IMPORTANCE OF PASHTO LANGUAGE IN THE EYES OF CAMBRIDGE ‘O’ LEVEL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study was to assess the importance of Pashto Language in the eyes of Cambridge ‘O’ Level Students. The objectives were to study the opinion about the importance of mother language; assess perceptions related to Pashto in the light of four basic skills; analyze comments and put forward recommendations of Cambridge ‘O’ Level students for including Pashto as First Language in ‘O’ Level Qualification. The study was delimited to ‘O’ Level Students studying in ‘O’ Level Schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Population of the study comprised all ‘O’ Level students studying in all twenty-nine ‘O’ Level Schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The researchers selected only sixteen schools which were fifty-five percent of the total population. Questionnaire was administered to all of them. The close-ended structured part of the questionnaire was framed on five points Likert Scale and comprised nine items. The second part of the questionnaire was based on two open-ended items related to comments and suggestions about the inclusion of Pashto in ‘O’ Level Cambridge Qualification. Data were analyzed by using mean score, standard deviation, percentage and frequency. It was recommended that Pashto speaking students should get an opportunity to learn it in ‘O’ Level Cambridge International Qualifications.

Key words:- Mother Language; Skills of Language; Cambridge Qualification; Opinion about Pashto; Cambridge and Pashto

INTRODUCTION

It is a known fact that human beings in this world are the best creatures. They have been gifted with inborn intellectual capability, knowledge and authority by the Almighty God. It denotes that they are the vicegerent of God (Iqbal, 2004). They have been blessed with innumerable blessings by Allah. The Holy Quran brings testimony to this fact very much explicitly. It mentions, “Which, then, of the benefits of your Lord, will ye twain belie?” (Surah Ar- Rahman, verse 13).

In association with all benedictions vouchsafed upon human beings, language is the greatest gift that has made them the best of creatures in the whole universe. Taizi (2003) has highlighted that language has great significance in the life of humanity. Man is regarded as the best of creature (Ashraf-ul-Makhulqat) because of language.

All other beings in this universe are destitute of expressing their ideas in language except mankind. Language plays pivotal role in the process of learning. In formal education,
it is the sine qua non between the teachers and learners. The delivery of the content cannot take place without medium of instructions in a learning environment. The process of teaching and learning becomes more conducive if it takes place in the mother language of the learners.

Educationists have always given more emphasis and priority to education in mother language. The Muslims educationists in particular have highlighted on the significant role of medium of instruction that should be in mother language. Ibn-I- Kaldun, the greatest sociologist and educationist says that teaching to the children should be in their mother tongue. On the contrary, teaching in a language other than mother language is half – education (AIOU, 2009).

Siddiqui (2010) has stated that the recent 18th Amendment is a remarkable constitutional package for the people of Pakistan. It has great implications on the present education system. One of the key positive effects is that the provinces have been given the authority to devise policies in making their own syllabi and curriculum. This is a great milestone for the standardization of education system in the country. It will also lead towards more diversity in languages which will make the federation much stronger than weakening it.

Pashto is being widely spoken in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan province in Pakistan. It is also second to Punjabi language in the country (Pukhto National Curriculum, 2009). Afghan Online Web (2017) says below the heading of “Languages” that under the regime of King Zahir Shah in Afghanistan, it got the status of National Language. Pukhto National Curriculum (2009) says that it is as much as five thousand years old language both from linguistic and historical point view.

Research done by both oriental and occidental linguists reveals that Pashto belongs to the main family of Aryan Languages (Kakakheyl, 1965). Iqbal (2008) has stated that an analytical study of philology of South Asian region shows that Pashto was the sister language of Sanskrit in the Indus Valley Civilization, which has remained the habitat of Aryans in the bygone time.

Currently, there are three thousand to eight thousand languages being spoken across the world. According to Ethnologue Statistics (2017) there are seven thousand ninety nine (7099) languages that presently exist. On the contrary, there are only eighty two languages which have been officially recognized by the United Nations Organization. Pashto language has been mentioned at forty three (43) ranking out of eighty two (82) languages in the UN List (Pukhto National Curriculum, 2009). The same finding has been revealed by Summer Institute of Linguistics called as (SIL) that the ranking of Pashto goes to forty three (43) out of sixty five(65) languages that are spoken by above ten thousand (10,000) citizens of the world (Encarta, 2000).

Emphasizing on the importance of Pashto, UNESCO (2007) highlights that being the Official and National Language under Article sixteen (16) of the Constitution of Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, it is also in vogue as the language of Curriculum. Kakakhyel(2010) has also stated that Pashto was once the official language in Swat and Dir valleys in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before their merger in Pakistan. Pukhto National Curriculum (2009) data reveal that this language is being taught in six different universities in Pakistan. Two of them are in universities of Peshawar and Gomal University in Dhera Ismaiel Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; two are in the Federal Capital, Islamabad which are Allama Iqbal Open University and National University of Modern Languages and one each in University of Baluchistan in Quetta and University of the Punjab in Lahore. Likewise, Shinwari (2010) is of the opinion that Pashto would be included as a compulsory subject in the seventeen (17) districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Pashto is not only being taught and learnt in Afghanistan and different areas in schools, colleges and universities in Pakistan but also in many educational institutions and
Alma matters across the world. According to King’s College (2010) and Afghanistan Researching (2017) the teaching and learning of Pashto is taking place in as many as fourteen universities, colleges and language institutes in the United Kingdom and United States of America. In the UK, Pashto is being taught in London in King’s College, Maryland and SOAS universities. On the contrary, in the USA, there are eleven educational institutions where the teaching of Pashto is in vogue. They include Universities of Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Utah, Georgia, Cameron, Ohio, California East Bay, Anne Arundel Community College, Middle East South Asia Language Institute, Indiana and Wisconsin-Madison.

The above description regarding the position of Pashto reveals that it has the potential to be part of the curriculum on the international standard. However, Pashto language has not been part of ‘O’ level Cambridge Examinations System.

**Statement of the Problem**

This research study was aimed to focus on knowing the views and opinions of the students about the significance of Pashto to be included in modern regional languages in ‘O’ level Cambridge qualification. It was also to study the opinion about the importance of mother language; assess perceptions related to Pashto in the light of four basic skills; analyze comments and put forward recommendations of Cambridge ‘O’ Level students for including Pashto as First Language in ‘O’ Level Qualification.

**Objectives of the Study**

Main objectives of this research study were:

- To study the opinion of ‘O’ Level Cambridge Students about the importance of mother language
- To assess the perceptions of ‘O’ Level Cambridge Students related to Pashto in the light of four basic skills
- To analyze comments of ‘O’ Level Cambridge Students regarding inclusion of Pashto as first language in ‘O’ level qualification
- To put forward recommendations of ‘O’ Level Cambridge Students for including Pashto as First Language in ‘O’ Level Qualification

**Delimitations of the Study**

This research was restricted to:

- ‘O’ Level Schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
- ‘O’ Level Students studying in ‘O’ Level Schools
- Introducing Pashto in modern regional languages in Cambridge University in ‘O’ level
- ‘O’ Level Cambridge International Examinations only
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Population and Sampling

Population of this research consisted of ‘O’ level students studying in all the twenty nine (29) Schools in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. All the ‘O’ level schools are located in the eight districts of the province. They are the schools in Abbottabad, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Kohat, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar and Swat. The researchers used percentage and random sample. Only sixteen (16) schools which were fifty five (55) percent of the total population were randomly selected. There were total four hundred and twenty three (423) ‘O’ level students available in the selected sixteen (16) schools of ‘O’ Level Schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Questionnaire was administered to all of them during the process of data collection. Three hundred and thirteen (313) students responded to the close ended items asked in the questionnaire which was seventy four percent (74%). Two hundred and seventy four (274) students responded to the first open ended item which was sixty five (65) percent. On the contrary, the second open ended item was responded with two hundred and forty six (246) respondents which was fifty eight (58) percent.

Instrumentation

Questionnaire comprising both close ended and open ended items was developed. The close ended structured portion of the questionnaire consisted of nine items, which were constructed on five points Lickert Scale. The facets of all the items were based on the importance of mother language and Pashto in the light of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. The second portion of the questionnaire comprised two open ended items which were to find out the comments and suggestions of the students for including Pashto in ‘O’ level Cambridge Qualification. The questionnaire was administered for the collection of data by the researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following was the scale of the Mean Score in order to show the results of the close ended items:
The Mean Score= 1.00 --- 1.50 = Strongly Disagreed
The Mean Score= 1.51 --- 2.50 = Disagree
The Mean Score= 2.51 --- 3.50 = Undecided
The Mean Score= 3.51 --- 4.50 = Agree
The Mean Score= 4.51 --- 5.00 = Strongly Agreed

TABULATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table No. 1</th>
<th>Importance of Mother Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S.No</td>
<td>Item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Learning one’s mother language is a fundamental right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Students can better understand in mother language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students should have the option to study their mother language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teaching of mother language is easier than any foreign language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows that ‘O’ Level students were, “Agree” to considering the learning of one’s mother language as a fundamental right; better understanding of students in their mother language and availability of option with them to study their mother language with Mean= 4.25, 3.55, 3.59, Standard Deviation= 4.67, 4.22,4.15 and Percentage= 92%, 78% and 81 %. They were, “Undecided” about easiness in teaching in mother language than any foreign language with Mean= 2.95, Standard Deviation= 3.95 and Percentage= 65 %.

Table No. 2 Pashto in the light of four basic skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reading of Pashto Script is easy for students.</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Students face difficulty in writing Pashto.</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>It is easy to speak Pashto.</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Listening Pashto is amusing and understandable.</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>A computer literate person can easily type Pashto using its specific software.</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that students of ‘O’ Level, “Strongly Disagreed” that students can read Pashto script easily with Mean=1.03, Standard Deviation= 2.75 and Percentage= 61%. They also, “Strongly Disagreed” that Pashto script can be easily typed by a person having computer literacy with Mean=1.32, Standard Deviation= 2.99 and Percentage= 47%. The respondents, “Disagreed” that Pashto can be understood while listening with Mean= 2.13, Standard Deviation= 4.02 and Percentage= 73%. On the contrary, they remained, “Undecided” that they face difficulty in writing and easy speaking of Pashto with Mean= 3.45, 3.42, Standard Deviation= 4.10, 4.12 and Percentage= 77% and 75% accordingly.

Table No.3 Please give your comments regarding Inclusion of Pashto as First Language in ‘O’ Level Qualification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pashto should be included as first language in ‘O’ Level Qualification.</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pashto is the mother language of most of the students studying in ‘O’ level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Inclusion of Pashto will be a good step towards its development and for pukhtun nation in Pakistan and across the world.</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Most of the Pashto speaking students want to study Pashto in ‘O’ level.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pashto language is easy to learn in its writing, reading, speaking and listening. Therefore, it is capable to be part of ‘O’ level Cambridge Curriculum as First Language.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pashto is an easy, developed, rich, beautiful and sweet language.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Inclusion of Pashto will attract more students towards Cambridge ‘O’ level examination across Pakistan and worldwide.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Introducing Pashto will lead towards more job opportunities for the teachers and students in future.</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Students will take interest in Pashto if included in ‘O’ level Cambridge.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pashto language should not be introduced as First Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inclusion of Pashto in ‘O’ Level will overburden the students.
Pashto is a difficult language to understand.
Pashto should be included in ‘O’ Level Cambridge as a second and optional language.

Table 3 shows that:
• 43% of the respondents with Frequency = 118 responded that Pashto should be included as first language in ‘O’ Level Qualification.
• 37% of the respondents with Frequency = 37 said that Pashto is the mother language of most of the students studying in ‘O’ level in Khyber Pakhtunkhawa.
• 4% of the respondents with Frequency = 5 responded that inclusion of Pashto will be a good step towards its development and for pukhtun nation in Pakistan and across the world.
• 16% of the respondents with Frequency = 19 said that most of the Pashto speaking students want to study Pashto in ‘O’ level.
• 27% of the respondents with Frequency = 32 responded that Pashto language is easy to learn in its writing, reading, speaking and listening skills. Therefore, it is capable to be part of ‘O’ level Cambridge Curriculum as First Language.
• 8% of the respondents with Frequency = 10 said that Pashto is an easy, developed, rich, beautiful and sweet language.
• 18% of the respondents with Frequency = 21 responded that inclusion of Pashto will attract more students towards Cambridge ‘O’ level examination across Pakistan and worldwide.
• 8% of the respondents with Frequency = 9 were of the opinion that introducing Pashto will create more job opportunities for the teachers and students in future.
• 24% of the respondents with Frequency = 28 were of the view that students will take interest in Pashto if included in ‘O’ level Cambridge.
• 27% of the respondents with Frequency = 73 gave negative opinion that Pashto should not be included as First Language in ‘O’ level Cambridge Qualification.
• 15% of the respondents with Frequency = 11 were of the opinion that inclusion of Pashto in ‘O’ Level will overburden the students.
• 32% of the respondents with Frequency = 29 said that Pashto is a difficult language to understand.
• 39% of the respondents with Frequency = 29 were of the view that Pashto should be included in ‘O’ Level Cambridge as a second and optional language.

Table 4. Suggestions of the respondents related to Inclusion of Pashto as First Language in ‘O’ Level Qualification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Good and highly qualified, skilled, experienced and separate Pashto teachers may be provided and hired.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pashto may be introduced from basic and primary level.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Conferences, Seminars, workshops and advertisements may be conducted on internet and media may be used for the awareness of introducing Pashto in ‘O’ level Cambridge Examination.</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>History of Pashto language and pukhtuns, Pashto literature reflecting pukhutun culture and grammar may be included while designing Pashto curriculum for ‘O’ level Cambridge International Examinations.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 shows that:

- 7% of the respondents with Frequency= 8 said that good and highly qualified, skilled, experienced and separate Pashto teachers may be provided or hired.
- 18% of the respondents with Frequency= 7.3 suggested that Pashto may be introduced from basic and primary level.
- 5% of the respondents put forwarded that Conference, Seminars, workshops and advertisements may be conducted on internet and media may be used for the awareness of introducing Pashto in ‘O’ level Cambridge Examination.
- 17% of the respondents with Frequency= 7.3 highlighted that history of Pashto language and pukhtuns, Pashto literature reflecting pukhutun culture and grammar may be included in ‘O’ level Pashto.

FINDINGS

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of two (2) major factors about the significance of mother language and Pashto language according to the four basic skills. The first factor related to the importance of mother language were having four (4) items and the second factor pertaining to Pashto in the light of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills were consisting of five (5) items. Therefore, altogether the first part of the questionnaire had nine (9) items. Those were closed ended which were framed according to Five Points Likert Scale. The second part of the questionnaire comprised two open ended items that meant for obtaining comments and suggestions from the students about the inclusion of Pashto in ‘O’ Level Cambridge Qualification.

There were total four hundred and twenty three (423) ‘O’ level student available in the selected sixteen (16) schools of ‘O’ Level Schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to whom the questionnaire was administered. Three hundred and thirteen (313) students responded to the close ended items asked in the questionnaire which was seventy four percent (74%). Out of nine (9) items three (3) were accepted as, “agreed” with thirty three (33 %). Two (2) items out of nine (9) were rejected as, “strongly disagreed” which was eleven (22%). One (1) item out of nine (9) was also rejected as, “disagreed” which was eleven (11%). Three (3) items out of nine (9) were “undecided” which was thirty three (33 %). Thus, overall the responses were equal in percentage as thirty three (33%) each as agreed, disagreed and undecided.

Two hundred and seventy four (274) students responded to the first open ended item which was sixty five (65%). It was about the comments of the respondents to introduce Pashto as first language in ‘O’ level. The participants presented thirteen (13) comments. The highest frequency was one hundred and eighteen (118) with forty three (43%); whereas, the lowest one was five (5) with four (4%).

The second open ended item was responded with two hundred and forty six (246) respondents which were fifty eight (58%). The respondents put forwarded four (4) suggestions. The highest frequency was eighteen (18) with seven (7%). The lowest frequency was five (5) with two (2%). The frequency seventeen (17) of with seven (7%) has been repeated twice.

CONCLUSION

- It is the fundamental right of every learner to learn his mother language.
- Learners can have much better clarity of concepts in their mother tongue.
- Students should have the opportunity to learn their mother tongue.
Pashto as first language may be introduced in Cambridge ‘O’ Level Qualification.

Pashto is the mother language of most of the students studying in ‘O’ level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Inclusion of Pashto will be a good step towards its development and for pukhtun nation in Pakistan and across the world.

Most of the Pashto speaking students want to study Pashto in ‘O’ level.

Pashto language is easy to learn in its writing, reading, speaking and listening.

Pashto is an easy, developed, rich, beautiful and sweet language.

Students will take interest in Pashto if included in ‘O’ level Cambridge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Good and highly qualified, skilled, experienced and separate Pashto teachers may be provided or hired for the teaching of Pashto in ‘O’ level.
- Proper teachers’ trainings may be organized to train the teachers in teaching Pashto to ‘O’ level students.
- Inclusion of Pashto will be a good step towards its development and for pukhtun nation in Pakistan and across the world.
- Pashto may be introduced from basic and primary level.
- Inclusion of Pashto will attract more students towards Cambridge ‘O’ level examination across Pakistan and worldwide.
- Introducing Pashto will lead towards more job opportunities for the teachers and students in future.
- Students will take interest in Pashto if included in ‘O’ level Cambridge.
- Conferences, seminars, workshops and advertisements may be conducted on internet and media may be used for the awareness of introducing Pashto in ‘O’ level Cambridge Examination.
- History of Pashto language and pukhtuns, Pashto literature reflecting pukhutun culture and grammar may be included while designing Pashto curriculum for ‘O’ level Cambridge International Examinations.

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