

WHY PEOPLE ARE ABANDONING THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGES? (A DISSERTATION)

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INTRODUCTION TO NATIVE LANGUAGES:

Native language is a general term often used synonymously with mother tongue. Pakistan has at least six major languages and 58 minor ones (Rehman, 2003). Urdu is the national language with over 11 millions mother-tongue speakers and the number of people who use it as a second language could well be more than 105 million (Grimes 2000). Most Pakistanis speak at least two languages. A large segment of the population is trilingual, speaking English, Urdu, and an ethnic-based regional language.

Regional languages also called as native languages are recognized as a persuasive force because language and cultural identity are closely interrelated. However, there is growing belief among Pakistanis that to be fluent in Urdu and proficient in English is crucial for social mobility, national cohesion, and individual success. It could be said that the normal changes and complete adaptation of Urdu/ English as a living language in Pakistan. The native language is the foundation of cultural and spiritual heritage. In Pakistan Urdu as first language constitutes around 8% of the population. Punjabi shares 44%, Pashto shares 15%, Sindhi shares 14%, Saraiki shares 10%, Balochi shares 4% and other languages (Hindko, Brahui etc.) shares 5% as their first language.

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RECENT TRENDS ABOUT THE NATIVE LANGUAGES IN PAKISTAN.

It is observed that currently Pakistani native languages are facing two types of threats. These are the threat of amendments and the threat of replacement. Threat of amendment is the trend of mixing native language with the words of other language. Similarly threat of replacement is caused by the growing trend of communicating with children in a wide spread language instead of native language. In order to take this issue into account of public community based, early childhood, native languages maintenance programs along with the fair language policy is required. Being bilingual (if possible trilingual) is not a necessary thing but it is much superior to being monolingual.

THREAT TO PAKISTANI NATIVE LANGUAGES

Currently Pakistani native languages are facing two types of threats. These are the following:

Threat of Amendments

Threat of replacement as majority of the spoken languages are not in their “pure” form, several words of other languages especially English and Urdu are used in daily conversations. This is creating a “mix” of language instead of a single form. In this way the original native language is subjected to a threat of amendments

Uncertain Future of Native Languages in Pakistan

It is observed that currently Pakistani native languages are facing two types of threats. These are the threat of amendments and the threat of replacement. Threat of amendment is the trend of mixing native language with the words of other language. Similarly threat of replacement is caused by the growing trend of communicating with children in a widespread language instead of native language.

The other causes of leaving native languages:

We are facing with the following question:

Why do some people give up speaking and transmitting their inherited language, even if this is one of the major languages of the world and their group is the most powerful group in the country, while others hold on to their language, even if they are surrounded by more dominant groups and languages?

In order to tackle this question, let us begin with a closer look at the factual situation faced by us that here are some major causes to use English Language instead of adopting our National Language “Urdu” and other native languages:

- There is no any syllabic/text in educational institutions in early classes. Parents also try to talk with their kids in Urdu & English instead of mother language.
- The language of our educational text is different than our native languages.
- The parents are bounded to use National Language “Urdu” & International Language “English” for the best future of their kids.
- The communication medium for every one is Urdu and English language in Pakistan and abroad.
- For any type of business in Pakistan and abroad National and International communication medium “Urdu & English” is necessary than native languages.

- For professionalism in any subject, International language English is necessary for reading, writing and speaking is essential than native language.
- The whole official correspondence is going with English instead of National Language “Urdu”.

- 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.
- Subject to clause (1), the English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu.
- Without prejudice to the status of the National language, a Provincial Assembly may by law prescribe measures for the teaching, promotion and use of a Provincial language in addition to the National language.

Here are some basic points for adopting of National & International Languages:

Business, Diplomacy, and the Professions

To expand business at National level, only a national language is a strong medium of communication as well as English is a major language of international business, diplomacy, and science and the professions. It is the language that an Iranian businessman and a Japanese businessman are likely to use to communicate. Important commodities such as silver, tin and hard currency are traded in English. English is also an official language, or the official language, of many international organizations, including the United Nations and many professional organizations. It is frequently the language of international conferences, and it is the language of

international athletics. Throughout the world, many professional papers are published in English. Even papers that are published in other languages often have abstracts in English. So, everyone is in trying to learn, teach, read, write and speak National and International languages “Urdu & English” for the best future of their family, kids and country.

Travel at National & International Level.

If we have to travel to one province to other provinces, the national language “Urdu” is more helpful than native language i.e. Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto etc. Every Pakistani national could not understand the whole native languages of Pakistan as well as English is also very important for international travel. Much of the information countries disseminate about themselves outside of their borders is in English. English is spoken in large hotels and tourist attractions, at airports, and in shops that tourists frequent. There are newspapers printed in English, and TV news is available in English. Tours are almost always available in English. Even in countries where few people speak English on the street, people who work with tourists generally speak English. In some countries even drivers of buses or streetcars and sellers at newsstands speak English well.

Why English is Essential Official Language than Native Languages?

All languages of Pakistan are oppressed, and the ruling elite Anglophones continue to deny them their rightful role they deserve as the official languages of Pakistan. Fifty three years after the so-called independence English continues as the official language and graduates from non-English medium schools face a job market in the control of these colonial forces bent on the total destruction of all Pakistani languages.

The fact is that in 1947 we inherited an elitist ruling class bureaucracy tenaciously clinging to power and owing allegiance to Britain alone and seeking a strengthening of Anglo-American interests and cultural subversion, the destruction of Muslim/Pakistani values and lifestyles throughout the country. The plain fact is that as long as English remains as the official language of Pakistan it will be difficult to create a vibrant national spirit or culture. The status of national

language is meaningless; unless it is allowed to assume the role of official language, and as the medium of universal instruction within the country. Language is a potent force in the promotion of nationalism and national cohesion.

Indeed, after more than a half century of the so-called independence, majority of Pakistanis are still in a state of mental slavery. You have accurately pinpointed the causes and agendas behind the far more potent danger to our culture and identity---the English domination in Pakistan; which is led by the British-installed Anglophile elite of Pakistan, to serve the interests of the Anglo-Americans and their own.

Widespread ignorance among the masses is being exploited, with the false propaganda of English as the "global" or "better" language. Also, the promotion of English is misleadingly justified as the "heritage" of Pakistanis, or on the basis of "linguistic evolution".

The argument of English being a global language holds no weight, as you know these so called global languages come and go, depending on a nation's politico-economic influence in the world. At different time periods, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Persian, and Arabic served as global languages. Sure, it is good to learn the global language or any other language, but not at the cost of losing your own. And what is more important is that while these transitions in the balance of world power take place, other nations should cling on to their language/culture in order to ensure their long term survival.

The claim of English as a better language is simply hogwash. Linguists and cultural anthropologists agree that language is independent of the mental level in people. There is no correlation between a people's language and their level of sophistication. For example, the once barbaric Germanic-speaking people, who were far less civilized than others, are today one of the most sophisticated people in the world. Languages that lack the essentials of today's constantly changing modern world can simply be further developed to meet the demands via proper linguistic institutions.

It is true that language is in a constant natural process of evolution, dependent on the sociopolitical circumstances. As different peoples interact or merge, they influence each other, thereby bringing change. This is a slow natural process, independent of external factors. Unnecessarily using a foreign/colonial language, or purposely substituting the words in your language from it, is nothing more than slave-mindedness, and stands against the very principles of linguistic evolution. A proud Arab, Iranian, French, Chinese, Japanese, etc. would never unnecessarily prefer to speak English, nor replace words in their language from English.

The greater part of the blame for the continuing dominance of English language in Pakistan lies within us, the common Pakistanis. We blame others, particularly the elite and foreign powers, but at the same time it is very hypocritical of us to send our children to English medium schools, lavishly using English language/words instead of our own, and basically giving a godly status to everything English/Western. This slave-mindedness and inferiority complex is so deeply rooted in our psyche, that we don't even want to acknowledge or fight it. We are so much consumed with careerism and materialism that we continue to ignore the infection of slavery in our minds, like a deadly disease slowly destroying our identity and culture.

Conclusion:

It concludes that people are leaving their native languages and adopting National (Urdu) & International language (English) which can play a vital role in their future because it:-

- Increases individuals' employability
- enabling international collaboration and co-operation
- providing access to research and information
- facilitating the international mobility of students, tourists, workers and others
- facilitating disaster relief and disaster preparedness