

## **Attitudes of Parents and Children towards Multilingualism: A Case Study of Faisalabad**

**MAHREEN SHAKOOR**  
Lahore Leads University  
Pakistan

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Language plays a fundamental role in the progression of rational, social and expressive powers of human beings; without language, no society can stand with other nations. The basic purpose of every language is to communicate and express individual thinking and needs. As, Dash & Dash (2007) assert that it is an instrument to express oneself; the people communicate their thoughts feelings and experiences through oral and written language. If they are residing in a particular region, they communicate in their regional languages but to communicate with the people of other nations, they have to use the language of wider communication.

There is a great loss of minority languages in Pakistan and negative assumptions are increasing day by day about indigenous languages and it has become difficult to maintain mother tongue. It is a natural phenomenon that when we have more than one thing around us we show different attitudes towards them. The process of attitude building is slow and gradual, but once the attitudes are developed then it is difficult to change them. However, there is still hope and a change in attitudes is taking place. In this research the attitudes of parents and children towards multilingualism are discussed.

Development of language and multilingualism is a part and parcel of socialization process through which a child becomes a member of society (Parra, 20100).

This study addresses following major questions:

### QUESTION NUMBER ONE

Urdu is our national language, Punjabi is our mother tongue and English is international language so in which language you can better express yourself, on which language you have better command? And which language do you prefer to speak when you have a choice?

#### Prefer to speak Urdu over Punjabi.

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	52	55.9
Strongly agree	23	24.7
Neutral	6	6.5
Disagree	6	6.5
Strongly disagree	6	6.5
Total	93	100

Urdu can be spoken better. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and first language of urban young generation in Pakistan. Children from all the social sectors schools replied in the same way that they can better speak Urdu as compared to English and Punjabi. one of the students said “*I can better speak Urdu because it’s my first language*”. Another student replied in the same way “*I have better command in Urdu because it’s my mother tongue*” see Appendix *number*. Although students have to speak other languages in homes and school but according to their view they feel more comfortable when they speak Urdu and they can better express themselves in speaking this language. There were some respondents who argue that they can speak Urdu because it is more easy language and mostly they speak Urdu with their families. one of the respondent responded in this way “*I have better*

*command in Urdu because it's very easy and I usually speak with my siblings*" see Appendix number. The statement that Urdu can be spoken better can be applied to overall sample of population without gender discrimination because almost all respondents replied that they have better command in Urdu and all of them presented same reason for this.

Urdu is our national language. When the students were asked about their choice of language then majority of students from government schools choose Urdu languages. Following are some examples of actual data.

"I will choose Urdu because it's our national language and we should proud of it besides this we can easily speak It."

"I will choose Urdu because it's our national language and we should give it respect."

Urdu is our first language. Some of the students from government and private schools of lower rank also presented the reason that Urdu is their first language that's why they will choose it. Most of the students had positive attitudes towards the use of Urdu language and preferred to speak Urdu than any other language. one of the respondent replied that "I will choose Urdu because it is my first language and I think I know Urdu better and I can easily convey everything in Urdu." it is natural phenomena that we feel more comfortable in the language in which we have more competency and usually it is our first language.no difference were seen in the attitudes of girls and boys but girls are more positive towards Urdu than boys.

English is international language. It is strange to know from the student's side that almost all of them said that they can better speak Urdu but when they were asked about their choice of language then huge number of students selected English and they presented one basic reason but in different ways. Following are some examples from actual data:

"I will choose English because it's an international language and way of communication between different people. We can

communicate with different people living in different countries.”

“I will choose English because it’s easy for communication skills although Urdu can be practiced but it is known just in Pakistan so I will choose English because it’s a worldwide language.”

“I will choose English because it can be understandable everywhere in the world on the other hand Urdu is just spoken in Pakistan.”

“I will choose English because it’s an international language and spoken almost everywhere.

There is one more important thing in these responses that students of private school of lower rank and private school of higher rank are in more favor of English language. They understand well the importance of English and want this language to learn. They think that no language can take the place of English because it can help them everywhere in the world. They love their national language but they share more realistic view that English is more essential for them.

## QUESTION NUMBER TWO

In your opinion which language is more important? What are the reasons for this importance?

### Feel proud when children speak English.

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	40	43
Strongly agree	29	31.2
Neutral	19	20.4
Disagree	5	5.4
Total	93	100

English is international language. According to most of the respondents English is important for them. The researcher did not find any difference in the attitudes of girls and boys regarding this response. Respondents said that English is

important for them because it is their international language and if they have to compete worldwide then English can help them. Urdu is not spoken everywhere in the world but English is spoken so its crucial importance cannot be denied. Following are some actual words of students:

“I think English is more important because it’s an international language and people of the other countries cannot speak Urdu and Punjabi.” See Appendix number

“I think English is important because whenever we go out we have to speak English”. See Appendix number

“I think English is important because it is spoken by many countries and it’s our international language”.

English is the language of education. The second major reason the respondents describe that English is the language of education so it is important for them. One of the respondents presented the view that “*I think English is more important because our just one book Islamiyat is in English and all the other books are in English*”. Students consider that Urdu and Punjabi is not necessary for their education that’s why they take English as their language of education. Another respondent replied in the same context “*I think English is more important because it’s is helpful for our education*”. Some of the students also think that English will help them in higher education as one respondent replied “*I think English is important because it is help for higher education*”. Education system of Pakistan is affecting the students view because all the books are in English nowadays. In higher private sector students even feel shame when they speak any other language. When the parents were asked about the importance of English, their views were also similar and they think that English is necessary for their children’ future.

Urdu is related to our identity. Although majority of the respondents showed their favor for English yet there were plenty of respondents who have more positive attitude towards Urdu. According to them Urdu is necessary for them to survive

in Pakistan. one of the respondent said *“I think Urdu is important because it’s our national langue and mostly people speak Urdu”*. Students of the young generation have maturity in their thinking because at once they say that English is important for them but on the other hand they know the importance of their national language. one of the respondent said *“I think Urdu is important because it has a link with our identity and when we speak Urdu the other person come to know that we are Pakistani.”*

### QUESTION NUMBER THREE

Do you keep in mind the situation or surrounding when you speak a language? Briefly tell the situations you keep in mind when you speak English, Urdu or Punjabi language.

#### Speaking of English enhances social status.

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	34	36.6
Strongly agree	24	25.8
Neutral	21	22.6
Disagree	13	14
Strongly disagree	1	1.1
Total	93	100

Urdu is spoken at home. Researcher found different results when she asked about the situations in which children speak different languages. The first response about Urdu language was that most of the respondents use this language at home. Results were same in girls and boy’s interview data. No discrimination was seen even in different schools. Respondents of all most all schools said they speak Urdu at home. It was strange to know for the researcher that no respondent said that he or she speak Punjabi at home which is regional language and which should be used as mother tongue as well. Following is one of the respondents answer *“Yes I keep in mind the situation when I speak a language and I speak Urdu with*

*family and I speak English with my bother because he is in Canada and I don't speak Punjabi at home."*

English is spoken with teachers. In the response of last question it was came to know that English is the language of education for most of the respondents. Answers of this question also showed the effect of previous answers. As the respondents feel that English is their language of education so they speak this language in school with their teachers. Here one of the respondents answer is written *"Yes I keep in mind the situation when I speak a language and I speak Urdu with family and I speak English to give answer when teacher asks a question in English and Punjabi sometimes with brother.* one more important point is necessary to discuss here is that respondents of the lower private schools and government schools just speak English in the classroom sector especially in English class. one of the respondents said *"Yes I keep in mind the situation while speaking a language and I speak Urdu at home, Punjabi with friends and I speak English just in the class of English".*

Punjabi is spoken with friends and to crack jokes. one of the major situation in which Punjabi is spoken is company of friends to crack jokes. one of the respondents answered *"I speak Urdu with friends and family. I speak English with teachers and I speak Punjabi for the sake of fun."*

Another respondent replied this question in somewhat different way *"In school I use English; with my family I speak Urdu and Punjabi sometimes to crack jokes."* See Appendix Number. Punjabi is a source of amusement and children feel comfortable in speaking Punjabi with friends. It is strange to know that children feel comfortable in speaking Punjabi just with friends but not with family and in schools. one of the reasons for this is that they are forbidden to speak Punjabi by their parents and teachers.

Punjabi is spoken with servants. one strange reason appeared in the answers of respondents when they were asked about the situation in which they speak Punjabi as one of the

respondents said *“Yes I keep in mind the situation when I speak a language and I speak Urdu usually and I speak English with educated person and Punjabi who are not educated.”* See Appendix Number. Respondents also said they speak Punjabi when they visit any village as one respondent said *“Yes I keep in mind the situation when I speak a language and I speak Urdu with family and I speak English with teacher and Urdu with teacher and Punjabi sometimes when I am in village.”* According to the young generation only uneducated people speak Punjabi so whenever they have to talk with uneducated person they speak Punjabi. Some of the respondents of high private school said that they use Punjabi to talk with their servants or maids. Here is the reply of one respondent *“Yes I keep in mind the situation when I speak a language and I speak Urdu with family and I speak English with teacher and with maid I speak Punjabi.”*

#### **QUESTION NUMBER FOUR**

The choice of languages varies person to person, some people think their mother tongue is honor for them, some people think knowledge of Urdu is crucial for national identity and some people think speaking English is the sign of prestige because it's a globalized language. What do you think is a more prestigious language: English, Urdu or Punjabi? Why do you think so?

##### **English is more prestigious than Punjabi.**

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	40	43
Strongly agree	21	22.6
Neutral	18	19.4
Disagree	11	11.8
Strongly disagree	3	3.2
Total	93	100

**English is more prestigious than Urdu**

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	33	35.5
Strongly agree	18	19.4
Neutral	26	28
Disagree	11	11.8
Strongly disagree	5	5.4
Total	93	100

English being an International language is prestigious. Most of the respondents selected English as most prestigious language as compared to indigenous languages. one of the major reason of selecting English as prestigious language is its status as an international language. When someone can speak English he thinks that he can talk to everyone in the world because he has the knowledge of English. The other reason is that often people say that to speak English is necessary to understand the global issues. Following are some responses of some respondents:

“I think English is more prestigious language because it is the common language of the world.

“I think English is more prestigious language because if someone has to communicate with a foreigner then he has to speak English.”

“I think English is more prestigious because it is an elaborated language and if we go for worldwide tour we can easily communicate with other people.”

English being language of education is prestigious. Second largest number of population select English as a prestigious language and they presented the reason that it is the language of education. one of the respondents shared his view when he was asked about the prestigious language “*I think English is more prestigious because it is famous language of education*”.

Students of higher private schools and lower private schools gave such responses because in schools English is being more emphasized than any other language. As a result students also think that it is a prestigious language that’s why more importance is given to this.

Urdu being a national language is prestigious. Some students realized the importance of English language but they selected Urdu as more prestigious language *“I think Urdu is more prestigious language because being a patriotic person we should be proud on this language”*.

According to respondents they live in Pakistan and Urdu is the language which shows their identity and nationality. They also said that being Pakistani we should respect Urdu as it is our national language. All languages are prestigious but for us Urdu must be Prestigious. Some of the respondents’ replies are below:

“For me Urdu is more prestigious language as it is our history and our identity”

“I think Urdu is more prestigious because it is our national language and we should promote it.”

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:**

Questions about Punjabi language are asked from parents via questionnaire. Findings revealed that most of the parents speak Punjabi with their children but they do not want their children to speak Punjabi. Majority of the respondents said that they feel shame when their children make use of Punjabi language. Another fact appeared here that usually the female parents are in favor of Punjabi language as compared to male parents. Punjabi is the regional and mother tongue of the majority of people in Punjab but it is not enjoying its required status.

It is emerged from the results that Punjabi is considered as a symbol of lower status in Faisalabad. People are becoming more status conscious nowadays so speaking an indigenous language has become a matter of lower status. This is the main reason that why parents do not allow their children to speak Punjabi. Parents think that speaking of Punjabi is related to uneducated family background so when their children will speak Punjabi the other people will think about them that they

are not educated. There is no proper education in Punjabi and it is prohibited in schools as well that's why it is considered that uneducated people speak Punjabi.

Findings revealed the fact that majority of the parents do not want their children to speak Punjabi. They do not support the idea that it should be taught in schools. People are in inferiority complex about Punjabi so they are against the teaching of Punjabi.

On the other hand when children were asked about their attitudes towards Punjabi language their responses were somehow similar to their parent. Their responses were taken via group interview. Majority of the students from all social sectors said Punjabi is not important for them because it is the language of lower status and it is not the language of education. Punjabi according to them is an old language which is just spoken by old people. Children said that it looks awkward to speak Punjabi language in the public. The major reason behind children attitudes towards Punjabi is their parent's attitudes. Family context plays an important role in shaping the attitudes towards any language. Children are always discouraged by their parents when they use Punjabi language. Their parents feel shame when they try to speak Punjabi language.

As parents said that there is no need of Punjabi as a subject in the same way their children responded. But a vast majority also replied that there must be at least one subject of Punjabi so we can have a cultural touch. Moreover knowledge in different languages enhances critical thinking.

Findings also showed that children believe that Punjabi is not the language of education so only uneducated people speak Punjabi and the people who cannot understand English or Urdu. Punjabi is considered from outside the circle of education so it is the fact that children will think that it is the language of uneducated persons or who live in villages.

It is interesting to note from the results that children speak Punjabi with their fellows or friends for the sake of

entertainment. According to them they enjoy more when they pass comments in Punjabi.

Findings of the results of parents' responses showed that they mostly speak Urdu with their children and their children also speak Urdu. The parents of Faisalabad give more importance to Urdu than Punjabi language and majority of them consider it a better language than Punjabi. According to them knowledge of Urdu is essential for them and for their children social survival in the country.

Findings also revealed that Urdu language is considered more sophisticated language among society. A huge number of population was with the view that when they speak Urdu language they show their educational background. As parents think that Punjabi is the language of uneducated class so Urdu is related to educational background. This is the reason that majority of the parents want their children to speak Urdu language.

Furthermore parents were with the view that importance of Urdu language should be told to their children as it is related to their national identity. Findings of the results proved that Urdu is more important language for parents than Punjabi. A large number of population responded that Urdu is more superior to Punjabi and they prefer to speak Urdu with their children and want their children to speak Urdu instead of Punjabi. Here findings are according to hypothesis that Urdu is more important than Punjabi.

When the children were asked about their attitude towards Urdu they gave different responses. Result varied from school to school, students from government schools and lower private schools selected Urdu as more important language but the students of the higher private schools said that English is more important for them and they presented the reason that it is international language.

Moreover findings did not support the idea that speaking of Urdu is related to educational background. Here

children responses were opposed to their parents as parents think that Urdu shows educational background but according to majority of children anyone can speak Urdu so it would be wrong to say that only educated people can speak this language.

Majority of the respondents favored the view that Urdu is necessary for national identity so its importance should be taught to them. Respondents presented the idea that they have to communicate with different society members furthermore if they will go out they can represent themselves as Pakistani if they know this language properly.

According to findings Urdu being a national language is more prestigious language than Punjabi and English. overall attitude towards Urdu from parents and children side was positive as compared to Punjabi.

Findings disclosed the fact that English is considered most preferred language in Faisalabad. Majority of the respondents supported the view that they prefer to speak English on Punjabi and Urdu and want their children to speak English. Furthermore parents also supported the idea that they are trying to give their children maximum education in English so they can compete worldwide.

It is emerged from the results that English language is a source of proud for parents. Majority of the parents were with the view that they feel proud when their children speak English because it is an international language. Findings also revealed that parents give too much importance to English.

Moreover findings also support the idea that speaking of English enhances social status. Majority of the parents were in favor of the view so want their children to speak English to glow their place in society. As the English has been the language of powerful countries so people feel that speaking of this language will automatically better their position in society.

Parents also favored the view that speaking of English shows educated family background. English is now preferred in

all schools and it is taking the place of Urdu as well so people are in favor of English and they conceive that if they will speak English they can show that they are educated.

According to findings of the results the English language can provide better employment opportunities to the children in future and it is an important language for the future of the children. English being an international language is important for almost everyone in society so the parents are also with the view that it is necessary to learn English for their children if they have to groom their future.

Findings of the children data revealed that English is too much important for them and almost all the students from all schools want to learn English. English is important for them for different reasons. Firstly, it is important because it is an international language and spoke almost in every country. Students said that as it is the international language so no one can deny its importance and if we shall have a chance to visit any country for different purposes then we must know English. Secondly, English is important because it is the language of education. In addition to this again and again it is said to children in schools to speak English and almost all the books are in English. Furthermore according to the findings English is most superior language than Urdu and Punjabi and the students presented the same reason to support this view.

It is also emerged from the results that children feel superior when they speak English. It is interesting to note that most of them told that they feel superior when the other person cannot speak English. They presented another reason that it gives them a sense of proud when they know that they can speak a language which is international and they can compete anywhere in the world.

The overall attitudes towards English from parents and children side were most positive than Urdu and Punjabi.

Questionnaire data was also analyzed by keeping in view the gender difference. Questionnaires were filled by both

female and male parents. Findings supported the fact difference in gender result in difference in opinion towards languages. According to result female parents are more in favor of almost all the language as compared to male parents. Both genders have some negative assumptions about Punjabi but towards English their views were quite positive.

Moreover data was analyzed with the variable of age. Results did not show significant difference in the attitudes of different age groups. Anyhow it is emerged from the results that parents who are young in age are more positive towards English and they want their children to speak English on the other hand parents who were senior in age showed little importance towards English. But the parents of old age believed that Punjabi is their regional language so their children should speak it. Responses about Urdu language were positive in all age groups.

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