

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 7 : 12 December 2007

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

K. Karunakaran, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

The Status and Teaching of English in Pakistan

Muhammad Akram, Ph.D. Candidate

Anser Mahmood, Ph.D. Candidate

The Status and Teaching of English in Pakistan

Muhammad Akram & Anser Mahmood

Abstract

There are more than 60 languages spoken in Pakistan. Urdu is the official and the national language of Pakistan whereas English is co-official language of Pakistan. The present paper highlights the status and significance of English language learning and teaching in Pakistan on the one hand and the attitude of different social classes towards English language in Pakistan on the other.

1. Introduction

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and more than 60 other local languages are spoken in Pakistan. The status of English in Pakistan is as clear as daylight. A Pakistani's inadequate grasp of English language would keep him reminding of his inferior status. An overview of the history of English in the sub-continent will help understand present day attitudes toward English language learning in Pakistan.

Table 1: Pakistani Languages

Pakistani Languages	
Languages	Percentage of speakers
Punjabi	44.15
Pashto	15.42
Sindhi	14.10
Siraiki	10.53
Urdu	7.57
Balochi	3.57
Others	4.66
Source: Census 2001: 107	

English enjoys a high status in Pakistan as the language of education, law, government, science and technology. Advocates of English argue for its retention as language for international communication, and as lingua franca among the provinces. The teaching of English in Pakistan has been text based since the beginning because the British government policy was to create a class of natives who would act as a

buffer between the ruler and the ruled as also the link between the two. English is the one good legacy of the British rule in this sub-continent.

English in Pakistan is used as an official and a second language. It is spoken and used by a relatively small but extremely influential portion of country's population in the domain of government administration, law, the military, the higher education, commerce and mass media (Baumgardner 1993:43).

According to Ghani (2003:105):

English in Pakistan serves as a gateway to success, to further education and to white collar jobs. It is the language of higher education and wider education and not the home language of the population except in the upper strata of society where it is spoken as a status symbol.

Socially, English adopted as a second language has had a significant impact both economically and educationally. It continues to play an important role in the country's commercial and industrial development and outside the government sector.

2. Urdu-English code-switching in Pakistan

Code-switching is an important element of the speech of bilinguals/multilinguals. Urdu is the official and national language of Pakistan. In Pakistan, English is used as second language. According to Baumgardner (1993):

.because of the language's new context of use, words from Urdu and indigenous languages of Pakistan which refer to Pakistani culture and society are often used in English where no equivalent or appropriate English word exists.

The English words and phrases have gone deeper into the blood stream of bilingual or multilingual speakers. The bilinguals or multilinguals use these English equivalents for the sake of appropriate emphasis and to make their statements more effective. The elite class, the highly qualified people and the people under western influence use such type of language. The wide and common use of this language is in offices, picnic parties and discussions. Most of the bilingual speakers in Pakistan use English as the complementary language.

3. Teaching and Learning of English in Pakistan

English is taught as the compulsory subject from the first grade in our curricula. English language teachers in Pakistan must approach teaching English as a Second Language from the perspective of applied linguistics. Increase in the number of language institutes and their students also increasing interest of parents for their children to learn English can be a good evidence for the recent value of English language in our country.

Table 2: Medium of Education in Pakistani Schools/Colleges

	Madrassas (N=131)	Sindhi medium schools (N=132)	Urdu medium schools (N=520)	English-medium schools		
				elitist (N=97)	Cadet college (N=86)	Ordinary (N=119)
1. What should be the medium of instruction in schools?						
Urdu	43.51	9.09	62.50	4.12	23.26	24.37
English	0.76	33.33	13.65	79.38	67.44	47.06
Mother tongue	0.76	15.15	0.38	2.06	Nil	1.68
Arabic	25.19	Nil	0.19	Nil	Nil	0.84
No response	16.79	37.88	16.54	5.15	Nil	8.40
2. Do you think higher jobs in Pakistan should be available in English?						
Yes	10.69	30.30	27.69	72.16	70.93	45.38
No	89.31	63.64	71.15	27.84	29.07	53.78
NR	Nil	6.06	1.15	Nil	Nil	0.84
3. Should English-medium schools be abolished?						
Yes	49.62	13.64	20.19	2.06	12.79	5.88
No	49.62	84.09	79.04	97.94	86.05	93.28
NR	00.76	2.27	0.77	Nil	1.16	0.84
Note: The results do not add up to 100 in some cases because those choosing two or more languages have been ignored. Source: Rahman 2002: Appendix-14.						

The teaching of English in Pakistan has been a text-based programme. A Pakistani learner is motivated into learning English language for:

1. Studies abroad.
2. Greater job opportunities outside his native area.
3. Social, missionary or military purposes.
4. Trade and commerce.
5. Academic purposes.

The educationalist pleads for the teaching of English as a window on the world. The politician wants English because of inter and intra communicational needs with different linguistic regions of the country as well as with the world out side. It is evident that it can not take the place of a national language but a language that has

entered the blood stream of a nation can not by any canon of justice be given the status of just a foreign language.

4. Problems in Teaching English in Pakistan

Following are the problems or the shortcomings in English language teaching or learning in Pakistan:

- Learning or teaching of foreign/target language has been through the medium of its literature. The modern educationists do not agree with this theory. We need to revise our policies in this respect.
- The age old and obsolete Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is still in vogue and it is being practiced in most of our schools and colleges.
- The English language teachers are not highly qualified or competent to cope with the subject. No workshops are conducted on Teacher Training at larger level. The result is that the teachers are not aware of the modern techniques due to lack of proper teacher training.
- The faulty material and the out dated books are used which lack the proper subject matter. Local books are preferred rather than the foreign books. These books contain so many spelling and grammar mistakes and there are no proper illustrations as well.
- The students are provided with the assignments and they are not encouraged to do their own efforts. This method mars the creativity of the students. The cramming is promoted rather than creativity by this method of teaching English.
- The examination system is totally a failure in which just the power of expression and cramming is tested. The examination system fails to check the target language proficiency of the students and it also neglects to test the students' attainments in language skills.
- In most of the public schools and colleges the Audio Visual Aids and other modern techniques of overhead projector are not used. Even the cheaper modern techniques are not available.
- In a period less than 60 minutes how a teacher can justify himself. In that short span of time the teacher can not conduct the tests and in the same period he can not deliver the lecture. The teacher can not do justice to the students and to his own duties as well.
- One big hindrance in the way of learning and teaching English in Pakistan is the over crowded and large class rooms. The number of students exceeds more than 120

in some cases. In such a situation how can an educator pay individual attention to all of the students?

5. Conclusion

Judging from certain trends prevailing in Pakistan, it appears that the influence of English is on the increase rather than the decrease. The English news papers and magazines have an extensive readership. The number of books published in English is quite encouraging. English is still used in offices, High Courts and parliament, etc. More and more public schools where the study of English starts right from the first grade are being opened.

English is and will continue to be a necessity of Pakistan. In a country where the majority speak Punjabi, and the national language is Urdu, and over sixty other languages are spoken on regular bases, the status of English as a language of power and elitism reflects the current global attitude toward English language.

References

- Abdul Hafeez (2004) The Need of Introducing Communicative Syllabuses for Teaching English in Pakistan Journal of Research (Faculty of Languages & Islamic Studies) Vol.6 2004.
- Ahmad, C. B. (1995). New dimensions of English in Pakistan. Lahore: Polymer Publications.
- Baumgardner, Robert J. (1993) The English Language in Pakistan. Oxford University Press Karachi 1993.
- Census. 2001. 1998 census Report of Pakistan Islamabad: Population Census Organization. Statistics Division. Government of Pakistan.
- Ghani, Mamuna and Dr. Mobina Talaat (2004) Teacher Education vs. Teacher Training. Pakistan Journal of Language (LAP) Linguistic Association of Pakistan Vol. 1.No.1. 2004.
- Ghani, Mamuna (2003), Language Learning Strategies Employed by L2 Learners. Pakistan Journal of Language. Vol.4 No.1 2003.
- Ghani, Mamuna (2003) The Status and Position of English Language in Pakistan. Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities. Vol.1 No.1 October, 2003.
- Ghani, Mamuna (2003) The Role of Anxiety in English Language Class. Pakistan Journal of Language. Vol.4 No.1 2003

Haque, A.R. (ed) 1993. The position and status of English in Pakistan. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mansoor, Sabiha. 1993. *Punjabi, Urdu, English in Pakistan: A Sociolinguistic Study*. Lahore: Vanguard.

Mueen, A.(1992). English language teaching in Pakistan: A futuristic Perspective. The Pakistan Futuristic Foundation and Institute Islamabad.

Prof. Schofield, P. and Dr. Mamuna, Ghani. (2003) The Relationship of Socio-Economic Status and Length/Medium of English Instruction with Individual Differences and English Proficiency in Pakistan. Journal of Research. LAP Vol.3 2003.

Qureshi, I.H. (1975). Education in Pakistan. Karachi Ma'aref Limited.

Rahman, T.(1990). Pakistani English. Karachi: Oxford University Press.

Rahman, Tariq. 2002. *Language, Ideology and Power: Language-Learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.

Rahman, Tariq. (2005) Passport to Privilege: The English Medium Schools in Pakistan. *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, Volume 1, Number 1, January 2005.

Warsi Jilani (2004) Conditions under which English is Taught in PAKISTAN: An Applied Linguistic Perspective SARID journal vol.1.No.1. 2004.

=====

Muhammad Akram Ph.D. Candidate
The Department of English
(Applied Linguistics)
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Pakistan
Muhammadakram80@yahoo.com

Anser Mahmood Ph.D. Candidate
The Department of English
(Applied Linguistics)
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Pakistan
chanser73@yahoo.com