Factors Influencing ESL Teaching: Perspectives from Secondary Educators in Hyderabad, Pakistan

Bibi Khadija[1], Natasha Ghafar[2], Nadia Khan[3], Muslim Khan[4]

Abstract
This research is based upon a qualitative research approach in teaching English as a second language (ESL) in secondary schools in Hyderabad city of Pakistan. This paper discusses the obstacles that the 15 ESL teachers face as revealed in the semi-structured interview about outdated curricula, lack of available resources, ungeared teacher training, the lack of support from the school administrators, socio-cultural disparities, motivation levels of the students and the constant challenges involved in keeping the non -native speaking ESL teachers afloat. The results are generally in line with previous work and a clear indication of the need for broad-based change to enhance the quality of ESL education. Accordingly, recommendations were made for evolving curricular developments, enriching resources, ongoing teacher professional development, and institutional support to mitigate these challenges and shore up ESL teachers.
Keywords: ESL Teaching Secondary Education, Teacher Perceptions, Curriculum, Resources, Professional Development

1. Introduction

Finally, providing education is a challenging field and there is always the need of professionals who can see through, being able to recognize the finesses of pedagogics (Li & Akram, 2023). English language teaching, however, is a more pain-staking occupation that requires a high degree of professional consciousness based on applicable expert knowledge and explicit values (Noor et al., 2021). First year students have language challenges (Javaid et al., 2024). Since English is widely recognized across the globe as an international language and has become an obligatory school subject, Pakistan has now given an edge to the English language teaching at all levels of education in the country. It is a pleasure, the Professional Discipline of English Language Teaching has not only murdered various challenges that the English language teachers encounter (Malik & Pervaiz, 2023) and blasted a picture of research for research scholars and policy makers in the field of English language teaching (Akram, 2020; Akram &Yang, 2021) on one hand. Teachers may use collaborative strategies for ESL learners and further by creating classroom activities enjoyable and inducing media (Ramzan et al., 2023). Media role involves facebook portfolios evaluation as well (Chen & Ramzan, 2024).

Researchers have been gravitated towards the field of ESL teaching Pakistan to investigate matters primarily pertaining to classroom instructions, learners‟ performances and teacher development. A few in this niche include the advancement of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) and learning which the Ministry of education has exceptionally injected resources into improving proficiency among learners and harnessing the inculcation of pedagogical prowess among teachers. Thus, despite progress, it has delayed processes to operate especially at University level (Fareed et al., 2016). Afzal et al. (2022) have also pointed to a significant amount of work carried out by educational bodies to improve ESL provision standards and the end results of students, some of which, but not all (Akram et al., 2020), agreeing that the present arrangements for English learning and teaching have been kneaded with inadequacies. Teachers are often disillusioned from the ongoing process of teaching and learning due to a number of pedagogical and socio-cultural issues even though teachers are working professionals trained and have requisite qualifications in the domain of teaching (Akram et al., 2021a, 2021b) This is who the teacher-teacher and teacher-student interaction and the failure of the pedagogical process play a vital role in the socio-cultural context (Mahboob, 2K17). Academic performance is affected by social adjustment (Maqbool et al., 2021), coping (Javaid et al., 2024), language discursiveness (Ikramullah et al., 2023), language acquisition (Javaid et al., 2023) and parental involvement (Kamran et al., 2023). In an ESL classroom, teacher, learner and the course book can come from three different social and cultural background. In that case, teachers have to talk to their learners more generally and must be doing more than simply individualizing (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022) and providing localized and quite immediate knowledge that should also be appropriate to the students (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023). Syntax learning impacts as well (Ramzan & Alahmadi, 2024). Yet, the teaching materials are not framed in the local languages (Rao, 2019), which can clearly be observed in the status of teachers who maintain ignorance about the local cultures, leading to causing unpredicted language provocation in the classroom. The absence of cultural sensitivity among these teachers also means that they face great difficulty in adapting their teaching materials to the needs, learning objectives, and lesson aims of the curriculum.

In addition to all the myriad social factors, the attitude and response of learners to language and skills acquisition is a big issue. ESL learners stop using English because of their negative attitude they have on this language that it keeps them away from practicing their English skills (Lyja Kotlin, 2021). As a result, teachers face demotivated

and lazy learners in their classrooms who have never had L2 exposure and barely speak English (Shahzad et al., 2020). The researches carried out in Pakistan are mostly focusing on the problems of the learners and blame pupils for their poor achievement at the learning of English (Gul & Channa, 2023). Yet, a study of Jadoon et al. On the other hand, (2020) explains just an opposing but reasonable perspective and also lethargizes the teachers in their language teaching matters. Despite his clear proactive position on that problem, he does not elaborate on what effect these tribulations may be having on the performance of teachers in the classroom or how he might propose we move forward with them. Hence, in order to develop awareness on these themes and their implications for English learning and teaching in the context of Pakistan, this research seeks the answers to the following research questions.

1) What factors affect ESL teaching Pakistan? What do teachers think of these factors?

2) What strategies have the teachers in place to mitigate the negative effects of such factors on the teaching and learning process?

2. Literature Review

It is possible to characterize the educational process as a series of norms and information exchanges that take place between an educator and their students in every given environment (Akram & Li, 2024), which are shaped by social and cultural norms specific to that context. "Classroom is a socially defined reality and is thus influenced by the belief systems and behavioral norms of the community of which it is part" (Al-Adwan et al., 2022), highlighting the importance of the social backdrop. Classroom standards reflect the intricacies of the learning environment. For example, the beliefs and expectations of parents, institutional managers, and policymakers, as well as the relationships between classroom participants, are all influenced by sociocultural norms in a specific context, making the classroom environment more complex and diverse (Shahzad et al., 2022).

According to Ahmed and Myhill (2016), sociocultural context has a significant impact on the development of L2 learners, influencing teaching approaches, classroom environments, and progress. Language cannot be kept to the classroom's periphery since learning occurs through social interaction in certain circumstances. In the field of language education, it is observed by Hall (2013) that society and culture are more than just background and even more than context. The events that take place within a language classroom are inseparable from the sociocultural framework in which they take place. Because language teaching is inextricably linked to its social context, teaching and learning cannot occur in a classroom that is isolated from learners' outside experiences and personal engagements (Khanam et al., 2022). Thereby, what transpires in these interactions between students and instructors, as well as among students themselves, is heavily influenced by the broader context of life beyond the classroom.

The second language classroom is a place where the local and the global come together. It is naturally socially diverse and pedagogically complicated. In Saudi Arabia, teachers frequently face the interference of social taboos in the classroom. To avoid dissatisfaction and serious consequences, non-regional teachers, in particular, avoid discussing religion, politics, and the opposite gender in the classroom. According to Sultana (2011), cross-cultural frustration among Chinese EFL teachers stems from a failure to grasp each other's culture and educational philosophies, as well as an expectation of complete adaptation from the other party. Similarly, Luk and Lin (2017) observe differences between cultures and conclude that education cannot be separated from social circumstances, and that the implementation of new methodologies must be modified in response to social and cultural needs.

In addition to the social and cultural dimensions associated with language instruction, ESL teachers encounter additional challenges which exert a noticeable effect on the learning and teaching that takes place in the classroom. These obstacles include a lack of resources, improper textbook material, limited instructional time, large class numbers, mixed ability classrooms with diverse developmental needs, high expectations from students and parents, and a lack of resources (Sultana, 2011), students' low proficiency (Akram et al., 2020), irregular contact hours (Al Asmari, 2015), and a lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments (Marzulina et al., 202).

According to Ali (2015), teachers in Eastern countries face a number of challenges, including a lack of specialized development, a lack of genuine environments, and learning resources that are unrelated to the subject matter being taught. Teachers may struggle to create a positive learning environment and meet curriculum objectives when adopting the mandated syllabus. Institutional authorities place constraints on teaching practices in EFL courses. Teachers are not free to choose their teaching techniques. According to Ayesha (2022), teachers are influenced by societal conventions, student expectations, and school and ministry policies about teaching methods. As a result of these factors, they switch between behaviors that are academically focused and those that are socially oriented in order to accommodate the learning and social requirements of the learners. As a result, EFL/ESL teachers who teach a variety of skills find it difficult to select the best method for their students' requirements and learning styles. Like Pakistan, numerous EFL/ESL situations require teachers to use communicative methods. However, teachers in Pakistan frequently use old approaches. Jadoon (2020) describes them as unsatisfactory teaching techniques that are mostly teacher-centered. According to Shahzad et al. (2020), teachers in Pakistan prefer traditional approaches over interactive strategies due to socioeconomic and organizational limitations.

Dealing effectively with students in EFL/ESL classrooms is one of the most important factors that teachers face. Learners who do not demonstrate any enthusiasm in participating in educational curricular events are more likely to do poorly and achieve less than they could. Such students frequently lack enthusiasm and reject class engagement. According to Malik and Pervaiz (2023), EFL teachers may attribute their students' success or failure to their motivation. Dornyei (2003) believes it the most complicated issue confronting language teachers. Less motivated students skip classroom activities, cheat more creatively than they learn, anticipate responses from professors, and employ intermediaries to challenge them (Dörnyei, 2010). Ahsan et al. (2021) discover that, there is a significant lack of motivation among ESL students. Similarly, Jadoon et al. (2020) claim that EFL/ESL teachers encounter significant challenges with learners' ability, early readiness, and motivation. They frequently complain about their students' low proficiency levels and allege that they are uninterested in learning English.

The EFL/ESL classroom demonstrates teachers' talents and knowledge in addressing various issues. Choi & Lee (2018) emphasize the importance of teachers' fundamental competencies. These competencies include competence in languages, topic comprehension, instructional abilities, understanding of the environment, learner-focused teaching, and professionalism. In order to make their efforts in language classrooms relevant and effective, language instructors in any setting must exhibit these qualities first and foremost.

Teachers who have a good attitude toward teaching are more likely to strive for improved performance. The way in which they evaluate and assess their own teaching talents has a considerable impact on the effectiveness of their instruction (Zhang et al., 2023). Ghonsooly and Ghanizadeh (2013) define teachers' efficacy as their ability to impact student learning outcomes. Research indicates that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs significantly impact their instructional practices, classroom behavior, student achievement, and motivation (Choi and Lee, 2018). According to one school of thinking, educators who have strong self-efficacy beliefs are better able to deal with challenging situations than those who have poor self-efficacy views. Teachers that are very self-sufficient put the needs of their pupils first and educate with a tremendous amount of enthusiasm (Lu & Mustafa, 2021).

The current study's extensive literature analysis has identified the major components that may influence ESL/EFL instruction for better or poorer learning and teaching outcomes. This literature evaluation presents four primary themes that serve as a beginning conceptual foundation for the investigation.

3. Methodology

The present qualitative study will explore the factors affecting ESL teaching mainly in Pakistan and it seeks their perceptions of these factors of teachers of secondary school. The template of phenomenological investigation is well adapted to understand the detailed collegiate experiences and perceptions of members of a subculture. This framework provides an in depth examination of the interdisciplinary issues effecting ESL teaching from the voices of those who are involved.

3.1. Participants

This study was conducted in Hyderabad city with secondary school ESL teachers. We used purposive sampling to recruit those participants with considerable ESL teaching experience. This approach guarantees fertile insights that are tailored to the questions at the start of the research (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). The participant criteria were as follows: ESL teachers who had said that they had ever taught ELs for at least 5 years, should be diversified in school ownership types (public, private, and semi-private schools) to be representative of a range of perspectives, had a willingness to voluntarily offer experiences and insights. They chose 15 teachers in total, which covered a broad range of genders, school types, and teaching experiences.

3.2. Data Collection

Interview data base-interview data were collected through semi-structured interviews; the aim was to make the data collection as flexible as possible with respect to the interests and experience of the participants to allow for the exploration of a range of aspects related to the research questions, while ensuring that the core topics were covered (Joffe, 2011). The interview guide initially had questions on views towards factors influencing ESL teaching, such as curriculum, resources, administrative support, students' background, teachers' training, and socio-cultural factors, as well as items on perceptions including challenges encountered, strategies employed, and recommendations. Interviews were conducted in a safe, private space selected by participants and framed in such a way as to normalize open and honest dialogue. Over fifteen in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions of 60-90 minutes duration each were conducted, audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. Field notes were also done to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information.

4. Data Analysis

We transcribed the interviews into verbatim audio files. This study uses thematic analysis to explore data, following the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Data were systematically coded using NVivo software to assist in the process and organize the data outputs. This automatic software helped to organize the data and detect the patterns at a faster pace.

4.1. Trustworthiness

To verify the interpretation of the data, member checking was performed (i.e., sharing the preliminary findings with some participants) to ensure that their data had been interpreted correctly; provide rich descriptions of the research setting, actors, and processes to maximize potential for transferability; maintenance of a comprehensive audit trail to enable tracking of every research decision and ensure that the entire process of the study could be followed and replicated; and reflect by keeping a reflexive journal during the study to acknowledge and address any potential biases of the researchers (Gunawan, 2015). This study adopted the same methodological rigor to build a good transaction from factors affecting ESL teaching in Pakistan to the secondary school teachers' perceptions in Hyderabad city in implementing the practice.

5. Results

A comprehensive list of factors affecting ESL teaching in Pakistan was developed, and the perceptions of the secondary school teachers of Hyderabad city was captured in this study. Interview Findings. The data collection resulted in in-depth interviews and a range of themes which illustrate the complexities and challenges of ESL teaching in such a context.

5.1. Curriculum and Syllabus

Teachers consistently noted problems with the current ESL curriculum and syllabus. The curriculum was considered antiquated and unaligned with contemporary instructional best practices. A number of teachers said the syllabus is even too theoretical and neglecting the practical communicative components necessary for effective language acquisition. One of the teachers reveal,

"The curriculum is rigid, and the practical language is not important. We need to rethink this type of program and bring in an element of student-centered learning."

5.2. Resources and Materials

An important element that influenced the teaching of ESL was the scarcity of resources and supplies. There is also an acute shortage of modern teaching aids available for teaching such as audio visual equipment, UpToDate textbooks, digital resources, etc. This specificity tends to limit the ability to create a more immersive, engaging educational experience. According to one teacher,

You see, "We don't have the latest teaching materials. Half the time, their resources are not up-to-date, and we follow up by other ways to make up for the rest of the lessons."

5.3. Training and Professional Development for Teachers

Lack of Continuous Professional Development Opportunities - The research has identified that this is another crucial factor. Teachers complained that they had being ill-prepared by their own teacher training schools to deal with the practical aspects of the classroom. There is little indented provision for on-the-job teaching: teachers are not given adequate support to learn new skills or information. A teacher reported,

"ESL teachers receive minimal professional development. We need more workshops and interventions to be able to follow the new pedagogical theories."

5.4. Administration and Institutional Support

The teachers were concerned with the lack of support from school administrations. Their efforts were made to feel as not being valued, by their institutions. This lack of support also includes resources, professional development and providing recognition for teachers working to innovate and improve their teaching practices. One teacher said that,

"We all know the administration often ignores us Our ESL initiatives are hardly recognised or supported in schools."

5.5. Socio-Cultural Factors

The socio-cultural aspects also have an important part in ESL teaching. Teachers observed that students' motivation and ability to learn the language was influenced by their backgrounds including their home environment and wider attitudes to English in society. Students among different socio-economic conditions exhibit a sharp difference in language acumen. According to one teacher,

"Affluent students will perform better, because they are already learning in English. Bridging this gap in a classroom is tough to do."

5.6. The Learning Tendency

The importance of student motivation and attitudes towards learning English was particularly emphasized. Among the students, teachers saw different levels of interest and engagement. For some students, learning English is something really important for their future, and for others it is just one subject more they need to overcome. According to one teacher,

"One of the big challenges is motivating students. Most of them do not feel the importance of learning English right away and see it as a similar subject just to pass."

5.7. Recommendations from Teachers

In their interviews, teachers offered several suggestions for how these problems might be tackled. The main suggestions they proposed included a revision to the current ESL curriculum to enhance practical and

communicative use, easier access to teaching resources and more support for training and professional development. Moreover, they also stress on more administrative support and visibility for doing that and also some methods with which students from different socio-economic backgrounds would engage more effactually. "What we do need is a revised curriculum, valuable resources, and ongoing professional development. School administrators too need to take more responsibility in supporting ESL teachers and acknowledging their work."

6. Discussion

These findings are consistent with data from other studies on the insufficiencies of ESL programs in under resourced countries. Consistent with Irfan (2021), another finding of our study is that the ESL curriculum of Hyderabad is obsolete and more emphasis given on theory. Teachers echoed the need to shift to a more applied, communicative approach, reflecting the argument of Asghar (2014) that curricula should attend to class activities aimed at promoting interaction as well as a student-centered where language is built from below.

The results of this study that there is an absence of sufficient learning resources confirm with those of earlier studies conducted by Akram et al. (2020) and Jadoon et al. (2020). In this connection, teachers of Hyderabad experienced less availability of digital modes of teaching, which corresponds with the research work of Akram et al. (2020) who concluded that shortage of resources are significantly impeding the ESL process. As previously stated by Jadoon et al. (2020), this scarcity of resources leads teachers to depend on older, outdated material which impairs students' classrooms experiences and their learning efficiency.

The result of our study suggesting a demand for better teacher training and professional development is consistent with the expectations in the literature that justifies the value of the competent teacher. Marzulina et al. (2021) also add that effective teaching of ESL is a process which asks for constant professional development so that teachers may routinely incorporate the latest pedagogical strategies. The teachers, in our study, reported insufficient initial training and limited in-service opportunities which is in agreement with Akram et al. (2022) findings that on long term quality of teaching will need a constant professional development.

This is consistent with the lack of administrative and institutional support identified in this study and from previous work. According to Mahboob (2017), the backbone of the curricular changes need administrative support which was essential for bringing successful educational reforms. This echoes the outcry by teachers in Hyderabad who felt that their own institutions believed them rather dispensable, which matches what Mahboob (2017) had found with regards to the importance of institutional provisioning of infrastructure in developing teaching proficiency and morale.

Our own work on the effect of socio-cultural factors on ESL learning complement well with the findings of Malik & Pervaiz (2023). As they observed that home environment and societal perceptions influence heavily, teachers provided an example that students of a certain status motivated and skilled better in English. There is no doubt that the problem of student motivation and attitudes towards learning English are well documented in the literature, and this has been examined in the present study. The significance of motivation in language learning is also emphasized by Dornyei (2010). The Hyderabad teachers: reported that students were showing different levels of motivation and some were very motivated, others saw it as just another subject. This also supports Dornyei (2003) claim that students' attitudes have great influence on their success in language learning.

Our study yielded recommendations from teachers that reflect existing recommendations in the field. That curriculum should be more job-oriented, providing teaching resources and comprehensive training, all of which were referred also by Fareed et al. (2016). Marzulina et al. (2021) also emphasized the necessity of providing better administrative support for the teachers and that the constructive institutional framework is conducive to the improvement of their teaching effectiveness.

On the whole, the results of this study are on par with earlier work on some of the issues in ESP teaching in third-world nations. To improve the quality of ESL education in Hyderabad and similar contexts, stakeholders need to rectify the identified issues. Concordance of our findings with the literature demonstrates that there are some interlocking themes which require further intervention in curriculum design, resource allocation, professional development and administrative support to improve ESL teaching outcome.

7. Conclusions

The curriculum and students were also the subjects of our research which aimed to clarify the context in which supports and hinderances are working for ESL education in secondary schools of Hyderabad. Results indicated that use of outdated curricula, limited resources, insufficient teacher training, lack of administrative support, contextual and sociocultural factors as well as varied student motivation have a critical impact on effectiveness in ESL teaching. These concerns are commensurate with previous literature, and underscore the necessity for holistic reform in such areas as curricular alignment, resource provisions, professional development, and administrative practices. Interventions aimed at these issues can help to improve the quality of ESL education and by extension afford teachers the tools needed to facilitate superior language acquisition among students.

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