

‘Keep an Eye on Your Son! He Is Reading Too Much These Days’: Understanding the Reading Attitudes in English of Rural and Urban Sindhi Students

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Abstract—Research in second language reading has demonstrated that positive reading attitudes are very crucial in motivating a reader to engage in meaningful reading practices. The exploration of such findings is very limited in the context of Sindh, Pakistan. Learners in Sindh, Pakistan’s rural and urban areas experience life quality generally and reading resources and motivation very differently. This study explored a very basic question of the differences between the reading attitudes of learners from both areas. The findings suggest wide differences between the reading attitudes of rural and urban learners. An understanding of their reading attitudes leads one to devise ways for inculcating or reinforcing positive reading attitudes in further studies.

Index Terms—L2 reading attitudes, reading motivation, rural and urban, reading culture, self perception as a reader, utilitarian value of reading, personal involvement in reading, reading anxiety

I. INTRODUCTION

It is generally recommended that the question of how and why learners read can be answered in a better way through a sociocultural lens (Arzubiaga, 2002). For learners of diverse social cultures get exposed to different reading practices and availability of reading resources. Learners growing up in literacy rich environment, where a positive value is ascribed to reading, will develop positive attitudes towards reading than the learners who remain less exposed to stimulating reading environment. Learners with positive reading attitudes may read with more interest and may remain advantaged in terms of reading abilities, future career. For learners with negative reading attitudes may avoid reading.

Some reading attitude models too have acknowledged the impact of social life on the reading attitudes (McKenna 1994). Despite this growing interest, there has been little research on exploring the reading attitudes of learners in the light of their diverse social and cultural backgrounds. This study explores the reading attitudes of learners from two geographical locations-rural and urban in Pakistani context.

To understand the above, next section presents the literature review in the following fields:

a) Reading Attitudes: As the study explores the reading attitudes so this section reviews literature with twofold purposes: i) to understand the construct of reading attitude ii) how they have been explored

b) Rural and Urban difference: Although there have not been direct research on the differences between reading attitudes of rural and urban learners, there have been considerable research on rural and urban on reading achievement and performance. This section explores these studies to understand how the gap between both the groups has been viewed.

c) Rural and Urban Sindh: A short review will be given on the scenario of Sindh in order to depict the rural and urban parts of Sindh. This section would help the readers to understand findings of the present study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Reading Attitudes

A successful reading program -whether in first language or in second language- must not only develop children who can read but also children who do read (Harris and Sipay, 1985, p. 562). For students to have the desire to read, they must have a favorable attitude toward reading. McKenna et al (1995) suggest,

Even for the fluent reader, poor attitude may occasion a choice not to read when other options exist, a condition now generally known as aliteracy. (p. 934)

Moreover, reading attitudes may affect the level of reading proficiency in learners also. The more positive the attitude, the more positive the participation in reading activities (Black, 2006). Consequently, it is more likely that s/he would improve reading proficiency. On the other hand, negative attitudes bring in a set of weak self-efficacy and beliefs, lack of interest, unmotivated mind-set. Those students with negative attitudes engage less often with texts and generally achieve at lower levels than their age peers (McKenna et al, 1995).

Such a link between reading attitudes and reading ability may highlight the next important aspect. Reading abilities may affect students' level of academic achievement, which in turn may influence their employment choices in the future. Thus, negative attitudes can impact directly on society and the workforce of the future. This emphasises further on recognising the significance of one's reading attitudes.

In second language learning, it becomes rather more important to take account of learners' reading attitudes. Reading in a second language is much more complicated than in one's own language for many reasons. For example, L2 readers have to read in a different language about different people, different culture and different ideas. Particularly, in the context of Pakistan, English as a second language is now taken as a passport to a better future and sophisticated jobs. If a student fails to read in English efficiently, then s/he may deny him/herself from achieving many luxurious career options. So, it becomes very important for teachers of reading in L2 to take into account learners' reading attitudes in L2, to understand their reading behaviour and their reading problems. Such an approach could possibly help in getting through the affective barrier for students to a certain extent.

As attitude is a psychological term so there have been myriad of definitions. In second language research, many researchers have used Mathewson's (1994) tripartite definition of reading attitude. According to this definition, reading attitude is made up of three constructs: cognitive, affective and conative. This study used this definition but focused on only the former two as the conative aspect deals with observing the real behaviour of the participants. Many rural parts of Sindh do not have adequate library facilities or even proper books availability in local books. Therefore, their behaviours cannot be compared in an appropriate manner.

Cognitive reading attitudes: There has been limited but good amount of research on this aspect of reading attitude. Following sub categories of cognitive reading attitudes have been drawn.

(a) Self Perception as a reader: Learners develop self perceptions as a reader about themselves based on their internal evaluations and beliefs regarding their capabilities to perform on a reading task. The evaluations may be positive or negative in nature, Arzubiaga (2002) Gambrell et al's (1996)

(b) Value for reading: It is the importance and significance that learners attach to reading practices. It is further divided in the following sub categories in Yamashita's (2004, 2007 and 2010) studies:

c) Self Involvement in reading: Self Involvement in reading consists upon a reader's feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction curiosity or desire for reading for its own sake (Yamashita 2007).

d) Reading anxiety: It is a feeling of stress or nervousness related to texts during the process of reading.

B. Rural and Urban

A growing body of educational research has investigated the differences in performances of students from rural and urban backgrounds. Like many other areas in educational research, the studies investigating differences in academic achievement across rural and urban settings have yielded a rather inconsistent pattern of findings. While some studies have failed to find any statistically significant difference (Edington and Koehler, 1987; Haller et al., 1993) others have reported urban students having a significant advantage over rural students (Young, 1998). In other studies, however, students from rural schools were found better than their urban counterparts (Alspaugh and Harting, 1995). Although, these studies together do not give a conclusive picture, they do suggest that there are differences between rural and urban. The present study is first of its kind which compares reading attitudes of rural and urban in Sindh, Pakistan context.

C. Rural and Urban Sindh, Pakistan

The participants in this study come from both parts of Sindh, which remain poles apart from each other in terms of resources, social life style, education, job opportunities, information communication technology and almost in all aspects. The rural and urban gaps are noticed in public and official records too. The slow growth in the rural sector has led to widespread rural poverty and large and widening income gap with urban areas (The Nation 2008). Here, a small account of educational background, reading culture and their linguistic background is given in order to facilitate my reader to understand the findings of the study.

Education: In education sector, Sindh suffers with enrolment deficit in schools, urban-rural and gender disparity and a yawning gap of illiteracy (The News on Sunday 2014). According to the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey 2012-13, overall literacy rate in rural areas of the Sindh province is 42 percent only compared to 77 per cent in urban areas. 'Unfortunately, the issue of quality service delivery in rural areas receives scant attention specifically and it has been seen that the worst public sector schools are in the rural areas' (White Paper Report 2007). Urban settings enjoy better quality of English than teaching and learning opportunities as compared to the rural areas (Dawn Newspaper 2014).

Linguistic Background: Sindh is linguistically a rich province. People speak many languages such as, Dhatki, Goaria, Jandavra, Kutchi, Memoni, Mewari, Parkari Koli, Saraiki and Sindhi. Sindhi is the official regional language of the province. The majority of people of Sindh speak Sindhi as their first language, Urdu as national language and English as official language. In rural Sindh, 92 % people have Sindhi as L1 (Population Census 1998). Sindhi is mainly used for communication in daily business, public gathering, shopping and in all aspects of life. The urban Sindh is populated with Mohajirs, who speak Urdu as their L1. The present study used urban Sindhis only, who speak Sindhi as their L1. The indigenous Urban Sindhis interact with Urdu-speaking Mohajirs in business, education, personal and professional relationships and for these purposes in Urdu language. They also use English to a large extent particularly in education, government offices, court, and formal address in public gatherings.

Reading culture: According to Sindh-Baluchistan reading council report 2013, the literacy rate in Sindh province is 59%. Only 40% of the literate population can read simple text in local languages. A significant part of society lacks the reading habit. Generally students read selected portions of class textbooks to prepare for their eventual examinations. Education managers, school head teachers, and classroom teachers rarely buy any books for their own reading. Most schools lack library facilities even. The situation is worst in rural parts of Sindh. Availability of reading resources is another issue in rural Sindh. The common rural people do not have access to public libraries for they are located in the urban areas or in some district headquarters (The Culture Tourism and Antiquities Department, Sindh, Pakistan Website). The most common source is Sindhi newspapers. Moreover, one may access the academic syllabus books to some extent.

Based on the above studies, following research questions are taken in this study

D. Research Question

What are the differences in the reading attitudes of the rural and urban Sindhi learners?

It is further divided into following questions:

RQa: What are the differences in the 'Self Perception as a reader' of the rural and urban Sindhi learners?

RQb: What are the differences in the 'value rural and urban Sindhi learners place for reading in English'?

RQc: What are the differences in the 'self involvement in reading' of the rural and urban Sindhi learners?

RQd: What are the differences in the 'reading anxiety' of the rural and urban Sindhi learners?

III. METHOD

Mainly, research in reading attitudes area has taken place through questionnaire. Attitude is psychological construct and can be understood in more depth through qualitative accounts. This study aims to understand the differences, if any, between the reading attitudes of rural and urban. so interviews present the advantage of listening to the participants' views, life incidents and experiences so it was preferred for the present study.

The questions in interview protocol consisted upon two sections

- i. background information on the reading culture in their respective societies
- ii. categories of reading attitudes (self perception as a reader, utilitarian value of reading, personal involvement in reading and reading anxiety) undertaken in the present study (See section).

A. Participants

As the nature of my study required the participation of both rural and urban students, I used a stratified sampling technique to divide first-year participants into two cohorts: rural and urban.

B. Data Analysis Technique

All the interviews were transcribed. Following constant comparative method (Maykut & Morehouse 1994), I analysed the interviews in five stages. Firstly, the data was unitized by identifying meaningful units of meaning. Second stage involved combining any ideas that overlapped with one another and subsequently assigning them provisional codes following 'look alike and feel alike' criteria (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994: 136). The third phase transitioned to writing rules of inclusion -the propositional rule statement- (Maykut & Morehouse 1994: 141). Lastly, categories were further refined by grouping them under broader groups. In addition, the ratio of occurrence of each unit of meaning in a code was also quantified, with the aim of finding out the maximum and the minimum ratio of participants for any response. The last stage involved the synthesis. The propositions built so far were examined carefully to help understand the meaning in the data. This marked the conclusion of analysis.

IV. RESULTS

This section first presents results from the background questions on reading culture and encouragement for reading. Next, it presents findings on the main reading attitudes.

A. Reading Culture

1. Rural Participants

(i) Academic Reading in English: an acceptable behaviour: In Sindhi rural societies, the general concept of reading seems to be associated with the reading of academic books. Some participants (7, 54%) expressed their view that parents, friends, teachers, relatives and society as a whole appreciate if someone reads academic books. In particular, if someone engages in reading in English, then people take that learner to be very intelligent and hard-working. The following comments are typical of such a pattern of thinking.

People respect you more if you read your course books and, especially, come first in class.

Rural Participant_10

(ii) Discouraging attitude to reading: As mentioned earlier, the rural population is under the yoke of feudalism, and therefore any activity related to education and literacy is discouraged at many levels. Rather than showing appreciation, some parts of rural societies do not approve of leisure reading at all. A few participants (6, 46%) revealed that if someone reads for leisure, then s/he might have to face a discouraging attitude from other society members. Some rural people associate leisure reading with madness or immorality, because reading makes one think, question and be critical, and such behaviour is taken as a sign of madness and rebellion. The following comments explain this:

My people are strange. If you have a cigarette in the market and at the bus stop they take it as so normal. But if you read a book in a public place the people think something is wrong with us. Once I was reading a book at a local tea spot; the tea vendor said to my father, your son is reading too much. Keep an eye on him. His mind can go off the rails.

Rural Student_11

2. Urban Participants

(i) Appreciation for reading: The urban population expressed positive attitudes (appreciation, joy, exemplariness) towards reading. Many participants (7, 78%) expressed particularly how people normally associate reading of academic resources particularly in English with being intelligent and sophisticated. The following comments are typical:

I can't explain properly, but I feel people associate reading with being intelligent or decent. I remember all my relatives took me as a 'bright child' just because I would read more ... as compared to their kids. They would give my example to my cousins. Heehee.

Urban Student_6

People read for leisure to a certain extent. Some participants (6, 46%) expressed the view that people read for leisure at home, but there is no culture of reading at bus stops, hospitals or while commuting from one place to another.

You will not find people reading at bus stops, or in hospitals... I mean reading is not an everyday and everywhere matter... You see! But yes, people do read at home and love to discuss ideas.

Urban Student_8

B. Self Perception as a Reader

1. Rural Participants

Only a few (4, 31%) were confident enough to call themselves good or average readers.

Many of my rural friends do not even pass. I at least passed my English subject last term. So, it may indicate my reading capabilities to some extent.

Rural Participant_10

Overall, rural participants were very humble about themselves. Hardly anyone called themselves an efficient reader. Many of them (8, 62%) called themselves poor/struggling/not efficient readers. Based on my experience, I believe the root of such thinking goes back to a poor educational background, non-existent academic evaluation, especially in the teaching of English and lack of encouragement for reading in English. This influences learners' lives in their own thinking and evaluation, which is often very humble.

I get annoyed with myself for not being an efficient reader, but I am a poor reader. It takes a lot of time to understand anything in the English language.

Rural Participant_7

Some participants came up with explanations. Some of them formed impressions about themselves by comparing themselves with their urban counterparts.

My friends from urban schools take no time in understanding anything written in the English language. And I take so much time in getting the sense. This makes me feel so embarrassed.

Rural Participant_5

One participant mentioned difficult vocabulary as one of the causes for his evaluation of himself as a poor reader.

I am poor because I cannot understand all the vocabulary in a text.

Rural Participant_5

A participant also mentioned the difficulty she faces in comprehending the ideas in a text as the reason to believe herself to be a struggling reader.

I usually skip a lot... a lot of ideas and understand only the central ones.

Rural Participant_8

2. Urban Participants

The urban participants were found to be relatively confident and with good self-esteem as compared to the rural group. Many of them (6, 67%) considered themselves efficient readers. This may be due to the social backgrounds of urban participants. They seemed to be more confident and less judgmental of themselves.

Yes, I am a successful reader. Reading in English is not much of a problem for me.

Urban Participant_5

I also tried to probe further into the reasons that made them believe in their efficiency in English. One participant reasoned that English is so much embedded in everyday life that they feel confident reading in it.

English is so much embedded in our everyday life. Just think about the medicine prescriptions from the doctors we get and then the medicines we get... the instructions are written in English. Look at the names of the buildings and companies... you will get to read English. I am simply so used to it.

Urban Participant_6

Another mentioned the Internet as one of the reasons they read in English regularly, as a part of everyday life.

We are living in a global world... emails, social networking, everything is in English... Of course we read a lot in English as an everyday activity.

Urban Participant_1

C. *Utilitarian Value of Reading*

1. Rural Participants

It is an undisputed fact that, in Pakistan, English is taken to be a “Trojan horse” (Cooke, 1988, cited in Shamim, 2008), and the “gatekeeper to positions of prestige in society” (Pennycook, 1995, cited in Shamim, 2008). Literacy in English is considered a prerequisite, similar to ICT skills, for participating in the current trend of globalization and becoming part of the global village (Shamim, 2011). Owing to such widespread popularity, one would assume that everyone would be aware of the *utilitarian value of reading in English*. It came as an eye-opener when some of my rural participants (3, 23%) gave neutral replies such as:

Hmm, it might be useful for those who read.

Rural Participant_5

I do not know what to comment.

Rural Participant_1

The reasons for such a thought pattern can be attributed to the social vibes they receive from a rural society in which reading in English is not an integrated part of life, and where the job market (such as clerical work or daily wages) does not require proficiency in English. Therefore, they might not know the benefits of reading in English.

However, many participants also expressed their views about the utilitarian value they attached to reading in English. The categories formed are given below.

(ii) To experience city life: Some rural participants were very clear about the utilitarian benefits one may achieve from reading in English. Many participants (4, 31%) said that reading in English is a must if they want to come out of rural life and want *to experience city life*. Reading in English will help them to make their survival in urban areas easy.

It is very important to be able to read in the English language. Baba (father) always says... if I want to experience life in cities, then I must learn to read in English.

Rural Student_6

(iii) A route to pass the central superior services (CSS) examination: In Pakistan, CSS (Central Superior Services in Pakistan) is the competitive examination that takes place at national level every year. This is aimed at recruiting personnel for the top bureaucracy of the country. To pass this examination is a dream for the majority of youngsters. This examination requires a high level of proficiency in the English language along with critical and analytical abilities. The language of instruction for attempting this examination is strictly English. One of the main reasons for both the rural and urban population to learn English is to pass this examination. Many youngsters attempt this exam every year in order to join the bureaucracy cadre in Pakistan. Nowadays, people from rural areas are also becoming aware of the value of this examination, and therefore they aspire to attempt it. A few of my rural participants (3, 23%) said that they find reading in English important because of their plans to attempt the CSS examination.

My future aim is to prepare myself for passing the CSS exam. And you know how important it is to be proficient in reading in English.

Rural Participant_12

2. Urban Participants

As mentioned earlier, in Pakistan, English is perceived as the language of individual and national development (Shamim, 2007), and a universal tool for access to opportunities to level social inequalities (Tsui, 2005). In fact, in Pakistan, expressions such as ‘English-language school’ or ‘reading in English’ are heavily loaded with economic and sociocultural connotations (Shamim, 2010). That may be the reason that not many urban participants showed any utilitarian interest in reading in Sindhi. The majority of the participants (7, 78%) were of the opinion that:

From exams to personal communication on the Web, I use English so I really see little utility of reading anything in Sindhi. Moreover, all the current knowledge is available in English. So in fact there is little motivation for reading in Sindhi other than if you are really interested in this for personal reasons.

Urban Participant_2

Sadly, such perceptions are very common about indigenous languages in Pakistan. An important study conducted by Coleman (2010: 20) for the British Council, says about the marginalization of indigenous languages in Pakistan, “Not surprisingly, when a particular language is given no role to play in the education system, many parents respond by not

encouraging the use of that language at home”. He further found that many of the teachers who participated in the survey wanted parents to use English at home, with the idea of making learning English easy and effective. However, this is marginalizing the role of local/home languages as revealed in the comments of the above urban participant as well, as given above.

On the other hand, these urban (7, 78%) participants loved reading in English for various reasons, such as the following:

(1) Better public reputation: Many participants (8, 89%) believed that reading in English actually gives them a better public reputation. They read more and so they know more and can share more.

English itself is a status symbol. Reading in it is also important. People think of you as high calibre if you have knowledge about Western authors and philosophies.

Urban Participant_4

(2) Future plans: Useful for higher studies: Urban participants (7, 78%) seemed to have more future plans as compared to rural participants. They planned to undertake Master’s degrees in their respective fields and mentioned their plans to take up certain careers. They believed that reading in the English language would benefit them because much research is published or translated into the English language.

I plan to work with non-governmental organizations after doing a master’s in sociology. You see, we have to work with international organizations so it is better to read more and more in English. One becomes more proficient.

Urban Participant_5

(3) Future plan: Useful for studying abroad: A few participants (4, 44%) expressed their plan to study abroad.

I aim to pursue studies abroad and for that I know very well that I have to read, read and read everything a lot from now onwards.

Urban Participant_3

D. Personal Involvement in Reading

1. Rural Participants

and backwardness, at least some of the rural learners were aware of the utilitarian benefits attached to reading in English to some extent. This is because, in Pakistan, the general promise of English as a ‘world language’ for economic and personal development seems to have given a desire to the younger generation at large to learn English (Shamim, 2011). For example, Rahman (1999, cited in Shamim, 2011), in his survey of student attitudes towards English in different school types in Pakistan, found that the desire to learn English occurred among students from all school types including the madrasahs (religious schools), which represent the most conservative element of Pakistani society. Such desire and liking for reading in English was expressed by some of my rural participants as well.

Although I take hours to comprehend a little in English, but yet, I enjoy reading in it. It is not reading alone. But we learn a lot from reading in English.

Rural Participant_8

But overall, rural learners expressed a feeling of liking for reading in Sindhi. Their responses can be gathered in the following categories:

(ii) Easy and natural phenomenon: Rural learners grow up in a setting where people communicate and read (if ever) mostly in Sindhi. Many participants (5, 38%) expressed the view that it is very natural for them to read in Sindhi. They comprehend ideas clearly and easily in it.

I have grown up seeing at least Sindhi newspapers at home... and my family members reading it. I think reading the daily newspaper in Sindhi actually made it quite natural for me to read in Sindhi and today I feel comfortable and easy to reading in Sindhi.

Rural Participant_7

(iii) Identity consciousness as a Sindhi: In a context like Pakistan, where popular beliefs like ‘English as a stairway to upward mobility’ and ‘English as a guarantor of success’ are widely popular, it came as an eye-opener to see (4, 31%) participants who preferred to read in Sindhi over reading in English. They took it as a matter connected to one’s identity consciousness. They were of the view that, in the age of globalization, we need to save our uniqueness: linguistically and socially.

We have our own literature – so, so rich, like Sain Shah Abdul Latif, Sheikh Ayaz and Hazrat Sachal Sarmast. But many of us are over-obsessed with the wish to be Angrez (English Person) and so we disown our own culture by adopting Western dress, styles and even books. I love my Sindh Darti and for me it provides enough knowledge to read.

Rural Participant_13

This, however, may be owing to the narrow vision of life overall in rural parts of Sindh

2. Urban Participants

The huge promise of English as a ‘world language’ for economic and personal development seems to be a major driving force for the younger generation’s desire to learn English in Pakistan. Therefore, there is an insatiable desire for English in Pakistan (Shamim, 2010). Such views were also expressed by my participants.

(1) A fashion accessory: In Pakistan, familiarity with and use of English is an indicator of social class and educational and family background (Shamim, 2010). Many of my urban participants (8, 89%) stated that reading in

English is a signpost of being sophisticated and fashionable. It is just like a fashion accessory, which makes you look trendy.

We got to go with the flow, ma'am. Your trendy outfits won't make you look stylish if you do not have a grip of the English language. Reading is an integral part. It feels good when you can discuss Western authors.

Urban Participant_1

(2) Going global: Secondly, urban participants tended to feel more global. Many participants (7, 78%) believed that English, being an international language, is a means of making them feel a part of the global world. It seems that, unlike their rural counterparts, they do not feel threatened about their identity as Sindhi if they read more in English. Rather, many of them find it as way to assimilate into the international world.

The world is a global village now and we are a part of it. Being a part of it, we need to be able to share our experiences and know others' experiences through a common language. English is a very popular language. I love to read in the English language because the latest information is written, translated, in it. It is so easy to browse anything in the English language and read it.

Urban Participant_8

However, a few (3, 33%) expressed their involvement in reading in English but at the same time showed some regret over omitting to read in Sindhi altogether.

It is a pity that our own language is overtaken by the amount of knowledge we share with each other and get to read in the English language. And why blame others – I myself read mostly in the English language. But what can I do, English is an official language of Pakistan and it is the international language of knowledge so I cannot help that. But nevertheless, I am a proud Sindhi and love my language.

Urban Participant_7

E. Reading Anxiety

1. Rural Participants

(1) Confidence to overcome: Rural participants (9, 69%) were positive and sounded confident to acknowledge that they do not suffer from anxiety while reading in Sindhi.

Normally, I do not encounter any problems while reading in Sindhi but even if I come across them, I believe I would be able to get through them. After all, I have been reading in this my whole life.

Rural Participant_7

On the other hand, many of my rural participants (7, 54%) talked about getting nervous while reading in English.

Reading in English means giving your time and energies to a stressful activity.

Rural Participant_13

They gave various reasons for their nervousness. They are listed below:

(2) Difficult vocabulary: Poor resources for reading and lack of exposure to English cause the vocabulary of rural participants to be very limited. Many participants (5, 38%) suffered from stress and anxiety while reading in English because of that.

One important thing I share is that I get very stressed when I see text in English. I lose my confidence. The main cause of trouble is the difficult vocabulary. Sometimes I read and I get the main idea, but most of the times, I get the wrong meaning of the difficult words and then the whole passage. Now what to do. I get stressed.

Rural Participant_1

(2) Dictionary addiction: One participant shared that he is so addicted to using a dictionary while reading in English that now if he does not have it he feels nervous.

A dictionary is a source of comfort for me. During regular reading, I carry a dictionary with me. So English is not our mother tongue. And there are a lot of new words, a lot of difficult words. Before school education, we were never exposed to English vocabulary. Sometimes whenever I appear in any test or any situation where I cannot access my dictionary then I feel stressed. I get worried when I can't understand vocabulary or when I cannot get the actual point or subject matter of the text.

Rural Participant_8

(3) A tedious task: Some of the participants expressed how reading in English is a tedious task, a time-consuming job. They have to struggle a lot and for a long time, and therefore they avoid reading in English.

Yes, I do feel stressed, but that does not remain for long. I am always able to convince myself to reread and get the basic idea at least if not the whole passage. But I take a lot of time. And it looks like a time-consuming job so I prefer to avoid.

Rural Participant_11

(4) Comparison with urban counterparts: Some of my participants shared that they feel like giving up on reading in English generally. They feel that they will never be able to get through a text in English as well as their urban counterparts would. They seemed to compare themselves with their urban counterparts time and again.

I feel lost whenever I have to read in the English language. To be able to comprehend properly is the biggest hurdle. While I don't think that my urban friends feel so. They read and make me understand in the next minute. I feel do they have a magic wand or what?

Rural Participant_2

2. Urban Participants

Most of the urban learners (8, 89%) expressed a carefree attitude towards reading in Sindhi. Rather surprisingly, some of my urban participants expressed some feelings of confusion about reading in Sindhi. Upon asking for explanation, they expressed the main reason.

(1) Outdated vocabulary causing confusion: Some of the urban participants (3, 33%) shared that they sometimes feel confusion while reading in Sindhi, especially when it uses old Sindhi vocabulary.

I sometimes get really upset when I get to read typical Sindhi vocabulary. I do not know what is wrong with the local Sindhi newspapers. They still write in the language of the 100-year-old version. Languages have to adapt and move on to facilitate the language users.

Urban Participant_3

For reading in English, many urban participants (7, 78%) shared that they do not get entirely nervous, though they face some difficulties in the text. They always try to overcome them.

At times, I get to see many ideas which I cannot understand even if I read it and know the vocabulary. But I do not get upset and keep on working until things are clear to me.

Urban Participant_5

V. DISCUSSION

The general differences between rural and urban learners are well accepted in literature (Edington and Koehler (1987); Haller et al. (1993), Fan and Chen, (1999); Khattri et al., (1997), Cartwright and Allen, (2002), Howie et al., (2008), Martínez, Aricak, & Jewell, (2008). This study makes a theoretical contribution by investigating differences between rural and urban learners in terms of reading attitudes. More importantly, another strong contribution lies in bringing forth the inside accounts of the rural and urban learners: their opinions, their stories and the kind of life they live. A vivid and living picture comes through the opinions of both types of participants.

Below are the some of the main reasons, highlighted from the interviews that may explain the differences in the reading attitudes between the two groups:

Reason #1 Educational background differences: Most of the urban learners received education from English-medium schools as compared to the rural participants who received education from Sindhi-medium and government schools. Of course, that may be one of the reasons for their differences in attitudes towards reading in Sindhi and in English.

Reason #2 Differences in reading culture and reading resources: The reading culture in urban areas relatively promotes reading in English, but it is otherwise in the rural areas. The rural learners were not only at times discouraged from engaging in reading activities, but they were handicapped in terms of the non-easy availability of reading resources, particularly in English. Contrary to this, urban learners benefited from easy access to reading resources and stimulating encouragement for engaging in reading in English. This may explain why urban learners have better reading attitudes in English and rural learners vice versa.

Reason #3 Differences in worldview: Urban learners take themselves as a part of the global world and remain connected to it via social networking sites and generally the Web. They use more English than Sindhi there and that may add to their better reading attitudes in English. Meanwhile, rural people remain in touch with local people and use Sindhi for communication. This may also trigger the differences in them for their reading attitudes in Sindhi and in English.

Reason #4 Differences in self-perception as a reader: It was not only the quantitative findings but also the interviews confirmed that the urban learners had better *self-perception as readers in English*. They seemed to be less judgmental and critical of themselves as compared to their counterparts. This may be the reason that quantitative findings indicated them as having better self-perception as a reader in Sindhi as well.

Reason #5 Differences in utilitarian motives: Urban learners were more aware of the utilitarian benefits for reading in English than in Sindhi. The rural participants were less aware than their counterparts. A difference was found in the kind of utilitarian motives both the groups held about reading in English. The rural group attached the utilitarian purposes to shifting to cities, or to be able to participate in the civil service examinations. However, the urban group held very different purposes to reading in English, such as gaining a reputation in society and being able to pursue studies abroad.

Reason #6 Differences in personal involvement in reading: With limited reading resources and reading culture in English, it seems plausible that the rural participants harboured personal interests for reading in Sindhi. Interviews also revealed the same. Some of the rural participants even revealed feelings of Sindhism with reading in Sindhi and also expressed liking for reading in Sindhi as this is easy and they feel comfortable while reading in that. On the other hand, the urban learners remain exposed to reading in English and therefore, they feel ease and comfort while reading in English. Due to these all differences, urban learners were found personal involvement in reading in English. And the rural learners had the same for reading in Sindhi.

Reason #7 Differences in lack of reading anxiety: As a consequence of the above differences, urban learners felt a lack of reading anxiety while reading in English; the rural group felt the opposite.

Owing to the above reasons, differences seem very plausible. These findings may align with what Warsi (2004) said about the standards of teaching and learning of English in Pakistani rural and urban set-ups. Rural Sindh is no exception to what Warsi points out: inadequate infrastructure, poor English language skills and teachers' inexperience of teaching English language, use of the grammar-translation method for teaching and poor assessment of language skills are only some of the drawbacks which are found in rural Sindh as well. Furthermore, the '*White Paper Report on the Educational Policies in Pakistan 2007*' also acknowledges the wide discrepancies, which are creating an educational divide between rural and urban learners and particularly the opportunities to learn are very much limited in the rural set-ups. Moreover, it is also similar to what Cartwright and Allan (2002) found: that the rural and urban communities' best explain the differences in rural and urban reading performance.

VI. CONCLUSION

This section gives some general implications for policy makers. They may be effective in any research context.

a. Poor reading practices: Educators all over the world have concerns regarding poor reading practices in students. For instance, in the Malaysian context, Kaur and Thiyagarajah (1999) and quite recently Annamalai and Muniandy (2013) have mentioned the lack of interest in students for reading. The present study emphasises the value of policy makers in designing or imparting training programs which sensitize teachers to give importance to a reader's reading attitudes so that students choose more willingly to read.

b. Change in reading classes: Teaching of reading is largely traditionally oriented based on preparing learners for getting better scores in reading tests. Although this approach has its advantages such as; enhancing reading skills of learners, if we aim higher- 'fostering love for reading' (Cramer Castle 1994), or to give desire for reading to students (Morrow 2004)-we may have to broaden our lens to focus on developing interest of learners in reading as well. For this purpose, a block of time in class may be dedicated for building easy, enjoyable general reading activities. Learners may choose to read material of their own choice. Teachers may use these sessions to talk with students about their attitudes towards reading. Particularly, they can use these opportunities to support struggling readers. Such guided free reading sessions can enhance the reading engagements of learners and help them to be avid readers.

Now, it is useful to give some implications specific for the Pakistani context.

a. Since its inception, Pakistan lags far behind in education than the other countries in the sub continent (Ministry of Education, Pakistan. (2009). Similarly, interviews in the present study highlighted poor reading culture particularly in rural parts. This shows how urgent and important it is to take initiatives to improve reading practices at all levels. In this regard, this study emphasises the importance of policy makers of designing or imparting a national reading program. Training modules may be developed related to extensive/ free/ sustained reading. Teachers may be trained to launch these programmes in their classrooms so as to develop positive reading attitudes in students at all levels. Provinces and district governments should allocate some percent of their budget for updating school/college/universities and general libraries with books, so,that free reading programs can be carried out effectively.

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