

ISSUE OF MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN PAKISTAN

Saira Ijaz Ahmed¹

ABSTRACT

Medium of instruction is a controversial issue in Pakistan as it is a multilingual country and has a rich traditional history. There is more than one option for the medium of instruction in the country such as Urdu as the national language of the country, English as the language of Ex-masters, and mother tongue as the people living in different parts of the country speaks different languages. This situation provokes the most awful issue of medium of instruction in the institution. The objectives of the study were to identify the options of medium of instruction in Pakistan and to highlight the efforts made by the previous Govt. with reference to medium of instruction in the country. In the end the proposed model for the medium of instruction is given.

Key words: *Medium of instruction, Languages in Pakistan, Urdu, English, mother tongue*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is at the centre of all the teaching and learning activities because it is the main medium and source for transmission of information and knowledge. Language use to teach and to impart instructions in any discipline, subject and at any level of learning (Elementary, secondary, Higher etc) is called Medium of instruction. The medium of instruction is a controversial issue at all levels, especially in the society like Pakistan in which various systems of education are followed.

¹ Lecturer Govt Ibn-e_Ameer College for Girls, Jalal Pur Jattan, Gujrat, and Doctoral Scholar at Department of Education, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

We have numerous options of Medium of Instruction in Pakistan.

- **Vernacular / Mother-tongue / First language / Native language**

Major native languages of Pakistan are Punjabi (Provincial Language in the Province of Punjab), Pashto (Provincial Language in the Province of Khyber-Pukhtoonkhw), Sindhi (Provincial Language in the Province of Sindh), Balochi (Provincial Language in the Province of Balochistan), Saraiki (Regional Language) and some other languages like Burushaski, Shina, Khowar, Kalash , Wakhi or Xikwor and Bangali etc.

- **National Language:** Urdu is Pakistan's national language and considered as a symbol of national unity.
- **Official Language:** Pakistan's official language is English and Pakistan's Constitution is written in English.

The State of education in Pakistan is very miserable. We have three parallel systems of education: English Medium, Urdu Medium and Deeni Madarsas. The sufferings of educational system in Pakistan are the different forms of educational institutions which are obviously giving birth to discrete and dissimilar social classes in Pakistani society. These are presenting the most awful picture of the whole educational system. Every social class can found a separate setup of education for their children. Middle, upper-middle and upper classes can pay huge fees for educating their children, so that they have English medium schools. The lower-middle and working classes of Pakistan have Urdu medium schools for their children because they can invest as much money on their children as the middle, upper-middle and upper classes can pay. Poor and very religious people send their children in madrasses. No doubt that it is simply the murder of our national integration and uniformity. We as a nation are divided in different

setups of education. To understand the present status of the issue medium of instruction in Pakistan it is very necessary to have a rich background about the history of medium of instruction in Pakistan in different eras. In 1947 at the independence of Pakistan the official working of the country persistently continued in English, as it was before in the English era in subcontinent. At that time Urdu was accepted as the national language of the country.

1.1 History of Medium of Instruction in Pakistan since 1947 till Now

1.1.1 Urdu as National Language

In all of the three constitutions of Pakistan (1956, 1961, and 1973) Urdu was confirmed as National Language of Pakistan.

National Language of a country has two basic roles.

- (1) It represents the cultural heritage of the country.
- (2) It should be a valuable and effective mean for communication.

When we come across the history of different countries we see that these nations have declared the native language of the majority in the country as their national language of their country, for instance China, U.K and U.S.A. Some countries have declared the language of their Ex. Masters as their national language such as French. In Pakistan, we found entirely diverse situation. Where Urdu is the national language of the country, and Urdu is neither the language of the British, the ex-masters nor the native language of mass of the population in the country.

Here a question arises then, “Why Urdu declared as the national language even it was the language of a very few people, only 7.57% of the whole population in Pakistan?”

The answer is quite very simplest and easy to understand. Urdu has given birth after the Arabic merchants come in sub-continent and they used to communicate with the people of sub-continent by the help of that language. In other words Urdu is as old in sub-continent as Islam is in this region. Than in 712 AD when Muhammad Bin Qasim came and conquest the sindh. He put a stone of Islamic state in sub-continent. During the Muslim times Urdu got a very influential status. After that during the Pakistan Movement days Urdu was considered as the symbol of Muslim integration and unity. In that way it is vey simple for us to conclude that declaring Urdu as the National language of Pakistan is nothing but the porch of the emotional attachment with the Urdu language.

1.1.2 Urdu serves as Lingua Franca in Pakistan

“A lingua franca is a language systematically used to communicate between persons not sharing a mother tongue, in particular when it is a third language, distinct from both persons' mother tongues.” (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lingua_franca)

In the light of above said definition of lingua franca, Urdu can be no doubt considered as the lingua franca of Pakistan.

Researches have highlighted that since independence, Urdu was not actually adopted as the national language of Pakistan and this is the major cause behind the current situation in country. Urdu has been lost among English, regional and native languages

1.2 Multilingualism in Pakistan

It is said that Pakistan is a multilingual country because there are more than one language spoken by the citizen in the country. As it is already mentioned that the national language of Pakistan Urdu, is the native language or the Mother tongue of only 7.57 percent of the whole

population. Pakistan's official language is English, the language of ex-masters. Apart from all this, Pakistan has five major native languages and 58 languages.

	Languages	Percentage of Speakers	
	Punjabi	44.15	
	Pashto	15.42	
(Source: 1981 census	Sindhi	14.10	report of Pakistan
(1984))	Siraiki	10.53	
	Urdu	7.57	
	Balochi	3.57	
1.3 Action Taken	Other	4.66	by Different

Governments and Review of Policy Documents in Pakistan

The issue of medium of instruction is with us right from the time of independence. This issue is very much highlighted by all the policy documents formulated by almost all the governments of Pakistan since 1947. In the Pakistan Educational Conference, 1947 it was suggested that provincial languages should be used as media of instruction in the institutions of the country. The fundamental point highlighted in the report of this conference was to accept the status of Urdu as the lingua franca of Pakistan and to teach this language as a compulsory language in the institutions of the country. During Ayub Khan's martial law, Sarif commission (1959) recommended that national language Urdu should steadily and gradually replace English as medium of instruction, Urdu was suggested as the medium of instruction from grade 5 to 10 and at the upper level of education, it was realized that there is not as sufficient stuff and material available as needed so it was proposed to adapt English or Nation language as medium of instruction at 10-12th grade. This option was given up to the

preparation of necessary staff and books in Urdu. In 1969, General Yahya's government appointed a committee under the headship of Air Marshal Nur Khan to give the suggestions to repair the educational system of Pakistan. The committee recommended that English should not be continued as the medium of instruction in Pakistan; as a substitute of English language Urdu and Bengali should be used by 1975. Under the Government of Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977), Urdu lobby was much more active and it served as a Platform of anti PPP. Infact Bhutto government did not do any thing special to encourage the use of Urdu in the institutions of paksitan. General Zia-Ul-Haq put the stone of the MUQTADRA QAUMI ZABAN (The National Language Authority) in 1979. Urdu was provided a support by announcing that by April 1979, students in all English medium schools would be taught in Urdu or in any provincial language. The major drawback of our nation is that we make the policies and implement them without any research and prior consideration. Due to that reason all of our plans go into the wastage soon after the implementation and brings no fruit for us. There is another major reason of the failure of our plans is the lack of follow up of our policies. This was a great decision but it was also failed. In 1983, one more assertion came and it permitted the schools to conduct A and O level examination. This was nothing but simply the murder of Urdu as medium of instruction. After Zia, every Government has adopted a bendable attitude towards medium of instruction in Pakistan. The Musharraf Government declared English as compulsory subject from grade-1, and the adaptation of English as medium of instruction for all of the other subjects such as science, mathematics, computer science in all schools in a gradual manner.

1.4 Constitution of Pakistan, 1973

In all of the three constitutions of Pakistan, there are clear statements found related about the language policy of Pakistan. In the constitution of Pakistan 1973, the statement about language polity in Pakistan is as under:

- (1) “The National language of Pakistan is Urdu and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day.
- (2) The English language may be used for official purposes until arrangement are made for its replacement by Urdu.
- (3) Without prejudice to the status of the National language, a Provincial assembly may be law prescribes measures for the teaching, promotion and use of a provincial language in addition to the national language.”

1.5 Basis for Determining the Medium of Instruction

Before selecting a language as medium of instruction, there are some points which should be kept in mind:

1. Medium of instruction should endorse the understanding of students. (The most important point to be kept in mind)
2. It does not important what which language, we are selecting as medium of instruction, but the important thing is the full command over that language and confidence to speak that language on both sides (teachers as well as the students)
3. Selected Medium of instruction should help in raising the cognitive abilities of the students as well as development of students’ individuality.
4. It should not create the sense of superiority or inferiority complex among the students.

5. It should help the students in conceptual formation instead of forcing them merely rote memorization of the written text.

1.6 Need and Importance of English as a Second Language

1. Before the creation of Pakistan our medium of instruction was English.
2. English is the official language of Pakistan. It is used in all domains of power, Government, Bureaucracy, Military, Judiciary, Commerce, Media, Education and Research at Higher level.
3. English is the International language.
4. It is a rich language. It has thousand of words phrases.
5. English is the language of Science and Technology.
6. Employment opportunities are more for English medium students.
7. It is necessary for the Internet and Computer usage.
8. It is considered gateway to Higher Education.
9. At higher level all books are published in English language.
10. We can read all newspapers, magazines, research papers etc. of foreign writers and researchers.

1.7 Merits and Demerits of Adopting Urdu/English/Mother tongue as a Medium of Instruction.

1.7.1 Urdu as Medium of Instruction

Merits:

1. After 1947, Urdu became the National language of Pakistan, though Pakistan inherited no land where this language was a local language. Now people speak Urdu at home and at work places. It is widely understood language of Pakistan.
2. Urdu integrates all people and all communities of Pakistan, whatever their mother tongues are.
3. In case of Pakistan Urdu is preferred as it contained a huge fund of religious knowledge and National literature.
4. Urdu plays a crucial role in creating reciprocated love and national integrity.
5. It removes cultural diversity among people.
6. Teacher and Students can easily understand it.

Demerits:

1. Urdu language is not a well developed and advanced language as compare to English.
2. Urdu medium students are not able to understand latest advancement in the area of research.
3. Research work is not available in Urdu language.
4. Urdu medium students feel inferiority complexes.
5. Students of Urdu medium schools are not able to get good jobs.

1.7.2 English as Medium of Instruction

Merits:

1. English medium students are able to understand latest advancement in knowledge.

2. Advance research and literature is in English.
3. It is a rich language. It has thousand of words phrases.
4. English is the language of Science and Technology.
5. Employment opportunities are more for English medium students.
6. It is necessary for the Internet and Computer usage.
7. It is the gateway to Higher Education.
8. At higher level all books are publishes in English language.
9. We can read all newspapers, magazines, research papers etc. of foreign writers and researchers.

Demerits:

1. English medium students feel proud and superiority about them self and have a sense of inferiority about their own language and culture.
2. English is second language of the country, so students feel difficulty to exchange ideas. To get full command on that language is a hart task for the students.
3. It doesn't reflect our culture, values and traditions.
4. English is the foreign language, and Education in a foreign language places an enormous strain on students, forcing them to memorize and to spend a large proportion of their time on learning the language.

1.7.3 Mother tong as Medium of Instruction

UNESCO 1951 Meeting of Specialists

‘It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother-tongue.’

21 February celebrates as the day of Mother tongue in all over the world.

Golden Words:

“If you speak to a man in a language he understands, you speak to his head. If you speak to a man in his own language, you speak to his heart.”

(Nelson Mandela, 2007)

Merits:

1. Teaching in the Mother tongue enhance the understanding of the learner.
2. It is a quite natural phenomenon to teach a person in his/her Mother tongue.
3. The findings of latest researches show that a person thinks in his/her mother tongue. So, Mother tongue as medium of instruction removes the confusions.
4. A student has a rich vocabulary in his/her mother tongue. So, he/she can easily express his/her ideas and language does not become a hurdle.
5. Local languages promote in that way, and reflect the culture of the different regions of the country.
6. Education in the mother tongue enables the learners to gain fluency and confidence in speaking, reading and writing and to participate fully in, and contribute, to national economic and social development

Demerits:

1. Mother tongue as Medium of instruction gives birth to Cultural diversity

2. It becomes danger for National integrity.
3. Different parallel system of education introduce in the country.
4. It is very difficult to provide all the necessary literature and required material to the students in their mother tongue.

1.8 Problem Faced by the Teachers and Students by adopting any other Medium of Instruction except Mother tongue especially at lower level in Pakistan

At lower level especially in elementary classes our teachers and students are facing a lot of problems, which can be eliminated by adopting Mother tongue as medium of instruction.

1. Teacher and Students both face difficulty to exchange ideas due to the poor vocabulary. It is very difficult to get command over a non native language.
2. Level of understanding decreases. Students could not understand effectively. They are compelled to memorize the knowledge. Concepts of the students remain unclear.
3. Students get failed to integrate the knowledge, which the teacher is imparting in their minds, with their own natural setting. It makes their minds get confused.

1.8 Medium of Instruction in Islamic Perspective

Islam advocates teaching a person in his/her mother tongue. It is quite a natural phenomenon to teach a person in his/her own language. It enhances the understanding of the person and helps him to make her concepts clearer. Quran was descended by the Almighty Allah in Arabic, and Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) conveyed the message of Allah with the use of that language. It was the Mother tongue of the Arabs at that time so

that it was easy for them to understand the preaching of Quran without facing any trouble.

Arabic is the universal language of Muslims, although only 15% of Muslims speak Arabic as a native tongue.

CONCLUSION

“If you speak to a man in a language he understands, you speak to his head. If you speak to a man in his own language, you speak to his heart.”

(Nelson Mandela, 2007)

There are examples of so many countries which make tremendous progress without adopting International language “English” as medium in instruction, like China and so many European countries. Though English is the language of Science and technology and without adopting that language we cannot progress, yet it does not suffice because by adopting this language, we still have not progressed. So after spending 62 years in that confusion now we must realize that we can't make progress with a foreign language as medium of instruction and we should promote our own National language and should adopt it as medium to impart knowledge in our institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Medium of instruction is a controversial issue in Pakistan. Our institutions are subdivided into Urdu medium, English Medium. Some institutions have been adopted regional and provincial languages. In Madaris Arabic is a preferable medium of instruction.

In the context of Pakistan, it is very difficult to unify all the institutions at one medium. What should be the medium of instruction in the institutions of Pakistan?

Everybody has his own opinion; I just want to present a recommended sketch over here, which in my view is a suitable model to be followed for our institutions.

1. It is very important to make it clear over here that medium of instruction should be selected by keeping in view these two factors: Subject to be taught and Grade/level or class.
2. At lower level from grade 1-5 mother tongue/ Native language should be preferred because it is the level where the main focus should be on concept clarification. In the every early stage of learning a child should not be indulge in the male practices of memorization. Urdu should be introduced in 4-5.
3. Urdu being a National language and with the status of Lingua Franca in Pakistan should be introduce as Medium of Instruction from 6-12. The terminology of different subjects like Physics, Biology and Chemistry should be adopted in English. In this way we can introduce the students with the language of Science and technology.
4. At higher level English is the most suitable medium of instruction, it should be gradually be replace by Urdu.
5. All type of Educational Institutions, Public and Private, should follow the same policy of Medium of Instruction very strictly.
6. A national progeamme of mass orientation is needed to inform and update parents and the public about the wisdom of the Native and National Language as Medium of Instruction policy from 1-12. Parents need to know what the schools are doing, as principal stakeholders.
7. The government should come up genuinely to face the challenges of implementing the Native and National Language as Medium of Instruction policy by providing the required

resources for the production of relevant curriculum materials, instructional materials and facilities, orthography and trained teachers in the desired numbers.

8. Government and Non-Governmental Agencies need to encourage and develop written literature in different regional, provincial languages and in National Language also by organizing writers' workshops and seminars and providing grants to local authors.

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