

Starting Compulsory English Early in Pakistan: A Study of Newly Emerged Scenario in the Light of TEYL Principles

Muhammad Sabboor Hussain^{1*}

¹ Head, English Language Research Team, Preparatory Year Program, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia

* Muhammad Sabboor Hussain, E-mail: rajasaboor@hotmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to describe and analyse complex and important issues surrounding the new scenario that has emerged after compulsory English has been introduced from class-1 in Pakistan. This paper attempts to explore these vital issues in the light of TEYL principles. A literature review of the problem is presented enumerating the TEYL principles to provide a proper theoretical framework to administer research tools for collection of relevant data. Both qualitative and quantitative research tools have been administered viz., interviews, observations, and survey on the target population. In order to highlight the advantages of starting English early in Pakistan and get the optimum benefits from this change, this paper provides some suggestions and recommendations. We must train and prepare the teachers and the schools so that they may cope with the new scenario, in a professional and planned way. This paper mainly focuses on highlighting the problems emerging in the new scenario to the forefront. Limited scope does not allow the researcher to provide practical solutions to the problem at length. It does, however, open areas of research for the future researches and researchers. This paper tends to engage the teachers, administrators, policy makers to focus on the complexities of TEYL to make the change in the policy a real success. The culture of the classrooms, teaching and learning could be transformed towards betterment by funding the researchers to focus on this issue. The hiring, training and evaluation of school instructors could also be impacted in this way. The paper begins with an overview of previous researches bringing out the TEYL principles on the forefront focusing on the definitions, explanations and argumentation on this theme. It then focuses on the target population viz., the teachers and students to find out the ground realities, opinions, perceptions, apprehensions and suggestions, and then moves on to give recommendations.

Keywords

ELT, young learners, early compulsory English, young vs. adult learners, TEYL principles

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In continuation of many Educational reforms in Pakistan, a reformative move of starting compulsory English early was made in recent times and English was introduced from class-1 instead of class-6. There was immense social and political pressure on the people at the helms of affairs ever since the independence of the country in 1947. The leaders deeply rooted in the people in the real sense have always had the political will of addressing this important issue in the language education development in Pakistan; however, bureaucratic hurdles and red-tappism have been great hurdles in this regard. The place of English in language education has always played a politicized role in determining the success of learners from the upper strata of society. All the competitive exams and interviews are held in English language. The private schools for the affluent class would start compulsory English early and give a clear competitive edge to the rich class over the middle/poor class who would start compulsory English in class-6. Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to highlight the implications of the move in starting compulsory English earlier in the government sector. The study, therefore, intends to contribute to the implementation stage of the changed policy.

1.2 Problem Statement

TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners) has entered the domain of Applied Linguistics in recent times. Its significance is acknowledged all over the world now. The young learners, who are admitted to the schools, have an inbuilt and inborn capacity of absorbing the language inputs available to them in and outside the classroom. As they get transformed into adult learners, their intuitive and unconscious absorbing capacity usually reduces though it gets compensated by experience. The adult age does bring wisdom and knowledge through experience and observation, but for the acquisition, improvement and development of the skills particularly the language skills, the prime and proper time is the young age. There has been a growing awareness about this in Pakistan as well, where, in recent times, a major shift has taken place. As per new education policy, compulsory English has been introduced from class-1 in all private and government schools. Prior to this, in government schools, English would be started from class 6th. Many associated complex and important issues surrounding this new scenario have emerged as a result. There is dire need to explore and analyze these complex but vital issues from all the possible angles and dimensions. In order to enhance the advantages of this shift resulting into a changed paradigm, efforts must be made to reduce the risks involved to the bare minimum.

There is a refreshing realization everywhere in the world in general and in Pakistan in particular to start English language teaching at an early stage. In Pakistan, English is considered an essential requirement for progress. English is the language of international communication, higher learning and better career options in Pakistan. It should, therefore, reach the masses so that there is no discrimination among the rich and poor in Pakistan in term of opportunities for personal, professional and economic development. This demands a careful, well planned and well directed policy which needs to be implemented with great care and caution.

English has been introduced from class-1 now in Pakistan. It has resulted in new researchable issues. There is dire need to deeply analyze the whole perspective of this change: the circumstances which forced it, the situation before it and the present situation after bringing this change in the schools in Pakistan. The principles of TEYL provide a proper theoretical framework through which a deep qualitative probe can be carried out into this newly emerged scenario.

Keeping in view the possible problems resulting from the sudden shift to compulsory English education from class-1 in public schools in Pakistan, it is important to reach the conclusion as to how beneficial this shift may be and how it can be made so if it is not. There is a need to analyze this newly emerged scenario in totality in the light of major TEYL principles for the benefit of all the stakeholders involved.

2. Literature Review

Following is the review of major TEYL principles relevant to the present research study. This section of the study intends to provide a sound philosophical and theoretical framework as well as a guidance to all the stakeholders involved in the new policy of starting English education early in Pakistan.

First Principle: Awareness of YL's Cognitive and Social Development

Children development study runs parallel with the study of young learners' growth in learning. "Teachers need a strong understanding of children's social and cognitive development as well as a good understanding of theories of second language acquisition in order to teach effectively: a child of three will be very different from a child of five or seven and classroom approaches that are suitable for the latter will not be so for the former" (Copland & Garton, 2014). In order to study the perspective of English language teaching to young learner, there is, therefore, a need to study the child development. This will help understand the requirements for teaching them effectively at such an early stage.

The characteristics of a young child/learner as stated by Piaget and Vygotsky explain how children learn and make sense of the world. Piaget sees the child as an active learner and thinker who actively tries to make sense of the world (Donaldson, 1978), and constructs knowledge from working with objects or ideas. Vygotsky (1978) finds the child an active learner and thinker who uses language as a tool for learning and development, and constructs knowledge from other people by interacting with them. Therefore, adults/teachers should work actively to improve child's development (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, 2004). In this regard, Vygotsky presents the theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), i.e., the difference between the child's capacity to solve problems on his own, and his capacity to solve them with assistance. According to Vygotsky (1978), an essential feature of learning is that it awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is in the process of interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Therefore, when it comes to language learning, the authenticity of the environment and the affinity between its participants are essential elements to make the learner feel part of this environment. These elements are rarely predominant in conventional classrooms (Schutz, 2002). Therefore teaching language to young

learners should be innovative and eclectic taking into account the cognitive and social development of the young learners.

Second Principle: YLs Must not be Treated as Adults

Young learners possess some unique characteristics which distinguish the learning process in them from that in the adult learners. Maria Jose Lobo (2003) gives a very comprehensive description of the characteristics of young learners. Young learners are very receptive, curious and motivated. They are able to pick up new sounds accurately. They are spontaneous and willing to participate enthusiastically. They are not only physically active and interested on themselves and on what is here now, but also deeply involved in the world of fantasy and imagination. They are highly linked and attached to the teacher in developing their personality. They tend to learn by doing. The young learners do have some peculiar issues which demand special attention: they cannot concentrate for a long time, do not analyze the language, are happier with different materials depending on the natural language they have on the different intelligences, and cannot remember things for a long time if they are not recycled. It is believed that the materials designed and strategies developed keeping in mind these characteristics of young learners make the learning process more effective, meaningful and productive.

As per TEYL principles, the teachers teaching English to age group 3-16 must have an attitude towards the whole teaching learning process different in many ways from that of the teachers teaching English to adults. The young learners need more of sense of security and seek more pleasure giving activities. The teachers are required to be more sensitive to the moods of the young learners given under their charge. The young learners are more enthusiastic and lively than the adult learners. They are mostly seen and observed busy in the process of developing their own learning strategies. Therefore, they need good English language models. Moreover, all of them may not respond to an activity in the same way. Therefore, each of them needs individual attention from the teachers. They are more open and cooperative to their peers. They are required to be engaged in a variety of more meaningful group activities rather than being lectured in a traditional way. The traditional lecture method switches their minds off. Thus, young learners need to be kept in the small classes for the meaningful learning and purposeful teaching. Large and crowded classes kill their creativity and send them to higher/college level as spoiled individuals.

Child learning differs from that of adult. It is only after the age of 15 that they become capable of reasoning like adults. Piaget (the school of cognitive theory) finds intelligence the basic mechanism ensuring equilibrium in the relations between the person and the environment (Piaget, 1950). He is of the view that children primarily learn through imitation and play throughout the first two stages, i.e., from infancy to age 7, as they build up symbolic images through internalized activity (Herbert & Sylvia, 1969). Therefore, the teachers in the primary schools are required to be sensitive to the learners' need and be able to make teaching a fun activity. In other words, teachers teaching the young learners have a different role to play as compared to the teachers teaching the adult learners. B.F. Skinner, the founder of Behaviorism claims that all behavior is learned consciously and that humans enter the world with no

innate abilities. His famous quote runs as, “Give me a child, and I’ll shape him into anything” (Fodder, 1975). The teachers dealing with young learners need to understand their important relationship with their learners. However, if the school teachers’ own self and social image is low, they cannot realize the strength of the shaping hands they have for the new buds given under their charge.

Third Principle: Careful Choice of Right Strategy to Teach the YLs

Language plays a very vital role in a child’s mental growth. Bruner (1990) discusses the importance of language as a tool for cognitive growth. Like Vygotsky, Bruner also focuses on the importance of language in a child’s cognitive development. He has investigated how adults by using language can become the mediators between the child and the world. Adults use scaffolding to guide child’s learning through finely-tuned talk. According to Bruner’s studies on American parents and children (Cameron, 2001), parents who scaffold effectively create interest in the task: they break the task down into smaller steps; keep the child on task by reminding him of the purpose or goal; point out the important parts of the task; control the child’s frustration during the task, and model the task, including different ways to do the task. In the school, the role is played by the teachers who, through in-service and pre-service training, learn strategies to build connections between the brains of the learners and the real world in their own particular surroundings.

Chomsky has given the concept of critical age in relation to acquisition and learning. According to Chomsky (Luteral, 2009), till the critical age, it is acquisition and once the critical age passes, it is learning. In this way, the teachers teaching language to the young learners are facilitating the acquisition process and not the learning process. The human brain keeps these grammar switches flipped for a few years only. This span of time when the switches are on is known as the critical period. If a child is not exposed to language during this time, he or she may never be able to develop language normally.

Fourth Principle: Motivating the YLs to Learn the Target Language

Can just lowering the age for compulsory English education guarantee the efficient learning in young learners? We all believe that children can learn languages more easily. Intuitively we believe this because we have all witnessed the ease with which our children learn their first language (L1). However, it is not that simple. Although children may use similar processes for acquiring L1 and L2, the setting for L1 and L2 acquisition can be quite different. L1 environment provides learners, who are highly motivated, with highly contextualized language which is spoken in the real world and thus is authentic. L2 environment, in contrast, has learners who may not be highly motivated, and the language they are exposed to is more de-contextualized and tends to be artificial in the classroom. Therefore, it is important to remember that an early start alone will not necessarily improve children’s ability to learn English. It is also very important that L2 instruction presents language structures within a context that is meaningful and gives learners plenty of practice using them communicatively. “While much of the research focuses on formal learning environments, we should not ignore the opportunities children have, even in what is traditionally called an EFL environment, to use English outside the classroom”

(Copland & Garton, 2014). The teachers need to be vigilant enough to address all these issues in time and change these challenges into opportunities in a befitting manner.

Introducing English to young learners may not be more advantageous than teaching English to adult learners in some ways. There are theories and research studies on second language acquisition which point out both the advantages and drawbacks of introducing English language to the young learners. Cameron (2001) finds that young learners can be easily motivated because they are keen, enthusiastic and uninhibited. But adult learners are at an advantage in another way compared with younger learners. They are better placed in formal learning of grammar in instructional settings (Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979). Ellis (1994) explains that adult learners have an initial advantage as far as the rate of learning is concerned, particularly grammar and morphology. Lightbown and Spada (1999) advise the teachers and the policy makers to pay special attention to the needs, motivation and contexts of different groups of learners. They recommend that if the required goal is the native like fluency then the learners should be made to have an early start at learning the language. On the contrary, if the goal is just the communicative ability, the benefits from an early start are not very clear. Programs for YLs need to be carefully planned, adequately supported and resourced, and closely monitored and evaluated (Nunan, 1999). Effectiveness of YL program depends on many factors like status of English, goals of English education, the role of motivation, exposure to English, training of teachers, and continuity of curriculum from primary to secondary levels (Pinter, 2006). Therefore, a proper transitional coordination between school education and college stage is direly needed. There are big names in the field of Applied Linguistics like Stephen Krashen, who do not believe in any distinction between learning and acquisition. Stephen Krashen (1981) believes in the natural approach. He declares that even adult learners can acquire a language if the linguistic input is made interesting, comprehensible, and presented in a natural and unconscious way.

Fifth Principle: Properly Trained Teachers to Teach the YLs

After English has been started earlier in education in Pakistan, the major problem that has surfaced is lack of trained teachers. There are many possible make shift arrangements. Hu (2007), for example, describes how the Chinese government has attempted to address the shortage by recommending the following measures:

- 1) Primary school teachers of other subjects who had some English background should be trained to teach English;
- 2) English teachers should teach across a number of schools;
- 3) Retired English teachers from both primary and secondary schools should be employed; and
- 4) Class advisors or teachers of other subjects should be used to organize students for activities such as watching English videos or listening to cassettes.

In Pakistan, there was no proper preparation to carry on this change in the field. The teachers teaching English to these children or the young learners were no new teachers. The teachers engaged in teaching other subjects earlier were now made to teach English to these young learners. Later, new teachers were

hired for the purpose and they have been teaching the young learners without any pre-service teacher training. Teaching YLs requires pre-service training and in-service refresher courses. Only in this way, the teachers can acquire specialized skills for involving the young learners in the real learning. Thus, the teachers need to have a thorough knowledge of young learners' psychological and emotional development as it is direly desirable for effective teaching/learning at this level.

Sixth Principle: Developing Suitable Curriculum to Teach YLs

Copland and Garton (2014) rightly point out that there remains a lack of classroom-based studies, and "young learners", in general, remains an under-researched area when it comes to what to teach and how to teach the young learners. The benefits of starting English early in Pakistan will remain uncertain until right curriculum is developed and right approaches, methods and techniques are adopted. There is a dire need to carry on child centered researches in this regard. It is also equally important to assimilate young learners' social backgrounds into the curriculum and teaching methodology. "We know too little about effective pedagogies for teaching YLs, particularly in classrooms. The belief drawn from bilingual or immersion contexts that children are like sponges and will soak up English is not tenable when transferred to contexts where children have very limited input and this input is in large group settings. While in some contexts pedagogy seems to comprise games and songs, in others, children are expected to sit for long periods of time doing comprehension-type activities and grammar exercises" (ibid, p. 64). There is a dire need to conduct empirical studies and researches to reach the right curriculum to teach English to the young learners in Pakistan. The snag is that the teachers teaching the young learners are so poorly paid that they cannot even think of carrying on the research activities on their own.

3. Research Methodology

The research at hand is basically qualitative as it tends to get a deeper understanding of the issue under study. A qualitative research mainly focuses on the observation of the participants' behavior in their particular setting to understand realities experienced by them as the insiders. This also comes under the umbrella of action research since the researcher also considered his own experiences, first as a learner and then as a teacher, at various levels along with the results gained in the research to draw conclusions for the present study. I visited ten schools (five in private sector and five in government sector) and five colleges in Rawalpindi and Islamabad from where the data was collected. All in all, the present study is basically based on the mixed research method approach to serve the validation and triangulation purposes.

The researcher conducted a survey with the target and affected population. Fifty carefully chosen teachers (twenty five from government sector and twenty five from private sector schools) were made to respond to the following survey:

Table 1. Survey from the Teachers

No.	Questions	Options
1	What do you think are the major causes of students' failure in the subject of English in BA/BSc?	a. Aggregate System of Marking b. Poor Evaluation System c. Poor English Language Teaching Techniques, Methods and Approaches d. Poor English Teaching at Primary Level e. Annual Examination System
2	Do you think the policy of starting compulsory English early has proved to be very beneficial?	Yes/No
3	Do you think the system, the administration and the syllabus force you to focus on teaching the language system, and not the language functions?	Yes/No
4	Do you think there should have been planned reforms in the educational policy to meet the challenges of starting compulsory English early in Pakistan?	Yes/No
5	Do you think it is necessary to give teachers pre-service and in-service training to cope with the scenario that emerged due to starting compulsory English from class-1?	Yes/No

To supplement the quantitative tool of survey, following questions for interviews were designed. Five teachers and ten students randomly selected from schools and colleges were interviewed.

Table 2. Interview Questions from the Teachers and Students

Sr. No.	Questions
1	How do you see English language teaching in general in Pakistani schools and college?
2	What do you think is the contribution of private English medium schools in this regard?
3	Do you think the introduction of English compulsory subject from class 1 in all schools has helped improve the standard of English language among our students?
4	Are there any challenges in making this policy work efficiently? And how do you think these challenges can be met?
5	Any other opinion or suggestions in this regard?

To bring further qualitative depth in the study and to triangulate it, the researcher observed the classes

of four teachers (two from the government sector and two from the private sector). For this purpose, following observation sheet was used:

Table 3. Observation Sheet for the Teachers

Sr. No.	Observation Point	Remarks	Examples
1	Is the teacher well prepared?		
2	How is the classroom arranged?		
3	How many students are there?		
4	What teaching methodology is followed?		
5	Is the teacher a good role model of English for the students?		
6	What is teacher's pronunciation like?		
7	How is teacher's own English language skills?		
8	What kind of activities are conducted?		
9	How does the teacher respond to students' questions and queries?		
10	How do the students feel?		

4. Discussion/Data Analysis

Following is the qualitative analysis of the data based on the survey, interviews, observation, and the comparative study of the newly emerged scenario after starting compulsory English early in private sector and government sector schools in Pakistan. The data from the survey, interviews and observations have been juxtaposed to get a clear and vivid picture of the whole scenario emerging after English education has been started earlier in Pakistan, in the light of TEYL principles.

The young learners have been defined in various ways. In Pakistani context, the term young learners can be used mainly for the group from preschool learners to secondary school learners. It refers roughly to the age group 3-16. The teachers dealing with the age group of 3-14 are from school side. From the age of 15, most of Pakistani students enter colleges, and are given under the charge of college lecturers. Hence, not only the school teachers but also the college lecturers and professors teaching 1st year classes need special training in TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners).

In Pakistan, only the private English medium schools were giving compulsory English education from the pre-school stage in the past. But, now the government has made it compulsory for all private and public schools (Pakistan development Forum, April 2005). Private English medium schools would arrange for highly qualified and well trained teachers and students coming to them from rich class would pay high fee. This caused socio-political restlessness in Pakistan to a great extent.

There have been some important factors forcing the educators to demand the lowering of the age for

compulsory English in Pakistan. The focus has shifted to the young learners due to the fact that merely focusing on the adult language learners has not paid off as much as was expected or anticipated. It is quite evident in the poor results of intermediate and degree students in Pakistan every year. Only in 2007, more than 90 per cent of the students appearing in MA English examination failed. The total number of students appearing in MA English Part-I Examination 2007 was 9068 but only 1477 of them could successfully pass while the overall pass percentage was merely 16.3 per cent. Moreover, the same year, more than 100,000 students of BA/BSc could not get through in the annual examination of the compulsory subject of English conducted by the Punjab University. In addition, even in the year 2014, the result of BA/BSc announced by the Punjab University has shown a very sad picture. Overall 37.69% pass percentage itself shows that a large majority of students appear for their BA/BSc examinations but fail to qualify. 89% of unsuccessful students failed in English Language. These results evince the need to focus on better teaching English language strategies and policies from the very beginning of educational years of the students in Pakistan.

The stakeholders have expressed varied opinions about the reasons of the ever increasing failure percentage in MA and BA in the subject of English in Pakistan. A vast majority of the principals of the colleges, identified as poor-performing institutions in the backdrop of BA/BSc annual examinations for 2009, have considered the shortage of teaching staff and a lack of interest among faculty members and students in teaching/learning process as the main reason: most of the poor performers have failed in English either because of their lack of exposure to language learning or inability in the language and limited resources of their teachers to impart knowledge of the subject (DAWN, 2009). These justifications are probably oversimplifications of an issue which needs to be explored in great depth from all possible dimensions. The following figure shows how the target population for the present study—the teachers—views the major causes of failures in the subject of English.

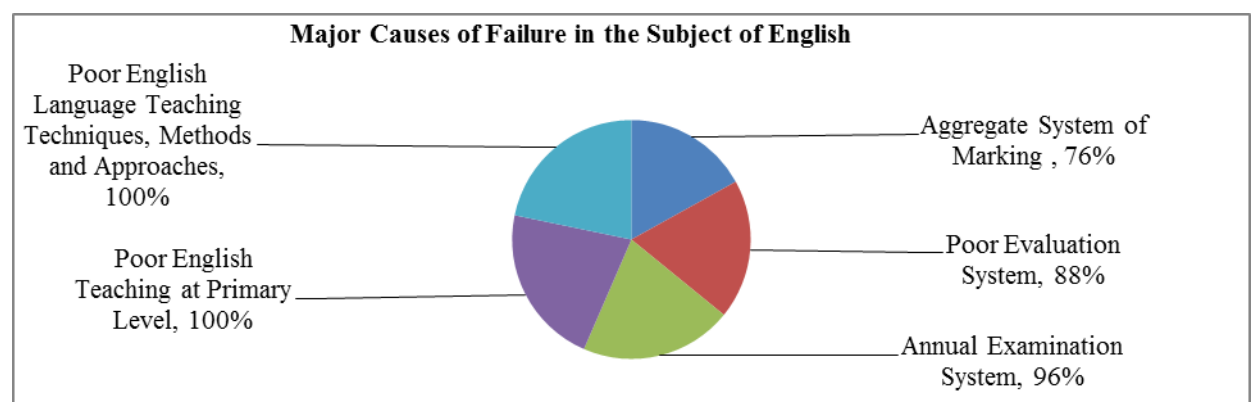


Figure 1. Teachers' Responses to Survey Item-1

It was found out that all the students in their interview responses blamed the authorities for not teaching English adequately at primary level. A high school student expressed himself in these words, "*they (the*

high class) want their monopoly. They want their children to rule on us always. If we are not taught English the way children of the rich are taught, (the) rich will become richer and (the) poor will become poorer in this country”. Moreover, they expressed their dejection on the ill English language teaching methodologies even at the secondary and higher level. A teenager young learner said, “*why doesn't the government pay good salaries to the teachers. All government teachers teach in private academies in the evening in a wonderful way. If they are paid well, they will work hard in their regular job instead*”.

Almost all the academicians, educationists and theorists in Pakistan are of the view that the major reason for this deterioration in the teachers and learners should be traced in the poor schooling system in Pakistan, more so in the government sector: the poor English language teaching at school level eventually leads to the ultimate deterioration in the standard of higher education especially in English language and literature. Thus, they claim that overall standard of English deteriorates right from the beginning. The main causes for deteriorating standards of English as a subject are enumerated as the burdensome teaching methodology, poor classroom instructions and incompetent or ill-trained English language teachers. Next, the situation gets intense because of the dichotomy between the government schools and private English medium schools. The government schools impart education through Urdu as the medium of instruction though English as a subject is also taught. In contrast, almost all the private schools use English as the medium of instruction, where all subjects are taught in English. Such instructional scaffolding as theorized by the renowned linguist, Stephen Krashen, is found in some of the private schools, and is seriously lacking in the government sector.

It is a common observation now that the government school teachers, who teach the subject of English, do not have the required communicative competence in English language. When the researcher approached the college teachers on the issue, they expressed their disgust on the standard of the students coming to them after successfully getting through the secondary school examination. They complained that the students were habitual of cramming and were unable to develop the critical and analytical abilities required for passing the examinations at higher level, especially in the English subject. There is no doubt that the development of students' poor learning abilities at school level, at the age when they are young enough to acquire all the required skills, is greatly responsible for the higher percentage of failures at BA/BSc and MA in English levels.

In one of the interviews, the chairperson Punjab University, Department of English Language & Literature took the side of the other academicians on the claim that overall standard of the subject of English is deteriorating right from the primary level and expressed her views in these words, “*this starts from school level and culminates in MA*”. She was of the opinion that the students who could make up till MA level were not well prepared; therefore, they could not perform well in the exams and failed. She added, “*our students are not dull but they are not prepared well*”. She also admitted that there were many loopholes and flaws in the examination system. She explained that there was no perfect system. She was of the view that the teaching community especially at primary level should be

improved as the first step towards rectification.

The educationists and the educational policy makers meditated on all these problems and issues on different forums and occasions. As a result, the government of Pakistan decided to focus on the young learners to improve overall English teaching/learning scenario. In 2009, it was decided that the English language must be taught from class-1 onward. The scenario changed all of a sudden in all government schools, as the teachers started teaching English to the children from class-1.

There was a pressing need to transform and reform the policy. Following responses from the teachers reflect this quite vividly.

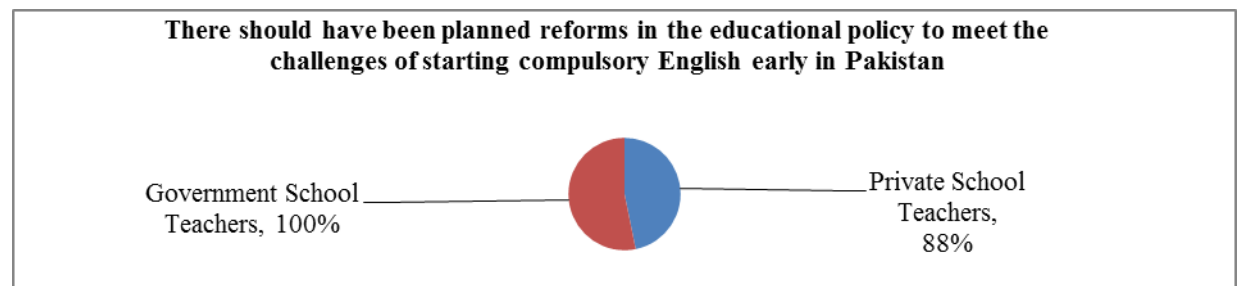


Figure 2. Teachers' Responses to Survey Item-2

The reform was brought but in a rather haphazard manner. Mr. ZA in a government school opines in the following way. In all public schools, the change has been made all of a sudden, *“one morning when I went to the school, I was told about the change. It was so sudden that we have not overcome the panic so far”*. The change needs careful planning, adequate support and resources, and close monitoring and evaluation and arrangements. Without proper planning and adequate support, the initiative, however well intentioned, is likely to be counterproductive (Nunan, 1999). While observing different classes in the schools in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, it was found that there were some baffled teachers in the crowded classes trying to teach in a rather haphazard and ill planned manner. The series of systematic observations and responses by the teachers to the survey and their responses in the interviews revealed that the sudden introduction of English subject at class-1 has been made without proper planning and preparation. Not having proper training and skills required for the said purpose, they felt so insecure that they were reluctant in allowing the researcher to visit and observe their classes. They are struggling hard to cope with the new situation. There seems to be no support for them from the system and administration.

In fact, the teachers are not well trained and qualified enough to handle the young learners in English language classes especially as the following data reflects this quite vividly.

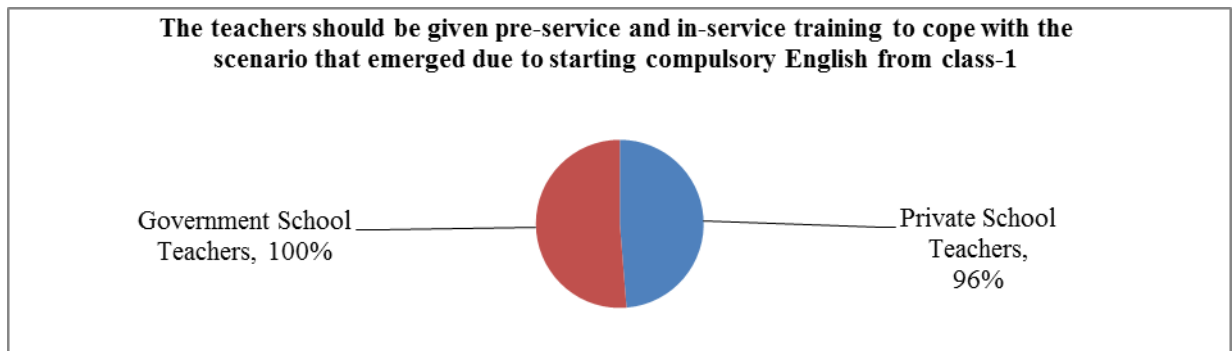


Figure 3. Teachers' Responses to Survey Item-3

During the interviews with the students on the issue at hand, the students also pointed out another sad dimension of the deteriorated situation. They commented that the teachers teaching them English in the schools and even in some colleges could not speak English fluently and accurately, so how they could develop the English language skills in the learners and be the perfect role model for them. One of the student in the matriculation class told how they were being taught, *"the teacher comes in the class five minutes late, takes attendance in next five minutes, tells the summary of the lesson in Urdu, doesn't let the students speak at all on the name of class discipline, chats for some more time in Urdu and gives the exercises as homework"*. This is one scenario where we find excessive GTM (Grammar Translation Method). The situation is more alarming in the primary section.

In most of the government primary schools, the teachers cannot communicate in English, and cannot even pronounce the English words properly written in the books. Some such examples are "water /wa:tər/", "main gate /mæn geit/", "imagine /iməɡain/", "determine /detərmain/", "interrogative /interəʊgeitiv/", "phone /fu:n/", "melody /mələudi/", "career /kæriər/" and "school /əsku:l/". As a result, the young learners are given the wrong models to follow for their initial English language development, and adopt the unfavorable habit of cramming everything coming from their teachers.

Generally speaking, in most of the private schools, the new policy of starting English early has proved to be beneficial. The feed these schools send to the colleges and universities have been impressive while almost reverse is true in case of public/government schools. Following feedback in the form of teachers' responses to the survey quite clearly indicates this:

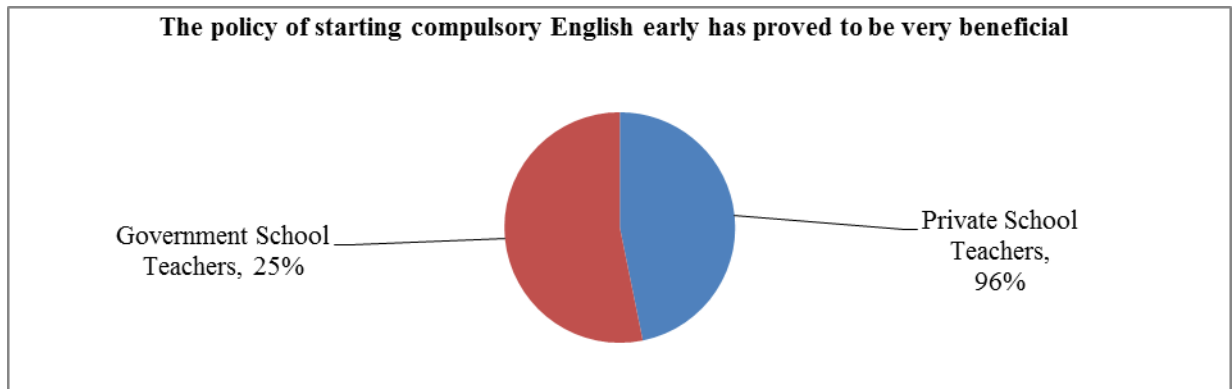


Figure 4. Teachers' Responses to Survey Item-4

To add fuel to the fire, the college teaching staff mostly mishandles the 1st year young learners given under their charge, treating them as adult learners right from the day one, unmindful of the transitional cognitive and psychological processes taking place in them. These baffled young learners, while in a process of transition to adulthood, face the baffled teachers due to the teachers' lack of awareness of educational psychology, non-availability of in-service and pre-service training, illogical seating arrangements, wrong assessment system and faulty teaching aids and material. One of the college students while sharing his view on the issue commented on the other extreme, the excessive and unmindful use of DM (Direct Method) in these words, "*we don't even understand what our teacher says in English. He comes to (start) explaining things in English without caring (whether) we understand or not... Our teacher thinks we have (had) a lot of knowledge in English*". Another student complained, "*... it is not our fault that we are poor and we (have) come from government schools. If we could not get good English teachers in our schools, at least here in the college, we expect that our teachers should work on our English (language development)*". The teachers are of the view that the students reaching college or higher secondary level have crossed the critical time for the language learning development and now it is not possible to engage them in this activity. When we discussed the same issue with the school teachers, they had plethora of complaints. One major view held by most of them was that the students coming to them were to learn two new languages, namely Urdu and English and it became greatly burdensome for both the teachers and the taught.

It is alarming to notice that generally the government school teachers' approach towards language teaching has been rather shallow as their focus is on having more pass percentages in their classes. We deduce it from the following responses to our survey item:

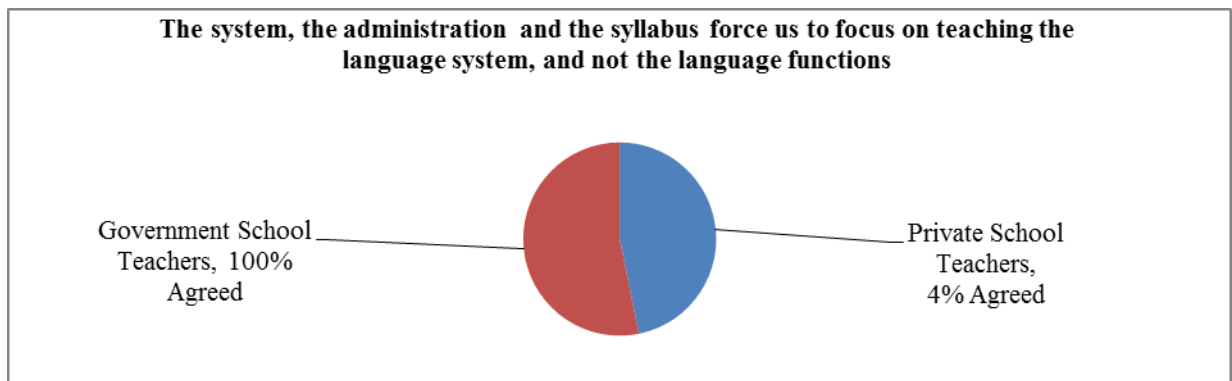


Figure 5. Teachers' Responses to Survey Item-5

Hence, all their efforts of the government school teachers go in the direction of making the students cram the English subject course content, and there is no attention paid towards the students' real English language skills development. One college lecturer expressed his opinion, "... when we try to make the class interactive and communicative to focus on the real language development of our learners, the class becomes a bit noisy and vibrant. The college administration taking the round gives us show cause and explanation notices. The principal goes to the extent of writing adverse annual confidential reports for us and blocks our promotion chances. Then we are left with no other option except for teaching English according to the whims and desires of the administration". It is as a result of this that the students reach the higher level without attaining the much needed English language proficiency and skills. They finally fail badly in BA/BSc examinations in the subject of English.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Nunan's (1999) has presented an interesting proposition in this regard, "younger the better?" I favor the proposition in the light of my personal and professional experience. As a young learner I was able to absorb five languages but ever since I have grown into a hard and rigid adult, I have been trying to learn the 6th one (Phushto) but many years have passed and I could not master it. I learnt my native language, i.e., the mother tongue "Potohari" (integral part of my brain) at a very early age. Then at an early age, I learnt my native-like language or the peer language "Punjabi" (almost as strong as our native language). Next, the language I learnt a bit later than that is my national language "Urdu"; taught formally in schools (I am ambi-lingual in it with native speaker like competence). The language (English) I learnt a bit later than that, I am compound bilinguals in it (I think and produce simultaneously). Finally, the language I learnt the last (Arabic), I am coordinate bilinguals in it, rather less than that (I think in my mother language and try to produce Arabic with a lot of fluctuations).

My child is 10 years now and studies in class-6. I have noticed and observed the pattern of acquiring/learning languages in him, similar to the one I had when I was young with a bit of shuffle in the sequence of the languages being learnt. Hence I deduce that at a very early age, no matter how many languages you want to teach the learner, she/he will acquire them all with wonderful pace,

astonishing competence and high degree of quality but it has to be done with proper environment, teaching tools, teaching techniques, methods and approaches.

Another positive point which the young learners have is that, most often, they do not develop any affective filter/barrier between their brains and the language inputs. They do not get blocked by negative emotions like anxiety, inhibition and lack of confidence, the way adult learners often do. The only challenge faced by the language input provider/teacher is to arrest their attention span which a professional and properly trained teacher, even the aware and educated parents, can do very well. Modern day media, cartoon networks and kids' movies can play a pivotal part in enhancing their competence in the target language as well in which the adults seem least interested.

Young learners are better than the adult learners or it is better to start teaching the target language to the young ones rather than the adults. It is high time that the policy makers, educational administrators, and professionals in the field realized this so that foundations could be laid down properly and teachers teaching adult learners could work on constructing buildings on those foundations. The teachers teaching the adult learners should start working in the areas like concepts formulation, theories making and research culture promotions rather than continuing what should have been completed long ago, i.e., language skills development.

Following should be the key considerations for English language teachers in Pakistan:

Does the term "Young Learners" mean small kids going through the experience of acquiring L₁ or this term should also be referred to the beginners from any age group on their way to new experience of learning a new language? To my mind (in the light of present research study), there is or should be no distinction except for some minor and procedural one.

Should there be any difference in approach in presenting the language inputs to the kids learning their first language or adults learning a language for the first time? Again the common notion is that there is a marked difference whereas, making this distinction has done more harm than good. There are linguists like Stephen Krashen who no more believe in the distinction between language learning and language acquisition. There is a need to explore whether there exists any remarkable difference in language input reception and assimilation in these different age groups. It is an area to be researched and this paper is a starting point in this direction.

In order to help resolve the confusion in the concepts regarding language acquisition and language learning, GTM (Grammar Translation Method), DM (Direct Method) and class environment, two living linguists, Noam Chomsky and Stephen Krashen present some impressive notions. Chomsky believes that language is acquired till the critical age and after that it is learnt. Thus the teachers at the early stage should become the facilitators for language acquisition and not language learning. Krashen has presented Natural Approach which does have a great impact on the learning process. I often put it in my teaching practice and results are amazing. The first thing it teaches you is that you learn to treat a child as an adult and an adult as a child. The rest starts flowing automatically in the right direction. Krashen does not believe in the distinction between language acquisition and language learning.

It is commonly held that adult learners learn the language and young ones acquire it but as far as my personal experience and observation in the present study go, I do not find any remarkable difference between language acquisition and learning. Acquisition is when language comes to you and learning is when you go to the language. In either case, it makes no difference to a professional language teacher whether she/he takes the learners to the language or brings language to the learners. My conclusion/teaching creed is when you stop making this distinction, you tend to be more natural, down to earth and sympathetic to the learners' lapses, errors, mistakes and even blunders and thus become more effective language teacher.

The issue of Urdu use/mixing while teaching English has taken the shape of serious controversy now in Pakistan. The new entrants in the field with linguistic background or the ones engaged in in-service qualification enhancement, and are involved in academic and research activities, have a clear cut stance that there should be DM, Eclectic, Communicative, Interactive, Student-centered and project based approaches while imparting language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing to the learners. The teachers with the rigid and stubborn stance on GTM need to be counseled, molded, reshaped and directed to the culture of change and advancement by promoting a culture of research in general with focused and dedicated funding by government and non-government agencies.

In the first place, having taken the step of lowering the age of compulsory English education in Pakistan (Pakistan development Forum, April 2005), the teachers are required to have the basic knowledge of the issues related to ELT. Zubaida Mustafa (2011) opines that our English-language teaching is not at all up to the mark and the National Education Policy also admits that. Hence the problem has to be addressed mainly by training good English-language teachers. Given the appalling standard of English-language teaching in all schools, with the exception of a few private elite ones, it will prove to be a formidable exercise to upgrade the knowledge of English of thousands of language teachers as well as thousands of those teaching science and mathematics to ensure their proficiency in English. School administrations should conduct workshops and hold in-service and pre-service training and refresher courses and invite distinguished research scholars and academicians and linguists for the concept formation and clarification of the teaching staff on regular and frequent basis. What is urgently and direly needed is that we must train and prepare the teachers and the schools so that they may cope with the new scenario, emerging from starting compulsory English early, in a professional and planned way.

Following are the key recommendations in the light of present research study:

a) First year (FA/FSc) class should be shifted to the schools. Once these young learners in transition turn into fully grown up adult learners, only then they should be sent to colleges and universities. There must be a clear conceptual difference between teaching the YLs and adult learners. YLs should be trained to achieve the communicative competence and the adult learners should be engaged in concept building.

- b) No teacher should be allowed to teach the YLs without pre-service teaching training course. An untrained teacher will do nothing but spoil the future of the learners.
- c) The salaries of school teachers should be higher than the college teachers. The hard work of the school teachers as compared to college teachers is more. It can only be acknowledged by keeping the salaries of the schools teachers higher.
- d) Steps must be taken to eliminate the differences and discrepancies in Private Schooling System and Government Schooling System.
- e) Teachers teaching the YLs should be encouraged and facilitated to be innovative and eclectic in their teaching approaches, methods and techniques taking into account the cognitive and psychological growth and development of these learners. They must properly plan their teaching strategies before going to their classes.
- f) The teachers teaching the YLs should be discouraged to use excessive GTM and lecture method. They must make efforts to make learning fun for YLs.
- g) Teachers teaching the YLs must make effective and excessive use of Audio Visual Aids to recycle the linguistic inputs according to the limited attention span of their learners.
- h) Class size of the YLs should be small allowing the teachers to give individual attention to each learner.
- i) School teachers' self image and social prestige needs to be improved so that they know the importance of their hands in shaping the YLs in the right and desired directions.
- j) YLs should be encouraged to use the target language out of the class in interaction with other students. Other subject teachers should also use English as medium of instruction to achieve the much desired instructional scaffolding.
- k) A curriculum designing committee at national level comprising of experienced and trained educationists and researchers should immediately be formed to give the most suitable syllabus to the teachers to teach YLs, and to bring uniformity in the system in the whole country.

References

- Brewster, J., Ellis, G., & Girard, D. (2004). *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of Meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Copland, F., & Garton, S. (2014). Key themes and future directions in teaching English to young learners: Introduction to the Special Issue. *ELT Journal*, 68(3), 223-230.
- Donaldson, M. (1978). *Children's Mind*. London: Fontana Press.
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fodor, J. A., & Bever, T. G. M. (1975). *The Psychology of Language: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics and Generative Grammar*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Government's education Reforms & Strategy: Pakistan Development Forum*. (2005, April 25). Retrieved January 17, 2010, from <http://www.moe.gov.pk/NDC-%205-Feb-05byEMfinal.ppt>
- Herbert, G. A. S. (1969). *Piaget's theory of intellectual development*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall.
- Hu, Y. (2007). China's foreign language policy on primary English education: What's behind it? *Language Policy*, 6(3), 359-376.
- Krashen S., Long, M., & Scarcella, R. (1979). Age, rate and eventual attainment in second language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*, 9, 573-582.
- Krashen, S. (1981). *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Lobo, M. (2003). Materials in the Classroom with Children. *Amazing Young Minds Forum*. Cambridge.
- Luttrall, A. (2009, October 14). *How We Learn Languages: Noam Chomsky's Approach to Language Acquisition*. Retrieved January 17, 2010, from http://www.languagestudy.suite101.com/article.cfm/how_we_learn_language
- Mustafa, Z. (2011). *Tyranny of Language in Education: The Problem and its Solution*. Karachi: Ushba Publishing International.
- Nunan, D. C. (1999). Does younger = better? *TESOL Matters*, 9(3), 3.
- Piaget, J. (1950). *The psychology of intelligence*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Pinter, A. (2006). *Teaching Young Language Learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schutz, P. W. (2002). Inclusion with Nature: The Psychology of Human Nature Relations. In *Psychology of Sustainable Development* (pp. 61-78). Retrieved January 12, 2012, from http://www.link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-1-4615-0995-0_4
- Spada, L. A. (1999). *How Languages are Learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). Interaction between Learning and Development. In *Mind and Society* (pp. 79-91). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Appendix A. Observation Sheet

Sr. No.	Observation Point	Remarks	Examples
1	Is the teacher well prepared?		
2	How is the classroom arranged?		
3	How many students are there?		
4	What teaching methodology is followed?		
5	Is the teacher a good role model of English for the students?		
6	What is teacher's pronunciation like?		
7	How is teacher's own English language skills?		
8	What kind of activities are conducted?		

-
- 9 How does the teacher respond to students' questions and queries?
- 10 How do the students feel?
-

Appendix B. Questions for Interviews with Teachers and Students of Schools and Colleges (5 Teachers and 10 Students Were Interviewed)

Sr. No.	Questions	Answers
1	How do you see English language teaching in general in Pakistani schools and college?	
2	What do you think is the contribution of private English medium schools in this regard?	
3	Do you think the introduction of English compulsory subject from class 1 in all schools has helped improve the standard of English language among our students?	
4	Are there any challenges in making this policy work efficiently? And how do you think these challenges can be met?	
5	Any other opinion or suggestions in this regard?	

Appendix C. Survey (25 School Teachers from Private Sector and 25 from Government Sector Were Surveyed on the Following Survey Items)

No.	Questions	Options
1	What do you think are the major causes of students' failure in the subject of English in BA/BSc?	a. Aggregate System of Marking b. Poor Evaluation System c. Poor English Language Teaching Techniques, Methods and Approaches d. Poor English Teaching at Primary Level e. Annual Examination System
2	Do you think the policy of starting compulsory English early has proved to be very beneficial?	Yes/No
3	Do you think the system, the administration and the syllabus force you to focus on teaching the language system, and not the language functions?	Yes/No
4	Do you think there should have been planned reforms in the educational policy to meet the challenges of starting compulsory English early	Yes/No

in Pakistan?

- 5** Do you think it is necessary to give teachers Yes/No
pre-service and in-service training to cope with
the scenario that emerged due to starting
compulsory English from class-1?
-