Linguistic Diversity: Language Policies of Higher Education Institutions of Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study sheds light on contributions and challenges faced in the implementation of language policies to promote linguistic diversity at tertiary level education in Punjab, Pakistan. For this purpose, data have been collected from the handbooks of five public and private universities of Punjab, Pakistan, and from semi-structured interviews of pertinent administrative bodies and foreign and indigenous language teaching faculty from five acclaimed universities of Punjab, Pakistan. Phenomenology, which aims to interpret the individuals' collaborative experiences of a phenomenon, renders the framework to this research to explore the phenomenon of linguistic diversity and the technique of document analysis tabled by Bowen has been used to canvass the data. The findings of this research comprise contributions including institutional support, advancements in the corpus of languages, training of language teachers, foreign and local languages as minor courses and exchange programs and, the challenges, consisting of inadequate institutional support, fewer advancements in the corpus of foreign and local languages, extraneous training for language teachers, obsolescent curricula of language programs and the dichotomy between local and foreign languages. It is hoped that this study would make significant contribution in the existing scholarship in the field of language planning and policy making in the universities of Pakistan.

Keywords: *language policy and planning, contributions, challenges, linguistic diversity, higher education*

Introduction

With an increase in bilingualism and multilingualism around the globe, language policies are needed to be devised under the shadow of this ubiquitous phenomenon since the world is no more a place where people are confined to their own linguistic communities. Spolsky (1989) asserts that the places that were once known for monolingual education, now have been replaced with multilingualism e.g., London was considered the center of Standard English but now there are only less than 20% of students who make use of Standard English.

By dint of ever-growing phenomenon of multilingualism, language policymakers and academicians cannot turn a blind eye towards this

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globally occurring phenomenon. Language policies are only implemented unerringly if they are formulated according to the current realities and fulfill the needs of states' inhabitants, and also keep in view all the groups of society who are from linguistically diverse backgrounds. Tonkin (2015) posits that effective language policy and planning operate at all levels equally but in these collective efforts, the efforts made at the political level have more importance than any other institution's or an individual's efforts.

Multiple researchers have made contributions in the field of language planning and policy in higher education institutions. Tindale (2008) opines that in Australian higher education institutions, students at tertiary level education are from the sundry national and international, cultural, and linguistic milieu where they not only get the chance of sharing linguistic knowledge with one another but also learn new ways of communication.

Canada also attracts immigrants from all corners of globe. Noelis & Clement (1998) assert that education is administered by the provincial government in Canada and the federal government provides funds to promote language education. Besides that, Anglophones and Francophones are assured for public education in officially recognized minority languages in accordance with demographics. The provincial government also conducts heritage-language programs in order to support non-official minority languages. Catherine (2014) is of the view that Singaporeans are required to learn English as a foreign language and one of the officially recognized mother tongues i.e., Tamil, Mandarin, and Malay. So, the current bilingual language policy is based on the formula 'English+1'.

Highlighting the endeavors of European Union countries, Ves (2009) asserts that Council of Europe (CE) is performing a very spry role by working on several projects for the advancement of linguistic diversity in educational institutions. Modern Language Project is one of the projects that offers a wide range of languages and setting propitious aspirations is one of the objectives of this project.

Different types of planning are done at macro and micro levels in order to tackle the challenges faced in the implementation of language policies. Chua (2008) is of the view that language planning that is done at macro-level includes status planning and corpus planning whereas micro-planning is the actual execution of language policies that include acquisition planning. Kennedy (2011) posits *Academie Francaise* in France, *Pusat Bahasa* in Malaysia, and Indonesia and Icelandic Institute of language in Iceland have been established by the ministries of Education and governments of concerned countries to implement their language policies effectively.

According to the Article 251 of Constitution 1973 of Pakistan, Rehman (2004) insinuates that Urdu has been given the status of the national language and requisite steps would be taken so that it can be employed for official and other purposes. But unfortunately, language policy is not practiced according to the stated policy. English, the language of former masters, is considered the only door for entering the domains of power and prestige. Mansoor (2004) also adds that language policies of Pakistan do not foster indigenous languages and English language is preferred to all the local languages, even to the national language of the state. Subsequently, speakers of regional languages show a negative attitude towards their own languages and prefer to learn English to access higher education.

Research Questions

Q1: How far language policies promote linguistic diversity in the higher education institutions of Punjab, Pakistan?

Q2: What are the challenges faced in the implementation of language policies to foster linguistic diversity in the universities located in Punjab, Pakistan?

Objectives of the Study
    Primarily, the objectives of this study are:
(a). To explore the contributions made on the part of language policymakers for the promotion of linguistic diversity in higher education institutions of Punjab, Pakistan through language policies.

(b). To shed light on the challenges that become the hurdle in the implementation of language policies at the tertiary level education in Punjab, Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology
Theoretical Framework
    While bringing the phenomenon of linguistic diversity under discussion, this exploratory study sheds light on the contributions made by concerned language policy makers to promote linguistic diversity at tertiary level education in Punjab, Pakistan and investigates the challenges faced in the implementation of language policies in the universities of Punjab, Pakistan through the lens of phenomenology. Lester (1999) opines that phenomenological research brings to fore the viewpoints of individuals who are involved in any particular phenomenon that can be any event, situation or an issue. He further adds that phenomenological

research is also employed to challenge or support any action and policy. Phenomenology provides a framework to this study while keeping in view the phenomenon of linguistic diversity in context of Pakistani higher education institutions where fruitful efforts of concerned higher bodies involved in language policy making at state and university level are needed for the advancement of linguistic diversity.

Methodology
Sample

In this study, purposive sampling has been employed. Chapman & Hall (2000) opine that prior information on the population units is frequently utilized for the selection of the sample. The sample of 30 participants has been selected from 5 universities located in Punjab, Pakistan including the University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore College for Women University (LCWU), Punjab University (PU), Govt. College University (GCU) and National University of Modern Languages (NUML). 10/30 participants are the administrative bodies involved in devising language policies in aforementioned universities and 2/10 administrative bodies are also the members of Committee of Language Research and Evaluation in Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan and Course Design Committee in HEC of Pakistan. While the rest of the 20 participants are the local and foreign language faculty involved in practicing the language policies in the classrooms.

Research Tools

Handbooks of five universities and the transcriptions of recorded semi-structured interviews of 5 universities' administrative bodies and language teaching faculty have been employed as the research tools in this study to highlight their endeavors for the promotion of linguistic diversity and to explore the challenges faced in the implementation of language policies.

Data collection

As mentioned above, the transcriptions of recorded semi-structured interviews of 30 participants and handbooks of five higher education institutions have been employed as the research too in this study to collect the data. Interviews are comprised 15 semi-structured questions. 8 semi-structured interview questions (See Appendix A) are for administrative bodies or policymakers to highlight their endeavors for the promotion of linguistic diversity in the 5 universities and 7 semi-structured interview questions (See Appendix B) are for language teaching faculty in order to

explore the challenges faced in the implementation of language policies and only the compendious data have been selected for analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines tabled by Halai (2006) have been considered in this study. All the participants have been informed about the purpose of the research before data collection. Data have been garnered only from volunteers. The anonymity of participants and the confidentiality of information is the top priority of the researcher. Participants' information has not been employed for any vicious purpose.

Findings and Discussion

To sheds light on the contributions by the concerned administrative bodies to foster linguistic diversity in the universities and to investigate the challenges faced in the implementation of language policies to promote linguistic diversity in the HEIs, the collected data have been analyzed by employing Bowen's technique of document analysis. Bowen (2009) opines that document analysis is based on four steps including finding, selecting, appraising and synthesizing the garnered data taken from the documents.

Contributions in the Implementation of Language Policies to Promote Linguistic Diversity in Higher Education Institutions of Punjab, Pakistan

The following contributions have been prized out from the handbooks and transcribed open-ended responses of the participants from aforementioned five universities of Punjab, Pakistan.

Institutional Support

Language policies are formulated not only by the administrative bodies of higher education institutions but the state is also a part of this process. According to an administrative body who is the Chairperson of the Department of Urdu Language and Literature,

"Here, in this institution we are making efforts for the advancement of local and foreign languages in different forms and it is our top priority that we have the support of government for our efforts as well, and, not 100 percent but to large extent, we have institutional support."

Getting backing from the state is another contribution to foster linguistic diversity at tertiary level education. Since higher education institutions strive to get the institutional support in the matter of physical, financial, and human resources while formulating language policy to cater for linguistic diversity. Jhonson & Jhonson (2014) opine that language policies are not devised by a single hand. Those who are in power have an

authority to marginalize those who are just supposed to adopt it and implement it. So, for effective implementation of language policies to foster linguistic diversity, support of the government plays a crucial role in it.

Development in the Corpus of Languages

For the advancement of any language, linguists are asked for assistance to get a lot of work done for the corpus development of a language. A participant who is chairing the Department of Urdu Language and Literature in one of the higher education institutions apprised of,

"Here, in *Idaara Taleef-o-Tarjama*, we are translating our websites, foreign research books and scientific terminologies into Urdu language after the orders of the Supreme Court. We have a Language Lab and Urdu Language Committee too for the corpus development of the Urdu language."

These are the contributions made on the part of higher education institutions of Punjab, Pakistan for the development of a corpus of local and foreign languages to promote linguistic diversity at the university level as well as at the departmental level. Rehman (1996) posits that efforts are made at the state level for the corpus development of local languages of Pakistan in the form of establishing LP academies that are The Punjabi *Adabi* Board, National Language Authority, The *Pashto* Academy, The *Brohi* Academy, The *Sindhi* Academy, and The *Balochi* Academy.

Trainings of Language Teaching Faculty

In order to implement language policies effectively, pedagogical development for language teaching faculty is mandatory since teachers are the actual implementers of language policies in the classrooms. A participant put the contributions in picture that are being made in the university where she is working as Head of the Department of English Language and Literature,

"Special heed is paid towards the training of our local and foreign language teachers. Earlier, an international language conference was held where topics related to local and foreign languages and literature were mooted. We encourage our English language teachers to attend sessions organized by HEC like English Language Teaching Reforms (ELTR).

Providing local and foreign language teachers with training for an effective implementation of language policies to promote linguistic diversity is another effort on the part of higher education institutions of Punjab, Pakistan. Okal (2014) posits that for developing linguistic diversity, only the availability of local and foreign teachers is not vital but their training is equally cardinal for getting favorable outcomes.

Languages as Minor Courses

To proselytize the linguistic diversity, offering local and foreign languages to the students of other disciplines can be a contributory endeavor. A participant who is working as a Dean of languages in a university enunciated, "Here, languages as minor courses are offered to the students of other languages as well as to the students of other disciplines. English language is mandatory for all the students. Hindi, Punjabi and Persian languages are offered to the students of Urdu language. French and German languages are taught to the students of English language and literature. the Chinese language is not compulsory but it is open to opt for all the students."

So, local and foreign languages are offered not only to the students of different languages but also to the students of sciences, social science, and humanities which is another contribution on the part of administrative bodies of HEIs of Punjab, Pakistan. This endeavor is not only fostering linguistic diversity at the tertiary level, but also grooming the students for international lucrative jobs. Phaahla (2014) suggests that to create a conducive environment to promote linguistic diversity in universities; it is important to offer languages to the students of humanities and sciences to a feasible extent.

Exchange Programs

The inception of student exchange programs at the tertiary level is a very efficacious endeavor on the part of HEIs to give backing to linguistic diversity. A participant who is the Head of Department of Persian language and literature in a university posits,

"Students of this department visit foreign universities especially universities of Iran either to study any language course or to conduct the research. Exchange programs not only promote linguistic diversity but are also very valuable for the research students."

It is propitious to commence exchange programs for fostering linguistic diversity and to hone research skills in assorted languages. So, it is another effort on the part of the state and administration of the universities of Punjab, Pakistan for the upbringing of linguistic diversity at the tertiary level. Qiang (2003) postulates that internationalization of higher education is of paramount importance for the vitality of teaching, learning, research, and quality improvement of education at the tertiary level.

Challenges in the Implementation of Language Policies to Promote Linguistic Diversity in Higher Education Institutions of Punjab, Pakistan

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, aforementioned universities of Punjab, Pakistan are doing their utmost to promote linguistic diversity but this fact cannot be back paddled as well that the following challenges still exist.

Lack of Institutional Support

If the state is providing all the significant constituents for the implementation of language policies to foster linguistic diversity in higher education institutions of Punjab, Pakistan, then, the question is why it is getting difficult to get the desired outcomes. According to a participant who is the member of a committee of Language Research and Evaluation in HEC of Pakistan and an active chairperson of the department of Punjabi language and literature in a HEI of Punjab, Pakistan,
 "All the graduate, postgraduate and doctoral level programs offered in Punjabi language are of no use because this language lacks institutional support. Funds are not given for the promotion of this language. What we have here, is the result of our own endeavors. The number of students is getting less in every passing academic year since they cannot get white-collared jobs after getting higher degree in Punjabi language."

Government's effort for the advancement of linguistic diversity at tertiary level education is just a lip service. Moreover, where linguistic diversity is being promoted, only foreign languages enjoy institutional support no matter how many local languages are offered in HEIs of Punjab, Pakistan. Zaidi (2013) suggests that the state's planning regarding the formulation of language policies for the promotion of linguistic diversity should not be understood on the surface level. It is important to get beneath the surface and understand ideological interests and power oriented hidden agendas.

Little Development in the Corpus of Languages

As postulated by Rehman (1996), several language organizations e.g., The Punjabi *Adabi* Board, The *Pashto* Academy, The *Sindhi* Academy, National Language Authority, The *Brohi* Academy and The *Balochi* Academy are working on the corpus of indigenous languages at state level, but the process is very slow that there does not seem any considerable efforts on the part of the state and the concerned bodies involved in it. According to a participant who is chairing *Idaara Taleef-o-Tarjama* in a renowned university,
"Here, we are mainly working on translations. Foreign books, written in Arabic, English, and Persian languages are translated into the Urdu language. But the problem is that a little work is done for corpus

development. Language teachers and students have tendencies towards literature-based research instead of linguistics-based research and consequently, its outcomes are not that appreciable."

So, it would be fair to assume that concerned administrative bodies in the government and in the higher education institutions are not paying heed towards the corpus development of local and foreign languages for the promotion of linguistic diversity. The promotion of linguistic diversity is limited to just offering degrees in local and foreign languages. There is a need to develop the oral local languages since written languages enjoy higher esteem and power.

Sallabank (2014) postulates that in African and Asian countries, language policies are just positive-sounding rhetoric about the promotion of linguistic diversity in educational institutions whereas the actual picture is painted with a lack of institutional support, physical and human resources.

Tangential Trainings for Language Teachers

Training for local and foreign language teachers are of crucial importance for the development of research and pedagogical skills but the reality is quite different in the universities of Punjab, Pakistan that are apparently the torch bearer of linguistic diversity. One of the participants who is working as an associate professor in the department of Punjabi language and literature stated,

"Trainings are conducted by Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) for all the teachers and by our department but these trainings are of no relevance since these trainings are usually conducted by the staff of human resource management who focuses on classroom management, unbiased attitude, punctuality, etc. whereas the trainings conducted by our department are usually based on research skills in literature instead of language. Neither language teaching skills nor linguistics is the topic of discussion in any session that is the need of an hour."

Training and seminars conducted for the language teachers' pedagogical development are based on impractical approach. Research and language teaching skills are more important than what is being provided. As compare to English language teachers, teachers of local and other foreign languages (Arabic, German, and French) use traditional teaching methodologies in their classrooms. Such biased attitude towards languages will dissuade the students and the teachers of local and foreign languages other than English language learners which is ultimately deleterious for the promotion of linguistic diversity at tertiary level education. Bashiruddin & Qayyum (2014) opine that the policymakers are

recommended to provide trainings apropos the teachers' needs and expertise to overcome the challenges.

Improvement in Curricula

Curricula are used by the language teachers as a tool to implement language policies in the classrooms. Regrettably, curricula of local and foreign languages offered in the universities need several amendments to compete with the global market. According to a participant who is serving as an assistant professor of Urdu language and literature in a renowned university of Punjab, Pakistan and is also a member of Course Design Committee in HEC of Pakistan,

"Urdu language is offered from undergraduate to doctoral level here and we are teaching HEC approved curriculum that is purely based on literature. There is not even a single course of Urdu linguistics or Urdu language teaching. It is crucial for any language's students to study the science of languages."

For the advancement of linguistic diversity, it is necessary to ameliorate the current curricula of all the languages taught in the Pakistani universities so that students and teachers can produce scientific researches in multiple languages. Teaching only literature-based curricula can stop the students to compete with the international market where focus is on the science of languages and language teaching skills. There should be a balance between the curricula of local and foreign languages. Triangle of linguistics, language teaching and literature can offer balanced curricula. Hismomoglu (2005) asserts that literature can be employed to teach language skills. Several language mentors employ literary texts to teach lexicon, sometimes semantics, pragmatics, syntax, and stylistics.

Polarity between Local and Foreign Languages

Language policies that foster linguistic diversity by preferring foreign languages to the local languages are not less than linguistic suicide. This is one of the causes of ineffective implementation of language policies to promote linguistic diversity. According to statistics given by Khokhlova (2014),

"The Punjabi speaking community constitutes 44.15% of the total population of Pakistan. Punjabi has the largest speakers in Pakistan: Pashto, with 15.2% of the speakers, and Sindhi, with 11.77% occupy a distant second and third place. Urdu, the national language of the country is the mother tongue of only 7.5% of the entire population of Pakistan". (p. 19-20)

Figure 1 Statistics of majority languages of Pakistan
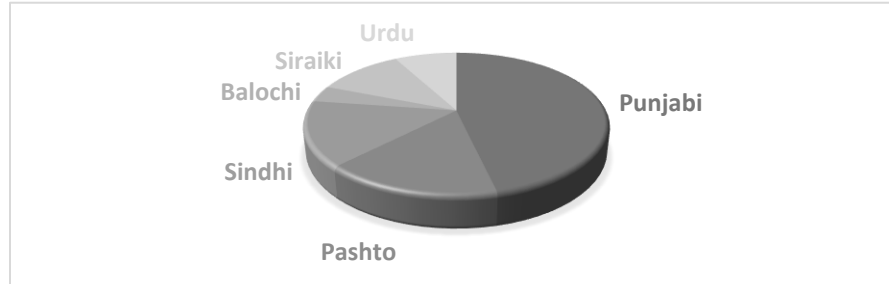
Six majority languages of Pakistan are ignored by the language policymakers at tertiary level education. Out of these, only Punjabi and Urdu languages are offered in the HEIs of Punjab, Pakistan. According to a participant who is the Dean of Languages in a renowned university,

 "Actually, linguistic diversity is fostered by offering foreign languages at the university level and local languages are ignored by both universities' administration and by the state. Number of students is very less in local language programs because they cannot get money-spinning jobs with degrees in any local language."

There is a need to adopt an aligned approach regarding the promotion of linguistic diversity. If language policy makers continue to prefer foreign languages to local languages, that time is not far, when the majority languages of Pakistan would be in danger. As postulated by Baart (2003), currently, there are around 7000 languages spoken globally. Optimists gauge that half of the worlds' current languages will be wiped out in this century whereas pessimists guess that 75% - 90% of the languages currently spoken in the world will get vanished in this century. Rehman (2009) opines that language policies have to be formulated while keeping in view all the languages of Pakistan since several languages policies are becoming the cause of weakening or killing some languages of Pakistan.

Conclusion

In this study, document analysis has been employed in order to explore the contributions made by the universities of Punjab, Pakistan and by the state by formulating the language policies to foster linguistic diversity at tertiary level education and to investigate the challenges faced in the implementation of language policies to promote linguistic diversity at tertiary level education in Punjab, Pakistan. Contributions reconnoitered in this research include institutional support, development in the corpus of languages, trainings of language teachers, languages as minor courses and

student exchange programs, and the challenges probed in this study comprise lack of institutional support, little development in the corpus of languages, tangential trainings for language teachers, need of improvement in curriculum and polarity between local and foreign languages. Hence, it would be fair to assume that though endeavors are made for the promotion of linguistic diversity yet these efforts are either not enough or just a lip service since several challenges occur in the implementation of language policies in the true sense, and where linguistic diversity is promoted, foreign languages are preferred to the local languages of Pakistan that is a very alarming situation.

Recommendations
Following recommendations have been given based on the key findings of this study.

- Linguists can highlight the implications of the work done in the corpus of all the local languages of Pakistan in private and public language research centers or language academies.
- Since long time struggle is going on between the Urdu and English language in the educational sector, researchers can table any language policy to promote plurilingualism at university level by focusing specially on the local languages of Pakistan.
- To check that whether the language policies are implemented effectively, a proper language teachers' evaluation process can be suggested.
- Suggestions can be given apropos the curriculum for local and foreign language degree programs according to the needs of students as well as the demands of modern era.
- In future, researchers especially TESOL and ELT experts can give recommendations that how the local and foreign languages teachers should be trained for the effective implementation of language policies in higher education institution of Pakistan.

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