



JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES DEVELOPMENT

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EXPLORING THE URDU LANGUAGE TEACHING USING PHENOMENOLOGICAL LENS:
INSIGHTS FROM PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCE

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Urdu Pedagogy, Phenomenology, Bilingual Education, Teacher Training, Curriculum Reform, Qualitative Research	This study adopts phenomenological approach to explore lived experiences of Urdu language teachers, teacher trainers, and pedagogical experts. As Pakistan’s national language and a symbol of cultural heritage, Urdu poses distinct instructional challenges, particularly in multilingual and under-resourced educational settings. This study aimed to recognize how educators perceive the current teaching practices, navigate classroom challenges, and implement effective strategies. Using interpretivist paradigm, qualitative data were collected over semi-structured interviews with five experienced participants. Thus, the data analysis followed Moustakas’ modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, revealing five core themes of this study. The findings show that, despite limited institutional support, educators creatively adapt their teaching to engage the students and enhance their learning outcomes. This study underscores the importance of integrating teachers’ experiences into curriculum development and training programs. It further advocates for modern, culturally responsive as well as technology-supported pedagogical reforms to make sure Urdu language instruction more efficient, effective & learner-centered.
ARTICLE HISTORY	
Date of Submission: 10-01-2025 Date of Acceptance: 15-02-2025 Date of Publication: 16-02-2025	
	 2025 Journal of Social Sciences Development
Corresponding Author	Shireen Razzaq
Email:	sdzrshabbir@gmail.com
DOI	https://doi.org/10.53664/JSSD/04-01-2025-03-28-37

INTRODUCTION

Urdu has played a crucial role in the social and academic domains as a symbol of cultural identity in the national language of Pakistan (Jafar, 2023). The translation between Urdu and English has significant utility for bilingual users, Urdu pedagogy stems from complexity that is not only related to its language diversity but also linked to its colonial and socio-political history (Imran & Ismail, 2024). In multilingual classrooms, the evolution of teaching methodologies has drawn attention to

the necessity of new holistic and experience-centered strategies, such as phenomenology (Rahman, 2000; Naz & Malik, 2014). Phenomenology makes the study ideal for detecting challenges in Urdu pedagogy, permits a detailed examination of teachers' lived experiences and analyses of classroom realities (Haq, 2019). Thus, Urdu instructors face exclusive challenges related to semantic doubts (Ahmed, 2017), orthographic complications (Mirdehghan, 2010), and the incorporation of idioms and ethnically rooted terminologies (Qureshi, Anjum & Iqbal, 2012). The innovative approaches include the multimodal and digital methods (Basha, 2023) and bilingualism in teaching (Rasool, Ahmad & Ali, 2020). The student-centered curricula that integrate the competency have been emphasized in research.

Pedagogical adaptation for phonological and syntactic extension distinctions amid Urdu students (Ambreen & To, 2021). The lexical and semantic shift searching confuse command while applying teaching methods (Khan, 2014), as do code-switching dynamics in bilingual classrooms (Shahid & Mahmood, 2021). Challenges related to language and culture are often overstated in educational settings, which have more resource deficiencies and inexperienced educators (Alap, 2014). Moreover, the use of dictionaries is considered a key facilitator of advanced Urdu learning (Ahmad, 2013). This adds difficulty to teaching Urdu as a second language. These are the Interference from the learner's first language within the context of second language (Masood, Shahid & Yousuf, 2020). Although there are challenges, including experiential feedback from educators and students for curriculum refinement and teaching plans highlights the need for research (Mushtaque & Zaki, 2019). Thus, connecting findings to pedagogical theories and implications for teacher training and curriculum development. It offers in-depth and useful kind of pedagogical science related to Urdu instruction. Thus, this study helps to bridge this gap through the lived experiences of educators by employing a phenomenological framework.

The Urdu language instruction in Pakistan is influenced by pedagogical challenges like outdated curricula, ineffective teaching methodology, and the lack of proper teacher training (Naz & Malik, 2014). Several instructional materials do not place as much emphasis on critical thinking, and these challenges are further compounded (Rasool et al., 2020). Research on textbook analysis in diverse subjects in Pakistan reveals excessive past emphasis of the current curriculum on rote memorization instead of on developing skills of analytical reasoning, inquiry-based learning & problem-solving (Azmat, Muhammad & Jamil, 2021; Jamil, Aslam & Ali, 2024; Naseer, Muhammad & Jamil, 2022). The STEM education has risen to similar concerns, where stress the acquired knowledge rather than conceptual thinking and scientific interrogation (Jamil, Muhammad, & Aslam, 2024; Jamil, Bibi, & Shahzadi, 2024). The textbooks do not integrate life skills like critical thinking in language education (Jamil, Hassan, & Godil, 2024). In view of such concerns, study attempts to examine how Urdu language pedagogy can be improved through experience-centered and phenomenological approach, which ensures primacy of critical thought and cognitive engagement in program design and teaching strategies.

Research Objectives

1. To discover lived experiences of Urdu language instructors, trainers and pedagogical experts regarding classroom practices and instructional tasks.

2. To explore pedagogical tactics and principles recognized by teachers, trainers, and experts for effective Urdu language teaching.

Research Questions

1. How do Urdu language teachers, trainers, and pedagogical experts perceive and experience current teaching methods and challenges in Urdu instruction?
2. What teaching strategies & pedagogical principles for teachers, teacher trainers and experts are considered most effective for teaching Urdu?

LITERATURE REVIEW

As Pakistan's national language, Urdu has a long educational and cultural presence. However, the pedagogical methods used to teach Urdu have evolved due to historical, linguistic and institutional factors. Thus, understanding the challenges and innovations in this field requires examining various dimensions of Urdu language teaching, including instructional strategies, linguistic features, and training of teachers. Historically, Urdu teaching was significantly shaped during British colonial era. The language was initially introduced to British officers to help them administer the Indian subcontinent and later became a symbol of Muslim identity and a tool of the political mobilization (Rahman, 2000). Today, Urdu is taught across Pakistan and in the various regions globally, but the methods and resources remain inconsistent, especially for non-native learners (Kausar & Sarwar, 2015). In this linking, linguistic challenges in Urdu pedagogy include issues related to semantic shifts, particularly in vocabulary borrowed from Arabic. The excessive importance of contrastive and semantic analysis in language instruction regarding semantic changes often results in learners' misperceptions and teaching inaccuracies (Ahmed, 2017). Hence, students are not able to discuss reflectively and creatively.

Similarly, the pressure structures and phonological complications, such as gemination and syllable structures, are often not thoroughly addressed in courses despite importance in exact pronunciation and knowledge development (Ambreen & To, 2024). Cultural and figurative language is deeply rooted in teaching idioms and formulaic sequences, which are underexplored in Urdu pedagogy. Although their prevalence in daily Urdu communication is important, these elements are excluded from the mainstream textbooks (Haq, 2019; Qureshi et al., 2012). Using the phenomenological lens helps us go beyond traditional methods and look at the deeper, subjective experiences people have with language learning, what it feels like, how it's perceived, and how it shapes identity. Above all, these teaching tactics must adapt to include such terminologies when teaching advanced students in the future. Moreover, instructional materials and curriculum design have been acknowledged. Efforts related to pedagogical dictionaries and teaching tool development highlight the necessity of corpus-based and learner-centered resources that reproduce actual language practice (Ashraf, 2014). Similarly, especially in the higher education, English-Urdu bilingualism has become more prominent in instruction.

The explorations show that a blended-language approach frequently advances understanding and engagement among undergraduate students (Rasool et al., 2020). There is call for modernized more intuitive approaches to teaching Urdu grammar and script according to the learner's perspective.

It could benefit native and non-native speakers; therefore, learners recommend and reorganize the teaching of Urdu letters and grammatical categories to match cognitive learning patterns (Young, 2016). Themes related to the future concluded that technology could play a key role in language instruction because emergence of digital and AI-supported learning tools, such as mobile-based Urdu-learning applications, is now significant. To support Urdu literacy among young learners, these tools integrate the multimedia elements and AI-driven feedback systems (Khalil, Iqbal & Akram, 2020). In summary, Urdu language teaching has a rich and historical foundation. Modern pedagogical training must advance to address current dialectal, technological & learner-centered requirements. These studies highlight methodologically flexible strategies to rally Urdu language education in local and global contexts, which are important in culturally rooted and linguistically aware settings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The interpretive paradigm was used in this study, emphasizing subjective meanings of individuals related to their experiences. The interpretive approach aligns with the aim of this research, which is to understand how Urdu language teaching is perceived and practiced by those deeply involved in it. It is also recognized that knowledge is co-constructed through social interaction and shaped by context, culture, and experience (Moustakas, 1994). For phenomenological investigation, the paradigm of this study is suitable and grasps the crux of the lived experiences. The focus of the study was to capture and explore research questions regarding depth of individuals' lived experiences via qualitative phenomenological design (Moustakas, 1994). In this connection, this approach was selected because of its richness and in-depth insights into various strategies, tasks, hurdles, and perceptions in Urdu language teaching. Therefore, Urdu language teachers, teacher trainers, and experts participated in the study. Participants were selected based on their experience, expertise, and involvement.

The collection was done via purposive sampling, and to know the truth, it was ensured to add the participants whose professional engagement in teaching and teacher training lasted at least ten years. Their expert insights and valuable viewpoints unveil the truths and provide an experimental perspective on Urdu pedagogy (Creswell, 2013). Semi-structured interviews were conducted for data collection to elicit open-ended, reflective answers. This ensures that the constant structure is maintained over its members. Virtual face-to-face interviews were led considering participants' availability, each session continued for approximately 45 to 60 minutes. All participants provided informed consent. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed precisely. The interview protocol included questions related to teaching methods, challenges, experiences, and suggestions for effective instruction. By incorporating Moustakas' (1994) and Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's modified technique, data were guided and analyzed through thematic analysis using the phenomenological framework in study.

With bracketing, the researcher leaves all personal biases and sets aside preconceived notions to focus only on the participant's experiences during the analysis. Horizontalization was performed to find significant statements about transcriptions of interviews. The statements were then examined in clustering phase, and themes were generated. The researcher established textural explanations

(what was experienced) and structural descriptions (how it was experienced) for each participant. Using phenomenology allows us to dig deeper into how people experience the language, moving beyond surface-level instructional techniques. Finally, capturing the core meaning and shared essence of Urdu language teaching as experienced by the participants, these were combined into a unified essence description. Strategies like peer debriefing & member checking, where participants reviewed transcribed responses, were used to confirm interpretations and maintain analytical rigor to ensure trustworthiness.

DATA ANALYSIS

The qualitative data obtained to uncover spirit of Urdu language teaching from lived experiences of educational professionals from five in-depth interviews were analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. This approach was employed to identify, interpret, and synthesize the meanings embedded in the participants' reflections. Thus, the analysis followed five important stages, and thus through this analysis, five core themes emerged while analyzing the data for reaching conclusion.

1. The Bracketing of researcher predisposition to remain open to the participants' experiences.
2. Horizontalization of data, wherein significant statements were extracted from the transcripts.
3. The Thematic clustering involves grouping statements into coherent themes for the analysis.
4. The Textural as well as structural descriptions articulating what & how it was experienced.
5. The essence description, mixing all perspectives to portray core experience of UL pedagogy.

Theme 1: Instructional Challenges in Urdu Language Teaching

The participants consistently highlighted the lack of structured pedagogical resources, including inadequate textbooks, visual materials, and outdated curricula. Teachers often feel compelled to design their teaching materials, especially when working with idioms, poetry, or abstract grammar concepts of teaching the language in different contexts. One teacher shared that "students struggle with grammar not because it's difficult, but because the material is dry and disconnected from real-life language use."

Theme 2: Influence of Cultural & Linguistic Nuances

Urdu's deep cultural roots and figurative expressions, such as idioms, proverbs, and poetic styles, were both assets and obstacles in diverse circumstances. While these features enrich the language, they also make it harder for learners, especially second-language learners, to grasp the meaning without cultural context moving beyond instructional techniques. A teacher trainer stated, "Idioms like 'aasman se taarey corona' (plucking stars from the sky) confuse students unless we explain their cultural significance."

Theme 3: Disconnect Between Teacher Training & Classroom Realities

There was a consensus that pre-service teacher training does not adequately prepare teachers for the challenges they face in classroom. Participants described a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical strategies, especially regarding differentiated instruction, student engagement, and digital integration. One expert mentioned, "Many teacher training programs are overly theoretical. Therefore, when new teachers enter the classroom, they are often unsure how to engage the diverse group of learners."

Theme 4: Effective Strategies for Urdu Pedagogy

Despite these challenges, participants shared several effective practices, including storytelling, interactive dialogues, dramatization, and blended language approaches (Urdu-English bilingual instruction). These methods helped make lessons more engaging and contextually relevant. One teacher noted, "When I start a grammar lesson with a funny Urdu story, students understand better, they remember better."

Theme 5: Need for Curriculum and Policy Reform

All participants agreed and stressed need for policy-level reforms in Urdu-language instruction. Policy reforms, including curriculum modernization, integration of digital tools, and development of textbooks aligned with student needs and cultural identity, were highlighted by almost all participants little attention is given to subjective experiences of those involved. A teacher trainer emphasized, "We must revise Urdu curriculum to reflect the language as it is spoken today, not as it was fifty years ago."

This is also highlighted by the structural descriptions of these experiences in under-resourced classrooms within rigid institutional frameworks through self-developed methods. Resilience and adaptation through essence of Urdu language teaching, as revealed through the lived experiences of teachers, trainers, and experts, is one of the main insights of this study. Educators demonstrate creativity and commitment to making Urdu meaningful for students, despite limited support. With limited training, they navigate complex cultural and linguistic terrains and innovations. Systemic reform experiences point to an insistent need to be informed by the realities of those at the frontlines of language education.

DISCUSSION

This study provides deep insights into existing experiences of Urdu language instructors, trainers, and experts through the outcomes and facts revealed in the several dimensions. In Urdu language teaching, these dimensions need to be improved, including the instructional restrictions, cultural-linguistic complications, and pedagogical gaps in teacher training. These findings fully support and extend current research on Urdu language pedagogies. A core theme emerged as an instructional challenge in Urdu language teaching is intensely supported by current literature. This aligns with previous research that highlighted inadequacy of traditional Urdu-language resources and the absence of learner-centered instructional materials; teachers in this study also described outdated textbooks and a lack of relevant teaching aids (Ashraf, 2014). This practice is widely observed in urban and rural educational contexts, and teachers often develop materials to address immediate classroom needs due to the aforementioned gap. The cultural and linguistic richness of Urdu poses pedagogical difficulties.

The participants noted that idioms, poetic constructs, and figurative language require cultural interpretation, which students understand effectively. This is related to the research of Qureshi et al. (2012), who stated that several idioms resist linguistic manipulation and the need contextual clarification and highlighted the complexity of the teaching Urdu idioms and symbolic language

(Qureshi et al. 2012). Similarly, Haq (2019) noted that standard expressions are often excluded from organized curricula despite their central role in everyday Urdu usage (Haq, 2019). A noteworthy finding is that it is prominent and linked to the disconnect between the teacher training and real classroom challenges. Members discovered that pre-service training often fails to train educators for practical realities, as deep concerns were raised by Rasool, Ahmad and Ali, (2020), who also found that in training programmes, pedagogical methods are often misaligned with bilingual, multicultural classroom settings (Rasool et al., 2020). For the efficient delivery of lessons, managing student diversity, or applying modern teaching tools, this gap between theory and practice limits the teachers' ability.

Despite the many challenges, teachers and trainers in present study shared effective pedagogical strategies, including storytelling, dramatization & interactive bilingual instruction. These methods resonate with discoveries of Young (2016), who claimed that to meet the needs of diverse learners, Urdu language instruction must advance to embrace the better-organized writing and grammar instruction (Young, 2016). Finally, echoing the prior literature advocating for updated and context-sensitive Urdu pedagogy, the study participants called for policy-level reforms and curriculum modernization. According to researchers, Urdu's evolving phonological system must be reflected in teaching materials to better serve learners from the diverse backgrounds (Ambreen & To, 2024). Moreover, digital inventions such as AI-based learning apps and multimedia teaching have shown potential for addressing present teaching resource gaps (Khalil et al., 2020). In summary, the results of this study endorse much of the prevailing research while offering exclusive, experience-based understanding of Urdu language pedagogy. They highlight mixing of culturally contextualized teaching materials & policy devotion to curriculum modernization as urgent need for instructional training reform.

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological study of Urdu language pedagogy identifies five key themes: instructional challenges in Urdu language teaching, influence of cultural and linguistic nuances, the disconnect between teacher training and classroom realities, effective strategies for Urdu pedagogy, and the need for curriculum and policy reform. The findings show that, despite limited institutional support, teachers creatively adapt their instructional methods to engage students and enhance learning outcomes over curriculum development and training programs. It advocates for modern, culturally responsive, and technology-supported pedagogical reforms to render the Urdu language teaching more effective and learner-centered. Besides, the study supports the alignment of teacher training programs with classroom applications, ensuring that teachers acquire practical skills suitable for their teaching conditions. The experiences shared by the teachers in this study demonstrate that practical wisdom significantly contributes to the advancement of inclusive and effective Urdu language education.

Future Directions

1. The longitudinal studies are needed to track the outcomes of specific teaching interventions, like bilingual approaches and digital learning tools thus, there is a need to measure impact

- of pedagogical innovations on student learning outcomes, motivation, and retention in Urdu language classrooms.
2. Future studies should expand participant base to include students' perspectives, especially in multilingual and multicultural classrooms in understanding experiences would provide a inclusive picture of Urdu language education and highlight mismatches between teachers' intentions and students' reception.
 3. The comparative studies across provinces or countries could explore regional variations in Urdu pedagogy, especially in urban versus rural or public versus private school contexts. This can inform context-specific curriculum development & help address educational inequality in Urdu instruction.
 4. There is room for experimental research on teacher-training models. Future work should evaluate the effectiveness of revised training curricula that incorporate practical, culturally grounded & interactive pedagogical techniques, would address disconnect amid training content and classroom demands.
 5. The further research is required to explore the integration of technology in Urdu language teaching. In this connection, AI-driven applications, mobile learning platforms, and online collaborative tools offer the promising possibilities, nevertheless their use in Urdu classrooms remains unexplored.
 6. The studies should assess usability, accessibility, and pedagogical effectiveness of such tools for students & teachers, advancing Urdu language teaching requires multi-pronged research agenda focused on pedagogy, training, curriculum, and technology, guided by empirical evidence and stakeholder experiences.

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