

**A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDE OF THE STUDENTS  
TOWARDS THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AIOU	Allama Iqbal Open University
BZU	Bahauddin Zakaria University
CMLA	Chief Martial Law Administrator
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IIU	International Islamic University
NUML	National University of Modern Languages
SPELT	Society of Pakistani English Language Teachers
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TEFL	Teaching of English as a Foreign Language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UMT	University of Management and Technology

## **ABSTRACT**

English occupies a unique status in Pakistani society. It is as much used as it is hated. The existence of two separate systems of education to cater for the needs of different social classes has further complicated the issue of linguistic preference. The students of Urdu-medium schools, due to less frequent contact with English do not accept English as an important language and the students of English-medium schools, due to their prolonged contact with English develop positive attitude towards it. However, whether they consequently develop a negative attitude towards English and Urdu respectively is what this research tried to find out. Three different types of schools from Gujranwala region were selected for this study and a questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. It showed that the students of Urdu-medium schools had indeed developed a negative attitude towards English. On the other hand, the students of English-medium schools had developed a slightly negative attitude towards Urdu. Interviews further underscored the issue of language attitudes. Most of the Urdu-medium students, despite wanting to learn English, hated it for various reasons. On the other hand, the students of English-medium schools preferred English over Urdu. The problems of language attitudes and their impact on the socio-political divide of the country have been discussed in detail in this research.

## Chapter One

# INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The choice of medium of instruction has been a contentious issue in Pakistan ever since its creation in 1947. Urdu, the national language, has been fighting a losing battle with English to replace it as the medium of instruction at all levels of education in the country. English, on the other hand, continues to be patronized by the powerful elite and proto elite of the country due to its colonial heritage and sociopolitical motives of the two parties. Almost every government since 1947 has pledged to replace English with Urdu as the medium of instruction at all levels; however, except for a brief period in the 1980's under Zia-ul-Haq, little has been practically done to put these pledges into practice. English on the other hand has continued to flourish continuously and ruthlessly. Not only has English put Urdu under considerable strain, but the turf war between the two languages has also given rise to two distinctly different, but parallel systems of education in the country. The poor send their children to government sponsored cheap Urdu-medium schools; whereas, the rich send their children to expensive private English-medium schools. The students in the Urdu-medium schools prepare for the local Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) examinations; whereas, the students in elitist English-medium schools are prepared for British Ordinary and Advanced Level examinations.

Not only do the two types of schools teach different syllabi, they also prepare the students for different social roles. Since the ability to speak fluent English is considered to be the

basic requirement for most of the jobs, the poor students, who are a product of the Urdu-medium schools, find it extremely difficult to compete with those from the elitist English-medium schools when it comes to finding a good job. Therefore, most of the top level jobs go to the students with English-medium background; whereas, the students from Urdu-medium schools most often find only the low-level clerical jobs. The existence of two parallel systems of education in the country has, therefore, created social disparity and a sense of injustice and alienation among the poor who find themselves languishing in the lower cadres of professional hierarchy with little hope of ever climbing up the ladder of social hierarchy.

English poses a huge threat to Urdu which has always been on the receiving end when it comes to implementation of language policies drafted by different regimes. The attitude of the state and the ruling elite towards Urdu has been at best parochial and condescending. In Pakistan, Urdu has low prestige as compared to English and is generally considered inferior (Rahman, 1999 & 2002; Mansoor, 1993). Gil (2005) has discussed in detail how a large number of indigenous languages in China feel insecure due to the rise of English. Similarly, English, as a globally rising phenomenon, poses a very realistic threat to indigenous languages of Pakistan, especially Urdu. This is where the choice of medium of instruction becomes very important. Since attitudes are circular in nature and positive attitude towards something may give rise to a negative attitude towards its opposite and vice versa, the students of the English-medium schools, due to their prolonged contact with English may develop a positive attitude towards English, and consequently, negative attitude towards the local language/s. Similarly, lesser contact

with, or students' inability to learn English may develop a negative attitude towards it. Since there is a direct relationship between attitude and achievement, the low achievement of the students of Urdu-medium schools in the subject of English may be a result of the negative attitude they may develop towards English language during their school days. The negative attitude of the lower and lower middle class may be attributed to the discrimination in the educational system which resists the provision of equal learning and employment opportunities for all the social classes of the country.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Research**

This research aims to investigate whether or not the use of the vernacular language as a medium of instruction develops a negative attitude among students towards English, and whether or not the use of English as the medium of instruction develops a negative attitude among students towards local languages.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The research aims to

- Investigate if the students having English as the language of instruction develop negative attitude towards Urdu
- Investigate if the students having Urdu as the language of instruction develop negative attitude towards English and
- Find out what other demographical factors shape students' attitude towards a particular language.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. Do the students having English as the language of instruction develop negative attitude towards Urdu?
2. Do the students having Urdu as the language of instruction develop negative attitude towards English?
3. Is the language attitude of the students belonging to rural areas different from that of the students belonging to urban areas?
4. Is the language attitude of the male students different from that of the female students?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

This research will try to find out if the use of Urdu as the language of instructions in Pakistani schools is developing positive attitude of learners towards Urdu. On a broader level, it will make a case for the abolition of parallel systems of education which are only creating restlessness and a sense of injustice among the poor people. Even the rise in terrorism may be attributed to the existence of unjust and polarized educational system which favours the rich at the cost of the poor. This research will also help the language/educational policy makers in understanding the threat to the native languages posed by the metronomic rise of English in Pakistan in particular and around the world in general.

## **1.6 Delimitations of the Research**

The field of language attitudes in Pakistan is very broad with overlapping and overarching functions of different regional and provincial languages. This investigation, however, is meant to serve an academic purpose and, therefore, focuses on the attitudes of the students towards only two languages— English and Urdu since they happen to be the two most widely used languages as the medium of instruction in Pakistan. The issue of language attitudes in Pakistan at social, political and economic level is out of the purview of this investigation. This investigation focuses only on the students of matriculation because they, at their age, are most prone to developing a particular attitude towards a certain language. This study focuses on the attitudes of the students of a few selected schools of Gujranwala district. Its results and findings, therefore, may not be generalized for the whole of Pakistan.

## Chapter Two

# LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 What is Mother Tongue?

Defining mother tongue, first language, native language or simply L1 is as difficult as defining language itself. Bloomfield (1984) defines the first language or the mother tongue as the language a human being learns from birth. This definition is a rather simple definition of the mother tongue which is more complex than being only the language a child is born into or the one a child acquires at first. Tulasiewicz & Adams (2005:3) point out the deficiencies of this definition of L1 in multilingual communities by quoting a 1989-91 research conducted in the London Borough of Newham. In that study many children from the immigrant families preferred the use of English even when their mothers knew no or little English. This shows that the language of the mother may not always be the L1 of the children.

The terms first language, second language and third language sometimes refer to different levels of proficiency of a speaker. First language thus is the language that a speaker speaks best and his second language is the language he speaks second best and so on. In monolingual contexts, L1 means the only language a person speaks. The term native language is used to indicate a language that a person is as proficient in as a native inhabitant of that language's base country, or as proficient as the average person who speaks that language as his mother tongue. Sometimes the term mother tongue is used for the language that a person learns at home usually from his parents. Children growing up in bilingual homes can, according to this definition, have more than one mother tongue.

Statistics Canada (2001), for the purpose of population census, defines mother tongue as "the first language learned at home in the childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the census." It is possible that the first language learned is no longer a speaker's dominant language. Young immigrant children, whose families have moved to a new linguistic environment, may lose, in part or in total, the language they first acquired.

## **2.2 Urdu as a Mother Tongue in Pakistan**

Urdu has had an uncertain past. Although declared as the national language of Pakistan at the time of independence, Urdu was not accepted by the people of East Pakistan who found the decision to declare Urdu as the national language as politically motivated (Rahman, 2002). They clearly favoured Bengali as the national language of Pakistan. Most of the *mohajirs* from India spoke Urdu which had deeper roots in the areas which were included in India than in the areas which became a part of Pakistan. Even after the separation of East Pakistan from the West, the number of people having Urdu as their mother tongue continues to be very little as compared to the other languages like Punjabi, Sindhi and Pashto. According to the Statistics Division of Pakistan, only 7.57% of the whole population of Pakistan speaks Urdu as compared to 44.15% who speak Punjabi and 15.42% who speak Pashto. Urdu is getting some good support from the middle class families of Pakistan which speak Urdu with their children instead of the local languages. Therefore, the number of speakers having Urdu as their first language may increase in the time to come.

### **2.3 Urdu Language Teaching in Pakistan**

According to the Report of the Commission on National Education (1959), the medium of instruction from class I to V in West Pakistan will be Urdu except in the regions of former NWFP and Sind where Urdu should be made compulsory language from class III. Although the medium of instruction in the government owned schools was supposed to be Urdu, yet instruction in the best schools continued to be imparted in English as a continuation of the colonial heritage. After assuming powers, the CMLA Zia-ul-Haq convened the National Education Conference in 1978. The conference, attended by the eminent scholars of the time, while outlining the education policy, also touched the medium of instruction:

National language will be used as the medium of instruction to strengthen ideological foundation of the nation and to foster unity of thought, brotherhood and sense of patriotism (New Education Policy, 1978).

So, in a move to promote nationalism, the government of Zia-ul-Haq declared Urdu to be the medium of instruction in the government schools. Private schools in the urban centers (attended by the children of the elite) were allowed to retain English, while smaller rural schools could continue to teach in the provincial languages. Now the number of Urdu-medium schools is the largest in the country. Urdu is taught as a compulsory subject from class 1 to intermediate level in Punjab. In B.A., it is a compulsory subject in Karachi; whereas, in the rest of the country, it is taught as an optional subject in B.A. The students can choose to study the subjects like Pakistan Studies, Islamic Studies, Sociology,

Education and Economics in either Urdu or English. Law subjects had been taught in both Urdu and English languages, but the choice of Urdu has been abolished of late. Most of the major universities of Pakistan offer M.A. in Urdu focusing on the study of Urdu classical literature. Karachi University offers an M.A. in Urdu Linguistics; whereas AIOU offers an M.A. in Iqbaliat based on the study of the philosophy of Allama Muhammad Iqbal. According to Rahman (2002) Urdu is a cheap commodity available to children at much lower price than English.

According to Statistics Division of Pakistan, only 4.38% of the whole population has a B.A. or higher degree of education. Of this small portion of the population, the number of those who can speak English is much smaller at 3 % (Hashmi, 1990, cited in Mansoor, 1993). That means that English facilitates only a select few— mostly rich and educated elite of the country; therefore, its widespread use in the daily life of the public is highly inconvenient for the common people. Urdu, on the other hand, is the first language of the educated Pakistanis and serves as the lingua franca for interprovincial communication and is understood by even the illiterates. Therefore, the students who come to the colleges and universities are fairly competent in Urdu, and they do not need to work as hard as they have to in English.

The establishment of Urdu as the most influential language of the country is the result of government's pro-Urdu policies. According to Mansoor (2005), the state has raised the status of Urdu language and literature by promoting them through media, publications, translations to and from Urdu, and writing of dictionaries by providing maximum support

in terms of providing grants and setting up of boards. However, Urdu is taught as a subject and not as a language and there are no Urdu language centers which might teach people good and educated Urdu. The issue of government's role in promoting Urdu is controversial. Rahman (2002) points out that the government spends much money on Urdu. Muqtadara Qaumi Zuban (The National Language Authority) published books in Urdu to enable it to function as the medium of instruction at the highest level. However, Mansoor (2005) believes that the government is not doing enough to translate and develop scientific material in Urdu. This is a major cause of slow development in science and technology in Pakistan.

Urdu is the symbol of integrity and national pride. It is the most preferred language after English in the Pakistan. Despite people's acceptance and even preference for Urdu, there are a many areas which need attention. The teaching of Urdu language is an important area which requires urgent attention of the government. Urdu needs to be taught as a language and there is a need for Urdu language centers where good Urdu must be taught.

#### **2.4 English Language Teaching in Pakistan**

The importance of English in Pakistan can be gauged from the fact that the education system of the country is divided into two distinct streams only on the basis of English language. There are two separate but parallel systems of education in Pakistan: the government school system, sponsored by the government for the children of the poor, uses Urdu as the medium of instruction; whereas, the private English-medium school system is for the children of the rich. There is another category of schools which does not

essentially have English as the medium of instruction, but is named as English-medium schools because they teach English from class I and, in some cases, may teach other science subjects in English as well.

#### **2.4.1 Government Schools**

In government schools, English was taught as a compulsory subject from class VI till 2001 when the government of Pervez Musharraf declared that all schools will teach English from class I. However, Rahman (2004) believes that English teaching still begins from class VI in most of the schools. Quoting a report of 1982 he says:

In twenty-two Urdu medium high schools in Lahore district, it was found that the students could not speak or understand English, nor could they read it for pleasure or write anything creative in it. They could, however, read their lessons and simple sentences in it. Even at this girls were better than boys and schools in cities were better than the ones in villages and smaller towns.

In these government schools, English continues to be the most difficult subject because the students are taught English through the traditional Grammar-Translation Method and are not exposed to this language outside the classroom. Even inside the classroom, it is not spoken; it is rather taught as any other science subject with the help of grammatical rules for making isolated sentences. In these vernacular schools, the ability of the students to speak English is neither taught nor tested. Since the teachers themselves are not fluent speakers of English, they do not take care of the spoken aspect of the language