

Economic change and English language teaching and learning in Pakistan: the growth of the Private sector and challenges for the Public sector

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This project assesses whether private English Language Teaching institutes in Pakistan really make a difference to the proficiency of students. A large number of private ELT institutes have arrived on the scene since 1990 following economic changes in Pakistan linked to globalization. Most high paying jobs in the private sector are reserved for those who are competent in English, and English language requirements such as IELTS tests can serve a gate-keeping function *within* Pakistan. Large numbers of students in Pakistan graduate every year from the (English medium) public sector universities yet the majority of them remain deprived of better job opportunities because they lack proficiency in English. The universities are challenged by outdated curricula, poor ELT methods, large classes, and a dearth of English language teachers and the resources. These graduates turn to the private institutes which offer diploma courses and preparatory classes for IELTS/TOEFL for 2-3 months. Their fees are considerable and their better resources offer hope to graduates of gaining sufficient English for better employment prospects. The project has two components: a quantitative component in which students at three institutes are tested on IELTS before and after their course; and a qualitative component which aims to identify whether the institutes deal with more “universal” English language learner concerns or whether they focus on the difference between local norms and L1 (British or American) norms. In this talk I will present the preliminary findings from a survey of some private English language teaching institutes of Pakistan.