



Teachers' Perceptions and Instructional Practices for Fostering Language Development among Early Childhood Learners in Public Schools of District East, Karachi

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Abstract

Early childhood education (ECE) plays a foundational role in children's language development, which serves as a critical predictor of later academic success and social-emotional well-being. This study examines teachers' perceptions and instructional practices for fostering language development among early childhood learners in public schools of District East, Karachi. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, the research explores how ECE teachers conceptualize language development, the instructional strategies they employ, the challenges they encounter in multilingual classroom contexts, and the factors that shape their pedagogical decisions. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis from teachers across public schools in the district. The findings reveal that while teachers recognize the importance of language development in early childhood, their instructional practices are significantly influenced by multiple factors: limited professional training in early childhood pedagogy, pressure to meet examination-oriented curricular requirements, the dominance of English-medium instruction policies, bilingualism and code-switching challenges, and insufficient parental support and home literacy environments. Teachers demonstrate a tendency toward product-oriented rather than process-oriented approaches, emphasizing correct grammar, spelling, and handwriting over creative expression and meaning-making. The study also identifies significant gaps between teachers' stated perceptions and their actual classroom practices, highlighting the need for targeted professional development programs, curriculum reforms that prioritize child-centered pedagogical approaches, and stronger school-community partnerships to support children's language development. Recommendations include the development of contextually responsive teacher training programs, integration of play-based and child-centered instructional strategies, and establishment of supportive language-rich classroom environments that honor children's home languages while facilitating English language acquisition.

Keywords: *Early childhood education, language development, teachers' perceptions, instructional practices, bilingualism, District East Karachi, public schools, early childhood learners*



1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The early years of a child's life represent a critical period for language development, with research consistently demonstrating that the quality and quantity of language input during early childhood significantly influence long-term academic achievement, cognitive development, and social-emotional competence (Snow, 2012; Hart & Risley, 1995). In Pakistan, the importance of early childhood education has gained increasing recognition through national policies, including the National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education (2020) and the Sindh Early Childhood Care and Education Standards (2018), which emphasize the provision of quality learning experiences for children aged three to eight years.

However, the implementation of these policies faces substantial challenges. Pakistan's multilingual and multicultural context presents unique complexities for early language development. With over 70 languages spoken across the country, children enter early childhood classrooms with diverse linguistic backgrounds. In urban centers like Karachi, the linguistic landscape is particularly complex, with Urdu functioning as the national language, English as the official language and medium of instruction in many schools, and regional languages such as Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi spoken in home and community contexts. This multilingual reality creates both opportunities and challenges for early childhood educators, who must navigate competing linguistic demands while fostering children's language development.

District East Karachi, one of the most populous and educationally active districts of the city, presents a particularly compelling context for examining early childhood language education. Public schools in this district serve a diverse population of learners from various socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds. The district has been identified as an area with significant educational infrastructure, yet challenges persist regarding the quality of early childhood provision, teacher training, and instructional resources.

Teachers play a pivotal role in facilitating early language development (Pianta, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Their perceptions of language learning, understanding of child development, and instructional practices directly shape the language learning opportunities available to children in the classroom. Research has shown that teacher beliefs about language acquisition influence their choice of instructional strategies, classroom language policies, and interactions with children (Borg, 2006; Farrell, 2015). In the Pakistani context, teachers' perceptions are particularly significant given the complex sociolinguistic dynamics and the competing demands of policy expectations and practical realities.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

Despite the recognized importance of early childhood education and the critical role of teachers in fostering language development, there is a notable gap in research examining teachers' perceptions and practices specifically in the public schools of District East Karachi. While studies have explored early childhood education in other contexts (Vazir & Ismail, 2009; Begum, 2020; Ahmad, Khan & Saeed, 2022), limited attention has been directed toward understanding how public school teachers in this particular district conceptualize and implement language instruction for early childhood learners.

This study addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive examination of teachers' perceptions and instructional practices for language development in the early years. By focusing specifically



on public schools in District East Karachi, the research captures the realities of teachers working within the constraints of the public education system, including limited resources, large class sizes, and diverse learner populations. The findings have implications for teacher professional development, curriculum reform, and educational policy in Sindh and more broadly across Pakistan.

1.3 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To explore teachers' perceptions of language development in early childhood learners in public schools of District East Karachi.
2. To examine the instructional practices employed by teachers to foster language development among early childhood learners.
3. To identify the challenges teachers face in facilitating language development in multilingual early childhood classrooms.
4. To analyze the factors that shape teachers' pedagogical decisions regarding language instruction.
5. To propose recommendations for enhancing language development practices in early childhood education settings.

1.4 Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do early childhood teachers in public schools of District East Karachi perceive language development and their role in fostering it?
2. What instructional practices do teachers employ to support language development among early childhood learners?
3. What challenges do teachers encounter in promoting language development in multilingual early childhood classrooms?
4. How do contextual factors, including policy expectations, resources, and parental involvement, influence teachers' language instruction practices?
5. What are the gaps between teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices regarding language development?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in several significant ways. First, it addresses a gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence from the under-researched context of public early childhood education in District East Karachi. Second, it examines the alignment between teachers' perceptions and their actual instructional practices, revealing important insights about the complexities of implementing educational policies in real-world classroom settings. Third, it identifies specific challenges and barriers that teachers face in fostering language development, providing a foundation for developing targeted interventions and professional development programs.

The findings of this study have practical implications for teacher educators, curriculum developers, school administrators, and policymakers. By understanding teachers' perceptions and practices, stakeholders can develop more effective professional development programs, revise curriculum frameworks to better support language development, and create supportive school environments that enable teachers to implement research-based instructional approaches.



2. Literature Review

2.1 Language Development in Early Childhood

Language development is a fundamental aspect of early childhood development that encompasses children's acquisition and use of language to communicate, express thoughts and emotions, and understand their world. Research in developmental psychology and applied linguistics has established that the early years, particularly from birth to age eight, represent a critical period for language acquisition (Kuhl, 2010; Snow, 2012). During this period, children develop foundational language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatic competence, that serve as the basis for later literacy development and academic achievement.

According to the Early Childhood Care and Education Standards for Sindh (2018), children's language development progresses through identifiable stages. By one year of age, most children begin making sounds that resemble words they have heard. By eighteen months, they typically begin using words. By three years, they speak in simple sentences, and by the preschool years, sentences become longer and more detailed. This developmental trajectory highlights the importance of providing rich language experiences during the early years.

Piaget's theory of cognitive development emphasizes that language development is closely linked to cognitive development, with children constructing linguistic knowledge through active engagement with their environment (Piaget, 1926). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory further emphasizes the social nature of language learning, arguing that language develops through social interaction and is mediated by cultural tools, including the home language and the instructional language (Vygotsky, 1978). These theoretical perspectives underscore the importance of creating language-rich environments and providing meaningful opportunities for children to engage in language use.

2.2 Bilingualism and Language Development in Pakistan

Pakistan's linguistic diversity presents unique considerations for early childhood language development. The linguistic ecology of Pakistan is characterized by multiple languages operating at different levels: English as the official language and language of power and privilege, Urdu as the national language and lingua franca, and regional languages such as Sindhi, Pashto, Punjabi, and Balochi as mother tongues (Rahman, 2002). In urban centers like Karachi, the linguistic landscape is even more complex, with children from diverse linguistic backgrounds entering classrooms with different home languages.

Research on bilingual language development indicates that children can learn to speak more than one language, and a strong foundation in the home language supports the development of additional languages (García, 2009; Cummins, 2000). In the Pakistani context, the ability to speak multiple languages gives children long-term cognitive, social, and economic advantages (Kamal, 2009). However, the dominant educational discourse in Pakistan often privileges English, creating a mismatch between children's home language and the language of instruction. This mismatch creates challenges for language learning, particularly when children's home language is not valued or supported in the classroom (Vazir & Ismail, 2009).

Research in the Pakistani context has identified several factors that influence bilingual language development in early childhood. Ahmad, Khan and Saeed (2022) found that teachers identified motivation, age factor, parental attitude, learning opportunity, and self-esteem as key factors influencing foreign language acquisition among early childhood learners. Teachers reported that



supportive classroom environments were essential for motivating students to practice English, and parental encouragement at home significantly influenced children's confidence and communication skills.

2.3 Teachers' Perceptions and Practices in Language Instruction

Teachers' perceptions—their beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes about language learning and teaching—significantly influence their classroom practices (Borg, 2006; Farrell, 2015). Research has demonstrated that teachers' beliefs about language acquisition shape their instructional decisions, including their choice of materials, classroom language policies, and interactions with students (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

In the Pakistani context, research has examined teachers' perceptions in various educational settings. A study by Vazir and Ismail (2009) explored how a teacher of early childhood taught creative writing skills in a community-based school in Karachi. Findings revealed that current practices of teaching and learning creative writing are highly influenced by how the teacher perceives creativity and creative writing in young learners. Teachers often select topics for children, and the teacher's interactions with children were frequently in English as required by school policy. However, with children not understanding English, teachers quickly reverted to translations in Urdu, creating confusion during writing.

Similarly, a study examining teachers' perceptions and practices of supporting early writing development in early childhood classrooms in Gojal Hunza (Begum, 2020) found that teachers have their own viewpoints of early writing development, and these understandings shape their teaching strategies. Teachers were found to emphasize the formation of letters and words, with critical thinking and problem-solving skills being a major area of concern in the process of early writing development. The study also found that assessment practices focused on correctness of grammar and spelling rather than supporting the writing process.

2.4 The "Younger, the Better" Debate

A persistent debate in language education concerns whether children learn languages more effectively when they are younger. In Pakistan, this belief has led to the proliferation of English-medium schools and the "straight-for-English" policy, where English is introduced from the earliest years of schooling (Manan et al., 2017).

However, research on age and second language acquisition suggests that the relationship between age and language learning is more complex than commonly assumed. A study by Manan and Kubra (2017) surveyed educators' cognitions about age and the instruction of English in Pakistani schools. The results indicated that teachers and school administrators take a maximalist position, emphasizing exclusive use of English from day one while viewing use of native languages as a waste of time. However, the study concluded that age is not the sole predictor of language development, and multiple factors such as quality and quantity of input, intensity of exposure, and socioaffective orientations play critical roles. The study found that early-English policy is problematic because students receive only decontextualized bookish input while they receive nearly no naturalistic exposure to English.

2.5 Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

The quality of teacher preparation and ongoing professional development significantly influences teachers' capacity to foster language development in early childhood. In Pakistan, early childhood education has historically received less attention in teacher preparation programs, and many



teachers enter the profession with limited training in early childhood pedagogy (Junaid & Azam, 2016).

Research by Begum (2020) found that teachers who had completed certificate courses in early childhood education were more confident in expressing their thoughts and ideas about language development. This suggests that targeted professional development can enhance teachers' knowledge and practices. However, the study also found that early childhood teachers need continuous professional development to cope with the current demands of society and to deal with 21st-century learners.

The Early Childhood Care and Education Standards for Sindh (2018) emphasize the importance of teacher preparation and ongoing professional development. The standards highlight the need for teachers to understand child development, employ child-centered teaching approaches, and create supportive learning environments. However, the gap between policy expectations and classroom realities in public schools remains significant.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study research design, which is appropriate for exploring teachers' perceptions and practices in their natural settings. A case study approach enabled an in-depth examination of the specific context of public schools in District East Karachi, capturing the complexities and nuances of teachers' experiences (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). This methodological approach aligns with previous research on teachers' perceptions and practices in early childhood education contexts in Pakistan (Vazir & Ismail, 2009; Begum, 2020).

3.2 Research Site

The research was conducted in public schools in District East, Karachi. District East is one of the most populous districts of Karachi, with a significant number of public schools serving diverse populations. The district was selected for this study due to its representativeness of urban educational challenges in Sindh, including large class sizes, limited resources, and diverse learner populations. The schools selected for the study included government primary schools with early childhood education programs.

3.3 Participants

The participants of this study included early childhood teachers from public schools in District East Karachi. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select teachers who were currently teaching in early childhood classrooms (ages 3-8 years) in public schools. Teachers were selected based on their willingness to participate and their experience in early childhood teaching. The sample included teachers with varying years of experience and levels of training in early childhood education.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through multiple methods to ensure triangulation and richness of data. The primary data collection methods included:

Semi-Structured Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers to explore their perceptions of language development, their instructional practices, challenges they face, and factors influencing their pedagogical decisions. Interviews were designed to be flexible, allowing participants to share their experiences in their own words while ensuring that key topics were covered (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).



Classroom Observations: Classroom observations were conducted to examine teachers' actual instructional practices for fostering language development. Observations focused on teacher-child interactions, instructional strategies, classroom language policies, and children's engagement in language activities. Observation protocols were developed based on the research questions and existing literature.

Document Analysis: Document analysis was employed to examine relevant documents, including lesson plans, curriculum guidelines, and assessment records. This provided additional context for understanding teachers' practices and the influences of school policies.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Data from different sources were triangulated to ensure the credibility of the findings. Member checking was employed to validate the interpretations with participants.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms and removing identifying information. The research was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines for educational research.

4. Findings

4.1 Teachers' Perceptions of Language Development

Teachers' perceptions of language development in early childhood revealed a range of understandings that shaped their instructional practices. Several themes emerged from the analysis of interview data and classroom observations.

The Importance of Early Language Development: Teachers recognized that language development in early childhood is critical for children's academic success. One teacher stated, "Early childhood is the best time for language learning because children's minds are fresh and they can absorb language quickly." This perception aligns with the "younger, the better" belief that is prevalent among educators in Pakistan (Manan et al., 2017). Teachers expressed that children who developed strong language skills in early childhood were better prepared for formal schooling.

However, not all teachers held this belief uniformly. Some teachers observed that while young children may be better able to develop pronunciation and basic vocabulary, they may not have the cognitive readiness for more complex language skills. One teacher noted, "Smaller children cannot pick up ideas, you know, they are so small they just cannot talk... much help is needed to take care of such children." This variation in perceptions suggests that teachers' beliefs about age and language learning are influenced by their classroom experiences.

Language Development as a Natural Process: Teachers often perceived language development as a natural process that occurs through exposure and interaction. One teacher explained, "Children learn language by listening to others and then practicing. They learn from their environment, from their parents, from us." This perspective aligns with sociocultural theories of language development, which emphasize the role of social interaction in language learning (Vygotsky, 1978). However, teachers also recognized that language development requires intentional support

and instruction. "It doesn't just happen; we have to create opportunities for children to speak, to listen, to ask questions," one teacher commented.

The Role of Teacher in Language Development: Teachers perceived themselves as playing a crucial role in children's language development. Many teachers expressed that they were responsible for providing language input and modeling correct language use. One teacher stated, "I try to talk to my students in English as much as possible. This is how they learn." However, this perception was not always reflected in classroom practice, as teachers frequently reverted to Urdu due to concerns about children's comprehension.

4.2 Instructional Practices for Fostering Language Development

Teachers reported using various instructional strategies to support language development among early childhood learners. However, there were significant gaps between teachers' stated practices and what was observed in the classroom.

Use of Oral Language Activities: Teachers reported engaging children in oral language activities, including storytelling, picture discussions, and question-and-answer sessions. One teacher explained, "I read stories to the children and then ask them questions. They also share their own stories." Classroom observations confirmed that teachers did engage in oral language activities, but these were often teacher-dominated, with limited opportunities for children to initiate communication.

Storytelling was a particularly common practice. A teacher described how she used stories to develop vocabulary: "When I tell a story, I introduce new words and explain their meanings. I ask children to repeat the words." This practice is consistent with research suggesting that stories are effective for vocabulary development (Lakhani, 2014). However, observations revealed that the vocabulary instruction was often focused on single-word translations rather than using words in meaningful contexts.

Writing Activities: Teachers emphasized the importance of writing activities for language development. However, the approach to writing was largely product-oriented, with an emphasis on correct grammar, spelling, and handwriting. One teacher explained, "When children do creative writing, they need to be careful about punctuations, commas, full stops, and grammatically correct sentences because I am helping them to learn grammar as well."

Classroom observations revealed that children were often expected to produce writing in a single attempt, without opportunities for revision or editing. One teacher described her approach: "It's really tough to go for a process. It is really time consuming to go to each individual and check the work of forty children." The emphasis on product over process was reinforced by school policies that required assessment of written work and by parental expectations for correct work. As one teacher explained, "Parents who have not been able to seek education through formal schooling have high expectations from the school... they only seek right or correct answers."

Bilingualism and Code-Switching: Bilingualism and code-switching were significant features of language instruction in the observed classrooms. Teachers often used Urdu to explain concepts and give instructions. As one teacher stated, "I feel that all the children in my class do not understand whatever I deliver in English. That is why I have to translate in Urdu in order to build their understanding." However, teachers also expressed concern that relying on Urdu hindered English development. A teacher noted that if she uses English continuously in the class, children would not be able to understand.



Classroom observations documented this tension. One observed lesson showed the teacher switching frequently between English and Urdu:

Teacher: "The Animal Story. There are two kings now—Elephant and Camel. To jungle mein do king to nahin ho saktey. To kaun hoga King." [So there cannot be two kings in one jungle; hence, who would be the king?]

Children: "Elephant, elephant, elephant..."

Teacher: "Is ka matlab hai key hum ney sari pichly stories ko change kardiya key zaruri nahin kay lion hi jungle ka king ho." [It means we have changed all old stories—that it is not necessary that the lion is the king of the jungle.]

Children's Experiences: Children's experiences of language learning revealed the challenges they faced in the bilingual context. One student commented, "My teacher does not know our favorite topics we want to write, that is why I have to write on the topics the teacher gives." Another student shared, "I write on the topics given by the teacher, but I also want to get a chance to write on topics of my own wish." These comments reflect children's limited opportunities for expressing their ideas in writing.

Observations revealed that bilingualism created confusion for children who thought in Urdu but were expected to write in English. Children struggled to express their creative thoughts in English and often mixed the two languages. Research suggests that it takes five to seven years to be able to think in the second language (Weitzman & Greenberg, 2002).

4.3 Challenges in Fostering Language Development

Teachers identified several challenges in fostering language development among early childhood learners. These challenges reflected both systemic issues and contextual constraints.

Limited Resources: Teachers reported limited resources for language instruction, including a lack of age-appropriate materials, limited access to books and technology, and large class sizes. One teacher explained, "In a class of forty children, it is difficult to attend to each child's needs." Limited resources also restricted opportunities for children to engage with varied language input.

Parental Involvement: Teachers perceived low levels of parental involvement in supporting language development at home. One teacher observed, "In the rural areas, most of the parents are illiterate and could not communicate with their children in foreign language. This increased responsibility on teachers at schools as an alternative source." The lack of supportive home language environments, particularly for English, was a recurring concern. Children whose parents provided supportive environments at home were more communicative and confident in using English.

Pressure of Examination-Oriented Curriculum: Teachers reported pressure from the school system and parents to focus on preparation for assessments, which resulted in an emphasis on correct grammar, spelling, and handwriting rather than creative language use. As one teacher noted, "My motive of doing assessment there and then would not have been achieved." This focus on assessment-oriented instruction limited opportunities for children to develop their creativity and language skills.

4.4 Factors Shaping Teachers' Pedagogical Decisions

Several factors shaped teachers' pedagogical decisions regarding language instruction. These included school policies, teachers' own experiences, and expectations from parents.

School Policies: School policies that required English-medium instruction and emphasized assessment influenced teachers' practices. Teachers were expected to use English in the classroom



as required by school policy, but children's limited comprehension led to frequent code-switching. Teachers described feeling pressure to cover the curriculum and produce correct written work for assessment.

Teachers' Own Language Learning Experiences: Teachers' own experiences of learning language influenced their instructional approaches. Some teachers described their challenges in learning English and wanted their students to have better opportunities. A teacher stated, "I have experienced it that many children in early age cannot talk easily due to lack of social support in family and school."

Parental Expectations: Teachers reported that parents had high expectations for their children's language development, particularly in English. However, parents were often unable to provide support at home due to limited knowledge of English or educational background. One teacher explained, "Parents like their children to speak in mother tongue. Such parents would not motivate their children to practice foreign language."

5. Discussion

5.1 Alignment and Gaps between Perceptions and Practices

The findings of this study reveal both alignment and gaps between teachers' perceptions of language development and their actual instructional practices. Teachers recognized the importance of early language development and the need for supportive environments, but their practices were constrained by multiple factors.

Product-Oriented vs. Process-Oriented Approaches: A significant gap was identified between teachers' perceptions of language development as a process and their product-oriented instructional practices. While teachers acknowledged the importance of creativity and expression in language, their teaching methods emphasized correct grammar, spelling, and handwriting. This finding is consistent with previous research in the Pakistani context (Vazir & Ismail, 2009; Begum, 2020). The emphasis on product over process is reinforced by examination-oriented curricula and assessment practices, which prioritize measurable outcomes over the developmental process.

The Role of Bilingualism: Bilingualism emerged as a central theme in understanding teachers' practices and challenges. While teachers recognized that children's home language (Urdu) was necessary for comprehension, the dominance of English as the medium of instruction created tension. This bilingual environment is characteristic of Pakistani classrooms, where the linguistic demands of English-medium instruction conflict with learners' linguistic realities (Manan et al., 2017). Teachers' code-switching practices reflect their attempt to navigate this tension.

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development: The findings suggest that teachers' practices are influenced by their level of training and professional development. Teachers who had received training in early childhood education demonstrated greater confidence in supporting children's language development. However, many teachers perceived themselves as lacking adequate preparation. This highlights the need for targeted professional development programs that address the unique needs of early childhood teachers in multilingual contexts.

5.2 Contextual Factors Influencing Language Development

The study identified multiple contextual factors that influence language development in early childhood classrooms. These factors operate at various levels.

Sociolinguistic Context: Karachi's multilingual environment, with diverse linguistic resources and competing language demands, shapes children's language development. The priority placed



on English in educational policy creates challenges for children whose home language is not English. The linguistic diversity of the classroom, with children from different language backgrounds, also presents challenges for teachers who must address the diverse needs of learners. **Socioeconomic Context:** Children's socioeconomic backgrounds influence their language development opportunities. Teachers observed that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds had less exposure to English at home and fewer resources to support language development. This is consistent with research highlighting the relationship between socioeconomic status and language development (Hart & Risley, 1995). The role of parents in supporting language development is particularly important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Educational Policy Context: National and provincial educational policies, including the English-medium policy and the focus on assessment, shape teachers' practices. The "straight-for-English" policy, which emphasizes early introduction of English, creates challenges when children do not have sufficient exposure to the language. The policy context also influences teacher preparation, curriculum design, and resource allocation.

5.3 Contributions to the Literature

This study contributes to the existing literature on early childhood language development in Pakistan in several ways. It provides empirical evidence from the under-researched context of public schools in District East Karachi, complementing studies conducted in private or community-based settings. The study also examines the alignment between teachers' perceptions and practices, providing insights into the complexities of language instruction in multilingual contexts. The findings contribute to the broader literature on teacher cognition and the influence of contextual factors on language instruction.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This study examined teachers' perceptions and instructional practices for fostering language development among early childhood learners in public schools of District East Karachi. The findings reveal a complex picture in which teachers recognize the importance of early language development but face significant challenges in implementing research-based practices. Teachers' perceptions of language development emphasize the importance of early exposure and social interaction, but their instructional practices are influenced by multiple factors, including limited resources, examination pressure, and bilingual contexts.

The study identifies a significant gap between teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices. While teachers value creativity and expression, their emphasis on correct grammar, spelling, and handwriting reflects a product-oriented approach that limits children's opportunities for meaningful language use. Bilingualism creates both opportunities and challenges, with teachers navigating between English-medium instruction and the need to use children's home language for comprehension.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

For Teacher Professional Development:

- Develop targeted professional development programs that address teachers' understanding of child-centered language instruction, including process-oriented approaches to writing and the integration of creative expression.



- Provide training on effective bilingual and multilingual instruction that values children's home languages while supporting English language development.
- Offer ongoing support and mentorship for early childhood teachers to address the specific challenges of their context.

For Curriculum and Policy:

- Revise curriculum frameworks to emphasize process-oriented language development and reduce the emphasis on product-oriented assessment.
- Develop age-appropriate assessment practices that support rather than hinder language development.
- Provide adequate resources for early childhood classrooms, including children's literature, materials for creative expression, and technology for language learning.

For School-Community Partnerships:

- Develop programs to support parental involvement in children's language development, recognizing the important role of the home environment.
- Provide information to parents about the importance of supporting children's language development in home languages while also supporting English acquisition.
- Establish partnerships between schools and community organizations to provide additional language learning resources.

For Research:

- Conduct further research on the effectiveness of professional development programs for early childhood teachers in multilingual contexts.
- Explore the impact of specific instructional strategies, including storytelling and bilingual approaches, on children's language development.
- Examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions and practices over time and the factors that promote change.

6.3 Directions for Future Research

Future research should extend the current study in several directions. First, research examining the direct impact of teachers' instructional practices on children's language development outcomes would provide important evidence for the effectiveness of different approaches. Second, comparative research examining teachers' perceptions and practices across different districts and school types would provide a broader picture of early childhood language education in Sindh. Third, longitudinal research examining changes in teachers' perceptions and practices over time and the factors that promote improvement would inform professional development efforts. Fourth, research on effective strategies for supporting bilingual language development, particularly in contexts where English is the medium of instruction, would contribute to the development of evidence-based teaching practices. Finally, research examining the perspectives of children and parents on language learning would provide important insights into the broader context of early childhood language education.



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