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Investigating the Problems of English Language Teachers and Learners in Digital Era

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Abstract

English is taught as a compulsory subject in Pakistani educational institutions. Many efforts have been made to boost up the standard of English Language teaching and learning. The main objectives were to investigate the problems English language teachers and learners face in the digital era, use of digital technologies by English language teachers and correlation between the indicators of teachers' language teaching problems and their use of digital technologies. Self-developed instrument, "English Language Teachers Problems and Digital Technology Survey [ELTPDT]" was used. The results explained a statistically significant relationship among all indicators of English teachers' language learning problems and the types of digital technologies they used. The language teachers used music videos, audio listening exercises, educational websites, collaborative tools, smartphones, and tablets during their lectures. It was evident that lack of professional development, overcrowded classes, unfamiliarity with technology, use of traditional pedagogies, and lack of parental support were the major problems faced by the English language teachers. The fruitful results were not achieved unless English language teachers were equipped with digital technologies.

Key Words: Language learning problems, pedagogical skills, digital technologies, Global, Investigating.

Introduction

Due to its global significance, English is the most vital language in the world. Language exists solely for the purpose of communication. The future of a nation lies in the hands of current generation. The landscape of modern teaching practice has completely transformed as a result of great advancements in information and communication technology. According to a study conducted by Songbatumis (2017), students face difficulties due to poor vocabulary knowledge, poor concentration, lack of discipline, and trouble in communicating. Moreover teachers face problems such as a deficit in professional development a language barrier, lack of instructional delivery and quality, and unfamiliarity with technology. There are a time limitation with amenities, such as inadequate resources and facilities (Copland et al., 2014).

Majority of students are unable to achieve the required English language competence. These issues are caused by a number of factors, including a shortage of qualified teachers and inadequate management. Teachers in the 21st century are still using traditional teaching

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strategies in the classroom and are unable to adopt new and innovative teaching techniques. The ability to teach English is contingent on prospective greatness, abilities, and current knowledge. For several reasons that have been linked to technology's pushing across the globe, the position of an English instructor has significantly changed in the current settings. The world is changing swiftly as a result of globalization. As a result, a teacher must enhance and update knowledge and new ways to suit the demands of a changing era (Padmavathi, 2019). Low attendance leads to waning ambition to study and practice English in the class (Ilter, 2015; Wold, 2006).

Yoon et al. (2012), investigated many explanations and terminology emerged as digital tools like web-based training, on-line learning, and virtual learning. According to Holzberger et al. (2013), digital learning is a form of media connected to internet to improve teaching efficiency, skills and knowledge (Kaklamanou et al., 2012). To deal with such a change, a teacher's and instructor's roles become more tough and demanding, necessitating more attention for teaching in an ever-changing digital environment, teachers need a fair balance of academic and practical expertise (Sharma, 2017).

Electronic communication has evolved into a modern phenomenon, with its distinct style of abbreviations and linguistic deviance. Some argue that this is contributing to a reduction in basic literacy and is interfering with efficient language use and communication. This tendency necessitates a proactive effort on the part of educators to become more adaptable and adept at digital and information technologies, as well as mastery of language and communication skills for effective English language and ICT management. Despite the difficulties, studies have shown that ICT-mediated teaching and learning stimulates interest and improves both acquisition and performance in language sessions (Akeredolu-ale et al., 2014; Pai & Tu, 2011).

Language teachers in the digital age have four major responsibilities: making online resources available, making language learning successful, making context-based resource selections depending on student groups, and developing appropriate activities that will enhance both digital and language skills. English teachers in the Kathmandu valley have been discovered to be overworked; they do not have enough time to plan, prepare, or collaborate with their colleagues (Rijal, 2016).

According to Kumaravadivelu (2011), all teachers should be assisted to learn the knowledge, skills, autonomy and attitude to depict expertise. The complex nature of English is linked to inappropriate applications of instructional methods, teachers' poor fluency and speaking English, lack of inspiration, pupils' psychological disorders and stressors, provision of inefficient linguistic resources, language interruptions and overcrowded classes are all the reasons for poor performance of English language among students.

To improve teaching efficacy, practical teaching strategies might be devised by combining current teaching trends with the benefits of digital learning (Lai et al., 2012). Although many students approach digital tools like cell phones and computers, the survey found that they are only used for instructional purposes in a small percentage of cases. Undergraduate students' mobile phones were the most commonly used technology for this purpose. Furthermore, most students lacked confidence in their digital skills (Rashid et al., 2018).

Only 10% learners in Pakistan uses the internet, despite the fact that English is main language of the country and the first language of only a small percentage of its. These kids attend Urdu-medium schools, where Urdu is the primary language of instruction, and English-medium schools, where English is the primary language of instruction. In Pakistan, the Ministry of

Higher Education (2014) distinguishes between private and public schools. Private schools, on the other hand, are favoured by upper-middle and upper-class families. When compared to Urdu-medium schools, English-medium schools are better equipped with digital resources such as computers, projectors, and access to digital libraries, according to many researchers (Dogar, Butt, & Qaisar, 2015; Khurshid et al., 2016; Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017). Students' skills and digital practises in English-language schools are positively influenced by access to and exposure to these digital facilities (Shabbir et al., 2014). The usage of digital tools by Urdu medium school children, on the other hand, is dependent on their personal access to these technologies at home (Salam et al., 2017). Teachers face new problems every day from students' side, their specific demands, new gear and software, and their own developing needs in this digital age. They must deal with a varied group of pupils, a high student-teacher ratio, digital natives, a competitive job market, lifelong learning, and job placement (Sharma, 2017).

Technology Issues in the Classroom

The rate of change to maximize the hardware's capabilities, curriculum, assessment, and education must all function together. Cost, social dynamics, distraction, alignment, and purpose are all issues that teachers encounter (teachthought.com). The studies showed that digital learning has positive effect on learning motivation (Lin et al., 2017). Pakistani students and teachers are torn between learning English and learning Urdu, the national language. There are also a slew of other regional and local languages that Pakistani students and teachers must contend with. According to Rahman (2016), one of the major groups of Pakistani society, the elite, after realizing the empowering factor of the English language, adopted the English medium for their own children, while as policymakers, they have drawn a line of discrimination in the establishment of public sector educational institutions in the country (Khan et al., 2017).

The findings of the study of Tabatabaei and Pourakbari, (2012) revealed that in a technologically sophisticated classroom, kids are more responsive, spontaneous, and cooperative since the instruction becomes more hands-on and dynamic for them. On the other hand, incorporating technology into the English language classroom is easier said than done from the standpoint of the instructor, who may not always have the appropriate materials on hand. The majority of instructors are not interested in using technology in their classrooms due to time constraints, a lack of understanding in using or incorporating technology into their classes, strict school authority norms, and a power problem (Gupta, 2010). Several issues involving teachers, students, textbooks, and methods were discovered, including: teachers do not use teaching aids during class, school libraries are not well equipped to serve English learners, classrooms are lacking in terms of facilities and physical conditions, teachers do not teach in English, and English textbooks are not appropriate for the students' level of proficiency (Khan, 2011; Tabatabaei & Pourakbari, 2012).

Many case studies demonstrate language problems at local level. These factors include class size, teachers' personal English abilities and confidence, and time constraints (Copland et al., 2014). The findings of this study revealed that the environment was the primary cause of difficulties in learning ESL. Boys, in comparison to girls, perceive greater problems. Another significant conclusion was that students in rural areas perceived more challenges than students in urban areas. Learning ESL can be difficult due to a lack of reading and listening habits (Selvi, 2011).

To deal with such a change, a teacher's and instructor's roles become more tough and demanding, necessitating more attention. To provide a firm foundation for their teaching in an ever-changing digital environment, teachers need a fair balance of academic and practical

expertise (Sharma, 2017; Mumary Songbatumis, 2017). The ability to adapt to a changing reality is one of the traits of pupils in the digital era (Peter, 2009; Ilter, 2015).

Teaching and learning English are hampered by a lack of teacher training programs, sufficient teaching materials, adequate infrastructure, effective teachers, teacher motivation, adequate teaching experience, scientific teaching methods, and ELT research. One of the primary issues in teaching English is a lack of teacher training. There are few possibilities for teachers at this level to receive training, and most English teachers are hesitant to do so (Anggeraini, 2020; Hossain, 2018). For students, digital technology can be fascinating and provide a potentially more engaging alternative. At the same time, it's crucial to recognize that some students may lack confidence in using digital technology for learning, and steps must be taken to provide equal access.

For both the teachers and the students, digital technology provides fast feedback (Cambridge Assessment, 2017). The English teachers faced difficulty in applying digital teaching effectively and creating their own digital media in school practises due to a lack of teacher training, time, and facilities. According to the findings, English teachers should actively participate in teacher professional development activities such as group discussions, workshops, training, and seminars to keep up with the advancement of new technologies (Anggeraini, 2020). Teachers and parents voiced opposing viewpoints on the difficulty of English language learning. Students were found to be lacking in English grammar, vocabulary, and speaking ability, according to participants (Hossain, 2018). The concerns and challenges that the trainees faced were the teacher's voice, classroom management, teaching tactics, learning strategies, English communication barriers, vocabulary knowledge, lesson planning, teaching appraisal, and classroom motivation, according to the findings (Deocampo, 2020). There are a variety of reasons why this language should be taught. Learning languages, on the other hand, improves children's memory, reasoning, perception, and imagination (Stakanova & Tolstikhina, 2014).

The data shows that writing skill was often regarded as the most serious issue (Banditvilai & Cullen, 2018). Nowadays, the advancement of technology, information, and knowledge has resulted in an increase in the teaching and learning of English as an international language as an international language. There have been several issues with teaching and learning English in many places (Khajlo, 2013).

The ultimate barrier to learning English is that they do not have access to an environment that allows children to become acquainted with the native language. In other words, English has no active role outside of the classroom. As a result, they do not perceive a pressing need to learn English (Akbari, 2015). Another key issue that stops teachers from obtaining four essential language skills is a lack of basic understanding of language development, such as vocabulary and grammatical knowledge (Karademir & Gorgoz, 2019). Computers and interactive whiteboards are becoming more popular in schools around the world, and the speed at which schools can link to one another and to the rest of the world is improving all the time. Technology is now transportable for both teachers and students, with laptop computers, tablet devices, and cell phones becoming commonplace in many schools (Warschauer, 2002). More instructors and school administrators are acknowledging the role that digital resources and the internet can play in increasing student motivation and engagement, assisting students with varied learning styles, and improving teaching and learning quality (Zhao, 2005).

Many elements influence language learning process, including self-confidence, attitude, motivation, language exposure, classroom settings, surroundings, and the availability of qualified teachers (Verghese, 2009). The factors like environment, motivation, the teacher's

attitude, and competency are identified (Raja & Selvi, 2011).

The trained English language instructors have been reported in various countries (Hu, 2007; Kirkgöz, 2009). As a result, teachers consider themselves teaching English to young learners without proper training. The situation is particularly dire in impoverished or rural areas. Programmatic (classroom) elements, teacher training, and classroom pedagogy are all covered by these options (Bell & Bogan, 2013).

Objectives of the Study

Based on the background of the research, the main objectives of the study were:

1. To investigate the problems faced by English language teachers and learners in the digital era.
2. To explore the digital technology which English language teachers use while teaching language to the learners.
3. To find out the significant correlation between the indicators of teachers' language teaching problems and their use of digital technologies.

Research Questions

The current study answered the following questions:

RQ1. What are the problems English language teachers and learners face in the digital era?

RQ2. What are the digital technologies that English language teachers use while teaching the language to learners?

RQ3. Is there any significant correlation among the indicators of teachers' language teaching problems and their use of digital technologies?

Research Design and Procedure

The current study was descriptive in nature as the researchers used a survey method to fill up the questionnaire from English language teachers to gauge their viewpoints regarding study.

Population of the Study

The Population of this study was the teachers of public Elementary schools of Bahawalpur-Pakistan. The data were collected from the 8th grade learners in the academic year 2019.

Sample of the Study

In this study, 320 English language teachers were selected randomly as sample for the study. All teachers had master degrees in English language majority of the teachers had ample degrees as well and experience of the teachers were from one year to 12 years. The schools were selected randomly using simple random sampling technique and all the teachers from those schools were teaching English at elementary and secondary levels.

Instrument

The data were collected with the help of self-developed instrument, "English Language Teachers Problems and Digital Technology Survey [ELTPDT]. These 320 English language teachers were requested to fill up the questionnaires. The questionnaires have different factors. They were divided into deficit in professional development, overcrowded classes, unfamiliarity

with technology, use of traditional pedagogies, lack of parental support, absence of language learning environment, absence of language learning labs. The instrument was validated by the experts in the field and the reliability was calculated as 0.832.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

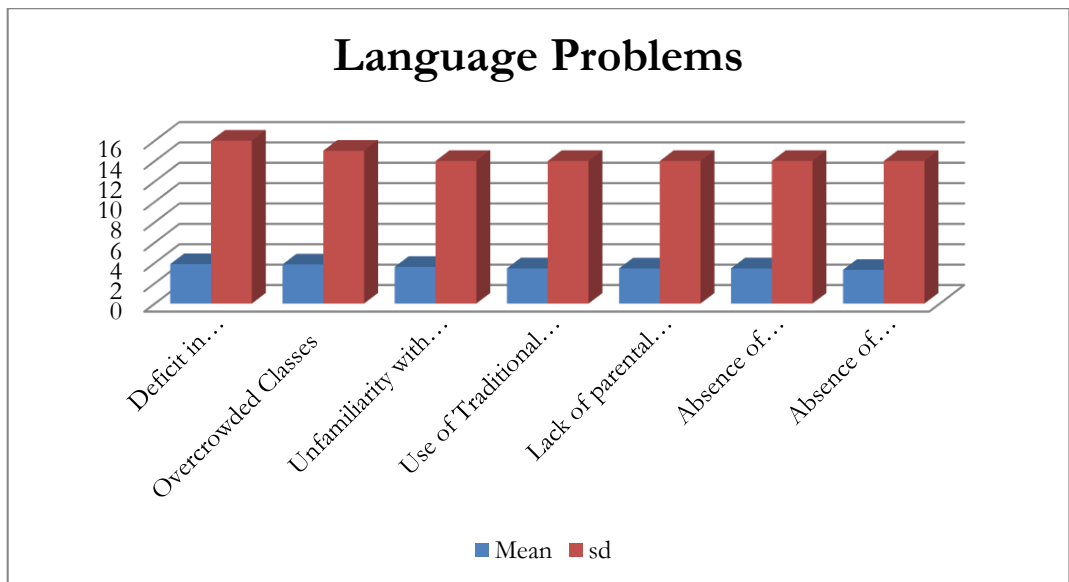
The data were analyzed through SPSS. The data were tabulated and interpreted and the results were drawn.

RQ1. What are the Problems English Language Teachers and Learners Face in the Digital Era?

Table 1: Problems English Language Teachers and Learners Face in the Digital Era.

S#	Indicators	Mean	Percentage	sd
1	Deficit in Professional Development	3.877	16%	.3520
2	Overcrowded Classes	3.840	15%	.6131
3	Unfamiliarity with Technology	3.602	14%	.2834
4	Use of Traditional Pedagogies	3.459	14%	.4115
5	Lack of parental support	3.452	14%	.3664
6	Absence of Language Learning Environment	3.460	14%	.4771
7	Absence of Language Labs	3.314	13%	.4627

Table 1 showed the problems faced by English language teachers. It was evident that English language teachers perceived that the deficit in professional development was the foremost problem. The second problem was overcrowded classes. The third problem was unfamiliarity with technology. The fourth problem was use of traditional pedagogies. Lack of parental support was the fifth problem faced by the English teachers faced. The absences of language learning environment and language labs were the last but not least problem English teachers face. It was shown in the graph below.



RQ2. What are the digital technologies that English language teachers use while teaching the language to learners?

Table 2: Digital Technology that English Language Teachers Use.

S#	Name of Technology	Mean	Percentage
1	Music Videos	3.882	22%
2	Audio Listening Exercises	3.651	20.7%
3	Educational websites	3.932	23%
4	Collaborative tools	2.271	13%
5	Smartphones and Tablet Apps	3.870	23%

Table 2 demonstrated the list of digital technology that English language teachers use. English language teachers used music videos first of all. The second technology they used was audio listening exercises as digital technology. They also used educational websites, collaborative tools, smartphones, and tablets during their lectures.

RQ3. Is there any significant correlation among the indicators of teachers' language teaching problems and their use of digital technologies?

Table 3: Correlation among the Indicators of Teachers' Language Teaching Problems and their Use of Digital Technologies

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
DPD	.221**	1									
OC	.233**	.340**	1								
UT	.253**	.420**	.174**	1							
UTP	.271**	.349**	.284**	.389**	1						
LPS	.080	.360**	.259**	.315**	.286**	1					
ALLE	.488**	.700**	.544**	.605**	.705**	.700**	1				
ALL	.489**	.701**	.546**	.606**	.704**	.702**	.998**	1			
MV	.143*	.740**	.239**	.316**	.279**	.213**	.493**	.498**	1		
ALE	.209**	.307**	.878**	.171**	.273**	.229**	.492**	.494**	.246**	1	
EW	.214**	.359**	.123*	.842**	.340**	.247**	.503**	.505**	.259**	.096	1
CT	.215**	.256**	.211**	.285**	.744**	.193**	.518**	.517**	.224**	.203**	.233**

The results of the table 3 explained a statistically significant relationship among all indicators of English teachers' language learning problems and the types of digital technologies they used.

Conclusions and Discussion

The problems faced by English language. It was evident that English language teachers perceived that the deficit in professional development was the foremost problem (Sharma, 2017). It supported the study of (Copland et al., 2014). The second problem was overcrowded classes as investigated by (Rashid et al., 2018; Rijal, 2016). The third problem was unfamiliarity with technology. The fourth problem was use of traditional pedagogies. Lack of parental support was the fifth problem faced by the English teachers faced. The absences of motivation of language learning environment and language labs (Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017) were the last but not least problem English teachers face (Akeredolu-ale et al., 2014). It was supported Doris Holzberger et al. (2013). English language teachers used music videos first of all. The second technology they used was audio listening exercises as digital technology outside the classroom (Ilter, 2015) as perceived by (Kaklamanou et al., 2012). They also used educational websites, collaborative tools, smartphones, and tablets during their lectures. A statistically significant relationship among all indicators of English teachers' language learning problems and the types

of digital technologies they used. The current study supported the findings of prior studies like (Padmavathi, 2019).

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