

REVISED ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN BALOCHISTAN: POLICY, PRACTICE, AND THE STRUGGLES OF IMPLEMENTATION

Khadega Tul Kubra^{*1}, Muhammad Zeeshan², Bibi Palwasha³

^{*1}MPhil Scholar, English Department, University of Balochistan, Quetta

²Chairperson, Department of Linguistics and Philology, University of Balochistan, Quetta

³Lecturer, Department of Linguistics and Philology, University of Balochistan

^{*1}kakarkubra@gmail.com; ²zeeshan.english@um.uob.edu.pk; ²zeeshana@yahoo.com;

³palwashasyed57@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17164695>

Keywords

English language policy, medium of instruction, revised English curriculum, Balochistan education, linguistic diversity, pedagogical practices, policy challenges

Article History

Received: 05 July 2025

Accepted: 05 September 2025

Published: 20 September 2025

Copyright @Author

Corresponding Author: *
Khadega Tul Kubra

Abstract

English holds a central yet contested position in Pakistan's language policy, functioning simultaneously as a medium of instruction, a tool of socio-economic mobility, and a source of linguistic inequality. This paper examines the status of English in Pakistan's educational system with a particular focus on Balochistan, where educational challenges are compounded by limited resources and socio-political complexities. Drawing on literature related to language policy, linguistic challenges, pedagogical practices, and teacher professional development, the study highlights the implications of adopting English as a medium of instruction (EMI). Special attention is given to the revised English curriculum and its intended role in improving language learning outcomes. However, the findings underscore significant barriers in its implementation, including ideological tensions, policy ambiguities, inadequate teacher preparation, and lack of alignment between curricular goals and classroom realities. The paper argues that without addressing these structural and pedagogical challenges, the revised curriculum risks perpetuating inequalities rather than bridging them. The discussion offers insights for policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers to reimagine English education in Pakistan in ways that are contextually sensitive and pedagogically effective.

INTRODUCTION

Language policy in Pakistan has historically been a site of tension, reflecting competing ideological, political, and educational priorities. English, in particular, has maintained a privileged yet controversial status since independence, serving as both an official language and the primary medium of instruction (Rahman, 2006). On the one hand, English is viewed as a gateway to academic and professional advancement; on the other, it

reinforces linguistic hierarchies that marginalize indigenous languages. In the context of Balochistan, these tensions become more pronounced due to fragile educational structures, limited teacher preparation, and lack of resources. The introduction of a revised English curriculum was intended to standardize learning outcomes across provinces, enhance communicative competence, and prepare students for global

competitiveness. However, the literature reveals persistent challenges in its implementation, ranging from inadequate teacher training and pedagogical practices to ideological disputes and systemic policy gaps (Shamim, 2008; Manan, 2015). This paper, therefore, examines the status of English in Pakistan's language policy, the role of EMI in education, and the difficulties associated with the revised curriculum, with particular reference to Balochistan. In doing so, it highlights the structural, pedagogical, and ideological factors that continue to shape the landscape of English education in Pakistan.

The current updated English curriculum implementation is a challenging and effortful task but implementing it in Government schools is a hard-hitting work. However, the new curriculum teaches English as a language rather than a subject. English is taught as a communication tool and a medium of instruction under the new curriculum. So, implementing revised English curriculum which consist major subjects Math and Science in English language and based on federal pattern cause different intrinsic and extrinsic challenges in Government primary schools in Balochistan.

Status of English in language policy in Pakistan

The English language occupies a complicated position within Pakistan educational system. English has been a part of the educational framework since the colonial era (Khan, Rahman & Hamid 2021). During British rule, English became the medium of instruction in many institutions, creating a legacy that has persisted after independence. This lasting presence has resulted in a divide in Pakistan's educational landscape, where English is viewed as a language of power and prestige, often linked to social mobility and economic opportunity (Manan, David & Dumanig, 2016). However, this perception comes with its own challenges. Many students, especially those from rural areas and lower socio-economic backgrounds, encounter significant challenges in learning English, leading to notable educational disparities. English is the official language of Pakistan, yet its teaching in government schools is inadequate (Zeeshan, 2013).

A key aspect of language policy is the selection of the language used for educational instruction. This choice is not just an academic matter; it is often shaped by social, economic, and political influences (Haider & Manan, 2021). The language employed in schools significantly impacts which linguistic group benefits the most, thus serving as a mechanism of influence and social structure. The National Education Policy emphasizes the necessity of enhancing English language instruction to improve educational quality. However, actual implementation frequently falls short due to persistent bureaucratic obstacles and insufficient teacher training programs. Hult and Hornberger (2016) noted that language policies developed from this perspective often aim to limit or entirely eliminate multilingualism in favor of promoting the dominant majority language.

English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Pakistani educational institutions

English as a medium of instruction (EMI) is often positioned within broader ideological orientations that reflect socio-political dynamics in multilingual societies. Sah (2022) explores these dynamics in South Asia, emphasizing the ideological underpinnings of EMI policies and practices. He argues that while EMI is intended to democratize access to global knowledge, it often perpetuates existing inequalities due to varied linguistic competencies among students from different backgrounds (Sah, 2022). The findings of Sah and Li (2022), who discussed the concept of "unequal languaging" in Nepal, suggesting that EMI can reinforce social hierarchies rather than alleviate them.

The adoption of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Pakistani educational institutions has garnered considerable attention in recent years. In the context of Pakistan, the implications of EMI are particularly pronounced given the country's rich linguistic diversity. Khan and Khan (2016) identify significant obstacles faced by students learning English as a second language, including limited exposure and inadequate pedagogical strategies. These challenges are compounded by socio-economic factors that further hinder effective EMI implementation.

Pedagogical Practices and Professional Development

The role of teachers in facilitating effective EMI is crucial, yet often overlooked. Farrell (2020) emphasizes the importance of professional development through reflective practices for EMI teachers, which is essential for enhancing their pedagogical skills and adapting to the linguistic needs of their students. This need for teacher training is echoed in the broader context of South Asia, where Sah (2022) notes that effective implementation of EMI requires not only policy support but also adequate training for educators. Moreover, Tai et al. (2020) illustrate how translanguaging can be integrated into mathematics classrooms to create a more inclusive learning environment. This approach can potentially enhance student engagement and understanding, suggesting that EMI should not solely focus on English proficiency but also on leveraging students' linguistic resources.

Balochistan's Education system and Revised Curriculum

One of Pakistan's provinces, Balochistan makes up 44% of the country's total area and has been at odds with the government since 1948. Balochistan's education system has fallen behind in a number of areas related to decision-making and government policy. The major issues facing Balochistan's educational system are a severe lack of textbooks, inadequate school supervision, teacher shortage, a lack of educational institutes for both girls and boys, and insufficient funds (Faiz, 2015). Despite all these problems, federal has forced all provinces including Balochistan to adopt the Single National Curriculum in all educational settings, including government and private schools and madrasas. The revised English curriculum creates many challenges and issues in Government primary schools in Balochistan as its English centered curriculum and it focuses more on English as an instructional medium and major subject textbook are in English language.

Challenges of the Revised English Curriculum

The rollout of the updated English curriculum is a challenging endeavor, particularly in government

schools, where it faces significant obstacles. The new curriculum aims to teach English as a means of communication rather than just a subject. In this framework, English will function as both a communication tool and a medium of instruction. However, the revised English curriculum, which includes core subjects like Math and Science taught in English and adheres to a federal model, presents various challenges in government primary schools in Balochistan. The push for a standardized curriculum stems from the issue of educational inequality. The Pakistani education system is generally categorized into three groups: low-to-middle-class public and private schools following federal or provincial guidelines; a few expensive private institutions preparing students for international exams; and madressah education, which focuses on religious training (Nayyar, 2020). However, it remains unclear whether this curriculum will achieve the government goals (Irfan, 2021).

Bari (2021) states that the National Curriculum Council (NCC), a government body in Pakistan, is tasked with revising the educational curriculum. This manifesto has been the main driving force behind the recent changes to the English curriculum, which seek to resolve class conflicts in education, such as those between secular and religious, and private and public sectors. The authors believed these changes would benefit all stakeholders, both economically and socially. According to Ali and Baig (2012), a single national curriculum (SNC) is an educational framework where all students in a country or state adhere to the same guidelines. However, the idea of a unified national curriculum has faced opposition due to widespread skepticism regarding the nature of a curriculum designed by a single institution, complicating its implementation (Aslam et al., 2024). Following the 18th Amendment, the responsibility for public education was transferred to the provinces. Rubab et al. (2021) found that the unified curriculum must be assessed by the provincial textbook board, which may reject it, similar to how the Sindh government dismissed its current initiative. On September 15, 2021, Provincial Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah informed the Sindh Assembly that the Single

National Curriculum (SNC) was rejected, asserting that education and curriculum are provincial matters and that provinces have the right to teach students in their respective mother tongues (Siddique, 2021). He stated that the federal government acted with in implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC). The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf promised in its manifesto to enforce the SNC without considering the Constitution, which designates education as a provincial matter. This issue is not just about the manifesto but about the constitution the minister commented. He added that the provincial government supported the federal initiative to apply the SNC only for science subjects, clarifying that Urdu and Sindhi remain mandatory in the province.

Abbasi (2021) highlighted that the inequalities in the education system contribute to many of the country issues, as most public-school students lack opportunities for success, while a small elite in wealthy schools have the best prospects. Hasan (2020) observed that there is still significant confusion regarding the languages of instruction in the national curriculum. To effectively grasp and retain information, young learners should be taught in their native language; otherwise, they may resort to rote memorization, which hinders critical thinking. The term English-medium can be misleading in the current context, as, despite school's claims, Urdu remains the primary language of instruction, limiting students' chances to engage with English (Manan, Dumanig & David, 2017). The rapid growth of English-medium instruction is based on the belief that early exposure to English will lead to faster learning. However, research indicates that early English instruction is not particularly advantageous for students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Coleman, 2010; Shamim, 2008; Manan, 2015). Additionally, the omission of native languages in the updated curriculum negatively impacts the perception of indigenous languages and diminishes the chances of creating a supportive environment for these languages and cultures to flourish, potentially leading to their extinction (Zeeshan 2025c; Manan, 2015).

Significant Challenges in the Implementation of the Revised English Curriculum in Pakistan

The implementation of the revised English curriculum in Pakistan has been met with various challenges influenced by ideological, pedagogical, and technological factors. This literature review synthesizes the current research findings on the significant hurdles faced during this implementation process, highlighting the multifaceted nature of the issues at hand. It also identifies gaps in existing knowledge and proposes directions for future research.

Teacher Agency and Pedagogical Challenges

Teacher agency plays a pivotal role in the successful implementation of educational reforms, including the revised English curriculum. The findings from Jiang et al. (2018) indicate that teachers often feel confined by policy mandates, which can restrict their ability to adapt teaching methods to meet the needs of their students. This tension between policy adherence and pedagogical preference can lead to ineffective curriculum implementation, as teachers may struggle to find a balance between mandated practices and their own instructional beliefs.

Moreover, novice teachers, as evidenced by Rasool et al. (2023), frequently encounter challenges related to inadequate training and institutional support. The parallels drawn between novice English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers in China and the situation in Pakistan highlight the necessity for comprehensive support systems that address the specific needs of teachers. By recognizing and addressing these challenges, institutions can empower teachers to exercise their agency, thereby enhancing the implementation process and improving student learning outcomes.

Ideological and Policy-related Challenges

The ideological landscape surrounding English language instruction in Pakistan is complex, primarily shaped by the country's colonial legacy. As noted by Asad et al. (2020), the societal divisions regarding the status of English versus local languages create significant barriers to effective curriculum implementation. The tension between promoting English proficiency and respecting local

linguistic identities necessitates a multilingual perspective within language policy. This ideological conflict complicates the successful adoption of the revised curriculum, as it must address the diverse needs of learners while promoting inclusivity.

The research conducted by Manan (2015) further emphasizes the disjunction between language policy and the sociocultural ecology of children in Pakistan. This disconnect suggests that an effective English-medium education policy must consider the local context and the realities faced by students and teachers alike. The implications of these ideological challenges are profound, as they not only affect curriculum adoption but also influence teacher attitudes and student engagement.

Comparative Perspectives

The comparative studies of educational reforms in other regions, such as Kazakhstan and the Philippines, provide valuable insights for understanding the challenges faced in Pakistan. The rapid implementation of educational reforms without adequate preparation, as noted by Karabassova (2021), can lead to fragmented solutions and ineffective teaching practices. These findings suggest that Pakistan could benefit from a more gradual and supportive approach to reform implementation, focusing on piloting initiatives and ensuring that teachers are adequately prepared to embrace changes in the curriculum.

Conclusion

The review demonstrates that while English continues to occupy a dominant role in Pakistan's language policy and education system, its implementation as a medium of instruction presents substantial challenges. In Balochistan, these difficulties are intensified by underdeveloped infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, and limited professional development opportunities. The revised English curriculum, though ambitious in scope, remains constrained by ideological tensions, policy inconsistencies, and classroom-level realities that hinder effective learning. These challenges are further compounded by ideological, and pedagogical factors, which demand a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved. Addressing such issues requires a multi-

faceted approach, including context-specific pedagogical strategies, sustained investment in teacher training, and greater alignment between curriculum design and the socio-linguistic realities of learners. Equally important is the role of teacher agency, the effective integration of technology, and sensitivity to the local context in shaping meaningful learning experiences. By bridging these gaps, stakeholders can work toward fostering an inclusive educational environment, improving the implementation of the revised curriculum, and strengthening English language education in Pakistan. Future research is also essential to further illuminate these challenges and inform effective policy and practice.

Reference

- Abbasi, K. (2021, August 16). PM officially launches single national curriculum today. *Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1640866>.
- Ali, S. K., & Baig, L. A. (2012). Problems and issues in implementing innovative curriculum in the developing countries: The Pakistani experience. *BMC Medical Education*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6920-12-31>
- Asad, M. M., Hussain, Nadia., Wadho, Maria., Khand, Z., & Churi, Prathamesh P.. (2020). Integration of e-learning technologies for interactive teaching and learning process: an empirical study on higher education institutes of Pakistan. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education* <http://doi.org/10.1108/jarhe-04-2020-0103>
- Bari, F. (2021). Pakistan's education reform test. *Current History*, 120(825), 133-139. <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2021.120.825.133>
- Coleman, H. (2010). Teaching and learning in Pakistan: The role of language in education. *Islamabad: The British Council*, 1-56. <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/265186454>

- Faiz, J. (2015). *Politics of education, conflict and conflict resolution in Balochistan, Pakistan* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Westminster).
- Farrell, T. (2020). Professional development through reflective practice for English-medium instruction (EMI) teachers. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 23, 277 - 286. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2019.1612840>
- Haidar, S., & Manan, S. A. (2021). English in Pakistan: Language policy, features and present-day use. In *English in East and South Asia: Policy, Features and Language in Use* (pp. 242–255). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429433467-17>
- Hasan, S. (2020, August 17). Experts point out flaws in Single National Curriculum. *Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1574777>
- Hult, F. M., & Hornberger, N. H. (2016). Revisiting orientations in language planning: Problem, right, and resource as an analytical heuristic. *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe*, 33(3), 30–49. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/476
- Irfan, H. (2021). Insightful Perspectives about Effective Implementation of ESL Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Pakistani Schools. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 5(1), 975–986. [http://doi.org/10.354884/pssr.2021\(5-i\)74](http://doi.org/10.354884/pssr.2021(5-i)74)
- Jiang, A., Zhang, L., May, Stephen., & Qin, L. (2018). Understanding novice teachers' perceived challenges and needs as a prerequisite for English curriculum innovation. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 33, 15 - 31. <http://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2018.1518452>
- Karabassova, L. (2021). English-medium education reform in Kazakhstan: Comparative study of educational change across two contexts in one country. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 22(5), 553-573.
- Khan, T. J., & Khan, N. (2016). Obstacles in learning English as a second language among intermediate students of districts Mianwali and Bhakkar, Pakistan. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2), 154-162.
- Khan, I. U., Rahman, G., & Hamid, A. (2021). Poststructuralist perspectives on language and identity: implications for English language teaching research in Pakistan. *sjesr*, 4(1), 257-267.
- Manan, S. A. (2015). Mapping Mismatches: English-Medium Education Policy, Perceptions, and Practices in the Low-Fee Private Schools in Quetta, Pakistan. *Thesis*, 1(September), 7–9. Retrieved from [http://studentsrepo.um.edu.my/5899/2/FINAL_FINAL ~\(14th August\).pdf](http://studentsrepo.um.edu.my/5899/2/FINAL_FINAL ~(14th August).pdf)
- Manan, S. (2018). Myth of English teaching and learning: a study of practices in the low-cost schools in Pakistan. *Asian Englishes*, 21, 172-189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2018.1503041>
- Manan, S. A., David, M. K., & Dumanig, F. P. (2016). English Language Teaching in Pakistan: Language Policies, Delusions and Solutions. In *Language Policy* (Netherlands) (Vol. 11, pp. 219–244). Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22464-0_10
- Manan, S. A., Dumanig, F. P., & David, M. K. (2017). The English-medium fever in Pakistan: analyzing policy, perceptions and practices through additive bi/multilingual education lens. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 20(6), 736–752. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2015.1080659>

- Rahman, T. (2006). Language policy, multilingualism and language vitality in Pakistan. *Trends in linguistics studies and monographs*, 175, 73.
- Rasool, Ushba., Qian, Jiancheng., & Aslam, Muhammad Zammad. (2023). An investigation of foreign language writing anxiety and its reasons among pre-service EFL teachers in Pakistan. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.947867>
- Rubab, U., Yousuf, M. I., & Dahar, M. A. (2021). Analysis of Peace Education in Social Studies Curriculum at Elementary Level. *Journal of Educational Sciences & Research*, 8(1), 61-78.
- Sah, P. K. (2022). English medium instruction in South Asia's multilingual schools: Unpacking the dynamics of ideological orientations, policy/practices, and democratic questions. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25(2), 742-755.
- Sah, P. K., & Li, G. (2022). Translanguaging or unequal languaging? Unfolding the plurilingual discourse of English medium instruction policy in Nepal's public schools. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25(6), 2075-2094.
- Shamim, F. (2008). Trends, issues and challenges in English language education in Pakistan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 28(3), 235-249.
- Siddique, T. (2021, September 14). Sindh education minister rejects Single National Curriculum. *Dawn News*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1646304>
- Tai, Kevin W. H., & Wei, Li. (2020). Co-Learning in Hong Kong English medium instruction mathematics secondary classrooms: a translanguaging perspective. *Language and Education*, 35, 241 - 267. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2020.1837860>
- Zeeshan, M. (2013). *Pakistani government secondary school teachers' and students' attitudes towards communicative language teaching and grammar translation in Quetta, Balochistan* (Master's thesis, California State University, Los Angeles).
- Zeeshan, M. (2025). Mother Tongue-Based Instruction in Pakistani Print Media: Implications for Language Policy and Epistemic Inclusion. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*. 2025; 0:1-10. <http://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12715>

