

## Threats and Opportunities of Globalization: Analyzing the Impact of Globalization on Pashto Language

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### Original Article

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### Abstract

*Globalization promotes socio-cultural, political, and economic integration of communities and countries across the globe. Globalization also results in cultural and intellectual assimilation and produce both positive and negative impacts on local cultural fabric particularly languages. The present study aims to find out the threats posed by globalization to local languages and particularly analyze the impact of globalization on Pashto language. The study was conducted in the two Districts including Dir Lower and District Swat of Malakand Division. Primary data was collected from a sample of 12 Pashto Language Lecturers and Assistant Professors (05 from University of Malakand and 07 from different colleges) conveniently selected from the two districts. Data was collected through in-depth interview, using interview guide. The collected information was analyzed qualitatively under different themes to clarify the issue under study, derive study findings and conclusion. The study shows that globalization is an omnipresent phenomenon and despite its positive aspects it has threatened Pashto language and culture at large. It was also found that due to globalization the Pashto dialects, concepts and terminologies have either disappeared or changed which will create identity and cultural preservation issues in future. The study suggests that academicians particularly related to Pashto language need to consider severity of the issue and work for preservation of Pashto language to protect cultural identity of Pashtun.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Identity, Globalization, Intellectual Assimilation, Threats, Linguistic Performance, Language Erosion

### Introduction

Globalization has been a widely known and prevalent phenomenon of the modern world. Globalization refer to the flow of capital, goods, services, skills, technologies, and labor across borders accompanied by the dissemination of concomitant taste, values, and worldviews across the world (Muzaffar, 2008). The term globalization was coined by Ronald Robertson in 1985 (Currie, 2005), which refers to the compression and intensification of integration of the world societies irrespective of geographical frontiers (Robertson, 1992). Globalization also refers to the processes by which people of the world are incorporated into a single world society, wherein distant localities are linked in a way that local happenings are shaped by the events occurring many miles away, creating transnational flows of networks and thus impacts the socio-cultural fabric particularly language (Albrow & King 1990; Antony Giddens, 2003).

On one hand globalization has created linguistic homogenization and has produced multiple avenues for learning different languages, however; on the other side it has maintained linguistic dominance. In this context, the develop states has involved the creation, adoption and promotion of a single national language for maintaining their dominance and hegemony. The global uniform agenda for education and cultural expressions in other dialects and languages within the national frontiers have created threats to the survival and promotion of local languages. Similarly, in line with global agenda at national level too different dialects and languages occupy different positions wherein one language is the usually recognized as a standard and a prescribed norm for use and promotion while the rest are undermined and ignored (Milroy & Milroy 1999). The process of globalization and the predominance of English at the expense of local languages is not a new phenomenon rather it is result of centuries-long colonialism and subordination in which local varieties of language are eroded and replaced with more universal varieties.

Although, within the contradictory mix up of global networks and local identities, language plays a critical role; however; the intersection of language with international networks have propelled English as a single dominant international language which is spoken and used more broadly than probably any other language in world. The global presence of English language at the time of birth of the internet and the telecommunications industry has used English as a de facto lingua franca of online communication. Today, English is probably used on about 50% of websites and nearly 90% of sites used for international e-commerce (Crytal, 1999). Scholars of cultural studies and linguists speak about linguistic genocide and fingers at globalization, formal education and mass media for the massacre of local languages and results in linguistic determinism (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2001).

Due to the process of globalization English language has been utilized as a widely used source of communication and it has created linguistic imperialism and has shaped local culture and identity. In this regard, the killing of local language and cultural values thus threatens the identity of Pashtun and ultimately disturb their social solidarity based upon language. This study is based upon the argument that globalization has resulted in integration and homogenization and create a pluralistic society. However; globalization in its essence has posed significant threats to local languages across societies including Pashto Language. Further, the massive transformation as resulted by globalization in way of life, folk, custom, tradition, old structure of Pashtun society also creates challenges to Pashtun cultural identity (Ahmed, 2007).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The twentieth century has brought massive socioeconomic and cultural transformation at global level. Generally, led by the global north the process of globalization has been a type of new colonialism as it has impacted all aspects of life particularly in the global south. Pakistan in general and Pashtoon society in particular has witnessed some positive progress in because globalization has exposed it to more open, educated, tolerant, and flexible societies across. However; it is also evident that the process of globalization has also brought major changes in life pattern of the local communities particularly their language has been changed (Sotshangane, 2002). In fact, language is a source of preserving our identity and promotes our culture. Besides, native language is a source of information for its members, helps them to maintain their life in a proper way and produce social cohesion and conformity in society. Despite the fact that local language plays an important role in the life of communities, the process of globalization has undermined this importance and has posed wide threats to Pashto language. The present study was conducted in two districts of Malakand Division including Dir Lower and Swat to explore the

impact of globalization on Pashto language. Although, the study is exploring the broader factors however; it is focusing on the following specific objectives:

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify different challenges to Pashto language in the era of globalization
2. To explore the impact of local language erosion on Pashtoon culture and identity

### **Methods and Procedures**

This study was conducted under qualitative research design. The study was carried out in two districts of Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Primary data was collected from a sample of 12 conveniently selected respondents (Lecturer and Assistant Professors) conveniently selected from different colleges of District Dir Lower and District Swat as well as from University of Malakand. Further, data was collected through in-depth interview using interview guide (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015; Neuman and Dickinson, 2003). Data collection was continued until a point of saturation was reached. The collected information was passed through different phases (familiarization with data, creating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes etc), and a thematic discussion has been generated to clarify the issue under question and derive study findings and conclusion (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

The concept of globalization and its impact on local culture and languages is not new and this issue has been widely discussed in different disciplines. Different social scientists have debated the phenomenon of globalization and a chunk of scholarship is available on the issue. The present study is informed by different theories and amalgamation of these theories helped in developing study framework and broader understanding of the issue under question. In this context, the hyperglobalist approach explains that in fact the world had entered a global age and globalization has spread across. The exponents of this approach legalize the dominance of global capitalism and free market economy irrespective of its consequences on culture and societies (Tikly & Crossley, 2001). The logic of hyperglobalist stance is underpinned by "neo-liberal agenda" (Held, 2004), and argue in favor of re-interpretation of global social, economic and political relations under the umbrella of neo-liberalism (Green, 1997; Waks, 2003). This approach also views cultural hybridization as a result of globalization (Green, 1997), and clarifies that due to cultural hybridization local cultures would lose identity and indigenous control over their values. Contrary to globalist, the skeptic approach discusses globalization from multiple different angles and argues that the process of economic globalization has led to greater polarization between the developing and developed countries (Tikly, 2001). Globalization has diminished the importance of local education, language and culture and thus poses significant threats to local communities. Further, the transformational theorists agree with hyperglobalist and support their stance of global interconnectedness. According to this approach globalization creates first world and third world countries due to nations. Some nations get full advantage of globalization while the other fall behind and are unable to reap its benefits properly (Taylor, 1997). On the basis of above discussion, this study is based upon the argument that the center-periphery relationship creates global inequality and impact language, culture, people, and gender relationship in the periphery. Thus, the process of globalization creates linguistic imperialism and results in suppression of local language (Pashto), that ultimately impact our education, politics, culture, communication, patterns of interaction and identity.

### Process of Themes Identification and Analysis

In qualitative research interviews are commonly used for collecting field information and after collection of the information the next phase is data interpretation and analysis. Thematic analysis is commonly used for data analysis in qualitative research (Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020). Themes are identified across the collected information after familiarization with and transcription of the interviews (Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997). Thematic analysis is valuable in capturing the complicated meaning within the data (Guest, 2012), and it helps in linking the analysis with study objectives and thus provide an accurate picture of the research issue (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study aims to explore the threats and challenges of globalization to local language (Pashto). The field data was collected through in-depth interview, and after following Braun & Clark (2006) thematic research model of six steps the following themes were identified for discussion and clarification of the issue.

Different Themes
Globalization, an opportunity for Promotion of Pashto Language
Globalization, a Threat and Challenge to Pashto Language
Globalization, the Erosion of Pashto Language and Pashtun Culture and Identity

### Globalization, an Opportunity for Promotion of Pashto Language

The process of globalization has resulted in the growth of English language and it has become an international language (Asraf, 2005). The increasing use and wide recognition of English have evoked changes in language education particularly among linguistic minorities and indigenous communities. This has resulted in a phenomenon of multilingualism (Swan, 2001), and has integrated global communities together. At the bottom of this system are world's small languages (peripheral languages), which constitute 98% of the world languages, however; these are used by less than 10% of the population of the world. At the next level are central languages (e.g., Chinese, Hindi, and Russian), connecting peripheral languages. In this context, the process of globalization provides opportunities for the promotion of Pashto language across the globe. Primary information also shows similar results and most of the respondents were of the opinion that globalization is a significant vehicle that navigate Pashto language across communities if proper forums were utilized. An extract from interview:

*“Globalization can play a significant role in the promotion and growth of Pashto language. Globalization is intensely media driven and proper utilization of the social media networks will help in promotion of Pashto language. Today some websites and mobile applications are in Pashto language and these applications are helpful for the promotion of Pashto language” (1SD39).*

The process of globalization has made the world a global village in which people from different parts are easily connected. As, we learn other languages from distant communication, in the same way we can promote Pashto. Besides, globalization has connected us with global networks and platforms that are helpful to spread the importance of Pashto language to the entire world. The study also found that connectivity with the global digital networks facilitates the promotion of Pashto literature and it has made academic research in Pashto language easier and

accessible across the globe. Similar opinions were also shared by respondents. An extract from interview:

*“Globalization has increased access to different global platform that are helpful for the promotion and development of Pashto language. Through these platforms Pashto literature is easily available to huge number of people online. In this sense, I consider globalization as an opportunity for the revival of the significance of Pashto language” (3AS47).*

He further added that:

*“If we want compete with world, we have to focus on the principle of science. Pashto language and literature need to adopt internationally acceptable and applicable strategies to aware the people about the richness and importance of the Pashto language. In this way, the global community will take interest in learning of Pashto language through digital connectivity” (5NS36).*

Thus, field data analysis indicates that globalization is an opportunity for the promotion of Pashto language. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that if others languages have spread through globalization Pashto language also have the ability to developed and spread. We need to developed space for Pashto in global website and internet to spread it across and make it a globally recognized language.

### **Globalization, as a Threat and Challenge to Pashto Language**

The processes of globalization have resulted in transformation societies across the world and Pashtoon society is not an exception. Although, globalization has influenced all aspects of Pashtoon society, however; its impact on Pashto language is particularly evident. The concept and emergence of global village has changed traditional values and outlook of our society and the rampant use of English words in Pashto have made Pashto as a marginalized language. In recent years a major shift towards English communication has been witnessed and its impacts is evident on other aspects of Pashtoon life and culture (Rahman, 2010). In this regard, primary data also show similar results and majority of the respondents expressed that globalization has been a challenge to the existence and survival of Pashto language.

*“The big challenge to Pashto language is maintaining its existence. Due to the influence of other languages Pashtoons are not reading and writing Pashto language. Usually, people give more importance to English and recognize its learning necessary. English has been considered as a requirement of daily life and a tool for development. Due to the global prevalence of English Pashto language has been ignored and remained underdeveloped” (3MD44).*

In this context, majority of respondent uttered that Pashto language has not remained pure as it was in past. It has been a mix of several languages and the original version is declining with each passing day. Our children are not aware about the basic of Pashto language while government is also not giving proper importance to this important issue of national significance and identity. If the present decline of Pashto language continued it will lose its identity and will not survive. An extract from interview:

*“The main challenges to Pashto language is not from outside but we are responsible for it. Look, our education is delivered in foreign language and in many private schools*

*students are not allowed to speak in Pashto language. In domestic and family level interaction as well as daily conversation the general community and particularly the educated people mostly use English and ignore Pashto” (8BD48).*

While reflecting upon this, another respondent added:

*“The process of globalization has changed reading and speaking of Pashto. English words are commonly used in daily communication and all types of advertisements use English. We have neglected Pashto in every field of life and I fear our children will not be able to read and write in Pashto” (7ND40).*

Almost all the respondents share their view about the potential of Pashto language. Few of them explained that according to UNESCO report half of the world languages move towards decline, however; Pashto language has maintained its status and identity and survived from complete decline. They expressed that there is no space for Pashto language in electronic media in this globalize era. The huge numbers of websites are available in other languages and a single website in Pashto language is not available (Manan, David, & Dumanig, 2017). Similarly, different news channels in Pashto language are only working for promotion of political interests and not representing Pashto language and literature in its real essence. A respondent specifically told:

*“In school the first word is taught in English not Pashto. In our whole academic career, we are told about the importance of English and the portrayal of Pashto in our school’s curriculum is inferior as compared to English. The names of most of items/things we use in daily life are presented in English not Pashto. This promotes the dominancy of English in our society at large” (7ND40 & 8BD48).*

In this context, another respondent explained:

*“This is a reality that globalization has widely impacted Pashto language. Although, we cannot ignore the importance of English in this globalized world, however; Pashto as a local language has its own significance and it is a source of our identity and unity. I suggest inclusion of Pashto as compulsory subject in our curriculum up to higher secondary education. This will help in maintaining the status of Pashto and will keep it alive” (9KS45).*

Conclusively, majority of the respondent were of the view that globalization is one of the major threats to the existence and survival of Pashto language. It has impacted the promotion and purity of Pashto in reading and writing. Due to the wide prevalence of and significance of English language it has been considered as a tool for personal and communal growth and development. Academician and general community must work for the maintenance and survival of Pashto language and only globalization shall not be blamed for the decline of Pashto, rather lack of political will and individual interest also results in lessening/decreasing the importance of Pashto.

### **Globalization, the Erosion of Pashto Language and Pashtun Culture and Identity**

Undoubtedly, globalization has long-lasting impacts on our way of life particularly our language and dialect. Although, Pashto is our first language however; English words are frequently utilized in daily life conversation and discussions. The prevalence of an expanded number of English medium schools and imported curriculum has increased the charm and use of English language and it has been recognized as a source of pride, fame and class in our society (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002). Primary data also show similar results and majority of respondents shared their views about

the erosion of Pashto language and excessive use of English in daily life interaction. Few respondents shockingly shared that if such a trend continues that day is not far away that we will lose our identity as Pashtoon. An extract from interview:

*“In fact, globalization is a massive change and inescapable feature of the today’s world. It has brought enormous changes in the society and has changed the status and use of Pashto language. The media and education system are constantly promoting English language and it will ultimately result in erosion of Pashto language and Pashtoon cultural identity” (11MD51).*

He further explained that:

*“In this era of globalization, the importance of English is promoted and the value and significance of local language is usually disregarded. Although, we require learning of other languages for interacting with the outside world. However; we need to focus on the native language and its promotion because it is a source of our identity and symbol of our existence” (11MD51).*

It is a matter of concern that individuals who are capable to communicate in English are thought to be fit in the exclusive upper class. As a result of this, local languages and dialects are in danger of extinction. According to linguists count there are approximately 6,800 different languages in the world today, but these languages are not spoken equally and almost 417 languages are considered virtually extinct today. These languages are spoken by very few or elderly people. This trend in extinction of local languages is widely attributed to the spread of English language (Grenoble & Whaley, 1998; Mühlhäusler, 2002). In this context, field information also reveals similar results and a respondent expressed that:

*“Pashto as a local language is declining in its significance and if proper steps were not taken for its preservation, it will completely disappear. It is responsibility of all of us to maintain and preserve our language and identity. Awareness is required among public about the importance of native language for cultural identity. Different forums shall be utilized for the promotion of local languages” (12QD37; 10MS54).*

In-fact, language is a source of progress and a powerful tool of development. Language is a source of one’s existence and keeps the culture alive and functional and provides social identity to us. The respondents were also of the opinion that language play a vital role in growth and development of societies and erosion of language ultimately results in erosion of cultural identity of communities. They also expressed their fear about the constant decline of Pashto language and told that serious and stern steps are required to maintain the originality, significance and identity of Pashto language.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that globalization in all its facets and manifestation has penetrated in communities across the globe. It has brought certain positive aspects that are helpful for growth and development; however; it has been one of the major challenges towards local culture and language. The process of globalization has created linguistic imperialism and the powerful nations have used it in their favor. Further, it was also found that although Pashto has shown some resilience and maintained its identity in wake of globalization however; it has not maintained its purity and significance. The speaker and reader of Pashto language are decreasing with each

passing day and English has becoming a powerful means of communication and interaction. The study revealed that we could not live in isolation and better education delivered English language is require, but preservation of Pashto language is also necessary for survival of Pashtoon culture and identity in this post-modern era. For this purpose, basic and necessary knowledge of Pashto language and its terminologies is also required for our students, which is helpful for our cultural preservation and identity.

### Suggestions

On the basis of study findings and conclusion it is suggested that people shall learn other languages as a need of the time, however; they shall not ignore importance of their native language. Education sector shall promote the importance of native language and Pashto shall be made compulsory subject up to intermediate level. Further, different types of media platform are required to enhance the status of the Pashto language. It was also suggested that family members are required to use Pashto language in their daily interaction and conversation. In addition, electronic and print media should play their role in promoting Pashto language in different ways to secure our linguistic heritage.

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