



Teaching Language Configuration and Language Selection in Pakistan

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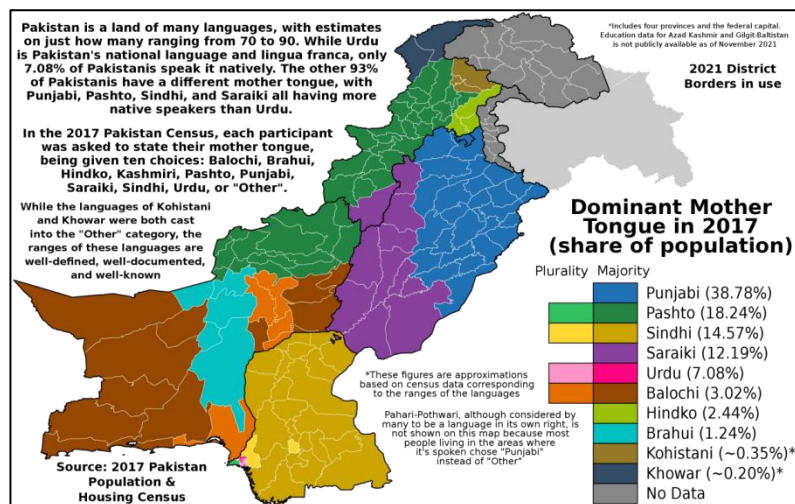
Abstract: Since the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, Pakistan has gone through multiple stages of reforms such as initial attempts, legalization, and systematization of educational governance, attempting to build a distinctive internal and external governance system for its education. Due to the influence of national conditions and many other factors, Pakistani education also presents many differences in language configuration compared to other countries. This article takes language ideology as the theoretical framework, specifically interpreting language pluralism and language configuration in education in Pakistan, and analyzing language practice in education in Pakistan.

Keywords: Pakistan; Urdu; Education; Language

Introduction:

Pakistan is a multilingual and multicultural country, with a total of 77 languages spoken nationwide, most of which belong to the Indo-Iranian group of Indo-European languages. The languages with over 1 million speakers include Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Saraiki, Urdu, Balochi, Hindko, and Brahui. Although each province is associated with a specific ethnic group that has its own language and culture, English and Urdu are national languages and official languages. Urdu language is commonly used for communication and serves as a lingua franca between different ethnic groups.

Figure 1 Language usage distribution map of Pakistan in 2017^[1]



Urdu language helped to establish national unity and trust among the people of Pakistan, especially during the accelerated formation of Muslim society in the Indian subcontinent before the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. However, English remains the main language used by the Pakistani elite and is used for both official and informal

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interactions. English has been integrated into Pakistani society and is considered by the vast majority to be an ideal language, thus it holds a high position as a language for education, law, government, science, and technology, while other languages are excluded from the official and provincial power structures of the federal government.

Language Ideology and Media Expression

Language practice and language choice are usually controlled and influenced by language ideology. Paul de Man, a representative figure of the deconstructionist Yale school, read all phenomena as if they were texts. He believed that human political destiny has the same structure as language, and language specifies the pattern of ideology. As long as there is language, there is ideology. Paul de Man's ideology differs from the views of Marx and Althusser, providing a new perspective for people to understand the essence of ideology. Language ideology is defined as a belief pattern implemented in context through the connection between language and social power structures. Linguistic ideology shapes language structure and influences speech style by creating specific viewpoints, thereby establishing a relationship between language and language practice. This relationship also influences social concepts by generating collective values, economic standards, and political control that reflect the social standards and principles of a society. This social control is governed by economic and political factors. Economic factors persuade marginalized groups to acquire specific national or international languages in order to achieve stable economic status, while political factors aim to strengthen the position of policy makers to control and disseminate individual ideologies through specific languages. Therefore, language ideology influences language production through the systematic connections between language, power, and society. The dominant language protects specific social and official structures by disrupting the social and official structures of other languages. Language ideology is linked to the material reality of language, which means that communication and ways of communication between individuals may be inseparable from physical qualities related to personal identity.

Table 1 Historical data on the main languages of Pakistan^[2]

Serial Number	Languages	2017 Census	1998 Census	1981 Census	1961 Census	1951 Census
1	Punjabi ^[3]	38.78%	44.15%	48.17%	56.39%	57.08%
2	Pashto	18.24%	15.42%	13.35%	8.47%	8.16%
3	Sindhi	14.57%	14.1%	12.7%	12.59%	12.85%
4	Saraiki*	12.19%	10.53%	9.54%	-	-
5	Urdu	7.08%	7.57%	7.60%	7.57%	7.05%
6	Balochi	3.02%	3.57%	3.02%	2.49%	3.04%
7	Other	6.12%	4.66%	5.62%	12.49%	11.82%

Language policy, education policy, political power, and cultural control are completely interrelated and cannot be ignored in educational research directly influenced by such policies. Through this focus, language ideology can be used to effectively explore the belief structure that interacts with language and language practice. Language ideology reflects the language values of the entire society and greatly affects individuals' choices of language in the process of language use. More importantly, the direction of the overall social language order also depends on language ideology. Language ideology is closely related to language policy. The language policy of a country is determined by the dominant language ideology in the country.^[4] Language policy mainly refers to the government's efforts to encourage and regulate the use of language at the national level through legislative, administrative, and other measures to meet the needs of individuals, groups, and the country. The formulation process needs to consider various factors at all levels. It is generally believed that language ideology has guiding and determining functions, marking functions, and determining the order of language. The so-called guiding and determining function refers to the language practice of individuals and society, as well as the dominance and determination of language consciousness to determine the life and vitality of a language. Language ideology has a symbolic function because it represents the attitudes and beliefs of a country's ruling class and mainstream social language use. This means that if there is a phenomenon of using languages other than mainstream languages in social life, monolingualism cannot be tolerated. At the same time, language ideology has the function of determining language order. Language order refers to the hierarchical relationship between various languages based on the size of the language usage domain and the amount of resources occupied. Language can first be the dominant language and non dominant language. It is also possible to distinguish between high and low levels within non dominant languages.^[5]

The media landscape in Pakistan reflects a multilingual, multi-ethnic, and class divided society. There is a clear disagreement between the Urdu and English media. Urdu media, especially newspapers, are widely read by the public -

mainly in rural areas. Compared to Urdu media, English media is more free and professional, centered around cities and elites. The audience of English print, television, and radio channels is far less than Urdu, but their influence is greater among opinion makers, politicians, the business community, and the upper echelons of society.

Linguistic pluralism and ideological presentation

As a multilingual and multi-ethnic country, the bilingual or multilingual phenomenon in Pakistan is very common. Before independence, its teaching language was Sindhi and Pashto. After independence in 1948, Urdu was designated as the national language and teaching language. In 1973, English was made the official language. The teaching language for primary and secondary schools in Sindh is Sindhi, and Urdu is a compulsory course. Currently, Sindhi is only used as a local language in Sindh. Similarly, Pashto is only used as the teaching language in local schools. Currently, there are many schools in Pakistan that use English and Urdu. Although Urdu is the most widely used language in Pakistan, most ordinary schools teach in Urdu, and English is a foreign language. However, due to the influence of British colonial rule, the role of English in Pakistan cannot be underestimated. In large and medium-sized cities, English still dominates. Many aristocratic schools still teach in English, while Urdu is a compulsory course. Pakistan inherited the education system of the British colonial system, including English education and vernacular education for specific administrative roles. English high schools serve the elite class of the country, who can afford expensive tuition fees, so these schools are considered symbols of high-quality education. The vernacular education schools include the use of Urdu, Sindhi, and Pashto. Urdu secondary schools include most schools that have received government support since Pakistan's independence due to the status of Urdu as the national language. However, there are still issues regarding the quality of education in these schools. Due to the symbolic power of English as the elite language in Pakistan, a large number of non-elite private schools have emerged, promoting themselves as English high schools. Although it has attracted middle-income and low-income families to participate in English secondary education courses, the quality and language proficiency of teachers and students in these schools are still very poor. Many scholars have conducted multiple studies on English teaching and English as a teaching language, focusing on educational discourse in the classroom and its impact on classroom learning in Pakistan. These classrooms are diverse in terms of culture, language, and socio-economic class.

In Pakistan, there are many languages and cultural ideologies that influence the views of various ethnic groups on social language. One of these ideologies is the claim that national values are best approached and disseminated through Urdu, which, as mentioned above, was also the language of Muslims in the pre-colonial Indian subcontinent. This ideology supports the labeling of English as a colonial language and implies that the younger generation should not hold onto the linguistic and cultural norms that English brings. The second ideology that exists in Pakistan is that individuals' identification with groups is regulated by their language and culture. Each ethnic group has its own language and culture, which is considered a fundamental element of its national values. In this ideology, both Urdu and English are considered a threat to local languages, as government support for Urdu and English limits opportunities for other languages. The third ideology is related to economic growth, international employment, and the opportunity market. This ideology has received support from many stakeholders in government and decision-making institutions, and English is described as a language of opportunity. Improving students' English professional abilities is another important discourse in quality education. Due to the privilege of administrative power enjoyed by English and Urdu, they have formed a functional position and significance, and have played a symbolic role in implementing a unified language market controlled by the official language. Therefore, for those who aim to prioritize their own language over the national language, a connection is established between power and inequality. These ideologies intersect in this way, creating challenges and conflicts among social groups.^[6]

In the policy context, the concept of one country, one language (Pakistan and Urdu) was adopted by authorities from the beginning to create a national consciousness, which led to significant conflicts between the majority of language groups. Urdu was named the national language when Pakistan was born, and was renamed again in the drafting of the 1973 Constitution. It was later elevated to a symbol of Pakistani unity and a language of Muslim unity. However, English remains the language of several power domains, such as administration, justice, military, higher education, and commerce, as these domains were under British rule until 1947. The melee between Urdu and English has continued between governments since the 1990s, supporting Urdu as a symbol of national unity and English as a language of development. The government has accepted the symbolic power of English through its national education policy (2009), and starting from fourth grade, the teaching language for science and mathematics has been changed from Urdu to English. In addition, the Pakistani judicial law aimed at regulating social behavior presents another complex ideological landscape. Article 251 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan stipulates that Urdu, as the national language, should be used for official purposes after a transitional period of 15 years from the date of constitution signing. Therefore, on September 8, 2015, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered the federal and provincial governments to fully implement Article 251, which was passed by the National Assembly in 1973 but never implemented.^[7]

Language Configuration in Teaching Curriculum

Urdu as a teaching language has gone through roughly four stages: "Urdu teaching has been promoted, Urdu teaching has been influenced by English, Urdu teaching and English teaching are in opposition, and Urdu plus English teaching language strategy has been established.^[8]For policy makers, curriculum language has been and is a very complex issue. The previous idea was that Pakistan was a country and Urdu was the national language. Therefore, Urdu should be the language of public school curriculum. Policy makers have strongly approved the implementation of Urdu language, which they believe will help establish their Pakistani identity for all regions. They prefer to adhere to their Pakistani identity rather than regional identities constructed differently. Due to the fact that education has been a national matter since 1947, policy makers believe that education should support Pakistan's identity, so Urdu has priority over regional languages. The participating teachers moderately accepted these decisions, but there were some differences between regions. Economic impact is the main factor affecting participants' views on language practice and the shift from regional and national languages to English. They emphasize the importance of economic impact on language selection, not only for curriculum language, but also for a national language.

Nevertheless, some scholars from Sindh seem to attach great importance to the knowledge of Sindh and appreciate its important significance and role in Sindh society. As a scholar once said, "Sindhi is not a purely technological language. For centuries, Sindhi has been the medium of instruction for Sindh. We have always been satisfied with Sindhi. However, Pakistan's policies after independence limited its role.^[9]However, they believe that it has not been fully developed in the past and therefore cannot be used as a language for science and technology. They discovered different political and administrative deficiencies that limited their language development. In addition, Sindhi has not been elevated to a technological language because the authorities support the dominance of English and Urdu. These comments reveal different positions and perspectives on the use of Sindhi as the language of the curriculum. There are disagreements regarding whether Sindhi can be used as an appropriate medium for disseminating scientific knowledge. There is a strong belief, especially among those who supervise higher education, that Sindhi is not suitable for teaching modern and complex scientific concepts. However, some people believe that if efforts were made in the past or even now to make it easier for students and teachers to achieve this, it is possible. They gave an example of a Sindhi secondary school, where the teaching language is Sindhi, and the entire curriculum is developed in Sindhi. However, they pointed out that the national government always treats these schools poorly. A certain Sindh scholar said, "We have many Sindh high schools. If you visit different cities in Sindh, you will be surprised to see the curriculum and development of Sindhi. However, they did not receive support from the national government because they (schools) use Sindhi courses that contradict the national curriculum (Urdu/English).^[10]

Pashto, Balochi, and Punjabi have not developed rapidly in Pakistan. The participants in these language groups reflect how these languages cannot be used in the curriculum. One of the main reasons given is that these languages cannot fully handle scientific applications. The second reason is that these languages have no practical history in official and economic environments. Therefore, constructing courses using these languages is considered a challenging task, and its benefits are unknown. Some scholars believe that the development of Pashto is too poor (in Pakistan). It cannot teach science, mathematics, and other higher level subjects. Applying Baluchistan courses is difficult or impossible because it lacks language development in literature, science, technology, and various aspects (compared to English). However, this statement does not mean that Pashto inherently lacks the potential to teach science. On the contrary, these comments contain criticism of the forces hindering the development of Pashto, as well as other languages during the establishment of national control over the language. However, in Pakistan, the national government controls language policies, which hinder the development of Pashto within the country. Due to its never being used at the official level or in school education, Pashto is still only a language of communication. Most participants from various regions believe that currently, when everyone is moving towards English, choosing a regional language for courses is very dangerous.

In addition to regional languages, some scholars have also proposed different perspectives on the role of Urdu and its use as a curriculum language. After independence, Urdu was adopted as the single ethnic language of Pakistan. Since then, the government has promoted it by declaring it as the language of the curriculum. In addition, not only in daily communication, but also in courses, it has become a fashion for people to convert English words into Urdu. However, most participants believe that Urdu is not suitable for this course, as although it has been promoted at the official level, its use in practice is still immature.

Language Practice in Teaching Curriculum

The teaching practice in all provinces of Pakistan, including language learning, only focuses on reading and writing. Most participants view reading as a part of speaking, as reading means being able to read and speak. The school does not have a separate oral course or any specific oral practice. Most teachers in public schools and some private schools believe that it is difficult for students to change their language behavior in the classroom, as the classroom and school are the only places where most students practice speaking Urdu and English. Outside the classroom, most students use the local

language with classmates, friends, and family. Only when learning and memorizing words will English be used in the classroom. It is difficult for teachers to teach elementary school students science and mathematics in English because students cannot even recognize English letters. In addition, although high school students have good English proficiency, the medium of communication and lectures is still Urdu.

The difference between private and public schools is the main factor that generates different perspectives and methods in teaching. For participants in private schools, language is strictly controlled in both the school and classroom, not only in terms of teaching and learning, but also in terms of practice. They emphasize the role of language in education, mainly Urdu and English. All private school teachers have stated that their schools require students and teachers to only speak Urdu or English. These schools also require parents to speak Urdu or English to their children at home, as doing so can affect their speech at school. A school administrator from Punjab Province said, "Our school has very strict policies for speaking on campus and at home. We require our students to only speak Urdu or English. We do not allow students to speak other languages at school. In addition, we also require parents to speak Urdu or English at home. This will affect their spoken English at school."^[1] However, public schools do not have such regulations regarding the use of school language, nor do they require parents to practice any specific language at home. The teacher also does not have any rules regarding speaking specific languages in school. Most teachers disclose that they often communicate with colleagues and students in the local language or Urdu.

The urban-rural gap is the second factor that affects language practice. Some scholars explain that local languages are still the main form of communication among people in rural areas, and students in rural areas face additional problems in language communication in schools and courses. Some students described various influences, including parents' education, communication language habits, and racial and cultural values. However, this practice is not limited to rural areas, as it also occurs in urban societies. Students from low socioeconomic families practice local languages with their families and communities. For a few teachers, teaching in Urdu may seem easy, but it is difficult for students to speak Urdu in school. In Punjab, students with Punjabi backgrounds mostly speak Punjabi. Similarly, other languages are also related to students' behavior, and local languages are also more suitable for expressing emotions.

Currently, in the field of Pakistani media, Urdu language and English language media coexist. In the past, Pakistan was a British colony, and English, as its official language, was widely used in various sectors of society. Although Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, English is widely used by the domestic elite or middle class, which has created a special situation in the media industry where Urdu media and English media coexist. There are significant differences in the media audience markets between the two languages. Among them, Urdu media are more targeted at the general public, mainly newspapers, and concentrated in rural areas. English media, on the other hand, cater to the elite population in big cities and excel in professional information output. Although English media cannot compare with Urdu media in terms of audience size, their social influence is far higher than the latter. Especially some business elites, social celebrities, politicians, etc. are accustomed to using English media. In addition, Urdu media mainly report domestically, while English media mainly report internationally, with a very distinct pattern.

The language usage in higher education in Pakistan is characterized by a combination of English, Punjabi, Urdu, and other languages such as Balochi. English is the primary choice for classroom teaching and use in most universities. Language practice and language choice are usually controlled and influenced by language ideology. Influenced by British colonial rule, English plays a crucial role in Pakistan's higher education system. However, it is noteworthy that Pakistan is also actively developing its national language. Many universities, such as the University of Sindh, have made Urdu a compulsory course for students. Despite certain obstacles such as policy requirements, higher education in Pakistan has shown a diversified trend in language allocation and selection, which can be summarized as follows: Punjabi has a large proportion but is not the official language of the country; Urdu language has a small proportion, but it has become the official language of the country and has a clear role in uniting the country; In the early days, English was accepted as the language of colonizers and is still well used by elites; In higher education, there is a phenomenon of language game, but English dominates; The languages used by media institutions are diverse, but Urdu accounts for a relatively large proportion; Based on English teaching, making media education in Pakistan more convenient to align with international standards.

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