

Exploring the Contemporary Educational Challenges and Impact of Influential Coaching Classes of English Language Learning in Pakistan

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Abstract

This research explores the structure, phenomenon and impact of coaching class on the academic scenario in connection with the shadow education system in Pakistan. It is assumed that coaching centers focus to apply better techniques to teach English as a second language (L2). This research analyzes all the positive and negative aspects of coaching classes on English language learning especially in secondary education. This study is qualitative in its nature and mode of presentation but most of the data has been collected in written and recorded form for more comprehensive results and findings. Data is collected through questionnaires and class observation in Pakistani public sector schools. It is observed that students are satisfied with the coaching centers and the education they are providing in the sense of learning of English as a second language. Findings of this research show that students and teachers pay more attention in coaching classes/centers than to their regular classes at school. The study has some important implications, Pakistan government should introduce the tight check and balance system to reduce the burden on the parents who pay hefty amount of fees to the coaching centers for the prosperous future of their children and the standards of the public sector schools should be raised so that the students will rely more on their regular classes at school.

Key Words: Coaching, English Classes, Students, Syllabus, Conventional Style, Pakistan.

Introduction

The education system of Pakistan is the result of the traditional education system derived from the British colonial period. However, the changes that took place in the modern education system since the fall of the British Empire are not very significant. This is due to the compliance with the current field of employment required by the employers and institutions. It has become customary for the students of Pakistan to concentrate only on scoring the highest marks in examinations and to achieve certificates. Because of such practices, the standard of education has declined. Furthermore, most

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educational institutions have time constraints since teachers have to complete a lesson within a specific time limit. The allotted time is often not enough for the students to fully comprehend a lesson. An earlier article, it was proposed Leonardi that “English, as an international language, has become a growing interest within the last few decades and this implies a new way of communication amongst different nationalities and cultures through the medium of a common language” (Leonardi, 2010, p.86). Zamir pointed out that “[t]he study of English Language has the same importance as that of learning Urdu Language. He further argued that English language is now an international language as well as a second language because of political and geographical reasons” (Zamir, 2009). Therefore, it can be said that English language is a second language (L2) for the people of Pakistan and has now become a very important aspect in support of students’ life and future career. UNESCO defines L2 as “A language acquired by a person in addition to his mother tongue” (Cook, 2008, p. 12).

An issue with tutoring English language in a classroom filled up by students is that a time frame is stipulated to a single teacher with the purpose of teaching any lesson based on the subject. Also another problem is that “English has always been taught just as a subject instead of a language skill” (Selim and Mahboob, 2001). As a result, majority of the students fail to understand their lessons. This ultimately results into enrollment in private tutoring to get help beyond classroom education. In his book “The shadow education system: private tutoring and its implications for planners”, Bray (1999) pointed out that: “The forms of private tutoring may be varied. Some tutoring is provided one to one in the home of either the tutor or his/her client. Other tutoring is in small groups, in large classes, or even in huge lecture theaters with video screens to cater for overflows” (Bray, 1999, p.21). In Pakistan, the type of tutoring that is done one to one is known as private tutoring. The other kind of tutoring where instructions are provided to students in a small group or large classes, usually at the teacher’s house, is known as coaching. There are institutions that facilitate the second type of tutoring. Such institutions are known as coaching centers. This research is concerned with classes conducted in both at coaching centers and teachers’ houses (together known as coaching classes). Nevertheless, there is no alternative to formal educational institutions. However, it has become a lucrative business for instructors which is an extra source of income for them as their salary is very low.

Statement of the Problem

Many scholars believe that after school coaching creates a lot of problems in the present education system of Pakistan. They strongly assert that such activities of the coaching classes must be stopped in order to

contemplate learning English language at school. Basically, the growth of the coaching classes indicates the weakness of formal educational institutions, such as schools, colleges and universities. "It is believed that without the help of coaching classes, it is not possible to achieve good results, the consequence of which is not getting the desired job." (Dutta, 2001). The coaching based English language learning has become an alternative source of income for the teachers by means of which they can earn an extra sum of money for their better life style. Billah opined that "private coaching has turned even the most creative and dedicated teachers into stereotyped ones. They lose their talent and creativity since there is a lack of practice" (Billah, 2011). Similarly Jalal Uddin (2011) in "Should Private Coaching be Banned?" argued that "coaching is not an enjoyable experience for the students and also stated that "a teacher gets involved in it because a regular teaching job at any school does not provide a reasonable salary and status" (Uddin, 2011). Therefore, the issues that will be examined in this paper will look into the above mentioned problems through the survey and classroom observations conducted for this purpose. The classroom observation examined the difference in students' comprehension towards English language both in school and coaching classes. The shadow education system like "mechanisms through which pupils extend their learning and gain additional human capital, which benefits not only themselves but also the wider societies of which they are part" (Bray, 1999, P.18). Private coaching is more flexible and informal. "It is not only one to one tutoring sector but also group classes. The teachers are not only fulltime based tutor but also students, university professors, even homemakers" (Russell, 1997). Coaching centers are more affordable for many households.

Advantages and Disadvantages of English Coaching Classes

The ever increasing stress of performing well in exam is making it difficult for students to adjust and they are not capable of concentrating on their studies. Ultimately parents consider putting their wards in coaching for extra revision. We know every coin has two sides; similarly coaching classes have its own advantages and disadvantages. Foster (2016) and Hansford (2013) talked about advantages and disadvantages of coaching classes which are as follows:

- It is not possible to teach thoroughly in classroom because of time limitation. English language is a subject that students need to be understood first.
- Students have the advantage of choosing their own preferred tutors and respond better to them which will suit to them in terms of both skill and learning style.

- Teachers or instructors can give more time in coaching center rather than classroom of school. For this, students as well as teachers can give attention in coaching center.
- Teachers are always flexible in coaching centers with students and parents as well. Teachers can easily consult with parents and students regarding students' difficulties in skills. This is a great positive sector to understand the need of a student and able to get know student better.
- Students' learning styles vary from each other's because every one's learning style is not the same. In coaching centers, instructors can use various materials depending on students' learning styles. It can be authentic as magazine, newspapers etc. materials for teaching English.
- Parents can reduce their duties of concern regarding English learning by enrolling their children to English coaching centers.
- Coaching centers demand a big amount of money to teach English to students but some families are on too tight in their budget to manage this.
- While parents send their child to English coaching centers to learn English, students become busy to spend their valuable time in it. For this, students lose their interests in extracurricular activities such as sports and music etc.

In summary, English coaching center is an effective way of learning. It comes with powerful benefits, not only for getting better grades at school but also for improving life standards in this competitive world. Despite some disadvantages, parents are still concerned about teaching English by coaching centers for a bright future of their children.

Research Objectives

- To know about the aims and activities of coaching for English in Pakistan as second language (L2).
- To analyze the impact of coaching on students' second language learning.
- To search the way to resolve the problems created by the coaching classes while maintaining the opportunity to learn second language with proper guidance.

Research Questions

1. What are the opinions and perceptions of students, parents and teachers towards coaching classes in English language?

2. How do coaching classes affect students' learning of English as a second language in Pakistani secondary school level?

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed method study design, a mixed methods study is "Studies that are products of the pragmatist paradigm and that combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches within different phases of the research process." (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008, p.22). The collected data has been critically analyzed, specially focusing on the impact of coaching classes on students' second language (L2) learning.

Research Instruments

To conduct the survey of data collection, two instruments had been used. These are:

- i) Questionnaires
- ii) Classroom and coaching class observation form reported by the researcher.

Participants

Three different groups of people were asked to provide their opinion in the questionnaire. The participants are:

Teachers

I had communicated with teachers personally after their class hours and encouraged them to volunteer in this research. They were also ensured that their identities will not be disclosed. As the school authorities didn't allow to take much of their time at school hours, so I had to complete the survey via online questionnaire. After convincing them, out of 40 teachers from various schools only 27 teachers responded to the survey.

Parents

Communication with the parents was the hardest part in this paper as most of the parents did not want to stay at the school premises after taking their kids from school. I had to talk to them while they were coming to take their kids after school hour was over. Some of the parents were pleased to give time. I had to use my own device to collect answers from few parents for the survey. I also had to use social media (online questionnaire) as a platform to reach other parents and get their answers. 25 parents had responded to the survey.

Students

After meeting with some students and explaining the objectives of the paper, they became very co-operative and were excited to participate in the survey. Now- a-days 18 most of the students have access to internet; they have participated on the survey and shared it with their friends on Facebook. A total of 40 students took participation in this survey.

Data Collection

The data was collected through formal permission from respective authorities. The survey and classroom observation were done at different schools and coaching centers in Pakistan. Mainly, the teachers, parents and the students of the respective institutions have been selected to conduct the survey through the questionnaire. They have been encouraged to answer according to their opinions. Every question was written in English in a formal way in the questionnaire that was understandable by participants. The questionnaires was published both online and offline in order to collect the data from the participants. Classroom and coaching centers were observed by using a form that was based on few queries.

Data Analysis and Observation

The data has been collected in a formal setting during and after the school hours. Most of the teachers, parents and students filled up the questionnaire through online while some of them filled it up in the hard copy of the questionnaire. Mainly the data is analyzed focusing on the effect of after school coaching classes on students' learning of English language (L2) in the classroom of secondary (6-10) level. Special attention was given to the policy and methodological implication for the data collection in this research paper. The close ended questions, classroom and coaching class observation reports are evaluated and the results are projected in the research paper. Since the resources were limited, it was not possible to represent the total scenario but I intended to give an overview of the actual situation.

The question was whether students try to learn most of the lessons from class, 8% teachers said "Strongly agree" and 48% teachers said "agree" while 16% 21 said "disagree" and the rest 28% said "strongly disagree". It shows that most of the students try to learn English language from class. Here, we can see that students are interested to learn from class. It is possible only when the teachers give directions and students able to carry them the in classrooms. 4% students said that they "strongly agree" but 20% teachers said "agree" while 32% said "neither agree nor disagree" 40% answered "Disagree" and the rest 4% answered "strongly disagree". It also shows that most of the students who attend coaching classes are not very attentive in

classroom for learning English. Here, we can see that students focus on coaching rather than classroom teaching, they are not so much attentive in classroom as they are attending coaching. But few students pay their attention in class. All the students' attitudes are same in the English language classroom although some of them attend English language coaching. Students' attitudes towards the classroom are same though some of the students attend coaching for learning English. 8% teachers said "Strongly agree" and 24% teachers said "agree" while 8% answered "neither agree nor disagree" on the other hand 56% answered "disagree" and rest 4% said "strongly disagree". According to the teachers' opinions, the graph above shows that most of the students' have negative attitudes (almost 60%) towards coaching classes. 4. Mainly, teachers focus on after school coaching classes than regular classroom teaching in English language subject. Teachers mainly focus on after school coaching than classroom English language learning. According to the survey, 20% said "strongly agree" and 52% teachers said "agree" while 12% said "Neither agree nor disagree" and on the other hand 16% said "Disagree" and the rest 4% teachers said 'strongly disagree'. Teachers focus more on English coaching classes than classroom learning. 5. After school coaching classes are very effective for weak students to learn English language.

Another question was whether coaching is very effective for weak students to learn English as second language. 36% teachers said "Strongly agree" and 44% teachers said "agree" 4% said "neither agree nor disagree" while 10% said "disagree" and the rest 10% said "strongly disagree". Here, we can see Teachers of English language coaching classes are concerned about weak students. 80% teachers are agreed on it in the survey. Students, who are always attentive in their English language class, do NOT need coaching classes. 32% teachers said "Strongly agree" and 52% teachers said "agree" while 8% answered "neither agree nor disagree" 4% said "disagree" and the rest 4% said "strongly disagree. 84% of teachers think that the students, who are very attentive in the classroom, do not need coaching classes for learning English as second language in our country. By attending coaching after school, students get help with their daily lessons and do homework regularly to learn English language. Use of multi-media in English language class is very helpful to teach students. According to the graph above, 36% teachers said "Strongly agree" and 44% teachers said "agree" while 12% answered "neither agree nor disagree" and rest 8% said "disagree.

Teachers always focus on classroom based learning than coaching for teaching English. 29.2% parents said "Strongly agree" and 41.7% parents said "agree" while 4.1% answered "neither agree nor disagree" on the other hand 25% said "disagree". The graph above shows that total 70.90% of the parents agree with the statement that teachers always focus on classroom based

learning than coaching. Parents want their child to attend coaching for good result in English language subject. Among the 16.7% parents said “Strongly agree” and 54.2% parents said “agree” while 8.3% answered “neither agree nor disagree” on the other hand 16.70% said “disagree” and the rest of 4.10% parents said “strongly disagree”. 70.90% of the parents agree with the statement that parents want their child to attend coaching for good result in English language subject. English language coaching classes help students to enhance their learning capacity. 54.20% of the parents agree with the statement that English language coaching classes help students to enhance their learning capacity. After school coaching classes always reduce pressure of learning English language at home.

Discussion

In Urdu medium school, teachers explained the subject to the students through Urdu language whereas in English medium school, teachers explained everything in English language. Fifteen classrooms have been visited and observed for this research. Nonetheless, in both coaching centers, either that be for English medium students or Urdu medium students, coaching instructor used Urdu language. During my survey, I also observed classroom environment. Urdu medium schools’ classrooms were small with a great number of students together. But English medium schools’ classes were very small with a small number of students. In Urdu medium school, the teacher called the roll number of students. There were almost sixty students in each classroom in English language classroom of Urdu medium, and 40 minutes was allocated for each class. English teacher of class 7 was very friendly and controlled the class very well. She followed only text book and gave lectures on a specific topic. Their direction was not much clear. On the other side, English medium schools’ classes were filled up 30-35 students with 40 minutes time allocation. The teachers’ direction was clear and well prepared regarding the topic of English language. English teacher of class 7 used multi-media to show a video that related the topic. Teacher used both textbook and handouts in such a short time class. Teacher provided handouts (title was ‘Worksheet’) to students to do some exercises regarding that topic.

Apart from the schools, I observed three coaching classes’ environment also. The classroom was an individual room either of apartments or flats. Classrooms were very small. There were almost 25-30 students in each English coaching classroom of Urdu medium, whereas for English medium coaching centers there were approximately 8-10 students in English class. 1 to 1.30 hours was allocated for each English class in all coaching centers. In Urdu medium, coaching center’s teacher of class-8, provided a note/ information sheet that was full of English grammar rules based on a particular topic of English Language. Then he explained all the rules with

examples one by one to students with the help of a marker and white board. Other teacher (class- 9) used text book and gave them a task to do a comprehension based work (a paragraph followed by few questions). His direction was helpful and well prepared. All of the coaching instructors' lectures were not formal. The students felt free to ask questions and instructor helped them to understand each and everything. English medium coaching center's students of class 8, 9, 10 were taught together as the O'level syllabus was the same for all three classes. The materials were same for each of them. Because they studied in English medium school, they easily understood the topic and they did not need much explanation from instructor to understand the topic.

Alternatively, for the necessity of social development communication with other countries is of great importance. Thus, we cannot isolate other languages from our society. As every country has an alliance with each other in many ways such as trade and commerce, politics, technology etc. the world has become a global village. Therefore, to maintain such unity within ourselves, we need to communicate with each other, and this requires speaking in other languages apart from our native language. Hasan pointed that "Many countries around the world has adopted European language as L2 which is used in various sectors such as education, economic activities, law court, government work and so many places. It has been an international language. That is why learning English language is of utmost importance" (Hasan, 2011). As an increasing number of students now do "double school" (real school and coaching), the number of students achieving outstanding results have increased. Coaching is a teaching, training or developing process where a person helps the students' to achieve their goals. Bray and Kwo explained coaching as "tutoring provided by individuals, companies or other bodies demanding financial remuneration, in contrast to free of charge provision by families, community bodies, etc." (Bray and Kwo, 2014, p. 5). Coaching is also defined as "a private educational institution that runs in parallel with school in order to help students to make subjects easy and understandable" (Kumar, 2015). In this paper, it was examined how coaching classes work parallel with school with a view to teach English language to the students in a comprehensible manner.

Findings

In Pakistan, English coaching centers are aggressively increasing. It is extensively spread in urban and rural areas in Pakistan. "Coaching is a phenomenon which was chosen for weak students earlier but now it has become very popular for all types of students for learning English language. Even it becomes a way of a student's life" (Farid, 2016). Nowadays, coaching centers are found in every street and every locality in Pakistan city.

It has become a common scenario that students are get enrolled in coaching center to learn English since most students may have lacked confidence in four skills of English language- speaking, writing, reading and listening. The consequence of this is that students' result of examination turns out to be futile. Therefore, apprehension of parents in regards to examination results leads them to select coaching centers for better education for their children. "Parents are ready to invest a large sum in the courses in order to give their children the best preparation for and facilitate access to a higher level of studies and to the best schools" (Bray, 1999, p. 10). With every parent wanting their child to score good result in examinations as possible, the demand for coaching institutes has grown notably.

According to the survey and presentation in the data analysis, three kinds of answers are found from those three groups of people of the education system of our country. Teachers explain how well the students do in the class room and what benefits are gained from attending extra coaching classes. Teachers agreed that students who attend coaching classes often do not do their classes attentively. The weak students get extra care in the coaching classes. However, most of the students lose interest in paying attention in classroom studies as those topics are also covered in the coaching classes. Both teachers and parents agreed on the fact that teachers give their full effort in coaching classes rather than regular classes.

One third of students agreed that they can learn most of their lessons in classroom. However, they have also accepted that they can get help from the coaching classes and the lesson becomes much easier in the coaching classes. Many of them believed that coaching classes help them to bring good marks in their results only. Then they lose their interest on having classes on the same topic again which they already covered in the coaching sessions. They do not feel the necessity of attending classes properly since they know that all the lessons will be covered. Parents in this issue always keep different perspectives. They take the system of coaching sessions for the students by the teachers as a negative side of the education system of our country. They strongly deny any importance of the coaching after regular classes in the classrooms. On the contrary, they believe that students can learn more and get good marks because of coaching centers. 54% of the parents, who participated in the survey, stated that they want their children to go for coaching classes to get good grades though coaching classes are becoming more commercial (agreed by 87% of parents). Different comments are heard from different perspectives. So the data analysis makes it easier to have a good idea about this research.

The issues were discussed according to the perspectives of teachers, students and parents from the survey and data analysis. The most common

scenario is that students are demanding more of coaching learning and paying less attention in academic classes because of the short term benefits of coaching classes. Teachers are defending the blame that are put on education system while parents are demanding that coaching system should be banned and educational institutions should focus on regular classes than forcing students to join coaching classes. If any student thinks that he/she needs extra care for learning English for winning the battle of life and to get a good position in country, he/ she should be admitted for developing his/her skills and achieving goals. On the other hand, after school coaching is very famous to the students. In the coaching center, students are given special care by instructors to learn English. Some teachers are involved in private teaching to earn extra money while some do it for a polite survival. From the above, it can be said that coaching classes of English language have both positive and negative aspects. For this reason, parents seek well-organized private tutors for their child's betterment in future. So Pakistan government should raise awareness about it rather than prohibiting it from its existence.

Conclusion

The concept of coaching classes is derived from private tutoring, that is one-to-one tutoring, and goes way back to middle Ages where the idea of school education did not exist. Robin stated that "education was entirely reserved for a small elite people and majority of private tutors were philosophers, the sophists, and other teachers of rhetoric. Private tuition can be traced back to ancient times but differs from what we know today" (Robin, 2017). Now, private lessons involve the passing off knowledge and skills from teacher to student in exchange of remuneration that he gained over a course of year. "Private tutoring has spread all over the world both in developed and developing countries" (Bray, 1999). It spread in both English speaking countries and non-English speaking countries all over the globe. "After the language movement in 1952, Urdu and Urdu had been made the official languages of Pakistan, and English was the only common language to communicate between East and West Pakistan. However, this was changed after the liberation war in 1971 as Urdu became the state language only." (Alam et al., 2001)

Implications

- Teachers of all educational institutions should not relate to coaching without the permission of authority. They should be more dutiful in their work places.
- Teachers and students should communicate in English language because this is a language that needs to learn. So, it needs to be practiced regularly.

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- Weak students can be sent in coaching for learning English language.
- All the teachers and instructors of English language need to take training from the\ government.
- Education is the process of creating quality leaders for the society. So, parents should not depend on coaching classes only. They also need to focus on the quality of teaching in school.
- Urdu medium school should reduce the number of students from each classroom. As there are too many students, it is difficult to focus on students' four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). It is better to make one class consisting of 30 students.

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