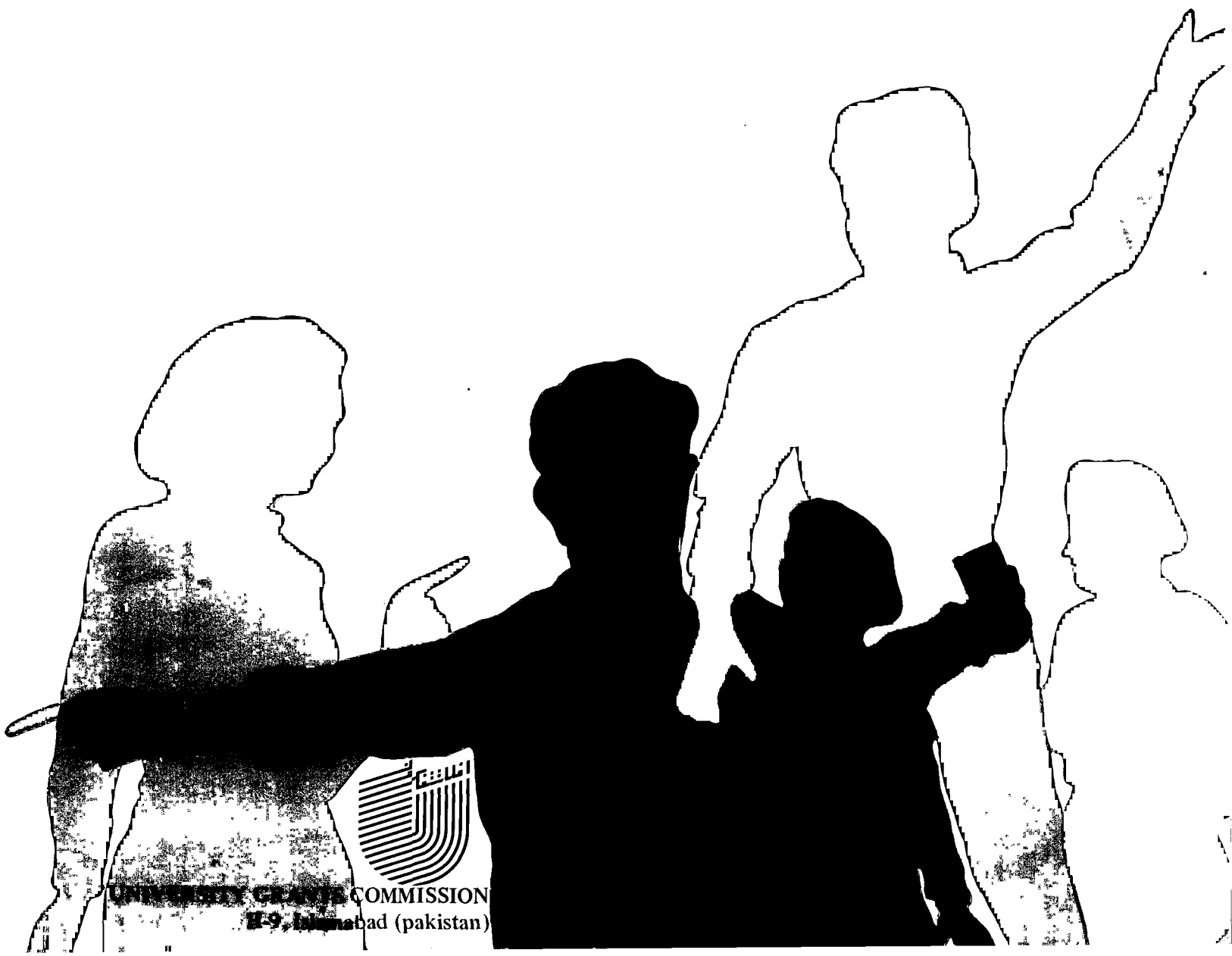


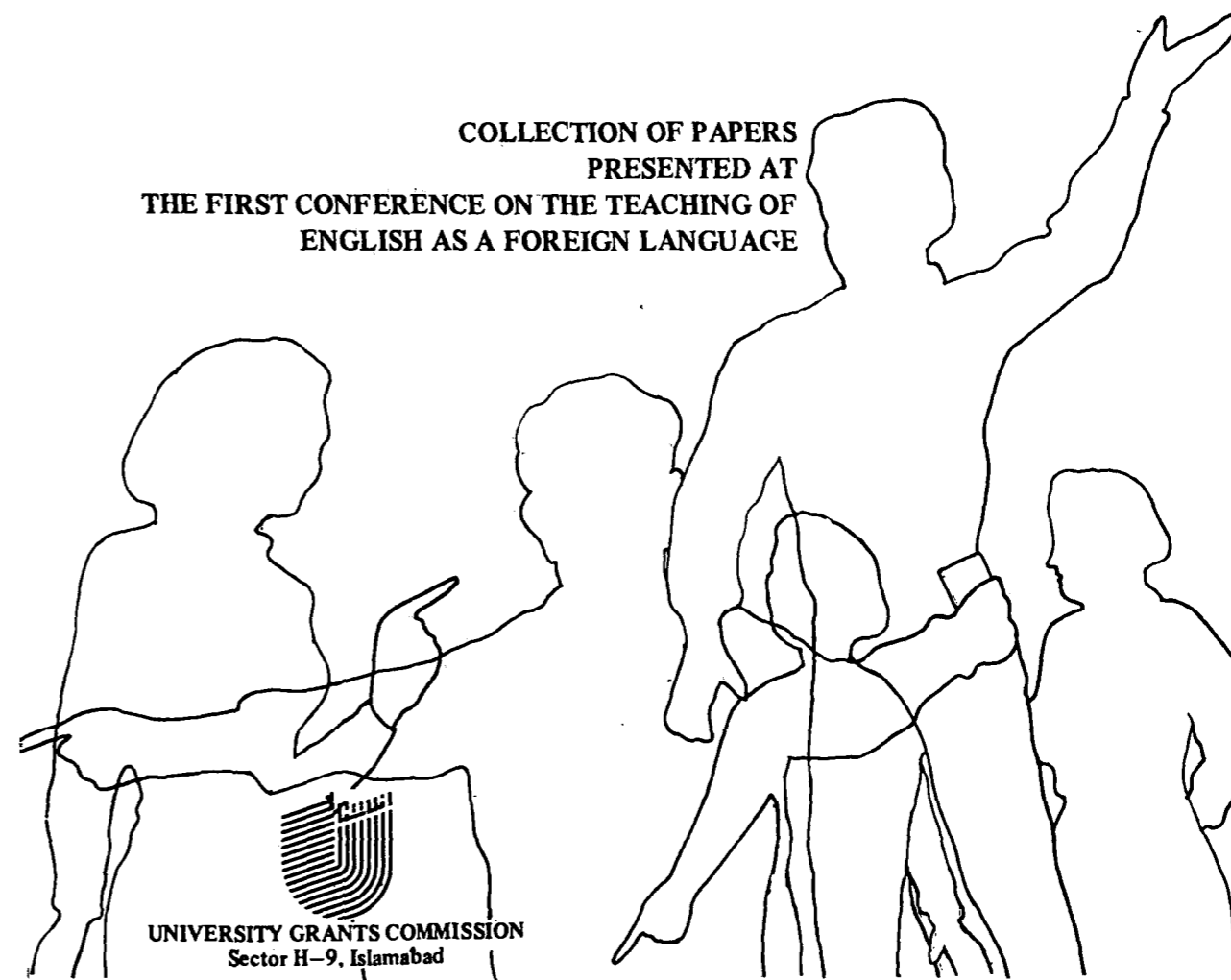
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING 1983




UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION
E-9, Islamabad (Pakistan)

**ENGLISH
LANGUAGE
TEACHING**
1983

COLLECTION OF PAPERS
PRESENTED AT
THE FIRST CONFERENCE ON THE TEACHING OF
ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE



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X

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VI
INTRODUCTION	VII-VIII
ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE	9
... K. M. Larik	
THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN PAKISTAN	14
... Mrs. Bilquis Qureshi	
GOVERNMENT LANGUAGE POLICY	19
... Muhammad Jamshed Khan	
THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN PAKISTAN	25
... Professor Amena Khamisani	
THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN PAKISTAN	29
... Rafat Karim	
A METHODOLOGY FOR PAKISTAN	36
... Hafiz Fateh Mohammad	
CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES	45
... Mrs. Khalida Sarwar	
CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES	58
... Ahsan-ur-Rahman	
CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES: TEACHING ENGLISH AT THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL: WHY? WHAT? HOW?	66
... Miss Shamim Akhtar Sharif	
THE STUDENT'S PERCEPTION OF DIFFICULTY	76
... Abbas M. Husain	
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF INTERPERSONAL TRUST IN LANGUAGE LEARNING	81
... Husne Jehan Alam	
LINGUISTIC AND NONLINGUISTIC BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL READING	88
... Suraiya Nazar	
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: TWO INSEPARABLE ENTITIES	96
... Suraiya Makhdoom	

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN PAKISTAN	110
... Dr. Kalimur Rahman	
POETRY AND LINGUISTICS: COMPREHENSION, COMMUNICATION, AND STYLISTICS	116
... H. R. Ghauri	
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LITERATURE	123
... Shanawaz Doger	
ENGLISH LANGUAGE EXAMINATION POLICY	129
... Noor Ilahi Khan Khattak	
TESTING IN THE CLASSROOM	136
... Aneesa Mumtaz	
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE	147
... Liaquat Ali	
WRITING SKILLS AND INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS	155
... Professor Mian Muhammad Afzal	
WRITING SKILLS: SUBSTANCE AND TECHNIQUE	168
... Bashir Ahmad Chaudhry	
TEACHING WRITING AT THE POSTGRADUATE LEVEL IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BALUCHISTAN	194
... S.M.A. Rauf	
HANDLING LARGE CLASSES	205
... Rubina Rasool	
THE QUESTION OF LARGE CLASSES	210
... Mohammad Abdul Hafeez	
HANDLING LARGE CLASSES	219
... Zakia Sarwar	
HANDLING LARGE CLASSES	225
... Samina Shamim	
TEACHER SKILLS AND THE EDUCATION PROCESS	230
... Miss Fatima Qadir	

X

110	CONSTRAINTS ON METHODOLOGY ... Mrs. SHEMEEM ABBAS	237
116	ENGLISH IN NON-NATIVE USE: A SECOND LANGUAGE VIEW ... ANJUM P. SALEEMI	245
123	DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM ... MRS. M.S. HAMID	255
129	HANDLING LARGE, MIXED ABILITY CLASSES ... MRS. FATIMA HUSAIN	261
136		
147		
155		
168		
194		
205		
210		
219		
225		
230		

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CONSTRAINTS ON A METHODOLOGY FOR PAKISTAN

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In the present paper I will be discussing the resources available for the teaching of English in the country and the constraints on the application of instructional strategies for teaching the language at the various levels of education. In my paper I will be focussing attention on variables such as the geography of the country, the linguistic variations, parent attitudes, student attitudes, the quality of teacher-training, the attitude of the administration, monetary allocations and their utilisation, the curriculum designed for teaching English in relation to textbooks, the aids available, and the time allocation for teaching English. I begin my analysis by briefly surveying the geography of the country and the population break-down.

Pakistan has four major geographical units, i.e. Sindh, Baluchistan, N.W.F.P. and Punjab, and each area has its distinct physical features, climate, and a linguistic and cultural character. The population figures for the country are:

Total Population	81.61 million
Males	42.824 "
Females	38.78 "

The area-wise population break-down in figures of millions is:

	PUNJAB	SINDH	NWFP	BALUCHISTAN
Urban males	6.91	4.39	.89	.37
Urban females	6.05	3.82	.77	.30
Rural males	17.85	5.57	4.77	.67
Rural females	16.31	5.20	4.46	.17

I am giving the details of the population figures in relation to urban and rural and in the context of males and females as these are also the variables which ought to be taken into consideration in any attempt to analyse the attitudes

towards the learning of English in Pakistan and therefore the strategies for learning the language. These are variables which create the cultural attitude towards the learning of a foreign language such as English.

Let us proceed further and on the basis of the population figures briefly glance at the range of educational institutions area-wise in the country. I am afraid the figures are not very up-to-date and are compiled on the basis of whatever statistics could be available from the research wing of the Ministry of Education.

At best, most of the figures hold good up to 1979. These are the area figures of Primary Schools run by the Government in:

	NWFP	PUNJAB	SINDH	BALUCHISTAN
Total	5,76	31,386	11,470	2,338
Males	4,416	19,421	9,558	1,912
Females	1,350	11,965	1,912	426

Figures for Middle and High Schools area-wise are:

	NWFP	PUNJAB	SINDH	BALUCHISTAN
Total	980	4,963	1,594	408
Males	802	3,424	1,178	330
Females	178	1,539	416	78

The number of Colleges both Degree and Intermediate which teach Arts and Science are:

	NWFP	PUNJAB	SINDH	BALUCHISTAN
Total	62	201	131	27
Males	51	139	93	23
Females	11	62	38	4

These figures do not include privately run institutions, which are a very small percentage of the total and in Baluchistan none at all.

Ninety percent of the teachers including those teaching English at various levels of primary and secondary education in Pakistan are formally trained. I quote figures for the number of trained teachers at primary and secondary school level throughout Pakistan and area-wise. These figures are based on statistics available up to 1975. The total number of formally trained primary school teachers up to 1975 were 51,231: males, 35,872; females, 15,259. Area-wise the number of trained teachers are:

	NWFP	PUNJAB	SINDH	BALUCHISTAN
Total	6,479	25,250	11,035	2,655
Male	5,591	19,710	6,207	2,251
Female	888	8,045	4,828	404

No untrained teachers in Baluchistan.

In spite of the high percentage of trained teachers at the primary and secondary level, our average student even when he gets into college is far from fluent in any of the skills of the English language. I am not talking of the student who comes from the elite, cream of English medium schools. I am referring to the student who comes from the Urdu-medium stream and who is the basis of this paper. With regards to the factors involved, let us first look at our clientele depending on where the institution is. The client for learning the English language is a student whose first language is either Pushto, Baluchi, Sindhi, Siraiki, Punjabi or one of the regional dialects and in some cases, Urdu. English in most cases is a third or fourth language which a student learns in Pakistan. After the regional language or first language, he learns Urdu as the second language which is the national language. His attitude towards learning English would, therefore, depend on where he is living, whether in an urban environment or in a rural environment, and whether he is a male or female. The attitude of his community and parents towards the learning of the target language would contribute greatly to the success or failure of the language-learning process.

If the student is a male there is more community encouragement and parental encouragement to learn English for getting on in a profession. If the student is a female and in a rural area, the chances are fewer and community encouragement to learn the language minimal, as it means exposure to a foreign and alien culture pattern. In Pakistan as elsewhere.

student attitudes and feelings towards the learning of English are also affected by such variables as regional language variations, their own backgrounds, and the backgrounds of their classmates and teachers.

By and large one can safely say that the learning of English for the majority of Pakistani students is a traumatic experience. Students feel that it is a 'hard' subject, and they do not get anything out of the class. Shortly they forget what little they do learn. The parents can do little to relieve the child of the anxiety of learning the foreign language. The goals for learning the language are hardly visible to either the student or the parent, except that the language has to be learnt to pass the examination. The teacher who is teaching the language is in no better position. He too feels that the language has to be taught to make the student pass the examination. The goals for learning the language are clear to no one, perhaps not even the administration. The absence of clearly identified goals for learning English, I would say, is a severe constraint on instructional strategies for teaching the language.

This takes us to the next variable in the argument and our major resource in a language programme for English, that is the teacher and the quality of teacher training. Altogether there are 213,335 formally trained teachers up to the secondary school level in the country. But the academic situation in our schools, especially in relation to English-language teaching, is far from satisfactory. This is largely due to the poor quality of training in our teacher-training institutions. Of the four major universities in the country, i.e. Sindh, Punjab, Peshawar, and Baluchistan, perhaps only one university--Peshawar--makes it compulsory for graduates in teacher-training colleges to study English. In Sindh, Baluchistan, and Punjab, English need only be taken as an elective subject. Appointments at school level of junior English teachers and senior English teachers are made by the District Administration without reference to the subjects of specialization in training institutions and most often teachers who have not specialized in English are required to teach a subject which they themselves have studied perhaps only up to the level of their pupils. The curriculum of teacher-training colleges where teachers do their bachelor's degree in education has increased from five to seven subjects and even where teachers do specialize in teaching English, they are only exposed to such methods as the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, Substitution Methods, and Dr. West's Method. However, in actual practice our teachers from primary school level up to the college level teach English mainly through the Grammar-Translation Method.

There is no exposure of teachers to classroom use of remedial methods of reinforcing their teaching with students who are already weak in the language. Nor is there any attempt to build in achievement procedures within the instructional system. These are handicaps in the curriculum design of teacher-training colleges. The quality of teacher training for English language is the severest constraint on the resources for developing language skills. It is a vicious circle. Teachers appointed to teach subjects at the secondary school level themselves come through a process of obsolete but demanding curriculum design in teacher-training colleges. These teachers in turn have to instruct students in a syllabus design loaded with literary texts which have to be taught with severe restraints on time.

The curriculum in the teacher-training colleges is not designed to train teachers in developing effective language skills nor in preparing innovative materials using the prescribed textbook. There are no programmes within the system for updating or refreshing instructional strategies in the inservice training of teachers at any level, whether at secondary school or at college level. It would perhaps be interesting to read the figures for the financial allocations in the national budget for education and evaluate the constraints on the resources for teaching English which need not be financial. I quote the figures for the fifth Five-Year Plan from 1978 through 1982.

The allocations for education are	10,281.3 million rupees
Percentage of GNP	1.6%
Allocations for secondary school education	3,257.5 million rupees

Up to 1981, including the years 1978 through 1981, only 433.0 million out of the 3,257.5 million was utilized for secondary school education which is barely 12% of the total allocation.

Allocation for colleges	767 million rupees
Money utilized from 1978-1980	248 " "
Allocation for universities and professional colleges	965 million rupees
Money utilized form 1978-1980	361 million "
Allocations for the 6th Five-Year Plan (1983-1988)	20,500 million "
Percentage of GNP	1.6%

One wonders how much of this amount will be effectively used. We cannot say that enough money is not available for developing language programmes in English, it is simply that the planning is poor and outdated, and amongst the constraints on language programmes of English, we may take into account the poor utilization of resources, absence of absorption capacity, and absence of fresh programmes, added to the apathetic approach of the administration both at school and college level and at district administrative level. English language teachers themselves have to break through the barriers and impress upon school administrators the urgent need for inservice education and training of teachers and their training for improving skills in the classroom.

Another variable which is a constraint on developing effective instructional strategies for teaching English is the textbook. If we look at the textbooks used in schools and colleges for the teaching of English, we would be able to assess why the student response to the learning of English is at best indifferent. Added to the generally poor quality of the textbook is the poor quality of teacher-training in developing further materials from prescribed texts. The traumatic experiences of learning English can therefore be understood. The absence of motivation in the student to learn the target language is a by-product of an unrealistic English curriculum and the unimaginative quality of the textbook. Added, of course, to such variables are the socioeconomic backgrounds of both students and teachers.

Another variable which ought to be taken into consideration in identifying the constraints on the application of instructional strategies for teaching the target language is that of time allocation. In the Urdu medium stream where all other subjects are taught in Urdu, English begins to be taught from class six only and that, too, for only one hour daily, which means six hours weekly. If the teaching of English is to

be meaningful, a variable which ought to be looked into is that of time allocation for teaching the language. Negative student reactions to English are built because of discomfort with the target language. Second language study requires the student to tread new linguistic and cultural territory and this exposure to a different culture pattern can be psychologically uncomfortable. Perhaps given more time for teaching the language, especially in the initial stages and with more relaxed teacher attitudes, the learning of English for the Pakistani student may not be such a terrifying experience.

Another constraint on developing effective instructional strategies for English language teaching is the availability of teaching aids. The aids which language teachers have access to both at the school level and at the college level are minimal. Mostly it is the blackboard and in odd cases at the school level, a few charts for teaching the alphabet. Effectively, there are hardly any supplementary materials in the classroom for developing the skills of the language or for creating an environment of motivation to learn the language. We have seen that the problem is not so much that of money, it is essentially the initiative to get the money for better teaching aids and the utilization of those aids.

In the absence of teaching aids the initiative of the teacher could be a substitute in order to design inexpensive aids with the involvement of the students. The argument again goes back to the necessity for radical inservice teaching-training.

All of us here today are aware that the instructional strategies for teaching English in the country need up-dating; and that if we have to continue learning English and to develop linguistic competence in our students, we have to restructure our methodologies for teaching the language. This includes the up-dating of testing and evaluation procedures, renewing the strategies for teaching the language and to carry out a massive operation in the inservice training of English language teachers in the country at all levels.

We, in Pakistan, need to revise our curriculum design and update our evaluation and testing procedures to coordinate with the revised curriculum design. We need not go completely with the 'pendulum syndrome', swinging with the newest practices and theories on second language learning, but we can certainly infuse the spirit of the new approaches into the existing system and in a revised curriculum design for language teaching. Countries like Malaysia have, after careful planning, gradually shifted to a communicative syllabus design and have likewise trained the teachers to use a communicative

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syllabus. We in Pakistan need not perhaps shift completely to such a curriculum design but we certainly can expose our teachers to some of the communicative classroom skills and the designing of materials from existing textbooks for communicative teaching. This would perhaps infuse the new spirit in the teaching of English we so desperately need. We also need to help our teachers identify the skills of the language and to train them to develop all the four skills in the students and not to concentrate on developing just the writing skills in the classroom. The language teacher has to take the instructional strategy for teaching the language outside the classroom in creating the spirit of learning the language by motivating the students to use the language in other situations.