
A Review on English Language Learning Strategies among Urdu Medium Students at Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT

Learning English has become increasingly vital in modern schooling due to its influence on success in school, ability to converse, and career prospects. On the other hand, learners from the Urdu medium system face numerous linguistic, academic, and social challenges when trying to learn English and when trying to adjust to English medium schools. The current paper is a literature review on English Learning Strategies and Urdu Medium Students. The purpose is to understand the role learning strategies have in the English language and the school experiences of Urdu medium learners. The author reviewed 54 research papers in total; 30 papers focused on English Language Learning Strategies and the remaining 24 papers focused on Urdu Medium Students. The reviewed papers articulated that some English Learning Strategies, including cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies, memory, and technology-enhanced strategies, positively impacted learners' autonomy, proficiency, communicative competence, motivation, and academic



success. The review generated the finding that Urdu Medium students experience barriers in language, limited teaching resources, English exposure, socio-economically, and the language in which instruction is given. The review developed the finding that learning strategies, such as integrating language skills, learning, and technology, along with a flexible and learner-centered approach, positively impacts the learners. The review generated the finding that most of the papers reviewed lacked the use of English Language Learning Strategies in the Urdu medium, necessitating future research. The review findings may help educators, researchers, and policymakers design practices to better support Urdu medium students learning English.

Introduction

English is becoming an increasingly integral part of many industries, such as education, communication, and technology. This has resulted in English becoming an important part of many professions. Because of this, English language competence has become an important part of planning and policy in many countries. From the perspective of educators and researchers, English language education has become an important part of their work. The focus of many of these research studies has been the strategies people employ in order to learn a language. These strategies result in the language learner becoming more self-regulated and autonomous in their new learning process. For the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in a new language, many researchers have identified the use of cognitive, affective, social, memory, metacognitive, and compensation strategies. There is a direct correlation between the use of language learning strategies and motivation, positive self-assessment, and improvements in academic performance. Additionally, the language learning strategies that language learners utilize have a significant impact on learners' confidence and language learning proficiency. Rapid technological advancement has revolutionized the ways that English is learned as a new language. Empirical studies indicate the introduction of AI-based language tools, learning analytics, and technology-based instruction in the language classroom helps improve students' vocabulary, grammar, and writing as well as their language skills, classroom engagement, and overall language achievement (Taj, Khudai, & Thakur, 2026; Alkhatib, Khan, & Ishaque, 2025; Pattiasina & Rutumalessy, 2026; Vadakkayil, 2026). These studies reveal the increased potential and possibilities technology brings for language learning and teaching. Despite technological advancements, learners from various educational and linguistic backgrounds



perceive and experience the learning of the English language differently. Among such groups, students coming from Urdu medium schools pose the largest group of learners who encounter several linguistic, educational, and socio-cultural barriers in their journey of learning the English language. Because Urdu is the first language for these learners, and English is considered their second language, learners are faced with extra difficulties pertaining to vocabulary and pronunciation, as well as difficulties related to verbal and written communication, reading comprehension, and academic writing (Ali, 2022; Bavajan, 2022; Ansari, 2022). It has been reported that lack of exposure to English, inadequate learning resources, lack of teaching assistance, and low socio-economic status impede English learning for students taught in Urdu (Akbar et al., 2014; Hussain & Amanat, 2021; Maria, 2026). The focus of the majority of research conducted on learners who are taught in Urdu is on the language of instruction, academic performance, language and learning skills, and the availability of the means to pursue higher education (Moshahid, 2013; Ansari, 2024; Razvi, 2021). Research has shown that learners who are taught in Urdu lack the confidence, have poor communication skills, and their level of participation in academic activities is low when they move from an Urdu medium to an English medium educational system (Akbar et al., 2014; Ali, 2022; Hussain & Amanat, 2021). The good news is that the use of the right teaching methods and the use of integrated language skills in supportive educational systems can greatly improve students' learning of the language and enrich their academic experience (Razvi, 2021; Gomti, 2022). There is a lot of research in the field of Urdu students and the learning of the English language, but these two fields have been studied separately. Language learning strategies have been the focus of research, while studies on Urdu students have focused on linguistic barriers and their educational concerns. Few attempts have been made to understand how learning English can help resolve learning obstacles that are particular to Urdu medium learners. Thus, it becomes essential to analyze the existing literature to describe the knowledge and trends newly introduced and possible future research avenues. This review aims to assess existing literature with respect to English learning strategies and students with an Urdu medium background. This review aims to create an integrative framework on the obstacles that Urdu Medium learners face when learning English as a Second Language, by focusing on learning strategies related research, and studies undertaken in varied educational contexts. The review also aims to suggest future research and educational practice from the gaps that have been identified.

Objectives of the Study

1. To review the literature related to English Language Learning Strategies among learners in different educational contexts.



2. To examine the various language learning strategies employed by learners for developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English.
3. To review the literature related to the educational, linguistic, and academic challenges faced by Urdu medium students.
4. To analyse the role of language learning strategies, technology-integrated approaches, and innovative instructional practices in enhancing English language learning outcomes.
5. To examine the major findings and trends emerging from the studies on English Language Learning Strategies and Urdu Medium Students.
6. To identify the research gaps in the existing literature and suggest directions for future research related to English Language Learning Strategies and Urdu Medium Students.

Structure of the paper

This paper has been divided into multiple sections for readability and ease of navigation. The first section describes the study's objectives and introduces the topic. In the following sections, we define and describe the English Language Learning Strategies and Urdu Medium Students. The literature pertaining to these two variables is examined. Summary tables are included to present the major findings in the literature and to provide an overall assessment of the literature. The final sections identify the gaps in literature and present the major findings along with some recommendations for future studies.

English Language Learning Strategies

English Language Learning Strategies (ELLS) involve the behavioral, conscious actions, and the thought patterns of learners utilized for the purpose of facilitating the learning, comprehension, retention and usage of the English language. ELLS grant learners the ability to actively partake in the learning process and, moreover, practice the English language in all four of its aspects: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. ELLS are deemed imperative to the successful learning of a language because, as stated by Oxford and Crookall (1989), they help learners to tackle communication and linguistic problems and, in turn, they help to gain achievement in the field of education. ELLS have been the center of studies concerning language because of their crucial position in the development of language learning. Lessard-Clouston (1997) said that learning strategies in general are methods to help make language learning more efficient, effective and fun. Moreover, Wray and Hajar (2015) stated that learners of the English language are successful when they utilize the multitude of strategies to address the planning, monitoring, and



evaluation of their learning, as well as self-regulation. The stratification of ELLS covers numerous strategies. Memory strategies also consist of the methods in which information is stored and later retrieved. Cognitive strategies are the ways that assist learners to comprehend language and its usage, and compensatory strategies are ways in which learners may overcome gaps in their language. Finally, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies are used in planning, self-control, emotional and anxiety management, and social communication, respectively. Studies have shown that metacognitive and social strategies have been reported as popular strategies during English language learning (Das, 2016; Hapsari, 2019; Jyothsna, 2019). The recent pace of growth in educational technology has created new ways of thinking about English language learning strategies. The digital applications, online learning platforms, artificial intelligence, learning analytics, and technology-assisted learning and teaching methods have made it easier for learners to receive personalized learning, rapid feedback, and more practice (Alkhatib et al., 2025; Taj, Khudai, & Thakur, 2026; Pattiasina & Rutumalessy, 2026). These have impacted learners' language skills, engagement, and success. It has also been shown that using English language learning strategies can help improve learners' language skills, self-confidence, motivation, and communicative competence (Alshaghel, 2022; Terance, 2017; Manigandan, 2020). For this reason, English language learning strategies have been considered as a cornerstone of sound English language teaching and learning and of creating useful and effective language learning.

Table 1: Summary of Studies on English Language Learning Strategies

S. No.	Author(s)	Year	Major Findings
1	Arias	2026	Positive attitudes and social, educational, and personality factors significantly influenced English language learning.
2	Taj, Khudai & Thakur	2026	AI-based evaluation tools enhanced grammar, writing skills, motivation, and learner engagement.
3	Said & Siraji	2026	Phonotactic constraints influenced pronunciation and communication in English learning.
4	Sanusi & Darmawan	2026	English facilitated vocabulary transfer and pronunciation development in third-language acquisition.
5	Hariyani, Akhyar & Firdaus	2026	Positive learning attitudes improved achievement, while anxiety negatively affected performance.
6	Pattiasina & Rutumalessy	2026	Learning analytics improved vocabulary, speaking skills, reading comprehension, and learner engagement.



7	Vadakkayil	2026	Technology integration positively influenced English language achievement.
8	Ojanola & Bacasmot	2025	Language learning strategies reduced classroom anxiety and enhanced motivation.
9	Alkhatib, Khan & Ishaque	2025	AI-powered language models improved vocabulary, writing, reading, and speaking skills.
10	Abdullaeva	2024	Communicative approaches and technology integration improved speaking proficiency.
11	Monika	2024	Metacognitive reading strategies enhanced metamemory, meta-attention, and reading comprehension.
12	Alshaghel	2022	Language learning strategy instruction significantly improved writing skills and learner autonomy.
13	Aditama, Amelia & Pravitarsi	2022	Character education was effectively integrated into English language learning.
14	Swamy	2022	E-vocabulary learning strategies enhanced vocabulary development and learner autonomy.
15	Manigandan	2020	Vocabulary learning strategies improved speaking fluency, confidence, and communication skills.
16	Ranjan & Philominraj	2020	Social and metacognitive strategies were most frequently used by foreign language learners.
17	Hapsari	2019	Metacognitive strategies emerged as the most frequently used language learning strategies.
18	Jyothsna	2019	Language learning strategies and learning styles positively influenced language skills.
19	Sivaram	2019	Cognitive Strategy Instruction significantly improved achievement and oral fluency.
20	Chattaraj	2018	Learner-centred pedagogy promoted effective use of language learning strategies.
21	Grace Shanthi	2018	Strategy-based instruction improved listening comprehension and speaking performance.
22	Reinders	2018	Learning analytics supported personalized language learning and instructional decision-making.



23	Thomas, Reinders & Gelan	2017	Learning analytics enhanced monitoring of learner engagement and progress.
24	Prajeesh	2017	Biography-based strategy significantly improved writing skills and cultural awareness.
25	Terance	2017	Language learning strategies were more effective than traditional methods in improving reading skills.
26	Das	2016	Metacognitive strategies were most frequently used and positively related to language proficiency.
27	Ravi	2015	Systematic intervention strategies effectively reduced spelling difficulties.
28	Wray & Hajar	2015	Successful learners effectively employed cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies.
29	Lessard-Clouston	1997	Language learning strategies promoted learner autonomy and effective language acquisition.
30	Oxford & Crookall	1989	Strategy use significantly contributed to successful language learning and proficiency development.

All 30 studies in the review collectively indicate that English Language Learning Strategies positively influence the development of language proficiency, improve academic success and motivation, and enhance communication skills. Research shows that learners use many different strategies, including cognitive, metacognitive, social, affective, memory, and compensation strategies, to strengthen their literacy skills. Strategies for the integration of technology in the English language have positive impacts, as reported in recent studies. The reviewed literature indicates that the use of English Language Learning Strategies promotes learner independence, self-assuredness, involvement, and effective language learning. As a result, they are important to the modern English language teaching and learning process.

Urdu Medium Education

Urdu Medium Students are individuals who are taught in the Urdu language. Urdu medium education is vital for giving many Urdu-speaking people in Pakistan and India the opportunity to receive an education. Urdu medium education covers instruction in the Urdu language, while also preserving the culture and art of people who speak this language. Urdu, being the first language for many students, is the language necessary for communication and the language in which many students become literate and educated. Urdu medium education is, thus, critical for the learners' growth and development. While



medium education is given to students in Urdu, some students are also taught in other languages, such as English, and other local languages. Upon entering English-based schools and facing English-centric exams, students experience multifaceted challenges related to language transition, expression, comprehension, and performance (Akbar et al., 2014; Hussain & Amanat, 2021). Research shows that a lack of English exposure, learning resources, teaching support, and socioeconomic circumstances negatively impact the language skills and academic performance of Urdu medium students (Ansari, 2022; Bavajan, 2022; Maria, 2026). Studies indicate that Urdu medium students are unable to compete in English-based higher education and employment due to lack of English language skills, understanding of English-based academic and professional vocabulary, and access to quality English educational resources (Ali, 2022; Razvi, 2021; Shaban, 2015). However, studies suggest that educational outcomes can be improved with the use of appropriate teaching support, bilingual methods, and integrated language and skills development, and learner-centered teaching (Gomti, 2022; Razvi, 2021). This suggests that Urdu Medium Students are an important group of learners as their educational experiences are impacted by a combination of linguistic and socioeconomic factors as well as the quality of instruction. Identifying challenges and educational gaps of this group is necessary to design interventions aimed at increasing teaching equity, enhancing educational and linguistic outcomes, and improving learners' overall achievement.

Table 2: Summary of Studies on Urdu Medium Students

S. No.	Author(s)	Year	Major Findings
1	Maria	2026	Urdu medium students faced linguistic, academic, and resource-related challenges in Teacher Eligibility Examinations.
2	Ayub & Naveed	2026	Urdu served as an effective linguistic bridge in learning Arabic and facilitated comprehension of grammar and vocabulary.
3	Barich et al.	2025	Students perceived Urdu Medium Instruction as more effective for comprehension and disciplinary knowledge acquisition.
4	Naqvi	2024	MANUU significantly improved educational attainment, employment opportunities, and quality of life among Urdu-speaking learners.
5	Ansari	2024	Parental education and family income significantly influenced academic achievement among Urdu medium students.
6	Ali	2022	Urdu medium students faced difficulties in English creative writing due to limited vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills.



7	Bavajan	2022	Urdu medium learners experienced challenges in understanding, speaking, and writing English.
8	Gomti	2022	Activity-based and learner-centred strategies improved Hindi language proficiency among Urdu medium learners.
9	Ansari	2022	Students and teachers faced challenges related to infrastructure, learning materials, language skills, and pedagogical practices.
10	Hussain & Amanat	2021	The Urdu-English medium divide contributed to educational inequality and limited opportunities for Urdu medium students.
11	Razvi	2021	Integration of language skills significantly improved English study skills among Urdu medium learners.
12	Shahida, Ali & Muhammad	2021	Code-switching facilitated comprehension and effective classroom communication among learners.
13	Ali	2019	Urdu fiction in Rajasthan contributed significantly to the development of Urdu literary traditions.
14	Muntazim	2019	Emotional intelligence, study habits, and achievement motivation significantly predicted academic achievement.
15	Alam	2018	Creativity showed a weak positive relationship with academic achievement among Urdu medium vocational students.
16	Ayoub, Mehmood & Awan	2017	Students lacked effective dictionary-use skills and required training to improve language learning.
17	Saleem	2017	Creative writing abilities improved through systematic instructional interventions.
18	Shaban	2015	Urdu medium students faced challenges in higher education and employment due to language-related barriers.
19	Akbar et al.	2014	Urdu medium students encountered difficulties in English-medium higher education and communication.
20	Moshahid	2013	Intelligence, study habits, adjustment, and socio-economic status significantly influenced academic achievement.
21	Fatima	2011	Spelling errors were primarily related to substitution, addition, deletion, and word-boundary confusion.
22	Alam	2011	Socio-economic status showed a significant positive relationship with

			academic performance.
23	Rizwan	1997	Urdu medium schools faced deficiencies in infrastructure, resources, and educational facilities.
24	Khan	1995	Improvement in teacher training, teaching aids, and educational facilities was needed in Urdu medium schools.

In analyzing the 24 studies conducted on Urdu Medium Students, it becomes clear that participants of these studies reported various academic and instructional challenges. These challenges impact Urdu Medium learners' educational experiences and academic success. Numerous studies reported challenges pertaining to learning English, including poor vocabulary, a lack of communication skills, a deficiency in exposure to English, and difficulties with adapting to English Medium instruction. Other challenges reported in the literature included insufficient quality instructional resources, insufficient instructional support, and socio-economic disadvantage, which often result in limited access to higher education and employment. Several studies reported the challenges of Urdu Medium students related to parents' educational level, students' study habits, emotional intelligence and motivation, and their socio-economic status. The majority of the studies also reported that using bilingual methods, integrated skills, and learner-centred instructional methods, alongside code-switching and computer-assisted instruction, can improve both educational and language outcomes for Urdu Medium students. Overall, the studies show that Urdu Medium students face a number of educational challenges, but given appropriate instructional methods and support, equitable opportunities, and effective teaching practices, the students' educational experiences and academic outcomes can be improved.

Table 3: Overall Summary of Reviewed Literature

S. No.	Variable	Number of Studies
1	English Language Learning Strategies	30
2	Urdu Medium Students	24
Total	Reviewed Literature	54

According to a review of 54 studies, English Language Learning Strategies and Upper-Urdu Medium Education both shed light on different aspects of the same phenomenon. Literature suggests that implementing English Language Learning Strategies positively shapes learner autonomy, motivation, and communicative competence and leads to the development and improvement of language skills. There have been repeated studies that discuss the significant role of cognitive, metacognitive, social, and tech-assisted strategies in developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Literature on upper-Urdu



medium students shows that students face a number of English language learning challenges, as well as the difficulties of adapting to an English medium of instruction. The studies stress that the challenges faced by students can largely be resolved through the use of learner-centered teaching strategies, an integration of language and technology-supported skills, and the provision of teaching aids and other educational resources. The literature most especially advocates the use of English Language Learning Strategies and providing support to maximize the teaching potential to enhance the learning outcomes and the level of English proficiency of upper-Urdu medium learners.

Research Gap

After reviewing the available literature, we can see that the majority of the studies have covered English Language Learning Strategies and Urdu Medium Students individually. The studies on English Language Learning Strategies have focused on the use of strategies, learner motivation, language anxiety, technology, artificial intelligence, learning analytics, vocabulary, and language proficiency. The studies on Urdu Medium Students have focused on academic performance, socio-economic status, language learning problems, the medium of instruction, problems in the education system, and availability of higher education. Unfortunately, the number of studies on English Language Learning Strategies and Urdu Medium Students is almost negligible. The literature shows that even though Urdu medium learners face problems in learning English, little has been done to understand what English Language Learning Strategies they use to tackle the problems. Also, the artificial intelligence and technology-based learning innovations have been researched a lot, but the research on the technology-based language learning innovations for Urdu medium students is lacking. The literature has also shown that there is almost no research on English Language Learning Strategies and how they can improve the language learning and the academic performance of Urdu medium students. Given all of these factors, the use, relevance, and impact of English Language Learning Strategies for Urdu medium students in different educational settings needs to be researched.

Conclusion

This review considers 54 studies and literature pertaining to English Language Learning Strategies and Urdu Medium Students. From the literature reviewed, English Language Learning Strategies have the potential to enhance learner autonomy, motivation, and communicative competence, along with increased language and academic achievement. The results of the studies highlight the importance of cognitive, metacognitive, social, affective, and technology-based strategies in developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Emerging technologies and innovations in learning (Artificial Intelligence,



Learning Analytics and Digital Learning) promote and support effective English Language Learning in a flexible and personalized way. The review uncovers the challenges that Urdu Medium Students face when learning English and transitioning to an English Medium education system. These challenges are linguistic, educational, social economic, and instructional. Factors such as language limitations, instructional resources, inadequate exposure to the English language, and problems of the medium of instruction have a negative influence on educational opportunities and learners' academic performance. The literature reviewed proposes learner-centered instruction, integrated language and skills instruction, the use of a bilingual method of instruction, and technology-based instruction as means to overcome these challenges. The studies reviewed demonstrate the potential of English Language Learning Strategies to assist Urdu Medium learners in overcoming language challenges and enhance their educational opportunities. Additionally, it shows a greater need for research in this field to understand better the use of English Language Learning Strategies by Urdu Medium learners. The research will promote the development of educational practices that are more inclusive and learner-centered. Furthermore, it will enable greater success in both English language learning and the learners' academic performance.

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