

A Life Story of a Punjabi Language Learner

Bahramand Shah

Following is the transcription of The Life Story Interview of Mr. Sayed Haseeb Sadiq, an MBA student from Pakistan at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The interview was conducted in his room at University towers, IUP.

1. Shah: So we have Haseeb with us and we are going to interview him for
2. a life story interview ok Haseeb hi
3. Haseeb: Hi
4. Shah: So can you introduce yourself
5. Haseeb: Of course ah my name is Sayed Haseeb Sadiq and I am 25 I am
6. from Pakistan and basically I grew up there and I have just come
7. to the States for my graduate studies that is the MBA program and
8. (short pause) I am Muslim by birth and (short pause)I have an
9. engineering degree in my bachelors (pause) and that's about it
10. Shah: What was your first language
11. Haseeb: My first language is Urdu that's the national language of Pakistan
12. ye that's my first language
13. Shah: So you learned it because it was your national language [or it was
14. your native] language?
15. Haseeb: [No it was]
16. the language that was spoken to me since the beginning it was it is
17. the language of my parents and it is the language of my family of

18. people around me so obviously since it is the national language
19. that is the first language I learned
20. Shah: Like you have English Urdu you have only two languages or there
21. is another language
22. Haseeb: Ah I can understand another regional language called Punjabi and I
23. can understand small bits of another regional language called
24. Pashto and another ones called Hindko=
25. Shah: =So we can say that your L1 that is your first language it was Urdu
26. Haseeb: Yes=
27. Shah: =Which you learned at home from your parents from your..
28. Haseeb: That's the first language I came across=
29. Shah: =ha hum and how did you learn it like ah..
30. Haseeb: Ah I I don't remember specifically learning it because I always
31. knew its because it its my mother tongue th.. I I don't remember
32. learning it ever I just knew it [from the day I..]
33. Shah: [You acquired it] from your parents
34. at home [and your friends]
35. Haseeb: [I am thinking] I don't know how it works but th..it was
36. the language that I began begun my thoughts with I mean that's
37. when I gained consciousness I gained it with Urdu so that
38. probably means that you know I was ah you know that's my first
39. language and that's the language my parents communicated=
40. Shah: =Ok and (short pause) like there was no instruction in the first

41. language like you acquired it=
42. Haseeb: =Obviously I I was introduced to more specific grammatical
43. details and other stuff in school but the basic language I didn't
44. have to you know learn it from somewhere I just knew
45. Shah: ahu so=
46. Haseeb: =the colloquial language=
47. Shah: =so you were admitted to school when you were=
48. Haseeb: =I was ha (short pause) I think I was five or six may be
49. Shah: Ok where was the school
50. Haseeb: My school was located in a rural backwater in the back home its
51. called kalarkahar its like back then it was two and a half hours
52. away from Islamabad the capital but now due to this motorway
53. going from Islamabad to Lahore its its more like an hour away
54. Shah: ahum was it an English medium school or Urdu [medium School]
55. Haseeb: [it was supposed]
56. to be an English medium school yes the curriculum was taught in
57. English but our teachers were from the region (short pause) and
58. they weren't really well versed with the language itself they used
59. to make a lot of mistakes but since my family is educated and they
60. speak near fluent English (short pause) and since I was introduced
61. to ah English movies English books at a very early age I kind of
62. developed the correct form of the language at an early stage I
63. didn't apply it in speak I mean the spoken bit wasn't really you

64. know I didn't really have that skill at that time but you know I did
65. have a good grasp of the knowledge I could understand what was
66. written in English I could read what was written in English you
67. know write it too=

68. Shah: =So as we said like you you wo... you learned the first language
69. from your parents at home and like you were not instructed in that
70. language=

71. Haseeb: =Exactly, and=

72. Shah: =was there instruction in the first language in the school

73. Haseeb: Ah it yes and no I mean hum in the sense that you know the
74. curriculum(short pause) was in English but the teachers did not
75. have a good command of the language themselves because they
76. belong to the same area and the area was very backward ah so
77. they tried their best to teach us the form they knew (short pause)
78. but it wasn't the correct form so you know I basically corrected
79. myself through the books that my parents gave me I mean my
80. parents encouraged me to my parents and my family and my
81. circumstance you know encouraged me to learn the language ah
82. you know as perfectly as possible

83. Shah: Ok so when you were introduced to English and (long pause) when
84. you were introduced to English in the school so how it was taught

85. Haseeb: Ah there is a standard form in which most schools in Pakistan
86. teach English you start with the alphabet and then you move

87. towards some higher concepts gradually but ahm there was never a
88. requirement to actually speak English in the class and many
89. people could not speak nor write until you know guided in a very
90. ah you know intensive manner ah they were bad at dictation they
91. were they weren't really very good they had to struggle very hard
92. with English and they used they had to learn things by heart in
93. order to get through the classes but mostly you I did not have
94. problems in English because I had a background you know ah I
95. was very well-versed with the language I mean I had these since I
96. was reading books at a very early age given to me by my parents I
97. had family relatives whose spoke in English and that gave me an
98. opportunity to converse in them converse in English with them and
99. I was watching English TV programs and you know serials from
100. the US and movies from the US so I kind of had a better know how
101. of the language than other people other students in the class
102. Shah: So as you said like ah speaking was not focused or concentrated
103. that mush so that it means other skills they were like writing and
104. listening and reading they were focused or not
105. Haseeb: There was a very textbook ah centric methodology followed in our
106. school and that's the case that almost all schools to my knowledge
107. there whatever was in the textbook was followed to the dot the
108. teachers themselves didn't you know ahm come up with you know
109. ways to enhance the students comprehension or whatever so they

110. followed the textbook to the dot because they themselves lacked
111. the command over the language so you know this is followed this
112. is taught the basics I guess=
113. Shah. =and so that was reading and writing based basically=
114. Haseeb: =It was more like reading the textbook learning the alphabet first
115. and then you know(short pause) they did a good job I mean if you
116. go through a Pakistani school you do end up knowing how to read
117. and how to write basic stuff I mean you do learn the basics it's the
118. spoken part and you know articulation and eloquence all that and
119. all those skills that you know you have to learn on your own but
120. the basics are more or less you know you know ah you get the
121. basics from the Pakistanis schools
122. Shah: So one reason might be like reading and writing they are stressed
123. because it's the need of the system the educational system like
124. speaking and listening is not be that much important its only
125. writing and reading am I right=
126. Haseeb: Ah you are right to an extent but hum people who can speak
127. English are its more like hm its more like its an issue of prestige
128. people who can speak English fluently with the proper with the
129. with an accent that's considered proper hm who are very well you
130. know who have a command over the language are generally given
131. more respect they are treated they they they carry a certain prestige
132. value because of the fact that they can converse in English they are

133. generally respected everywhere they go more than people who cant
134. converse in English so its more like in Pakistan its like its trendy to
135. be fluent in English

136. Shah: Ok so are you satisfied with the way English was taught to you in
137. the school when you were in your primary stage

138. Haseeb: Ah No I am not because it didn't give I mean I had to learn how to
139. and I write and I believe that I write very good essays and you
140. know and I have got good scores wherever I have to write essays I
141. believe that I have good writing skills but those skills were more
142. acquired by you know my own desire to improve my writing skills
143. ah and the same is the case for the spoken English skills so I I
144. learned them on my won with the help of my family my situation
145. in life whatever but other people who don't have these
146. opportunities are you know who don't have that desire ah within
147. them ah they suffer they can only read and write and they can
148. understand someone who is speaking English to some degree but
149. they cant really speak as fluently as one would expect students
150. who you know graduate English medium high schools may be you
151. know even universities so that's I I don't think that they teach
152. English to the degree they should I mean their teaching their
153. methodology is not that much effective they do give you the basics
154. and they do make you understand, make you=
155. Shah: =rules and grammar=

156. Haseeb: =ya ya they give you the ability to read (short pause) English but
157. beyond that you have to acquire all those skills on your own you
158. know they they gi.. I mean I remember we used to we used we
159. used to memorize essays we didn't write them on by on our own
160. we used to have like for example an essay on a dog may be on my
161. dog or my cat whatever and the teachers used to write them down
162. on the board and we used to copy it on our note books and then we
163. used to memorize it and you know if asked in the exam to write
164. and essay on dog we used to copy word to word whatever the
165. teacher dictated us so you know they people never developed the
166. art of the skill of writing essays themselves there was little
167. emphasis placed on doing things on your own

168. Shah: ok so were you in a public school or a private school and is there
169. any dichotomy between public and private schools in Pakistan like
170. may be the private schools where money matters=

171. Haseeb: =it was a semi-public I cant even hm it belonged to I mean it was
172. under the auspices of the air force it was a Pakistan air force model
173. school ah so I cant really call it public as such per se but there is
174. there is definitely a very strict dichotomy between the public and
175. private education system in the country the public schools do not
176. teach English until may be a very later age I mean at a very later
177. time something like in high school probably but they don't teach
178. English and there curriculum is in Urdu Pakistan has two education

179. systems which have two different mediums of education so it was
180. then a public school per se
181. Shah: Ok so like why (short pause) like if there is a dichotomy between
182. the public schools and private schools so what is the reason like =
183. Haseeb: =its bad planning on the part of people who have governed
184. Pakistan and who formulated a strategy to guide the nation since
185. its inception since its you know independence they should never
186. have allowed two systems to coexist to determine the rank and
187. prestige of a person I mean a person going to a public school who
188. is normally a person who cant afford a private school and is subject
189. to a ah you know a very bad education system that that has not
190. been updated since I don't know when I mean like ahh its very
191. very inferior in quality compared to the private schools and
192. someone who has gone to a public school is never has the
193. opportunities ahh a kid who goes to a private school has I mean
194. immediately as soon as he gives his resume with the name of a
195. public school like a government college he will be rejected right
196. there if its its like a multinational or may you know like a big
197. Pakistani company they don't have a good future anyone so you
198. know the reason behind it is a lack of planning a lack of foresight
199. on the part of you know on our leaders part on people who
200. governed Pakistan and its also it also has to do with you know the
201. general population's own ah (long pause) you know lack of civic

202. duties towards their country and their kin and their kith and you
203. know and country together
204. Shah: So like your English it shows that you started well when you were
205. a kid so if the school was not that much good the teachers were not
206. good the area was not it was rural and it was backward in a sense=
207. Haseeb: =yes=
208. Shah: =so what are the reasons like=
209. Haseeb: =I think it has to to big I if I go back and you know trace the
210. beginnings of my foundations in English the right foundations I
211. would start with books my father always encouraged me ah to read
212. books you know he gave me that ah quest for knowledge that quest
213. for knowing more and that love for reading so I used to read a lot I
214. started up with you know with books that were appropriate for my
215. age and I progressed gradually and I been to comics and you know
216. all that you know and that really helped me a lot that made me
217. understand the language more but I think the point where I really
218. was able to speak the language fluently was the point where I
219. innately I don't know how I decided it I subconsciously converted
220. my thoughts into English my I think in English and sometimes
221. when I am angered I fight in English and I apply the language as
222. for example I come across a word that I like in a book I apply it
223. immediately and I think it was borne out of a need to have a
224. greater social status may be because the more because I always
225.

226. knew that I was coming from a small town and I knew the fact that
227. I would probably end up in a big town which I did so=
228. Shah: =As you said like your father was responsible for your [English or
229. learning] so when you were a kid like when you were admitted to
230. school and when you were introduced to English so like can you
231. tell us something about your parents and then did they talk to you
232. in English at home or
233. Haseeb: [ya early
234. big foundations] they did really talk to me in English they did kind
235. of guided me as for English is concerned they can speak English
236. fluently yes but they never did really talk to both my brother and I
237. you know in English per se but ah they they did talk in English
238. when they had to when they were trying to teach us something and
239. they did encourage us to read books and you know they
240. encouraged us to watch movies and you know play pc games and
241. you know all that kind of stuff you know socialize with kids in the
242. cities and stuff like that=
243. Shah: =what is your parents' level of English like [are they proficient]
244. Haseeb: [they can..] they can
245. speak English fluently yes they are proficient
246. Shah: Ok and when you were in school in primary school so what was
247. the environment like did you use English outside the classroom or
248. inside the classroom with your class fellows with your teachers

249. Haseeb: Ah no we did not have a requirement to speak in English in our
250. classrooms no we did not and I never got the chance to speak in
251. English with my friends until a very later age until college may be
252. and ya that's the time when I started using English in my daily
253. speech with my friends (short pause)

254. Shah: Ok so like (long pause) if if you if you are given a chance like now
255. you know better about English so what changes would you like in
256. in that age when you were in primary school

257. Ah I would actually want people who speak the language to teach
258. the language that's the best way you can=
259. Shah: = you mean native speakers of =
260. Haseeb: = exactly=
261. Shah: = English should=
262. Haseeb: =Exactly I think no matter how much should it would cost the
263. government or (short pause) the private schools or the owners of
264. the private schools they should actually bring in native speakers as
265. teachers and that would really help in you know judging by my
266. parents' level of English and they speak fluently because they went
267. to convents that had English ah fathers and all that, they are they
268. stopped that system long time ago back in the seventies or
269. something but we did have convent mission schools that had
270. English fathers and nuns and teaching children and ah these people
271. were relatively at [proficient level] convent

272. Shah: [so the teachers] of those schools were they
273. native speakers of English=
274. Haseeb: =Yes they were English they were they were from the UK
275. Shah: Is it possible to have you know native speakers of English in
276. Pakistan now
277. Haseeb: I think now may be not because of the current situation I mean
278. with strife increasing every day on the global arena but even now I
279. think it would be more beneficial because it would bridge gaps
280. between you know peoples and it would actually also help
281. Pakistanis to ah you know ah gain more proficiency in in the
282. language I think it would be better to be taught by a native speaker
283. than by a local speaker who has better command of the language
284. Shah: Ok so you are talking about the early stage the primary school=
285. Haseeb: =Yes it should start with a native speaker=
286. Shah: =and later on=
287. Haseeb: =may be later on you can switch to advanced language speakers
288. within the country but it should start it should definitely start with
289. a native speaker they should establish the foundation of the
290. language
291. Shah: It means like students young students kids they would be able to
292. listen to correct English correct grammar=
293. Haseeb: =Ya and they would be able to ah know the they would naturally
294. be guided as to other sources of you know knowledge where

295. English is concerned from these native speakers naturally they
296. would recommend books and you know they would encourage
297. them to ahm read write in the very language where it would
298. actually really really help people who want to speak English and I
299. think it's the call of the day English is becoming more and more
300. and more of a language franca for the world and I think that for
301. Pakistanis to get competitive in the global market and to better
302. understand ah you know or westerners whatever they should
303. actually have native speakers teach them and they should be able
304. to talk fluently in English that's something that I really believe in

305. Shah: Ok lets talk about (short pause) the way English was taught to you
306. in the school so you said it was started with alphabets=
307. Haseeb: = Ya
308. Shah: And later on they started [nouns] some nouns
309. Haseeb: [started ya] they started with basic
310. sentence making you know recognizing basic sentences I don't
311. really remember the details but I think it started out with James
312. went there and Roger came home and things like that [you know
313. basic sentences]

314. Shah: [So was it
315. through translations]=

316. Haseeb: =There was a time yes I remember that we had to translate English
317. in Urdu I think the logic behind that as my teachers or the people

318. who made the curriculum was to ah you know give the ability to
319. the students who had Urdu as their mother tongue to convert their
320. thoughts into English so the translation was a major part of English
321. courses through out carried a lot of grade in the exams so yes
322. translation I think translation was one part tenses and nouns the
323. other sentence making and we were given a set of words we used
324. we used to make sentences out of them I am talking about the third
325. grade and fourth grade that's generally the pattern that continued
326. just till advanced level but you know we had sentences we had
327. dictation in the beginning you know words that we had to spell so
328. spellings and essay writing came later on ah hum and translation
329. and tenses that was a very big part of our curriculum

330. Shah: So when you say tenses and you know grammar translation so the
331. focus was basically on grammar on the structure of the language=
332. Haseeb: =On the structure of the language as I don't I had intuitive
333. knowledge of tenses from the start and I could translate Urdu
334. sentences into English intuitively you know because I developed
335. and earlier understanding of the language I mean I developed this
336. understanding earlier on so this exercise did not really benefit me
337. because I knew the you know English form of any Urdu sentence
338. and I also knew the correct tens of the sentence so it did not help
339. me but I think that they thought this is a method that's effective to
340. transition someone who speaks a different language into another

341. language may be that I don't know the logic behind it but it did not
342. help me as such I did not gain anything out of it I just had this
343. knowledge pre-hand
344. Shah: So so people who have this like you you said that you think in
345. English and you can speak it without translating from another
346. language but what about those people who are used to it who have
347. been taught in this way to translate from their first language into
348. the second language=
349. Haseeb: =I don't think they can really you know use English in their daily
350. lives as such I mean I am sure they can write and may be they can
351. read but they cant really converse in English as fluently as I can ah
352. but you know it's a system that's been there for many years it's a
353. system that people believe in whether it works or not and I doubt
354. that its going to change any time soon unless we as I said you
355. know as a proposed solution we bring in native speakers to start
356. teaching our kids
357. Shah: Ok so you said like it was not there in the classroom it was=
358. Haseeb: =It was more out of the school that I acquired the skills to [speak
359. write]
360. Shah: [like it
361. was from your parents and]=
362. Haseeb: =Ya it was my background and that as I said was the
363. circumstances I was born in that includes my family who were

364. very well versed who speak English fluently eloquently and with
365. articulation and it was to do with my contact with western culture
366. you know with movies with the you know by watching movies by
367. reading books and you know by reading magazines and playing
368. games and you know all that that helped so that's how I started up
369. and I think it was the international traveling experience that helped
370. me a lot where spoken English is concerned when you go to other
371. countries where you know you cant communicate in any other
372. language but English as a lingua franca language of
373. communication that's the point where you gain the confidence in
374. your speaking abilities mean that's how you gain fluency so=
375. Shah: =Any important incident in your childhood where that that incident
376. might have transformed your thinking of English ah your approach
377. to English the way you learned English ah your liking or
378. disliking for the language
379. Haseeb: Not that I can recall I always found English very fascinating and I
380. wanted to speak English because it gave me ah it was to do more
381. or less of getting out of rural I mean it was I knew that if I could
382. speak English fluently with eloquence and articulation I would be
383. accepted in the high echelons of society in the big cities and that
384. something you really need I order to go out so since my ambitions
384. were high I knew that I had to learn the language with very high
385. skill I needed very high skills in the language in order to you know

386. be recognized and respected in the higher echelons of society that I
387. wished to move into once I you know

388. Shah: So oh like is there this difference between classes rich poor middle
389. class [in the acquisition of English]

390. Haseeb: [Yes of course] definitely most definitely like I said since my
391. circumstances permitted me to actually revolve in in circles where
392. English is more preferred than Urdu and its considered something
393. of a you know ah status symbol you know and the ability of Urdu
394. itself to you it started out by you know an amalgamation of
395. languages and now its inducing a lot of English words in itself so
396. in in the society that I belong to in the circles that I belong to Urdu
397. and English are used more interchangeably and the person who
398. uses English more is very respected given more credit and is
399. generally more successful at getting jobs you know at getting may
400. be you know girls you know that's the definite status symbol and
401. anyone who can master the ability to speak good English can you
402. know really do wonders in Pakistan

403. Shah: So it means like it does not mean that you can buy English with
404. money but it like you use money to acquire English it means you
405. are revolving in that circle where [English is used where its
406. respected]

407. Haseeb: [Not really no] I mean I came
408. from a place where English was badly spoken I mean Kalarkahar

409. was a rural backward area as I said I mean it was and when I talk
410. about rural backwater in a third world country I mean a rural
411. backwater in the lateral sense I mean people did not even know a
412. single word of English they did not even care but I knew that I
413. wanted to go high and I knew that you know I had to acquire skills
414. that would allow me to you know fuse with you know society I
415. wanted to revolve in and yes it did help me to have a family that's
416. educated that's mostly in the city but I mean if you have the will
417. anyone can do it exist that people in the villages and the rural areas
418. of Pakistan don't really care they do not want the same things that
419. I want there goals are very limited so I had these goals because of
420. my circumstances yes I was able to formulate these goals because
421. of my circumstances but I did it from a village so its really possible
422. to do it from a small village or whatever provided that you have
423. sufficient will I mean like you know anyone would tell you its
424. noting is impossible you can do I know people who like grew up in
425. villages without even electricity and they are like doing very well
426. in their lives they are like educated

427. Shah: Well now you are a grown up and from your own experiences
428. when you were a kid suppose in future you have a kid so what
429. would you like for them what where would admit them where=

430. Haseeb: =I would want ideally speaking I would want them to go to a
431. school that's that has a curriculum that's very up-to-date that's

432. very =

433. Shah: =Modern=

434. Haseeb: =Ah I don't know how that's a term we use in Pakistan but I don't

435. think you know people here would understand what modern in the

436. Pakistani sense means but I would call it more up-to-date more it

437. gives you value for the money you put in I mean your kids not only

438. learn the basic stuff like science and all that but they really learn

439. their civic duties their moral obligations you know basic ethics you

440. know they the school should not only just concentrate on

441. elementary knowledge but it should also concentrate on other

442. things you know like how you deal with your parents how you deal

443. with other human beings how you put civic duties you know

444. obligatory all that

445. Shah: Ah we talked about primary school so what about your middle

446. school like was it the same English was taught in the same way it

447. was taught in the school or was it different somehow

448. Haseeb: It got a little different because I went through a transition (short

449. pause) ah in the eight when I was in the eight grade as was the

450. trend in those days it was considered prestigious to join one of the

451. old boarding schools that were established by the English but now

452. are operated by Pakistanis but they still carry the same prestige and

453. value and I applied to various schools and I got into one called

454. Abbottabad Public School and College (short pause) it is located in

455. the northern region in the mountains and its located in a very
456. scenic part of the north western frontier province and it was built in
457. 1954 if I am not wrong ah and its considered very prestigious all
458. over the country it has very ah it has a very powerful alumnus
459. alumni sorry and so I went to the boarding school when I was in
460. the 8th grade and things were different there compared to you know
461. my primary elementary school so yes it was different the level the
462. level of English was different I get I got to meet people from all
463. over Pakistan who came from comparatively better schools had a
464. better command over the language so I got more opportunities to
465. learn and grow as far as English is concerned=
466. Shah: = So in other ways it was an elite school I mean=
467. Haseeb: =it was an elite school yes=
468. Shah: =You know the children of the rich people are studying there=
469. Haseeb: =Yes and as I described earlier (short pause) ah you know in
470. Pakistan since there is a very class oriented segregated society ah
471. people who go to the these elite schools are normally ah more
472. fluent in English they have they have more contact with the
473. language itself they have more you know they have better
474. command of the language in general so obviously I got to test my
475. own language skills with them and the the teachers in these schools
476. were you know more qualified at teaching the language as well so
477. that's the that's that makes that made the difference definitely

468. where English is concerned=
469. Shah: =Ok so what about the environment how the environment was
470. different teacher were like [what about]
471. Haseeb: Ya [teachers were] more qualified
472. compared to the teachers in my earlier school ah the the the my
473. friends my colleagues my class fellows they had a better
474. knowledge of they had a better command of the languages as well
475. so you know both these factors combined to increase my skills in
476. the language=
477. Shah: = what about teaching methodologies in the class=
478. Haseeb: =ah at that level the don't really teach you the nitty gritty of the
479. language itself ah they follow the same curriculum that's that's all
480. over that's predominant in Pakistan so that there is no change in
481. the curriculum its just ah the the only difference is that English
482. there is an emphasize definite emphasis that's placed on English
483. and you know ah the medium is mostly English teaching medium
484. and since as I said the teachers have better command so they are
485. more able to deliver lectures in English compared to Urdu
486. Shah: Um and you remained in the same school=
487. Haseeb: =Ya I remained there from the I I did my junior high what you call
489. junior high school here and my high school from there=
490. Shah: =Ok so (short pause) ah then you were admitted to a College=
491. Haseeb: =A university college ya my college was located in (short pause)

492. ah in a city called Rawalpindi it's a twin city to Islamabad and
493. actually since it's very near to the capital and the school I went to
494. was considerably expensive as compared to the state's schools
495. that's why the people there were more affluent but the quality of
496. education I I would not say that it was very high but the my peers
497. and you know my class fellows they were definitely you know my
498. batch mates they came from very affluent families and again it was
499. one developed and I got to speak the language practically with
500. them the this is this is the moment in my life very I started
501. conversing in English although I knew the language I could read I
502. had very good reading skills very good writing skills and very
503. good listening skills but I still hadn't ah you know gained
504. necessary fluency when it you know came to speaking the
505. language itself so this is the moment in my life where I started
506. speaking English you know by one starting by just adding one
507. sentence in my daily in my in my conversation one sentence
508. followed by an Urdu sentence followed by another English
509. sentence so I was mixing Urdu and English and I started using
510. more and more compared to Urdu to gain the necessary level of
511. proficiency when it came to speaking English
512. Shah: Ok was there any difference between the books curriculum in the
513. school in the college teaching methodologies methods used by the
514. teachers

515. Haseeb: At this point in time the teachers were less bothered about the
516. professors were less bothered about the language skills than the
517. matter of the subject itself I mean the point was to deliver the you
518. know subjects that were closely related to by nature and hum so
519. there was very little emphasis placed on the language itself I mean
520. some professors preferred English over Urdu while delivering their
521. lectures whereas some professors preferred Urdu over English and
522. it doesn't it did not really matter and it this point (short pause) you
523. know ah just by hearing someone talking English did not really
524. make much of a difference to my own you skills where the
525. language is concerned what mattered is the fact that I preferred
526. using English more and more in my conversation with my peers
527. and my friends in my daily life that really you know was the
528. change that I think occurred in this period

529. Shah: Ok ah then what about University what was the experience

530. Haseeb: When I graduated back in 2004 I I had already planned at that
531. point that I want to get an MBA later on ah so I needed the
532. necessary work experience to be eligible to apply to a business
533. school so after I graduated in 2004 my priority actually my priority
534. was to get a job than anything else no I was talking about what
535. happened after my university so I was looking for I got a job and
536. then I started working and (short pause) by that time I had gained
537. whatever level of proficiency I have right now so nothing really

538. changed (short pause) so ya then when I worked for two years I
539. stopped and I applied for a business school and then I got in and
540. now I am here=
541. Shah: =Ok so when you compare your skills listening speaking writing
542. reading what skills are more developed and=
543. Haseeb: =I think that my reading skill if I would have to rate them in order
544. my reading skill would be the best then my listening skills after
545. that I would consider my writing skill and lastly I would consider
546. (short pause) my speaking
547. Shah: So is it because of your learning in those institutions or is it
548. because of your individual aptitude=
549. Haseeb: =No its because of the order in which I learned these skills I mean
550. like I said you know reading and listening came first then writing
551. and at the later stage as if my life came of speaking so its it's the
552. order in which I gained proficiency in each skill that you know
553. Shah: It means that if you had started with speaking=
554. Haseeb: =Speaking first may I would have been more but ah more
555. generally speaking I think I rate all my skill you know in these
556. areas almost equal I don't find any areas specifically lacking=
557. Shah: =Ok what you what you liked about English language teaching in
558. school in college at university like what were your good
559. experiences what are your views like what do you think are the
560. positive things

561. Haseeb: Like I said before I had the chance of ah you know being taught
562. English by Hewkeshphel sir Hewkeshphel I mean he is a very
563. famous name in the subcontinent and he has been given the honor
564. of CB or OB I don't remember order of the British Empire if I am
565. not wrong and he dedicated his life to teaching English in Pakistan
566. and India and he is reputed to have you know formed almost all
567. these major boarding schools elite boarding schools in the country
568. and I Had the opportunity to learn English from him and I think as
569. I said before you know learning English from a native speaker is
570. an entirely different and more fulfilling experience than learning it
571. from you know non native speakers but on the whole I think the
572. way English is taught in Pakistan it did obviously you know helped
573. me in some ways I mean it did I mean I did go through the whole
574. learning process and I did take something out of it if not everything
575. and if not a lot but it does need improvement because I had to work
576. on my own to gain sufficient proficiency in the language so=
577. Shah: =Ok when you when you look at your schooling your life in school
578. like your learning period from your school till your university so
579. where do you learned where did you learn better than the other like
580. was it in your school=
581. Haseeb: =Obviously as I switched from an inferior school to superior
582. school there was a level of difference and by to elaborate as to how
583. these school are I am sure in the States there are some schools

584. some public schools that are not deemed equal to other schools
585. private or public I mean where the level of education is concerned
586. so ah like that even in Pakistan you know some schools are more
587. they have a better you know they are more able to give you the
588. necessary skills in English or whatever other subjects than other
589. schools so as I moved from an inferior school to a superior one
590. there was a definite you know difference and you know I was able
591. to learn obviously more in a parallel school but when it came to
592. college I don't think I really gained a lo of language skills from
593. there I mean yes there I did learn a lot but it was not particularly
594. language skills that I was learning at the college level but yes
595. during my primary school I did not learn as much as I did during
596. my junior high or high=
597. Shah: =It means the pace of like the speed of your learning it was better
598. at your school than your college and university the speed at which
599. you learned the English language
600. Haseeb: I think it does not have to do with speed I think it has to do with
601. the point in time you find yourself in I mean you know there is a
602. certain time till which they teach you know you know English as a
603. language or English as a subject they don't teach you English they
604. don't have you know after high school in Pakistan they don't
604. concentrate on English as a subject I mean we had English in our
605. high school and that was like at an at an advance level compared to

606. you know junior high I mean the level did increase with time but it
607. wasn't something I mean I did not really really learn from school
608. when it comes to English that's my conclusion I mean looking
609. back I always knew what was being taught when it came to
610. English because I was reading it and writing it and listening to it
611. on my own so I was always one step ahead of my class where
612. English is concerned so I was I I never really gained anything new
613. from my (short pause) school obviously there must have been
614. something like you know grammatical know how you know some
615. new vocabulary some additions to my vocabulary or may be you
616. know other details which aren't really very useful in your life but
617. besides that when it comes to the basic reading writing listening
618. speaking skills I didn't really gain a lot=

619. Shah: = So the the reason might be like in your school English was a
620. specific subject in itself that was taught in the classes but later on
621. at your college and university although other subjects were they
622. were taught in English but English was not focused directly

623. Haseeb: Ah in the college years=

624. Shah: =Ya the college and university=

625. Haseeb: = Ah we did have a professional I did take a professional
626. communication course in my first semester undergrad but it it
627. focused more on writing you know writing skills pertaining to
628. writing and speaking in fact yes pertaining to professional

629. environments they taught you how to write official letters

630. applications may be you know give presentations all that so those

631. were the skills that I learned in that particular course but it it was

632. the only course of its kind during the whole four years

633. Shah: Ok so when you like distribute your learning of English language

634. among your home your schools and friends so and the media

635. definitely like which plays a major part in the you know language

636. learning (short pause) so which will you consider as you know the

637. most important one where you acquired the most of the language

638. was it in the school was it at home=

639. Haseeb: =You mean to ask which source or=

640. Shah: =Ya ya

641. Haseeb: Ha I think it has to do with hm it has to do with my friends because

642. we usually converse in English and we use English a lot as a

643. means to converse ah then it would be my family some of my

644. cousins are from the US or you know other western countries who

645. which speak English so I got a chance to speak to them in the

646. language ah it has to do with the books that I read you know and I

647. tried speaking in the same hm I tried to use the language you know

648. what I read I tried to use it in my speech as well so that kind of

649. helped as well but most of all it was my own motivation to gain

650. proficiency in English when it comes to speaking that's what really

651. got me you know that's what really got me to the level that I am

652. today=
653. Shah: =Ok so like my understanding is that you learned most of your
654. English out of the classroom=
655. Haseeb: =Out of the classroom ya=
656. Shah: =And the ah like may be the methods the curriculum the teachers
657. they were not doing enough in the classroom to teach you the
658. language (long pause) I mean you were not satisfied with the
659. teaching of [English in the classroom]
660. Haseeb: [I think whenever it comes to] teaching another
661. language as my personal observation ah it has to do a lot with your
662. own personal motivation I mean I know people who have been
663. taught Spanish most of their elementary as well as you know
664. throughout their schooling been taught Spanish but yet they don't
665. really speak a word of it now that's because they weren't
666. motivated enough to learn the language ah for any kind of
667. language yes you can you know specify the grammar you can sp---
668. you can teach someone in a couple of words basic sentences
669. sentence making everything and that's what people back home did
670. as well I mean in the and they still do it in the schools but most of
671. the us number one don't have a choice when it comes to learning
672. English it's a mandatory subject that everyone has to take during
673. their early schooling and may be later the schooling as well so they
674. don't have a choice normally they are not motivated enough they

675. don't see the benefits of learning another language they are quite
676. content with their own language and you know ah but some of us
677. like myself we are motivated enough to learn the language and
678. that's why I am where I am where English is concerned but it does
679. not really have to do there is a certain way where you should learn
680. the language the rest depends upon the student

681. Shah: So what are the reasons for like in Pakistan what are the major
682. reasons for the motivation of English language acquisition=

683. Haseeb: =I was motivated more because of the prestige value it carried I
684. think ah you know my primary motivation I always wanted to you
685. know have that prestige value associated with myself I mean I
686. wanted to gain from it so I guess it has to do with the fact that
687. speaking the language I knew that it would give me more respect
688. later on in life it would open opportunities for me elsewhere there
689. were so many benefits that I had identified early on that motivated
690. me enough to actually you know learn it

691. Shah: Ok what are what are your strengths in English language

692. Haseeb: I can pretty much do everything I like I said before I cant really say
693. that you know that I have proficiency in just one area of the
694. language like you know so my versatility when it comes to English
695. is perhaps my biggest strength I can write very well I can read
696. almost everything I have a very good vocabulary I have a good
697. understanding of the grammar where I can speak very well and you

698. know that's why I think you know my I am very versed in all areas
699. and you know so=
700. Shah: =So which one do you think is your strength
701. Haseeb: Ah (short pause) I think that hm I cant really say as I judge them
702. all at an equal level I think that you know I have increased all my
703. skills to a certain level and they are all at a certain level which isn't
704. bad on average it's a little above average you know
705. Shah: Lets put it another way like what things were easier for you to
706. acquire to learn in English=
707. Haseeb: =I think ah conversely the most difficult part was to gain fluency
708. in speaking the language ah but reading was probably the easiest
709. then came listening and writing and then=
710. Shah: =So it means speaking was a bit difficult
711. Haseeb: Speaking I mean even though you know a language that's what I
712. have observed I knew English I had a good understanding of it but
713. you need that confidence to start speaking in English to actually
714. gain that fluency even if you know you can speak English but hm
715. still you when you try speaking it if you don't have that confidence
716. if you haven't practiced enough you don't reach that level of
717. fluency so you need to start speaking in the language in order to
718. gain fluency ah in it where speaking is concerned=
719. Shah: =And you didn't get enough practice=
720. Haseeb: =I did actually that's why I am able to speak flu- quite fluently like

721. I said that it started from ah my college years and it has increased
722. over time since then

723. Shah: Ok so when you came to America ok for how long have been you
724. here in America

725. Haseeb: I arrived here on the nineteenth or the twentieth of January and its
726. [that] yes three months

727. Shah: [three months] so when you came here and you started interacting
728. with people here with native English speakers so what were the
729. differences like what was your understanding and learning of
730. English and what was there in actual life when you interacted with
731. people here

732. Haseeb: Ah Americans I mean the native speakers that belong to America
733. the US they tend to have a very simple form of speech which is
734. very different from the kind of English that we speak back home
735. because that tend to be more ah you know it tends to be more
736. complex like perhaps the British English and our pronunciation is
737. more British than American or sometime sometimes its mixed so
738. hm I could understand American very clearly I had no problems in
739. understanding what they were saying I had no problems speaking
740. to them but they had a problem understanding me at times because
741. my accent was different I mean ah not that I was speaking or even
742. pronouncing anything wrong it was more a matter of dialect I
743. mean you know like for example we go poor and American go

744. poor (pour) so you know they have they could figure out what I
745. was trying to say but sometime they had the difficulty in you know
746. getting my accent but you know otherwise I had no problems
747. whatsoever initially of course since I was used to mixing Urdu
748. with English in my conversation back home ah you know the total
749. ah you know the total absence in my speech was a little weird at
750. first but I got used to it later on=
751. Shah: =Ok so one problem was pronunciation it means they were finding
752. it difficult to understand you=
753. Haseeb: =It can be I mean we cant really say that its pronunciation as such
754. its more like the dialect we have we speak English in a different
755. dialect compared to its something like you know southerners
756. southerners American have different dialect and northern
756. American have a different dialect so its something like that and
757. sometimes they have a difficulty understanding their own dialect
758. so=
759. Shah: =Ok does it happen with you sometimes like you have enough
760. vocabulary may be like you have the right accent somehow but
761. sometimes you don't have the proper structure in in the English
762. language and when you when you mean when you try to say you
763. try to convert translate from your own language =
764. Haseeb: =No that doesn't happen to me anymore I don't I don't mentally
765. convert ah Urdu sentences into English sentences because that

766. would give me pause whenever I speak and as you may have
767. noticed I don't pause when I speak I mean that you know my
768. thought process has the ability to convert (short pause)you know
769. my thoughts into English directly it it does not have to go through
770. ah conversion function as such I mean my thoughts come in
771. English when I want them to I don't have to convert my thought
772. from Urdu into English first because that that's the point when you
773. stop doing that that's the point where you gain you know fluency
774. in the language that's the point where you don't have to think
775. before speak you just utter your thoughts out loud I mean like you
776. know because they are coming in English

777. Shah: Like it's a common concept in English language acquisition that
778. what happens is that like English is not English but each and every
779. language its influenced by its culture and it comes out of the
780. culture the society where its used so what happen is like you are
781. coming from you know Pakistan you have Urdu your mother
782. tongue your native tongue and you have you know you have
783. structures in your language which are influenced by your culture so
784. you think in that way like you will have you know a definite
785. structure to express yourself people here have different structures
786. so when you translate your like if you don't know about the
787. structures in English what will happen you will translate your ideas
788. into your own structure and it will not fit into English sometimes it

789. happens=
790. Haseeb: = Yes its very true but hum since my country and my culture is
791. very heavily inspired by the popular culture in the US we are very
792. familiar with the language the culture and everything so we don't I
793. didn't find it difficult to adjust and I didn't find it very difficult to
794. converse with American or you know use I didn't have to change
795. my the structure that I used before because I was watching their
796. movies and I was watching their programs and I was reading their
797. books and you know all that I was very familiar with the culture
798. here it it and you know hum most part of my own language
799. acquisition process had to do with you know gaining I mean came
800. from these very sources I mean their culture itself I mean movies
801. and music and books and all that
802. Shah: As you said like you have been here for three months so if you
803. compare your these three months with your previous three months
804. in Pakistan when you were a student and learning the English
805. language and here you are learning it and you are using it so how
806. would you compare both like what about the pace of learning and
807. development=
808. Haseeb: =Firstly I don't think I don't consider that I am learning the
809. language as such but you know I am gaining more fluency in it
810. perhaps obviously because I have to talk in English all day but the
811. change that I have started noticing is in my ah my accent itself and

812. I I I my pronunciation has become more American than anything
813. else and its gradually moving towards more you know (short pause)
814. more like American English form so you know my my
815. pronunciation and everything is changing so its more the way I
816. speak rather than what talk about or what I speak it's the way that I
817. speak which is which I find is changing sometimes=
818. Shah: =So humm do you have a language class=
819. Haseeb: =No no not at all no language classes
820. Shah: Ok so ah what would you suggest like after you experienced (short
821. pause) the learning of the English language almost 16 years of
822. your education so what would you suggest you know=
823. Haseeb: =I think (long pause)
824. Shah: Like what should be done to acquire it in a more=
825. Haseeb: =Learning judging by my own experiences and my own learning
826. process I think the way they teach English which is pretty much
827. standardized and is pretty much the same all over the world its not
828. very different I mean everywhere you go you taught you start with
829. the alphabet and then you start with a few basic words a few basic
830. sentences its all the same everywhere else but ah you know to
831. regain the level of proficiency that is required in this day and age
832. ham or to get to the level where I am right now I would very
833. strongly recommend native speakers teaching non-native willing
834. student that's I think is very necessary because once you and and it

835. would be equally better if there are more exchange programs
836. between different countries between English speaking countries
837. and non-English speaking countries it would be very helpful if you
838. know hm we had American students attending or may be any
839. English speaking country students from any English speaking
840. country attending Pakistanis schools who want to learn Urdu
841. perhaps ahh we should have more exchange programs ah you
842. know in place

843. Shah: Ok ah when you compare it with your first language acquisition
844. that's Urdu so you might acquired it in three to four years and
845. when you acquired when you compare it with English you tool
846. almost ten fifteen years to you know learn the language but still
847. you are proficiency may not be the same as your first language so
848. what was the reason like what is this why is this imbalance is your
849. first language influencing this=

850. Haseeb: =Obviously you know second language would can never overtake
851. your skills in your first language because that is the language that
852. comes to you naturally that comes to you as your second nature it
853. it cant be taken away from you obviously this second language you
854. acquired would never be hm you know you would never be as
855. proficient in it as in your first language because that's how it is but
856. ah you know I don't really consider ah lot of difference in the
857. skills that I have you know in both these languages I have I mean

858. yes obviously my Urdu would be a little better than my English but
859. they are almost generally speaking=
860. Shah: =In speaking it may be better than English but when it comes to
861. other=
862. Haseeb: =Ya when it comes to other areas its almost the same in fact I may
863. lack in the necessary skills to read you know Urdu literature=
864. Shah: =To read write=
865. Haseeb: =Ya because Urdu literature is quite complex and you know I
866. didn't really own my skills there so there are some skills in Urdu
867. that I may lack in right now compared to English
868. Shah: Ok one final question=
869. Haseeb: =Yes
870. Shah: Why English why English is so important what do you think=
871. Haseeb: =It's the lingua franca of the world I mean as simple as that all
872. your sciences all your subjects are in English your since your basis
873. the basis of science is in English I mean your (short pause) your
874. number system you know ahm your computers everything is in
875. English since the world is becoming more and more of a global
876. village there is a need for a common language and regardless of
877. you know however English got to the place that it is now its not
878. specifically English anymore you know like I sometimes joke that
879. it should be called something like you know the name should be
880. changed because now you have a very distinct form of English

881. that's called the Indian English I was reading about it the other day
882. and you have got the American English and you have got the
883. British English and as more and more people use English as an
884. international English obviously they could never overtake the
885. languages spoken in different countries but as a second language
886. its not very difficult to acquire number 1 com.. I mean like even
887. Urdu is more complex than English it's an easy language its more
888. standardized its easy to learn its spoken all over the world it's a
889. very effective way to communicate with different people who
890. speak different languages and it it has it has global importance and
891. you know sooner or later (*ya that's probably here*)* I think its very
892. important to be able to have decent skills in all the areas important
893. areas of the language English itself
894. Shah: Thank you Haseeb
895. Haseeb: You are welcome Shah

Note. * Here Haseeb was telling his roommate about something. Unrelated to interview topic