

Mother Tongue or the Other Tongue? That is the Question!

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Abstract

Pakistan is a country with diverse cultures and languages but this cultural and linguistic diversity is hardly utilized in any of the domains of power, including the domain of education. Despite the fact that UNESCO has declared mother tongue education the right of every child, Pakistani children are deprived of this basic linguistic right which, according to the findings of neurolinguistic research, leads to cognitive development. If cognitive development takes place in one's mother tongue, depriving children of the opportunity to get mother tongue education implies inhibiting their cognitive development, which is a blatant violation of the linguistic rights of millions of children in several multilingual countries including Pakistan. The present study attempts to take into consideration university students' and teachers' opinion regarding the issue of medium of instruction and mother tongue education, as they are the actual stake-holders as far as the language and education policy of the country is concerned. The data for the study were gathered through focus group discussions with the students of the University of Karachi representing eight different ethno-linguistic groups along with teachers' interviews. The study not only projects students' and teachers' point of view but also highlights the factors that impede mother tongue education in the country affecting the cognitive growth of children, which ultimately affects their academic performance. In the light of the stake-holders' opinions, an effort is made to propose a series of recommendations for a feasible trilingual language and education policy that can help resolve the issue of medium of instruction by incorporating mother tongue education without neglecting the mainstream languages. Through the proposed recommendations it is hoped that the indigenous languages will get a chance to prosper, which can also empower the indigenous language speakers.

Keywords: *mother tongue, indigenous languages, language planning, language and education policy, empowerment.*

Introduction

Language policy of any country is a reflection of that country's linguistic and political ideology. Spolsky (2004) mentions three components that any theory of language policy ought to be based on. These three components include: language practices, language ideology or beliefs and language management or planning.



If we observe the first component, that is language practices, we notice that the use of indigenous languages in Pakistan is common among that segment of society that is living in remote rural areas and is illiterate; among those living in urban centers the use of indigenous languages is mostly confined to the home domain and is found among those groups that are socio-economically less powerful; thus indigenous language usage has begun to be associated with powerlessness. People prefer to use the mainstream languages to avoid the sense of deprivation even if they are not proficient in them. The use of English which has begun to be seen as a symbol of power is one example. One can see how linguistic choices are governed by linguistic beliefs (the second component that Spolsky mentions) that are acquired through the sociolinguistic landscape of the community which, in turn, has important repercussions for language management or planning and it is this language planning which provides foundation for the language and education policy of a country.

In most of the South Asian countries, including Pakistan, the importance of mother tongue education is recognized but not much is done to impart mother tongue education to children. In Nepal, for instance, the dominance of the national language at the expense of the indigenous languages has threatened the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country. The use of local languages was clearly forbidden in the education policy of Nepal, before the restoration of democracy; the aim at that time was to promote Nepali alone, which implied advocating the Assimilationist model of Language Planning. Unlike Nepal, Pakistan's constitution does not explicitly proscribe the use of any local language in education, but despite the absence of any restriction on the use and teaching of indigenous languages, the language and education policy of Pakistan has put the fate of indigenous languages in danger.

It must be mentioned that Nepali government's stance towards indigenous languages changed after the restoration of democracy which is evident from the 1991 constitution of Nepal, according to which all the languages spoken in Nepal are recognized as national languages. Unlike Nepal, where the change in the political scenario resulted in a change in the language and education policy, in Pakistan the situation remains unchanged. Whether one looks back at the long periods of dictatorship or the brief episodes of democracy in the country, none of the indigenous languages has ever been given national status in the language policy of Pakistan, as a result of which the indigenous language speakers feel marginalized. If we apply, Wardhaugh's (1986) categorization of languages to the indigenous languages spoken in Pakistan, these languages can easily be placed under the category of 'tolerated languages' which, according to Wardhaugh (1986) are neither proscribed nor prescribed. Although there is no explicit restriction on the use of these languages in the public domains, the government is indifferent to the promotion or preservation of these languages. Being at the mercy of the native speakers alone, these languages do not enjoy the prestige that is accorded to the mainstream languages like Urdu and English. Since these languages lack constitutional support, they also lack the utilitarian value, which is gradually leading to language shift, especially in case of the indigenous minorities who are settled in urban centers.

1.1 Aim, Research Questions and Significance of the Study

Considering the outcome of the past language and education policies of Pakistan, which are more or less the same, as none of them can be said to promote the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country through mother tongue literacy, the present study aims to investigate the factors that have prevented the policy makers from providing mother tongue education. Since the already existing language and education policy and its ineffectiveness in resolving the ethno-linguistic tensions that often take the form of serious conflicts---conflicts which have lead to a great deal of intolerance in the country---is known to all and has been severely criticized by different scholars, instead of re-analyzing the existing LEP, the study takes into account the opinions of university students (belonging to different ethno-linguistic groups) and teachers regarding the medium of instruction and mother tongue education by answering the following questions:

- What are the views of university teachers and students regarding mother tongue education?
- What should be the medium of instruction in Pakistan in the point of view of teachers and students?

Since students and teachers are the real stake-holders, their opinions need to be taken into consideration while designing the language and education policy (LEP) of the country. It is hoped that the results of this study can help the government deal with the issue of language planning more systematically and in a more rational way. Some of the recommendations given at the end of the study can be utilized for designing an effective language and education policy that may strengthen the socio-economic position of the indigenous minority groups which in turn can benefit the country on the whole.

2. Literature Review

Scholars working in the field of language and education policy emphasize the need for mother tongue education. Cummins (2001), who is an ardent supporter of bilingual education, particularly mother tongue education, feels that it is a prerequisite for the empowerment of indigenous minorities across the globe. Like Cummins (2001), Kosonen (2013) also reinforces the importance of literacy in the mother tongue, which cannot be imparted unless it becomes part of the language and education policy of a country.

Although scholars have been interested in a critical evaluation of the language and education policies of multilingual countries for several years, this interest has increased since the year 2000 after the publication of research studies and books on language loss, which includes language shift, attrition, and death; all these phenomena have been found to be associated with the language policies based on the Assimilationist model of language planning that pose a serious threat to the linguistic ecology of multilingual societies. With the publication of Spolsky's (2004) and Shohamy's (2006) books on language planning and policy, as well as Skuttnab-Kangas, Phillipson, Mohanty, & Panda's (2009) edited book focusing on the need for multilingual education, scholars

have started taking keen interest in studying the language and education policies of multilingual countries and how these policies affect the linguistic fabric of multilingual countries in general and their ethno-linguistic minorities in particular.

There is a wealth of literature examining the language and education policy of multilingual countries, in different regions including South Asia (Arslan, 2015; Feng & Sunuodula, 2009; Marszałek-Kowalewska, 2011; Mohanty, 2008; Petrovic & Majumdar, 2010; Singh, Zhang, & Besmel, 2012; Yadava, 2007). In one of the studies on the language and education policy (LEP) of Bangladesh, for instance, Bhuiyan and Khan (2009) present not only the historical review of the language policy of the country but also analyze the indigenous language speakers' views regarding the treatment of their mother tongue in the LEP of Bangladesh. The study throws light on the discriminatory policy which the non-Bengalis do not approve of. It also reveals that because of the absence of mother tongue education in schools, many children are unable to cope up with the studies resulting in a high drop-out rate.

With the aim to explore the stakeholders' perspectives regarding the medium of instruction MOI in Maldives, Mohamed (2013) conducted a case-study based on some Maldivian schools. The data for the study were gathered through a survey questionnaire that was administered on the students, parents as well as the educators. The questionnaire was administered in both Dhivehi and English and included items related to the use of and attitude towards both the languages. Besides questionnaire, other data-collection tools included classroom observation and documents related to the language policy, curriculum, and the instructional material used in schools along with samples of students' work. Although most of the students and parents favoured Dhivehi as the medium of instruction in the lower grades, very few of them supported its use in the higher classes. As far as the educators were concerned, they did not see English as a threat to the Dhivehi language and culture. Thus, the results of the study reveal conflicting ideologies regarding the medium of instruction in Maldives.

Within the Pakistani context, Rahman (2002) has dealt in detail with the issue of language and education policy of the country and the role English has played in Pakistan since independence. He has not only presented a historical account of the previous language and education policies of the country along with a critical analysis but has also commented on the current policies and their ineffectiveness. In a recent case study of Pakistan, Saeed, Zulfiqar, Ata, and Rathore (2015), present a critical analysis of the language policy of the country with a focus on its education policy which they believe is heavily influenced by globalization. Their study also highlights the intervention of the international agencies that play a crucial role in shaping the language and education policy of the country as the government is dependent on these agencies for financial assistance.

The current study is different from the previous research on LEP in Pakistan. Instead of conducting a survey which only provides a glimpse of the participants' opinion, the study utilizes focus group discussions and interviews to provide a detailed account of how the stakeholders (teachers and students) feel about the issues regarding the medium of instruction and mother tongue literacy in the country.

3. Methodology

The primary data for this qualitative study were based on focus group discussions with indigenous language speakers studying at the University of Karachi. Although speakers of various indigenous languages of Pakistan along with the speakers of a few foreign languages study at the University of Karachi, speakers of eight ethno-linguistic groups were chosen by employing purposive and convenience sampling. Besides focus group discussion with students, eight teachers of Karachi University were also interviewed using convenience sampling as it involves selecting those who are easily accessible and available at the time of research.

The data were gathered from university students and teachers instead of general public because students and teachers are the actual stake-holders who are directly affected by the language and education policy of the country, and therefore their opinions equally matter in designing the language and education policy. Instead of school or college students, university students were chosen for the focus group discussion because they are considered far more mature than school or college students and are thought to have the ability to engage in critical debate.

The ethno-linguistic groups that participated in the study included: Balochi, Balti, Burushaski, Khowar, Pashto, Punjabi, Saraiki, and Shina, speakers. The reason for choosing these groups is not just the availability of the speakers of these languages in the university; these linguistic groups were also chosen because these languages are among the 13 indigenous languages that were proposed to be given national status in the Standing Committee of the National Assembly in a Special Report on National Language Commission presented in March 2014. Besides this, there is enough reading material available in these languages. The scholars working on these languages have also compiled dictionaries and have written grammar books in some of these languages.

The sample size for the study was based on 64 students, 8 from each linguistic group. The students were chosen on the basis of their availability and their willingness to participate in the focus group discussion. A separate focus group discussion was held with each linguistic group, with the aim to explore students' opinion regarding mother tongue education and the medium of instruction. In order to explore teachers' point of view regarding the LEP of Pakistan, eight teachers from different departments were also informally interviewed to see if the teachers' opinion match with the students.

4. Data Analysis

The data based on focus group discussions with students and teachers' interviews provide a clear picture of how they feel about the issue of medium of instruction and mother tongue literacy in the country. The data for the study helped identify some of the pertinent issues that need to be taken seriously while reformulating the language and education policy of the country.

4.1 Conflicting Ideologies Regarding the Medium of Instruction

There was a clear divide between those who supported Urdu and those who favoured English as the medium of instruction. There were quite a few teachers as well as students who ardently favoured English as the medium of instruction as they believed that without English their future is bleak. It must be mentioned here that both the students and the teachers who favoured English were equally concerned about their future. As far as the teachers' future is concerned, for promotion to the next cadre at the university level, teachers have to have an M. Phil or a PhD degree and a certain number of research publications in HEC recognized journals along with the required number of years of teaching experience and for this they have to have a sufficient command of English.

Teachers who supported English as the medium of instruction from the beginning of formal education believed that those who have been exposed to English medium schools and colleges perform better than those who have had their initial education in Urdu medium; this belief was based on the teachers' evaluation of students' performance. Besides this, some of the teachers were of the view that there is not much material available in Urdu; translating all the material in Urdu would not only cost a lot but is also time-consuming. However, students had different reasons for supporting English. Majority of the students who participated in the focus group discussion supported English as the medium of instruction because of their personal fondness for English as well as its demand in both national and international market. The students' inclination towards English as the medium of instruction can be seen in the light of the Perceived Benefit Model by Karan and Stalder (2000). According to this model, people are motivated to learn and use languages that help them gain material benefits that can improve their socio-economic position.

Nevertheless, despite the material benefits associated with English, there were quite a few students from different ethno-linguistic groups who supported Urdu as the medium of instruction because of their belief that being the national language of the country it must be made the sole medium of instruction. Some of them were also of the view that Urdu instead of English should be made the language of Higher Education in Pakistan. When the students were asked to justify their choice of Urdu as the language of higher education, one of them said:

*chu~ke ye hamaari national language he ham is me~ behtar taur
par apne xayalaat ka izhaar kar sakte he~ hame~ school aur
college me~ Urdu me paRhaate he~ to university me~ achaanak
sab kuchh English me~ hone se hame~ aksar chiize~ samajhne
me~ baRi mushkil hoti he~*

*(Since it is our national language, we can express our thoughts
better in Urdu. We are taught in Urdu in school and college; when
everything is all of a sudden in English in the university, we face
serious problems.)*

It is obvious from this student's complaint that the students who want Urdu to be made the language of Higher education are the ones whose proficiency in English is limited because of the inadequate exposure to English in the early years of their education. The abrupt transition from Urdu to English in the higher education poses a serious threat to many such students as a result of which a large number of students fail to pass papers in one attempt, while some of them fail repeatedly as a result of which they abandon the idea of completing their education. It is not surprising therefore to find such students' preference for Urdu over English as the medium of instruction.

Besides students who favoured Urdu as the medium of instruction, there were a few teachers as well who supported the idea of making Urdu the sole medium of instruction. Like the students who used Urdu as a shield to compensate for their lack of proficiency in English, some teachers also seemed to support Urdu in the same vein. Since they did not seem to have sufficient command of English, they considered it a sign of linguistic imposition.

4.2 Students' and Subject Teachers' Dissatisfaction with the Teaching of English

Although many students supported English as the medium of instruction, they lamented the poor teaching of English in government schools, colleges as well as universities. Some of the students who participated in the focus group discussion complained about the sheer indifference of their English language teacher regarding students' difficulties in learning English. One of the students said in a complaining tone: "agar hamaare a~grezi ke teacher hame motivate karte aur hamaari performance pe feedback dete to hamaari a~grezi improve ho jaati." (Had our English teacher motivated us and provided feedback on our performance, our English language proficiency would have improved). This comment provides enough food for reflection and questions the role of English language teachers in Pakistan.

Some of the subject teachers interviewed also questioned the quality of English language teaching, particularly at the university level. One of the subject teachers also complained about the attitude of the English language teacher who was assigned the task of teaching English in his department, stating that:

ek to vo vaqt pe kabhi nahi aate duusra jab aate he~ to students ko Daa~Tne ke ilaava kuchh nahi~ karte. baqaul hamaare students ke, unho~ ne puura semester bamushkil saat classes li he~ aur syllabus complete karna to duur syllabus share tak nahi~ kya. Students ko pata hi nahi~ ke un ke English ke syllabus me~ kya he. (One issue is that he does not come on time, secondly when he comes he does not do anything except scolding the students. According to our students, he has hardly taken seven classes in the entire semester and let alone completing the syllabus, he has not even shared the syllabus with the students. The students do not know what is included in their English syllabus.)

If this is the situation at the university level, one can imagine what problems students face in government schools and colleges. This implies that making English as the medium of instruction or teaching it for 14 years is of no use unless serious steps are taken to improve the quality of English language teaching in Pakistan. It is more important to focus on how English has to be taught instead of merely focusing on the number of years spent on teaching it. Some of the subject teachers interviewed expressed the view that despite the fact that their students are taught English for one semester and in some departments where BS system still exists, English is taught for two semesters, there is no significant improvement in the students' English language proficiency.

4.3 Students' and Teachers' Attitude towards Mother Tongue Education

Just as the teachers and students were divided regarding the medium of instruction, they had different opinions with regard to the idea of mother tongue education. The teachers who were interviewed did not seem to favor mother tongue education, as according to them it is impractical not only because of the non-availability of sufficient written material in the indigenous languages, but also because of the lack of trained teachers in these languages. Although they were not completely against the idea of mother tongue education, they had some reservations.

In contrast to the teachers, the students had a very different perspective regarding mother-tongue education. Although most of the students representing different linguistic groups, except Punjabi speakers, favored literacy in the mother tongue, each group had a different reason for supporting mother tongue education and the level at which it should be provided. The Balochi speakers, for instance, ardently favoured mother tongue education at all levels. To the Balochi speakers, absence of mother tongue education in the education policy of the country is a gross violation of the linguistic rights of Balochi speakers who they believe are already victims of different forms of discrimination. The same resentment was also expressed in a seminar on Baloch Culture and Civilization held at the University of Karachi on the 3rd of March, 2016 in which different speakers made a demand that mother tongue education be provided to Balochis so that they can further promote their language and culture.

Like Balochi speakers, Pashto and Saraiki speakers as well as the students of Gilgit-Baltistan studying in different departments of the University of Karachi who represent different linguistic groups like Balti, Burushaski, Khowar, and Shina also expressed the need for mother tongue education. Nevertheless, they gave a different justification for providing literacy in the mother tongue. Most of the Balti, Burushaski and Shina speakers who participated in the focus group discussion favoured mother tongue education at primary level because they believe that it is easier for children to grasp the concepts in the mother tongue as compared to any other language. The Khowar speakers, however, did not favour

mother tongue education at primary level; they favoured it at secondary level because of the belief that teaching literacy in the mother tongue at an early age can be an extra burden on children and therefore literacy in the mother tongue should be provided only when children become literate in the mainstream languages.

As far as the Punjabi speakers' resistance against mother tongue literacy is concerned, it seems to have its roots in the prevailing stereotypes against Punjabi language and its speakers and these stereotypes are reinforced through media. There are quite a few programmes telecast on different Pakistani channels where Punjabi language is employed only for cracking jokes giving the impression that no serious discourse can take place in Punjabi language. Besides this, the character portrayal of Punjabis in plays is done in such a way that it harmonizes with the stereotypical term 'pe~Du' that is often employed to refer to Punjabis.

4.4 Teachers' and Students' Views Regarding Constitutional Support for Indigenous Languages

All the teachers and students irrespective of their ethno-linguistic background supported the idea of constitutional support for the indigenous languages. Most of the students were of the view that giving national status to the indigenous languages cannot only empower indigenous language speakers but can also help promote these languages. Some of the Punjabi students who participated in the focus group discussion were of the view that giving national status to the indigenous languages can also help the speakers of these languages develop positive attitude towards indigenous languages and their speakers, particularly the ones that are stereotyped.

Although some form of stereotyping exists in case of every ethno-linguistic group, some of the ethno-linguistic groups are particularly made the victim of negative stereotyping. This is often the case with Pathan, Punjabi, and Saraiki speakers. As stated earlier, media particularly electronic media is to a great extent responsible for creating a negative image of some of the ethno-linguistic groups, like Pathans and Punjabis.

Nevertheless, media cannot solely be held responsible for promoting negative stereotypes against Punjabis or any other ethnolinguistic group. The school authorities' attitude towards children's mother tongue can also inculcate negative self-image in students as a result of which they avoid being identified with their own group identity. For instance, in one of notices issued by Beacon House school in Punjab a couple of months ago, Punjabi was termed as a 'foul' language and the students were prohibited from using it within the school premises. The issue became viral on social media and the school authorities were severely criticized as a result of which they apologized and the notice was withdrawn. Although the notice is withdrawn, there is no guarantee that the psychological damage done to Punjabi children's identity is repaired. Those

children who became the direct recipient of that notice may develop inferiority complex and consciously or subconsciously abandon their Punjabi identity in future. The impact of such negative treatment of indigenous languages and their speakers, results in the construction of negative self-image on the part of many indigenous language speakers and one of the ways to create a positive self-image is giving constitutional support to the indigenous languages.

5. Discussion

There are quite a few sociolinguistic surveys conducted in Pakistan but unfortunately the findings of those surveys are not utilized. Every time a sociolinguistic survey is conducted, problems are identified and solutions recommended but the recommendations are hardly taken seriously. After a gap of every five years or so there is a sudden wave of energy at the national level for designing an effective language and education policy which is followed by a period of hibernation that is interrupted for some time and then again the same cycle continues. The result is that we find ourselves standing at the same place from where we begin and things have to be started from the scratch every time which is extremely frustrating.

The situation is not so bleak in all the South Asian countries. In Bhutan, for instance, where nineteen languages are spoken, the government has designed a language policy with a balanced approach. If there are moves to strengthen the national language of the country, Dzongkha, efforts are also made to preserve the linguistic diversity in this multilingual nation. Similarly, there are many states in India, where tri-lingual education policy or a three-language formula has worked with considerable success. In countries where three-language formula is not implemented, one can find the local languages finding a place in the domain of education. In Afghanistan, for instance, Pashto and Dari are used as the medium of instruction depending on the numerical strength of the population in the region. No such move has ever been taken by the policy makers in Pakistan.

One of the often cited reasons for the reluctance to provide mother tongue education in Pakistan is the limited amount of budget spent on education. Unlike other South Asian countries, Pakistan's budget on education is just 2.6% which is extremely low. Even Afghanistan, which is a war-torn country, is spending 4.6% of its GDP on education now, while Pakistan's greatest rival India is spending 4.9%. Not only is Pakistan lagging behind most of its neighboring South Asian countries in terms of the amount of budget spent on education but is also far behind in terms of an effective language and education policy.

The issue regarding the medium of instruction is still unresolved in Pakistan. There is a Hamlet-like vacillating attitude among the policy makers regarding the medium of instruction, as a result of which there are Urdu as well as English medium schools which have led to a class divide. There are also Sindhi medium schools in interior Sindh while in the schools running in rural areas and small towns in the other regions of the country, classroom discourse mostly takes place in the indigenous language spoken

by the majority in that region without providing literacy in that language. This situation has resulted in producing students who can be considered semilinguals as they are neither proficient in their mother tongue nor in any of the mainstream languages, Urdu or English. It has been proved through research that absence of literacy in one's mother tongue impedes literacy in the second language (Beykont, 1994). In other words, transfer of literacy skills become easier from L1 to L2, but in the absence of L1 literacy, this possibility is lost. Despite the availability of research evidence, mother tongue literacy programmes have not been implemented at the government level in Pakistan. Since mother tongue education is not provided to children in any of the stages of education in Pakistan, not only does their linguistic growth suffer but their cognitive development is also adversely affected.

Considering the ever increasing importance of English it is generally believed that English as the medium of instruction is the only solution to all the problems related to the education system of the post-colonial countries like Pakistan. However, we have seen that it has not yielded the desired results so far, at least in the Pakistani context. In fact, the indecisiveness associated with making Urdu or English the sole medium of instruction has led to chaos. Before it becomes impossible to repair the damage, there is an urgent need to redesign the language and education policy of the country by not only achieving uniformity regarding the medium of instruction throughout the country but also making room for mother tongue education to promote mother tongue literacy which can slow down the process of language loss at the national level and empower the minorities. Empowerment, which according to Cummins (2001) is, "the collaborative creation of power" (p.15), can only be achieved through the joint efforts of the policy makers and the stake-holders. This means that any language planning policy that fails to take into account the stake-holders' views is unlikely to yield fruitful results. The ineffective language and education policy of some multilingual countries, including Pakistan, bears testimony to this claim, as the policy makers do not even bother to find out the stake-holders' perspective.

Depriving children of their right to get mother tongue education is not only hindering their cognitive growth, but is gradually leading to the obliteration of native languages and cultures. The sense of frustration on the part of those students who cannot perform well because of their inadequate command of Urdu and English, inculcates in such students inferiority complex and with the passage of time, their fondness for their mother tongue is replaced by their abhorrence for it. In case of indigenous language speakers who are proficient in the mainstream languages right from their childhood, because of greater exposure to these languages from an early age, both in the home and the education domains, there are greater chances of L1 attrition. First language loss, which can take the form of attrition or shift, is often the result of the stigmatization commonly observed in multilingual societies.

We cannot deny the fact that there are many ethno-linguistic groups in our country that are stigmatized to such an extent that even those who actually belong to that

group do not like to be associated with their group identity. In such a situation if literacy in the mother tongue is made compulsory, many parents may raise objection against the idea of providing mother tongue education to their children, especially in the presence of English, which they know is the only key to unlock the door of worldly success. So, the biggest challenge is to bring attitudinal transformation. Once people's attitudes are transformed, redesigning the language and education policy and its implementation would become less challenging.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The data generated through the teachers' interviews and focus group discussions with students reveal diverse opinions regarding mother tongue literacy and medium of instruction. None of the arguments provided by both the students and the teachers can be completely refuted which makes it all the more difficult to abandon one language in favor of the other. The diversity in the stakeholders' opinions is symbolic and calls for a need to redesign a language and education policy that celebrates this diversity by providing enough room to the indigenous languages to flourish without isolating children from the mainstream languages.

A three-language formula incorporating literacy in the mother tongue in the initial years of education followed by teaching Urdu and English can be introduced at the national level as it can not only minimize the degree of resentment and the feeling of injustice the indigenous language speakers suffer from but can also help them compete at both national and international level by becoming literate not only in their mother tongue but also by attaining proficiency in both the mainstream languages, Urdu and English.

In other words, there is a need for a trilingual language and education policy (LEP) based on the Integrationist Model of language planning that incorporates mother tongue, Urdu, and English. In case of the native speakers of Urdu, literacy in a regional language depending on their province can be provided so that they can communicate with the locals of their province, which can also develop linguistic and cultural tolerance and promote plurilingualism. Moreover, there should be a smooth transition from one language to the other instead of an abrupt transition to avoid frustration on the part of students.

The first step that needs to be taken is elevate the status of the indigenous languages by not only providing them constitutional support but also by publishing books, magazines and newspapers in those indigenous languages that have a literary heritage. There are publications in many local languages, particularly in the eight languages whose native speakers participated in the focus group discussions for this study. Since there is enough material already available in these languages, this authentic material can be exploited and turned into semi-authentic material for teaching these languages to the native speakers. The government can begin with teaching these eight indigenous languages to see how the idea works and then the mother tongue literacy programme can be extended to include other local languages.

There is a strong need to run campaigns on electronic media to promote the idea of mother tongue education to make people realize the importance of their native languages and cultures, which can help improve their self-image as well. Besides this, the government should also provide incentives to people to make the idea of mother tongue education successful in the country. There is an urgent need to provide jobs to those who have sufficient command of their mother tongue and are already literate in it.

There are some non-profit organizations like Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI), Balochi Academy, Burushaski Research Academy, Khowar Language Academy, Pashto Academy, Punjabi Adabi Board, Saraiki Waseb Development Organization, The Shina Language and Culture Promotion Society, etc working in different regions within the country to promote and preserve the local languages and cultures but because of limited resources and lack of government support, their work largely remains unknown to the general public. If we just take an example of Burushaski, three volumes of Burushaski-Urdu dictionary are already published by the Burushaski Research Academy in collaboration with the University of Karachi. Currently the academy is busy in preparing a pictorial dictionary of Burushaski for children. Besides this, the Holy Quran has also been translated into Burushaski. Other language academies are also working on the local languages within their own capacity. If the government collaborates with these private non-profit organizations, not only can the plan of providing mother tongue education to children be implemented successfully, it can also lead to the increase in employment which is essential for empowering the indigenous languages and their speakers.

Furthermore, the teaching of English as the medium of instruction in higher education must be implemented seriously to avoid global alienation and prepare our young scholars to compete in the international market. Finally, there is an urgent need to bring reforms in language teaching so that the students can communicate effectively in all the languages they are exposed to.

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