

## ***TEFL in Pakistan: Emerging Issues***

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The study investigates whether students have sufficient language support in English in higher education by exploring the background of students, the facilities for English, the language needs and motivation of students for higher education, work, and information technology, the availability and quality of English language courses, and the students' language outcomes. A 'multi-method' approach was adopted where a Sociolinguistic Survey was combined with Case Study to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. The findings of the study reveal the gap between the English language needs of students in higher education and the availability and quality of English support programmes. The results display the importance attached to English in higher education by students who show a strong desire and motivation to learn English, and display highly positive attitudes to English. The results reveal that the present language policy is leading to a significant difference between private sector and public sector students' ability to access higher education with the public sector lagging behind. Recommendations are to adopt an 'English for All' policy.

The issue of medium of instruction has plagued higher education in Pakistan since independence in 1947. The question that the present language policy poses is whether Pakistani students involved in higher education receive sufficient linguistic support in Urdu, English, or their mother tongue. The choice of a language to be the medium of instruction or a language to be studied is a complex matter. It involves various factors including the aims of the language planners, the needs of learners, and attitudes of parents and

teachers. In addition, there are practical factors involved, like economic resources available to implement the policy in training of teachers, as well as development of materials.

One major problem in Pakistan is the lack of research in the area of language planning in education. Although there have been a few sociolinguistic surveys involving schooling in Pakistan (Mansoor, 1993; Rahman, 2002), these have been limited to a few institutions or a particular region.

In all Educational Policies and Reports of Education Commissions and Committees set up on this topic (1957-1998), the official policy has been to maintain English as the medium of instruction in higher education after the country's independence in 1947. This policy is seen as an interim arrangement. The long-term language policy as laid down in all the Reports of Educational Policies as well as Education Commissions and Committees has been to introduce Urdu as the official medium of instruction in higher education, once teaching materials have been developed in it. Although, Urdu was declared the official medium of instruction for schools (class 1-12) in the public sector soon after the country's independence, the period assigned to the transfer from English medium to Urdu medium in higher education has varied in various reports, from fifteen years in the 1950's (Sharif Commission, 1959) to five to seven years in the 1970's (University Grants Commission, 1982). Despite endorsement of this policy by every regime, it has been generally observed by students, teachers, and parents as well as other stakeholders that adequate attention has not been given to the problems regarding learners' language difficulties in the English medium or developing sufficient and quality materials in Urdu for higher education. The Report of the Education Sector Reforms (2001) and the Task Force on Higher Education (2002) set up by General Musharraf did not address the issue of language policy in higher education.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Higher Education and English Language Teaching**

The participation rate of 2.6% in higher education is very low as compared to the 50% participation rate in advanced countries (PST, 1999). According to the Economic Survey (2001), there are over 789 Science and Arts colleges with an enrollment of 9,56,000 and teachers at various levels. In university education, there are 68 degree awarding institutions that include universities in the public and the private sector (Task Force Report, 2002). During the year 1996-1997, the total enrollment in the public universities was 101,308, which is 20% of the total enrollments in higher education. Enrollment in the private universities was 4,910, which was 4.62% of the total university enrollment. A crisis in the educational system of Pakistan is demonstrated by the high rate of failure of students in examinations at the intermediate, graduate, and postgraduate levels. Hoodbuoy (1998) laments the fast expansion of universities without enough attention to academic quality, high standards, modern methods of teaching and learning, as well as academic freedom or academic ethics.

English is taught in undergraduate programmes as a compulsory subject in all the institutions. According to Abbas (1998), despite the massive inputs into the teaching of English, the national results are abysmally poor. At college level, the pass percentage is barely 18-20% and since English is a compulsory subject, failure in English means failure in the entire University examination. At the secondary level, the ratios are almost the same. Abbas (1998) attributes the failure in English examinations mainly to flawed pedagogy and material design and concludes that perhaps the teaching of English is not necessary for all levels of the population. In academic institutions in Pakistan, English is a compulsory language from class VI bachelors' level with the exception of Sindh and Punjab, where English is compulsory from class-I. This policy is already being implemented and recently the N.W.F.P. government has also announced the introduction of

English as a compulsory subject from class 1. At present an emerging graduate has studied English for at least nine years. The importance of English is apparent from the fact that English is a compulsory subject at the graduate level whereas Urdu is not. According to Malik (1996), the weak proficiency of emerging graduates has led to a lowering of standards of performance at the graduate and postgraduate and equivalent levels where English is the official medium of instruction and assessment. Malik (1996) also points out that the 'high rate of failure effects students in two ways: it destroys their opportunities for white collared jobs in the country and also destroys their morale'.

### **The Importance of English**

Global trends in economics, technology, and culture suggest that English as a world language will play a significant role in the twenty-first century (Graddol, 1997). The rapid spread of English and the fact that the number of people who speak English as a second language will exceed the number of native speakers in the next twenty years, has serious implications for all developing countries of the world, including Pakistan. English as the international currency of science and technology as well as the major business lingua franca, is now being used widely in many countries of the world. In post-colonial countries of South Asia, such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, English continues to be used in higher education as a medium of instruction and compulsory subject (Powell, 2001). In Pakistan also, English remains popular as a symbol of power and as a tool for economic and social upward mobility (Rahman, 2002). The mushrooming of English language centres all over Pakistan is an evidence of the positive attitudes of learners and their high motivation to be fluent in English. The concept of distance learning and the rise of information technology have also led to the increasing demand for English education in Pakistan.

An issue of central concern for educationists these days is that if English language learning is so much in demand presently then what would be the

best courses incorporating the most updated approaches and methods to teach English, keeping in view the underlying socio-political aspects. What is required is also an understanding of the relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement as well as what should be the exit criteria of ESL/EFL programmes. A key problem in the effective teaching of English in schools internationally is that of teacher supply. As Graddol (1997) points out, an important educational trend world-wide is the teaching of growing number of courses in universities through the medium of English. There is a growing need to teach some subjects, especially sciences in English rather than the national language so as to enable students to access updated text-books and research articles. In addition, the influx of foreign students to the first world for higher education through the system of 'distance education' courses from 'mega universities' such as the British Open University and 'virtual universities' is leading to a rapid rise in teaching courses in the English medium.

### **Language Attitudes and Motivation**

According to Ryan (cited in Gardner, 1979), research on attitudes and motivation has mainly focused on two important areas that include: 1) the effects of language attitudes to second language acquisition and 2) the effects of second language acquisition on attitudes. Most of the research makes a contrast between integrative and instrumental orientations. An integrative orientation refers to an interest in learning a second language in order to facilitate interaction with the other language community. An instrumental orientation, on the other hand, focuses on the utilitarian aspects of learning a language like a means to 'higher education' or 'a good job'. Paulston (cited in Spolsky, 1998) points out that the major linguistic consequence of ethnic groups in prolonged contact within one nation is language shift of the subordinate group to the language of the dominant group. Though there is little research data to identify the kinds of incentives, the two major ones are: 1) economic advantages, and 2) social prestige. In Brudner's terms (1972),

jobs select language-learning strategies state that whenever there are jobs available that demand knowledge of a certain language, people will learn it.

## **THE STUDY**

The current study was designed to examine the role of English in higher education with a focus on some of the key areas in language planning and language education. The research questions in the study revolved around collecting information on: the background of learners (demographic and language), facilities in English, attitudes to languages in education and motivational orientation, parental support for learning English, learners' language difficulties in English, English language support programmes, English language competency of subject and English teachers, and English language outcomes.

### **Research Design**

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were considered to examine which would be more suitable for the research study and it was decided to use a 'combined approach' suggested by Robson (1993), since the main purpose was not only to find out how many number and percentages of respondents held the same or different attitudes, values, opinions and beliefs, but also the reasons for this. In this study Language Education in Pakistan, the methods of data collection were: 1) questionnaire survey, 2) interviews, and 3) documentary analysis. The present research was designed to be a "real world enquiry" mainly concerned with contributing to both language policy and practice in higher education in Pakistan. Our concern in this article is with the first source. The 'sociolinguistic survey,' suggested by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) was seen as a good model to adopt in this regard.

## **Participants**

Participants in the study included students and teachers from public and private degree colleges and universities in higher education. A minimum sample size of 2,450 students was required for this study.<sup>1</sup> A sample size of around 150 teachers (English and Subject) with representation of at least 5 teachers from each institution was considered sufficient. It was decided that to be able to record the responses of the parents, the parents' questionnaire would be handed to the students with a request to return the filled in questionnaire to their coordinator. The sample of the colleges and universities from private and public (Government) as well as general and professional was taken from the list of degree colleges and universities as listed in the Handbook Colleges of Pakistan University Grants Commission (1999). Only the colleges and universities from capital cities of Pakistan and the federal capital, Islamabad, were included.

## **Instrument**

Four types of instruments were developed for conducting the survey. These included a questionnaires for each population (students, parents and teachers), and an English language test to gauge the English language proficiency of students and teachers. The student questionnaire and the teacher questionnaire were completed in the presence of the researcher. A separate questionnaire for the parents of the students was sent home with the students. All questionnaires were bilingual (Urdu and English). The purpose of short language proficiency assessment was to supplement the data obtained from the questionnaires. The test comprised two components:

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<sup>1</sup> The sample size for testing the hypothesis for the prevalence of students' opinion about the role of English in higher education in our population was calculated by taking a proportion of 50% with level of significance of 5%, a power of 80%, the bound on error (the absolute difference between actual and hypothetical prevalence) of 4% and design effect of 2 (because of two-stage cluster sampling).

Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary and Structure. Both the sections of the test were taken from validated tests (Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS, 1996, compiled by Jakeman and McDowell) and Michigan English Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP, 1985).<sup>2</sup>

### **Data Collection**

The research team included two faculty members, a statistical advisor, an editor and two data entry operators; all the team members were already trained and had been involved in previous research projects. The project was supported by the Aga Khan University Seed Money Grant Award. Data collection took six months. The coded responses were analyzed using SPSS, Version 6.1.3.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Reviews of English Language Proficiency Test (Alderson, et al., 1987) the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) is a test that is particularly designed to measure language proficiency. Such tests test the ability to either recognize or produce correct grammar and usage. In addition, the basic knowledge of grammar underlies the ability to use language to express meaning, and so grammar tests do have an important part to play in language programmes (S. Kitao & K. Kitao, 1999). The administered assessment demonstrated enough evidence of construct validity as the two sections on Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary and Structure were able to measure the most important academic skills as well as general proficiency of the respondents.

<sup>3</sup> The analysis of all quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires was done at a descriptive and inferential level (see Kinnear & Gray, 1999). Various statistical measures were applied such as the chi-square tests used for comparison of categorical data, t-tests used for comparing two groups of quantitative data, and ANOVA used for comparing more than two groups of quantitative data. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was also used to investigate the relationship between total scores and motivational (integrated & instrumental) scores. The level of significance was set at the 0.05. Parametric tests were used because of the large sample size, which approaches to central limit theorem. Simple and multiple linear regressions were used to examine the relationship between student test score and other factors.

## RESULTS

The final sample comprising 2,136 students was predominantly from Punjab (Lahore and Taxila) and Sindh (Karachi and Hyderabad) Balochistan (Quetta), followed by the Federal Capital (Islamabad), and the N.W.F.P (Peshawar); the 121 subject and English teachers came from all provinces except Balochistan. Only 63 parents' questionnaires were received from Punjab and Sindh. The majority of students were from colleges (84%) and a smaller number from universities (16%). Around two-thirds of all students in the study were from public sector (colleges and universities). The majority of the students reported Urdu as their mother tongue (42%), followed by Punjabi (30%), Pushto (14%), Balochi (5%), Sindhi (4%) and others (5%). The students involved in higher education in Pakistan belong to various socio-economic backgrounds. Students studying in private sector (Mean income = Rs. 30,361; standard deviation = Rs. 45,736) have significantly higher monthly household income as compared to students studying in public sector (Mean income = Rs. 13,718; standard deviation = Rs. 16,701).<sup>4</sup> One fifth of all students and one quarter of public sector students reported a household monthly income of Rs 5,500 (\$ 90) and less.

As far as the facilities for English in the two sectors are concerned, the results do not show a good picture at any stage of schooling either in public and private sectors. The students from the public sector report insufficient facilities at the primary (10%), secondary (19%), intermediate (26%), and graduate levels (36%). The significant difference between public and private sectors in the facilities for English at different stages proves the general perception of the public that the facilities for English are much better in the private schools.<sup>5</sup> Overall, students involved with postgraduate studies from both public and private sectors report that there are hardly any facilities for English (2%-9%) available to them.

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<sup>4</sup> (p-value=0.000; independent samples t-test;  $t = 7.95$ ;  $df = 573$ ).

<sup>5</sup> Confidence interval for the difference in proportions used; p-value was obtained using chi square with  $df = 1$ .

The results show a significant difference between public and private institutions regarding their medium of instruction as reported by students.<sup>6</sup> Majority of private institution students reported English medium (65%) and Urdu Medium (15%), while majority of public institution students reported Urdu medium (40%) and English medium (40%) as their medium of instruction. About one-fifth of private as well as public institute students (20%) reported both (English and Urdu combined) as their medium of instruction. A significant difference was also found between public and private institutions regarding their medium of taking examinations. A majority of private sector students took their examinations in English (68%), whereas, a majority of public sector students did so in Urdu (50%) or in both Urdu and English (35%).<sup>7</sup>

In the results of the study, an overwhelming majority of students (male or female) from all provinces (both public and private sectors), teachers, and parents show highly positive attitudes to English in their preference for English as a medium of instruction in higher education (88%-97%) that is much higher than preference for Urdu (40%-71%), regional languages (6%-17%), or Arabic (0%-8%). However, more students from public institutions prefer Urdu as compared to private students<sup>8</sup>, while more students from private institutions prefer English as compared to public students.<sup>9</sup> More parents whose children were studying in public institutions preferred Urdu as medium of instruction when compared with parents whose children were studying in private institutions.<sup>10</sup> The majority of students, teachers, and parents show a preference for English medium education at all levels. At graduate levels, for both Arts and Science, the preference by all respondents ranges from 72%-94% in both public and private sectors. However, the preference for regional language, though low for all levels, is slightly higher

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<sup>6</sup> ( $\chi^2 = 187.341$ ;  $df = 2$  &  $p = .000$ )

<sup>7</sup> ( $\chi^2 = 59.96$ ;  $df = 2$  &  $p = .000$ )

<sup>8</sup> ( $\chi^2 = 9.69$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p = .0018$ )

<sup>9</sup> ( $\chi^2 = 11.87$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p = .0006$ )

<sup>10</sup> ( $\chi^2 = 8.23$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p = .004$ )

at primary levels (6%-23%). The preference for Urdu as medium of instruction follows the preference for English and keeps decreasing from primary levels (31%-42%) to graduate levels (9%-28%). The main reasons for preference of English as medium of education at various levels by students, teachers and parents were instrumental, as studying in English is seen as useful for students for studying abroad (78%) and getting good jobs (63%). The reasons given by all subjects for studying in Urdu are mainly integrative. Students see Urdu as the main link language (67%) and also for its role on the national language (67%). The main reasons for studying in regional language are related to learning and it is felt by the students that study in the regional language is helpful in the first few years of schooling (60%), and also because students can learn better in their mother tongue (58%). The majority of all students, teachers and parents (59%-97%) also show a preference to study English as a compulsory subject at all levels followed by Urdu (8%-50%). The preference for the Urdu as compulsory subject gets lower in higher levels. Very few subjects show a preference for study of regional language as a compulsory subject even at primary levels (0%-22%). Students from all institutions give more weight to instrumental reasons compared to integrative reasons for learning English. Students from private institutions give more weight to different instrumental as well as integrative reasons as compared to public students except for acquiring new ideas and broadening one's outlook, and acquaintance with people in touch with latest trends in the West. In instrumental reasons, coping with college / university classes, travelling abroad, having access to information technology, getting access to international books and journals, and using English in of future career were found to be significant between public and private institutions. In integrative reasons, living and behaving like English-speaking Pakistanis, becoming more modern, and improving social status were found to be significant.

As seen in the results of the study, an overwhelming majority of all students display a far higher demand for English than any other language for the purpose of higher education (79%), employment (77%), and information

technology (82%). This trend was similar when looked at private and public institutions. Urdu was reported as the second language needed by students but was far behind English for purpose of higher education (39%), employment (33%), and information technology (22%). The parents reported a similar trend for English, Urdu and other languages for the purpose of higher education, employment, and information technology.

The majority of parents (77%-87%) thought that they try to help children with their English, and no significant difference was found between private or public institution of the students.<sup>11</sup> The majority of the parents thought that students should devote more time to their English studies, and no significant difference was found between private or public institution of the students.<sup>12</sup> Parents also stressed the importance that English will have for students when they leave college/university, and no significant difference was found between private or public institution of the students. Similarly, the majority of the parents encouraged their children to seek help from their English teachers, and no significant difference was found between private or public institution of the students. In students' view, majority of the parents (71%-86%) thought that a student should devote more time to his/her English studies, a finding significantly higher among students studying in public institutions.<sup>13</sup> The majority of the students reported that their parents have stressed the importance that English will have for the student when he/she leaves college/university, a finding higher among students studying in public institutions. Similarly, the majority of the students (especially in public institutions) reported that their parents encouraged them to seek help from their English teachers.

Overall the results regarding students' language difficulties while coping with their higher studies in English show students from public sectors face more difficulties than their counterparts from private sectors as reported by students and teachers. Similarly, female students face more difficulties than

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<sup>11</sup> ( $\chi^2=0.060$ ;  $df=1$ ,  $p = .807$ )

<sup>12</sup> ( $\chi^2=0.463$ ;  $df=1$ ,  $p = .496$ )

<sup>13</sup> ( $\chi^2=43.613$ ;  $df=1$ ,  $p = .000$ )

male students as reported by students and teachers. Significant difference (all at the  $p < .0001$  level) were observed between public (15%) and private students (9%) when asked whether they faced difficulty while listening to teacher's lectures and other students talking in English between public (17%) and private students (10%) in reading comprehension of texts/materials in English between public (25%) and private students (8%) when speaking to teachers and making presentations in English between public (20%) and private students (13%) while writing notes/assignments in English between public (23%) and private students (12%) while taking tests/examinations in English. Similarly, teachers responded to the same questions regarding students and found the following significant results in students facing difficulty while speaking to teachers and making presentations in English, writing notes / assignments in English, taking tests/examinations in English, and getting anxious when taking tests and exams in English.

Despite the fact that English is a compulsory subject of study in the graduate classes, a fair percentage of public sector (60%) and private sector students (40%) and public sector (48%) and private sector (30%) teachers responded that English courses are not offered at institutions. The results of the study regarding the courses of English offered at the institution show a significant difference between public and private institutions.<sup>14</sup> The overall quality of English courses reported by students and teachers is also very low (see Table 1).

The responses revealed significant differences (at the  $p=.000$  level) between private (46%) and public institutions (30%) students for high or excellent quality in terms of course and syllabus of English courses ( $\chi^2 = 49.14$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = .000$ ), a significant difference between private (46%) and public institutions (30%) students for texts and materials; between private (47%) and public institutions (38%) students for teaching methods; between private (59%) and public institutions (32%) students for test and examinations, overall quality and agreement that courses be made available if these are not offered.

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<sup>14</sup> ( $\chi^2 = 79.6$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = .000$ )

**TABLE 1**  
**Percentage Distribution of Students & Teachers**  
**by Quality of English Language Courses by Type of Institution**

Quality of English language Course	Private %	Public %	95% C.I. for the difference in percentage
<i>High/Excellent quality in terms of:</i>			
Courses/Syllabus	45.9	30.5	(11.2, 19.6)**
Texts/Materials	45.6	29.6	(11.8, 20.2)**
Teaching Methods	46.6	37.7	(4.5, 13.3)**
Test/Examinations	59.3	32.5	(22.4, 31.2)**
Overall Quality	48.3	31.7	(12.3, 20.9)**
<i>Success of the courses in preparing for:</i>			
Higher Studies in English	17.5	18.5	(-4.5, 2.5)
Communicating in work place	20.0	16.7	(-0.1, 6.7)
Agreement to courses be made available if are not offered	82.9	89.5	(-9.5, -3.7)**
<i>Type:</i>			
General English	13.4	11.6	(-1.1, 4.7)
English for Specific Purposes	12.3	11.9	(-2.5, 3.3)
Both	67.4	72.1	(-8.8, -0.6)**
<i>Agreement to:</i>			
English Courses should emphasize the communicative use	56.1	51.8	(-0.2, 8.8)
English Teachers should be trained in the latest methods	76.6	76.8	(-4.0, 3.6)
Literature should be a component of English course	41.2	42.8	(-6.0, 2.8)
Total Students	716	1420	
<i>Teachers</i>			
<i>High/Excellent quality in terms of:</i>			
Courses/Syllabus	34.1	34.2	(-19.0, 18.8)
Texts/Materials	29.3	34.6	(-24.1, 13.5)
Teaching Methods	36.6	28.2	(-9.8, 26.6)
Test/Examinations	29.3	30.8	(-19.8, 16.8)
Overall Quality	24.4	25.0	(-17.8, 16.6)
<i>Success of the courses in preparing for:</i>			
Higher Studies in English	29.3	29.1	(-17.9, 18.3)
Communicating in work place	22.0	25.4	(-20.6, 13.8)

Agreement to courses be made available if are not offered	70.0	77.2	(-24.3, 9.9)
<i>Type:</i>			
General English	14.6	16.5	(-16.5, 12.7)
English for Specific Purposes	2.4	7.6	(-15.0, 4.6)
Both	63.4	62.0	(-17.9, 20.7)
<i>Agreement to:</i>			
English Courses should emphasize the communicative use	68.3	72.2	(-21.9, 14.1)
English Teachers should be trained in the latest methods	70.7	81.0	(-26.6, 6.0)
Literature should be a component of English course	46.3	48.7	(-22.3, 17.5)
Total Teachers	35	79	

\*\*p < .01

As reported by students from public as well as private institutions, although the competency of subject teachers in English speaking and writing is not very high, a significant difference is found in public and private sectors with high proficiency in private sector. It is worth noting that the spoken competency of around one-third of all English teachers in both public (43%) and private institutions (38%) as well as written competency of public (37%) and private (32%) teachers was not as high as reported by students.

**TABLE 2**  
**Percentage Distribution of Students and their English Test Scores**  
**by Public and Private Institutions**

Scores (%)	Public %	Private %	Both%
<33	32.4	14.9	26.2
33-40	10.0	6.6	8.8
40-50	22.0	18.3	20.7
50-60	18.6	19.2	18.8
60-70	11.9	18.7	14.3
70-80	4.7	17.1	9.1
80 & above	0.4	5.2	2.1
Mean Score (Standard Error)	43.0 (0.49)	54.5 (0.73)	47.0 (0.43)
Total Students	1,250	678	1,928

A vast majority of students and teachers attempted the English test. As seen in Table 2, although the test scores for the students in public and private institutions are not good, the students from private institutions have significantly higher scores as compared to public institutions.<sup>15</sup> The test scores among teachers in public (Mean=59.9; Standard Error=1.81) and private (Mean=62.7; Standard Error=2.54) institutions are not significantly different. In the overall proficiency scores of students and teachers as measured by the English test, results show that teachers scored better in structure of the language (70%) as compared to the application of the language. Overall the teachers' proficiency scores were only 61%. The students' performances were low in both structure and application of the English language with an overall score of 47%.

### **Issues of Access and Equity**

Results confirm the significant differences between private sector and public sector students in terms of socio-economic status, facilities for English, medium of instruction, language difficulties in English, availability of English support programmes, English language competence of subject and English teachers, and the resultant language outcomes. The results of this study reveal that there are two streams entering our higher education institutions (colleges and universities). The language policy in education in schools is that of a dual medium policy where the students from the government sector study in Urdu medium with English as a subject from class VI (new policy proposes English from class I), and the students from the private sector who study in English medium with Urdu as a subject from class I. As seen in our study, despite the official policy of English medium in higher education, actual classroom practice shows that the two mediums (English and Urdu) continue to be used depending on the types of institutions (public sector and private sector).

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<sup>15</sup> (t-value = 12.99; df=1280; Mean difference = 11.5; 95%; C.I. for the mean difference =9.7, 13.20; p = .000)

The results of questionnaires show that the students from the public sector face a great many more problems than the private sector students due to various reasons. Foremost is the fact that a large number of the students (49%) from the public sector belong to low socio-economic status with a total household income of Rs 9,900 and less and a quarter (25%) with Rs 5,500 and less. The majority of these students report an Urdu medium school background (52%) and that they have received very few facilities to learn English in their schools than their counterparts from private sector institutions (26%). Also, despite the fact that they show a strong desire to study in English medium (90%), they continue to study in either Urdu medium or a 'mix' of English and Urdu medium in higher education. In addition, less than 50 percent of this limited English proficiency (LEP) student group report that they are provided with adequate English language programmes (39%). Despite the fact that English is a compulsory subject at graduate level, many of the students report that there are no English language support programmes available to them. The present English courses have very heavy literature content and so become an additional subject of study for the students and a burden, rather than provide language support to the students, or help them become proficient in English. The students and teachers from the public sector (46%) also show more dissatisfaction with the quality of materials available to them in English. In addition, they have limited access to materials in English (51%). As reported in the questionnaires, some of these LEP students from the public sector institutions who have studied in the Urdu medium face a great deal of difficulty while speaking, following lectures in English, reading with understanding, and also while writing notes and taking examinations (23%) when they join the private sector institutions, or the professional universities in the public sector that are English medium. As a result, many of them resort to guide books or poor translations in Urdu, and 'rote learn' their English texts, resulting in poor language outcomes as seen in the low proficiency scores in the English test, and performance in their examinations.

The results of the study show that the students' performance in the English

test keeps getting higher as the household income also rises, and that there may be a link between household income per month and language outcomes. The results also inform us that in all the groups of students with various household income groups, the students from the private sector institutions perform better than the students from the public sector institutions who come from a lower socio-economic background. It appears, therefore, that the public sector students are 'disadvantaged,' as compared to the private sector students, and need additional support from the state to cope adequately with their higher studies.

## **DISCUSSION**

Keeping in view the favourable attitudes to English for international resources of all stake holders in higher education, it is important to consider a language policy in education where all students are empowered by being fluent in English. This would allow effective participation from the public sector where English acts as a gate-keeper and a powerful means of inclusion or exclusion from further education, employment, or social positions (Pattanayak, 1981; Rajah, 1990; Tollefson, 1991). This seems to be the best solution to a very complex and problematic issue. By removing the barrier of English, students from the public sector institutions and lower socio-economic strata would be able to access higher education and white-collared jobs. The challenge of working on the notion of 'English for development' is that it would have to take into account not only the concept of sustainable development (Pennycook, 1994) and linking it with 'notions of local involvement, continuity, and ecological soundness,' but also to ensure that development does not only 'imply a linear path of development that is easily conflated with notions of modernization, and westernization'. This would involve post-colonial countries like Pakistan in developing an indigenous model for English language teaching that is suitable in its own context.

The study reveals that despite favourable attitudes and high motivation of

learners, their English language proficiency to cope with their higher studies, and future work requirement is far below desired levels. The intervening variable is seen as the low quality of the English courses that are outdated and inefficient. Results of the study drew attention to the need to strengthen the English language teaching programmes through a revision of courses, development of local materials, and training of teachers so as to meet the students' learning and target needs.

### **ELT Reforms in Higher Education**

The following major ELT reforms are proposed to improve the standards of English in Higher Education in Pakistan:

#### *Re-organization of Departments/Centres of English Language*

Presently, in many universities, English departments are offering only postgraduate programmes in English Literature and are not involved in providing English support programmes to students for their studies in higher education. Although English is a compulsory subject in the colleges at the bachelor's level, the students and teachers are dissatisfied with these courses. Therefore, it is proposed that departments / centres of English language be set up in each general or professional university and the existing English departments of different degree colleges be re-organized so that English language courses are separated from English literature courses. The departments/centres of English language should offer English for Specific Purposes, English for Academic Purposes, and English for Science and Technology courses as a support programme to students from different faculties. A few language centres set up with the assistance of the Overseas Development Authority (ODA) and the British Council during the 1980s such as the Centre of English (CEL) in Aga Khan University are functioning successfully by providing English language support and EAP / Study Skills to the students and employees of the University, and can be used as a model

of good practice for other Centres of English being re-organized or developed in higher education in the country.

#### *Curriculum and Material Development*

The present English courses are outdated and presently there is a dire need to revise courses and develop text books and materials that are tailored to meet the learning and target needs of students in higher education. It is cost-effective and logical for a developing country like Pakistan to have ESL programmes in the universities that equip the students to acquire knowledge with emphasis on reading comprehension and study skills by teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This course (with emphasis on EAP) is therefore recommended as being most suitable for our university students who are learning English en-route to the acquisition of some quite different bodies of knowledge or sets of skills and who are about to take up employment. The English language is seen as playing an auxiliary role; it is important that ESP courses be learner-centred (Munby, 1978). On the whole there is an agreement that ESP does not mean a restricted language if it is concerned with students in tertiary education who will have 12 years of General English course and will therefore have a 'common core' English. An ESP programme for higher education would mainly be for academically advanced learners who have already acquired through the medium of mother-tongue a good deal of knowledge and understanding of the subject which might possibly be exploited in the ESP programme (Widdowson, 1983), so students are equipped with a second language, as an auxiliary tool in a particular area of specialization.

#### *Faculty Development through Postgraduate Programmes in TEFL/TESL*

The majority of English teachers in higher education have only a Masters in English Literature with no formal training in English language teaching. The results of various research studies also reveal that there is an urgent need

to improve the English language proficiency of college and university teachers. It is highly recommended therefore that postgraduate programmes in TEFL/ TESL be offered to English teachers from colleges and universities that aim at providing a strong theoretical base to the teaching of English on modern lines. The programmes should also focus on integrating theory with practice so that teachers can apply the knowledge and skills gained during their training to their own context. These courses should range from a one-year Postgraduate Diploma Programme to a two-year Masters Programme in TEFL. These courses should be mandatory for all in-service teachers from both public and private sectors. According to this programme for faculty development, English college and university teachers could be trained through long-term training (Diploma / Masters) to update them on the latest teaching approaches and methodologies. In addition, Short Certificate Courses should be offered in English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Study Skills to teachers. Recommendations are also being made for a few teachers with outstanding merit to be sent abroad each year to do their PhDs in TEFL, TESP, Testing, ELT and Multimedia, Curriculum Development, and ELT Management from leading universities in UK.

### *Testing*

The present testing and examination system is outdated and inefficient and leads to rote learning and memorization of texts rather than assessing the language proficiency of students. In addition, students are examined only at the end of course and on-going assessments are not counted towards final grades. Moreover, the spoken component is not part of the assessment scheme and is thus completely neglected in the English classrooms in higher education. It is proposed that various types of English language tests including computer-based tests be developed that are suitable for higher education for different purposes in keeping with modern approaches. In addition, it is recommended that teacher training courses and workshops be

provided to teachers and examiners so as to enable them to develop valid and reliable tests for classroom assessments and end-of-course assessments.

#### *Information Technology (On-line & CALL)*

Electronic communication has become one of the newest strategies to support language learning. The computer offers a powerful tool for promoting student centered instruction, transforming learning into an interactive and personalized experience. With a strong trend towards co-operative and interactive methods of teaching and learning, computer mediated learning can act as a very effective medium to aid and facilitate English language teaching and learning in Pakistan. One of the difficulties that teachers encounter while undergoing ELT in-service teacher education is the unavoidable duress of taking time out to attend training programmes. Moreover, due to time reservation, most of the training programmes end up as rushed affairs and therefore do not promote meaningful interaction. Through e-communication, this barrier can be overpowered and teachers, while remaining in their own particular settings, can increase their knowledge base through supportive and collaborative learning. In addition, Self Access Centres (SAC) should be set up in various higher education institutions where Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) could be provided to strengthen independent and interactive language learning.

#### *Research and Publications*

Presently there is a great paucity of quality research on English language teaching in the Pakistani context. There is also no incentive or training being imparted to students to do research projects in graduate programmes in colleges and universities. In addition, there are hardly any materials or support services to facilitate research in ELT in the public sector institutions. Research is required to assess language needs of learners and to determine percentage of intelligibility of Urdu, English, and regional languages in

different parts of Pakistan; language and literacy mapping to enable resources to be targeted more specifically and equitably. Research is also needed in areas such as the psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, spoken English, and approaches and methods of English language teaching and testing so as to provide direction for viable language planning, policy making, and practices in English in the Pakistani context. It is recommended that the research capacity of English departments and faculty and graduate students be enhanced through the setting up of a Language Research Centre (LRC) for the provision of updated research materials and research training programmes.

*Collaborative Links with British Council and Overseas Institutions and Organizations*

Links and collaborative efforts with the British Council and centres of English languages in overseas universities and organizations are seen as beneficial for the development of courses and materials in English as well as training of college and university teachers in TEFL. The overseas models in ELT / TEFL could be adapted to suit our own learning and teaching requirements. It is also suggested that overseas experts be consulted at all stages for successful implementation of ELT reforms.

## **CONCLUSION**

The dire need for ELT reforms was shared with the Chairman, Higher Education Commission through a Report of this Aga Khan University grant funded PhD research study on *English and Higher Education in Pakistan* (Mansoor, 2003). Consequently, in March 2003, the National Committee in English (NCE) was commissioned by the Higher Education Commission with English language teaching (ELT) experts from both public and private sector institutions and organizations, from all the four provinces and Federal Capital of Pakistan. The major objectives of the NCE are: 1) to promote

English language teaching and research in Pakistan; 2) to identify areas in English that have a direct and major impact on the economic well-being of the country; 3) to prepare major projects in these areas; and 4) to develop human resource for English language research and teaching.

By strengthening the existing departments of English and setting up English support programmes in higher education institutions, many English teachers in various educational institutions will directly benefit in terms of their knowledge and skills in imparting updated English language teaching and research. The students will benefit in terms of English language development, study skills, and enhanced research capacity from the teachers and researchers being trained under this project, as well as the improved learning / teaching conditions. Similarly the interaction between the English teachers and researchers will result in better job opportunities for Pakistani graduates in the employment sector. This Human Resource Development (HRD), through the improvements in the standards of English in Higher Education, will lead to improvements in the skills of the graduates and socio-economic upliftment through the various faculty development programmes.

The underlying principle of the proposed recommendations in higher education is 'English for All.' The policy aims at democratization and empowerment of the masses through the removal of the 'elitist policy' of a dual medium of instruction in higher studies, by a 'cultivation policy,' (Bell, 1976) that ensures that studies in English are available to all students in the public and private sector in higher education. The results of the research study (Mansoor, 2003) indicate that state support is required for strengthening the English departments and courses in the public sector colleges and universities.

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