

ISSUE OF LANGUAGE AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN PAKISTAN: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This research paper focuses on the medium of instruction that has been the burning issue not only in Pakistan but all around the world. This issue has remained unresolved in Pakistan due to overwhelming practice of other local and native languages in different provinces. The use of English as a medium of instruction in schools has given opportunity to a long debate whether English is better verified than any of the native languages especially to build up the learner's comprehension level at secondary school level. The n = 68 public higher/secondary schools of Hyderabad District were taken as the sample. The two groups of the Class VIII students comprised 100 out of which 50 were from mother tongue and 50 were from non-mother tongue schools respectively. Simultaneously, 15 teachers from mother tongue and 15 from non-mother tongue schools were respectively selected for interview. Appropriate interview protocols were made to inspect the effect of the medium of instruction on cognition of learners. In this regard, 5 item semi-structured interview protocol in each was developed for teachers and students. Data were analyzed quantitatively. The results of the study demonstrated that students' cognition is better when taught in their mother tongue and they prefer to learn the subject in their respective mother tongues. This understanding of the subject enhances their cognition level as well. On the other hand, teachers also illustrated their preferences to teach in the mother tongue through which students have better learning and understanding. Finally, recommendations were provided for the improvement of the situation planning.

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan, being a multilingual country, has five major indigenous languages i.e. Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashto, Saraiki and Balouchi while Urdu serves as the national language (Rahman, 2003; 2004).

As far as English is concerned, it is the language that still follows the same tradition of British Rule i.e. the language of correspondence and armed forces (Rahman, 2004; 2006). As a matter of fact, a language plays a pivotal

role in linking the past and present and transmitting culture, traditions, knowledge and acquiring skills to other people. It develops the feelings of people enabling them to think, feel and act as a unified group (Rahman, 1996). It also develops the patriotic feelings among people. In the country, different educational institutes apply different media of instruction. Thus, the controversy of medium of instruction is known to the general public in the country. This deeply-rooted controversy need to be un-rooted to become a conclusive end.

Literature Review

The controversy of the medium of instruction came into view in the sub-continent as soon as the English people took hold and started governing the people in the sub-continent (Rahman, 2006; Shamim, 2011). It arose first in Bengal between the supporters of the classical languages on the one hand and those of English on the other hand (Nurullah and Naik, 1951; Rahman, 2006). The only relieving factor of the situation was that the Missionary activities were conducted on a very large scale in Madrassas and consequently English educa-

tion was more extensively imparted. Looking at the majority in the educational institutes, it was decided by the provincial governments to give education to the people by using their mother tongues as the medium of instruction and not English (Nurullah and Naik, 1951). Therefore, the issue carries on since then. According to the UNESCO report (1953), the child's initial literacy should start in his/her mother tongue. In particular, pupils should begin their school through the medium of mother tongue, because they understand it best. Moreover, to begin their school life in the mother tongue will reduce the gap between home and school to a noticeable extent.

People of Pakistan come across at least four languages in their life such as Arabic, English, Urdu and their provincial languages (Sindhi, Balochi etc). Among these, Arabic is used in Madrassas; English is used as the official language of the country and Urdu as national language. As Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and it serves as the *lingua franca* or link language for all the regions (Rahman, 2006). The origin of Urdu can be traced

to the Muslim invaders who came to the sub-continent speaking first Turkish later Persian. As far as Sindhi is concerned, it is one of the oldest languages of Pakistan and is spoken in Sindh and tiny portion of Baluchistan.

It is also a well-known fact that Pakistan is a country where approximately thirty-one different languages are vocal, except a quantity of vernaculars, but unfortunately no single language is usually spoken or understood in the entire corners of the country. According to Rahman (1996) many of the languages are spoken by fairly miniature amount of the population among them a variety of languages and dialects spoken are: Balouchi, Brahavi and Jugdal (also Makrani) in Baluchistan; Pushto and Hindko in the Khaiber Pakhtoonkhuwa with local dialects of Chitral, Gilgit and Hunza; Punjabi, Potwari and Saraiki in the Punjab; Sindhi, Saraiki and Urdu in Sindh; Gujri and Kashmiri in Azad Kashmir.

The language for the medium of instruction, in the context of secondary education, is chosen

by the government, that do not even know what the major requirements of schools are and such decisions are made outside of schools. In a country where different languages are spoken, language used as a medium of instruction is chosen which is spoken by majority (Coleman and Capstick (2012). But, on the other hand, minority is also an issue. For that, countries have to choose at a certain point or level to introduce international regional or national language in the educational systems. Therefore, choosing a particular language is important for basic education as it is the base for future learning.

The deeply-rooted issue of the medium of instruction carries on with the emergence of English in the sub-continent where the local languages (called vernaculars by the English rulers) were neglected and discouraged just to uphold the English language by the East Indian Company (Evans, 2002; Rasool and Mansoor, 2009). The Wood Despatch 1854 was the proposal given by Charles Wood about the education of sub-continent. It points to the core intention behind this i.e curbing the study in Indian

languages. It aimed to initiate joint venture of Indian languages and English at educational institutes to broaden proper education. Nurullh and Naik (1951) stated that the resolution moved by Rayaningar 1915 in the Imperial Legislative Council recommended to the Governor General in the Council to consult the provincial governments for establishing the vernacular languages as the medium of instruction and English language a compulsory subject for the learners in schools. Since then, English is accompanied with Indian languages. Even after the independence, it still prevails here.

The famous National Commission on Education (NCE, 1959), which provided foundation of education in Pakistan, emphasizes the necessity for the development of Urdu and Bengali as two official languages of the country. However, it is a fact that in Pakistan, diversity is unavoidable and in order to satisfy the needs of all learners, it is imperative to adopt flexible modes of teaching and learning and not to restrict the teacher from deliver-

ing multi-lingual instructions. Multi-lingual teaching and learning should be appreciated if individualized consideration is to be given a priority and also the construction of knowledge is important rather than making learners to memorize information. This will help the secondary school children to become critical thinkers and excel in problem-solving and creative-writing and thinking. Thus, through this process, students' grasp of ideas will get stronger and they will be able to learn more languages on the basis of their own language. According to the report of National Commission of Education (1959), in Pakistan multilingual groups are present, therefore, it would be very useful to use their (students') mother tongues as the medium of instruction up to class V. However, keeping the importance of English in mind, English should be taught and studied as a compulsory subject from class III.

Primary education is the first important stage in a child's life in Pakistan. The primary students are young and have tender minds, so their basics are developed

and enhanced in this early age. It is very important for a teacher to make sure that the young students understand what the teacher intends to teach. Therefore, as per the researchers' opinion, the teacher must not teach in one language only. Educational system using the home language is significant in order to develop positive self-esteem. The teacher should focus on mother tongue and lay foundations for the other languages so that by the time they grow older, they can at least study in two languages and expand their experiences in the future. It is also inappropriate for a teacher to converse in one language only as it is not in favour of all students because primary students are young and are in the process of developing language skills. However, emphasis should be laid on the indigenous language. National Education Policy (1992) was announced in the era of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. In this policy, the medium of instruction issue came under discussion. It clearly states that the medium of instruction shall be regional languages.

Secondary education is also an important level of education.

It is a holistic growth of the child. It builds up foundation of the child's learning and lays proper educational background for the rest of his / her life. Since secondary level is extremely significant for the development and flourishing of the child's educational settings, it is also important to ensure what type of instructions is being provided to him/her and in what language. The role of a particular language of instructions also has a very essential responsibility. Language is clearly the key for communication and understanding in the classroom. In the national education policy of Pakistan from 1998-2010, it is predictable that the learners should depart secondary education stage and be able to verbalize Urdu or English smoothly along with good communication skills (The National Education Policy 1998-2010). Therefore, it is essential to attain mother tongue based bilingual instruction approaches in secondary classrooms to teach beginners reading and writing skills whereas second or foreign languages should be taught in a systematic way so that learners can gradually acquire skills from both languages.

The medium of instruction dilemma in the Pakistani educational system was also discussed in the National Education Policy of 2009. Furthermore, the National Education policy (2009) disseminated that this issue was discussed as a challenge to the students. The policy states that English is undoubtedly an important global language and a great source of competition in the world as well. And Urdu, being National Language, joins the people all over the country as it is a symbol of national uniformity and union. In addition, there are local vernaculars / mother tongues in the country that are indicators of ethics, cultural richness and diversity.

The above discussed details in the national educational policies mention that there are several controversies and challenges found in the selection of exact medium of instruction for the students so the findings and recommendations of this study may resolve this burning issue. Hence this study aims to explore student-teacher perceptions of the medium of instruction that may provide sound understanding of knowledge and skills to the students.

Methodology

Objectives of the Study

- To review the National Education Policies with special reference to the medium of instruction.
- To analyze the issue of the medium of instruction at secondary school level in Pakistan.
- To provide suggestions for the resolution of the medium of instruction issue.

Delimitations of the Study

- The present study is delimited up to the Hyderabad District (both rural and urban)
- All Government boys' and girls' secondary / higher secondary schools, having both media of instruction i.e. mother tongue (MT) Sindhi / Urdu and English non-mother tongue (NMT).
- Only grade VIII was chosen as the sample for the study.
- Only *General Science* subject was selected to conduct the present study.

Research Design

Sample

This research is a qualitative study. For the purpose of data, the following population and samples were selected.

Table No. 01
Showing Population of the Study

Medium	Schools	Students	Teachers
Sindhi / Urdu	59	3540	59
English	34	2720	34
Total	n=93	n=6260	n=93

Table No. 02
Showing the Sample of the Study

Medium	Schools	Teachers for Interview Protocol	Students for Interview Protocol
Sindhi / Urdu	34	15	50
English	34	15	50
Total	n=68	n=30	n=100

Rationale

For sampling purpose, the study is divided into two groups i.e. Sindhi/Urdu medium and English medium schools. There were 59 schools of Mother Tongue Sindhi / Urdu medium in Hyderabad district whereas the number of English medium schools was 34, which means 25 less than MT schools. So to give equal weightage to both languages and maintain the validity and reliability of the collected data, the researcher took the equal number of schools from both media. Thus, 34 schools from each group were selected.

Data Collection Methods

To gain clearer picture about the issue, interviews from teachers as well as students were conducted. For the interview protocol the 01/02 most regular students according to the attendance register were selected. From both medium schools total 100 students were selected. 50 students from each group were selected for the interview. Equivalently, from 15 schools of both groups, 30 most experienced teachers of the subject of *General Science* were chosen. This way one teacher from each group

randomly selected school was selected as the sample for the interview protocol. As it is a qualitative study, data were collected through an interview protocol.

Interview Protocol for Teachers and Students:

An interview protocol for teachers having 05 semi-structured Question items was formed. The interviews were taken from 30 most experienced teachers of the subject of *General Science*. Similarly, for the students of Class VIII an interview protocol having 05 Question items was formed. In the same way, these interviews were also conducted from 100 most regular students.

Data analysis

Data were analysed through thematic data analysis process. This method is most commonly used method for qualitative data analysis. It aims at identifying patterns through repeated reading, coding and examining the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Creswell (2014) argues:

More general steps include organizing and preparing the data; an initial reading through the infor-

mation; coding the data; developing from the codes a description and thematic analysis; using computer programs; representing the findings in tables, graphs, and figures; and interpreting the findings.

Since the present study also aims at identifying and developing themes and categories with the help of the process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Cresswell (2014), this method of qualitative data analysis was deemed very effective. The following tables in Section 'Findings' show the results gained through the use of thematic data analysis results. Both teachers' and students' interviews were analysed in detail with the careful use of the processes and procedures recommended for thematic analysis. The raw data was read and underlined / coded repeatedly. During the process various themes and categories emerged which later were merged and reduced with the overlapping themes and categories. The themes which were closely related to the objectives and research questions were retained and are presented and discussed in the subsequent sections. The questions of both interview protocols were conver-

ted into different themes which are analyzed as follows:

Findings

Table No. 3
Showing Teacher response
about the language efficiency in
General Science Grade VIII

Themes	Theme wise Frequency of Agreement out of n = 30	% age
General Science contents in English	07	23.3
Comprehension when taught in English	06	22.0
Subject teaching-learning in English	04	13.3
When recapitulation of lecture in Mother Tongue (MT)	17	56.7
Effects on learning when medium of learning is English in schools	07	23.3

General Science contents in English

This theme exhibits the responses pertaining to the interview protocol, taken from the teachers and enquired when General Science content is presented in English in class room the students learn in better way. Thus, 73.3% responses indicate the poor learning in contents of the subject whereas 23.3% responses support the English

language advocating the subject be taught in English, a very less number i.e. 3.3% responses are of the opinion that it does not make any difference whether the subject is taught either in mother tongue or in English. So 73.33% is a persuasive margin that favors the MT as the medium of instruction at the secondary school level. This way the majority of the teachers viewed that students pick the concepts of General Science subject more quickly in mother tongue as compared to the same taught in English language.

Teaching Comprehension in English

The theme # 2 concentrates on comprehension and in analyses. The table shows that 20% responses favor English whereas 73.3% responses advocate their mother tongue (MT) and 6.66% responses are insignificant. Thus, the marginable majority is inclined towards the MT through which the learner comprehends the concepts of *General Science* rather than in English. Yet, 6.6% responses still stand neutral in this regard. In this way, the teachers of the subject *General Science* once again advocated the mother tongue by saying that the students

pick the concepts of science and understand them better when they are taught through the medium of MT and also when they use MT. Hence, only 22% favored English whereas a significantly large number favored the mother tongue in this regard.

Subject teaching-learning in English

Theme 3 relates to the teaching-learning of the General Science Subject in English. Analysis of the data in the table demonstrates that 86.7% of responses, that is a substantially large number of the respondents, opined that the subject of *General Science* should be taught in MT; whereas the rest responses i.e. 13.3% go in favor of the teaching-learning of this subject in English saying that teaching of science through English medium is better. Hence, it can be argued that the students at school level are more inclined to the learning through MT. However, the findings of Bughio (2013) and Panhwar (2016) suggest that students at the university level preferred to learn through the use of English in the classes of all subjects.

When recapitulation of lecture in Mother Tongue (MT)

This theme clarifies the recapitulation of lecturing using the MT on the request of students. Analysis of the data in the table demonstrates that 56.7% teachers recapitulate their lecture using MT on the request of learners whereas 43.3% teachers do not repeat the lecture on the demand of learners. Therefore, for the sake of imparting knowledge in a better way, the majority of teachers, however not a great majority but sufficient number, repeat the lecture in MT based on student's request. The majority of teachers reported that students pick the concepts in their MT when the lecture is repeated. Arguably, it seems from the data that students gain more in English, but they polish and clear their concepts when the lecture is repeated in MT. However, 43.3% favor the use of English by saying that the terminology of the science subject cannot be translated in MT. Therefore, the subject may be taught in English rather than the mother tongue.

Effects on learning when medium of learning is English in schools

This theme explains the effects of learning when the subject of *General Science* is taught in English in schools. Analysis of data enlightens that on the minds of 70% of respondents, a negatively strong effect is felt. They felt that teaching and learning of the Subject of General Science in English was ineffective and disappointing experience for them. However, 23.3% opined that the teaching-learning through English leaves better effects on them. Very little number, about 6.7% declared that the teaching-learning of the subject of General Science does not make any difference. From the overall data, it was expected that the majority of teachers will support the use of MT, but still some teachers argue that if students' English is better, they will have more effect on their learning process and pick the knowledge and comprehend in a better way.

Table No. 4
Showing the student's responses
about language efficiency in
General Science Grade VIII

Themes	Theme wise Frequency of Agreement out of n = 100	% age
General Science contents in English	17	17.0
General Science when taught in Mother Tongue	71	71.0
Teacher agrees for recapitulation of lecture in Mother Tongue	76	76.0
General Science Subject should be taught in English	20	20.0
The topic in Mother Tongue on request	68	68.0

General Science contents in English

This theme exposes the responses pertaining to the interview protocol, taken from the students enquiring that when General Science content is taught in English the students learn better. As such, 78% responses indicate that poor learning takes place in contents of the subject whereas 17% responses encourage the use of English language and advocating the subject be taught in English whilst a very little number i.e. 05% responses

are of the opinion that it does not make any difference whether the subject is taught in English. So, the 78% is a convincing margin that supports MT as the medium of instruction at the secondary school level. Here the students viewed that English is not their mother tongue, therefore, they feel a great difficulty in grasping the meaning of the science terminology. As a result, they cannot understand fully the lecture and consequently are compelled to learn by heart the content of the subject. Accordingly, it can be judged that the concepts of the subject General Science are not understood by students. Thus, they are helpless and without getting the meaning of the content they just remember the content.

Teaching General Science in Mother Tongue

The theme reveals the difference in the comprehension of the subject when taught in MT. Analysis of data shows that 71% responses go in support of MT whereas only 20% responses prefer English for the medium of instruction by justifying that learners comprehend more in English and

09% responses were insignificant. So, MT again gains a huge support. Students are of the opinion that when using MT they can very easily understand anything. At the same time, they said when they could understand well, they can write well in the examination.

Teacher agrees for recapitulation of lecture in Mother Tongue

Based on the above table, it can be clearly distinguished and judged that 76% of respondents, a substantial part of the figure, articulate that recapitulation of lecturing in MT makes learning easier and better. However, 22% of respondents still support poor learning and only 02% stand neutral. Therefore, 76% of votes go in support of MT. The students were pleased when their teachers repeated the same lecture in their mother tongue. They said in this way they could pick the concepts easily and remember them with very little efforts. They reported that sometimes they are disappointed when their teachers do not repeat the lecture in MT but when they repeat they pick well.

General Science Subject should be taught in English

Similarly in this theme, the above table shows that 70% of responses state that with the use of English, poor learning takes place when the contents of *General Science* are taught in English where as 20% say that learning gets better when taught in English and 10%, a small number of the summation, stands impartial in this observation. The majority of students do not want to carry on their studies of the subject of *General Science* in English; for them it is not their mother tongue for that reason they prefer to learn the subject in MT where their concepts get clearer.

The topic in Mother Tongue on request

In this theme, the above table illustrates that 68% of respondents report that effects on learning are better when the topics of the subject of *General Science* are repeated in MT while 24% of respondents do not support the postulation. Only 8% of the respondents say that it does not make any distinction. Here students were satisfied therefore 68% go in support of the

repetition of the topic of the subject *General Science*. They argue that in this way they can explore the topics and can discuss with each other very easily in the other case they felt a great difficulty in discussion with teachers and their classmates and were puzzled in getting the meaning of various words/terms in the content.

Discussion and Conclusion

On the whole, responses of teachers and students appear to be in contradiction with literature in higher education. For example recent studies in the context of higher education such as Ahmed (2012), Bughio (2013) and Panhwar (2013) strongly suggest that both teachers and students emphatically suggested the use of English for teaching and learning. Both teachers and students in these studies recommended greater use of English in classes and outside. They were of the view that English was an international language so it was important. Furthermore, the respondents were aware of the fact that subjects and books of science and technology are produced in English so it was very important for them to learn and understand

English. The use of English as the medium of instruction helped them to get accustomed to English. Since for the practical learning of English it were not books that helped them to learn English, but more importantly it was the setting and environment where they were compelled to speak, listen, read and write in English. Conversely, the results obtained through data analyses and interpretation in this study, it may be concluded that a great majority of the sample report that MT leaves the greater as well as stronger impact on the students' cognition of Grade VIII when the students learn the science concepts. Though there is a number of the sample including teachers as well as students that go in support of the English as the medium of instruction, the sample majority voted for the mother tongue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The content of General science subjects should be delivered in the mother tongue of the child because this study proves that both students and teachers are comfortable when various concepts of

- General Science are taught in their mother tongue (M.T.)
2. Those students who want to learn General Science in English should be provided with better support, resources and guidance so that they can overcome the challenges of learning
 3. While developing educational policies, the policy makers should emphasize regional and national languages as medium of instruction and English as second language.
 4. Curriculum developers should develop the vocabulary of science terminology in the MT that may help enhance the understanding of the concepts.
 5. Literature of General science subject may be published in the mother tongue to facilitate the tasks of teachers and students.
 6. Teachers of General Science subject may be given free hand to explain the terms and words in the mother tongue of a child so that the conceptual understanding regarding the subject may be grasped properly.

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