

**Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy (JSSRP)****Language Policy and the Role of Language as a Medium of Instruction in Pakistani Education****Qadar Khan**

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**Abstract:** *The study examines the impact of language policy and medium of instruction (MOI) on educational access, equity, and academic achievement in Pakistan, a multilingual nation. Qualitative research design was applied to gather data using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with the teachers, students, administrators and policymakers of both urban and rural public and private schools. Thematic analysis shows that the dual-language system, in which English is predominant in higher education and elite institutions and Urdu is taught in the public schools, has brought about massive inequalities in education. Urban students who are English proficient perform better and have an increased access to higher education and employment opportunities, whilst rural students and students of the regional language background have problems with comprehension and opportunities. Other significant obstacles to bilingual education identified in the study are a lack of teacher training, an inadequate number of instructional materials, and the difference in language levels among learners. Also, the decline of regional languages has an adverse effect on the cultural identity and learning process among students. Even though English is considered to be necessary to achieve socio economic mobility, it strengthens social stratification. The research proposes a language policy that is more inclusive, inclusive of regional languages, and enhances the use of two languages and equal access to quality education by all learners.*

**Introduction**

The use of language as a teaching tool in education has become a matter of considerable scholarly study, especially in linguistically diverse nations such as Pakistan. There are more than seventy languages in Pakistan and the issue of what language to be used in learning institutions has been a burning question. The colonial past, sociopolitical and regional inequalities affect the historical, cultural and social dynamics of language in education (Rahman, 2002). English, a colonial legacy, is predominant in the educational system, especially in towns and in privately run schools, with Urdu as the official national language and the language of teaching in government schools (Shamim, 2008).

This is also aggravated by the fact that different provinces have their own languages that are spoken and thus the choice of a common language of instructions is a controversial issue. The adoption of English as the language of study in institutions of higher learning and elite schools compared to Urdu in the state

school system has brought a disparity in the education system. This dual language education system has resulted in inequity in access to and achievement in education, with the native language of the students frequently predicting their social status and the place of residence. Therefore, there is much controversy over the effectiveness of language policy in Pakistan in promoting equal educational opportunities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although language has been at the center of development of educational experiences, the language policy in Pakistan has not been effective in closing the increasing educational gap among the various language groups. The national language, Urdu, is taught in most schools but English remains the language of instruction in schools of higher learning which further increases the socio-economic divide between the urban and rural communities (Bashir, 2012). This lack of balance between Urdu and English as the medium of instruction along with the disregard to regional languages leads to difficulties with students, teachers, and policymakers. These obstacles prevent many groups of people and in particular rural population who might not have resources to master English language because of these challenges. Moreover, the current language policy is also associated with the issues of upholding regional languages and linguistic rights of minorities.

### **Research Objectives**

This paper investigates how language policy affects educational achievement in Pakistan. This research aims to:

1. Judge how the language policy of Pakistan affects the academic outcomes and availability of quality education among students.
2. Explore the issues of educators and students in the bilingual education system where Urdu and English languages are used.

### **Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the existing language policy in Pakistan affect educational access and quality for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds?
2. What are the perceived challenges associated with using Urdu and English as the primary mediums of instruction in the educational system?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study is important because it can help to advance the current debate on the issue of language policy and its effects on education in Pakistan. Through the analysis of the role of language as a tool of instruction, the research will offer good insights on inequalities in education caused by the existing policy framework. The results will guide policy makers on the real challenges encountered by learners and teachers, and it will provide evidence-based policies to reform. The research also aims at emphasizing the wider sociocultural aspects of language in education, especially identity, social mobility as well as maintenance of regional languages.

Moreover, the study will be able to illuminate the complex correlation between language and academic performance, and add to the interpretation of how language variables affect academic performance in multilingual classrooms. The results of this research will be applicable in terms of establishing more accommodating language policies capable of accommodating the linguistic diversity of the country.

### **Scope of the Study**

This research paper dwells on primary and secondary education in Pakistan, that is, in both urban and rural learning institutions in the form of public and private schools. The study analyzes the views of educators and learners because these are the most directly impacted groups in the context of the

language policy in schools. Although the study does not go into the depth of the higher education system, the results are viewed as the effect of language policies in higher education as a contextual aspect in determining the overall educational outcomes. The focus of the study is narrowed to the examination of the role of language as a medium of instruction, and it does not cover the general educational policy questions.

### **Literature Review**

#### **The Policy of language in Education**

In education, language policy is a set of decisions taken by the governments and institutions in terms of the choice of language to be taught and to be used in the classroom. The policy of language in multilingual countries has far-reaching effects on educational equity, access and quality. As Phillipson (2003) says, language policy may either facilitate or inhibit the process of social integration based on the inclusiveness of language options to different ethnic, linguistic and social groups. In Pakistan, British colonialism has left a distinct language environment in which English still holds a very powerful influence in the education and governmental system, whereas local languages and the national language, Urdu, tend to be relegated (Rahman, 2002).

The political and social life in Pakistan has contributed a lot to the language policy of the country. Although Urdu is being propagated as the national language and is the main language of instruction in government schools, English is also popular in tertiary schools and among the elites. According to Rahman (2002), the perpetuation of inequality in higher education has been aided by the use of English as a medium of instruction since students with rural and less privileged backgrounds who might lack the proficiency in English are made to suffer significant disadvantages in education.

#### **The Medium Instruction Role of Language**

Medium of instruction (MOI) in education is a term used to define the language of teaching and learning at the classroom. There is a growing body of research indicating the significance of the choice of a proper medium of instruction to facilitate better understanding and academic performance of students (Cummins, 2000). In the case of Pakistan, the issue on whether English or Urdu is the main medium of instruction has been a long-standing debate. The lingua franca of the nation is Urdu which is spoken by most of the population, and the major language of the instruction in the state schools (Shamim, 2008). Nevertheless, English is widely seen as an icon of modernity and economic prospectus, hence it is the language of instruction in the higher learning institutions and elite private schools.

Studies indicate that the selection of MOI can greatly influence the learning outcomes among students. According to studies conducted by Shohamy (2006) and Cummins (2000), teaching students in a language in which they are not proficient not only results in poor performance in school, but also makes them lose interest in the learning process. This is especially acute in Pakistan, where rural students or students speaking regional languages at home are concerned. Indicatively, students in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in Sindh where the regional languages such as Pashto, Balochi and Sindhi are spoken find it quite difficult when English is the medium of instruction since, in most cases, they lack the required language skills to perform well in school (Bashir, 2012).

Conversely, the adoption of Urdu as the language of instruction has also been claimed to be more inclusive since it is the most spoken language in Pakistan. According to Shamim (2008), Urdu might be used to close the educational gap by enabling students with various language backgrounds to follow the content in a better manner. Nevertheless, other researchers warn that overdependence on one national language can be detrimental because they can exclude students in other regions where other languages are commonly spoken and the linguistic diversity is diminished (Perry, 2009).

### **Bilingual Education: Its Effect**

The most common educational systems that have been extensively researched are those that are bilingual and trilingual in nature. Bilingualism in Pakistan normally implies the use of both Urdu and English, but it can also include the regional languages. The studies on bilingual education indicate that, when properly adopted, it can positively impact cognitive development, academic performance and cultural identity (Baker, 2006). The success of bilingual education however, relies on a number of factors such as the skills of the teachers and the learners involved in the languages and the availability of resources in both languages and the policies in education that facilitate bilingualism.

The bilingual system has been accused in Pakistan of being unequally and ineffective. Since private schools and urban centers tend to have quality bilingual education, Bashir (2012) notes that in the rural setting, the public schools cannot offer good education to the children due to the lack of qualified teachers and resources. The difficulty is to balance between the necessity to master the English language that is a key to higher education and world competitiveness and the necessity to provide students with a solid background in their native language(s) (Cummins, 2000).

### **Regional Languages and Linguistic Diversity**

The disregard of the regional languages, including Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, and others, is one of the main concerns of the language policy in Pakistan. Millions of people use these languages, but they are frequently not taught in the formal education system. Rahman (2002) claims that such exclusion causes the loss of regional identities and adds to the marginalization of some linguistic communities. He believes that a more inclusive language policy would acknowledge the linguistic plurality of Pakistan, as well as encourage the use of regional languages in schools, in addition to Urdu and English.

The cultural and educational impact of the linguistic marginalization of regional languages is enormous. It has been established that students are more likely to perform better when they are taught in their native language since they are in a position to relate more with the information and their culture (Baker, 2006). Also, regional languages should not be excluded by the curriculum since it can destroy the sense of identity and cultural pride of students, which, in their turn, may influence their academic activity and motivation at large (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

### **The Relationship between Language Policy and Educational Inequality**

Educational inequality has been a major occurrence as a result of language policy in Pakistan. The imposition of English as the medium of teaching in higher education and in elite schools has resulted in a bifurcated education system whereby access to good education depends on how well students understand the English language (Bashir, 2012). Low-income students, especially in the villages, tend to be disadvantaged, since they have lower chances of being provided with the English-medium instructions and more likely to be sent to schools where Urdu is the main medium of instruction. This gap has facilitated the socio-economic stratification in Pakistan where the English proficiency has emerged to be the major factor that determines upward mobility.

A report by the British Council (2015) shows that the disparity between English-medium education and Urdu-medium education in Pakistan has continued to increase over the years, a factor that has led to the continuation of social and economic inequalities. The report recommends an inclusiveness in language policy that encourages bilingualism, but should also adopt the significance of local languages in the preservation of culture and equity in accessing education.

The complexity and multifaceted nature of the problem is indicated in the literature on language policy and the importance of language as a medium of instruction in Pakistan. The teaching of Urdu and English as the official languages poses a great problem in the context of accessibility and equality in

education. Although bilingual education can increase cognitive and academic achievements, the existing language policy in Pakistan tends to create new social and educational inequalities. In addition, the exclusion of local languages raises the question of inclusiveness of the Pakistani education system. This is a literature review that highlights the necessity of a holistic review and reformation of the language policy in the country so that all students, irrespective of their language background, can access quality education.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This research project will be based on a qualitative research design to explore the importance of language policy and the application of language as medium of instruction in the Pakistani education system. The qualitative approach is selected because it allows the researcher to give a holistic picture of the experiences, perceptions, and issues of students and teachers and policymakers about language policy in education. The aim is not to quantify variables but to understand the underlying reasons and dynamics of the impact of language policy on educational outcomes. The method is highly appropriate when it comes to researching complex social phenomena and gaining in-depth information about the views of stakeholders.

### **Research Approach**

The research uses an exploratory case study method which enables it to conduct a narrow study on the Pakistani education settings. This approach allows studying real-life phenomena in their respective environments and allows an in-depth examination and further insights (Yin, 2009). Case study methodology is useful in exploring various linguistic settings and learning landscape in Pakistan particularly with reference to medium of instruction and its effects on the students and teachers.

The study involves both urban and rural schools in both private and public schools. This variety guarantees the representation of various linguistic backgrounds and educational contexts, which is a holistic picture of the issues and advantages related to the language policy in education.

### **Data Collection Methods**

This research involves the application of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to gather qualitative information of the key stakeholders. The techniques can be used to deeply examine the experiences of participants and offer detailed and nuanced information.

#### **1. Semi-structured Interviews:**

Teachers, school administrators and policymakers are interviewed in semi-structured interviews. It is also flexible since the predetermined questions are asked, but it is also possible to explore the topics that arise during the interview. The interviews are aimed at learning the opinions of participants on the subject of the language policy, the difficulties they encounter in terms of medium of instruction and the impact of language on the outcomes of education. Interviews are about 45-60 minutes and are recorded on tape with the permission of the participants.

The themes of the interview questions are:

- The discussion of the role of language policy in the formation of educational practices.
- Challenges faced in implementing bilingual education (Urdu and English).
- The effects of language selection on student achievement.
- The availability of education to linguistically varied students.
- The possibility of the regional languages in education.

#### **2. Focus Group Discussions:**

Students of urban and rural public schools are divided into focus groups and participate in discussions.

Through these discussions, the students can collectively explore their ideas about language as a medium of instruction and experience with language policy. Through focus groups, it is possible to determine some common themes and differences in opinions among the participants, which will give a holistic picture of what the students go through.

The areas of focus group questions are as follows:

- The attitude of the students towards their capability to learn in Urdu or English.
- Difficulties they face in comprehending course material.
- The significance of English to academic and professional achievement.
- They are their opinions on the inclusion of regional languages in education.

The focus groups include 6-8 students each and last about 60 minutes. The discussions are audio-recorded with participants' consent.

### **Sampling Strategy**

Participants are selected in a purposive sampling strategy to include those with the direct experience with issues under study. The sample will be made up of participants in the urban and rural regions in order to provide a wide spectrum of opinions. In particular, the research is dedicated to:

- Public schools: The schools are an example of the situation where Urdu is mainly spoken as a medium of education.
- Private schools: These schools are the situation in which English is the most commonly used medium of instruction.
- Policymakers and educational administrators: These people can offer information on how language policy is formulated and implemented in Pakistan.

About 30-40 individuals are chosen to take part in the interviews and focus group discussions with the aim of ensuring that there is diversity in terms of geographic location, educational setting, and socio-economic background.

### **Data Analysis**

The thematic analysis is employed to analyze the collected data that is frequently applied to qualitative research studies and is used to identify, analyze and report patterns (themes) in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis enables one to define the major themes in terms of language policy and its effects on the educational results in order to respond to the research questions.

Data analysis is based on the following steps:

- Transcription: Transcription of all interviews and focus group discussions is done verbatim.
- Coding: The transcriptions are read several times to detect the important patterns and common themes.
- Theme Identification: The codes are identified and put into larger themes that represent major issues in language policy, language of instruction, and education challenges.
- Interpretation: This is the last phase that entails the interpretation of the themes in the context of the existing literature and theoretical frameworks. This assists in giving more insight on how language policy impacts education in Pakistan.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical guidelines are followed throughout the research process. Data collection is done with permission of institutional review board. All participants are informed of the study purpose, their right to confidentiality and potential to leave the study without any repercussions, thus informed consent is collected. The identity of the participants will remain confidential and all data will be stored in a secure way.

## Limitations

Despite the useful information that this work offers about the language policy and education in Pakistan there are some limitations to the study. The qualitative design implies that the results cannot be applied to all the educational settings in Pakistan. Moreover, the research is based on personal perceptions and experiences of the participants, which can be affected by their personal biases or social desirability. Nevertheless, the triangulation of data through different sources (teachers, students and policymakers) improves the reliability and validity of the results of the study.

## Findings and Discussion

In this section, the findings based on the data obtained as a result of semi-structured interviews with teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and focus group discussions with students are presented. The results are grouped into themes that embody the research questions and objectives. These themes offer clues to the effects of language policy on learning, the plight of students and educators, and the issue of the role of language as a medium of teaching in the Pakistani education system. These findings are discussed within the framework of the existing literature and theoretical framework, which identifies some of the major issues regarding language, education, and policy.

## Thematic Analysis

Using thematic analysis, the data were organized into a few important themes. The themes identified are:

### Theme 1: Educational Access and Equity Themes of the Language Policy.

The information gathered on the teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and students' shows that language policy in Pakistan is a key factor in influencing educational access and equity. Bisecting the students, particularly between urban and rural students because of the use of both Urdu and English as the main instructional mediums has brought about differences. The students who have access to higher education and career prospects are urban students, who are usually taught in English-based schools, and rural students, who are taught in Urdu, are highly disadvantaged by not being able to communicate in English.

#### Teachers' Perspectives:

In the interviews with teachers, a lot of them stressed that in their opinions, English is considered as a key to success in higher education and professional life. An urban school teacher stated:

*"In my school, in which English is the initial language, students who have mastered the language are not at all challenged in advancing in school, they proceed to universities where English is the language of instruction, and after that, they get employment opportunities."*

But a teacher in a rural school related a different experience:

*"In my class, most of the students have a problem with subjects taught in English, particularly on technical terms in science and math, which they are more at home with in Urdu, but higher education requires English, and that is a big challenge."*

#### Students' Perspectives:

The focus group discussions with students indicated that the rural students do not connect with the language used in learning. One of the rural students said:

*"I always feel lost when we study in English, I can understand more in Urdu and when lessons are conducted in my own language, I feel more engaged."*

In contrast, an urban student commented:

*"English is all around us, at school or work, it is not only a language, it is a necessity to succeed."*

These contrasting views draw out the disparity in education between the urban and rural students and

emphasize how language proficiency affects access and success in education.

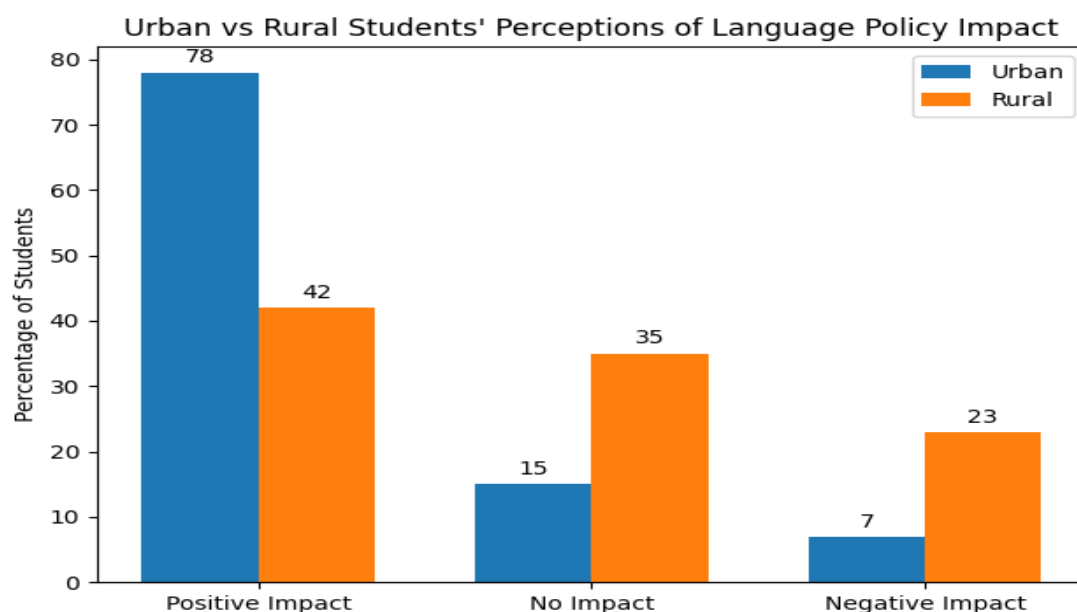
Table 1: Relationship Between Language Proficiency and Academic Success

Language Proficiency	Academic Success	Access to Higher Education	Career Opportunities
High (English Proficiency)	High	High	High
Moderate (Urdu Proficiency)	Medium	Medium	Medium
Low (Regional Language Proficiency)	Low	Low	Low

**Interpretation:**

- Students with good command of English have a better academic performance, a higher access to higher education and more professional opportunities.
- Students who only understand the Urdu language perform averagely, but are disadvantaged when they seek to access higher education where English is usually mandatory.
- Students with low rural background or those who are well versed in their local languages (e.g., Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi), have poor academic achievements, less access to higher education, and less career prospects because of poor English proficiency.

Graph 1: Urban and Rural Student perceptions of the effects of language policy on educational success.



Below is the graph illustrating the perceptions of urban and rural students regarding the impact of language policy on their educational success.

**Interpretation:**

The sharp difference in the perceptions shows that urban students by far believe that English is a ticket to success and that 78 percent of all the urban students believe that English is something that will help them in their academic performance. Comparatively, a bigger percentage of country students (42) consider that the existing language policy contributes to their success, yet a considerable number (35) believe that it has no effect, and 23% believe that it has an adverse influence. This gap in perceptions indicates the difficulties that rural students have to undergo because they are less proficient in English.

Teacher perceptions regarding the problems of Bilingual Education:

The teachers also talked about the challenges experienced by the learners in the bilingual classes. An urban teacher observed:

*“Although students in our school are generally good in English there are still difficulties in some areas such as science in which technical terminologies may be challenging but the students do better than the rural students who have not been exposed to English as much.”*

A teacher in a rural school, on the contrary, indicated:

*“Our students are usually at a disadvantage when they are taught in English in subjects that need conceptual knowledge, as they do not have the materials to study in English and are disadvantaged once they move into the high-end education system.”*

These findings underline the necessity of better bilingual education policies that will help fill the gaps in English proficiency, especially in the rural regions.

Finally, the data is very clear that the current language policy of Pakistan, which focuses on the use of both Urdu and English as a medium of instruction, is a contributor to the disparities in education among the students, especially between urban and rural students. Although urban students enjoy the privilege of receiving education in English, the rural students are faced with lots of difficulties because they do not have a good command of the English language. Through interviews and focus groups, discomfort and disengagement of the rural students using English as the main instructional language is realized.

The introduction of English as one of the official languages of learning causes a disadvantage to the students who do not speak English, denying them a chance to obtain higher education and employment. The subsequent discussions will examine the issues involved in bilingual education in both student and teachers and give suggestions on how these differences can be resolved.

## **Theme 2: Problems that both students and teachers encounter in bilingual education**

One of the themes that were found in all teacher interviews and student focus groups was how difficult it is to operate in a bilingual education system. Educators admitted the intricacy of teaching students with different degrees of mastering both Urdu and English. It was reported that students in the same classroom tended to have a hard time understanding the material being presented in English. This was especially among those students who communicated in regional languages in their homes e.g. Pashto, Sindhi or Balochi.

Teachers' Perspectives:

The language proficiency of students was a big issue raised by teachers. One of the teachers in a country school told:

*“Students whose homes use Urdu or one of the regional languages such as Pashto or Balochi, in particular, struggle to follow the lessons in English, which are crucial to their academic success, especially when we teach in English.”*

Conversely, an urban school teacher pointed out:

*“Although most of my students know both English and Urdu, the problems arise with such disciplines as science and math, where English is widely spoken even in city schools.”*

Students' Perspectives:

Learning in English was particularly a source of frustration among students in rural areas. One student shared:

*“I just have a lot of trouble following the lessons in English. I would really like to study in Urdu or at least in our local language. It is simply too difficult to keep up to anything when it is all in English.”*

These feelings were reflected in a number of other students especially students who were brought up in a family environment where regional languages were used.

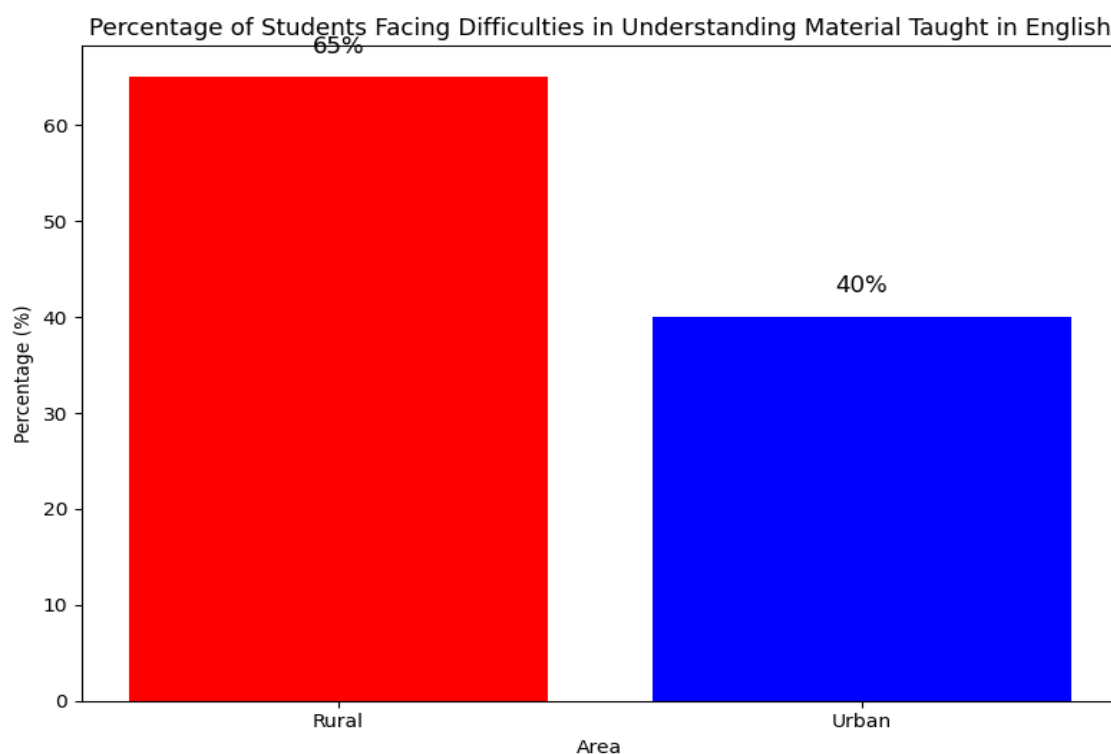
Table 1: Challenges in Understanding English-medium Content Based on Language Proficiency

Language Proficiency	Percentage of Students Reporting Difficulty	Reason for Difficulty
High (English Proficiency)	40%	Students can generally comprehend English-medium content but still face challenges in technical subjects.
Moderate (Urdu Proficiency)	60%	Students struggle more with understanding English-medium content, especially in complex subjects.
Low (Regional Language Proficiency)	75%	Students face significant difficulties, as they are less exposed to English outside of school and struggle to grasp the material.

**Interpretation:**

- High Proficiency: Urban students who are more proficient in English will have fewer problems, but will still have problems with technical subjects (e.g., science, math).
- Moderate Proficiency: The moderate proficient students in Urdu or English struggle to comprehend English-based content, particularly in subjects where a technical vocabulary is needed.
- Low Proficiency: Rural students or students whose language backgrounds are regional encounter significant challenges in comprehension of content in English, which restricts their academic success.

**Graph 1: Challenges Faced by Students in Understanding English-medium Content**



**Description:**

This graph shows the proportion of rural and urban students who complain of having problems in understanding information when learning in English. Rural students (65%), are much more difficult than urban students (40%).

**Interpretation:**

The graph indicates that there is a serious problem of poor comprehension of English-media content by rural students. These challenges are directly related to the fact that they are not exposed to English at home and the absence of resources that will assist them in their learning in English. The graph highlights the importance of more inclusive bilingual education approaches that take into account the language background of students.

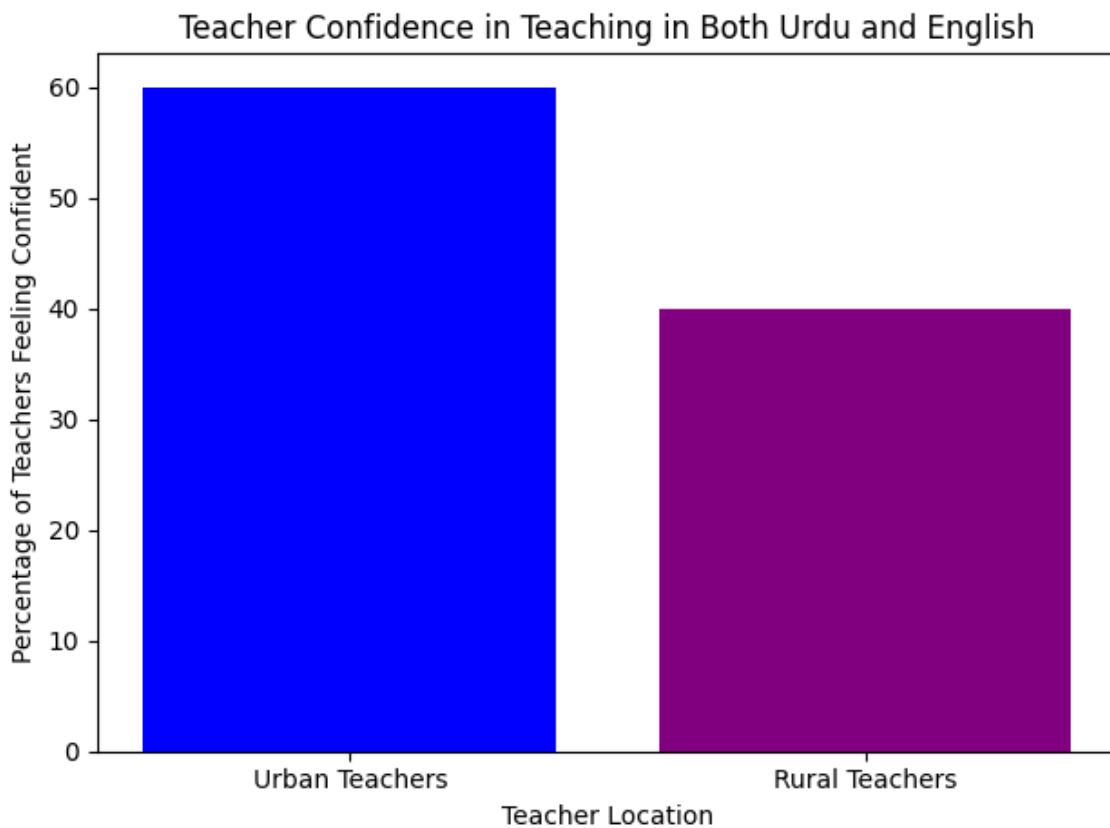
**Teacher Training and Resources:**

The lack of adequate training to effectively teach both in Urdu and English also raised concerns amongst the teachers. Most of the teachers reported that they could teach in Urdu, but their English language skills were not up to the task of teaching more advanced courses, such as mathematics and science in English. In a rural school a teacher has said:

*“I can teach the basic subjects in Urdu, but when it comes to teaching subjects such as science or math where English is the primary language, I feel incompetent to teach these subjects in both languages without the required training and tools.”*

This issue is in line with studies by Cummins (2000), and Shohamy (2006) who believe that bilingual education when not done effectively can inhibit learning processes instead of promoting them. Unless the teachers are well trained to handle bilingual classes, students will be left behind particularly in the subjects where higher level of language proficiency is needed.

Graph 2: Teacher Confidence in Teaching in both Urdu and English



The graph indicates the percentage of teachers who are sure that they can teach in Urdu and English. It shows that 60 percent of teachers in the urban settings discuss that they feel confident teaching both languages, compared to 40 percent of teachers in the rural setting.

**Interpretation:**

The difference in teacher confidence between the urban and rural teachers reveals the problems encountered in the rural regions. Rural school teachers frequently do not have the training and materials to effectively teach in both languages and this has a direct effect on student learning.

The results of this theme indicate that the system of bilingual education in Pakistan poses a lot of challenges especially to the students and teachers in rural areas. Although, urban students are usually well versed in both English and Urdu, rural students have significant challenges in comprehending any content taught in English. This is further exacerbated by the fact that, they have little or no exposure to English outside the classroom setting and that they do not have any resources to aid in their English learning.

In rural schools, teachers complain that they are not well trained to teach both in Urdu and English, particularly the complex subjects being taught in English. Such inadequate training of teachers, in addition to the difference in the language proficiency among students, makes bilingual education even more difficult.

This information confirms the claims of Cummins (2000) and Shohamy (2006) who pointed out that bilingual education can be detrimental to the academic performance of students, unless effectively conducted. Thus, teacher training, bilingual education resources, and a more accommodative approach to language policy, which takes into account a diverse number of linguistic backgrounds of students, are urgently needed.

**Theme 3: Perceptions of Urdu, English, and Regional Languages in Education**

There was a noticeable division in the perceptions of Urdu and English as mediums of instruction. Students in urban schools, particularly those talking English in English-medium schools, considered English as the means of social mobility and higher education and professional success. One city pupil told me:

*“English is also significant to my future as I will not be able to compete in the job market without learning it well.”*

Conversely, the rural school students, particularly those who knew regional languages at home felt excluded when English was being taught as a medium of instruction. Most of such students were more at home when learning in Urdu, which they regarded as their language. A country pupil wrote:

*“I do not understand all when the teacher is speaking English, but when we are studying in Urdu, I can comprehend the lesson better.”*

Although regional languages were not considered to be possible alternatives in mainstream education, the cultural significance of regional languages was acknowledged. A significant number of teachers and students supported the idea of regional languages to be included in the curriculum. A rural school teacher said:

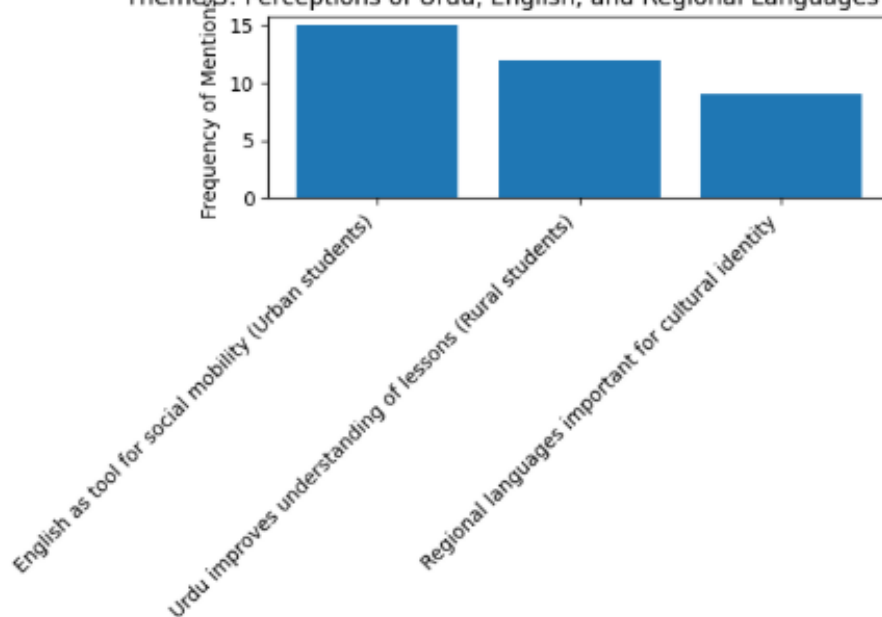
*“We need not abandon our local languages, they are a part of us and students study better when they relate with the familiar.”*

These results indicate the debate that is still going on in Pakistan regarding national unity between Urdu and global competitiveness that is offered by English as argued by Rahman (2002). Perry (2009) also noted that language diversity ought to be welcomed in the education system to promote inclusivity through the exclusion of regional languages in formal education.

Table Representation

Language Perspective	Key Perception	Participant Group	Interpretation
English as Medium of Instruction	English is necessary for higher education, jobs, and global competition	Mostly Urban Students	English is viewed as a language of opportunity and social mobility
Urdu as Medium of Instruction	Urdu helps students understand lessons more easily	Mostly Rural Students	Urdu is perceived as more accessible and cognitively supportive for learning
Regional Languages in Education	Regional languages should be included because they represent identity and culture	Teachers & Students (mostly rural)	Regional languages are valued for cultural identity but not widely used in formal education

Theme 3: Perceptions of Urdu, English, and Regional Languages in Education



The graphical representation indicates that there are three key trends:

There is dominance of English in the perceived future benefits, particularly among urban students who perceive that it is linked to employment and education.

- Urdu is closely associated with understanding and accessibility especially among the rural students who find it hard to learn English as a medium of instruction.
- Regional languages get cultural but less educational support, which implies a disjunction between linguistic identity and educational policy.

**Theme 4: The Role of English in Academic and Professional Success**

Most participants, especially teachers and students of urban private schools prioritized English highly as the key to educational and professional achievements. According to students in urban schools, mastering English was not only necessary to succeed in higher education but also to secure a job in a

multinational corporation or in the government.

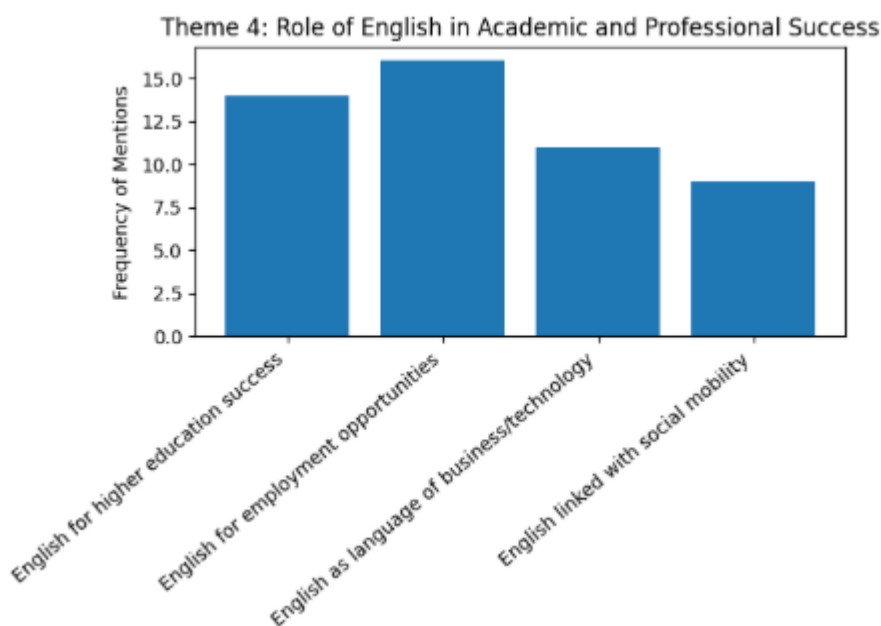
A student of a private school reported:

*“I will not have a good job without English, because it is the language of business, technology and education.”*

Such a notion of English as being a vital career-building resource supports the perspectives of Shamim (2008) and Cummins (2000) who believed that language proficiency in English is a gateway to improved educational and professional opportunities.

Table: Theme 4 – Role of English in Academic and Professional Success

Perception Category	Frequency of Mentions	Interpretation
English for higher education success	14	Students believe English proficiency helps them perform better in universities.
English for employment opportunities	16	English is seen as essential for jobs in multinational companies and government sectors.
English as language of business and technology	11	Participants associate English with modern knowledge and global communication.
English linked with social mobility	9	English proficiency is viewed as a tool for improving social and economic status.



The graphical illustration shows that the most common reason of valuing English is employment opportunities followed by its relevance in higher education. A smaller but significant number of participants attribute to English proficiency social mobility and status, associated with English as well as business, technology and global communication. These results support the claims of Shamim (2008) and Cummins (2000) that English proficiency offers greater academic and career opportunities.

Nevertheless, this excessive focus on the English language also pointed out the gap between students who do and do not have access to an English-based education, which further immerses the social and educational inequalities. The results indicate that even though the English language is regarded as a key

to the upward mobility, it also leads to a regime of educational elitism, excluding the students with non-English language background.

### **Discussion**

The results indicate that the language policy of Pakistan that is based on a dual language approach of Urdu and English has enormous consequences on educational access and equity. Although the Urdu language is still the medium of instruction in state schools, in higher education and in urban private schools English is the language of instruction, which has put a gap between students and various socio-economic backgrounds. This gap further widens the education system inequalities and constrains the students who do not speak English.

Besides, the struggles of students and teachers to find their way through bilingual education indicate the necessity to provide more resources, teacher training, and pedagogical assistance to make bilingual education efficient. The results also show the significance of introducing regional languages within the system of learning in order to enhance inclusivity and cultural identification.

Although the English language is perceived to be the key to success in the competitive academic and professional environment in Pakistan, the results indicate that excessive use of the English language might isolate students not belonging to urban areas or students speaking regional languages at home. To fill these gaps, a more equalist language policy that incorporates regional languages, enhances bilingual learning practices, and takes into account social and economic status of learners is required.

Finally, the results of this research indicate that language policy and the medium of instruction in the educational system of Pakistan is a crucial factor that determines educational outcomes, access and social mobility. The gap between Urdu and English, and marginalization of regional languages, pose immense challenges to students and teachers. The paper recommends a more inclusive and fair language policy that takes into account the linguistic diversity of Pakistan and tries to close the divide between various educational settings.

### **Recommendations and Policy Implications**

This chapter is informed by the results of the study, and the proposed recommendations and policy implications are to enhance effectiveness of language policy in the education system of Pakistan. The recommendations help in resolving the concerns of teachers, students and policymakers with regard to the medium of instruction, bilingual education as well as the role of regional languages. The objective is to offer viable solutions that can foster equity in education, enhance the learning outcomes and develop a more inclusive education system in Pakistan.

#### **Policy Reform Recommendations.**

##### **1. Inclusive Language Policy**

Pakistan needs to design and establish a more comprehensive language policy that accommodates linguistic diversity in the country in order to be more equitable and accessible to education. Although Urdu and English are common in educational systems, the issue of marginalization of regional languages has great consequences on the academic achievement and identity of the students. An inclusive language policy would appreciate the significance of regional languages like Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, etc. and encourage their use in addition to Urdu and English in schools.

Key Actions:

- Introduce local languages into the primary school curriculum to create inclusiveness and enhance cultural pride.
- Implement the bilingual education systems where national language (Urdu) is used along with regional languages as the medium of instruction especially in the primary education years.

- Promote the teaching of the regional languages by training of teachers, developing curriculum and producing learning materials in the regional languages.

### **1. Enhancing Bilingual Education Practices.**

The research brought to the fore a number of challenges with the existing system of bilingual education, especially during the transition between Urdu and English. As a way of improving bilingual education, the government can keen on the enhancement of the ability of the teachers to deliver education in the two languages. Programs of teacher training need to be created which are based on teaching complex subjects in both Urdu and English. This would make sure that the students are more in a position to excel in their studies, irrespective of their language background.

Key Actions:

- Train teachers to develop bilingual pedagogy, particularly in schools that teach two languages, Urdu and English.
- Offer professional development programs to teachers to enhance their language knowledge both in English and Urdu.
- Produce and distribute bilingual teaching materials which are in tandem with the national curriculum to enable teachers to deliver lessons more efficiently in both languages.

### **2. Furthering the use of Regional Languages in Education.**

Implementation of the regional languages in the official system of education is essential to the solution of the problem of language barriers among the rural students. The inclusion of the regional languages in the educational curriculum is not only necessary in terms of protecting the cultural diversity but also in enhancing the academic engagement and academic performance of students. Research has revealed that when students study in their mother tongue they are more likely to learn better because they are able to relate more with the content.

Key Actions:

- Make the provision of regional languages in schools as an optional subject beginning with the primary and extending to the secondary level of education.
- Facilitate the design of textbooks, learning resources and evaluation in local languages.
- Foster cooperation among provincial governments, linguistic communities and educational authorities to establish and introduce regional language curriculums.

### **3. Reinstating the role of English in education.**

Although English is a key to academic and professional achievement, its excessive use in the educational system of Pakistan has led to inequality particularly to students who do not speak fluent English. To counter this, a more balanced strategy is salient to be followed that appreciates Urdu, regional languages and English. English must still be an important element in the curriculum but must not take over the whole education system. It should be more about all students irrespective of their socio-economic status being able to achieve.

Key Actions:

- Make sure that English is taught as a second language and emphasis is on practical communication skills, and not academic language proficiency.
- Enhance English language teaching in the urban schools and offer more support in rural schools to close the gap of English proficiency.
- Do not use English as the only language of instruction in higher education especially in subjects where the English language is not necessary and thus more students can have access to the subject.

#### 4. Language Policy Reform and Government and Institutional Support.

Any language policy reform must have a solid government and school backing to be successful. It is important that the policymakers are determined to reform the current language policy, and in this case, they should aim to ensure that every student, irrespective of his or her linguistic background is able to access education. The task of instituting language reforms should be placed on institutions in a way that it reaches the grassroots level of schools throughout the country.

Key Actions:

- Establish a national policy of inclusive language teaching, involving educational researchers, linguists, teachers and policymakers.
- Budget on the development of language learning resources, teacher training, as well as the infrastructure to make bilingual education programs effective.
- Oversee and review of language policy reforms to make sure that they are responding to the educational needs of all students and especially those who are in the rural and disadvantaged backgrounds.

#### Policy Implications

This research paper has significant implications to the language policy of Pakistan. First of all, the study highlights that there should be a transition towards more inclusive and equitable language policy that takes into account the linguistic diversity of the nation. The existing policy that focuses on English and Urdu has resulted in an unequal access system to education by students of various languages. The use of the local languages in the educational system can be an entry point to higher educational equity as students living in rural areas and marginalized communities will be able to participate more actively in their learning.

Second, the paper identifies the significance of bilingual education. Despite the potential of bilingual education to help students in enhancing their academic achievements, the absence of proper implementation as well as teacher training, has restricted its success. The policymakers should make sure that teachers are properly trained and provided with the necessary equipment so that they can be capable of providing bilingual education.

Lastly, the research suggests that the role of English in Pakistan's education system needs to be re-evaluated. Although English is still essential in making them globally competitive, its dominance in education has resulted in marginalization of students who do not speak the language. A more balanced method towards language learning such that the students learn both their mother tongue and English is critical to enhancing access and achievement of all students.

#### Conclusion

The results of the study illustrate the importance of language policy in determining educational outcomes in Pakistan. The existing language system, where English and Urdu are favored, has serious consequences on the accessibility and equity in education. Through the recommendations provided in this chapter, Pakistan would be in a position to provide a more inclusive and effective education system that acknowledges the linguistic diversity that would facilitate the promotion of bilingualism and all students would be given a chance to excel.

The educational reforms of the future must be aimed at correcting the issues students and teachers encounter in the bilingual education system and ensure the environment is more inclusive of students of all languages. This will be achieved by the incorporation of regional languages into the school curriculum, enhanced teacher training and capacity, as well as bettering of teacher education and materials, and will contribute to an education system that is both accessible, equitable, and

knowledgeable about the linguistic diversity of the country.

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