Pedagogical and Learning Challenges in Implementing English as a Medium of Instruction in Rural Area Public Schools

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Abstract

The background of this study relates to the Punjab government's recent initiative to introduce English as a teaching medium (EMI) in state run schools. t is focused on the challenges and educational opportunities and language skills of teachers and students in implementing EMI. The population of the study consisted of rural public schools in Pakistan's Punjab Province The data was collected from a systematically selected sample of 89 elementary school teachers. The results show that both teachers and students have a poor understanding of English compared to Urdu. The translation technique to comprehend the text was employed. The students and the teachers have been found motivated to adopt EMI, nonetheless, the fear of lower grades in exams due to EMI turned out to be a hurdle. The study is significant in understanding the nature and types of challenges related to the teachers and students in implementing EMI in rural area public schools.

1. Introduction

English is used extensively throughout Pakistan. It also enjoys the status of an official language, the language of science and technology, also a tool of communication for business, courts and baking in Pakistan. In academics, it is also a partial medium of instruction in the teaching and learning process. The status of English is prestigious as it also maintains thriving status in both the public and private sectors, despite having elements and rhetoric of anti-English, pro-Urdu and pro-vernacular across the country. Furthermore, English is a source of power in social organization. Likewise, to improve social and economic status in society, learning and speaking English has become the dream of every Pakistani (Asif, 2013).

National Education Policy 2009 decided to adopt English as a medium of instruction (EMI). Hence, the Government of Punjab is also determined to introduce EMI from grade 1 to 12 throughout the province in both public as well as private institutions (Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan, 2009). The decision was based on the realization of the necessity and importance of English in the global world, research, political negotiation, and also in business as a lingua-franca with the aim to create abilities among Pakistanis to meet global needs (Crystal, 2012). The Government of Punjab launched EMI in 2011as a reform project named, Punjab School Reform Roadmap. Another project initiated by the Govt. of Punjab is Punjab Education and English Language Initiative (PEELI). The main objective of this project was to explore the issues and challenges related to the implementation of English as a medium of instruction in the schools of Punjab (British Counsel, 2013).

1.1. Pedagogical Practices of Teaching English in Pakistan

In Pakistan, traditional teaching methods and pedagogical practices are being adopted for the English language (Mahboob, 2009). Studies have highlighted the practice of English (Azam & Saleem, 2018; Javed et al 2018; Ahmad et al. 2018; Tahir et al. 2017) as medium of instruction from both teachers and students perspective in Pakistan. The traditional method is the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) for the teaching of the English language. Furthermore, as for as the main aim of teaching English in Pakistan is concerned, just mastery in literacy skills is concentrated, while literacy skills are never focused on. The usefulness of teaching and learning of English in Pakistan are grades achieved in examination at different levels while speaking skills have never been included in the examination (García, 2011). Furthermore, the linguistic competence of the learners is also measured based on a number of scores got in the examination. As a result, a learner who scores well on the exam is considered to have good language proficiency even if he is unable to speak a single sentence confidently and correctly (Krashen, 2003). Moreover, the criterion for employment in Pakistan is also the marks obtained in the examinations which is also a scale which represents the actual linguistic competence of that person due to the adoption of the teaching methods and traditional pedagogical practices (Chaudron, 1988).The method of teaching English in Pakistan indiscriminately in rural or urban areas is the Grammatical Translation Method (GTM) (Khan, 2013).

In GTM, translation is done from English into Urdu and vice versa. The local languages are also a source of explanation like Punjabi, Saraiki and Potohari (Ahmad & Rao, 2013). In this method, teachers, in order to teach grammar, follow a deductive approach in which a

general to specific technique is followed. Teachers first introduce the grammatical rules of the language and then engage their learners to practice the rules and produce grammatically correct sentences (Danesi, 2012). Naiman (1996) states that tenses, narration, active and passive voice are the focus in deductive teaching along with memorization of grammatical rules to teach English instead of making the learner able to use of these rules in a meaningful context.

1.2. Motivation of the Study

One of the big challenge that the public school teachers face is MIL. Implementation. The government of Punjab provides the books in English, but teachers turn these books in English into Urdu due to their unwillingness for EMI. Teachers' training programmes have also failed to meet this goal, Moreover, all that is taught in the Punjab public school is not English but about English, which is also not valid in most cases as most public school teachers do - even do not have a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and teaching techniques on English grammar teaching practices. (British Counsel, 2103).

1.3. Research Questions

This study set three questions as follows:

2. What pedagogical and learning challenges do the public-school teachers face in implementing English as a medium of instruction?

3. Which methods and techniques do the teachers use in teaching and understanding English?

4. How do the teachers and students perceive their linguistic competence?

This research is important because it provides real knowledge about pedagogical and learning challenges as well as the state of the proficiency level of English teachers as well as learners in schools. These issues must be addressed to understand the complications involved in implementing EMI. Since the issue of IME is part of the education system and is closely linked to students, teachers, parents, and policymakers, this study provides useful information for the effective implementation of EMI policy.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The study took a quantitative approach to examine the educational and learning challenges of implementing EMI in public schools in rural Punjab. It was primarily a descriptive study in which the researchers recorded teachers' perceptions and views about the educational and learning challenges of implementing EMI. The study is a survey research. The data was mainly collected from 20 state schools in the rural areas of Faisalabad District. In order to achieve equal representation of the sexes, the researchers selected 10 schools for boys and 10 schools for girls from a total of 20 schools. The researchers distributed a data collection questionnaire to the selected Faisalabad public school.

2.2. Population and Sampling

The public school teachers were the population of this study. For this study, a total of 100 participants from schools in rural areas of the Faisalabad district were selected at random to ensure that the population was actually represented. The questionnaire was used as a research tool to collect data from 100 samples from 20 schools, 5 samples from each selected school from three Tehsils of Faisalabad District: Tandlianwala, Samundri and Jaranwala. The minimum qualification for most teachers was MA. The data collected came from 89 teachers, 48 men and 41 women.

Table 1 contains the details of the schools contacted about the data.

Table 1
List of school for respondents

Faisalabad	Male	Female	English Teachers	Science Teachers
Tandlianwala	18	20	19	20
Samundri	17	16	16	15
Jaranwala	15	14	15	15
Total	50	50	50	50

2.3. Instrumentation

The researchers adopted the questionnaire as a research instrument for this research. The questionnaire for this study was created using three techniques: consulting the relevant studies, brainstorming, and piloting the questionnaire. First, the relevant studies were consulted to review the likely challenges that existed in implementing EMI. Second, the research summarized the most discussed challenges from the relevant studies. The second technique is to brainstorm the researchers' own experiences and information about the study. The third technique was to design the questionnaire and control the questionnaire to examine the actual situation and conditions which are possible indications of the real problem.

The questionnaire consisted of 17 closed items, and each item contained a five-point Likert scale indicating *Disagree Strongly*, *Disagree, Undecided, Agree* and *Agree Strongly*. The researchers divided the questionnaire into two sections to make the study easier and more systematic:

1. Pedagogical and learning challenges - item 01 to 09.
2. Teachers and students' linguistic competence- item 10 to 17.

The questionnaire was prepared using valid sources that have already been used for similar studies. The piloting of the questionnaire made it possible to maintain reliability, i.e., consistency of results over time (Selltiz, Wrightsman & Cook, 1976). The researchers used

the most widely used reliability method, internal consistency, which was measured using Cronbach's alpha statistical test, which remained within the acceptable limits of 0.69.

2.4. Piloting the Questionnaire

The piloting of the questionnaire proved useful for the creation of the questionnaire. The researchers held a meeting with 15 public school teachers and asked to respond to the questionnaire. The researchers summarized all the dates obtained from the piloting and then organized the date for completing the questionnaire. The participants' suggestions were also included in the questionnaire in order to facilitate the work of the respondents.

3. Data Analysis

3.1. Frequency Tables of Responses

The frequency table (Table 2) of items in this research was produced to analyze the data by using SPSS-16 software. The frequency table contains six columns as each column indicates a particular description of the data. Domains/items are in the first column of the frequency table whereas, the second column of the frequency table is named as a response. These are responses that were instructed to the participant of the study to response in the form of five points Likert scale with five options. These five options are further given numerical values as option *Disagree Strongly* has value 1, the option *Disagree* has value 2, in the same way *Undecided, Agree* and *Agree Strongly* have values 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The number of participants who responded to the questionnaire is mentioned in the third and fourth column, for the percentage of the participants (frequency).

Table 2 can be described as item 1 of the questionnaire is responded by a total of 89 participants so the total frequency of the item is 89 and total per cent is 100. The response *Disagree Strongly* is chosen by 6 participants of the study, so its frequency is 6 and 6.7 percentage. Similarly, option *Disagree* is opted by 2 participants as its frequency is 2 and 2.2 percentage. Third option *Undecided* is opted by 2 participants out of 89 so it has 2 frequencies and 2.2 percentage. In the same way, the fourth option *Agree* is chosen by 34 participants, so its frequency is 34 and 38.2 per cent while 45 participants opted 4th option *Agree Strongly* as its frequency is 45 and 56.6 per cent.

Column 5 of Table No. 2 shows the valid per cent. The 6th column is Cumulative per cent. It is the addition of the percentage of frequency of that option plus all above-given percentage of frequencies in that column. It is pretty informative as it describes frequency distribution with orderly categories. As item number 1 of the questionnaire is associated with the variable pedagogical and learning challenges, it indicates that 9% of teachers chose *Disagree Strongly (6.8%) and Disagree (2.3%)*. It reflects that they could not understand the challenges so clearly. Similarly, 79 % of teachers of this research chose to *Agree* and *Agree Strongly*. It indicates that they knew the pedagogical and learning challenges about the understanding of the students and teachers clearly or very clearly. Moreover, 91% participants selected Undecided, *Agree,* and *Disagree Strongly* in this item which shows that the concept that they knew the pedagogical and learning challenges related to the understanding of the students very clearly, clearly or lie in the middle position. Finally, 100% of respondents opted to Disagree, *Undecided, Agree* and *Agree Strongly*. It shows the concept that some

(9%) failed to understand pedagogical and learning challenges and some (91%) knew the pedagogical challenges very clearly, clearly or lies in the middle position.

Table 2
Frequency distribution pedagogical and learning challenges

Domain/ Item	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Q.1. The students in the class understand lecture better in Urdu medium than they do in English medium.	Disagree Strongly	6	6.8	6.8	6.7
	Disagree	2	2.3	2.3	9.0
	Undecided	2	2.2	2.2	11.2
	Agree	34	38.2	38.2	49.4
	Agree Strongly	45	50.6	50.6	100.0
	Aggregate	89.0	100	100	
Q.2. It is easy for me to understand the topic in Urdu medium than in English medium.	Disagree Strongly	4	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Disagree	9	10.1	10.1	14.6
	Undecided	9	10.1	10.1	24.7
	Agree	37	41.6	41.6	66.3
	Agree Strongly	30	33.7	33.7	100.0
	Total	89.0	100	100	
Q.3. I often use bilingual translation to comprehend English text.	Disagree	12	14.7	14.7	14.7
	Undecided	21	24.6	24.8	39.5
	Agree	42	46.2	46.2	85.2
	Agree Strongly	14	14.5	14.7	100.0
	Aggregate	89.0	100	100	
Q.4. The students often use bilingual translation to comprehend English text.	Disagree Strongly	1	1.1	1.1	1.1
	Disagree	32	36.0	36.0	37.1
	Undecided	19	21.3	21.3	58.4
	Agree	33	37.1	37.1	95.5
	Agree Strongly	4	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Aggregate	89.0	100	100	
Q.5. The students show better writing skill in English than in Urdu.	Disagree Strongly	3	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Disagree	39	43.8	43.8	47.2
	Undecided	9	10.1	10.1	57.3

	Agree	33	37.1	37.1	94.4
	Agree Strongly	5	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Aggregate	89.0	100	100	
Q.6. I feel the students are comfortable with English and ready to adopt English as their medium of instruction.	Disagree Strongly	10	11.2	11.2	11.2
	Disagree	22	24.7	24.7	36.0
	Undecided	20	22.5	22.5	58.4
	Agree	31	34.8	34.8	93.3
	Agree Strongly	6	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Aggregate	89.0	100	100	
Q.7. My students' performance in examination is affected due to writing in English language.	Disagree Strongly	1	1.1	1.1	1.1
	Disagree	15	16.9	16.9	18.0
	Undecided	9	10.1	10.1	28.1
	Agree	52	58.4	58.4	86.5
	Agree Strongly	12	13.5	13.5	100.0
	Aggregate	89.0	100	100	
Q.8. My students' performance in examination is better when they write in Urdu language.	Disagree	7	7.9	7.9	7.9
	Undecided	5	5.6	5.6	13.5
	Agree	33	37.1	37.1	50.6
	Agree Strongly	44	49.4	49.4	100.0
	Aggregate	89.0	100	100	
Q.9. The number of learners in the classes is not too high to adopt activity bases learning.	Disagree Strongly	3	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Disagree	18	20.2	20.2	23.6
	Undecided	6	6.7	6.7	30.3
	Agree	45	50.6	50.6	80.9
	Agree Strongly	17	19.1	19.1	100.0
	Aggregate	89.0	100	100	
Q.10. I feel comfortable in using English as medium of instruction in my class.	Disagree Strongly	4	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Disagree	26	29.2	29.2	33.7
	Undecided	26	29.2	29.2	62.9
	Agree	28	31.5	31.5	94.4
	Agree Strongly	5	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Aggregate	89	100	100	
Q.11. I can fluently	Disagree	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.2

deliver my entire lecture in English.	Strongly Disagree	27	29.3	29.3	30.4
	Undecided	12	14.5	14.5	44.8
	Agree	32	34.7	34.7	79.9
	Agree Strongly	17	20.1	20.1	100.0
	Aggregate	89	100	100	
Q.12. The students feel uneasy in comprehending the entire lecture in English.	Disagree	14	15.7	15.7	15.7
	Undecided	9	10.1	10.1	25.8
	Agree	41	46.1	46.1	71.9
	Agree Strongly	25	28.1	28.1	100.0
	Aggregate	89	100	100	
Q.13. The learners easily understand my questions asked in English.	Disagree Strongly	4	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Disagree	25	28.1	28.1	32.6
	Undecided	12	13.5	13.5	46.1
	Agree	40	44.9	44.9	91.0
	Agree Strongly	8	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Aggregate	89	100	100	
Q.14. I always answer the students' questions in English language only.	Disagree Strongly	1	1.1	1.1	1.1
	Disagree	31	34.8	34.8	36.0
	Undecided	12	13.5	13.5	49.4
	Agree	23	25.8	25.8	75.3
	Agree Strongly	22	24.7	24.7	100.0
	Aggregate	89	100	100	
Q.15. I can comfortably read any text written in English.	Disagree Strongly	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Disagree	11	11.3	11.3	12.5
	Undecided	5	6.8	6.8	19.2
	Agree	54	59.5	59.5	78.6
	Agree Strongly	18	21.2	21.2	100.0
	Aggregate	89	100	100	
Q.16. I think all of my colleagues have linguistic competence enough to adopt English as a medium of instruction.	Disagree Strongly	4.0	4.6	4.6	4.6
	Disagree	25	27.1	27.1	31.6
	Undecided	14	14.7	14.7	46.2
	Agree	26	30.2	30.2	76.3
	Agree	20	23.5	23.5	100.0

	Strongly Aggregate	89	100	100	
Q.17. I know very well how to teach the students with activity based learning and following students centered approach.	Disagree Strongly	6	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Disagree	7	7.9	7.9	14.6
	Undecided	10	11.2	11.2	25.8
	Agree	45	50.6	50.6	76.4
	Agree Strongly	21	23.6	23.6	100.0
	Aggregate	89	100	100	

3.2. Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive statistical data in Table 3 presents that all the required measures including *mean, mode* and *median* are appropriate and located within the ranged as expected by the researchers according to normal values. Likewise, the *standard deviation* is also within the normal range. Furthermore, the additional values of *range, minimum, maximum* and *variance* were also found normal. Briefly, the data was declared as error free. The *Mean* of item 1 to 9 was 4.24, 3.9, 3.61, 3.08, 2.98, 3.01, 3.66, 4.28 and 3.62. This result of *Mean* of each item was above the half value.

Table 3
Descriptive analysis related to the pedagogical challenges

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9
N	Valid	89.0	89.0	89.0	89.0	89.0	89.0	89.0	89.0	89.0
	Missing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean		4.23	3.91	3.62	3.07	2.99	3.02	3.67	4.27	3.61
Median		5.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Mode		5	4	4	4	2	4	4	5	4
Std. Deviation		1.08	1.11	.91	.98	1.08	1.15	.95	.89	1.11
Variance		1.18	1.25	.83	.96	1.18	1.32	.90	.79	1.23
Range		4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0
Minimum		1.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.0
Maximum		5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0

		Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17
N	Valid	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.04	3.44	3.87	3.26	3.38	3.89	3.42	3.76
Median		3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode		4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4
Std. Deviation		1.01	1.14	1.00	1.10	1.22	.91	1.24	1.10

Variance	1.02	1.31	1.00	1.21	1.51	.82	1.54	1.22
Range	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
Minimum	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

Figure 1 presents the trend of *means* of the questions related to the challenges in implementing English as a medium of instruction in the schools of Punjab. The graph shows the highest means for question No. 8, stating that "My students' performance in the examination is better when they write in Urdu language". It clearly shows that the teachers, who are expected to implement English as a medium of instruction in the schools, believe that the students' performance is directly affected by the medium of instruction and English does not support their performance. Similarly, the lowest means can be seen for Question No. 5, stating that, "The students show better writing skill in English than in Urdu". This clearly supports the idea that the learners lack the required proficiency in the English language which is being implemented as a medium of instruction in our schools. The others reading of the means can be read likewise.
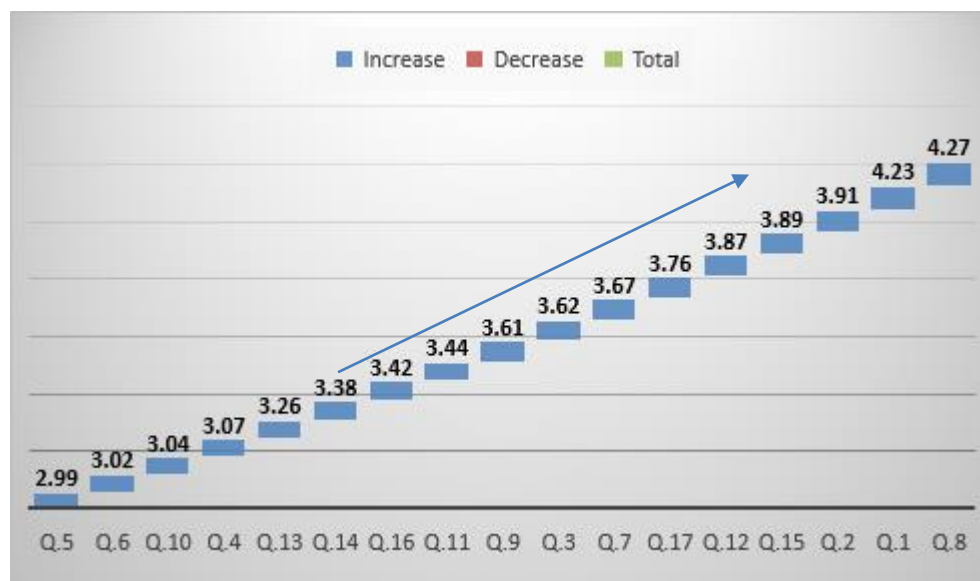

Figure 1. Trend of Means of Questions Related to Challenges in Implementing EMI

4. Findings and Discussion

The data analysis provides us following given below findings as:

1. Understanding of both teachers are students in Urdu is found better than English as 88.8% participants agreed to a better understanding of the students while 75.3% participants accepted that the teachers are better in Urdu as compared to English.

2. Meaning and understanding of English text are got with the help of translation technique as data analysis says that 60.7% of students and 60.7% teachers use translation technique to understand the text.

3. Writing skills in Urdu of the students are weak in English but better in Urdu as shown in item 5.

4. The students and teachers are not fully ready and motivated to adopt EMI policy as 41.7% participants accepted the idea.

5. The students' performance in the examination is affected because of EMI as items 7 states that 71.9% of teachers agreed to the weak performance of the students in the final examination because of EMI.

6. The classrooms are not much overcrowded with the number of students in the school and likely to accept activity-based learning as 75% of participants accepted it in item 9.

7. The teachers' ability to deliver their lectures in English is weak as 62.9% teachers stated that they do not feel convenient while 75% participants hesitate while delivering their lectures in English.

8. The students and teachers' ability to deal EMI policy is not up to the mark as 30.3% teachers are unable to fully explain their lectures in English while 74.2% students cannot understand lectures in English.

9. The teachers like to respond in Urdu as compared to English as 64% of teachers stated that they feel easy in responding to the students' question in Urdu than in English.

10. The comprehensive skill of the teachers is comparatively good but the students' skill is weak to comprehend the text as 87.6% teachers can understand English text easily while 58.45% of students cannot comprehend the text.

11. The teachers' professional skills are not fully up to the mark as 32.4% teachers need much professional and pedagogical practice skills about English while 14.6% of teachers are unaware of activity-based learning.

Pedagogical and learning challenges are described in the above findings. Lack of comprehension skill and understanding of English text is the main pedagogical and learning challenges in implementation of EMI. It exists among both teachers and students. The translation technique is used to make the text understand. Both teachers and the students first translate the text into Urdu in order to get meaning. The translation technique slows down the speed of understanding as it does not let thinking directly in the target language. The reason behind the use of translation is the wide use of Grammar Translation

Method (GTM), the traditional teaching method. Teachers are also well versed in modern methods and techniques used in teaching the English language known as the Direct Method and the Audio-Linguistic Method (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

The role of writing skill is crucial in obtaining exam scores. The writer with a good command of writing can express his idea convincingly and effectively. This study shows that students in public schools feel comfortable and easy to write in Urdu compared to English. The desire to obtain the maximum number of marks makes students reluctant to adopt EMI. Lack of creative writing practice is one reason for poor English writing skills, as claimed by 57.3% of study participants. Students in rural areas are not sufficiently motivated and ready to adopt EMI. Motivation and preparation can play a vital role in the implementation of EMI. English is not spoken in a social setting which is also a cause of lack of motivation, but the tendency to use English in a social setting is increasing due to technological advancements. The teachers also stated during piloting that lack of motivation is a major obstacle to the implementation of the EMI. They also said that local languages should be promoted instead of English in order to make the learning process quick.

The exam results measure students' overall performance. Academic success in the Pakistani education system relies solely on written exams where the ability to write well ensures good exam performance. In short, effective writing indicates good performance. The future career of students is also based on the results of written tests in job search. In this study, 86.5% of teachers said that their students perform well in the Urdu medium because their performance continues to be good. Both students and teachers believe that Urdu as a teaching medium (UMI) helps them get good grades on the final exams because they view English as a barrier to performance in the final exam.

The number of Student in the classrooms is not big in most schools, however, 25% of schools have overcrowded classes because it is difficult to use an activity-based learning approach. The language proficiency of students and teachers (STLC) is also seen as a major challenge when implementing IME. First, STLCSTLC is not up to date because teachers are reluctant to give their lessons in English. The findings show that hesitation while delivering lectures in English is because of weak linguistic competence which is the main hurdle in implementing EMI successfully. In addition, fluency in the language of students and teachers is essential for the implementation of the EMI policy According to the results, 84.4% of the participants reported that the students cannot fully understand the lessons in English because 53.9% of the students cannot answer the questions asked in English.

An ability to respond and understand English text shows the level of language proficiency. The result shows that 36% of teachers are unable to respond confidently in English. This indicates a poor mastery of teachers in English. A positive point is that 87.6% of teachers can understand while reading. In contrast, 58.45 students are unable to understand the text. In other words, the comprehension of the text by the teachers is judged to be reasonable while the comprehension of the pupils is judged to be poor and improvement is necessary. The professional and pedagogical skills of teachers are also not up to mark and also need to be improved in order to make the teacher aware and able to adopt modern teaching methods.

5. Conclusion

The study was carried out to examine the educational and learning-related challenges in the implementation of English as a medium of instruction and the status of language skills of students and teachers in rural public schools. The study has achieved its objective successfully. The results show that teachers and students understand Urdu well, while the weakness of English due to the English text is relatively difficult for them due to the widespread use of the Grammatical Translation Method (GTM), in which the text is first translated into Urdu, instead of being understood directly without translation. The translation method is very long and difficult. Teachers and students who use the EMI guideline lack motivation as they see the Urdu mode of teaching as the best way to get the highest score on the board exam. In addition, the fear of unsatisfactory results in the final exam is also due to a lack of language skills on the part of teachers and students, which is also an obstacle when implementing the EMI. The students are not sufficiently proficient to comprehend the English text as it needs to be improved, while teachers are unfamiliar with modern English teaching methods and practices. In addition, a friendly and supportive classroom environment is imperative for successful implementation of MIL EMI.

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Citation of the paper

Hashmi, M. A., Tahir, A., & Akhter, M. S. (2019) Pedagogical and learning challenges in implementing English as a medium of instruction in rural area public schools. *Erevna: Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, *3*(2), 42-56.