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## The Dynamic Forces which Help the Spread of English in Pakistan

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### Abstract

English as an international language is deemed to be the most effective language for communication in many respects. It is the reason that in many countries, English is taught and learned either as an EN, ESL or EFL. Those countries, which had remained colonies under the British Empire have adopted English as an ESL. Pakistan being a part of united India is also among those countries where English is taught as a compulsory subject. English influenced the local languages from day one when British occupied the land. Its influence is increasing day by day due to the increased education, economic needs and the modern technologies. In this study, we have examined some of the dynamic forces which characterize the spread of English in Pakistan. The data were collected through online sources, documents and articles. The thematic analysis of the study highlights some of the important factors responsible for speeding up the spread of English in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Dynamic forces, Spread of English, Pakistan, ESL and EFL.

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## **1. Introduction**

The emergence of English as a Lingua Franca has speedily changed the linguistic map of the world (Matsuda, 2006). Research has shown that there are many dynamic forces which have speeded up the spread of English particularly in the Subcontinent. This study examines those dynamic forces which have caused the spread of English in the context of South Asia particularly in Pakistan. For this purpose, this study takes into account a range of dimensions such as the present status of English in the world, particularly English in Pakistan: colonial and post colonial periods. Finally, the study examines the forces which gear up the spread of English in Pakistan.

### **1.1. Significance and Objective of the study**

This study will develop the insight of the readers about the English contact with the indigenous languages and the influence of English over the local languages. The readers will also be able to understand the spread of English by studying the factors and elements responsible for this spread. Furthermore, it may open the door for further research on this topic to investigate the forces in more detail. The study may be helpful and beneficial for further research in the field of World Englishes, particularly in the context of English contact with individual indigenous languages.

The main and sole objective of the study is:

1. to identify the forces and mediums that accelerate the spread of English in Pakistan.

### **1.2. Research question**

English language has become a part of the repertoire of the people of every south Asian country (Kachru 1969). It may be said that the outstanding sociolinguistic feature of South Asia is the peculiar role that English plays in this area. The question of the study is;

**What are the dynamic forces which characterize the spread of English in Pakistan?**

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## **2. Literature Review**

In this section, we concentrate on previous research studies to portray a brief sketch of how English did spread across the world and particularly in Pakistan.

### **2.1. Spread of English across the world**

English has spread all over the world rapidly. The previous research literature has shown the spread of English as very unique and significant in the sense that neither such progress had been shown by any languages in the past nor it may be shown in the future. This spread of English is estimated as four million in 1500, six million in 1600, eight and half million in 1700 and between twenty to forty millions in 1800 (Jaspersen, 1938, P. 68). This, according to him, reached between 116 and 123 millions in 1900. Pennycook asserts that there has been ten-fold increase in the number of the speakers of English in 1900. It is worth mentioning that these are not only the native speakers but also those who use English either as a second or foreign language.

According to Kachru (1986), the speakers of English fall into the three circles; inner circle (where English is used as a mother tongue), outer circle (where English is used as a second language) and the expanding circle (where English is used as a foreign language).

Talking about the spread of English, Crystal (1987, p: 358) asserts;

“English is used as an official or semi-official language in over sixty countries and has a prominent place in a further twenty. It is dominant or well established in all six continents. It is the main language of books, newspapers, airports, international business, academic conferences, science and technology, medicine, diplomacy, sports, international competitions, pop music and advertising. Over two thirds of the scientists write in English. Three quarters of the mail is written in English. Of all the information in world’s

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electronic systems, eighty percent is stored in English. English radio programs are received by over one hundred and fifty million in 120 countries. Over fifty millions children study English as their additional language at primary level; over eighty millions students study it at secondary level. In one year, the British council helps a quarter of a million foreign students to learn English, in various parts of the world. In the US alone, 337000 foreign students were registered in 1983.

Besides, Ferguson (1983) considered the spread of English as significant as the use of computer in this modern age. Computer transforms even that information which is beyond the human capabilities. Similarly in the communication context, English is used to convey those messages across the world which other languages may not convey to the full extent in international communication situation.

The role and functions of English across culture in this era are of great significance. English is not only spoken across the globe, it is also widely employed by writers in scientific, anthropological, religious and political writing as well as in literature in various countries and societies. In other words, English has been nativised in many countries. The degree of nativisation of English is more particularly pronounced in those countries which were colonies of the Britain Empire (Kachru, 1983).

## **2.2. Spread of English in Pakistan in colonial and post-colonial periods**

Pakistan was a colony of British Empire for about two hundred years. After colonising the Subcontinent, the British had brought English language with them to the Subcontinent. So, a language contact between English (the language of rulers) and the local languages (the languages of subjugated people) was established. This contact between these two sets of languages affected the local languages including Urdu and Hindi. English, from then onward, got high prestige and status in south Asia including that part of the subcontinent which is now called Pakistan. As a language of rulers, English became essential for establishing relations with the rulers and getting jobs. All the court proceedings were done in English language since the judges were English speakers. In addition to it, English was introduced at schools and colleges and Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

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at the university level. Keeping the high prestige and status of the language in mind, local people started learning English because it had become the need of the day. This effect of English was so great that the burden of colonial yoke has not yet freed these countries even after the independence of the subcontinent.

### **3. Methodology**

Under qualitative research methodology, the first author collected the required information through online information, reviewing articles, and other documents in this issue to find out the maximum possible forces accelerating the spread of English in this region. The data collected were analyzed and consequently some major themes were identified such as economic, social, political, and education forces, media, internet and the role of British Council, etc. These themes have been discussed in detail in the following lines.

### **4. Discussions**

#### **4.1. Social forces**

In today's world generally and South Asia particularly, English has gained prestige in social set up because it is considered a language of the elite: a pedestal for prestigious social-cultural footing (Ferguson, 1992). Pennycook (1994), in this regard, asserts;

“In many countries particularly former colonies of Britain, small English speaking elites have continued the same policies of the former colonizers, using access to English language education as a crucial distributor of social prestige and wealth” (p: 14).

Furthermore, the strength of English in the social set up of the south Asian countries can be judged from the notion that exists there. In these countries, English is considered a measurement tool through which students' progress, talent and intelligence are measured. A student who can speak English is observantly respected, s/he is considered the cream of the society, no matter how stupid s/he may be. On the other hand, a student who can't speak English is considered dull and s/he cannot continue their education to higher level, no matter how strong and skillful s/he may be

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in his/her respective fields. Here, we can apply the Ngugi's statement (1985) as cited by Pennycock (1994) in the context of Pakistan where it is English that determines the progress of a child in education.

One of the results of the prestige of English, which in return becomes a source for the spread of English, is the phenomenon of code switching and code mixing. Since English provides the pass to a better and prestigious position in a society, its mixing with the 'imposed languages' as a marker of prestige has become a fashion of the day in Pakistan. Here, "even those, who can't speak but know a bit of English, do mix the local code with English in their daily lives" (Kachru, 1986, p. 19).

#### **4.2. Language policy**

The impact of English on Urdu and other local languages started before the direct colonial period and remained continued till today. This impact of English increases gradually for many reasons and, in its consequence, levels a path for English to spread over the linguistic boundaries of the region.

One of the forces which provide opportunity to the spread of English is the language policy of Pakistan. Though Urdu has been declared a national language since independence, it could not occupy the position of an official language. All the government policies and official documents are codified in English. Abdullah (1977) in this regard states that English is used in all sectors of civil administration and armed forces. It is evident even in the field of law. The Constitution of Pakistan, and the body of law are also codified in English as a consequence, judgments, and precedents rules and regulations, standing procedures and the major policy documents of the federal and provincial governments are documented in English. This policy influences people particularly the educated young generation to the extent that have now great fascination for English even at the cost of their native languages. They often switch the code with English that reflects the esteem attached to English. Based on the above discussion, it can easily be stated that language policy of Pakistan works as a catalyst in the spread of English.

#### **4.2.1. Education policy**

Another important catalyst which characterizes the spread of English is the education policy of the country. In Pakistan, English has been accepted as a second language. This is the reason that it is taught at school and college levels as a compulsory subject. In higher education, the medium of instruction is either Urdu or English or both. However, there are some public universities like Peshawar, Qaid e Azam, Kohat and KIU where only English is the medium of instruction (KIU, QUI, KUT and PU Official Documents). Furthermore, the Higher Education of Pakistan has initiated a policy to make proficiency in speaking English compulsory for the recruitment of university lecturer. In the present education policy of Pakistan, English has been given first place status in the whole education system, starting from primary to higher education. This inclination of policy towards English paves ways for its spread. Now the question is why such inclination is towards English, why not to national language? It is a matter for long discussion and investigation which can't be handled in the present study. But it could be said that English has been developed to the extent that it meets the requirements of all sectors, to the extent which can't be done by any other language including our national language, Urdu. For achieving this status, our national language has to enrich itself with the linguistic potentials required for every field of life, which seems nearly impossible in near future.

#### **4.3. Language of knowledge and research**

English has also occupied the field of science and technology. A major portion of research is written in English even by those whose first language is not English. In addition, it has been observed that most of the research journals (including international and local) are in English covering almost all the fields of sciences and technologies. Some of them are: (1) Language Testing, (2) American Journal of Semiotics, (3) American Philological Association Newsletter, (4) American Speech, (e) Applied Linguistics, (5) Canadian Journal of Linguistics, (6) Classical Philology, (7) Discourse Processes: A Multidisciplinary Journal, (i) English for Specific Purposes, (8) Botany Science Journal, (9), Physics Journals, (10) Chemistry Knowledge, (11) Journal of Higher Education and so on. Besides, almost all the

famous books whether they are originally composed in any other language have been translated into English in order to meet the requirements of those who understand English. It is a fact that no body can learn all the languages but one can learn and understand one language (English) to get benefit from all the materials even not originally were composed in the said language. So, it may be said that fulfilling requirements of science and technology by English is another force speeding up the spread of English in South Asian countries particularly in Pakistan ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)).

#### **4.4. A source of improving economic status**

Like in other South Asian countries, English is considered necessary for upward economic and social mobility as a symbol of progress and modernization in Pakistan. It may be said that people are psychologically obsessed (Kachru, 2004) by the significance of English as a source of employment. And it is to great extent the right obsession because it is our common observation that people who are proficient in English get attractive jobs (in government and private sectors) with handsome salaries and in this way improve their economic status and living standard. In order to improve economic status, people prefer and try to learn English. So, it may be argued that the belief of English as a source of economic stability and improvement also makes the way smooth for spreading English in Pakistan. In my discussion with students, I heard from about ninety five percent students that they want to learn English for instrumental purposes.

#### **4.5. Media**

Media (print and electronic media) can be considered another stakeholder in promoting the culture of English in Pakistan. There are many English newspapers, journals and magazines of English in Pakistan published on daily, weekly and monthly basis. Some of them are (1) The Daily News, (2) The Dawn, (3) The Daily Frontier Post, (4) The Nation, and (5) the weekly Mountains, etc. Through these newspapers, English language has got success in reaching far-flung areas. Even the uneducated people living in small towns and the rural areas got familiarity at least

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with some of the lexis of English. Though they don't know English, they are aware of the importance of English. So, they desire for their children to learn English if possible. Besides, the emerging electronic media has further accelerated the spread of English in Pakistan through launching varieties of programs in English like broadcasting English news, interviews, programs and various advertisements in addition to national and other indigenous languages, thus, exposing the students to the influences of English. So, it may be said that media has played a vital role in propagating English language in Pakistan (Rahila, 2008).

#### **4.6. Role of International Tests**

The role of international tests can not be ignored in this respect. It is compulsory for the students, who want go abroad for higher education to qualify the tests like IELTS, TOFL, and NTS. Such types of tests also force the students to learn English in order to go abroad particularly to the English speaking countries for higher studies (Dawn, 24 October 2009)-----editorial.

#### **4.7. Role of International Graduates**

International graduates also contribute to the spread of English. Those who get education abroad particularly in the English speaking countries often return to Pakistan as educators, politicians, and businessmen with the potential to influence the spread of English, both directly and indirectly. They join different public and private sectors and propagate the importance of English through writing, speaking in public meetings, debates discussion, dealings bearing great impacts on common man. In consequence, common people inspiring by these personalities change their attitudes towards English and start desiring for learning English. The contributions of international graduates to the spread of English have been investigated by Munro (1995) in following words;

..... the functions and varieties of English, the worldwide role of English, and attitudes and changes in attitudes toward English. .... that students tend to emphasize the instrumental role of English, to support English as a world

language largely because of inertia, and to hold more positive attitudes toward English over time.

#### **4.8. Role of Internet**

The importance of Internet grows rapidly in all fields of human life, including research, education, marketing and trade as well as entertainment and hobbies. This implies that it becomes more and more important to know how to use Internet services and, as a part of this, to read and write English. The use of the Internet grows and often replaces traditional methods of communication.

Same is the situation in Pakistan. Being an emerging source of communication, in Pakistan, the spread of English has been increased by the use of computer and internet. Since English is the universal language on the Internet, the users of internet need to learn English for using various internet services. To communicate with people especially to foreigners through internet, one needs to be proficient in English. A man will find oneself isolated on the Internet if one is not familiar with English. Research has shown that English is essential for learning how to use internet and then to communicate with other users. So, to be proficient users of internet, people in Pakistan strive first for learning English.

#### **4.9. Role of British Council**

The role of British Council can't be ignored in spreading English in Pakistan. British Council preaches English by launching different language programs in Pakistan in order to make Pakistani students proficient in English language. Besides, it offers scholarship, conducts workshops, seminars and conferences in different parts of the country and in this way try to spread English even in the rural areas.

### **5. Conclusion**

We may conclude saying that the above described processes may be considered responsible for the spread of English in the region. However, there may be many other factors like tourism, multinational companies and international NGOs, etc. which also

contribute to the cause equally. In this regard, an extensive research needs to be conducted in determining the other factors in Pakistan.

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