Pulpit to Boardroom: Sociolinguistic Attitudes and Prestige of Urdu, Arabic, and English Languages in Pakistan

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Abstract: This research article studies the existing stock of knowledge in order to understand the complexity of the sociolinguistic divide among Urdu, Arabic, and English languages for their perceptions and utilization across social sectors/domains, viz. religious, corporate, and education, etc. As language serves as a means of communication and identity. Correspondingly, Pakistan is no exception to this reality in this context, as it also represents social status and power in numerous forms. The significant importance of the Arabic language can be traced to its religious liturgical facts, which showcase spiritual authority. Likewise, the Urdu language represents cultural heritage and national identity and is symbolically a national language, whereas the English language, being a colonial remnant, represents economic opportunity, modernity, and education. Based on the existing information, the current research study also examines the historical or socio-political factors that contribute to shaping the attitude towards language, which makes Urdu literary tradition reputed even in the wake overshadowed practicality compared to English as the language offering global space. On the other hand, Arabic is not widely spoken but is considered an integral part of the religious curricula and is treated with immense respect for its spiritual offering. Consultation of published material reveals varying language preferences across the country with shifting settings (religious, academic, corporate, etc.). Urdu has been maintained for its cultural resonance, Arabic for its unparalleled spiritual cover, and corporate arena inclines towards English. English foreshadows Urdu for its perceived global reach, while Urdu is secondary albeit cultural significance. The outcomes of the research show that there is an intricate association between language, power, and identity in Pakistan. Deep-seated historical and cultural roots could be traced to attitudes toward language, varying pragmatic considerations, and perceptions towards language. This research article is a contribution to the field of sociolinguistics in a multilingual setting, which offers insights into ongoing linguistic conciliation.

Keywords: Language attitudes, language prestige, Urdu, Arabic, English, Pakistan, sociolinguistics, religious arenas, corporate environments

1. Historical Development of Urdu, Arabic and English in Pakistan

The constitution of Pakistan counts Urdu and the languages spoken in federating units (Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto and Balochi) in the category of national languages while English being the official language till the time Urdu comes at par with English under necessary arrangements (Article 251, Constitution of

Pakistan; Ali et al.,2022). The historical significance, cultural synthesis, and linguistic evolution of the Urdu language in the subcontinent is a compelling narrative that emerged as a distinct language back in the 12th century due to the social, political, and cultural interactions between Indian locals and the Persian Muslim invaders. Urdu is flowered with the combination of Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and other indigenous languages in a particular context in the northern region, which later settled grounds for Urdu to be known as a language (Kachru, 1990). Urdu was initially called Hindavi, later Hindustani and finally Rekhta, which also became the subcontinent's lingua franca during the medieval period. Urdu evolved with Aibak, Iltamish and Mughal influence — Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) and Mughal Empire (1526-1857). Schmidt (1999) writes that terminology, literary style, vocabulary and court language have been patronized from Persian, giving Urdu its phonetic beauty and aesthetic character portraying cultural ethos. Ghazal became the poetic beauty of Urdu with thematic diversity by the contributions of Mir Taqi Mir and Mirza Asad Ullah Ghalib, having the court patronage (Faruqi, 2001). Similarly, the British also acknowledged the administrative importance of Urdu. British officers were trained in local languages, especially Urdu at Fort William College in 1800, resulting in language dissemination and standardization as a colonial policy prioritizing Urdu over Persian (King, 1994). The contemporary status of Urdu is thriving in Pakistan and parts of India due to its dynamic and adaptive nature, which is closely coupled with the socio-cultural fabric of the Indian Subcontinent (Rahman, 2011).

So far as Arabic is concerned as a language, the narrative of its development is intertwined with centuries-old educational, religious and cultural transformations in the Indian subcontinent. The advent of Islam in the subcontinent majored Arabic language in the region endowed to Islamic scholarship, culture, religious practices and scholarly perspectives contributing to the spread of language – primarily religious and spiritual. Arabic in the subcontinent dates back to the 7th century when Arab traders settled along western coastal areas that facilitated cultural exchange in the regions of Gujrat and Kerala (Wink, 1997). The primary use of Arabic mainly focused on religious liturgical, religious rituals, Islamic jurisprudence, and recitation of the Quran, which is purely religious. Muslim rulers significantly strengthened the Arabic language and institutionalized the language by establishing Islamic learning centers such as Madrasas, which proved the bedrock of Arabic education and produced Islamic scholars proficient in law, theology, and the Arabic language (Metcalf, 1982). The curriculum of these Islamic centers included Arabic texts, the Quran, Hadith, Fiqh and Tafsir. Along the same lines, during the rule of the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rule, the role of the Arabic language extended to administrative and legal spheres, which enriched the vocabulary of the Urdu language infused with Arabic diction (Rahman, 2011). Arabic was also disseminated due to Sufism — a mystical Islamic branch. Sufi literature was also produced in Arabic or heavily relied on Arabic word choice, which got acceptance among the general masses (Ernst, 1997). Colonial establishment shifted the winds to English in the local vernaculars for governance, but the religious and educational circles kept on relying on Arabic. Continued emphasis on Arabic also established Madrasas such as Darul Uloom Deoband (1866), which contributed to preserving the Arabic language and propagation of Islamic knowledge (Zaman, 2002). Contemporary trends continue using the Arabic language in religious practices and Islamic education at educational institutions for its transmission to the next generations. On the contrary, critics like Pervez Hoodbhoy have discouraged the instruction of the Arabic language as a compulsory subject —a decision taken by the Senate of Pakistan (Dawn, 2021).

Colonialism shaped the complex narrative of English as a language in the Indian subcontinent, as well as educational policies and social and political shifts. During British rule, English became the language of education and administration, an enduring legacy of the post-colonial language spread context. In the 17th century, with the arrival of the British East India Company, the role of the English language was limited to diplomacy and trade. A significant shift was marked in the 18th century when British political power consolidated in the region (Viswanathan,1989). English was promoted as a language after the Battle of Plassey (1757), which subsequently led to the establishment of British rule. The Charter Act of 1813 furthered the institutionalization of English. Later, Lord Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education (1835) strengthened English, which led to the education of the elite to create English the elite of India, which aimed to develop Indian color and blood-tasting English in their morals, intellect, and opinion, resulting in the English medium educational institutions (Macaulay, 1835). In Madras, Bombay and

Calcutta, the medium of instruction became English in higher education, solidifying English in universities in 1857. Such institutions produced a speaking Indian gentle elite that shouldered responsibilities in intellectual spheres, law and administration (Guha, 1997). Every walk of life, such as literature, press, public discourse, etc. influenced English fostering a bilingual elite among natives. English proved to be a colonial nation in the 19th and 20th centuries, with the rise of independence movements and Indian nationalism. Prominent leaders of the independence also articulated their vision in English for international attraction and in indigenous languages to reach out to locals. In Pakistan, English coexists with Urdu in mainstream educational institutions and governing bodies, and English holds a key role in day-to-day correspondence (Rahman, 1996). In the present time, English is used as a language of research, science, business, diplomacy and higher education and son on Amid debates on cultural identity and linguistic imperialism, English thrives as the legacy of the globalized world (Kachru, 1983 and Gul et al.,2022(b)).

2. Attitude and Prestige Perspective of Pakistanis towards Urdu, Arabic and English: The Sociolinguistic Fault Lines

In Pakistan, the perceived attitude and prestige towards Urdu, Arabic and English are complex and paradoxical in nature. The socio-political fabric responds to all these languages differently, advocating historical, identity, national and cultural standpoints. This research also aims to highlight how the people of Pakistan respond to the sociolinguistic aspect of the languages in the debate for education, religious beliefs, regional identity, and socio-political and socio-economic factors. The gap lies in the cohesiveness and cohesion of the developed outcomes, which clearly prioritizes one over the other. Urdu, being the symbol of national identity and cultural heritage, characterizes the cultural diversity of its speakers (Rahman, 1996). Various strata and regions associate its prestige differently, as the language is respected in literature, national discourse, and poetry, while the scientific role remains unanswered (Haque, 1983). There is a contrast between the use of Urdu in public-sector education and English in private-sector education due to the socio-economic divide (Mansoor, 2005 and Gul et al., 2022) (a)).

In contrast to Urdu and English the reverence of Arabic is unique due to liturgical use and religious education transcending all boundaries across Muslim residents of the Indian subcontinent (Zaman, 2002). There is very limited use of Arabic in practical commutation outside the religious and spiritual context as Arabic is an influenced language in the subcontinent (Metcalf, 1982). English enjoys a colonial legacy and outruns Urdu and Arabic for its acceptance as it is considered the gateway of global connectivity, socio-economic shits, and access to contemporary discourse (Rahman, 2002 and Gul et al.,2023) polarized attitude is observed among the Urban and Rural populace as the middle-class views English as an opportunity for career advancement (Shamim, 2008). On the contrary, segments of society still take English as a remnant of cultural imperialism threatening identities and Indigenous languages, further accentuated by the divided access to education, whether Urdu or English medium (Haque, 1983; Mansoor, 2005). From what I have weighed and considered about the public reactions and attitudes towards these languages, Urdu has emotional value, whereas Arabic has a spiritual value, but English is a means to excel and get in step with global activity significantly in this age of information. The functional role of Urdu in modern society is under question, leading to a clear divide in higher education, vocational, and professional sectors (Mansoor, 2005 and Gul et al., 2022(a)). Arabic is graded as the language of religion — Islam. It is evergreen in religious practice but not in the day-to-day practical use of the language or administrative purpose. Theological debates, Quranic studies, and the fastened role in religious scholastic communities make Arabic an important language (Zaman, 2002). The limited role of Arabic as a language in Pakistan makes it a niche language — the language of the religion Islam. The dominance of English as a language has always contributed to the socio-economic divide and heated debates in competition with the Urdu language in the backdrop of cultural imperialism (Shamim, 2008). As a way forward to navigate Pakistan's linguistic future and balance global integration and cultural preservation in a diverse society, there is a need to balance the needle between linguistic varieties by clearly defining the role and functional use of these languages. The figures about the mother tongue distribution across Pakistan produced by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics — a federal agency, also advocate for the complexity of the sociolinguistic divide.
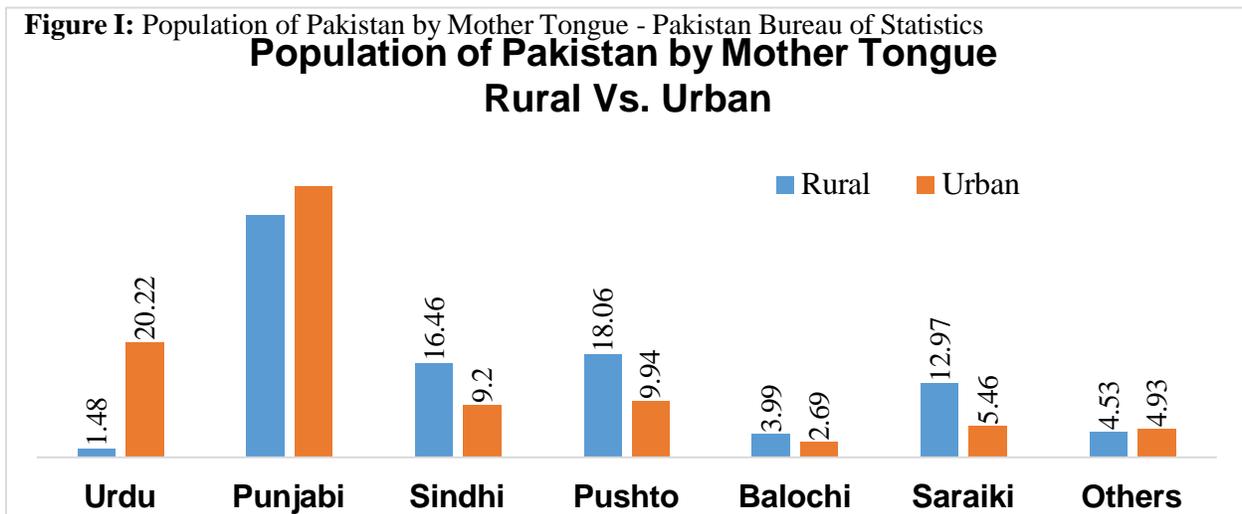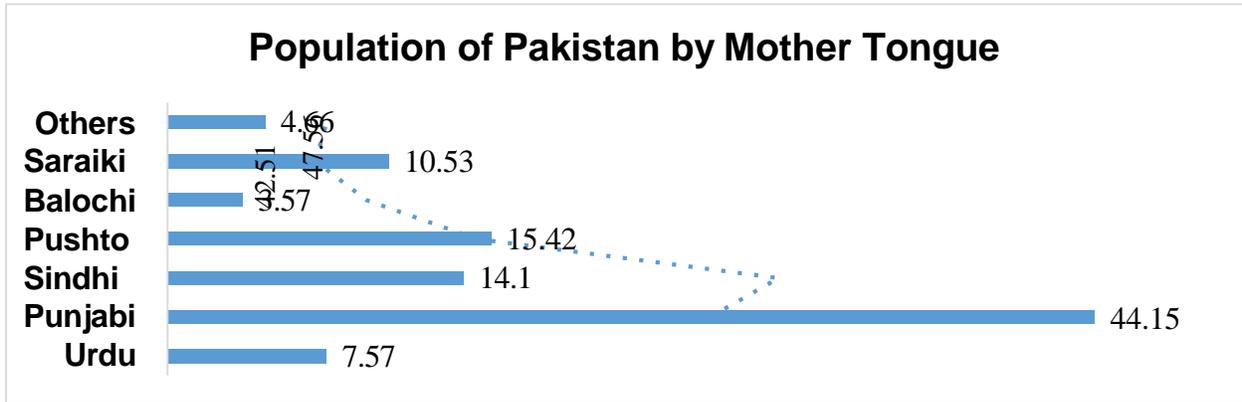
Population of Pakistan by Mother Tongue

Language	Value
Others	4.66
Saraiki	10.53
Balochi	3.57
Pushto	15.42
Sindhi	14.1
Punjabi	44.15
Urdu	7.57

(42.51, 47.56 shown on chart)

Figure I: Population of Pakistan by Mother Tongue - Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

Population of Pakistan by Mother Tongue
Rural Vs. Urban

Rural ■ Urban

Language	Rural	Urban
Urdu	1.48	20.22
Punjabi		
Sindhi	16.46	9.2
Pushto	18.06	9.94
Balochi	3.99	2.69
Saraiki	12.97	5.46
Others	4.53	4.93

Figure II: Rural Vs. Urban - Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

Comparative Analysis of Language Education in Government Schools, Private Schools, and Madrassahs in Pakistan: Perspectives on Urdu, Arabic, and English There is a swing between language implementation across the educational spectrum of Pakistan as Government Schools use Urdu, Madrasas use Arabic and Private Schools relying on English. As a national language, Urdu holds a central position in government sector education, and the policies also emphasize the importance of Urdu for cultural identity and national unity (Rahman, 1996). On the other hand, the practical role of preparing students for 21st-century challenges by using Urdu is questioned in comparison with English as a medium of instruction that exists in parallel and offers multiple opportunities. In government schools, Urdu, being the medium of instruction, still emphasizes English for competition in the practical world and to hunt global opportunities. Professional success and higher education are associated with English medium instruction in Pakistan (Haque, 1983). STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) calls for English as an instructional medium, even though efforts are put into Urdu, making it a challenge. Modern- day subjects and discourse consider knowledge production and extended scholastic discussion and dissemination in English. The role of Arabic remains limited to religious education, such as Quranic studies and teaching of Islam, and holds spiritual importance, which is still integrated into the mainstream curriculum, which has restricted the role of Arabic to a niche in educational policies (Zaman, 2002). There are frequent onsets where Urdu and English coexist, but the primary focus is on English. Private schools prefer bilingual education to make students proficient in both languages, catering to national and international considerations — cultural preservation and global aspirations (Shamim, 2008). The status of Arabic remains either elective or supplementary to cater to religious education to enrich culture, but the mainstream role of Arabic is too narrow and limited.

Religious education and Quranic studies remain central to the Arabic language in Madrasas (Sikand, 2005). Madrasas are the epitomes of the propagation of Islamic knowledge through classic texts deep-seated with cultural identity and religious traditions. The role of Arabic in teaching Hadith, Quran, Fiqh, Tafsir, and Islamic jurisprudence is comprehensive and irreplaceable (Metcalf, 1982). Religious intellect and scholarship demands for proficiency in Arabic language and Arabic remain integral to Madrassah education. The role of English in Madrasas' instruction is limited. Still, the trends are shifting as there are instances where Madrasas are also offering English courses and religious education to their students to make them on par with the competitive world (Zaman, 2002 and Sajjad et al.,2023). Undoubtedly, global trends, cultural aspirations, and socio-economic factors decide the future of languages, posing challenges in formulating language policies for the government and private sector to find a fair balance to cope with the theoretical and practical demands. English outruns the market demand compared to Urdu and Arabic (Rahman, 2011and Gul et al.,2023(a)). It is crucial to strengthen Urdu and enhance linguistic skills in English to equip students for future challenges. Private schools promote bilingual education, making students adaptable to global standards and embodying the expanding curriculum diversity. Madrasas have prioritized Arabic, Urdu, and English in the order they are mentioned. Efforts are at hand to include modern subjects to broaden academic and professional opportunities for students.

3. Conclusion

The article has analyzed language dynamics across Government, Private, and Madrasas in Pakistan to assess the sociolinguistic divide for Urdu, Arabic and English. The approach of each educational setup is distinct and has much to offer in one way or another. Priorities of language instruction are different and advocate specific educational aspirations, historical legacies, and socio-cultural settings. Urdu is a unifying force in Pakistan, encapsulating the affective aspect of the nation and representing cultural identity in the preservation of linguistic heritage, pride, and national unity. English dominates the private schools and government institutions with its increased influence and the opportunities it offers, sparking debate over indigenous languages. Arabic is respected and revered as the language of religion — Islam. The role of Arabic in Madrasas is unique and prestigious for Quranic studies, Islamic knowledge, values, morals and religious discourse. There is a need to balance global competencies and cultural considerations to shape the future of language education, where government policies' role remains crucial. The policies must consider both economic growth and international engagement. Every institution is the flag bearer of varying values, but the dominance of any language is a complex interplay of educational strategies, linguistic heritage, and socio-economic aspirations. The challenges lie in inclusive policies that uphold cultural identity and build skill sets among students to navigate 21st-century challenges, where a win-win situation prevails for all, enjoying prepared youth for futuristic assignments and celebrating cultural diversity simultaneously.

4. Recommendations for Future Research Studies

Based on the major findings of the current study, the researchers recommend the following areas for further exploration:

a) Investigating Language Attitudes and Ideologies: Research should be conducted to investigate language attitudes and ideologies of Pakistani students, teachers, and policymakers. This research will be highly beneficial in understanding sociolinguistic settings.

b) Comparative Analysis of Language Education Models: Research is needed to compare language education models employed in government schools compared to private schools and the model used in Madrasas. The research aims to identify an effective model and recommend its improvement.

c) The Impact of Language Instruction on Cultural Identity: Establishing the relationship between language instruction and maintaining the overall cultural identity appropriate for Pakistani educational settings.

d) Language Education Policy and the Decrease of Economic Rate: The research will make it possible to understand how the policy of enforcing language education in Pakistan influences the economic rate.

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