Measuring School Support for Learning English as a Foreign Language through SSELL

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Abstract

Schools label themselves to be English medium considering that by implementing textbooks in English language and adopting English as a medium of instruction is sufficient to be English. In this regard, there is a need for a checklist or self-assessment tool to enable the schools to evaluate themselves to see their positioning as an English medium school as well as understanding their role in it. This study aimed to develop a scale to enable the English language teaching practitioners to explore if the non-elite schools successfully fulfilled this claim. The scale construction methodology was used to carry out this investigation. The sample comprised of 134 participants including school principals, coordinators and teachers randomly selected using convenient sampling methods. A reliability analysis was carried out to establish the authenticity and applicability of the tool. A satisfactory score of test-retest reliability revealed the scale as a good fit to evaluate school support for English language learning; therefore, the scale can be stated as acceptable based on its psychometric properties.

Keywords: English language, official language policy, scale construction, school assessment.

Introduction

The official language of Pakistan is English, though Urdu language holds the position of national language in the country and is used widely. According to Amir (2008), Urdu language holds the position of national language in Pakistan, whereas

English language is an official language. Nevertheless, the English language is being used in most of the important departments of government, commerce, education, armed forces, and the judiciary (Coleman, 2010). Furthermore, the constitution's codification of Pakistan, known as a multilingual country, is in English language. Although multilingualism is a common affair in the country, the medium of instruction in higher education within Pakistan is exclusively English. Ahmed (2011) points out that English is widely used as a medium of instruction in the educational institutions of Pakistan, including schools, colleges and higher education institutions. This is particularly so because the English language is given more importance in the country. For instance, Coleman (2010) presents the statement of a teacher figuring out that the English language is a great source of knowledge. The Englis language should be learned by everyone having English as a second language, as it opens the doors of knowledge.

As private English aim to provide an educational system where the English language is considered as a medium of instruction, these schools claim to follow the English medium education system. On the other hand, the elite class schools in Pakistan consider the usage of the English language as more of a fit to their modernized lifestyle and thus position the English language as a medium of class and elegance. Nevertheless, the term 'English Medium Education' refers to a schooling system that is supposed to use English as a principle medium of instruction. From this perspective, private English are more attractive because of their claim of offering English medium, which is often unfulfilled in reality. According to Mansoor (2003), English in Pakistan are providing the devices of distributing economic and social power. In the country, children and parents often consider education in English medium school as an opportunity for economic success. In Pakistan, one of the very common practices of private schools (specifically which claim to be English medium), is to staff young women who do not have professional education or any other formal training in teaching (Raju & Nguyen, 2014). Furthermore, teachers at the private school are paid considerably less as compared to the government school teachers.

In present-day Pakistan, English can be seen as a medium of instruction in most of the schools. Coleman (2010) figures out a wider of recognition regarding the main function of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in schools in terms of preparing the EFL learners examinations that are chiefly held in the

English language. In other words, students in Pakistan are supposed to pass examinations in the English language in order for their acceptance in the higher levels of education as well as to gain employment opportunities. It is also argued that English is considered mandatory in Pakistan for admission to certain government services. From this perspective, the importance of English to be used as an official language within various contexts particularly in education, cannot be denied. For instance, Channa, Memon and Bughio (2016) state, "Education in English is the determining factor for the career of children" (p. 1574). The purpose of the present study is to construct a scientifically developed scale to evaluate the schools' support for English language learning and promotion. Besides, the construct also helps the practitioners and schools to explore if the non-elite schools in Pakistan successfully fulfil the claim they make to be English medium.

Literature Review

The process of language learning and acquisition starts from birth. There are many factors that contribute towards acquisition of any language. Nariswariatmojo (2011) classifies the factors influencing the language learning process in two: internal and external. The internal factors can be counted as physical, psychological and exhaustion, while the external factors include family background, school environment and the social environment. According to Nariswariatmojo (2011), the physical factors are associated with health, physical defect and gender of learners, whereas the psychological factor includes intelligence, attention, interest, aptitude and motive. The exhaustion factor is concerned with the motivation of the students towards the learning process. In the light of the mentioned factors, schools are recommended to take all of the factors into consideration to promote the English language learning within the premises of their schools. The school policy, school culture, teacher competincy, learning environment, parental participation and co-curricular activities enable the students to learn the language successfully.

School Policy

As private-run English Medium schools in Pakistan aim to provide education that incorporates English as a medium of instruction, these schools claim to follow the English medium education system, an educational system where the English language is used as a medium of instruction and not as mother tongue (Taguchi, 2014). According to Stepanek, Raphael, Autio, Deussen and Thompson (2010), it

is the commitment of everyone within a school community to take part in order to promote the English language learning. In Pakistan, private-run English Medium schools are more attractive because of their claim of offering English Medium Education that is not often fulfilled in reality. According to Mansoor (2003), children and parents often consider education in English medium schools as an opportunity for economic success. Coleman (2010) figures out that one of the basic purposes of teaching in the English language is to prepare students for the examinations held in the same language. It is true to say that passing examination is the ladder for the students in Pakistan, like in any other countries, to get into the higher educational institutions or better employment opportunities.

School Culture

Yaqoob and Zubair (2012) figure out that private-run English Medium schools in Pakistan usually do not teach the English textbooks recommended by the Oxford University Press (OUP)to expose their students to the English culture, values, beliefs, and traditions. Even if some of the schools teach the OUP recommended English textbooks, such schools come up with indigenous values, traditions, culture, and beliefs. Since non-elite schools do not charge high fees, they remain unable to provide the education that can be matched with the modern standards and Western atmosphere. Yaqoob and Zubair (2012) ironically indicate the dual standards of learning with two different cultures including the western culture available within the elite class schools and the indigenous culture available within the lower and middle-class schools, also known as non-elite private run Englishm medium schools. However, Santrock (2011) represents Vygotsky's language theory according to which the cognitive development of students is shaped through a cultural context.

Teacher Competency

Memon (2007) argues that the positive results concerning English language learning success among learners can be achieved through the notion of teacher competency. Furthermore, Kasi (2010) argues that teacher competency in Pakistani private run English medium schools need to be paid attention. He elaborates that the subject matter knowledge, academic qualifications, skills and competency of teaching and commitment of teachers to have an effective influence on the process of teaching and learning are the basic elements to promote English language learning.

Learning Environment

As noted by Coleman and Capstick (2012), one of the most significant selling points of the privately-run English medium schools in Pakistan is their claim to be English Medium. According to Dearden (2014), the term 'English Medium' refers to the English languag usage in teaching academic subjects in the jurisdictions and/or countries in which a large portion of the population do not use the English language as their first language.Nevertheless, in Pakistan the private run English medium schools claim that they offer learning environment in which instructions for every subject (other than Urdu and Islamiat) such as mathematics, history, science and so on are delivered in the English language. Students are supposed to use English as a medium of communication even outside their classrooms within the school premises.

Parental Participation

Education can be stated as a key to the development of a society. From this perspective, Rafiq, Fatima, Sohail, Saleem, and Khan (2013) explain that a society can be well disciplined and more civilised only when it has more educated people. It is the responsibility of the family to socialise children in order to make them productive members of the society. Sarwar (2016) figures out the role of parents playing an influential role to mould as well as shape the children's behaviour towards learning. Students' academic achievement is not only dependant on the experienced teachers nor does it depends on the overall quality of schools, rather parental involvement plays an equal role in this regard., Rafiq, Fatima, Sohail, Saleem, and Khan (2013) also point out that the role of parents is associated with both the school and the home environments. Generally, without the supporting hand of parents, it may become very difficult for students to get higher achievements in the English language.

Co-curricular Activities

Students feel difficulty to use English language skills when they reach college level to get admission. Although English is taught as a compulsory subject at the school level, yet students remain incompetent to use the English language effectively in their later academic levels. Cambridge International Examinations (2013) explains that the term curriculum is used in different ways across the globe. The most widely used definition of curriculum is the encompassing of subjects

as well as the connection of those subjects between them, teaching methods and other schooling activities resulting in educational experiences received by the learners. Schools claiming to be English medium should put emphasis on the school curriculum that follows the concept that 'every learner is a language learner' and 'every teacher is a language teacher', as their major selling point is the provision of instruction in English medium (Coleman & Capstick, 2012).
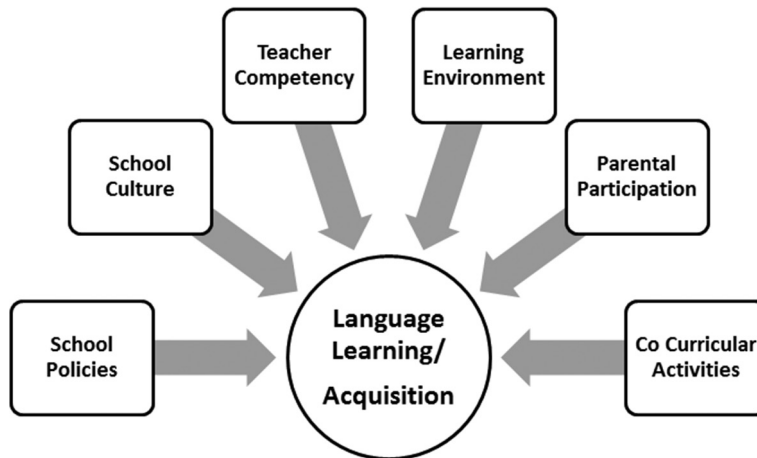

Figure 1. Theoretical framework

Considering the references from the literature, reflecting upon the personal experiences as an ESL teacher in a mediocre private school and seeing a syncronization of theoretical framework (see Figure 1) that defines a true essence of English language learning support, the purpose of this study is as follows:

1. To construct a tool that facilitates the practitioners to self-evaluate their support and standing as English mediul;.,,m education system
2. To establish the reliability of the constructed tool for its ground level adaptation
3. To propose a scoring key for the same

These objectives are the initial part of the investigation that was followed by testing advanced psychometric properties for the constructed scale to further enhance its generalizability.

Methodology

This study followed the quantitative research paradigm using scale construction/tool development research methodology. The scale construction was broken into the following three phases:

- Phase I: Generating items

- Phase II: Conducting a pilot study

- Phase III: Testing the psychometric properties

Phase 1: Generating Items

Subsequent to the identification of six main themes (constructs) including school policies, co-curricular activities, school culture, teacher competency, parental participation, and learning environment based on the reviewed literature, 144 statements were chosen to include in the initial draft of SSELL (See Figure 1). According to Hinkin (1998), developing a well-articulated theoretical foundation indicating content domain for a novel measure is essential for the successful item generation. Afterwards, only 42 statements were chosen consequent to the sorting process for clarity as well as to avoid repetition and unnecessary statements, in order to construct a scale to evaluate School Support for English Language Learning (SSELL), the present study generates items in the light of the reviewed literature, a process generally known as 'item generation', an essential task to establish sound measures. The draft was termed aninitial draft.

Phase 2: Pilot Study

Sample. Using purposive sampling, the data were gathered from 13 participants; 51.1% were females, 47.1% were aged between 31 and 35, 59% had more than 5 years of teaching English language experience. The data obtained from the pilot study were then utilized for item analysis, to establish internal consistency between the 42 chosen statements based on their categorized themes including school policies, co-curricular activities, school culture, teacher competency, parental participation, and learning environment. Upon the satisfactory internal consistency between the 42 chosen statements, the scale was made ready for the next phase.

Phase 3: Testing the Psychometric Properties

Drost (2011) figures out that through reliability, the degree of repeatability is measured. Therefore, the reliability refers to the consistency or stability of measurement over different conditions. If the same results are not shown, it refers to an unreliable data. The most common methods to measure the reliability include test-retest reliability, split-halves, internal consistency, external consistency, and inter-rater reliability. In the present study, the researchers measured the reliability through inter-rater reliability and test-retest reliability.

Sample and Sampling Technique

In the present study, the researchers aimed to utilize purposive sampling to gather the data. According to Tongco (2007), purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique that does not need a set number of informants or underlying theories. In this technique, a researcher makes a deliberate choice of an informant based on a few specific characteristics the informant possesses and thus the technique is also known as judgment sampling. Through this sampling technique, the researchers aimed to approach the participants serving in non-elite schools. School principals, coordinators and teachers were approached to self-evaluate their school performance and learning environment support for learning and promoting the English language. In order to distribute the questionnaire among the school principals, coordinators and teachers, the researcher offered workshop titled 'Enhancing English Proficiency for Teachers'. The workshop was conducted in 10 non-elite schools being run in different localities of Karachi. Participants were invited in the workshop free of cost and at the end of the workshop, they were provided with the questionnaire to be filled out by them. Around 15 teachers attended the workshop in each school and the researcher received 150 observations. After 15 days, the respondents were requested to fill in the questionnaire again to make assess time-bound reliability.138 usable responses were received in the second attempt.

Procedure

In order to measure the reliability, initially, all participants were given two forms to ensure that each participant filled out the form SSELL twice with a 15 days interval. This procedure was accomplished to meet the right process of test-retest

reliability. Once all forms were received, statistical analysis was administered to further test the psychometric properties of the scale being constructed.

Statistical Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation was applied to the statistical analysis of test-retest reliability to determine the relationship between scores obtained in both test and retest.

Findings

Reliability of the Scale

Reliability of the scale was measured by running Cronbach's Alpha on SPSS to measure the internal consistency (can also be stated as reliability) of each item used in SSELL. Table 1 shows the score of Cronbach's Alpha on the overall scale that can be seen as .815 and .833based on the standardized items, which demonstrates the scale as highly reliable.

Table 1
Reliability Statistics

Facets	CA* Test 1	CA* Test 2	N of Items
School Policy	.601	.672	6
School Environment	.798	.821	5
Co-Curricular Activities:	.872	.900	7
Teachers' Professional Development	.849	.830	5
Parental Participation	.861	.873	6
Teaching and Learning Support	.912	.906	13
Total	$\bar{x} = 0.815$	$\bar{x} = 0.833$	$\sum = 42$

Cronbach's Alpha

Table 2 shows the scores received in the result of running Cronbach's Alpha pointing out the reliability of the construct 'School Policy' included in the measurement (SSELL) if item deleted. It also shows the mean, SD and the number of participants. In the light of this scale, it is right to interpret that if item11having mean = 2.43, S.D. = 1.093, N = 138, if deleted value = 0.839, item 11having mean = 2.54, S.D. = 1.001, N = 138, if deleted value = 0.878, and item 35having mean = 2.38, S.D. = 0.883, N = 138, if deleted value = 0.907are deleted from the scale,

the reliability of the scale can be further improved. On the other hand, the removal of any other item would lead the lower Cronbach's Alpha value and thus lower the reliability.

Table 2

Items Statistics and Analysis if Deleted

No.	Items	Mean	S.D	N	Cor-Item	If Deleted
	School Policy					
1	Do you have a formal English language policy?	2.41	0.418	138	0.259	0.517
2	Is the School, a member of Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers?	2.9	0.456	138	0.278	0.405
3	Does your teacher recruitment include a test of English language proficiency?	2.58	0.491	138	0.337	0.667
4	Is it compulsory for all subject teachers to speak in English?	2.65	0.5	138	0.196	0.45
5	Is it compulsory for all the school staff to use English as a medium of communication?	2.63	0.499	138	0.158	0.471
6	Do you involve families and the community in the formation of new school policies pertinent to the promotion of Official/English Language?	2.76	0.496	138	0.202	0.546

Table 3 shows the scores received in the result of running Cronbach's Alpha pointing out the reliability of the construct 'School Environment' included in the measurement (SSELL) if item deleted.

Table 3

Items Statistics and Analysis if Deleted

No.	Items	Mean	S.D	N	Cor-Item	If Deleted
	School Environment					
7	Every single element in the school is labelled in English?	2.09	0.799	138	0.664	0.777
8	All printed materials in school are in English	2.06	0.891	138	0.645	0.777
9	All bulletin boards in the school are in English	2.1	0.98	138	0.694	0.761
10	Are the assemblies held purely in English?	2.37	1.024	138	0.66	0.771
11	All Quranic translations are made in English?	2.43	1.093	138	0.454	0.839

Table 4 shows the scores received in the result of running Cronbach's Alpha pointing out the reliability of the construct 'Co-Curricular Activities' included in the measurement (SSELL) if item deleted.

Table 4

Items Statistics and Analysis if Deleted

No.	Items	Mean	S.D	N	Cor-Item	If Deleted
	Co-Curricular Activities					
12	Do you provide support and encouragement Students Participation in Essay Writing activities outside the classrooms?	2	0.918	138	0.686	0.887
13	Do you provide support and encouragement Students Participation in Story Writing activities outside the classrooms?	2.16	0.919	138	0.697	0.886
14	Do you provide support and encouragement Students Participation in reading (English Newspapers/Magazines/Letters etc.) activities outside the classrooms?	2.25	0.963	138	0.743	0.881
15	Do you allow students to present diver activities, promoting Official/English language, in assembly? (gathering of all students in the morning)	2.41	1.091	138	0.716	0.884
16	Do you allow Students Participation in conversational activities outside the classrooms?	2.34	1.026	138	0.721	0.883
17	Do you allow Students Participation in other activities designed to focus on the 4 skills of language?	2.43	1.007	138	0.674	0.888
18	Do you allow students to work together to plan and present skits using the English Language	2.28	1.101	138	0.712	0.885

Table 5 shows the scores received in the result of running Cronbach's Alpha pointing out the reliability of the construct 'Teachers' Professional Development' included in the measurement (SSELL) if item deleted.

Table 5

Items Statistics and Analysis if Deleted

No.	Items	Mean	S.D	N	Cor-Item	If Deleted
	Teachers' Professional Development					
19	Do you promote English as a medium of instruction for the teaching of the subject you are hired for?	2.1	0.883	138	0.727	0.771
20	Do you promote speaking English while interacting with the students on the premises of the school?	2.16	0.903	138	0.683	0.782
21	Do you promote receiving any in-service training pertinent to the improvement of students' English Language skills?	2.27	0.975	138	0.658	0.788
22	Do you promote using instructional resources/ media frequently in the English Language to teach your subject?	2.31	1.044	138	0.643	0.793
23	Do you promote the professional skills of non-English teachers required to increase students' ability to speak English?	2.4	1.041	138	0.464	0.845

Table 6 shows the scores received in the result of running Cronbach's Alpha pointing out the reliability of the construct 'Parental Participation' included in the measurement (SSELL) if item deleted.

Table 6

Items Statistics and Analysis if Deleted

No.	Items	Mean	S.D	N	Cor-Item	If Deleted
	Parental Participation					
24	Do you ensure that all policies and reforms, pertinent to the promotion/English language are of Official explained to parents in their language through written communication and various meetings held at times convenient to parents?	2.13	0.774	138	0.573	0.868
25	Do you encourage parents to promote the environment appropriate to improve the English language in their homes?	2.31	0.799	138	0.675	0.853
26	Do you encourage parents to promote Students Participation in reading (English Newspapers/ Magazines/Letters etc.) activities in their homes?	2.31	0.992	138	0.721	0.844

27	Do you encourage parents to promote Students Participation in conversational activities (among siblings and/or cousins) in their homes?	2.54	0.978	138	0.753	0.838
28	Do you encourage parents to promote Students Participation in other activities designed to focus on the four skills of language?	2.54	1.001	138	0.738	0.878
29	Do you encourage parents to allow students to work together to plan and present skits using the English Language?	2.34	1.018	138	0.614	0.864

Table 7 shows the scores received in the result of running Cronbach's Alpha pointing out the reliability of the construct 'Teaching and Learning Support' included in the measurement (SSELL) if item deleted.

Table 7

Items Statistics and Analysis if Deleted

No.	Items	Mean	S.D	N	Cor-Item	If Deleted
	Teaching and Learning Support					
30	Do teachers engage students in classroom conversation to promote spoken English?	2.1	0.788	138	0.598	0.9
31	Do teachers introduce a storytelling session at the beginning of every lesson?	2.25	0.701	138	0.326	0.91
32	Do teachers give topics to discuss in the classroom?	2.19	0.88	138	0.723	0.895
33	Do teachers give roles to be played in the classroom?	2.31	0.967	138	0.622	0.899
34	Do teachers schedule debates to develop students into competent public speakers?	2.4	0.893	138	0.565	0.902
35	Do teachers make sure there is a spoken English lesson every day?	2.38	0.883	138	0.582	0.907
36	Do teachers give students chance to speak in the classroom?	2.19	0.935	138	0.687	0.896
37	Do teachers require students to listen to audio tapes, radio broadcasting in English or watch English programs on TV?	2.51	0.932	138	0.635	0.899
38	Do teachers motivate students to learn English?	2.22	0.945	138	0.641	0.898

39	Do teachers give assignments, which are neither too easy nor too difficult?	2.21	0.958	138	0.641	0.898
40	Do teachers give feedback that supports our beliefs that we can do well?	2.26	0.965	138	0.712	0.895
41	Do teachers make the lesson interesting and enjoyable?	2.22	0.999	138	0.665	0.897
42	Do teachers help the student to feel they are valued?	2.21	1.041	138	0.634	0.899

Discussion

As can be seen from the data analysis that the constructed scale holds a very high-reliability score in the mentioned context. This reveals that this scale if applied in similar context may serve the purpose. Reflecting upon the facets chosen for this scale and placed under separate categories is a true reflection of the literature studied for construction of this scale and the theoretical framework, which highlighted similar variables. This scale was constructed as a self-administered genre for the reason that the schools and practitioners become independent to self-assess their conception and promotion of English as an official medium of the school which in the long run will enable them to identify gaps, enhance understanding and bridge gaps in their own system. It is suggested by various researchers that the self-administered tools are significant and in demand as they provide users with autonomy to self-assess their area of concern without (Marefat & Pakzadian, 2017; Clark, 2012).

It is crucial to note that private schools that claim themselves as English medium schools are emerging like mushrooms specifically in metropolitan cities. This sudden rise in a number of schools with big claims may raise ample questions on their quality and promotion of English language. Many research studies claim that the promotion of English language in Pakistan is increasing every day in numbers, yet students after graduating from their higher secondary schools find it extremely challenging to even draft a one-page personal statement (Manan, Dumanig & David, 2017; Manan, David & Dumanig, 2016; Manan, David & Dumanig, 2016). With the help of this scale, teachers, parents and even students will be able to understand what support and academic facilities are to be demanded and provided by the school to ensure that English becomes a mode of thought formation and

part of local culture than a mere mode of communication. It is referred by several researchers that self-administered scales should not only focus on the assessment of any inquiry, but should also have the potential to propose future uptake and directions (Ahmady, Changiz, Masiello & Hamadanchi, 2016).

Another way this scale could be utilized is by bridging the gap that exists in the knowledge community. Hardly any locally available and scientifically developed tools enable practitioners, schools and education service providers to self-evaluate themselves and set some basic standards of academic advancement they foresee for their schools and students. By using the items of this scale, the schools and education service providers can also create English language promotion policy for their systems. This is evident from several research studies that scientific scales should have the flexibility that it can be used for evaluation as well as for program development (Cadorin, Bressan & Palese, 2017).

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, a large number of privately run schools in Pakistan claim to be English medium to increase their demand in the society. It is a dire need for both the policy practitioners and the schools themselves to assess English language education they are providing. This self-administered scale for measurement includes all of the potential aspects that might be helpful in promoting the English language considered as an official language of Pakistan. Some of the major facets of this tool include categories that enable practitioners to assess education systems' response to include EFL in the mainstream, factors influencing language learning, policy for EL promotion, role of leadership in promoting English as official language, perceptions of learners and teachers, and evaluation of school environment for the same. All in all, this scale will enable practitioners, school systems and education service providers to place their current status as English medium schools and plan future endeavours for its retention or enhancement.

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