

Banishing Colonial Specters: Language Ideology and Education Policy in Pakistan

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This paper examines the presence of British colonial language ideologies in Pakistan's language-in-education policy and discourses. Through a review of scholarly work on official language policies, and a sampling of current policies and media commentary, I analyze how the language ideologies that undergird the language-in-education discourses are embedded with political, cultural, and moral projects about speakers and their languages. The colonial language ideologies had assumed a direct relationship between a language and the stereotypic characteristics of its speakers and failed to account for the multiple possibilities that the English medium education provided for the indigenous population, eventually leading to decolonization. In Pakistan's post-independence education system, the positioning of English as a prestige language variety in contrast to the vernacular languages continues to have important consequences within Pakistan's current domestic and global political context. By recognizing how top-down colonial policies failed to account for the resistance efforts of English-speaking Indians, I argue that current language-in-education policies for political and governmental purposes may continue to be counterproductive unless they take local knowledges and realities into account.

If it is true that there is “no view from nowhere” when it comes to ideas about language (Irvine & Gal, 2009), then what is the position of Pakistan's current language-in-education policy discourse with respect to its colonial history and multilingual context? Furthermore what can we learn from the history of policies and programs that will contribute to the language-in-education dialogue so that the educational system is not destined to repeat its past? In this essay, I examine colonial and post-independence language-in-education policies in Pakistan, paying special attention to the overlapping of colonial and nationalist language ideologies, and analyze how these continue to impact Pakistan's current language in education policies. By recognizing how top-down colonial policies failed to account for the resistance efforts of English-speaking Indians¹, I argue that current language-in-education policies for political and governmental purposes may continue to be counterproductive unless they take local knowledges and realities into account.

My discussion must be selective given the enormous breadth of the topic and the limited length of this work. I hope, however, that the arguments presented will have relevance to language policy discourse beyond the paper's scope. As part of my theoretical framework, I use the analytical concepts of *language ideology* and *discourse*. Language ideology is defined as “ideas with which participants

¹ Prior to 1947, the nations now known as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India constituted one country recognized as India. My reference to English-speaking Indians indexes the English-speaking segment of this pre-1947 Indian population.

and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them” (Irvine & Gal, 2009, p. 402), and serves as a useful tool to examine the current debates, or discourses, regarding the medium of instruction (MOI) in Pakistan’s education system. According to Blommaert (2005), discourse consists of “all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, historical patterns and developments of use” (p. 3). The historic debates regarding MOI and the related language ideologies held by multiple stakeholders can be most aptly understood to constitute multiple discourses on MOI in Pakistan. He goes on to explain that any discourse, and also any policy, has a range of socially significant attributes and associated ideologies. While it is inconceivable that we can fashion a language policy without ideologies, it is imperative that we become more critically conscious of the ideologies that have informed previous language policies and ensure that we cease the perpetuation of language policies informed by colonial-era, and thus colonizing, discourses. Rather we must understand contemporary language practices of teachers, students, and families and then it may be possible to propose more contextually appropriate and empirically-grounded language policies based on these practices. After all, languages are only useful insofar as people find them suitable for their communicative needs and language policy discourse should recognize this reality.

Through a review of scholarly work on official language policies, and a sampling of current policies and media commentary, I analyze how the language ideologies that undergird the language-in-education discourses are embedded with political, cultural, and moral projects about speakers and their languages. This paper examines specific official language policy and language policy discourses created by researchers, journalists, and other public figures, and considers the language ideologies that continue to inform these discourses. One can begin this exploration into Pakistan’s language policies at the country’s inception in 1947, but in order to understand the language policy enacted at Pakistan’s independence, it is helpful to turn to the earlier British colonial policies in India. After analyzing colonial and independence-era language in education policy, the paper turns to current policy initiatives and discourses. Finally I discuss on-going efforts to create more effective policies and the primacy of ethnographic research in this process.

The Colonial Moment and Language Policies

Prior to 1784, the East India Company’s language policies were relatively tolerant since the then-purpose was to conduct trade peacefully and profitably with the indigenous Indian people.² In fact, during the late 18th century, the University of Oxford established a professorship of Persian Studies, the official language of the Mughal Empire’s administration, for the “cultivation of the Persian tongue, as an useful attainment in such persons as are designed for the service of the East-India company [sic]” (Rahman, [circa 18C] 2004a, p. 6). The Orientalists in the Company’s leadership favored indigenization as a means of governance (Ayres,

² As noted, the areas now known as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India were identified under one name ‘India’ and as one colony in the British Empire. In this paper, I follow the languages of Pakistan (Urdu, English, regional languages) more closely. Due to this scope, Hindi, Sanskrit, and other languages will not be included in the analysis.

2009; Viswanathan, 1989). Viswanathan (1989) explains that the British sensed that an “efficient Indian administration rested on an understanding of Indian culture” (p. 28), and so it was not uncommon for many early Company men to learn local languages, marry local Indian women, and even convert to local religions. The 1784 Pitt’s India Act changed the linguistic preference of the administrators when the Company came under the control of the British crown, thereafter espousing a more Anglicist policy. With the passage of Bentinck’s English Education Act in 1835, English became the colonial system’s medium of instruction, “endorsing a new function and purpose for English instruction in the dissemination of moral and religious values” (p. 44). In the oft-cited *Minute on Indian Education* ([1835] n.d.), Macaulay, a proponent of Anglicist policies, argued that due to the costs of maintaining both vernacular and English systems of education in India, the Crown must choose English, emphasizing the priority of good governance over cultivation of indigenous languages and customs. Macaulay explained:

I feel...that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. ([1835] n.d., n. p., emphasis added)

This policy to divide the Indian population into two classes—one who serve as interpreters, and the “millions”—manifested in two media of instruction: English for the elite and non-English for the larger population due to “limited means.” In the same *Minute*, he expresses his interest to “strike at the root of the bad system,” by ceasing the publication of Arabic and Sanskrit books and closing religious schools of learning. Here, we see how Macaulay’s language ideology about indigenous languages negates Indian religious texts and learning, specifically referencing Arabic, a stand-in word for Islam, and Sanskrit, for Hinduism. If the roots of the bad system were expunged through the removal of texts and religious education, the British could then replace them with a colonial and missionary education in English. It is noteworthy that although Macaulay nowhere mentions Persian in his *Minute*, the 1835 English Education Act and the Crown’s focus on English for official and administrative communication ousted Persian, the official and courtly language of the Mughal empire, from all administrative and educational functions (Rahman, 2011). Once Persian was strategically removed, as an attempt to eradicate Mughal symbols of power, the colonizers maintained English as the official language for colonial administrative functions³. Since British

³ The Hindustani language, which preceded Hindi and Urdu, became a sort of cosmopolitan lingua franca within the northern and western regions of the British empire (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006; Rahman, 2011). For this reason, 19th century scholars, some employed by the East-India Company, regularly published detailed grammars on the Hindustani language (Eastwick, 1858; Forbes, 1861). While there are many other languages spoken in the formerly colonized area now known as Pakistan and India, the priority assigned to Hindustani, now Urdu and Hindi, demonstrates the usefulness it held for colonial administrators who wished to communicate more effectively with the local Indians. Today, Urdu and Hindi are recognized as two separate languages based on two orthographic systems, lexical differ-

moral and intellectual superiority was not questioned by the colonial officers, their mission to create a class of interpreters, Indian only in blood and color, would continue unabated. As history has shown, this strategic colonizing mission would eventually be thwarted by many of the same interpreters (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006), which will be discussed later in the paper.

Through this selected analysis of colonial language education policy, we can identify two emergent language ideologies. The first ideology divides Indians into two linguistically-defined classes—the interpreter class of English speakers and the millions who are not English speakers; and the second ideology assumes that if Indians learn English, they will behave more like British citizens and support the Crown, thereby equating language, thought, and behavior. Echoing Macaulay, Rahman (2002) explains that due to limited resources an English medium education remained an elite privilege, and the British supported a policy of vernacular education for the masses up until independence. This division of English-medium and vernacular-medium schooling has remained a defining characteristic of education in Pakistan, and arguably even within the larger subcontinent. Rahman (2004b) explains that there were two kinds of English-medium schools under British rule: Chiefs' Colleges and English schools. Both were designed for political and social purposes, i.e., to encourage loyalty to the Crown and to create a class of civil service employees that constituted the newly emerging professional upper middle class, and separated from the vernacular-speaking masses.

The prioritization of secular governance and the creation of an intermediary class indexes the second language ideology which emerges from colonialist language policies. According to Anglicist thought, if Indians learned to speak English and follow the associated cultural traditions, they would think more like the native English speakers and remain loyal to the Crown. The colonial policymakers imagined a “rational” directionality from language learning and thought to political allegiance and agentive action. The initial Muslim reaction to English education follows a similar ideological position, exemplified by the famous religious edict, or fatwa, of Shah Abdul Aziz (1746–1823) in which he states that there is nothing inherently wrong with Muslims learning English as long as it is not for the purpose of flattering the English or gaining their favor (Rahman, 2002).⁴ While Aziz's fatwa could be interpreted as a rhetorically ambiguous statement, many Muslim families saw it as a clear instruction not to send their sons to study English; after all, in the late 18th century, there was little else to do with the English language in the Indian subcontinent other than to work under the supervision of colonial officers. Similar to the British belief that learning English would have moral and religious implications, the Muslim scholars also understood English learning to have a *pre-determined communicative functionality*. For example, some, like Aziz, argued that it would lead to a less cohesive Muslim community. This leads to an important ideological position where English education was adopted as a colonial strategy to enhance national unity and successful governance. In other words, students of English were not expected to demand independence.

ences, and cultural references (Rahman, 2011; Rai, 1984).

⁴ The initial Muslim reaction acknowledges an early understanding of the multiple possibilities of English usage. Later I will discuss the emergence of multiple varieties of English in Pakistan (for more on Pakistani English see Baumgardner, 1993; for more on English as an Islamic language, see Mahboob, 2009).

We can see a link between the second language ideology and a long tradition in European philosophical thought which has recently been examined and critiqued by sociolinguist Jan Blommaert (2005). He explains that German Romantic thinker Johann Gottfried Herder appropriated John Locke's enlightenment principles that assumed a shared language indexes a shared culture among its speakers. Along the same lines, Hymes (1974) argues that the Herderian approaches separate languages from their socially situated use, equate the stereotypic characteristics of a given speech community with the language itself, and assume the social functions of a language to be given and universally equivalent. For example, if a Muslim person learns Hindi, the learning act may index or position her as a Hindu sympathizer. In this sense, language learning as a practice becomes emblematic and "sets defaults for subsequent readings of personhood" (Agha, 2007, p. 252-253).

Macaulay's statement designates English as the language of science and conveyor of knowledge, a task for which the vernacular languages were deemed unfit. Later in this paper, I expound on how the denigrating and negative ideologies ascribed to vernacular languages remain a specter of Indian colonial heritage. In both the colonial moment and in post-1947 Pakistan, the notion of a single language and its associated speech community and the simple language-equals-people equation fail to capture the dynamic nature of human communication both within a singular speech community and between communities (Ayres, 2009; Blommaert, 2005; Hymes, 1974).

The Crown's hope for a passive acceptance of English rule, as well as the English language, was short-sighted. In 1857 Indian sepoy, or soldiers in the colonial army, led a major uprising also known as the First War of Independence. This rebellion is considered to be a major turning point in the British colonial presence in India (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006). The Sepoy Uprising was but the beginning of a long struggle for independence for India and Pakistan. Despite British maneuvers to delegitimize Mughal rule, including replacing Persian with English as the new official language, the desire for Indian independence was certainly not dependent on the medium of communication. How can we understand the possible reasons why, despite the British belief in their colonial project and strategic Anglicization of the education system, they were ultimately unable to avoid indigenous calls for independence? Despite the attempt to create "a class of persons...English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay, [1835] n.d.), it is clear that that the indigenous did not remain Indian only by blood and color. The Indian National Congress⁵ convened in 1885 by a group of some seventy English-educated Indians to acquire more legal standing in the colonial government (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006). These Indians attended the very same elite, English-medium schools and universities that Macaulay had proposed, and many also went to London to study for the bar or the Civil Service. Metcalf and Metcalf (2006) explain that the initial cohesion of the Congress was based on these shared interests and educational experiences. As Bhabha (1994) would argue, the class of interpreters were "*part-objects* of a metonymy of colonial desire...[who] emerge as 'inappropriate' colonial subjects" (p. 126, emphasis added). The inappropriateness of these agents led to the destabilization of the colonial subjectivity and altered the colonial master's

⁵ The INC (founded in 1884) was one of the most famous political parties in India. The history of INC presidents includes many illustrious Indian politicians including Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006). The INC-led coalition won the 2009 Indian elections.

authoritative centrality (Ben Beya, n. d.). Bhabha's theoretical contribution on colonial ambivalence helps illuminate how the Herderian, one nation-one language ideology and a top-down understanding of language instruction cannot adequately account for the ways that individuals learn and trope on language use for their own purposes (cf. Agha, 2007). In other words, while the British fervently hoped that an English education would remove the indigenous population's hopes for independence, it can be argued that this very education significantly contributed to the ultimate passing of the Indian Independence Act by the British parliament in 1947. The Indian National Congress became "the focus of the longest-lived nationalist movement in the modern colonial world, [and]...was the model for nationalist movements elsewhere" (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p. 136). It appears that the same interpreter class, or Macaulay's translators, learned to use the discursive tools of the master, here English, and the socializing opportunities provided by its learning to protest the colonizer's domination (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha's (1994) theory on mimicry and colonial ambivalence situates the subversive nature and consequences to English-medium education for the elite interpreter class. Once indigenous English speakers began not only flattering the British in English but also communicating with each other (in both English and vernacular languages), we can see how the very colonial education designed to create a class of Indians who would resemble the British became more of a "menace," leading to colonial rupture and not colonial solidarity (p. 126).

Here we see an instance of how a top-down, colonial language policy and its associated language ideologies may have actually backfired since the local contexts and actors were not understood or included in the policy-making process. The British were surely unaware of the private conversations between Indian expatriates studying in London, but it appears these private moments accumulated and transformed into a forum to express political desires, leading to the Indian independence movement.

Recycling Colonial Language Ideologies after Independence

The Indian Muslim leaders were working alongside their Hindu counterparts in the Indian National Congress (INC) to attain independence for India as *one undivided nation* (Jalal, 1985). Prior to August 1947, the Muslim faction had envisioned an India that would have included Pakistan and Bangladesh in a single nation-state. Early that year, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, also known as the founder of Pakistan, proposed the possibility of a homeland for Indian Muslims to the INC as a bargaining strategy, in order to obtain more political rights and power for Muslims in an undivided India. When this strategy did not yield the desired results and the Congress Party did not acquiesce to the Muslim League's demands in the years before Independence, Pakistan was forged into existence through the violent and traumatic Partition from India (Jalal, 1985). As a result, Pakistan's early nationalist identity was positioned as counter to Indian nationalist identity. This division was evident in the language ideologies that Indian Muslim nationalists and Indian Hindu nationalists ascribed to their respective languages (for more on the Hindi public sphere, see Orsini, 2002). The status of Urdu as the Indian Muslim language became part of the rallying cry for an independent Muslim state (Ayres, 2009; Rai, 1984). Rahman (2002) explains that Muslim scholars came to see Urdu as

an Islamic language and that “one of the major changes in Muslim consciousness... was because of the adoption of print by the Indian ulema [or Indian Muslim scholars]” (p. 220). The increasing popularity of Urdu print became part of the Muslim leaders’ political strategy to communicate and garner support within their communities. In this case Urdu language practices, specifically the use of Nastiliq script which is aesthetically similar to the same script found in the Quran, leads to an ideology of Urdu being seen as more emblematic of Islam and being Muslim; while the same grammatical system when written in the Devanagari script, or the script used for Sanskrit and Hindu texts, is thought to be a Hindu emblem. Rahman (2011) explicates the shared history of Urdu and Hindi and discusses how the processes of Sanskritization for Hindi and Arabization for Urdu became indexical markers for contrasting religious identities. These religious affiliations have continued to inform the language ideologies of both Hindi and Urdu⁶. The premise of Pakistan’s independence, as a homeland for Indian Muslims⁷, hinged on its religious and linguistic difference from India. Ideologically speaking, the post-1947 discourse of Urdu as a symbol for Indian-Muslim unity recycles the earlier colonial ideologies where language indexes not only national unity but also moral positionality (cf. Ayres, 2009; Rahman, 2002).

Between 1947 and 1971, Pakistan consisted of two regions—West Pakistan, which is present-day Pakistan, and East Pakistan, which is present-day Bangladesh—separated geographically by 1100 miles. Many of the nation-state’s new leaders came from largely Urdu-speaking provinces and devised a language policy based on a “project to forge a Pakistani ethnicity through the cultural heritage of the Urdu language” (Ayres, 2009, p. 6). During a 1948 public meeting in Dhaka, the capital of former East Pakistan and now present-day Bangladesh, Pakistan’s founder Mohammed Ali Jinnah told the audience that, while the Bengali language may well be the provincial language:

the State Language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Any one who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan. Without one State language, no nation can remain tied up solidly together and function. (Jinnah, [1948] 2000, p.150)

Pakistani leaders’ emphasis on the role of a common language shares similar epistemological assumptions as the Crown, namely that speakers of the same speech community would consider themselves compatriots of a united nation and therefore easier to govern through one state language (Ayres, 2009). This statement also illustrates the development of Urdu as a linguistic emblem of national identity and any identification of a non-Urdu language with Pakistan is deemed a treasonous act. Jinnah’s statement also carries the weight of Herderian thought where once again language is linked to the unity and strength of a nation. In January 1952, governor-general Khwaja Nizammudin defended Jinnah’s Urdu-

⁶ The fact remains that most speakers across cities in Pakistan and North India speak a mutually intelligible language variety, often referred to by linguists as Hindi-Urdu (Rahman, 2011). In this paper, I use Hindi-Urdu and Urdu-Hindi interchangeably to further emphasize the similarities between the two language varieties as well as to discursively resist the tendency to order the primacy of Hindi over Urdu.

⁷ My reference to “Indian Muslims” indexes the identificatory label many Muslim members in the Indian independence movement used to advance the interests of Muslims in the movement. For example in 1906, a group of elite Muslims created the All-India Muslim League in Dhaka (Metcalfe & Metcalfe, 2006)

only position, sparking student-led protests in Dhaka, leading to a number of student deaths and, as some would argue, the beginnings of Bengali nationalism (Ayres, 2009; Rahman, 2004a). Subsequently in 1955 the central government adopted a one-unit and dual language policy⁸ (Ayres, 2009; Bose & Jalal, 1998). In order to design a more inclusive governance strategy for the fledgling two-part nation-state, the 1956 constitution⁹ declared both Bengali and Urdu as national languages for East Pakistan and West Pakistan respectively, while English remained the official language. However the imbalance between power of East and West Pakistan persisted since the nation's capital was in West Pakistan, where the majority of government officials spoke Urdu, or even Punjabi, but not Bengali. To be fair, language policy is but one aspect of the complex political, social, and economic factors that led to Bangladesh's eventual independence in 1971, but language issues certainly sowed the seeds of discontent in both the East and West Wings.

The one-unit policy created an imbalance of representation within the West Wing since Punjab had the largest population and overwhelmed Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa (Ayres, 2009). Following Bangladesh's independence, Pakistan's current constitution (1973) delineates the national language as Urdu and the official language as English; the latter was described as a temporary policy. The 1973 Constitution was promulgated with Article 251 stating:

1. The National language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day.
2. Subject to clause (1), the English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu.
3. Without prejudice to the status of the National language, a Provincial Assembly may by law prescribe measure[s] for the teaching, promotion and use of a provincial language in addition to the national language.

The Constitution recognizes the need to continue English for official purposes until "arrangements" can be made for its replacement. The writers also appreciated the plurality of vernacular languages and left it to the discretion of provincial assemblies to take up the matter. In both the pre- and post-partition eras, the geographic area known as Pakistan has had a rich plurilingual environment. Nearly every province and its spoken language(s)—Balochi and Brahvi in Balochistan, Pashto in Pukhtunkhwa Khyber, Siraiiki and Punjabi in Punjab, among others—remained officially unrecognized in language-in-education policies, with the exception of Sindhi in Sindh which has resumed its *de jure* status as a MOI. Furthermore with more than 60 languages spoken in Pakistan, many ethnic-separatist movements continue to center around their respective languages as a rallying cry for political

⁸ In 1955, the Pakistan Assembly passed a bill declaring all the areas and provinces in the West Wing to be "one unit," while the East Wing were a second unit. Under this bill, the provincial governments of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and North West Frontier Province were dissolved. Leaders hoped this would do away with provincial prejudices and reduce administrative expenditures. The one-unit policy was dissolved in 1970 by General Yahya Khan (Bose & Jalal, 1998).

⁹ The Government of India Act of 1935 was used as an interim constitution by both India and Pakistan until they wrote their own. It did not express an explicit language policy (Ayres, 2009). The 1956 Pakistani Constitution replaced this interim constitution.

autonomy¹⁰ (cf. Ayres, 2009; Rahman, 2010a). Compared to the Bangladeshi riots of 1971, there was a less violent reaction to the 1973 declaration of Urdu as the national language, although regional language movements continued to resist this imposition. These vociferous language movements have resisted the Urdu-centric cultural practices throughout Pakistan's history, particularly in Sindhi-speaking, Siraiki-speaking, Pashto-speaking, and Balochi-speaking communities (Ayres, 2009; Rahman, 2002). The non-Urdu-speaking population believed the leaders wished to suppress ethnic identity and rally the public around a constructed national identity supplemented by an imposed single national language (Rahman, 2004b). In this sense, we see a similar language ideology to the colonial era, where Pakistan's leaders assume that a single national language will encourage national unity and efficient governance. These status policy efforts to unite Pakistani citizens under one language have been fraught with politics and conflict (cf. Ayres, 2009; Huizinga, 1994; Oldenburg, 1985; Peshkin, 1962; Shackle, 1977).

Similar to the colonial policy where English was not for *all* Indians but only a selected elite, Pakistan's education system perpetuated this division between English-medium education for the elite and Urdu-medium education for the rest. The ideological division along class differences continues to characterize English speakers and non-English speakers. Rahman (2004b) argues that Pakistan's current educational institutions designate class along the lines of English proficiency or lack thereof. The Pakistani elite attend English-medium education, typically private schools and universities, while the working classes attend Urdu-medium public schools and public universities, and the very poor and rural, mostly male, youth attend Urdu-medium, or perhaps Arabic-medium, madrassah, or traditional Islamic, education. Rahman explains that the educational apartheid has made class disparities more acute and that the class-based education policies are part of the state's discriminatory practices against the marginalized non-elite. Of course, many factors, other than language-in-education policy, contribute to the state's mismanagement of education policies and their implementation. Such claims by Rahman and others ask that scholars devote more attention and care to understanding the weaknesses of the current system and the complex history that has shaped it before proposing any more programs that only exacerbate the current dilemma while prioritizing governance and marginalizing the public's daily realities. Furthermore, if the majority of Pakistanis do not claim Urdu or English, as their first language, this leads to the exclusion of "linguistic communities from education because they do not understand the language used in school" (Coleman, 2010, p. 23). The divisive repercussions of not addressing the local communicative practices relates to the current political instability and conflict, running contrary to the state's goals of good governance.

It seems that neither the British colonizers nor Pakistan's political leaders sought to maintain the elements of the area's linguistic diversity in national language policies. Perhaps similar to the Crown, the state determined multilingual language-in-education policies would be disadvantageous for political expediency and strategic governance. For example, in 1990 Benazir Bhutto's government proposed the Balochistan Mother Tongue Use bill which mandated the use of

¹⁰ According to the 1998 Census, only 7.57% of approximately 132 million Pakistanis claim Urdu as a mother tongue, while 87.77% claim one of the following: Punjabi, Siraiki, Sindhi, Pashto, or Balochi (Government of Pakistan, 1998).

Balochi, Brahvi, and Pashto in public, or non-elite, schools, exempting elite English medium schools from this language policy. However, in 1992 Nawaz Sharif's representative in Balochistan passed an amendment to this bill making the policy "optional" (Ayres, 2009). The specific political reasons why these governments disagreed over their support for Balochi language education cannot erase the general lack of interest, commitment, and political will evident in language policies that do not account for non-Urdu, non-English localized language practices. The continued existence and official backing of a Macaulay-esque "class" of elite, English speakers who are protected from the, albeit short-lived, Balochi language policy is indicative of the continued prestige and valorization given to English compared with any and all other languages. As discussed earlier however, despite the official colonial language policy, there was an undercurrent of communicative activity that led to a major political and social upheaval in the subcontinent. The question that remains is whether current Pakistani scholars and policymakers will continue the top-down education language policy that fails to account for locally-informed communicative practices or if they are willing to change this paradigm.

Post 9/11 Shifts in Language Ideologies

Today, the instability of the Pakistani political infrastructure as well as geopolitical and domestic problems (i.e., the US War on Terror, extremism, corruption, lack of adequate power resources, and yearly droughts and floods in a largely agrarian economy) take center stage in most domestic debates. In Pakistan, where 30% of the population is said to be living in "extreme educational poverty"¹¹ and 63% percent is under the age of 25 (UNESCO, 2010; UNDP, 2011), it is crucial that stakeholders in both the public and private sectors address the needs of the current educational crisis and invigorate the dialogue with fresh ideas. If more than half of Pakistan's population is currently under 25, the need to understand how young people are socialized as Pakistani citizens and as global citizens takes on great urgency. Simultaneous to the Pakistani Prime Minister's declaration of 2011 as the "Year of Education," there has been a renewed interest among policymakers, researchers, and the media to examine the existing language education programs and policies and to suggest proposals for improving the country's education system (cf. Lyon & Edgar, 2010; Mustafa, 2011; Rahman, 2011).

To address these complex problems, it is useful to draw lessons from past attempts at education policy. It almost goes without saying that the historical events have shaped the post 9/11 moment we find ourselves in. Sociolinguists and educationists (e.g., Ayres, 2009; Hayes, 1987; Mansoor, 1993, 2005; Rahman, 1996, 2002, 2004b) have analyzed efforts by earlier colonial and Pakistani state governments to design language policies and have critiqued the nationalist and religious ideologies about language informing these mandates. From a methodological point of view, many of these studies on language programs and policies are primarily based on textual analysis of historical documents and events or draw from survey-based research. In other words, the bias of the research methodology is likely to gloss over the underlying social processes taking place in schools and universities. Without a more reflexive understanding of how we

¹¹ UNESCO defines individuals living in "extreme educational poverty" as those with two or fewer years of education.

are positioned within these ideological labyrinths, it becomes difficult to remove colonial ideologies from contemporary language policies. In this section, I analyze current language policy discourse to understand how older language policies have continued to influence the discourse and what is not currently being included in the dialogue.

At the higher education level, all universities maintain a standard language policy that instruction and assessment must be in English (Higher Education Commission, n.d.), with the implicit assumption that English is used exclusively for communication in classrooms and for general academic discourse. As espoused by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), the symbolic capital of English for non-English speakers in terms of employment and economic mobility is well documented and understood (Mansoor, 2005; Mustafa, 2011; Rahman, 2002, 2005). In a public address to an American university audience, Rahman (2005) explains that these individuals are “unable or unwilling to overcome the obstacle of English to get a decent job in society”¹² (p. 23). The belief that education systems should be designed to support the market and that the development of human capital increases a nation’s ability to participate in the global market manifests in the priority ascribed to English medium education by many students and families (for more on human capital theory, see Patrinos, 2000; Schultz, 1971). The emblematic nature of English is as a means of self improvement that leads to greater possibilities of career advancement, but more importantly it seems that earning power is eclipsed by a correlation with secularism and democracy and an inverse relationship with terrorism and militancy. Rahman (2005) explains:

[Pakistan] is now a frontline state helping the United States fight terrorism. At the same time its education system has the potential to *create terrorists*. English is relevant in this context because students who are *least exposed* to it appear to be *most supportive* of intolerant and militant values. (p. 3, emphasis added)

This statement presents a more recent shift in language ideology regarding English from the historical ideology where English-speaker portended elite and prestige status to English as an indicator of non-militancy. Rahman’s reference to the education system having the potential of “creating” individuals who support intolerant and militant values aligns with his earlier critique (1996, 2004b) of the economic and social disparity produced by an educational system divided by medium of instruction. Rahman (2005) goes on to discuss the potential implications of English discourses within Pakistan:

English is also the window to the outside world and has discourses with liberal, democratic values which do have the potential of changing male-dominating, macho values from Pakistani traditional sub-cultures. It can also act as a moderating influence against the influence of religious extremists who are intolerant of points of view different from their own or of womens’ empowerment and liberation. (p. 23)

Compared to the first quote, Rahman bifurcates the English discourse into two main perspectives: (1) the power to discourage militant and intolerant attitudes

¹² I assume that “decent job” means a well-paying position at some kind of socially acceptable establishment and/or institution.

and (2) the possibility of a more liberalizing and moderate ethos. English use in Pakistan now becomes associated with two kinds of English speakers who espouse two language ideologies. One ideology references the elite English speakers, formerly part of the interpreter class, who are “alienated from and indifferent to the rest of their compatriots from less privileged socio-economic classes” (Rahman, 2005, p. 23). He goes on to explain that since these less-privileged compatriots are not exposed “to any discourses created in other societies, it is easy for discourses produced by religious fundamentalists, cultural chauvinists and others to dominate their minds” (p. 23). Rahman (2005) explains that this bifurcation is connected to the same two-tiered educational system where the teaching and use of English is accompanied by the inculcation of liberal and modern values. Mahboob (2009) takes another perspective where he explains how English in Pakistan “reflects Islamic values and embodies South Asian Islamic sensitivities” (p. 175). While I abhor the recent trend in the media to equate Islamic practice and extremism, I become concerned with ideological relationships between Islamic ways of thinking and the English language. It is imperative that researchers understand the explicit and implicit consequences of such ideological positioning and investigate what it is that people actually *do* with their English, Urdu and other communicative resources.

Rahman’s discourse seems similar to Coleman’s (2010) review of English language teaching policies and practices in Pakistan, where Coleman acknowledges that English has a gate keeping role and that many students of English see their education as a means to an end. While this is not surprising, both of these authors cannot account for the daily lived communicative English literary practices since the focus seems to be on a top-down, social engineering agenda. Both Rahman’s emphasis on the moderating influence of English and Coleman’s report, written at the behest of the British Council and the Government of Pakistan to understand the importance of English as a “tool for individual and national development” (Wazir Ali, cited in Coleman, n. p.) embody an interest in understanding how English can be taught to better the educational system and consequently the sociopolitical environment in Pakistan. In a post 9/11 world, where Pakistan and its majority Muslim population are discussed frequently in the context of the US War on Terror, it is understandable why researchers would want to imagine a relationship between English-medium education and non-militancy or as a means to create a more equitable reality. Lyon (2010) takes a contrary approach to such “education as panacea” ideology. He argues that “if educational reforms are meant to raise national literacy...it may behove the state to comply with community expectations, even if they may be contradictory to what an indigenous urban minority elite or external donor may think is appropriate” (p. 17). He goes on to propose that education reforms should not be “a disguised form of social engineering to correct existing inequalities between genders or classes,” (p. 27) but a more locally informed set of practices which includes community members in the policy-making process.

The recent ideological connection in regards to English language as a modern, secular language indexes a recycled revision of older language ideologies. English was originally designated as the communicative medium for Macaulay’s interpreter class, but it had a subversive role in the processes of colonial ambivalence and became a medium through which the Indian elite propelled decolonization. In Rahman’s statement, we see an instance where English has become ideologically

linked to liberalism and modernity, and in opposition to extremism. Rahman (2005) claims that those who are exposed to it, most likely through some kind of schooling experience, may become less extremist in their thinking. Urdu speakers are ideologically positioned in contrast to English speakers where Urdu is seen as a non-elite language variety, void of prestige, and related to extremism. In her survey-based study, Mansoor (1993) finds that male and female students studying in both Urdu and English medium schools rated English speakers to be more cultured, mannered, intelligent, educated, and capable than Urdu speakers. Rahman (2004b) explains that English-medium students hold Urdu-medium students in open contempt and describe them as *paendoo*¹³ ['rustic'] as a term of derision. He describes the English-medium students to have only one redeeming feature: "their support for liberal-humanist values,...human rights, democracy, and freedom" which they eventually lose when they become functionaries of the state (p. 71). Such statements seem rife with conflicting language ideologies and the ideological shifts, from colonial ideologies to the present, demand more empirically grounded research to explore their significance and implications for contemporary social and educational processes. While scholars have conducted large and small-scale quantitative-based surveys to understand the educational system's deficiencies and students' needs (Coleman, 2010; Lyon, 2010; Mansoor, 1993, 2005; Rahman, 2002), these studies have contributed to our understanding of the needs of contemporary educational context but more qualitative research is necessary, especially to understand the systemic reasons for the deficiencies of the educational system and what kinds of locally contextualized language policies would be most desirable looking forward.

Making the Case for Empirically-based Language-in-Education Policy

Finally I turn to recent national discourses concerning language education beginning with the National Education Policy of 2009 and analyze them in conjunction with other language policy proposals by researchers, multilateral agencies, and Pakistani public figures. Due to the recent national attention to improve Pakistan's educational system, particularly given the large youth population in a region marred by conflict, the Prime Minister, along with the UK government, mandated a national initiative to support the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2009 through the efforts of the Pakistan Education Task Force (PETF). The government recognized Pakistan's previous failures to implement policy and prioritizes the goals of providing greater access and raising education quality. The PETF "signals a renewed commitment by the Government of Pakistan to deliver on policy pledges and to be held accountable for bringing about change" (Pakistan Education Task Force, n.d.). Item #21 of the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2009 explains that while English is an international language necessary for competition in a globalized world, Urdu is the language that "connects people

¹³ The word *paendoo* is etymologically related to the Punjabi word *pind* for a rural village or settlement. Someone who is referred to as *paendoo* is from a *pind*. While it may seem ironic that the English-speaking students use an Urdu word to metapragmatically reference Urdu-speakers, I propose that this kind of cross-exchange and mixing between English and Urdu registers and sensibilities indexes the existence of hybrid register formations known by both English-speakers and Urdu-speakers. I hope to follow this line of reasoning in my current research projects with urban Pakistani youth and their hybrid registers and multi-modal communicative practices

across Pakistan and is a symbol for national cohesion and integration” (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 4). The policy asserts simultaneously Pakistan’s investment in English education to compete internationally as well as its position as a modern nation-state united by a symbolic language. Since English is described as necessary only as far as international purposes are concerned, the Urdu (language)-as-Pakistan ideology survives intact. The 2009 NEP highlights the need for children to learn “English as a subject” from Class I to Class V and then stipulates that all instruction must be in only English from Class V onwards (p. 20). The assumption is that after taking English as a subject for four years, students will acquire enough academic proficiency to enter English-medium schooling. How this can be accomplished in such a short time frame in a country where English is spoken by a very small and elite population is left unanswered. The current Educational Task Force may want to reconsider whether it is possible, given Pakistan’s educational system’s financial constraints and qualified instructional staff limitations, to pursue the goal of being seen as a modern, English-speaking nation, united by a single national language. None of Pakistan’s vernacular languages are mentioned by name in the NEP 2009, with the exception of Urdu. These two related but seemingly incompatible goals—to look modern while remaining united as a nation—do not adequately address the obstacles faced by students and teachers to achieve academic success expected by the government.

The language policy sections of the National Education Policy 2009 appear to be a *posturing* rhetorical device to interested development agencies outside of Pakistan and could arguably not manifest in any real implementation plan. The proposal for four years of English-as-a-subject learning is not grounded in any research study to explain why this would be sufficient for students to enter English-medium schooling. In a longitudinal study on bilingual education (BE) in the United States, Ramirez *et al.* (1991) found that regardless of the kind of bilingual education program, whether it was a strong form of BE (like dual bilingual education) or a weak form (like early-exit transitional BE), it took non-English speaking students five or more years to acquire academic proficiency in English. In another study, Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (2000) concluded that it could take four to seven years for most students to attain proficiency in English, depending on whether it was oral proficiency or included academic criteria. While the educational programs in Pakistan and the United States are very different, as are the national contexts, I refer to these findings to make the point that immigrant, non-English speaking students in America take anywhere between four and seven years to become fluent in English, and this is in a context where the teacher, administrators, and other students are most likely fluent English speakers. Many immigrant students in America are surrounded by examples of English communication in their neighborhood, playgrounds, and media. The NEP 2009 is proposing that students in Pakistan, of particular concern those coming from non-English speaking households, should be able to “pick up” English in subject courses after four years and then go on to only English-medium classrooms. Rahman’s dismay in the two-tiered system seems appropriate considering the lack of empirical proof for why four years would be sufficient in a multilingual country, like Pakistan, where students may likely be speaking two or three other non-English languages outside of school. Coleman (2010) explains that while the NEP 2009 extends the role of English medium instruction and the desire to reduce

social stratification is commendable, “it does not necessarily imply that English should be used as a medium of instruction. In fact a persuasive argument has been made that this ‘democratising’ approach may ultimately lead to widespread illiteracy, rather than literacy, in general and particularly in English” (p. 19).

I argue that upon analysis, it becomes clear that the NEP’s position on language policy as a posturing device rhetorically points to the state’s interest in making English-medium education more accessible, but without any serious political will or intellectual commitment to the endeavor. Furthermore if Pakistani policymakers are primarily speaking to development agencies and international audiences, the priority given to non-localized education objectives and requirements of the global economy seems equally evident and problematic for the Pakistani schoolchildren and their families who will be affected by the policies. Recently several scholars and writers have suggested proposals to address education policy within Pakistan (Khalique, 2007; Lyon & Edgar, 2010; Mansoor 2005; Mustafa, 2011; Rahman, 2010a). Tariq Rahman (2010a) and Sabiha Mansoor (2005) argue for an additive form of bilingual education that appreciates the linguistic diversity in Pakistan while recognizing the utility and importance of Urdu and English competency. Similar to Rahman (2010a), the columnist Haris Khalique (2007) argues that while English-medium education is the official stance of public education in Pakistan, and although Urdu is seen as a bridge to acquiring English competency, if we were to compare the kind of English-medium education available to the elite population through private schools to the English-medium education found in most urban and rural public schools, we would find tremendous disparity, exemplifying a high degree of social and class inequalities prevalent in Pakistani society.

Several Pakistani public figures have proposed that if these inequities cannot be addressed perhaps Pakistan should do away with English-medium education altogether (Khalique, 2007; Mustafa, 2011). This rather extreme view represents the more ideology-based policy proposals, without enough understanding of local knowledges and practices, circulating in the Pakistani and international media. Mustafa (2011) proposes that the language of the home environment, or mother tongue, be the MOI until grade 7 when it can remain the mother tongue or change to Urdu. At the 11th grade level, students can choose either English or Urdu (p. 151). Such top-down approaches to language education are contrary to many of the international studies on bilingual education where scholars emphasize the importance of community and parental support to ensure bilingual education program success (cf. Bartlett & Garcia, 2011). Neither Mustafa (2011), Khalique (2007), nor Rahman (2010a) offer specific plans for how such national program policies can be enacted. Many of these authors seem to be responding to language ideology-based policies from the past often with an un-reflexive understanding of their own language ideologies. For example, Mustafa, a Karachi-based journalist, states that “English has become a prop for Pakistan to project itself as a state trying to reform itself and emerge as a modern society” (2011, p. 161). In one moment, she has ideologically linked the state’s support for English as part of an insincere attempt to appear modern and so one wonders how the state can genuinely make a case for support of English to participate in global markets without seeming disingenuous.¹⁴

¹⁴ Mustafa’s (2012) comments gained international traction when she wrote a similar article titled “Pakistan ruined by language myth” for the British online version of *The Guardian* newspaper.

In contrast, Mansoor (2005) conducted an extensive mixed methods case study on language planning in Pakistan to examine whether students received sufficient linguistic support in Urdu, English or the mother tongue to achieve academic success. Her work is remarkable in that, contrary to many other policy proposals, her suggestions are grounded in an empirical study that includes the voices of students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders. She also recognizes that there are multiple Englishes circulating in the Pakistani educational sphere and encourages more communicative language teaching pedagogies (such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and English for Science and Technology (EST)) and suggests that “overseas experts” be consulted at all stages in developing ESP methods (p. 362). Although Mansoor argues for a “bottom-up” approach to language planning (p. 353), her proposal for language teaching with overseas consultants seems to undermine the possibilities of local knowledge and participation. Such a top-down development of Centers for English Language (CELs) may be contrary to the task of language education that reflects the daily communicative practices in classrooms unless teachers are taught the benefit of employing ethnographic research within their classrooms to adapt literacy education for the specific students they teach (cf. Nabi *et al.*, 2009; Street, 2001). It is necessary to further Mansoor’s work and explore more ethnographic approaches to language teaching that incorporate online technologies and media. In *Emerging Issues in TEFL: Challenges in Asia*, Nesi (2009) and Khan (2009) explore how ESP pedagogy can be informed by technology and the implications for communicative language teaching (CLT) in computer mediated communication. Such work is indicative of an important dialogue emerging among scholars within Pakistan, and it is imperative that these efforts continue and be relayed back to policymaking circles at the state level and private-NGO level.

I propose that only by developing our understanding of localized communicative practices and their associated ideologies in formal and informal spaces of learning through more ethnographic approaches will we be able to understand the globalized lives and nuanced realities faced by the Pakistani youth. For example, the exponential use and popularity of cell phone technology has helped more non-English speaking users to learn and use the Roman alphabet, through texting in Roman Urdu or Roman Punjabi. World Bank education specialist Michael Trucano (2011) describes pilot-research projects with local college students to understand how text messaging services can be maximized for educational purposes. In Pakistan, the popularity of SMS communication, which uses the Roman alphabet, has immense implications for the diversity of Roman Urdu, Roman Punjabi, Roman Sindhi, and the like communicative practices. Such instances are further proof that education and language education policies designed at the bureaucratic governmental level and passed down to classrooms may not be meeting the needs of students, if they ever did. Mustafa remarks upon the annoying presence of *Urlish*, “an ugly combination of Urdu and English,” in Urdu TV talk shows and blames the education system for this phenomena (p. xi). Her disappointment for the dearth of linguistic purism in classrooms where the students may not be required to speak English outside of the school is not surprising given that her language policy proposals are not based on classroom-based or youth-based studies. As scholars have explained about the multiple varieties of English present in Pakistan (Baumgardener, 1993; Mahboob, 2009; Rahman, 2004b),

it is not shocking that multiple Urdu varieties, often spoken by the youth, exist and that these varieties circulate in urban Pakistan through mediatized discourses. In fact, Rahman's (2010b) presentation at the TEDx Lahore event, titled "Who's afraid of Urdu and Hindi?" demonstrates an acknowledgement of these varieties, where Urdu references mixing Urdu and English and Urdu, a mixing of Urdu and Hindi. However since Urdu is ideologically positioned as inferior or not useful to acquire English competency, there has been little research on the actual Urdu communicative practices of youth either in or out of school. In Mansoor's (2005) study, she reports on predominance of mixing Urdu and English in classroom practices, although this phenomena does not inform her language policy proposals (p. 307). While there is a negative connotation ascribed in media and scholarship about mixing language varieties, the occurrence of such mixing can hardly be denied (Rahman, 2010b). In my forthcoming research, I intend to explore the dynamic communicative practices of young people through mediatized discourse to inform our understanding of language education and language socialization, and perhaps to design a more localized language-in-education policy.

While most of the scholars find the linguistic diversity of Pakistan to be indicative of rich and vibrant cultures and communities, they are more hesitant to recognize the place of the mixing of these varieties in the educational sphere. Pennycook (2010) explains that the "current approaches to diversity, multilingualism, and so forth all too often start with the enumerative strategy of counting languages and romanticizing a plurality based on these putative language counts" (p. 63). But how do we incorporate this information when it comes to language-in-education policy? How can we address the needs of the national leaders and their strategies of good governance with the reflexive understanding of the extent to which languages, and their associated ideologies, are "inventions of the disciplines that make them" (p. 64)? I propose that in order to better understand the kinds of language-in-education policy that may benefit non-elite Pakistani students, the first step would be to support more empirically and ethnographically informed research studies that focus on localized and diverse communicative practices in both urban and rural classrooms (Canagarajah, 2005). It appears premature to recommend a definitive language policy without more critical understandings of the language ideologies that have informed earlier policies. Rahman's discussion (2005) about the ideologies associated with English and Urdu since 9/11 certainly points us in the direction where language-identity-nation cannot be thought of as fused into one synthesized language policy. Rather, researchers must recognize the multi-dimensional communicative repertoires of students, teachers, and families and make room for these pluralities in the school experiences. That may mean multiple language policies for different regions and cities, but this should not be a cause for alarm that Pakistani students will no longer identify with a monolingual nation-state, if such a thing ever existed. Rather a language policy that accepts and makes room for superdiverse repertoires (Blommaert, 2011) may actually be a productive move in terms of reducing economic instability and increasing national and regional security. If we understand the ideologies that inform language education as socially constructed and politically charged, then it becomes vital that we trace how these ideologies are formed and enacted in everyday practice so that policy recommendations actually respond directly to daily realities of the population addressed, and resist recycling outdated colonialist language ideologies of the past.

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