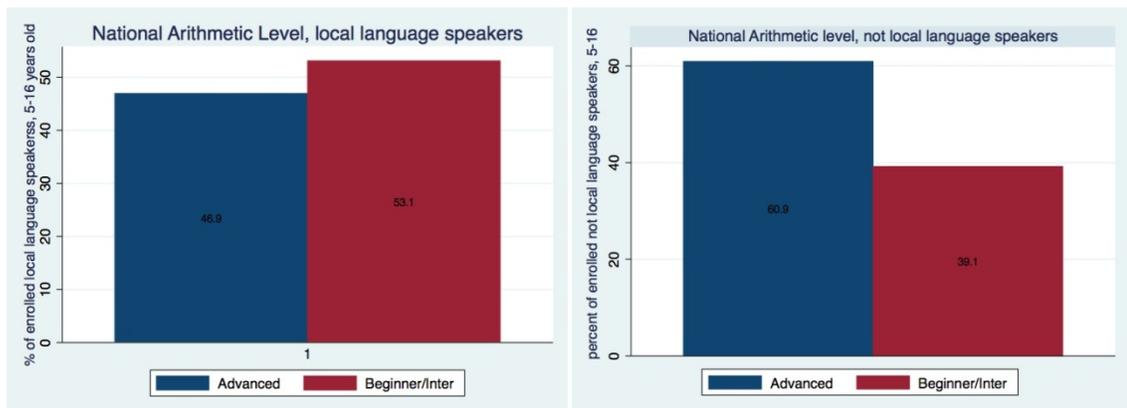


Learning levels of local language speaking children in Pakistan

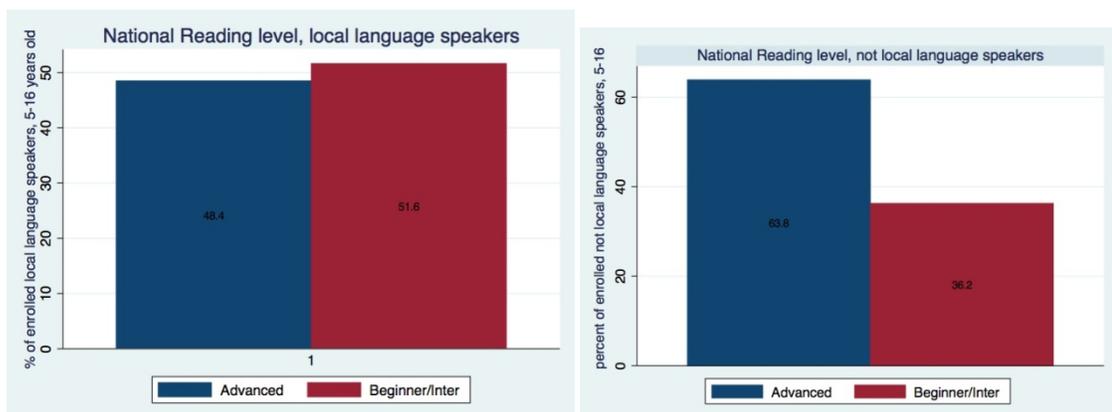
Evgenia Valuy, August 2013

95% of all Pakistani school children speak local languages and only 67% of them are currently enrolled in school. These children come from poorer households than children from English and Urdu-speaking families. Their mothers are usually less educated and they tend to attend government, not private schools. Also, they are doing worse than children from English and Urdu-speaking families in reading, arithmetic and English language subjects.

Arithmetic: 14% more English and Urdu-speaking children can perform such basic arithmetic operation as subtraction



Reading: 15% more English and Urdu-speaking children can read sentences.

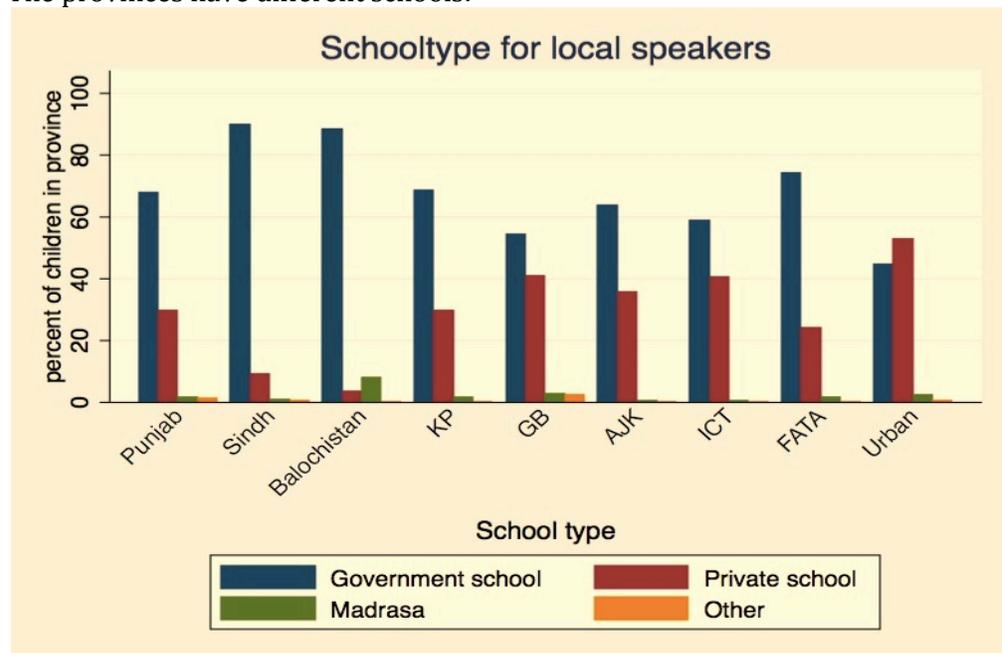


Why are local language-speaking children learning worse?

The local language-speaking children learn **differently across the Pakistani provinces**. Islamabad and Urban areas have the highest learning competencies while Sindh, Balochistan and FATA are doing the worst.

What is different in these provinces?

- The provinces have different wealth. Which provinces are the wealthiest? Islamabad and Urban areas are the wealthiest. Can lack of wealth be a reason for local language-speaking children doing worse? It certainly affects the learning levels because it is difficult for a child to study well if s/he cannot do homework in the evening without electricity or if the school has no textbooks. However, it is not the one and only reason, the magic key problem. FATA is poorest province of Pakistan and yet is doing slightly better than Balochistan, which is *almost* as poor.
- The provinces speak and learn in different languages. Can the discrepancy between home and school language be the reason? It certainly affects the learning levels: As suggested by UNESCO (2007) children should be first taught in a familiar language until they firmly grasp all the new concepts. Once they know the concepts they can transfer them into a different language if they are to learn in a different language further. However, in Sindh children study in their home languages but perform the worse in the country.
- The provinces have different schools:



Sindh and Balochistan have primarily government schools. Sindh has government local language-medium school and Balochistan has government Urdu-medium schools. Typically, government schools are less equipped with such facilities as toilets, boundary walls, and libraries. All these facilities are indirectly conducive to learning and lack of them might be impacting children's learning competency levels.

Recommendations:

- Teacher training. Research from Africa (Kyeyune R. (2003), Bunyi G. (1997)) suggests that a teaching model has a stronger effect on children's learning. Teachers are to be instructed how to teach children in a friendly manner where children can ask question and learn.
- Further research into the school practices, with a possibility to compare the learning levels to school characteristics.
- Qualitative research into teaching practices, including the language practices and realities such as code-switching and mono- or multi-linguistic classroom composition.