

Localizing the Kashmiri Language in the Education System of the Kashmir Valley

Javaid Aziz Bhat^{1*} and Sameer Ahmad Kuchay

¹Department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir, Srinagar—190006 India

*Corresponding author: Javaidazizbhat@gmail.com

Abstract: The relationship between language and education is very intimate and any educational process cannot be thought of without language. The planning of languages in multilingual societies is not an easy task because of being of interest to different stakeholders like administrators, academicians, and above all, to the people. Jammu and Kashmir, like many other states of India, is a multilingual society with Kashmiri language being the most dominant language, in terms of number of speakers, in the state in general and the Kashmir valley in particular. Therefore language planning, particularly in the field of education, has always been a complicated matter in the valley because of its multilingual structure. The education system of the valley follows the national system of education spanning across three levels: Primary Education, Secondary Education, and Higher Education. The present paper is an attempt to locate the teaching/learning of the Kashmiri language at different levels of the education system in the Kashmir Valley. For locating the Kashmiri language in the education system of the valley, the model given by M.A.K. Halliday regarding the relationship between language and education, has been adopted. For the present study different 'Reports of the Government', in addition to the first hand experience of the researchers, have been used. The study reveals that, in spite of its introduction in schools in 2008, the Kashmiri language has not achieved the status equal to that of the other languages like, English and Urdu. The language is looked at as having low-prestige in the society which garners negative attitude among students. The study further reveals that the students are less proficient in the reading and writing modalities of the Kashmiri language which can be cited as a result of the lack of specialist teachers teaching Kashmiri and the negative attitude towards it. At the Secondary and the Higher education levels, Kashmiri as a subject is offered by a limited number of colleges and universities. At these levels language is secondary to the literature of Kashmiri. The paper therefore concludes that Kashmiri is not well-placed in the education system of the valley and proposes some recommendations for its proper planning.

[Bhat JA, Kuchay SA. **Localizing the Kashmiri Language in the Education System of the Kashmir Valley.** *Rep Opinion* 2015;7(11):68-70]. (ISSN: 1553-9873). <http://www.sciencepub.net/report>. 9. doi:[10.7537/marsroj071115.09](https://doi.org/10.7537/marsroj071115.09).

Key Words: Language planning, multilingualism, prestige, language modality, language localization.

About the Kashmiri language:

Kashmiri belongs to the Dardic branch of the Indo-Aryan language family. It is primarily spoken in the Kashmir Valley and is the most dominant language in terms of the number of speakers in the Jammu and Kashmir state. Even though being the most dominant language in terms of the number of speakers in the state, the Kashmiri language has always been assigned a secondary place in different social and educational domains. Kashmiri language has never been used as an official language in its home state. The Jammu and Kashmir state is probably the only state in India having a non-native language as its official language. The Kashmiri language has also the least role in media, administration and education. The language was introduced in the schools as a subject of study in 2008. The introduction of the language into the schools has not though elevated its position and status. The present paper is an attempt to locate the Kashmiri language in the education system of the valley.

About the Education System of the Kashmir Valley:

The education system of the valley follows the national system of education which consists of the primary, secondary and the higher education levels. The primary and the secondary education is imparted in the schools and Higher Secondary Schools of the valley. The evaluation is done internally by the local and zonal administrations except the VIII, X, and XII standards for which the JKBOSE (the regional board) examines and evaluates the students. The other institutions where education is imparted up to the secondary level include the institutions affiliated to the CBSE. Most of the schools recognized by the JKBOSE are private schools where the Kashmiri language is not well placed. The three language formula which places the regional language in good position at the primary level is seen unimplemented in these private schools. Similarly, the Kashmiri language has almost no role in the institutions affiliated to CBSE. The public schools run by the government see low response with many schools having zero enrollment. As such the Kashmiri

language has limited heirs which does not place it in good position. The student strength of the government-run schools is very weak as proposed by the census reports. Kashmiri as a subject of study is meant only for the schools working under JKBOSE. The University of Kashmir and its affiliated colleges, along with all the universities of the valley constitute the higher education system of the valley. The colleges are mostly public funded with a small percentage of professional colleges being private.

Locating Kashmiri in the education system of the valley:

Language and education are intimately related. Education cannot be thought of without language. As suggested by M. A. K. Halliday, the relationship between language and education can be divided into three heuristic categories: (1) learning language, (2) learning through language, and (3) learning about language. This model can be used to locate a language in any education system. 'Learning language' refers to the learning of a language for educational and other purposes. 'Learning through language' refers to the medium of instruction, and 'Learning about language' refers to the study of different aspects of language.

In their early years, children are learning both spoken and written language. 'Learning Language' in school settings, refers to learning of second language which starts with the learning of secondary modalities, that is, writing and reading which ultimately leads to the learning of the primary modality of speaking. In the present case of teaching of Kashmiri at the primary level, the trend is reverse because here the language is taught to the native speakers of the language who already have learnt the spoken form of the language. The teaching of this language is therefore intended to train the students in the modalities of reading and writing. The case is interesting because of the following reasons.

Kashmiri as a subject of study in schools was introduced in 2008. Its introduction into the schools does not seem to fulfill the purpose though. Kashmiri language at elementary level is taught by the teachers who have never learnt the Kashmiri language and its script formally in the schools. The reading and writing by such teachers relies on guessing which is assisted by their being the native speakers plus having learnt Urdu which shares the script with Kashmiri language. Since the script used for writing Kashmiri has additional diacritical marks which makes it different from Urdu, the reading and writing of such teachers and students is therefore full of mistakes.

On the basis of the above assumptions, the questionnaire was framed to elicit responses from

teachers and students. The students and teachers were asked to rank their proficiency levels in reading/writing of three languages, that is, English, Urdu, and Kashmiri. All the thirty students and 12 teachers placed Kashmiri at the third rank with respect to the proficiency in reading and writing while in speaking all the participants placed it at the first rank. The next part of the questionnaire was framed to explore the reasons of the low proficiency in reading and writing of Kashmiri. The questions asked were about the prestige of the same languages. All the participants replied with English as being the most prestigious language.

While as Kashmiri was placed at the bottom of hierarchy of prestige. A separate question for the 12 teachers about whether they had learnt Kashmiri formally in schools yielded the answer as NO in case of all the 12 teachers. The sweeping results indicate that the low proficiency of the students in Kashmiri at the primary education level can be attributed to the lack of the specialist teachers and negative attitude of the teachers and the students towards Kashmiri language. The negative attitude towards the Kashmiri language leads to lack of motivation as well.

Learning through language:

'Learning through language' refers to the medium of instruction. Even though the Three Language Formula gives a due place to a regional language as the medium of instruction in at least primary schools, the Kashmiri language is nowhere visible as a medium of instruction at any of the levels from primary to the higher. The reasons for this include the structure of the education system which at the primary level is dominated by the private institutions where the medium of instruction is either Urdu or English. At the higher education level the teaching almost exclusively takes place through the medium of English language except the teaching of Kashmiri in the colleges and universities of the valley.

It is only Kashmiri as a subject that is taught through the medium of Kashmiri in some of the colleges and universities of the valley which offer it as an optional subject. The problem however remains to be that the takers are very few for opting Kashmiri as a subject because of the negative attitude towards it and the low prospects of jobs in the field. Therefore, Kashmiri language finds a little space in the academic setup of the valley with respect to the second part of the Halliday's model, that is, 'Learning through language'.

Learning about language:

Perhaps the most obvious classroom practice for 'learning about language' is through the study of grammar and spelling. The 'learning about a language' includes learning of the sound system,

word formation, history and other such aspects of that language. Looking the sound patterns, word formation, use of language in social contexts, history of a language etc. as the content of the study of a language, it is evident that such contents are not taught at any of the levels of the education system with reference to the Kashmiri language.

Kashmiri as a subject of study in colleges is exclusively taught as literature without any focus being on the linguistic aspects of the Kashmiri language. At the post graduate level, only 10% of the credits deal with studying 'about the language'. By locating Kashmiri language in the education system of the valley on Halliday's model, it is evident that Kashmiri language is not well placed at any of the levels of the education system and it is not required to perform the functions in the education system which other languages like Urdu and English perform.

There is a strong need to elevate the status of the Kashmiri language in the education system of the valley which can be achieved by putting the specialist teachers in charge of teaching the subject right from the primary level. It can not only make teaching productive but also create opportunities of employment which will garner positive attitude towards it among the students. Furthermore, the Kashmiri language should be given due place in media and administration which will ultimately elevate the status of Kashmiri.

Corresponding Author:

Javaid Aziz Bhat

Ph.D. Scholar

Department of Linguistics

University of Kashmir Srinagar -190006 (India)

E-mail:Javaidazizbhat@gmail.com

References

1. Annamalai, E. 1977. Bilingual education for minorities. *Language Forum*, 3.3 Oct-Dec, 1-9.
2. Annamalai, E. et al. (eds.) 1986. *Language Planning*. Mysore: CIIL.
3. Daswani, C. J. (ed.) 2001. *Language Education in Multilingual India*. New Delhi: Unesco.
4. Di Bona, J. 1989. *Critical Perspectives in Indian Education*. New Delhi : Bahari Publications.
5. Dua, Hans R. 1985. *Language Planning in India*, New Delhi: Harnam..
6. Pattanayak, D.P. 1981. *Multilingualism and mother tongue education*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
7. Srivastava, A.K. 1990. Multilingualism and school education in India: special features, problems and prospects. In D.P Pattanayak(ed.), *Multilingualism in India*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 37- 53.
8. Srivastava, A.K, Ramasamy, K. and Devaki, L. 1993. *An Indian Experience in Bilingual Education*. Project Report Submitted to CIIL, Mysore.
9. Webb, V. 1998. *Multilingualism as a development resources: Framework for a research programme*.

11/25/2015