



## Perception of Future Teachers About Mother Tongue Education in Brahui Language at Primary Level

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### ABSTRACT

*Brahui language has its own uniqueness and value as it is one of the oldest languages of Pakistan and considered as a Dravidian language. The purpose of this study was to explore the perception of future Brahui speaking teachers about mother tongue education in Brahui language at primary level in Balochistan. In this study, a qualitative approach was used. The research design was case study and site of the study was Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University Quetta. Semi-structure interviews were conducted from the Brahui speaking future teachers of B.Ed. (Hons.) 7th semester (5), M.A Education 3rd semester (5) and M.Phil. (5). The participants were selected through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis was used as method for data analysis. The data analysis revealed two main themes as need of Brahui mother tongue education in Brahui majority schools and teacher training for Brahui mother tongue education.*



### 1. Introduction

Brahui language has its own uniqueness and value as it is one of the oldest languages of Pakistan and a Dravidian language. It is being spoken mainly in provinces of Balochistan and Sindh, Pakistan (Bashir, 2003). Despite of its importance, government of Pakistan, particularly Balochistan, has paid little attention on preservation and promotion of this language. The Brahui language has also been included in endangered languages by UNESCO. One of the main reasons behind its endangerment is the influence of other languages being spoken around the Brahui

people. For example, the Brahui spoken in Baloch areas such as Chaghi and Noshki is amalgam of Brahui and Balochi. The people living in Pashtoon areas such as Afghanistan and Quetta have the Pashto words and accent while people living in Sindh have been influenced by Sindh language. Thus, the areas where Brahui live have become more multilingual and in such multilingual communities people move from their own ethnic language to a new language by using a mixed discourse of different language (David et al., 2003). According to Cummins (2001), when people from different language stay together, the indigenous language and identity is threatened. Dr. Liaquat Sani has pointed out that various Brahui terminologies have

already been lost (Bano & Sani, 2012). This arguments is further supported by the findings of Birahmani and Lohar (2019) who conducted a study to explore the attitude of Brahui speaking people from Dadu, Sindh towards their own mother tongue and Sindh. They found that the native Brahui speaking people have negative attitude towards their own language while positive language towards Sindhi language. They also claimed that due to this negative concept a shift is noticed from Brahui to Sindhi language.

On the other hand, Mother tongue education is considered important in preservation and promotion of mother tongue. Globally, the mother tongue education is being emphasized and formal support is given to the students to improve their literacy skills in mother tongue (Ball, 2010). Mother tongue education is required for in-depth and sustained learning, for translating other languages in order to make things clear, and creating a social environment in the classrooms (Harbord, 1992; Harmer, 2007). Research has been conduct on Brahui as mother tongue. However, there are limited studies that report the importance of Brahui in English language in order to communicate its importance to a wider community (Bashir, 2003). Secondly, studies on exploring the perception of future or prospective Brahui speaking teachers towards teaching Brahui at primary level are scant. Thus, this study aims to fill the gaps discussed above by exploring the perception of future Brahui speaking teachers about Brahui mother tongue education at primary level in Balochistan.

## 2. Mother Tongue Education

The review of literature indicates different alternative terms used for mother tongue as home language, L1, native language, primary language and in some cases where it is spoken by minority group of people the term 'Minority language' is used. These all terms can used alternatively and only in some instances they may mean different things (Ball, 2010; Khati, 2011). "In general, a mother tongue can be defined as a language learnt before any other language has been learnt" (Khati, 1970. 42). While Mother Tongue Education (MTE) means providing opportunities to the students to learn in their own first language in their schools.

Around the globe, when it comes to mother tongue education, two stances are observed. The first emphasizing on the avoidance of mother tongue

education and application of national language or international languages (Harbord, 1992). While the second group considers such attempts as "Assimilationist policies" that intend to absorb aboriginal people in other majority societies and discourage students from maintaining their own mother tongues (Cummins, 2001. 2). Which according to him, is against children rights to get access of education in their mother tongue. He further added that the main purpose of education is to construct students' knowledge and experiences and promote their innate talents and abilities, which is not possible without mother tongue education. According to him, schools are playing a destructive role in diminishing languages of students. According to him following can be the advantages of MTE:

1. By using mother tongue education, a child at primary level develops literacy skills in more than one language by comparing and contrasting both languages and developing more flexibility in the thinking.
2. Strong mother tongue foundation and education in school is strongly related to strong literacy ability in the other school languages.
3. Using mother tongue education does not have any negative consequences in students' ability to learn the school languages.
4. Mother tongue can be forgotten and lost by students if it is not included in schools as primary school age students can forget it forever.
5. Discouraging mother tongue education means discouraging a student. It also rejects diversity in schools.

Children when taught in language other than their own mother tongue, they would not be able to perform and succeed according to their talents and capabilities (Ball, 2010). MTE gives an opportunity to the students to develop confidence, gain fluency, contribute to the economic and social development of their country (Ahmed, 2011).

### 3. Mother Tongue Education in Pakistan

Language Policy in Pakistan has always remained a challenge since its independence. Education in Pakistan, before independence, was being provided mainly in Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic. However, after British rule bilingual education was promoted including English with indigenous languages (Javed, 2017). After independence, Urdu was declared as National Language while English as official language of Pakistan. "Urdu was considered as the symbol of Muslim integration and unity" (Ahmed, 2011, p. 69). However, this policy resulted in language dispute among East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan and that was one of the main reasons behind Bangladesh's separation from Pakistan (Jabeen et al., 2010).

Currently, there are more than 69 languages including Brahui being spoken in Pakistan (Rahman, 2006). In many developing countries, for first two years the education is provided in mother tongue and it is known as transition stage to shift students slowly towards school language (UNESCO, 2005). The constitution of Pakistan 1973 has acknowledged and emphasized on the importance of mother tongue education (Rahman, 2006, 2019). Students at early grads should be given opportunities to develop their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in mother tongue with a slow shift towards national, school or international languages (Desai, 2012; UNESCO, 2005). In this regard, teachers should be trained in using 'how, when and why' of mother tongue education in their schools (Khatai, 2011).

Despite the importance of MTE, multilingualism in Pakistan has made it a challenge for successful implementation of a language policy including national (Urdu), official (English), and mother tongue (such as Brahui) (Ahmed, 2011; Javed, 2017). Among all provinces, Sindh is using mother tongue as medium of instruction in its schools and as not allowed to change this policy (Rahman, 2019). Presently, in Balochistan, majority of the government schools are Urdu medium, elite private schools are English medium and only in few government schools mother tongue education is being provided. There have been many attempts to use mother tongue as medium of instruction in Balochistan in 1990 however, after two years the policy was changed with change in government (Rahman, 2019). In 2014, a bill was passed from Provincial Assembly of Balochistan to

introduce a compulsory subject of mother tongue language in all districts of Balochistan (Government of Balochistan, 2014). The Act also affirmed that teachers would be given proper training, free textbooks would be provided and teacher training programs should also include courses related to teaching mother tongue education. However, the implementation of this act is facing many challenges including less interest from teachers and parents towards regional languages, lack of training opportunities, especially in house training opportunities for teachers and weak monitoring process. In teacher education programs, the regional languages are added as optional courses with Urdu language but due to lack of trained teacher educators and teaching resources, the regional languages are not being taught in majority of teacher education institutions.

### 4. Methodology

In this study, a qualitative approach was used to explore the perception of future Brahui speaking teachers about use of Brahui as a mother tongue education at primary level in Balochistan. The research design was case study and site of the study was Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University Quetta. The senior Brahui speaking future teachers from B.Ed. (Hons) 7<sup>th</sup> semester and M.A Education 3<sup>rd</sup> semester and M.Phil. students were selected as sample of the study through purposive sampling. For data collection, semi-structured interviews were used as data collection tools. A total of fifteen interviews were conducted including 5 students from B.Ed. 7<sup>th</sup>, 5 from M.Ed. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5 from M.Phil. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

### 5. Results

The data analysis revealed two main themes as need of mother tongue education in Brahui in Brahui majority schools and teacher training required for mother tongue education in Brahui. These themes and subthemes are discussed in subsequent sections.

#### 1. Need of Brahui Mother Tongue Education

The data analysis revealed that a large number of future teachers emphasized on use of Brahui language as medium of instructions for those whose mother

tongue is Brahui. Among them, only one B.Ed. student considered Urdu and English more beneficial than Brahui as mother tongue. According to her, children already have command on their native language, therefore, should be taught in Urdu or English so they may not face difficulty in their future lives.

Majority of the future teachers were from Quetta who declared that even majority of students in Government schools of vicinity are Brahui speaking, mother tongue education in Brahui is not provided at primary level. Some of the future teachers from Mastung mentioned that for schools in Mastung Brahui is used as medium of instruction for only two years and they strongly emphasized that mother tongue education should be used in primary level schools. In this regard, a teacher claimed:

In my point of view children should be taught in mother language in primary level and they should also be introduced with Urdu and English slowly. However, here in Mastung children are taught a subject in mother tongue only for two years and I think it is not sufficient

The data analysis revealed that teachers emphasized on development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in Brahui. A teacher said, “we need to work on all four language skills [reading, writing, speaking, listening] of Brahui”. For future teachers Brahui should be compulsory as medium of instruction at primary level due to following reasons:

## 2. Making Concepts Clear and Understandable

The future teachers considered Brahui important for making basic concepts clearer and understandable for students. According to a future teacher, the most important task of a teacher at early grades is making basic concepts clear for students and it can only be achieved by giving elaborations and illustrations in mother tongue. “A child learns a concept as word or as a vocabulary but may not be able to grasp its actual meaning until not clarified in mother tongue” argued a future teacher. Another M.Phil. scholar commented, “A child when taught in mother tongue can understand concepts. Thus, actual learning occurs when students are taught in their own language”. They also claimed that children can enjoy learning and take interest, if Brahui is used as medium of instruction. A future teacher shared:

You know if a student is taught in mother tongue, things become more clear to her and she starts taking interest in her studies and by using mother tongue education we can reduce drop outs rates and make school and education attractive for her

## 3. Developing students’ communication skills and Confidence

Children can communicate their feelings and emotions better in their own native language. The future teachers regarded Brahui mother tongue education as an important tool for developing students’ communication and presentation skills. A teacher belonging to Khuzdar shared:

As a teacher and as a mother I know my children can better express themselves in their own language. Unfortunately, we kill our children’s communication skills at early stages where students instead of communicating confidently, struggle for learning a new language.

Another M.Phil. scholar who was also a school teacher added:

It was the first day of a girl in our school. She was screaming and crying. Her class teacher who was not a Brahui speaking was continuously trying to calm her but all in vein. I came and started speaking in Brahui. You will not believe after few minutes she was not only quiet but also started sharing details of her family and friends...

The above quotations support that mother tongue education can play an important role in developing students communication skills at primary level. They are more confident in communicating in their own native language. The data analysis showed that Brahui speaking students show more attachment to Brahui speaking teachers and therefore become more confident.

## 4. More helpful for Uneducated parents

A large number of students living in Brahui dominating areas are from low socio-economic background and uneducated. By using Brahui as medium of instruction at primary level can help these parents in understanding what is being taught to their children. In this way, the parents can get motivated and more committed towards their child’s education. “Majority of the parents cannot understand Urdu, for

them it [Brahui] would be easier” said a future teacher”.

### 5. Teacher Training for Mother Tongue Education in Brahui

The future teachers considered the current teacher education program as sufficient for training teachers to teach in mother tongue in futures as teachers. They mentioned that they are trained in pedagogical skills required for teaching and that is sufficient. It is worth mentioning here that in the B.Ed. (Hons.) curriculum regional language and their teaching courses are included. However, according to the participants, these courses have never been offered to them. Nevertheless, according to them, teaching courses of Urdu and English both train them in teaching strategies needed for teaching Brahui Language.

The participants also highlighted that in-service teachers need professional development opportunities. A participant complaint, the books are provided from government but unfortunately are unused because teachers are not provided required in-service trainings for them.

Another teacher shared, “we have been given trainings by PITE but these trainings are not enough to get our in-service teachers ready for teaching in mother tongue education”. Another M.Phil. scholar who was also working in education department government of Balochistan claimed that all books provided to schools are not utilized therefore it has been planned that this year books of regional languages will not be purchased. This is showing that the interest of teachers towards teaching mother tongue subjects is quite alarming and more in-service trainings are needed to motivate them.

In addition to this, the participants also stressed on need of more informal and formal trainings and workshops on Brahui history, culture, poetry, and literature. A future teacher stressed:

Brahui Academy and Department of Brahui at University of Balochistan should conducted more awareness sessions workshops, seminars, even conferences on need of mother tongue education for preservations and promotion of Brahui language...they are the ones who can save their and our language.

### 6. Discussion

Mother tongue education plays an important role in a child’s learning. Education provided in mother tongue can positively affect students learning. The findings indicated that Brahui as mother tongue should be made compulsory as medium of instruction at primary level not as a compulsory subject only. Introducing Brahui language as only a compulsory course does not fulfil its objectives for saving this language from extinction. The following recommendations are provided to the main stockholders.

Government of Balochistan should take some serious steps for successful implementation of regional mother tongues including Brahui in schools and in teacher educational institutions. Among other regional mother tongues, Brahui language demands more serious steps as it has been decaled as endangered language by UNESCO. In this regard, national and international language experts should be involved in planning strategies for successful implementation of Brahui as medium of instruction and as well as a subject. Moreover, Provincial Institute for Teacher Education (PITE) should design more extensive and continuous training programs for in-service teachers and every teacher should be trained in teaching of his/her mother tongue. Moreover, the schools and teachers who are working hard in successful implementation of regional languages including Brahui should be recognized and appreciated in order to motivate other schools and teachers.

The findings of this study show that Brahui speaking future teachers are not only aware of the importance of their own mother tongue education but also willing to teach is this language in future. Unfortunately, they do not have opportunities to get pre-service trainings in content and methodological courses of Brahui. Regional languages including Brahui should be offered to the pre-service teacher in all teacher education colleges and universities of the province. For this purpose, firstly, the teacher educators should get proper trainings in their own regional languages.

Brahui literary societies, academies, linguaphiles, and activists should play an active role in successful implementation of Brahui as medium of instruction. Department of Brahui, University of Balochistan can play the most vital role in this regard. They should



conduct more awareness sessions workshops, seminars, conferences on need of mother tongue education for preservations and promotion of Brahui language.

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