

MULTILINGUALISM AND CROSS-GENDER LANGUAGE PROCLIVITY: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE OF PAKISTAN

Abstract

Gender, being a substantial dynamic in establishing the philosophy of language use, language ideology and difference in the process of language preference, is an irrefutable and prospective disposition of a given socio-linguistic fiber. Present study aims at investigating and analyzing the discernible socio-linguistic phenomenon of language preferences exhibited by varied gender categories in Pakistan. It is directed towards analyzing how gender along with other social factors plays its role in determining linguistic attitudes in social mosaic of Pakistan. Over two hundred people were chosen through convenient sampling technique from different cities of Pakistan in order to explore their opinion regarding given issue. Results of the study reveal that women tend to associate themselves with emblematic capital, English, for their societal standing and repute.

Key Words: *Multilingualism, gender, language choice, ethnic ideology, social paradigm*

INTRODUCTION

There exists a pre-determined correlation between an individual's language choice and his or her social identity and status. Language is an indicator and it reinforces an individual's position in social paradigm and signals shared social outlook. Language different genders that are at the disposal of more than two languages, as in the case of

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Pakistan, where different languages are arranged in a hierarchical fashion inchoice remains an important phenomenon to be explored especially in the context of accordance with various functions and roles. English is being exercised as the official language of the state (Rahman, 2002), language of instruction at graduate and post graduate level, media, science and bureaucracy, while Urdu is playing the role of the national language of Pakistan. It is fundamentally the phenomenon of multilingualism that furnishes individuals with multiple choices in terms of language that is in turn connected to the trend of language shift and language maintenance/ language loss. Fishman (1977) observed the use of various language varieties by a multilingual in accordance with corresponding functions.

The current study explores the above discussed phenomenon of language choice with regard to different gender categories; male and female. It is meant to show the significance of gender in shaping the stances towards English and Urdu. The socio economic turbulence in Pakistani society corresponds to the differences regarding social and linguistic ideologies and attitudes of people especially different genders; male and female. Coates (1986) asserts that the approach of difference signifies a sense of egalitarianism and impartiality towards both genders, under consideration, as belonging to varied 'sub-cultures' as they are normally realized from very beginning of their life circles. This practicing phenomenon gives birth to different communicative techniques and choices, adopted by males and females in their speech. Deborah Tannen (2006) supports above stated point of view of Coates and makes a comparison between language and cultural differences in the context of varied gender categories. He emphasizes that given gender based dissimilarities are all-encompassing across social and electronic media and tête-à-tête communications, etc. Bilaniuk (2010) is of the view that though linguistic attitudes are affected by gendered patterns, ethnicity and political factors yet the fact remains that it is difficult to put conclusive explanation regarding relations amid linguistic ideology, social patterns and prototypes of gender and ethnic identities.

Calvert (2002) argues that identity development, commencing at formative years of an individual, represents a vital aspect of his/her life till adolescent age. Language embodies the social and cultural beliefs in terms of identity across gender. Self-disclosure is another important aspect of the phenomenon of language choices made by individuals belonging to varied genders. Self-disclosure engrosses receptiveness and predilection (Borchers, 1999) and is all about giving out facts about one's life that she/he usually would not otherwise prefer to share with others. Derlega (1993) asserts that individuals belonging to different gender categories, exhibiting totally opposite opinions regarding the phenomenon of self-disclosure, made entirely different language choices while put in a situation where they had to develop a given level of familiarity and confidence with others. Lambert (in Wardhaugh, 1987) details

the instances regarding bilingual (English and French) male and female speakers in Canada, who opted for one language in one given situation while employed other one for a different situation.

Politeness is another worth noticing aspect in the context of language choices across the gender. Generally, it is assumed that women make use of relatively more polite linguistic expressions as compared with their male counterparts. In this respect, Lakoff (1975) acknowledges three distinct kinds of politeness: formal, deference, and camaraderie. He is of the view that speech of female is replete with formal and deference aspects of being courteous while camaraderie is a characteristic of male language. Above discussed code choosing difference among varied genders may correspond to difference at a comparatively bigger social canvas. O'Barr and Atkins (1980) identified that involvement of hedges and tag questions in female speech renders their verbal communication a frail kind of speech. Michael, Liaw, Muthusamy & Veeravagu (2010) conducted a research in Malaysia in order to analyze varied conversation styles among members from different genders and found striking differences in the usage of fillers and qualifiers.

Objective

The basic objective of the study is:

- To explore the opinion of people about the multilingualism and cross-gender language proclivity in Pakistan.

Research Hypothesis

H01. There is no statistical significant difference between the opinion of varied genders about the multilingualism and cross-gender language proclivity in Pakistan.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study was designed to examine the opinion of people about the multilingualism and cross-gender language proclivity in Pakistan. The data was collected from Lahore, a big metropolitan city of Pakistan. The study was executed through a survey in order to find out the gender diversity over the said issue because surveys are designed to find out the opinion of people about a particular area or issue as Dornyei (2007: p. 29) pointed out that “quantitative research was seen to offer a structured and highly regulated way of achieving a macro-perspective of the overarching trends in the world”.

Furthermore, the numerical data was produced via statistical analysis. The quantitative approach was chosen to avoid the biasness because people can be subjective in their open remarks as Colton and Covert (2007) said “surveys are typically used to gather factual information or to assess attitudes and beliefs”. Over two hundred people were chosen conveniently to find out the opinions of the people regarding given issue.

Total	<	Male
250		125
		Female
		125

The actual status of multilingualism and cross-gender language proclivity could be explored by analyzing the opinions of people. For that purpose, a questionnaire consisting of 13 items was designed on two point’s scale (1 for English and 2 for Urdu). The questionnaire was prepared by the researchers by deriving ideas from literature review and a pilot study was also conducted in order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire. For that purpose, the questionnaire was distributed by the researchers among some fellows and students of Masters of Linguistics at Lahore Leads University, Lahore; however, their responses were not included in the part of sample of population.

The researchers also went to public places and other universities located in Lahore in order to get data from the respondents of the study. The researchers also explained the nature and purpose of research to their respondents and also provided them proper guidance where required.

RESULTS

After collecting data, it was organized and firstly t- test was applied to test out the multilingualism and cross-gender language proclivity. To find out the difference in opinion of various genders and for the further verification of rejected null hypothesis frequency, percentage, and mean tests were applied. The numerical data for the analysis was obtained by Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version (16.0).

Table no. 3.1 (t-test) to show the multilingualism and cross-gender language proclivity.

Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Std..Error Mean	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2- tailed)
Male	125	21.21	2.454	.219	3.281	248	.001
Female	125	19.60	2.148	.192			

Table no. 3.1 shows the gender wise opinion regarding multilingualism and cross-gender language proclivity. The computed t value is $3.281 > 1.96$ (critical value) at 0.05 level of significance. The computed significant value is 0.001 which is lesser than the P value (0.05). By using t-test for independent variable gender, it was found that there is significant gender wise difference between opinion of varied genders about the multilingualism and cross-gender language proclivity. Therefore, null hypothesis was rejected.

Table no. 3.2 to show the differences in opinions at cross-gender level about their language proclivity.

Sr#	Statements	Overall Language Proclivity in %		Difference at Cross Gender Level in Numbers				Mean	Std.	Difference Shown by Mean and its Std. Between Male and Female			
		Eng.	Urdu	Male=125		Female=125				Male Mea n	Std	Female Mea n	Std
				En g.	Urd u	En g.	Urd u						
1	Language preferred for public use	39.2 %	60.8%	25	100	75	50	1.61	.489	1.82	.389	1.40	.492
2	Language used with family	5.2 %	94.8%	5	120	10	115	1.95	.222	1.96	.197	1.94	.246
3	Language to be used in class	67.6 %	32.4%	60	65	100	25	1.32	.482	1.49	.502	1.16	.368
4	Language to read literary writings	44.8 %	55.2%	45	80	60	65	1.55	.469	1.63	.484	1.47	.501
5	Language to make jokes	5.6 %	94.4%	10	115	5	120	1.94	.230	1.92	.272	.197	.177
6	Language for friends	31.6 %	68.4%	25	100	55	70	1.68	.466	1.78	.413	1.58	.495
7	Language for text message/ email	80.8 %	19.2%	100	25	100	25	1.19	.359	1.17	.375	1.22	.413
8	Language for cinema	31.6 %	68.4%	60	65	60	65	1.48	.501	1.51	.502	1.46	.500
9	Language to read newspaper	40%	60%	40	85	60	65	1.60	.491	1.68	.468	1.52	.502
10	Language employed at work	45.6 %	54.4%	45	80	70	55	1.54	.499	1.65	.480	1.44	.498
11	Language preferred for learning	85.6 %	14.4%	115	10	85	40	1.14	.352	1.08	.272	1.21	.408
12	Language to listen to music	36.8 %	63.2%	40	85	45	80	1.63	.483	1.66	.474	1.60	.492
13	Language they feel self-assured in	25.2 %	74.8%	20	105	45	80	1.75	.435	1.86	.353	1.64	.482

RESULTS

- Most of the people 60.8% preferred Urdu for public use whereas only 39.2% favored English.
- Majority of the people 94.8% wanted to use Urdu as a medium of communication with their family members whereas only 5.2% respondents were found to be in favor of English. It is one of the strongest grounds of Urdu where people wanted to use their national language.
- Only 32.4% people desired to communicate in Urdu with their class fellows in educational institutes whereas 67.6% wanted to prefer English for that. It is almost opposing to usage of Urdu while communicating with their family members.
- Only 44.8% people like to read English writers' work whereas 55.2% prefer Urdu literature in their leisure time.
- Only 5.6% people liked to use English while having jokes/fun with their fellows and 94.4% samples preferred Urdu to make fun with their fellows. It is another most dominant area of Urdu among the people.
- Only 31.6% people like to use English with their friends whereas 68.4% prefer Urdu.
- Majority of the people 80.8% preferred English for text messages/email and only 19.2% preferred Urdu for that.
- 31.6% preferred to go for seeing English movie in the cinemas and 68.4% liked Urdu.
- 40% people liked to read English newspaper whereas 60% preferred Urdu newspaper.
- 45.6% people preferred to use English language at their work place whereas 54.4% preferred Urdu language.
- Majority of the people 85.6% preferred English for their education/learning and only 14.4% preferred Urdu for that purpose. It is one of the most dominant areas of English language. This result is also showing that people give preference to Urdu language for their recreational purposes but not for education and academic purposes.
- Only 36.8% people took pleasure in English music whereas 63.2% preferred Urdu music.
- Only 25.2% people were found who felt themselves self-assured in English while communicating with their fellows and in their social activities whereas 74.8% felt themselves self-assured in Urdu.

DISCUSSION

The results indicated that most of the male preferred Urdu language while majority of females preferred English; they may be status-conscious or less confident in native language or may be more confident in second language. The data also revealed that males chose Urdu to English because they felt less confident in English, to express themselves while females brought English into play in their communication because they are more conscious of formal setting and decorum of class whereas more males cherished Urdu literature because of less proficiency and interest in English literature, as compared with females. The results also illustrate that more males preferred Urdu to English in order to create informality with friends; they also felt more fluent while fewer females preferred Urdu because of being informal to friends and more expressive. And almost same results were found when they were enquired regarding entertainment.

Mostly, males were reported preferring Urdu newspaper because of their better fluency of reading Urdu and conceiving direct meaning as compared with females whereas while conversing males favored Urdu because they deemed themselves less communicative and at-convenience in English language while more females preferred English language because they depicted themselves more ceremonial and status-conscious. Here, the most worth mentioning point is that most males and females cherish learning English language because they desire to be good at it to gain confidence as it is a status symbol and global language but they were found unable to express themselves because they did not feel themselves enough competent in English. However, overall results indicated that Females exhibited more preference for English, considered as status symbol in Pakistan, at various levels and areas; i.e. learning, talking, joking, between family, etc. This shows that females are more status conscious and more particular about choosing language of expressing. In this connection, effect of the society cannot be ignored because society treats females differently and they are restricted to follow certain roles.

Both genders feel more confident in speaking a politically dominant language. For language selection, speakers appreciate using a language which they find rich in social, political and economic values. It demonstrates that individuals are pre-occupied with a pre-determined set of social constructs through which they ally themselves with a particular language in a given social framework.

CONCLUSION

Both genders are in a sub-conscious war against each other to gain superiority in multilingual Pakistani society. Women are more persistent in shielding their

established social linguistic traditions while men are less flexible in attitudes towards other languages whereas women are more inclined towards the traits of prestige and status consciousness. They are more inclined towards associating such traits of intelligence, cultural awareness, authoritativeness and politeness with English as it has evolved as a globally dominant lingua-franca for last couple of decades. It reveals that women tend to associate themselves with emblematic capital for their societal standing and repute.

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