



English as Linguistic Capital: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of Language Preference among Pakistani Youth

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ABSTRACT

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The present research explores the socio-cultural rationale behind Pakistani youths' preference of English over their mother tongue in both personal and professional communication. This phenomenon is placed in perspective of the context of globalization and the proliferation of English based on how the global stance of English overlays on the local language practices. The current study is an attempt to investigate the correlation between the language preferences and socio-cultural factors through a quantitative approach. Structured questionnaires are used to collect the data that are examined using SPSS. It is determined that dreams about socio economic mobility, interconnected world, and cultural perceptions influence the preference of the English language with the consequences on the language policy and cultural identity. Empirical evidence of the findings gives solid theoretical arguments that make language a capital and a product of power relations. It also points to the increasing influence of globalization and digital media in transforming linguistic practices within the multilingual societies. These results align with the existing literature on globalization and language use, while also providing context specific insights into the Pakistani sociolinguistic landscape.

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1.0 Introduction

Language does not just exist as non-partisan means of communication, but it is a subject of social system, cultural identity, and power. Language is considered a symbolic resource as well as a social practice where people create identities and negotiate their relationships and their places in the society (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). The choice of language is especially critical in multilingual societies as it suggests a wider range of socio-cultural hierarchies, historical factors, and the global pressures (Anwar, Rasool, & Kamran, 2020). Being a linguistically diverse state, Pakistan provides a valuable example of how such factors shape the language preferences of its citizens.

Pakistan is characterized by significant linguistic diversity, with numerous native languages spoken across the country, including Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, and Saraiki. English is not only a form of communication, but also it is a transmitter of cultural heritage, social values and continuity of history (Rahman, 2020). Even with this language wealth, English holds a strong and powerful role in the country. It is used for official communication, higher education and in corporate and elite institutions. This hegemony is not entirely incidental but rather based on the colonial past of the area and supported by the postcolonial policies and the world economic systems (Rahman, 2020; Phillipson, 1992).

English dominance in Pakistan has been traced back to the British colonialists who institutionalized English as a language of administration, government and education. When Pakistan gained independence in 1947, the government continued to use English as an official language alongside Urdu; as a result, it retained functional significance in major spheres of authority. Consequently, English was linked to power, modernity and access to social economic opportunities (Mahboob, 2017; Rahman, 2020). This prolongation can be viewed as the manifestation of linguistic imperialism, which, according to Phillipson (1992), strengthens unequal relations, in which the dominant forces are the ones able to use English.

The role of English in Pakistan has been enhanced in the modern world by globalization (Anwar & Talaat, 2011). English is now used as lingua franca all over the world, and it has facilitated communication between different countries and cultures (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 1998). The growth of the world markets, online technologies and international connections have greatly contributed to the profitability of the English language, especially among the younger generations who are more susceptible to the global influences. English as a language, and as a mode of linguistic capital, is a medium of access to superior education, job and social mobility (Bourdieu, 1991; Block, 2010).

This is particularly observed among the young people in Pakistan. English is becoming equated by the young generation with success and prestige and modernity, whereas the native languages are exclusively used in the informal or domestic circles (Mansoor, 2005; Rahman, 2011). This change is informed by various socio-cultural elements such as education systems, exposure to media, peer pressure and family pressures. For example, education in English is mostly viewed as the best one and it is also somehow associated with improved career opportunities hence the students tend to embrace English at an early age (Mansoor, 2005).

This trend has been enhanced further due to the implication of digital media. Social media, entertainment over the internet, and the rest of the world communication is mostly conducted in the English language making people more exposed to the language making it common in every day communication (Pennycook, 2007; Androutsopoulos, 2014). To most of the young Pakistanis, English has taken the form of a symbol of cultural sophistication and worldliness. This is consistent with Pennycook (2007), who argues that English carries connotations of modernity and global cosmopolitanism in contemporary societies.

Nevertheless, the growing popularity of the English language creates significant issues of linguistic diversity and cultural identity. Through marginalization of the native languages, cultural heritage may occur gradually since language is major in passing of the traditions, values and the collective memory of the people across generations (Fishman, 1991). The prevalence of English in Pakistan has also led to social inequality, because, in most cases, the level of English knowledge has been the key to access to good education, jobs and social status (Rahman, 2011; Bourdieu, 1991).

This scenario is explained more by the three circles model of Kachru (1986) who puts countries such as Pakistan in the outer circle with an institutionalized role of English together with their local languages. In these circumstances, English plays a dual role; it allows the world to engage in a global activity and it challenges the local language systems. This poses a conflict between globalization and cultural conservation especially to the young generations who are living in a multilingual environment.

Though existing literature on the role of English in Pakistan is quite extensive, a significant part is devoted to the language policy, historical development, and elite discourse (Rahman, 2020; Mansoor, 2005). Limited studies exist which explore how an individual socio-cultural aspect affects the language choices, particularly in personal and professional communication in their daily lives in youthful population. This is significant to understand these dynamics since the youths form the future patterns of language usage in the nation.

Thus, this study seeks to delve into the socio-cultural reasons behind why young people in Pakistan prefer to use English as their preferred language instead of their native languages. Through a personal and professional contextual analysis, the study aims to determine the language choice motivations, perceptions and structural factors that influence language choices. It will help in the larger debates of globalization, linguistic inequality and cultural identity in postcolonial societies.

To sum up, the linguistic preference in Pakistan is not only related to communication patterns, but it is also related to gaining the insight into more profound socio-cultural changes. The results are likely to offer information to policy makers, educators, and researchers who can contribute to a balanced language use style that would facilitate interactions with the global community without sacrificing diversity in languages

1.1 Research Questions

1. What are the key socio-cultural factors that drive young Pakistanis to prefer English over their native languages?

2. To what extent have media exposure and globalization contributed to the increasing use of English in personal and professional communication?
3. What does this pattern of language preference imply for linguistic diversity and cultural identity in Pakistan?

2.0 Literature Review

The use of English in multilingual societies like Pakistan as compared to native languages is an issue that has been studied extensively with numerous theoretical and empirical perspectives. Scholars have addressed this phenomenon in terms of globalization, postcolonial history, socio-cultural dynamics and identity and linguistic inequality issues. This literature review is aimed at synthesizing these views in a bid to come up with a holistic picture of what socio-cultural issues influence language preference among the younger generation in Pakistan.

2.1 Globalization and the Spread of English

The processes of globalization have been at the center of the global development of English which has turned it into the major language of international communication. According to Crystal (2003), English has gained the position of lingua franca in the world because of its widespread application in various fields of business, science, technology and diplomacy. This is not merely a matter of linguistic dominance but has close and deep links to economic and political systems of power, which are advantageous to the English-speaking countries.

Graddol (1998) also notes that the aspect of globalization has reconfigured the functional value of English because it has made English directly connected to economic participation in the global market. In third world nations such as Pakistan, fluency in English is frequently seen as a necessary quality when it comes to securing a job in a multinational company, outsourcing sector and other international bodies. Consequently, English is becoming a skill that one needs to survive in a competitive global economy as opposed to just a communication tool.

Phillipson (2013) adds to this argument by introducing the idea of linguistic imperialism, which states that the globalization of English language strengthens the structural inequalities between the countries and social classes. In this view, the English hegemony marginalizes other languages and makes them dependent on the English-speaking systems of knowledge and communication. This has great consequences to such nations as Pakistan where speaking English sometimes serves as a key to economic and educational opportunities.

One should not underestimate the role played by digital media in the rapid proliferation of the English language. Androutsopoulos (2020) emphasizes that online communication, social media, and online content are mainly created and read in English, which exposes people to the language. On the same note, Pennycook (2007) asserts that the English language has gotten linked to modernity, innovation and global culture, especially among the young users who actively utilize the digital platforms. The everyday use of English makes this constant usage be normalized and makes it desirable in normal communication.

These outside forces are especially vital in Pakistani context with reference to youth, who are more apt to use international media and digital technologies. Research indicates that youths tend to think that being able to speak English is the same as being connected with the world, being

successful in the workplace, as well as enjoying respect within the society (Graddol, 1998; Block, 2010). Therefore, not only has globalization enhanced the practical usability of the English language, it has also altered the way people approach language, and English has become the language of choice in life and in work.

2.2 English in Postcolonial Context

In Pakistan, the dominance of the English language cannot be explained entirely without the colonialist background. When the British colonised South Asia, they institutionalised the English language as the administrative, educational and governance language. This historical trend gave birth to a linguistic hierarchy, which favoured the English language against the native languages (Rahman, 2020).

Following independence, Pakistan maintained the English language as an official language hence maintaining its hegemony in the official spheres. According to Rahman (2020), this move pitted the English speaking elites against the rest of the people resulting in inequality in education and job opportunities. This stratification in language is still employed today whereby the English language is used as a gate keeping tool which defines social mobility. Brinkman (2024) opposes the use of the colonial languages by pointing out that it has contributed to the alienation of culture and destruction of the indigenous cultures. In this view, the favoring of English has to do with internalized colonialism whereby the local languages are seen as less important or lesser than English.

Three circles model by Kachru (1986) helps in making sense of the place of English in the post-colonial context. Pakistan belongs to the outer circle, in which the role of English is institutionalized and it exists in parallel with local languages. In these situations, English is a tool of global communication and conflict in the local language ecosystem.

Another concept that can be used to understand why English enjoys such a strong position in Pakistan is Bourdieu's (1991) linguistic capital concept. Language is not only a way of communication, but it is also a capital that can be translated into social and economic benefits. In this way, English is a high-value tool which opens the door to high-ranking institutions and career. This gives rise to a system where people are encouraged to use English so as to enhance their social status.

2.3 Socio-Cultural Factors in Language Preference

Language choice is shaped by complex needs and is influenced by a range of socio-cultural factors, including education, social status, media, family expectations, and peer relationships. A combination of these elements in Pakistan has led to the increased preference of English among the young people.

Education especially has a great role to play in the formation of language attitudes. Mansoor (2005) discovered that students taking up courses in the English-medium institutions are more likely to develop a strong inclination of English as it is related to the success in studies as well as their advancement in careers. English-medium education is often perceived as a mark of prestige, leading parents to prefer it for their children, even when it may pose challenges in comprehension and learning.

Another important consideration that affects language preference is the socioeconomic status. The higher socioeconomic status of people predisposes them to access to the English education system and resources; this also supports the correlations between English and social prestige (Rahman, 2020). This gives rise to a cycle whereby English proficiency is also a symbol as well as a predictor of social status.

Another influence that has come up as a proficient source of language usage is the media and technology. Young people are being subjected to English on a daily basis due to the overwhelming presence of content in English language in television, films, social media and online platforms. According to Anwar (2012), code-switching and the hybrid language practice are frequent characteristics of communication, however, English is still dominant in dictating the language trends.

Language preferences are further endorsed by peer influence and social networks. The youths tend to use English so as to conform to their peer pressure and also to assume the image of being modern and well educated. According to Pennycook (2007), English has a symbolic meaning beyond the functional application of the language, which is that it is a signifier of cultural capital and world membership.

There is also the family pressure especially in the urban areas where parents would promote the use of English as a tool to getting a brighter future. This generational passing of language attitudes is one of the factors that will help to make the attitude towards English the norm and native languages will become marginalized over time.

2.4 Linguistic Identity and Cultural Implications

The growing popularity of the English language has serious consequences on linguistic identity and cultural continuity. The identity of a language is one of its important aspects as it influences the way people see themselves and their position in the society (Fishman, 1991). This process may hence cause identity dilemmas especially among the youths who have to juggle between the local cultural belonging and the international ambitions.

The increasing predominance of the English language in Pakistan, cautions Rahman (2011) is also causing the corrosion of native languages with limited functional areas. This is commonly known as language shift which may lead to loss of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage with time. This is developed by Phillipson (1992) in the context of linguistic imperialism whereby the spread of English language compromises the local language and strengthens global inequalities. But other scholars give a different more nuanced point of view. According to Canagarajah (1999), people in multilingual societies would actively negotiate language use and come up with hybrid practices that blend some elements of the English and local languages.

Such an attitude brings to the fore the fact that linguistic coexistence can be observed instead of the total substitution. Canagarajah (2013) continues to claim that translingual practices enable speakers to be able to retain their cultural identities and yet interact with global communication systems. This implies in the Pakistani context that the interaction between the English and the native languages is not as such that there is zero sum interaction, but it could be complex. However, the English domination still serves as a cause of worry of social inequality.

Bourdieu (1991) notes that inequalities in the access to linguistic capital may reinforce the status quo in relation to power, whereby, those who are not fluent in the dominant languages are disadvantaged. This in Pakistan is frequently transformed to education, employment and social mobility inequality.

2.5 Research Gap

Despite the fact that the available literature offers important information on the topic of the role of English in Pakistan, there are some gaps that need to be filled. A significant portion of the studies has gone into the macro-level concerns like language policy, historical development and structures of institutions (Rahman, 2020; Mansoor, 2005). It is relatively less focused on micro-level of analyzing the impact of socio-cultural factors on the language preferences of individuals in their daily personal and professional communication. This paper seeks to fill the gap by offering an empirical research of the socio-cultural forces that affect the language preference of Pakistani youth. Leveraging on both the personal and professional contexts, it aims to provide a more holistic view of the driving factors and consequences of preference of English in modern Pakistan.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research methodology used in the study is a quantitative research design. It explores the socio-cultural determinants of the preference of English over the native languages in Pakistan, in the younger generation. The quantitative method is used as it allows determining the relationships between variables and statistically generalizing the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The research is based on the positivist paradigm, in which the social phenomena like language preference can be objectively introduced using empirical observation and statistical analytical tools.

This study applies a cross-sectional survey design. The sample of data is gathered at a specific point in time concerning a specific population to represent the existing tendencies in the language usage and socio-cultural factors. The design is especially appropriate in determining the relationships between independent variables, i.e., media exposure, educational background, socioeconomic aspirations, and the dependent variable, which is preference of the English language in personal and professional communication situations (Bryman, 2016). The study is also cross-sectional thus making it efficient in terms of time and resources.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis of the study is three circles model by Kachru (1986) and the notion of linguistic capital by Bourdieu (1991). Three circle model is used to interpret the institutionalized role of English in Pakistan as the outer circle country, where English is used together with the local languages in multilingual context. This view assists in the explanation of structural conditions, which define the use of language.

Besides this, the conceptualization of language in the theory of Bourdieu describes language as a type of capital potentially beneficial socially and economically. In this regard, English is perceived as a high-value linguistic resource that access to education, employment and upward social mobility. These theoretical views are used to select the variables and the

interpretation of the findings.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The population of this study includes young people in Pakistan who are aged 18-30 years. The age group is chosen due to the fact that it is very much affected by the globalization, digital media, and modern educational practices, which are major contributors of language preferences. These persons are represented by the population of university students and young professionals who constantly interact with English and native languages.

Participants are selected using a purposive sampling method to identify relevant persons to the research objectives. This approach enables the researchers to exclude those who have insufficient exposure to English in academic, social, and professional settings (Etikan et al., 2016). The participants are recruited in the urban centers including Lahore, Islamabad, Gujrat, and Sargodha where English influence is more pronounced. This study has a sample size of 150 respondents. This sample size is considered sufficient for conducting statistical tests such as correlation and regression, while also providing a reasonable degree of representativeness of the selected population (Field, 2024).

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire that is designed for this study is used to collect data. The questionnaire is developed by using the available literature and theories and should be relevant and valid in terms of content. It is further divided into three segments. The first section captures the demographic data, such as age, sex, level of education, and socioeconomic status. The second part deals with the language use patterns, such as how people use the English language and the native language in personal and professional environment. The third section is the measurement of socio-cultural aspects like perception of prestige, attitude towards the English language, media effects, family pressures and peer pressures.

The answers are measured on five-point Likert scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. The method of scaling can be used to measure subjective perceptions and can be statistically analyzed (Likert, 1932).

3.5 Validity and Reliability

The research instruments are tested on a pilot scale to guarantee validity and reliability of the research instrument. Pilot study assisted in highlighting the areas of ambiguity and making the questions in the questionnaire more precise. The required changes are also made according to feedback on the participants.

Cronbach alpha is used to measure internal consistency reliability. Any score of 0.70 and above is deemed as being acceptable in terms of social science research meaning that the questions in one construct are reflecting the same concept underpinning them (Nunnally, 1978). The validity of the content is guaranteed by consistency between the items in questionnaire and the theoretical constructs and the previous empirical research.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection is done using online and face to face to ensure that the process is optimal in terms of participation and sample diversity. The online versions of questionnaires are distributed

via online means, and the printed ones are given out within learning institutions and at workplaces.

There is strictness on ethical consideration throughout the process. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants who then provided informed consent before being involved in the study. It is confidential and anonymous and the respondents are provided with permission to drop out at any point without facing any repercussions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Statistical analysis of data is performed by use of the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS). This starts by cleaning and coding data to be accurate and consistent. General language usage patterns and demographic characteristics are summarized with descriptive statistics like frequencies, means and standard deviations.

Statistical inferences of relationships among variables are then made using inferential methods of statistics. The Pearson correlation analysis is established to identify the level and direction of associations between the socio-cultural factors and language preference. Through the use of multiple regression, the predictive ability of the independent variables such as media exposure, socioeconomic aspirations, educational background, and family and peer influence on the dependent variable, which is the preference of English, is measured (Field, 2024). With this method of analysis, the entirety of the relationship between various socio-cultural variables that interact to affect language choice amongst the younger generation in Pakistan can be well understood.

4.0 Findings and Results

4.1 Data Preparation and Screening

To achieve accuracy, reliability, and the appropriateness of the inferential procedures, the data obtained using the structured questionnaire were prepared and screened systematically before statistical analysis. One hundred and fifty responses were received and all of them were first checked in terms of completeness and consistency. Questionnaires that did not have all the values filled in were checked with utmost care; as no responses were removed at this point, the sample size remained 150.

The data set was also tested on whether there are outliers, and whether the data follows the assumption of statistics. The analysis of boxplots and standardized residual showed that no extreme outliers exist. The skewness and kurtosis value of the data were used to determine the normality of the data distribution as they were within the range of +1 to -1, which showed that it was approximately normal. This was the reason to apply parametric statistical methods including Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis.

All the answers to the questionnaires were coded into numerical form and fed as input into SPSS. The Likert-scale questions were rated based on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The composite variables were created by averaging the scores of each construct. Preference towards English was the dependent variable that was operationalized by summing up the items concerning the use of language in personal and professional settings. Media exposure, socioeconomic aspirations, education background, family and peer influence were used as independent variables.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics was used to present a detailed picture of the sample features and the overall trends of language usage. According to the demographic profile, most of the respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years old, which showed that there is a high number of youthful and academically active population. This is also consistent with the fact that the study focuses on the youth, which is generally more affected by the forces of globalization and digital media.

The structural analysis of the language use patterns showed that there was an evident functional difference among the English and native languages. The English language was mostly spoken in serious spheres like education and business communication, whereas the native languages remained in the informal and family communication. Nevertheless, the peer communication showed a certain change with a significant percentage of the respondents stating that they spoke English or mixed linguistic forms. This implies the introduction of English not only as a formal language, but also as a socially acceptable medium of communication in the informal setting.

These were also supported by the mean scores. One of the relative high mean values ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.68$) was observed in the preference to English, which depicts a general tendency towards English among the respondents. The mean score of socioeconomic aspirations was the highest ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.63$), as it revealed the high perception of English as a gateway to economic growth and social mobility. Also with a high mean ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.59$), which indicates a regular interaction with the content in the English language, was media exposure.

Conversely family and peer influence registered a relatively lower mean ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.74$) and it means that interpersonal factors are not as important as structural forces are. The findings presented in these descriptions are interesting in that they emphasize the prevailing effect of macro-level factors on language preferences including globalization and institutional practices.

4.3 Reliability Analysis

Cronbachs alpha was used in testing the reliability of the measurement instrument to identify the internal consistency of the scales. The socio-cultural factors yielded a cumulative coefficient of reliability $\alpha = 0.82$ that is greater than the suggested amount of 0.70 which signifies a high level of internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Alternative constructs analysis showed that the socioeconomic aspirations showed the greatest reliability ($\alpha = 0.84$) and this was followed by media exposure ($\alpha = 0.79$), educational background ($\alpha = 0.76$), and family and peer influence ($\alpha = 0.72$). These values validate the fact that the items in each construct are measuring the same underlying concept in a coherent way, hence, validity of the further statistical analysis. The scores on high reliability also indicate that the respondents understood the questions on the questionnaire uniformly, which makes the results more credible.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation test was applied to determine the relationships among socio-cultural aspects and the preference to English. The findings showed statistically significant positive relationships between all variables though the degree of these relationships was not uniform.

The greatest relationship between English preference and socioeconomic aspirations was recorded at $r = 0.68$ and $p < 0.01$. It means that those who equate English with career development, internationalization, and the promotion of social status have a high probability of becoming more inclined towards English in their personal and professional life. This observation helps a great deal to substantiate the idea presented by Bourdieu (1991) to refer to linguistic capital, in which the knowledge of the language is directly associated with the capability to enjoy the benefits of both the economy and the society.

There was also a high positive correlation between media exposure and language behavior ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$) which indicates the importance of media (digital and global) in creating linguistic behavior. The pervasiveness of English-language content in social media, streaming sites and online communication networks seem to naturalize the use of English and enforce its desirability. This is in accordance with the literature of Androutsopoulos (2020) who asserts that the digital environments play a large role in shaping language practices.

There was a moderate positive relationship between English preference and educational background ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that a person who studies in English-medium institution stands better chances of developing positive attitudes towards English and uses it more often. This observation is in line with Mansoor (2005) who underlines the role played by the educational institutions in replicating language hierarchies.

The weak but statistically significant correlation was between family and peer influence ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.05$). This shows that although social networks are involved in determining language preferences, their influence is not very high as compared to structural factors. This gets to the point that language selection is incorporated in larger socio-cultural and institutional frameworks and not necessarily defined by immediate social exchanges only (Fairclough, 1995).

4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the ability of socio-cultural factors to predict better. The model incorporated which incorporated the independent variables as media exposure, socioeconomic aspirations, educational background as well as family and peer influence and the dependent variable as English language preference.

The regression model was considered statistically significant, $F(4, 145) = 32.87$, $p < 0.001$ which means that the effect of the independent variables on the language preference is significant. A large percentage of the English preference variance was explained by the model: 47 percent ($R^2 = 0.47$), which is a significant amount of explanatory power in a social science study.

Socioeconomic aspirations were also found to be the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$). This is giving a hint that the economic incentives and the perceived use of the English language in the pursuit of upward mobility are the major factors that lead to the language preference of the younger generation.

The second strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$) was the media exposure, which supports the influence of global media in the formation of the norms and preferences in language. The educational background also contributed significantly ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$), and this means that the exposure of the institutions to English is still playing a key role.

The smallest effect size was the family and peer influence even though they were significant ($\beta = 0.12, p < 0.05$). This implies that interpersonal factors do not prevail over bigger structural forces like globalization, media and education.

4.6 Integrated Interpretation of Findings

This research has shown that preference of English among the Pakistani young people is not just a language prejudice but rather a socially, economically driven trend. The prevalence of the socioeconomic desires and exposure to media shows that language preference is intrinsically rooted in the dynamics of globalization and the neoliberal economies of the world. English is a symbolic and material capital that allows one to have access to education, employment and global networks. Meanwhile, the effect of digital media promotes the realization of the English language in daily communication, which does not distinguish between the use of formal and informal languages.

The comparatively lesser contribution of the family and peer influence implies that there is a change of the traditional social organization to more global and institutionalistic determinants of language behavior. The change is indicative of more general socio-cultural shifts in the Pakistani society, as globalization and economic ambitions are gradually influencing the decisions of individuals. Altogether, the analysis revealed that the preference of the English language among the young population in Pakistan is strongly dependent on a set of socio-cultural factors. The most significant ones include the socioeconomic aspirations and media exposure, and then there are educational background and interpersonal factors

5.0 Discussion

The results of this research give a good empirical evidence of the argument that preference of English by younger generation in Pakistan is influenced by a multiplied interaction of socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors. The findings show that the most important predictors of English language preference are media exposure and socioeconomic aspirations, followed by educational background, and family and peer influence ranked last. The relatively high influence of media exposure on language preference is a manifestation of the increased contribution of digital and global communication platforms to the creation of the language behavior. These results are in line with those of Androutsopoulos (2014) who maintained that media has changed the practice of language by exposing more people to the dominating world languages especially English. The mass usage of English-language sources in the Pakistani environment in terms of social networks, as well as streaming and online platforms, seems to make the use of English in daily life seem acceptable. This reinforces the fact that English is symbolic as a language of the modern world and world culture as stated by Pennycook (2007). Media effects are not solely functional and help in the construction of English as a respectable and sought after language among the young people.

The instrumental value of the language was evident by socioeconomic aspirations being the most influential predictor of English preference. This observation supports the idea of a linguistic capital presented by Bourdieu (1991) according to which linguistic skills may be transformed into social and economic benefits. English has become synonymous with higher education, career and social advancement in Pakistan. The findings also substantiate the argument that Graddol (1998) makes that English has become a major asset in the global economy especially

in the developing countries where embracing global market is perceived as a way of development. There is a close connection between the economic ambitions and the language preference which poses the idea that the adoption of English is not only a cultural tendency but the strategic choice based on the perceived opportunities.

The individual influence of the education in the development of a language preference also highlights the institutionalization of the English dominance. The results reveal that those who have studied in institutions that use English, tend to prefer to use English in personal and professional-related situations. This finding agrees with Mansoor (2005) who discovered that English-medium of instruction plays a role in the development of positive attitudes towards the English language and has the same effect of marginalizing the native languages. Pakistani educational system therefore serves as one of the principle places where the hierarchies of language are reproduced the language of knowledge, competency and success thus being placed as English. This institutional bias does not only affect the use of language but also tends to form the wider language value opinion.

Even though family and peer influence proved to be statistically significant, their relatively weak effect may indicate the action of interpersonal factors in terms of a broader socio-cultural system. This observation shows that although social contexts do play a role in language attitudes, it is usually guided by the larger structural forces that include education, media and economic influences. This is in line with the perception that language choice is actually not influenced by immediate social exchanges but rather rooted with broader structures of power and ideology (Fairclough, 1995). In this regard, peer and family influence can support the trends instead of determining language preferences on their own.

The implications of the findings are also significant to the areas of lingual identity and cultural preservation. The growing popularity of the English language is also being felt in the informal and personal life which hints at a slow change in the linguistic behavior that might be followed by the exclusion of the native languages. This substantiates the fear of Rahman (2011) that the growing use of the English language in Pakistan is diminishing the functional spaces of the indigenous languages, hence undermining the cross-generational transmission of native language. In the view of Fishman (1991), these trends denote the possible language drift, which may eventually lead to the loss of linguistic diversity given that they are maintained over time.

Simultaneously, the findings may be viewed in a subtler perspective according to which various languages exist together. Canagarajah (2013) points out that in a multilingual environment, people tend to practice language flexibly by integrating the features of other languages instead of totally substituting one with the other. The fact that the respondents were using mixed languages implies that the emergence of the English language does not have to mean the total extinction of the native languages but a shift in the mode of use and perception of the languages. Nevertheless, the presence of English in the high-prestige areas is still a matter of concern due to inequality because the distribution of linguistic capital is unequal.

On the whole, the discussion shows that the inclination towards the use of the English language by the Pakistani young generation is entrenched in wider socio-cultural changes that are

organised by the processes of globalization, economic and institutional processes. The results verify that language use cannot be viewed as an unbiased and solely subjective choice but as an activity conditioned by the relationships of power, cultural meaning, and material conditions. This work can be described as the contribution to a deeper knowledge of the language preference in postcolonial and globalized settings through the correlation of empirical findings and theoretical frameworks.

6.0 Conclusion

This study aimed at investigating the socio-cultural reasons behind the favoring of English among the younger generation in Pakistan at the expense of their native languages. Taking a quantitative method and examining data obtained by 150 participants, the study offers an empirical understanding of the influence of a general social, economic, and cultural process on the choice of language instead of the individual or neutral one.

The results of the research indicate clearly that the preference of using English amongst Pakistani young people depends greatly on a complex of other factors which are interconnected, but socioeconomic aspirations and the media exposure become the most powerful ones. The high predictive value of social economic aspirations points to the fact that English is generally seen as an access point to vertical mobility, improved job prospects and participation in the global arena. This supports the notion that language is a capitalistic structure in which mastery of English opens up valuable social and economic opportunities.

On the same note, media exposure shows the power of globalization and digital communication in defining linguistic practices. The ubiquity of English in social media, on-line media and entertainment material leads to the normalized status and desirability of the language, especially among younger people. This has led to the fact that English is no longer to be used in a formal or institutional context but is being more and more embedded into the communication of ordinary people, even in the peer interaction.

The education background is also very crucial in supporting the preference of the English language. The supremacy of English-mediated teaching in the academic institutions adds to the internalization of the language of knowledge, proficiency, and achievement, English. Such institutional reinforcement adds to the status of English in the Pakistani sociolinguistic hierarchy. Conversely peer influence, which was found to be statistically significant, and family influence, which was found to have a weaker effect, indicated that interpersonal factors act in a larger context defined by structural and global factors.

Another significant change that the study shows is in language practices whereby English language is slowly becoming elastic even in informal and personal communication, owing to its functional areas. This transformation is indicative of the shifting social standards and the rise of symbolic importance of English as a sign of modernity, status and internationality. Nonetheless, this tendency raises crucial issues as to language diversity and cultural persistence. The exclusion of native languages in the essential areas can cause a slow loss of the cultural background and identity, especially when the current trends will persist.

Theoretically, the research findings justify the applicability of the three circles model

developed by Kachru (1986) and the idea of linguistic capital discussed by Bourdieu (1991) in the discussion of language dynamics in postcolonial and globalised societies. In Pakistan, English does not only act as a medium of communication, but it is a resource within the structures of power, inequality and social stratification (Anwar, 2012). The research thus leads to a more in-depth knowledge of the influence of globalization, institutional and socio-economic drive on language inclinations.

To sum up, it is stated that the tendency of the young generation in Pakistan to use English is a multidimensional and complicated phenomenon that is caused by structural, cultural, and economic aspects. Although there is no denying the benefits of English in relation to international connectivity and career development, the expansion of the English language is becoming a problem to the survival of local languages and cultural identities. Balanced language policies and practice in education which facilitates multilingual competence and protect linguistic diversity are needed. Further studies can be based on the present one and involve qualitative methods or increase population coverage to rural areas to obtain a more representative image of the language use in Pakistan.

Muhammad Zain Ul Islam: Problem Identification and Theoretical Framework

Behzad Anwar: Supervision and Drafting

Tabassum Iqbal: Data Analysis

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

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