

Exploring the Problems of Elementary School Teachers after Taking on English as Medium of Instruction in District Sialkot

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Abstract

Aim of the study was to explore the problems faced by teachers teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science ensuing to taking on English as medium of instruction (MI) at grade 7 and 8. The research was mixed method in nature. All the teachers teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science at grade 7 and 8 of District Sialkot comprised the population of the study. Using stratified random sampling technique, a sample of one thousand five hundred Elementary school teachers was selected. The data were collected through a questionnaire constructed on five point Likert scale comprising 5 closed ended items related to perception of taking on English as (MI) and 2 open ended items related to tentative solutions to the problems. Stratified random sampling technique was used to collect data. The sample of the study comprised 1500 teachers 722 male, 778 female, 1208, rural and 292 respondents from urban areas teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English at grade 7 and 8. Frequency, percentage and independent sample *t* test were used to analyze the data. The research statistics showed that regardless of gender, teachers were facing problems in teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science after the change in (MI) from Urdu to English; the teachers of rural areas were facing more problems as compared to teachers working in urban schools. The research also revealed that change of (MI) from Urdu to English without any prior professional development trainings of teachers adversely affected their performance.

Keywords: professional development, elementary school teachers, English, medium of instruction

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Introduction

English is the most commonly used language of the modern world. It is used as lingua franca. English is one of worldwide spoken languages and enjoys the status of an international language. Its role in various spheres of life is prime and vital. All the genre of existing modern body of knowledge is available in this language. It contributes to the communication and research needs of scientific, technical, literary and economic fields.

Language as (MI) plays a vital role in the process of effective learning and teaching. As (MI), English is the source of information and body of latest knowledge which provides sources for higher and professional studies like medical sciences, natural and social sciences, engineering, computer, economics, finance, etc. Even in Pakistan, the importance of English as (MI) is undeniable (Mansoor, Skindar, Hussain & Ahsan, 2009). According to Rennie (2001) English as a (MI) provides a vast source of knowledge in different disciplines and means of communication among different communities. English as (MI) involves appropriate teaching strategies, communication, explanation of concepts and feedback from and to the students. Teachers generally aim at effective teaching to enhance learning and influence students' lives (Ganser & Johnson, 2005). Learning English is need of the hour. The prosperity of the country depends upon its trade relations with other nations. For business relations English as lingua franca is being used and economic gains are maximized. Taking on English language as (MI) is a way of empowering people towards economic gain and prosperity (Ayala, 2005). As English imparts an array of expression to learners, a person having command over English may communicate effectively to achieve the required objectives. By speaking English fluently and writing accurately, people can pursue white collar jobs. According to Mustafa (2012) it is imperative to take on English language as (MI) at all levels of education in order to compete in the international scenario.

English language as (MI) demands it's acquisition at every level of education as it embodies a vast range of knowledge (Clark & Peterson, 2001). In Pakistan elementary stage provides foundational level of education and implementation of English as (MI) should be from this very level which requires teachers who have command over English language. After taking on English as (MI), the teachers faced an additional challenge that also provided them the opportunity to learn English for the specific purpose of teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English language (Hudson, & Nguye, 2008).

Teachers are considered change agents; therefore, they are entrusted with the responsibility of implementation of educational reforms. Acquisition of English for particular purposes require, resources, time, and continuous training programs not only to get command over the subject matter but also to strengthen the grasp over effective communication skills and pedagogy (Mansoor, Skindar, Hussain, and Ahsan, 2009). Teachers who need to take on English as (MI) require proper training and refresher courses so that the teaching and learning process may be productively effective. In this context Australian National Science Standards Committee (2006) has recommended professional qualities like professional knowledge and professional practice for teachers who need to teach in English language.

Elementary education plays a key role in the future development of the students. It provides bases for the secondary, higher and professional education and prepares the youth for practical life. Knowledge at Elementary level accumulates through out to all the higher levels of education. Keeping the world wide progress in view and to bring Pakistan at par with the modern world, the Federal government decided to change (MI) from Urdu to English for teaching Mathematics, Social Studies and Science at elementary school level (Government of Punjab, 2009). This paradigm shift was initiated without any long term planning or training of the existing cadre of elementary school teachers. A report by ASER, 2011 revealed that merely twelve days teachers' training workshops were organized which failed to cater for teachers' preparedness, time frame for proper training and facilities for teachers and students alike.

The current workforce of Elementary teachers were not professionally trained to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English and also lack expertise in the language, therefore, they found it difficult to teach these subjects in English language. Furthermore, inadequate qualification and insufficient command over the content and subject matter also played a key role in augmenting the impediment for the teachers. Most of the teachers did not have command over the vocabulary to communicate ideas and concepts properly to the learners, they could not even pronounce the words correctly. As a result they failed to explain the ideas and concepts clearly which resulted in poor understanding on the part of students which prevented them from asking questions.

Though Pakistan is a multilingual society with four predominant regional languages i.e. Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto and Balochi, but English enjoys the central place of official language (Rehman, 1999). However,

among the literate population a variety is found regarding written and spoken English competence ranging from good to poor. Roach (2013) described that teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science required extra command over English to communicate concepts and technical terms.

The use of English as (MI) led to numerous problems for the in-service Elementary teachers. Although, Urdu or mother tongue was used to explain the technical terms in the classroom but it contradicted with the sole purpose of regarding English as (MI). The Elementary teachers of Social Studies, Mathematics and Science were often observed struggling with communication issues which asked for urgent solution for the implementation of English language as (MI). Overcrowded classes were also an obstacle in implementation of English as (MI). The teachers had to spend a lot of time in keeping the classroom discipline. ASER (2013) reported that a teacher had to teach more than 70 students in the class room at a time. A teacher needed more time to explain concepts and technical terms after take on English as (MI). Bohrnstedt (2009) observed that in smaller class rooms a teacher could pay more attention on the poor readers.

The demographic features including qualification, gender, teaching experience and location proved a hurdle in practicing English as a (MI). Most of the teachers at elementary level did not have proper qualification or proficiency to teach in English language. The Elementary school teachers belonging to rural areas had limited access to modern communication modes like internet, language libraries, and latest English language books. Inexperienced teachers lacked in depth knowledge of subject content to be delivered in the classroom. On the other hand students studying in elementary schools were also facing multiple problems i.e. poverty, diverse socio – economic status, illiterate communities, school schedule, lack of help from parents, etc.

Irrespective of their gender, the elementary school teachers were facing similar problems regarding teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English language. The location of the teachers significantly associated with acquisition of English as (MI) and performance in the classroom. Siddiqui (2013) mentioned that the teachers working in rural areas were facing more problems as compared to the teachers working in urban areas to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English

Although, female elementary level teachers are considered better as compared to their male counterparts but they found it difficult to avail the training opportunities held at away from their station of appointment.

According to Bashirudin, Bana & Afridi (2012) male teachers have more exposure and access to social interaction, mobility, and the internet and language libraries. Female teacher have limited movement and access due to different cultural and social taboos. That might affect the teachers' working capacity to prepare lesson prior to teach in the class room. According to Shah (2012) after the take on English as (MI) teacher did not prepare lesson prior to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English.

In the absence of proper training programs, continuous guidance, supportive material (A.V. aids explaining pronunciation concept and terminology of Mathematics, Social Studies and Science subjects in English), help from fellow English language teachers, language library and internet the teachers may not generate expected results. The textbook as a single source of knowledge cannot contribute to the acquisition of language and fulfill the basic demands of teachers in contributing to the standard of teaching learning process. According to Quraishi & Shamim (2012) in the absence of supporting material (language libraries, subject relevant books and A.V. aids) the teachers felt difficult to teach Mathematics, Social Studies and Science subjects in English. This current situation sparked the idea of exploring the teaching difficulties at elementary school level preceding the shift of (MI) from Urdu to English.

Statement of the Problem

In Pakistan it is generally perceived that taking on English as (MI) adversely affects the performance of teachers who teach Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science at elementary level; as these teachers have studied English as a second language throughout their academic qualification. Before this change in (MI), even professionally they never required proficiency in second language (English) which in the present situation is essential for teaching these subjects. This research was an attempt to explore the problems faced by these teachers of elementary schools.

Objectives of the study

This study was designed:

1. To measure the perceptions teachers about the change in (MI) from Urdu to English at grade 7 and 8
2. To explore the problems faced by teachers after taking on English as (MI) at grade 7 and 8
3. To find the difference in the perceptions of urban, rural, male & female teachers after taking on English as (MI) grade 7 and 8

Research Questions & Hypotheses

- RQ1: What are the perceptions of teachers teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science at grade 7 and 8 about change in (MI) from Urdu to English?
- RQ2: What different problems were faced by teachers to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science after take on English as (MI) at grade 7 and 8?
- RQ3: How can these subject teachers be facilitated to adjust to teach Social Studies and Mathematics and Science in English after take on English as (MI)?

The hypotheses of this study were as follows:

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male & female teachers at grade 7 and 8 subsequent to the change in (MI) from Urdu to English.
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of urban & rural teachers at grade 7 and 8 after change in (MI) from Urdu to English.

Significance of the Study

This study attempted to explore the perceptions of teachers at grade 7 and 8 after taking on (MI) as English. It might be helpful for teachers as this study revealed different kinds of language related problems faced by the teachers after the (MI) was changed from Urdu to English. It might also be helpful for the head teachers, curriculum and policy designers and teacher trainers in modifying their professional development programs regarding teaching of English as (MI) according to the problems faced by teachers in the context of taking on English as (MI).

Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to the teachers teaching in the public sector elementary schools located in district Sialkot (Pakistan). District Sialkot is a typical geographical entity representing Pakistan's general socio-economic and educational scenario.

Methodology

The population of the study comprised of 2580 (1140 male and 1440 female) working in all 245 public sector elementary schools of district

Sialkot. Stratified random sampling technique was used to take the sample. The sample of the study comprised 1500 teachers teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English at elementary schools. The sample included 722 (48.13%) male, 778 (58.9%) female, 1208 (80.5%), rural and 292 (19.5%) respondents from urban area.

The data were collected through a questionnaire constructed on 5 point Likert scale comprising of five close ended items and one open ended item. The validity of the scale was ensured through experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was checked in terms of Cronbach's alpha and found (0.76) within the acceptable limits. The collected data were compiled and tabulated.

Population

All 2580 teachers 1140 male (218 urban and 922 rural) and 1440 female (150 urban and 1290 rural) of 245 elementary, 86 boys (12 urban and 74 rural) and 159 girls (9 urban and 150 rural) at grade 7 and 8 comprised the total population of district Sialkot. The detailed population is given in table below:

Table 1

Tehsil wise gender and location of elementary schools and teachers of district Sialkot

Tehsils	No. of Schools				Total	No. of Teachers				Total
	Male		Female			Male		Female		
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	
Sialkot	7	22	6	56	91	94	270	108	520	1022
Daska	2	21	1	36	60	67	252	14	310	643
Sambrial	1	8	1	15	25	30	107	16	130	283
Pasrur	2	23	1	43	69	27	293	12	300	632
Grand Total	12	74	09	150	245	218	922	150	1290	2580

Source: School Education Department, Government of the Punjab

Sample of the Study

Random sampling technique was used to collect data. The sample of the study comprised 1500 teachers teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English at grade 7 and 8. The sample included 722 (48.1%) male, 778 (58.9%) female, 1208 (80.5%), rural and 292 (19.5%)

respondents from urban area. The details of the sample are given in the table below:

Table 2

Tehsil wise gender and location of elementary schools and teachers of district Sialkot

Tehsils	Male Teachers			Female Teachers			Grand Total
	Urban 1	Rural 2	Sub- Total	Urban 4	Rural 5	Sub- Total	
Sialkot	73 (78%)	159 (59%)	222	86 (88%)	226 (41%)	300	522
Daska	56 (84%)	152 (60%)	208	14 (100%)	175 (56%)	186	394
Sambrial	28 (93%)	80 (75%)	108	14 (88%)	97 (75%)	111	219
Pasrur	24 (89%)	165 (56%)	184	12 (100%)	169 (56%)	181	365
Grand Total	181	556	722	126	667	778	1500

Analysis of Closed Ended Items

Opinion of the respondent teachers teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science at elementary was analyzed through frequency and percentage.

Table 2

Perception of teachers at elementary level after taking on English as (MI)

Sr.No	Statement	level	frequency	percentage
1	After taking on English as (MI)..... in elementary classes.	SA	145	10.2
		A	216	14.7
		UC	112	9.1
		DA	610	40.1
		SDA	417	27.2
2	Taking on English as (MI) has adversely affected...English.	SA	965	63.8
		A	227	15.6
		UC	79	5.8
		DA	112	7.2
		SDA	117	7.5
3	English as (MI)..... as compared to Urdu	SA	482	32.1
		A	665	42.7
		UC	72	5.4
		DA	232	15.1
		SDA	69	4.6
4	All the teachers teach..... effectively	SA	151	10.1
		A	132	9.2
		UC	116	7.7
		DA	736	48.7
		SDA	365	24.6
5	Teachers ... English as (MI).	SA	148	10.1
		A	130	8.7
		UC	154	10.2
		DA	512	34.1
		SDA	556	37.1

Table 2 shows the results in frequencies, percentage of respondents. The results of Statement 1 “After taking on English as (MI) from Urdu to English, teachers face no difficulty in teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science at grade 7 and 8 ” show that a majority (67.2 %) disagreed while (24.8 %) agreed with the statement and (9.0 %) remained uncommitted. The result revealed that teachers were facing problems in teaching Science, social studies and Mathematics after taking on English as (MI).

Statement 2 “Taking on English as (MI) has adversely affected the teachers teaching Science, Social Studies and Math subjects in English” at grade 7 and 8 reveals that majority of (79.2 %) agreed, (5.8 %) were uncertain and (14.8 %) disagreed with the statement.

Further statement 3 “English as (MI) is difficult as compared to Urdu” finds that majority of (74.8 %) agreed, (5.3 %) uncertain and (19.8 %) disagreed with the statement.

The results related to statement 4 “All the teachers teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English effectively” shows that majority (73.3 %) disagreed, (7.5 %) were uncertain and (19.2 %) agreed with the statement.

The results of statement 5 “Teachers are not worried about English as (MI)” found that majority (71.1%) disagree, (10.0 %) uncertain and (18.7 %) agreed with the statement.

The perceptions regarding English as (MI) of the teachers of Social Studies, Mathematics and Science at grade 7 and 8 with respect to gender and location were compared through independent sample *t*-test.

Table 3

Gender (male/female) difference related to English as (MI)

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	df	t-value	Sig (p-value)
Male	695	216.38	20.806	2.570	1530	2.995	.109
Female	835	213.24	20.133				

■ = 0.05

Table 3 shows that t-value= 2.9 is significant at $p = .109$, which is much higher than the critical value ($\alpha = 0.05$) therefore, the difference is not significant. It proves that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female teachers of Social Studies, Mathematics and Science related to change of (MI) from Urdu to English. Thus H_0 is accepted i.e. regardless of gender teachers were facing problems in teaching Science, social studies and Mathematics after taking on English as (MI).

Table 4

Location (rural/urban) difference related to English as (MI)

Area	N	F	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-value	Sig(p-value)
Rural	1052	6.666	213.17	21.319	1530	-4.349	.010
Urban	478		218.08	18.196			

■ = 0.05

Table 4 shows t -value=-4.3 with $p=.010$ and $\alpha=0.05$, since the test statistic, ($p = .010$) is smaller than the critical value ($\alpha = 0.05$), therefore, the difference is significant. It establishes that there is significant difference between the perceptions of rural and urban elementary school teacher related to change of (MI) from Urdu to English. However, the mean difference shows that rural teachers were facing more problems as compared to the urban teachers of Social Studies, Mathematics and Science when teaching these subjects in English.

Analysis of Open Ended Items

Question No. 1

What kind of problems teachers teaching at grade 7 and 8 are facing to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English subjects after taking on English as (MI)?

Sample comprised of 1500 teachers. Teachers responded the two open ended questions. The information was arranged as percentage. Findings summarized on the basis of the information provided by the respondents are as follows.

1. After (MI) was changed from Urdu to English prior to any teachers training, 797 (53.1%) respondents complained that they were facing in teaching Science, social studies and Mathematics after taking on English as (MI).
2. Insufficient command over English language was complained by 679 (45.2%).
3. Results showed that 654 (43.6%) teachers revealed that students found it difficult to learn English as (MI) conveniently.
4. Due to deficiency in English, 639 (42.6%) teachers reported that the confidence level teachers had decreased.
5. As the syllabi for Social Studies, Mathematics and Science were too lengthy and difficult, 619(41.3%) teachers reported that it was difficult for the teachers to teach Science social studies and mathematics at elementary school level.
6. Taking on English as (MI) increased work load on teachers teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English complained by 596 (39.7%) teachers.

7. After taking on English as (MI) 584(38.7%) teachers opined that communication problems lessen interaction between students and the teachers in the class room to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science at elementary school level .
8. After change of (MI) from Urdu to English, 573 (38.2%) teachers complained that students found it difficult to understand the subject matter of Social Studies, Mathematics and Science subjects in English which further promoted cramming among the students.
9. Change of English as (MI), 556(37.1%) teachers opined that teaching Science Social Studies and Mathematics in English made the teaching sluggish and syllabus covered in time.
10. Overcrowded classes were an obstacle to implement English as (MI) 545(36.3%) teachers reported.
11. To teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English after the take on English as (MI), 529(35.3%) teachers opined that teachers were not facilitated with supporting material (relevant books, hand books, the internet and A.V. aids)
12. Aspired for proper professional development training, 517(34.5%) teachers revealed that in order to adjust to the new (MI) (English) and if the training is not possible then the (MI) may be reverted back Urdu.
13. Taking on English as (MI) 509(34.0%) teachers revealed that, change of (MI) increased the cost of education as students had to take tuitions to cover the deficiency in the subject of study.

Question No. 2

How can these subject teachers be facilitated to adjust to teach Social Studies and Mathematics in English after take on English as (MI)?

1. Continuous teachers training programs.
2. Teachers maybe facilitated with supporting material (relevant books, hand books, the internet and audio visual aids to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English.
3. Teachers aspired for proper professional development training in order to adjust to English as (MI) and if the training is not possible then the (MI) may be reverted back to Urdu.
4. Number of students in a class room limited to 20-25.

Discussion

Compiled data revealed that teachers faced problems after taking on English as (MI) to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science at elementary level. Teachers found English difficult as (MI) as compared to Urdu. Irrespective of their gender, the elementary school teachers were facing similar problems regarding teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English language. According to (Siddiqui, 2013) rural teachers were facing more problems as compared to the urban teachers to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English after change of (MI) from Urdu to English.

Mansoor, Skindar, Hussain, and Ahsan (2009) observed that after take on English as (MI) from Urdu to English reduces the level of interaction in the class room to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English. As the step was taken prior to proper professional development training, the teachers were worried about coping with the change in (MI). Change in (MI) from Urdu to English adversely affected the perceptions of elementary school teachers teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science as the teachers found it difficult to teach Science, Social Studies and Mathematics in English at elementary school level. Teachers did not prepare lesson before teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English. Teachers' disinterest in preparing lesson plans has also been reported by (Shah, 2012). The findings of the open ended question revealed that the teachers aspired for proper professional development training in order to adjust to the new (MI) (English) and if the training is not possible then the (MI) may be reverted back Urdu. Quraishi & Shamim (2012) reported that in the absence of supporting material (language libraries, subject relevant books and A.V. aids) the teachers felt difficult to teach Mathematics, Social Studies and Science subjects in English. Regardless of gender teachers faced problem in teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English. Bohrnstedt (2009) observed that in smaller class rooms a teacher could pay more attention on the poor readers. Overcrowded classes was another cause to in implement English as (MI). The teachers had to spend a lot of time in keeping the classroom discipline. ASER (2013) reported that a teacher had to teach more than 70 students in the class room at a time.

Conclusions

Conclusions drawn from the findings of the study showed that the use of English language as (MI) was complex as compared to Urdu.

Taking on (MI) from English to Urdu adversely affected the teachers teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science subjects at grade 7 and 8. Taking on English as (MI) increased the class work of the teachers at elementary level. Due to disturbance in communication with the students in the class the teachers lost their confidence level while teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English. Taking on English as (MI) had unfavorably affected the teachers at elementary level teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and Science. Teachers could not explain technical terms, concept and ideas of Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English easily. Due to lack of teachers' training, understanding of the content matter of Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English had not been enhanced after the change of English as (MI). Due to lack of interest, efficacy, training and work load teachers at grade 7 and 8 found it difficult to prepare lessons to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science

During the working day at school, teachers showed lack of interest to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science subjects in English continuously. As teachers could not explain term and ideas properly that made lectures of the teachers difficult for the students to understand. After taking on English as (MI), even literate parents found it difficult to help their children in their studies. Taking on English as (MI) increased cost of education as students had to take tuitions to cover the deficiency in the subjects of study. Teachers and the students could not interact and converse properly after taking on English as (MI).

Recommendations

In the light findings of the present study following are the recommendations:

- i. Continuous teachers training programs for teachers to teach English as second language for teaching Science, Social Studies and mathematics at elementary school level..
- ii. Teachers may be facilitated with supporting material (relevant books, hand books, the internet and Audio visual aids) to teach Social Studies, Mathematics and Science in English.
- iii. In order to adjust to the new (MI) proper professional development training of the teachers may be conducted and if the training is not possible then the (MI) may be reverted back Urdu.

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