Examining the Impact of University Libraries in Facilitating Foreign Language Learning in Pakistan

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Abstract

Purpose: The field of language education is thoughtfully evolving in the 21st century since libraries around the world are offering substantial numbers of language learning resources to its users. In Pakistan, learners are likewise zealously devoting their time in learning other languages and they are depending on university libraries to get relatable and beneficial language learning resources. In order to find out that Pakistani learners are satisfied with these facilities, a study was designed to examine the impact of university libraries in facilitating the needs of the foreign language learners in Pakistan.

Design/methodology/approach: The overall design of the study was quantitative and data was collected from the four universities of Lahore using convenience sampling. A self-developed questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The collected data of 100 participants was analyzed on SPSS software.

Research limitation(s): Public libraries and other academic libraries were not the part of the study.

Key finding(s): The results uncovered that, university libraries are lacking in providing new and advance facilities along with a healthy reading and learning environment to their users in Pakistan.

Practical implication(s): The findings of the study has made this easy for university libraries to understand their short comings and improve their systems.

Contribution to knowledge: This study has enriched the existing knowledge not only in portraying a societal image of university libraries in Pakistan but also in determining the needs and requirements of foreign language learners in Pakistan.

Paper type: Research.

Keyword(s): Foreign language learning; Library services; University libraries; Lahore, Pakistan.

Introduction

Chronic of history unveils that there are a number of factors associated with success of academic education, for instance before and after school programs, financial aids, parental supports, socioeconomic background, strong mentorship, and learners' attitude. But one of the most influential factor, which has been overlooked and underestimated in many societies, and that without it, the success of any academic program is not guaranteed is the access to libraries and library materials (De Souza, 2009). Libraries have always supported the education by providing treasure of books to man's quest of knowledge and by providing diverse teaching resources, numerous informational and referral services (Ogbebor, 2011).

Developed nations of the past, paid a special attention to their libraries and made them accessible to common people. And if any nation tried to eradicate the other, the assailant first attacked its library systems. This shows that libraries role is indispensable in developing a society and in improving education system. Over the time, revolutionary changes have taken place in the field of education. These changes have introduced a new era of learning, and libraries have embraced new approaches of imparting information and facilitating the learners. These immediate changes in the field of Library and Information Sciences have entirely altered the image of library.

The traditional image of library was a quiet and a big place of study, which accommodated a number of printed collection of books but with the advent of new age of technology this old concept is fading away. In developed countries the so called portray of traditional libraries with lots of printed documents and books is transformed into paperless libraries, which contain a numerous collection of digitized documents. Ogbebor defined library as an "organized collection of published and unpublished books and audiovisual

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materials with the aid of services of staff who are able to provide and interpret such material as required, to meet the informative research, educational and recreational needs of its users" (2011, Library).

A library is like a storehouse of knowledge where content and informational material on any topic of the world can be easily found. Libraries provide this informational material to its users in many different languages. And this point is vital to understand here that, in one society, when one language is spoken, and afterword why do the libraries of that society provide information in different languages? The appropriate response is that the mobilization of human race from one part of the globe to the other for multiple reasons like for gaining knowledge, earning money, for better life style or many other reasons. Therefore, it is important to learn other languages for better communication and to have a clear prospective of the world. In countries, where it is hard to find books about other languages, libraries are considered as a valuable assets. Indeed libraries are playing agreeable and meaningful role in the process of learning of foreign languages in many countries but this role of libraries varies from area to area and region to region.

In Pakistan, the libraries survive on federal and provisional funding. Without these funds, the survival of the libraries is burdensome. When the Government of Pakistan realized this critical situation of the libraries, they took an initiative to encourage the private sector to play a supporting role in providing good education facilities all around the country. Consequently, a number of private academic libraries came into sight. These academic libraries are financed and supported by their parent institutes. In comparison with public and other academic libraries the performance of university libraries is better but still lacking in attracting the attention of majority of hungry minds in Pakistan (Mahmood, Hameed, & Haider, 2006). Beside this, in the era of modern technology, these libraries are far behind to alter their system.

Research Objectives

The study has following objectives:
1. To find out the perceptions of the learners about university libraries in Pakistan.
2. To identify the needs and expectations of the foreign language learners in Pakistan.
3. To investigate the nature of facilities, university libraries are providing to foreign language learners in Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

This study is beneficial because it brings into light a societal thought about the image of university libraries in Pakistan, and draws attention toward a surprisingly emerging trend of foreign languages learning in Pakistan. In the light of this study libraries can understand their shortcomings and strengths and upgrade their systems according to emerging needs of the learners and reshape their image and perceptions of the learners. This paper also highlights those barriers which are the hindrance in the success of library system.

Research Limitations

This study only examines the role of university libraries in foreign language learning in Pakistan. The current study is conducted in the city Lahore but this fact cannot be ignored that in this populous city it was not possible to collect data from all university libraries and every single person because of time constraint and expense element. Therefore, the data is presented in this research is collected from four selected university libraries of the Lahore city.

Literature Review

Wilkin and Crawford (2015) claimed that word 'library' means four pillars. These four pillars have magnified the importance and complexion of the nature of library. These are curation, engagement, publishing and space.

Curation: Means the selection, preservation, maintenance, collection, archiving and provision of access to materials pertaining, to the cultural record for libraries, predominantly books and manuscripts, but often images and audio items also.

Engagement: Means connection with research, teaching and learning.

Publication: Means ranging from the most modest reproduction and dissemination of materials to full-blown editorial processes with peer reviews.

Space**:** Creating and managing spaces devoted to users and collections.

Library and Language Learning

Libraries are helping in the construction of information, access of information, and the dissemination of information. It is a common knowledge that library and learning goes hands in hands. This inseparable relationship between library and learning started in the ancient city of Thrace. In modern era, this city is known as Istanbul (Jato, Ogunniyi, & Akerele, 2019). The image of library has influenced the learning process in all levels of education. According to Marchionini and Maurer (1995), the libraries are providing three different types of learning (a) formal learning (b) informal learning, and (c) professional learning.

Formal learning is systematic study and guided by instructions. It takes place in courses, which are offered at schools, universities, institutes, training courses and programs of various kinds. The important role, libraries serve in formal learning is illustrated by their physical prominence in university campuses, schools and institutes, and by the courses, which universities are offering to their learners to make direct use of library services and materials. Languages learning programs and practices have been highly improved with the help of library system around the world. As the resources provided in the libraries are conveniently exchangeable like Books, Audio, Audio-books, Language reference books, bilingual dictionaries, educational workshops, DVDs, CDs, Internet and many more.

Language learning is a struggling experience. In order to guarantee the success of learners, libraries have gone out of their way to facilitate the language learners and have assembled all types of information and contacts detail of the different language programs offered in different institutes of the city. So that the learners can get all the information about different languages courses offered by different institutes of the city in libraries. Even, some libraries are offering language classes which are hosted by different professors of schools and colleges, who have free evenings. Likewise, libraries keep collection of foreign languages films, documentaries, and music collections, in case learners need them and can understand different languages with the help of these materials (Russel, 2017).

University Libraries and Language Learning in Pakistan

In Pakistan, the survival of libraries is on Federal and Provisional funding. Since last two years, there is a decline in their funding because of the poor economy situations. Therefore, libraries in Pakistan have to face many problems like inadequate collection of books, space problems, cutting in the library opening hours, cancellation of periodical subscriptions, cutting in the working staff and poor services (Mahmood, Hameed, & Haider, 2006). Libraries in Pakistan, count on a large import of books from the US and UK. According to Kyrillidous and Young, the Pakistani libraries get 90% of their resource materials from the UK and USA (2004). Mostly, these books are not relevant to the needs of the libraries.

Furthermore, Libraries have inadequate basic and technical tools for classification and cataloguing the materials. There is lack of national informational cataloguing policy. Unfortunately, there are no promotional opportunities for library staff as well. Therefore, librarians do not cherish their profession, because their status and salaries are not equal to that of teachers and other administrative officers. Librarians are considered no more than clerks, while in most Government departments there is no service structure or promotion formula for librarians (Mahmood, Hameed, & Haider, 2006).

When private sector showed their interest in this matter, than libraries have to compete with each other and to win this race, libraries started to give vigilant attention to the needs of the users. Learners in Pakistan recently, started to show their interest in languages learning. Lately but fortunately, the learners became wise to the well-known quote of Nelson Mandela as "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language that goes to his heart" (Thomason, 2015, p.74).

Many learners in Pakistan are learning other languages besides English, Arabic and Persian. Due to the fact that there will be more favorable and better job and foreign opportunities for them and they will have a brighter future. The learners are eagerly enrolling themselves in different languages classes and dedicating their time in learning these languages. According to the Anwer Mahmoud, the dean of faculty languages at

NUML, classes of Chinese, German, French and Korean are crowded with the students (personal communication, March 2020). Among Asian languages, Chinese and Korean languages are becoming favorite in youngsters. The main charm for students to study Chinese and Korean languages is to get employment or training opportunities in the respective countries. Among European languages, German and French languages are becoming beloved languages. The main reason of studying these languages is the fee free education policies and educational activities of these countries (Jamal, 2017).

A sizeable number of learners depend on university libraries to get information about the concerning languages. The books and helping materials which learners cannot get in the classroom from the teachers. They tried to find those books and helping materials in the university libraries (Khan, Bhatti, Khan, & Ismail, 2014). Arif and Mahmood (2010) conducted a study on the satisfaction level of users with the libraries. They collected data from Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Islamabad, Pakistan. The study unveiled that 52% of the respondents regularly visited the library, whereas 47% respondents went to library rarely. The participants showed displeasure with the collection of materials available in the library, online databases, virtual reference services, interlibrary loan, photocopy facilities, and journals related to subjects. Nevertheless, they were pleased with the location and the physical setup of the library. The study also uncovered that most of the respondents used library for teaching and research. About 54% of the respondents demanded that the university library should provide information literacy programs. They also demanded that competent and qualified library staff should be appointed at senior positions in the central library.

Another study was conducted by Khan and Bhatti (2012) in University of Peshawar. The results indicated that most of the departmental library services were below standard. Major issues were identified as lack of budget, inadequate information technology infrastructure, inadequate administrative parameters, and poor physical facilities.

Research Methodology

The current research is quantitative in nature. A quantitative research highlights objectives, measurements, statistical, mathematical or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, surveys, or by working pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques (Labaree, 2006). There are total seven universities in Lahore offering foreign language short courses and degree programs to the learners as follow.

1. National University of Modern Languages (NUML)
2. The University of Punjab (PU)
3. Government College University (GC)
4. Kinnaird College for Women Lahore (KC)
5. Minhaj University Lahore (MUL)
6. Lahore College for Women University (LCW)
7. Hajvery University (HU)

In view of time constraint and a large population of the study, the researcher collected data between July and October 2019 from the four universities of Lahore namely, (i) Main Library and Oriental Languages Department of the University of the Punjab, (ii) Library and language & linguistic departments of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), (iii) Library and Oriental Learning Department of the Government College University, and (iv) Library and French and Arabic Departments of the Kinnaird College for Women University. The main reason of selecting these universities was that majority of foreign language learners' visit these libraries because of having various foreign language courses.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher used a self-constructed close-ended questionnaire to collect the data. To assess its validity and reliability, the questionnaire was reviewed by several professors of Statistics and Library and Information Science. Their suggestions were incorporated accordingly. The questionnaire was comprised of 15 statements. These statements were about the staff working in library and about the facilities library provides to its users. In the preparation of this questionnaire Likert scale of three points was used to gather the responses of the respondents. The responses were coded as agree 3, not sure 2, disagree 1.

The target population of these 4 universities according to a rough estimation was 1500 students. In order to select sample size for the study Raosoft software was used and the sample size of this study was 306 participants. The convenience sampling technique was used for the distribution of questionnaire copies among the subjects. The questionnaire was provided to the participants in a hard printed form. These participants were studying different foreign languages like German, French, Korean, Chinese, Turkish and Arabic in respective universities. The participant were informed about the nature, aim and objectives of the study. The questionnaire was filled by 100 participants with a response rate of 32.68. The responses of the participants were analyzed on SPSS software. The descriptive analysis is performed on the collected data to obtain the frequency and percentage for the individual item.

Findings of the Study
Demographics
As shown in Table 1, the participants of this study aged from 18 to 25. Of 100 subjects, male and female were respectively 57 and 43. Of 100 respondents, 35 participants were studying Chinese language, 10 German language, 31 Arabic language, seven Korean language, 13 French language, and four were studying Turkish language.

Table 1. Demographics (n=100)

#	Category	Frequency
1	Age between 18 to 25 years	
2	Gender	
2.1	Male	57
2.2	Female	43
3	Participants' language of study	
3.1	Chinese	35
3.2	German	10
3.3	Arabic	31
3.4	Korean	07
3.5	French	13
3.6	Turkish	04

Perception
Table 2 below shows the results of questionnaire survey. The statements 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the questionnaire were about to know the perceptions of the learners about the demeanor of staff working in the respective libraries. A high percentage of the participants showed negative response (disagree) towards these statements. In response to statements 1 and 2, the respondents exhibited high percentage of negative responses (disagree 53%) and (disagree 57%).

They were not satisfied with the library staff, because they did not inform them about the new services related to their language programs neither did they inform them about new collection of books and other helping materials. When the responses of the statement 3 were calculated, it revealed that a huge number of the users asked the library staff for help. It can be seen in table 2 that 45% of the respondents showed their agreement.

In answer to statement 4, a ratio of agree responses was calculated 36%. There was not much difference in disagree or not sure response of the participants. The statements number 5 and 6 in the questionnaire were about user's guidance and approach. A high percentage of the participants showed their feedback by selecting agree option in connection to both statements. The table 2 displays homogeneity in the responses of the both statements.

Table 2. Perception of Respondents about Library (n=100)

#	Statement	D	NS	A
1	Library staff keeps me informed about new services related to my language course.	53	28	19
2	Library staff keeps me informed about of collection of books related to my language course.	57	22	20
3	I usually ask library staff for assistance/help.	29	26	45
4	Library staff has the knowledge about the language I am learning.	31	32	36
5	I easily find the resources those address my assignments or activities requirements.	25	36	39
6	I can make recommendations for new and different resources.	23	31	46
7	The library provides me appropriate resources for my language course.	27	22	51
8	The library provides most current and relatable resources according to my language course.	28	31	41
9	The library provides collection of audio and videos related to my language course.	60	30	10
10	The library provides computer and internet to facilitate my language learning needs.	28	17	55
11	The library provides adequate space for group study or language practice.	26	21	53
12	The library arranges gathering and events for foreign languages learners to practice their language skills.	66	25	9
13	The library provides me information of the all the languages courses offered in different universities and institutes of the city.	67	30	3
14	The library arranges training classes and sections for foreign languages learners.	76	21	3
15	The library has a web guide which gives instructions to users in different foreign languages.	43	28	29

D=Disagree, NS=Not Sure, A=Agree

It shows that 36% participants have no reaction towards the statement 3, because sometimes, they can easily locate their targeted book and sometimes it takes few minutes to find a particular book, and participants showed their contentment with statement number 4. Statements 7 to 15 were about different facilities libraries provide to their users. The basic purpose of this questionnaire was to inquire about the facilities and appliances libraries provide to foreign language learners. Therefore, most of statements in this questionnaire were about the services and facilities university libraries in Lahore are providing to foreign language users.

In answer to 7th statement, 51% participants believed that libraries provide them correct and proper material and 41% respondents exhibited their satisfaction with statement 8th. When learners were asked about the availability of the computers and internet in the library, a decent size of the participants promptly declared their fulfillment with the statement. Likewise, when the participants were asked about availability of the adequate space and proper setting arrangements in library, a sizable number of participants 53% actively selected agree option.

The results revealed that there is hardly any library which is providing audio visual material to the users. The "not sure" responses showed that learners are clueless, because they have never seen such things in libraries. The learners also rejected the thought that libraries never arranged gatherings and events for the practice of foreign language learners. Therefore, a hug number of participants selected the "not sure" response. The highest ratio in denial response reached to 76%, when the learners were asked that libraries arrange language training classes for them. When the learners were asked about university libraries web guides, majority of them rejected this idea.

Discussion

The main objective of academic libraries is to satisfy the needs of an institution and learners. This objective is difficult to achieve, because university libraries do not only have to cater the needs of learners but they also have to meet with the requirements of the teachers as well. Besides fulfilling the curricular demands of the particular institute, libraries have to meet with the emerging demands of the research (Shukla, Singh, & Mishra, 2013). Therefore, the researcher tried to know the perceptions of learners about university libraries and confronted diverse perceptions of the learners. Some language learners have good impressions of their university libraries, in terms of cooperative staff, availability of latest and adequate

material on research and their subject's topic. On the other hand, some learners were upset about the inhospitable attitude of the library staff, insufficient informational materials, improper sitting arrangement, non-availability of the computers in the libraries and libraries working hours. In case this study, the data was collected from four well named universities of Lahore but those university libraries were also lacking in leaving a good impression on their users.

In the same context, the British Council (Pakistan) conducted a survey about reopening of libraries in Pakistan (2014). According to this survey 55% users, who visit libraries belong to language and literature subject. Therefore, it was important to know the needs of foreign language learners. In modern time use of technology is the key of success and use of internet in every field has become the basic need. Unfortunately, in Pakistan university libraries are lacking in implementing this technology. For instance, libraries web guide just provide the rules and policies of using library and some web guides are not even users friendly. There is no arrangement of orientation lectures or tutorial lectures on how to get maximum benefit from these web guides. There is lack of serious attention being paid on the upgrading of university libraries web guides.

Islam and Panda (2009) emphasized that the use of IT in the university libraries for the productive and continual development of the libraries is essential. So accordingly, foreign language learners demand that besides the book, they need other helping material like collection of audio and video books and a proper system to use such database. Unluckily, university libraries are slow to adopt new advancement in the field of education. Internet was introduced in Pakistan in 1995, and Pakistani libraries embraced this technology almost a decade ago (Butt, Qutab, & Mahmood, 2011).

Saeed et al. (2000) conducted a survey in 40 university libraries of Pakistan to know about availability of the internet facility in university libraries. And the results were very disappointing, of 50% university libraries have this facility but only nine libraries were using Internet for reference services, five for acquisitions, cataloguing and classification purposes, two for interlibrary loan, and four were using Internet for document delivery.

Sadly, Pakistani users are deprived of many modern facilities, even users are deprived of the basic need which is adequate space and proper setting arrangement. Haider (2010) claimed that the condition of libraries in Pakistan is a sore point and there is dire need of functioning libraries. A decade has been passed to this claim but infrastructure of Pakistani libraries is still a sore point not only for the users but also for the universities, for education sector and for the Government of Pakistan. These findings imply that university libraries have to pay a serious attention to upgrade their library systems. They can no longer brush aside this matter. If they want to provide quality education and produce talented youngsters, they need to fulfill the requirements of these youngsters.

Conclusion

The findings shows that university libraries need to embrace the new and innovative ways to meet the emerging and evolving needs of the foreign language users. Learners are appreciating the services and resources which libraries are providing them. But these services and resources are not enough. The findings also indicate that the university libraries are incapable in arranging healthy reading and learning environment for them. Most of the learners visit university library to seek information from books or from reference materials while only a small number of learners visit libraries to borrow books. The use of electronic resources and non-book materials is very less, as these supplies are scant in university libraries. There is an absolute need to purchase generic as well as course books to escalate the use of library resources and services among learners.

This is a critical challenge for university libraries to stay relevant to their user's needs and demands, because the world of education, teaching, learning and research is changing quickly. Therefore, it is obligatory for university libraries to maintain their position religiously in the diffusion of information and in the promotion of research by understanding, anticipating, and highlighting the challenges in the respective domains. Rather than assuming these challenges as obstacles, embrace them as opportunities to improve the quality of services to support teaching and learning of foreign languages' activities more effectively.

Recommendations for Further Studies

This research study examined a small sampled population and conducted in Lahore, city of Pakistan. Replicating this study in other cities of Pakistan and increasing the number of statements in the questionnaire may yield more intriguing and valuable results and information. This study examined only the impact of university libraries, it can be extended to impact of public libraries. Moreover, this study talks about different foreign languages. It can be limited to any specific language which is soaring among Pakistani youngsters.

Besides this, the title of this study can be customized and impact of university libraries can be investigated in promoting the learning of social, technical and non-technical subjects as well. The attainment of the information will glean the perceptions of students of other subjects. It will help to upgrade our libraries system according to modern day's library systems.

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