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English in the Language Policy and Planning of Pakistan

Liaquat Ali Channa

Abstract

The paper reviews the role of English and its evolution in the language policy and planning (LPP) of Pakistan. Because areas such as language policy and language planning and the categories of language planning such as status, corpus and acquisition are interrelated with each other, the paper discusses the categories and applies them as a theoretical framework in order to examine an overall role of English in Pakistan. The paper notes with regard to the status planning of English that English lies at the highest position not only in the LPP of Pakistan but also in the Pakistani society. So far as the corpus planning of English is concerned, English is not a first language (L1) spoken in Pakistan, no any policy has so far mentioned whether a certain language authority be established for the corpus planning of English; nor has any policy officially declared that Pakistan should use American, British, and/or Pakistani English. Finally, with regard to the acquisition planning of English, English has undergone the bleak time when it was disfavoured in the General Zia's era to the current time in which it is mandated in the National Education Policy (2009) that English not only be taught as a compulsory subject in Grade 1 onward but also be used as the medium of instruction in Grade 4 and onward for the content subjects such as mathematics and science in the public schools of Pakistan. The paper concludes that considering the burgeoning influence of English bred by globalization English shall be enjoying the highest status in Pakistan.

Keywords: *Language policy & planning, Pakistan, status planning, corpus planning, acquisition planning.*

1. Introduction

Language policy and planning (LPP) have been differentiated by their basic definitions and their characteristics. In his book *Language Planning and Education*, Ferguson (2006) discussed that scholars such as Balduf (1994), Schiffman (1996) and Kaplan and Balduf (2003) hold that language policy refers to "the decision-making processes and setting of goals" whereas (language) planning denotes "the implementation of plans for attaining these goals" (p. 16).

As the characteristics and activities of *language policy and planning* are interconnected, Ferguson continued that scholars such as Rubin (1971), etc. take these both terms as two dimensions of a same phenomenon. Contending that these two sides are interrelated but unique domains, Ferguson (2006) later

divided *language planning* into two "conscious" and "organized" categories: *status* and *corpus* planning (p.20). Ferguson stated that status planning deals with assigning "functions of language(s) in society, and (it) typically involves the allocation of languages to official roles in different domains." According to him, corpus planning "addresses language form, the code itself, and seeks to engineer changes in that code" (2006, pp.20-21).

As the theoretical scholarship regarding language policy and planning evolved, Hornberger (1994 cited in Hornberger and Ricento 1996, p 402) added the third category of language planning: *acquisition*. According to Hornberger (1994), *acquisition* planning entails planning done for teaching and learning any language(s) in any country. Currently, it is generally acknowledged that planning has three classifications: status, corpus and acquisition.

From the above discussion, it appears that language policy and planning (LPP) are two sides of the same coin. The categories of language planning such as *status*, *corpus*, and *acquisition* are also interrelated with each other. The areas and categories cannot be separated because they influence and dictate each other in multiple ways. For instance, one may contend that language policies are translated through language planning. In addition, *status planning* not only impacts and necessitates *corpus planning* but it also influences *acquisition planning*, and vice versa. Thus, *language policy and planning* and the categories of language planning such as *status*, *corpus*, and *acquisition* are interconnected. Due to the interconnectedness, I shall hold LPP as a unified whole in this paper and examine the categories of language planning with respect to English in Pakistan. The paper aims to answer the following research question: *What has been the role of English in the language policy and planning of Pakistan?* By seeking an answer of the above research question, the overarching research purpose is to explore the significance of English in Pakistani LPP.

The paper argues that discussion of the categories of language planning will help examine LPP undertaken till the current time in Pakistan in the context of the role of English. In addition, it could help in understanding the future functions of English. Thus, by taking the above discussion regarding language policy and planning as theoretical framework, the following part of the paper discusses each category of language planning with reference to the role of English in Pakistani LPP.

2. Status Planning

As discussed above, status planning refers to the functions that are allocated to any language in any society. One may argue that one cannot analyse the allocation of functions to any language without looking into historical perspectives and reasons due to which the functions were assigned. In addition,

status planning of any language tends to be ideology-driven. Status planning has widely been influenced by variables such as politics, religion, and culture all over the world. Our case—the LPP of Pakistan—is no more dissimilar so far as the impact of the variables on status planning is concerned. For instance, Islam, Pakistani culture (?), and Pakistani politics have played highly important role in deciding the current status planning of English in Pakistan (Rahman, 1996; 2002). For understanding the role of the variables in our case, we shall briefly, yet critically, look at the history of English language contact in the Sub-continent in order to understand the current status planning of English in Pakistan.

The history of English language contact in the Sub-continent dates back to more than a century before the birth of Pakistan. The contact started with introducing English and replacing Persian with English through the Macaulay's Minutes in 1835. The Lord Bentick, the then Governor General of India, announced on March 7, 1835: "The great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone" (in Rahman 1996, p. 34). Thus, English arrived into the Sub-Continent—South Asia—through the Macaulay's Minutes.

To understand why English was introduced as the official language in the Sub-Continent, scholars vary about the British colonizers' fundamental objective. For example, Philipson (1992, cited in Ferguson 2006, p. 114) considered Macaulay did it in favour of Anglicists to settle the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy "over the content and medium of government education in India (the Sub-Continent); and, the intention was to produce a class 'Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect'." Mahboob (2002) stated that the colonizers' basic objective was to "civilize" the colonized people (p. 1). He supported the argument by quoting the poem of Rudyard Kipling (1899) *The White Man's Burden* in which the poet calls the colonized "new caught sullen peoples/Half devil and half child." Finally, Rubin (1971, cited in Mahboob 2002) held that there were other purposes than linguistic in orientation behind the move of introducing English in the Sub-Continent.

Moreover, apart from these fundamental reasons, it was not the case in the SubContinent region to use the English language against the British domination "as a 'byproduct' of anti-colonial struggle," unlike the other British colonies such as Malawi, Ghana, etc. that did (Brutt-Griffer 2002, cited in Ferguson 2006, p.117). English, in effect, spread in the Sub-Continent by its replacement with Persian and taking the official language status with the advent of the Macaulay's Minutes in 1835.

However numerous reason(s) there may be behind the arrival of the English as the official language in the colony, it is widely agreed upon that the project of colonization was one of diaspora-wave that helped English spread and take pre-eminent position in the world language hierarchy today (Graddol, 1997; Jenkins, 2003; McKay & Hornberger 1996). English came to the South Asia through the diaspora. Thus, according to the Kachru's theory of the global increase of English (1985; 1992; 1996), Pakistan stands in the *outer circle* that entails those countries wherein English arrived by the diaspora of colonization and is used for various educational and administrative purposes.

The English has since then been entrenched so deep in the outer circle societies that, in the words of Philipson, where "Britannia ruled the waves, now it is English which rules them" (1992, p. 1). To understand how English rules Pakistan, we shall discuss below the domains where it is employed and why it is employed there.

3. Functions of English

After the replacement of Persian with English in 1835, the Urdu language emerged as an identity marker of the Muslims of the Sub-continent. The Muslims identified with Urdu closely than they did with English or Hindi. That was why the variables such as the language – Urdu – and the religion – Islam – played the same role in the emergence of Pakistan what the variables did for Greece when Greece got freedom from the Ottoman Empire in 1832 (Ferguson, 2006). Since Urdu played an important role for the establishment of Pakistan, it was taken as the national language. English was upheld as the official Language. English was given the official status because "the ruling elite was trained to do in the language" (Haque, 1983, p. 6). Thus, it was thought not only in the interests of the rulers to keep employing English as the official and Urdu as the national language of Pakistan but also in the interests of the country to function smoothly after her emergence in 1947 (Abbas, 1993; Haque, 1983).

In fact, the decision to maintain English as the official language was for certain time. It was decided that Urdu would replace English when Urdu would be mature in its corpus planning. Urdu could then easily be used in all administrative levels. Although the National Language Authority (NLA) was also founded in 1979 for the corpus planning of Urdu, the replacement never occurred. The ruling elite felt more comfortable with English. They identified more with English than with Urdu (Rahman, 2002). In addition, English started taking its roots deeply. Currently, it appears that the use of English is so inevitable in the Pakistani society that Urdu does not seem to replace English in future in Pakistan.

Since then, English has not only played the official role but also a neutral one in the country. For example, during the language riots in 1970s in the East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and Sindh (West Pakistan), majority of the people did not identify with Urdu due to the assimilationist nature of the language policy. Yet, they had positive attitudes towards English. Thus, Abbas (1993) noted, "English became entrenched as a *neutral* language of unification, and of administration. It was transformed from the status of a colonial, prestige language to that of a functional one, a link language, sometimes and a complementary language to Urdu or the regional languages" (p. 150). Unlike Urdu, English gained a neutral status in the multilingual Pakistan.

One may contend that because of the neutral role of English positive attitudes resultantly emerged. For example, in the past, whosoever learnt English was considered an infidel (Rahman, 1996, 2002). But, the people took it positively then and wanted to invest in and learn the language. The emergence of positive attitudes was also due to other pragmatic and utilitarian factors at both national and international levels. At the national level, for instance, English was then extensively employed in the realms of power such as bureaucracy. Learning English provided an opportunity to enter in the power domains. Consequently, English emerged as the language of power in Pakistan (Mansoor, 2004; Rahman, 2002).

Presently, English is the most dominant language in the linguistic hierarchy of Pakistan. For example, there are five major indigenous languages and more than fifty minor languages spoken in today's Pakistan. Punjabi has 44.15%, Pashto, 15.4%, Sindhi, 14.10, Siraiki, 10.53%, Urdu, 7.57%, Balochi, 3.57%, and 'Others' have 4.66% speakers respectively according to the 1998 Census (Mansoor, 2004). Yet, English is the language that is liked and learned more than any other language in Pakistan (Shamim, 2008).

To put the hierarchical position of English in Pakistan by using the Swan's model⁴ (cited in Ferguson 2006, pp. 119-121), it appears that all the indigenous languages (Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashto, Balochi, etc.) are "peripheral" which lie at the base of the hierarchy followed by the "central" –Urdu–used at the national level. English—the "hyper central"—is "at the apex" that "connects the speakers of 'peripheral' and 'central' with one another."

English has been allocated the following functions presently. First, English is employed in "Pakistani civil administration and bureaucracy" (Abbas, 1993).

⁴ The Swan's concept (1998, 2001a cited in Ferguson 2006; pp.119-121) is regarding the spread of English as the lingua franca in the multilingual world. It tells the hierarchal position of English. Since certain parts of the model seem to have close resemblance with the situation of Pakistan with respect to the hierarchal position of English, I exploit it here to clarify the linguistic situation of the country.

Second, it is employed in the national legal system. Third, English is widely used in armed forces, i.e. (Army, Air Force, and Navy) along with Urdu. Fourth, it is increasingly used in the national media. Fifth, English is employed in trade and commerce along with Urdu. Lastly, English occupies a central position in public education. English is initiated as a compulsory subject in Grade 1 onward and employed as the medium of instruction at college and university levels (Abbas, 1993; Haque, 1983; Rahman, 2002).

In addition to the above functions, English is also widely employed in code switching and code mixing in Pakistani society. Loan words such as 'net-café,' 'cold-drinks,' 'glass,' etc. are nativized and used excessively in Urdu and the indigenous languages of Pakistan. Words such 'school' have been indigenized as 'sakool' in their pronunciation.

In addition, people prefer using English alphabet – Roman script – than Urdu – PersioArabic script – in writing emails or short messages. Not only that, morphology, syntax, and phonology of the regional languages, especially that of Urdu, is being used/nativized in English to the extent that a new variety, namely, *Pakistani English* or *Pinglish* has been brought into discussions in various international journals and conferences (Baumgardner, 1995; Mahboob, 2004; Mahboob & Ahmar, 2004; Mahboob, 2009; Rahman, 1990; Talaat, 2003). From a social perspective, the phenomenon has surprisingly evolved to be an identity marker in the upper, middle, and the lower middle classes. S/he who mixes English code with his/her L1 or switches to English while talking in his/her L1 is considered as an *educated* or a *literate* person.

What follows below now is the corpus planning of English in Pakistan.

4. Corpus Planning

As mentioned above, corpus planning deals with the form and code of language to meet the requirements of time that emerge in language(s). English has been designated as the official language of Pakistan. It is *not* the national language or an L1 of any speech community of Pakistan. Therefore, corpus planning of the English language has not been undertaken in Pakistan since her establishment. In addition, no educational and/or language policy has so far explicitly mentioned that Pakistan should be using British, American, and/or Pakistani English. Thus, no any institute has been established for the corpus planning of English in Pakistan.

However, since Pakistan was the part of the Sub-Continent that was colonised by the British, English books or the content used in the English syllabi in the public education sector is comparatively more from the British writers than from the American ones. The Standard British English is the dominant variety commonly

preferred in Pakistan. In this context, a survey was also conducted with respect to knowing the choice of Pakistani people for certain normative and exonormative variety at the country level. The survey found the influence of the Standard British English. For instance, 61.5 % participants of the survey – students, teachers, journalists, etc. – supported learning and using the Standard British English in Pakistan (Baumgartner 1995 p. 264). The research results for the preference of the Standard British English in Pakistan make sense because Pakistan was a part of the British colony. However, the research attitudinal research underlines that positive attitudes towards Pakistani English and its pronunciation are emerging in Pakistan (Ali, 2015). The section below discusses the acquisition planning of English.

5. Acquisition Planning

Acquisition planning refers to planning done for teaching and learning any language(s) in any country. Acquisition planning is also named as *language in education policy* and/or *language education policy* in the scholarship of LPP. The section discusses acquisition planning of English in Pakistan. The discussion is drawn upon Abbas (1993) and Rahman (2002) in general and Coleman (2010), Mahboob (2002), and Shamim (2008) in particular. Mohammad Ali Jinnah's, the founder of Pakistan, address to Bengalis in 1952 is commonly discussed as the impetus of the acquisition planning of Pakistan. He addressed (that): "...it is for you, the people of this province, to decide what shall be the language of your province. But let me make it clear to you that the State Language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan (Jinnah, 1948, p.183 cited in Mahboob 2002, p.10). The words of the address made it clear that the state of Pakistan was going to follow one-languagepolicy in its multilingual society. In the theory of language policy, Pakistan was going to pursue an assimilationist ideology. An assimilationist orientation tends to focus upon taking languages other than national as *problems*. Due to such an orientation, the assimilationist ideology sparked language riots and later led to the disintegration of Pakistan in 1970 (Rahman, 1996).

However, English was considered inevitable for Pakistani public education during the early decades. For instance, the significance of English was spelt out in the *Report of the National Commission on Education Reforms* in 1958 that: "...Pakistan cannot shut itself up in isolation and must provide for the study of a well-developed foreign language in its education system' (cited in Moss 1964, p. 64). Consequently, the report recommended that the English language be used in Pakistani education for the sake of its learning and teaching.

After the recommendations, the English language was started as a compulsory subject. Urdu was designated as the medium of instruction in the public schools

(Mahboob, 2002). The era also witnessed an emergence of elite English medium schools in the country that catered to the needs of the aristocracy. English found more firm ground in 1970s. For instance, after the disintegration of Pakistan in 1971, a new constitution of Pakistan stated in its article 251⁵ that:

- “1. The national language of Pakistan is Urdu and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day.
2. Subject to the clause 1, the English Language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu.”

The constitution strengthened the administrative position of English. However, the right wing politicians of the time demanded a comprehensive operationalization of Urdu at all social levels. They thought that “maintaining the status of English symbolized a new form of colonization” (Mahboob & Ahmar 2004; p.1003). Therefore, the worst time for the English language in Pakistan was from the late 70s to late 80s when the right wing General Zia-ul-Haq ruled the country. All the English medium schools were given the choice to employ either Urdu or any provincial language as the medium of instruction. Urdu was declared as the medium of instruction in all the governmental as well as nongovernmental English medium schools. Since Zia’s government was pro-Islamic, it introduced Arabic besides Urdu as compulsory languages in Pakistani educational system. Discussing the repercussions of such language education policy, Mahboob (2002) stated “this (step) led to a sharp decline in the competence of the people in the English language, something from which the Pakistani Educational System has not been able to recover yet” (p. 19).

There was a substantial change in the 90s in the acquisition planning of English after the Zia’s darkest days. The English language was declared as a compulsory subject in Grade 1 onward. Public schools were given an option to use English in lieu of Urdu as the medium of instruction for all the subjects in Grade 1 onward. General Musharraf’s era suggested some drastic changes. His government got determined to initiate English as the medium of instruction in Grade 1 onward for mathematics and science subjects besides starting the English language along with Urdu as the compulsory subjects in all the public schools⁶. However, although English did start as a compulsory subject in Grade 1 onward (Ministry of Education, GoP, July, 2004), it was recommended that English as the medium of instruction start in Grade 4 and onward (Aly, December, 2006 & Aly, February, 2007).

⁵ Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/most/lnpakist.htm> on 17/02/2007

⁶ Retrieved the Press Release, 9th February 2007, Ministry of Education, Pakistan, www.moe.gov.pk/01/05/2007.

The current acquisition planning of English is inscribed in the National Education Policy 2009 (Ministry of Education, GoP, 2009). The NEP (2009) mandates the teaching of English as a compulsory subject in Grade 1 onward. In addition, it recommends that English be initiated as the medium of instruction of content subjects such as mathematics, science, etc. gradually in Grade 4 and onwards. Although English is being taught as the compulsory subject in Grade 1 onward all over Pakistan, the English medium policy is being followed by two provinces: Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Sindh and Baluchistan have yet to follow the English medium policy.

6. Conclusion

English has been deep-rooted in the Pakistani society. With regard to the status planning of English, so far as the constitutional position of the English language was concerned, English was designated as the official status only for fifteen years. After fifteen years, Urdu had to replace English. This replacement did not occur. In addition, with reference to the acquisition planning, English as a language started only as a compulsory subject in Grade 6 onward previously in the public educational system. Currently, English is taught as a compulsory subject in Grade 1 and onward. Additionally, English is recommended as the medium of instruction in Grade 4 and onward for the content subjects such as science and mathematics. The mandated role of English in both status and acquisition planning speak the dominant position of the language. The leading role assigned to the English language is indeed due to Globalization that has squeezed the world into a global village. English has been appearing one of the major vehicles of disseminating and unfolding Globalization. To conclude, due to the burgeoning influence of English all over the world through Globalization, one could argue that the constitutional mandate of the replacement of English with Urdu could never occur, at least, in the near future in Pakistan. English shall be enjoying the highest hierarchical position in Pakistan.

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