Nurturing Sociolinguistic Competence in Pakistani ELT Context through Teachers: Practices, Perspectives, and Practicalities

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Abstract

Sociolinguistic competence or the appropriate use of language in different social scenarios is a construct that depends on such social variables as age, gender, class, and ethnicity as well as on different socioeconomic categories too. Teachers have a vital role to play in developing both receptive as well as productive sociolinguistic competence in any society, especially where English is a second language. The present research aimed at investigating public sector school teachers' perceptions and practices regarding sociolinguistic competence in Pakistan. In terms of sociolinguistic competence, the study has a special focus on context-appropriate grammar and vocabulary usage. The study consisted of two phases, in the first phase perceptions and practices of school teachers were analyzed using the works of Jianda (2006), Abedi (2016), and Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1981). In the second phase, building upon the findings, various training sessions were conducted in the Twin Cities of Pakistan to identify the hurdles and suggest practical solutions for the development of sociolinguistic competence among English language learners. The findings indicated that the unawareness of English culture is the major reason for cultural instruction failure in English language learning lessons. Also, by using feasible and cost-effective measures we can develop the sociolinguistic competence of English language learners at public sector schools.

Keywords: sociolinguistic competence, socioeconomic factors, ELT context, cultural perspectives

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Language learning is appropriately termed as an art where competence alone might not satisfy the purpose if you cannot perform it. Kanwit (2021) states that "learners must develop the ability to vary language according to linguistic and situational factors to produce context-appropriate utterances". In other words, performance is equally important as knowledge is. Moreover, it is just not simple performance but contextually appropriate performance. The appropriate use of language in numerous social scenarios is acknowledged as sociolinguistic competence (Alptekin, 2002). It is regarded as an essential part of communicative competence (Mede & Dikilitaş, 2015) that enables the learners to converse strategically, and skillfully. The concept itself can be traced back to Hymes (1972) who introduced the notion of communicative competence, including sociolinguistic competence as a crucial aspect of it. Far along, Canale and Swain (1980) offered a communicative competence model, distributing it into four modules: grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. They defined sociolinguistic competence as knowledge of appropriate language usage according to situation and context. Later on, many researchers defined it in various ways for example; Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) consider it as a skill to use language in appropriation with pragmatic and social factors. Bayyurt (2016) designates it as a "science studying the relationship between language and the speaking community, and it is also a science studying the purpose and function of language" (p.70). Comprehending the notion of sociolinguistic competence as evolved from various social and economic factors, it can be simply phrased as the appropriate usage of language in diverse social situations.

Substantial research has been offered to express how understanding and learning a foreign language requires sociolinguistic competence (For example, Mujiono & Herawati, 2021; Mede & Dikilitaş, 2015; Rezende, 2012; etc.). Mede and Dikilitaş (2015) highlight the fact that language teaching is incomplete without getting your learners equipped with knowledge of cultural and social rules that govern the conversation. Thus, teachers have a critical role to play while teaching a language. They have to provide the students not only with sufficient knowledge about lexis and grammatical rules of languages but also to equip them with sufficient mastery of socio-cultural factors that govern the practical usage of a language. Irrespective of the variables at play, teachers have a dynamic part to play in sociolinguistic competence in a society where English is a second or foreign language. In relation to the selected scenario for the current study, it is known that the English language in Pakistan is being taught as a compulsory part of the curriculum at schools for decades. However, many of the students that pass out each year lack linguistic skills specifically speaking skills (Habib, 2014). One of the explored reasons as suggested by many researchers is that it is being taught using traditional language teaching methods and approaches.

Consequently, most of the students may be able to produce grammatically correct sentences but not socio-culturally acceptable sentences. It can be concluded that the English language teachers in the Pakistani context have thus failed to impart sociolinguistic competence to students.

The present research focused on the investigation of public-sector-school teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the inclusion of sociolinguistic competence, in Pakistan. In terms of sociolinguistic competence, the study has a special focus on context-appropriate grammar and vocabulary usage in vocal verbal communication i.e. speaking.

1.2 Objectives

The research aims:

- To analyze the perceptions of public-sector-school teachers, in Pakistan, regarding the importance of teaching sociolinguistic competence
- To examine the selected English language teachers' practices for developing sociolinguistic competence

1.3 Significance of the Study

The findings can be useful for English language teachers directly and their students indirectly thus benefitting the education sector. It would assist in developing sociolinguistic competence primarily and then communicative competence thus helping Pakistani learners of the English language to be better communicators at various levels nationally and more importantly, internationally. Finally, it would assist EL teachers across the global community to cater the sociolinguistic competence in their pedagogy.

2. Literature Review

Plentiful studies have been conducted in the field discussing the importance of acquiring sociolinguistic competence for learners of a foreign language. For effective communication, not only internalizing grammatical knowledge but also the knowledge of appropriate usage in a social setting is necessary.

There have been studies that discussed how sociolinguistic competence could be acquired or developed among language learners. Bayley and Regan (2004) wrote one such article in which they mentioned a lot of research on the said topic. They primarily focused on mainstream methods in sociolinguistics such as the variationist tradition employed by William Labov and conversational analysis. Most of the studies researched vernacular dialects communities of second language learners; variationist tradition is used to study the linguistic aspect of second language acquisition whereas conversational analysis hinted at the importance of context (Bayley & Regan, 2004). They attempted at elaborating on how sociolinguistic competence can be developed by discussing several types of research.

Incorporating sociolinguistic competence in second language learning helps in a better understanding of other cultures, identity formation, and cross-cultural differences. Mede and Dikilitas (2015) studied how teaching and learning of sociolinguistic competence are being perceived on part of teachers. They studied the perceptions of seventy EFL teachers and showed that sociolinguistic rules can help learners in choosing appropriate forms that are more closely integrated into the culture and can be incorporated into language teaching and learning curricula. Kramsch (2014) writes that the difference between what is taught inside a language-learning classroom and what is required outside the classroom to carry out a meaningful conversation has never been this wide as it is now. She also noted that over the past few decades, communication has changed so much that even teachers are not quite sure about the real-world situations that their students might face. She steps a little forward and says that classroom practices are influenced by the macro-level decisions of authorities that design curricula and syllabi.

Sociolinguistic competence is a mandatory part of learning second languages in classrooms. Thus ignoring the social aspect of a language has certain impacts on learning. In a country like Pakistan, specifically, where English is being taught as a second language to a child throughout school years, not incorporating sociolinguistic competence may affect language learning. Several researchers studied how knowledge of the use of appropriate language can assist in learning languages in classrooms. Rezende (2012) conducted an ethnographic case study of an international teaching assistant course in which she discovered that for "good teaching" or deliverance of a lecture effectively, incorporating communicative competence was necessary. Likewise, Ritchie (2011) specified how sociolinguistic competence can be developed through virtual intercultural exchange. She showed that computer-mediated communication (CMC) offers conditions for the development of sociolinguistic competence of second language learners. Another study about communicative language teaching (CLT) in a computer-assisted language learning environment studied the perceptions of both teachers and students (Sarfraz et al., 2015). Contrastively, it is also being proved that variance in cultural roles is one of the hurdles in sociolinguistic acquisition, that is to say, what may be appropriate in one culture can be unacceptable in another. The learner, being unaware of these principles, uses his native language practices. This process called a pragmatic transfer, is the cause of misunderstandings and can cause serious communication breakdowns (Mizne 1997).

In a study where perceptions of English teachers regarding strategic and communicative competence were studied, it was seen that they are not significantly different among ELT and non-English Language Teaching (non-ELT) students in Indonesia (Yufrizal, 2017) Tchoutezo (2010) showed that incorporating pragmatic instructions with second language teaching produced better results and helped in improving communicative competence on part of ESL learners. The study discussed in detail the perceptions of instructors, the techniques they use, and the difficulties they faced. Other works (such as Lundgren 2005; Larzen 2005; Israelsson, 2016) have shown very often that

teachers lack intercultural competence's theoretical backgrounds and central guidelines. Consequently, culture is not integrated into language pedagogy. Yu (2008) said that no matter how many or fewer classrooms were communicatively oriented, they often lacked sociolinguistic instruction, and as a result, even though the students had varying learning outcomes concerning speaking and writing skills, their sociolinguistic competence was the same. The same happens in Pakistani public sector schools where teachers are not aware of the concept and therefore do not teach their students.

Regarding sociolinguistic competence or pragmatics, there are studies that not only discuss perceptions but also practices. For instance, Tibebu et al. (2017) studied perceptions and practices on part of preparatory school EFL teachers. The results showed that the teachers were largely unaware of the concept and did not practice it in class. Moreover, they considered the integration of socio-cultural knowledge in class infeasible and most of them did not contextualize their speaking lessons. Omaggio (2001) puts forward three reasons why teachers don't work for the development of sociolinguistic competence. (1) lack of time for teaching the culture of the target language; (2) lack of confidence in themselves for being able to teach the cultural aspect as well; (3) developing sociolinguistic competence requires considering students' attitudes which more often than not are found challenging by teachers. Educationists have been promoting the socio-cultural dimension in foreign language teaching for quite some time. Abedi (2016) made a comparative study of apology strategies used by Iranian language learners and English native speakers. He used Cohen and Olshtain (1981) categorization of apologizing where an apology can come under one or more of the five categories.

From the above discussion, it is evident that incorporating sociolinguistic competence and contextualization of speaking lessons is very much necessary in ESL classrooms but unfortunately, the idea has not gained real importance in Pakistan. A large number of students pass out of school each year without having sufficient knowledge of the English language, something, which is taught to them for more than ten years as a compulsory part of their education. Therefore, keeping in view the situation that students at public schools in Pakistan face, it seems important to find out how the teachers perceive and practice sociolinguistic competence. What is their knowledge of the concept and how much do they practice themselves in their lives and transfer it to their students? The present study also aims at finding out the effective methodologies of teaching sociolinguistic competence to teachers primarily who can later transfer their knowledge to students to increase their sociolinguistic and communicative competence eventually.

3. Research Methodology

The study makes use of a mixed-method approach that is combining elements of both qualitative as well as a quantitative research approaches for broader purposes of an in-depth understanding of data. The research was conducted in two steps.

- Initially, the research design was concurrent since the qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed simultaneously.

- The second step built upon the data from the first step and was purely qualitative where participants were informed and trained about sociolinguistic competence and then data was collected and analyzed.

The population chosen for the study consisted of teachers of government-run schools in the Islamabad and Rawalpindi region. The schooling system in the Pakistani government sector usually offers education from primary to secondary levels. Thus, teachers teaching at elementary and secondary levels only were the target of the study. The reason was that the primary level ELT curriculum mainly focuses on individual components of language like vocabulary, grammar rules, alphabets, sounds, etc. therefore not concerned with skills-based teaching (listening-speaking and reading-writing). The present study was mainly concentrating on sociolinguistic competence that can be more focused at higher levels of education (like elementary and above). Stratified sampling was used to select several teachers from both areas by dividing the population into various strata and then selecting a sample from within each stratum (Thomson, 2012). Around 137 responses were received from male and female teachers however, 120 responses were randomly selected to keep the balanced gender ratio (60 males and 60 females). The mean age of the selected sample was 32.4 years, whereas qualification was between bachelor's to master's, with the majority of them with supplementary professional Bachelor of Education degrees (83%).

For the first phase of research, the tools being used included a survey questionnaire; using the Likert scale to study perceptions and practices respectively. The questionnaire included seventeen statements regarding the role of teachers, students, the education system, and other factors like lack of time and overpopulated classes, as an effect on socio-linguistic speech competence. All seventeen questions were mainly concerned with three areas, the role of teachers, the role of students, and the role of the education system with respect to various elements like curriculum, syllabus design, interaction, etc. The questionnaire was designed to check the perceptions of the teachers regarding these factors (described above) influencing the transmission of sociolinguistic competence (attached in appendix). To check the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with a random sample of 20 teachers. The internal coefficient of reliability was measured to be 6.1 which was satisfactory. The face validity of the questionnaire was obtained from some experts in the field. While, for the second phase, the study made use of two research tools. These were i) an adapted questionnaire based on DRPT (Tchoutezo, 2010) and ii) a focus group discussion of how to incorporate cultural instructions in classrooms.

Both the first questionnaire and the DRPT (Discourse Role Play Tasks) were administered to the sample teachers through the survey method. The researchers personally visited the local schools with a proper ethical statement and permission to obtain the data. The respondents were informed about the aims and objectives of the research as well as about the ethical standards to use the collected responses. For the second tool, training sessions were conducted initially for the school-level teachers (in Rawalpindi and Islamabad Capital Territory) on how to integrate sociolinguistic competence in their ELT curriculum. It was a 2-days workshop conducted in each of the selected cities. Succeeding this, a focus group dialog was conducted with the selected participants, in order to search for possible

problems they can face and probable solutions. The focus group interview was based on the number of questions (attached in the appendix).

The data collected from the first questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS whereas data from DRPT was analyzed and interpreted as done using Tibebu et al. (2017) work and as Abedi (2016) categorized it. Moreover, data collected in focus group interviews were analyzed through the content analysis method.

4. Findings and Discussion

The data from both steps or phases are analyzed and discussed below.

Data collected during the first part of the study is presented and analyzed below. The survey questionnaire included seventeen statements to which respondents i.e. 120 government teachers from Rawalpindi and Islamabad region had to respond. The expected answers were mostly the agreement of the teachers in identifying the above-mentioned roles in developing the focussed aspect of socio-linguistic competence. The difference between strongly agree and agree depends upon the subtle differences in the individual interpretation of the subject.   The results revealed that overall the teachers did not take a very strong stance. Most of them had "agreed" and "disagreed". A very small number of teachers "strongly agreed" and an even smaller number of those "strongly disagreed." An overall summary is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of responses to the questionnaire

Statement. No. and their Inquiry Type	By percentage			
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1(Students' concentration: for exams only)	36.2	53.3	10.6	0
2(Role of the education system: syllabus design)	19.1	46.8	34.0	0
3(Students' concentration: on the theoretical matter only)	20.8	72.9	6.3	0
4(Role of the education system: curriculum and course material)	15.2	39.1	37.0	8.7
5(Students' concentration: attachment with target language's culture)	35.7	52.4	11.9	0
6(Role of the education system: atmosphere in classes)	29.8	53.2	17.0	0
7(Role of the education system: management of teaching and learning system)	20.8	68.8	10.4	0
8(Role of teachers: unawareness of the importance of SLC)	14.6	56.3	20.8	8.3
9(Role of students: Lack of interest)	16.7	54.2	27.1	2.1
10(Role of the education system: test-centric system)	19.1	70.2	10.6	0
11(Role of the education system: non-supportive)	18.8	50.0	31.3	0
12(Role of the education system: curriculum development)	14.6	58.3	25.0	2.1
13(Role of teachers: strict following of curriculum)	25.0	52.1	18.8	4.2
14(Meaningful interaction of students and teachers)	33.3	62.5	4.2	0
15(Role of students: unawareness from formal and informal use of language)	39.1	56.5	4.3	0
16(Role of students: their family background)	31.9	59.6	4.3	4.3
17(Role of the education system: overpopulated classes)	52.1	43.8	4.2	0

The questionnaire actually dealt with the role of teachers, students, and the education system in determining the SLC i.e sociolinguistic competence (context-appropriate speech as a focus for this research). Apart from one statement i.e. "Lack of time and over-populated classes are responsible for this problem" with 52.1% strongly agreeing participants, the highest value for strongly agreed was 39.1% for "Students must be aware of formal and informal usage of language" which only meant the realization of need. The most surprising response was that of statement no. 4 where curriculum development was mentioned. Again a mild tone was seen but i.e. 15.2%, 39.1%, 37%, and 8.7% strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree respectively. This statement had the highest number of disagreers and strong disagreers, probably because instead of teachers and students this time the role of authorities was questioned.

One common observation was that during data collection a considerable number of teachers did not even know about the importance of the concept of sociolinguistic competence. This was accepted by a total of 70.9% of teachers.   89.2% of teachers accepted that even teachers are unaware of various contexts of language use thus causing problems. In a nutshell, it was clear that the teachers did accept the need for incorporating contexts for language teaching however due to several factors such as lack of awareness, time, and over-population the students were not taught sociolinguistic competence.

DRPT was used for qualitative data collection regarding apologies, complaints, and requests. The participants were provided with 22 situations. In our daily life, apologies, complaints, and requests are one of the most frequently employed speech acts, hence for the present study, they would be pragmatically significant. They were adapted from the ones given by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). Out of these, eight were related to making apologies, seven to making complaints, and seven to make requests.

The way an apology is made depends upon the spectrum of intensity of the kind of mistake committed and the attitude of native speakers of the English language towards that mistake. Languages are culture-specific and what may be acceptable in one culture may be considered offensive in another. An apology according to Cohen and Olshtain (1981) can consist of one or more of the five types:

- An illocutionary force indicating device IFID; which may include expressing regrets, asking for forgiveness, or offering an apology.

- Explaining
- Admitting what you've done.
- Offering remedy.
- The promise of forbearance.

The participants were provided with 22 situations. These were adapted from the ones given by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). Out of these, eight were related to making apologies.

The results obtained from analyzing this data showed that the apologies that teachers offered were the same except for the fact that the appropriateness, context, and intensity of mistakes were not kept in mind. Most of them used IFID by saying the word "sorry", only a few of them said "I'm sorry" and even rare would be the ones who said, "I am so/extremely/ sorry". There was a little less of the same number of participants who took responsibility and gave an explanation but did not use IFID or offered any remedy. These people would appear to be a little impolite. Some of them took a step further and offered a remedy or promised of being careful in the future. Usually, the apologies consisted of a combination of two to three of these categories. However, linguistically being correct, the context was being ignored. The first two situations involved the relationship between super and sub-ordinate. For instance, Situations 1 and 2 were related to coming late and not being able to submit work on a deadline. Now, this act of being late is considered highly impolite in English culture whereas being a Pakistani has become normalized. Therefore, apologizing for being late in English culture includes the use of phrases that expresses great regret such as "I'm so sorry for keeping you waiting". However, not a single apology included "sorry for keeping you waiting". The participant had used IFID, admittance, explanation, and promise to forbearance but the appropriate level of politeness according to the mistake was missing. There was a problem in comprehending situation 3, which involved the relation of two colleagues, for several participants because the most inappropriate responses were seen for that. Even though the mistake was running into a colleague's car, the level of regret expressed was not according to the mistake committed. Situations 4 to 7 included a student's apology to the teacher. Although the relationship between a teacher and student demands respect yet some responses were not sociolinguistically correct for example when given a situation where the student talks during a lecture one response were "But sir isn't it right to ask when I'm not getting a single word" here although the reason was stated no IFID was observed. Another response said, "Sir, sorry leniency and well-behaving are also a part of teaching and communication". Now although it had the word sorry it was highly impolite on part of a student to say this to a teacher when they are at fault. Situation 8 was about a teacher bumping into a student and spilling his books on the floor. Out of 48 responses, only 9 teachers were "extremely/ sorry" and out of these 9, only 4 wanted to offer a remedy by picking up the books for their student.

Table 2. Summary of responses to the eight DRPTs for apologies

Types of Apology	Situations							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	75%	39%	61%	81%	70%	58%	44%	97%
2.	33%	69%	47%	24%	38%	61%	88%	31%
3.	13.8%	5%	8%	-	19%	19%	-	19%
4.	-	19%	14%	-	-	-	-	30%
5.	86%	11%	3%	-	27%	28%	14%	-

Regarding the complaints, the participants were provided with 22 situations. These were adapted from the ones given by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). Out of these seven were for making complaints.

The impact of the grammar-translation method was most evident in making complaints than in any other speech act. The participants were given seven situations of different severity in which they had to complain. Situations 1, 2, and 7 involved teacher and students, situations 3 and 6 involved colleagues, situation 5: boss and teacher, and situation 4 a random person. Most of the complaints were moderate but involved one or more of the following four parts, which were:

- Stating problem
- Expressing feelings
- Suggesting action
- Threatening in case of not agreeing.

In situation 1, the teacher had leaned the book to the student which he had damaged on return; the responses were of various intensities ranging from very polite to moderate such as "It's not fair. You should take care of the book" and "I hate to tell you that you damaged my book" to "I haven't seen such a careless student in my life. You damaged my book. Next time I won't give you this favor." In situation 2; an unknown student was sitting in class without permission. Responses again were of different severity but usually moderate for example, "It is very bad that not only you are sitting in class without permission but also creating disturbance… " Situation 7 involved students making noise in a library which were mostly told to "be quiet" by giving reference to "library rules".Situations related to colleagues had responses of different intensities largely moderate, but sometimes harsh and seldom polite. Situation 6 was about a colleague spilling a cup of tea on the only copy of a rare book. This had usually moderate to harsh responses even "It's really embarrassing. You are deaf and blind. You spoil my book." was observed.

For situation 5, where the boss was a friend but had not paid a salary, responses were largely moderate, sometimes with a threat even. For instance, "Sir, I have to fulfill my needs. If you can't pay me then I will resign from my job". Furthermore, Situation 4 was related to a random person breaking the line in which the respondent was standing. Usually, it had polite to moderate complaints.

As mentioned before the effect of GTM was observed more in complaints than any other speech act. There were literal translations from Urdu to English in various situations, in other words, pragmatic transfer was seen more clearly in complaints. For example the use of "Oh Hello!" is not sociolinguistically correct still it was used. "Oh, brother!" was used for what we say in Urdu as "*O Bhaii*". In one place the word *"yaar"* (which means friend in English) was used as it is. The responses are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of responses to seven DRPTs of making complains

Parts of Complains	Situation						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	93%	62%	86%	69%	83%	65%	51%
2.	42%	5%	35%	9%	5%	31%	2%
3.	33%	64%	42%	74%	62%	31%	78%
4.	5%	5%	4%	7%	7%	2%	47%

For the request's part, the participants were provided with 22 situations. These were adapted from the ones given by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). Out of these, seven were for making requests. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) attempted to study inter-language and intra-language variability in how requests and apologies are realized with a special focus on the native and non-native differences in use. They presented three working hypotheses for making requests. These were in a request:

- The central phenomenon can be distinguished from internal and external modification.

- Directness is a matter of choice.

- The scale of directness has three main options i.e. direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect.

For requests too, seven situations were provided, the first being the one in which teachers are discussing something in the staffroom while students are making noise outside. Most of the responses were about asking what the matter is or telling them to be quiet, but there were a few responses where instead of making requests students were being called and warned. The responses were usually direct such as "keep quiet please" and "keep silence and no talking in class". In situation 2, the head spoke fast while giving the teacher some instructions. All the responses had the word (or phrase) "please/kindly/would you mind" as an essential part of it. This is because of the social relationship between a teacher and a head. Although the level of directness varied yet they were all polite. However, there was one exceptional response as well i.e. "Sir, repeat it." In situation 3, i.e. asking a student who is preparing for exams to fix his own computer, again politeness level varied. Almost half the participants did not use the word please/kindly. The requests were conventionally indirect i.e. stating the known circumstances still requesting. For example, "I know you're busy preparing for your exam but you're the only student who is skillful in fixing computers". For situation 4, the mobile phone of a colleague rings during the meeting and the participant had to request him to turn it off. All the responses were direct requests with little or no modifications. Situation 5 is when the participant had to request a student who was blocking his view during a cricket match. Usually, the responses were direct requests but three were indirect requests as well. Although most of them used the words "please/kindly/could you" because of social-relational imbalance some did not use these terms to show politeness. For situation 6, the participant needed to request a colleague to assist him in teaching a difficult course. Responses were largely polite, conventionally indirect requests such as, "Sir, hope you would be fine. I have heard about your expertise in the new English course. Would you please help me out?" The last situation i.e. 7 was about asking your colleague for his computer who himself has some work but the deadline for submission of his work was a day after yours. Mostly the responses were conventionally indirect; however, a considerable amount of participants had made direct requests. What was surprising was the fact that only a few had acknowledged that the colleague also had to work and would be a great favor if they give the participant his computer.

In the last phase, two-day workshops were arranged, one in each of the twin cities for teachers. They were provided with questionnaires initially and then the concept and implementation of sociolinguistic competence were explained explicitly. Following this, a focus group discussion was conducted in order to search for possible solutions. The data collected from the three sources using the above-mentioned methodology is analyzed below.

Teachers were asked to select the strategies they adopted to integrate cultural instructions in class from a list. In the Rawalpindi region, almost all of them used dialogues or dialogue completion. Some of them used reading or themselves modeled correct responses while even lesser were the ones who used discussion and role-plays. They were then asked to check what benefits they perceived from doing so. Many teachers checked increases in self-esteem, avoidance of hesitation and awkwardness, and achievement of linguistic functions. A few were also selected to manage the impression others have of a speaker and establish solidarity and relationships. In Islamabad Capital Territory, almost similar responses were seen except that a larger number of teachers used reading scenarios, discussing, and reading socially and culturally appropriate communication as well. A few had also checked field experience. Despite what options they chose on the questionnaire, a few of them admitted during the session that they practically did not employ any of these things except the reading of dialogues in textbooks.

The participants were then asked about the difference in students' sociolinguistic competence because of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Many of them in Rawalpindi only pointed toward the difference in pronunciations and accents and that they were unaware

of the correct responses. Also, students tried to act in or handle a situation according to their native language ways. One teacher also pointed out that the community a student lives in also has a great impact on his sociolinguistic competence. Teachers of ICT told that students in rural areas were reluctant to speak the English language and would prefer to use their regional languages in school even, specifically Pashto and Potohari speakers. "They are rigid and sometimes become indifferent to what is being taught in class", such students handle situations in their own ways. One of the teachers while mentioning the extreme native language effect said that her students called her "Baji" instead of ma'am because of their strong adherence to social and cultural background.

Finally, the teachers were asked about the difficulties they face during integrating cultural instructions in class. The teachers of the Rawalpindi region admitted that even they were not aware of the English culture and hence could not teach it to the students. The few problems that were seen were lack of time, lack of resources, overcrowded classrooms, lack of a purpose-oriented-designed syllabus for improving sociolinguistic competence, lack of awareness and understanding of culture and its importance, etc. Many teachers admitted that they are not subject specialists and therefore have no idea and experience a lack of confidence while teaching something new. Also for many of the students, English is not a second but a third language with their native language as first and Urdu as second, they are not comfortable or confident while speaking Urdu even. One of the participants stated that since our examination system focuses only on the written aspect of language very often teachers fail to improve students' speaking skills. Similarly, in ICT, lack of motivation, resources, time, overcrowded classrooms, lack of familiarity, rush to complete syllabus, being constantly monitored for bringing good results in board specifically, weak examination system, etc. were mentioned. However, one teacher pointed out that girls in rural areas are very shy and therefore do not speak the English language.

At the end of each session, both in Rawalpindi and Islamabad Capital Territory, a focus group discussion was held where participants could come up with the problems they were facing and easy solutions to them. Mostly the above-mentioned issues and remedies were put forward again, except for a few. For instance, many of the teachers specifically in the Rawalpindi region were not subject specialists and they did not have a sound command of the English language yet they were assigned the task of teaching English. Furthermore, a teacher was judged based on students' results or record/notebook maintenance; not his learning or performance, and their written skills were tested only so the teachers focused solely on written skills and very often used cramming as their shortcut. Also, the teachers at government schools have been assigned so many duties and have little or no free classes. Therefore, they cannot give proper time to their classes. Another problem was the planned visits and monitoring and evaluation methods for teachers. The teachers in Rawalpindi were bound by the Punjab Employee Efficiency and Discipline Act (PEEDA), 2006, which was more of a hurdle than a facilitator for them. Out of all the suggestions made during this part the revision of syllabi, curriculum, and examination system was the most prominent one. Also, the teachers should be facilitated and extra tasks should be reduced.

In government-run schools in Islamabad, almost similar responses were seen. Although there were very few teachers who stated that it was practically not possible, there were some enthusiastic teachers as well who wanted to learn it for their students. They believed that teachers are role models for students and therefore a teacher must first use sociolinguistically appropriate sentences. They said that students experience language change and are already very weak at grammar even. The teachers agreed that while teaching the English language in their classrooms, they needed to incorporate manners as well. The problems present in English language learning classrooms, as stated by the teachers of public sector schools, located in ICT, were almost the same as Rawalpindi; i.e., the pressure of completing the syllabus in time, huge strengths, imbalance in teachers-students ratio, the problem of not teaching listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, etc. These teachers also told that the problem of being a subject specialist exists in ICT as well. Usually, the English teachers were given science subjects as they were considered competent and science was given importance, while English was given to non-subject teachers as the authorities took it for granted and said that anyone could teach English. Also, the same teacher would, at a time, take many different and contrastive subjects as well, thus reducing their focus to teach the English language. They also pointed out the flaw in the examination system and the way an exam was divided into objective and subjective type questions. They also highlighted the use of the mother tongue at schools as a problem.

The effective teaching practices that were suggested by these teachers for developing sociolinguistic competence among students included dialogues, dramas, providing students with situations to act, role-plays, creating stories, establishment, and maintenance of interactive sessions, speaking skills-oriented organized and planned classrooms, group activities, task-based learning, question-answer sessions, drills, elicit production, reading socially and culturally appropriate texts, etc. One unique and interesting idea that was put forward by a teacher from the Rawalpindi region was the use of comic books and puppets to motivate and attract students. However, there was a difference in the use of video/multimedia for teaching in both areas. The teachers from Islamabad said that they have been provided with resources such as multimedia, which they can use to teach children whereas, no such facility was present in the Rawalpindi region. According to participants, teachers themselves should focus on themselves first and improve their as well as their students' pronunciations.

In light of the above data, it has been clear that sociolinguistic competence is a concept that needs to be taught and implemented across Pakistani schools. Also that although a lot of methods have been suggested by Baley and Regan (2004) mainly the variationist tradition of Labov and conversational analysis, however, this study is different in the way that it makes use of the survey method and content analysis of DRPT to study sociolinguistic competence. There are studies related to the development of sociolinguistic competence such as Rezende (2012) who said that "good teaching" requires the incorporation of context in class and Ritchie (2011) who suggested online culture exchange as one of the methods for sociolinguistic competence development but the present study has a different focus. Yu (2008) showed that no matter how much communicative environment teachers provided, the sociolinguistic aspect was still ignored. This is true

in the Pakistani context as well. Pakistani teachers have been using the Grammar Translation Method for ages, but recently a gradual shift is being seen from GTM to a communicative approach however, the outcomes for sociolinguistic competence remain the same. These studies are pedagogic-centric and ignore the cognitive aspect i.e. the role of the teacher's knowledge in teaching sociolinguistic competence as is studied presently. Tchoutezo (2010) brings in the role of teachers as well by studying their perceptions along with the techniques they'd use to teach students and the hurdles they face in doing so. However, the practice of teachers on their part was not studied before. This study shows that the teachers in public sector schools in Twin Cities themselves are not quite aware of the concept of sociolinguistic competence. It was a common observation during data collection that very few teachers were aware of the idea. Moreover, the lack of a strong stance in the responses to the survey indicates the same as well. Lundgren (2002) and Larzen (2005) also stated that the reason teachers fail to incorporate cultural contexts is the lack of intercultural competence. This is very much in line with the present study which shows that intercultural competence is not taken into account by teachers in their day-to-day communication which means they would obviously not bring it into their classrooms and teach learners.

Perceptions regarding different kinds of competencies have also been under discussion. Yufrizal (2017) showed that the perceptions of teachers for strategic and communicative competence are not significantly different among ELT and non-ELT teachers. He did not study perceptions regarding sociolinguistic competence; the present study covers that. Mede and Dikitas (2015) however, filled this gap in teachers' perceptions about teaching and learning sociolinguistic competence but they did not discuss the practices. This study focuses on the perceptions of Pakistani public sector teachers and how these perceptions affect their practices. The findings discussed above are in line with the ones by Tibebu, et al. (2017) who studied it in the Ethiopian context and with a smaller number of schools. Also, although the different method was used the outcomes of both research are more or less the same. The Ethiopian teachers perceived the application of sociolinguistic competence in classrooms as rather impractical and infeasible whereas, Pakistani teachers were more welcoming to learning and employing the idea.

Also, it is clear that the present pedagogy of the English language in public sector schools of Rawalpindi and Islamabad is not in line with modern needs, and what Kramsch (2014) said is accurate in that what is taught inside the class is different from the requirements outside for communication. Teachers focus more on what is written inside textbooks than what should be taught. Also that the decisions taken at the macro level directly affect classroom teaching as is evident from acts like PEEDA. Also as Mizne (1997) writes that because of cultural differences and differences in rules of learners' context (Urdu) and target context (English) as in cases of English and Urdu/regional languages, there are a lot of elements that may be acceptable in one culture and not in the other.

Therefore, to improve students' sociolinguistic competence teachers were trained as suggested by teachers were trained After the workshop, the teachers agreed that they did not possess sound knowledge and understanding of sociolinguistic competence and its development as pointed out by Lundgren (2005); Larzen (2005); Israelsson (2016). The problems stated by the public sector schools' teachers were in line with the ones that were put forward by Omaggio (2001). This study should that teachers in public sector schools of Rawalpindi and Islamabad are unaware of the idea of sociolinguistic competence and its importance but once, taught they realize its importance and commit to taking that to their students as well.

5. Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is quite clear that many teachers were either completely ignorant of the concept of sociolinguistic competence or had little knowledge of it. They, therefore, had completely ignored the importance of sociolinguistic competence and therefore had not employed such pedagogy that could help improve students' sociolinguistic competence. This is because of several reasons but the most important is that teachers themselves were unaware of the contextual use of language. They had very little information about English culture and since they were unaware of it, they usually didn't find it necessary to teach it to their students. Resultantly, even after decades of teaching the English language as a compulsory subject at schools, many of our public sector students still find it difficult to communicate in English, or if they can utter grammatically correct sentences, they fail to produce sociolinguistically acceptable sentences.

This study, therefore, serves as an eye opener, for both the teachers as well as the curriculum development authorities, to acknowledge the importance of integration of cultural instruction in language learning classrooms, so that our students not only speak grammatically correct but also contextually appropriate English. Consequently, the misunderstanding of our students being rude could be eliminated.

The second phase has largely been dependent on interactive sessions that were conducted to improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of the concept of sociolinguistic competence. It was clear from the interaction that although there are a lot of problems in our education system, specifically at government-run schools, where students from all kinds of backgrounds are being taught and teachers have to face several difficulties while teaching the English language to these students. Therefore, if teachers are provided with significant pieces of training, they are mostly willing to implement it in their classrooms. We face problems of weak curriculum and syllabus design and outdated examination systems, lack of teachers' training, and many others that need to be addressed. The training sessions conducted under the present research suggested that the teachers want to teach their students effectively. Therefore, many methods that would help improve students' knowledge of language were suggested by teachers.

It is thus recommended that teachers of the English language must understand the concept of communicative competence generally and sociolinguistic competence particularly. For this purpose, teachers, and English language students should be exposed to English culture. There should be some facility at schools that if not daily, even weekly or fortnightly English language learners must be brought in contact

with their native use of language. Cultural instruction should be made a vital part of teachers' training programs. There should be workshops that would instruct teachers about the importance of sociolinguistic competence so that they realize it and pass it on to their students to make them more accurate, more sophisticated speakers of the English language. Also, such training sessions should be arranged regularly and more in-depth training workshops should be conducted that would familiarize teachers more with the English culture so that they can learn and bring cultural instruction to their classrooms.

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Appendix I

The main aim of this Questionnaire and DRPTs is to investigate schoolteachers' perceptions and practices regarding sociolinguistic competence. The information you provide will strictly be used for research purposes only. You are requested to kindly cooperate and complete the task. For DRPTs, please respond to the situations and write what you would say in each situation. Make sure to read the whole situation carefully before you respond. This is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers; just answer as spontaneously as you can. Thank you so much for your time.

Name: School:

Sr.	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	At school, students concentrate on written grammar and vocabulary only to pass the exam.				
2	The syllabus is designed for exam purposes, not for communicative purposes.				
3	Students fail to communicate as they focus on the theoretical matter only.				
4	Neither the curriculum nor the course materials applied in schools enable our students to develop this competence.				
5	Attachment to the target language's culture plays a vital role in communication effectively.				
6	The atmosphere provided in the classes also causes a failure in learning the proper use of the English language.				
7	Decisions by authorities for how language will be taught and assessed influence students' learning.				
8	Teachers are unaware of the importance of sociolinguistic competence.				
9	Students themselves do not take interest in developing sociolinguistic competence.				
10	Learners have been conditioned by the test-centric system.				
11	The present education system is a hurdle in developing sociolinguistic competence.				
12	While developing the curriculum the importance of sociolinguistic competence is neglected.				
13	Teachers need to follow a strict curriculum to improve the stated competence among students.				
14	By informing students about various usages of language, teachers can help the students.				
15	Students must be aware of the formal and informal usage of language.				
16	Families of students who lack sociolinguistic competence are also responsible for it.				
17	Lack of time and over-populated classes are responsible for this problem.				

Discourse Role Play Talks

1. The Principal: This is the third time you're late. Next time you will be given an explanation letter.

2. The Principal: I told you that there won't be any extension. Why didn't you prepare your presentation?

3. Your Colleague: Can't you look where you are going? See what have you done. (Ran into his/her car)

4. Your cell phone rings loudly in a very important meeting in the principal's office.

5. The teacher: Don't you think it is impolite to speak while I am teaching? (You're a student.)

6. The teacher: What are you thinking about? Are you following me? (You're a student.)

7. The teacher: I told you several times that you must always be ready for the class. Why didn't you study this chapter?

8. Accidentally bump into your student, causing him to spill his/her book all over the floor.

9. You have lent your book to one of your students to prepare a presentation. Now he/she has returned the book but some of the pages have been damaged.

10. While you are teaching you get to know that a student from another class is sitting in your class without your permission and disturbing the class.

11. A few days ago, you lent a book to one of your colleagues and you told him/her that he/she should return it soon because you need it. Tomorrow you have an exam and you need the book you have called him/her but it is not returned yet.

12. You are waiting in line to buy something. Suddenly a person cuts in the line in front of you.

13. You are an employee in a company; the boss who is an old friend of yours has not paid your salary for two months.

14. Your colleague has spilled a cup of tea/coffee all over the book which you were reading. You only have one copy of that important book.

15. You are in a library studying but other students are making noise which is disturbing you.

16. You are trying to work in the staffroom and your colleagues are discussing there's noise coming from down the hall. You don't know the student, but you decide to ask him to keep quiet.

17. You are now discussing your project with your head. Your head speaks very fast. You do not follow what he is saying, so you want to ask your head to say it again.

18. Your computer is down because of a virus. One of your students is very skillful in fixing computers. You know he has been very busy preparing for exams, but you still want to ask him to fix your computer.

19. You are in a meeting. The mobile phone of one of your colleagues rings. You ask him to turn off his mobile phone.

20. You are watching a cricket match at school. A student you don't know comes and stands just in front of you blocking your view. You want to ask the student not to block your view.

21. For the first time this year, you are taking a difficult course. You have had a hard time understanding the textbook. You notice that one colleague seems to have good background knowledge of that course but you do not know him/ her yet. You want to ask him/her to help.

22. Something is wrong with your computer, but you have to finish some work, which is due tomorrow. Your colleague has a computer, but he is also using his computer. His work is due the day after tomorrow. You want to ask him to stop his work and let you use his computer to finish your work first.

Appendix II

Today's session aims to familiarize English language teachers with the concept of sociolinguistic competence. You are requested to kindly pay attention to the contents and videos and then keeping in the view Pakistani context, provide feasible and practical suggestions. Your cooperation in this regard shall be highly appreciated.

Name: **School:**

1. Which of the following approaches have you used to integrate cultural instruction into second language classes? Check all that apply.

- o   Roleplay
- o   Dialogs
- o   Teacher models socially and culturally correct responses
- o   Read the scenario and identify correct responses and behavior
- o   Use videos or computer programs demonstrating pragmatics
- o   Read about socially and culturally appropriate communication
- o   Field experience
- o   Dialog completion
- o   Analysis of a social dilemma or problem
- o   Discussion of socially and culturally appropriate language and behavior
- o   Other (please describe):

2. What do you perceive to be the benefits of integrating pragmatics instruction in second language classes? Check all that apply.

- o   Manage impressions others have of the speaker
- o   Increase self-esteem
- o   Successfully establish and maintain interactions with native speakers
- o   Establish solidarity and relationships
- o   Avoid hesitation and awkwardness
- o   Successfully achieve linguistic functions (e.g. regretting, apologizing)
- o   Familiarize students with native speakers' norms for various situations (Don't overuse "please")
- o   Other (please describe):

3. What differences in sociolinguistic performance have you noticed based on learners' LI or cultural backgrounds?

4. What difficulties do you face during the integration of cultural instruction in second language classes?

5. How well do you think cultural integration is practical in classrooms?

6. Keeping our context in mind, how can you contribute to the effective development of sociolinguistic competence?