

LANGUAGE PLANNING AND LANGUAGE POLICY DILEMMA IN PAKISTAN

Ahdi Hassan Independent Scholar

Naeem Dilpul

Monica Gill

Syed Aziz, Sher Azam

Saima Kasuar

Shazia Akbar Lecturer at Department Linguistics
Quaid e Azam University, Islamabad

Abstract

In this project, we have focused Language planning and language policy (LPLP) generally, in particular, in Pakistani context and discussed the dilemma of language policy in Pakistan. The problems are as well discussed which were caused by language policy and close study of language policies have been done from 1947 to date. The language policies have been debated and gaps have been pointed out. At last, a recommended proposal has been given for language policy in Pakistan to be implemented.

Keywords: Language planning, language policy, overview of language policies

Introduction

The language planning is essentially so important for the survival of any nation which can elevate it to the level of high prestige or very lower ones. The language planning was first introduced by Einar Haugen, an American linguist, in the late 1950s, which states ‘...all conscious efforts that aim at changing the linguistic behavior of a speech community.’¹ Language planning and policy mainly are considered to be similar terms relating to each other; however, language policy refers to more general linguistics, political and social goals.²

¹ (Mesthrie, 2009)

Language policy in Pakistan is meant to strengthen the state. This is taken to mean that there should be a national language which should symbolize the nation-state. This language is Urdu. The policy also claims to modernize the state (Rahman)

Language planning has been defined in multiple ways, one of which is:

‘...language planning is an attempt by someone to modify the linguistic behavior of some community for some reason.’³

The reasons multiple such as spreading the language, creating standardized form of it as Cooper discusses three major types of language planning:

‘...status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning.’⁴

The first one is status planning which is to giving status to a language and selecting a language to standardize it. Tariq Rehman writes that ‘...term was used by Kloss (1969) for the importance given to a language by the state.’⁵ It is invariably done by the governmental bodies, who decide which language is taken to be national language or official one.

The second one is corpus planning, which is primarily is to create literature in the language, to codify it and make the orthography so that the masses get it easy to read and write it. Most of the time, corpus planning is done by the institutions and linguists authorized by the state, but not necessarily all the time. The efforts are taken to make dictionaries in that language, translate world literature in it and produce neologism. As mentioned ‘Corpus planning may include attempts to define or reform the standard language by changing or introducing forms in spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.’⁶

The third one is known as acquisition planning, the third type given by Cooper, discusses the teaching of language. This too ‘refers to organized efforts to promote the learning or relearning of a language’⁷. It is to boot considered the ‘sub-category’ of status planning⁸ and it promotes the use of language in media, education and research by the help of status planning.

Language planning seems a very complicated concept which not only solves out linguistic issue but also generate simultaneously linguistic issues to the surface. The reason behind it is that it creates problem may be that it’s done by the bureaucratic organizations or ruling elites who always do language planning and formulate language policy to their own favor ignoring the other minor languages. Mansoor points out that ‘...language policy and

(Crystal, 1987)

⁶ (Jr, 1997)

The strategy is to establish language policies on a local, regional, and international level as part of overall political planning and resource management (Romanie, 2000)

(Jones, 1998)

(Mansoor, 2005)

planning decisions take place not only at the policy level but also in bureaucratic organization (Mansoor, 2005)⁹

When devising language policy or working on language planning, some very crucial factors are never neglected, be that social needs, religious, technological and financial. Moreover, by the emergence of nation-states in Europe, the significance of LPLP doubled, for every state endeavored to prove itself as a distinct identity which made the language the strong ground for it. Commenting on same process Mansoor states ‘The choice of language, therefore, has to fulfill the functions of both nationalism and nationsim so that the social structure is not disrupted and the country is not isolated from the outside world (Mansoor, 2005)’¹⁰

From the day one, in Pakistan, government policy regarding the language has faced on its each step sheer fiasco; however, no significant lesson has ever been learnt by policy-makers. Given the national unification the strong base, the ruling elites very earlier just decided one-prong-approach to language problem in Pakistan, which was to impose Urdu both declaring it the identity marker of Islam and unifying force to unite all ethnic groups together. To the contrary, the same fruitless approach made the building block to the separation of Bangladesh.

The dilemma in LPLP in Pakistan is that of no implementation but only paper work or rhetoric, and no considerable attention towards regional and provincial languages. Some writers carry the belief that the controversy on languages in Pakistan is a sense of a pre-partition drama. As Rafiqul Islam writes:

“The language controversy of Pakistan started even before the creation of Pakistan. Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed, a former Vice-Chancellor of the Aligarh University of India had suggested that Urdu should be the state or official language of the future state of Pakistan. Simultaneously Dr. Md. Shahidullah, a noted Bengali linguist from Decca University, opposed the suggestion and put forth argument in favor of Bengali as the future state language of Pakistan (Islam, 2008)”¹¹

It was the dreadful beginning of a politico-lingual problem for Pakistan which very harshly and compellingly led to the making of a country on face of world as Bangladesh. By the time, Pakistan emerged as a state in the world; it had two parts, West Pakistan (present one) and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). It was a blunder on part of West Pakistan to ignore Bangla language and impose Urdu on Bengali people who were in majority, as opposed to same illogical decision the agitation were waged. Bengali

¹¹ (Islam, 2008), 143.

people endeavored so enthusiastically to get the decision changed, but to no avail. Once such example is of Mr. Dharendra Nath Dutta's proposal which was openly rejected by Mr. Liat Ali Khan, the then PM of Pakistan in 25th of Feb, 1948 in Constitutional Assembly of Pakistan.¹² The proposal emphasized that the lingua franca of state should be the language majority speak, absolutely indirect indication to Bengali. Moreover, in the second Advisory Board Committee decided that Arabic should be the script of all regional languages¹³ which added fuel to the fire of Bengali language issue and in response to it a protest memorandum was sent to education advisory board which is following:

'The attempt of introducing Arabic script for the Bengali language, which has a rich heritage and tradition, is an attack on our language, literature and culture. This attempt has created a fear of new colonial design and slavery in the minds of Bengalis. (Omar 1970:263)"¹⁴

Furthermore, language related issues not only are confined to Bengali movement, but also the history witnessed in 1971 to 1972 the Sindhi-Muhajir linguistic riots in Pakistan. The basic reason of which was the problem of Sindhi salariat who were of the opinion that Urdu-speaking people avail greater jobs than them because of language, absolutely Urdu. Fearing this that in coming time, they would be turned into the inferior citizen; they wages a protest to change language policy towards them and bring Sindhi language in place of Urdu. Till today, ethnic politics is mostly based on language as seen in case of Seraiki province movement, which shows their language different from Punjabi and consider themselves a distinct ethnic identity on base of language; therefore, they keep struggling to get a new province.

Overview of Language Policies in Pakistan

Pakistan has now completed 65 years of its independence, though it has not got any authentic policy for language which is wholeheartedly implemented and is in the official process. Below are the given policies pertinent to language from the day one of independence.

1948-1958

The first meeting on education was held at Karachi in 1947, but at that time Pakistan was going through a critical period and education was not a subject of high priority in the new state. Then the topic of language

¹² We must think locally but act globally: local languages for expressing local identities and global languages for communicating beyond local levels and expressing our identities as citizens of the world (Romanie, 2000)

¹³ (Rehman, Language Planning and Politics in Pakistan, 1995)

erupted, elite wanted to make Urdu national language while at the same time a controversy between majority and minority language arose as the issue of 'Bengali as the national language of the country'.¹⁵ At the time of independence, Pakistan was faced with the problem of language developing a language policy. The problems in designing and implementing such a policy were complicated by language groups competing to be recognized as national languages, the two dominant native languages were Urdu and Bengali. Urdu was used as a symbol of Muslim unity and Bengali was the majority language of East Pakistan. Bengalis were in majority and half of the total population of Pakistan. The prominent leader of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah delivered a speech in Dhaka University in 1948, said that Urdu is going to be a state language of Pakistan and no other language. According to this speech Bengali recognized as a provincial language. The Bengalis protested against this speech, many students were killed and several others injured. The Pakistani leaders believed that there should be one national language and more than one language could not bring the nation together. This policy strongly criticized by Bengalis and the government towards Bengali was symbolically terminated the Bengali culture and the Bengali nationalist movement that eventually separated to form Bangladesh (East Pakistan) in 1971.¹⁶

1958-1971

Ayub Khan was openly pro-English and he believed that most of the qualified personnel should acquire their knowledge in English medium schools. All training for military officers was in English and cadets were not allowed to use regional languages.

In 1959 a comprehensive document in education policy was set up to explore language issues in Pakistan. According to this commission, Urdu and Bengali should be the medium of instruction in secondary schools in the government schools and Urdu would reach to become the medium of instruction at university level in 15 years. The Sharif commission stated clearly that Urdu should replace English.

"English should continue as second language since advance knowledge which was in English only needed for advanced study and research". In the government schools institutionalized Urdu was the language

¹⁵ (Rehman, Language and Politics in Pakistan, 1996), 84-85.

English was supposed to continue as the official language of Pakistan till such time that the national language(s) replaced it. However, this date came and went, as had many other dates before it, and English is as firmly entrenched in the domains of power in Pakistan as it was in 1947 (Rehman, Language policy, multilingualism and language vitality in Pakistan)

¹⁶ (Afzal, 1976), 01.163-175.

of instruction, English was taught as a compulsory subject and English medium schools were allowed to flourish.¹⁷

National Language

In addition to maintaining English, Bhutto tried to give Urdu official recognition in the newly form constitution. According to the article 251 of 1973 constitution states that:

✓ The national language of Pakistan is Urdu and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within 15 years from the commencing day.

✓ The English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu.

✓ In addition to the national language, provincial languages should promote to the status of national language.

Thus, 1973 constitution gave English a new lease for 15 years based on first clause, language instructions were set up to develop Urdu and English medium schools got legal protection under this constitution. According to the article 251, states clearly that Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and the policy planners desire that it should play its role as the official language of Pakistan. It has only mentioned in the constitution of 1973, but no materials or documents have been developed successfully after twenty-three years of the country's independence. National and official language of Pakistan in Article 251 has remained unchanged in all three constitutions. The constitution very clearly states the role of English as the language for all official purposes for definite time. Abbas (1998) and Rehman (1998) pointed out the official policy is being promoted Urdu as the official language and English continues for all practical purposes as the official language of Pakistan.

The status of provincial languages in Article 251 is also conditional to the national language. The development of regional languages has been remained only on the lip service based on constitutional provision but, there is no concrete stet to promote regional languages at the cost of the status to the national language. Regional languages should organize in all provinces in the official shapers including education.¹⁸

(Rehman, Language Planning and Politics in Pakistan, 1995)

The stated policy was to support Urdu but that was only to create a subordinate bureaucracy at low cost (vernacular-medium education costs less than Englishmedium education). It was also to keep an anti-ethnic, centrist, ideological symbol potent and vibrant in the country. (Rehman, Language policy, multilingualism and language vitality in Pakistan)

The armed forces, better organized than any other section of society, created cadet colleges from the nineteen fifties onwards. These schools, run on the lines of the elitist British public schools, were subsidized by the state (Rahman)

National Language Policy (1979)

General Zia ul Haq justified his coup by implementing Islamization and Urduization policies. This policy involved drastic change towards English. Consideration for medium of instruction and provincial languages can be placed in educational system. National language and its programs are going to adopt as medium of instruction. The importance of English particularly at higher level of education .The 1979 language policy advised the English medium to shift either to Urdu or to another regional language; all Pakistani schools throughout the country will be required to adopt Urdu and provincial languages used as a medium of instruction. Only one language was recognized as the provincial in each province. According to this policy English medium schools abolished, so this policy imposed forcefully and some English medium schools had to go back to Urdu and after few months they adopted English again. In addition to Urdu, and as a provincial language, Arabic was introduced as a compulsory foreign language and used as a symbol of Islamic government.

In 1979 Muqtadira Quami Zaban (National Language Authority) was formed to devise ways and means for the promotion of Urdu as the national language of Pakistan. Urdu was imposed as the medium of instruction in all government schools from class1 and English was not introduced until class 6.

The government imposed the Urdu policy quite strictly in government schools however; the elite schools were not affected and were allowed to operate due to political influence exerted by the people who sent their children to these schools. English elite medium schools got legal protection in 1987, used as the medium of instruction for science subjects .Urdu only policy had surfaced and the students did not get the same exposure to the English language the generation before had them. The teachers stopped working in English and the sharp competency of people in English was completely declined.

National language policy (1992)

The objective of national educational policy of Nawaz Sharif government was to restructure the education system according to the teachings of Islam. The 1992 education policy did not directly address the language in education issue. During this period, there were some changes in the government's stance on English; Benazir Bhutto gave schools the option of adopting English as the medium of instruction in all subjects beginning class 1.This change in policy was supported by informants who participated. This policy was focused on Islamiyat in the education system and to promote Islamic education as a compulsory subject in all educational institutions from class 1 to BA/B.Sc. The policy fully recognized the importance of the

contributory role of higher education in economic development and to improve efficiency of higher education and to strengthen graduate programs and capability of universities for creating new knowledge and materials. According to this policy, English may be used as one of the medium of instructions in addition to Urdu as a provincial language. At secondary level, English may be the medium of instruction for science and technical subjects.

National language Policy (2009)

This policy was introduced by General Pervez Musharraf in 1999. According to this policy, the state makes a commitment to use Urdu as the medium of instruction in state schools. The main focus of this policy is that to elevate the status and development of English in his government, reforms in the areas of basic education and literary, revision of curriculum in secondary and technical education and interfacing between higher education and industry. Furthermore, one of the justifications for the coup is the poor shape of the Pakistani economy. Improvement of economy and boosting foreign investment has been set as the primary goal by this policy. In order to attract multinational investment, he stated that government will have to increase the literacy rate and resource requirements in all these areas. English is a key to the global economy; the government will have to develop English language skills.

Recommendations

Having done a comprehensive study on this topic, our approach to design a language policy for Pakistani society will be mainly trilingual model which in some sorts has been mentioned in some commissions done before.

This trilingual formula or model included the regional language, communicational language and international language. Urdu to be changed from National to Communication so that grudge against it lesser down, for it has been the bone of contention among many ethnic groups in Pakistan, i.e. Sindhi movement in case in 1971 to 1972. However, for this to happen a modification in educational policy is worth needing or without it this would either not be implemented or would be paid completely blind eye.

Let us give a brief sketch of the historical overview of the English language policies in Pakistan. We have seen a number of educational policies instituted by different governments but never has there been a comprehensive document on language policy and these documents have not been bolstered by institutional support. English is an important contemporary language used for wider communication in the world. Pakistanis must learn English but not at the cost of rejecting regional languages. In fact, we should be striving for a balance between English and the local languages. There is a

serious need to carve out a policy that is realistic in nature and that makes the attempt to preserve local languages and cultures.¹⁹

Trilingual Formula

Regional Language

Class first to Middle as medium of instruction including Urdu and English being compulsory subject within that.

Urdu

It should be changed to communicational language from national language and English language should be national language

English

It should be given serious attention from the beginning so as to equip students with modern technology and fast running world.

Moreover, the status of 1973 constitution regarding Urdu to be implemented but with modified version as the official language and communicational language. After completing middle, the students should be given their own choice to any language to further proceed their study in that, be that regional language, Urdu or English. The most important thing is that NLA should be empowered to work for the development of all languages in Pakistan with having linguists or educationist from every region of country to contribute. The language policies of Pakistan, declared and undeclared, have increased both ethnic and class conflict in the country. Moreover, our Westernized elites, in their own interests, are helping the forces of globalization and threatening cultural and linguistic diversity. In this process they are impoverishing the already poor and creating much resentment against the oppression and injustice of the system.

Both globalization and the continuation of colonial language policies by the governments of Pakistan has increased the pressure of English on all other languages. While this has also created an increased awareness of language rights and movements to preserve languages, it has generally resulted in more people learning English. In Pakistan this means that the poor are under more pressure than before because they cannot afford expensive schools which 'sell' English at exorbitant rates. As such linguistic globalization is anti-poor, pro-elitist and exploitative (Rahman)

Conclusion

Issues relating languages must be discussed with unbiased approach by the help of any community and this should be given a lot of attention,

Most language policy deals with national or international levels rather than local usage (Romanie, 2000)

¹⁹ (Mahboob, 2002)

because it's no more 1947 in which on name of religion people can be compelled to follow the orders. In fact, the ethnic-politics throughout the history of the country has been based on language which contributed a lot of disintegration within the communities. To the advantage of unity in the country, the state should formalize a policy which can serve both elites and common individuals in the country.

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