

Language Policy and Linguistic Landscape in the Potohar Plateau of Pakistan

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Abstract

Linguistic landscape (henceforth LL), in commercial hubs, plays a key role in identifying language policy of the state. Looking through the lens of history, we realise that regime change affects language policy and language display in public spaces. Russian, for instance, was dominant in the LL of Baku and Azerbaijan, but it got diminished in one decade after the regime change there. Several studies have documented potential association between LL and language policy. In the context of Pakistan, most studies in the field of LL focussed on the dominance of English language on the commercial signboards. The present study aimed to explore the relationship between LL and language policy in the Potohar Plateau of Pakistan. To do so, a mixed-method approach was used to analyse both the 100 photo-clips, collected from the business domains of Islamabad and Fateh Jang, and the 12 interviews taken from the business holders in the same locations. The findings indicated that there was a negative relationship between the language practice and the language management. The results of this study supported the view that language policy in disharmony with the social and economic needs of the people could hardly be implemented in true spirit.

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1. Introduction

Understanding the complexity of language policy implementation is vitally significant in multilingual/multiethnic countries like Pakistan. LL plays a key role in identifying language policy implementation as the text displayed in public places are created by the public. In other words, LL is the voice of the masses.

Although the language policy is often institution-based yet language rights can be owned and realized by individuals. Thus, the display of language in public places is indexical of the identities, heritages, and power dynamics of the people who use them. The language chosen by the people in public places becomes a political act which represents their beliefs, cultural background, and social position. So, the act of language choice is not just neutral but carries significant meaning (Ramsdell, 2004). Given its importance, various researches have been conducted on the LL, such as display of language in public places represents linguistic and cultural attitude in these areas. Moreover, the identity and ideology of an area can be understood through this presence of language in public discourse (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Scollon & Scollon, 2003). This is where the language policy of a state interfaces with the LL of an area, for the signs used at such public spaces themselves reflect as well as reinforce those policies in everyday life of these people. Due to its intricate, multifaceted and subtle nature, several linguists including Canagarajah (2005a) and Fishman (2006) labelled language policy/planning as a complex field because it demands a collective approach that considers multiple purposes of a language and its complexity. Ricento (2005) states that language policy study looks for reparations; how implicit or explicit language policies are reinforced or opposed in economic and social inequalities. These social disparities relate to religious, political, regional, ethnic and gender differences. These studies suggest that language policy can only be successful if the complexities in its implementation and people's opinion is observed and given due weight to their social and economic needs. This becomes even more important in the case of multilingual countries.

In India, the colonial education policy was based on political-vested interests to upgrade colonial population in their temporal mileage, to assist the colonial government in a subordinate position, to be the buffer between the masses and the rulers. The ones who were pushed to the periphery, had to attain the worldview and values of the British and pledge loyalty to the British government (Annamalai, 2005). The colonizers in India mapped out the education policy based on a centralized system to standardize outcomes across the country. This colonial policy was controlled politically and bureaucratically (Shahidullah, 1987). India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were one country at the time when colonizers were designing and implementing language policy for the locals. It means that language policy is not neutral; rather it is a step towards a covert or overt agenda of its designers. Since the inception of Pakistan till today, Pakistan could not declare Urdu as its official language because detaching from the globalised world because of abandoning the use of the English language could not be a sane decision. But at the same time, no considerable efforts at the state level were observed to promote the English language among the masses.

Countries which were formerly colonized ended up adopting the language of the colonizers after the departure of the colonizer, interestingly not with imperialist force, rather the pursuit of economic development and globalisation forces pressured them to do so. The needs for economic development, modernization in technological fields and globalization of their inhabitants compelled countries like India and Malaysia to accept English language as a

medium of instruction at the elementary as well as tertiary level. Thus, instead of departing, English returned with a renewed force (Lin & Martin, 2005). Malaysia openly expressed that through learning English they could develop their country and that would be true nationalism. Likewise, Nigeria is a multilingual country, and it adopted English as its national language. We may find several such countries in Asia and Africa which adopted English as their national language, official language or the language of classroom instruction because of its global importance and currency.

1.1. Linguistic Landscape

Landry and Bourhis (1997) state that “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration” (p. 25). This is the most cited definition; however, some other scholars define LL more comprehensively. “LL refers to linguistic objects that mark the public space, i.e., inscriptions – LL items – that may refer to any written sign one finds outside private homes, from road signs to private names to names of streets, shops or schools” (Ben-Rafael, 2008, p. 40). According to Backhaus (2007), LL is “any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame” (p. 66). According to Gorter (2006a), the LL is on traffic signs, shop awnings, billboards, posters, and street advertisements.

The devised language policy of a government is reflected in LL texts and LL is the exhibit of the enactment of the policy (Lu, 2019). The language/s display on public places shows the status of those languages in those societies and this display also represents the surrounding population of that area, for example, language groups living in that geographic space. Top-down signs represent the official language policy while bottom-up signs reflect language practices by that community (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006). According to Spolsky (2003), “the real language policy of a community is more likely to be found in its practices than its management” (p. 222).

1.2. Significance of the Study

Investigating LL through photo clips of signboards, and the interviews of sign creators would help in determining the importance of local languages, national language (Urdu) and international language (English) in the eyes of people. Moreover, the reasons behind successful or unsuccessful implementation of the state language policy would emerge through this investigation. The current study will pave the way for a more rational language policy for Pakistan which is a linguistically diverse country.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Pakistan is a multi-ethnic and multilingual country. Urdu is declared as the national language according to the constitution of Pakistan. Now, Urdu has become a lingua franca in oral communication among the multilingual communities, but it is hardly visible in written communications in government/private offices, commercial banks, superior courts and in competitive examinations at national levels. Similarly, the national language is not dominant on signboards, especially the bottom-up ones. Customers come across English on signboards

while their oral interaction with shop owners is in the national or local languages. The dilemma is that people use their local languages or the national language in their oral interaction, but they come across English on signboards.

The objective of this study was to find out the phenomenon behind the conflict between the national language (Urdu) of the country and international language (English), and to determine whether top-down policy was practised by the public. If not, what could be the possible reasons and motives behind this phenomenon. The following two research questions were designed to sort out the clash and complexity between language policy and LL.

1.4. Research Questions

- i. Why do people prefer English and English names on their sign boards instead of national or local languages and names?
- ii. What are the general views of the shop owners about the use of English in public places?

2. Literature Review

Language policy should be viewed in relation to governmentality, cultural politics, educational practices, curriculum, and complex relationships among language policies. This could be a fruitful perspective for a language policy (Pennycook, 2002). According to Davis (2012), the language policy of a country is socially, politically and linguistically situated. As McCarty (2011) claims that language policy and planning cannot be detached from the government's larger political, linguistic, and socio-economic agendas. These studies prove that language policy is not designed in the air, or it cannot be neutral. Language policy is devised keeping in view a specific agenda whether it is linguistic, social or political.

While creating a language policy, a few questions like the selection of official and national languages, spelling standardization and orthographic selection, the use of language in government, judicial and educational settings, language status and power are tricky questions and generate controversy and conflict among the circles of society which matter (Reagan & Schreffler, 2005). According to Altbach (1984), "language is a key to the intellectual situation in many Third World nations. Language also plays a role in the distribution of knowledge since the medium through which material is communicated determines accessibility in multilingual states; questions of language policy are often politically volatile" (p. 234). The scholars who focus on language policy on micro level refer to local and classroom practices. They also focus on the role of teachers as policy enactors in school contexts. Moreover, these researchers undertake on-the-ground language policy research and ask for the creation of a room where the community members and the educators could manage, address the needs of the community and introduce the practices that could be more candid for bilingual education (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008). The role of teachers especially at elementary levels is crucial in implementing or rejecting a language policy designed by the state. Whatever the language is chosen as an official or academic language, sufficiently trained teachers are essential who can fulfil the purposes of national language policy.

2.1. Importance of English

English is the most widespread language of the world and there is no clue that it has ceased to spread. In fact, it is, with no considerable competitor, on the ascendant on the global map (Wardhaugh, 1987). The increasing dominance of English is observed in the publishing of academic and scientific literature, medium of instruction and discourse as it is a language of international communication (Candlin & Mercer, 2001). The knowledge of English is a mandatory requirement in many academic disciplines. In different fields, whether technical or professional, the literature is available in English and students of these fields are supposed to read this literature in their fields. Furthermore, they are expected to interact in English in performing their professional responsibilities (Reagan & Schreffler, 2005). The studies mentioned above prove that the importance of English cannot be denied. The world has become a global village, and it is hardly possible for any nation to become a part of and interact with the international community without the knowledge of English.

English is not only necessary for communication among the nations, but it also plays a key role in nation building and development. The former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, expressed his views that Malaysia needed such a workforce that could be technologically literate, could play an active role in a global environment, and could make Malaysia a developed and industrialized country. The vision of a technologically literate workforce was automatically linked with the status of English as the language of the cross-national environment (Martin, 2005). According to Gill (2002), the English language in Malaysia was positioned as the language of nationalism after independence. The former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad clarified it in the following two statements which were published in two newspapers in 1999 and 2000. When the citizens believed that the English language was essential to develop their country and to enhance the economy of their country, they would learn the English language with the spirit of nationalism. Thus, true nationalism was bolstered when the nation was ready to do everything possible including English language learning for the nation and the country (Mahathir Mohamad, *The Sun*, September 11, 1999). Some Malaysians developed a misconception that speaking Malay made them a nationalist while we believed that true nationalists were those who were motivated to master a variety of knowledge and skills including English language skills. This mastery of knowledge and skills would enable them to contest against the rest of the world in multiple fields (Mahathir Mohamad, *New Straits Times*, December 28, 2000). According to Pennycook (1994), English language was not attached to the discourse of colonial elitism any more in Malaysia, rather it was considered as the language of modernization, science, development, technology, capitalism and even the language of democracy. Martin (2005) mentioned that in Malaysia, English and Malay got predominant positions while the other local languages of the masses were downgraded to also-rans. The Malaysian state and the community have accepted English as the language of the international environment but access to the other local languages should be ensured.

The studies mentioned above prove the importance of English as a global language. English is no longer attached to colonialism rather it is considered the language of technological development. In Pakistan, as well, English is no more attached with the colonial heritage rather learning English is a need of the day. For accessing technical and scientific knowledge and getting a better job, the knowledge of English is a basic requirement. There is a clear-cut similarity of the Pakistani situation with Malaysia. But in Pakistan, the importance of English for development is not explicitly stated at national level. Moreover, no practical

measures have been taken to disseminate English at the mass level since the inception of Pakistan.

Historical, socio-economic and political processes forced countries like India, Hong Kong and the Philippines to rely on the English language. Gaining mastery of English skills was vital for countries like these to integrate themselves with the global market economy. This integration was important for technological development and nationalism. The colonized countries constantly utilized the English language as an instrument along with their national languages for their national identity and historical construction (Tsui & Tollefson, 2017). In Hong Kong, someone who was not conversant in English would be considered a part of the lower strata of the society (Lin, 2005). The English language was associated with Western culture and modernity in the African experience, though this conception was criticised by many intellectuals in post-colonial Africa. African policymakers were prone to the fallacy that westernisation in language and culture would pave the way for progress and development. Policymakers in Ethiopia promoted the English language and tried to make it a language of instruction in schools. The visibility of English in LL in public spaces was evidence of the promotion of English by local language users (Mazrui, 2004).

2.2. Successful Language Policy

If the basic principles of language policy implementation are followed, the policy is successful. For example, the Turkish Republic was established in 1923. During the Tanzimat Period, the efforts to reform Ottoman Turkish had started in the late 19th century but the most vital and lasting language reforms were brought into being under the leadership of Atatürk. These significant language reforms caused to revolutionize Turkish society socially, politically and culturally (Reagan & Schreffler, 2005). Among the reforms during the Atatürk period, two were considered the most significant ones; (a) renovation and modernization of the lexicon (b) change of the script from Arabic to Latin. These language planning activities were state-sponsored and centralized. Moreover, these activities were coordinated with other plans and programmes for the country's national development (Doğançay-Aktuna, 1995).

Nigerian language policy (English as a national and official language) was imposed in 1977. It was reviewed in 2004, and then in 2014. This policy was criticized by different factions of society. Those who favoured it considered English as a unifying force of different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Thus, English served a pragmatic advantage in national life. According to the favouring faction, English was a mechanism of governance and administration without which Nigeria could not exist as a national entity. English has become the language of Nigeria's literature, archival, library, history and law so becoming the part and parcel of the nation's life, and not as a foreign language or mere a colonial tool (Ogunmodimu, 2015). Those who held an internationalist perspective were satisfied with the neutrality of English. To them, English united Nigeria and coped with globalisation challenges. However, the critics of English as a national and official language viewed it averse to the indigenous languages (Acheoah & Olaleye, 2019). Despite facing criticism, English is widespread in Nigeria. Offices, courts, banks, educational institutions and even the mass media use English as their primary language.

2.3. Unsuccessful Language Policy

After the revolution in 1979 in Iran, Persian was given heavy weight as the national and official language, but contrary to the state policy, which was not the vast dissemination of English, the process of learning English language was enhanced as a hidden curriculum by the globalization pressure. The economic power of the globalization process was evident in all aspects of masses' lives and this power forced the public to learn English despite formal policies introduced in school curricula (Riazi, 2005). The English language became an incontestable necessity, and it crept into Iranian society not as a mere school subject (Talebinezhad & Aliakbari, 2002).

Tunisia, after its independence from France in 1956, adopted the Arabisation policy and declared modern standard Arabic as the official language in its national constitution. The purpose of this adoption was to secure Muslim culture, heritage and identity but the discrepancy between language policy by the state and language practice by the people hampered the achievement of such objectives (Ben-Said, 2010). The purpose of Arabisation policy in Tunisia was to eliminate the colonial footprints but these vestiges remained prevalent in the socio-cultural arena as well as in the education system (Daud, 1991). These two examples prove that implementing a language policy was not a matter of emotions or patriotism. Rather, the language policy that had the potential to accept and meet the global challenges was more viable and practical.

2.4. Language Policy after Regime Change

Language policy of a community or state whether de jure or de facto can be observed in public places which are a relevant arena. On the bases of this display of language, ideological battles in newly born states can be put into practise (Shohamy, 2005). The language choice on the signboards by the sign creators has a great symbolic importance and this importance increases manifold in multilingual or bilingual regions or countries. For example, language selection for a place name is a regular issue of linguistic discord in bilingual or multilingual societies (Puzey, 2008). The dominance of a language or the priority given to a language such as the font size, colour, design or the position on the signboard of that language in a local community or a region represents the status and power phenomena of that language in the relevant community.

A study about LL was conducted by Du Plessis (2010) in South Africa. He noticed the visible changes in LL after the regime change. A similar phenomenon was investigated by Shibliyev (2014) in Baku, Azerbaijan after freedom from the USSR occupation. He concluded that noticeable changes were observed in the LLs of commercial hubs in Baku after the collapse of the USSR regime. The Russian language practically disappeared from the shop fronts; however, it was noticed in a subsidiary role. Sloboda (2008) selected three locations which were Belarus, Czech Republic and Slovakia and scientifically studied the LLs of these three locations during and after the Soviet regime. After comparative analysis of the locations, this study concluded that significant visible changes were noticed in LLs in post-Soviet locations. These studies presented evidence that regime change affects LLs of an area, and consequently the language policy.

3. Research Methodology

To formally study as to which language, in the Potohar Plateau of Pakistan, is considered more important and why it is considered so, the current study was carried out by collecting 100 photo-clips of the signboards of specific commercial locations. These photo-clips were collected from three prime locations of Islamabad, namely The Centaurus Mall, Blue Area, and Super Market, and a business avenue of the nearby city, Fateh Jang. To further investigate the motives and the attitudes of the sign creators and the customers, 12 business holders from the above-mentioned four locations (3 from each) were interviewed through open-ended structured questions. The data helped to produce a comparison of language dominance and language policy implementation between the two nearby cities of Potohar Plateau. In this study, the three fundamental principles suggested by Backhaus (2007) were followed. The principles were a) the geographic limits of the survey area b) the determination of the survey items and their linguistic properties be determined before collecting the sample of signs c) the sample should represent the city or area where the signs were collected.

The analysis of 100 photo clips showed the dominance of English on public signage. It is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1:
Language display on signs shown in frequency/percentage

Unilingual (English)	Bilingual (English/Urdu)	Transliteration	Unilingual (Urdu)	Total
60 (60%)	25 (25%)	10 (10%)	5 (5%)	100

The analysis of the photo-clips data revealed that 60% of the photographs contained ‘only English’ text in bottom-up signs, 25% contained bilingual (English and Urdu), and only 5% contained ‘only Urdu’ text. Although lots of clips could be added here as evidence to such language display on these signposts, the space and cost permitted to include merely the following three representative clips. The following sign was displayed in a popular shopping mall in the city. The purpose of this sign was to direct the customers to their relevant places. Surprisingly, not a single word of Urdu was found on this sign while the majority of the customers were Urdu or other local languages speakers. However, the directions in English were beneficial for the foreign customers though their number was limited.



The following is a bilingual sign displayed outside the mosque in another shopping mall. In this sign, Urdu was written but at the second position, and the Urdu font is relatively smaller than English. Moreover, no Urdu equivalent was used for the word 'mask', and it was transliterated. These were also important directions during the COVID-19 but the sign creator preferred English and rated national language as the second. These both signs were not to sell the products or to attract customers to buy a foreign brand. Directions for the public at large were either written all in English or English was preferred.



The following sign was displayed in the shopping street in the neighbouring town. This is a unilingual (Urdu) sign. The sign creator would have thought that the surrounding population was not educated and might not be able to read English. Preferences of sign creators came out during their interviews. One phrase 'Free Home Delivery' was transliterated and the names of electronic gadgets were also transliterated which did not have Urdu equivalents. Moreover, this sign provided a comparison between the city and the neighbouring town LL.



Moreover, 12 shop owners who agreed to participate in the study were requested to answer seven questions about language use and language priority on their signboards. The interview questions were adapted from Sheng and Buchanan (2019). The participants' consent was sought through a consent form during the interview. The respondents were also asked whether the choice of language on the shop fronts impacted their business positively. The interview transcripts informed the researchers about objectives and motives of the sign creators behind the choice and prioritisation of languages on their signboards. Based on the participants' responses, the data were given a tabular form. Table 2 shows the themes of shop owners' interviews in the form of 'Agree' and 'Disagree'.

Table 2:

Shop owners' interviews' themes

Partic i- pants	Languag e Choice Impact on Busines s	One Languag e on Signboar d	Two Languag es on Signboar d	Preferre d Languag e English	Preferre d Languag e Urdu	English as symbol of modernit y	Preferen ce for English names
BA1	A	D	A	A	D	A	A
AS2	D	A	D	D	A	D	A
UN3	A	A	D	A	D	A	A

IH4	A	D	A	A	D	A	A
NA5	A	D	A	A	D	A	A
YS6	A	D	A	A	D	A	A
MD7	A	A	D	A	D	A	VR
AN8	A	A	D	A	D	A	A
WA9	D	A	D	A	D	A	A
MJ10	A	D	A	D	A	D	A
NA11	D	A	D	D	A	D	D
JA12	A	D	A	D	A	D	VR
A%	75.00%	50.00%	50.00%	66.67%	33.33%	66.67%	75.00%
D%	25.00%	50.00%	50.00%	33.33%	66.67%	33.33%	8.33%
Mean	0.75	0.50	0.50	0.67	0.33	0.67	0.90
SD	0.43	0.50	0.50	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.30

3.1. Description of Tabular Statistics

‘Disagree’ to a value of **0** and ‘Agree’ to a value of **1** were mapped by the researchers. ‘Vague Reply’ (VR) was not included in the calculations. ‘Mean’ refers to the arithmetic average of all the responses from each participant. The greater the mean, the larger number of people agree to the theme. The lower the mean, the fewer people agree with the theme. Standard deviation is a measure of the dispersion of responses around the mean. The greater the standard deviation, the more varied the responses, and the less representative the mean is of all the participants. The lower the standard deviation, the less varied the responses, and the more representative the mean is of all the participants.

4. Result and Discussion

English language dominates LL in Potohar Plateau’s commercial areas, and this is, perhaps, because of Pakistan’s colonial past. Many studies in Africa were evidence of this phenomenon too. For example, Anderson et al. (2020) claimed that the findings of many studies showed the dominance of English on signboards in many African cities, and the colonial history of the continent was reflected through the signboards. De Los Reyes (2014) investigated the dominance of English and Filipino on the signboards on two train stations in Metro Manila. He claimed that more than 50% of the signs were only in English, and the English language was given priority over Filipino as English was written first in bilingual

signs and it was highlighted in different ways such as circling, underlining or capitalising it. Fekede and Gemechu (2016) pointed out the lack of a colonial past which was reflected in a study conducted in Ethiopia where Amharic language was dominant as compared to English.

The discord between the communicative language of the individuals in a society and the language which is displayed on the signboards was noticed among Arab and Jewish communities in Israel. This pattern of discordance led the researchers to new insights regarding whether LL text was the representation of symbolic construction of the public space (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). In Oaxaca, Mexico, sign creators preferred English on their signboards despite knowing that a layman in Oaxaca might not be able to understand the content. The preference for English by the sign producers could be because of the global status of the English language. In this case, this preference was understandable (Sayer, 2010). Keeping in view the above two examples, the situation is not different in Pakistani cities. An average Pakistani is hardly proficient in reading or writing the English language, but he always comes across English text on signboards. The reason is obvious: the international status of the English language and it being a symbol of modernity.

After tabularising the participants' data, further analysis was conducted to elicit the themes of the participants' views. The English language was more dominant in the LL texts in the city as the customers were either foreigners or educated and well-heeled. They got impressed by the English language on the signboards which symbolised modernity and status. On the other hand, the sign creators in the neighbouring town wrote Urdu language first as their customers hailed from the surrounding villages. The participants claimed that they followed the customers' whims, and the choice of language affected their business in a positive sense.

The business holders who were running international companies or dealing in international brands preferred only English language on their shop fronts because this was the demand of their business. The shop owners in the town chose Urdu language for their signboards as the buyers were mostly from rural areas that surrounded the town. The objective of the business holders in the city was to attract both foreign and local customers so they preferred English on the first while Urdu on the second position on their signboards. Only one shop owner did not consider the importance of language. According to him, choice of language did not affect their business in any way.

The shop owners preferred English because of their international customers, local customers' trust, social acceptability and the fashion of the current time. The participants' responses were divided about language choice. The sign producers, especially in the neighbouring town, preferred Urdu because of its national language status and because it was easy to read for their rural areas' customers. Hence, it was proved that LL text was not a free float. The shop owners structured this text keeping in mind customers' choices and whims. Global and local cultural factors were also given importance otherwise their business could suffer.

In response to the language prioritisation question, eight participants preferred English because of it being fashionable and its international status. Four preferred Urdu because of its national status and the language of the common man. Preference for Urdu was given in the neighbouring town.

The shop owners preferred English names for their business outlets because their clients considered English a symbol of fashionable, well-off, highly educated and universal lifestyle. Lawrence (2012) investigated the dominance of English at public places in Korea, and found

out that people gave weightage to English because of its association with modernity, luxury and youth. Lanza and Woldemariam (2008) also concluded that English was the most frequently found language on shop fronts in commercial hubs in the regional capital of Ethiopia. The participants responded that English played a role in attracting the customers, and it had a significant symbolic value in the shop names.

4.1. Language Policy Practice in Pakistan

Due to the lack of sound theoretical foundations and reliable empirical research work, the current English language policy in Pakistan could not produce the requisite output. Private English-medium schools grew like mushrooms because government-run schools could not cater to the needs of the public due to low standards of English teaching. Private English-medium schools better met the needs of children from middle class and lower-middle class families of the society as compared to the public schools, but studies proved that these private educational institutions could not hire trained English language teachers and failed to provide a school environment which could be conducive to the English language learning. This estrangement from English resulted in a lack of subject knowledge and the English language proficiency. Moreover, this half-hearted effort encouraged cramming. In the context of Pakistan, the English language should not be viewed in isolation from the critical issues. Only a small number of children from urban areas and well-off families can access quality English language instruction. This phenomenon played a major role in creating divisions between the rich and the poor, between the populations of the urban areas and the rural far-flung areas.

The government of Pakistan should adopt an additive multilingual policy in which local languages do not suffer, and English be adopted as a medium of instruction at late-primary levels where students can switch from their local languages to the international language. Thus, community needs would be fulfilled, and the local languages would maintain their status (Kirkpatrick & Bui, 2016). It is suggested to education and language policymakers that they consider the ground realities of Pakistani society, i.e., multilingualism, language identity, and the need to maintain local languages. We need the English language skills to be a part of the global community, but we should not estrange ourselves from our local languages. In other words, we should not become the cause of local languages' death.

5. Conclusion

Language policy at the state level has remained confused ever since the time almost immediately after the creation of Pakistan. Explicitly, Urdu language was given the status of national language but implicitly English was promoted, partly through it being the official language. Interviews for high-ranking jobs are conducted in English and court decisions are written in English. When Urdu is practically marginalised by the state, English gets dominance at the mass level and its preference over the local languages on signboards is one example. However, people maintain the language identity of their local languages in their spoken discourse and the national language identity in their private correspondence.

Personal observation and the analysis of one hundred pictures of shop fronts from four commercial hubs helped us to conclude that English language dominated in the city as well as the neighbouring town's LLs. Sixty percent of signboards were unilingual i.e. only

English, and twenty-five percent were bilingual i.e. English/Urdu. Only five percent of the signs were 'only Urdu' and that too only in the neighbouring town. In bilingual signboards, English was prioritised and written with large fonts to make it more prominent. One of the reasons behind this dominance of the English language could be the colonial past of Pakistan. More reasons for this dominance could be modernity, fashion, international status of the English language, being the language of medium in academia, official language of state institutions and the language of the corporate sector.

Shop owners' interviews gave the researcher insight into the motives and objectives behind the selection of the languages on signboards. Foreign customers and educated and affluent local customers in the city were the cause of choosing English for the city's shop owners, while educationally and financially marginalised customers in the neighbouring town were the cause of writing English names in Urdu script so that the visitors of the area may more easily comprehend the signboards. In the opinion of the shop owners, the choice of the English language brought positive effects on their business, and it increased their daily sales.

In this study, only the commercial hubs in four locations were investigated. It is suggested for future studies that other aspects of LLs such as pamphlets, visiting and wedding cards, inscriptions on stationery items, and playground advertisements should also be brought under the ambit of research to fortify the phenomenon of connections between language policy and linguistic landscapes. The areas of LL like wedding and visiting cards are of more private and personal nature. The findings would show how far English has crept into or removed from Pakistani society.

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