

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

Abstract

Urdu Language is an Indo-Aryan language with significant historical and cultural importance on the Indian subcontinent. It has its roots from the Mughal era to modern world, and is known for its rich literary heritage, especially in poetry and prose in Indian subcontinent. Millions of people in India and other parts of the world speaks Urdu Language. In India, Urdu Language 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. This research investigates the present condition of the Urdu Language, its degree of popularity, and students' impressions and expressions of Urdu Language as a subject at the school level in the Kishanganj District of Bihar, India. This extensive research has identified some crucial components that play a significant role in determining the status of the Urdu Language within the relevant location. These features may be regarded as influential factors that contribute to the current state of the Urdu Language.

Keywords: Kishanganj, Urdu Language 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 Language's 7th rank as the most spoken language in India Nearly eight crore people speak Urdu Language in India alone. There are 22 languages officially recognized in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India, and Urdu Language is one of them. Urdu Language 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 Language is the national language of Pakistan and is considered a regional language of Nepal. Urdu Language ranks 11th among the most spoken languages in the world, with approximately 80 million speakers. Urdu Language is among the most sophisticated languages, defining politeness and beauty. Generally seen in Urdu Language 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 Language 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 Language is also spoken in Nepal, Mauritius, and South Africa. In the world, there are approximately one billion people who speak Urdu Language. In India, Urdu Language 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 Language speakers. The 2011 Census shows a decline in the number of people who registered Urdu Language as their mother tongue.

According to census data, only Urdu Language 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 Language speakers has dropped to below 4%. Apart from Konkani, Urdu Language 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 Language 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 Language speakers. Whereas in the Census of 2011, the figure declined to 5.06 crore. According to 2001 census data, Urdu Language 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 Language perfectly than those who register it as their mother tongue. But unfortunately, these days, Urdu Language is being seen as the language belonging to the Muslim community.

1.1 South India and the Urdu language:

The popularity of Urdu Language 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 Language speakers is 75.2 lakh. There are 75 lakh Urdu Language speakers in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. In Karnataka, 66.15 lakh people registered Urdu Language as their mother tongue. Hence, the total number of Urdu Language speakers after combining the above four states is more than 2.16 crore. This figure is almost double when compared to Urdu Language speakers of Uttar Pradesh. There are also two states in north India where a small part of the population speaks Urdu Language. 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 Kishanganj, Bihar, and the Urdu Language:

Kishanganj District, located in the state of Bihar, has a significant Muslim population, and Urdu Language 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 Language 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 Language 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 Language speakers, whereas Purnea has only 28.5%. In Katihar district, the Urdu Language-speaking population is nearly 26.5%. In Kishanganj district, the total number of Urdu Language speakers was found to be 5.3 lakh, which constitutes 54% of the total district population. The general perception of Urdu Language is that only Muslims read and understand it. But it is not necessary that all Muslims consider Urdu Language their mother tongue. For example, in Bihar, 66.7% of Muslims consider Urdu Language 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 Language is closely related to Muslims, many non-Muslims also read Urdu Language at school level, but not all Muslims take Urdu Language as their mother tongue. Here are some potential perspectives for students studying Urdu Language in this district:

- **Cultural Identity:** For students in Kishanganj District, learning Urdu Language might be a way to connect with their cultural and historical roots. Urdu Language 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 Language is renowned for its poetry, prose, and literary contributions. Students studying Urdu Language might have an interest in exploring classic and contemporary Urdu Language literature, allowing them to appreciate the depth and beauty of the language.
- **Religious and Spiritual Context:** Urdu Language has been used for centuries to convey religious teachings, especially in Islamic contexts. Students studying Urdu Language 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 Language could provide students with an additional linguistic skill that can facilitate communication and understanding within their own community as well as with Urdu Language speakers from other regions.
- **Educational Opportunities:** Proficiency in Urdu Language 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 Language 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 Language 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 Language 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 Language as a Subject in Kishanganj District of Bihar."

3.1 Definitions of the study area that are useful:

- **What is the current state of the Urdu language at the school level?** This includes things like acceptance, ease, frequency, usefulness, reach, and so on.
- **Perception of Urdu Language:** What students think about the Urdu language, especially how they feel, what they know, and what they understand.
- **Students:** These are 9th graders from a government school in Kishanganj.
- **Kishanganj:** is a district in Bihar state. It is in the Seemanchal subregion.

4. Methodology

- The present study is based on the comprehensive survey method with self prepared tools i.e. questionnaire, Interview and school records.

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 ten government secondary schools in Kishanganj District of North Bihar.

4. Results and Discussion

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

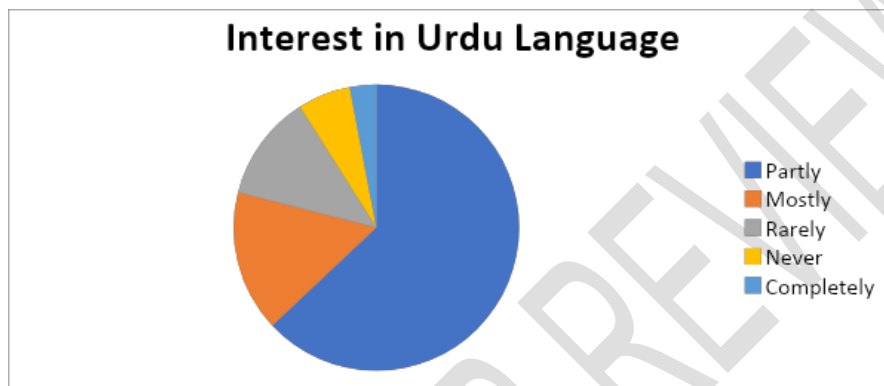
Table No. 1 shows the categories of the study

S. N.	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 Language

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.

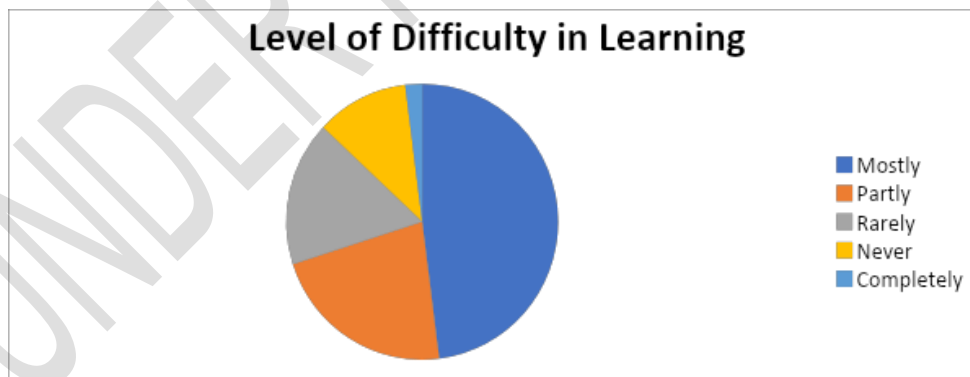
Figure No..1: showing Interest in Urdu Language



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%.

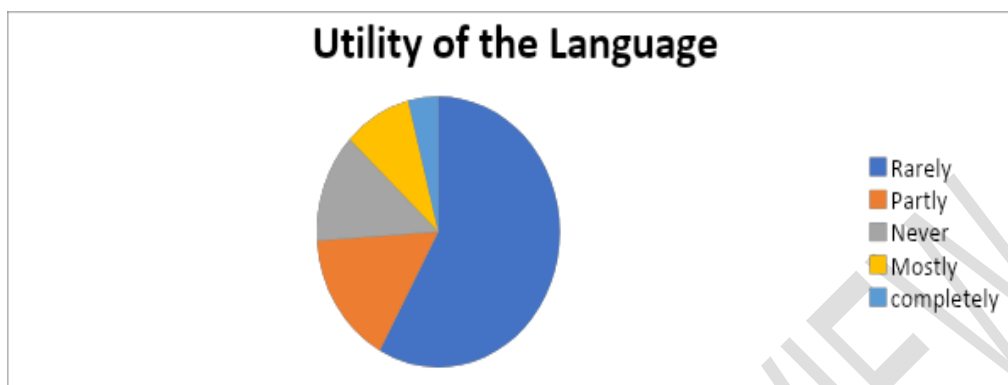
Figure No.2: Level of difficulty while studying Urdu Language



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.

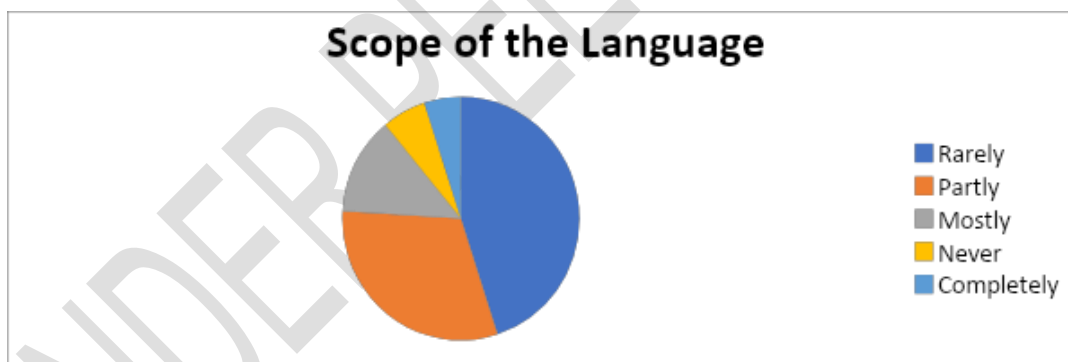
Figure No.3: Showing Utility of the Language in Daily Life



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.

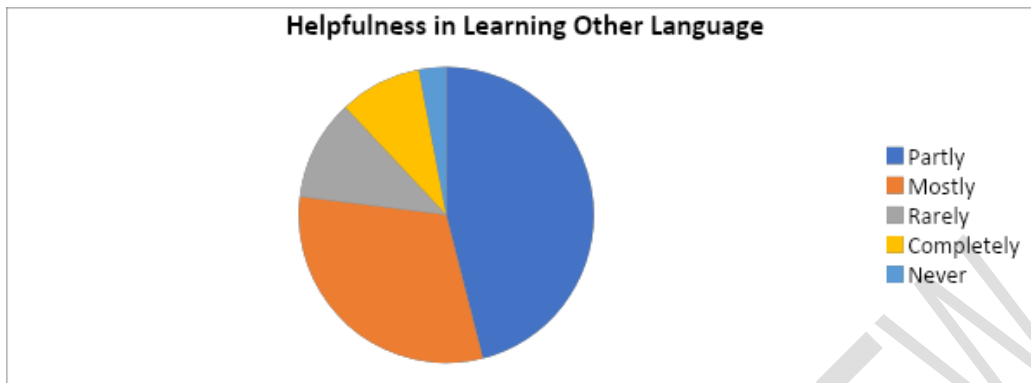
Figure No..4: Showing Scope of the Language



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 Language is completely helpful in learning other languages, whereas 31% mostly, 46% partly, 11% rarely, and 3% of outcomes suggest no helpfulness.

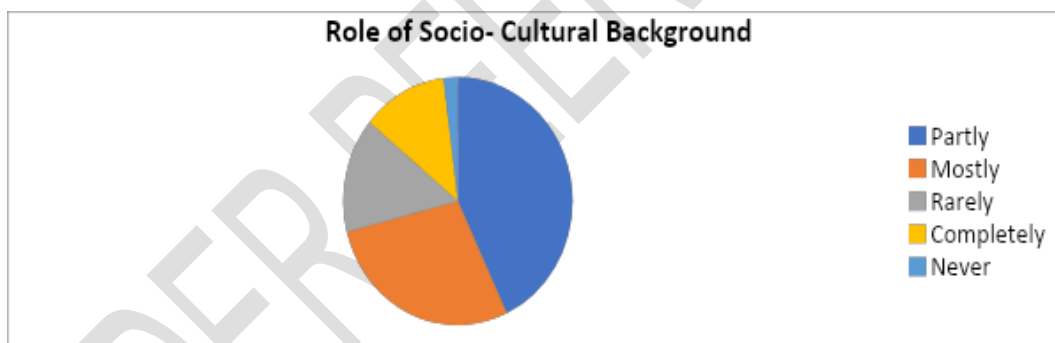
Figure No..5: Transfer of learning with other languages



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.

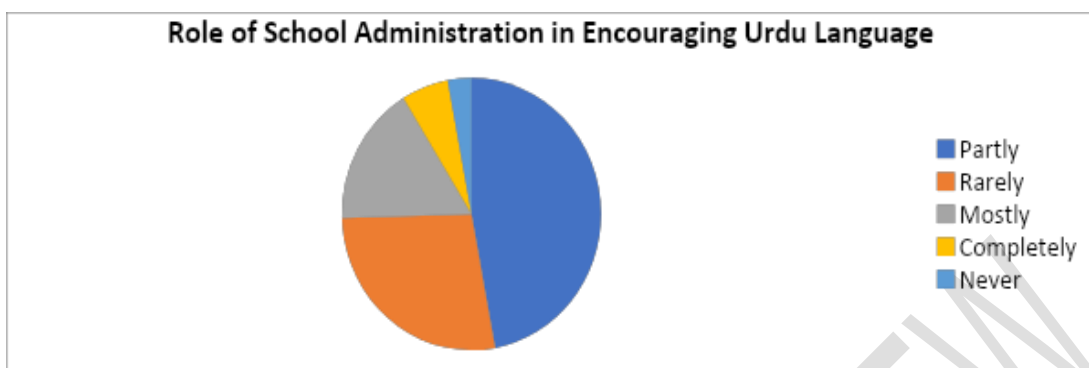
Figure No.6: Showing Role of Socio- Cultural Background in Learning of Urdu Language



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.

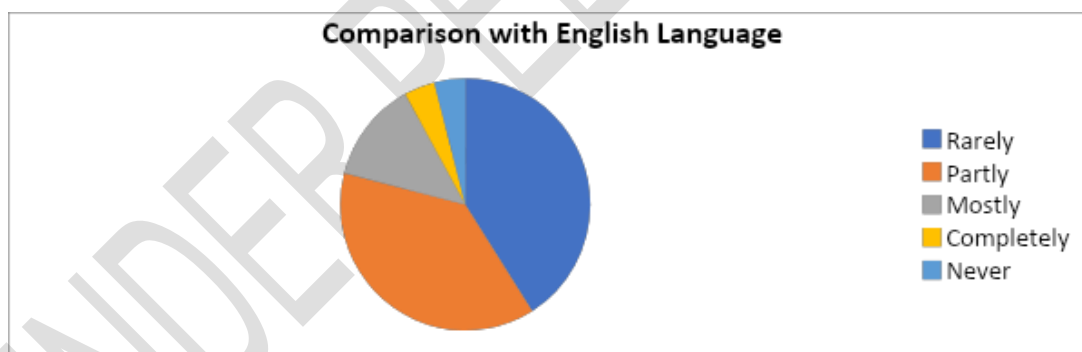
Figure No.7: Showing the Role of School Administration in Encouraging Urdu Language.



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 Language 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.

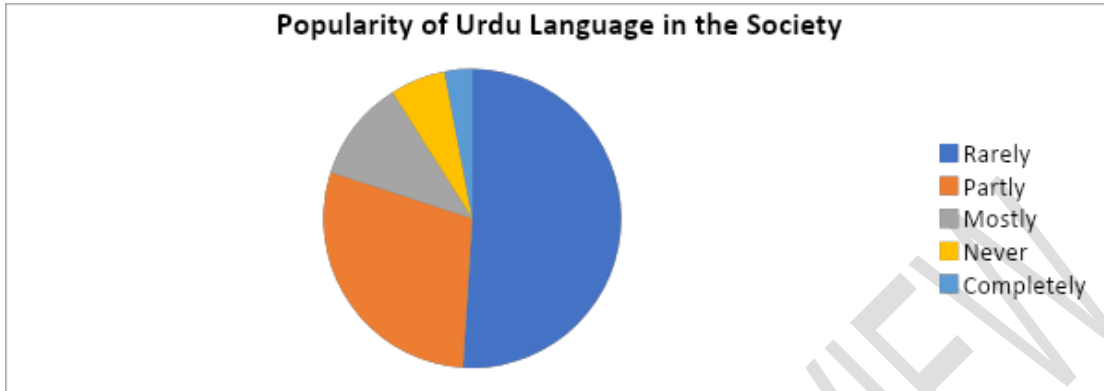
Figure No..8: Showing result of Comparison with English language



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.

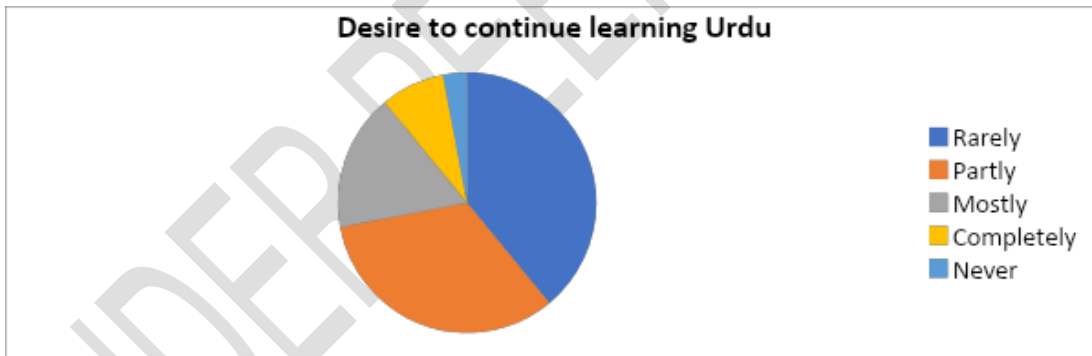
Figure No. 9: Showing Popularity of Urdu Language in the society



5.10 Desire to continue learning Urdu Language

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 Language education in their future studies. It was found that 8 % completely agreed that they would continue studying Urdu Language, whereas 17% mostly, 33% partly, 39% rarely, and 3% never agreed.

Figure No.10: Showing Desire to continue learning Urdu Language



5.11 Overall result and findings

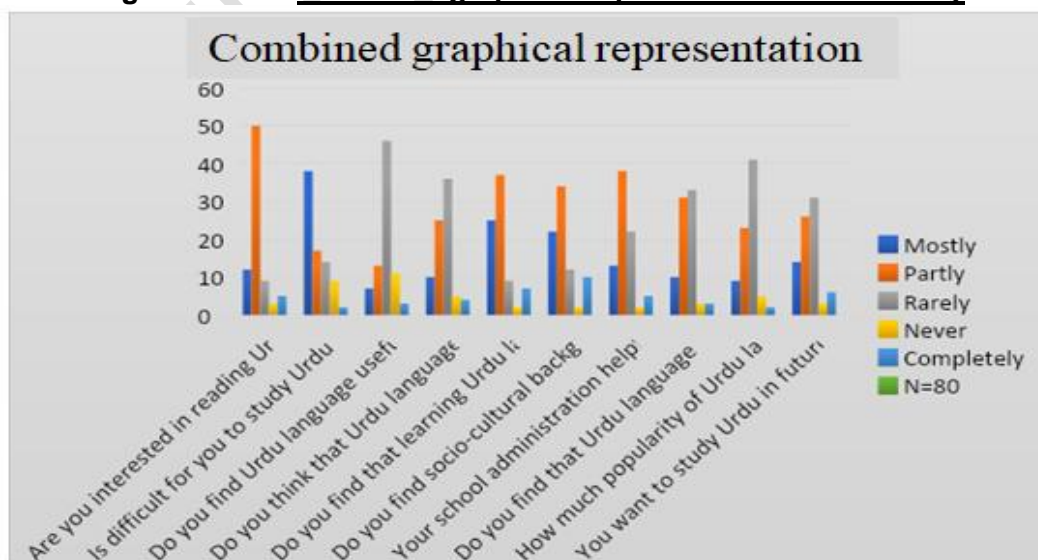
After getting data and doing a detailed analysis, we found that Urdu Language teaching and learning needs the attention of stakeholders, policymakers, and educationists to uplift Urdu Language in the said area, as students of Urdu Language subjects continuously lack interest, lack facilities, and lack 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 Language in future also?	14	26	31	3	6	80

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



5. Findings of the Study

The point of this study is to look into the current state of the Urdu language and the problems that students are facing right now. During the study, some new aspects have come to light that could be seen as important factors in shaping the current state of the Urdu Language. These problems include a lack of teachers, students who aren't interested in Urdu anymore, and parents who don't like the language when it comes to their kids. There are many things that are making Urdu Language less and less connected to society. The results of this study show that the state of the Urdu language is not good enough. Here's what we can say about it: The students lack interest in studying Urdu Language due to an absence of motivation related to the scope of the language, parent support, the role of school administration, etc.

- Many schools don't have Urdu language teachers, so kids have to choose another language.
- It's hard to learn because there aren't any other tools, resources, or creative ways to teach besides books and materials. Because of this, the kids are now less interested in the Urdu language.
- The way parents, students, and school management feel about Urdu Language is not good because it is not widely used and there are not many jobs available.
- It was also discovered that students use Urdu less in everyday life and that speaking English and Hindi makes them feel more at ease.
- While Hindi is more commonly used in schools, Urdu is used less often because most of the materials are in Hindi. Students also get used to this kind of speaking system because they see it as common and useful for getting jobs.

6. Ideas for making the Urdu language more important:

- All schools should hire a certain number of professionally trained Urdu language teachers based on the number of kids they have.
- Teachers of the Urdu language should always meet with their students for guidance and talk to them in Urdu so that the students can learn new words and become interested in speaking Urdu.
- For the same reason that other subjects are taught in schools, books and TLM should only be available in Urdu. Anyone who learns Urdu should not be afraid to speak it in public.

- Knowledgeable people in a society should make it possible for their families to learn Urdu.
- People who are parents should stop telling themselves that their kids can't do well in life because they speak Urdu. The government should focus on the language's growth as a whole instead of connecting it to a specific group.
- Professionally qualified Urdu Language teachers should be appointed in all schools according to the number of students enrolled in the schools.
- The government should emphasize its development as a language rather than linking it to any particular community.

7. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, governmental efforts have been undertaken to foster the promotion of the Urdu Language; yet, it is evident that these endeavors have not yielded tangible advantages at the local level. The ideas and attitudes that emerged throughout society towards the Urdu language during the post-liberalization period are deemed unsuitable for the language's development. It is imperative for the government to implement more robust and creative measures aimed at enhancing the language, with a particular focus on ensuring its accessibility to individuals at all levels of society. It is imperative that we engage in a collective effort to revitalize the declining state of the language that originated, developed, and thrived within our domain.

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