A CASE STUDY ON LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY THROUGH TEACHERS’ ATTITUDES AND STUDENTS’ PRACTICES IN CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT: Pakistan had been a British colony and English replaced Urdu and other vernaculars as medium of education. It was a source of getting education, jobs and prosperity. After partition the status of English could not be changed and it continued to be an official language, language of power and language of education. The role played by educational institutes and academia in teaching English beggar description. The objectives of the current study are to find out the teachers’ attitudes and linguistic practices during lectures in the class room. The current investigation also attempts to know students’ linguistic practices in the class room. The study used mixed method research design. It was a case study employing triangulation for data collection. The data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire, focus group discussion and two classroom observations. The data were analyzed manually. The analysis of data reveals a difference between class room linguistic practices of teachers and students and students’ approaches towards English. The students believe that English is a sought after entity, while the practices are contrary to their linguistic beliefs. Similarly teachers know that subjects should be taught in English while they use Urdu for the purpose. The paper contributes that if linguistic attitudes and practices of teachers and students are goal specific, they can utilize English as a potent medium of communication which will eventually develop students’ holistic language skills. The research may also be helpful for language policy makers to design syllabus and language practices which will be compulsorily followed both by teachers and students.

Key words: Linguistic attitude, linguistic practices, classroom instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a country peopled by approximately 176 individuals and is the 6th largest country in the world [1]. There is an extreme linguistic diversity in the country. There are 72 living languages spoken in Pakistan. Rahman reports that this number of language is exaggerated because there are several names of languages which refer to the same language [2] (P. 21). Language diversity makes Pakistan complex for historical reasons. Urdu is national language of Pakistan and it is chiefly spoken in Urban Pakistan. It is according to the census of 1998, spoken by 8% citizen of Pakistan as a mother tongue. Languages have been a conflict in the country since after its creation. For instance, when Quaid e Azam declared in 1948 in Dhaka that only Urdu would be national language it sparked an angry movement in East Pakistan in 1957, 1952, 1954, 1956, 1966 (p.58) [3]. Like many Asian countries, Pakistan had the experience of being a British colony. However, the British did not take control of the areas of today’s Pakistan until 1840 and thus Pakistan experienced colonial rule for almost a century (P.13) [1]. Owing to Colonial background Pakistan inherited some problems along with linguistic issues therefore Pakistan could not make human development and ranked 145th in terms of human development from 187 world’s nations [4].

Urdu is a national language though it is mother tongue of a minority. The people have historical association with Urdu because it was associated with Mughal rulers [5]. Pre Partition British administration adopted English language for education purpose. However, it was restricted to the elite class. The common people were educated in Hindi, Urdu or in indigenous languages. So, English became the language of power and prestige [6].

Today, Urdu is taught as a compulsory subject and is a major language of media [7]. Rahman argues that Urdu is the national language of Pakistan because at the time of partition majority of the bureaucrats were Urdu speakers (p. 22,23) [2]. However, the role of English could not be undermined. It is also taught as a compulsory subject at all levels and is medium of instruction from primary to higher education assessment. It also enjoys the status of official language in the country. The potency of English language can be judged from the fact that constitution of Pakistan 1973(article 251) reads that English will be an official language and sufficient arrangements will be made in fifteen years to replace it with Urdu. However after lapse of four and half decades the arrangements to supersede English could not be made.

Role of English

Coleman [8]; Wedbell [9]; Seargeant and Erling [10] have questioned the utilitarian approach towards English in Pakistan. Whereas, Rahman [11] argues that it is the language of power and elite and dominates the country since independence. It is an official language, language of education, military and government. Mehboob as cited in a report of British Council Coleman [8] reports that though it is official language and language of prestige yet there are communities which resist English.

There is multi-layered education in Pakistan. Elite and armed forces run educational institutes which use English as a medium of instruction. State educational institutes use Urdu as a medium of instruction through the course books and medium of examination are English and Madrassas use Urdu and Arabic as a medium of examination [11].

A scholar [12] suggests that if national language or foreign language is used as a medium of instruction, and if a very small minority uses these languages at home, we are denying access to education to a vast majority because he estimates that 91.62% people of Pakistan use mother tongue (P.50). Thus, de facto resistance to English in educational institutes is a natural outcome.

Medium of instruction policy

July-August
Tollefson and Tsui argue that medium of instruction (MOI) has vital importance in educational policy. This is MOI which helps determine which linguistic group has more access to political and economic opportunities and which group is marginalized and disenfranchised (P.13) [13]. Baldauf, Li and Zhao [14] argue that although there is linguistic diversity in America yet it is English-dominant as far as medium of instruction is concerned. MOI is made to make the nation united but it becomes a tool of political subjugation of minorities. Baldauf, Li & Zhao[15] say that English and Malay are the main medium of instruction in Singapore. Mandarin and Tamil are taught as second school languages. Singapore balanced the interests of different ethnic groups and achieved political stability. Macao is another example where Chinese and Portuguese are the medium of instructions which co-exist and ensure bilingualism and biculturalism. These examples reveal that MOIs are not only educational issue but are closely linked with social, economic and political context [14]. According to Fortune and Tedick [16] if a medium of instructions is other than mother language it is called immersion. Immersion programs are adopted when the objective is to produce bilinguals with academic proficiency. 

**English as a monolingual policy**

A researcher [17] describes that people send their children to fee-paying schools where English is medium of instruction. They send their children to these schools with the idea that the earlier a child acquires English, the more chances are there to master it. This belief serves as a guarantee to a good performance only in the inception but will also lead eventually to a good job. Kachru [18] calls it the “Alchemy of English”. Thus it is believed that children’s proficiency in English is in direct proportional to their economic prosperity in future.

A scholar [19] states a common belief in Africa that English is an instrument of economic, social progress, justice and equality. Such belief has developed a negative attitude among the Africans towards the indigenous languages. A scholar [20], cites in Omoniyi [19] notes that English enjoys hegemonic relationship with local languages and is believed a tool for upward social and economic mobility (P: 141). This situation also characterizes the linguistic scene in Pakistan. The affluent parents send their children to elite English schools with a view to developing their English language proficiency which may guarantee a well off future. The commoners also feel tempted for their young ones that they develop English language. We find an evidence as an example from research that mother tongue instruction enhances cultural and cognitive benefits as compared to L2 [21]; [22]. The scholars [23] denote that if the formal schooling of children is in L1, there are more chances of their being proficient in L2 achievements. Keeping in view this notion, international organizations have also recognized the linguistic and educational rights of indigenous population. (The Hague Recommendation regarding Educational Rights of National Minorities 1996).

**Theoretical Perspective**

It has been practiced that socio-anthropological approach should be used in language planning and policy (LPP). It involves a comparison of the language practices with the policy documents. However, Spolsky [24] &[25] explains that practices themselves constitute language policy he further states that practices constitute policy to the extent that they become regular and are predictable. These regular and predictable practices become the task of a sociolinguistics study. Practices add a new dimension to LPP research. Spolsky notes that language policy has three independent, describable but interrelated components namely practices, beliefs and management (P. 4) [24]. Spolsky’s model is based on Fishman’s [27] generalizations of domain and suggests three independent, describable but interrelated components. Spolsky [24-26] states there are two main basic assumptions behind the model. It includes: (a) policy is basically a social phenomenon; b) and language has three components: practices, beliefs and management.

Spolsky [25] &[26] argues that each domain controls linguistic features internally and the external forces also influence when individuals make regular choices to determine language which are appropriate to their domain. Spolsky [25] views language practices as the strongest feature of the three because there is no language model which can help learn a language without language practices. Consequently, we learn that language practices are of great significance in recent LPPs. Spolsky and Shohamy [28] explain the concept of practice which is described as the implicit rules that sound to underlie the language of a defined community. They also introduced a broader concept of language policy that includes ideology, ecology, and management. It is argued that there is a complex relationship among the relationship of these features. Correspondingly language practices refer to how language is actually used in the real world and ideologies refer to as how policy makers believe about language and management manipulate the ways how language is used. Shiffman [29] differentiates between explicit and implicit language policy. Explicit policies refer to overt formalized de jure whereas implicit policies refer to covert policies which are indirect and informal and are believed to be de facto.

However, language policy demands that it should be analyzed through an expanded view. It must be viewed not only in the perspective of ideology, practices and management but also the mechanism which alter language policy and it demands to be brought into account. These mechanisms are used to prolong language behavior via specific agenda. Moreover, language policy is negotiated with different stake holders.

**Rules and Regulations**

The laws which declare a language an official language or the decisions to make a language standardized are significant. In the modern world of today a tendency is growing that one should be proficient in one language or the other. This is mainly done for getting a job or citizenship. The notable thing is that these policies are constituted by law makers and the teachers are not involved.

**Language Education Policy**

Language education policy is a document that consists of decisions regarding which language will be taught and learnt. It also declares about language that has to serve as a medium of instruction and examination. It also focuses which languages are to be taught to young learner [29].

Language education policy is a powerful mechanism as it is imposed by politicians and it is top down. Language policy
Qualitative research, the researcher generally uses descriptive data taken from interview, videos, documents, notes, observation, focus group discussion etc. However, quantitative research deals with numerical data that are commonly formulated into statistic data. In general, the problems of the research are mostly described with variables and hypotheses. Mixed method incorporates the tools of both quantitative and qualitative approaches for the sake of more reliability and validity.

The research design for the current investigation is mixed method. It is a case study because it allowed us to delve deeper into the phenomenon of language education policy at college level. Triangulation method (mixure of both Qualitative and Quantitative) was used in order to know the underlying assumptions, beliefs and attitudes of stakeholders with regard to language policy and how these are revealed in practices in classrooms of public sector colleges.

The research was conducted at one of the largest public sector colleges of Lahore, Pakistan namely Government College of Science, Wahdat Road Lahore (Pakistan). The college was chosen for case study because it presented samples of different types as it is offering BS Four Year Program in almost sixteen disciplines. The names of students and teachers had been changed and abbreviated in order to protect their identities.

The instruments used for the current study are questionnaires, focus group discussion, and classroom observations. The questionnaires were administered to 30 students of Social and Applied Sciences. The questionnaire was based on close ended responses to assess the linguistic perception of the students. Focus group discussion was also generated with the help of open-ended questions. Two classrooms, one of BS Semester One with major subject Economics and other of Chemistry, were observed. The duration of class observation was one hour each. The classes were observed to know the teachers’ linguistic attitudes and practices.

The data were collected through convenient sampling from the college. The data were collected from the students of BS Humanities and BS of Applied Sciences. Focus group discussion was recorded and transcribed. Responses were also taken through observations.

Both quantitative data and qualitative data were analyzed manually. For quantitative data the frequencies and percentages were obtained and counted. For qualitative analysis data were separated from research questions and then coded for emerging themes and sub-themes.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The first section of the questionnaire deals with the labels of using language in social circles. The results are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labels</th>
<th>Urdu</th>
<th>Punjabi</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language used with friends</td>
<td>73.33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language used with siblings</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
<td>56.66%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language used by parents</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
<td>56.66%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language easier to speak</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language comfortable to speak</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language used by parents to talk to each other</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>76.66%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data show that majority of the participants use Urdu and Punjabi in their social circles. Majority of the respondents (73%) use Urdu with their friends. 76% parents of the participants use Punjabi language with each other. 70% participants feel it comfortable to speak in Urdu and 30% feel it comfortable to speak Punjabi. It is easier for 60% participants to employ Urdu language and 40% to use Punjabi language for communication purpose. So far English is concerned it is much marginalized language in social communication of the participants. Only 6.6 respondents use English language for communication and that too only with friends.

The second part of the questionnaire includes constructs about Medium of Instruction, means of communication with teachers and principal, language of higher status etc. The results are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labels</th>
<th>Urdu</th>
<th>Punjabi</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium of Instruction (MOI)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General communication with teachers and Principal</td>
<td>73.03%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>26.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking is advantageous</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>56.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language spoken in every situation</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language given much importance?</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language much higher in status</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>86.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that 90% participants believe that English is MOI of the classroom, 86% believe that English enjoys higher status whereas 73% percent participants use Urdu to communicate with principal and teachers. 60% participants use Urdu, 23% participants use Punjabi and 16% use English in every situation for routine communication. However, the numbers of the users of Punjabi language user is very small. The third part of the questionnaire is about the better medium of instruction, advantageous language in modern time etc. The results are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Urdu</th>
<th>Punjabi</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language which should be the medium of instruction</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>76.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language advantageous in the modern age</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred language to study all the subjects</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>86.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language used by teachers for teaching</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language causes hesitation while speaking with your teachers</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language of honour</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language causes embarrassment</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and a sense of being modernized</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>93.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results shown in the table tilt more to English. 93% participants state that while speaking English they have the sense of being modernized. 90% respond that English is advantageous in modern age. 87% state that English should be the medium of instruction. The results show that Punjabi is the most neglected language in the classroom. 60% participants prefer to communicate with teachers in Urdu. 40% participants say that Urdu causes embarrassment and 40% think Urdu is a source of honor.

**Focus group discussion**

The researchers changed the names of the respondents and coded them as A, B, C etc for ethical reasons. It is essential for the researchers not to reveal the identity of the respondents lest they should be afflicted with any harm.

In focus group discussion participants talk about the language they use with friends and class fellows. They are of the opinion that in private circle they use Urdu most of the time. As participant A says “Sometimes I use Urdu and sometimes Punjabi”. The same is the case with the language used with class fellows during break time. Majority of the participants state that they either use Urdu or Punjabi.

Talking about the significance of the languages, majority of the respondent are of the opinion that English enjoys much importance in today’s world. Participant B says, “English has a very influential role in our lives”. Another participant C states, “We see English being used in stories, movies and dramas. We see its importance all around”. Others say, “When we speak English we feel confident and modernized” and “when we speak English we feel superior to others”. While talking about the language policy of the college most of the respondent state that Punjab University and Government College of Science demand them to be proficient in English language. But in the college most of the lectures are delivered in Urdu which is not a good policy. They state that the teachers do not use English throughout the lecture.
They rely on code switching and code mixing. Hence there is no culture of speaking English in class rooms.

The participants are asked to discuss the role of Urdu and Punjabi in their lives. They state that they feel pride in speaking Urdu language. They can easily communicate in Urdu language. Moreover they feel no hesitation while speaking in Urdu. As far as Punjabi is concerned participant E state, “I feel comfortable with Punjabi because it is my mother tongue”. Another respondent F says, “We must promote our mother tongue”. Respondent A says, “While speaking English we feel anxiety but this is not the case with Punjabi. We speak Punjabi without any anxiety”. Another participant G states, “Yes, our mother tongue is our identity”. The participants also discuss the pressure they feel in front of the teachers. They state that they feel pressure of the teacher while speaking Punjabi in the classes. So they don’t use Punjabi in front of the teachers. They also feel hesitation in speaking English in the presence of the teachers. They express one of the psychological reasons of not speaking English when their teachers are present. The reason is fear of doing errors. This fear does not allow them to speak English. They are also asked to discuss the question about the role of the college in promoting their mother tongue and English. Participant I says, “There is no activity to promote mother tongue in the college”. On the other hand, there are several activities to promote English language. Participant B states “We have to attend special lectures and seminars which are delivered in English language”. Another student D states, “Our course books, semester notes, presentation, manuals, and assessments are also in English”. They further state that although their teachers do not deliver the whole lecture in English yet they discuss the importance of English with them. The respondents are asked to discuss the role of mother tongue in learning English as second language. The responses are dichotomous. Some say that mother tongue helps in learning English while others state that it supports. They are of the opinion that sometimes mother tongue creates hindrance and sometimes it facilitates.

Observation

All courses taught to the BS students and medium of assessment is English. Moreover, though there is not explicitly expressed medium of classroom instructions mentioned in the rules and regulations laid by the University, the subjects demand that they should be taught in English. During the class observation it was observed that the teacher used Urdu to teach. They also did code switching and code-mixing on a small scale. It appeared that the teacher’s linguistic belief was that if the students were taught in English they might not grab the concept of the taught contents. And when the teacher used English (very few sentences i.e. definition etc) he promptly was back to Urdu. The students also felt comfortable when the teacher delivered his lecture in Urdu and the researchers observed a sense of unease from the facial expressions of the students if the lecture was delivered in English. It explicitly portrays a contrary picture to the academic norms and ethos. A teacher can do justice with teaching using English language while the taught subjects are written in English and to be examined in English.

The use of English was not small in teaching activities but also in routine conversation. During common conversation both teachers and students mostly used Urdu language. There were a sprinkling number of exchanges in English among teacher and students. It appeared as if both parties were at ease and comfortable when they used Urdu. The linguistic classroom practices do not betoken that English was at all a vibrant part of the courses. The classroom practices showed the causes why the students were not fluent in speaking English language and do not use English language and if ever use it, it is used very seldom. The classroom practices are contrary to the results of the same study which are obtained through a questionnaire and focus group discussion. The findings of the questionnaire reveal the students’ predilections are more towards English as they believe that English is necessary to delivering presentation, reading manuals, and getting through examination. It is a touchstone to get a good job and it is also a language of honor and prestige. If the teacher is more communicative in English, the students may overcome hesitation and discomfort caused by the usage of target language.

CONCLUSION

The linguistic practices of the university and college, course books, medium of assessment make English language a de jure LEP. However, classroom practices both of teachers and students make Urdu language make a de facto LEP. Implementation of top down LEP is in the form of academic linguistic practices which is resisted both by the teachers and the students. The findings of the results are dichotomous. The students want to be proficient in English language through classroom linguistic practices. They also believe that proficiency in English language would help them acquire honor and get good jobs. On the other hand, the teachers also acknowledge the great importance of English language not for academic purposes but also for practical utility. But practically English is not accorded due attention both by students and the teachers in the class room which results in anxiety, fear and hesitation in usage of English language. Owing to scarcity of time and resources convenient sampling was carried out. In order to make the results of present study more valid and reliable another study can be conducted with a large sample.

REFERENCE

