A SURVEY-BASED STUDY OF CHALLENGES OF MULTILINGUALISM IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate how people face different challenges in a multilingual and multicultural society, especially in Pakistan. The English enjoys official language status, while Urdu is the national language in Pakistan. Minority languages, on the other hand, are a sign of stigma and destitution, and most speakers of minority languages face discrimination. In this paper, a binary approach of qualitative and quantitative is used to explore multilingualism in Pakistan. In order to understand how Pakistan's language policy favors some languages over others and what impact that has appeared on politics, society, education, and the economy. A closed-ended questionnaire was given to 30 participants as part of the quantitative data gathering process utilizing the purposive sampling technique. In the qualitative phase, researchers used content analysis as a strategy to gather information from secondary sources in search of strategies and solutions to the challenges. It also briefly examines the effects of globalization on Pakistani languages. The findings of the study revealed that there is a need to use such strategies that help overcome these challenges and help in the development of English as an international language. Future researchers can undertake a longitudinal study to investigate the language development and experiences of multilingual persons in Pakistan and they can perform a comparative examination of multilingualism in various regions of Pakistan.

Keywords: multilingualism, challenges, policy, language

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a system of sounds, words, and patterns humans use to communicate their thoughts and feelings. It is the source of thought expression through speech sounds.

It is the most powerful, convenient, and permanent form of communication. At both the individual and social levels, language serves as a symbol of identity. According to Dr. Shahid Siddique (2011), "Language has a significant role in a nation’s social, political, cultural, and economic institutions." The importance of dominant languages is becoming increasingly obvious in the aftermath of globalization, as native languages face the prospect of extinction among their own speakers. Language may be considered a bridge of communication on one level and a representation of identity and nationality on another level.

Pakistan is a multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual country, and it has been facing many challenges of multilingualism since its independence in 1947. Each province of Pakistan has its own culture, including its beliefs, traditions, rituals, dresses, food, and language. There is a diversity of cultures in Pakistan, while there is also a diversity of languages. Therefore, it is known as a linguistically diverse region as the majority use more than one language. There are almost 77 languages spoken in Pakistan, among which six are major and others are minor languages spoken by a specific group of people.

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, a lingua franca that connects the people of the whole country, and only 8 percent of the population acquires it as their mother tongue. Another major and official language in Pakistan is English, which dominated all other languages after Britain's rule in the subcontinent. Currently, it is the most powerful language, and all other languages are associated with people of the lower and middle classes. In Pakistan, English is still regarded as the language of the upper classes and is used in both formal and informal situations (Rahman, 2006). Due to its high status, the English language is becoming dominant, and small languages are being suppressed. Other languages are losing their identity, which is why the powerful are ruling and have command of the English language.

Language is fundamental in the formation of national identities. However, this position on language has undesirable consequences. When one language is used to define "national" or "provincial" identity, it can lead to the development of laws that oppress other "ethnic groups" or "linguistic minorities." This is certainly the situation in Pakistan, where
Urdu and English enjoy official legitimacy while suppressing the other languages. Similar circumstances apply to provincial languages, which have the potential to repress other linguistic minorities in those regions.

As a result of the above-presented picture of Pakistan, a number of challenges are faced due to multilingualism (Shoaib & Ayaz, 2021), such as: facing barriers while communicating; learning problems in a multilingual classroom; getting different treatment on the basis of language; impact on their personal and social identities; different ethnic groups rioting; political conflicts among groups; the dread terror of dominance and prejudice among individuals; a higher risk of social conflicts; having particular stereotypes and injustices towards certain languages.

Multilingualism within a country result in poor communication between members of different language communities and between those communities and the government. It can lead not only to mistrust and political tension but also to poor levels of literacy and problems in the judiciary when different languages may be used and transcripts are required in order for a case to be heard at all. Language barriers impede international communication in general and individuals in particular by rendering them unable to speak with and correspond with whomever they wish or read the periodicals and books they want to read. Bilingualism enables people to participate fully and directly in world culture and universal dialogue; monolingualism leaves the individual with a more parochial and fearful worldview (Danet and Herring, 2007). "The media contribute to the experience of linguistic diversity and thus aid in the spread of multilingual practices—that is, how we use different languages and transition from one to the other." Media is playing an active role in the twenty-first century. There are various types of media, such as print media, electronic media, and social media. Today’s media environment is inevitably multilingual. The media is a site of multilingual practices and a source of information.

Various education commissions, plans, and language policies have been developed to achieve multilingual competence, but the goals have yet to be met. The government’s policy in Pakistan is different from the realities on the ground. In 2009, the government switched the teaching of sciences and mathematics from Urdu to English, beginning in Grade 4. According to Article 251 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, Urdu should be used for official purposes. The Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered the federal and provincial governments to completely implement it on September 8, 2015, but they failed to implement it. The education
policy in Pakistan is promoting only English and Urdu at the macro level, while at the micro level, bilingualism and multilingualism are the realities coming out of institutes. English is a colonial language and is considered a language of power. This is becoming a hurdle in the development of this language in Pakistan and the development of Pakistan in the circle of developed countries. This paper highlights such aspects that need to be changed. By investigating the issues of multilingualism in Pakistan, the study hopes to achieve the following research objectives. The first goal is to investigate the distinctive challenges that restrict English language growth and competency in Pakistan. The second goal is investigating and analyzing ideas and solutions that successfully solve the multilingualism concerns. The findings will add to the existing repository of information and serve as a significant resource for policy makers, instructors, and language specialists in developing successful policies and interventions to promote multilingualism and language development across the country.

**Research Questions**

This research paper is guided by the following research questions:

1. How can multilingualism be challenging for the development of the English language in Pakistan?
2. How can different kinds of strategies and solutions be employed to overcome these challenges?

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The notion of "multilingualism" is defined as the use of two or more distinct and independent languages by any society as its primary means of communication. Multilingual refers to a person who speaks more than two languages. Pakistan has been dealing with the problem of multilingualism since its inception in 1947. It is "a multilingual country with 77 different spoken languages" (Eberhard et al., 2020).

Each province has its own language and culture because it is associated with a distinct ethnic community. English, along with Urdu, is regarded as the language of administration. The Urdu language is most commonly used for communication and as a lingua franca among many ethnic groups. It promotes national solidarity among Pakistanis, a role it previously played between Muslims in the subcontinent before separation in 1947 (Channa, 2017). Nevertheless, English is still the preferred language of the Pakistani aristocratic class and is used in both
A survey-based study of challenges of multilingualism in Pakistan (A. Nisa, Z. Sarfraz, A. Naveed & F. Mahmood)

professional and social settings (Rahman, 2005). Due to its prestigious position as the language of education, law, administration, science, and technology, it has highly integrated itself into Pakistani culture and is seen as very valuable by the vast majority of the population (Mansoor, 2004; Rahman, 2002), whereas other languages are excluded from the official and power structures of the federal government as well as from provincial power structures, such as the Punjabi language in Punjab. However, other significant indigenous languages spoken in Pakistan are shown below in the chart.

![Pakistani Languages](image)

**Figure 1.** 2017 Census

Punjabi is used in the province of Punjab as the mother tongue of many of Punjab’s people. Pashto is used in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindhi in Sindh, and Balochi in Baluchistan as the mother tongue (Khan, 2017). These languages are sacrificed in Pakistan, and more privilege is given to Urdu and the English language. English language courses are compulsory at every level of education, but teaching methodologies are not clearly defined and teachers are not provided with instructions regarding teaching methodologies, which is the reason for the low percentage of communicative competence in English.

Social and cultural approaches to language studies have shown a nuanced picture of language use and instruction. Learning a language is a process of becoming familiar with a community's social and cultural norms, of which language or linguistic performance is a crucial component (Heath, 1983; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2008). Additionally, learning a language is an investment in developing a sense of national identity and effect the many identities of learners (Gellner, 1983; Peirce,
Access to language learning is a significant issue for learners, especially those learning a second language, according to related studies (Duff et al., 2002; Miller, 2005; Pomerantz, 2007).

People who don't know any languages well are likely to fall into the trap of speaking only the language that is spoken in their area, which eventually lowers their chances of getting excellent employment and rising in society (M. A. Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016; Butler, 2015; Khalid, 2016; Phillipson, 1992). For instance, verbal interactions at the local, national, and international levels in many nations, including Pakistan, currently favors English over other languages. The English language has turned into a commodity for speakers of other languages despite its status as an international language and possession of significant advantages.

Planning for linguistic status in Pakistan is founded on ideas of nationalism, religion, and development (M. A. Ashraf, 2018b; Shamim, 2008). While nationalism and religion seemed to assist Pakistan's national goal of fostering unity among Muslims of various ethnic identities, development backed by English language proficiency became essential to Pakistan's progress in the worldwide community. This idea of nationalism represented the nation as "false" if citizens could not assert sovereignty over a nation-state and had no right to national self-determination (Gellner, 1983). Though nationalism is largely a political notion that offers a foundational definition to connect people with their place, the country is more difficult to define than nationalism (Hall, 1993).

In multilingual countries like Pakistan, where this structure is governed by linguistic ideologies in administrative and educational contexts, language is related to both the nation and nationalism, but the structure of this intersection is exceedingly complex (Rahman, 2001). For instance, the Pakistani government is required by Article 251 of the Pakistani Constitution (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2018) to use Urdu instead of English in official situations, although in practice this has never been done (Channa, 2017).

According to Capstick (2010), the British Council's English language advisor in Pakistan, all groups will be valued provided people have access to education in their native tongue. However, Pakistan is linguistically fragmented, and the dominance of the two languages, Urdu and English, has resulted in the marginalization of children who speak one of the numerous other languages that are spoken throughout the nation. This issue has the potential to accelerate social and political conflict in the country.
A binary approach is utilized to examine the challenges of multilingualism in the development of the English language in Pakistan. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches gives a better understanding of research difficulties than either method alone. As a result, this study employed a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative part of the study, a sample of 30 students were chosen via purposive sampling. A close ended questionnaire is given to these individuals in order to determine their present state of multilingual difficulty. The acquired data is then statistically analyzed using SPSS version 29. The questionnaire consisted of fifteen (15) statements intended to elicit information about the challenges of multilingualism in the development of the English language in Pakistan. The researchers selected the Likert scale to get answers from respondents. The selected Likert scale consisted of the following categories: Strongly Agree (SA) = 1, Agree (A) = 2, Neutral (N) = 3, Disagree (D) = 4, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 5.

For qualitative analysis, researchers employed content analysis as a tool to collect data from secondary resources for solutions to the challenges. To examine prospective solutions, content analysis is conducted on secondary sources such as past research, publications, and reports during the qualitative phase. This mixed-method approach gives a complete knowledge of the issues and significant insights for policymakers, educators, and language practitioners to build effective policies and treatments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Pakistan, as a multicultural and multilingual country, faces many challenges regarding language use and development. In this study, different kinds of challenges are stated in the introduction, and it elucidates how the education policy of Pakistan is also becoming challenging to meet the future demands of regional languages. As the researchers have used both qualitative and quantitative pieces of evidence for conducting the research on multilingualism, Primarily, the data is collected from questionnaires and analyzed qualitatively to
explain solutions to the challenges. The questionnaire is designed to collect data regarding the challenges of multilingualism. To determine the accuracy of the questionnaire, the researchers employed the reliability test using SPSS 29.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Reliability Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
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<tr>
<td>.799</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reliability test produced a Cronbach’s alpha of .799, which suggests that the result of the questionnaire was dependable.

The questionnaire asked a series of questions, and the majority of respondents were between the ages of 22 and 40. Participants’ results showed that multilingual people shouldn't have any trouble blending into a monolingual society or having trouble comprehending the context of conversations in various settings. On the other hand, they concur that multilingual people frequently make grammatical errors, mix and switch between codes, and create their own vocabularies because they are unable to learn the nuances of each language. They also acknowledge that English and Urdu are the two most widely spoken languages in Pakistani multilingual societies and that political, social, and ethnic conflicts are raised by the use of multiple languages. The following table shows the complete result of the questionnaire received by the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Responses on the challenges of multilingualism in Pakistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Multilingual find it difficult to get along with monolingual societies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Multilingual frequently made mistakes in pronunciation and sentence structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Multilingual face difficulties in understanding the context of a conversation in different Discourses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Multilingual individuals often switch and mix the code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Multilingual try to create their own vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Individuals of linguistic minorities cannot be denied the right to use their own</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A survey-based study of challenges of multilingualism in Pakistan (A. Nisa, Z. Sarfraz, A. Naveed & F. Mahmood)

language". This right to language is being followed in Pakistan.

7. Auto translator sometimes fails to convey the exact meaning of some words 37% 53% 10% 0% 0%

8. Teachers prefer to use the national language in a multilingual classroom 43% 47% 7% 3% 0%

9. In multilingual classrooms, there is no 'common' first language. 23% 50% 3% 17% 7%

10. The political, social and ethnic conflicts arise from the contact of multiple languages 30% 40% 10% 20% 0%

11. The use of multiple languages influences the personal identities of individuals 43% 40% 17% 0% 0%

12. The dominant language in the multilingual society creates a fear of influence among minority people 23% 53% 7% 13% 3%

13. People tend to judge others on the merits of their language output 43% 33% 17% 7% 0%

14. Multilingualism manipulate a particular variety of a language within a particular context 17% 47% 27% 10% 0%

15. Only Urdu and English are dominating while suppressing the regional languages 43% 33% 10% 13% 0%

The results that are explained in the above table have been shown in the form of a graph. Responses showed that 27% of participants strongly agreed, 43% agreed, 12% were neutral, 15% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed with the statements in the questionnaire.

![Figure 2. Participant’s Overall Responses](image)

Descriptive statistics of the collected data are shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

588
Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mini.</th>
<th>Maxi.</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ques1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>.640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>.877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, most respondents agree with the statements raised in the questionnaire regarding the challenges of multilingualism, which show that the majority in Pakistan is facing these challenges. The importance of the English language is acknowledged by people, and it is an international language that connects people across the globe and helps in the development of a country. It is the language of trade for people who do business all over the world. The language policy of Pakistan promotes the English and Urdu languages only. The majority of Pakistanis are facing these challenges of multilingualism; only a few percent of the population understand the need for the English language nowadays. In order to cope with these difficulties, we must adopt new methodologies and strategies to meet the challenges of the development of English in a multilingual society.

Discussion

There are two aspects that will be discussed in the following sub-sections: the strategies and the solutions in response to the current situation.

Strategies

In the National Education Policy (Columbia & Francis, 2009), the government acknowledged the symbolic value of English, switching the
teaching of sciences and mathematics from Urdu to English beginning in Grade 4. According to Article 251 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, Urdu should be utilized for official purposes following a 15-year transition period from the date the constitution was signed. Since Article 251 was passed by the National Assembly in 1973 but never implemented, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered the federal and provincial governments to completely implement it on September 8, 2015. The Supreme Court judgement has created an urgent situation in which it is critical to comprehend the linguistic ideologies that shape policymakers and educators in this intricate and nuanced environment.

**Solutions**

Rahman (2003) suggests that in order to gain power while maintaining our linguistic abilities and sense of pride, we need to add other languages to our repertoire. The state and our educational system should promote the idea of linguistic rights. Local languages should no longer be discriminated against. Additionally, people should be encouraged to tolerate other cultures and religions by raising awareness.

According to the European Commission (2008), learning other languages offers so many advantages that the media can inform people about the advantages of learning an English language. Authorities can support the media in producing intriguing films, series, and documentaries about language awareness. Radio and television are also able to create instructive languages programmed alongside native tongues. Additionally, subtitling films and news in English can have a significant impact on its development. In this way, the media can play a significant role in providing solutions to overcome these challenges.

Moreover, a lack of knowledge of another language can feel embarrassing or create misunderstandings in communication. The worst-case scenario is that these errors could confuse or even offend the individuals we're trying to communicate with, which could lead to misinterpretations and cause conflicts among individuals. However, by educating people about this issue and the shared roots it has with their native tongues, this makes them feel closer and promotes friendly relationships. However, decisions about language policies in a multicultural society like Pakistan require deliberate planning for better implementation and should be guided by local conditions and requirements that are essential for successful policy implementation.
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion
This paper asserts that Pakistan is a multilingual country due to the diversity of cultures that exist in the country, with six major and many minor languages. Pakistanis face numerous challenges associated with multilingualism, as the English language enjoys prestigious status in Pakistan due to its colonial heritage and is the language of power, effectively terminating all other minor languages and posing a barrier to the development of the English language in Pakistan. The current education policy of Pakistan promotes English and Urdu while subjugating all other minor languages such as Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, and Saraiki. This paper elucidates different kinds of challenges and how the education policy is playing a vital role in the development of English, Urdu, and other languages.

Suggestion
The researchers concluded with a recommendation that there is a need to make changes in the overall language policies of Pakistan that should promote all languages equally while protecting the languages, cultures, and identities of Pakistani people. Also, minor languages are on the verge of extinction.

However, by encouraging additive multilingualism, Pakistani languages will develop and endure as cultural treasures rather than cultural liabilities.

It is also suggested that future researchers undertake a longitudinal study to investigate the language development and experiences of multilingual persons in Pakistan. This type of research would be useful in understanding the long-term ramifications of multilingualism, language change, the evolution of language policy as well as the impact of language education policies. Furthermore, researchers might perform a comparative examination of multilingualism in various areas of Pakistan to investigate regional differences in language problems, language attitudes, language policies, and their consequences on language practices and development. Researchers might identify distinct issues and dynamics peculiar to each location by comparing multilingualism across varied regions, such as urban and rural areas or different provinces.
These study ideas aim to expand understanding of multilingualism in Pakistan by focusing on specific areas of language problems. They can help create contextually relevant policies and provide the groundwork for future interventions to promote successful language practices and development.

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