

Original Research Article

“A Study on the Status of Urdu Language and Students' Perception of Urdu as a Subject in Kishanganj District of Bihar”

Abstract

Urdu is an Indo-Aryan language with significant historical and cultural importance on the Indian subcontinent. It has its roots in the Mughal era and is known for its rich literary heritage, especially in poetry and prose. Millions of people in India and other parts of the world speak Urdu. In India, Urdu holds a special place due to its association with the freedom movement and its use as a medium of expression for various artistic, cultural, and literary endeavors in Kishanganj, Bihar. In this study, we have examined the current state of the Urdu language and the perceptions of students for Urdu in the Kishanganj District of Bihar, and we found some true elements that are very important for the upliftment of Urdu language in the concerned locality, and these elements might be considered as the factors that shape the present status of the Urdu language.

Keywords: Kishanganj, Urdu status, Indo-Aryan language, Medium of expression

1. Introduction:

Language is a medium for communicating our ideas, thoughts, and beliefs. Every day we learn something, and it is done through cognition. Language learning is also a part of cognition. Generally, people acquire languages easily that are being used in their locality. In order to learn any language, one needs a proper environment and a facilitator. There are 22 languages that are officially listed in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. In a multilingual country like India, where languages differ from one place to another, people learn more than one language automatically. Language has a close relationship with perception. We generally share our perceptual experiences, thoughts, and incidents with others through the medium of any language. Language also affects one's perception as it shapes memory. Generally, students choose languages that have good scope in the future. These languages are in great demand, and this will help students to compete in the job market

Urdu's 7th rank as the most spoken language in India. Nearly eight crore people speak Urdu in India alone. There are 22 languages officially recognized in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution

of India, and Urdu is one of them. Urdu is also recognized as the official language in several states of India, i.e., Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, J&K, West Bengal, and the NCT, Delhi. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and is considered a regional language of Nepal. Urdu ranks 11th among the most spoken languages in the world, with approximately 80 million speakers. Urdu is among the most sophisticated languages, defining politeness and beauty. Generally seen in Urdu poetry, it has a unique way of conveying an aura of elegance, which makes it nobler than the ordinary. It touches the soul through hidden meanings in prose and poetry like no other language can. Urdu is the main language of South Asia, and gradually it is gaining popularity in the USA, France, the UK, and Germany, as well as in the Gulf region. Urdu is also spoken in Nepal, Mauritius, and South Africa. In the world, there are approximately one billion people who speak Urdu. In India, Urdu has the unique feature that its speakers are not clustered in a particular region but rather are distributed across the nation. Starting in North India, especially Uttar Pradesh, which is considered the nursery of this language, there has been a decline in the number of Urdu speakers. The 2011 Census shows a decline in the number of people who registered Urdu as their mother tongue.

According to census data, only Urdu has experienced a decline out of all the languages spoken by more than one crore people. Although the overall population of the state is growing considerably, the number of Urdu speakers has dropped to below 4%. Apart from Konkani, Urdu is the only scheduled language where a decrease in the number of speakers has been recorded. The trend in the number of Urdu language speakers can be seen in earlier census data. In 1971, the total number of Urdu speakers was calculated at 2.8 crore. The number increased to 3.55 crore in 1981. After a decade, it reached 4.45 crore. In 2001, the census data declared 5.16 crore Urdu speakers. Whereas in the Census of 2011, the figure declined to 5.06 crore. According to 2001 census data, Urdu got sixth place among the most spoken languages but slipped to seventh place in the 2011 census. The Urdu language was never related to any particular religion, and it has been spoken by people of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds in the recent past. Even many more people speak and understand Urdu perfectly than those who register it as their mother tongue. But unfortunately, these days, Urdu is being seen as the language belonging to the Muslim community.

1.1 Urdu in South India:

The popularity of Urdu in south India is not lower than anywhere else. A large number of speakers are found in states that include Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, and

Karnataka. In Maharashtra, the total number of Urdu speakers is 75.2 lakh. There are 75 lakh Urdu speakers in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. In Karnataka, 66.15 lakh people registered Urdu as their mother tongue. Hence, the total number of Urdu speakers after combining the above four states is more than 2.16 crore. This figure is almost double when compared to Urdu speakers of Uttar Pradesh. There are also two states in north India where a small part of the population speaks Urdu. This includes Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, where the total number of speakers is found to be 9.15 lakh and 6.65 lakh, respectively.

1.2 Urdu in Kishanganj Bihar:

Kishanganj District, located in the state of Bihar, has a significant Muslim population, and Urdu might hold a special place in this region due to its historical and cultural ties. The Urdu language has an important place in the state of Bihar. As we already know, Hindi is the first official language of the state. While Urdu has been declared the second official language in the state. The state government has alerted various areas where 15 percent or more of the local population typically speaks one of the state's minority languages. In the Seemanchal subregion of Bihar, where a significant number of Urdu speakers are located, This region touches the international borders of Nepal and Bangladesh. This subregion comprises four districts, which include Purnea, Araria, Kishanganj, and Katihar. Araria occupies 33% of the population as Urdu speakers, whereas Purnea has only 28.5%. In Katihar district, the Urdu-speaking population is nearly 26.5%. In Kishanganj district, the total number of Urdu speakers was found to be 5.3 lakh, which constitutes 54% of the total district population. The general perception of Urdu is that only Muslims read and understand it. But it is not necessary that all Muslims consider Urdu their mother tongue. For example, in Bihar, 66.7% of Muslims consider Urdu to be their mother tongue, but 43.3% of the Muslim population claims other languages as their mother tongue. It is said that, although Urdu is closely related to Muslims, many non-Muslims also read Urdu at school level, but not all Muslims take Urdu as their mother tongue.

Here are some potential perspectives for students studying Urdu in this district:

- **Cultural Identity:** For students in Kishanganj District, learning Urdu might be a way to connect with their cultural and historical roots. Urdu has been an important language in Islamic culture and has been used to express emotions, ideas, and stories in various forms.
- **Language of Literature:** Urdu is renowned for its poetry, prose, and literary contributions. Students studying Urdu might have an interest in exploring classic and contemporary Urdu literature, allowing them to appreciate the depth and beauty of the language.

- **Religious and Spiritual Context:** Urdu has been used for centuries to convey religious teachings, especially in Islamic contexts. Students studying Urdu might find it beneficial for understanding religious texts and participating in religious activities.
- **Linguistic Diversity:** Bihar is a state with linguistic diversity, and learning Urdu could provide students with an additional linguistic skill that can facilitate communication and understanding within their own community as well as with Urdu speakers from other regions.
- **Educational Opportunities:** Proficiency in Urdu could potentially open up opportunities for students to engage in various fields such as journalism, translation, teaching, and even diplomatic roles, considering the international significance of the language.
- **Challenges:** Depending on the availability of resources and the quality of education, students might face challenges in accessing quality Urdu learning materials, experienced teachers, and a conducive learning environment.

1.3 Language and its Perception

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines perception as "the process or result of becoming aware of objects, relationships, and events by means of the senses, which includes such activities as recognizing, observing, and discriminating." All five senses, i.e., touch, sight, sound, smell, and taste, are included in perception. Each and every task that we perform is closely related to our perception. In our daily conversations while talking to people, perception is used. We can identify the nature of an individual with his attitude, interest, and perception as well. Our response to stimuli in the environment depends on the perceptual experiences we possess.

Language and perception interactions are crucial in order to understand human behaviour. Language processing involves the activation of perceptual representations and the construction of situational models. Both the terms language and perception are somehow related, as we can talk about what we generally perceive. In the early stages of cognitive and language development, interaction with the outer world and substances provides an opportunity for the learner to practice and learn active vocabulary. Apart from this, the visual display provides a better understanding of the objects, and along with this, perceptual abilities are developed. If the visuals are provided with audio sounds, language development takes place at a faster rate. Hence, the perception of the objects and materials changes, and children act accordingly. Finally, this will lead to a change in the behaviour of an individual.

2. Objectives of the study:

- To study the status of Urdu in Kishanganj district.
- To study the perceptions of secondary school students towards the Urdu language.
- To find out the interest of the students taking Urdu at secondary level.
- To find out the difficulty level faced by the students of secondary level.

3. Statement of the Problem:

To find out the answers to the above questions, the present study has been conducted on the following problem: **“A Study on the Status of Urdu Language and Students' Perception of Urdu as a Subject in Kishanganj District of Bihar.”**

3.1 Operational Definitions:

- **Urdu language status:** Current status of Urdu at school level and related various aspects like adoption, accessibility, prevalence, utility, and scope.
- **Perception:** The perception of students related to Urdu language, especially their attitude, awareness, and understanding.
- **Students:** Students of the 9th class of a government school in Kishanganj.
- **Kishanganj:** is a district located in the Seemanchal subregion of Bihar state.

4. Methodology

- The present study is based on the descriptive survey method with self prepared standardized tools

4.1 Population:

- We have chosen Government secondary schools are located in the Kishanganj, District of North Bihar.

4.2 Sample and Sampling Techniques:

- The researcher has adopted the convenience sampling method to selected 80 (N=80) students from 10th standard Government secondary schools in Kishanganj District of North Bihar.

4.3 Tools of the Study:

- Secondary sources of data (policy papers, books, newspapers, articles, reviews, etc.)
- The researcher used the perception scale tool for the data collection in the present study, which she developed herself with the help of a supervisor and experts in the field. The scale consists of 5-point rating scales.

4.4 Statistical Techniques:

- To analyze and interpret the data, the researcher used descriptive statistical techniques.

4.5 Delimitation:

- The study was limited to the senior secondary government schools at Kishanganj District.
- The study includes only 9th grade students from government secondary schools in Kishanganj District of North Bihar.

5. Results and Interpretations

In this study, we have collected data through a five-point rating scale to find out the status and standard of Urdu in schools in Kishanganj District, Bihar. Where we tried to find out different aspects of Urdu language in the secondary school students, i.e.

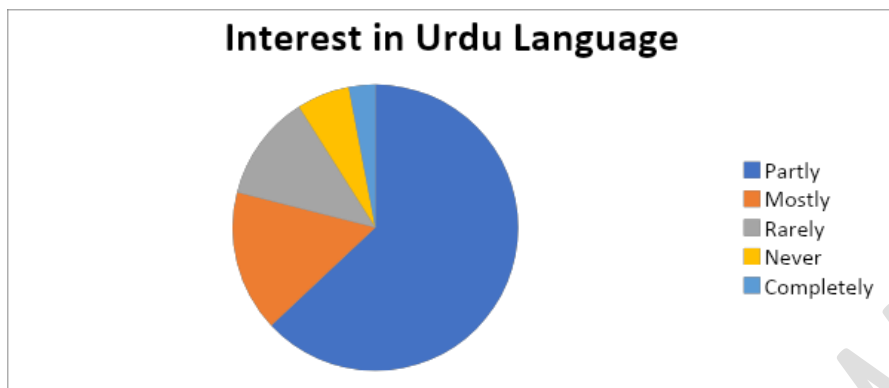
Table No. 1 shows the categories of the study

Sr. No.	Categories
i	Interest in Urdu Language
ii	Level of difficulty while studying Urdu Language
iii	Utility of the Language in Daily Life
iv	Scope of the Language
v	Helpfulness for other language
vi	Role of Socio- Cultural Background in Learning of Urdu Language
vii	Role of School Administration in Encouraging Urdu Language
viii	Comparison with English language
ix	Popularity of Urdu Language in the society
x	Desire to continue learning Urdu

5.1 Interest in Urdu Language

At the 9th class of secondary level in schools in Kishanganj district, it was found that the level of interest in Urdu language among students represents the average category. 63% of students found Urdu Language partly interesting, 16% mostly interesting, and 3% completely interesting. Further, 12% found a rare interest in the Urdu language, and 6% were never interested in it.

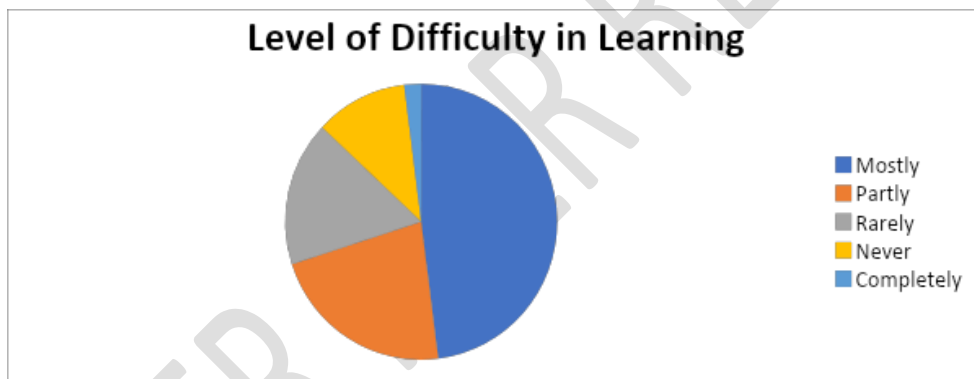
Figure No..1: showing Interest in Urdu Language



5.2 Level of difficulty while studying Urdu Language

While investigating the facts regarding the level of difficulty faced by students in learning Urdu language the collected data suggest that mostly students found some sort of difficulty in the learning process (48%), partly 22%, Rarely 17%, never 11%, and completely 2%.

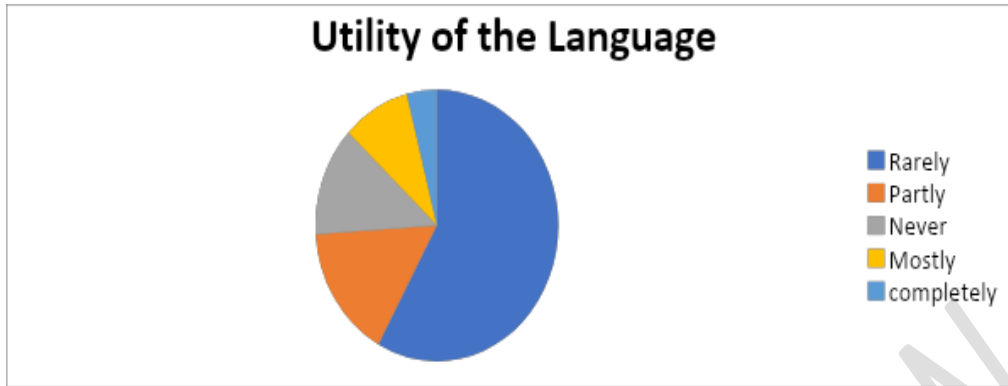
Figure No.2: Level of difficulty while studying Urdu Language



5.3 Utility of Language in Daily Life

The utility of any knowledge or subject in daily life shapes its importance and place in the curriculum. That is why this question was included that how many students find Urdu language useful in their daily life. It was found that only 4% of students found it useful in daily life, whereas, 9% found it mostly useful, 16% partly useful, 58% rarely useful, and 13% never useful.

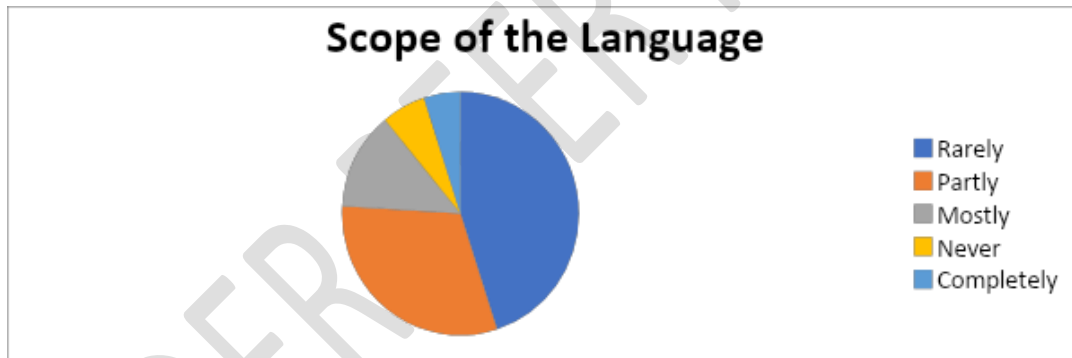
Figure No.3: Showing Utility of the Language in Daily Life



5.4 Scope of the Language

In the Post Liberal Era of education, the economic aspect dominated the teaching – learning process as well as the curriculum. So it was essential to check the scope related aspect of the language which actually contributes to shaping the perception of the language. Here it was found that 5% found it completely useful, 13% mostly, 31% partly, and 45% rarely, whereas 6% thought that it had no scope.

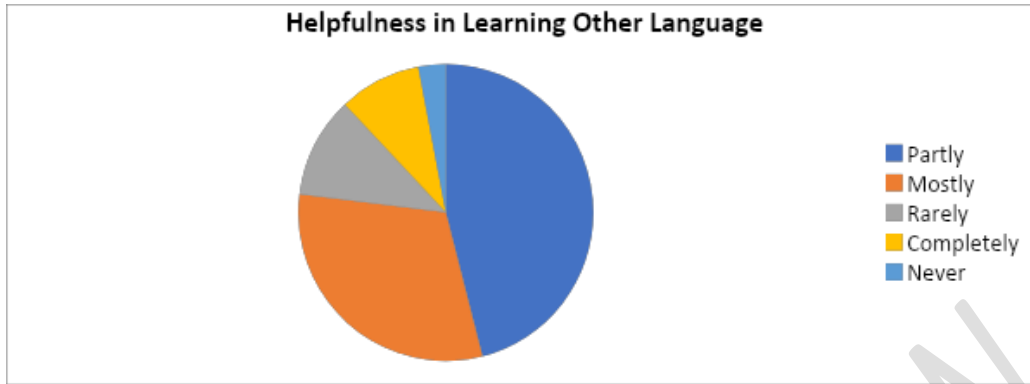
Figure No..4: Showing Scope of the Language



5.5 Helpfulness for other languages

Any particular language might be helpful in learning other languages too. That is why the question of whether Urdu language provides such scaffolding or not was included in the questionnaire. Here, 9% of outcomes suggest that Urdu is completely helpful in learning other languages, whereas 31% mostly, 46% partly, 11% rarely, and 3% of outcomes suggest no helpfulness.

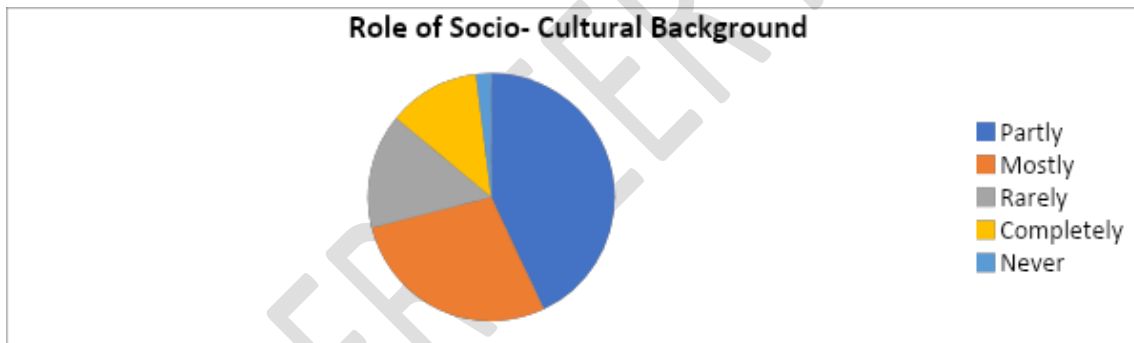
Figure No..5: Transfer of learning with other languages



5.6 Role of Socio- Cultural Background in Learning of Urdu Language

Language is a socio - cultural element that gets impacted by it, and in turn, it also impacts socio cultural aspects of a society. Research attempts to find out this interrelationship's influence on the learning process of Urdu language. It was found that sociocultural background contributes 12% completely, 28% mostly, 43% partly, 15% rarely, and 2% never to the learning process of the Urdu language.

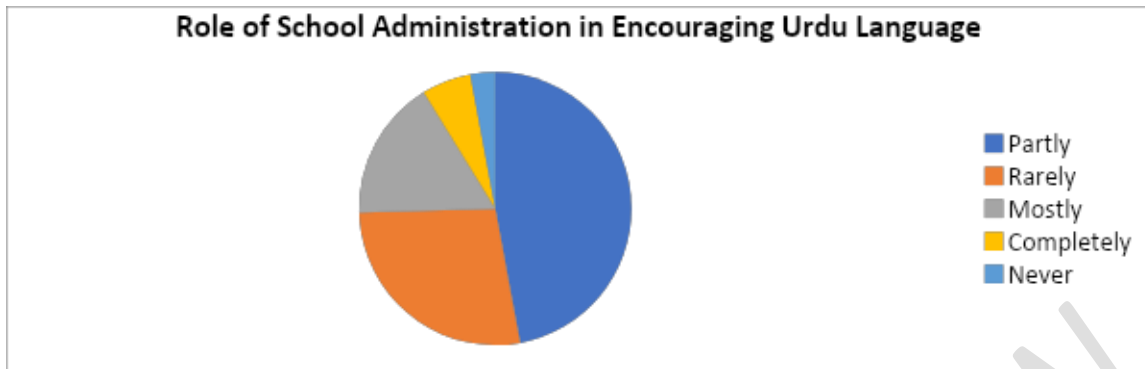
Figure No.6: Showing Role of Socio- Cultural Background in Learning of Urdu Language



5.7 Role of School Administration in Encouraging Urdu language

Article 350A of the Indian Constitution provides that primary education should be conducted in the mother tongue, and school administration is given the responsibility to ensure this. Apart from this, the role of school administration becomes critical in shaping the curriculum. So, the attitude of the school administration was evaluated through the perspective and experiences of the students. It was found that 6% contributed completely, 17% mostly, 48% partly, 28% rarely, and 3% never to the encouragement of the Urdu language among the students.

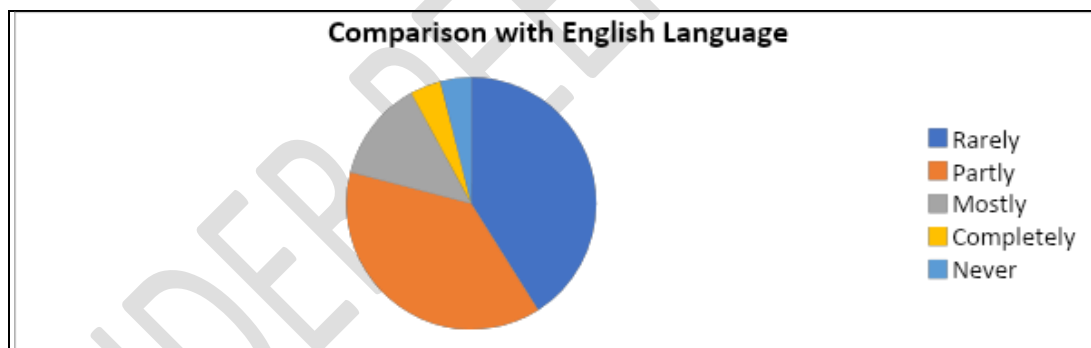
Figure No..7: Showing the Role of School Administration in Encouraging Urdu Language.



5.8 Comparison with English language

One outcome of Post Liberalised Indian education system is adoption and popularization of the English language. Vernacular languages are facing challenges from the expansion of this global western language. Comparative paradigms are often a matter of quest for vernacular educators to understand these complex phenomena. So here, the opinions of students, who are active stakeholders, were sought about the comparative perspective of Urdu with English language. The findings suggest that 4% consider it completely equal to the English language, whereas 13% consider it mostly, 38% partly, 41% rarely, and 4% never equal.

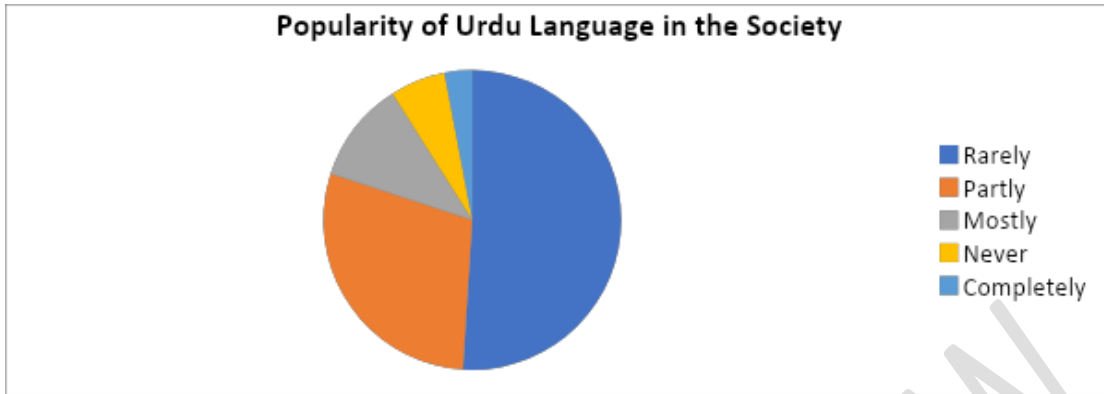
Figure No..8: Showing result of Comparison with English language



5.9 Popularity of Urdu Language in society

Popularity and acceptance of any language in society is one of the factors behind the motivation for choosing that language as a school subject. That is why the question was included in the questionnaire, and the findings are that 3% considered it a popular language in society, whereas 11% mostly, 29 partly, 51% rarely, and 6 percent found it never popular.

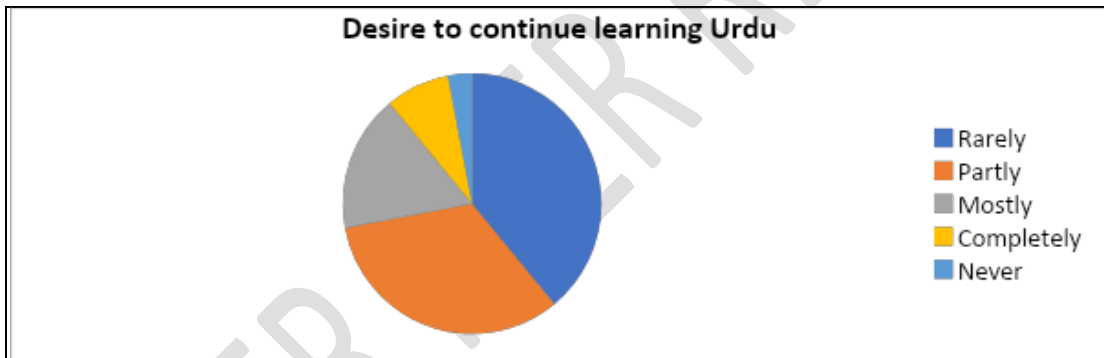
Figure No. 9: Showing Popularity of Urdu Language in the society



5.10 Desire to continue learning Urdu

A language prevails, survives, and expands when its adoption and expansion occur in higher education. So it was asked of the students about their interest in continuing their Urdu education in their future studies. It was found that 8 % completely agreed that they would continue studying Urdu, whereas 17% mostly, 33% partly, 39% rarely, and 3% never agreed.

Figure No.10: Showing Desire to continue learning Urdu



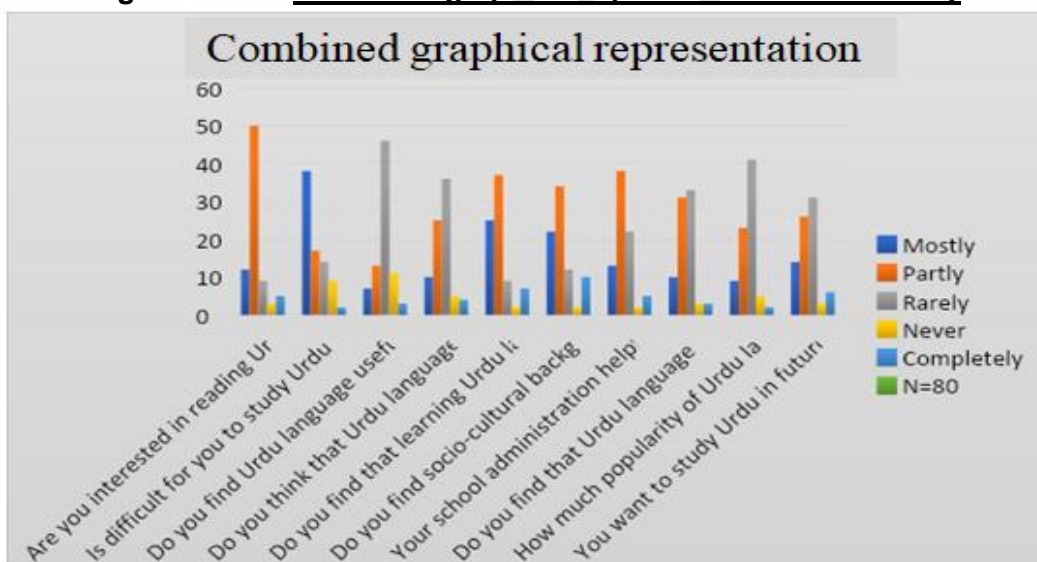
5.11 Overall result and findings

After getting data and doing a detailed analysis, we found that Urdu language teaching and learning needs the attention of stakeholders, policymakers, and educationists to uplift Urdu in the said area, as students of Urdu language subjects continuously lack interest, lack facilities, and lack local motivations in the said area. the table No.1. All the ten areas are properly rated with a five-point scale, and the graphical representation of the table indicates interest, uses, difficulty level, etc. of the said language, these are very low in the secondary schools where students use Urdu language as a subject in the said schools of Kishanganj, Bihar.

Table No. 2. Showing data and result of the study

No.	Question	Mostly	Partly	Rarely	Never	Completely	N
1	Are you interested in reading Urdu language?	12	50	9	3	5	80
2	Is difficult for you to study Urdu language?	38	17	14	9	2	80
3	Do you find Urdu language useful in your daily life?	7	13	46	11	3	80
4	Do you think that Urdu language will help in shaping your future?	10	25	36	5	4	80
5	Do you find that learning Urdu language helps you in learning other language?	25	37	9	2	7	80
6	Do you find socio-cultural background helpful in learning Urdu language?	22	34	12	2	10	80
7	Your school administration helpful for learning in Urdu language?	13	38	22	2	5	80
8	Do you find that Urdu language has significance as English language?	10	31	33	3	3	80
9	How much popularity of Urdu language in your society?	9	23	41	5	2	80
10	You want to study Urdu in future also?	14	26	31	3	6	80

Figure No..11. Combined graphical representation of the study



6. Findings of the Study

The research focuses on finding out the present status of Urdu language and the challenges faced by students these days. During the research, many new aspects came to light that might be considered factors that shape the present status of the Urdu language, like the shortage of teachers, diminishing interest of the students in Urdu, and the negative attitude of guardians towards Urdu for their wards. These are some factors due to which Urdu is shifting away from society.

As the outcome of this research suggests, the condition of Urdu is not satisfactory. The following point may be concluded:

- The students lack interest in studying Urdu due to an absence of motivation related to the scope of the language, parent support, the role of school administration, etc.
- At many schools, teachers of Urdu language are not appointed, and due to this, students are forced to select another language.
- Books, materials, and the absence of other aid, assistance, or innovative ways of teaching have made the learning process difficult. This has resulted in shifting the students away from Urdu language.
- The attitude of parents', students', and school administration is not conducive to Urdu due to the limited scope of the language and lack of job availability.
- It was also found that students use less Urdu language in daily life, and at the same time, they find a more conducive environment when utilizing English and Hindi.
- In schools, Urdu language is used to a lesser extent in comparison with Hindi, as most of the content is available in Hindi language. Students also get adjusted to such a language system as they find it mainstream and job-oriented.

7. Suggestions for improving the status of Urdu language:

- Professionally qualified Urdu teachers should be appointed in all schools according to the number of students enrolled in the schools.
- Urdu teachers should always arrange counseling sessions and talk with students in Urdu so that they can learn new words and develop an interest in speaking Urdu.
- Like other subjects in schools, books and TLM should be provided exclusively in Urdu.
- A person who knows Urdu should not feel hesitant about speaking Urdu in public.
- The intellectuals of societies should create an environment for speaking Urdu in their families.
- Parents should remove the thought from their minds that their children cannot succeed in the future with Urdu.
- The government should emphasize its development as a language rather than linking it to any particular community.

8. Conclusion

In a nutshell, there is no doubt that governments have taken steps to promote the Urdu language, but this has not resulted in benefits at the grass-roots level. The perspectives and

attitudes that developed regarding Urdu in society in the post-liberalization phase are not appropriate for the development of the language. The government must take more strong and innovative steps for the betterment of the language, which must reach the bottom level. We must act in a collaborative manner to rejuvenate the deteriorating condition of the language that took birth, grew, and flourished in our courtyard.

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