

## CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION DURING SMOG PANDEMIC IN PAKISTAN

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### Abstract

*The study aims at examining the role of English language as medium instruction during smog era in Pakistan. Smog is an infectious air pollution caused by the dirty environment (i.e., burning crops, smoke of chimneys so on and so forth) specifically in Pakistan and India. Smog posed significant challenges to education, public health and society. English has traditionally held a prominent place in Pakistan's education system, with many schools and universities using it as the medium of instruction. The importance of English became evident as the country shifted to remote learning to curb the Smog's spread. While this shift had challenges related to internet access and technology, English language skills played a pivotal role in ensuring that students could access and understand online educational content. For the purposes of this study, the population consisted of all of the faculty members working in three institutions in Multan division. Two Hundred and Ten instructors (teaching English as a medium of instruction) were chosen at random from the whole population by using a method known as the simple random sample approach. The results of the survey showed that, in general, the majority of teachers believe that smog is now effecting in their teaching, and the majority of teachers think that English as medium of instruction (as it is a lingua franca and people all over the world can easily understand it especially in contrast to all other languages of the world) have a good influence on students, teachers and people's ability to know smog's effects on education. As a result, it was suggested that the government should educate teachers on effective methods (direct method) by providing them with the appropriate training courses and seminars. It was also suggested that collaborative, efficient, and speedy efforts should be done in order to provide institutions with the greatest facilities that should be available for all.*

**Keywords:** Smog, English Language, Education, Pakistan.

### Introduction

In order to investigate the difficulties and potential solutions that are linked with the use of English as a medium of instruction in the midst of a smog epidemic in Pakistan, it is necessary to conduct a detailed investigation into the complex relationships that exist between language education and environmental problems.

The investigation begins with a general overview and then digs into the intricacies that are inherent in the process of adopting English as a medium of teaching in Pakistan while simultaneously experiencing a pandemic of pollution. In order to do this, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis of the obstacles that are growing at the confluence of language education and the environmental problems that are being caused by the smog epidemic.

The accompanying investigation will focus on the difficulties that are linked with using English as a medium of education. Different degrees of linguistic competency among students and teachers are a manifestation of linguistic barriers that might be encountered. Concurrently, cultural and social elements are responsible for the obstacles that are encountered. These aspects include concerns that are associated with socio-economic inequities as well as cultural opposition to the domination of the English language. The scope of the investigation encompasses the sphere of educational infrastructure, with a particular focus on the constraints imposed by

resources and the deficiencies that exist within teacher training programmes. In addition, the evaluation takes into account the health problems that have arisen as a result of the pandemic of pollution. It takes into consideration the influence on their physical health as well as the possible implications on their mental well-being, both of which may hinder the process of language acquisition.

In addition to addressing the difficulties, the investigation investigates the possible solutions. There are linguistic options that include the deployment of proficiency examinations and programmes that are specifically designed to enhance language skills. Promoting inclusion and adapting English language courses to local settings are two examples of cultural and socioeconomic concerns that should be taken into account. In order to address the issues that are associated with educational infrastructure, it is necessary to spend resources and improve teacher training programmes. The incorporation of health awareness programmes and support systems for students who are experiencing health problems as a result of smog is required for the implementation of health-related solutions.

Moreover, the investigation takes into consideration the possibility of incorporating these solutions within the framework of a pandemic occurring due to pollution. In order to do this, the curriculum will need to be modified to accommodate the environmental circumstances that are caused by smog. Additionally, digital platforms will be used to facilitate remote learning during school closures, and community participation into educational activities will be encouraged.

### **Research Objectives**

The study aims:

- To synthesize findings into practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and relevant stakeholders to enhance English language instruction resilience during smog-related disruptions.
- To contribute insights that can inform the development of future policies addressing language education challenges in the context of environmental crises.

### **Research Questions**

- ❖ To what extent are educational institutions in Pakistan prepared and adaptable to the challenges posed by the smog pandemic in delivering English language instruction?
- ❖ How effective are existing institutional strategies and policies in mitigating the impact of smog on English language education?

### **Literature Review**

English as a medium language, often referred to as English-medium instruction (EMI), has gained widespread use in various educational and professional contexts worldwide. EMI refers to the practice of using English as the language of instruction in institutions or workplaces where it is not the native language. It has become increasingly prevalent in higher education, international business, and the global scientific community (Jahan & Hamid, 2019; Köksal, & Tercan, 2019; Doiz, & Lasagabaster, 2020; Tang, 2020; Murata, 2019). EMI is often adopted in universities to offer courses in English, allowing institutions to attract a diverse international student body. In the business world, English has emerged as a lingua franca, facilitating communication and collaboration among individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. In the scientific community, English is the dominant language for publishing research, enabling the dissemination of knowledge to a global audience. However, the expansion of EMI has raised concerns about linguistic and cultural homogenization and the potential exclusion of non-native English speakers, highlighting the need for careful implementation and support for those using English as a medium language.

Despite the advantages of using English as a medium language (Khatri, 2019; Sanyal, 2019), it also poses challenges. One significant concern is linguistic inequality. Non-native English speakers may face barriers in academic or professional settings, as they often need to achieve a high level of English proficiency to succeed. This can create disparities and inequalities, especially when it comes to access to education or job opportunities. Moreover, the prevalence of English can result in the erosion of local languages and cultures, as English becomes the dominant means of communication in various domains. As English is often associated with global power structures, it can lead to linguistic imperialism and a potential loss of linguistic diversity. In conclusion, the use of English as a medium language is a multifaceted phenomenon with both advantages and challenges (Iqbal et al., 2020; Iqbal et al., 2020b). While it facilitates international communication, collaboration, and access to knowledge, it also raises concerns about linguistic inequalities, cultural homogenization, and the potential loss of linguistic diversity. Careful consideration and support are necessary to harness the benefits of English as a medium language while addressing its associated challenges.

In Pakistan, English as a medium language has a complex role in the country education system and society. It is one of the official languages and is widely used in education, business, and government. English-medium schools are highly regarded and often considered a pathway to better career opportunities (Afzal et al., 2021; Umair et al., 2021; Javaid et al 2021). However, the widespread use of English can also create disparities, as not all segments of the population have equal access to quality English education. This linguistic divide can exacerbate social and economic inequalities. Additionally, there are concerns about the potential erosion of indigenous languages and cultural identities. The coexistence of English with local languages reflects the country's linguistic diversity but also underscores the challenges of striking a balance between promoting English proficiency and preserving linguistic and cultural heritage (Alhumaid ate el, 2020).

#### **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

The study aims at examining the role of English language as medium instruction during smog era in Pakistan. Smog is an infectious air pollution caused by the dirty environment (i.e., burning crops, smoke of chimneys so on and so forth) specifically in Pakistan and India. Smog posed significant challenges to education, public health and society. English has traditionally held a prominent place in Pakistan's education system, with many schools and universities using it as the medium of instruction. The importance of English became evident as the country shifted to remote learning to curb the Smog's spread. While this shift had challenges related to internet access and technology, English language skills played a pivotal role in ensuring that students could access and understand online educational content (i.e., its mostly found in English language). These were the only types of questions included in the questionnaire. Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SD) were the possible responses on a Likert-type scale with five points of agreement. Each and every assertion accepted the proportion of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. In order to accomplish specific computations, the statistical concepts of percentage (%) and mean were used throughout the gathering of the information.

**Table No. 1 Gender:**

**Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Male	70	33
Female	140	67
Total	100	100.0

**Table No. 2 Departments**

**Departments where English is being taught as medium of instruction**

Department	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sciences	84	40.0
Social Sciences	126	60.0
Total	210	100.0

**Table No. 3 Universities**

**Universities**

Universities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
BZU	110	52
WU Multan	70	33
EU Multan	30	15
Total	210	100.0

**Table No. 4 creating awareness about smog is a success for future**

Statement	Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean

creating awareness about smog is a success for future	SDA	1	1	4.29
	DA	4	2	
	UD	12	6	
	A	108	51	
	SA	85	40	
	Total	210	100.0	

According to this table 91% of respondents had a favourable attitude towards the testimony, which states that **English as medium of instruction** is critical to achieving success in the future, while just 3% do not agree with the testimonial. Instead of this, 6% of respondents were unable to form any kind of opinion based on the information that was provided before the testimony. The mean was 4.29, which was more than 3.0, indicating that there was an increasing degree of conformity to the testimony.

**Table 5 Do you believe using English as the medium of instruction exacerbates challenges during a smog pandemic?**

Statement	Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
Using English as the medium of instruction exacerbates challenges during a smog pandemic	SDA	5	2	4.20
	DA	2	1	
	UD	6	3	
	A	130	62	
	SA	67	32	
	Total	210	100	

According to this table, 94% of respondents had a favourable attitude towards the testimonial, which states that it is important to Use English as the medium of instruction exacerbates challenges during a smog pandemic. Only 3% of respondents did not agree with the testimonial. Instead of this, 3% of respondents were unable to form any kind of opinion based on the information that was provided before the testimony. The mean was 4.20, which was more than 3.0, indicating that there was an increasing degree of conformity to the testimony.

**Table No. 6** There should be a shift to alternative mediums of instruction during smog pandemics? (e.g., local languages, online learning platforms)

Statement	Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
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There should be a shift to alternative mediums of instruction during smog pandemics? (e.g., local languages, online learning platforms)	SDA	8	4	4.15
	DA	9	4	
	UD	7	30	
	A	105	50	
	SA	81	39	
	Total	210	100	

Table 4.6 reveals that 89% of respondents have a favourable attitude towards the testimonial claiming that there should be a shift to alternative mediums of instruction during smog pandemics? (e.g., local languages, online learning platforms), while 8% of respondents do not agree with the testimonial. Instead of this, 3% of respondents were unable to form any kind of opinion based on the information that was provided before the testimony. The mean was 4.15, which was more than 3.00, indicating that there was an increasing degree of conformance to the testimony.

**Table No. 7** the government and educational institutions provide support to students and educators facing challenges in English-medium instruction during smog-related disruptions

Statement	Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
the government and educational institutions provide support to students and educators facing challenges in English-medium instruction during smog-related disruptions	SDA	4	2	4.16
	DA	6	3	
	UD	21	10	
	A	99	47	
	SA	80	38	
	Total	210	100	

According to table 4.7, 85.2% of respondents had a favourable attitude towards the testimony that government and educational institutions provide support to students and educators facing challenges in English-medium instruction during smog-related disruptions, while 4.8% of respondents did not agree with the testimonial. In contrast to this, 10% of those who responded were unable to form any kind of opinion on the offered prior testimonial. The mean tally was 4.16, which was more than 3.00, indicating that there was an increasing degree of conformance to the testimony.

**Table No. 8** it helps in understanding the difficulties faced and potential solutions for maintaining effective education during such environmental challenges.

Statement	Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
It helps in understanding the difficulties faced and potential solutions for maintaining effective education during such environmental challenges.	SDA	8	4	4.08
	DA	11	5	
	UD	16	8	
	A	95	45	
	SA	80	38	
	Total	210	100	

According to table 4.8, 83 percent of respondents had a favourable view towards the testimony that it helps in understanding the difficulties faced and potential solutions for maintaining effective education during such environmental challenges, whereas 9 percent of respondents do not agree with the testimonial. Instead of this, 8% of respondents were unable to form any kind of opinion based on the information that was provided before the testimony. The mean was 4.08, which was more than 3.00, indicating that there was an increasing degree of conformance to the testimony.

**Table No. 9 The government is taking actions in your region aimed at controlling smog?**

Statement	Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
The government is taking actions in your region aimed at controlling smog	SDA	6	3	3.97
	DA	9	4	
	UD	29	14	
	A	106	50	
	SA	60	29	
	Total	210	100	

According to table 9, 79% of respondents had a favourable attitude towards the testimony that government is taking actions in your region aimed at controlling smog, whereas 7% of respondents do not agree with the testimonial. Instead of this, 14% of respondents were unable to form any kind of opinion based on the information that was provided before the testimony. The mean was 3.97, which was more than 3.00, indicating that there was an increasing degree of conformance to the testimony.

**Table No. 10 it could keep aware of any emerging technologies or innovations designed to address smog-related issues**

Statement	Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
it could keep aware of any emerging technologies or innovations designed to address smog-related issues	SDA	6	3	3.80
	DA	20	9	
	UD	35	17	
	A	98	47	
	SA	51	24	
	Total	210	100	

According to table 10, 71% of respondents had a favourable attitude towards the testimony that it could keep aware of any emerging technologies or innovations designed to address smog-related issues, whereas 12% of respondents do not agree with the testimonial. Instead of this, 17% of respondents were unable to form any kind of opinion based on the information that was provided before the testimony. The mean was 3.97, which was more than 3.00, indicating that there was an increasing degree of conformance to the testimony.

**CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the function of the English language as a medium of teaching during the period of pollution in Pakistan. In particular, Pakistan and India are the countries that are most affected by smog, which is an infectious kind of air pollution that is created by an unclean environment (such as burning crops, smoke from chimneys, and so on). In terms of education, public health, and society as a whole, smog presented enormous obstacles. Pakistan's educational system has long placed a significant emphasis on the English language, with a significant number of institutions and colleges using English as their primary language of teaching. As a result of the country's transition to remote learning in an effort to reduce the spread of the smog, the significance of English became more apparent. Despite the fact that this change presented difficulties in terms of internet access and technology, the ability to communicate in English was of the utmost importance in ensuring that students were able to access and comprehend instructional information that was available online. With regard to the objectives of this research, the population included all of the faculty members who were employed in three different universities located within the Multan division. A technique known as the simple random sample approach was used in order to choose one hundred and ten teachers who were teaching English as a medium of instruction. These teachers were selected at random from the whole population. The results of the survey indicated that, in general, the majority of educators believe that smog is now having an effect on their teaching, and the majority of educators believe that English as a medium of instruction (due to the fact that it is a lingua franca and people from all over the world can easily understand it, particularly in comparison to all other languages spoken around the world) has a positive influence on students, teachers, and people's ability to understand the effects that smog has on education. As a consequence of this, it was proposed that the government should provide educators with the required training courses and seminars in order to educate them on effective approaches (direct method). It was also advised that efforts should be made in a collaborative manner, in an effective manner, and in a timely manner in order to offer institutions with the best facilities that should be accessible to everyone.



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