

English Language in Pakistan: A Policy Analysis of Past and Present of Linguistic Contact with Urdu and Pashto

Ayaz Ahmad* Liaqat Iqbal† Irfan Ullah‡

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Abstract

The paper revisits the diachronic evolution of the belief, practices, and attitudes of Urdu and Pashto speakers towards English and ascertains the drivers and effects of such changes. The changes are explored at two levels, micro and macro. The macro-level perspective concerns the 'use' interface while the micro-level concerns the 'code'. The study hinges on the theory of contact linguistics' approaches such as language shift, hybridization and domain conquest. In the wake of this study, the scholars revisit the value of 'Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scales' (GIDS) in the assessment of language prospects of survival. The study finds that Pashto and Urdu both underwent substantial changes as a result of contact with the English language. The study also proposes revisiting definitions of some popular terms used in the evaluation of language policy and planning as the proposal to use more discrete terms that can be easily understood and applied by the practitioners of the fields, such as the distinction of language attitude and belief.

Key Words: English Language, Urdu, Pashto, Pakistan, Contact Linguistics, GIDS, Language Policy, Language Planning.

Introduction

The mention of multilingualism and plurality of Pakistani languages and cultures has become a necessary cliché that opens a paper that aims to understand its dynamics and effects. Among 70+ languages of Pakistan (Simon, & Fennig, 2018), the constitution of Pakistan, 1973 differentiates between the national, official and regional languages (and also mentions minority languages and culture). While Urdu is declared as the national language, English is allowed to function as an official language (till Urdu replaces it), Pashto and other minority languages are implied through the mention of regional language and minority culture.

The current legislation and linguistic context is the product of a historical process wherein migrations and conquests played a decisive role. The most decisive impact came from the regime of British colonial rule. The English language was non-existent in the South Asian subcontinent before the arrival of the British or the East India Company. The establishment of colonial rule in South Asia made English, their native language, necessary for the masses of South Asia. As time passed, the establishment of government

* Lecturer, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

† Assistant Professor, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

Email: liaqatiqbal@gmail.com

‡ Assistant Professor, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

machinery demanded a workforce that could not be supplied from the mainland of the United Kingdom (including Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland). As the government of British India realized the need to have educated Indians who could assist them in running the affairs of the colony, the crown and viceroy began the encouragement of the establishment of English medium schools. Initially, many of these schools and colleges were run by missionary service, which along with providing the education that suited the British governance style in the language (English) the rulers spoke also preached the faith that the rulers believed in. The missionary schools set the ground for the establishment of English medium schools with modern western education supported by various indigenous philanthropists. Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College can be quoted as an example of the college where the English language was taught with a curriculum that was acceptable to the Muslims of India, and the lagging behind of Muslims in participating in receiving the modern education (Mehmood, 1895; Das Gupta, 1970). Muslims of South Asia was hesitant in coming forth to receive this education; therefore, they were left behind, and their share in the government jobs remained far below their demographic proportion (Rahman, 1998).

Muslims of the colonial era were undergoing extreme depression as they were the rulers of India before the arrival of British rule. They lost not only their rule but also lagged far behind the majority Hindu population. They had to confront two adversaries in the colonial era; first, the rulers whom they were not ready to trust, and second the Hindu majority, who they feared might go for the retribution for the past subjugation, wars and plunders. On the linguistic front, they had used earlier Persian as the court language, and at the end, were indigenizing their language policy by promoting Urdu that had evolved as a result of their rule in India (Saksena, 2003). Urdu was not fully accepted until the resistance to the colonial system consolidated in India, and the Hindi-Urdu controversy arose as the Hindu nationalists were in favor of promoting Hindi while the Muslim leaders aligned themselves for the defence of Urdu (Rahman, 1998). In the formative of Muslims' struggle against colonial rule, the difference between the regional languages and the emergent national language, Urdu, was not substantial. The Pashtun nationalists were as ferment in their opposition to the colonial rule as the Urdu speaking community was, and both had a shared aim of ending the colonial rule. However, the post-colonial aims were not fully aligned as Pashtun leadership of the *KhudaiKhidmatgar Movement* was in favor of forming Pashtunistan (Rahman, 1995). The contact of Urdu and Pashto in the context of anti-colonial resistance created a gap where borrowing from English into Urdu remained minimal, mostly used for the formation of the literary genre such as novel, and terminology of the structuring of armed forces and civil administration. English names also cropped up when cities were named after the British rulers, such as Jacob, Abbott and Montgomery, etc.

After independence, the division of the national language and regional language became apparent in Pakistan when Urdu was declared the national language, while the rights of using another language in the region (conflated with Province) were recognized. The incumbency of the English language was also recognized, and it was proclaimed that English would continue as the official language till the moment become ripe when Urdu replaces English (see the constitutions of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, i.e. 1956, 1962, and 1973). The emergent situation of active intervention in language policy and planning at the center and the complicating socio-political and economic developments the crisis of identity formation at the national and local level in Pakistan. The struggle and negotiation for the assimilation, accommodation and preservation of the regional and minority languages of Pakistan continue as the urgency of replacing English with Urdu is felt at the national level in the face of globalization (where the necessity of increasing English in the globalized world is acutely realized even in the places that never came in the fold of British commonwealth- a mild term for the former colonies). The desire for rapid development in industry, education and economy is also realized as a factor in Pakistani policies that asks for homogenization. The divergence in policies and planning for Urdu, Pashto, and English is interwoven into the contradictory and inefficient planning and policies. The problem is tackled in this paper, and illuminating the way for the resolution of these problems is intended.

Literature Review

While the introduction of this paper focused on the rationalization of the problem in the current and past events, the review of literature in this section is intended to help in the formation of a theoretical construct for this study. Therefore, the review is limited to the establishment of the research problem in the field of linguistics, followed by a discussion of language planning and policy where contact linguistics' results are explored. The concept of linguistic vitality is also discussed. Finally, the views of Schuman are acculturation in applied linguistics are explored.

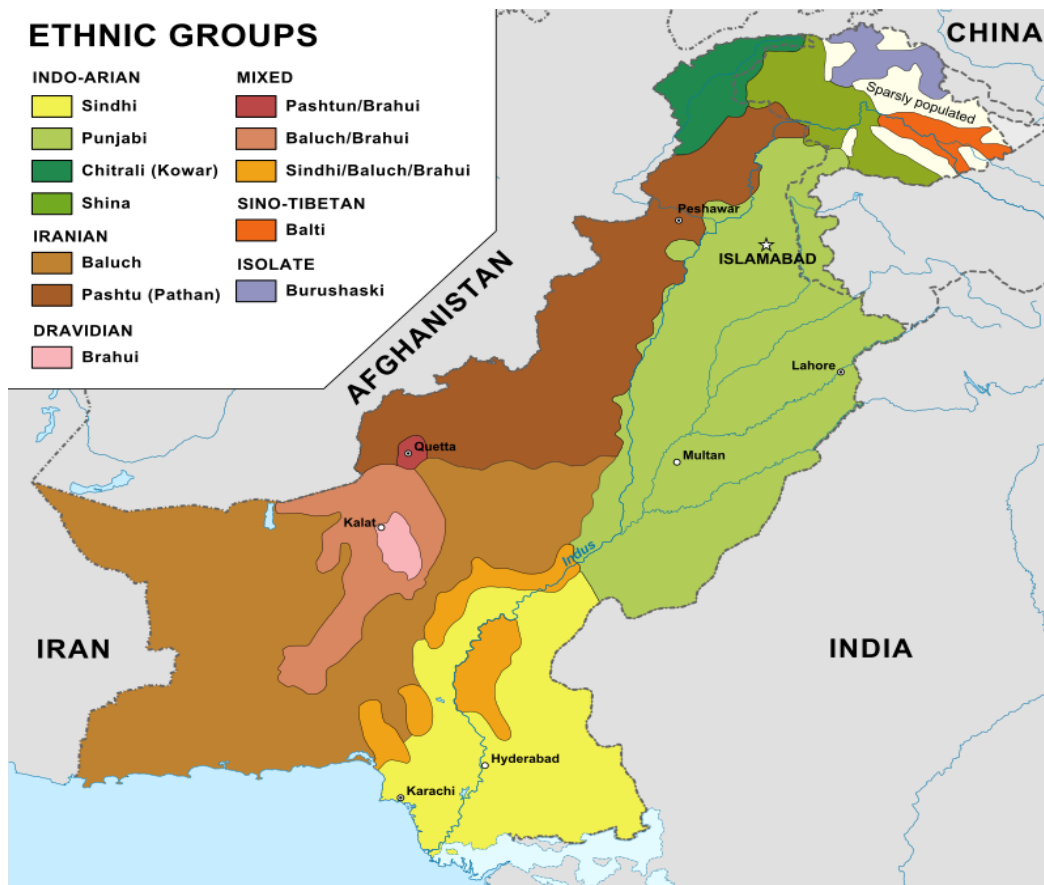


Figure 1: Map of Major languages in Pakistan along with legend (Ethnologue, 2018)

As the twentieth century ushered in the age of modernization of everything, linguistics also took a new look and, like a phoenix, rose from the ashes of the erstwhile philological investigations. Saussure (1915) himself was a renowned practitioner of the historical investigation into the lineage of families and tracing the convergent-divergent aspects in the diachronic axis. His proclamation of centralizing the synchronic comparison as the basis of linguistics and placing the sign as the center of linguistic inquiry created favorable grounds for the followers who completely disregarded his concept of parole and found in the langue a true possibility to pursue language in a scientific spirit. Bloomfield (1933) and Skinner and Chomsky (1965) all thought linguists' primary call concerns description of the abstracted system. Though Chomsky considered the position of behaviorism proposed by Skinner (and by implication Bloomfield as well) as not suitable to the nature of language, and in contrast to him supported mentalist abstraction as the preferred way to

understand the nature of language (1957). While Chomsky disagreed with Skinner et al., he broadly subscribed to their approach of studying the language in isolation from the context of society.

While the mainstream of linguistics was cozy in the restricted application of linguistics, a revolt silently took place when sociolinguistics gradually established its position as a major branch of linguistics with the founding studies of Labov (1966), Malinowski (1944), Voloshinov (1930) and Wienreich (1953). One great pressure emerged in the sociology of language from the active interventions of the newly formed states who were seeking to establish their post-colonial identity (Nekvapil, & Sherman, 2015). The work of Weireich (1953) on the contact of languages is monumental and can be considered as the founding work in language policy and planning (Rahman, 1998). Weinreich's 'Languages in contact: Findings and problems' while focusing on contact between languages in a multilingual setting, alludes to a myriad of processes that influence both languages that come into contact. The changes may be grouped into prestige formation, borrowing (hybridization, code-switching and mixing); he introduced the concept of contact situation (language domain) where the domination can lead to ousting of a language from the given situation. The effects of language shift emerge in an unstable contact, where one language disappears or weakens to be replaced by a stronger language. His study was based on the multilingual context of Switzerland. His concept of the context of language contact was later presented by Fishman (1965) and Fishmand and Ferguson, & Dasgupta (1968) as domains of language, hinging on 'who speaks what language to who and when' as the simplest definition of a domain of language and sociolinguistic context.

Studying the language and its use is covered by multiple branches of linguistics (in fact, language and its use are inseparable features as mentioned by Saussure in the form of signifier and signified to be the face of one coin of language). The interventions in the language are normally undertaken with a political motive by a resourceful agent (such as government), and this feature becomes language policy and planning when studied by a linguist systematically (Spolsky, 2004, Nelde, 1987). Spolsky identified the practices, beliefs and attitude of language speakers towards their language and languages of other plays an important role in the scope and nature of language change and shift (Spolsky, 2004), while for Phillipson (1992) such changes are common in favor of a strong language against a weaker language. He adds, when English as the global language comes into contact with any other language, in most cases, English successfully conquer the domain where such contact between English and the other language happens; he terms such a change as a result of the 'linguistic imperialism' of English. Therefore, Pakistan's current scenario is such that English is actively promoted by the government as the key to unlocking the knowledge-based economic opportunities for Pakistan (Khan, 2004; Government of Pakistan, 2017; Baumgardner, 1996). When languages enjoy uneven privileges, most likely, the opportunities that arise out of language use to the users are even available, and gradually the linguistic difference coincides with and augment the social, political and economic differences and stratification, favoring the elite at the expense of the non-elite (Rahman, 1998, Ahmad, & Khan, 2017, Ahmad, Hussan, & Malik, 2018; Blomaert, Recensie, & Wright, 1995; Fishman, 2006a, 2006b; Phillipson, 1992).

A question of assessment of such impact arises, and in the field of language policy and planning, a large number of methods exists that support either the macro or the micro-linguistic analysis (see, e.g. Ahmad, 2016; Ahmad & Khan, 2017; Fishman, 2008, 1991, 1989, Hult, & Johnson, 2015; Labov, 1966; Lewis, & Simons, 2004, Schumann, 1978). Out of these instruments, the acculturation theory of Schumann (1978), and the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) of Fishman (1991) and its enhanced form or EGIDS by Lewis and Simons (2004), suit the scope and objectives of this paper best. Further, fig.2 is taken from Ahmad & Khan (2016a) to highlight how assimilation and accommodation produce contrary effects.

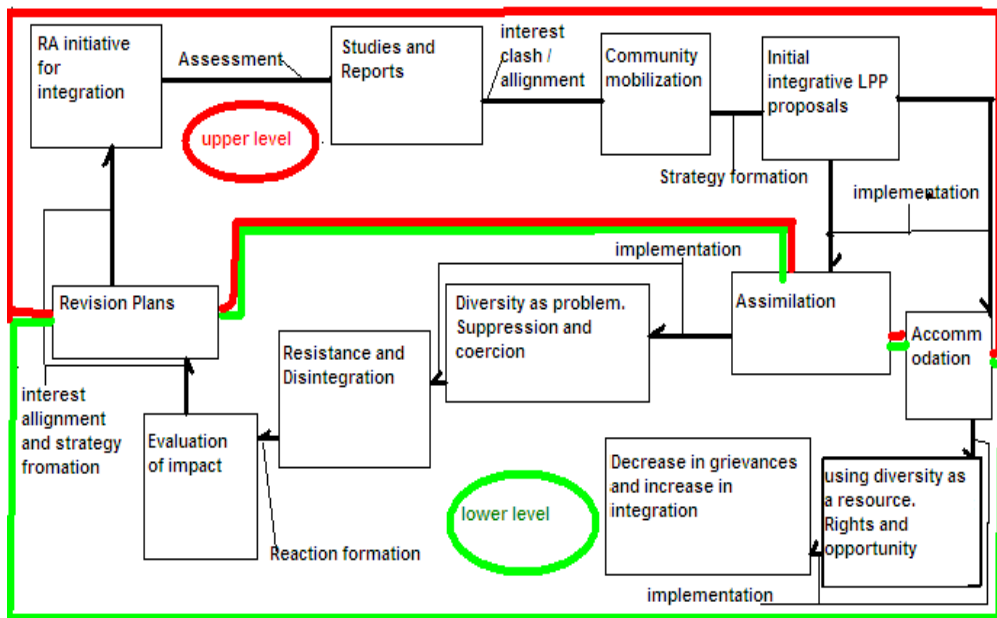


Figure 2: Assimilation vs Accommodation in the language (Ahmad, & Khan, 2016a)

If we were to sum Schumann's (1978) concept of acculturation, we find him presenting eight pairs of elements; on one extreme, they support acculturation and on the other side, they promote alienation and cultural gaps. When cultural gaps are closed, the learning of the target language becomes facilitated, and language contact yields openness to the target language among learners. These elements include social distance, integration patterns, enclosure, cohesiveness, comparative sizes of learners' community, institutional congruence, presence of positive attitude and length of contact. During the contact of language, if a person does not experience cultural shock, ego barrier, language shock, and demotivation, then it is easier for the person to go across to the target language culture and language. After reviewing the acculturation theory of Schumann (1978), the discussion of the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (Fishman, 1991) is explored in the following lines.

Fishman (1991) presented the concept of GIDS as a means to reverse the process of extinction of languages spoken by very few people at the time of intervention. The concept essentially relies on the number of speakers, the scope of functions and the concentration of power associated with the domain where the language is used. The same concept was adopted by the Summers Institute of Linguistics (SIL) when they started to use the scale as a descriptor of the vitality of various languages they catalogued and described. Their website, <https://www.sil.org>, can be visited to find the application of this scale. While Fishman (1991) used eight gradations between a vibrantly thriving language such as English (placed at level 8) and extinct languages that were placed at 1., Lewis and Simons (2010) expanded the scale proposed by Joshua A. Fishman. Their Enhanced GIDS corresponds to the vitality categorization of UNESCO. Lewis and Simons (2010), while providing their assessment, showed their optimism in the utility of using the scale; however, they confess that the scale is based on certain assumptions that do not guarantee to represent the factual status of the language. This paper will later elaborate on some shortcomings of this scale, which were identified during the course of research.

To sum the review of literature as presented in this section, the researchers found the scope of language contact has become very wide after the seminal work of Weinreich in 1953 on the multilingual context of Switzerland. The Contact of Pashto and English has been explored by a number of studies, which

are not mentioned here as the researchers wanted to focus only on finding adequate tools that would suit the purpose of the study. However, intrusted readers can find such works in abundance in the library of any Pakistani university where MPhil/Ph.D. thesis/dissertations are available. For PhD studies, the online HEC repository is an excellent resource that can be accessed at <http://pr.hec.gov.pk>, where more than 80 dissertations catalogue examples showing the result of this contact in the emergence of hybrid forms in Urdu or other regional languages. The scope of this work is to overview the macro aspects of contact which lay ignored in the research studies that explore the influence of English on Urdu or other Pakistan languages or vice versa study the emergence of a localized variety of English, which is exemplified best in Rahman (1990), bearing the title 'Pakistani English'. The review, by ignoring the catalogue, focused on the literature that studies the nature, manner and effects of linguistic contact, especially contact between unequal languages, that is also the case with English's contact with Urdu and Pashto.

Research Methodology

This paper is the product of a qualitative study that arose out of a systematic study of the available secondary sources and augmented, verified and rectified the findings of the secondary sources with scheduled open-ended interview format (N=20) based that was undertaken at two universities of Mardan (Pakistan), i.e. Women University Mardan and Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM), with 14 interviews at AWKUM and six interviews conducted at the Women University Mardan. The duration of interviews ranged between 40 and 90 minutes, and transcribed text ranged between 3000 and 4500 words.

The theoretical construct of acculturation (Schumann, 1991), EGIDS (Lewis, & Simons, 2010) and accommodation vs assimilation paradigm (Ahmad, & Khan, 2016a) were combined in the research outlined in fig.3.

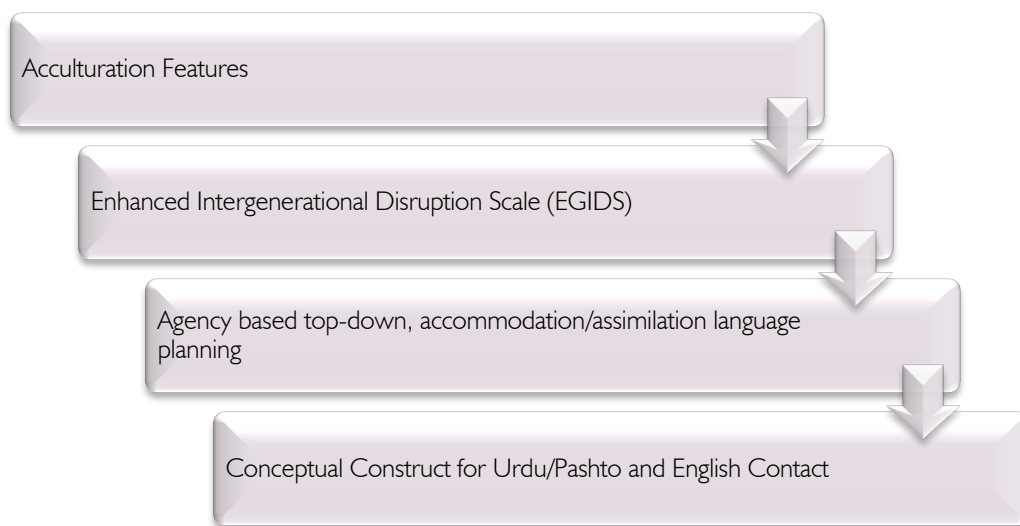


Figure 3: Formation of a conceptual construct for Urdu/Pashto and English Contact

Research Objectives

As the literature review and then the preceding discussion on adopted tools for the study hint, the following objectives were set for the research:

The study aimed to find the nature of past and present language policy and planning for English, Urdu, and Pashto to manage their contact.

The study also aimed to identify the future prospect of contact between English, Urdu, and Pashto.

Finally, the study attempted to find out the specific relevance of this contact in terms of acculturation, linguistic vitality and accommodation/assimilation of Urdu and Pashto.

Keeping in view the exploratory nature of the study, the formulation of operational questions was avoided, and analysis was used to meet the goals set in the objectives of this paper.

Analysis and Discussion of Urdu, Pashto and English language Contact: Present realities and Future prospects

This section presents an analysis and discussion of the interview-based data in light of the conceptual framework presented in the research methodology. This section is formatted to provide the analysis in the form of continuous narrative, and it avoids referencing the contents as the same disrupts the intention of providing a holistic perspective of language contact (of Urdu, Pashto with English) at the macro level of planning and policy. First, Urdu and Pashto's individual contact is explored, and then an overview of both of the languages are drawn. Finally, the discussion identifies some problems that the researchers faced due to confusion in the explication of the key terms that are provided in the literature on the theoretical construct.

Contact of Urdu with English in Pakistan is the product of past history. As the process of decolonization started, so the sentiments of replacing English with Urdu ran high; however, the post-colonial context of globalization again necessitated English as the economic dominance of the Anglophone sphere in G8 and other influential forums. Mardan is a city of 2.5 million Pashtun with a small number of Punjabi speaking settlement inside the military cantonment and up to 20000 Hindko speakers along the side of river Indus and the same number of Punjabi Christians concentrated mostly in the former properties vacated by the Hindu population in the early days of independent Pakistan. Urdu is, therefore,, mostly spoken by the people as their second language. However, at the national level, Urdu speaking population is sizeable and significant. The perspective of the participant normally is based on treating Urdu as a national language. The effects of contact in terms of assimilation, accommodation and preservation paradigm, the view was largely in favor of accommodating English as an international language. While the social distance of Pakistan and English as a foreign language was appreciated, the interviewees were confident that the Urdu language could not be endangered by the English language. They viewed that level of proficiency and number of people who speak Urdu as their dominant second language is far above that for the English language. They also added that English is not spoken and understood by the large majority of poor people; it is the language of the affluent social and political elite. While exploring the vitality of the Urdu language in Mardan, the scale became problematic, perhaps due to its original design to gauge the vitality in terms of the L1 population, not the L2 population.

The contact of Pashto with the English language is mainly confined to English language learning centres, schools (English medium), colleges and universities, or to sum the contact remained limited to educational institutions, though informally entertainment media and internet (especially the social media) are rapidly becoming popular among the youth. The increasing number of loan words of English in Pashto is found as an alarming element, which raises the fear of assimilation of Pashto by the English language. The Pashtun participants viewed both English and Urdu as second languages, and out of the two, they saw in English greater potential for various persona and collective reasons such as education, professional career, moving abroad etc. The participants lamented that while for Urdu language learning there are numerous resources available, English that government claims are important for the quality education is left to the mafia, who make a lot of money and the rich who can afford the expensive English medium schools benefit from the private schools and colleges, while at the government schools English is made compulsory without providing enough resources. Even at the university, the fees were a barrier for the poor to enrol who were forced to enrol in government colleges (for BS programs) where the English language resources were inferior and scarce. The participants of the study saw little threat of assimilation from Pashto (though mindless use of

English vocabulary and forms in Pashto through code-switching and mixing was considered as a bad habit, not as a serious threat to the vitality of Pashto. The negative cultural factors presented by Schumann (1978) were all identified by the participant to be deterrents such as social distance, assimilative integration, the comparative size of Pashto speakers in Mardan as compared to English language speakers, lack of enclosure, and institutional divergence; however, Pashtun did not find their cohesion to their community as a problem and possessed a high level of motivation to learn English language and viewed it as a window of opportunity that they must access. Therefore, motivation became a strong personal force, which trumped community-based deterrence for English language learning. As Pashtuns were interviewed in an area where they were the absolute majority, therefore, they viewed their L1, Pashto language to be on the highest level of vitality. Though a sizeable number of the participants could not read and write in the Pashto language, they did not consider it a big problem as some of the participants who had never being taught literacy of Pashto language informed the researchers that they learned how to read and write in Pashto in a few hours as the Arabic script of Urdu has a few modifications when it is used for the writing of Pashto language.

When we collectively take Pashto (a regional language) and Urdu (a national language that is L2 of the majority of Pakistanis) and study the contact of these languages with English language, we find a similarity in the nature of contact in the field of education. Both languages coexist along English at some stage of education (Pashto mostly at the primary stage, while Urdu at the secondary level and in some universities/disciplines such as Islamic studies, becomes the only language at all levels). While the leadership at centre and many influential people and institutions (such as the supreme court) have repeated expressed in their writing and speeches an intention to promote Urdu and Pashto, the English language thrives, as the government does not muster enough resources (human and material) to ensure a language shift in the domains of power especially that of government and education. Further, the top-down model fails to work in Pakistan, as is evidenced in Mardan, where people prefer English over Urdu due to the career potential it offers to them as compared to the Urdu language. Further, Pashtuns feel insecure about the Urdu language assimilating the Pashto language and are not insecure about the English language assimilating the Pashto language.

Conclusion

To sum the discussion of this paper, the researchers found that during the struggle for independence, Urdu and Pashto speakers shared anti-colonial sentiments, which translated into belief, attitude and practices. So, during the colonial era, Pashto and Urdu both maintained minimal contact with the English language as very few learned English through formal education, and very few had to interact with offices. After the formation of Pakistan, the distinction between Pashto and Urdu emerged as one became the regional language of NWFP and the KP, and the other became the national language. As the national language, Urdu was aimed to compete with English with a view to replace it later. However, Urdu language did not succeed in this attempt, and for the present, both accommodate each other in the domains of power and such mutual accommodation has left no room for any regional language to be elevated in any domain at the national level. Pashto language speakers do not feel threatened by the presence and domination of English language, for them, their language has to compete with Urdu at the regional level in KP province. While conducting research, it was found that EGIDS lacks details and uses only a single digit for the indication of the vitality of a language and that too for only the L1 population. The researchers suggest that EGIDS needs improvement and the inclusion of details. They propose that instead of a single number, a four number system may be introduced where the four digits stand for various key domains. The researchers recommend that 1111 to 9999 may be used to indicate government, education, commerce and media, respectively. Further, the researchers suggest that synonymous terms like attitude, belief for a description of language speakers' for their language may be avoided, and instead, less confusing terms may be used.

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