



**THE MAGSHSS, LUMS and BLOOMSBURY PAKISTAN
PUNJABI LANGUAGE CONFERENCE**

24 FEBRUARY 2019

**VENUE: MUSHTAQ AHMAD GURMANI SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, LUMS**

What is Bloomsbury Pakistan

Bloomsbury Pakistan is a research centre and a UK based organisation, registered as a UK Charity. It was created by UK based academics, thinkers and writers interested in Pakistan, meeting to discuss the politics, culture and history of the country since 2000. This has resulted in a huge international network, periodic advocacies and insightful analyses on a wide range of topics. Bloomsbury Pakistan provides institutional footing for research work and uses the social and intellectual capital to create a forceful engagement with public debates in Pakistan. Today, it represents possibly the largest network of intelligentsia working on subjects related to Pakistan; either within or outside the country.

A major and founding objective was to create an organic link between production of debates in Bloomsbury's home in London and its dissemination into the public sphere of Pakistan. To this end, Bloomsbury has previously participated in assisting with literature festivals, literacy workshops and academic conferences in Pakistan. The collaboration with LUMS is therefore building on past successful joint participation.

What is happening on 24 February 2019

1. Pakistan's government educational system has many failings; including poor syllabuses, teaching quality, financial exclusion and high dropout rates. These issues are all relatively well known; leaving charities and NGO's doing their best to plug the huge gap left by the Pakistan state.
2. What is less well publicised is the lack of importance given to lack of importance given to educational instruction in the Mother Tongue Education (MTE) - especially Punjabi. In no school in Pakistan is Punjabi the medium of instruction despite being the mother tongue (and in many cases the only tongue) of the majority of Pakistan's population.

3. Since colonial times, Muslim Punjabis have been taught in Urdu in government schools. The result of Urdu medium of instruction in Punjab is that the actual learning of children, the retention rate, the reading ability and the invisible cultural disconnect is there for all to see. For a variety of political reasons, apathy and ignorance by successive governments of Pakistan and the Punjab, there has been no serious review of this policy to date.
4. The MAGSHSS at LUMS is dedicated (amongst other things) to research on languages in Pakistan and has previously organised a conference on Punjabi language in February 2018. This year Bloomsbury Pakistan is excited and honoured to be allowed to join hands with LUMS and organise a full day programme on Sunday, 24 February 2019; with our focus being MTE in Punjab and Computational Punjabi.
5. 24 February 2019 will be therefore be dedicated to not only try and analyse the importance of MTE (with special reference to Punjabi) but also to suggest some practical solutions to the difficulties written Punjabi is facing. All major stakeholders in the field of education are invited and expected to attend. All educational research to date has proven beyond doubt that MTE is critical to a child's educational success.
6. **For the avoidance of doubt, there is no political, chauvinistic or provincial pride in advocating Punjabi as the medium of instruction in Punjab. We believe that every child in Pakistan should be taught (where possible) in their Mother Tongue. Also, for the avoidance of doubt, we are not against the teaching of Urdu or English; on the contrary; all studies have shown that second and third languages are absorbed better if there is a solid foundation of a Mother Tongue from which to learn national and international languages. We firmly believe that a child's Urdu and English would be superior by adulthood if taught in the Mother Tongue for the first 5 to 7 years of school and then introduced to other languages.**

Mother Tongue Education (MTE) session - Morning of 24 February 2019

This session will explore the positive benefits of MTE, case studies of other post-colonial societies and practical steps towards improving the current situation.

There are three speakers on this session:

- i) Zubeida Mustafa (author and activist).
- ii) Dr Tariq Rehman (Pakistan's foremost language scholar)
- iii) Dr Tony Capstick (former British Council Pakistan and now Lecturer of Applied Linguistics, University of Reading)

This session will be chaired by Prof Mushtaq Soofi of the Institute of Arts and Culture, Lahore.

Computational Punjabi in Nastaliq script – Afternoon of 24 February 2019

In Pakistan, the full Punjabi alphabet in Nastaliq script has never been adapted for computers or typewriters. There are some huge developments in this area which will be explored in this session.

i) Dr Gurpreet Singh Lehal, Director of the Advanced Centre for Technical Development of Punjabi Language, University of Patiala, India. Dr Lehal has developed Punjabi transliteration software.

ii) Dr Sarmad Hussain, Professor and Head of Centre of Language Engineering, UET, Lahore. Dr Sarmad and his team have made great strides in Pakistani languages and computing.

iii) Sharon Correll of SIL International (one of world's largest language institutes). She and her team helped develop Awami Nastaliq font, a new font which can be adapted for use for almost every language in Pakistan (including Punjabi).

The objectives and goals of the Conference

1. For at least one primary school in Punjab to begin teaching all subjects in Punjabi by 2020. This can either be an existing government school, a charity school or a new one
2. Written Punjabi to be made easier and more accessible with the development of a e-keyboard for Shahmukhi script Punjabi.
3. Shahmukhi Punjabi also to be made fully Unicode compliant.

These steps will lead to not only simpler translation and writing of books but also transliteration from Gurmukhi Punjabi (as used in Indian Punjab) to Shahmukhi Punjabi. Individuals and institutions in Pakistan and internationally are working on this as a practical solution seems within reach. 2020 is the target year for these 3 things to happen.