



Attitudes of Pakistani University Students towards English as a Lingua Franca

Mahaam Khan¹, Faqir M. Aslam Rana²

¹Lecturer English Department, PhD Scholar University of Lahore, GC Women University Sialkot

Email: mahaam.khan@gcwus.edu.pk

²English Language Unit, Preparatory Studies Center, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman, Email: faqir.rana@utas.edu.om

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Lingua Franca, Global Language, Concentric Circles, Attitude

Corresponding Author:

Mahaam Khan, Lecturer English Department, PhD Scholar University of Lahore, GC Women University Sialkot
Email:

mahaam.khan@gcwus.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This research observed the attitudes of Pakistani university students towards English as a Lingua Franca. It focused to analyze the opinion of university students through a close ended questionnaire to reveal their perspectives about learning English language as an integral and obligatory part of their education. The study is quantitative in nature represented statistically with the help of data collected and analyzed from a sample size of fifty (50) students, twenty-five (25) each from University of Lahore and Punjab university-Law college. The study analyzed the attitude of Pakistani students towards status of English as a global language limiting the status of Urdu and its impact in Pakistan with major influence on educational institutions. To justify results and interpret the findings, Braj Kachru's concentric circles (1985) and David Crystal's work on English as Global Language (2003) were used as a model to conduct data collection and discussion analysis. The findings of this research depict that English enjoys the official status, and Pakistani students are under its enforced influence to be competitive in the market altogether sabotaging the status of their national language i.e., Urdu. Learning English has become mandatory for them to be a part of the economic sector with good future opportunities. Moreover, English is a status symbol in Pakistani society, where elitism is attached to its speakers, and any educational institution is considered significant because of its highly paid focus on English as a subject for their students.

1. Introduction

As English is a Global language and its widespread prestige in the entire world has given it the status and power all around the globe in various aspects. It has been likely considered that there are more non-native speakers of English present in the world than the native speakers of English language (Kaur, 2014) and it has increased the growth and function of English language according to its pertinent speakers. Moreover, this also explains that English emerged as a Lingua Franca long time ago and till today due to its enormous number of non-native users in all parts of the world has allowed it to keep its status safe. This research investigates the role of English as Lingua Franca in Pakistan along with the attitudes of Pakistani students attached to this language which are both, negatively and positively expressed. Attitudes towards any language display the behavior of people and their background in developing any hostility towards it. To investigate the true feelings of Pakistani students towards English, several aspects are considered such as, what are the prevailing factors that make them learn and accept English in their daily life. This quantitative study targets that English is considered prestigious in Pakistan as a symbol of high status, a need for good employment opportunities, necessary medium of communication for face saving, impact of colonization, societal pressure, language of power and other socio-economic factors. The official status of English in Pakistan and the medium of education has led towards institutionalization of it. All these facts are considered true according to various research, but the main focus is the acceptance of English by Pakistani students positively or negatively. This research reveals attitude of these students who are under the influential impact of English as their second language and its imposed position in all educational and official pursuits of Pakistan. The results reveal that how English has taken over Pakistan and has progressed from being a foreign language to the language which is now officially recognized as a second language with social prestige attached to it.

1.1 Research Objectives:

1. To explain the status of English language as Lingua Franca in Pakistan.
2. To analyze the political and social factors dominating English as a medium of education in Pakistan.
3. To observe the attitudes of Pakistani students who are forced to learn English as a second language in all institutions.

1.2 Research questions:

1. What is the role of English as Lingua Franca in Pakistan?
2. Is English considered an obligation for socio-economic acceptance?
3. What are the attitudes of students towards English as a second language in Pakistan?

2. Literature Review

This section focuses on building theoretical underpinning of the research. It provides an understanding of the research and material that was used to analyze and prepare discussion analysis. It explores the work of famous contributors in the field of English as a Global Language and World English/es with respect to earlier research conducted as attitudinal study in this aspect. The role of attitudes towards English language have been a concern of many countries around the world over a long a period of time. It has been widely accepted that English enjoys the status of the most prestigious language as a Lingua Franca internationally. To deal

with the attitudes related to English language by the user who is non-native if it is as a Lingua Franca is affected by it in various ways. Such as, according to David Crystal (2003) in his book “English as a Second Language” explicitly sheds light on the international status of English. He is of the view that English became a global language after a sequential series of steps that were taken historically through colonization. The era of British and American empire led towards the expansion of English language through power and military invasions in the 17th and 18th century. The widespread of English politically and through military power increased its status and its journey towards becoming a prestigious language enjoying the status of an official language in over seventy countries made it a successful global language. At first, like Latin, French and Arabic which were considered prestigious before English just because of the power of people, empires, and their strong political and military base (Crystal, 2003). Similar, to this long-lived phenomenon of power English today holds the status of an international language. The influence of English in the subcontinent at large gave a road to its high status which is prevalent in our media, education, law, and other institutions till today. All these historical perspectives are a reason for change or shift in attitude towards English which brings hostility to Pakistan’s national identity and ideology. English has been dominant across a huge number of countries as the language of rulers which was imposed during the period of colonization.

After this grave impact of British colonization wherever English had influenced in the world those countries did show their aggressions later. Some countries were highly influenced and they nativized it and this gave rise to many new varieties of English in Malaysia and Tanzania which was a result of creolization. English was used as a contact language and this also led towards the numerous varieties of it present today as a result of trade. On the other hand, the countries which did not have English as their native language such as, Singapore, Nigeria, India, and Pakistan got highly influenced or dominated that it is used widely with high social status in these countries. It has been likely considered that there are more non-native speakers of English present in the world rather than the native speakers of English language (Kaur, 2014) and it has increased the growth and functions of English language according to its pertinent speakers. As in Pakistan it enjoys the official status and has dominated in all education, social, and institutional domains.

A long-edged debate has been going on since, 1980’s to place English under the heading of World English/es or as international language or global English. This confusion has the greatest contribution by an Indian linguist Braj Kachru who in 1985 gave the world-famous Concentric Circles Model of English Language. He made a definite bifurcation between English speaking countries in three circles: inner, outer, and expanding. His model of “World English/es” gave a distinction between countries having English as a native or non-native language with many historical, social and political factors (UK.Essays, 2018). The model of Braj Kachru (1985) can be explained as follows.

1. Inner Circle:

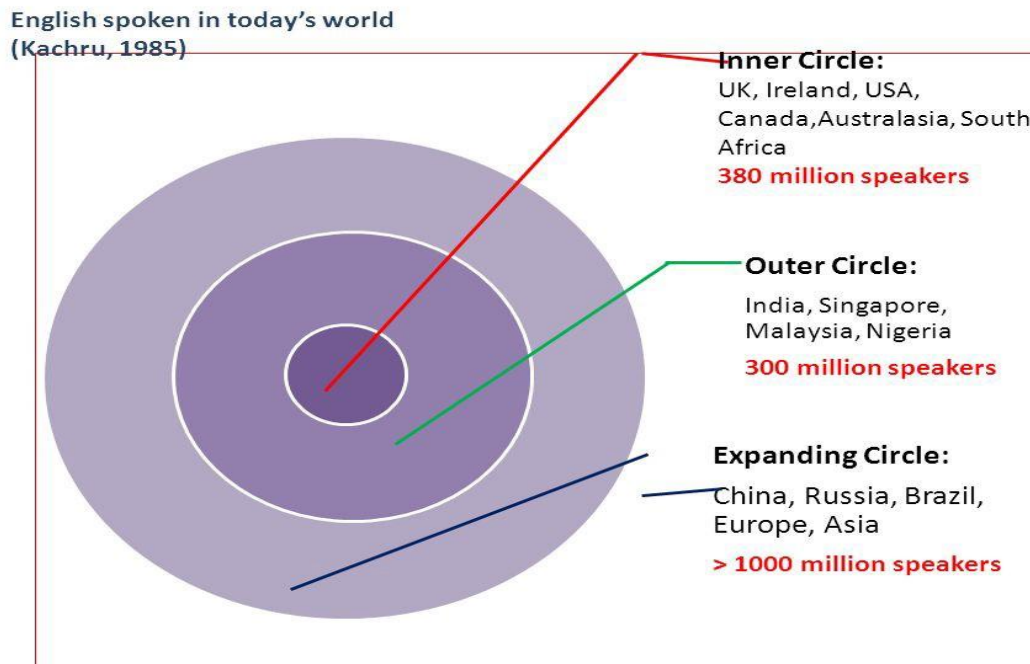
It is the circle which presents countries where English is the native language or the first language of the people residing there. All speakers have English as their mother tongue and are natural speakers of it. They mainly comprise of United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. These countries whose native language is English are also referred to as the norm-providing countries. (Al-Mutairi, 2019)

2. Outer Circle:

In this circle English is the second language, and it is not native to any speaker but is widely accepted and spoken. It is learned in educational domains, has high social status, political importance and often enjoys official status (Al-Mutairi, 2019). The countries in this circle were influenced through colonization where their government sectors were dominated and are still under the spell of their power. They include India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Malaysia, Ghana, Kenya, Singapore, etc. They are also called norm-developing countries.

3. Expanding Circle:

In this circle English is neither native nor the second language in the countries which come inside the expanding circle. They simply take English as a foreign language and teach in schools just for the purpose of communication and not to lack behind internationally (Al-Mutairi, 2019). They do not it as a language of prestige and does not allow it to overcome their identity and language through the power of English. These are also labelled as norm-dependent countries with no history of British colonization. The list of these countries includes China, Japan, Korea, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, etc.



(Valpa, 2020)

Another main concern of this research is based on attitudes towards language which can be assessed both in terms of the speakers and language use in a society positively or negatively. People feel hostile when a foreign language invades their national language space and penetrates deeper to suppress their identity. These opinions and attitudes can be addressed by asking questions through observing their personal view about that language to gauge their real feelings. Such as, people do realize that their national language promotes identity and is important for patriotism but if any foreign language such as, English eats that language their identity is at stake (SIL International, 2020).

The attitude of language users towards a particular language has always been a concern of many scholars over a long period of time. These attitudes have been analyzed through variables such as age, gender, socio-political setting, social status, prestige, psychological impact, motivation, native and non-native concerns and overall, the role and context of English in that community. There are many research conducted to know the attitude towards a foreign language such as, the impact of modern foreign languages in West England where a foreign language is not preferred or has positive feedback (Wikeley, 2007)

Moreover, research conducted to evaluate the opinions of students towards English as a foreign language revealed that people do hold certain resentment towards a language which is imposed on them just for being the language in power. It all termed as using English for being “politically correct” and it sweeps away the identity of one’s own culture and identity (Matsuda, 2018).

The global question of whether English should be used as a medium of instruction and education has always haunted the field of pedagogy. Language does not just come with its structures and vocabulary, but its literature brings in new culture, norms, ideas, dominance, and identity. Such as, Fall of Dhaka is a suitable example of language rift which was caused due to not giving Bengali the official status and East and West Pakistan were on war for this discrimination. In the case of Pakistan English is in a love-hate relationship where people do give it prestige but, in some cases, it is also condemned. The popular example of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan to bring English language at that time when he was unaware of the aftereffects it has today changed the entire game.

Pakistan is a multilingual country, having about seventy-three languages, with Urdu as a national language and English as an official language. As mentioned above, Pakistan still follows colonial language ideology, considering linguistic uniformity necessary for national unity rather than accepting multilingualism and language plurality as a reality against the backdrop of globalization (Ayres, 2009; Durrani, 2012). There is no separate document on the language policy, but the constitution, legislative statements and education policies may be referred to the language policy of the country (Shamim, 2011). As Pakistan is considered a *heterogenous country* along with its diversity in religion, culture, and ethnicity with other socioeconomic, educational, geographical, and ecological factors, it has a broad array of language domains. The impact of colonialism, socioeconomic crisis, political domination, and foreign domination has led towards marginalizing regional languages of Pakistan and even limiting the domain of its national language i.e., **URDU**. English is considered the language of better employment opportunities and is the official language which is promoted widely in all institutional domains. So, the aim of this research is to look for positive and negative attitudes of Pakistani students towards English as a Lingua Franca as explained through the concept of David Crystal (2003) and Kachru’s concentric circles (1985). The questionnaire helped to understand the attitude to these students and highlight how they perceive the dominance and influence extending from the stage of a foreign language as a second language in Pakistan.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Type of Research:

The type of research implemented is quantitative in nature. It is based on a closed-ended questionnaire with the use of Likert scale comprising of twelve questions, numerically

evaluated and presented through pie charts with required discussion and analysis. It is based on Kachru's (1985) concentric circles as a model, David Crystal's work in the field of English as a Global Language and various studies on language attitudes.

3.2 Research Population:

The research sample comprises of fifty (50) students in total, twenty-five Ba. Hon's students (25) from the English department of University of Lahore and twenty-five (25) students from Law department (LLB Part 2) of Punjab University, Lahore.

3.3 Research Significance:

The significance of this research paper is to depict the role of English language in Pakistan. It is significant in this area of English as a global language because it identifies the attitude of Pakistani students specifically, to analyze their real feelings about being dominated by a foreign language.

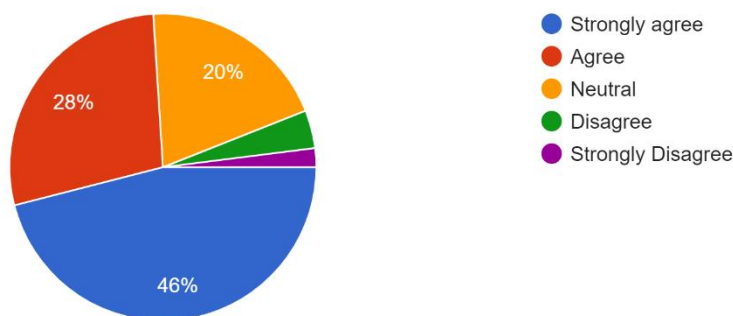
3.4 Research Limitations:

The limitations of this research paper are that it revolves around a quantitative or numerical representation of data collected through questionnaires. It only focuses on two prestigious institutions of Lahore i.e., University of Lahore and Punjab University asking their attitudes towards English language through a close-ended questionnaire.

4. Data Analysis

This section will present the data and interpretation of the findings of this research from quantitative approach. It represents all collected data in the form of pie charts to analyze the responses given by the respondents gathered from Punjab University and University of Lahore to the close-ended questions.

1. Do you like to speak English?
50 responses

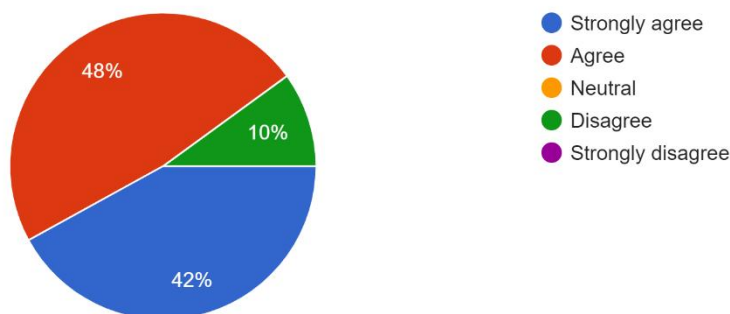


This question addressed the likeability of the respondents towards speaking English language. Therefore, forty-six percent (46%) of the participants strongly agreed to like to speak English whereas, twenty-eight percent (28%) also agreed to the question. As a response only twenty percent (20%) of the participants were neutral whether to like or dislike speaking English.

On the other hand, just two percent (2%) disagreed and only one participant strongly disagreed to show their dislike for speaking English.

2. Do you prefer learning English as a compulsory subject?

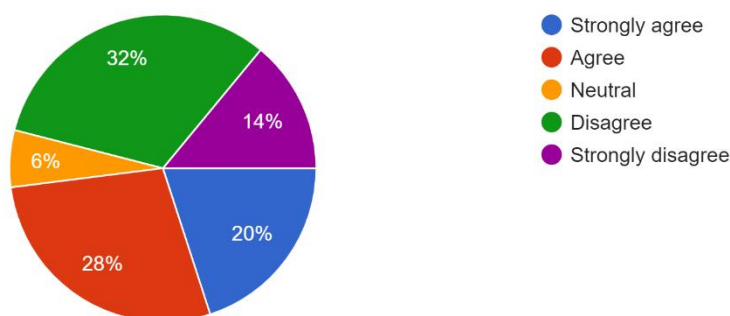
50 responses



As a result, to the second question which observed the preference of the selected students as respondents for this research to study English as a compulsory subject had great acceptance. Such as, forty-two percent (42%) strongly agreed and forty-eight percent (48%) agreed to this question. The results also revealed that only ten percent (10%) disagreed to learn English as a compulsory subject. Whereas, no participant strongly disagreed or remained neutral as a response to this question.

3. Do you think all educational institutions in Pakistan focus learning only in English?

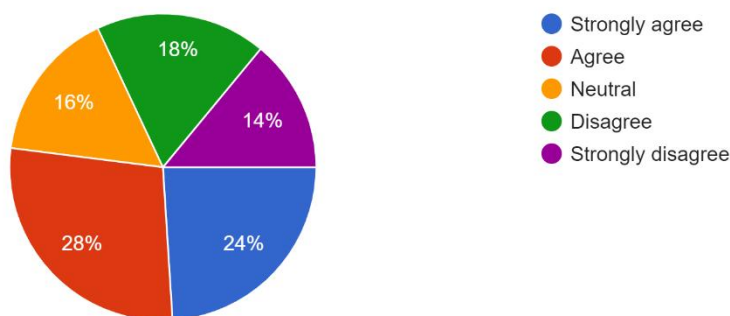
50 responses



As English is the global language and has high impact on Pakistan so, this question addressed whether English is given prestige in its educational institutions or not. Approximately twenty percent (20%) of the respondents strongly agreed, and twenty-eight percent (28%) agreed that in Pakistan learning is made necessary in English language. Whereas, fourteen percent (14%) strongly disagreed, and thirty-two percent (32%) disagreed that the only focus is on English. Just six percent (6%) of the participants remained neutral without any specific opinion regarding this query.

4. Do you think English is important for high social status?

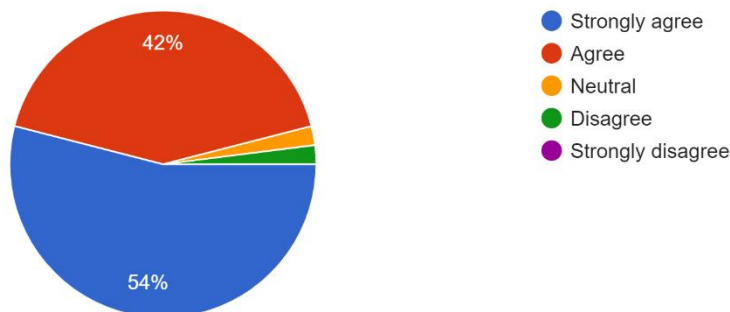
50 responses



This question addressed the notion of high social status and prestige attached to the use of English language in our society. As a result, twenty-four percent (24%) strongly agreed, and twenty-eight percent (28%) respondents agreed to think that English is considered as a language of the elite and is important to maintain status in society. On the contrary, eighteen percent (18%) disagreed and just fourteen percent (14%) of the participants strongly disagreed to consider English important for high social status only. Whereas, sixteen percent (16%) of the respondents were neutral to think of English associated to a class and maintain high status.

5. Do you think English is important for good jobs in future?

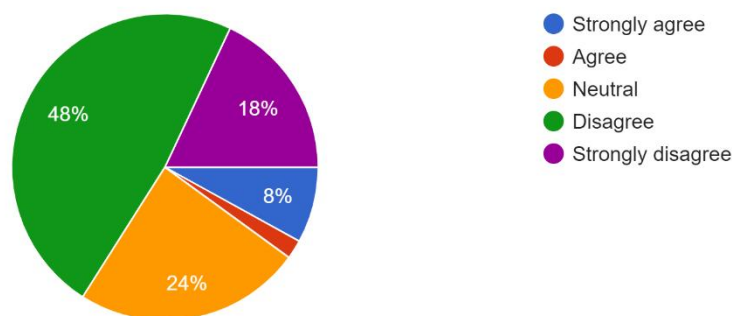
50 responses



This question addressed a very important factor to judge the opinion of Pakistani students towards learning English by choice or due to the economic gains attached to it. The results are very clear as fifty-four percent (54%) strongly agreed, and forty-two percent (42%) agreed to consider that it is important to learn English to secure future by getting good opportunities. No participant strongly disagreed with this question and just one participant disagreed with this fact. Whereas, again only one participant remained neutral to answer this question. The results reveal on a large scale that in Pakistan English is considered important for getting good jobs.

6. Do you think English is the only way to be successful?

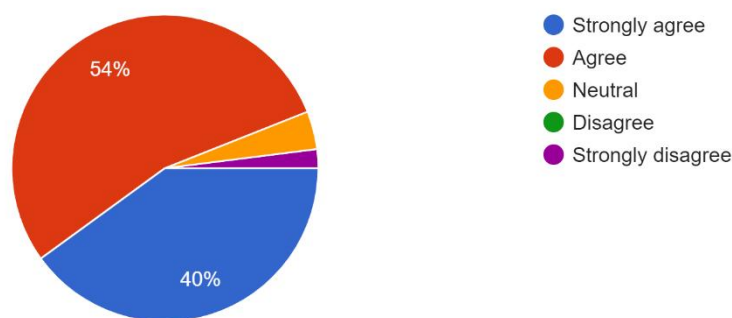
50 responses



As an extension to the previous question this question addressed that whether English is the only way to be successful or not. Eight percent (8%) strongly agreed and surprisingly only one participant agreed with this question. this reveals that the recent situation has forced English for economic gains whereas it is not the only way to be successful. As forty-eight percent (48%) disagreed, and eighteen percent (18%) of the respondents strongly disagreed to consider English as the only means to be successful. This question had differing ratios as twenty-four percent (24%) of the students were not sure about measuring success through the parameters of being fluent and competent in English and were neutral.

7. Do you think the knowledge of English beneficial for you?

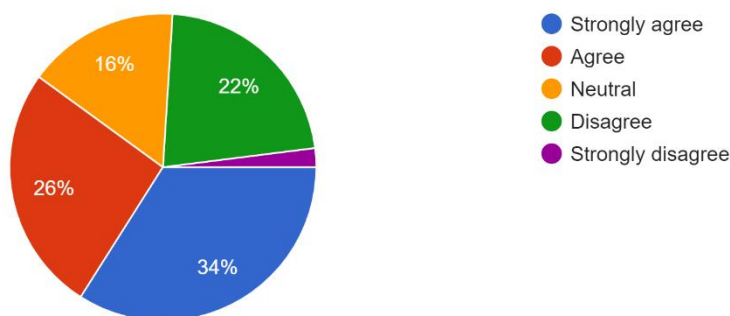
50 responses



As English is widely accepted as a medium of education in Pakistan and in many other formal contexts so, does it benefit to increase knowledge or not is also important. Therefore, forty percent (40%) strongly agreed, and fifty-four percent (54%) agreed that English does benefit them to increase their knowledge in educational setup through its literature. No participant disagreed to this question as even in English at the end of the day they are learning something. Whereas, just two participants were neutral and only one participant strongly disagreed with this question.

8. Do you think English is imposed on students?

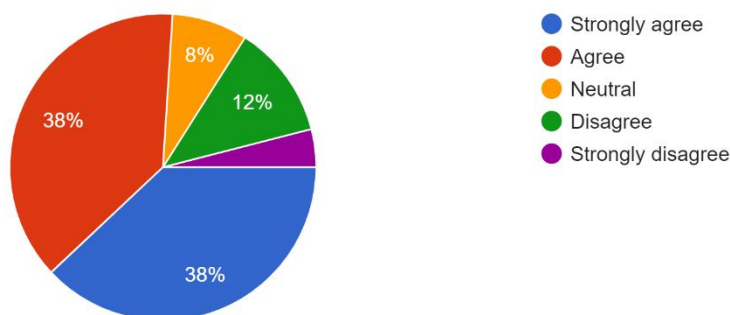
50 responses



This question observed the attitude of Pakistani students towards studying English as being imposed on them or out of their own free will. The results depict that thirty-four percent (34%) of the students strongly agreed, and twenty-six percent (26%) agreed that English is imposed on them to learn as a compulsion in their educational setup. Whereas, twenty-two percent (22%) disagreed that English is imposed on them to study. Only one participant strongly disagreed to negate the imposition English language at his/her university. Sixteen percent (16%) of the participants were neutral to consider English as an imposition or not in the curriculum of their educational institution. Majority of the respondents considered English language as an imposition.

9. Do you think English is given more importance than Urdu in Pakistan limiting patriotism?

50 responses

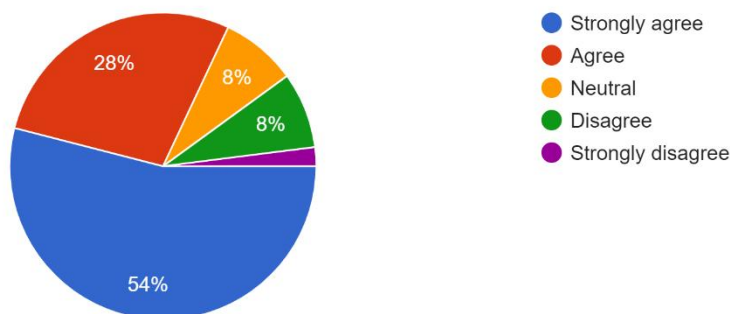


To observe whether English has overtaken and oppressed the status of our national language i.e., Urdu in Pakistan or not this question was asked. As a result, thirty-eight percent (38%) of the respondents strongly agreed, and an equal percentage of thirty-eight percent (38%) agreed that English is given more importance than Urdu. On the contrary, twelve percent (12%) of the participants disagreed to accept it as a general fact and only two participants strongly disagreed to accept that the status of Urdu is at stake due to high prestige given to English language in Pakistan. Whereas, eight percent (8%) considered this situation as neutral. Therefore,

majority of the participants agreed that English has influenced the status of Urdu, and this is decreasing patriotism by limiting the national language Urdu.

10. Do you think a person fluent in English is considered more educated?

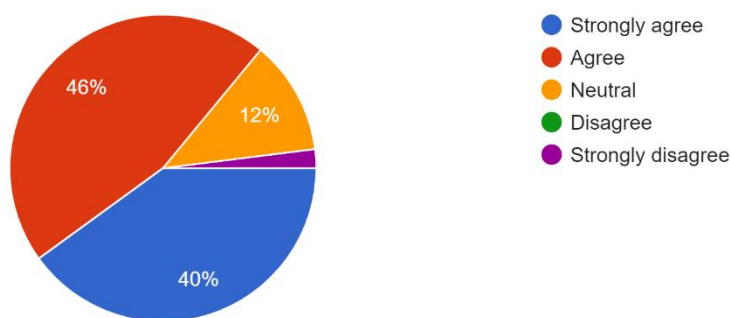
50 responses



A prominent situation by people in Pakistan is that who talks in English is considered more educated was asked by the selected students. As a result, fifty-four percent (54%) strongly agreed, and twenty-eight (28%) percent agreed that intellect is judged by the amount of English a person knows in our society. Unfortunately, just eight percent strongly disagreed and only one participant strongly disagreed that if you are not fluent in English it does not affect your intellect and label you as less educated. Moreover, eight percent of the respondents were neutral whether it is important to be fluent in English to be accepted as more educated or not.

11. Do you believe that English is taught due to being an international language?

50 responses

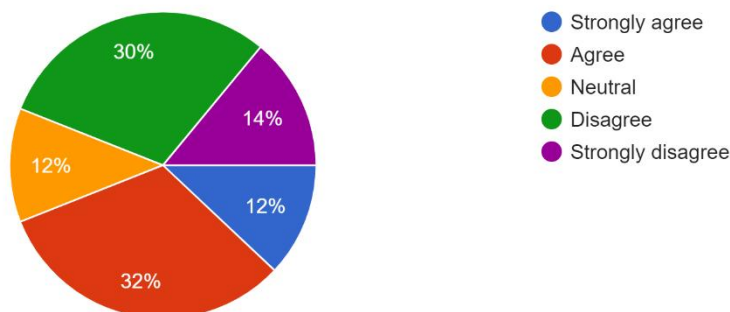


The status of English as a global language with an international influence on numerous countries worldwide depicts that it is taught due to this factor. The results also reveal that forty percent (40%) of the participants strongly agreed, and forty-six percent (46%) agreed that English enjoys the global status and that is why it is taught for being the international language. No participant disagreed to accept it as a false statement which proves that the influence of English in Pakistan as an international language is extremely high with many

concerning factors enforced in Pakistani institutions. Just twelve percent (12%) of the respondents were neutral to consider whether English is taught because of its international acceptance or due to many other reasons as well.

12. Do you think English is difficult for you, but social pressure makes you learn it in any case?

50 responses



To observe positive or negative attitudes of Pakistani students towards English language this question was asked to know whether English is difficult for them and still the social pressure inculcates them to learn it by any means possible. The results reveal that twelve percent (12%) of the students strongly agreed, and thirty-two percent (32%) agreed that English, rather being difficult for them, is still enforced on them to learn due to the social pressure. Whereas, thirty percent (30%) disagreed to accept this notion and fourteen percent (14%) strongly disagreed to consider English as a difficult language and social pressure for its learning. Just twelve percent (12%) were neutral in this scenario.

5. Discussion Analysis

This section provides a detailed discussion to justify the findings of this study. Moreover, it provides a detailed description of the attitudes of Pakistani students towards English as a global language hindering their national identity and sabotaging the status of Urdu. As a result, (question 1,2,3) we can see that most of the respondents preferred to like to speak English and were not against a foreign language being taught as a compulsory subject. These responses can be explicitly analyzed in the light of other questions asked from the participants which interrogated the reason of learning English as a subject with great importance. Therefore, as the responses to English being taught and learn due to economic and social factors to provide high social status and good job opportunities many agreed. The existing situation in the world, specifically the developing countries and which are also in the outer circle of Braj Kachru's concentric model have to face these circumstances. English has been imposed largely through colonization and imperialism in Pakistan since it the hold of Britishers on the subcontinent. The effect of it is present in our social, economic, and political arenas.

The study also reveals (question 8) that Pakistani students think that English is imposed on them to learn in their educational and social setup. A large number of students agreeing to this imposition and learning English language as a requirement for better future shows that this economic slavery is not admired by the students. They agree to the social

pressure which makes them learn English due to its global prestige and enforced status as the official language in constitution. Moreover, it has also sabotaged the status of Urdu (question 9) and has also created a prejudice in society to mark individuals fluent in English as highly educated (question 10). This bifurcation and identity crisis have aggravated negative attitudes towards English. Pakistan's national language Urdu is given a secondary role and comprising a national language means to target one's identity. The ratio of patriotism is lacking behind due to the increase in the role and status of English in all social and educational institutions. It has also suppressed many speech communities and created divisions in one speech community as well by introducing the notion of elitism attached to English.

It is a widespread belief that due to the domination of first world countries such vast language spread took place and the anarchy in terms of imperialism made it happen. This stance is opposed by David Crystal as he represents his argument with a fact that even the first world countries have adopted English through the same pressure. English is no more playing its power game through colonialism and imperialism which still has its aftereffects as Asia is still under the control of these historical factors but now English has emerged as the economic giant and its spread has been diverted from coercion to monetary dominance.

Resulting, Language controls power and prestige is always attached to a dominant language. Linguistic power is a well-known and unavoidable phenomenon. The role of imperialism and colonialism is an eminent part of history still influencing all across the outer circle. The issue of competency and fluency will develop where the non-native speakers will be given less advantage in any field as compared to the mother tongue speakers as in Pakistan people who can speak good English are considered more intelligent and educated.

Conclusion:

The external motivation to learn English and not any other language is because it runs the economy and is important for earning good money and have good educational and employment opportunities. It is not the language itself, but the opportunities attached to its usage as the results of this research have also proved this fact. Moreover, the social status and prestige they attach to a certain language is also very important factor to research on which is essential to understand the linguistic changes happening in the world. Such as, in public domain language policies, educational curriculum and employment opportunities all revolve around the dominant language is used i.e., English replacing Urdu.

The fact that English had its widespread through colonialism and imperialism is considered "old" now, as David Crystal (2003) argues that this has shifted towards the adoption of English as a functionalist language which empowerment through economic gains prevails in the society. The provides a clear understanding that how English as a global language is already subjugating the minority languages through keeping in view "naïve imperialism" shift to empowerment through economic gains. Therefore, the attitude of Pakistani students towards English as a Lingua Franca are not positive to accept English with no optimism rather, the social and economic pressure has made it accepted widely.

References

Al-Mutairi, M. A. (2019). Kachru's Three Concentric Circles Model of English Language: An Overview of Criticism & the Place of Kuwait in it. *English Language Teaching*, 13.

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language*. New York, USA: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved March 01, 2021

Kaur, P. (2014, March). Attitudes towards English as a Lingua Franca. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 118, 214-221. Retrieved March 1, 2021

Matsuda, A. (2018). Is Teaching English as an International Language All about Being Politically Correct? *RELC Journal*, 49, 24-35. Retrieved March 02, 2021

Shamim, F. (2011). English as the language of development in Pakistan: Issues, challenges and possible solutions. In *Dreams and Realities: Developing Countries and the English Language*. The British Council. Retrieved March 02, 2021

SIL International. (2020). Retrieved March 02, 2021, from Language Attitudes.

UK.Essays. (2018, November). *Three Circle Model of World Englishes English*. UKEssays. Retrieved March 2021

Valpa, A. (2020, April). Kachru Model “The Three Circles of English”. Retrieved March 2021

Wikeley, A. S. (2007, August 06). From bad to worse? Pupils' attitudes to modern foreign languages at ages 14 and 15. *The Language Learning Journal*, 27-31. Retrieved March 02, 2021