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A Comparison of Students' Achievement in the Subject of English A Pakistani Context

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Abstract

The present study aims at analyzing the effects of medium of instruction on students' achievement in the subject of English at secondary level. The participants of the study were 310 students of grade X. Sample was randomly selected from 12 boys and girls schools. A multiple choice-item test in subject of English was used as research instrument.

It was found that in most cases the performance of the English medium school students was better than that of the Urdu medium students. On the whole, in some cases, by keeping in view the difference of means, the study showed almost the similar performance of both groups but apparently, the students of English medium school students were better in the subject of English.

Key words: English, secondary students, performance, Pakistan

Introduction

Medium of instruction should be understandable to teachers and students. It should also enable them to attain comfort levels so that they can both deliver and receive messages using the chosen medium. Farani (1990) described the characteristics necessary for a language in order for it to be adopted as a medium of instruction. These are:

- The language should be lucid and understandable for the teachers and taught.
- It should be possible to promote advance research work in that language.
- It should have simple grammatical structure, not complicated one.
- It must have rich vocabulary.
- It should be considered language, spoken and understood all over the country.

Mostly, the educational experts recommend that the mother language of a child should be adopted as a medium of instruction at the primary level. Zubair (1993) proposed mother tongue as a medium of instruction at the primary level and argued that, “Ideally, the medium of instruction of a child living in its own language environment should be the mother tongue. Children should be taught in their mother tongue and the second language i.e. English, should be adopted/taught as a subject”.

Great Debate

In fact, medium of instruction is a matter of great debate among teachers, educationists and parents. The majority of teachers and parents say that English should not be the medium of instruction but should be taught as a subject right from the very beginning of the school. But as we all are well aware that English is a widely used international language. It has (as a medium of instruction and as a subject) its roots in pre-partitioned India, when the controversy started with the emergence of two distinct opinions at the time of making educational policy for India by the British Government. The controversy was between the Orientalists and Occidentalists (Ahmad, 1997).

After the emergence of Pakistan in 1947, the problem of language arose for teaching as well as for other communications. Like all free nations, there was a national demand in the public for the national language as a medium of instruction in teaching institutions. However, English language occupies a very important place in the educational curricula in Pakistan. It enjoys the status of an international language. It also remains the language of diplomats of Pakistan in diplomatic affairs, legal proceedings. Of all the language in the world today, English is taken as the primary language.

English in Pakistan

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 8 August 2010

Iram Gul Gillani, Khalid Khurshid, Nabi Bux Jumani and Fazalur Rahman

A Comparison of Students' Achievement in the Subject of English - A Pakistani Context

English has top most position as compared with other languages in Pakistan and studied as one of the major foreign languages. Mueen (1992) described that in Pakistan, the use of English is well entrenched. It is often a pre-requisite for employment in the public and private sector. It is a language of science and technology. Therefore, in order to remain in step with the expanding frontiers of human knowledge, the use of English in Pakistan needs to be actively sponsored by the educated and patronized by the policy makers.

Similarly Taimurie (1999) cited that, no doubt, Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, but English is the language of science and technology, despite the emphasis on Urdu, Pakistan cannot ignore English.

It is evident that English is a foreign language for Pakistan but it has multifaceted and compound position all over the country now. It is used as an official language, medium of instruction and symbol of status too. Its importance can also be judged from the fact that there is no country in the world where English cannot be understood. Further Shahid (2002) described that by accident of history and by the rapid spread of industrial development of science, technology and international trade, English has become the world language. It is the means of international communication, there is no other language.

Pakistan has a dual system of education, Urdu and English medium, but in both English is taught as a compulsory subject. Mostly Urdu medium schools are run by the government where English is a subject, while, on the other hand, in the English medium schools, which are run by some private organizations and missionaries, English is a subject, the medium of instruction and communication tool. English medium schools are being establishing more rapidly in Pakistan and educated parents, even non-educated also, prefer to send their children to English schools.

Qualifications Required

The minimum qualification for a teacher is M.A. with B.Ed. But the surprising fact is that after learning English language as a compulsory subject in the educational institutions, our students are generally weak in English. This is obvious from the high rate of failure in the subject of English at matriculation and above. This causes frustration among students and shows that our students fail to achieve the desired level of proficiency in English. English medium schools show better performance and better results in English as compared to the students of Urdu medium schools. So keeping in view the above facts, the present study was intended to explore the benefits of teaching English and compare the achievement of students of English and Urdu medium secondary schools.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were:

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 8 August 2010

Iram Gul Gillani, Khalid Khurshid, Nabi Bux Jumani and Fazalur Rahman

A Comparison of Students' Achievement in the Subject of English - A Pakistani Context

- To compare the achievement of English and Urdu medium secondary school students in the subject of English.
- To examine gender difference in the performance of students.
- To compare the achievement of the students of English and Urdu schools

Method and Procedure

The study was descriptive in nature. An achievement test comprised fifty (50) multiple choice items was used as research instrument. The test was developed from the grade IX textbook. The tool was validated and finalized with the help of experts.

Sample of the Study

The study was conducted in 12 schools (six English medium schools and six Urdu medium secondary schools). A total of 310 students (160 male and 150 female) participated in the study. Random sampling technique was used to select the sample. The sample was divided into two groups.

The students of English medium group were placed in group A while the students of Urdu medium schools were kept in group B. The researchers administered the test in most of schools. However, in some schools the researchers sought help from colleagues in administering the test and collecting data. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and z –tests to compare the performance of the students. The critical ratio was also calculated by using the formula, given by Garratte (1967).

$$CR (Z) = \frac{M1 - M2}{\sqrt{\frac{SD_1^2}{N_1} + \frac{SD_2^2}{N_2}}}$$

Where

- CR = Critical ratio.
- M1 = Mean of scores obtained by group 1.
- M2 = Mean of scores obtained by group 2.
- N1 = Number of students in group 1.
- N2 = Number of students in group 2.
- SD1 = Standard deviation of scores obtained by group1.
- SD2 = Standard deviation of scores obtained by group2.

Table 1 Category-wise comparison of students' achievement

Name of Category		N	\bar{X}	S.D.	Z Value at .05
Students of Urdu Medium		230	32.8	10.4	
Students of English Medium		80	34.6	10.5	1.32<.05

Table shows that the mean performance of English medium school students was better than the Urdu medium school students.

Table 2 Performance of sample students

Group	Gender	N	Mean	S.D
Urdu Medium Schools	Male	100	28	10.6
	Female	135	35	8.7
English Medium Schools	Male	60	33	11.3
	Female	25	37	6.7
Students of High Qualified Teachers		180	37	5.4
Students of low Qualified Teachers		130	26	11.3

The table revealed that the performance of students of highly qualified teachers was better than low qualified teachers.

Table 3 Achievement of female students of English and Urdu medium schools

Category		N	Mean	S.D	Z Value
Female students English Medium schools		25	37	8.7	
Female students Urdu Medium schools		135	35	6.7	1.35<.05

Table indicated that there is a significant difference between performance of female students of Urdu Medium and English medium schools.

Table 4 Achievement of male students of English and Urdu medium schools

Name of Category		N	Mean	S.D.	Z Value
Male students of English Medium schools		60	33	11.3	3.2 < .05

Male students of Urdu Medium schools	100	28	10.6
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Table 4 revealed that there is a significant difference of achievement between the English and Urdu medium male students.

Findings of the Study

It was found that:

- The achievement of English medium secondary school students was better than that of Urdu medium secondary school students.
- In sex-wise comparison the achievement of female students was better than that of male students.
- In case of the students of high and low qualified teachers, the achievement of the students was better whose teachers were highly qualified.
- In case of English and Urdu medium female students, the achievement of both groups was almost similar.
- In case of English and Urdu medium male students, the achievement of both groups was almost similar.

Conclusion of the Study

The results of the study do not show very significant indicators to determine the achievement of any particular group. In most cases the performance of the English medium school students was better than that of the Urdu medium students. On the whole in some cases, by keeping in view the difference of means, the study shows almost the similar performance of both groups, but, apparently, the students of English medium school students were better in the subject of English.

The results also suggest that if the conditions are improved it may positively affect the performance of all groups.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 8 August 2010

Iram Gul Gillani, Khalid Khurshid, Nabi Bux Jumani and Fazalur Rahman

A Comparison of Students' Achievement in the Subject of English - A Pakistani Context

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