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What to choose, Linguistics or Literature? - Analyzing the Predicaments faced by University Students of Okara District Concerning their area of Specialization.

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Abstract

Selecting the perfect area of specialization can be a vital step when one is pursuing a degree of BS or M.Phil. in English. This seems what an individual must aim to follow to assist them to get ahead in their professional life and career. One can regard it as a game changer or an important decision that a student needs to consider and it is at times difficult to identify as to which specific area best suits the needs and interests of a given learner. Students of BS and M.Phil. levels in English are perplexed either to opt for Linguistics or Literature as their area of specialization. In this regard, adequate and timely career planning/counseling is highly significant and is needed on an emergent basis to overcome the prevailing ambiguity among the students. Lack of career counseling is leading to numerous problems. The primary objective of this study has been to identify and highlight the lack of awareness among our students about their decision-making and career selection, which in turn possibly leads to numerous problems for the students in their career prospects. The study's respondents include the BS & M.Phil. English students from the Okara district of Pakistan's Punjab. This study uses the quantitative paradigm with survey research being its research design. Data has been gathered through a Close-ended questionnaire. The sample from study respondents from an Okara-based university has been derived based on Convenience sampling. Data collected from the population was analyzed via Microsoft Excel and represented in bar diagrams. There must be courses of at least 2 or 3 credit hours on career selection and decision-making in our BS-level curriculum to combat the current scenario of poor planning and decision-making in terms of career selection.

Keywords: Linguistics vs Literature, decision-making, Okara district, BS English, area of specialization, selecting the right career

Introduction:

Career counseling is a procedure that primarily focuses on helping an individual to better understand oneself and also to properly identify one's hidden potential through the timely seeking of an expert opinion. It also allows an individual to understand their favorite career with its respective scope in the job market. All such is done in order to make a timely and well-informed decision about one's academic as well as professional career.

In today's era of a highly competitive and tough job market, individuals seem continuously losing hope in their survival, because of multiple reasons such as population growth, tough competition, and because of several other difficulties that university pass outs are confronting these days. University students are however gradually comprehending that they must go for a career that best suits their interests and hence is the one that is truly aligned with their desires and passions. But as a matter of fact, many of our students are incapable of identifying their passion in the truest sense. In such a complex situation, timely and adequate career counseling can hold huge importance and can therefore be capable of turning around the decision-making inability of the students completely upside down.

Numerous of our university students in Pakistan seem being usually forced to let abandon their dreams on account of the lack of guidance and awareness. This is possibly the area where career counseling can play a crucial part in the growth of our university graduate and undergraduate students of English, by aiding them to identify their inner potential and accordingly chase their desirable dreams. However, it is essential to ascertain that career counseling alone will not be enough, it is integral also to study various skills of career counseling and apply them adequately.

Timely career counseling can lead to better and more effective career decisions. By the provision of timely guidance and assistance, career counselors can assist graduate and undergraduate students of English in identifying and overcoming barriers that may be thwarting them from attaining their career goals, the ones that suit their mental aptitude, intellect, and interests. Some of the common hindrances that career counselors can assist and sort out can possibly comprise a lack of determining the suitable path, a lack of confidence, perceived fraudulence, and a lack of awareness.

Background of the study

Unfortunately, there is no sound system in place for guidance and timely counseling for selecting careers pertinent to specialization in English. Consequently, students go for those specializations, courses, or degrees that don't match their mental aptitude. Not surprisingly, they become exasperated and feel like being wasted.

Statement of the problem

Students of BS English (both ongoing and pass-outs) in Okara district of Pakistan's Punjab are in a fix in terms of their planning for a suitable career. Students are perplexed as to which area of specialization to pursue as an area of specialization or career, whether Literature or Linguistics. This research aims to describe the problems faced by students and remedial measures to overcome those problems. The current study reveals that students of BS English are in dire need of timely and adequate career planning by experts.

Research objectives

- To identify and highlight the lack of awareness among BS English students concerning their decision-making and career selection.
- To assess possible problems arising for students due to the absence of timely counseling and guidance

Literature review

Career planning can be taken as something concerned with students taking decisions concerning their careers. An adult seeks a career when he starts exploring various career choices and then starts relating all those with their personal choices and interest. Several mechanisms can influence individual decisions¹.

Multiple constituents influence learners' decisions to undergo a specific professional pathway. These can include personal interests, one's family, teachers, the print media and electronic data, and an overview of the profession itself². There is a great influence of the parents and instructors on the learners for either choosing science or engineering³.

The ultimate career fondness is extraordinarily foreseen by the career selection when learners practically enter the specialized school that eventually prioritizes those elements that impact the

learner in making career choices at the beginning of the specialized school⁴. Workshops on career guidance and career counseling also have an influence on career decisions^{5,6}.

We can conclude that most of the high school students in our country do have adequate knowledge, and an optimistic attitude regarding career counseling but unfortunately there is an absence of such proper practices. Students do think that career counseling is very much significant and further are also much concerned with the acquisition of guidance on careers. Seemingly parents also play a significant and effective role in their student's career paths and the students also take the piece of advice of their parents to be sincere and honest. It is undoubtedly a fact that there are only a few schools in Pakistan that equip our students with sessions on career counseling and there is almost no presence of career counselors in schools in our country. The researchers of the future must hence focus on this thing as to why the school administrators are least interested in the career guidance of their students and why their students are not being equipped with suitable career counseling⁷.

The contribution of higher education to economic prosperity has been a driving force behind higher education policy in recent years. It has justified the massive expansion of student numbers and has provided the rationale for a whole series of Government supported interventions to make higher education graduates more employable.⁸

A career is a blueprint or outline for an individual's life. Career counselors, therefore, assert that learners aspirants of an academic career need to adjudge their inner abilities, strengths, and weaknesses to make higher education a successful experience⁹.

Salami (2008) highlighted many factors that influence students' career choices such as self-worth, sociable personality, interest, one's motivator or role model internationalization, financial provisions, and the information collected through media which are related to the selection of a career. Salami (2008) had much earlier warned that many learners tend to make improper choices in their careers on account of peer pressure, unenlightenment, lack of experience, or labels attached to various job types without consulting experts for their valuable opinion.¹⁰

Research Methodology

The research consists of innovative work embarked on a methodical basis in order to upsurge the stock of knowledge that include the knowledge of mankind, cultural and societal issues, and the utility of this stock of knowledge is to plan new practicalities." It is utilized to form or validate facts, the reaffirmation of previous work, and the solution of novel or existing

issues, supporting theorems or developing new theories. Research can also be a growth on previous work in the field.

This study uses the quantitative paradigm with survey research being its research design. Data has been gathered through a Close-ended questionnaire. The sample from study respondents from Okara has been derived based on Convenience sampling.

Results and Discussion

This research explores the importance of timely guidance and career counseling for graduate and undergraduate students pursuing their degree in English as a field of study. Current research identifies the emergent need for counseling the students of English regarding their selection of an area of specialization whether Linguistics or Literature.

For the purpose of data collection, a close-ended questionnaire was created and the study participants were asked to respond with their opinion following the Likert scale showing distinct 5-points comprising:

SD- Strongly Disagree

DA- Disagree

N-Neutral

A-Agree

SA- Strongly Agree

SD	DA	N	A	SA
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Data analysis

Data collected from the population has been analyzed and discussed below:

I was extensively trained regarding the differences between literature and linguistics before my admission to the university.

Table 1: Responses to Q1

Q1	SD	DA	N	A	SA
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Response	72	13	4	3	8
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Out of the entire population, 72% of respondents strongly disagree with the notion that they were extensively trained regarding the differences between literature and linguistics before their admission to the university. Another 13% are those who simply disagree with it. A small proportion of 4% is neutral on it. 3% simply agreed with the statement. Moreover, 8% of those who think otherwise strongly agree with the notion.

Most of my peers are well aware of the differences between literature and linguistics.

Table 2: Responses to Q2

Q2	SD	DA	N	A	SA
Response	47	19	0	23	11

Out of the entire population, 47% of respondents strongly disagree with the notion that most of their peers are well aware of the differences between literature and linguistics. Another 19% are those who simply disagree with it. None is neutral on it. 23% simply agreed with the statement. Moreover, 11% of those who think otherwise strongly agree with the notion.

The scope of both literature and linguistics in my view remains unpredictable in Pakistan.

Table 3: Responses to Q3

Q3	SD	DA	N	A	SA
Response	5	7	41	14	33

Out of the entire population, only 5% of respondents strongly disagree with the notion that the scope of both literature and linguistics in their view remains unpredictable in Pakistan. Another 7% are those who simply disagree with it. A major proportion of 41% is neutral on it. 14% simply agreed with the statement. Moreover, 33% of those who think otherwise strongly agree with the notion.

Literature and linguistics must both be taught together concurrently in the same academic program and throughout the complete degree span.

Table 4: Responses to Q4

Q4	SD	DA	N	A	SA
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Response	66	21	3	6	4
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Out of the entire population, a major number that is 66% of respondents strongly disagree with the notion that Literature and linguistics must both be taught together concurrently in the same academic program and throughout the complete degree span. Another 21% are those who simply disagree with it. A small proportion of only 3% is neutral on it. 6% simply agreed with the statement. Moreover, 4% of those who think otherwise strongly agree with the notion.

Literature and linguistics must both be treated as separate areas of specialization and must be taught as separate disciplines.

Table 5: Responses to Q5

Q5	SD	DA	N	A	SA
Response	13	3	54	8	22

Out of the entire population, merely 13% of respondents strongly disagree with the notion that Literature and linguistics must both be treated as separate areas of specialization and must be taught as separate disciplines. Only 3% are those who simply disagree with it. A major or maximum proportion of 54% is neutral on it. 8% simply agreed with the statement. Moreover, 22% of those who think otherwise strongly agree with the notion.

Linguistics is more interesting and easier as compared to Literature

Table 6: Responses to Q6

Q6	SD	DA	N	A	SA
Response	41	11	3	5	40

Out of the entire population, a maximum of 41% of respondents strongly disagree with the notion that Linguistics is more interesting and easier as compared to Literature. 11% are those who simply disagree with it. A small proportion of only 3% is neutral on it. 5% simply agreed with the statement. Moreover, a significant portion of 40 % of those who think otherwise strongly agree with the notion.

I often feel perplexed as to what to choose as an area of specialization whether Linguistics or Literature.

Table 7: Responses to Q7

Q7	SD	DA	N	A	SA
Response	10	4	5	12	69

Out of the entire population, only 10% of respondents strongly disagree with the notion that they often feel perplexed as to what to choose as an area of specialization whether Linguistics or Literature. Only 4% are those who simply disagree with it. A small proportion of only 5% is neutral on it. 12% simply agreed with the statement. Moreover, a major portion 69 % of those who think otherwise strongly agree with the notion.

Teachers and experts must counsel the students so that they may excel in whatever they choose as a career or area of specialization out of Literature and Linguistics

Table 8: Responses to Q8

Q8	SD	DA	N	A	SA
Response	0	0	3	5	92

Out of the entire population, none of the respondents strongly disagree with the notion that teachers and experts must counsel the students so that they may excel in whatever they choose as a career or area of specialization out of Literature and Linguistics. None simply disagree with it. A small proportion of only 3% is neutral on it. 5% simply agreed with the statement. Moreover, a major portion 92 % of those who think otherwise strongly agree with the notion.

The government of Pakistan in collaboration with provincial governments must take educationists and prominent linguists and literary figures on board to overcome the prevailing ambiguity regarding Literature and Linguistics.

Table 9: Responses to Q9

Q9	SD	DA	N	A	SA
Response	3	5	19	24	49

Out of the entire population, only 3% of respondents strongly disagree with the notion that the Government of Pakistan in collaboration with provincial governments must take educationists and prominent linguists, and literary figures on board to overcome the prevailing ambiguity regarding Literature and Linguistics. Only 5% are those who simply disagree with it. 19% is neutral on it.

24% simply agreed with the statement. Moreover, a major portion 49 % of those who think otherwise strongly agree with the notion.

In the current Pakistani scenario, students are bound to prepare for both literature and linguistics in order to pass competitive exams

Table 10: Responses to Q10

Q10	SD	DA	N	A	SA
Response	16	14	23	10	37

Out of the entire population, 16% of respondents strongly disagree with the notion that in the current Pakistani scenario, students are bound to prepare for both literature and linguistics in order to pass competitive exams. 14% are those who simply disagree with it. 23% is neutral on it. 10% simply agreed with the statement. Moreover, a major portion 37 % of those who think otherwise strongly agree with the notion.

The Questions and responses of the research participants are as follows:

RESPONSES TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

S. No.	Question	Percentage of each response				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I was extensively trained regarding the differences between literature and linguistics before my admission to the university.	72	13	4	3	8
2	Most of my peers are well aware of the differences between literature and linguistics.	47	19	0	23	11
3	The scope of both literature and linguistics in my view remains unpredictable in Pakistan.	5	7	41	14	33
4	Literature and linguistics must both be taught together concurrently in the same academic program and throughout the complete degree span.	66	21	3	6	4
5	Literature and linguistics must both be treated as separate areas of specialization and must be taught as separate disciplines.	13	3	54	8	22
6	Linguistics is more interesting and easier as compared to Literature	41	11	3	5	40
7	I often feel perplexed as to what to choose as an area of specialization whether Linguistics or Literature.	10	4	5	12	69
8	Teachers and experts must counsel the students so that they may excel in whatever they choose as a career or area of specialization out of Literature and Linguistics	0	0	3	5	92
9	The government of Pakistan in collaboration with provincial governments must take educationists and prominent linguists and literary figures on board to	3	5	19	24	49

	overcome the prevailing ambiguity regarding Literature and Linguistics.					
10	In the current Pakistani scenario, students are bound to prepare for both literature and linguistics in order to pass competitive exams	16	14	23	10	37

Conclusion and findings

There is an absence of timely guidance and career counseling for our university students (in particular). Our university students (of BS English and those desiring to pursue their M.Phil. English) are perplexed as to which area of specialization or career to pursue, whether Literature or Linguistics. The current study reveals that students of BS English are in dire need of timely and adequate career planning. Students must clearly be taught as to what are the underlying differences and respective scopes of both Literature and Linguistics.

The government of Pakistan in collaboration with provincial governments must take educationists and prominent linguists and literary figures on board to overcome the prevailing ambiguity regarding Literature and Linguistics.

Career counseling can help our students of BS English in figuring out the career path that is best suited for them. There must be courses of at least 2 to 3 credit hours on career selection and decision-making in our BS-level curriculum to combat the current scenario of poor planning and decision-making in terms of career selection. There must be a separate Career counseling section in each academic department of the university. The Voice of the students must also be linked with their choice. Students too must be given autonomy to choose what suits the best for them in terms of their interests and passions. There must hence be a separate Counselling section in each academic department of the university.

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