

INCLUSION OF PASHTO IN 'O' LEVEL CAMBRIDGE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT. *The purpose of this study was to present the argument of including Pashto Language in 'O' Level Cambridge University International Examinations System (CIE.) Major objectives of the study were to highlight the significance of imparting education to the students in their mother tongue and using mother language as medium of instructions in school. It was also to describe the conspicuous features of 'O' Level (CIE) education and the importance of language in this internationally recognized education system. The argument for the inclusion of Pashto was delimited to General Certificate of Education (GCSE) and International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE) 'O' Level (CIE) and was particularly restricted to the University of Cambridge International Examinations System (CIE). This study recommended that Pashto language should be included in GCE and IGCE 'O' Level CIE in the optional modern regional languages for Pashto speaking students across the globe. Due to its international importance, it was also recommended that Pashto language has the potential to be included and taught as modern regional language in CIE.*

Keywords: Pashto in 'O' Level; Regional Languages in Cambridge University; Modern Regional Languages

1. Imparting Education in Mother Language. Language is the greatest blessing of Allah from which the rest of the creatures are deprived. Man is called as the Vice-gerent of Allah due to language. Dr. Taizi (2003) says, "The language has great importance in the life of mankind. The man has been called Ashraf-ul-Makhulqat (the best of creatures) due to language." (P.1)

Language plays significant role in the process of education. It is the linchpin between the teacher and the taught in formal education. No content can be delivered without medium of instructions in the class. The teaching learning process can be more effective if the learner is taught in his mother language. Since Prophet Adam (AS) till our Holy Prophet (PBUH), Allah sent numberless prophets for the guidance humanity. All the prophets taught to their nations in their own mother tongue. It shows that every prophet used his own respective mother tongue as medium of instructions to his own nations for its guidance and education. It is enshrined in the Holy Quran in Sura Ibrahim, "We sent a messenger except (to teach) in the language of his own people, in order to make (things) clear to them. So Allah leads astray those whom He pleases and He is exalted in power, full of wisdom." (p.691)

Acquiring education in one's mother language is a basic human right. This fundamental human right got due recognition under International Law (the Barcelona Declaration, 1996; ICCPR, 1966). The importance of mother tongue and using it as medium of instructions was realized by UNESCO in 1999. Gaining

international significance, in its General Conference of UNESCO, it was declared that International Mother Tongue Day would be regularly observed. Since 2000 till date, February 21 is being regularly observed as the World Mother Tongue Day throughout the world (Rehman, 2004).

2. Significance of ‘O’ Level Cambridge Education. Cambridge “O” level education is recognized in more than 160 countries. This internationally recognized education system is divided in two streams i.e. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) ‘O’ Level and International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) Cambridge University Education. Being a high ranking university, the University of Cambridge has got flexible curriculum with reference to languages. All the important languages are included in the curriculum of this university qualification.

The students in Cambridge University study subjects which are drawn from areas covering languages, humanities, social sciences, mathematics, creative, technical and vocational (CIE, 2010). Cambridge “O” Level is specifically designed according to the requirement of international market. It is also sensitive to the needs of different countries. The curriculum is so flexible that the teachers across the world face no difficulty in delivering the content in their localized context and can make it relevant in various regions (Urdu-Syllabus, 2011). At GCSE “O” levels Cambridge University; there are thirteen languages and in IGCSE, twenty one languages are being taught (CIE, 2011).

3. Key Features of Pashto Language. Pakhtuns are generally called as Afghans or Pathans in both the eastern and western world. The word “Afghan” means brave and courageous (Rekhteen, 2009). They have got rich and diverse history. Their diversified history shows that this unique nation belongs to marshal tribe of parts of Central Asia and South Asia. Pukhtuns are dominantly settled in Afghanistan and in Pakistan’s north western province called the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and parts of the Baluchistan province. They are also settled in regions from America to Europe, the Middle East, the Far East, Australia, New Zealand and India. Pakhtun, as a nation is also called Pashtun and Pathan. He is a descendant of mixed races particularly of the Persians, the Greeks, the Mongols, and the Turks that came to India from the heart of Asia. (Khan, 2010).

Pashto also called as Pakhto is the national language of Afghanistan. It is also widely spoken in Pakistan’s north western province called the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and parts of the Baluchistan province, a dominant regional language. Its speakers are called as Pashtun, also spelled PUSHTUN, or PAKHTUN, Hindustani PATHAN, Persian Afghan (Britannica, 1986).

Pashto language is replete with a rich history. Being a rich language, it has the capability of expressing ideas with clarity (RIDGWAY, 1983). It has the potential to be part of Cambridge University (CU) curriculum at secondary level schools. Like many other modern national and regional languages included in the CU curriculum, Pashto can fulfill the required criteria. It has got a very conspicuous position among the important eastern languages and is progressing positively (Rekhteen, 2009).

This significant language has much scope in learning the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening at secondary level. It is the medium of instructions in majority of schools, colleges and universities in Afghanistan and in some educational institutions in Pakistan. In 1936, it was declared the national language of Afghanistan and instruction in it is now compulsory (Britannica, 1986).

Outside Pakistan and Afghanistan, Pashto is also being taught in King’s London’s College and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in University of London. It is also included as an important language in the United States (US) at different Universities and Colleges, such as, universities of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Utah, Georgia, Cameron, California, Anne Arundel Community College, Maryland, Middle East South Asia Languages (MESALI) Washington, and the South Asian Language Institute (SASLI) Wisconsin-Madison. Pashto is also taught in Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India.

Beside Dari, it is the national and official language of Afghanistan and is used as mediums of instruction in all levels of education (UNESCO, 2007). According to a government notification (2012), the Provincial Cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa approved an Action Plan for introduction of Pashto /Regional Languages as compulsory subject from Class 1 to 12 in all schools, operating in the public and private sector across the Province.

There are five thousand to ten thousand languages spoken in today’s world. According to Pashto National Curriculum (2009), Pashto stands at 43rd in ranking amongst the 82 languages duly recognized across the globe by the UNO. A list of Sixty Five Languages spoken by more than ten million people, which was

prepared by Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) shows that Pashto was at Forty-Three position (Encarta, 2000).

4. Conclusion.

1. Language is the greatest blessing of Allah and has got great importance in the life of mankind. It is the main source of communicate among human beings which has made them next to Allah.
2. The study revealed that the Holy Quran has given due importance in acquiring education in mother tongue.
3. Every prophet used his own respective mother tongue as medium of instructions to his own nation for guidance and education.
4. February 21st is being regularly observed as the World Mother Tongue Day that denotes learning one's mother tongue and using it as medium of instructions.
5. "O" Level keeps into consideration the situational analysis and the national educational aims and goals of all the nations across the world.
6. Having adoptability and flexibility in this system, the teachers across the world can easily deliver the content in their localized context and can make it relevant in various regions.
7. Pashto language, too, has a long and rich history. It is a rich language, having the capability of expressing ideas with clarity.
8. It has the potential to be part of Cambridge University (CU) curriculum at secondary level schools.
9. Like many other modern national and regional languages included in the CU curriculum, Pashto can fulfill the criteria.
10. Pashto is being taught in different International universities.
11. Pashto stands in rank at 43 among those languages which are spoken by more than 10 Million people which show its importance at international level.
12. There are 5 languages which are below in rank from Pashto but are being taught in both the streams i.e. GCSE and IGCSE O 'Level'. They are Indonesian, Nepali, Sinhala, Greek and Czech.
13. In GCSE, there are 9 Asian Languages out of which 6 are from South Asia which are being spoken in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. Pashto being the national language of Afghanistan and equally important language is not part of CIE Languages.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. The Cambridge International Examinations organize examinations twice a year and the papers are set for the candidates throughout the world. It will further create more interests for the curriculum designers to go deep into Pashto language and its literature. It may also add more diversity to the Cambridge International Examinations, enhancing its appeal globally.
2. Keeping in view the given facts that Cambridge education is sensitive to the needs of different countries and also considers the requirements of the international market, it is quite important that Pashto needs to be given equal status in this respect and be included in the Cambridge 'O' Level Education System across the globe.

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