

English as a Lingua franca: a threat to Urdu

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I put forward the assumption that English language as a lingua franca is not endangering Urdu in Pakistan. Colonization played a vital role to sow the seeds of English and even after the departure of colonizers it exists. I argue the proposition by emphasizing Urdu as our national identity and a binding agent embracing all provinces in its lap. English is helplessly trying to blur the face of Urdu for the last sixty six years. Its a hanging sword on our culture that has shaken our national faith. Consequently giving birth to unrest, Chaos, demoralization and instability, but remained simply unable to uproot Urdu as a mode of national and cultural integrity from our country. Qualitative methodology would be applied by the researcher. As a researcher I am of the opinion to improvise English as optional curricula after matriculation and make Urdu compulsory till degree level.

INTRODUCTION

The arrival of English language in Pakistan has its roots in the colonization of sub-continent. Colonizers came and as a matter of fact invaded their language and culture as first step. Even after independence it was resolved for the sustenance of our identity to implement Urdu in Pakistan, consequently making a national plan for change in curricula from English to Urdu as language had a vital role to play in the ideology of Pakistan presented categorically by our great Quaid. Therefore, the first constitution of Pakistan raised the slogan for the removal of English within fifteen years, the second constitution again planned it to be done within ten years and third again ten years. It depicts the helplessness of the government to uproot English being so deeply rooted in our country. As the whole organizational/institutional structure is borrowed from west----- Being an incarnation of impotence our government seems unable to eliminate English language from the whole official structure. Ultimately in Musharraf era it strengthened to such an extent that its vitality has forced government to transform the whole curricula from nursery class till onwards to English. The invasion of English is being done through internet

surfing as most of the softwares are available in English. Online dictionaries that boost word learning, online teaching classes are a constant source of threat to Urdu. We are blind to this fact that language brings harmony, integration and unity to a nation. Present indefinite tense is not the criteria to judge a person's competence.

Literature Review

How to define a lingua franca?

The term lingua franca was originally formed, by Arabic 'Lisan-al-farang, the Arabic speakers used it to communicate with the European travelers as a result this intermediary language expanded and became an established language with little differences as well. Its meaning broadened making it an independent variety that dealt with all spheres of life. Today these meanings cannot be applied to present global English that is functionally flexible and wide spread as well. As a result of these two characteristics a new feature has emerged i.e today non-native speakers are more in number than natives (Graddol 1997)¹. English is no longer

¹ The future of English by David Graddol.

owned by its native speakers but prone towards 'de-owning'.

Lingua franca is a lingual mode of communication. It becomes a second language of many people who have different mother tongues (samrin 1987, p.371). in this sense lingua franca has no native speakers, it only connects two persons whose native tongues and cultures absolutely differ from each other but they adopt English as a foreign language (firth 1996).² Today English is widening its horizons not only in Europe but strengthening its significance around the whole globe. Both bilinguals and monolinguals are inclined towards English language (Barbra Seidlhofer "common property: English as a lingua franca in Europe international hand book of English Teaching by Jim Cummins and Chris Davisin- springer 2007)

English as a lingua franca is used today by everyone who communicates with American media, commerce and culture. A culture should be vigilant while using a lingua franca which is the most frequent and wide spread manifestation of the lingua franca mode. Different speakers from different cultural backgrounds get access to each other through ELF. Its a flexible mode rather than a fixed code. ELF does not have strict boundaries its elastic, flexible and fluid that functions to promote mutual lingual understandings. It aims to intensify level of mutual intelligibility among people to make the lingual mode correct and effective.

Is ELF only a pidgin or a specific inter language. ELF serves all linguistic functions without being a pidgin or a specific language (Kachru 1997).³ It is used as a language of communication by those who have nothing common between them, neither culture nor tongue so they adopt a foreign lingual mode of communication (Firth 1996).

Kachru and Smith 2008 make a case for dividing this world wide spread of English into four diaspora. English being the lay of only one small

island expanded over the rest of British Isles, then crossing the seas to North America, Australia and Newzealand. Then in the third diaspora it came to colonized spheres like India, Nigeria, Singapore and phillipines. The fourth diaspora consists of china, SaudiArabia, Japan, korea, Germany who are the users of English as an international language. It was Kachru (1985a)⁴ among others to adopted the plural term "Englishes" in place of the single term English.

An agreed starting point for most of the linguistics is however Kachru's division of world Englishes into three circles i.e inner, outer and expanding circles. A lingua franca can be defined as a vehicular language (Mauranen, 2003)⁵. As Seidlhofer states Lingua Franca is in its purest form when it is used by second language users in the third circle defined by Kachru. English presents like other contact languages two factors of intelligibility and comprehensibility given by Smith and Nelson (1985). When a speaker understands meanings in a specific context it is called *comprehensibility* and when a listener recognizes individual utterances it is called *intelligibility*. According to Gramkow Andersen, ELF is inconsistence and the speakers negotiate according to their own level of proficiency, mixing of codes and the extent of pidginization (Gramkow Andersen 1993).

In short ELF is nothing else but only a mode of communication that an individual possesses for his convenience.

IDEOLOGY of Pakistan

Kennedy, Emmet (July- September 1979)ideology from Destutt Detracy to marx-Journal of the History of ideas40(3):353 says," The term ideology is the product of intensely controversial, philosophical and political debates and fights of the French revolution that had several other meanings since the early days of the first French Empire to the present day. Karl Mannheim reconstructed the shifts in the meanings of ideology. The new meaning of the word came in to being Nepolean Bonaparte used it

² Firth, Alan (1996) The discursive accomplishment of normality: On conversatin analysis and "Lingua Franca" English journal of pragmatics.

³ "The Alchemy of English" Baraj-B-Kachru

The spread, Functions and Models of non native Englishes.

⁴ The Handbook of world Englishes. Edited by B-Kachru, yamuna Kachru, Cecil Nelson

⁵ Mauranen, Anna (2003a)

"The corpus of English as Lingua Franca in academic settings"

in an abusive way against the” ideologues” to express the derogation of his political antagonists.

The two nation theory emerged as a result struggle between Hindus and Muslims in sub-continent. It was made clear that sub-continent was occupied by two different cultures, whose ideologies, religions creeds, ways of living differed absolutely from each other. This universal difference also resulted to establish different writing scripts. Muslims adopted Nastalic script and Devnagri script was chosen by Hindus. Ideology of Pakistan is Muslim’s concept of national identity that has its basis in Islam, common spiritual aspirations and not a common language, race or territory (www.nation.com.pk)

Significance of language cannot be denied as it helps us to express feelings, emotions, greetings, regrets, joys and fears as well. Language unites us to a nation, gives identity to an individual, binds people in to chains of nation hood to make them feel similar and homogeneous. Quaid e Azam the great leader of Pakistan categorically said “let me make it clear that the national language of Pakistan is Urdu and no other”. Before independence Urdu symbolized Muslim identity, culture, and strength. Bengalis constituted more than 55.6%of the population of Pakistan, yet to avoid the threat of their major existence Urdu came forward as a unifying symbol of the state. Leaving aside all interests the people of East Pakistan also felt national interest to have one language i.e Urdu...An educational conference was held at Karachi(27 November -I Dec 1947)that made Urdu the LINGUA FRANCA of Pakistan and to teach it as a compulsory subject. Later on in 1958 Ayub khan’s commission on National Education made its policy clear by strengthening the status of National language.

Idara-e-farouge-e-quamizuban came in to being in 1979. It did its best to establish Urdu language. The institution has standardized Urdu orthography and lexicography as well. Translations from other languages to Urdu is a credit to institution who maximized the awareness of language’s potential to its users (Rehman 2004)⁶. Idara has published

several scientific, technical and general dictionaries and Quami English Urdu dictionary besides an Urdu thesaurus. Its not unaware of developing reading habits in children and to promote our national language to disentangle it from the clutches of English.

In 1980 the authority standardized (Muqtdara 2002)⁷. Akhbaare e Urdu software number January to February Muqtdra quamizuban Islamabad, the urdu keyboard lay out type writers based on “Naksh script”. The digital age improved the layout of teleprinters to process information (sajjad, A1999). Urdu zabta Takhti that was formed after long efforts of Urdu encoding subsequently these efforts developed to fulfill the needs of Urdu language on prodigious scale such as computerized national identity cards by NADRA. It was also NLA who localized Microsoft applications that made possible the creation of windows and office in Urdu.

Urdu is the language of all Pakistani nation it unifies us into one whole irrespective of our provincial territories. English as lingua franc cannot be a threat to Urdu, because those who are unable to speak English have proved their worth. Urdu is not threatened by English as a lot of work has been done by Pakistani institutions to keep Urdu intact as a representative of their ideology. In Pakistan many programs have been developed as a replacement of English windows. The creation of Urdu software is a stupendous success. Urdu letter adopted many shapes and they do not begin at the same height. Ahmed Mirza Jamil, proprietor of Elite publishers (Karachi) saw the Chinese character type set in Singapore in 1979 and got inspiration that same software should be created in Urdu. In Birmingham July 1980 a specimen of Urdu was displayed that could create 250,000 words of Urdu. This was called Nuri Nastaliq that was adopted by the Jung group of newspapers and they published their newspapers in it.

Dr Ishtiaq Hussain Qurashi, chairman of Muqtdara in 1980(jamil 2002:8) also welcomed it. Many other software like Shahkar, Surkhab, Nastaliq and Nizami were created. Nizami software was created

⁶ Language Policy and localization in Pakistan. Proposal for a paradigmatic Shift.

⁷ Ahmed S-(1990) Library Muqtdara Quamizuban. An introduction.Pakistan Library Bulletin vol.21(3-4)

by Pakistan Data Management services (PDMS) Karachi, that was installed by National language Authority (Muqtadra QoumiZuban) that was meant for the promotion of Urdu in Pakistan.

In 1998 Fast university Lahore organized the seminar that aimed to develop and standardize Urdu code-plate (Muqtadra2002 a: 87). Standardization of Urdu computerization was done by Dr Afzal and his associates

Aqeel Abbas Jaffari and Dr Atash Dorani the representatives of Muqtadra standardized the code plate for Urdu. Dr Sarmad Hussain a computer linguist Dr M Afzal, Dr Atta-ur-Rehman also Developed programs to develop Urdu computer language.

Dr Afzal and his associates contributed towards the standardization of Urdu computerization (see his account Afzal2002) Dr Sarmad, Tahir Mufti all contributed in developing computer assisted translation from English to Urdu.

All these efforts are a proof that Urdu is not at all threatened by English. Pakistani linguists are aware of their national language's importance and significance. Urdu absolutely caters to our needs regarding ideology, culture and literature.

All the governments favored Urdu as national language. During the regime of General Zia , it was planned that the strengthening of ideology of Pakistan needs Urdu as a single mode of instruction. Students would be given information in Urdu even if they study in English medium schools. The state would replace English with Urdu within five years. Teachers would learn to instruct their students in Urdu. It was made realized to the nation that their ideology is Islam and Urdu is National language of Pakistan.

Ideologies are threatened when there is shift from language and cultures. English would not be the yard stick to measure caliber for job seeking (Rehman 1996:242).

As a researcher I have come to know that the rulers and elite class of Pakistan favor globalization. This

as a result conduces change both in language and culture, discourages “haves not” and gives birth to miserable poverty, and focuses those who are the users of English. This is true to every extent that English is the power today Brutt –Grffler2002. English became the language of African and Asian countries, even after the departure of British. English strengthened as it commands international commerce, media, economic power and political power. English is a ‘killer’ language which aroused movements to safeguard the minor languages. It is unjust to incur the feelings of inferiority and shame in a child’s mind for his language. This complex leaves a bad impact by telling him that his “cultural capital” is worthless and shameful. As a researcher I feel that English is creating “cultural shame” among our youth.

Elizer Ben Yehuda determined to revive his language i.e Hebrew after the completion of his studies. He felt enthralled by the European idea of national unity on linguistic grounds, and thought it to be implemented on his Israeli soil. Ben Yehuda adopted many plans that were as to use Hebrew in all walks of life use of words was felt incumbent at homes and schools. According to him, when a language is spoken and conversed on the most every day topics it becomes a living proof. Yehuda wrote in the introduction to his dictionary, “if a language is stopped to speak, nothing remains of that language, and if a language is spoken to fulfill all the needs of an individual’s life, so it is evident that it becomes a language of community. Before Yehuda, “Hebrew” was a dead language but he single handedly revived it (Jack Fellman)

Urdu has potential to feel its users esteemed and proud of it. As a nation we should speak our language by considering it our identity and a major contributing factor of our ideology. Nations remain alive only when they take care of their language, culture and ideology. There are many languages that are becoming extinct or being overpowered. In 2002 three great books were written on language death by David Crystal. Dannial nettle and Suzanne Romaine’s Vanishing voices Toveskutnavv-kanga’s linguistic Genocide in education or world wide diversity and human rights. These writers alarmed

the linguists of the present day about the uncertainty of smaller languages.

In Pakistan TV plays are amply representing Pakistani culture and Urdu language. The interest of people in Pakistani literature within Pakistan and outside Pakistan is an evidence that English being a lingua franca is not at all a threat to Urdu. Proficient Urdu speaking population comprises a large number as it is used in petty jobs ,media. education , law and business.

Human beings can adopt and learn different languages for the sake of interest, prestige, fashion or any other factor but ideology is much deep rooted in societies that cannot be easily abolished. Pakistani immigrants who live in abroad and are brought up there present a clear cut example of their culture and language. Generations being fostered there speak English outside their homes and as they come from their jobs or academic institutions speak Urdu with their families. Urdu is the language of our jokes, friendships and feeling ease among our community. It does not matter that how much we adopt English and become proficient in it, our true enjoyment and satisfaction lies in Urdu.

As a researcher I assert the fact that without English as lingua franca we can survive. Germany and china both the most developed countries of the world still teach all their subject, technology in their own languages at university levels. The head of national research institute in china said English languages studies were “destructive” to education, which is facing an “unprecedented crisis”⁸The CPPCE deputy cited a 2010 survey in China reported that there is a language crisis that was harmful to Chinese culture and language. So foreign language studies were accused for this crisis. As a remedy it was suggested to focus teaching of Chinese language and Maths instead of other subjects. Zhang suggested elementary and middle schools focus on teaching Chinese and Maths and reduce other subjects.

If English is the lingua franca and the representative of every class, ethnic group why it was condemned

by these two super powers?? Language is the matter of identity not a matter of capability. A student who belongs to lower middle class and studies at Urdu medium schools can have accurate knowledge regarding science and technology although he cannot speak English. In our everyday life we see mechanics, drivers, plumbers and many other people who are masters of their fields but they are not masters in English language.... So it becomes clear that language cannot be substituted for talent.

Urdu evolved over a period of centuries by cultural contacts between local people of north of sub-continent and Muslims of Arabia-Iran and Turkey the base of this language is Prakrit , an Arian language. Urdu is a word of Turkish language means Camp. Urdu has great power of assimilation, the vitality of Urdu lies in its ability to adopt words from other languages.

CONCLUSION

In conceptualizing and researching ELF as a threat to Urdu, we should take surrounding examples of Hebrew, Chinese and Phillipines .The future of Urdu is brighter in spite of the serious threats from English as lingua franca. Urdu is eating up the vocabulary of English language and the future language of the world is going to be changed. The fact that even English language is losing its center in Britain and new varieties of English just like American English, Canadian English, Singaporean English and so many other varieties are emerging. It seems pretty clear that in the coming days standard English would be completely lost and disintegrated. Urdu that is understood in approximately twenty two countries of the world is a proof of its vitality. Urdu is absorbing the words of other languages so quickly that it can never be subdued by English. As Urdu is inevitably used in our class rooms, institutions, homes and our everyday conversations.

⁸ (www.scmp.com/new/china) South China morning post by Chris Luo tue july 16, 2013