

Irem Sultana*

Malik Adnan†

Muhammad Imran Mehsud‡

p-ISSN: 2663-3299

e-ISSN: 2663-3841

L-ISSN: 2663-3299

Vol. V, No. IV (Fall 2020)

Pages: 27-33

Media, Culture and Indigenous Languages in Pakistan: A Critical Review

Abstract:

This research paper inspected the role of Pakistani media to protect indigenous languages and culture in Pakistan. The study examined the situation; if Pakistani media outpours concern with the native languages or not. The article also checked the media landscape, its language-wise segregation and scenario of literacy in different areas of the country. The outcomes of the study showed that Pakistani media is neglecting the indigenous languages. The study results exhibited clearly that media houses' focus on protecting native languages, is not profound. The findings also showed that foreign ownership of Media houses plays a role in neglecting indigenous language promotions. The current study presented that Pakistani mainstream media is damaging the local and native languages. The study was the outcome of qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews of senior communication experts.

Key Words:

Media, Culture, Indigenous Languages, Pakistan

Introduction

Media has been considered as the ears and mouth of modern societies. It has a substantial role to enlighten the public and to disseminate the cultural tendencies of society. [Ahmed \(2018\)](#) well-presented these phenomena when he said: “the role of media is very significant to enlighten the masses regarding happenings in society”. Language had been considered as the basic component of media. Media outlets provide information to society as well as affect the individuals' minds, using language as a tool. According to [Ahmed \(2018\)](#), “Media has a vibrant role in society, and it can affect society positively or negatively in many aspects, through its content”. Hence language, as one of the components of any culture can be influenced either positively or negatively by Media Houses.

The language always reflects the culture and use of the language show the cultural values and traditions of that particular area. The language and culture have their relationship, which cannot be untied. It is observed that language is the main component to express cultural ties, norms, values and traditions of a particular land. The language represented its culture rather used by media outlets or within personal communication. The phenomena had presented by renowned scholars [Emmitt and Pollock \(1997\)](#) with these words “language is rooted in culture and culture is reflected and passed on by language from one generation to the next”. The same has also been reflected in the quote “one can see that learning a new language involves the learning of a new culture” by All wright and Bailey (1991).

It is well known all over the world that information generated by the media of mainstream has its own interior motives defined or countries and poor southern countries. The said researcher believed that the flood of the news staff of the western countries usually, target the developing countries to serve their vested interests. Most of the contents of international global media defuse western cultures and thus distort century's old customs and traditions, snatch their independence undefined as Rokya Hassen (2016) indicated unbalanced and unreasonable information flow among the northern developed and damage cultural integrity. For instance, to be fully benefited from the new technology of social networking, one needs to be well versed with

*Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

†Assistant Professor, Department of Media Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: dr.adnan@iub.edu.pk

‡Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Hazara University, Mansehra, KP, Pakistan.

the language of English. Therefore, the people in bulk invest their times and energy in learning the English language and thus ignore the local languages that have seeds of local cultures.

The studies have elaborated that the differentiation in language use may affect cultural values. It has also been noted that the change in language use may change the cultural perspective of someone. [Emmitt and Pollock \(1997\)](#) presented this concept as: “Even though people are brought up under similar behavioral backgrounds or cultural situations but however speak different languages, their world view may be very different”. The studies elaborate on the phenomena that language is the tool to express the innate and inherent culture, and use of content describes the innate culture from where the language is used. The renowned scholar Hantrais (1989) presented the same tendencies in her study when she found: Culture is the beliefs and practices governing the life of a society for which a particular language is the vehicle of expression. Therefore, everyone’s view depends on the culture which has influenced them, as well as being described using the language which has been shaped by that culture”. [Edward T. Hall \(1976\)](#) suggests what we normally refer to as “mind” is actually internal culture. He puts music, art, foods & drinks, dresses, greetings, and outward behavior in the tip of the iceberg and environment, time, communications, space power, individualism, competitiveness, structure, and thinking deep inside. All given components are repeatedly used in media contents. Here in this study, the researchers tried to sort out whether Pakistani media is playing its role to promote Pakistani regional languages and culture.

Summary of Literature Review

The most important encouragement behind this literature review was the effort of Richard Hoggarth did in “The Uses of Literacy”—a ground-breaking study was available in the mid-1950s, offer an analysis of how current development was reshaping and transforming the cultures of the ‘traditional’ low socio-economic class. Native languages globally are in a severe dilemma. There is unquestionable indication put into view by researchers in a variety of fields—beginning from the natural sciences to the social sciences—that paints a terrible depiction of the language world would appear in the coming two-three decades. By recognizing the work of researchers, teachers, scholars and other stakeholders of the discipline of language and culture & society, who have given rare attention to local languages ([Fishman, 1991; 1996](#)), State political goals made slant regarding the selection and manipulated of national languages for a particular country or state, and these national languages took place the main moods of sharing & communication for everything from personal to social, from education to commerce & political spheres (Garcia, 2006; 2009). It doesn’t matter the populace of speakers, their Indigenous language, most of which are verbal in the countryside, consequently marginalized, and people experience diverse scale lingo hammering and then shifted to the governing nationalized language ([Hornberger and Coronel-Molina, 2004](#)). Although this phenomenon is multifaceted and complex in nature and gradually more includes the interplay of leading global or national languages like English, there is significant evidence of its impact on individual multiplicity. In this decade, 97% people of the world speak 4% of the world’s total languages, and vice versa 96% of the total languages of the world are spoken by only 3% of the world’s population ([Bernard 1996](#)). The same as the native community of America has focused on countrywide political schema include rejuvenation and globalization, as the idea of leading global culture, which is pressurizing natives who feel themselves in difficulty to disagree. By using equipment and means of communication (media), members of local communities might be participating in and also feel fear the power of the concept of a conventional one culture. Though primary school learner does direction-finding in learning and they spent leisure time in informal use of new media and engage in lingo learning, which provides a vital sign of the society that is to do something using the apparatus accessible to them. Although interest to lingo loss, and their usage of the instruments and technology of this era and media, native learners make available as an important example of not only in use in opposition to the domination of native languages but also to the classification of equipment as a smooth impression.

Academicians and researchers argue that locals ought to reform themselves in globalization while earlier dreams of individualism are defied but not discarded, hence for learning, in all this progression they usually make inquiries, "will it be only to make us more productive and increase our ability to produce and consume, or will it be able to instil in all of us a democratic spirit with values of solidarity?" (Monkman & Stromquist 2000, p. 21-22). However, these clarifications are applicable to negotiations about the globalization and progress of the concept today, where, media and the latest technology took heart value. Scholars and Researchers argued that school learner is also reshaping their own conventional understanding of globalization and teaching-learning by the usage of media for the purpose to produce, use and construct cohesion with one another other. As native youngster use up moment in time away from dwellings and their community, the existing ideas of local lingos and youth individuality, as well as verbal communication, need accepting and novelty in both informal and formal surroundings for the purpose to have a say considerably in their native cultures and to employ in languages, wherever that may be. It can be concluded that media as representative of the people at large should not be the tool of few elites who are interested in modernization and globalization, media and technology should be both used for the purpose of to sustain individuality and diversity as well.

Methodology

The aim of the study was to examine the scene of the media landscape and its role to protect the native cultures and languages. The study also tried to assess the picture of foreign influence on Pakistani media and its societal effects on native languages. The study was done with the qualitative content analysis of official data of Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) and Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. To sharpen the data analysis and to find the meaning full results from the statistical numbers provided by the two national offices, in-depth interviews of senior communication and language experts were conducted through a questionnaire that consisted of open-ended questions. Answers of the respondents were presented in a descriptive way in results.

Results and Discussion

Pakistan has vivid media topography with more than a hundred private and six governments own TV channels and thousands of newspapers. According to official data provided by the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), there are 126 Television channels and 188 FM radio stations including 45 non-commercial stations. Out of these 126 TV channels, 23 English language channels, 14 Urdu language channels and one Pashto language channel are owned by foreign nationals. There are two English, six Pashto, five Sindhi, two Saraiki, one Balochi and one Punjabi language local channels in the country.

The scenario clearly presented a picture that out of 126, there are only 15 TV channels with native languages, 25 are in the English language, and 85 are in the Urdu language. Although Urdu had been declared national language of Pakistan it does not represent the culture of any area across the geographical boundaries of Pakistan. Findings of the study showed that the majority of people in Pakistan have Punjabi as their native language, but there is only one TV channel with Punjabi language functioning in the country. Baluchistan, being the largest territorial province too has one Balochi language channel. The Pashto and Sindhi have seven and five TV channels, respectively, to promote native language and culture in innate content. This small number of regional language-based channels is insufficient to promote the native languages or cultures as a whole. The communication experts agreed that language affects culture and societal tendencies. Pakistan has a big portion of electronic media with 25 English language TV channels in the country and with 92 percent foreign ownership affects the societal traditions, norms and values. The foreigner owned Urdu TV channels present the translated verbal content, but the pictorial view of the majority content fails to represent the local cultures and traditions. The population landscape of native languages presented a different scenario than its media presence. According to official data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the population landscape with native languages was 44.15 percent Punjabi speaking, 15.42 percent Pushto, 14.1percent Sindhi, 10.53percent

Saraiki, 7.57percentUrdu, 3.57percentBalochi and 4.66percent having other small languages as native. These other small languages are a set of 57 languages have six million speakers around the country. Language and communication is an important ingredient of culture, and the media can use or misuse this ingredient to polish or demolish a culture. When native language channels are small in number, then responsibility for the promotion of the native cultures falls on the shoulders of the mainstream national media. But Pakistani mainstream media is not paying attention to promote indigenous languages. Pakistani media not only deviate from its role towards society, but it is also damaging the local culture. The study found another aspect of population landscape. As per findings, there are more than 99 percent people in FATA and 73.9 percent in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP) with Pashto as a native language. In the province of Sindh, 59.76 percent people speak Sindhi whereas, 21.05 percent are Urdu speaking people. Likewise, the province of Baluchistan, 59.75 percent is Balochi speaking people. In the province of Punjab, 75.23 percent residents speak Punjabi and 17.3 percent are Saraiki speaking natives. Another fact of population landscape has been found in shape of populace with education. To utter surprise, the province of Punjab was unearthed the lowest in this picture. The data resented the literacy scenario with the findings that the overall population in the country with matriculation was 17.29 percent and there in Punjab, the rate was 16.78 percent below all other provinces. To the dismay of the literacy scene in Pakistan, the research further explored that the province of Punjab has graduate (BA/BSc) rate of 3.23 percent in overall 4.38 graduate rate, and sixteen years masters (MA/MSc) ratio of 1.07 percent in overall 1.58 percent rate in the country. These findings suggest a clear sign of low literacy rate in this province and hence the need for conversation and communication in native language is much more important for natural growth and understanding of the masses.

Conclusion

The study lime lighted the scenario that language and medium of communication cannot be separated at all. Findings of the research enlighten that the language is nothing without medium of communication. It furthered, that media is powerless to communicate if fails to choose the language according to perceivers. The study suggested to the people at the helm of media management to do some modifications and tweak in media intentions. The current study presented that Pakistani mainstream media is damaging the local and native languages and cultures by presenting non-indigenous content in the shape of language, dress, food, music and drama, and displaying the invaded content, especially, in pictorial shape. A the majority of media outlets are owned by foreigners, consequently most of the time, they present a mixed culture of a specific class of a few instead of the whole population of the country. Moreover, Pakistani media has become the main reason to affect the language style, grammatical compositions and accent of the majority. The local media always has to protect and promote the local culture and set barriers against culture invasion, but here in Pakistan, we see that the local media has been protecting and promoting the cultural invasion. There is not a single example found in Pakistani mainstream media that has tried to protect local culture and displayed the local content solely. This is much similar to Edward's concept of human mind and personality, which he compared to an iceberg, with a conscious mind representing the tip and the unconscious or subconscious mind reflecting under the surface portion. Hence, human mind and personality grow within the natural environment, culture and native language is the best tool for communication to provide a natural environment to habitats of an area. Though it is very hard to ensure that the norms and values of the indigenous cultures and pros and cons of native languages persevere in the country, but sustainable efforts in this direction contribute a lot in achieving the goals.

It is not surprising to mention that most of the people in Pakistan have adapted to numerous aspects of the western cultures in their daily lives. It is getting tough for local and regional languages and customs and traditions to survive and save themselves from impurities. In view of the fact that the global technology of communication is produced and run by advanced countries of the west, items with local cultural ingredients are overcome by the contents having seeds of the so-called liberal and democratic cultures. To promote the

native languages and our socio-cultural norms, the people at the helm of affairs in Pakistani media need to contribute to their potentials.

Although, overall norms and values of our society are geared up and furthered by the national mainstream media under the umbrella of Urdu language more planned efforts are required before native languages, and norms and values of the local cultures are engulfed by the popular culture presented by Pakistan media. Pakistani local channels are few in number, and they try to follow the mainstream media for their content and style with the local language. Media in regional languages disseminate contents that support nationalism and patriotism, preserve native languages, social and cultural norms and values and ensure the process for national and cultural integration. Pakistani mainstream communication media need to be reshaped to represent the social and cultural facets of the society in large, its people and their cultures, languages, and educational system.

Reference

- Ahmed, H. Y. (2018). News Coverage of Panama issue in leading Urdu Dailies. (unpublished MPhil Thesis, Government College University Faisalabad, Faisalabad).
- Allwright, D., & Bailey, K. M. (1991). *Focus on the language classroom: an introduction to classroom research for language teachers*. Cambridge: *Cambridge University Press*.
- Bains, B. (2014). Influence of Social Media on Language. Vol *XCIII*, No. 311
- Bernard, H. (1996). Language preservation and publishing. In *Indigenous Literacies in the Americas: Language Planning from the Bottom up*, ed. N. Hornberger, 139-156. Berlin: *Mouton de Gruyter*.
- Dijk, V., & Teun, A. (1985). Structures of News in the Press. In: Van Dijk, Teun. (Ed). *Discourse and Communication: New Approaches to the Analysis of Mass media Discourse and Communication*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Edward, T. H. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. Garden city New York, *anchor publisher*.
- Emmitt, M., & Pollock, J. (1997). *Language and learning: an introduction for teaching (2nded.)*. Melbourne: *Oxford University Press*.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and Power*. Harlow: *Pearsons Education Limited*.
- Fishman, J. (1996). What do you lose when you lose your language? In *Stabilizing Indigenous languages*, ed. G. Cantoni, 80-91. Arizona: *Northern Arizona University*.
- García, O. (2009). En/countering Indigenous Bilingualism. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*. Special issue on Indigenous Youth and Bilingualism.
- Hornberger, N. & Coronel-Molina, S. (2004). Quechua language shift, maintenance, and revitalization in the Andes: The case for language planning. *International Journal of Society and Language* 167: 9–67.
- Huaman, E. D., & Stokes, P. (2018). Indigenous language revitalization and new media: Postsecondary students as innovators. *Global Media journal*.
- Huntrais, L. (1989). *The Undergraduate's Guide to Studying Languages*. London: *Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research*.
- Hymes, D. (2003). "Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Life". In: *Sociolinguistics: The Essential Readings* (pp. 30-47). Paulston, C.B. and Tucker, G.R. (Eds.). Oxford: *Blackwell Publishing Ltd*.
- Hymes, D. (Edr). (1964). *Language in Culture and Society: A Reader in Linguistics and Antropology*. New York: *Harper and Row, Publishers*.
- Jasilek, Nina. (2013). The Effect of Social Media on Language. *London School of Public Relations*.
- Klyukanov, I. E. (2005). *Principles of Intercultural Communication*. Boston: *Pearson Education, Inc*
- Mesthrie, R. et al. (2009). *Introducing Sociolinguistics (2nd Ed.)*. Edinburgh: *Edinburgh University Press*.
- Musau, P. M. (1999). "The Liberalization of the Mass Media in Africa and Its Impact on Indigenous Languages: The Case of Kiswahili In Kenya". *AAP* 60 (1999) 137-14.
- Nawaz, S, Bilal A. H., Kalsoom, M., Fayyaz, Z., & Nayyar, H. (2013). Social Media Destroying the English Language? *Media Discourse and Their Implicit Ideologies*. Vol. 2, No. 2.
- Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. (2019, December 23). *Census Report 1998*. <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/population-tables>
- Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority. (2019, December 23). *Satellite TV channels list*. <http://pemra.gov.pk/>
- Reed, J. (2014). *How social media is changing language*. *Oxford University Press*.

- Stromquist, N., & Monkman, K. (2000). *Globalization and education*. Maryland: *Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.*
- Tommaso, M. M., & Johnson, S. (2010). *Language Ideologies and Media Discourse: Texts, Practices, Politics*. *Advances in Sociolinguistics*. (*University of Leeds, UK*).
- Wodak, R. (2007). What is Critical Discourse Analysis?. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 18(2).
- Wodak, R. (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis: Some Important Concepts and Considerations*. www.ling.lancs.ac.uk
- Zhou, D. (2008). Richard Haggart and Early British Cultural Studies, *Comparative Literature: East & West*, 10:1, 144-148, DOI: 10.1080/25723618.2008.12015593.