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Punjab Education and English Language Initiative

Change of Medium of Instruction in Punjab's Government Schools – Perceptions and Prospects

Society for the Advancement of Education (SAHE)

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February 2020

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Acknowledgements

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List of Abbreviations

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
BLE	Bilingual education (BLE),
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)
CUP	Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP)
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EMI	English medium of instruction
L1	First language
MoI	Medium of instruction
NEP	National Education Policy
PCTB	Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board
PEC	Punjab Examination Commission (PEC)
PSEP	Punjab School Education Sector Plan
QAED	Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development
SAHE	Society for the Advancement of Education
SED	School Education Department

Executive Summary

The findings of this study point to the need for an appropriate language in education policy wherein Urdu rather than English serves as the MoI in the primary grades, English is taught more effectively as a subject or skill and there is room for the mother tongue to complement Urdu in the initial years. As of now the real change at the level of the classroom will be the change in the language of the textbooks.

Given the attitudes and methods that inform language teaching and learning, students for the most part end up not acquiring fluency in any language and therefore find it difficult to get away from rote learning, something that the system encourages in any case.

While fully recognizing the value and social demand for English, most teachers are of the view that students are unlikely to know enough English by Grade-5 to make the transition to EMI, post-primary, at the level of Grade-6. There is a key choice to be made here: either the introduction of EMI needs to be delayed or English as a subject or skill needs to be much better taught at the primary level, presumably through the agency of teachers trained for the task.

Teachers see technology as a major aid to the learning of English for themselves as well as students. A blended learning model for teacher training could be a starting point in the quest for better trained teachers and improved student learning outcomes in English.

There is considerable support among teachers and students for teaching and learning in Urdu and fewer advocates for EMI. However, a significant percentage of parents appear persuaded that learning different subjects in English helps improve learning in English, i.e., EMI. They will need persuasion to the effect that English is best learned as a subject or skill and introducing English as MoI from the start helps neither in the learning of English, nor other subjects in English.

To this end, teachers recommend face to face and community-level interaction with parents as well as a media campaign in order to clarify the role of language(s) in education, i.e., which language(s) at what stage and the distinction between teaching language as a skill, as a subject, or adopting it as MoI.

A sizeable number of teachers and parents see the benefits for learning in using the child's first language or mother tongue in the teaching-learning process, as a supplement to Urdu. The issue of first language vs. Urdu is often posed as a binary choice to respondents and the tendency, almost inevitably, is to go with Urdu. But when respondents were asked whether the first language or mother tongue had a role in the classroom along with Urdu, a large number responded in the affirmative. A role for the mother tongue or first language will help the child both by way of cognitive development as well as enhanced confidence.

Only one-third of the teachers said that there is a supportive environment available at school for students to practice their English language skills while nearly 40% emphasized English language teachers and libraries with interesting and easily accessible books.

A roughly similar percentage of parents, around 20%, cited three sources that constituted, in their view, support at home for their child to learn English: access to TV with English programs, access to English content through mobile phones/tablets/ computers and books in English.

While a majority of the parents, 55%, said that they believed that learning different subjects in English helped improve their child' s English skills, a significant minority, 41%, disagreed.

Three quarters of the parents said that they wanted their children to learn in English in school.

A higher number of parents, 49%, said that they encouraged their children to speak Urdu and 17% said they encouraged children to speak English.

Contrary to the general perception that Urdu is largely the spoken language of the households in Punjab, over 50% or the parents said that they spoke Punjabi and Saraiki/Rotki at home and a little over one-third said they spoke Urdu.

"Parents find it difficult to converse in Urdu when they come to see us in school. So, we switch to Punjabi."(A teacher from Lahore).

"If a child is taught initially in the mother tongue, he won't drop out of school." (A parent from Lahore).

Two-thirds of the teachers were of the view that student should be taught in Urdu along with their mother tongue, in the early grades.

"We are feeding children a sandwich of languages and the child is still not able to comprehend but he is quick to grasp the meaning when we use the mother tongue."(A teacher from Multan) Given parents' inclination for their children to go to English medium schools, teachers were asked for suggestions as to what would be the best way to persuade parents to accept Urdu as a MoI at the

primary level. Over 40% suggested face to face interaction with parents and the community while over one-third favoured a media campaign to this end. Only around 12% indicated that, in their view, parents were already on board with this policy.

Although the surveyed teachers indicated that they were sufficiently qualified to teach English, responses to how they might be supported in this endeavor suggests that they want additional help in teaching English as a skill. Most (43.75%) responses favoured face-to-face trainings, whereas a quarter of responses further favoured trainings focused on developing pedagogical skills.

Over 80% of teachers said they were aware of teaching/learning/training resources available online. And a similar percentage said that they had made use of these resources. It is possible that these resources are being accessed at a very basic level, or knowledge and access are being over-stated in this context.

Clearly teachers give credence to the role of technology in the learning of English. Around 50% were of the view that students make the greatest gains in the learning of English through TV and mobile phones at home. By comparison, only 21% saw the school as playing a major role in this regard.

As to the transitioning of students to English at the post-primary stage, from Grade-6, nearly 90% of the teachers were of the view that this will be difficult. In response to another similar question, only one-third of the teachers were of the view that students could learn enough English by Grade-5 to be able to transition to EMI by Grade-6.

"It is difficult to teach English in the early grades. This is a triangle: teacher, parents and the child; it is possible if all three make an effort. In any case, where children are relatively better at studies or the parents are educated, they opt to send their child to a private school." (A teacher from Lahore)

I myself am learning Pashto from the children and now understand how difficult it is to learn in a different language."(A teacher in Rawalpindi)

Nearly 90% of the teachers were in favour of teaching English as a subject at the primary level. Clearly, almost all teachers accord high priority to the learning of English and recognize its importance for students.

When asked if there were qualified teachers in school who knew how to teach English, three-quarters of the parents responded in the affirmative. An even larger number, over 95% responded in the affirmative when asked if there were qualified teachers who knew how to teach Urdu. While this may not factually be the case, it is interesting to note that parents are confident about the school having qualified teachers for the teaching of English as well as Urdu.

50% of the teachers favored using the translated term next to the term in

English in Science textbooks. And over 50% of the teachers said that switching to English when it came to technical terms in Science as well as translation into Urdu would help in the process of transition to EMI.

A majority of the parents were of the view that the mother tongue or first language is not relevant to the teaching/learning process but a sizeable minority, 38% replied in the affirmative.

Over 41% of the teachers responded in the negative to a question about the formal introduction of Urdu as MoI. However nearly one-fourth said they were apprehensive that students' dropout rate would increase with Urdu being formally made the MoI. It should be noted that over one-third of the teachers did not respond to this question indicating a measure of uncertainty on their part as to what the impact of this change of policy might be.

Responding to a direct question as to the role technology in the teaching in English, nearly three-fourth of the respondents replied in the affirmative. Around 45% of the teachers favored using TV and mobile phones for teaching students English; 19% favoured activities and games that incorporate English while close to 15% cited the role of interesting books in English.

Teachers claimed to be aware of teaching/learning and training resources available on the internet, and the majority of teachers also said that they had access to these resources and has used them. There may be a measure of over-statement here but at the very least this suggests that technology has a role to play in teaching children English. Given the key role of digitized content in the restructured Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program for teachers recently instituted by QAED, this is certainly an area deserving further exploration.

The education system, in its current state, does not produce satisfactory student outcomes for a number of reasons including teachers with insufficient Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), textbooks of often questionable quality and an examination system that rarely tests for higher order skills. Nevertheless, it has to be said that for any improvement in learning outcomes in any of the subjects, an improved proficiency in languages is certainly a necessary if not a sufficient condition. For language serves as the lens which enables access to other subjects. If a child does not have a grasp over the language in which the content is delivered, by way of speech or text, it is obvious that he or she will be unable to comprehend it in any reasonable measure and therefore little no learning will take place.

Based on the findings of this study as well as insights gained from prior work in the area, our recommendations are as follows:

a. The role of English, Urdu and the mother tongue, or first language, should be carefully determined in the context of different stages of schooling, with Urdu complemented by the mother tongue being employed as MoI at the primary stage.

b. There is no evidence to support the notion that studying different subjects in English right from the start helps improve English language proficiency. Equally, it does not improve student learning outcomes in other subjects. So, English should be taught from Grade 1 as a skill or subject, but not as MoI till Grade 6 or later. Once a student reaches the necessary level of proficiency in a given language, he or she is in a position to study different subjects in that language.

c. It is not enough for a teacher to be proficient in English in order to teach it well. Teachers should be trained to teach English as a second or foreign language.

d. Urdu should also be taught as a second language where it is not the mother tongue or first language for the majority of the students. Again, the teachers should be appropriately trained.

e. Given teachers' stated interest in and engagement with technology, the possibility of a blended learning program with incentives for teachers to make better and more structured use of resources available on the net should be instituted. This becomes even more doable in the context of the restructured Continuous Professional Development program being put in place by QAED, relying on digital resources and assisted peer learning.

f. The need for libraries pointed out by teachers should encourage SED to pay attention to ensuring this critical facility in schools in order to encourage reading and facilitate the learning of English as well as Urdu.

g. Given that the first language or mother tongue has some role in the teaching learning process, its effective use should be part of the QAED training for the teachers.

h. In view of the possible resistance from parents – many of whom will see the shift from EMI to Urdu MoI in government schools as a reversal of what has been often perceived as a meaningful way of teaching English and enhancing children's life opportunities – a media campaign needs to be undertaken to clarify the somewhat complex role of language(s) in the teaching/learning process.

Background and Introduction

According to Article 251 of the Constitution, Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and English will serve as the official language till such time as arrangements are made for Urdu to play this role. The Constitution also allows for the Provincial Assembly of any given province to enable the teaching and promotion of a provincial language.

Given its status as the national language, Urdu is essentially the lingua franca – or the language of common use – in varying degrees across Pakistan. In terms of denoting status and achievement, English stands at the top of the hierarchy of languages followed by Urdu and the respective provincial languages of which more than one are inevitably spoken at the provincial level.

This hierarchy is also reflected in Pakistan's education system. The different education policies since Pakistan's independence have sought to engage with the three languages in some form but the emphasis has been on Urdu and English, especially in Punjab, the focus of this study, the key languages in education have remained Urdu and English.

Urdu, for the most part, has continued to serve as the medium of instruction in all government schools in Pakistan of the present era, since independence and has therefore continued to be the MoI for the overwhelming majority of the students.

The Zia regime sought to made Urdu the medium of instruction (MoI) in all schools, government or otherwise, from Grade 1, and all students appearing in the matriculation examination in 1989 could use only Urdu. The teaching of English as a subject was to start from grade 4. In the same year, however, under the democratically elected government of Benazir Bhutto, the teaching of English was made compulsory from Grade 1 onwards as a subject, with the option to adopt English as medium of instruction in all subjects from Grade 1 onwards (Rahman, 1997)

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 further affirmed the policy of English as the MoI. Additionally, it recommended making the teaching of Science and Math in English compulsory from Grade 4. The NEP 2009 argued that a candidate's proficiency in English puts them at a great advantage when it

comes to white collar jobs, and also contributed significantly to the social stratification between the elite and the rest (NEP, 2009, p. 27). As such, it recommended the adoption of English as MoI in government schools at the primary level.

The NEP 2009 allowed for a 5-year grace period during which time Urdu or a regional language could continue being used. However, the government of Punjab decided to introduce English as MoI from Grade 1 in a phased manner to all government schools. The government framed it as an equity measure arguing, in effect, that English language education should be accessible to everyone and not just the children from affluent families. Subsequently, under a departmental directive, schools could choose to use Urdu as the MoI up to Grade 3 if, for any reason, they were unable to implement the policy of English as MoI starting from Grade 1.

In the initial phase (2009), 588 high schools and 1103 government community model girls' primary schools were directed to employ English as MoI. In 2010, 1176 High and Higher Secondary schools, 1764 elementary schools and 7056 primary schools were directed to change to EMI and finally in 2011, all the government schools from primary to higher secondary were directed to adopt English as the medium of instruction.

At present, the policy of English as MoI has formally been in effect for more than five years, albeit with less than promising results. The Punjab School Education Sector Plan (PSESP 2013-2017, p.72) indicated that students' proficiency was low in English and also in Urdu because neither of the two languages was used in teaching; instead, the mother tongue was mostly used as the MoI. The PESP 2013-2017 recommended the development of a school language policy that improved proficiency in both English and in Urdu, whilst supporting children's cognitive development.

Consequently, the current government in Punjab has announced a policy whereby Urdu will be made the MoI while English will be taught as a subject from Grade 1. This policy change was made in the light of students' poor learning outcomes, as reflected in the Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) results at the level of Grade 5.

Urdu as MoI is expected to result in improved learning, as it is considered a more familiar medium than English. Teaching English as a subject, it is expected, will ensure that students reach a proficiency that enables them to engage with the language as MoI once they are in middle school, i.e. Grade 6 and onwards (The New Deal: 2018-2023, p.12). Also, it is seen as a key measure in moving towards a uniform education system, since the quality divide between elite English medium schools and the rest is epitomized by the actual use of English as MoI.

However, it is not quite clear how the private sector schools, even those that are not really English medium schools but only advertise themselves as such, will be persuaded to drop the label, given that it constitutes a key component of their marketing strategy; especially as now, even more so than before, English language education has become synonymous with quality education (Rashid et al., 2014).

Due to a dearth of research done on this theme locally, however, there are a lot of questions on how to effectively implement this policy in the context of Punjab, with an aim to maximize learning outcomes in both language, as well as understanding of core concepts across subjects. In this regard, through this study, SAHE intends to undertake research that would help identify the strategy and approaches that can be used to support learners at the primary level in the learning of English as a language and a skill as well on how to best support these learners in transitioning from an Urdu MoI to an English MoI in later grades.

Literature Review

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Bilingual education (BLE), according to Cohen (1975, p. 18) is the use of two languages as media of instruction for a child or a group of children in part or across the entire school curriculum. Though there is general consensus between scholars and non-experts that bilingual education refers to the "use of two languages as media of instruction," there is no such consensus regarding the philosophy and goals of bilingual education. Likewise, there is no unified theory for a bilingual education system, and various aspects/strands are highlighted by different academics which are discussed in the following sections.

Nonetheless, experts agree that an effective BLE does not simply happen or should be left to chance, but that it needs to be carefully formulated designed, prepared for, be strongly supported and well executed (Malarz).

INTERDEPENDENCE HYPOTHESIS AND COMMON UNDERLYING PROFICIENCY (CUP)

Jim Cummins' canonical works in the field of BLE and linguistics and education in general (Cummins, 1978; Cummins, 1979; Cummins, 1980; Cummins, 1984; Cummins, 1993; Cummins, 2000) provide insights for planning of an efficient BLE system in Punjab.

Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis argues that languages are interconnected to one another, and that there is a relationship between achieving a level of proficiency in one language to the relative ease of learning of another. The Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) posits that proficiencies that require more cognitively demanding tasks – for instance, literacy, problem solving, abstract thinking and content learning – are common across languages.

In other words, students are able to develop second language skills once their first language skills are developed (Baker, 2001, p. 169).

This introduces one to the concept of inter linguistic transfer. It is defined by

Pflepsen (2015) as the "cognitive process of applying literacy and other skills from one language into another."

BASIC INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS (BICS) AND COGNITIVE ACADEMIC LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY (CALP)

Cummins (1984) also differentiates between two dimensions of language, i.e. Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) – described as the acquisition of conversational fluency in the second language – and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) – defined as the use of language in decontextualized academic situations.

Baker (2006) describes the two concepts, positing that "BICS is said to occur when there are contextual supports and props for language delivery. Face-to-face 'context embedded' situations provide, for example, non-verbal support to secure understanding. Actions with eyes and hands, instant feedback, cues and clues support verbal language. CALP, on the other hand, is said to occur in 'context reduced' academic situations. Where higher order thinking skills (e.g. analysis, synthesis, evaluation) are required in the curriculum, language is 'dis embedded' from a meaningful, supportive context. Where language is 'dis embedded' the situation is often referred to as 'context reduced'" (Baker, 2006, p. 174).

According to Cummins, the dimension of language used in more cognitively demanding tasks that involve more complex language – i.e. CALP – is transferable across languages through the interdependence hypothesis. Cummins and others postulate that, on average, it takes learners around two years to acquire BICS, and between five to seven years or more to acquire CALP that is at a level comparable to their monolingual speaking peers.

ADDITIVE AND SUBTRACTIVE BILINGUALISM

Cummins' concepts of additive and subtractive bilingualism are also pertinent for the discussion here. Additive bilingualism is where students develop both fluency and proficiency in a second language as they continue to develop proficiency in the first. On the other hand, in subtractive bilingualism, the second language is added at the expense of the first language.

Lambert notes that additive bilingualism alludes to a situation where "the addition of a second language and culture are unlikely to replace or displace the first language and culture" (in Baker 1993, 57). It is the process through which children's bilingual and bicultural skills are developed where there is "no fear of ethnic/linguistic erosion [whereby children] can add one or more foreign languages to their accumulating skills, and profit immensely from the experience, cognitively, socially and even economically" (1983:99-100). On

similar lines, Liddcoat describes additive bilingualism as developing "when both languages and the culture associated with them bring complementary positive elements to the child's overall development" (1991, p. 6).

For subtractive bilingualism, Lambert argues that it is a situation where there is an erosion of the learner's first language, as well as culture (1980, in Baker 1993, p. 57). He notes that typically in the North American and European contexts, subtractive bilingualism happens when a child who speaks a minority language "enters a school where a high prestige, socially powerful, dominant language like English is introduced as the exclusive language of instruction", that leads to a "steam-roller effect of the powerful dominant language [that] can make foreign home languages and cultures seem homely in contrast, ghosts in the closet to be eradicated and suppressed' (Lambert 1983, p. 100).

THRESHOLD HYPOTHESIS

Through the threshold hypothesis, also known as the additive bilingualism enrichment principle, Cummins (1976; 1979) posits that the cognitive advantages of bilingualism will be realised once a minimum level of proficiency – i.e. a threshold – is achieved, in both the local language and the second language. Otherwise, bilingual education will remain ineffective. This threshold may vary depending on the cognitive stage of the bilingual person and the academic needs of a certain school period. In the threshold hypothesis, there are two thresholds. Lasagabaster (1998) elaborates Cummins' thresholds and the associated benefits/risks:

Once the lower threshold level of bilingual competence is achieved (high level in one of the languages — dominant bilingualism) bilingualism will not bring about any negative cognitive effect, whereas once the higher threshold level of bilingual competence is achieved (high levels in both languages — balanced bilingualism) bilingualism will have positive cognitive effects. Problems arise when there is a low level of competence in both languages; it is at this stage that semi lingualism will entail negative cognitive effects.

TRANSITIONAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION MODELS: EARLY EXIT AND LATE EXIT

The latest MoI policy of the government of Punjab envisages using a transitional bilingual education program where students essentially transition from MoI in one language at the primary level to another with the beginning of middle school at Grade-6. There are two types of transitional bilingual education systems: the early exit, and the late exit.

Walter (2008) provides definitions of both concepts. Early exit programmes, according to Walter, are developed around the assumption that the duration

of instruction in the primary language is enough to prepare children for the language of education.

"In early exit programs, learners receive some or much of their instruction in their primary language during the first one to three years of school. At the same time, learners either undergo second language instruction or receive some instruction in a second language – typically the future language of education" (p. 131).

On the other hand, late exit programmes:

"use the language of the learner as a medium of instruction for five, six, or even more years while, at the same time, bringing the child to a level of proficiency in the L2 deemed adequate for the child to fully benefit from instruction in that second language after primary education" (p. 131).

The Government of Punjab appears to be opting for an early exit program, whereby Urdu will be replaced with English as the MoI. However, Urdu is not the L1 (first language) for most children in Punjab, even though many are exposed to Urdu as a language commonly used in most of urban Punjab. There may also be a need to examine whether Punjabi and Urdu lend themselves to simultaneous learning though inter comprehension, as elaborated by Jules Ronjat in 1913.

Thomas and Collier (1997, cited in Walter, 2013, p. 276), and others have argued, with substantial backing by research, that early-exit transitional programs are inherently weaker than late-exit transitional programs, which makes them less desirable. However, in practice, educational authorities face difficulties in authorizing late-exit models because they are considered too costly, too difficult and politically unacceptable (Ouane & Glanz, 2011, cited in Walter, 2013).

TRANSLANGUAGING AND CODE-SWITCHING

In multilingual or bilingual classes, teachers often resort to code-switching in an effort to clarify concepts to students, particularly in the subjects of Mathematics and Science. Lin (2017, p. 487) describes classroom code-switching as the alternating use of more than one linguistic code in the classroom by any of the classroom participants (e.g. teacher, students, teacher aide).

Some have argued that the practice of code-switching between two or more languages should not be rendered restrictive and construed as parallel monolingualism (Heller 1999 cited in Agnihotri, 2014, p.368) or plural monlingualism (Makoni 2003 cited in Agnihotri). They are more comfortable with the concept of multilinguality, which treats language boundaries as porous and provides space for the diverse "linguistic and cultural practices [for] children

and teaches [them to] bring [these practices] to school." (Agnihotri, p. 370).

Within the context of multilingual education, a concept that has also been the subject of considerable discussion more recently is that of translanguaging which seeks to make use of the full set of students' language practices (Garcia et al, 2017 cited in Duarte, 2018, p. 3). Garcia and Kano (2014, p. 261, cited in Duarte, 2018, p. 3) refer to translanguaging in education as a process by which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that include all the language practices of all students in a class in order to develop new language practices and sustain old ones, communicate and appropriate knowledge, and give voice to new sociopolitical realities by interrogating linguistic inequality.

The idea of translingualism is seen as empowering the learner by providing space for the speaker's L1 in generous measure and acknowledging their agency in shaping language to particular ends. (Flores and Baetens-Beardsmore 2015 cited in Duarte and Gunther Van der Meij, 2018).

However, there is also criticism of translanguaging-based approaches on the grounds that while the goal may have philosophical merit, there is a lack of clarity when it comes to pedagogical tools for implementation. (Ticheloven 2016, p.3 cited in Duarte 2018).

Francois Grin in a paper presented at the Inclusion, Mobility and the Multilingual Education Conference, 2019, (p.4) pointed to the tension between the notions of inclusion and mobility and the need for policy to strike a balance between the two. Challenging some aspects of the translanguaging debate, he argues strongly in favour of retaining clear boundaries between languages on the grounds that an appreciation of diversity is really possible only when differences are recognized. (Grin 2019, p.8).

He is critical of arguments to the contrary: "consider, for example the notion that languages, because they supposedly blend into each other (and because named languages are constructs), don't really 'exist', or the claim that the very concept of 'mother tongue' should be discarded. Such musings may be intellectually entertaining but they ultimately undermine the diversity that they claim to exalt because diversity cannot exist without distinct and identifiable elements."

Methodology

Fieldwork was conducted in three districts in Punjab i.e. Multan, Lahore and Rawalpindi. These districts were selected to ensure there was representation from northern, central and southern Punjab. From each district, data was collected from six schools i.e. extensive surveys were conducted in 18 schools in total. 11 of these were primary schools, 5 were elementary schools, and 2 were secondary schools. From every school, two teachers, two parents/ guardians, and two learners were surveyed. In total, 36 teachers and 36 parents/guardians and were targeted as respondents for this study. Effort was made to ensure equal representation of urban/rural, boys'/girls' schools, as well as a roughly equal number of male and female respondents in each of the categories. Some relevant personnel from various government institutions and departments such as PCTB, QAED, and PEC, were also interviewed to gauge the readiness of the Punjab education system to implement the new policy.

Teachers were interviewed to assess their views and practices along a number of themes. These included awareness regarding the proposed change of policy and implications of the change for them and the school; views regarding the proposed policy; perceptions on teaching in the mother tongue in the initial grades; the extent to which the new policy will bring about a change in practice; impact of MoI on learning outcomes; the measures required to support the learning of English; the attitudes and practices pertaining to the teaching of English as a subject/skill; the nature, duration/frequency of training required to train teachers to teach English; the use that could be made of available technology; views on an appropriate language policy in multilingual contexts; and views on making the new policy acceptable for parents.

Parents were interviewed to get their response to the new policy and their views on an ideal language in education policy that enables their children to learn English and transition to EMI at an appropriate stage. They were also interviewed to get their views on if EMI in the early grades was a good policy, as well as why it has not worked as well as might be expected.
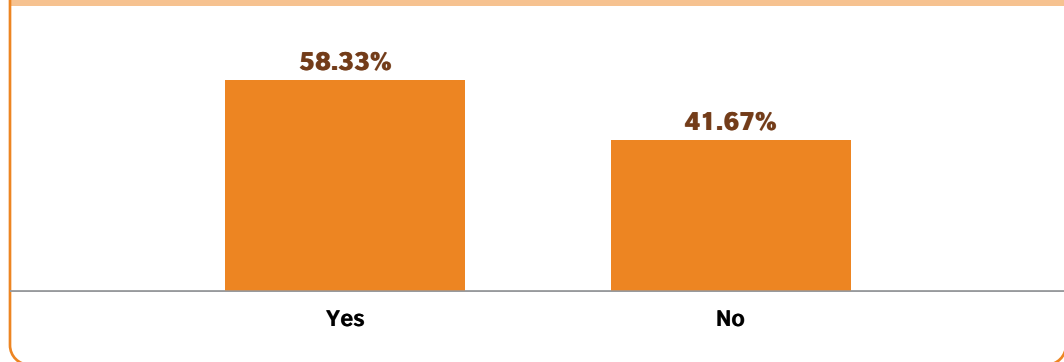
The literature review for this study consisted of a review of government policy documents relating to MoI, particularly by reference to the issue of

transitioning to English as MoI; a review of relevant recent research pertaining to effective language teaching including practices such as code-switching and translanguaging; and a review the phenomenon of English as a global lingua franca and the use of new technologies in the teaching and learning processes.

This was a study carried out to gain policy-relevant insights from teachers, parents and representatives of relevant government institutions in the aftermath of the announcement by the Punjab government that Urdu will now substitute English as MoI at the primary level. The sample size is small and therefore the responses are meant to be indicative rather than representative. Further, reliable data from students could not be collected, as even Grade 5 students were too young to provide adequate responses. Possibly, students' data in this context is better gathered through classroom observation.
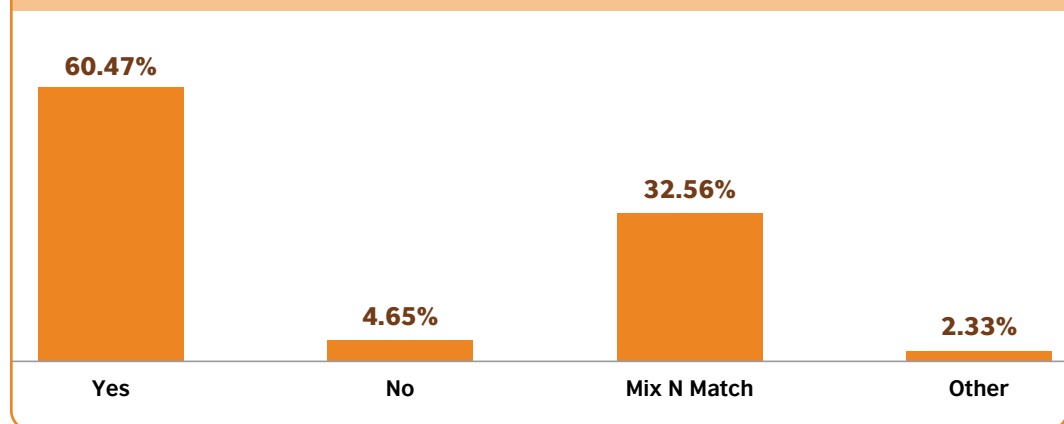
Field Results

GRAPH 1 | Are you aware of the Moi change?

58.33%

41.67%

Yes   No

A majority of the teachers, nearly 60%, were aware of the announced change in policy regarding the medium of instruction, at the primary level. The actual number may well be larger as some respondents, who are possibly not aware of the details, responded in the negative.

GRAPH 2 | Despite English being the official MoI, do you use Urdu while teaching anyway?

60.47%

32.56%

4.65%

2.33%

Yes   No   Mix N Match   Other

For teachers, the switch to Urdu as MoI from EMI does not present a major shift. Even as English, formally, has so far been the MoI at the primary level, around 60% of the teachers said that they have been using Urdu as MoI with 30% indicating that they used a mix of the two. It is, of course, very likely that those who speak of a mix are usually employing Urdu while occasionally using a few words or phrases of English for teaching. (Rashid et. al., 2013)

GRAPH 03 | What is your opinion of teaching English as a subject at the primary school level?

Highly Favourable	Favourable	Unfavourable	No Response	Highly Unfavourable	Indifferent
69%	20%	8%	3%	0%	0%

Nearly 90% of the teachers were in favour of teaching English as a subject at the primary level. Clearly, almost all teachers accord high priority to the learning of English and recognize its importance for students.

GRAPH 04 | Difficulty for children to transition to English MoI starting in Grade 6

Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult	No Response	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Dont Know
36%	53%	5%	3%	3%	0%

GRAPH 05 | Can students learn English well enough before Grade 6 to transition to English as MoI?

61%

33%

6%

Yes

No

No Response

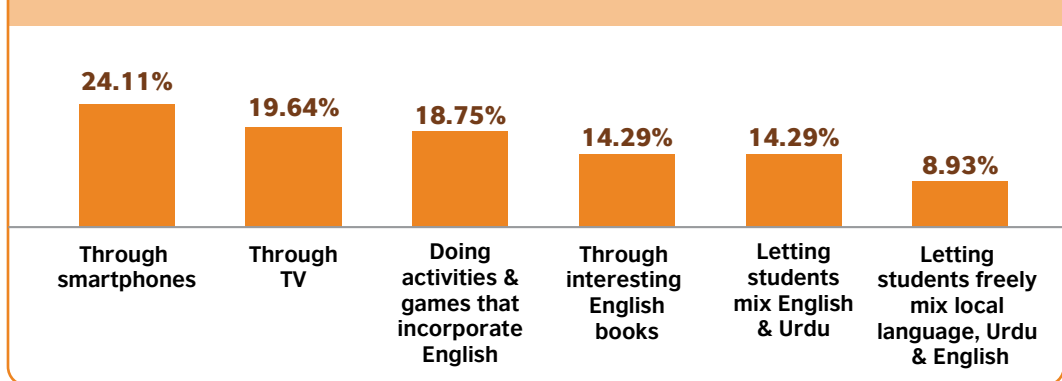As to the transitioning of students to English at the post-primary stage, from Grade-6, nearly 90% of the teachers were of the view that this will be difficult.

In response to another similar question, only one-third of the teachers were of the view that students could learn enough English by Grade-5 to be able to transition to EMI by Grade-6.

GRAPH 06 | How can students be taught the English language?

24.11%

19.64%

18.75%

14.29%

14.29%

8.93%

Through smartphones

Through TV

Doing activities & games that incorporate English

Through interesting English books

Letting students mix English & Urdu

Letting students freely mix local language, Urdu & English

Around 45% of the teachers favored using TV and mobile phones for teaching students English; 19% favoured activities and games that incorporate English while close to 15% cited the role of interesting books in English.

GRAPH 07 | Where do most students make greater gains in the context of learning English?

Category	Percentage
Through TV	25.84%
Through Mobiles/Tablet	23.60%
At School	21.35%
From parents	7.87%
Through private tuition	7.87%
Others	5.62%
Through Siblings	4.49%
No Response	3.37%

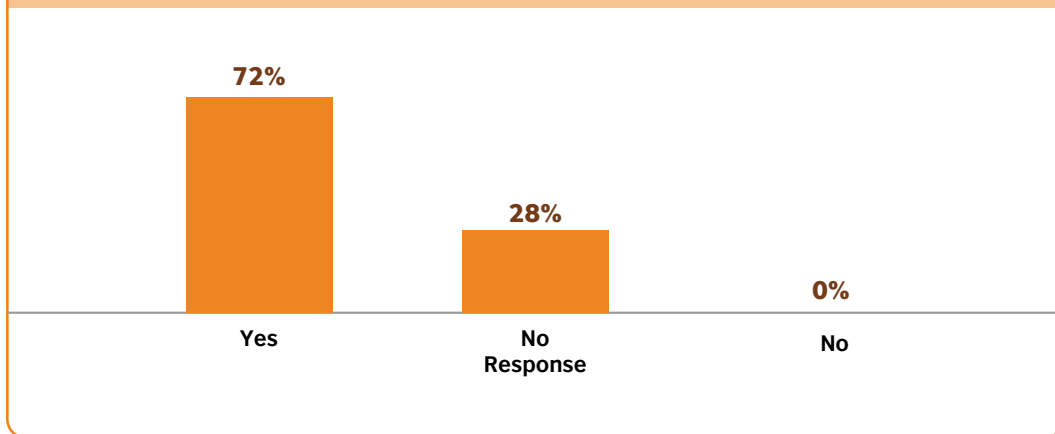Clearly teachers give credence to the role of technology in the learning of English. Around 50% were of the view that students make the greatest gains in the learning of English through TV and mobile phones. By comparison, only 21% saw the school as playing a major role in this regard.

GRAPH 08 | Does technology have a role in teaching English?

Category	Percentage
Yes	72%
No Response	28%
No	0%

Responding to a direct question as to the role technology in the teaching in English, nearly three-fourth of the respondents replied in the affirmative.

GRAPH 09 | Are you aware of teaching/learning/training resources available online?

83%	**8%**	**6%**	**3%**
Yes	**No**	**Others**	**Other**

Over 80% of teachers said they were aware of teaching/learning/training resources available online. And a similar percentage s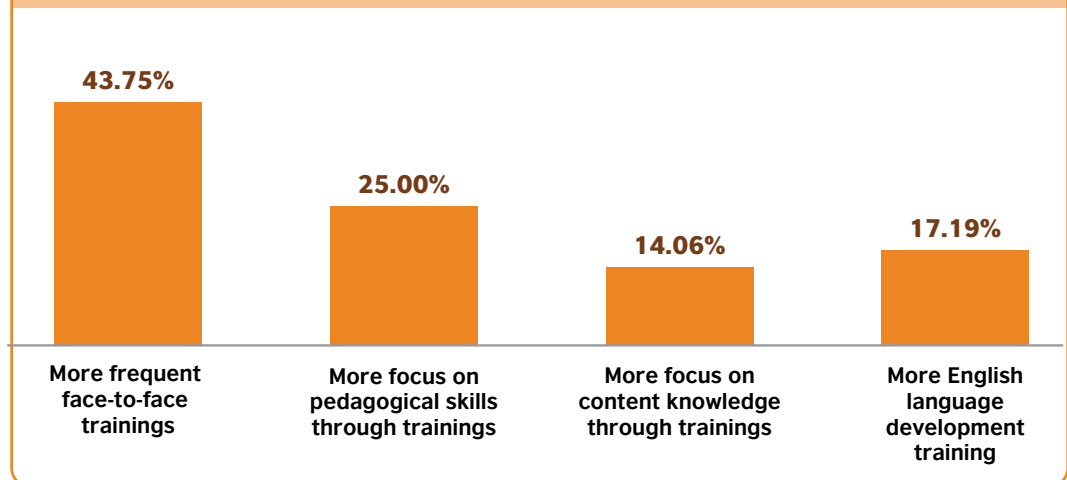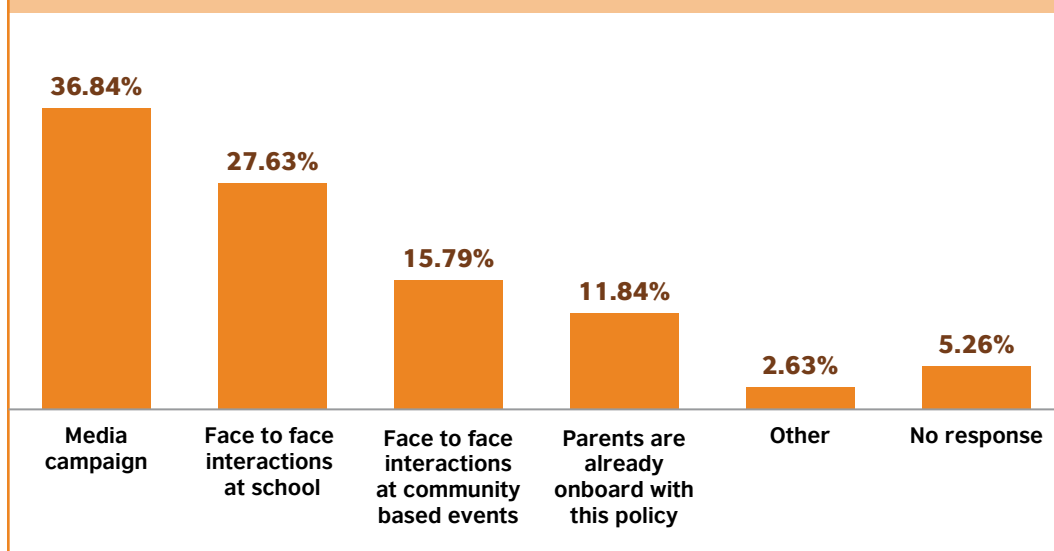aid that they had made use of these resources. It is possible that these resources are being accessed at a very basic level or knowledge and access are being over-stated in this context.

GRAPH 10 | How can you or your colleagues be supported in the teaching of English as a subject in primary schools?

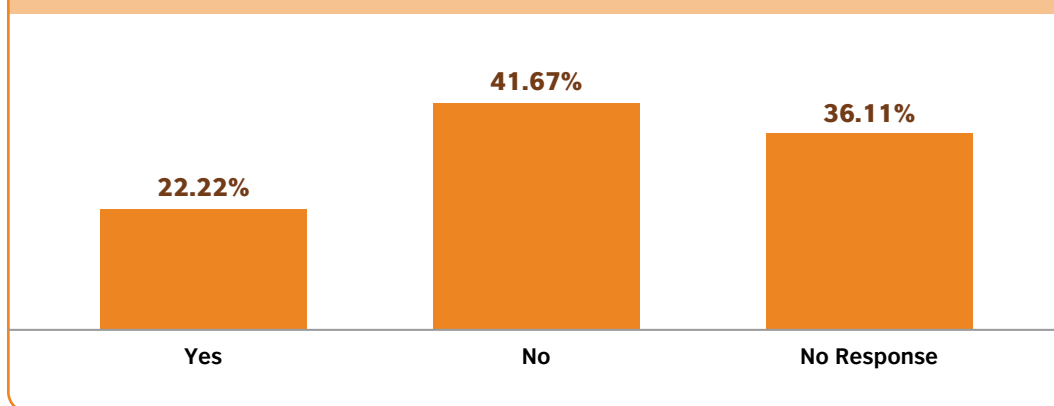|			
43.75%	**25.00%**	**14.06%**	**17.19%**
More frequent face-to-face trainings	**More focus on pedagogical skills through trainings**	**More focus on content knowledge through trainings**	**More English language development training**

Although the surveyed teachers indicated that they were sufficiently qualified to teach English, responses to how they might be supported in this endeavor suggests that they want additional help in teaching English as a skill. Most (43.75%) responses favoured face-to-face trainings, whereas a quarter of responses further favoured trainings focused on developing pedagogical skills.

GRAPH 11 | Strategies to convince parents of the benefits of MoI change

- Media campaign: 36.84%
- Face to face interactions at school: 27.63%
- Face to face interactions at community based events: 15.79%
- Parents are already onboard with this policy: 11.84%
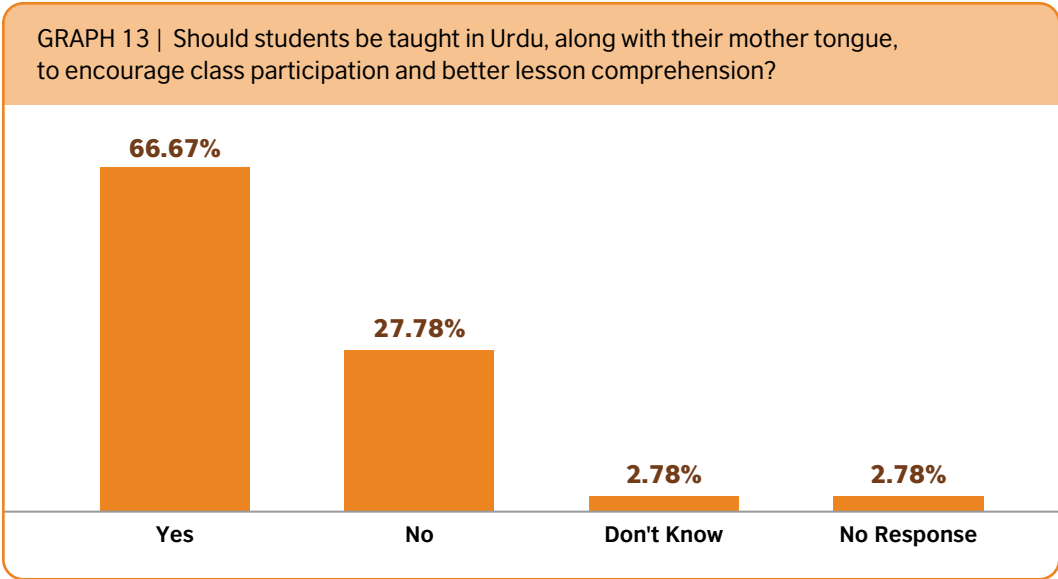- Other: 2.63%
- No response: 5.26%

Given parents' inclination for their children to go to English medium schools, teachers were asked for suggestions as to what would be the best way to persuade parents to accept Urdu as a MoI at the primary level. Over 40% suggested face to face interaction with parents and the community while over one-third favoured a media campaign to this end. Only around 12% indicated that, in their view, parents were already on board with this policy.

GRAPH 12 | Will the dropout rate increase due to the MoI becoming Urdu?

- Yes: 22.22%
- No: 41.67%
- No Response: 36.11%

Over 41% of the teachers responded in to the negative to this question. However nearly one-fourth said they were apprehensive that students' dropout rate would increase with Urdu being formally made the MoI. It should be noted that over one-third of the teachers did not respond to this question indicating a measure of uncertainty on their part as to what the impact of this change of policy might be.

GRAPH 13 | Should students be taught in Urdu, along with their mother tongue, to encourage class participation and better lesson comprehension?

66.67%	**27.78%**	**2.78%**	**2.78%**
Yes	No	Don't Know	No Response

Two-thirds of the teachers were of the view that student should be taught in Urdu along with their mother tongue.

GRAPH 14 | Have students' Math and Science scores been negatively affected due to English being made MoI?

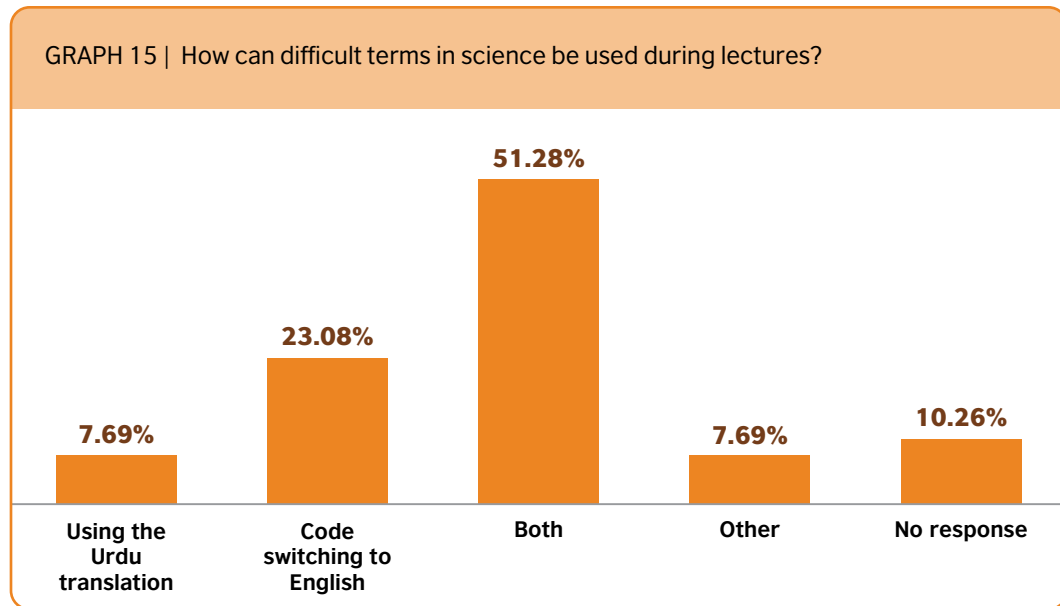|			
50.00%	**25.00%**	**8.33%**	**16.67%**
Yes	No	English wasn't reasonably implemented as MoI	No response

50% of the teachers said that students Math and Science scores had been negatively affected due to English being made MoI. Considering that Urdu had for the most part remained the MoI effectively it is not clear as to why this should be so. In any case there was no indication from the teachers that teaching these subjects in English had led to any improvement in performance.

GRAPH 15 | How can difficult terms in science be used during lectures?

7.69%	23.08%	51.28%	7.69%	10.26%
Using the Urdu translation	Code switching to English	Both	Other	No response

Over 50% of the teachers said that switching to English when it came to technical terms in Science as well as translating into Urdu would help in the process of transition to EMI.

GRAPH 16 | How can difficult terms in science be used in textbooks?

48.84%	37.21%	6.98%	2.33%	4.65%
Using the translated term next to the term in English	Inserting the term in English in the science textbook in Urdu	Writing the English term in Urdu(Persian/ Arabic) script	Other	No response

Similarly, nearly 50% of the teachers favored using the translated term next to the term in English in Science textbooks.

GRAPH 17 | Types of English language support available in school for students
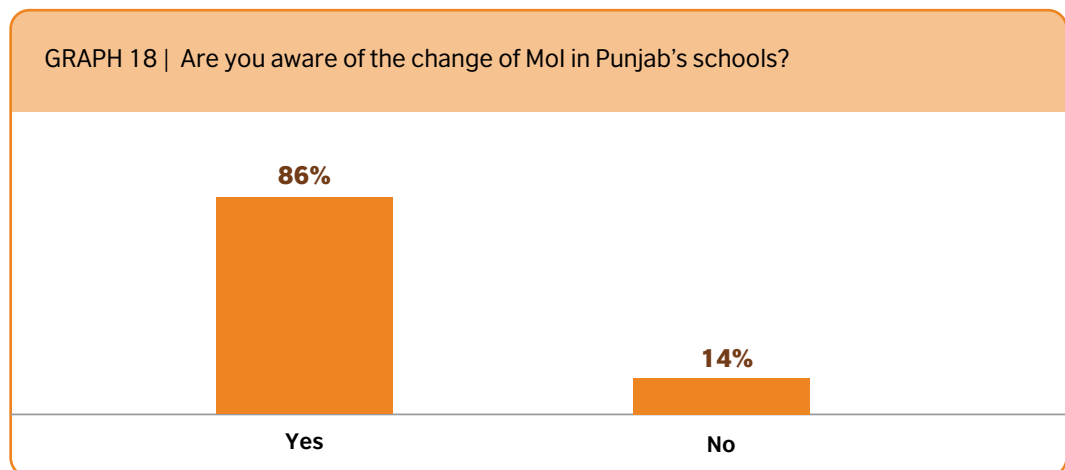
15.25% 23.73% 13.56% 30.51% 10.17% 6.78%

Library with interesting books that students can easily access

English language teacher(s)

Remedial classes for students

Supportive environment for students to practice language skills
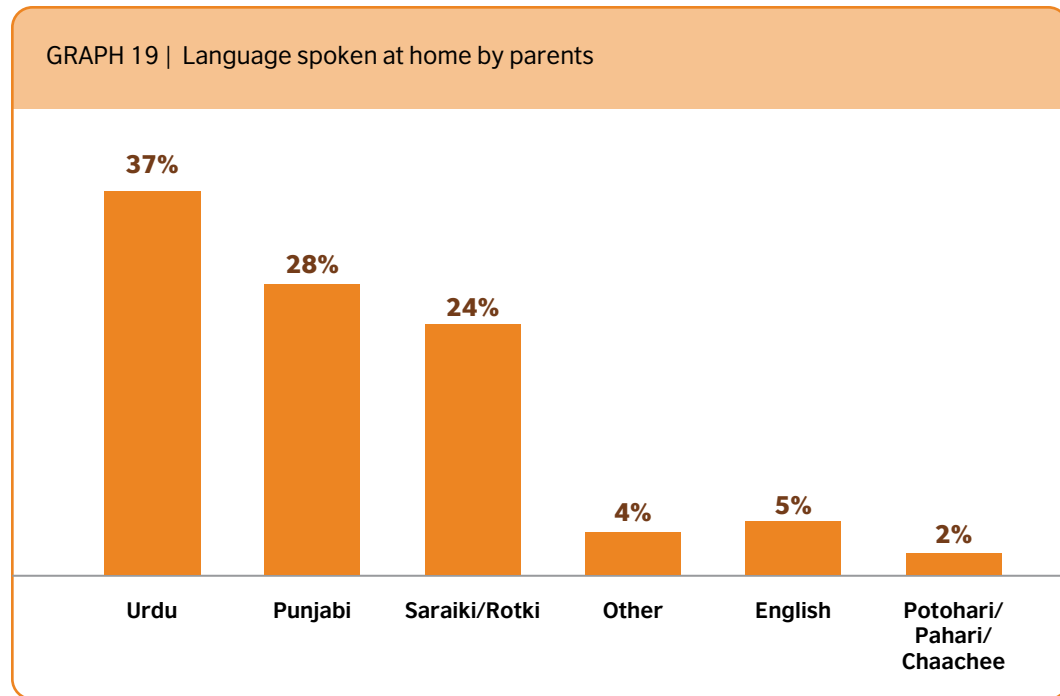
Other

No response

Only one-third of the teachers said that there is a supportive environment available at school for students to practice their language skills while nearly 40% emphasized English language teachers and libraries with interesting and easily accessible books.
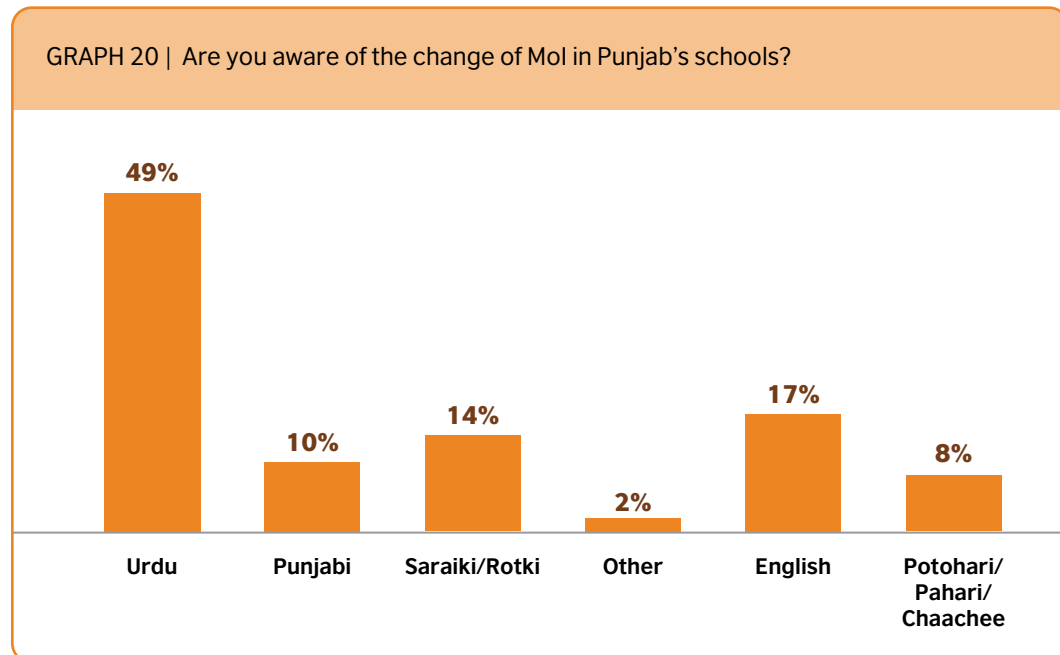
GRAPH 18 | Are you aware of the change of MoI in Punjab's schools?

86% 14%

Yes No

On the other hand, an overwhelming majority, 86%, of the parents was not aware of the announced change in policy regarding MoI at the primary level.

GRAPH 19 | Language spoken at home by parents

Language	Percentage
Urdu	37%
Punjabi	28%
Saraiki/Rotki	24%
Other	4%
English	5%
Potohari/Pahari/Chaachee	2%

Over 50% or the parents said that they spoke Punjabi and Saraiki/Rotki at home and a little over one-third said they spoke Urdu.

GRAPH 20 | Are you aware of the change of MoI in Punjab's schools?

Language	Percentage
Urdu	49%
Punjabi	10%
Saraiki/Rotki	14%
Other	2%
English	17%
Potohari/Pahari/Chaachee	8%

A higher number of parents, 49%, said that they encouraged their children to speak Urdu and 17% said they encouraged children to speak English.

GRAPH 21 | Do parents think learning mother tongue in primary school is relevant?
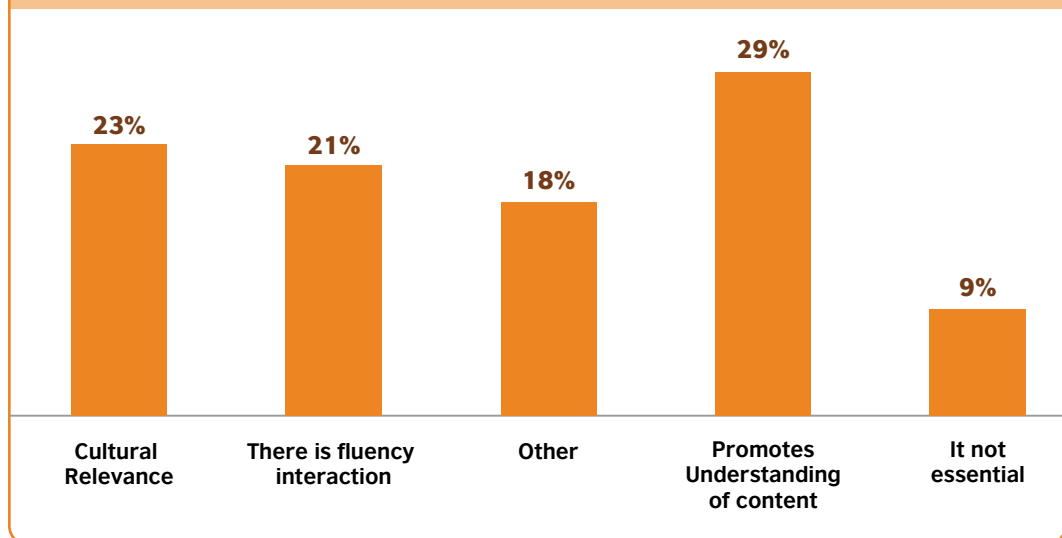
55.17%

37.93%

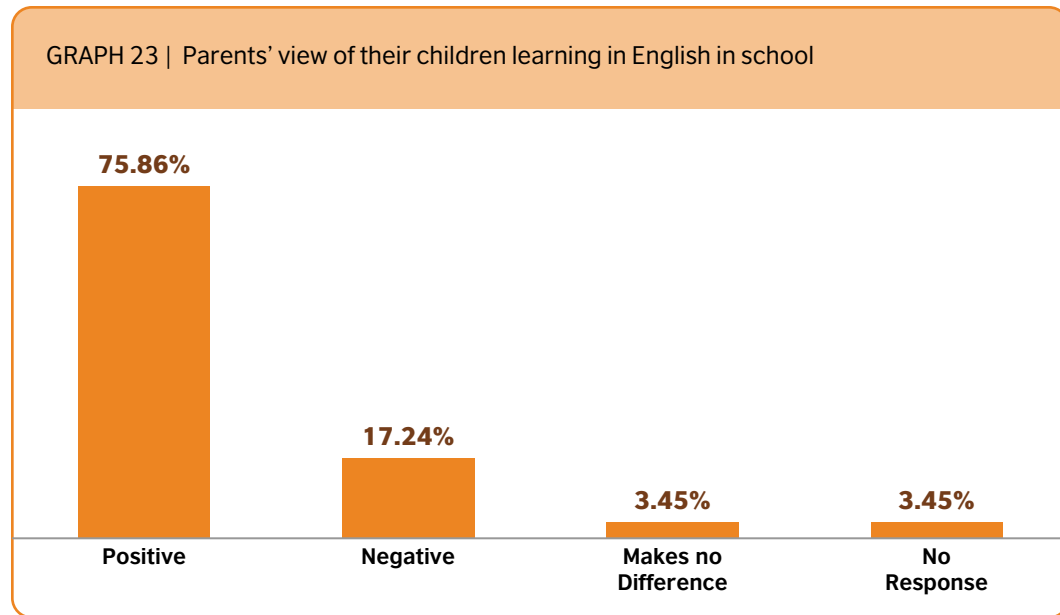**3.45%**

3.45%

| Yes | No | Other | No Response |

A majority of the parents were of the view that the mother tongue or first language is not relevant to but a sizeable minority, 38% replied in the affirmative.

GRAPH 22 | Reasons why parents think mother tongue is essential in primary school

29%

23%

21%

18%

9%

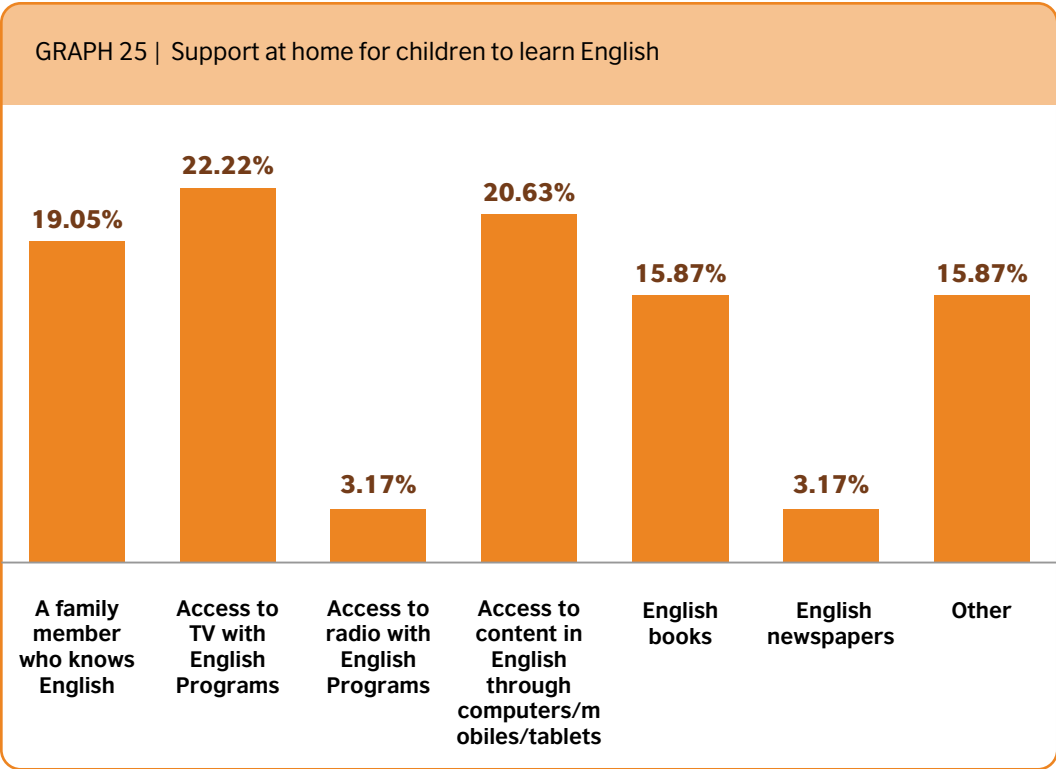| Cultural Relevance | There is fluency interaction | Other | Promotes Understanding of content | It not essential |

As to the reasons for its relevance, 60% of the responses encompassed three reasons: It promotes understanding of the content; there is fluency in interaction and cultural relevance with each response accounting for about 20% of the respondents.

GRAPH 23 | Parents' view of their children learning in English in school

75.86%	**17.24%**	**3.45%**	**3.45%**
Positive	Negative	Makes no Difference	No Response

Three quarters of the parents said that they wanted their children learning in English in school.

GRAPH 24 | Learning different subjects in English: does it improve your child's English skills?

55.17%	**41.38%**	**3.45%**
Yes	No	Other

While a majority of the parents, 55%, said that they believed that learning different subjects in English helped improve their child' s English skills, a significant minority, 41%, disagreed.

GRAPH 25 | Support at home for children to learn English

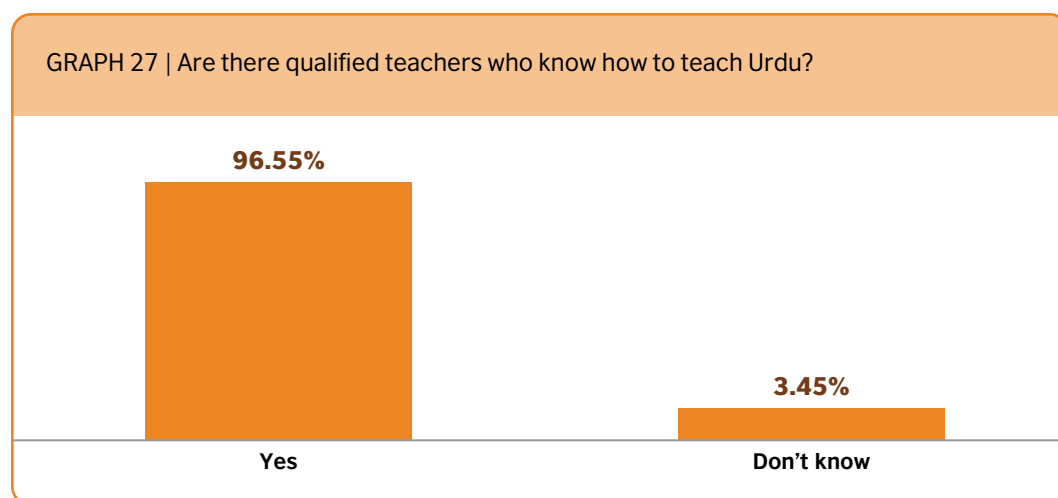| Category	Percentage
A family member who knows English	19.05%
Access to TV with English Programs	22.22%
Access to radio with English Programs	3.17%
Access to content in English through computers/mobiles/tablets	20.63%
English books	15.87%
English newspapers	3.17%
Other	15.87%

A roughly similar percentage of parents, around 20%, cited three sources that constituted in their view support at home for their child to learn English: access to TV with English programs, access to English content through mobile phones/ tablets/ computers and books in English.

GRAPH 26 | Are there qualified teachers who know how to teach English?

Response	Percentage
Yes	70.97%
No	22.58%
Don't know	6.45%

GRAPH 27 | Are there qualified teachers who know how to teach Urdu?

96.55%

3.45%

Yes

Don't know

When asked if there were qualified teachers in school who knew how to teach English, three-quarters of the parents responded in the affirmative. An even larger number, over 95% responded in the affirmative when asked if there were qualified teachers who knew how to teach Urdu. While this may not factually be the case, it is interesting to note that parents are confident about the school having qualified teachers for the teaching of English as well as Urdu.

Some government officials and academics were also asked for their views on issues related to language and learning:

Most of the respondents from the relevant government departments did not see a problem with regard to the readiness of the government to implement the new policy. Though in one case an official expressed reservations about the disruptive effects of frequent changes in policy and expressed the view that the large number of science teachers recruited in recent years would find it difficult to engage with Urdu as the MoI.

Another official stressed the need for a review by language experts of the books produced, or approved, by PCTB.

An academic who was interviewed emphasized the role of technology in improving educational outcomes.

Recap of Findings and Discussion

The majority of teachers were aware of the change in MoI across Punjab from English to Urdu; however the majority of parents were not and less than half of the surveyed students were aware of this planned change of MoI.

The survey results reveal that nearly two-thirds of the teachers responded "Yes" to whether they use Urdu while teaching, despite English being the official MoI; 32.56% responded with "mixing and matching." In the light of what we know from other studies on the subject, this response could also be understood to mean virtually the same thing, i.e., mostly Urdu would occasional use of English.

Broadly, teachers may use languages other than English for these reasons: many teachers feel that students understand their lessons better when taught in Urdu along with the mother tongue; others think that the students prefer that teachers mix English with Urdu or the mother tongue when teaching. Perhaps most importantly, many teachers are quite aware that students don't understand them when they use English.

A majority of surveyed teachers are in favour of teaching English as a subject at the primary school level. However, the majority of the surveyed teachers felt that students will find the transition from Urdu MoI to EMI difficult around 53% feel that students will find the transition very difficult, while 36.11% felt that students will face "some difficulty." So, most teachers do not think that their students will be able to learn enough English by Grade 5 for English-medium education to start from Grade 6 onwards.

When asked how students can be taught English, over a quarter of teachers' responses favoured the use of TV and smartphones in teaching English. Additionally, most responses from the surveyed teachers indicated that students appear to make the greatest gains in learning English through electronic media, specifically TV and mobile phones/tablets. This suggests that technology has a role to play in teaching children English. Survey results further confirmed this, as the majority of teachers felt that technology had a role to play in the teaching of English.

Additionally, the teachers are widely aware of teaching/learning and training resources available on the internet, and the majority of teachers also has access to these resources and has used them. Possibly, the information and resources accessed are of a very basic level. Nevertheless, this is an area for further exploration. Even if there is a measure of over-statement here, greater insight into what is essentially an unstructured, self-learning enterprise could be of considerable value for institutions such as QAED in designing teacher training programs.

Teachers felt that they needed support in teaching English as a subject, with 43.75% of all responses favouring more face-to-face trainings and 25% favouring pedagogical skill development.

The vast majority of teachers felt that students should be taught in Urdu along with their mother tongue, in order to encourage class participation and better lesson comprehension.

Half of the teachers surveyed felt that students' mathematics and science scores have suffered due to English being the MoI. It is not clear why this should be so as even this study shows that for the most part Urdu continued to be the MoI. Though there is little to suggest that learning in English or other subjects improved as a result of English being made MoI.

Nevertheless, an overwhelming majority of the surveyed parents had a positive view of their children's learning at school being in English. Most of the surveyed parents also felt that learning a number of different subjects in school in English will help their children improve their English skills. It is worth mentioning, however, that the fact that 41% of parents responded "No" to this question suggests that this is not a universally held notion.

Parents indicated that that support available to children at home is from access to TV with English programs and access to English content through computers/mobiles/tablets, with some support from a family member who knows English and also from English books. This aligns with the surveyed teachers' responses, who felt that technology has a major role to play and that children make the most gains in learning English through access to English language media (i.e. on TV or electronic devices like smartphones and/or tablets). While the exact nature of the electronic content viewed by children is not known, it is possible that it is entertainment content that resonates with children in some way.

When asked about their preferred MoI, the majority of parents said they would either prefer Urdu as MoI (34%) or both, i.e. an MoI comprising both English and Urdu.

Over one-third of the parents responded in favour of employing the mother tongue as well for teaching of the mother tongue at the primary level. The

majority of parents' responses (71%) suggest that parents think that their child's school has qualified teachers to teach English; the vast majority of all surveyed parents (97%) feel that the schools have teachers qualified to teach Urdu. This is significant in that parents have a high degree of confidence in the ability of teachers to teach their children English as well as Urdu while it is clear that very few schools would have teachers trained to teach Urdu as a second language and English as a second or foreign language.

When asked how difficult science terms may be used in lectures, most responses from teachers favoured using the actual English term and also using its Urdu translation. For textbooks, the responses were also very similar, as the majority of responses favoured using a mix and match approach.

Conclusion

The findings of this study point to the need for an appropriate language in education policy wherein Urdu rather than English serves as the MoI in the primary grades, English is taught more effectively as a subject or skill and there is room for the mother tongue to complement Urdu in the initial years. As of now the real change at the level of the classroom will be the change in the language of the textbooks.

Given the attitudes and methods that inform language teaching and learning, students for the most part end up not acquiring fluency in any language and therefore find it difficult to get away from rote learning, something that the system encourages in any case.

While fully recognizing the value and social demand for English, most teachers are of the view that students are unlikely to know enough English by Grade-5 to make the transition to EMI, post-primary, at the level of Grade-6. There is a key choice to be made here: either the introduction of EMI needs to be delayed or English as a subject or skill needs to be much better taught at the primary level, presumably through the agency of teachers trained for the task.

Teachers see technology as a major aid to the learning of English for themselves as well as students. A blended learning model for teacher training could be a starting point in the quest for better trained teachers and improved student learning outcomes in English.

There is considerable support among teachers and students for teaching and learning in Urdu and fewer advocates for EMI. However, a significant percentage of parents appear persuaded that learning different subjects in English helps improve learning in English, i.e., EMI. They will need persuasion to the effect that English is best learned as a subject or skill and introducing English as MoI from the start helps neither in the learning of English, nor other subjects in English.

To this end, teachers recommend face to face and community-level interaction with parents as well as a media campaign in order to clarify the role of language(s) in education, i.e., which language(s) at what stage and the distinction between teaching language as a skill or subject, adopting it as MoI.

 A sizeable number of teachers and parents see the benefits for learning in using the child's first language or mother tongue in the teaching-learning process, as a supplement to Urdu. The issue of first language vs. Urdu is often posed as a binary choice to respondents and the tendency, almost inevitably, is to go with Urdu. But when respondents were asked whether the first language or mother tongue had a role in the classroom along with Urdu, a large number responded in the affirmative. A role for the mother tongue or first language will help the child both by way of cognitive development as well as enhanced confidence.

The education system, in its current state, does not produce satisfactory student outcomes for a number of reasons including teachers with insufficient Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), textbooks of often questionable quality and an examination system that rarely tests for higher order skills. Nevertheless, it has to be said that for any improvement in learning outcomes in any of the subjects, an improved proficiency in languages is certainly a necessary if not a sufficient condition. For language serves as the lens which enables access to other subjects. If a child does not have a grasp over the language in which the content is delivered, by way of speech or text, it is obvious that he or she will be unable to comprehend it in any reasonable measure and therefore little no learning will take place.

Recommendations

a. The role of English, Urdu and the mother tongue or first language, should be carefully determined in the context of different stages of schooling, with Urdu complemented by the mother tongue being employed as MoI at the primary stage. What is needed, then, is a broad socio-linguistic survey to ascertain the dominant first language in the different parts of the province as well as the level of familiarity with Urdu.

b. There is no evidence to support the notion that studying different subjects in English right from the start helps improve English language proficiency. Equally, it does not improve student learning outcomes in other subjects. So, English should be taught from Grade 1 as a skill or subject, but not as MoI till Grade 6 or later. Once a student reaches the necessary level of proficiency he or she is in a position to study different subjects in that language. So, the focus should be on teaching English, not other subjects in English until such time that the student is in a position to learn in English.

c. Given teachers' stated interest in and apparent engagement with technology, the possibility of a blended learning program with incentives for teachers to make better and more structured use of resources available on the net should be instituted. This becomes even more doable in the context of the restructured Continuous Professional Development program being put in place by QAED, relying on digital resources and assisted peer learning.

d. In view of the possible resistance from parents – many of whom will see the shift from EMI to Urdu MoI in government schools as a reversal of what has been often perceived as a meaningful way of teaching English and enhancing children's life opportunities – a media campaign needs to be undertaken to clarify the somewhat complex role of language(s) in the teaching/learning process. More than social media such a campaign needs to make use of radio and TV, the preferred media for large numbers among the relevant audience.

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