

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING ORIENTATIONS: THE CASE OF PAKISTAN *

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Abstract

The paper deals with the motives of the students of foreign languages in Pakistan to enroll in a foreign language course. The object of this investigation is the group of foreign language students enrolled at the Institute of Languages at University of the Punjab during the academic year 2013-2014. A questionnaire was provided to the students where they had to answer the main questions of this research. The data collection was followed up with personal interviews which enabled the students to further explain their reasoning for their choice of foreign language. The study concludes with the factors and reasons behind the students' motivation towards learning a foreign language.

Keywords: *Foreign language motivation, sociolinguistics, language learning orientations.*

Introduction

The linguistic infrastructure of Pakistan is a complex one as it is a multilingual country. However, the literacy rate of the country is extremely low¹. The official languages of Pakistan are Urdu and English. As in many other countries, we find that in Pakistan some regional languages are spoken such as Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Siraiki, Urdu, Balochi, Potohari, Balti and others at a minor level². According to Ethnologue the number of languages still spoken in Pakistan is 72:

The number of individual languages listed for Pakistan is 72. All are living languages. Of these, 132 are institutional, 11 are developing, 38 are vigorous, 8 are in trouble, and 2 are dying.³

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Some of these languages are taught in schools while others are only spoken at home and villages. Some of them are in danger of extinction. Additionally, learning of reading Arabic is compulsory for all Pakistani Muslims as a part of their religious duty. This is due to the fact that it is the language of the Quran and Muslims need to learn it in order to be able to read the scriptures in their original language.

Pakistanis are used to listen and speak many languages in their daily lives. The majority of the residents of Punjab speak Urdu and Punjabi. The residents of Sindh speak Sindhi and Urdu, the residents of Balochistan speak Urdu and Balochi and some of them speak Pashto. Those who speak Siraiki, in the majority of the cases can speak Urdu as well, as Urdu is the national language⁴. Urdu, in fact, is most spoken language in the cities rather than in the rural areas. In addition, English is the official language of Pakistan and it has become a compulsion for Pakistanis who are now used to listen it. It is taught as a subject in public and private schools, colleges and universities and many educational institutions and has been adopted as the medium of instruction.

The constitution of Pakistan discusses the issue of language in several articles. Article 28, on the *Preservation of language, script and culture*, states that the citizens of Pakistan have the right to speak another language, other than the official language:

28. Subject to Article 251 any section of citizens having a distinct language, script or culture shall have the right to preserve and promote the same and subject to law, establish institutions for that purpose”⁵

In addition, the Constitution states in article 31 that the citizens of Pakistan, a Muslim state, will be encouraged and facilitated to learn Arabic⁶. The most important mention to language in the Constitution is article 251 which treats the topic of National Language. It states:

251. (1) The National language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for it being used for the official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day. (2) Subject to clause (1), the English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu. (3) Without prejudice to the status of the National Language, a Provincial Assembly may by law prescribe measures for the teaching, promotion and use of a provincial language in addition to the national language”⁷.

In this article 251, the Constitution confers several rights to its citizens. Urdu language can be used for official and other purposes. The English language can be used for official purposes until it is replaced by Urdu.

This happened because the language of bureaucracy in India was English after the British departure from the subcontinent. In fact, India hired the services of British officers along with Lord Mountbatten as the first governor general. This very fact retained the importance of the English language. It was expected

that in future, Urdu would become the language of the official matters. However, a few hurdles did not permit Urdu to achieve an appropriate status. Instead the English language has retained its superiority mainly due to educational and sociolinguistic factors. Article 251 further promotes the teaching and instruction of provincial languages in addition to the national language.

Apart from the study of local languages, the language factor related to employment and the language policies of Pakistan, already treated extensively by Pakistani linguist Tariq Rahman in several of his articles⁸. Another factor has entered the equation; that is foreign languages. In this sense, this is a new trend.

Language Orientations

The average Pakistani student speaks a minimum of two national or local languages. “According to recent language research, learning a new language will make it easier to learn subsequent languages such a third or fourth language”⁹. The reasons behind the desire to learn a foreign language are multiple. In case of Pakistani students, learning a new foreign language has a special meaning. The instructors at the Institute of Languages at University of Punjab in Lahore, Pakistan, have observed the trends in foreign language learning shift considerably over the years. This has partially, been attributed to European countries’ policies on immigration, foreign scholarships, and availability of employment in these countries. On the other hand, the permanent political instability of the country accompanied by recession, inflation and a literacy rate of approximately 41%¹⁰ (less than half of any developed country) convince students wish for foreign degrees and employment.

In this sense, the reasons or motivations for learning a language have been proven to be a determining factor in the level of success of the students. These reasons, motives or goals have traditionally been denominated in language learning as *orientations*.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore orientations in Pakistan, given the fact that one of the largest if not the largest groups, of foreign scholarship seekers in the world is the one composed by Pakistani students. This became evident at the Erasmus Mundus conference held in Bangkok in October 2013, where it was obvious that the largest group of applicants of Erasmus Mundus Scholarships by nationality for that particular Asian project was Pakistani, followed only, and not closely, by the Indian group of applicants.¹¹

Gardner and Lambert had identified two different types of orientations which referred to the need of an individual to identify or integrate within a particular L2 community which they named *integrative* and the desire to obtain employment or a particular course or degree which was denominated *instrumental*. Gardner and Lambert’s studies had focused more ever since on the integrative orientations since the object of their study was based in Canada’s bilingual society and integration was an important motivating factor. However,

for the purpose of our study we believe the integrative orientations to be almost irrelevant with a few exceptions.¹²

Studies until now have focused mainly on motivation, rather than on orientation and there has been little discussion on this topic as compared to motivation. However, according to the researcher's experience, the level of motivation is directly dependent on the level of need or desire for achieving a particular goal in which language acquisition serves as just the means. This is supported by authors such as Noels et al.¹³ According to them four types of orientations are common to all groups of learners, these include:

1. Desire for travel.
2. Desire for friendship.
3. Desire for knowledge.
4. Instrumental orientations.

The aim of this paper is to determine the types of orientations motivating the language students of Pakistan and more concretely those in Lahore, enrolled in the Institute of Languages at University of the Punjab, to learn a new language. For this purpose, we conducted a similar study to that of Lin & Warschauer¹⁴. In their study "the results suggest that learner's orientation varies by age, gender, income, education, linguistic background, and target language". The researcher has collected information according to similar parameters. This study will prove that in a great majority goals are at the core of L2 learning motivation at the Institute of Languages.

Method

The Sample of the Investigation Participants

The sample of this study is the 176 students enrolled in a one year diploma language course at the Institute of Languages. The group is homogeneous in the sense that none of them had received instruction in the target language before, their mother tongue is Urdu language and the majority comes from middle class environments. The minimum age of the students was 17, since the requirement for enrolling in the diploma course is to have finished high school and have a high school certificate. A large portion, were students of the University enrolled in a higher degree program such as Bachelors or Masters. One differentiating factor can possibly be that some of the students were not able to speak English at all, others had an intermediate level of English language while some were able to communicate well in English. All of them had familiarity with English whether passive or active. However, they all were inexperienced in the learning of a foreign language within a classroom environment. The large majority of the students were already students of the morning program in the University and a small minority was comparatively older and working people.

The Measuring Instrument

We could have utilized the Language Learning Orientation Scale of Noels, Pelletier, Clement & Vallerand¹⁵. However, the researcher realized that through this survey only a partial result would be obtained. So a slightly modified version of the survey was created¹⁶ and given to the students during regular class hours. It was conveyed to the students that the survey was confidential and they did not require writing their names on it. All students of the Institute consented to take the survey. The survey consisted of 12 questions to be responded by them in 15 minutes.

Results

The first component measured the enrolment per language course which is presented in Table 1.

TABLE-1. ENROLLMENT AT IOL

Language	N. of students	Percentage
German	75	42.61%
Chinese	27	15.34
Hebrew	15	8.5%
Greek	13	7.38%
Turkish	11	6.25%
Spanish	9	5.11%
Russian	7	3.97%
Latin	7	3.97%
Italian	6	3.4%
Pashto	3	1.70%
Portuguese	1	0.56%
Sindhi	2	1.13%
Total	176	100%

The German language course attracted the largest number of students. 75 students were enrolled at the time of the study. This was followed by Chinese language with an enrolment of 27 students. These two groups seemed to be the most influential for the purposes of our study. Since the main point of the study was the type of student seeking language instruction, we recorded the data according to gender (number of males and females enrolled).

Table-2. Division by Gender

Total Admission	176	100%
Male Students	135	76.70%
Female Students	41	23.29%

In addition, the age group of the students was recorded in table 3.

Table-3. Division by age

18-25 years	94	53.40%
26-30 years	34	19.31%
31-40 years	20	11.36%
40 years or older	28	15.90%
TOTAL	176	100%

Furthermore, the student's level of education was recorded:

Table-4. Division by educational level

High School (finished)	84	47.72%
Bachelor (finished or ongoing)	66	37.5%
M.A/M.Sc (finished or ongoing)	23	13.06%
M.Phil/ P.hD (finished or ongoing)	3	1.70%
TOTAL	176	100%

The largest number of students had achieved only a high school education. It shows as 'finished' on the table as this is an entrance pre-requisite for enrollment in a language course. A considerable amount of students was pursuing their Bachelor Degree or had already finished it.

Further this information per language of instruction was collected:

Table-5. German language diploma

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	31-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	M.Phil/ P.hD
60	15	50	11	8	6	37	29	7	2
75		75				75			

Table-6. Chinese language diploma

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	31-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	P.hd./ M.Phil
21	6	12	7	4	4	11	10	6	0
27		27				27			

Table-7. Hebrew language course

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	31-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	P.hd./ M.Phil
11	4	6	4	4	1	6	7	2	0
15		15				15			

Table-8. Greek language course

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	31-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	P.hD./ M.Phil
7	6	5	2	3	3	8	5	0	0
13		13				13			

Table-9. Turkish language diploma

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	31-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	P.hD./ M.Phil
8	3	5	4	0	2	5	5		1
11		11				11			

Table-10. Spanish language course

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	35-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	P.hD./ M.Phil
7	2	4	3	-	2	5	2	2	0
9		9				9			

Table-11. Latin language course

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	31-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	P.hD./M.Phil
6	1	3	0	1	3	3	3	1	0
7		7				7			

Table-12. Russian language diploma

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	35-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	M.Phil / Phd.
6	1	4	0	0	3	4	2	1	0
7		7				7			

Table-13. Italian language diploma

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	31-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	M.Phil / P.hD
4	2	5	0	0	1	3	1	2	0
6		6				6			

Table-14. Pashto language diploma

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	31-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	P.hD./ M.Phil
3	0	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	0
3		3				3			

Table-14. Sindhi language diploma

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	31-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	M.Phil / P.hD
0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
2		2				2			

Table-13. Portuguese language course

Gender		Age				Qualification			
Male	Female	18-25	26-30	31-40	40+	High School	Bachelor	Master	P.hD / M.Phil
1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
1		1				1			

The last step was to collect information on the purpose of enrolling on a language course which was the main research question. The results are as follows:

ORIENTATIONS	LANGUAGES CHOSEN											
	SPANIS	RUSSIA	CHINE	GERM	HEBRE	ITALIA	TURKI	GREEK	LATIN	PASHT	PORTU	SINDHI
Pursuing higher education	3	2	5	62	11	2	7	11	6	2		
Seek employment or start a business	1	1	1	1								
Works in a co. doing business with a foreign c	3	1	16	3							1	
Family members in another country				1		3	1					
They enjoy the language	2	3	5	8	4	1	3	2	1	1		2
TOTAL	9	7	27	75	15	6	11	13	7	3	1	2

Their income level was recorded. The great majority had a middle class background.

Analysis of the results:

The relevant data was put on various tables as above which produced interesting results. The results are as follows:

Gender based results. The fact that out of 176 students enrolled, 135 of the students were male, versus 41 female can be reflective of a male dominant society where women in a large number of cases are not allowed to travel abroad for education or seeking employment overseas.

On the other hand, there are positive signs with regards to local education for females which has been progressively higher as compared to males after the mid 1990's in urban areas¹⁷. The data also reflects the number of male and female students in each class which shows that in a great majority of the cases the females are in minority, except for Sindhi language where the only students enrolled were female, also in a small number. Just like in Oxford & Nyikos¹⁸ in this case gender has a profound effect on the results of this research. However, in our case it is due to socio-cultural reasons and not language learning strategies.

Another important finding is the fact that out of 75 students in German class (which is the language students usually enroll in when they need to apply for a foreign scholarship) only 15 were female.

Answers to the main research question. To answer the main research question i.e., *for what reason are you learning this language?* the survey form was consulted.

It has now become evident that the large majority of students (63.07%) learn a specific language in order to pursue further studies for which the particular language they are studying is fundamental. A large percentage of them will pursue studies abroad through a German scholarship while others will continue their studies locally.

A smaller number (2.72%) was enrolled to fulfill the need of a specific language in order to seek employment or start a business. Others, 13.63% of the studied sample were enrolled because they worked in a company which did business with a country where the particular language they are enrolled in, was spoken.

Fives orientations emerged from the analysis. In addition to orientation identification, we established the type of orientations and the frequency with which a specific orientation was present.

Types of Orientations

Orientation No. 1. Instrumental. *Pursuing higher education.*

The largest group of students falls under this group which is learning a language to pursue a higher level of education. In the majority, they are students of Bachelors. This group spans all languages except for Portuguese and Sindhi which are also the groups with less number of students. Out of 176 students 111 or 63.06% of the total number of students enrolled in a language course because

they were planning to pursue further studies. The fact that more than half of them are enrolled in German language (62 students out of 75) is significant, considering the fact that the German government offers a large number of scholarships. The other two larger groups are the students of Hebrew and Greek. These students are in fact pursuing theological studies for which these two languages are fundamental in their progress.

Orientation No. 2. Instrumental. *Seek employment or start a business.*

It is significant that only 4 students (2.72%) enrolled in four different languages were interested in seeking employment or starting a business for which the language they were learning was required.

Orientation No. 3. Instrumental. *Works in a company doing business with a foreign country.*

There are 24 students (13.63%) who are learning the language with the purpose of doing business with another country, out of which 16 of them are enrolled in Chinese language, so a great portion of the students of Chinese language are already doing business with China. Three of them are enrolled in Spanish language and 3 in German, 1 in Russian and 1 in Portuguese language.

Orientation No. 4. Integrative. *They have family members in another country and would like to join them (emigration).* Only 5 students answered that they had family members in another country. Three of the students had family members in Italy, one in Germany and one in Turkey.

Orientation No. 5. Learning Goal-Intrinsic Motivation. *They enjoy the language they are learning.*

Thirty two of them replied that they enjoyed the language they were learning. These were the people who usually learn languages for pleasure. They span through the great majority of languages except for Portuguese since this language had only one student. Apart from instrumental and integrative orientations there could be other reasons for a person to take on an activity. Noels¹⁹ states that people may carry out different activities simply because it is enjoyable for them. Perhaps the student is interested in the culture and the language of a country and enjoys the sounds of a language. He associated greater accomplishment under this type of motivation. In this case we have classified this group under Dweck's learning goal²⁰ (LG) and intrinsic motivation²¹ and Noels et al. intrinsic motivation²².

Finally we compiled all results in the following table which shows the types of orientations:

Table 16. Types of orientations

<u>TYPES OF ORIENTATIONS</u>		
Instrumental	139	78.97%
Integrative	5	2.84%
Learning Goal	32	18.18%
Total	176	100%

CONCLUSION

The study provided a comprehensive insight about the variables influencing the choice of a particular language by the students of the Institute of Languages, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

The influencing factors such as gender, years of study, etc. provided comprehensive data on the types of orientations of the students.

The fact that only 41 girls enrolled in a language diploma program, is a determining factor when considering gender. Out of all of them only 15 had enrolled in German language which is a language in which the students usually enroll for the purpose of obtaining an overseas scholarship. Instrumental orientations are at the core of the enrollment at the Institute of Languages with 78.97% of students falling into this category. The students which fall under the category of integrative orientations are almost negligible with a figure of 2.98%. Surprisingly, there is a much elevated percentage of those students who are learning a language for the pure pleasure of doing so than we had originally thought. This group constitutes 18.18% of the total enrollment.

A number of strategies can be developed with the data obtained from this study. The courses should be in correlation with the orientations of the students and directed towards specific pedagogical goals which will fulfill the needs of those enrolled in them. Marketing for the diploma courses should be targeted towards those students looking forward to continue further their studies abroad. In addition, specific campaigns can be developed towards the female side of the population with the purpose of making parents understand that females should also take advantage of language education and furthering studies abroad.

In any case, a concern is the danger of post-graduation migration and brain drain which is elevated as stated in Imran et al²³ not only affecting the medical sector but others.

Future work

Many types of studies on motivation and orientations can be performed on the sample utilized in this research paper. Perhaps in a future study we could measure the exact level of post-graduation migration by graduates of the Institute of Languages as well as the causes.²⁴

Annex 1- Survey

1. What is your age? _____
2. Are you female or male? _____
3. Are you enrolled in a higher education program? If so which? _____
4. What was your last degree? _____
5. Has it been completed? If so, which year? _____
6. How many languages do you speak and which? _____
7. Which language are you learning at the Institute of Languages? _____
8. Do you study or do you work? _____
9. What is your household income per month? _____
10. If you study, do you contribute to your household income? _____ If yes, how? _____

11. Are you a student of this university (other than this language course)? _____
12. Why do you want to learn this language?
 - a. You want to apply for a higher education degree through a scholarship _____
 - b. You want to seek employment abroad _____
 - c. You want to start a company abroad or join an existing family business overseas _____
 - d. You have relatives abroad and want to join them _____
 - e. You work for a company which does business with foreign companies and need to learn this language for business purposes _____
 - f. You or your family own a company which does business with overseas companies and need to learn this language for business purposes _____
 - g. Other. Explain

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¹ Although there is no accurate information, it is calculated that the literacy rate in Pakistan is currently of 60%.

² *Pakistan Census* <http://www.census.gov.pk/MotherTongue.htm>

³ *Ethnologue*: <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/PK> (accessed 14th Nov. 2013)

⁴ Many other regional languages exist within the federating units of Pakistan; even one regional language may be spoken across the provincial boundary. For example, Siraiki is a dialect of south Punjab but it is also spoken in the bordering or adjacent areas of Sindh. Pashto is a language of Pashtuns who are inhabitants of KPK and Balochistan. So in every region several languages may be spoken but all understand Urdu.

⁵ National Assembly of Pakistan. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. (Pakistan: 2010), p. 16 <http://www.na.gov.pk/publications/constitution.pdf> (accessed 14th Nov. 2013)

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17

⁷ *Ibid.*, 148

⁸ Rahman. T. "The Language of Employment: The Case of Pakistan" *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* (2000): 23, 4, 62-87; Rahman. T. *Language, Power and Ideology in Pakistan*. In *Pakistan: Democracy, Development and Security Issues*; (New Delhi and London: Sage, 2005), 108; *Language Policy, Multilingualism and Language Vitality in Pakistan*. In *Trends in Linguistics: Lesser-Known Languages of South Asia-Status and Policies, Case Studies and Applications of Information Technology*. (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006), 73.; *Language, Ideology and Power: Language-Learning Among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India*. (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 51; 'Language Problems and Politics in Pakistan'. In *Handbook of South Asian Politics: India Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal*. (London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 15.

⁹ M. I Maldonado García, "Multilingual Matters" *The Journal of Communication and Education*, (2011): 18.

¹⁰ *Ethnologue*: <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/PK> Accessed 28-5-2014. Ethnologue literacy figures contradict that of the Census of Pakistan.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² R.C. Gardner, & R. C Lambert, "Motivational variables in second language acquisition" *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, (1959): 13; *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. (Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishing, 1972), 45.

¹³ K.A. Noels, et al. "Why are you learning a second language? Motivational orientations and self-determination theory." *Language learning* 50, no. 1 (2000): 59.

¹⁴ "The results suggest that learner orientation varies by age, gender, income, education, linguistic background, and target language"

¹⁵ K.A., 57-85.

¹⁶ Attached as annex 1.

¹⁷ G.M. Arif, & Chaudhry, Nusrat. "Demographic Transition and Youth Employment in Pakistan". *The Pakistan Development Review*, (2008), 47, 1.

¹⁸ In their sample, "everyone's use of such strategies appeared to be suppressed by the traditional, academic of the classroom-a setting which promotes and rewards performance on discrete tasks rather than interactive, communicative efforts". In our case, we did not measure the language learning strategies. However, the low enrollment of females in language courses constitutes the differential factor between male and female students. R. Oxford, & Nyikos. "Affecting Choice of Language Learning Strategies by University Students" *The Modern Language Journal*, (1989). 73,3., 291-300.

¹⁹ K.A, 45.

²⁰ "A learning goal focuses (children) on effort-effort as a means of utilizing or activation their ability, of surmounting obstacles, and of increasing their ability".

²¹ C. S. Dweck, "Motivational processes affecting learning" *American Psychologist*, (1986): 41, 1040–1048.

²² "Generally refers to motivation to engage in an activity because that activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do". K.A. et al., 59

²³ "An alarming percentage of medical graduates from Lahore, Pakistan intend to migrate for post graduate training, mainly to the United States. A significant proportion wished to stay in the host country either temporarily or indefinitely. Impact of residency abroad on future career, financial conditions of doctors, job opportunities and better working conditions were some of the motivating factors behind the migration".

M. I. Maldonado García, "Multilingual Matters" *Language Magazine. The Journal of Communication and Education* (2011), 10, 10.

²⁴ S. L. Chang, "Causes of brain drain and solutions. The Taiwan Experience" *Studies in Comparative International Development* (1992), 27, 1., 27-43.