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Evaluation of the Practical Implications of ESL Curriculum at Intermediate Level

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Abstract

Curriculum is the basic tool used in the pedagogical process. Every education system fails if it is not developed to meet the needs of those for whom it is designed. In this research, it has been observed that the existing National Curriculum for the English Language (2006) is not fulfilling the language-based needs of the Pakistani learners. The intermediate level is the terminal level for students to discontinue education and get a job or continue learning in various advanced fields. The existing theoretical curriculum is different in terms of the practical application of English in a real-life situation. Paulo Freire's theory of problem-posing education supports the present study. Data was collected through teacher and student questionnaires filled by intermediate students of both the public and private sectors and for the analysis of collected data CIPP model of Stufflebeam was used. For computational analysis, MS Excel was used. The results showed that learners' creative writing skills and verbal skills are not improving satisfactorily and a gap was also found in teaching methodologies that are being currently used for teaching English. The present study is beneficial for providing the ground realities and practical needs of teachers and students in teaching and learning process. It would be helpful also for the stakeholders while designing the curriculum and syllabus.

Keywords: critical evaluation, ESL, pedagogical process, problem-posing education, theoretical curriculum

Introduction

Language being a medium of communication is used in every sphere of life. Amir (2008) stated that the language used in education and for instruction plays a very important role in the history of the English language. During the colonial period theme of "divide and rule" remained an essential language policy. The colonial period was geared to produce educated elites loyal to Britain, getting access to more economic opportunities, empowering supremacy of English men, dividing masses

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into upper and lower-salaried classes. In the colonial rule, there was discrimination between the rich and the poor in terms of using the English language. It was considered that the language of power is the language of elites as they enjoyed better opportunities of economic and social status. Being socially and economically rich, they exploit the masses in the best of their interests. English language curriculum (2006) snubbed this discrimination and offered equal chances of earning and social development to all people by offering equal English language learning chances to all learners of English till intermediate. Further, by having command over the English language, learners can best utilize their linguistic abilities to develop their academic career or economic pursuits.

In Pakistan, English is treated as a compulsory 2nd language in the curriculum until graduation. The second language is any language that is learned after acquiring the first language, in Pakistan, English is learnt as a second language. The students learn English intentionally to pass the examination to have a degree for further higher studies or for pursuing a job to earn their livelihood. It has been observed that, in most areas of Pakistan, where Urdu is the first language, learners are not provided with an environment where they may acquire English unconsciously as language learning mostly is an unconscious process. In the most cases, they are only situated to encounter the English language in the English language classroom or through interaction with English textbooks (exposure to books may vary in the private and public sector). Briefly, English language learners interact with English as a second language, usually, in academic settings so they put conscious efforts into learning English. English is the language of research, science, and communication at the international and even at the national level. To meet the needs of educational, economic, individual, and social awareness, the learners must develop four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. On the contrary, students do not become able to develop English language skills even after having 12 years of compulsory English language education in Pakistan.

Overview of the National Curriculum for the English Language (2006)

The curriculum is a whole educational plan directed towards the development of learners to cope with academic, social, or individual needs. The National Curriculum for the English Language (2006) has been designed with the idea of the development of four language skills to enable learners to use English for catering to their academic or social language-based needs. The whole curriculum, across grades I to XII, is woven together to produce skilled learners after the terminal stage, i.e., intermediate. The learners after their 12 years education are supposed to use the English language in formal as well as informal settings. According to

National Curriculum for the English Language ([2006](#)) intermediate is terminal level for those learners "who discontinue education to look for jobs, while others branch off into their respective specialized areas for further Study" (p.4).

National English Language Curriculum ([2006](#), p.3) focuses on developing the following English language competencies:

- Reading and Thinking Skills
- Writing Skills
- Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language
- Appropriate Ethical and Social Development

Njeng'ere ([2014](#)) stated that the Curriculum helps institutions to produce reliably learned individuals who will perform their social or individual functions in society.

The existing English language curriculum ([2006](#)) of Pakistan was designed on the grounds of development of language skills, it was built around five levels among them intermediate is the level after which learners will either plunge into practical fields or continue an academic course of action in desired fields. The designed curriculum for this terminal level is aimed at developing professional or academic language skills.

Literature Review

The curriculum is the source and basic tool in the teaching-learning process through which we can bring the desired lifetime changes in the learners at any level (Connelly & Clandinin, [1988](#); Kelly, [2004](#); Tanner, [1975](#); Beauchamp, [1967](#)). A curriculum is always designed according to the purpose and requirements of all the stakeholders, keeping in view the actual needs of the society. Evaluation is the act of gathering data about any project to assess its working value. Curriculum evaluation is a process of evaluating whole educational activity to introduce changes in the areas that are not meeting goals behind it or to initiate a new program to attain special needs that are not satisfactorily achievable from the existing program. In this regard, Guba and Lincoln ([1981](#)) said that evaluation of curriculum is evaluation of its merits and worth. Worthen and Sanders ([1987](#)) viewed curriculum as a formal deduction or judging the effective value of curriculum and Worthen and Sanders ([1987](#)) mentioned Stufflebeam as an advocate of decision-oriented evaluation. While Ornstein and Hunkins ([2004](#)) stated that evaluation is an ongoing process. This ongoing process they related to Stufflebeam's evaluation model of CIPP (context, input, process, and product). This model design is in favour

of evaluating curriculum from the stage of setting objectives to end product that is producing desired behavior.

Curriculum evaluation is a process that asks questions who are the participants for whom the educational program has been organized? What are their needs? Why do they join certain courses of study? Is the learning material according to their needs? How do they receive knowledge? How is their knowledge assessed? Is the final product meeting the set objectives?

Yıldız (2004) evaluated the Turkish Language Curriculum with the help of Stufflebeam's evaluation model of context, input, process, product (CIPP) for foreigners. Lodhi, et al. (2019) did a very important study to evaluate the English text books from the perspective of students. The researchers selected the sample through cluster random sampling technique and a questionnaire was designed to collect the data. The findings and results of the study exposed that the reading material being educated at the intermediate level isn't be satisfactory to meet the normal goals of the objective language. Besides, it has been suggested that the course readings should be reconsidered occasionally to acquire clear language learning goals.

According to the researchers' best knowledge of the curriculum has not been evaluated critically by using Paulo Frier's concepts. Educational institutions are a mirror to society. Educational programs are designed to meet the changing needs of society. So, there is dire need to evaluate the curriculum. The current research is based on evaluation of the National Curriculum for the English Language (2006) at the level of intermediate for investigating educational and job-related needs of learners after passing intermediate.

Research Objectives

1. To get an idea about the views of students regarding practical implications of curriculum.
2. To get an awareness about the role of teachers in teaching and learning process of EL learners.
3. To check the difference between students and teachers' opinions about the achievements of teaching and learning process of EL learners.

Research Questions

Following research questions of this study relate CIPP (Context, Input, Process, and Product) evaluation model of Stufflebeam:

1. What are students' ideas about their learning of the English language at intermediate level?
2. What is the role of instructors in the learning process at intermediate level?
3. What is difference between teachers and students' views about achievements of curriculum at intermediate level?

Methodology

The present action research applied the concept taken from Paulo Freire's theory of problem-posing education (1968). The problem-posing education model contrasts with the bucketful system of education where learners are passive and regarded as buckets to be filled by the knowledge from the teacher only. The problem-posing model of education treats the learners as an active shareholder in the process of learning. They are given the tasks or problems and they are required to solve the problems and carry out the task on their own by operating in different social contexts (inside or outside the classroom). The Model of Evaluation developed by Stufflebeam (1983s) CIPP (context, input, process, and product) was employed by the researchers in the evaluation of the English language curriculum (2006). The model provides the measure to focus on the practical implications of the curriculum. The sample for the study included 45 participants. 30 English language learners and 15 English language teachers provided information in the present research work. The researchers used a questionnaire as an instrument of data collection in order to preserve the responses from the study participants. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items that were administered to English as second language learners to measure the educational language proficiency level they had acquired to use in further pursuits of academic classes and to assess the needs of language students that are complementary for being professional to earn livelihood in their practical lives if they discontinue education after intermediate. Moreover, a questionnaire comprising 15 items was used to assess the teaching-learning process of EL teachers that how they deliver English language content to English as a second language till intermediate (terminal) level.

Analysis and Findings

Overview

The analysis of data was divided into three parts: part one dealt with the students' perception about English language skills namely reading, writing, and speaking skills; the second portion shed light on English language teachers' perception of their teaching experiences and arising findings of the study.

Students' Perception of Language Skills

Table 1

Student's Perception about their Reading Skill

Sr. #	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I am able to understand grammatical connections in text through reading.	23%	53%	13%	7%	3%
2	I am able to identify figures of speech through reading text.	17%	53%	17%	10%	3%
3	I am able to use dictionary to supplement reading text.	30%	50%	3%	10%	3%
4	I am able to scan answers of questions while reading text.	27%	40%	23%	3%	7%
5	I am able to derive hidden meaning of text through reading.	17%	33%	33%	23%	3%
6	I am able to understand meaning of difficult words from the context through reading.	17%	33%	37%	13%	0%
7	I am able to make summary of text after reading.	27%	37%	23%	10%	3%

Table 1 shows the percentage of the responses received on grammatical features, figures of speech, use of a dictionary, reading comprehension, inferring meanings of the given text, understanding of meaning through contextual cues, and skill of summarizing given reading texts after the circulation of the questionnaire among English language learners studying at an intermediate level.

Table 2 shows the percentage of the responses received on the areas of individual's ability to relate with the text, ability to write an essay, story, research reports, business letters, job application, CV, cover letter, and creative writing through proper grammatical constructions after the circulation of the questionnaire among English as second language learners studying at an intermediate level.

Table 2

Students' Perception about their Writing Skills

Sr. #	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8	I am able to relate text with my own experiences.	27%	27%	23%	10%	7%
9	I am able to write an essay on any topic.	13%	50%	20%	17%	0%
10	I am able to write story of my own on any topic.	10%	37%	23%	27%	3%
11	I am able to write research reports.	7%	17%	30%	37%	10%
12	I am able to write business letter according to appropriate format.	7%	13%	27%	37%	17%
13	I am able to write job application in response to job advertisement.	20%	23%	20%	30%	7%
14	I am able to write a Curriculum Vitae (CV).	13%	30%	23%	23%	10%
15	I am able to write a covering letter.	13%	30%	30%	20%	7%
16	I am able to write my own text with appropriate vocabulary and punctuation.	17%	30%	23%	27%	3%
17	I am able to write correct grammatical sentences.	7%	30%	37%	17%	10%

Table 3 shows the percentage of the responses received on the categorical constructs of communication ability in an informal setting, ability of oral presentation, and ability to appear in a job interview after the circulation of the questionnaire among English as second language learners learning at an intermediate level.

Table 3

Students' Perceptions about their Speaking Skills

St #	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18	I am able to communicate with others in informal setting.	20%	30%	27%	17%	7%
19	I am able to give oral presentations in English.	20%	30%	23%	23%	3%
20	I am able to give job interview in English.	20%	17%	23%	23%	13%

Teachers' Perception of Teaching Experiences

Table 4

Teacher's Perception about their Teaching Experiences

Sr. #	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I teach from The Punjab Curriculum Text Book Board's books.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
2	In my class students actively take part in learning process.	27%	53%	20%	0%	0%
3	I devise activities for collaborative learning.	20%	60%	13%	7%	0%
4	I take oral presentations from students to develop speaking skill in them.	33%	33%	27%	7%	0%
5	I ask students to read text by themselves.	33%	47%	20%	0%	0%
6	I give them questions to answer after reading.	60%	33%	7%	0%	0%
7	I ask questions from exercises for evaluating writing skill.	27%	67%	7%	0%	0%
8	In my class students review the test of their peer.	13%	40%	13%	33%	0%

Sr. #	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9	I promote discussion in class to develop language skills among students.	33%	27%	20%	13%	7%
10	To develop language and social skills I organize teaching content around role play.	7%	80%	7%	7%	0%
11	I ask students to analyze texts.	33%	47%	13%	7%	0%
12	I ask students to perform language tasks in groups.	20%	33%	27%	20%	0%
13	I create real life like situations in class and students respond accordingly.	47%	47%	7%	0%	0%
14	I discourage rote learning.	13%	53%	33%	0%	0%
15	I also use journals, newspapers and cassettes etc. as teaching material.	7%	33%	33%	27%	0%

Table 4 shows the percentage of the responses received from English language teachers after the circulation of the questionnaire among teachers teaching at an intermediate level. The areas of investigation from EL teachers through questionnaire include using the textbook in EL class, learners' participation in EL class, collaborative learning tasks, oral EL skill, text comprehension by EL learners, comprehension questions, use of textbook given exercises, peer review activities, classroom discussions, activities of role play, text analysis tasks, performing language tasks, teaching through authentic situations and use of other supplementary material in El classroom for development of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills of English Language among learners of English at an intermediate level.

Findings and Discussion

The results of this study are based on the data collected from the English language learners and the English language teachers questionnaires designed for evaluating responses keeping in view the objectives of the curriculum. Major areas that have been observed in the study are English reading skills, English writing skills and

English speaking skill, and the role of teaching-learning processes in the development of English language skills among English language learners. Findings of research have been categorized into students' perceptions of English language skills and English language teachers' role in developing English language skills.

Students' Perceptions of Language Skills

Reading enriches the repertoire of language. Reading develops vocabulary and gives trigger to consciousness to think and reflect. It has been claimed in the curriculum document, competency 1; standard 1 (C1, S1), that after 12 years of education learners will polish their thinking ability after reading texts. The first four statements inquired C1, S1and it has been seen that the majority of students are able to understand the grammatical structure of the given text. This makes students think about literary meanings accompanied by the literal meaning of the reading text. Such type of understanding is an indicator that they have developed sufficient thinking ability to answer the questions related to the text. Competency 1; standard 2 (C1, S2), is about developing analyzing ability of the reader. Statement 5 to 7 investigated analyzing ability with the thinking skill of learners. Many of the students' responses to these statements support the idea that after developing thinking skills, students are able to analyze and draw hidden layers of meaning and to make their summaries. It is proved that reading texts are helpful in the development of learners' consciousness (National Curriculum for English Language, 2006, p.7).

The reading leads to the development of writing skills and the readers, during reading, consult dictionaries to find the meaning of difficult and unfamiliar words. In this way, they happen to experience the treasure of language, from that treasure they incorporate some jewels in their mind and enrich vocabulary. The process of reading helps the learners to learn new vocabulary, to understand sentence structure, grammatical connections between sentences, and meaning beyond the sentence level. The writing is the expression of thought that they develop through reading and analyzing texts. Further, the writing is a process of written communication that facilitates the learner in their academic course of action and job officials to perform job-related written tasks of applying for a job, giving a response to a boss, and writing a letter, etc. According to the reference document (2006, p.8), competency 2; standard 1 (C2, S1), after developing their skill of thinking in the target language, they will be able to express their fluency of thought on paper in the form of creative academic writing. From the interpretation of the data, it was seen that the writing needs of learners are fulfilled satisfactorily. Only 17% of responses of statement 9 and 30% of responses of statement 10 show that

they are unable to accomplish writing tasks. The results of statement 11 to 15 show that students' writing skill, in the area of writing curriculum vitae (CV), job application and covering letter, is not developed as these areas are linked with job needs. Overall, present teaching methodologies are not developing learners' writing skills much.

The speaking is a verbal channel of communicating ideas or information. In Pakistan, the learning to speak English is a subconscious process as here English enjoys the status of a second language. Unconsciously speakers acquire Urdu as their first language from the surrounding where people habitually use Urdu for communication. That is why language teachers while teaching English make use of Urdu to make understanding of English language easy for the learners. It has been theorized in English Language Curriculum (2006) that the medium of instruction would be English (p.1). The researchers have observed that in Pakistan English language teachers switch from English to Urdu as a facilitator in the clarification of content. Thus, Urdu stays in between the learners and the target language i.e., English and hinders the acquisition of fluent speaking skills of the learners. Whereas, speaking skill is the need of students to communicate their ideas later at their job places, and as officials to perform constructive roles in the socio-economic scenario. Further, speaking is a language skill that plays a vital role in making contacts to promote social bonding, economic development, and having constructive opportunities across the countries. Keeping in view the significance of the speaking skills, the English Curriculum (2006, p.8), competency 3; standard 1 (C3, S1) clearly emphasizes the development of speaking skills in both formal and informal settings. The results of Table 3 show that this oral communication need of students and job officials is not fulfilled. It is because the medium of instruction in teaching English is usually Urdu and our examination system does not have assessing criteria for speaking skills. Pakistan's teaching and learning practices are designed to train students to pass the exams. The examination bodies are designed to assess writing skills only. So, students do not develop intrinsic motivation to become proficient speakers of the English language. They simply focus on writing as they are to be judged on writing to promote in the next grade. For promotion, they just focus on those areas that are to be assessed.

According to the findings based on the results of student's perceptions of language, the existing curriculum fulfills the objective of reading and thinking skill improvement but it does not develop academic writing skills completely.

Teachers' Role in Developing Language Skills

Freire (1972) believes that teacher-student and student-teacher active participation in the learning process play a vital role in producing creative and critical beings who will be able to think, reflect and then act. This supports Freire's idea of problem-posing education that has been taken as a theoretical construct for the present research study. The results presented in Table 3 show that the English language teachers organize their teaching activities around collaborative learning activities where students can find the chance to discuss their ideas with their peers inside and outside the classroom. According to the found data, the English language instructors organize authentic (real life-like) situations where students actively participate and answer questions discouraging rote learning which is traditionally characterized by a bucketful system of education.

Conflicts Resulted from Data Analysis

It has been understood while interpreting results that EL learners put forward their claim that their English speaking skill is not developed while EL teachers claimed that they provide such a sufficient environment that is suitable for the English language learners where they actively participate in communicative situations. The difference of their (students and teachers) opinion has been observed in the study.

The results, gathered from the teachers and the students perspective, show that the writing skill is developed among learners after passing intermediate level except for certain areas which require professional needs of them. In Pakistan, summative assessment is done through writing. According to the Gujranwala Board Result 2017, the pass percentage is 61.65% which clearly shows that the professional and academic needs of learners of the English language need to be focused on. It is required because the learners do not develop proficiency in writing a CV, business letters, and responding to job applications. Researchers observed EL (English Language) papers and opine that evaluation items of intermediate EL examination papers (I & II) lack evaluation of professional writing development.

Conclusion

The ground realities and practical needs of the stakeholders should be kept into consideration while designing a curriculum. It has been observed that Pakistani English language learners have been confronted with deficiency of lacking English language speaking proficiency and the development of speaking skill has not been focused on the existing curriculum of the English language (2006). The English speaking skill has not been given attention in curriculum and as well as in English

Language classrooms while EL learners are to encounter practical situations of academic continuity or to search for a job. If they are offered opportunities to develop English speaking skills, they will be able to contribute their best share in the developing economy and the status of Pakistan. Further, in order to meet practical needs to compete on a national and international level, they need to develop skills of speaking English along with other skills.

It has been concluded that National Curriculum for English Language (2006) has enough and rich textual content and recommendations for the development of English reading and writing skills of EL learners. The present research study results have expressed that English language learners in EL class developed reading skills through instructional material and guidelines (teaching methods) and they had been proved from data that they have proved as incapable of doing creative writing tasks and oral tasks i.e., integrative tasks. From the study, it has been found that English language classrooms and instructional aides are not inculcating reflective and productive activities in the EL classroom so the learners remain ignorant of integrative skills to develop. Though, reading comprehension skills have best been developed.

It is concluded that the present curriculum caters to the needs of reading and writing development of English language learners but a gap has been found in methods of teaching and instructional guide in EL class to develop speaking and integrative aspects of language development. There has been observed a need of incorporating Paulo Freire's problem-posing education in the content of the curriculum and be implemented by Curriculum bodies in the class.

Suggestions

Following suggestions have been made for the curriculum bodies to reflect over:

- Questions of technical writing (e.g. CV writing, report writing, memo writing, and business letter, etc.) should occupy a place in the final evaluation to develop writing skills to meet the academic and professional needs of EL learners as the evaluation is made by putting thoughts on the piece of paper. So these items should be included in the assessment items so that these can be focused on the academic tenure of intermediate.
- Higher authorities should organize training programs for English language teachers based on curriculum objectives to meet in actual classroom and assessment types.
- To enhance English speaking skills, some percentage of marks should be assigned to listening tasks and viva even at a smaller scale, initially. Or some

percentage of marks should be in the hands of institutions to conduct English speaking test in the institute to save energy, time and money.

It is a dire need to revise the curriculum to encompass language as an integrated skill. The integrative syllabus should have an equal percentage of language skills and be in harmony with the examination system, so the whole educational activity could run successfully from setting a goal to evaluation finally.

Recommendations

Following recommendations have been framed for future researchers:

1. The present study can be extended in the area of assessment and evaluation to resolve assessment issues that are functioning as a barrier in English language development and its practical reflections by the ESL learners in Pakistan.
2. The sample size may be revised into a large subset of the population in order to generalize results nationwide, more logically.
3. Comparative studies may also be carried out in Govt. and private sectors.
4. Researchers can conduct comparative studies regarding primary, high, and higher-level dealing with the English language.
5. Researchers may conduct the vast study by taking BS and MS curriculum.

Limitations of the Study

The current study has a number of limitations which are as follows:

- The present study is only limited to the teachers and students' views.
- The data were only collected through using questionnaires.
- A small sample have been selected by the researchers.
- In the present study only curriculum of intermediate level was selected.

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