

Urdu Medium Intermediaries Issues Getting Higher Education in English Medium Institutions: Evidence from Pakistan

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Abstract

The most important aspect of all beings is language. Language connects us with other people, we use express our thought and emotions, to fulfill our needs of life. However, the barrier to understand language can put you at trouble especially if the matter is of education. Education system of Pakistan is preserve of an elite, leaving the rest of the country to linguistic confusion and educational failure. This system has put the youth at confusion and threat to pursue their higher education where they have to study their courses in English. It has created the cultural and social discrimination in our youth. This study examines the issues related to language choice in education system of Pakistan. The study is qualitative in nature and four in depth interviews are conducted with the Urdu medium intermediates who have started their university education in English medium. The respondents reveal system that such system has put them in great difficulty and disappointed to continue their education. The study implies that language discrimination has greatly affect the confidence level of Urdu medium students clearly indicates that Urdu background students have to face problems in every field of life because the mindset of society is quite conservative towards a person who cannot speak English.

Key words: higher education, language discrimination, Urdu intermediaries

1. Introduction

The official name of Pakistan is “Islamic Republic of Pakistan”, a country where the Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and Sunnah.

Islam gives great importance to Education as well as equality by any means. Good education system is like a pillar to the nation. The Constitution of 1973 which is based on Islamic principles says that Urdu is the National Language of Pakistan and one of the two official languages of Pakistan along with Urdu. But in Pakistan, Effective teaching of English is the preserve of an elite, leaving the rest of the country to linguistic confusion and educational failure. Besides, the influence of the local languages can be traced-out in the interaction between teachers and students in bilingual classrooms, as Pakistan is a multilingual country and educational institutions are essentially bilingual.

The main purpose of this study is to examine the issues related to language choice and use in education system of Pakistan. The education system is divided in to two mediums that is English and Urdu. Urdu medium education policy is given by the Government of Pakistan so it is obvious that all Government schools and colleges uses Urdu in teaching and their text books are also in Urdu whereas private schools and colleges uses English. This system creates a biggest discrimination in terms of class, race, culture, education and most of all language.

But the biggest drawback of this system is faced by the student who, after completing their intermediate education, wants to continue their studies but they can't, because there are no Urdu medium universities available in Pakistan. Therefore it is necessary to examine the issues due to the Education System of Pakistan. The objective of this study is to to investigate the problems faced by Urdu medium intermediates in Bilingual Education system and analyze the impact of such system on students carrier choice.

2. Literature Review

Harris (2007) starting from the convocation of Pakistan's founding father, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, at the convocation of Dhaka University in 1948 in which he stated that Urdu would serve as a bridge between the peoples of different provinces and be the official language of the Pakistani State. Jinnah called Urdu the "State Language of Pakistan" neither national nor official.

The Advisory Board of Education in its first meeting in 1948 had resolved that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction at the primary stage. Also, a number of institutions were established or supported by the State to do basic work in Urdu as an official language (Rahman 1996).

The 1973 Constitution of the Republic was promulgated with Article 251 stating:

"The National language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day. The English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu."

The timing of the Constitution coincides with the lapse of the fifteen year lease given to English and hence refreshes that lease for another fifteen years.

The elected governments of Benazir and Nawaz Sharif continued with the same education systems and encouraged English medium private schools. Benazir's first government took one step for the poor children by the introduction of English as a compulsory subject from Class 1 in all government schools which remained weak because of no quality teaching available. General Musharraf's martial rule since 1999 is no different as far as redefining the language relationship is concerned (Harris 2007).

Zubeida (2012) wrote an article related to her book says: "Effective teaching of English is the preserve of an elite, leaving the rest of the country to linguistic confusion and educational failure".

The news reports and articles on the report released by the British Council Pakistan on the role of language in education was launched in Pakistan on 24 October 2010 published in different newspapers includes The News, Dawn.com, Dawn, Daily Times.

The report suggests that Pakistani students are best served by education if they are to be instructed in their mother tongues. They can easily understand, learn and feel comfortable in speaking their home language. Education in mother tongue is more effective especially in early years because children learn in a familiar language which enables the parents to get involved and monitor and contribute to children's education but only 5% of Pakistanis have access to education in their first language. The report briefly explains the percentage of languages spoken in different provinces of Pakistan but it said primary language of instruction in Pakistan is Urdu, which is first language of only 6.8 per cent of the population.

Coleman (2010) suggests that the government should raise awareness through policy debates on the importance of teaching in mother-tongue in the early years of schooling. Coleman divided the schools in Pakistan into four types: private elite (English medium), private non-elite (nominally English), government (Urdu) and madrassas (Urdu).

He stressed on the fact that once children grip on the basic fundamental things in mother tongue then they should be taught in national and foreign languages.

Memon (2010), professor and director of the Institute of Educational Development at Aga Khan University supported Coleman's model and said about his education background that he got his early education in Urdu till Intermediate and still managed to learn English later.

Jalal (2004), a former education minister, argues:

"When we subscribe to the experts' view that the economic future of Pakistan is linked with the expansion of information technology, it means that we are recognizing the need for making the comprehension and use of English as widespread as possible. This is now an urgent public requirement, and the government takes it as its duty to fulfill this requirement".

David (2010) point out the problem in a different manner and said that it is not a solution of every problem to make English an important language in education because no educated person can function without it. There are so many other issues that need fixing if children in government schools are to enjoy the same life and

employment opportunities as their peers in elite private schools.

3. Research Methodology

The study is a qualitative type research and descriptive in nature. For this research we have chosen interview as a medium to collect the data. The interview is taken one on one basis. After recording each interview, they are carefully transcribed for further analysis and final note is prepared.

The target sample is only those students who completed their intermediate education from Urdu medium schools and colleges and now started their university education. four respondents are selected for this study due to time constraint as well as nature of this research. Since qualitative research requires in depth study therefore limited sample was selected. For the study, we have rephrased the names of respondents as R1, R2, R3 and R4.

The sampling technique is purposive sampling. However, it was difficult to find Urdu medium intermediate students from universities because everyone knows very well that Urdu medium students are considered as lower class students as compare to English medium students so no one come forward to give their interview which creates big problem in finding the target population for the interview. After surveying from many universities, I got few Urdu medium intermediate university students for an interview.

The main questions of the research are:

- Q1. What are the difficulties Urdu medium intermediates have faced getting education in university?
- Q2. What is the perception of Urdu medium intermediates about bilingual education system in Pakistan?
- Q3. Which language is beneficial for educating people in Pakistan?

4. Finding and Discussion

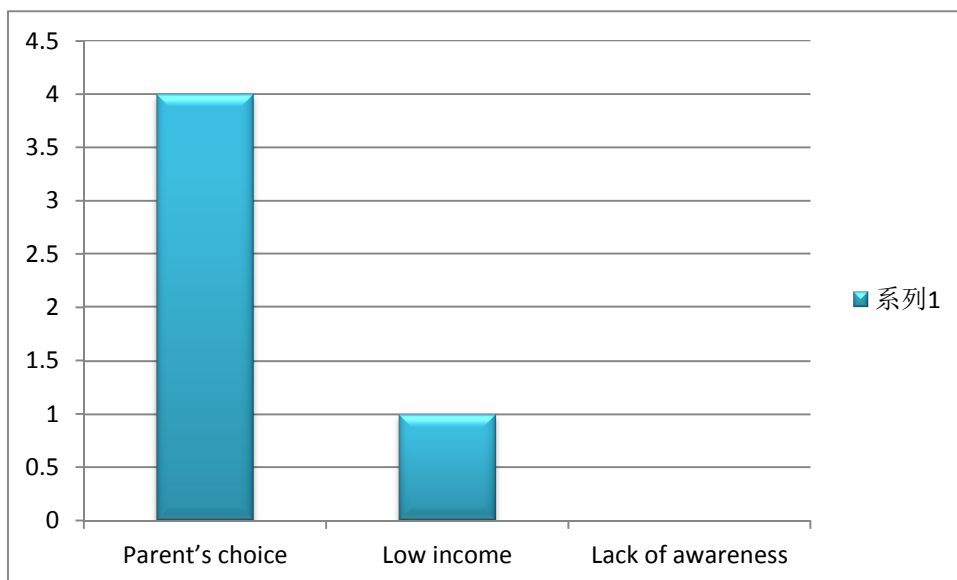
4.1. Education Background:

	Matric	Intermediate
Respondent 1	Computer Science	Commerce
Respondent 2	Science	Pre-Medical
Respondent 3	Science	Pre-Medical
Respondent 4	Arts	Commerce

In this study, there are total 4 respondents and all are females. 1 respondent is from PIMSAT university and 3 respondents are from Sindh Madressatul Islam university. Matric education of 2 respondents are from science department, 1 is from computer science department and 1 is from arts department. Intermediate education of 2 respondents are from Pre-Medical department and 2 are from commerce department.

4.2. Decision about Urdu Medium Education:

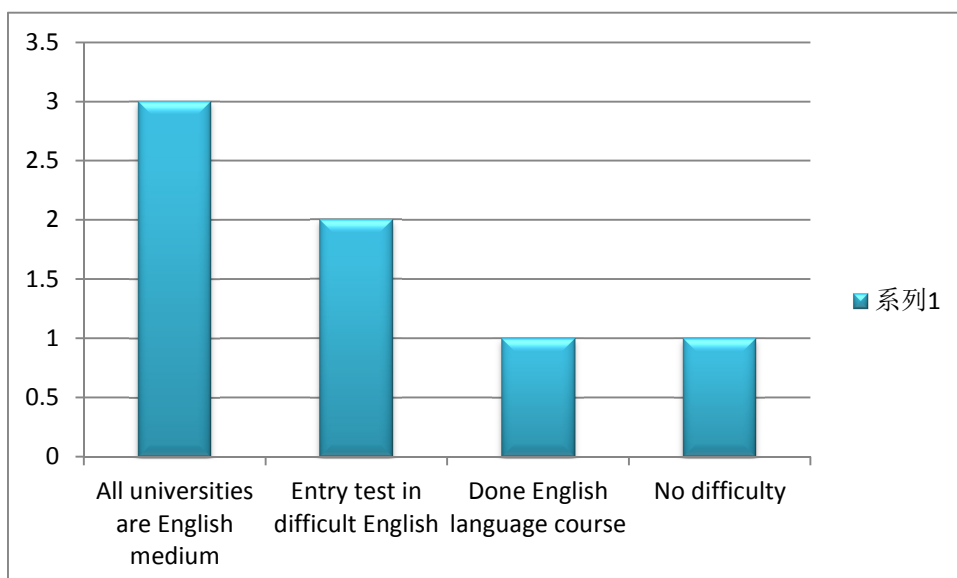
	Respondents
Parent's choice	04
Low income	01
Lack of awareness	00



In response to the question about taking decision to get education from Urdu medium schools and colleges, all of the 4 respondents said that it is their parent's choice because at this stage, they are not mature enough to take decisions about their education. Out of 4 respondents, 1 also gave the reason of low income with parent's choice. This clearly indicates that parent's decision may be due to low income because they will not choose Urdu medium schools and colleges for their children in such bilingual education system.

4.3. Difficulties faced in getting University Admission:

	Respondents
All universities are English medium	03
Entry test in difficult English	02
Done English language course	01
No difficulty	01



When respondents were asked about the difficulties they have faced getting admission in university, few respondents gave more than one reason due to which they faced difficulties in getting admission in university. Majority of the respondents said that all universities have an English medium education system that put them in great difficulty and disappointed them to continue their education.

R2 states that:

“When I started searching universities after college, I found out that all public and private universities are English medium. One university named ‘Wafaki Urdu University’ that I felt would be Urdu medium but it was also English medium so to continue my education I applied in many universities and got admission in Sindh Madressatul Islam University.

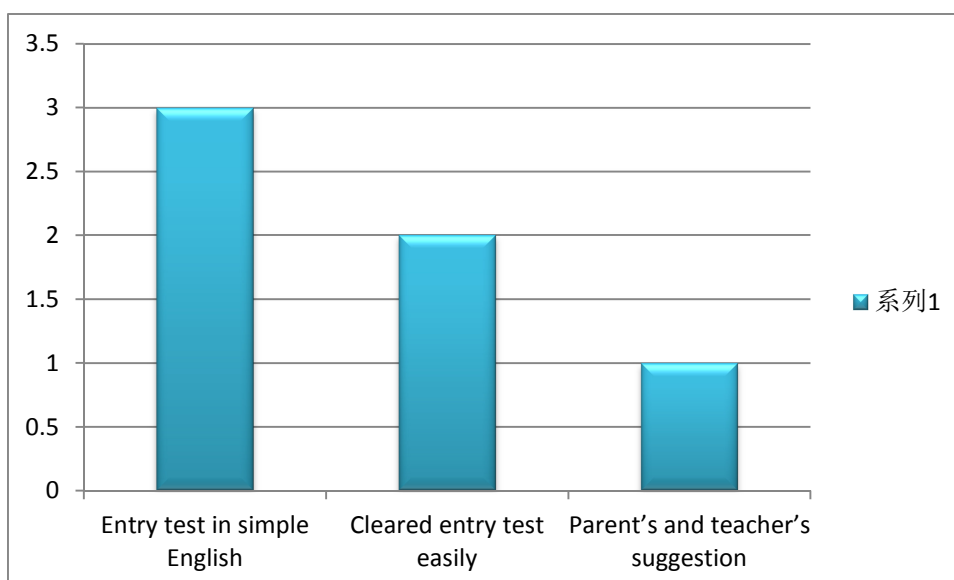
R4 states that:

“Of course, I faced difficulties because almost all universities are English medium so I was in trouble that how I continue my education so I did English language course”.

This clearly indicates that every Urdu medium student faces some of the difficulties and took different ways to overcome difficulties so that they can continue their education.

4.4. University Selection:

	Respondents
Entry test in simple English	03
Cleared entry test easily	02
Parent’s and teacher’s suggestion	01

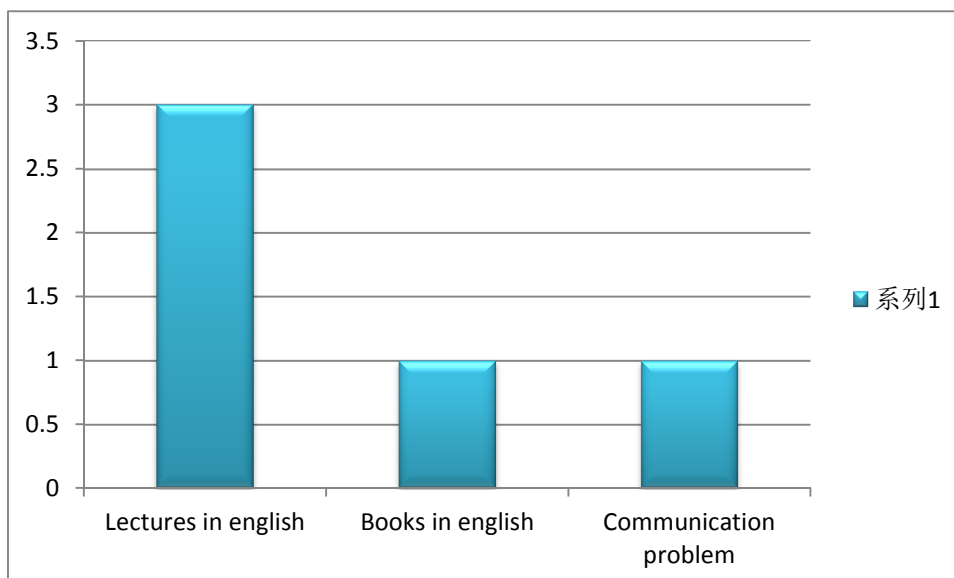


When respondents were asked about the selection of university in which they are studying, few respondents gave more than one reason of choosing their universities.

Out of 4 respondents, majority said that it is not their personal choice, they cleared entry test because it is easy and in simple English. This analysis shows that almost every respondent did a lot of efforts in continuing their education by attempting so many entry tests but concern authorities are not doing anything to resolve this issue.

4.5. Difficulties faced in getting University Education:

	Respondents
Lectures in English	03
Books in English	01
Communication problem	01
Took English language classes	01



When respondents were asked about the difficulties they faced in getting education in university, few respondents gave more than one reason. Out of 4 respondents, majority said that they have difficulty in understanding lectures.

R1 states that:

“A big problem that I faced is that my communication skills are not so sharp. In spite of knowing the answer, I could not speak than I started English language classes to improve my English”.

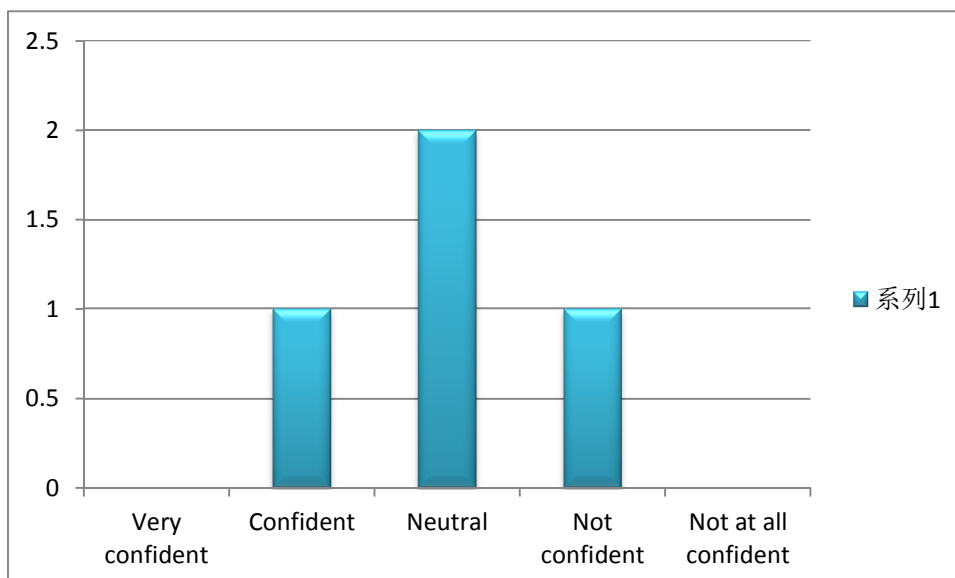
R4 states that:

“In class, all lectures are in English so I have to revise the whole lecture with the help of dictionary that wastes my lot of time”.

This clearly indicates that a person whose education background is from Urdu medium, have to face problems in every field of life because the mindset of society is quite conservative towards a person who cannot speak English.

4.6. Confidence Level in getting University Education in English:

	Respondent
Very confident	00
Confident	01
Neutral	02
Not confident	01
Not at all confident	00

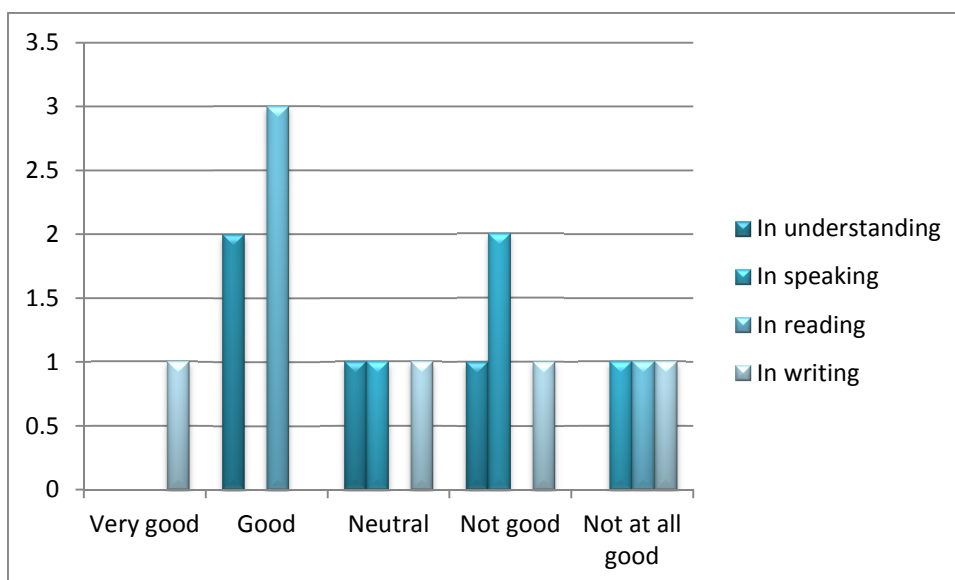


This analysis shows that language discrimination greatly affect the confidence level of Urdu medium students. Majority respondents said that they are neutral as far as the confidence level is concerned.

1 respondent is quite confident after taking English language classes whereas 1 is not confident in getting education in university.

4.7. Progress in English:

	Very good	Good	Neutral	Not good	Not at all good
In understanding	00	02	01	01	00
In speaking	00	00	01	02	01
In reading	00	03	00	00	01
In writing	01	00	01	01	01



Out of 4 respondents, 2 said that they have good progress in understanding English when others are speaking while 1 respondent said that she has neutral understanding in English and 1 respondent said that she has no progress in understand English.

Out of 4 respondents, 1 has neutral progress in speaking English while 2 students have not good progress in speaking English and progress of 1 respondent is not at all good in speaking English.

Out of 4 respondents, 3 said that they have good progress in reading English while progress of respondent is not

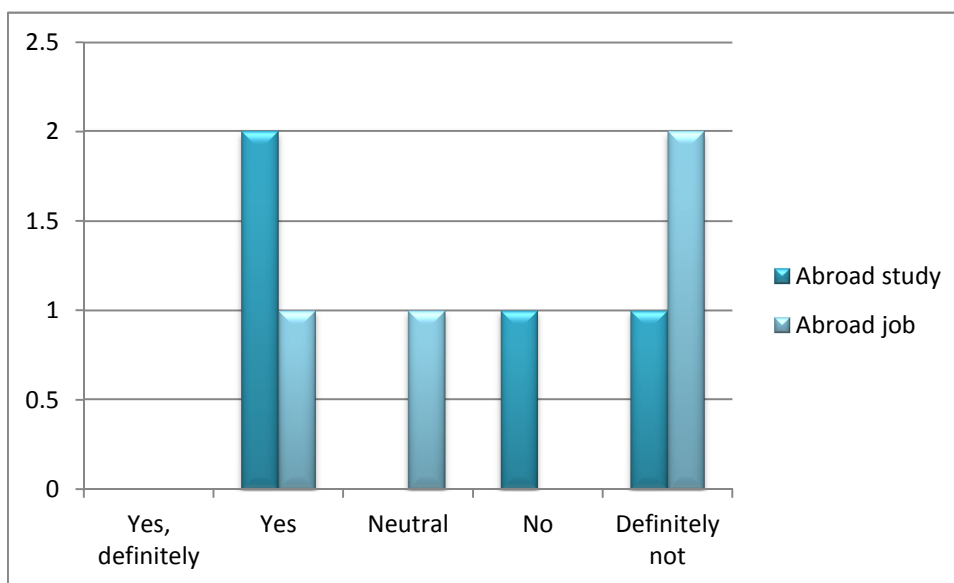
at all good in reading English.

Out of 4 respondents, 1 has very good progress in writing English while respondent has neutral progress in writing English, respondent said that her writing progress in English is not good and progress of 1 respondent is not at all good in writing English.

This analysis clearly shows that after adopting so many ways to improve English, the overall progress of all the respondents cannot at the level as compare to English medium students.

4.8. Abroad Study and Job:

	Yes, definitely	Yes	Neutral	No	Definitely not
Abroad study	00	02	00	01	01
Abroad job	00	01	01	00	02



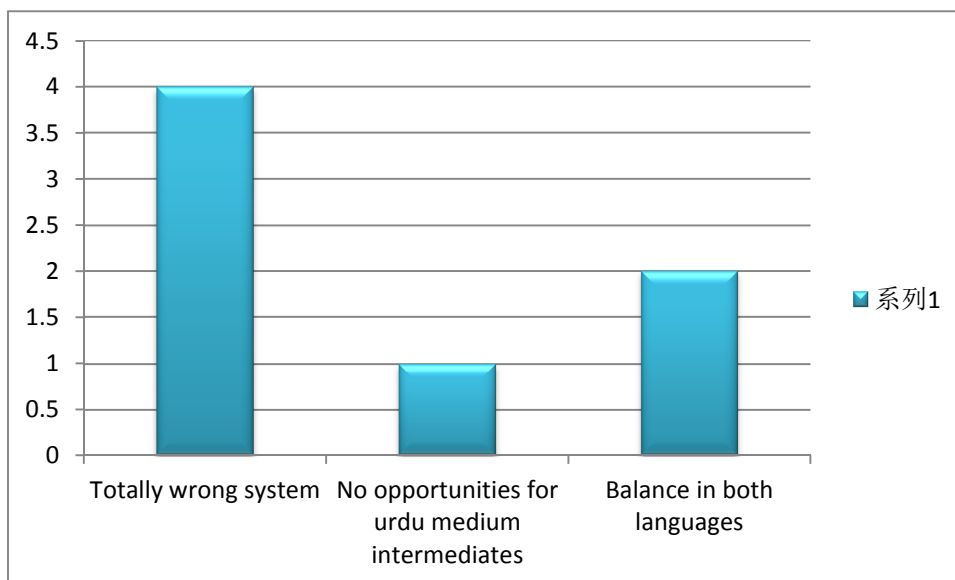
Out of 4 respondents, 2 said that they are quite capable to study abroad while 1 respondent said that she is not capable to study abroad and 1 respondent said that she is definitely not capable to study abroad.

Out of 4 respondents, 2 said that they are definitely not capable to do a job abroad while 1 respondent said that she has neutral capability of doing a job abroad and 1 respondent said that she is now quite capable to do a job abroad.

This analysis clearly shows that the students with initial Urdu medium education cannot avail future opportunities in educational and professional life.

4.9. Perception about Bilingual Education System in Pakistan:

	Respondents
Totally wrong system	04
No opportunities for Urdu medium intermediates	01
Balance in both languages	02



When respondents were asked to tell their perception about bilingual education system in Pakistan, almost every respondent said that the bilingual education perception system is totally wrong system for the future of Pakistan and specially for Urdu medium students.

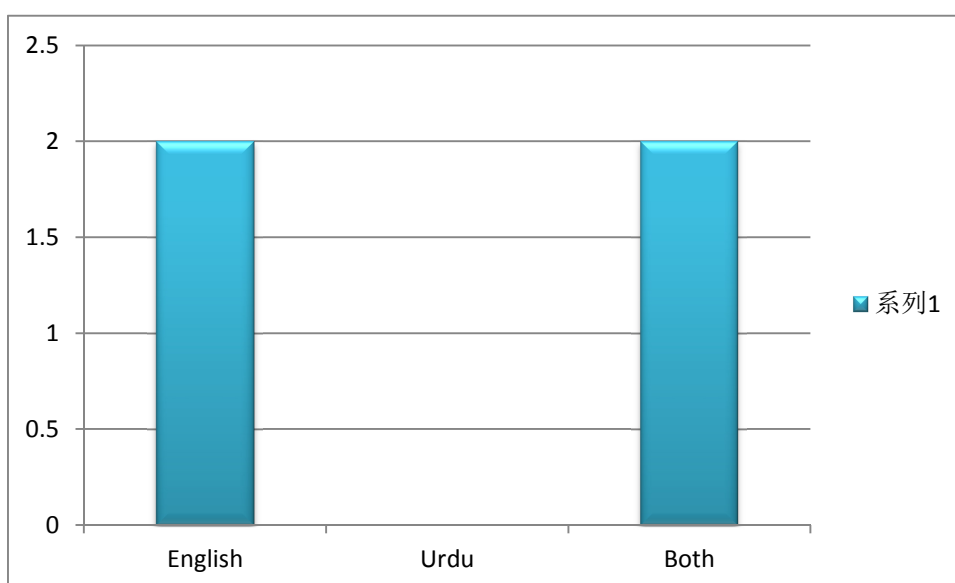
R3 states that:

“According to me, ‘BLKUL GHALAT’ (totally wrong). Education should be totally English medium or totally Urdu medium. The reason we are not getting success, is this Bilingual Education System”.

This analysis shows that there should be proper education system under which every student should provide equal opportunities.

4.10. Beneficial Language for Pakistan:

	Respondents
English	02
Urdu	00
Both	02



In response to this question, no one agreed to have complete Urdu medium education system in Pakistan. This analysis clearly shows that government should make English an official language of Pakistan by eliminating

Urdu from education system or government should apply both languages in an appropriate manner in education system of Pakistan. In spite of better knowledge and education than English medium students, Urdu medium students feel hesitation in speaking. English is very important to become connected with the world and in technology whereas Urdu is our national language and it cannot be ignored.

5. Conclusion

The objective of the study is to investigate and analyze the impacts and problems faced by Urdu medium intermediates in Bilingual Education system of Pakistan. The results reveal that there is a problem for Urdu medium intermediates in universities. Almost all of the respondents are found to have great difficulty in getting university education specially their confidence level and their educational progress is badly affected by this bilingual education system of Pakistan. The results are highly indicator for in depth study for further analysis. The future research area would emphasis on large sample sets and wide areas of Pakistan.

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Appendix

(a) Visited universities of Karachi

1. Preston Institute of Management Science and Technology.
2. Sindh Madressatul Islam university.

(b) Interview Protocol Form

Project: Effects of Bilingual Education System on University Students.

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Notes to interviewee:

Thank you for your participation. I believe your input will be valuable to this research and in helping grow all of our professional practice.

Approximate length of interview: 15 minutes.

Purpose of research:

- To investigate the problems faced by Urdu medium intermediates in Bilingual Education system.
- To analyze the impact of bilingual education on development of Pakistan.
- To find the reason behind this bilingual discrimination all over Pakistan.

Four major questions:

- Q1. What are the difficulties Urdu medium intermediates have faced getting education in university?
 Q2. What is the perception of Urdu medium intermediates about bilingual education system in Pakistan?
 Q3. Which language is beneficial for educating people in Pakistan?
 Q4. What is the role of language in development of Pakistan?

(c) INTERVIEW DRAFT FOR URDU MEDIUM STUDENTS

1. In which field you did your ?

Matric :

Intermediate:

2. Why you choose to get education in Urdu medium school or college?

- Parent's choice Low Income Lack of awareness Other please write:

3. What are the difficulties you have faced getting admission in university?

4. Why you choose this university?

5. What are the difficulties you have faced getting education in university?

6. How confident do you feel when you are getting university education in English?

- Very confident Confident Neutral Not confident Not at all confident

	Very good	Good	Neutral	Not good	Not at all good
7.(i): What is your progress in understanding people when they speak in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(ii): What is your progress in speaking English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(iii): What is your progress in reading English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(iv): What is your progress in writing English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes, definitely	Yes	Neutral	No	Definitely not
8.(i): Has it gives you the confidence to feel you could study successfully abroad, at some point in the future?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(ii): Has it given you the confidence to feel you could be employed successfully in a job of work abroad, at some point in the future?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. What is your perception about bilingual education system in Pakistan?

10. Which language do you think is beneficial for educating people in Pakistan?

- English Urdu Both

Give Reason:

Thank you for your cooperation.

(d) Interview Transcript

Respondent 1:	Student of PIMSAT University.
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Q.1: What are the difficulties you have faced getting admission in university?

As such I have not faced any difficulty ALHAMDULILLAH!

Q.2: Why you choose this university?

My parents and teachers suggested me about PIMSAT University.

Q.3: What are the difficulties you have faced getting education in university?

A big problem that I faced is that my communication skills are not so sharp. In spite of knowing the answer, I could not speak than I started English language classes to improve my English.

Q.4: What is your perception about bilingual education system in Pakistan?

My point of view is that there should not be two language education system. If you are in English medium, you need to be good in Urdu. Those students who are in English medium private institutions are not good in Urdu, their Urdu skills are not good, similarly Urdu medium students have no skills in English therefore both languages should be in balance.

Q.5: Which language do you think is beneficial for educating people in Pakistan?

English Urdu Both

Give Reason:

No! Both languages should be in balance.

Respondent 2:	Student of Sindh Madressatul Islam University.
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Q.1: What are the difficulties you have faced getting admission in university?

When I started searching universities after college, I found out that all public and private universities are English medium. One university named 'Wafaki Urdu University' that I felt would be Urdu medium but it was also English medium so to continue my education I applied in many universities and got admission in Sindh Madressatul Islam University.

Q.2: Why you choose this university?

As I told you before that I applied in many universities and I got admission in Sindh Madressatul Islam university because entry test is a bit easy and in simple English as compare to other universities.

Q.3: What are the difficulties you have faced getting education in university?

Yes obviously I am facing some difficulties because lectures are in English and books are also in English. I do not understand anything in class. I have to revise the lectures in Urdu at home.

Q.4: What is your perception about bilingual education system in Pakistan?

There should be balance in both languages.

Q.5: Which language do you think is beneficial for educating people in Pakistan?

English Urdu Both

Give Reason:

Both languages are beneficial because English become helpful in connecting us with outer world and helpful in today's latest technology and on the other hand Urdu is our national language so we cannot ignore it.

Respondent 3:	Student of Sindh Madressatul Islam University.
---------------	------------------------------------------------

Q.1: What are the difficulties you have faced getting admission in university?

First of all we are coming from Urdu medium schools and colleges so we think of any university like Iqra University or Bahria University, the think is that they are completely English medium but if we want to search for Urdu medium university, we are helpless.

Q.2: Why you choose this university?

Test was easy so cleared easily.

Q.3: What are the difficulties you have faced getting education in university?

Difficult to understand English because our Urdu background is totally from Urdu medium. Do not understand lectures.

Q.4: What is your perception about bilingual education system in Pakistan?

According to me, 'BLKUL GHALAT' (totally wrong). Education should be totally English medium or totally Urdu medium. The reason we are not getting success, is this Bilingual Education System.

Q.5: Which language do you think is beneficial for educating people in Pakistan?

English Urdu Both

Give Reason:

English would be better for our education system because hear every work is being done in English level; in offices, schools, colleges, universities; everyone uses English, so it should be English medium. If one student speaks English and other speaks Urdu, may be Urdu speaking is more intelligent but he become confuse and feel hesitation as compare to English medium students.

Respondent 4:	Student of Sindh Madressatul Islam University.
---------------	------------------------------------------------

Q.1: What are the difficulties you have faced getting admission in university?

Of course, I faced difficulties because almost all universities are English medium so I was in trouble that how I continue my education so I did English language course.

Q.2: Why you choose this university?

Gave entry test of many universities and I cleared the test of Sindh Madressatul Islam University.

Q.3: What are the difficulties you have faced getting education in university?

In class, all lectures are in English so I have to revise the whole lecture with the help of dictionary that wastes my lot of time.

Q.4: What is your perception about bilingual education system in Pakistan?

Urdu medium students do not get opportunities so this system is not beneficial.

Q.5: Which language do you think is beneficial for educating people in Pakistan?

English Urdu Both

Give Reason:

Of course English language is beneficial because there is no future of Urdu language in Pakistan.

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