

A Quantitative Analysis of Language Crisis and National Identity in Naya Pakistan

Amna Umer Cheema

Assistant Professor, Institute of English Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

Email: aminaumer@gmail.com

Hadia Baloch

M.phil. in English Literature, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

Email: hadiakbaloch@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Pakistan is linguistically and culturally a diverse nation. Urdu is the national language, but still not the official language of Pakistan. English continues to be the official language, the language of elites, the language of opportunities, and much more. Therefore, the division of Urdu and English has never been so neat, and it still appears to be so. This research paper is another effort to shed light on the persisting crisis of language and national identity, perpetuated by the vague division of Urdu and English in the socio-political and academic sectors of Naya Pakistan. In order to revisit this issue, a quantitative research was conducted through a questionnaire. The sample population was 50 students from the University of the Punjab, Lahore. The study shows the immovable existence of linguistic and cultural crises in the country. It is this crisis, which is affecting the youth's competency in Urdu language as well. Moreover, the study finds a desire for linguistic conformity through a "monolithic linguistic" pattern (Haque, 1983, p. 6) in order to preserve the ideological beliefs of the indigenous languages in Naya Pakistan. But, in order to do this, there is a need to accept the multilingualism of our society and establish concrete roles of Urdu as the national and official language and English, along with regional languages, as a subject. In this way, polarization of indigenous languages can be reduced, as they will have their own space in terms of being spoken as mother tongue and taught as subjects in academia.

Key Words: Linguistic crisis, National Identity, Indigenous languages, Naya Pakistan & Linguistic Plurality.

Introduction

Since the partition, Pakistan takes pride in the array of languages spoken in its four provinces. The linguistic map of Pakistan is an assortment of some 60 different languages (Haider & Fang, 2019, 166); each of the four provinces has a major, and a number of minor languages. Convincingly, Sabiha Mansoor is of the view that Pakistan is "a multilingual and multicultural society", therefore "the choice of language as a medium of instruction is not an easy matter" (Mansoor, 2004, p. 53). As languages represent cultures their differences create communicative barriers in social and political foyers. However, in a multilingual society, bilingualism is a common practice.

This is why, since the partition, the social and political environment gave way to a language controversy which led to the spatial division between the Urdu and Bengali speaking people of Pakistan. This linguistic and spatial division made a deep-rooted place between the four provinces of Pakistan. “There were language riots in Sindh in 1970s and it was argued that learning of Urdu is simply to gain social and economic communicational necessities under Urdu-dominated system of the country” (Jabeen et al., 2010, p. 122); ‘it was the biggest mistake to choose it as the national language of Pakistan with long-term negative consequences’ (Jabeen et al. 2010, p. 121). To this day, the people of Pakistan are being misled by their provincial and ethnic differences expressed through the conflict between the status of their mother tongues and Urdu as a national language.

On the other hand, there are mixed feelings for embracing English language as a mode of instruction and the language of opportunities. I agree with Tariq Rahman that the approach towards this “language of prestige” is variable (2012, p. 94), and that English language and Western values are being embraced by the elite class (Rahman, 2009). But some people who have opposed it, as a “colonial legacy”, (Haider & Fang, 2019, p. 166) and a symbol of imperialism, are in favour of the reinstating Urdu as our national, official language.

But it is important to deliberate on the fact that Pakistan came into being by unifying this express need of a separate nation for Muslims in Urdu language; it is this very same language, which has later been politicized to disintegrate the collective consciousness of the people of Pakistan. If as Anjum R. Haque says “every language is the instrument of a culture” (1983, p. 8), then Urdu language has been instrumental in holding on to the cultural diversity of the Muslims of the sub-continent amidst the ordeals of the partition. This is why, since partition, Urdu was meant to be promoted as our national identity. However, English takes a consistently overwhelming position and is considered to be a “passport to success” in terms of social wealth, power, and even education (Rahman, 1995, p. 17).

However, there is no denying that English has suppressed Urdu language’s establishment in all spheres of life, along with muting the regional voices. The Constitution of Pakistan is codified in English. Sabiha Mansoor (2004) states that the constitutions of Pakistan (1956, 1962, 1973) have supported the national language of Pakistan and made recommendations for the development of Urdu so as to replace English for official purposes (p. 57). Unfortunately, the 1973 arrangements for replacing English have never been actualized till today. Neither has Urdu been given its due place as national and official language, nor has English been replaced in any social and political domain. Haque is convincing when he says that “Urdu has been declared to be the national language of the country” (1983, p. 8). However, it is true that “the position of English in the country continues to be both vitally important and highly controversial” (1983, p. 8).

The fact of the matter is that, on one hand, in order to promote English in all spheres of life, Urdu has been projected as a language of national disintegration – diminishing cultures and the indigenous languages, which express them. This is

why, in 1950s, although there was a plan to introduce “Urdu only” education policy, the government could not find a better substitute for resources in English (Rahman, 2011).

Despite Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Zia-ul-Haq’s educational reforms to promote Urdu, (Mansoor p. 58), and Ayub Khan’s National Commission on education’s “preparation of uniform textbooks”, (Mansoor, p. 58) Urdu has never become our national official language. The National Education Policy Framework (2009) presents a similar helpless position. It talks of limiting English to a subject only, but then it also prefers it for other major subjects like science and maths. However, this solution was found to be flawed for “benefiting the dominant minority over the common majority because it over-emphasized the use of English as the language of education instead of encouraging multilingualism” (Coleman, 2010; Coleman & Capstick, 2012). Even at college and university level the medium of instruction continues to be the same.

Every elected government, soon after assuming power, announces its policy of teaching English at public sector schools and colleges as a subject, and also as a medium of instruction, in order to achieve democratic ideals of equal opportunity. Sandeep Cheema and Perminderjeet Singh note that

As this decision is politically motivated, it comes as no surprise that implementation efforts fall short of the supposedly democratic intent of the policy. This official rhetoric of providing equal opportunities for learning of English as a potential tool to level differences among the social classes, without a study of current provision and teachers’ ability to teach English effectively, is not practically there in the education policy in Pakistan. (“English Language in Pakistan – Tool of Empowerment or Weapon of Linguistic Imperialism”, p. 47)

According to Tania Saeed, the implementation of PTI government’s uniform curriculum, championing “equality in quality” with Urdu as the medium of instruction, and English as a second language, in public, private and madrassas “remains to be seen” (2019). The writer deliberates that such priorities appear to be bleak with the reduction in the government’s education budget 2019-2020 (Saeed, 2019).

Amidst these inconsistencies in the policies and their realizations, English as the medium of instruction persists to overshadow the bounds and scope of Urdu as a national language and continues to affect regional languages. In the present-day *Naya Pakistan*, the official language is still English, and it is used to administer government organizations, law enforcing bodies, and elementary and higher education.

Research objectives

- To assess the extent to which students of the University of the Punjab understand the crisis of language in relation to the national identity in *Naya* Pakistan.
- To assess the attitude of students towards preserving Urdu as their national language.
- To know how much our youth considers national language competency important for nationhood in *Naya* Pakistan.

Problem statement

Since its inception, our country has been suffering from crises of language and nationhood. Our history records the divided opinions on national language amidst varied strata of the society and between ethnic groups from different provinces. Since the inception of Pakistan, there has been an ambiguity between the practice and preaching of Urdu as the national and official language of Pakistan. Whether it is about using conversational Urdu, for official communication, or as a medium of instruction, nothing stands consistent or clear in planning and implementation. Our youth is still perplexed about the official hierarchy of Urdu and English, since the medium of instruction fluctuates between the two. With every new government there is a revised language policy that has never set a visible road-map for establishing Urdu homogeneously in our education systems and in official structures. In connection to this, the *Naya* Pakistan promises “uniform curriculum for all” (National Education Policy, 2018) in education sector. The Chief Minister Punjab, Usman Buzdar’s still awaited claim about implementing the PTI’s manifesto of uniform curriculum through introducing Urdu as a medium of instruction at primary level public schools has earned divided opinions. The decision of going back to Urdu to rescue us from social disparity, for a section of the population, is about increasing the divide between rich and poor people, and between provinces; for others, the previous government’s decision to make English as a medium of instruction in public schools, under the consultancy of Sir Michael Barber, was “unreasonable” (qtd. in Malik, 2019).

Limitations

The participants involved in the research are associated with social sciences within the University of the Punjab. Considering the objectives of the research, only Urdu language is focused for understanding the cultural and linguistic crises shadowing our nationalism. As far as the national solidarity is concerned, the overall cultural situation is taken into consideration ignoring the provincial cultural decline. At the same time, the focus has been on the current linguistic and cultural phenomenon. Moreover, in the process of tabulating the answers, there have been some missing values.

Methodology

The present research aims to investigate the phenomenon of language crisis and nationhood in a culturally diversified society. A quantitative research was conducted to address the consistent ambiguity surrounding Urdu language and our national identity. A survey consisting of fifty respondents was carried out in the premises of the University of the Punjab, Lahore. The questionnaire comprised fifteen questions with the aim to once again identify the problem of language crises in *Naya Pakistan*. In order to analyze the outcome of the conducted survey, the research analytical software SPSS has been used.

Literature review

The language crisis and national identity is directly relational to the gap between the privileged English speakers and the under-privileged non-English speakers. This binarism is not based on the quality of linguistic learning or equality of resources available, but the hierarchies which are socially and culturally embedded in the education system. The dominance of a language or the perception of it, has always been critical in the history of the subcontinent.

Like any imperialistic language, the potential of Urdu to be a threat to ethnicity and regional languages was perceived long ago. In their study “Language Controversy: Impacts on National Politics and Succession of East Pakistan” (2010) Jabeen et al. trace the history of Urdu language and how its imperialistic dominance resulted in the division of East and West Pakistan, and discuss how the dominance of Urdu was a major factor that contributed to the feelings of mistrust between West and East Pakistan. The perception of Urdu as an imposed language shaped the fate of another nation with the creation of Bengal. At large, people believed that choosing Urdu as the national language was a mistake, which had long-term consequences. However, the writers are of the view that respect is desired for Urdu and other regional languages, so that people can have the freedom to learn and speak the languages of their choice. At the moment, we need to promote a multilingual Pakistan for the solidarity of our nation; Linguistic inequality creates identity crisis, both cultural and politically.

Ironically, the very stated cause of the separation of Bangladesh persisted after the division. The superiority of Urdu had posed a threat because it was foreign to the people of Bengal. It would then be expected that a language spoken by and belonging to Bengalis would be anointed the official language. However, that was not the case. The position previously held by Urdu was given to English: a language of power that would uplift and aid the survival of the privileged class. Sandeep Kaur Cheema and Parminderjeet Singh (2015) study this experience by investigating the impact and implications the spread of the English language has had in Pakistan. “Linguistic Imperialism and Foreign Language Teaching” (Isik, 2008) delves deeper into this phenomenon of linguistic imperialism which “refers to the dominance, supremacy and hegemony of one language over the other

languages. It ranges from the imposition of one language on others by conquest and occupation to the transmission of the values and modes of thinking of a particular culture via language education” (Isik, 2008, p. 124). The survey conducted for the paper revealed that the English language in Pakistan has proved to be more of a weapon of linguistic imperialism than a tool of empowerment and development. Not only has it been used for politically and economically strengthening the elite classes of the country, but it has also perpetuated a state of confusion in students in particular and people in general. Furthermore, the pressure of acquiring competency in English is an added problem.

The position English language has acquired in Pakistani society has left many perplexed. There is a considerable amount of literature that points out that due to the hegemony of English seen widely in Pakistan, people at large have divided opinions on its status and are perplexed with the status of a national language and its official ideology. In their research article “English Language in Education and Globalization: A Comparative Analysis of the role of English in Pakistan and China”, Sham Haider and Fan Fang (2019) draw our attention to the fact that “in Pakistan, it seems that people are facing the dilemma of whether English will empower them in society or create unequal social stratification” (p. 172). They claim that society is still divided on the role of English and the colonial mindset persists in language ideology and instructional practices. (Haider and Fang, 2019).

Some researchers like Syed Manan et al. (2017) believe that the importance given to English language in Pakistan is inevitable. In their article “The English-medium Fever in Pakistan: Analyzing Policy, Perceptions and Practices through additive bi/multilingual Education Lens”, they state that “most people perceive early-English policy inevitable, and believe that the earlier the English-medium policy, the better. In this quantitative research, respondents’ majority also views additive multilingual policy unfavourable presuming that more languages will amount to learners’ confusion” (Mana et al., 2017). The public, for the most part, considers English as a potent instrument for socioeconomic mobility, and views it as a passport to potential social powers and privileges.

In a conference, Sandeep Cheema and Perminderjeet Singh (2015) further stated that

One of the major arguments in Linguistic Imperialism was that the spread of English, much of which had occurred through its prominence in global language education, has served to undermine the rights of other languages and to even marginalize the opportunities that should have existed for widespread multilingual education (p. 48).

Not only does language get affected, but regional language speakers also become marginalized. While this may seem like an outcome one would wish to avoid at all times, there is another result that sets back the country as a whole, inhibiting development and suffocating citizens.

In their article “Language Policy and Medium of Instruction Issue in Pakistan” (2015), Ammar et al. address this issue of hinderance and the role the state plays in this decapacitation. They note that

...in Pakistan, there is English backed by the state and the powerful elite versus local languages supported by majority ethnic groups, and in the middle is the young hungry talent of this developing state crunched under the innumerable geo-political, social, economic and psychological pressures from inside and abroad (Ammar et al., 2015, p. 114).

Not only does this affect the linguistic development and general capability of people, Pakistan’s education system faces the brunt of this too. While the Indian subcontinent is known worldwide for its intelligence and academic capabilities, Pakistan suffers badly at the hands of this linguistic fissure. The researchers explain that

for Pakistani society, this issue of privilege is giving rise to an academic-class-categorization that is pushing the non-native like English speakers or low competence level students already in the back seats of learning. This divide among students starts from the primary level and continues up to university level in Pakistan” (Ammar et al., 2015, p. 115).

Despite this, “English is still a very popular subject at all levels” (Rahman, 2002, p. 321). In this context, Tariq Rehman is convincing that English is still an important part in academia as well as in the official corridors. As can be foreseen, the results are disastrous. The article “Access to English in Pakistan: inculcating prestige and leadership through instruction in elite schools” reports that “As a result, the primary function of teaching English in schools in Pakistan is to prepare students for examinations, as passing examinations in English opens doors for employment opportunities” (Haider, 2017, p.831).

While one might say that globalization has connected the world like never before, and English being the lingua franca has further enhanced global communication and shortened distances, it has, at the same time, created various cultural, religious and psychological identity crises, including cultural imperialism. It is therefore safe to conclude that “the tension between retaining the culture and values associated with the mother tongue and the adoption of a national identity symbolized by a foreign language is not easy to reconcile” (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004, p. 7).

However, English is still predominantly used in education and as the official language in the country (Rahman, 2002). As a result, the primary function of teaching English in schools in Pakistan is to prepare students for examinations, as passing examinations in English opens doors for employment opportunities.

Perhaps the roots of this problem of the glorification of English can be traced back to the colonization of the world, which sows the seed of the belief that “education in the native languages leads to backwardness, and their teaching is akin to waste of time and energy” (Manan et al., 2018, p.2). Furthermore, “many also think that teaching more than one or two languages leads to children’s confusion, and thus they vehemently reject the possibility of a multilingual education policy (qtd in. Manan, 2018, p. 2). As a result, “the imposition of English education marginalized not only the uneducated but also the people educated in local languages” (Haider, 2017, p. 2).

It is important to review education policies and how the critics see them. I agree that government policies have been a mere pack of hurdles due to what Mustafa calls “the great disconnect between policy and implementation” (2011, p. 120). He further observes that “... language policies announced from time to time have been patently inconsistent and have not always been implemented either” (Mustafa, 2011, p. 35).

It is crucial to note that the National Education Policy itself appears to be indecisive in the matter. While a government policy should not be inconsistent, the problem is evident in the fact that the National Education Policy (GOP, 2009) declares that “Provincial and Area Education Departments shall have the choice to select the medium of instruction up to class 5 (5th grade)” (p. 28); however, it is partly contradicted by the next condition that “English shall be employed as the medium of instruction for sciences and mathematics from Class IV (4th grade) onwards” (GOP, 2009, p. 28). These two requirements seem to contradict each other. Therefore, Zubeida Mustafa (2011) contends that the “education authorities are shirking their responsibility of taking a categorical decision on this issue”. Zubeida Mustafa (2011) further underlines that the language policy needs to be “formulated clearly and pragmatically” (p. 47).

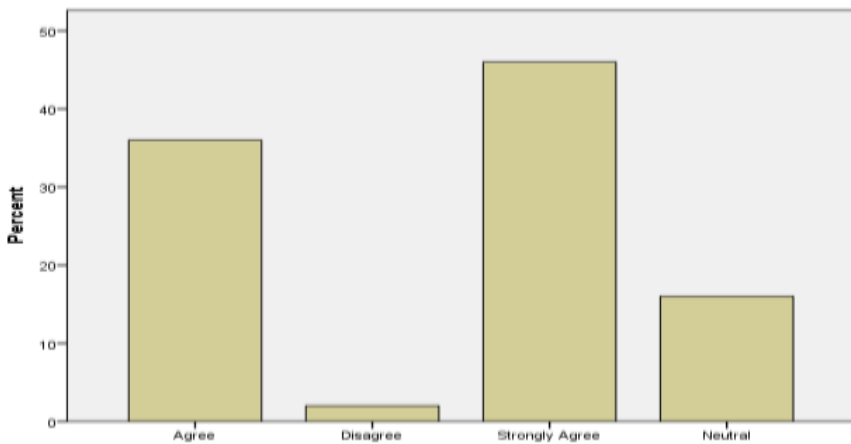
Currently, the medium of instruction policy persists to be vague. In terms of language policy and language choice, according to Suresh Canagarajah and Hina Ashraf (2013), there are still “tensions between policy and practice”, especially in the way language and teaching work differently in practice, “because of people’s changing attitudes toward the language, the varying currency of the available languages, and uneven resources for teaching” (Canagarajah & Ashraf, 2013, p. 263).

Criticism tends to bend more towards the negative in this matter. “An Analysis of Medium of Instruction Policies in the Education System of Pakistan with Specific Reference to English Medium Education” (Asif et al., 2020) traces the controversies and explores the historical backgrounds and various reasons for choosing a language that will serve as an instructional language in our Pakistani context. The researchers note that teachers should be trained in teaching in regional and second languages, and should be aware of the importance of bilingual education. Teaching material should be collected and written in regional language. It is time to accept that education in English, from the primary level, is not working in Pakistan. (Asif et al. 2020).

This opinion is also shared by researchers like John Clegg (2007) who believe that school achievement can only be raised through teaching in mother tongues and that there is an urgent need to bring our regional languages into our learning system. The foremost priority for education in Pakistan is to promote bilingual education through strategy discussions, and bringing issues to light of the significance of native language education in the early long periods of tutoring, rather than wasting effort and resources on the illusion that English medium education at the primary level will bring educational advancement.

It is safe to conclude that if identity is not a fixed entity, but discursively and dynamically constructed through interaction between writers, speakers, and audiences, then multilingual education needs to be encouraged at all levels (Mahboob & Jain, 2016; May, 2014). Due to globalization, there are no concrete traditional borders between different languages (Blommaert, 2010; Jenkins, 2014; Seidlhofer, 2011). People need different linguistic resources for survival in different circumstances (Blommaert, 2010). Pakistan still follows colonial language, ideology, considering linguistic uniformity necessary for national unity rather than accepting multilingualism and language plurality as a reality against the backdrop of globalization (Ayres, 2009; Durrani, 2012). This ambiguity regarding language in education policies results in using different languages for education in different schools (Haidar, 2017).

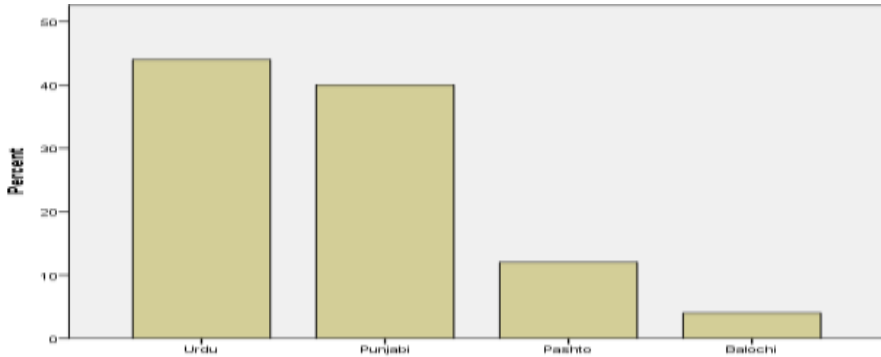
Data



Q.1. Currently, do you see the problem of language crisis in relation to the national identity in Pakistan?

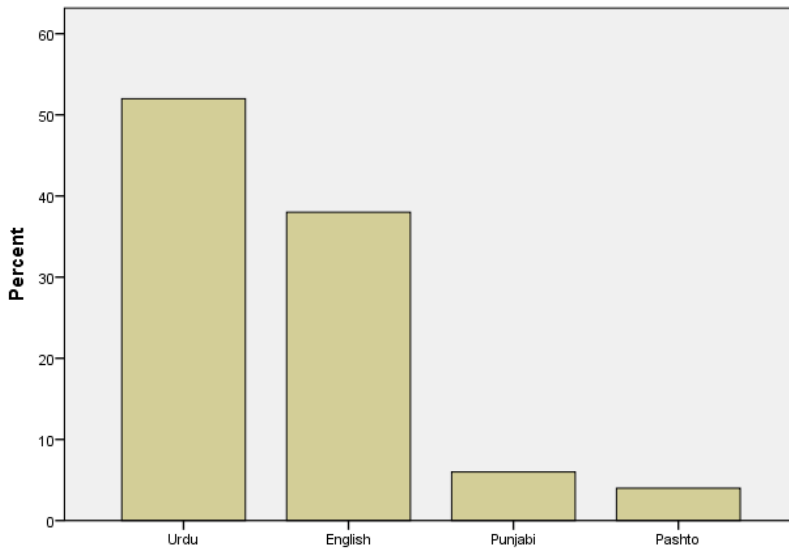
The graph illustrates that more than 45% participants strongly agree to the existence of an ongoing language crisis in relation to our national identity. It is important to note that more than 35% agree, about 18% are neutral, leaving only

about 2% responses in disagreement. None of the respondents strongly disagreed with the problem of language crisis in relation to the national identity.



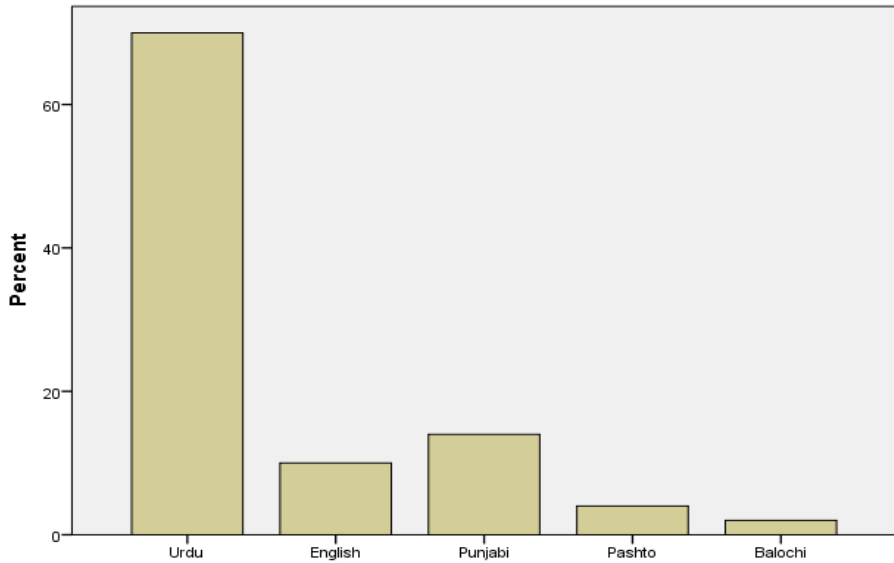
Q.2: In which indigenous language do you converse with your family?

When asked to identify the language respondents use to communicate with their families, almost 45 per cent participants chose Urdu, about 40 per cent chose Punjabi language, 13 per cent chose Pashto and 5 per cent claimed to speak in Balochi within their family. In the sample population, none of the respondents had Sindhi background.



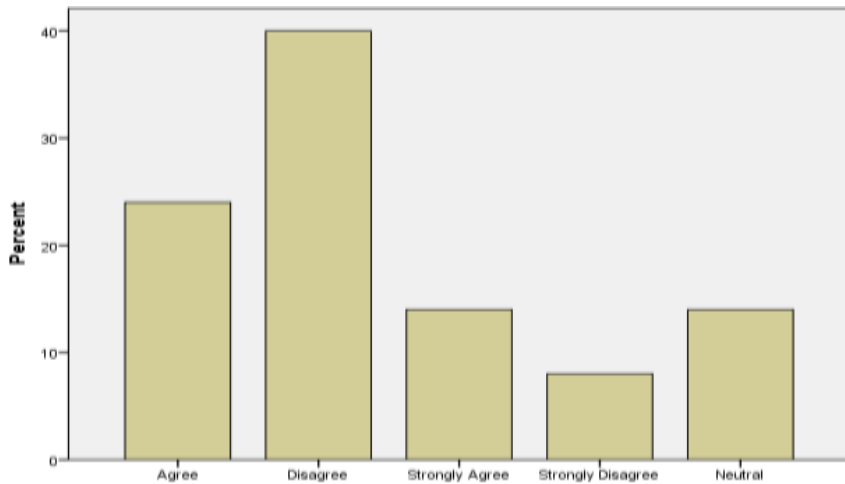
Q.3: Which language do you prefer to use in formal settings?

When asked about the choice of language in formal settings, more than 50 per cent of the respondents selected Urdu, less than 40 per cent English, about 5 per cent Punjabi and less than 5 per cent selected Pashto.



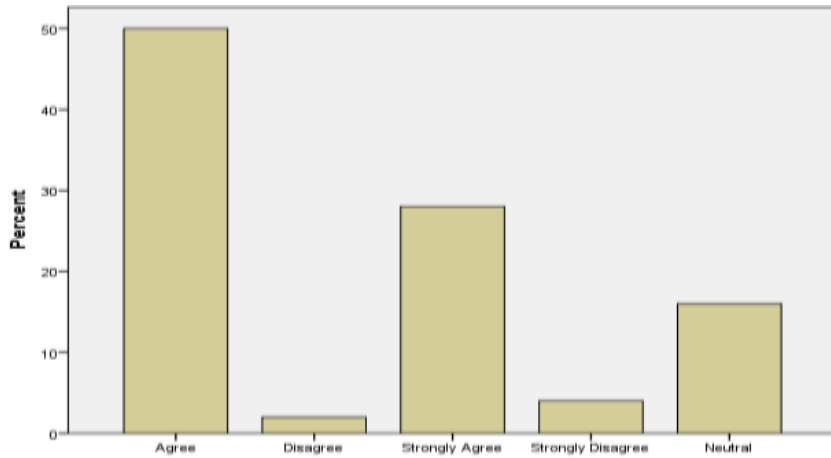
Q.4: Which language do you prefer for your future generation to speak and write in?

A majority comprising 65 per cent of the respondents wish to converse and communicate in Urdu, around 18 per cent selected Punjabi, more than 15 per cent selected English, less than 5 per cent selected Pashto, and around 2 per cent selected Balochi.



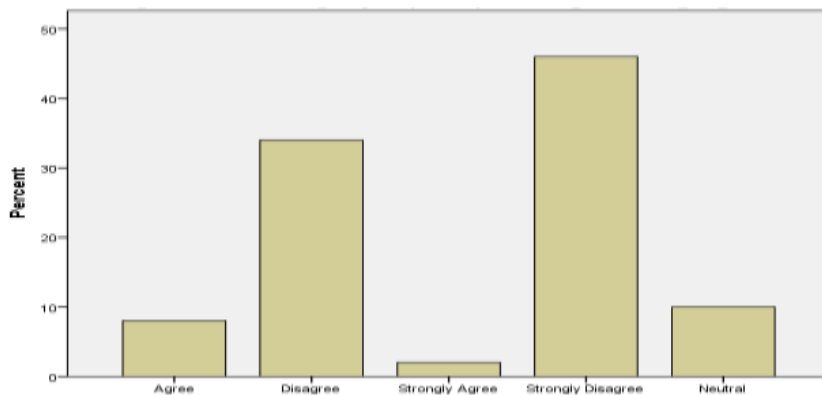
Q.5: Do you feel competent in speaking and writing in Urdu?

As far as speaking and writing in Urdu is concerned, almost 40% participants disagreed. Another 8 per cent strongly disagreed to the belief in Urdu language proficiency in speaking and writing. On the other hand, 25 per cent agreed to having competency in speaking and writing in Urdu, while 15 per cent strongly agree to the same. Around 15 per cent remained neutral on the topic.



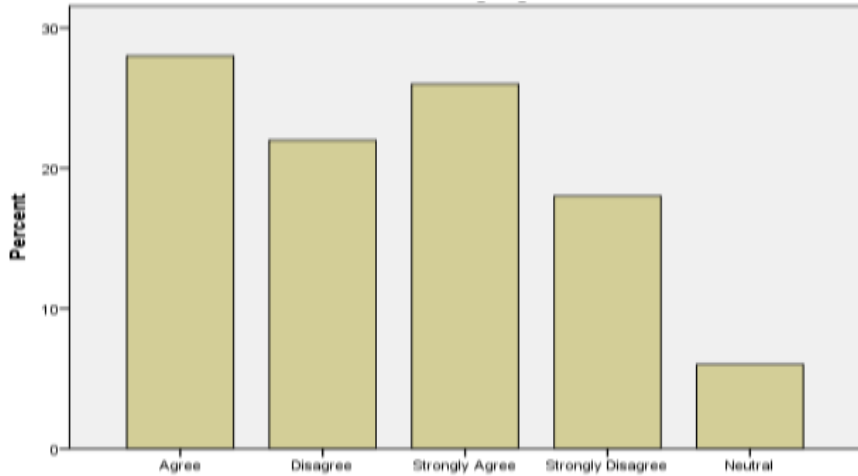
Q.6: English has diminished the importance of Urdu language in the official and academic domains. Do you agree or disagree?

Regarding the domineering influence of English language over Urdu, almost 50 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed, and 30 per cent agreed that Urdu language being over-shadowed in the official and academic domain. Less than 5 per cent strongly disagreed, while another 2 per cent disagreed with this viewpoint. About 18 per cent maintained a neutral stance on this thought.



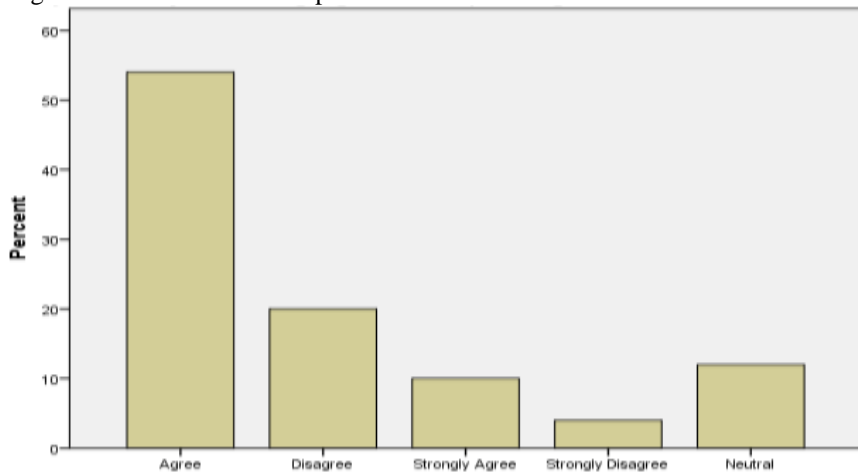
Q.7: Do you think Urdu language should not be the medium of instruction in higher education?

When asked if the students believed that Urdu should not be the medium of instruction in higher education, a majority of 45 per cent respondents strongly disagreed, another 35 per cent disagreed with this thought. Only about 8 per cent agreed, and 3 per cent strongly agreed with the non-Urdu medium of instruction policy. About 10 per cent maintained a neutral stance on this issue.



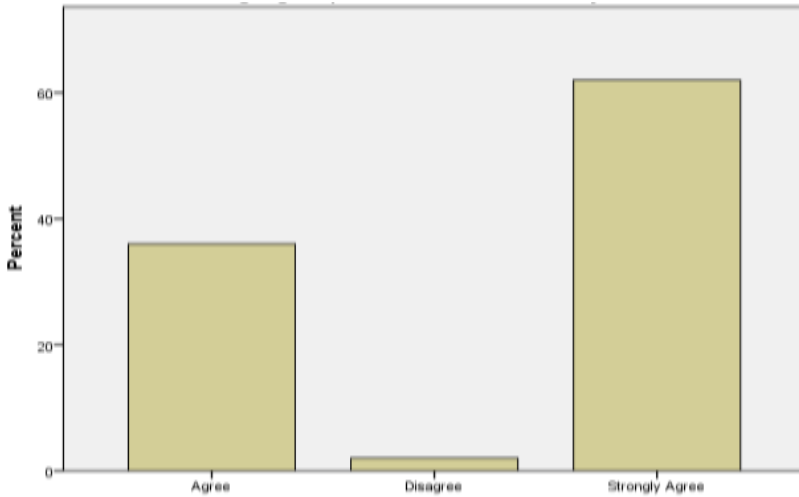
Q.8: Do you agree with the Supreme Court verdict (2015) of implementing Urdu as the official language?

Regarding the Supreme Court of Pakistan's verdict (2015) of implementing Urdu as an official language, 28 per cent of the respondents agreed, another 26 per cent strongly agreed with the decision. However, 23 per cent disagreed, and 18 per cent disagreed with it. More than 5 per cent remained neutral on this decision.



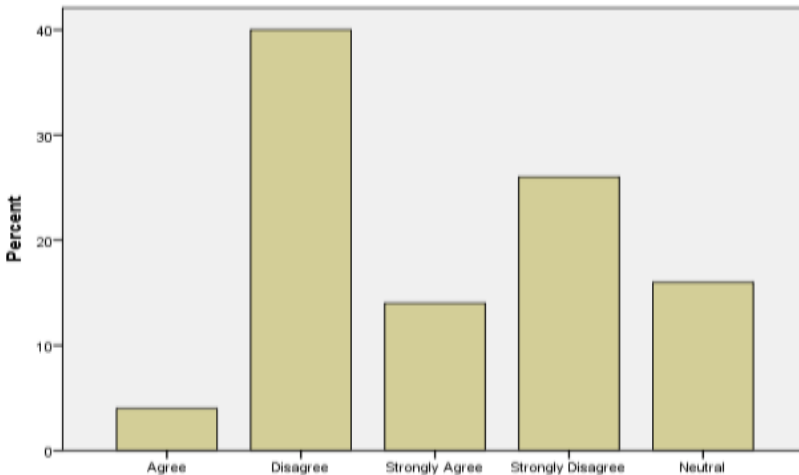
Q.9: Is Urdu language important for our national identity?

When asked if the students believed that Urdu language is essential for our national identity, 55 per cent agreed and 12 per cent strongly agreed. Largely, 25 per cent expressed disagreement. However, 12 per cent maintained a neutral stance.



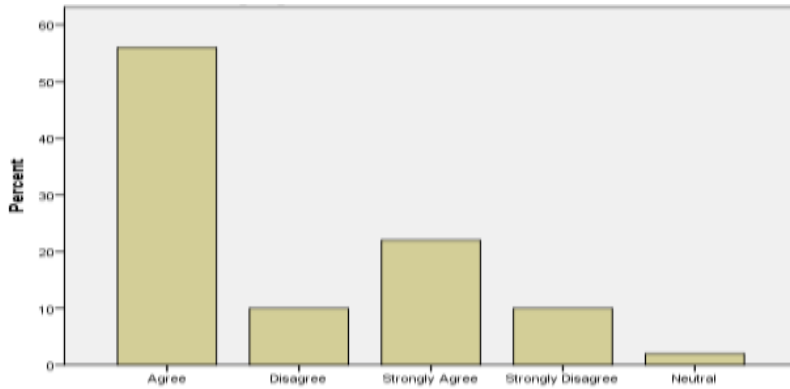
Q.10: Is Urdu the only language which can preserve our national identity?

When asked if Urdu language can ‘only’ preserve our national identity, more than 60 per cent participants strongly agreed with the thought. Another 38 per cent agreed with the fact that Urdu champions our national identity. Conversely, the disagreement remained insignificantly small.



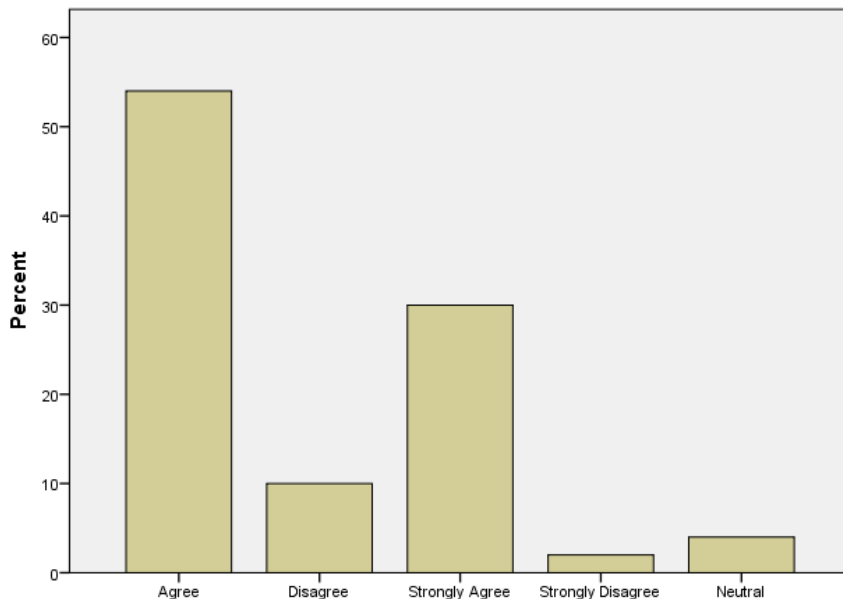
Q.11: Is linguistic competence in Urdu important for retaining our national identity?

About 40 per cent disagreed, and 24 per cent strongly disagreed with the idea that linguistic competence in Urdu is necessary for maintaining national identity. Whereas, 15 per cent strongly agreed, and less than 5 per cent agreed to this thought. Moreover, 17 per cent remained neutral.



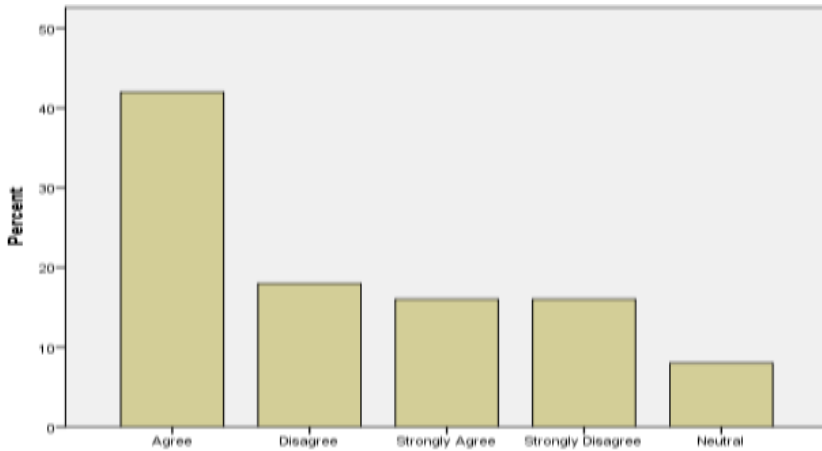
Q.12: We cannot progress without Urdu as our national and official language.

About 55 per cent of the respondents agreed, and another 23 per cent strongly agreed that the progress of our nation, in actual, is not possible without Urdu as our national and official language. In all, only 20 per cent disagreed with this view. Less than 5% maintained a neutral stance.



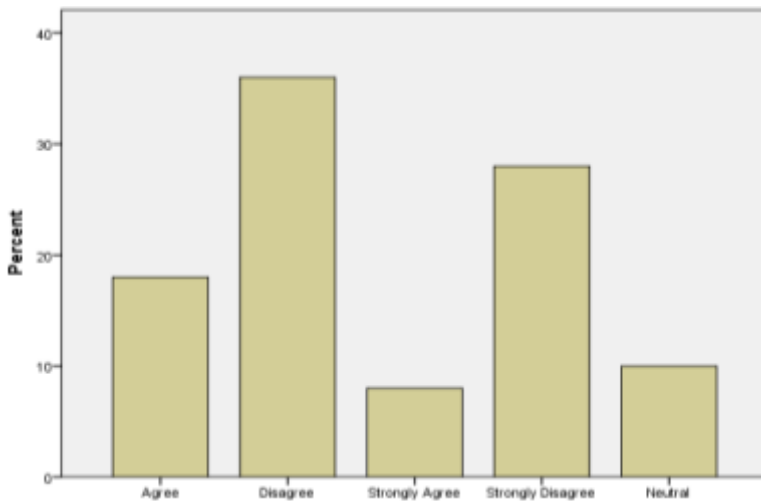
Q.13: Do you feel we have any provincial differences due to language crises?

With respect to any provincial differences caused by the language crisis, around 56 per cent of the respondents agreed and 30 per cent strongly agreed. However, 10 per cent disagreed, and less than 5 per cent strongly disagreed to the view. Around 6 per cent maintained a neutral stance.



Q.14: Do you feel that the language crisis plays a role in anti-national sentiments?

A majority comprising 42 per cent of respondents agreed, another 17 per cent strongly agreed to have the feeling that language crisis contributes to anti-national sentiments. Moreover, 19 per cent disagreed and another 17 per cent strongly disagreed with the viewpoint. However, 8 per cent maintained a neutral stance.



Q.15: In order to do away with the language crisis related to our national identity, the present government is taking steps to preserve Urdu as the national official language. Do you agree or disagree with the statement?

With regards to the present government's efforts in preserving Urdu as the national official language representing our collective identity, more than 35 per cent disagreed and about 28 per cent strongly disagreed with the statement. Moreover, about 18 per cent agreed, and another 7 per cent strongly agreed that the government is making effort towards Urdu language preservation. However, almost 10 per cent remained neutral about the status quo.

Discussion

A review of literature available revealed that there are multiple, even conflicting views regarding language and nationhood. There is one thing, however, that most critics agree upon. They acknowledge that language plays an important role in identity formation and the transmission of culture. The survey conducted for this paper reveals a number of things to us regarding PTI's policies. These will be elaborated upon in this section.

Results show that more than 80% university students acknowledge that in *Naya Pakistan*, there is indeed a language crisis underway. The sample population comes from a stratum of society directly in contact with the education sector, and also on the verge of entering different spheres of life. With its generous scholarships and quotas for minorities and residents of different provinces, University of Punjab is known to be home to students from all parts of Pakistan. Respondents come from backgrounds intimately familiar with other regional languages and how their development suffers at the hand of a foreign official language.

An important aspect of the linguistic crisis is the direct hit national identity takes from it. Zubeida Mustafa (2012) remarks that "... people are desperate to be seen as being proficient in English when they are actually not. At the same time, they are ashamed of their own language though that is the only language they can communicate in properly". The situation is even more preposterous when the history of the creation of Pakistan is revisited.

At the time of the creation of Pakistan, the need for a separate country arose from Muslims feeling threatened by an extinction of identity. Two major factors provided the basis for this threat: the fear that religion would not be freely practiced, and the distress that came from the systematic wiping out of the Urdu language, which served as an identifier for Muslims. It is obvious that language is important for national identity. The responses to the first question reveal that the respondents are aware of this fact.

The question that arises then is, why is the language that once mobilized the movement to separate the Indian subcontinent into two, and united people from

different regions, cultures and walks of life, now painted as a despotic, imperialistic language that can cause the country to erode? Instead, a superimposed, foreign and colonial language that a very small portion of the population can competently communicate is used as the official language. Consequently, even in *Naya* Pakistan an identity crisis is prevalent.

The survey reveals that a significant portion of the population in *Naya* Pakistan is aware of the relationship between language competency and identity. This relationship owes to the fact that both written and oral communication act as carrier of culture. It transmits cultural expression and values; hence language competency is important for identity retention. Perhaps, this is why older cultures and ancient languages have more heritage and strictly regulated norms.

The Fall of Dhaka occurred due to the disregard of Bengali when 98% of the population spoke Bengali language and not Urdu. This alone testifies what role language plays in identity retention. After the separation, language riots ensued in 1970s and 1990s (Siddiqui, 2020). Critics claim that “These riots were substantial evidence that preference to any regional language for medium of instruction will result in social unrest. Thus, the issue of medium of instruction remained untouched during those years and English was tacitly approved as a medium of instruction” (Siddiqui, 2020). Two things need to be noted here. Firstly, that a lack of common national language leads to disintegration, and secondly, that the decision to use English instead of Urdu to stop this disintegration is ludicrous.

Urdu could very well have served as the official national language for two reasons. To begin with, as the data shows, its speakers are present in every province. Almost every province has people who know it, if not as primary, then secondary language. Some might argue that English, being the lingua franca, is necessary for progress in the world, and bridges Pakistanis with the rest of the world. However, there are countries that function very well without giving it this undue importance. Discarding one’s own language to adopt a second language for communication purposes makes no sense, especially when world leaders, who speak English well, refuse to speak in a language that is not their own, and instead have translators for the job. China, Iran and France are some examples.

It also makes no sense that English was chosen to avoid picking between a regional language and in turn a language riot, when Urdu was a present option and a better one, given that it did not belong to one province and had speakers everywhere. On the other hand, English is the language of the colonizer first, and then the ruling elite trained by said colonizer. To this day, most so-called English-medium schools fail to impart competence in English. PTI promised to solve this problem, yet even in *Naya* Pakistan, the education system continues producing children who lack in both English and Urdu.

While English is enforced as medium of education, a very small portion of the population can communicate eloquently in it. A language in which people do not think, rather consciously translate to before having to say anything, hinders any identity formation whatsoever. Furthermore, not only is English given more importance than is its due, regional languages are stigmatized and held at inferior

positions, causing native speakers to in turn feel marginalized and shed an important part of their identity. This paper proposes that English be replaced by Urdu as the official language, while English, along with all major regional languages be promoted by being taught as individual compulsory subjects.

Contrary to popular belief, Urdu is not an inaccessible entity. When asked what language the respondents spoke in with their family, a majority chose Urdu. I iterate here that despite the location of Punjab University being Lahore, Punjab, it is the biggest government university of Pakistan, providing scholarships and quotas to students belonging to different ethnicities, hence enabling the sample population to be diverse enough to justify the question asked. The collected data shows that a big part of the population can converse in Urdu with ease, and is comfortable enough with its use to opt for it in informal settings and to communicate with their families in it.

Despite the positive responses towards Urdu, in official narratives, it is often painted as sabotaging, snubbing other cultures and artistic work, with arguments against its nomination as the official language. The problem lies not with Urdu, but in a lack of development of corpus of literature in regional languages. This paper proposes that instead of ostracizing a language spoken by many, regional languages which feel excluded be developed further, their literature promoted and taught at school level, in all provinces equally. Not only would this solve a problem of national scale, but it would also benefit at the individual level. Many studies show how beneficial multilingualism proves to be for cognitive development.

For a very long time now, Urdu has not been the sole medium of instruction in the education sector. So essential has it been considered for success, that schools aim to be 'English medium' despite a lack of teachers who have any linguistic competency. Regardless of lack of comprehension and skill development, Urdu medium schools are shunned.

Hafiz Iqbal observes that "the Shahbaz Sharif government's decision to introduce English as a medium of instruction in primary schools was "unreasonable" ...there should only be a strong component of the English language" (qtd. In. Malik 2019). It was not the Shehbaz Sharif government alone that took this step. PTI's *Naya Pakistan* leaves the problem unresolved. It's utopian vision of uniform education speaks of an idealistic homogenous course for all strata, declaring its plan of implementing a "multi-lingual policy, with English to be taught as a second language" (Framework, p.11). How this homogeneity will be of any benefit when no two provinces have the same mode of education evades common sense. With the regional languages not being too culturally apart, the linguistic richness of the subcontinent provides a window of opportunity for a number of things. Children may learn multiple languages at a young age. Consequently, the bias between provinces regarding a perceived hierarchy of languages will melt away.

There is no doubt that the process will be long and challenging. It has been pointed out that “It took almost 10 years to make a decision to introduce English medium in public sector schools and will take much time again to return to the Urdu medium instruction” (qtd. In Malik 2019). However, it will be one that will not only prove to be beneficial, but appears to be necessary to deal with the disarray not only the education system, but other socio-political structures are in. Fauzia Shamim (2008) raises the same issue and explains that

Using English as the medium of instruction in multilingual contexts, such as in Pakistan, may lead to many negative consequences, such as “linguistic genocide” of other local/regional and minority languages (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). Moreover, there are cognitive and educational consequences of learning concepts in English, which is often the third or fourth language of children in Pakistan. Inadequate proficiency in English encourages the teachers and learners to cope by using strategies such as code-switching in the classroom, and discourages the use of inquiry-based approaches for teaching and learning. (242)

The education sector has perhaps suffered the most. According to the Pakistan-National Education Policy 2018 report, one of the challenges mentioned was that “Pakistan faces significant education challenges in providing uniform and quality education for all children. It systematically performs lower than its South Asia neighbors and countries with similar per capita income” (2). With a majority speaking a language which is not the mode of instruction, this is only a recipe for disaster.

These disastrous results are reflected in the responses given when asked if the students believed they can competently read and write Urdu. While previously expressing that they prefer to use Urdu when amongst family and in both formal and informal settings, they claimed that they do not find themselves to be fully competent in reading and writing it. This reveals something very problematic about the nation: in the race to adopt an alien language, we have failed to properly master our own native language. This has left us language-less. While we feel comfortable communicating in Urdu, we communicate perfectly in neither language.

Pervez Hoodhboy (2020), discusses this in his article “Education: PTI’s Plan Exposed”, stating that “More worrying is that most students are unable to express themselves coherently and grammatically in any language, whether Urdu or English.” This has caused a crisis of both linguistic and cultural identity. Clearly then, Urdu does not garner the prestige that supposedly causes other regional languages to be looked at condescendingly. However, it does provide a common ground for a national identity to be born from.

Initially, English was selected to evade anti-national sentiments. It was a safe zone, a place of compromise. Kamran Siddique (2020) explains that “Soon after the inception of Pakistan in 1947, the Bengali-Urdu clash started because Urdu was declared the national language disregarding the regional languages spoken by a large number of people.” After the language riots ensued, selecting English instead of one language amongst at least five others was a move towards stability.

This paper proposes to ponder upon why English was assumed to be the only language to do the job, when Urdu was a better, more indigenous option present. English being a foreign language resulted in the disintegration of national identity. The prevalent language crisis makes us vulnerable to anti-nationalist sentiments.

The problem then is innate in the assumption that for a multiethnic and multilingual country like Pakistan, one language possibly can and should ensure national unity. If one country was officially divided into two separate independent ones on the basis of language, there will be no surprise if history repeats itself and speakers of each language put forth the same demand. This paper in no way attempts to make Urdu the sole language of development and education, rather the representative, while all regional languages get their due importance. With no regional language being held at an inferior position, there can be a decrease in hostility and biases amongst provinces can be eliminated.

The respondents were asked, if in their opinion, Pakistan can progress without Urdu as the national language. The responses to this question are better understood in relation to other questions asked in the survey. While agreeing that progress cannot be achieved without making Urdu the national language, it is in relation to English as the sole official language that the participants respond to this question. It has already been established above that communicating in English fails to provide the level of comfort and understanding that Urdu does. Having established the context, the impossibility of progress without Urdu is not meant with an absolutist and reductionist denotation.

The proposition is not to wipe off every other language and glorify Urdu alone. The approach would not only be destructive in theory, but also impossible to practice. During General Zia-ul-Haq’s rule, Urdu was considered as “one of the unifying symbols of the Pakistan movement” (Haque, 1993, p. 13). Fauzia Shamim (2008, p. 238) notes that while all schools were forced to adopt “urduization and Islamization” (Rahman, 1996, p. 240) policies, cadet colleges and elitist schools continued with English as their medium of instruction. There was also an increase in the promotion of English in the private sector. As a result, the divide grew. It is important to consider that neither language can be completely done away with. While Urdu is closer to the masses, competency in English has its own important place in today’s world.

The respondents were also asked if they believed the current government was taking any steps for the development of Urdu as the national language. The responses show that they have little faith in any steps being taken in *Naya Pakistan*. Even government documents reveal discrepancies. The National

Education Policy Framework 2018 for instance, has clashing calls for action. While on one side it emphasizes that “The achievement of education goals is a shared responsibility of the national and provincial governments, with the provinces having the major responsibility of implementation after the 18th amendment to the constitution” (6), it pushes the federal government to “set an example for the other education departments by restructuring itself around the priority areas and implementing all priority policy actions in the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) schools” (8). What makes it even more troublesome that,

In terms of governance, the education system of Pakistan is extremely complex. While the responsibilities for curriculum development and textbook approval are vested in the federal government, textbook development and assessment have traditionally been the prerogative of the provincial textbook and examination boards. With decentralization of the education system, a third tier of governance structure has recently been added, at the district level... These varied levels of authority, at the national, provincial and district levels, highlight the need for extensive planning and development of a shared implementation strategy. (Shamim, 2008, p. 237)

Within the National Education Policy Framework then, there is visible deflection of responsibility and the framework seems like nothing more than another document adorned with sub-headings, meant to be rote-learned for the next Pak Studies board examination.

Some might argue that a few years ago, the supreme court passed a verdict of implementing Urdu as an official language; but little has been done for its execution. Crowning one language over others in a multilingual and multiethnic society seems like a despotic step, but one that needs to be taken regardless. Europe is a case in point. While multiple languages are spoken throughout Europe, English is a language common to each country, and used as the official language in most. This has aided in their integration and a common identity as European nations.

Of course, doing so comes with its consequences, but the pros outweigh the cons. Kamran Siddiqui (2020) comments, “On the one hand, doing away with English is impossible due to domestic repercussions and international needs. On the other hand, resolving issues associated to English medium instruction need urgent and long lasting solution”.

The drawbacks of the selection of Urdu as the official language can be countered very fruitfully. Teaching English as a subject, and ensuring that competent and trained teachers train students in the language, can guarantee that

Pakistan does not remain illiterate in this global language. Introducing other regional languages in all provinces, and not just their own, can make our culture richer, our literature more profuse and bonds stronger. When syllabi get defined, literature automatically gets assembled and is also promoted.

A multiethnic and multilingual setting cannot claim to have one language settle all disputes. However, the data seems to show that a majority of the population finds themselves affiliated with Urdu. While it does act like an imperialistic language in provinces that have dominant languages like Balochi, Pashto, Punjabi and Sindhi etc., most families have adopted Urdu as a second language. As a whole, people of Pakistan do have one common language that they believe can help in preserving cultural identity, at least at a national level. Although the languages and cultures of individual provinces are older and hence richer than Urdu, Urdu is a *laskari* language and acts like a common thread. This is why this paper proposes that whilst Urdu is made the official languages, all regional languages be taught in all provinces, and not just those of their origin. Only then can an overall cultural identity begin to emerge.

Conclusion

The study shows that Pakistan has been perpetually suffering from linguistic and cultural crises. This issue has become a hindrance to our understanding of a national ideology. Conversely to Durrani's opinion about Pakistan's colonial ideologies making it difficult for the linguistic corridors to accept and propagate our multi-lingual reality (2012), this study shows that people are now against the covert language policies of the government. By removing the linguistic sensitivities from the country, we would not lose a culture, but we would rather culturally conform to a national solidarity. The study culminates in the fact that the youth of Pakistan desires to revive the spirit of the Pakistan movement, which made Urdu as the national and official linguistic expression of the ideology of the Muslims of the sub-continent (Haq, 1983, p. 6). As the majority agrees, Urdu should be the medium of instruction, even at higher education. English will still exist as the second language, a taught subject, and the language of many other subjects; but, these subjects can simultaneously be explained and interpreted in Urdu.

I agree with Anjum R. Haque that the use of English as the lingua franca cannot be reduced, but we need 'to demarcate the territory of English again' (1983, p. 9). We all want to communicate in a National language that conforms cultures. Sabiha Mansoor is convincing that the "classicization, westernization and localization would help make Urdu a language with its own distinctive features" (qtd. in Rahman, 1996, p. 56). All we need to do is change our lens to see Urdu in a global perspective, including words and concepts from English and other languages, and also complementing our own indigenous languages. The matter of dispute for the medium of instruction has become a severe challenge that needs to be addressed on urgent basis. In this regard, significant steps are required for

language planning. As read and re-read, language policies and planning have never been certainly and comprehensively documented or implemented. In this scenario, the *Naya Pakistan* should visualize its heartening education policies of “equality in quality” (Saeed, 2019) through uniform language in the education sector.

References

- Ammar, A., Ali, N., Fawad, A., & Qasim, K. (2015). Language Policy and Medium of Instruction Issue in Pakistan. *Acta Linguistica Asiatica*, 5(1), 111-123. doi:10.4312/ala.5.1.111-124
- Asif, S., Afzal, I., & Bashir, R. (2020). An Analysis of Medium of Instruction Policies in the Education System of Pakistan with Specific Reference to English Medium Education. *SJESR*, 3(2), 370-382. doi:10.36902/sjesr-vol3-iss2-2020(370-382)
- Ayres, A. (2009). *Speaking like a state: Language and nationalism in Pakistan*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Canagarajah, S., & Ashraf, H. (2013). Multilingualism and education in South Asia: Resolving policy/practice dilemmas. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 33, 258–285.
- Cheema, S. K., & Singh, P. (2015). English Language in Pakistan- Tool of Empowerment or Weapon of Linguistic Imperialism. *Proceedings of ISER 5th International Conference, Singapore* (pp. 46-49).
- Clegg, J. (2007). Analysing the Language Demands of Lessons Taught in a Second Language. *Volumen Monografico*, 113-128.
- Coleman, H. (2010). *Teaching and Learning in Pakistan: The Role of Language in Education*. Islamabad: *British Council*.
- Coleman, H., & Capstick, T. (2012). *Language in education in Pakistan: Recommendations for policy and practice*. England: British Council.
- Durrani, M. (2012). Banishing colonial specters: Language ideology and education policy in
- Haidar, S. (2017). Access to English in Pakistan: Inculcating prestige and leadership through instruction in elite schools. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 22(7), 833-848. doi:10.1080/13670050.2017.1320352
- Haider, S., & Fang, F. (. (n.d.). English language in education and globalization: A comparative analysis of the role of English in Pakistan and China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 39(2), 165-176. doi:10.1080/02188791.2019.1569892
- Haq, A. R. (1983). The Position and Status of English in Pakistan. *World Language English*, 2(1), 6-9.
- Hoodhoy, P. (2020, July 18). Education: PTI’s plan exposed. *Dawn*.

- Isik, A. (2008). Linguistic Imperialism and Foreign Language Teaching. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 5(1), 123-144.
- Jabeen, M., & Chandio, A. A. (2010). Language Controversy: Impacts on National Politics and Secession of East Pakistan. *South Asian Studies*, 25(1), 99-124.
- Jenkins, J. (2014). English as a lingua franca in the international university: The politics of academic English language policy. London: Routledge.
- Mahboob, A., & Jain, R. (2016). Bilingual education in Pakistan and India. In O. Garcia & A. Lin (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education: Bilingual education*. New York: Springer.
- Malik, M. (2019, October 13). Urdu to be medium of instruction in primary schools: Buzdar. *Dawn*.
- Manan, S. A., David, M. K., & Channa, L. A. (2018). Opening ideological and implementational spaces for multilingual/plurilingual policies and practices in education: A snapshot of scholarly activism in Pakistan. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 20(5), 521-543. doi:10.1080/14664208.2018.1543162
- Manan, S. A., Dumanig, F. P., & David, M. K. (2017). The English-medium fever in Pakistan: Analyzing policy, perceptions and practices through additive bi/multilingual education lens. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 20(6), 736-752. doi:10.1080/13670050.2015.1080659
- Meraj, S., & Tahir, A. (Eds.). (2004). The Medium of Instruction Dilemma: Implications for Language Planning in Higher Education. In 1112985769 841084191 S. Mansoor (Ed.), *Language Policy, Planning, & Practice: A South Asian Perspective* (pp. 53-75). Agha Khan University, Centre of English Language.
- Mustafa, Z. (2011). *Tyranny of language in education: The problem and its solution*. Karachi: Ushba Publishing International.
- Mustafa, Z. (2012, January 12). Pakistan ruined by language myth. Retrieved December 03, 2020, from <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/01/12/pakistan-ruined-by-language-myth/?thick=off>
- Pakistan, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Islamabad. (2018). *National Education Policy Framework 2018* (pp. 1-14). Islamabad: Government of Pakistan. Pakistan. Working Papers in Educational Linguistics 27(1), 29-49.
- Rahman, T. (1995). *Language and Politics in Pakistan* (Ser. 9, Rep.). Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Rahman, T. (1996). *Language and politics in Pakistan*. Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press.
- Rahman, T. (2002). *Language, ideology and power: Language-learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Rahman, T. (2002). English in Pakistan. In *Language, ideology and power: Language-learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India* (p. 288-323). Karachi: Oxford University Press.

Amna Umer Cheema & Hadia Baloch

- Rahman, T. (2009). The Muslim Response to English in South Asia: With Special Reference to Inequality, Intolerance, and Militancy in Pakistan. *Taylor and Francis*, 119-135. doi:https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327701jlie0402_4
- Rahman, T. (2012). *A history of language, learning among the Muslims of South Asia*. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications.
- Saeed, T. (2019). The poor scope of higher education in Naya Pakistan. *Dawn*. Retrieved December 1, 2020, from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1502389>
- Saeed, T. (2019, October 1). The poor scope of higher education in Naya Pakistan. *Dawn*.
- Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as a lingua franca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shamim, F. (2008). Trends, issues and challenges in English language education in Pakistan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 28(3), 235-249. doi:10.1080/02188790802267324
- Siddiqui, K. A. (2020, July 20). English as the medium of instruction: Right choice for Pakistan? *Dawn*.
- Tollefson, J. W., & Tsui, A. B. (2004). *Medium of instruction policies: Which agenda? whose agenda?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
-