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## **Integration Through Transformation: Training Madrassa Teachers for Teaching English**

### **ABSTRACT**

Schools pursuing Islamic curricula in South Asia are usually known as madrassas. Madrassas or Islamic seminaries are an indispensable reality in the wake of Pakistan's socio-economic and socio-religious conditions. The present study reports on the findings of a 'Madrassa Teachers Training Course' for young female teachers teaching English in the madrassas across Pakistan. The aim of the course was two-pronged; one, to bridge the gap between conventional teaching style and modern teaching practices; and two, to improve the communication skills of the course participants. This action research was conducted as a mixed-method study using a triangulation strategy to collect data. A pre-test and a post-test were administered to the course participants (n=41) to check the progress made during the two-week course. A questionnaire was prepared using a Likert scale with a few open-ended questions, to record the perceptions and beliefs of the participants regarding various teaching practices employed/introduced during the training. The semi-structured observation was done throughout the course to record the level of enthusiasm and interest of the participants. The data were analyzed through descriptive tests and several T-tests according to their scientific nature. The results reveal that a positive attitudinal and cognitive transformation occurred among the madrassa teachers during the course. They show a desire to get more trainings which have implications for the removal of mistrust attached to learning the English language. The results also reveal the positive attitude of teachers regarding the importance of English in the curriculum. The pre and post-tests show a notable improvement in their

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performance. This research can play a key role in successfully integrating the parallel education systems and bringing the marginalized sections at par with mainstream education in Pakistan. The findings have implications for future pedagogy and they can also be utilized to determine the needs of madrasa teachers in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Madrasa, ELT, Professional Development, Classroom practices, Perceptions, English, Single National Curriculum

## **Introduction**

For two decades, the government of Pakistan and other national and international donors have been attempting to reform madrassa education and bring them into the mainstream education system through various steps like registering them; their capacity building; and providing teacher training. The purpose has been to socially and economically modernise and empower their students in order to enable them to become productive and effective members of a competitive society. The course that this study reports on was one of such initiatives. It was co-sponsored by the RELO, the US embassy and READ Foundation. Participants were 41 female madrassa teachers teaching English in madrassas nationwide.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions and opinions of madrassa teachers about the course and to see whether their performance improved after the training. Hence, it is a mixed-methods study. For knowing the participants' perceptions, open-ended, semi-structured interviews were conducted and to gauge their performance, a pre-test and a post-test were conducted before and after the course respectively.

## **Literature Review**

Pakistan's education system comprises three types of institutions: public, private and religious seminaries or madrasas (Ahmed, 2009) and Rehman (2004) terms them as Urdu language-medium schools, English language-medium schools, and madrassas (Islamic seminaries), respectively. The bases of this division are the curriculum or medium of instruction, and socio-economic classes which these cater to. The English language-medium or private schools cater to the middle, upper-middle and upper classes, the Urdu language-medium schools (public) cater to the lower-middle and working classes, and the madrassas cater to the poor, marginalized or very religious segment of our society. This stratification gives rise to further disparity in students' achievement and socio-economic well-being like many other factors afterwards in their post school lives. Waseem et al. (2015), for example, found a significant difference between the achievement in vocabulary by undergraduate level students coming from an Urdu medium background and those coming from an English medium background with the latter achieving higher scores. Students at madrassas lag farther behind as they have access to even lesser resources than the students hailing from Urdu medium backgrounds.

As Anzar (2003) states, the term Madrassa or seminary is generally referred to describe an organized institution mostly with free lodging facilities to students and with teachers and classrooms for different levels. In these

seminaries, in-depth religious education is provided with an objective to enrich life with Islamic teachings present in the Quran.

International scholarship has been mistakenly portraying madrassas as sites for extremism, making it unnecessarily controversial (Butt, 2020). The main purpose of the advent of madrasa i.e., to learn knowledge as embedded in the principles of Islam is either downplayed or not stated (Anzar, 2003; Bhattacharya, 2014). Having the same curriculum across Pakistan, as it has had in the past when there was no madrassa-militants relation narrative (Rehman, 2004) renders the allegation invalid.

Madrassa teachers, on the other hand, perceive that the madrassa issue has been politically manufactured by the West due to the 'conservative ideology of madrassa' (Butt, 2020; Kazmi and Pervez, 2011). This belief of teachers transfers to their students. However, madrassa plays four important roles in society (Butt, 2020) viz., it imparts divine knowledge; it caters to the life-necessities and education of marginalized populations; it provides law-abiding citizens to the state; and, it also provides them employment opportunities. However, only less than 1 percent of children in Pakistan attend madrassas.

The government started thinking of madrassa reforms after 2001 (Anzer, 2003; Ahmed, 2009) and till 2009, these reform programs were restricted to only registering these institutions with the governmental authorities, which too failed in some cases for different reasons e.g., non-compliance and a shallow approach of various madrasa administration (Bhattacharya, 2014); contrasting interpretations by the state and the madrassa administrations (Amin & Lodhi, 2015); the politics played around this project under Enlightened Moderation; and lack of trust caused by differences regarding curriculum and financial regulation, degree recognition and the role of the government in forming people's opinions about *madaris* (Bashir & Ul-Haq, 2019).

In 2019, however, *madaris* in Pakistan agreed to different settlements including the registration of seminaries, as part of a uniform system of education countrywide (Virk, 2019). Accordingly, they have agreed to hold the board-based middle, matric and intermediate examinations like the one meant for public sector institutions. This would enable the students studying there to compete in various fields (Minister for Education Shafqat Mehmood, 2019).

The US aid package strongly emphasizes madrassa reform in Pakistan. However, Andrabi et. al. (2012) stresses that "Education for all" in the country needs to be practically implemented. According to Andrabi et. al. (2010), improvement in the quality of private and public schooling matters more than reforms in madrassas. Further, they suggest reforming the system by measuring student outcomes, and working with teacher unions on accountability and using the option of private schools to provide the poor with more options of schools to choose from.

Some researchers, however, propose a combination of religious and scientific education for long term development. Anzar (2003), for example, argues that enhancing the educational status of Muslim countries will help prepare more citizens to take part in the economic development of their countries. He recommends using Islamic education to bring about greater societal changes and advancement in the Muslim world by combining Islamic education systems with scientific interventions. This can be achieved by modifying the seminaries so that they lead the debate on independent reasoning. According to Anzar (2009), the international donors and educators need to facilitate a dialogue with the madrassa administration on this suggestion. Bashir & Ul-Haq (2019) recommends more active government reforms and a stronger relationship between the government and madrassah representatives to ensure successful reforms attempts. Ali (2012), for example, supports a curriculum-based, more innovative approach, based on Islamic knowledge to inculcate more tolerance in madrassa teachers and students which can support counter extremist narratives in madrassas.

Many researchers are in favour of taking the stakeholders i.e., religious teachers on board for any types of reforms e.g., Butt (2020) recommends keeping religious teachers on board, through training and research. The mainstream of education should be a uniform curriculum for all schools, up to the level of higher secondary school (grade 12) which is soon to materialize as Virk (2019) assures it. According to Butt (2020), it must be a combination of religious, scientific and cultural knowledge, as stated in the Pakistan Constitution 1973. At the next stage, the students would have the option to choose a specialized field, e.g., engineering, medical, agriculture, or religion, etc. This system should perform under the close supervision of the government.

A step toward a uniform syllabus, Single National Curriculum (CNS), has been taken by the current government in Pakistan and the Single National Curriculum for grade I to grade V has already been implemented in all the schools and *madaris* across Pakistan from August, 2021. The government and the *Ittehad Tanzeemul Madaris* decided that the *madaris* not registering according to the given procedure would not be able to impart education. Moreover, students wanting to continue religious education would be permitted to continue under *Dars-e-Nizami* and the students would be awarded equivalence certificates by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) according to the procedure agreed upon.

The debates regarding mainstreaming of madrassas in Pakistan have been focusing on providing career opportunities to their students by reforming the curriculum, removing hate speeches and adding some additional subjects such as English, Mathematics, and IT (Shafiq *et. al.* 2019). Interestingly, according to a report of Brookings Institute, madrassas in Pakistan are not responsible for the promotion of terrorism or related activities rather it is due to the weak and flawed government educational

system which is the main root cause of the problem. The report argues that the “curriculum of schools and the methodology of teaching” are the main causes of promoting intolerance (Ghazi et al, 2011). However, there is a great need for the introduction of reforms in the structure and curriculum of *madaris*. Modernization in imparting education in subjects related to the computer, science and the arts should be introduced to bring its students into mainstream education for better economic prospects.

Though the government has initiated a Single National Curriculum to be implemented at different levels gradually, an overall modernization and improvement also entails equipping the *madrassa* teachers with latest methodologies to keep abreast with the developments in pedagogies. Shaheen et.al. (2019) stresses dynamism in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to address the needs of students from diverse backgrounds which can be ensured through teachers’ training programs and introducing task-based learning and more technology in class. Researchers on funding for education also hold similar points of views. Curtis (2007), for example, contends that to ensure progress towards stability, tolerance, moderation, and prosperity in Pakistan, an effective education system needs to be in place. She recommends the U.S. to fund more programs for specific education and teacher training projects and encourage the government to implement reforms of public education. She also posits that many traditional madrassas serve a useful purpose in educating Islamic intellectuals and providing shelter and food to the poor students. While a few Pakistani madrassas represent an international terrorist threat, most madrassas should be left alone according to Curtis (2007).

As Curtis (2007) has it, the US government has been and is funding short and long programs for the training of teachers in Pakistan. The participants of this study were also attendees of such a course meant for the female teachers teaching English language to the *madrassa* students. The purpose of the course was to equip them with modern pedagogies of English teaching. This article reports on the findings of action research conducted during the course to find out the impact of the course on the teachers’ performance and their perceptions about the course and its usefulness for them professionally.

## **Methodology**

The present study is a mixed-methods research. It falls under Action Research conducted during an English Language and Teacher Training Program for *madrassa* teachers. The primary reason for engaging the *madrassa* teachers in this training was to assist them in improving their English language proficiency and refining their teaching practises.

The organizers of the training program used the Purposive sampling method to select the participants. Different madrassas for females across the country were contacted and they were requested to send their faculty teaching English for this training. Some refused outrightly, some did not reply to the invitation but many replied enthusiastically.

For the present research, a pre-test was conducted on the first day prior to the start of the training sessions, a post-test was conducted on the last day after the training sessions ended and a questionnaire was administered to the participants. The questionnaire gave us the data and insights about the trainee teachers' self-perceived needs and wants.

### Profile of the Training Participants

The participants of the training program consisted of 41 female teachers teaching at madrassas. Their ages ranged from 25-40 years. One thing worth mentioning here is that usually, families from low-income groups send their children to study at the madrassas and the teachers of these madrassas also belong to the same income group. So, coming to Islamabad, the capital city of the country by air or by luxury buses, and staying at a luxury premises for two weeks was itself a new learning experience for these participants. Many of them were visiting another city, apart from their hometown, for the first time in their lives. The purpose of stating this is to enhance the fact that these teachers do not usually get a chance of professional development training in their career. Table1 shows the regions where the participants' madrassas are located.

**Table1**  
*Region-wise distribution of Madrassas where participants are teaching*

City	No. of participants	City	No. of participants
Karachi	2	Muzaffarabad	4
Lahore	2	Hattian Bala	3
Islamabad (Suburbs)	7	Rawalakot	2
Rawalpindi	4	Mianwali	2
Multan	4	Wah Cantt	2
Skardu	3	Khaigala	2
Jalalpur Jattan	2	Batkhaila	2

### Introduction to the Training Contents and Methodology

Two trainers trained the madrasa teachers. Because of the cultural constraints, it was made sure that the female teachers were trained by the female trainers. One trainer was an English Language Specialist from the U.S. and the other, an ELT Specialist from Pakistan who is also one of the researchers in this study.

The program was quite intensive i.e., 15-days in length with each day starting at 9:00 am and ending at 5:30 pm. The day did not end there though, because the participants and trainers were staying at the same hotel so there were informal meet-ups during the evenings or over dinner as well. Over the weekend, the participants were taken on study-fun site-seeing excursions.

The goals of the training were to help the participants:

1. Learn new classroom teaching techniques
2. Develop peer and self-observation skills
3. Build individual collegial ties and personal-professional learning networks
4. Increase English language proficiency skills.

The trainers presented a variety of teaching activities and classroom techniques to reach the goals of the program. These activities covered all the five skills; listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking. Teaching practices like, using technology in teaching, group-pair work, managing time etc. were also the focus (c.f. Table 4). In addition, to support the day's learning, homework was also given. The homework and in-program activities were designed specially to improve the teachers' language proficiency; classroom management skills; time management skills; self and peer observation skills; and to build their confidence when speaking in English; presentation skills and research skills for materials selection and adaptation to some extent. A component on using technology in teaching was also included in this program (c.f. Table 4). To make this program more authentic, lessons were also taken from local English teaching textbooks and adapted according to the requirement. More focus was on teaching the first four skills in interactive ways so that the participants can replicate them later. Collaborative learning; effective group and pair work; student-centred teaching; and integrated skills practise were provided during the program. All this culminated in a micro-teaching activity in which participants were asked to "teach" a mini-lesson and reflect on their own teaching and those of their colleagues.

## **Analyses, Findings and Discussion**

First, the findings of the data collected with the help of a questionnaire will be discussed and then the participants' performance in the pre-and post-tests will be evaluated.

### **Analysis of Questionnaire Data**

The course participants (N=41) were teaching English at different levels in their respective madrassas from Class 1 to 12 and some were teaching at diploma level and one was also teaching madrassa-specific programs developed by seminaries named *Aama* (a level equivalent to Matriculation), *Khasa* (a level equivalent to intermediate) and *Aliha* (a level equivalent to an



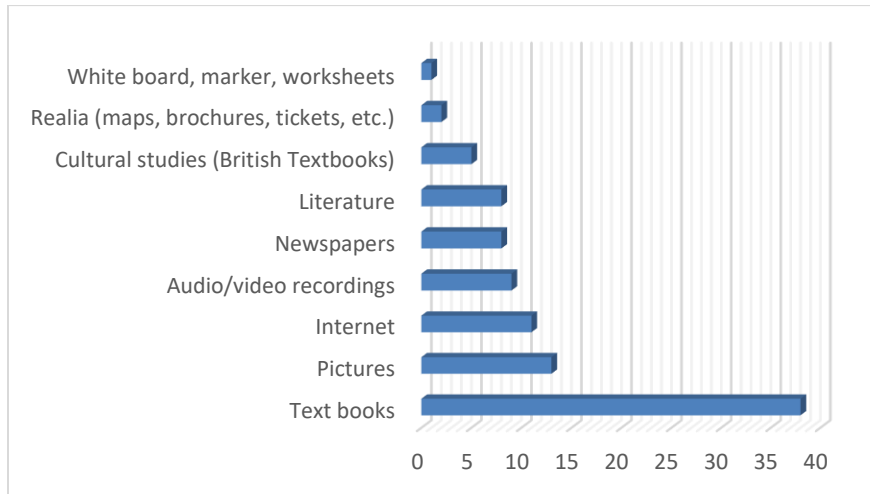
undergraduate program). One teacher reported that she is teaching English as well as Arabic. Table 2 shows a list of the different levels at which the course participants were teaching at the time of the training.

**Table 2**  
**Levels at which the participants were teaching**

Classes/Level	No. of Respondents
Primary (grade 1-5)	9
Lower Secondary (grade 6-8)	13
Higher Secondary (grade 9-12)	16
Diploma	2
Aama Part 1 & Khasa Part 1 & Aliha Part 1	1

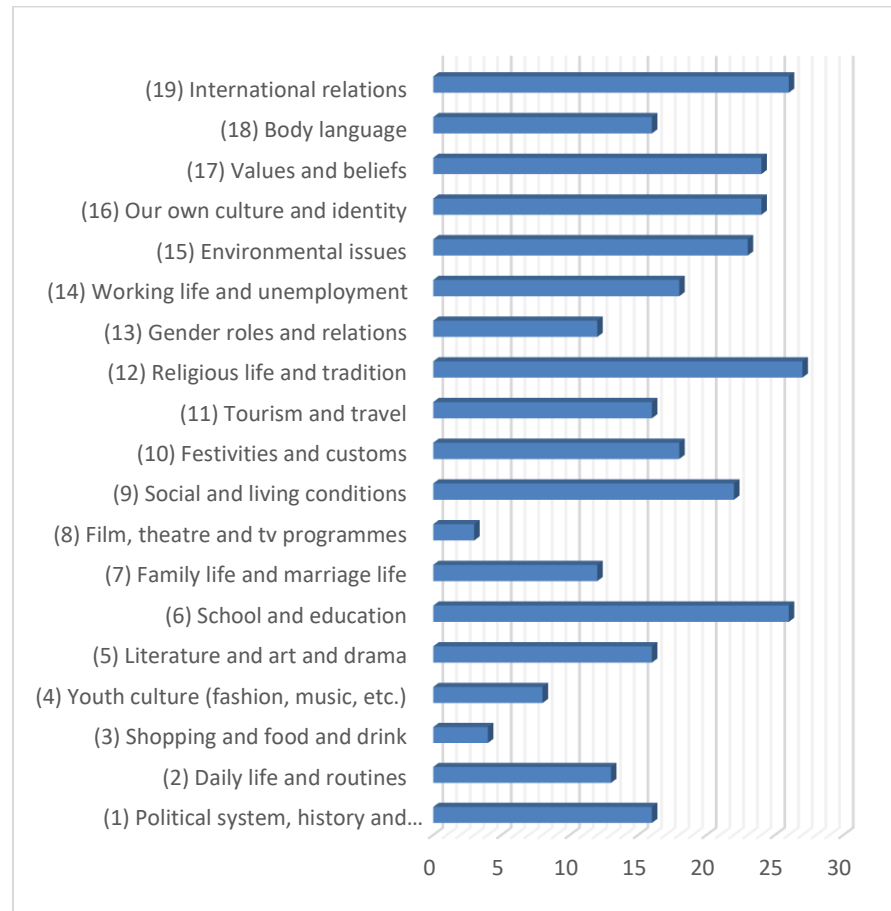
It was found that the participants used diverse materials when teaching English to the students as is shown in Figure 1. This points out the fact that some madrassas are equipped with modern infrastructure and the teachers are familiar with a variety of resources a teacher can rely upon for teaching. As reported by the participants, the most popular source for teaching English they use is the school's textbooks (38). Pictures, Internet and audio/video recordings were the second most popular source for teaching English among the participants (13,11,9 respectively). Newspapers are also used by 8 of the participants. Literature is used by 8 and Cultural studies (British textbooks) books are used by 5 respondents. Realia e.g., maps, brochures, tickets etc. are used by 5 and one also mentioned using Board, marker, worksheet, etc. (1),

**Figure 1: Sources utilized for teaching English by the participants**



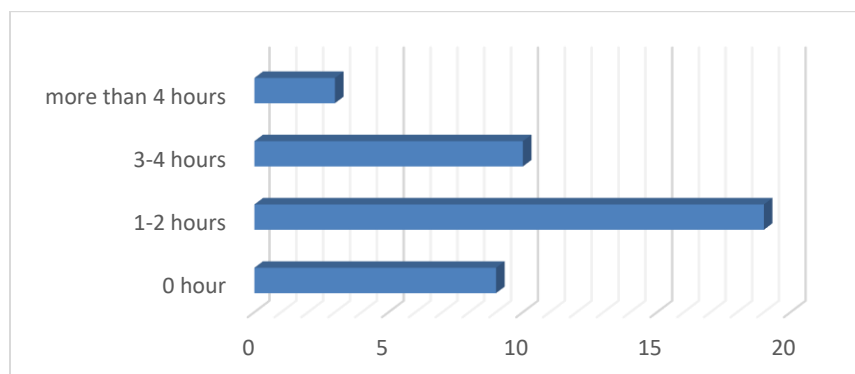
When asked about their preferences for the content that should be included in the English textbook, they were found to have diverse opinions and multiple choices. Figure 2 shows the teachers' content preferences. As is obvious from the table, a great majority is in favour of content related to school and education; religious life and traditions; culture and identity; international relations; and values and beliefs. This shows their broad horizons and holistic worldview.

**Figure 2: Teachers' Content preferences**



The teachers were asked if they read English material in any form like newspaper, magazine, articles, books, novels, etc., a majority responded in the affirmative and only 9 said they do not have a reading routine. Figure 3 shows the time they spend reading English per week.

**Figure 3: Weekly English reading hours**



When asked if they have read any book other than the coursebook, in English, 14 replied in the affirmative and 27 said they have not read any book in English. Those who said they have read and were asked if they can name any book(s) they have read. It is to be noted that many of them said that they started the book but did not finish reading it. The books they named fell under 4 categories viz., Real-life history; motivational books; fiction(novel); and general knowledge. Two of the respondents mentioned Urdu books, i.e., Urdu translations of 'Wuthering Heights' and 'Jannat ke pattey', 'Pareshan hona choreay, jeena seekheay.' Seven others said that they read books but could not recall any book title at the time of responding.

**Table 3**  
***The books the respondents had read and could recall***

Real life histories	'Our Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H.' and 'Stories of the Prophet P.B.U.H.'
Motivational Books	'Seven Habits' 'Pareshan hona choreay, jeena seekheay' (Quit panicking, Start Living)
Fiction	'Forty Rules of Love' (read but not finished) 'Black Beauty', 'Marquez', 'Monster', 'Picasso' 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist' 'The Kite Runner' (read but not finished) Urdu translation of 'Wuthering Heights' 'Jannat ke pattey' (Leaves from Paradise)
General Knowledge	'International Relations' by Robert Jackson

Twenty-two of the participants read English newspapers and the rest do not. Out of those 22 who read the English newspaper, 16 read it once a week, 4 read it 2 to 4 times a week and 2 read it daily. As for their willingness to attend any other teacher training program if given a chance, 37 said they will

and 4 were not sure as they said “maybe”. None said they would not want to attend a training program again.

When asked to list the teaching techniques and activities that they have been taught during this training which they feel they can and will use in their classes, the respondents expressed their liking for multiple activities. The findings have been shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
***Some Activities from training that the participants would like to use in their classes***

<b>Activity</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>
Identifying Learning Styles	16
Brainstorming activities	13
Attention Getter activities	8
Warm-up activities	26
Story writing/Chain story/strip story/Jigsaw story	24
Letter writing/Postcard making and writing/News writing	22
Vocabulary games/ Vocabulary cards/Board game/ Dictionary use	19
Reading/Jigsaw reading/One-minute reading	14
Listening: News/Songs/video/story	21
Speaking: Discussion/presentation/poetry recital, tongue twisters/peer-group discussion	21
Critical Thinking activities	13
Learning other cultures (Amish)	7
Activities related to Classroom management	15
Activities related to Time management	10
Activities related to using Authentic Materials	17
Group Techniques: Pair-Trio-Whole class	27
Micro-Teaching Activity	12
Peer-Observation	6
Body Language Improvement activities	24
Email/web searching/social media/online language learning tools	28
Keeping a Learning Log	14

Validating the claim made by Imtiaz et al. (2021) that use of technology in the classroom has become a “new normal”, the findings of the present study show that integrating technology in teaching scored the highest number of votes i.e. 28. Many of the participants were exposed to technology for the first time for teaching purposes in this training and were enthralled by what

they can do with the online resources to make their lessons interesting. On the other hand, Peer-observation scored the lowest, i.e. 6. This low score must be because the participants were not accustomed to being observed by their fellow teachers in their classes, and it was observed that this made them a little uncomfortable. Conducting class activities using Group-Pair work technique was found to be the most popular among them.

**Validity Test of Questionnaire Responses**

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) can be used to verify the validity of the data (Karriker & Williams 2009; Tsui et al.,1997). So a CFA test was run to check the validity of the data obtained through the questionnaire for the present study. CFA was run on the 18 questions prepared through the Likert scale.

**Table 5**  
**Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)**

Items	CFA
1. Learning English languages connects oneself to the rest of the world	.590
2. Students should learn English.	.555
3. Teaching English can corrupt students’ ethics.	.721
4. English is not an Islamic language	.741
5. There is no utility of learning English for Madrassa students as most of them are not going to use it practically.	.700
6. Learning the English language helps develop tolerance among the learners.	.828
7. Content in the English textbooks is opposed to the teachings of Islam.	.700
8. By learning English, students can spread the message of Islam globally.	.740
9. There is need to redesign English Language Teaching material to suit requirements and expectations of madrassa students	.804
10. English language can open up better job opportunities.	.797
11. By learning English students will forget their L1 (mother tongue)	.720
12. English is a difficult language and learning English is a waste of time and energy.	.857
13. Men may learn but English should not be taught to female students.	.816
14. When learning English, teachers should clearly tell students not to adopt English culture.	.772
15. Madrassa English teachers use modern teaching methods/techniques in classroom	.836
16. If a teacher gets training, his/her teaching of English is more effective.	.854
17. This Madrassa teachers training was beneficial for you as a teacher	.580
18. Learning English language is necessary to use internet sources	.846

As a rule of thumb, the items having values  $\geq .40$  should be retained for further analysis. It is clear from Table 5 that all values are greater than 0.40. The CFA values of all items range between 0.555 and 0.857, which is much higher than the acceptable standard value of 0.40. So, all eighteen items were retained for further statistical analysis.

**Reliability Test of Questionnaire Responses**

**Table 6**  
**Reliability Statistics**

<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>
.559	18

The generally acceptable value of reliability of the data in social sciences should be greater than 0.5 as a rule of thumb (Nunally & Bernstein, 1978). Here the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.559 which is greater than the common acceptable value. Therefore, it verifies that the data of the current study is reliable.

**Mean Score Analysis of Questionnaire Responses**

The mean score analysis of the 18 questionnaire items is as follows:

**Table 7**  
**Item wise Mean Score Analysis**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
1. Learning English languages connects oneself to the rest of the world	4.39	0.728
2. Students should learn English.	4.53	.774
3. Teaching English can corrupt students' ethics.	2.39	1.42
4. English is not an Islamic language	2.56	1.403
5. There is no utility of learning English for Madrassa students as most of them are not going to use it practically.	2.58	1.645
6. Learning the English language helps develop tolerance among the learners.	4.25	0.841
7. Content in the English textbooks is opposed to the teachings of Islam.	2.42	1.442
8. By learning English, students can spread the message of Islam globally.	4.5	1.028

9. There is need to redesign English Language Teaching material to suit requirements and expectations of madrassa students	3.78	1.098
10. English language can open up better job opportunities.	4.5	0.845
11. By learning English students will forget their L1 (mother tongue)	2.06	1.12
12. English is a difficult language and learning English is a waste of time and energy.	1.33	0.478
13. Men may learn but English should not be taught to female students.	1.28	0.779
14. When learning English, teachers should clearly tell students not to adopt English culture.	3.5	1.108
15. Madrassa English teachers use modern teaching methods/techniques in classroom	3.31	1.582
16. If a teacher gets training, his/her teaching of English is more effective.	4.58	0.906
17. This Madrassa teachers training was beneficial for you as a teacher	4.72	0.741
18. Learning English language is necessary to use internet sources.	4.44	0.843

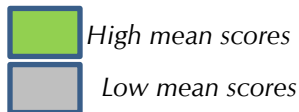


Table 7 shows the mean score value against each item for all the respondents who responded to the questionnaire. Item No 17 i.e., “This training was beneficial for you as a teacher” turned out to be the highest mean score item with a mean score of 4.72 which means most of the participants were highly satisfied with the training and believed that it would help them be more effective English language teachers. Item No 16 was the second highest mean score item with a mean score of 4.58. It said that teaching becomes effective if the teacher gets training which means participants believe in in-service trainings for improvement of teaching methodologies (c.f. Section 4.2). Among the other high mean score items was “Student should learn English” which stands with a prominent mean score of 4.53. This supports the notion that the majority of the respondents strongly agree that madrassa students should also learn the English language. Similarly, another high mean score can be seen with item number 8 which states “By learning English, students can spread the message of Islam globally”, with a high mean score of 4.50.

It reflects respondents' agreement that English is not a hurdle but can be a tool to spread the knowledge of Islam.

Item No 10 about English opening up better job opportunities has a significant mean score of 4.50 that shows that the participants are well-aware of the requirements of the current job-market in Pakistan. Similarly, Rahman (2005) posits that since British rule, South Asian Muslims have had three types of responses to English: resistance, acceptance, or pragmatic utilization. These differences are linked with English as a marker of the socio-economic class by its uneven access to different people. The two items, 12 and 13 scored the lowest mean score i.e. 1.33 and 1.28 respectively. Both the items have a negative connotation attached to the learning of English and the lowest mean score shows that the participants did not agree with it. This is an encouraging sign that they do not consider English difficult or learning English a waste of time. Moreover, their rejecting the notion that only men should be taught English nullifies the old perceptions that attach extremist ideologies related to binary gender ideologies with madrasa and its teachings.

### **Discussion on Open-Ended Questions**

In the last part of the questionnaire, there were a few open-ended questions in which the participants were asked about their view of the training and they were asked to give any suggestion to improve such a training program.

Regarding this training and the skills that they learned, most of them were of the opinion that it was a great opportunity. They were mainly impressed by the practice in time management, the four skills of English and the variety of activities and content used which all increased their level of confidence for future teaching. Thirty-one (31) participants said it improved and enhanced their speaking and communication skills among others and four (04) said it gave them self-confidence which they did not have earlier. One (01) even expressed, *"It brought out our hidden qualities."*

One of the participants while sharing her own experience as a madrasa student where her teachers were fond of corporal punishments said about this training: *"I learned all the skills of learning and my confidence increased and I learnt how to make the environment happy and interesting for students."*

One participant was of the view, *"The training was very well and thoroughly planned and conducted. One very important thing I learned here was to manage time. We would get free right on time and we made sure to reach the class on time."* She further confirmed that before coming for the training she had no idea that the time-table would be followed so strictly.



Another participant reported:

*"This training will help me to teach my students. This training gave me those things that I cannot achieve in 10 years, I learned all these in 15 days."*

Another participant said:

*"It was very rich in terms of the content and variety of activities. The trainers were polite and kind and very knowledgeable. Everyone was treated equally."*

Another participant said:

*"It was the very first opportunity to learn a lot of techniques, methods and styles for the improvement of teaching, learning strategies. I have found the road map of teaching methodology."*

Here it is pertinent to mention that none of these participants had ever attended any professional development training before.

One participant gave a very good suggestion to conduct this type of training in rural areas also:

*"I think that this training is a great opportunity for us. Before this training I often thought that the teaching profession is a bad [sic] profession in Pakistan. Teachers do not get their rights and they have no respect in our society. But after this training, I love my profession. I want to have another training like this."*

They were also sure that implementing these activities in their own classes afterwards will help enhance their students' English Language Skills as one participant commented:

*"All activities and skills which we learned are very useful and admirable. I will try my best to apply all activities and techniques in my classroom. Some activities which are practical to use in my classes would be 'go fishing and jigsaw story.' They are all very interesting to perform and will definitely enhance students' skills."*

Another participant gave her feedback in these words:

*"There are numerous activities that I can use in my class. Using name cards for the introduction is a good way to trigger students' creativity and get them excited about giving their introduction, rather than feeling nervous while having to give an introduction. Various ways of grouping the students can be used to make the grouping process very interesting. I learned many different ways of conducting listening, speaking, reading and writing activities. One skill can be taught with various sub-skills integrated into it."*

And still, another was of the view:

*“So many speaking, listening, writing, reading, vocabulary and grammar activities we have done in this training course. All of them are very practical. But the activity of “brainstorming and mind mapping” are two activities that I would like to conduct in my classes. They will not only provide my students with the overview/background of the lesson they are going to learn but will also improve their level of critical thinking.”*

The above analysis, so far, gives encouraging views from the participants, the madrasa teachers. They embraced the training wholeheartedly and took part in each and every activity quite actively. This overwhelming response by the participants was quite encouraging for the trainers as well. These views can be validated from their responses in Section 4.1.3. as well.

### Participants’ Performance in Pre- and Post- Tests

After discussing the encouraging response from the participants about the training (c.f. Section 4.2), now we will discuss the training participants’ performance in the pre- and post- tests to see how effective the training was.

#### Paired-Sample T-Tests

**Table 8**  
***Paired Samples Statistics of Pre-Post Tests***

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test Results	<b>12.02</b>	41	2.139	.334
	Post-test Results	<b>17.46</b>	41	2.656	.415

Table 8 reveals that there is a considerable increase in the mean scores of the trainees’ test results after the training. A total of 41 trainees attempted the pre- and post-tests. The mean score of the test before the training was 12.02, whereas, after the training, the mean score of the test results increased to 17.46. This shows an increment of 5.44 in the test results of the trainees. It clearly depicts that the performance of students significantly enhanced after the training. In their comments in the open-ended questions of the questionnaire almost all the participants admitted to learning new skills during the training. So, their comments and the test results validate each other here (c.f. Section 4.2).

**Table 9**  
**Paired Sample Test**

	Paired Differences					T	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
				Lower	Upper		
Pair 1 Pre-test Results - Post-test Results	<b>-5.44</b>	1.361	.213	-5.869	-5.009	-25.588	<b>.000</b>

Table 9 shows the results of the Paired Sample t-test. The values of the scores before and after training were analyzed through this test to examine the pre-test and post-test performance of the participants. The table shows that the difference between pre-test and post-test results was highly significant (sig. = 0.000). The t value is also very high i.e., 25.588 which shows the significance of results as it should be more than 2 as a general rule of thumb. So, 2-tailed Paired sample t-test has verified a considerable increase in the performance of trainees in post training test results. This result validates not only the observed performance of the participants during the training and their claims of new learning as well (c.f. Section 4.2).

### Conclusion

The findings of the present study have important pedagogical and policy implications for madrasa teachers’ training. The study concludes that the perceptions about the madrasa being a very radical or rigid place are misplaced. The study found the madrasa teachers to be very responsive and welcoming to new ideas for teaching-learning English. The training changed their perceptions about teaching which they earlier thought to be an unthankful profession. As for their performance, the methodology and activities employed proved to be effective as their post-test scores displayed a significant improvement in performance.

Their wish to join such training courses again points out that such professional development training programs should be made a regular practice as refresher courses for them as Shaheen et. al. (2019) contend. As pointed out by one participant, the scope of such training programs should be broadened in order to include the maximum possible population of the madrasa teachers from even the rural and far-flung areas of the country. This

study recommends the use of virtual modality to reach the maximum possible teacher population for such training courses in future. greater frequency for the same teachers on a regular basis in order to keep them abreast with the latest developments in English language pedagogies.

The government of Pakistan, madrassa administration and donors need to keep Professional Development Training as a special priority when planning madrassa reforms and improvisation as these training programs are essential for bringing madrassa into the mainstream of our education system which is the goal of the Uniform Education System proposed by the present government of Pakistan where they have introduced the Single National Curriculum (CNC) across the board, starting with the classes 1-5 initially. During the training, one of the participants went so far as to name this training as, "Madrassa-Friendly Training". This shows that the trainers have been successful in clearing any earlier mistrust or misconceptions madrassa teachers might have about such training programs. Considering the results of the present study, one can safely say that the training totally changed the perceptions of the respondents about not only the very profession of teaching but also about the teaching of the English language which is an encouraging sign.

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