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Challenges and Psychological Influences in Teaching English as a Medium of Instruction in Pakistani Institutions

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Abstract

Teachers in Pakistan are having a tough time using English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) to teach in ESL classrooms and psychological influence that handicapped them in potential learning outcome. Given these issues, this study explores the reasons of their perceived challenges. Using a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers to gain insights into the difficulties they face. First, the Linguistic barriers, such as English as second language (ESL) learners don't know English well enough. It's hard for them to understand & take part in class. Teachers have to make things simpler & change how they teach. Second, Pedagogical adjustments, where teachers use more pictures & hands-on stuff. This means more work for them. They're trying to teach both the subject & English at the same time. Lastly lack of institutional support signifies that teachers don't get enough training or the right tools to teach in English. To fix this issues, it is needed to help students get better at English performance. In addition, teachers should be given special training. Finally, it should be made sure that teachers have the right stuff to teach in English. These support mechanisms are crucial for improving the effectiveness of EMI in Pakistani classrooms. The study concludes that without addressing these challenges and eradicating psychological barriers the success of EMI in Pakistan will remain limited, as teachers continue to face the dual burden of teaching both content and language without sufficient institutional backing. Recommendations for future research include exploring student-centered approaches to EMI and investigating the role of professional development in enhancing teacher preparedness.

Keywords: EMI, ESL Teaching, Linguistic Challenges, Pedagogical Strategies, Institutional Support, Teacher Training, Pakistan

Introduction

English is super important all over the world now. That's why ESL teaching is become a big deal in schools everywhere (Martínez, 2016). Al-Asmari's (2015) research shows that more & more colleges are teaching in English. Lots of universities now offer their programs in English. There are many reasons for this change (Mahboob, 2017). It's different in each place (Rao, 2019). One big reason is that colleges want to attract students from other countries (Rind & Kadiwal, 2016). Soruç and Griffiths (2018) also affirm it. This is really important cause fewer local students are enrolling. Also, public universities have to compete with private ones, which often have more money & better programs (Belhiah, H., & Elhami, 2015). English is the go-to language for

business, diplomacy, & academics around the globe (Floris, 2014). It is also recognized by Litovchenko and Shmeleva (2020). This makes teaching in English even more urgent for colleges. Schools are feeling the pressure to be more international. They need to do this to stay competitive (Rahmadani, 2016; Roberts, 2015). It's not just about teaching anymore - it's about staying relevant in a changing world. This shift to English isn't always easy, but it's necessary (Jahan & Hamid, 2019). Colleges and higher education institutions are adapting to keep up with the times (Seraj & Hadina, 2021). They're trying to meet the needs of both local & international students. In the end, it's all about preparing students for a global future. The importance of the English language on a global scale has become undeniable, and as a result, ESL teaching is now a priority in educational systems worldwide (Martínez, 2016). English is becoming more common in colleges & universities worldwide, according to Al Asmari's (2015) study. More schools are teaching their courses in English now (Mahboob, 2017). There's not just one reason for this change - it's different depending on where you look (Rao, 2019). One big reason is that schools want to attract students from other countries (Rind & Kadiwal, 2016). This is really important because fewer local students are enrolling, and governments aren't giving as much money to colleges anymore. Public universities also have to compete with private schools, which often have better stuff and offer cooler programs (Roberts, 2015). English is the go-to language for business, diplomacy, & academics around the world. That's why it's so important for colleges and educational institutions to teach in English (Seraj & Hadina, 2021). Schools are changing how they teach to keep up with the times. It's not easy, but they're doing their best to make sure students are ready for the real world. English is a big deal in Pakistan's schools. It's seen as a way to climb the social ladder, make more money, and get chances around the world (Zaidi & Zaki, 2017). Pakistani universities, like many others, are using English more & more to teach. They want their students to be ready for jobs anywhere. Using English in class isn't just about learning a language. It's a smart move to make students more hire-able and able to compete globally (Haidar & Fang, 2019). When teachers use English, it helps students get better at the language while also learning about their subjects. This focus on both language & what's being taught aims to get students ready for a world that's more connected than ever (Hussain, 2017). It's not easy, but it's important for success in today's competitive job market. Schools in Pakistan know that English skills can open doors (Sadeghi & Richards, 2021). That's why they're putting so much effort into teaching in English. It's a big change, but one they think will pay off in the long run. In short, English is key in Pakistani education. It's not just about words - it's about future success. Pakistan's got a big problem with English, even though the policies really want kids to learn it but they have psychological barriers (Akram, & Abdelrady, 2023). Schools & colleges are struggling' to teach it well. Similar issues can be observed in other non-native English-speaking countries such as Saudi Arabia. Despite numerous policies prioritizing English education and even employing native English speakers as teachers, the country still ranks low in global English proficiency(Ahsan et al., 2021; Akram et al., 2020).. Pakistan shares many of these challenges. The teaching and learning of ESL in a country where English has limited everyday use is an arduous task, requiring substantial effort from both teachers and students (Ali, 2015; Ayesha, 2022). As such, the development of EMI programs is of particular interest to language policy researchers who study the effects of globalization and internationalization on education systems in non-native English-speaking countries (Getie, 2020; Haufiku et al., 2022). At the same time, good teaching is essential for fostering student engagement, promoting deep understanding, and inspiring a love for learning. It creates a supportive and stimulating environment where students feel motivated to explore ideas and think critically (Noor et al., 2021). Effective teaching also adapts to the diverse needs of learners, helping them develop the skills and confidence needed for lifelong success. Through positive relationships and well-designed instructional methods, good teaching not only imparts knowledge but also shapes attitudes, values, and problem-solving abilities, preparing students to navigate the complexities of the world. Javaid et al. (2023) assessed the stressing causing factors in English language learning in Pakistan. Javaid et al. (2024) did systematic review on cognitive and

emotional English language learning. Chen and Ramzan (2024) analyzed ESL learners' motivation through Facebook portfolio. Ramzan et al. (2023) viewed students' perception about collaborative strategies to enhance vocabulary and motivation in ESL learners and also analyzed potential of social media to enhance academic motivation. Further, Ramzan et al. (2023) studied English learning motivation from ethnic, gender and cultural perspectives affiliating positive ESL learners' attitude in Pakistan (Ramzan et al. 2023). Ramzan and Alahmadi (2024) evaluated effect of syntax instructions on the development of complex sentences in ESL writing. In Pakistan, as in many other countries, English is often regarded as more than just a subject to be taught in schools or universities. It is increasingly viewed as an essential instrument for accessing academic content and for success in various fields of study. The implementation of EMI in Pakistani universities is intended to simultaneously develop students' English language skills and enhance their understanding of academic subjects (Irfan, 2021). It will help enhance interests among learners, which is considered essential for their academic success (Al-Adwan et al., 2022; Khanam et al., 2022). However, this dual approach presents considerable difficulties, particularly for lecturers who may struggle to convey complex academic content to students who are still learning English as their second language. Lecturers face significant challenges when teaching students in a language in which those students lack proficiency (Le & Le, 2022). This is especially true in Pakistan, where many students have limited exposure to English outside of the classroom. Unlike their native language, which is learned naturally through consistent exposure in their environment, learning English as a second language (L2) requires deliberate, conscious effort, and the exposure to English in the Pakistani context is often insufficient for rapid acquisition (Ahmad et al., 2022). Pakistan's university teachers face a tough job when teaching in English. Not much is known about how they deal with it. Sure, we've got lots of info on what makes teachers do what they do in class. But we don't really know how they handle teaching in a language that's not their own. It's super important to get this. Why? because it will help make English teaching better. So, this study's going to look at what problems Pakistani university teachers run into when they teach in English. It will also check out how they fix these issues. By doing this, we'll learn more about how English teaching's working in Pakistan's colleges & universities. It's not easy, you know? Teaching in a language that's not your first one. But these teachers are doing it. They're trying their best to make it work. And that's pretty cool. This study's going to shine a light on all that hard work. It'll show us what's going on behind the scenes. Maybe it'll even help other teachers who are in the same boat.

Method

This study used a qualitative approach to look into the challenges teachers face when using English language as a medium of instructions and its psychological influence in their ESL classes. We picked this method to really get into the nitty-gritty of teachers' experiences & thoughts. It helps us understand the tricky parts of teaching in English in better ways (Maher & Dertadian, 2018).

Participants and Data Collection

We carefully selected 24 teachers from different higher institutions in Punjab. We wanted to get a mix of views, to be part of the study, teachers needed at least two years of experience teaching in English & they had to be actively teaching ESL. We found these teachers through work connections & by sending out emails. The teachers we picked had to know their stuff. They've been in the trenches, dealing with the ups & downs of teaching in English. By talking to them, we got a REAL picture of what's going on in classrooms. It's not just numbers and stats - it's actual experiences from people who've been there, done that. Data Collection Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences while enabling follow-up questions and clarifications (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). Interviews were conducted face-to-face or via online platforms like Zoom, lasting 45-60 minutes each. An open-ended question guide was created to investigate teachers' specific challenges, coping strategies, and views on EMI implementation in their classrooms. Additional questions were asked to gain more detailed insights from participants' responses.

Data Analysis

The interview data was examined using thematic analysis (Routledge, 2012). With participants' permission, all interviews were recorded and transcribed word-for-word. The analysis involved multiple readings of the transcripts to gain familiarity with the data. Recurring ideas and patterns were used to generate initial codes, which were then grouped into broader themes reflecting key challenges and experiences shared by teachers. This inductive approach allowed themes to emerge directly from the data without using coding software, ensuring themes were rooted in teachers' actual experiences and providing a nuanced understanding of EMI implementation challenges.

Ethical Considerations

The universities granted ethical approval for the study. Participants were thoroughly informed about the study's nature, and written consent was obtained before interviews. To ensure confidentiality, all identifying information was anonymized, and participants were told they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. By employing thematic analysis, this study aimed to capture teachers' lived experiences and offer valuable insights into the challenges they face when implementing EMI in ESL classrooms. This approach enabled a rich, detailed exploration of the data, highlighting areas for potential improvements in EMI practices.

Results

The findings of this study are presented in the following major themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the teachers' interviews. These themes represent the key challenges and their psychological influences are face by the teachers while implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in their ESL classrooms.

A. Challenges

1. Linguistic Challenges

Teachers identified linguistic barriers as a major challenge, noting that students' poor English skills greatly affected EMI effectiveness. Many educators reported that pupils had trouble understanding complex subject-specific terms, forcing teachers to constantly simplify and repeat information. This often slowed down teaching and disrupted lesson flow.

One instructor commented:

> *"It's gone beyond just teaching the subject matter. I dedicate so much time explaining simple terms that it often feels like I'm running an English class instead of teaching my actual subject."*

Furthermore, teachers observed that students' anxiety about making English mistakes led to decreased participation in class discussions. This lack of engagement made it hard for educators to assess student comprehension and create interactive learning environments.

Another teacher stated:

> *"A lot of students shy away from asking questions or joining discussions due to embarrassment about their English. This results in a very quiet classroom that's difficult to manage."*

2. Pedagogical Adjustments

The importance of tailoring teaching approaches to fit EMI settings stood out as a central issue. Educators often noted the extra effort required to create lessons addressing both subject matter and language development needs. Many instructors turned to increased use of visual aids, simplified reading materials, and practical examples to help students grasp the content.

One educator described their experience:

> *"My teaching style has undergone a complete transformation. I now rely more on images, video clips, and interactive exercises. It's not just about giving lectures anymore. I need to find ways to make the material more visually appealing and relatable."*

Another teacher highlighted the difficulty of juggling content delivery with language instruction:

> "It's a delicate balance. While I aim to teach the subject effectively, I'm also tasked with enhancing their English skills. Due to time constraints, it often feels like something is left out."

This theme underscored the inventive adjustments educators must implement in EMI environments to connect subject matter with language proficiency.

3. Institutional Support

The research identified a major shortfall in institutional backing for educators implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). Many teachers voiced their dissatisfaction with the scarcity of EMI-specific training or professional growth opportunities. Despite institutional expectations to deliver courses in English, few resources or formal programs were available to assist teachers in tackling the hurdles of instructing in a non-native language.

One educator remarked:

> *"We were instructed to transition to English by the administration, but there's no ongoing support. We're doing our utmost, but without proper guidance or resources, it feels like we're being set up for failure."*

Another participant highlighted the necessity for specialized teaching materials suited to EMI settings:

> *"We lack access to EMI-specific textbooks or materials. We're constantly crafting our own content, which consumes time that could be better spent enhancing lessons."*

This theme underlines the crucial need for institutions to offer both practical resources and continuous professional development to help teachers thrive in EMI environments.

The study's findings emphasize the language-related challenges, teaching method adaptations, and insufficient institutional support encountered by educators implementing EMI in ESL classrooms. These themes showcase the intricate and multidimensional nature of EMI, stressing the importance of comprehensive support systems to boost its efficacy.

A. Psychological Influence :

1. Embitterment is a psychological influence.

Students' Embitterment: Students who feel excluded or disadvantaged because they can't handle English as the medium of instruction may experience psychological issues including resentment. A perceived lack of support from peers and teachers can intensify this sense of animosity, which can result in disengagement and poor academic achievement.

Embitterment in Teachers: Teachers who are forced to teach in English without the necessary resources or training may also feel embittered. Their efficacy as a teacher and their relationships with pupils may suffer as a result of the additional strain of running a classroom in a language they are not entirely familiar with.

Institutional Impact: A hostile learning environment can be produced by resentment on the part of both students and teachers. As a result, schools may struggle to maintain strong academic standards in the face of such psychological demands, which could lower overall educational achievements, raise dropout rates, and damage school reputations.

Mitigating Strategies: To address these issues, comprehensive approaches are needed, such as teacher professional development, student language training funding, and creating an atmosphere that values both English and native tongues in order to lessen psychological and cultural resistance.

2. Students' Psychological Deprivation

Cognitive burden and Stress: Students in Pakistan, especially those from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds, have increased cognitive burden when English is utilised as the medium of teaching. Significant tension and worry can result from the combination difficulties of comprehending the subject matter and struggling with a foreign language. Their capacity to efficiently assimilate and retain knowledge may be diminished as a result of cognitive overload.

Sense of Alienation: In the classroom, students who have trouble with English frequently experience alienation. When individuals believe they are less competent in English than their peers, this feeling of alienation is exacerbated. Feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness can be exacerbated by this alienation, which can also lower confidence and self-esteem.

Emotional Detachment: In this situation, psychological deprivation may also show up as an emotional disengagement from the educational process. Disengaged students may show a lack of enthusiasm or drive to participate in class activities, which makes their academic difficulties even worse.

2. Teachers' Psychological Deprivation

Teacher Anxiety and Burnout: When compelled to teach in English without sufficient training or assistance, educators frequently experience psychological deprivation. Despite being conscious of their language barriers, they feel under pressure to live up to institutional expectations, which can cause anxiety. This can eventually result in burnout, which will impair their general wellbeing and effectiveness as teachers.

Professional Insecurity: Teachers may have professional insecurity due to their fear of peer and student criticism of their English language skills. A less dynamic and engaged learning environment may result from their inability to participate fully in class due to this insecurity.

3. The Effect of Psychological Deprivation on Institutions

Learning Environment: A strained learning environment is a result of the psychological deprivation that both teachers and pupils endure. The entire educational experience may suffer if classrooms turn into hotbeds of conflict rather than active hubs of learning.

Academic Outcomes: Students' and teachers' psychological struggles may lead to poorer academic achievement, increased dropout rates, and diminished institutional legitimacy. It may be challenging for institutions dealing with these issues to draw in and keep both students and skilled teachers.

Discussion

The study's findings provide valuable insights into the challenges teachers encounter when implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in ESL classrooms. These challenges fall into three main categories: Linguistic Challenges, Pedagogical Adjustments, and Institutional Support, which align with and expand upon existing research on EMI difficulties in non-native English settings.

Linguistic Challenges

Language barriers for both teachers and students emerged as a key finding. Students' limited English proficiency hindered their grasp of complex subjects, echoing findings by Zaidi and Zaki (2017) and Thao and Mai (2022). Students' reluctance to participate due to fear of making mistakes supports Shieh and Reynolds' (2021) research, showing how this hesitation impacts engagement and reduces interactive learning opportunities. Language can be improved with friendly environment, use of media and collaboration (Ramzan et al., 2023). The unwillingness of students to participate in discussions due to fear of making mistakes in English, as reported by the participants in this study, further supports findings by Shieh and Reynolds (2021). In their research, they found that students in EMI classrooms are often hesitant to engage in class discussions because they lack confidence in their English abilities. This hesitation not only impacts student engagement but also reduces opportunities for interactive learning, which is critical for language development.

Pedagogical Adjustments

Teachers reported needing to make significant changes to their teaching methods, balancing content delivery with language instruction. This aligns with Tang's (2020) research on the dual responsibility of EMI teachers. Malik and Pervaiz (2023) noted the lack of strategies tailored for students with limited English proficiency as a major hurdle. Teachers described modifying lessons, simplifying concepts, and using visual aids, consistent with studies emphasizing differentiated instruction in EMI contexts (Pun & Thomas, 2020; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2020). The increased workload mirrors concerns raised by Galloway and Rose (2021) about EMI's impact on teaching burden. Artificial intelligence can improve language (Javaid et al., 2024).

Institutional Support

Many participants reported insufficient formal training or resources for effective EMI implementation, aligning with Akram et al.'s (2021, 2022) findings on the need for better training. Richards and Pun (2023) highlighted how institutions often introduce EMI without adequately preparing teachers. The lack of EMI-specific materials reported by participants echoes Macaro's (2020) research on the scarcity of suitable instructional resources. This mirrors findings from

previous research indicating that successful EMI implementation requires not only institutional policy but also comprehensive teacher training and resource allocation (Sah & Li, 2022).

Methods for Handling Psychological Deprivation

Language Support Programs: To assist instructors and students in becoming more fluent in English, educational institutions can put in place language support programs. Language labs, more tutoring, and teacher professional development workshops are a few examples of this.

Psychological Counseling and Support: Stress, anxiety, and alienation can be addressed by making psychological counseling accessible. Both instructors and students can benefit from counseling services, which can help them manage the demands of an English-medium school system. Inclusive educational policies can lessen perceptions of deprivation by supporting bilingual education, which uses both English and native languages as teaching languages. Over time, this method can improve English competence while lowering emotional and cognitive stress (Javaid et al., 2024).

Establishing a Supportive Learning Environment: One way to lessen the psychological load is to foster a classroom culture that encourages collaborative learning and views errors as teaching opportunities. By making classrooms more inclusive, teachers who have received training in culturally responsive pedagogy might lessen the psychological deprivation that kids endure. Language skills have emotional impact (Javaid et al., 2023). Pakistani educational institutions can improve the quality of instruction and create a more encouraging and welcoming learning atmosphere by tackling psychological deprivation holistically.

Implications for Practice

The study suggests remedies for EMI implementation:
1. Provide more language support for students and teachers.
2. Offer EMI-specific professional development programs.
3. Supply high-quality EMI teaching materials integrating content and language instruction.
4. Minimize psychological barriers.

Conclusions

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges teachers face when implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in ESL classrooms and its psychological influence within the Pakistani context. The three main challenges identified—linguistic barriers, the need for pedagogical adjustments, and a lack of institutional support—highlight the multifaceted difficulties of EMI. Linguistic challenges hinder student comprehension and participation, requiring teachers to simplify content and slow down the pace of instruction. Pedagogical adjustments, including the incorporation of more visual aids and practical activities, add to teachers' workload as they balance content delivery with language instruction. Finally, the lack of institutional support, particularly in terms of professional development and access to appropriate teaching materials, exacerbates these challenges. The results emphasize the need for more comprehensive language support for students, targeted training for teachers, and the development of EMI-specific instructional resources. Without these support mechanisms, the effectiveness of EMI in Pakistani classrooms will remain limited, and teachers will continue to struggle with balancing their dual roles as content experts and language facilitators. Future research should explore how professional development programs can better equip teachers to handle these challenges and investigate the role of student-centered approaches in addressing linguistic barriers. Furthermore, policy-makers and educational leaders must recognize that EMI requires more than just language proficiency; it demands a holistic approach that integrates content and language learning.

Declarations

Authors have no conflict of interest. Informed consent was taken. Data will be made available on request. All authors approved the paper

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