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Reported Perceptions and Practices of English Language Teachers at Secondary Level in Pakistan

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Abstract

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes play an important role in teaching learning process. The present descriptive study, part of a PhD thesis, attempts to measure the attitudes, experiences and perceptions of the English language teachers at secondary level in Pakistan.

The study is significant in that it helps to compare the teachers' perception of how language learning takes place with their reported classroom practice.

To accomplish the desired goal, the study employed a survey instrument i.e. a questionnaire, to collect data from 100 English language teachers at the secondary level. The sample was equally divided among the male-female and urban-rural demographic variables. The questionnaire was pilot tested before administration to the sample. The Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.82. The findings of the study revealed that there was a great difference between the teachers' perception of how the English language should be taught and their actual practices in the classroom.

Introduction

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Teachers are one of the most important stakeholders in education system. This is especially so in the field of foreign language teaching. Though the teachers are no more considered as “masters”, the term replaced with facilitators, the importance of instruction and pedagogy remains unchallenged. It is the teacher who, with best practices and techniques in his relevant field, induces and complements the process of teaching/learning.

The English language teaching world has seen a tremendous transformation during the last century. However, quite contradictory to the changed conditions in the developed countries, the teachers in the third world mostly stick to the grammar translation approach, which is the most popular approach with teachers (Aili 1998, Hussain, 2005).

This paper presents perceptions and reported practices of English language teachers at secondary level in Pakistani district Khushab. 100 teachers, equally distributed into male/female and rural/urban, were selected as a sample for the study. The teachers were administered a questionnaire containing 34 items based on the Likert Scale. The questionnaire mainly focussed on these themes

It was considered essential to focus on the classroom practices due to the fact that these are considered as conforming to “a particular teaching method and its underlying philosophy” (Swaffar, Arens and Morgan, 1982:24). Such statements were included in the questionnaire that would provide an insight into the classroom practices and teaching methods and strategies either employed or may be employed by the secondary school English teachers.

Another important factor in the success of language instruction programmes, and which is also allied to the teaching methodology, is the competencies of the teachers (Nunan, 2005) which include, but are not restricted to, appropriate training in different methods of teaching, developing a sound relationship with the students and time management.

Seventeen statements were dedicated to the above mentioned phenomenon. It is now established beyond any shadow of doubt that high affective filter hampers the linguistic ability of a child and language learning becomes easier if the teacher lowers the affective filter (Krashen, 1981). Therefore, eleven statements were included that elicited responses from the teachers regarding the classroom environment during the foreign language teaching and the scope of creating a low anxiety language classroom.

Teaching a foreign language means enabling them to listen to, speak, read and write the foreign language. Hence, five statements in the questionnaire concerned the relative emphasis on different language skills.

The data collected through questionnaire were coded and analyzed through Ms- Excel in terms of percentage and mean scores. Scale values assigned to each of the five responses was as

Level of Agreement	Scale Value
Strongly Agree (SA)	5
Agree (A)	4
Can't Say (CS)	3
DA	2
SDA	1

To calculate the mean score, following formula was used.

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{(FSA \times 5 + FA \times 4 + FCS \times 3 + FDA \times 2 + FSDA \times 1)}{N}$$

Where

FSA = Frequency of Strongly Agreed responses.

FA = Frequency of Agreed responses.

FCS = Frequency of Uncertain responses.

FDA = Frequency of Disagreed responses.

FSDA = Frequency of Strongly Disagreed responses.

Findings from the Responses of the Teachers:

Findings drawn out from the questionnaire are given below

Demographic Variables

1. Gender and Locale

No.	Male		Female	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1	25	25	25	25

The table highlights that the sample was equally divided into male/female and urban/rural demographic variable.

2. Academic Qualification

No	Degree	Frequency
1	BA	35
2	MA	65
3	MPhil	0
4	PhD	0

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Most of the teachers, i.e. 65 % hold the Masters degree while 35 % teachers hold the bachelors degree.

3. Professional Qualification

No	Degree/Certificate	Frequency
1	CT	0
2	B.Ed	54
3	M.Ed.	46
4	Others (TEFL)	3

It is evident from the above table that 54 % teachers hold the B.Ed. degree as professional qualification while 46 % teachers possess the M.Ed. degree. Moreover, only 3 percent teachers have other qualifications, i.e. TEFL (Teaching of English as a Foreign Language) certificate.

4. Professional Experience

No	Years	Quantity
1	1-5	16
2	6-10	7
3	10-15	63
4	More than 15	14

This table shows the experience of teachers in terms of years. It is clear from the table that 16 % teachers have 1-5 years experience, 7% teachers have 6-10 years of experience, most of the teachers, i.e. 63 % have 10-15 years of experience, while there are 14 % teachers that have more than 15 years of experience.

Table 1
Satisfaction with English language teaching and learning

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
I am satisfied with the overall English language teaching and learning situation in Pakistan.	100	1	22	8	66	03	2.52	.899

The first table concerns the satisfaction of the teachers towards English language teaching and learning. It is revealed that one teacher strongly agreed with the statement, twenty two teachers

agreed, sixty six disagreed, eight of them were undecided and three teachers strongly disagreed. It is thus found from the above table that a majority of the teachers are not satisfied with the English language teaching and learning.

Table 2
Is translation harmful?

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
Too much focus on translation may prove harmful.	100	13	74		13		3.87	0.795

The Table 2 shows the responses of the teachers towards the statement, “Too much focus on translation may be harmful.” It is revealed that thirteen teachers strongly agree, seventy four teachers agree whereas thirteen of them disagree with the statement. It is thus found that most of the respondents agree that too much focus on translation may prove harmful.

Table 3
Motivation to Learn English

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
There is a need to focus on the students’ communicative skills.	100	15	67		18		3.79	.908

Table 3 reveals that fifteen teachers strongly agreed, sixty teachers agreed, whereas eighteen of them disagreed with the statement, “There is a need to focus on the students’ communicative skills.” It is thus found that a majority of the respondents agreed that there is a need to focus on the students’ communicative skills.

Table 4
Are the Dialogues helpful?

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
Teaching through dialogues helps in developing the communicative ability.	100	7	74		17	2	3.67	.906

Table 4 describes teachers' opinion on whether or not teaching through dialogues helps in developing the communicative ability. Seven percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement while seventy four percent of them agree. Seventeen percent teachers disagree and two percent strongly disagree with the statement. It is thus found that a majority of the respondents thinks that teaching through dialogues helps in developing the communicative ability.

Table 5

Need to develop Communicative Competence

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The students should be taught “when” to communicate “what” to “whom”	100	3	81		16		3.67	.848

The above table reports that three percent teachers strongly agree and eighty one percent of the respondents agree with the statement that “The students should be taught “when” to communicate “what” to “whom”. Sixteen percent of the teachers disagree with the statement. It is evident from the table that a majority of the teachers are of the view that there is need to develop communicative competence among the Pakistani students.

Table 6
Emphasis on Listening

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
I allocate an appropriate portion of time to listening	100		18		75	7	2.29	.840

This table shows whether or not the teachers allocate an appropriate portion of time to listening. Eighteen percent of the respondents agree with the statement, seventy five percent disagree and seven percent of them strongly disagree with the statement. It is thus found that a majority of the teachers does not allocate an appropriate portion of time to listening.

Table 7

Emphasis on Speaking

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
I allocate an appropriate portion of time to Speaking	100		18		75	7	2.29	0.840

This table informs about the teachers opinion of the allocation of time to the speaking skills. Eighteen percent of the respondents agree with the statement that they allocate an appropriate portion of time to speaking; seventy five percent disagree while five percent strongly disagree. It is found that a majority of the respondents thinks that they do not allocate an appropriate portion of time to speaking.

**Table 8
Emphasis on Reading**

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
I allocate an appropriate portion of time to reading	100	41	50		9		4.23	.846

Table 8 depicts teachers' views on the statement, "I allocate an appropriate portion of time to reading". Forty one percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement, thirty two percent agree, twenty two percent disagree and five percent strongly disagree with the statement. It is found that majority of the teachers allocate an appropriate portion of time to reading.

**Table 9
Emphasis on Writing**

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
I allocate an appropriate portion of time to writing	100	21	60		19		3.83	0.970

Table 9 shows teachers' opinion on the statement, "I allocate an appropriate portion of time to writing". Twenty one percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement, Sixty percent of them agree while twenty percent disagree with the statement. It can thus be concluded that a majority of the respondents believe that they allocate an appropriate portion of time to writing.

**Table 10
Suitability of the Grammar Translation Method**

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
Grammar Translation Method is most suitable for Pakistani Classes	100	36	56		8		4.2	0.8

Table 10 shows that when asked about the suitability of the Grammar Translation method for the Pakistani classes, thirty six percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, fifty six percent of them agreed while eight percent strongly disagreed with the statement. It is thus found that majority of the teachers feel that the grammar translation method is the most suitable in the Pakistani context.

Table 11

Examination System and the Choice of the Method

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
Examination system dictates the choice of method	100	7	71	2	20		3.65	.876

Table 11 records teachers' views about the relationship between the examination system and the choice of the method. Seven percent of the respondents strongly agree that the examination system dictates the choice of method, seventy one percent agree, two percent were undecided and twenty percent disagreed with the statement. It is thus found that majority of the teachers feel that the examination system dictates the choice of the method.

Table 12

Experimenting with the new Methods

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
I have often experimented with new methods in my class.	100		13		65	22	2.04	.859

The above table reveals the sense of innovation and experimentation on the part of the English teachers. It is evident that thirteen percent of the respondents agree that they have often experimented with new methods. Sixty five percent disagreed while twenty two percent of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. It is thus found that a majority of the teachers report that they do not experiment with new methods in their classes.

Table 13
Memorising the Rules and Learning the Grammar

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The students can learn grammar even if they have not memorised the rules of grammar	100	18	70		11	1	3.93	.839

Table 13 relates to the role of the memory in learning grammar. It can be seen that eighteen percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that the students can learn grammar even if they have not memorised the rules of grammar, seventy percent of them agree eleven percent disagree while one percent strongly disagree with the statement. It can thus be safely said that most of the respondents believe that the students can learn grammar if they have not memorised its rules.

Table 14
Communicative Ability and Grammar

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
Communication without grammar is meaningless.	100	5	79		15	1	3.72	.813

Table 14 relates to the relationship between the communicative ability and grammar. Five percent of the respondents strongly agree that communication without grammar is meaningless, seventy nine percent agree, fifteen percent disagree whereas one percent strongly disagree with the statement. It is found that most of the respondents agree with the statement that communication without grammar is meaningless.

Table 15
Role playing and Efficiency in Speaking

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
If the students are made to play different roles, there are chances that they become proficient speakers	100	3	81		16		3.71	.765

Table 15 records teachers' opinion about the effect of role playing in speaking proficiency. Three percent of the respondents strongly agree, eighty one percent agree whereas sixteen percent disagree with the statement. It is thus found that most of the respondents feel that if the students are made to play different roles, there are chances that they become proficient speakers

Table 16
Enriching the Syllabus

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The teacher can enrich the syllabus to add variety in learning	100	15	49	18	18		3.61	.947

Table 16 relates to the possibility of the enriching the syllabus on the part of the teachers. Fifteen percent of the teachers strongly agree, forty nine percent agree, eighteen percent are undecided; eighteen percent disagree with the statement. It is found that most of the teachers feel that the teacher can enrich the syllabus to add variety in learning.

Table 17
Focus only on the textbook

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
Classroom teaching is mostly focussed on the textbook.	100	5	77	6	9	3	3.72	.813

The above table reports on teachers' views on the statement, "Classroom teaching is mostly focussed on the textbook". Five percent of the respondents strongly agree, seventy seven percent agree, six percent are undecided; nine percent disagree and three percent strongly disagree with the statement. It is thus found that most of the teachers agree that the Classroom teaching is mostly focussed on the textbook.

Table 18
Variety in the Use of Methods

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The teacher should mix a variety of methods for effective teaching.	100	1	76		23		3.55	0.852

Table 18 shows the responses of the teachers about mixing various methods of teaching to achieve the desired ends. One percent of the respondents strongly agree, seventy six percent agree, twenty three percent disagree with the statement. It is thus found that most of the teachers believe that the teacher should mix a variety of methods for effective teaching.

Table 19

Balance between Fluency and Accuracy

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The teacher should try to strike a balance between the fluency and accuracy activities.	100	20	69		11		3.98	.799

Table 19 depicts the teachers' views on the statement: "The teacher should try to strike a balance between the fluency and accuracy activities". It is evident that twenty percent of the respondents strongly agree, sixty nine percent agree while eleven percent of them disagree with the statement. It is thus found that a dominant majority of the teachers agree that the teacher should try to strike a balance between the fluency and accuracy activities.

Table 20

Memorising the rules of the Grammar and the Communicative ability

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
Memorising the rules of grammar hampers the communicative ability of the students	100	3	70	3	24		3.52	.888

The above table deals with the relationship, if any, between memorising the rules of grammar and the communicative ability. It is shown that three percent of the respondents strongly agree, Language in India www.languageinindia.com 300
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seventy percent agree three percent are undecided and twenty four percent disagree with the statement. It is thus found that most of the teachers feel that memorising the rules of grammar hampers the communicative ability of the students.

Table 21
Role of Drama in English Education

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
Role playing and Drama can be used as an effective tool for learning English.	100	2	86		12		3.78	.672

The above table relates to the teachers' responses to the statement: "Role playing and Drama can be used as an effective tool for learning English". It is evident that two percent of the respondents strongly agree, eighty six percent agree while twelve percent disagree with the statement. It is thus found that majority of the teachers feels that role playing and drama can be used as an effective tool for learning English.

Table 22
Syllabus lacks relevance to the needs of time?

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The syllabus lacks relevance to the needs of time.	100		76	4	18	2	3.54	.853

This table relates to the teachers' perception of whether or not the syllabus lacks relevance to the needs of time. It is evident from the table that sixty six percent of them agree, four percent are undecided, eighteen percent disagree and two percent strongly disagree with the statement. It is thus found that majority of the teachers correspond to the view that the syllabus lacks relevance to the needs of time.

Table 23
Motivation to Learn English

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
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The students lack motivation to learn English.	100	13	74	03	10		3.9	.741
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Table 23 reveals that thirteen teachers strongly agreed, seventy four teachers agreed, three of them were undecided whereas ten of them disagreed with the statement, “The students lack motivation to learn English.” It is thus found that a majority of the respondents agreed that the students lack motivation to learn English.

Table 24
Learning through Activities

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
Students take more interest in learning if we engage them in activities.	100	33	54		13		4.07	.919

This table reveals the teachers’ responses about the statement “Students take more interest in learning if we engage them in activities”. It is found that thirty three teachers strongly agreed, fifty four of them agreed whereas thirteen teachers disagreed with the statement. Thus, majority of the respondents believe that the activities motivate the students to learn.

Table 25
Students’ confusion in the expression of aural oral skills

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The students often get confused while speaking or reading in the class.	100	32	59		8	1	4.13	.844

Table 25 relates to the language anxiety, specifically speaking or reading anxiety among the students. Thirty two teachers strongly agree, fifty nine teachers agree eight of them disagree whereas 1 teacher strongly disagrees with the statement. It is found that most of the respondents believe that their students often get confused while speaking or reading in the class.

Table 26

Students Afraid of Making Mistakes

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The students are afraid of making mistakes.	100	26	59	2	13		3.98	.894

This table describes the teachers' views on the statement: "The students are afraid of making mistakes". Twenty six percent respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Fifty nine percent of the teachers agreed while Two percent were undecided whereas thirteen percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. It is, thus, found that majority of the teachers agree with the statement that the students are afraid of making mistakes.

Table 27

Role of the Daily Life Experiences

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
Language learning can become easier if it motivates the students to make use of daily life experiences	100	20	65	1	14		3.91	.872

The above table reveals teachers' opinions about the relationship of the language learning and the motivation to make use of the daily life experiences. Twenty percent of the respondents strongly agree with the statement, sixty five percent agree, one percent is undecided and fourteen percent disagree with the statement. It is found that most of the respondents believe that Language learning can become easier if it motivates the students to make use of daily life experiences.

Table 28

Pleasure in Language Learning

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The students learn the language more easily if we make it pleasurable.	100	3	77	2	17	1	3.64	.830

Table 28 shows the responses of the teachers on whether or not the students learn the language more easily if the teachers make it pleasurable. Three percent of the respondents strongly agree, seventy seven percent of them agree, two percent are undecided; seventeen percent disagree whereas one percent of the teachers strongly disagree with the statement. It is found that most of the teachers agree that the students learn the language more easily if we make it pleasurable.

Table 29
Are the students Confident

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The students lack confidence in using English in the class.	100		79		21		3.58	.814

The above table reports as to whether or not the students lack confidence in the class. It is evident from the table that seventy nine percent of the teachers agree whereas twenty one percent disagree with the statement. It is thus found that most of the teachers believe that the students lack confidence in using English in the class.

Table 30
Student Participation in the Classroom

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The students usually avoid participation during the class.	100	31	59		10		4.11	.835

Table 30 reports on the teachers' opinion about the statement, "The students usually avoid participation during the class". Thirty one percent of the respondents strongly agree, fifty nine

percent of them agree whereas ten percent disagree with the statement. It is found that the teachers believe that the students usually avoid participation during the class.

Table 31

Students' Response to the Questions

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
The students get tensed when they are asked a question.	100	28	64		8		4.09	.825

Table 31 relates to the students' response to the questions. It is revealed that twenty eight percent of the respondents strongly agree, sixty three percent agree, eight percent disagree whereas one percent of them strongly disagree with the statement. It is thus found that the teachers feel that the students get tensed when they are asked a question.

Table 32

Pointing out the Students' Mistake

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
I pinpoint the students' mistakes at the spot	100	10	71		19		3.72	.884

The above table reveals the responses of the teachers on whether or not they pinpoint the students' mistakes at the spot. Ten percent of the respondents strongly agree seventy one percent of them agree while nineteen percent disagree with the statement. It is thus found that more than half of the respondents feel that they pinpoint the students' mistakes at the spot.

4.2.33

Maintaining Discipline in the Class

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
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I always maintain strict discipline in my class.	100	25	59	1	15	3.94	.925
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Table 33 reports the opinion of the teachers on whether or not they maintain a strict discipline in the class. Twenty five teachers strongly agreed, fifty nine percent of the respondents agreed with the statement, one of them was undecided; fifteen of them disagreed with the statement. It is found that majority of the teachers disagreed with the statement: “I always maintain strict discipline in my class.”

Table 34

The Need for Teacher Training

Statement	N	SA	A	CS	DA	SDA	Mean	St. Dev.
There is a need for teacher training in new methods of teaching English	100	11	74	1	14		3.82	.804

The above table reports in the needs for teacher training. Eleven percent of the teachers strongly agree, seventy four percent of them agree, one percent is undecided while fourteen percent disagree with the statement. It is thus found that most of the teachers agree that there is a need for teacher training in new methods of teaching English.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The teachers are not satisfied with English language teaching and learning scenario in Pakistan.
- Thought the teachers concede that an excessive use of translation may prove harmful, the stick to the grammar translation method.
- The teachers correspond to the view that there is a need for teacher training in new methods of teaching English.
- The teachers’ perceptions regarding the fact that language learning gets easier when it is made pleasurable was quite contrary to their reported practice of maintaining strict discipline in the classroom, pinpointing the students’ mistakes at the spot, and the fact that the students avoid participating in the classroom activities.
- Quite an interesting, and seemingly contradictory data emerges from the teachers’ perceptions and practices of teaching English. While the teachers conformed to the views

that memorising the rules of grammar hampers the communicative ability of the students, the students often get confused while speaking or reading in the class, the students should be taught “when” to communicate “what” to “whom”, teaching through dialogues helps in developing the communicative ability, the teacher should mix a variety of methods for effective teaching, they reported that grammar translation method was the most suitable in Pakistani classes. This might be reconciled with the fact that the teachers do not experiment with the classes too often (Cf. Table 12).

- The data clearly suggests that the teachers are aware of teaching learning process; however, they feel handicapped to induce modern techniques in their teaching.
- The results of the study would dictate the recommendation that there is a dire need for proper, state of the art training in teaching of English. There should be more emphasis on practicing the skills the teachers have learnt than on multiplying the theoretical knowledge about language pedagogy.

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