in different contexts are measured using evaluation tools, which can include the Appraisal of Guidelines for Research and Evaluation (AGREE II) and Mixed Methods Appraisal Tools (Shiferaw et al., 2024; Tangcharoensathien et al., 2021). The approaches of evaluating classroom practices usually involve both qualitative and quantitative methods, which are direct observation, interviews or surveys with the teachers and students, analysis of teach-back materials, and the results of their performance. The measures could be used to determine the nature and quality of instruction delivery, the involvement of the students, the compliance with pedagogical best practices (Suyo-Vega et al., 2024). It uses the methods of comparison to determine gaps between policy and practice by taking documented policy intentions and comparing them to their performance in an actual educational or clinical context. Smoked mirror of data sources (policy documents, stakeholder interviews and observational data) is a method of identifying gaps, inconsistencies or contextual factors that impede policy implementation. Thematic analysis of the qualitative results and bibliometric review of large volumes of literature may also be part of the method and help comprehend patterns (Jones et al., 2022; Tangcharoensathien et al., 2021). Therefore, a strict approach to literature review and a framed method of analysis can enable the researcher to analyze the policy implementation rigorously, examine classroom or practice reality, and find the gaps in them in order to make the things better in a future.

NATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICY IN PAKISTAN

Language Learning Objectives and Standards The policy has precise objectives devoted to the English proficiency as the essential skill to achieve success in educational and socioeconomic spheres. The knowledge of the English language is associated with a high-paying job and college education, which is why the role of the language is emphasized in the socio-political life of Pakistan. The goals focus on the competence in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in accordance with academic and professional needs. Critiques however have pointed out that these goals tend to favor the elite classes and even bolster linguistic imperialism which results in imbalances of access and achievement. Curriculum Recommendation and Teaching Approaches: The curriculum combines the communicative and task instructions to encourage learners to be engaged and to use real languages. Pedagogy techniques promote learner agency, dialogue and in situational language activities in line with the current models such as Communicative Language Teaching, Constructivist Learning

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Theory, and Task-Based Learning. Instructions are commonly designed using differentiated and personalized learning methods, which support the growth of students by engaging them in significant actions. Artificial intelligence like ChatGPT is becoming more popular in terms of its possible ability to facilitate the preparation of the lesson plans and deliver immediate feedback and promote language training in the classroom (Hatmanto and Sari, 2023; Meniado, 2023).

Assessment and Evaluation Methods: The practices of assessment are intended to evaluate both the linguistic competence and communicative effectiveness. Nevertheless, difficulties are still present as there is a great discrepancy between policy ideals and the reality of what practices entail which results in ineffective assessment and learning based on the tests. Teacher Assessment literacy is suggested as necessary in enhancing validity and competitiveness. These are summative and formative testing and language skills, real-world tasks, and performance-based tests. It is focused on matching assessment to curricular objectives that should help encourage learner-focused results instead of memorization (Islam et al., 2021). Ideally the National English Language Policy of Pakistan is designed in such a way that it has clearly stated learning outcomes, promoters of contemporary communicative pedagogies as well as assessment practices that are in tandem with curriculum directions. Nevertheless, equitable access and practice challenges are influenced by the sociopolitical factors and impacts in implementing them. It is perceived that incorporation of technology and teacher development program would be key to future enhancement. The English language policy formulation in Pakistan has several stakeholders such as government education agencies, learning institutions, teachers, students and parents, elite political forces, international bodies and local societies whose culture will influence the policy climate. The global trends that affected the policy are globalization which required English proficiency, language rights and multilingualism movements, international evaluation standards, integration of technological elements of education, and advancement of inclusive education. Local cultural factors involve the maintenance of indigenous languages, elimination of socio-economic difference in access, fraudulentness of the diverse as per religious and social conventions, recognition of historical linguistic mind sets and adjustment of the language ambiguity of the area. The policy outcomes focuses on desired improvements in the English language proficiency to help increase employment and education opportunities, meet international education standards, and provide equal access to the various socio-economic groups of people. Along with that, it should be mentioned that the policy is meant to facilitate national development by creating globalization, competitiveness, and balancing between English and retaining local languages and cultures, which will contribute to the presented factor to the emergence of multilingual, inclusive educational system that is sensitive to socio-cultural Pakistan (Gul et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2025; Macleod et al., 2021).

CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION REALITIES

The facts of classroom implementation in English language teaching include teaching, teacher readiness and encouragement as well as student experiences: Practices Concerning Teaching: noted to be typical in teaching practices are those which follow the communicative and task-based language teaching styles which involve

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participation and active collaboration of learners. Dialogic teaching which encourages the active discussions and shared building of knowledge has been proved to facilitate the acquisition of English vocabulary and phonological awareness amongst the various learners. Educators make use of different materials such as textbooks, audio visual materials and more and more materials are digital. The incorporation of technology in language instruction is becoming more popular, and language instructors use videoconferencing programs, teaching applications, and AI services like ChatGPT to plan their lessons, offer personalized feedback, and assist students in learning independently. Nevertheless, there are still difficulties with successful and fair technology implementation, and further adaptation of pedagogies is needed (Chow et al., 2021; Castaneda-Trujillo and Osorio, 2021; Chow et al., 2021; Wah and Hashim, 2021). Teacher Preparedness and Support: Teacher training programs are associated with pedagogical effectiveness enhancing the subject knowledge and classroom management confidence. Nevertheless, not all programs can prepare teachers regarding differentiation and use of modern technology at language classrooms appropriately. More recent changes like the emergency remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic identified the gaps in the teacher preparedness to digital teaching and constant professional growth. Better evaluation systems and institutional support of teacher identities, as well as continuous training especially focusing on the use of technology and inclusive pedagogy are being demanded. The obstacles are the necessity of balancing the research requirements with the teaching functions, not having much training in managing academic socio-emotional problems caused by the students, and the struggle to apply new policy directives to the specific classroom reality (Ou and Gu, 2023; Kosar, 2021; Olawale, 2024; Castaneda-Trujillo and Osorio, 2021).

Learner Engagement and Motivation Student experiences are positively affected by interactive and dialogic methods of teaching that would contribute to active learning and authentic communication. Language proficiency has better results when the learning is customized with the varying vocabulary and skill level. However, students also struggle to get motivated, and there is a difference in participation based on engagement in terms of language introduction and support. These two aspects of the dual nature of English as a gateway to socioeconomic opportunities and as a vessel of high expectations and testing pressures are manifested in student perceptions of English education. The mental health factors influence student engagement too, where teachers reported the necessity to have additional resources to meet the socio-emotional wellness of the learners in language classes (Deaton et al., 2022; Chow et al., 2021; Wong and Ortega, 2023). Recapping all the above, the successful realization of classroom interventions in English language teaching which will yield proper results would involve a combination of interactive pedagogues, the use of adequate teaching resources, and a prudent application of technology; intensive teacher training and continuous professional guidance; and consideration of the learner needs to build motivation and proficiency growth.

ANALYSIS OF THE DISCONNECT

Classroom realities and policy objectives have significant differences. Although it is common to find that polices have ambitious ambitious objectives in the form of

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inclusive and good quality teaching in English, challenges including lack of institutional support, teacher readiness and socio-economic limitation are practical barriers to the progression of policies. Self-reported competencies of teachers may be not related to their classroom practices, which is the contributor of a gap between planned policy outcomes and actual instruction (Jabri et al., 2025; Chung et al., 2024). Curriculum implementation is uneven wherein there is a challenge on the part of the teachers to introduce new pedagogical teachings like corpus-based language teaching or emergency remote teaching technology. Other contextual aspects such as poor access to technology and cultural differences influence educational implementation fidelity leading to skewed educational achievement (Chung et al., 2024; Castaneda-Trujillo and Osorio, 2021). In many cases, policy goals do not concur with the practice of assessment. The focus of assessments is more oriented on conventional testing procedures that cannot reflect communicative competence, inclusive teaching goals or socio-emotional abilities. The new points in the area like the ethical AI application in assessment make this inconsistency more complicated, meaning that modernized models, which represent the contemporary educational goals, are required (Bannister et al., 2023). In general, closing these issues will necessitate increased consistency of policy with classroom realities via increased teacher education, flexible curriculum integration based on local realities, and changes in assessment strategies to facilitate a comprehensive view of language competencies. The addition of English language education programs to policy development should include the inclusion of continuing classroom feedback to make it more relevant and effective. Socio-economic, cultural, institutional, administrative, and resource constraints (in infrastructure problems) are some of the factors that can be attributed to the disconnect in the English language education. The socio-economic inequality when marginalized or rural leads to barriers to access to good English learning and technological access as observed in Nepal where the measures to contain the COVID 19 pandemic aggravated the learning inequality among the students who are poorly placed in accessing English and digital devices. Attitudes towards language learning are also affected by cultural contexts and social conventions affecting the implementation of policies and student interactions. Lack of enough professional development, administrative, and flexible curriculums are also institutional barriers to effective teaching. One of the obstacles to language education policy and non-conventional pedagogies implementation is resource shortage, which is caused by the lack of technological infrastructure and other learning resources (Devkota, 2021; Jabri et al., 2025; Ramalingam et al., 2022). Aftereffects of this detachment entail adverse effects on the learning of the student population, where the differences in proficiency and motivation is generated through the unequal educational condition and quality of teaching. This disconnect between policy and practice not only worsens the readiness of student to meet the challenges of higher education, but also reduces the chances of employability by lack of conformity of curriculum and relevant skills. The connection between achievement motivation, academic performance and curriculum relevance to market demands has high correlation with employment, which implies that disconnection may reduce job attainment and job-skill fit among graduates. Educational targets to achieve inclusive high-quality competency in English consequently disadvantage national language education and curbs overall socio-

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economic growth and competitiveness in international markets. It is essential to widen the policies to improve sustainable learning outcomes and labor market integration by enhancing the aspect of these factors (Alimehmeti et al., 2024; Petruzziello et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022; Hadjeris, 2021).

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Comparative views of developing countries, they have faced similar problems with English language education that are characterized by lack of resources, as well as there is contradiction between formulation and implementation of policies, inflexibility in curriculum, social economic inequality, low level of technology and innovation. In most countries, there is a mismatch between the hype of the education policy and classroom realities because of institutional, infrastructural and cultural constraints meaning that access to language learning and its quality is not even. Effective models put special emphasis on the levels of stakeholder interactions, ongoing trainer capacity development, and strategic incorporation of ICT transformation to highlight the aspect of accessibility and quality in pedagogy. As an illustration, the experience of Argentina fits perfectly, reminding the reader of the importance of the federal systems with the ability to create the resilience of the policies enforced through the coordinated governance of the country, whereas the implementation of the electronic governmental practices in China reveals the strong advantages of adopting the digital technologies capable of revolutionizing the efficiency of providing the educational services. Participatory, inclusive policy-making methods enhance acceptability and practice via the environmental governance agenda, where the essence of inclusivity in policies and the application of these policies should be enhanced meaning that policy and practice should be tightly coupled and it is vital that communities are involved in policy making. The promotion of various governance tiers and agencies identified in comparative studies will build the institutional capacity and promote sustainable policy on the implementation of English language education policies in the unique linguistic and socio-cultural environment in Pakistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Revising of policies should be part of the policy refinement as it is necessary to make the policies as per the real life classroom practice by incorporating by both teachers and learners constant feedback. Adaptations should focus on the readiness to flexibility and cultural sensitivity towards the local socio-economic and linguistic settings. Contextualization strategies include decentralization of policy changes and curriculum development to regional and communities, inclusiveness and relevance. The structured cycles of data-owned policy review, consultation with stakeholders, and integration of new educational research and technological innovations should be created on a regular basis to keep the policy responsive and effective. Increasing the Implementation Strategies is associated with the improvement of teacher training and teacher support provision with the help of the continuous professional development aimed at the culturally responsive teaching and the real teaching skills. To enhance learning, relevant cultural teaching materials including background, and local contexts of the learners need to be developed to boost engagement and learning. Enhancing

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monitoring and evaluation procedures based on systematic, culturally sensitive evaluation frameworks and using digital resources to receive timely feedback will increase the quality of instructions and equity. Bridging the Gap entails encouraging policymakers and educators to work together in order to make the policies focus on the classroom needs and experiences of the practitioners. Promoting action research in language classrooms enables educators to transform and enhance the way of teaching according to the evidence and the reflection. The promotion of the culture of constant improvement by the professional learning community, the technology of telecollaboration, and innovative approaches to pedagogies contributes to maintaining the educational quality, and responsive teaching to changing needs of learners and technical progress. These all round solutions can make sure that the policies of English language education are designed and implemented in a way to achieve the improvements continuously to address needs and educational objectives of the diverse learners.

CONCLUSION

This review has provided a critical evidence to assert that the continued lack of coordination between the national policy of highest standard of pregnancy of the national English language policy in Pakistan and its implementation at the classroom level is not a issue of solitary consequential online failure to classroom instruction but a problem with systemic capacity gaps in historical legacies and socio-economic inequalities alongside ideological biases. Although the national policy frameworks present lofty ambitions as part and parcel of globalization, employability and international academic standards, the implementation of these frameworks are still unbalanced and unaffordable to students and teachers who may work in resource-scarce, multilingual, and rural environments. It has been shown that the growth of top-down policy-making, in conjunction with Anglo-normative views of proficiency and the preparation of teachers, the mismacement between assessment regimes and inadequate infrastructural provisions, are all contributing to the failure of the intended results of equitable and competent English language education. Therefore, English does not play a role as the instrument of empowerment and rather is the process that replicates the social stratification benefiting the already privileged groups, and discriminating those learners who do not have access to quality education and linguistic capital. Such policy-practice gaps are not also peculiar to Pakistan; comparative views confirm that, but there are other areas in the developing worlds that prove that participatory governance, long-term teacher professional growth, local curricula, as well as an integral incorporation of digital technology can go a long way in alleviating such impediments. The results highlight that effective reform necessitates a paradigm shift that awards inflexible and centralized policy implementation to flexible, context-sensitive and multilingualism that can also acknowledge local language contexts with appreciation as pedagogical resources, as opposed to as pedagogical shortcomings. This, to the policy makers, requires institutionalizing of systematic classroom monitoring, decentralized curriculum changes and vigorous monitoring systems into the policy cycles. To teachers and schools, it requires long-term commitment towards professional learning, culturally responsive pedagogy, assessment literacy and collaborative praxis-policy discourse.

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Empirical studies of the adaptations in the classroom level, teacher agency, and the learner outcomes at various regions within Pakistan should be the focus of future research to inform the evidence-based policy adjustments. Finally, the national policy of English language policy to be in accord with classroom reality is not simply an educational requirement but a social-economic and moral imperative; otherwise, until English language education aligns with classroom reality, individuals (as well as the nation at large) will remain aspirated in the vise of the so-called loss in translation, constrained in life opportunities and national goals of inclusive development and global competitiveness.

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