

LANGUAGES AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION, A SETBACK OF STUDENTS' ACCESS TOWARDS HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY FROM RURAL AREAS OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract, *The study intends to explore the difficulties of students' access towards higher education through English language as a medium of instruction in Pakistan. Data were collected by analyzing different documents, articles, research reports, research based books, and experts opinions, teachers of English Language and a questionnaire for students. The result show that although students faces multiple problems in access towards higher education but medium of instruction in this regard is one of the main problems of students failure towards higher education. In addition in English language proficiency the students of other language then English have less achievement scores as compared to native English speakers. The study further clears that English is a dominant language as a medium of instruction at all level of Education in Pakistan. The study suggested further research to address the issue.*

Key words: Higher education, English Language, medium of instruction, students' difficulties

I. Introduction

Higher education is an essential component of education system of every nation. It is valuable and beneficial for economy of the society(Kyllonen, 2012). It is an attempt for higher earning, reducing unemployment, better job status and agreement, reduction of crime (Card, 1999; Kyllonen, 2012). But access to higher education is not equal to every nation. The students face difficulties and barriers for acquiring higher education. The barriers to approaching Higher Education are broad spreading but not specific to a region. Various factors affect individuals' choice of higher education like, parents education, language, age, socio

economic background, cultural factors gender, income, family circumstances and geographical areas as well (Finnie, Wismer, & Mueller, 2015; Mullen, 2010).

According to UNESCO's Digest 2009 the participation rate towards Higher Education in Pakistan was as lowest as 5.1%, only 6% of Pakistanis population had been graduated from Universities up till as of 2007 (United Nations Educational & Organization, 2009). It shows a very low participation rate in Higher education. No doubt there are various reasons for this lower participation in higher education however one of the major factors involving is medium of

instruction at higher education institutions. (Rahman, 2004). According to Rahman there are at least 58 languages spoken in the country among them 6 languages including Urdu are prominent. The main objectives of this study were *to find out difficulties of students English as a medium of instruction in access towards Higher Education. The next purpose was to investigate the attitude of University students towards languages as medium of instruction and then to analyze language policy of Pakistan.*

Although research studies had been done on language yet importance was not given to the medium of instruction as to consider it as a hurdle for the student in their access towards higher education in Pakistan. Hence in this regard this study is very significant. The study also provides information the readers that what problems our graduates face for approaching Higher education. Which hurdles stop them from entering into the higher education? It also provides guidance to the policy makers, educationists, teachers and students that medium of instruction involves in education. It also suggests that to become prosper, developed and progressive nation higher education is very essential indicator. The paper further paves way for the researchers to probe deeply in to the issue and find considerable solution through further research studies.

National Language Policy

According to the constitution of Pakistan 1973 Urdu was declared as the National Language of the country. It was decided to adopt Urdu language as a medium of instruction in the institutions of Higher education. While, arrangement were made to adopt Urdu as official use and other purposes nearly up to fifteen years. Urdu language was also accepted by most ethnic groups as a lingua franca (a link language) to the other local languages (Rahman, 2004). But some groups rejected to adopt it. Since, the day of independence Pakistan had been facing problems of language planning in Higher education, as being a multilingual country i.e. deficiency of students facilitation resources and related material in Urdu etc. Hence due to these concerns the standard of higher education are declining (Mansoor, 2003). According to the findings of a study conducted by Mansoor there is a dual system of medium of instruction in schools of the Pakistan. Both Urdu and English are compulsory subjects from class 1 in both Public and private schools. But English has been medium of instruction in Higher education in most of the subjects (Mansoor, 2003). Not only in Pakistan English has been used medium of instruction in other non English speaking countries for years due to its international scope and job purposes (Coleman, 2006; D. Graddol, 2008; Hu & Lei, 2014). In fact Pakistan government never planned to stop

English as a medium of instruction in education. There is a dual system of curriculum of privately managed and public schools. There are cadet colleges, English medium schools; beacon house system and city schools etc. these schools follow the education system of Cambridge and oxford Universities. So this system had become a source of gap between upper and lower middle classes. The official communication in eminent offices of the state is also in English language. According to Masoor, 2003 there have been two streams of students entering into higher education institutions as Public sector and private sector students. Hence the policy of the language looks a dual policy in education system of Pakistan. The students from the private sector study in the English medium schools and colleges however the students from public or government sector study through Urdu medium(Mansoor, 2003).

Status of English

English is a well known language of throughout the globe due to its popularity s a language of technology, science, trade and online communication (Block & Cameron, 2002). It is because mostly the books of science medicine, engineering and academic literature are available in English Language. Especially English language became popular in the 20th century. Its speakers increased in and at a glance English language is the official language of 90

countries. It is expected that its speakers will increase than the natives (Graddol, 1997). If we take overview on the importance of English in Pakistan we see that English is a compulsory subject from grade 1 to graduation. On the other hand Urdu is not taught up to graduation as a compulsory subject. It shows that English is more important than Urdu in Pakistan (Khalique, 2006).

The research studies demonstrate certain reasons that why English is learned. It is learned to increase knowledge, individual development and to acquire world class education. English language is learned for the communication with non-native speakers and for travelling abroad one must know English language. No doubt it is the language science and commerce as well (Tahir, 2001).

English had been declared as official language of the state since the existence of Pakistan to date. It was the language of military and elites in the country. This was of a difference between them to be superior(Cohen, 1998; Dar & Khan, 2015; Rahman, 2004). English language has also been the language of British colonies in the world like Africa and Asain countries(Brutt-Griffler, 2002). In Pakistan English medium schools have different curriculum then that of the Urdu medium schools and madarsas. There are certain cadet colleges and institutions following the

education system of Cambridge and Oxford Universities. The historical record shows that Government of the Pakistan has been ever supported the English medium Schools as well as English language (Rahman, 2004). Although Urdu is the medium of education up to the higher secondary level but English is still the medium of education for higher education, technical and medical colleges. English is the language of commerce and the science and technology in Pakistan. It is also the language of law and judiciary(Rahman, 2004; Shah, 2003). Pakistan. All the official, military and judicial communication is in English language in Pakistan. Consequently it is evident that English is one of the most important languages in Pakistan. It is learned more than other languages including National language in Higher Education. Although Urdu is the national identity and a binding source for all the provinces of Pakistan yet English is still an important language in Pakistan.

Status of Urdu and Other Languages

As discussed earlier that Pakistan is a country with multi spoken languages. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan. However some languages are also taught at provincial level excluding the national language. Sindhi language had been taught in Sindh since the British conquest. Although 9% of the people of Pakistan use Urdu as first language yet it is the medium

of instructions in early education in public schools in Pakistan since the independence and it is a compulsory subject from class one to twelve(Rahman, 1996, 2004). Rahman more illustrates the languages hierarchy as English, Urdu and then regional languages. It is the demanded language of religious groups in Pakistan. Rahman,2004 further cleared that although Urdu had been accepted some ethnic groups as a linken language but still it was opposed somewhere due to the reason that it was the language of elite Punjabis and Muhajirs who like orients considered themselves sophisticated, educated and superior. So it is said that due to biasness with locals of Pakistan the language was not adopted by the other ethnic groups. Accordingly, Urdu is less effective for the elite class of Pakistan. They consider Urdu as a low prestigious language. The literature of Urdu is also boring for them. They only read English instead of Urdu and other local languages. But still Urdu is used for acquiring lower level job and commerce in Pakistan (Rahman.et al). Urdu has less online literature than English. Although effort were made in this regard since 1980s when Urdu Science College demonstrate Nuri Nataliq ligatures founded by Ahmad Mirza Jameel. Other software were also established like Shahkar, Surkhhab etc. in 1990s the Pakistan Data Management Services created Mahir software which works with Windows for both Urdu and

Sindhi(Hisam, 2002; Jameel, 2002). Hence there have been different stages of the development of Urdu language in Pakistan including computer assisted instruction. It has been illustrated by the researchers that both English and Urdu are used as medium of instruction however English being a language of Law, commerce ,management, Science and Technology is more powerful than Urdu(Canagaraja, 2005). consequently English is also considered as a national developing language in Pakistan(Mansoor, 2003).

Importance of Urdu as a National Language of Pakistan

As discussed earlier that Urdu is the national language of Pakistan. Being the national language it is indemnification as a Pakistani inhabitant. Urdu language shares its vocabulary with Persian and Arabic there to read Arabic and Persian becomes easy for the learners of these languages. Urdu plays a significant role in the independence of Pakistan but it needs improvement in its literature for higher education. We don't have enough advance literature in Urdu language that's why English is taking place at all levels of education particularly in higher education. In Pakistan almost more than 90% of the people are Muslims. Therefore their favorite language is Urdu than English. It is because Urdu language also shares vocabulary with Arabic which is language of The Holy Quraan. In this way

the significance of Urdu is not ignored. Urdu is also a used as the lingua franca through the all provinces of Pakistan (Rahman, 2006). Urdu has also been declared as the medium of instruction from class one to twelve after the independent of the country(Mansoor, 2003; Qureshi, Shirazi, & Wasim, 2007).

II. Methodology

All the students studying in English language of Master and M.Phil level and their teachers of English language were the population of the study. But randomly data of 50 students were collected through a questionnaire and semi structured interview for knowing the attitude of the student towards English and Urdu as medium instruction. However, this was not sufficient for generalizing the results. Therefore documents, articles, reports, and National language policy as well teachers of English Language were included in data collection. Their results were matched, compared and finally combined for conclusion to validate the results. Students language proficiency was judged by their achievement tests and analyzing their interviews as well as teachers opinions.

III. Findings and Discussion

The first finding was that students who were participated in attempting questionnaire, their attitude toward English language was positive. But their attitude towards Urdu as

medium of instruction was negative. The following table shows student attitude towards Urdu and English as the medium of instruction.

Table: Opinion of students about the usage of languages as medium of instruction

SR #	STATEMENTS	AGREE	DISAGREE
1	English should be the medium of instruction from primary school level	40%	60%
2	Bilingual medium of instruction should be from primary school level	70%	25%
3	Urdu should be the medium of instruction at higher level	20%	80%
4	English should be the medium of instruction at higher level	80%	20%
5	It is easier to understand the lectures conducted in mother tongue	65%	35%
6	It is better to study through English medium of instructions	85%	15%
7	English culture is superior to Urdu culture	10%	90%
8	Urdu have enough literature for research purpose	0	100%

The results show that 40% of students were disagree that English should be the medium of instruction from primary school level whereas 70% of them were in favor of bilingual medium of instruction from primary school level as well. Only 20% of students were agree that Urdu should be the medium of instruction at higher level while 80% of them were agree that English should be the medium of instruction at higher level. 65% respondents were in the favor that it is easier to understand lectures conducted in mother tongue. However, 90% respondents disagree with the statement that English

culture is superior to Urdu culture. 100% students were disagreed with the statement that Urdu has enough literature for research purpose.

The students' proficiency in Urdu language was better in their previous graduation scores. This was our second finding about

their proficiency in languages. Our third finding was about their difficulty and languages as barriers in their access towards higher education. The results about English as medium of instruction showed that the students faced lot of problems through English as medium of instruction. It is because they have little proficiency and poor background in English. They have no English speaking environment as well. The students also faced rigid rules and pithy sentences of grammar in English. They have a little vocabulary. These entire things clearly affected their achievement

negatively and they could not perform according to their natural ability like the first language speakers. In case of Urdu the students also faced difficulties as there is not enough literature available online. It is because now a day for a self learner online material is essentials. The trend from text books has been changed to eBooks especially in developing countries. The eBooks provide more information to students and teachers. Hence, now a day's students depend more on their eBooks than text books(Embong, Noor, Hashim, Ali, & Shaari, 2012). So this indicates that students of other languages and native languages cannot perform equally. Their performance is affected by language proficiency. In the views of second language learners got different score in their end achievement as compared to the native language learners it was because of their limited proficiency due to non background of English. Generally non English speaking students have to more work for achieving good scores(Saville-Troike, 1984). They further concluded that mastery in grammar proficiency is must for better scores that is very hard without being a native speaker. In a language proficiency test they said that the students who performed best mostly those who had the speaking environment of native language. The case is equal to some extent for non Urdu speaking students especially of those like Pashtu and Balochi languages. Research

studies show that the students of Pashtu and Balouchi language as mother tongue can never fully understand the usage of genders in Urdu Language. Being deprived areas no research studies or authentic survey has been conducted. Mostly in KPK and Baluchistan and tribal areas of Dera Ghzai Khan and Rajnpur Balochi language is spoken. The speakers of Saraiki are also not in favour of Urdu as a medium of instruction as well. Therefore Urdu as medium of instruction is also a problem for the students of these ethnic groups.

IV. Conclusions

The evidence shows that the majority of the students were opined that English is the central language for academic and professional careers. English should be the medium of instruction at all levels of education. Urdu is considered important only for primary education. Teachers and students emphasized that English must be the medium of instruction instead of Urdu in universities. It shows low status of Urdu as compared to English. Despite students limited proficiency in English they strongly recommended English as medium of instruction. But more trained teachers and facilitation should be given to the students to make English medium instruction for students friendly at all level. Students' positive attitude towards English as medium of instruction may be due to English is a language of economic progress while Urdu

is considered as only a domestic, mannered and cultured language. English is the sole medium to invent, discover, propagate and elaborate the knowledge and research. And most of the literature is in English language to fulfill the needs of self learning. On the other hand Urdu is left behind at this state. That is why an individual needs to be functionally and critically literate in the English Language so that he or she may be able to cope with new challenges and to contribute fully to the development and progress of society.

As a final result it is evident that medium of instruction is a main determinant to contribute to students achievement at a great extent. The study further show that although most of the students possessed limited ability to understand English as get lower scores as compared to other subjects like Urdu, Islamiat, Social Studies, and other Urdu medium subjects.

There is an issue for adopting both the languages including native languages as medium of instruction for higher education as if students of Public school adopt Urdu as medium of instruction the students with English background will compete them and they lagged behind in Public commission Exams for jobs purposes. And they also face the problem of shortage of online material. But if let English as medium of instruction then the students of backward areas and having Urdu and other languages

background have lot of problems in access towards Higher Education (discussed earlier) that is why their participation in Higher Education is very low. Hence, neither Urdu nor English fit to the current situation of the system as medium of instruction. So the system must be amended. Therefore, it is suggested that further research is needed and a comprehensive plan should be made to address the issue. And if a schooling system with equal teaching and learning resources should be provided to adopt English as a medium of instruction that may be suitable and effective as compared to present situation.

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