Analyzing the Challenges and Hurdles Faced by Urdu Medium Students in Achieving Proficiency in Essential English Grammar: An Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Several countries around the world use English as their official language. Individuals with adequate language proficiency would have a wide range of work opportunities to improve their opportunities. They can also travel anywhere in the world and profit from the English information that is available online. In this study, undergraduate students of Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) whose mother tongue and preferred method of instruction are Urdu will be analysed for their knowledge of essential English grammar and difficulties. The majority of undergraduate students of MANUU have little proficiency in functional English grammar, largely as a result of a dearth of qualified teachers in educational settings, as well as exposure, motivation, and learning tools. Due to the primary emphasis on mastering the Urdu language and literature, English continues to be neglected in their schooling and intermediate levels. The present study mainly aims at exploring the challenges and difficulties faced by undergraduate students and also focuses on the necessity and potential of involving members of the general public and English teachers to assist students in improving their English-language abilities.

Keywords: Urdu Medium, Grammar, Language skills, First-generation, Target language

INTRODUCTION

As the official language of numerous developed and emerging nations worldwide, English is a truly global language. An estimated three billion people use English as their primary language of communication daily in a world with a population of over six billion. Learning English offers doors to employment in areas where competition is fierce as it is the prominent universal commercial language. The English language is the engine that drives the internet, one of today's most renowned technologies. And roughly 70–90% of the online information is written in English. It can be difficult to learn English, or any other language, for that matter. In the 21st century, which is characterised by globalisation, the free market, and technology propelled by the internet, there are many reasons why one should study English.

Writing Skills

Henry Sweet(1964) says, students must master all four all the four language skills like, listening, speaking, reading, and writing to communicate effectively in English. Speaking and writing are regarded as helpful skills that necessitate student involvement. These two abilities are closely related or rely upon one another. They serve as instruments for producing efficient written communication. Sadiku, L. M. (2015) states, people who can express themselves well in writing will always succeed in their lives. Your intellectual or expressive level is a "hard copy" of your writing ability. Learners require chances to improve their writing and reading skills. They must be exposed to authentic reading materials and writing assignments or projects for that reason. Writing proficiency aids in the successful transmission of feelings, concepts, and thoughts. Students with strong writing abilities would be able to convey their ideas clearly and effortlessly through any medium or means.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The teaching and study of the English language have always included grammar. The Greek letter 'gramma' is where the word "gramma" for grammar originates. It has a long history of being related to both the study of logic and the skill of writing. Dionysius Thrax (2010) says, in his book titled "The Art of Grammar", grammar has been described as "the technical knowledge of language". Many methods, approaches, and tactics have been used throughout history to teach and learn languages. A brief remark on the many forms of grammar and language teaching techniques has been reviewed because grammar still plays a significant role in language learning.

Forms of Grammar

George Yule (2010) discusses several approaches to grammar in his book "The Study of Language" and provides a list of various forms of grammar, including traditional grammar, prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar, transformational grammar, etc. In conventional / traditional grammar, the components of speech continue to be emphasised. Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle agreed on three key concepts when describing the language: Onoma, which is Greek for name or noun; Rhema, which means saying or predicate; and Verbum, which is Latin for a verb. There are eight components of speech in contemporary English. Nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections are among them. Traditional grammarians were intended to give rules to language learners who needed direction on how to use the language. The majority of Indian classrooms teach conventional grammar. It uses word-based grammar in which there are eight different categories for word usage. Wren & Martin (2011) in their book "High School Grammar and Composition" gave a superb illustration of this style of grammar. With lots of activities, it concentrates on sentence forms and speech elements. It applies the deductive approach.

The following are definitions of certain grammatical terms taken from the Encyclopaedia Britannica, with additional meaning derived from Yule's writings: Descriptive grammar aims to accurately and scientifically characterise grammar. Prescriptive grammar lays out guidelines for proper usage. This method sees grammar as a set of guidelines for the "correct" use of a language. Transforming deep structure into surface structure and vice versa is the foundation of transformational generative grammar. American linguist Noam Chomsky first introduced the idea of transformational grammar.

Overview of Methods

Throughout many centuries, the practice of teaching languages has experienced significant change. Language instruction has advanced from the conventional method to structuralist and behaviourist philosophies. Before moving into the specifics of each method, it is important to know that an approach is the way you deal with or convey something, whereas a method refers to a collection of steps in a plan. Three elements make up a method: approach, design, and procedure. Since no one technique or method works for all types of learners, an effort was made to develop a way that would work for the intended audience. A quick comment on key techniques, as addressed by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) and Rodgers and Richards (1986) is as follows:

One of the earliest established techniques for teaching English is the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), sometimes referred to as the Classical Method or the Prussian Method in the United States. GTM is regarded as a product of German study. It was used to educate Latin and Greek in Europe over many centuries, but especially from 1840 to 1940. It regards translation as the primary or exclusive method for memorising words and sentence structures to learn grammar rules and learning vocabulary. This approach places a greater emphasis on reading and enjoying literature in the target language or a foreign language than on speech training. It teaches grammar rules deductively using the learner's mother tongue as the reference. To teach grammar principles using this way, a teacher might not require specific training or expertise.

Around 1900, the direct method was developed in France and Germany under the names Reform Method, Natural Method, Psychological Method, Phonetic Method, and Anti-grammatical Method. It emerged in response to the grammar-translation approach. Moreover, it is a subset of B. F. Skinner's Behaviourism theory. This approach maintains that association clear connection between experience and articulation in a foreign language is the key to all language learning. No translation is permitted in this system, unlike GTM. However, students are urged to acquire a target language in a way similar to how a young kid learns his or her first language (L1), or mother tongue. There is essentially no room for the use of the mother tongue, which encourages the learner to think in the target or foreign language. The direct method favours situational use of the target language and emphasises its spoken aspects when teaching grammar rules. It also considers the use of meaningful sentences in question-and-answer or dialogue formats, employs the inductive method, and aims to gradually develop language proficiency. Instead of encouraging the development of productive abilities like speaking and writing, it promotes the learning of receptive skills like listening and reading.

The Bilingual Method was established by Dr C.J. Dodson. The target language and the mother tongue are both used in this strategy. It can be viewed as a synthesis of direct approaches and GTM. This approach was developed concurrently in opposition to the direct approach. It differs from GTM in two ways: first, only the teacher can explain meaning in the mother tongue; learners cannot; and second, learners get a lot of practice drilling phrase patterns. Its guiding concepts are selection, graduation, presentation, and repetition. To achieve bilingualism, this approach aims to make students accurate and fluent in both spoken and written language. This approach continues to be a non-independent method without any original concepts or models. For a variety of pragmatic reasons, this approach is used by the majority of teachers in Indian schools.

The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), commonly referred to as the Army Method, was created in America to help soldiers quickly become conversationally fluent in several foreign languages. Foreign language study was necessary for the military. The Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) was created in 1942 to meet this

demand. It is based on behavioural psychology and language philosophy. The "Michigan Method" is a term that has sometimes been used to refer to this approach was developed by structural linguist Charles Fries of Michigan University. In 1964, Nelson Brooks introduced the concept of audio-lingual. He emphasised the fundamental tenet of structuralism, according to which "speech is primary," and that language acquisition follows a cycle of stimulus-response-reinforcement. It implies that this approach sees the acquisition of a second language as a mechanical process of habit-building. Similar to Direct Method, ALM does not emphasize the learner's original language and instead concentrates on the development of native-like speaking abilities. Via dialogue memory and pattern drills, it offers "contextualised" language instruction in actual contexts. This approach places more emphasis on oral abilities while placing less or no emphasis on writing abilities. The Eclectic Method might be the greatest option for language teachers in civilizations with a diversity of cultures and languages like India. All language teaching strategies, techniques, and exercises are used in the eclectic approach. A teacher chooses a methodology or approach to employ based on the situation and the needs of the students. It is suggested for teaching foreign languages when using a single method is not appropriate. The eclectic approach combines features of both conventional and cognitive methodologies. It is an essential component of learning overall.

METHODOLOGY
Objective and Sampling

The main purpose of this study was to examine to what level undergraduate students of MANUU were familiar with the value of English, its grammar, what type of challenges and difficulties they had in learning it, and how such problems could be addressed. According to the plan, undergraduate students should be able to speak English on par with other graduate students whose medium of instruction is English. The questionnaire was filled out by the students with their cooperation. 60 undergraduate fourth semester students took part in the exercise in class. The majority of these students were first-generation English language learners.

Data Collection

To make the questionnaire straightforward to respond to given the level of respondents, the teacher utilised an objective type format. The students had to check the box next to the appropriate statement or question on the questionnaire. The researcher was required to explain the questionnaire and the questions to the students in easy English. Grammar, English awareness, and the necessity for a qualified English teacher were the three sections of the questionnaire. The overall result was determined based on the responses to arrive at a particular conclusion. The researcher had to speak with students and taken consent before beginning to gather data. The data was meticulously sorted and examined after being gathered by translating the answers into percentages using a general mathematical procedure. Many students have shown little enthusiasm for participating in the exercise. As a result, only 60 students' opinions gathered and examined.

Information and Discussion

For each statement or question, there were three possibilities from which the respondents had to select one. These responses were transformed into percentages for the analysis. Based on the available answers, the table-1 shows how many people answered each question:

Table 1: Number of Responses

	Question/Statement	Yes	No	Can't Say
1	Do you know that English is a language?	60	0	0
2	English is the official language of India.	10	45	5
3	The English language has 8 parts of speech.	40	5	5
4	Name of the person, place or thing is known as 'Noun'.	55	0	5
5	Action words are called verbs.	58	0	2
6	A sentence contains at least one noun and verb.	45	5	10
7	'Delhi' is an example of a verb.	5	48	7
8	'Play' is an example of a noun.	49	7	4
9	Do you speak English daily?	50	5	5
10	Do you require a native English teacher?	35	15	10

Table 2: Percentage of Correct Responses Related to Grammar

	Question/Statement	Percentage
3	The English language has 8 parts of speech.	66%
4	Name of the person, place or thing is known as 'Noun'.	91%
5	Action words are called verbs.	96%
6	A sentence contains at least one noun and verb.	75%
7	'Delhi' is an example of a verb.	80%
8	'Play' is an example of a noun.	81%

The first question concerned their familiarity with English as a language. 100% of the class correctly answered the question, demonstrating their understanding of English as a language. They were all unaware that English was one of India's official languages at the time. Their overall score on grammar-related problems was ordinary. On one side, 91% of them correctly identified a noun's definition, but only 96% did the same for a verb's definition. Only 75% of pupils correctly answered the question about a remark about the sentence. 81% of them correctly selected the correct answer when given an incorrect verb example. With a bad example of the noun, just 80% of the students selected the right response. The majority of the students do not read anything in English every day, according to the results of this questionnaire. It's always better thought to have a backup plan in case something goes wrong, but it's not a need.

CONCLUSION

The study sought to determine the students of undergraduate students need awareness of English, familiarity with essential English grammar, and difficulties in learning writing abilities. 60 undergraduate students provided the data, which was then examined. It was shown that the majority of students lacked strong writing and grammar skills. They lacked qualified teachers who consistently taught them English in their schooling and intermediate level. Also, because they were first-generation students, there were not many materials available to them and the school teachers did not encourage them to read English newspapers, books, or stories. The schooling in Urdu medium continues to place a strong emphasis on the Urdu language and literature; therefore English does not receive the attention it deserves. Since the majority of these students are supported by donations and government money, the students could benefit from the active participation of volunteers, NGOs, and English teachers who work for free.

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