



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Language Practices of English Language Teachers at Secondary Level: A Comparative Study of Public and Private Schools in Lahore, Pakistan**

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**DOI**

[http://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021\(5-II\)1.15](http://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021(5-II)1.15)

**PAPER INFO**

**ABSTRACT**

**Received:**

July 14, 2021

**Accepted:**

September 20, 2021

**Online:**

September 23, 2021

**Keywords:**

English Language Teachers,  
Public and Private Schools

Teachers Role,

Teaching Practices

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The purpose of this study was to explore and compare the English language teaching practices and role of teachers at public and private sector schools in Lahore - Pakistan. The study employed qualitative research method to find the ELT practices in schools. By employing Purposive Sampling Technique, the data was collected from 30 English language teachers of private as well as public sector schools. 15 teachers each from public and private schools were interviewed while teaching practices of teachers at public and private schools were observed. Thematic analysis of the collected data revealed substantial variation in the teaching practices of public and private sector school teachers in terms of their competency, teaching practices and techniques. Teachers of public schools were practicing the traditional teaching methods; they were not utilizing their linguistic competency; they were not concerned about diverse learning styles as compared to teachers of the private sector schools, which have been the main reasons for poor English spoken skills of students of public sector schools. The findings suggest that the Punjab Education system should bring uniformity in the curriculum and teaching practices of both public and private schools.

**Introduction**

The role of language is entrenched as it is not just something to express in words but, it is also associated with the speaker's emotions, and it shapes the attitude of the person (Misyak, Christiansen & Tomblin, 2010). Referring to this, language teaching is an inevitable part of language practices in the domain of education,

specifically in the Pakistani society. English or any other language cannot be fully learnt or comprehended beyond the realm of practice (Horner, Royster & Trimbur, 2011).

English language is paramount important worldwide (Ahmed & Rao, 2012). Therefore, its demand has increased to the extent that it entails the nations of contemporary societies to be competent enough for being successful in professional careers and academic (Muhammad, 2011). For being successful and for pursuing their studies advance, learners are required to be proficient in four skills of English language (Nasir, Naqvi, & Bhamani, 2013). Writing is a way of expression, Pakistani secondary level students entail writing skills for getting success in academic and professional (Dar & Khan, 2015). Furthermore, effective reading skills also very important for development of learners since reading different genres help learners to be effective writers (Moureau, 2015).

As the medium of instructions, resource books and teaching materials are in English (Khan, 2013), it is essential for the learners to have expertise in four skills of English language. Many teaching practices have been promoted by the scholars and teachers. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been considered as a source of improving spoken competence of students' competence (Yu, 2001; Bax, 2003; Hiep, 2007; Hu, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Takanashi, 2004; Liao, 2004; Ahmad & Rao, 2012a). The investigators have pointed out gap between theory and its application in teaching English language (Littlewood, 2007; Nunan, 2003).

On the other hand, the linguistic environment of a basic learner is very important in the role of education nowadays, and according to Kanno and Stuart (2011), it is solely constructed by a language teacher. Similarly, Ward, and Grant (2011) stated that English language teaching when connected to classroom teaching, extends its role towards engrossing student's attention. Therefore, Enever (2014) indicated that ELT demands expertise in four skills of language and the interest in language for teaching language to students.

In Pakistan, according to language policy of 2009, the language teachers in Punjab were evaluated for their subject command and language proficiency (Hussain, Shahid, & Zaman, 2011). These reforms in the Language Policy had numerous implications on teaching and learning practices in the discipline of ELT in both public and private sectors. Teachers with their extensive role are emphasized to assess and enhance their own linguistic competency before devising effective strategies in their lesson plans (Kleickmann et al., 2013).

Therefore, there are various aspects associated with Pakistan's education domain, which need to be considered while analysing the current situation in schools. The system is broadly divided into public and private sectors with entirely different setups and the environment in terms of teaching quality, trained staff, school culture, school fees, and teachers' salary structure. The language teaching attitudes also have a huge difference. With reference to aforementioned perspectives, this research work

is about English language practices and the role of teachers in selected public and private sector schools located in Lahore.

### **literature Review**

A comparative study was conducted by Iqbal (2012) to compare different variables of public and private schools of secondary level in Lahore. The study explored lesson planning, discipline in schools, co-curricular activities and teaching learning environment. Findings revealed that government schools have qualified staff, spacious building and better facilities as compare to private schools. Zia and his co-authors (2017) concluded that private schools were more focused to improve the communications skills of the students by the implementation of information communication technologies as compare to public schools. Fareed and his co-author (2018) stated that teachers faced problems for teaching reading skills through reading text: e students' disinterest, lack of reading comprehension skills and low concentration. For teaching writing skills, teachers faced problems of: students' lack of competency of spelling, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary.

Another comparative study was conducted by Imran (2018) to explore the quality education of both sectors in Punjab. The findings of Chi Square test revealed that teachers of public schools were qualified as compared to private schools; there were more physical facilities in public schools as compared to private but attitude of teachers of private schools were motivating as compare to public schools' teachers.

Awan and Zia (2015) explored the reasons of attractions of parents towards private schools instead of public. Survey of the study revealed that socioeconomic status of the family. Easy accessibility of schools and specifically the perception of quality education were major reasons of attraction towards private schools as compare to public. A of Abdal and his co-authors (2013) concluded that the respondents (students), from educated father, were agreed that the private educational institutions were source of good character building for them and reported the liking of their fathers as well.

A study conducted by Fareh and Saeed (2011) in the context of language teaching, has analysed the role of language teaching with a different perspective. The study used two EFL classes for the formal observation in order to analyse the employed teaching approaches. The findings revealed that English teachers by determining the role of an action researcher can observe different ELT classes through collaborative methodologies. Findings of the study of Aslam and Kingdon (2011) revealed differences in teaching practices in public and private schools.

The discussed studies in literature shed light on the researches conducted in the fields of teaching and learning. There is still the need for research to uncover the real contextual issues in schools. Hence, it is vital to understand as to which language learning techniques will cater the needs of bilingual learners in both public and private sector schools. How teacher, being a moderator and facilitator can overcome these

problems with limited access to advanced material and resources. So, the current study aims to fill the gap by exploring how language teachers can be equipped, and also inculcate unique techniques to foster linguistic competency of the students in both categories of schools. The findings will advocate in establishing a better understanding of teaching and learning practices within the context of Punjab and how the existing scenario can be improved.

### Material and Methods

Nature of this study is qualitative. All the secondary level school teachers of English Language in Lahore were the population of the study. By employing purposive (criterion) sampling technique (Morgan, 2014) 15 public and 15 private schools' teachers of English Language of secondary level were selected. The teachers considered for this study fall within the age of 25- 40, and they had minimum two years' teaching experience in teaching secondary level classes at schools.

Keeping in mind the nature of the study, interviews & observations (Dornyei, 2007 & Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018) were adopted as the instruments of data collection. Themes were generated from the collected data and data was analysed through thematic analysis.

### Data Collection

The data was collected from 30 English language teachers of private and public schools. 15 teachers of public sector and 15 teachers of private sector schools were interviewed. Interviewees were given option to respond in Urdu or English. Interviews were recorded and the recording was transcribed on the same day. Same teachers of public and of private sector schools were observed during their lectures. For observations the heads and coordinators of target schools were pre informed.

### Data Analysis

Themes were generated from the collected data and the collected data was analysed through thematic analysis. The themes are stated below:

**Table 1**  
**Analysis of Interviews**

Themes	Explanation
<b>Theme 1</b>	Importance of teaching and learning English
<b>Theme 2</b>	Difference between private and public schools in language teaching practices and techniques to improve communication skills of students.
<b>Theme 3</b>	Importance of language competency of English teachers and their role in building language competency of students
<b>Theme 4</b>	Challenges of teaching practices faced by teachers in private and public schools

### **Theme 1: Importance of Teaching and Learning English.**

The status of English language appeared to be holding a great importance as one of the teachers from public school stated that *“I definitely see the increasing scope of English as it is an official language of Pakistan and the people are very much focused on gaining the command of language for a successful future. Therefore, I ensure conveying this important aspect of learning English to my students”*. Agreeing with this perspective, one teacher stated *“There is no denial of the fact that English enjoys a high status in our society and people attribute it to their future career”*.

The importance of teaching and learning English language was not only emphasized but one of the teachers analysed the issue with his experience of dealing with parents as the teacher expressed that: *“We deal with parents emphasizing on inculcating language competency in their children to survive in the mainstream. You can imagine how important it is considered in the society”*. The rising scope of teaching and learning English can be seen from these responses of public sector school teachers as they consider it as a mainstream language that increases the chances of better future in the professional lives of students.

While exploring the issue, almost similar kind of responses was received from the private sector school teachers who also highlighted the significance of teaching and learning English language from the perspective of academics. One of the teachers reflected, *“As it is the mainstream language, covering all the academic need, its importance has to be accepted. All other subjects, including mathematics, science, geography and social studies are being taught in English nowadays”*. Illuminating the same point, one teacher added, *“The language is being used on internet, TV, offices and on almost all the public forums. It is important to teach to excel in professional life”*.

However, seeing the other side, one teacher from the private sector stated, *“I think it is important to teach and learn English in order to be part of mainstream society and to excel in professional life but not at the expense of your own language”*. The responses stressed the importance of mother tongue in the process of language learning. Thus, most of the responses covered the same aspect of learning the language and its importance.

### **Theme 2: Difference in Language Teaching Practices and Techniques to improve communication skills of students between Private and Public Schools.**

Considering the importance of language teaching practices in the local context, the teachers from both sectors were inquired about the methods they prefer to adopt in their classrooms to teach English. The question was answered by public sector school teacher as, *“I think there are a number of ways that can be opted to teach English to the students in any context. It is all about the extent to which you, as a teacher, reinforce your students to learn English”*. Carrying the same idea, another teacher said, *“I try to explain all the given concepts of the texts usually translating the complex texts for my students for developing their better comprehension in the target language”*. The teachers expressed how

they translate the lessons for their students in their mother tongue so that students can learn and understand the language. While describing how lexical items and vocabulary can be learned best, one of the respondents said, *"I feel my students learn the best when I let them focus on the difficult lexical chunks of whatever we read in the class, then the meanings of those are told and discussed with them. This practice makes the lesson very easy for my students and they easily learn new vocabulary."*

On the other hand, the group of private sector school teachers has given contradictory responses as one stated, *"I like when my students use the lexical items in their written scripts which are given to them on board. I focus on semantics and provide different choices for the words not only in the target language but in Urdu as well."* A similar practice is observed in another teacher's response as he added, *"I try my best to make my students learn by providing them with the correct answers to the questions during lessons. I provide them examples from different books and they learn them and attempt their papers"*. However, the diversity in the responses of private school teachers can be noticed from this response, *"I try to involve my students as much as I can, and try to ask as many questions as I can to make them understand the concept. We read and decode the text together to solve the exercises"*.

Thus, teachers in both the categories of schools are using different methods to teach the language that lack the uniformity in their teaching methods in terms of effectiveness of the lesson. Rote learning was one of the common approaches found among teachers of public schools to teach the language.

As the focus of the study was on the language practices within the context, hence teachers were asked specifically if they incorporate language learning techniques to improve communication skills of students. Very few teachers signalled a positive response. One teacher from the public sector school stated, *"I never felt the need to design separate activities for this purpose; my students get this chance of their spoken skills in their grammar class"*. One more teacher stated the same point; *"I make my students practice their spoken skills when we study grammatical items in the class. They learn the concept and do the exercises which also enhance their spoken skills"*. Another teacher's response showed the inculcation of the activities to some extent, *"I ensure to give my students the opportunity to speak about what they learn in the class as I ask them to perform spoken activities given in text book."*

The state of the private sector was comparatively better as there were more teachers who tried to add activities that could improve spoken skills of the students. One teacher responded, *"I believe, language is all about speaking and it is extremely important to make your students speak rather than making them learn the language items."* Another similar response was received from a teacher, *"I consider it one of my goals to make my students proficient speakers, and to achieve that, I try to incorporate different techniques"*. Another teacher responded *"I always speak in English and focus on making students learn and use lexis and phrases of the lesson in their spoken."*

### **Theme 3: Language Competency of an English Teacher and his/her Role in Building Language Competency.**

In order to successfully deliver a language lesson the linguistic competency of the language instructor certainly cannot be ignored. It is also vital for the teacher to be aware of his/her role in teaching the language. How much do the teachers in the Pakistani context, consider the significance of language competency of teachers and how competent they are in all the language skills and are aware of their role in building language competency of their students, this question was asked. One of the Teachers from the public sector school stated, *“Since it is an official language, teachers at least must be competent in the basic skills of the language to teach students, and I think the role of a teacher is very important in language class as he is the one who is the only source of learning for his students. The more he/she uses language in class, the more students will learn the language”*.

Another teacher responded *“Linguistic competency is important in terms of having command on all the skills as far as the teacher knows how to handle a lesson on any subject. I believe it is a teacher who plays a great role in increasing acquaintance of target language among students; it is the teacher who has a charge how he/she makes students learn the language. So the role of the teacher is extremely important for students to learn the language.”*

One of the teachers reflected on the spoken skills by stating, *“To teach English, it is not necessary to speak the language. Children can better learn in their own language. I feel without the teacher being physically present in the class, learning of the students cannot take place. The teacher is the only source who can help students in getting familiar with the language.”*

Reflecting positively a teacher from private sector school stated, *“Undoubtedly, the significance of language cannot be denied as it is considered mainstream lingua franca and adds to your social, personal and professional status. To teach it, the teacher has to be linguistically qualified. It is the teacher towards whom the students look for everything that happens in the class. Their learning depends on us, so the role of the teacher is the most important one.”*

Adding to the similar note, one teacher stated, *“Teaching another language to anyone cannot be done unless you are sufficiently competent in it. Definitely, there is no denial of the fact that teacher plays a great part in student’s learning phase, whatever he /she is learning. However, according to me, learning does not solely rely on the teacher being physically present in the class but doing nothing except throwing language chunks to be memorized from the textbook. A teacher is playing his/her role when he/she knows how to involve everything in class positively that can add to the learning of the students”*.

Showing concurrence, one teacher responded by saying, *“It is one of the desirable languages that parents want their children to learn and in order to teach it, the teacher must be competent, and have command on the subject. The role of the teacher has now revolved and it is not just about making students repeat things but to facilitate their thinking in every aspect that helps them in building linguistic competency”*.

Conspicuously, there was a slight difference in the opinion of teachers almost teachers of both sectors were agreeing on the linguistic competency of the teachers for teaching English. On the other side all the teachers of both sectors considered the role of the teacher important, the difference in their employed teaching approaches and strategies in the class was prominent.

#### **Theme 4: Common Challenges of Teaching Practices**

To get the insights of the challenges that teachers face during their teaching practices, the answers reflected upon some ground realities, teachers tend to face. Giving his opinion, one teacher of a public school revealed, *“There are many challenges that we as teachers have to face in which lack of sufficient resources is most important. In public schools, there are no proper basic facilities including classrooms, textbooks, and required staff in the school”*. Another teacher said, *“Public schools lack the quality teaching as we are not facilitated with required teachers’ training, teaching aids, and other resources to teach our students. Sometimes students don’t have the stationery to write”*. More problems were surfaced by another teacher as he said, *“It is a dilemma of our educational system that we as public sector school teachers tend to make the most of the resources we have. Most of our students belong to the low socio-economic background, unable to bear the expenses of education”*.

Contradictorily, private sector teachers highlighted other challenges as one respondent stated, *“We do face problems like over-populated classes and overburdened schedule to teach students, over strictness from the management”*. Agreeing with the idea, another teacher responded, *“Most of the private sector schools do not focus on the quality of the education but on the quantity of the students in the classes”*. One more stated, *“Teachers, struggle with a huge quantum of the syllabus to be covered until assessment in language. They work under management’s pressure and are not often paid well”*.

#### **Results and Discussion**

**Table 2**  
**Observation Based Data Analysis**

<b>Teaching Components</b>	<b>Public Schools</b>	<b>Private Schools</b>
<b>Classroom Environment</b>	The classrooms’ environment of public schools was not appreciable as they were overpopulated. No illustrations as learning resources were utilized by the teachers. The physical distraction in the form of late arrivals, and electricity break downs were some of the issues interrupting the continuity of the lessons.	Classes were not spacious and were overpopulated. But classes were well decorated with the updated illustrations and resources. However, physical distraction issue was similar to the public schools.



<b>Lesson Plan</b>	13 teachers had no written lesson plans. The classes were conducted with chosen grammar lessons. The teachers having lesson plans were mostly found not adhering to lesson plans; and the activities were not divided accordingly.	All 15 teachers of the private schools were having their designed lesson plans and there were targeted skill language activities. Time allocation for the activities was not enough for the students to learn the language skill.
<b>Linguistic competency of Teachers</b>	Thirteen teachers were using little bit phrases of English. All fifteen teachers were found conducting English language classes in Urdu. The imparted knowledge was limited to the textbook activities, which also were not attempted as per the given requirement.	Teachers were conducting their classes in English. 13 teachers out of 15 were fluent in speaking English, but two teachers were not linguistically competent.
<b>Skill Focused Activities</b>	All fifteen teachers retained their focus on the activities given in the text book only. The lessons' objectives were found with no specific skills such as, vocabulary, reading, writing or speaking which were completely missing. Moreover, the lessons were taught deductively where the demonstration of the components was done followed by examples <b>(Grammar translation method)</b>	The teachers had comprehensive lesson plans for a single class with entire focus on refining a particular language skill. There was a combination of activities used by the teachers but in two classes the explanation and activities were not logically organized in a flow from i.e., easy to difficult pattern.
<b>Teaching Resources</b>	Illustrations, chart or relevant objects were used in the only three classes.	All teachers tried to incorporate the teaching aids appropriately in their classes
<b>Teacher, Student Interaction</b>	Classes were only teacher oriented. Very less student interaction was observed.	Classes were highly interactive, and students' participation was good. However, in three classes, teacher tried to engage them in activity to communicate with the class, but the frequency between teacher-student interactions was low.

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<b>Communicative strategies for Spoken Skills</b>	There was almost no communication among peers in English in the classes. The focus of teachers was to make students learn about the language instead of making them learn the language; as there were no communicative strategies used in the class.	One teacher was reading and explaining the text for the students however she asked students to focus on pronunciation and vocabulary. Five teachers added the strategies of role-play, presentations and speaking competition for the spoken English skills classes. Four teachers were using reading aloud activity for reading skills. In two classes teachers were explaining grammatical rules while asking question during the lecture and students were responding. In three classes students after lecture students were writing answers on the whiteboard/notebook posed by the teacher one by one However, all the students were not provided with the opportunity through which they could practice the language in an appropriate way due shortage of time.
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## Discussion

There was uniformity among teachers of both categories of schools about the importance of English language in Pakistan. However, there was diversity of views among teachers of both categories of schools with regard to teaching practices. Most teachers from government schools focused on teaching lessons by translating into local languages. The teachers from private schools on the other hand demonstrated variation and diversity in their teaching practices as their focus remained on the recurrent process of repeating and providing lexical items in their semantics in their teaching practices. The Study of Ahmed and Rao (2012) also indicated that translation method was adopted in public sector schools but in private schools teachers were closer to utilizing new teaching approaches. To compare the linguistic practices of both sectors, skill focussed activities were also observed. The findings revealed that most public sector schools adhered to the activities given only in the textbooks. The situation was better in private schools. There mostly teachers were incorporating the

skill-based activities into their lesson plans particularly related to spoken skills. Similar findings were revealed by the comparative study of Imran (2018).

The language teaching techniques for improving students' spoken skills were reviewed by interviewing and observing teachers. The interviews of public sector school teachers revealed teachers recognized it as an important part of ELT but responses revealed that teachers were focusing only on teaching the textbook content and the activities given in textbook. The private sector schools' teachers on the other hand, expressed their interest in making their student proficient speakers. Observing teachers in the classrooms depicted issues in the public sector schools. There was no communication between students and teachers in English language. On the other hand comparatively situation was better in private schools as responses of the teachers revealed their interest in communicative teaching techniques and observations revealed that they were conducting classes in English language; incorporations of communicative techniques and interactive classes adhering to lesson plans. Ahmed and Rao (2012) concluded the similar findings that the situation in private sector schools was comparatively much better.

In order to compare the role of teachers, importance of the linguistic competency of teachers and their role in building linguistic competency of students were explored. The findings of interview revealed that the teachers of public sector were highly qualified and realized the importance of linguistic competency of the teacher for teaching English to students. Their observations revealed that they were not delivering lectures in proper English. Teachers from private sectors expressed similar perspective on the role and the importance of teaching in language learning process. Their observations revealed that their condition was better than public schools' teachers. Similar findings were given by Aslam and Kingdon (2011) teachers had no proper role in improving student's linguistic competency in public schools but situation was better in private schools.

In response to third objective, findings of observation and interview revealed the challenges faced by the teachers during teaching English language. Teachers of public sector schools stated that problems like the lack of sufficient resources, basic facilities, and lack of required numbers of teachers, teaching aids, and also majority of students coming from low socio-economic background. Observations revealed overpopulated classes, distracted class room environment and lack of proper developed facilities as the major challenges. On the other hand, the respondents from the private sector schools revealed different challenges faced by them. Besides the issues of over-populated classes, and excessive quantum of syllabus, poor spoken skills of teachers were the biggest challenge for the teachers. Study of Ahmad and Rao (2012) revealed overpopulated classrooms, incompetent teachers, lack of teaching material and poor physical environment as major challenges faced by the teachers in Pakistan.

## **Conclusions**

With regard to the first question, the findings revealed that regardless of the fact that all teachers of both public and private sector schools admitted the importance of learning and teaching English language, there were differences in teaching practices and techniques in both private and public schools. The teaching styles of teachers in public sector schools indicated the use of grammar-translation method in classroom. There were no properly designed skill focused activities; public school teachers stressed on making the students memorize the language items; no communicative strategies were employed to improve the spoken skills of students. But, in private schools, according to the observations, teachers incorporated the skill-based activities into their lesson plan specifically spoken English activities.

In response to second question the findings of interviews and observations revealed that teachers from public sector schools, despite agreeing on the necessity of the language competency, were showed below average linguistic competency as most of them did not consider conducting their language classes in the target language. The situation was better in private sector schools as they were delivering lectures in English. However, the study concluded that the linguistic incompetence of ELT teachers in terms of proficient spoken skills and subject knowledge were deteriorating the student's language learning process.

In response to the third question, findings revealed that different challenges being faced by the teachers in both public and private sector schools. The challenges faced by the teachers of public schools were included lack of basic facilities, lack of resources and teaching aids, diverse background of the students. Observations revealed overpopulated classes and poor spoken skills of the teachers. On the other hand findings revealed that the teachers of private schools were facing the problems of overpopulated classes, and excessive quantum of syllabus. Observations revealed that the spoken skills of teachers were better than public teachers but not satisfactory.

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