

## English and Mandarin: The Question of Linguistic Capital and the Emerging Language in Pakistan

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### Abstract

*This research examines parental attitudes towards various languages used in urban Punjab, Pakistan with a specific focus on school-going children. The findings of the research are viewed through the lens of Bourdieu's linguistic capital theory and the study's outcomes hold relevance for educational policymakers. It is a qualitative study that is based on 26 semi-structured interviews of urban Punjabi parents of students who go to elite private English medium schools. In-depth interviews revealed data that was subjected to coding and thematic analysis. The findings reveal that parents consider English the most important language for their children's success, both nationally and internationally. English emerges as the preeminent linguistic capital for better career opportunities, job promotions, better social standing, and for exerting symbolic power. It was noted that despite Punjabi being the mother tongue of these parents, the majority of the Punjabi parents interviewed did not want their children to learn Punjabi. Owing to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, job opportunities for Pakistanis who know Mandarin have increased which has resulted in interest in learning Mandarin. Mandarin is the new emerging language in Pakistan followed by German, French, and Arabic in the order of their significance. Nevertheless, this research underscores that despite Mandarin's emergence, English remains the dominant linguistic capital within the nation. These findings not only contribute to our comprehension of language attitudes but also bear implications for the design of educational policies that reflect the prevailing linguistic landscape.*

### 1. Introduction

People make linguistic choices based on their attitudes toward languages. Linguistic attitudes are emotions toward a particular language used in a

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particular situation and influence language learning. Language learning is influenced by various individual characteristics (Williams & Burden, 1997). The parents' attitudes towards a language strongly influence the language learning and linguistic preference of their children. Chambers (1999) emphasizes that students do not come to the class as a tabula rasa; rather they bring with them attitudes 'born out of conversation' with their families and friends. Parents play a major role in transmitting language(s) to the next generation, a process profoundly impacted by their attitudes. Therefore, to explore the linguistic landscape of urban Punjab, Pakistan it is imperative to explore the parental attitude and perception towards various languages in use in the province. Within this framework, examining whether Punjabi parents pass on their language or opt for another language for their children becomes paramount. This situation will be analyzed through the lens of Bourdieu's linguistic capital theory where language serves as a currency that the speakers can use to define their position in society.

Previously researchers have focused mostly on Pakistani students' attitudes toward various languages. Research that explores the attitudes of Pakistani parents whose children go to elite English medium schools is scarce hence this research will fill that gap.

### **1.1 Background**

Urdu and English are the two official languages of Pakistan. Urdu is also the national language of the country. Although according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (updated online on 24 January 2020), only 7.57% of Pakistanis speak Urdu as their mother tongue, 80% can understand Urdu because it is the lingua franca of the country. In Pakistan, English is learned as a second language for instrumental reasons including education and better career opportunities (Mansoor, 1993).

Historically, Pakistan's language policy in education has been inconsistent and vague. Currently, the federal government has given the provincial governments the right to decide the language that should be used in schools in the provinces. On the ground, the medium of instruction is usually the local language save the elite schools where the medium of instruction is English (Rahman, 1997). Consequently, students who come out of elite private schools are better in English language skills as compared to the students from the majority of Pakistani schools.

Pakistan, a multilingual society, home to around 70 languages, faces the issue of maintaining a balance between the languages to make sure its own heritage languages are not overlooked while promoting another dominant language(s). As Tollefson and Tsui (2003) point out, when designing a language policy, “the tension between retaining the culture and values associated with the mother tongue and the adoption of a national identity symbolized by a foreign language is not easy to reconcile” (p. 7).

Currently, there are four different systems of education working simultaneously in Pakistan that widen the social class chasm because these systems are based on different languages and curricula. These four categories are English medium private schools, Urdu medium private schools, government schools, and Madrassas. Rahman (2005a) found that students from English medium schools had a wider opportunity to choose in the job market. They would opt for multinational companies or civil service and military. He also found that “in the civil service the ratio of employees who have graduated from English medium instruction elite schools is higher than those who have graduated from other types of school’ (as stated in Haidar & Fang 2019, p.3). In the same vein, research in 2014 has shown that Pakistani students going to private schools and government schools believe English will carve a path to success for them (Tamim, 2014).

According to Bourdieu (1992), language is a commodity, and linguistic capital is accumulated in society by learning the language of prestige. Each language has a certain value that is determined by its importance in society. As Pennycook (2017, p.xii) explains, we not only teach English, but we also drive “social change, cultural renewal” and shape “people’s dreams and desires.” Language is not simply a mode of communication, but it also serves as a medium of power through which individuals achieve their purpose (Bourdieu, 1991).

## 1.2 Research Questions

The major research question is:

1. What languages are considered significant by parents who belong to a high-income group in Punjab whose children go to private schools of Punjab?

The research question is further divided into the following sub-questions:

- What language do parents from a high-income group believe is important for the professional success of their child?
- Do parents want their children to learn Punjabi as a separate subject in school?
- If not Punjabi, what language should their children learn in school?

#### **1.4 Significance of Research**

This research can help determine the attitudes of parents towards English, Urdu, Punjabi, or any other language. Parents believe that when the government makes decisions about language policy the parents' views should also be considered and new language policy should not be implemented without their consent. This research will shed light on the linguistic choices of parents which can help the government make an informed language choice. This research will also document the importance of various languages and linguistic capital in Punjab, Pakistan.

#### **1.5 Research Gap**

Although there is a rich literature about the motivations and attitudes of students and teachers towards Urdu and English, not much research is available that explores the attitude of parents towards these languages in Pakistan. The importance of parents in making decisions for children and transferring a language cannot be overemphasized. Hence, it is crucial to understand the parents' perspective about the languages used at home and taught in school.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Bourdieu's Linguistic Capital**

According to Bourdieu, language is not merely a tool for communication, but it is a form of capital (1982f, 60). He has distinguished the following types of capital (1992, p 43-65): 'economic capital (material wealth), cultural capital (knowledge, skills, and other cultural acquisitions, i.e., educational or technical qualifications) and symbolic capital (i.e., accumulated prestige or honor)'. A type of cultural capital that Bourdieu talks about is linguistic capital, which he defines as 'the capacity to produce expressions for a particular market. The more linguistic capital a speaker possesses, the more he can exert symbolic power' (Bourdieu, as taken from

Thompson, 1992, pp. 13-18). Linguistic capital refers to the language skills acquired through education and socialization. Bourdieu (1992, p. 76) claims ‘all speech is produced for and through the market to which it owes its existence and its most specific properties.’

Symbolic power is an invisible power that is neither palpable by the person exerting the power nor felt by the person who is subject to this power (Bourdieu, 1992). This symbolic power is transformed from one type of power to another in the market. For example, a prestigious language is used by the people to secure coveted jobs that result in more economic capital that in turn makes them symbolically more prestigious in the community (Bourdieu, 1977). This aspect will provide the point of departure for the current research.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus refers to the system of dispositions, tendencies, and behaviors that are acquired through socialization and become internalized in individuals (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus is the product of socialization, and it is transmitted through social structures and institutions. Linguistic choices are, therefore, determined through socialization, and “the linguistic market defines the social conditions of acceptability... The dominant language establishes the norm against which the prices of the other modes of expression, and the values of the various competencies, are defined” (Bourdieu, 1977b). People are inclined to use the language that will increase the linguistic capital which in turn will be of value in the linguistic market. The dominant languages then lower the market share of other languages and individuals “align their linguistic practices accordingly” (Ashraf, p.3).

While linguistic habitus is the embodied product of linguistic market conditions bestowed throughout the lifespan, linguistic markets are manufactured by human beings and subsequently sustained because the values they endorse are reproduced in practice by language users who act in accordance with their embodied schemes of perception (Salo, p. 9).

Habitus shapes our worldview and can play a role in social mobility allowing the individual to navigate through social hierarchies because of the linguistic choices made for social advancement. Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital is closely linked to his idea of habitus. Linguistic capital

refers to the linguistic resources that individuals possess, including their language skills, vocabulary, and grammar, which are acquired through education, socialization, and cultural background. Linguistic capital can be used as a form of symbolic capital that enables individuals to gain social status, prestige, and power.

Bourdieu argued that linguistic capital is closely related to social class and is a key mechanism for reproducing social inequality. Individuals from higher social classes typically have greater linguistic capital and are better equipped to navigate linguistic and cultural domains that are valued by society. In contrast, individuals from lower social classes may lack the linguistic capital needed to succeed in these domains, which can limit their social mobility and reinforce their social position.

## **2.2 Languages in Focus**

Numerous languages are spoken in Punjab but for this study, the author has highlighted the two major languages that are used for communication officially and unofficially namely English and Punjabi respectively because the study aims to determine the attitudes of people towards these languages. The following section will shed some light on the current situation of the various languages used in Punjab, Pakistan.

### **2.2.1 English**

There is no denying that English is the language of mobility (Wardhaugh, 1998 & Kachru, 1986), provides limitless opportunities, and internationally it enables people to communicate with each other when their first language is not English (Haidar & Fang, 2019). Pakistani researchers have found that the “public considers English as a potent instrument for socioeconomic mobility and views it as a passport to potential social powers and privileges” (Rahman, 1996; Mahboob, 2002; Mansoor, 2005; Rassool & Mansoor, 2007).

English is placed on the highest rung of the social hierarchy of languages (Annamalai, 2004; Haidar & Fang, 2019; Rahman, 2007). Pakistanis believe it is important to learn English to access opportunities and have the freedom to choose among these opportunities whether they are pertinent to work or leisure (Norton & Kamal, 2003; Sultana, 2014; Islam, 2018). Students who speak in English feel empowered and have access to more

opportunities as compared to the ones who are not competent in English (Tamim, 2014, p.15). For students, “a community that is literate and skilled in English is also a community that has social, economic, and political power” (Norton, 2010, p. 9). According to Bourdieu, such a community possesses high linguistic capital. Teachers and the educational system play an important role in the “construction, legitimization, and imposition of an official language” by claiming other languages as insignificant and “gibberish” (Bourdieu, 1992, pp. 48-49).

### **2.2.2 Punjabi**

Whereas it is the first language in Indian Punjab and one of the 23 official languages of India, in Pakistan, Punjabi does not have official status in Punjab, and it is linked to ‘low’ culture in Pakistan (Rahman, 2002, 2007). Punjabi is not taught as a compulsory subject in any school in Punjab, Pakistan (Ahmed, 2020). It is, however, taught as an elective subject but the majority of the students do not opt for it resulting in many schools ceasing to teach Punjabi as an elective subject. Members of the Punjab Assembly are forbidden to speak in Punjabi in the parliament. Abbas & Iqbal (2018) found that students learned English and Urdu for instrumental purposes, but they did not attach any instrumental motivation to Punjabi.

In Pakistan, the majority of the periodicals published are in English (John, 2015). According to a survey in 2003, the highest number of periodicals in a local language was 53 in Sindhi which was far less than 204 periodicals printed in English (Rahman, 2010). According to Haroon (2018), around two dozen newspapers are published in Sindhi in Sindh, only three newspapers are published in Punjabi in Pakistani Punjab, and over two dozen Punjabi newspapers are published in Indian Punjab.

Historically, Punjabi has never enjoyed an official status in Punjab, and even during the Sikh era (1799-1849), Farsi was the official language of the court (Rahman, 2002). The British also used Urdu in the lower bureaucracy and English in the higher levels (Rahman, 2002, p.391). The British replaced Persian with Urdu as the vernacular official language (Khalid, 2018). In addition to the fact that they were familiar with Urdu and were educating employees in the language when they came to Punjab, they also considered Punjabi as ‘patois’ which further aggravated the downfall of Punjabi (Ayres, 2008). Consequently, Punjabi students are rarely aware of

Punjabi literature and its folk stories (Khalid, 2018) and do not consider their language to be “unique on earth and uniquely imbued with the spirit of the local people and local land” (Ayres, 2008, pp. 918-919).

Mansoor (2005) published the results of the biggest survey to date of the attitudes of 2160 students towards languages in the Pakistani educational system. The results of this study revealed that students, parents, and teachers prefer English medium education over any other linguistic medium of education. This is followed by Urdu and then the regional languages. In her study in 2005, more than teachers and students, parents preferred Urdu as the medium of instruction over any regional language.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research is qualitative and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility and the researcher could ask follow-up questions. The rich data acquired through these interviews provided a better understanding of the topic and revealed unexpected insights (Patton, 2015). Twenty-six interviewees (N=26) were selected through purposive snowball sampling (Creswell, 2013); half the interviewees were males, and the other half were females to ensure an equal number of responses from both genders so that the perspective of both parents is considered. Interviews were conducted through online video conferencing because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The parents belonged to three major cities of Punjab, namely Lahore, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi so online interviews eliminated the travel cost.

Interviews provide a means of ‘gaining information on participants’ views, beliefs, responses, motivations and perceptions on [the] topic’ (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 18). Semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews (Hoffman, 2013) allowed the participants to express themselves in their own words and enabled the researcher to explore the situation in detail. Interviews were conducted in the English language and the participants were comfortable speaking in English. All participants were dominant Urdu speakers; only a few of them sometimes spoke Punjabi at home.



Interviews can be spaces where ‘opinions are (re)constituted rather than simply reported’ (Litosseliti, 2010, p. 173). It may have been possible that the participants worded their opinions differently because they knew that it was a formal interview with a researcher over Zoom. As Heller (2011) reports, “interviews ... are situated performances in and of themselves ... They are what a certain kind of person tells another certain kind of person, in certain ways, and under certain conditions” (p. 44). Therefore, these interviews provided a window into the beliefs and attitudes of the parents towards languages which revealed a fragment of the information about their lived experiences related to the languages that can be extremely valuable (Scollon & Scollon, 2004 & Busch, 2015).

Since the sample size is small, the results of the interview cannot be generalized to a wider population, but they can provide insights into the attitude of parents towards various languages in depth. Despite the limitations, interviews were the best choice to gather data as Peräkylä (2005) points out, “through interviews, one can certainly gain access to speakers’ subjective experiences and lived realities... difficult to reach by means of other methods” (as stated in Soler, 2019, p. 254).

The interviews were transcribed and literary transcription (Kowal & O’Connell, 2014) of the interviews was carried out carefully because it is a crucial step of data analysis. Flick (2014) argues that it is essential “all social scientists doing qualitative research must carefully attend to the phase of setting down the verbal research material in writing by means of transcription” (p.65). Although, there is no “transcription notation system” that can provide an “accurate and comprehensive narrative of the original performance” the researcher can be selective and “make decisions based on reasoned choices rather than arbitrary, non-reflective ones” (Flick, 2014, p.66). Hence, for this research literary translation was conducted and no changes were made to the grammatical errors of the participants. Since discourse analysis was not the primary aim of this research, eye dialect was not necessary. Eye dialect is useful especially for conversation analysis because it allows the researcher to consider the deviation in the pronunciation of words and represents how the words have actually been pronounced by the participants. Orthographic transcription was not the method of choice because the researcher wanted to show the level of

grammatical accuracy and grasp of the language since the research is about language and one of the major languages is English.

After transcription, the data was analyzed, and themes were generated from the qualitative data gleaned from interviews and presented in the analysis section of the research. Important quotes from the interviewees were shown in quotation marks and block quotations. Recurrent themes included the importance of a certain language. Without any prompting parents had to reveal a language they would want their child to learn.

The interviewees earned more than an average Pakistani and their children went to private elite schools that charge tuition from Rs. 40,000/ and above. Parents earn from Rs. 400,000/ and above. Most of these parents have two or more children of school-going age. Some of these parents spend around 10% of their salary to send their child to a private English medium school. It is to be noted that most parents have more than one child. The age of parents ranged from 28 to 48 years old, and children ranged from 5 to 15 years old. All parents interviewed for this research had a high school education or above. Some parents had their businesses but most of them worked for another employer.

Ethical considerations were valued, and participants' consent was taken before the interviews were conducted. Participants were informed that the data collected would be used for research.

#### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

Various languages emerged during the interviews. There was generally a positive disposition toward the English language. The majority of the parents rejected the idea of teaching Punjabi to their children. Mandarin was the new emerging language. It is important to mention here that parents were not provided with any options of languages to choose from when they were asked to name a language that they would want their child to learn.

##### **4.1 English as the language of success**

###### **4.1.1 Jobs**

Parents considered English as the language of success and aspired to make their children fluent in English. They cited reasons such as getting through job interviews that help in securing jobs and succeeding globally because

English is the international language. For them, fluency in English was important for “creating [a] good impression in a job interview.”

Those who do not own a business felt it was mandatory to teach their children English because that can help the children secure lucrative jobs. One parent said, “We don’t have a family business and my son will most probably have to do a job so he will be going through interviews.” Habitus is transmitted through social structures (Bourdieu, 1977). Hence English is seen as a linguistic capital that can translate into better jobs and eventually more symbolic power.

A female parent stated:

The last thing I want to see is my child behind others. I want her to be successful and achieve in life what I could not. For this English will help in employment and career opportunities. I want her to excel in her studies as well as other extracurriculars, like debates.

This implies that knowing the English language is the key to success and if an individual does not know the language, the individual will lack the linguistic capital required for climbing the social ladder. The parent wants to provide her daughter with the linguistic capital that the mother herself was deprived of so that her daughter does not face linguistic hurdles.

English is not necessary only inside the classroom but also for extracurricular activities. As noted by Tamim (2014) students reported that the teachers select students who are well-versed in English to compete in extracurricular activities that do not require English language skills, for example, computer science competitions. Schools encourage and support students who are fluent in English to participate in inter-school competitions.

A father reasoned why English is the most important language for success for him:

I say this because this [English] is the undisputed language of the corporate sector. To get a position in the job market, a candidate must be fluent enough. It’s also been proven significant in surviving in that position as well as climbing the ladder of hierarchy. I see this factor as extremely significant because anyone in the corporate sector must be able to communicate their point of view, or even simple instructions, to their seniors, their subordinates, or more importantly to foreign delegates.

Both the examples above underpin the significance of the English language regardless of the gender of the parent and child. In a nationwide study, Mansoor et al (2020) revealed that Pakistani employees believe English is important for their hiring and promotion. The language policy in these organizations was implicit and all employees were aware that their promotion and hiring depended on English language proficiency. Ashraf (2008) states, “Parents grant more capital to English for its access to employment, a modern identity, information channels, and the global economy” (p. ). Access to wider job opportunities promotes upward social mobility that in turn motivates parents to send their children to English medium schools to accumulate linguistic capital.

#### **4.1.2 Higher Education**

Parents want their children to go to an English-medium private school because when the children go to universities, higher education is provided in English medium in Pakistan and abroad. If children want to study in a well-reputed university nationally or internationally parents know their children must know English. One male parent said, “Every major and high-ranking university in Pakistan and even outside Pakistan is English medium.” It is better to hone one’s skills earlier in life to avoid difficulties in future education. According to Bourdieu, “mechanisms determining the price of discourse’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p 654) are in place in higher education in the form of examinations and class participation that are conducted in English. “It follows that agents continuously subjected to the sanctions of the linguistic market, functioning as a system of positive or negative reinforcements, acquire durable dispositions which are the basis of their perception and appreciation of the state of the linguistic market and consequently of their strategies for expression.”

#### **4.1.3 Confidence**

Some parents attributed confidence to their children’s knowledge of the English language. They sent their children to English medium private schools because they wanted their children to learn English to be more confident. Students who are fluent in English feel confident to participate in the class whereas those who are not proficient in English try to refrain from participation. Parents added that English is the international language that can help their children get access to scientific literature and books.

Moreover, an English medium school provides a highly effective educational system and “grooms children well” consequently making the children more confident. This confidence can be attributed to the knowledge of linguistic capital that helps students to express themselves and get more attention in class.

#### **4.2 Status of Urdu**

It has emerged from this research that many children who go to elite private schools use Urdu when they speak to their grandparents, servants, and other people who may not know English. Otherwise, they prefer to speak to their siblings and parents in English. A few people interviewed expressed that they encourage their children to speak in Urdu when talking to them. However, some parents thought that even though English is taking over, “Urdu will always hold its position and value because its literary tradition is very rich.” Having said that, out of 26 parents interviewed only one parent said that her children spoke in Urdu with everyone at home.

One parent elaborated on the situations where she uses Urdu:

I mostly use the Urdu language when I am talking to elders in my family as they usually can't understand English. I also use Urdu when I am in an informal situation like with my friends and cousins.

According to Ashraf (2008) as stated in Ashraf (2023), “Urdu cultivates and nurtures local, cultural, and societal bonds, and for girls, it even symbolizes familial values” (p. 25).

Urdu is used everywhere by adults except at work where English is also required. At work, people speak in Urdu unless it is a formal situation such as a presentation or job interview in which case they must speak in English. Another parent reported a similar attitude except she also spoke to the children in Urdu.

I generally use Urdu at home, at my workplace, with kids, and with relatives. I think that most of our communications tend to be in Urdu unless we're in an official or formal meeting. Even at my workplace, most of the communication between the staff and co-workers is in Urdu.

### 4.3 Role of Punjabi

The need for the revival of Punjabi is not visible in the elite class of Punjabis. Many Punjabi parents said they were not fluent in Punjabi and can only speak limited Punjabi to convey their message to servants or people who do not know any language except Punjabi. This illustrates that Punjabi is used as the last medium of communication. One parent whose mother tongue is Punjabi said, “Punjabi is very useful when I am communicating with people in my village, fruit, and vegetable vendors, taxi and auto drivers, and other people who do not understand Urdu properly.” It is evident from this comment that people associate Punjabi with people from low socio-economic background. Its use has been reduced to communicating with people who do not understand Urdu and can only communicate in Punjabi.

When asked about teaching Punjabi to their children one parent commented: I would not want my child to learn Punjabi as a separate subject because it has lost its cultural value. Punjabi has been removed from the offices and schools. Punjabi is not applicable in the future, and it will just be a burden for students.

One out of 13 male parents interviewed expressed the desire that he would want his son to learn Punjabi as a separate subject, because “Punjabi is our identity and it is our mother tongue, it reflects our culture and background.” One out of 13 female parents interviewed said that she would want her child to learn Punjabi in school. She did not learn Punjabi from her Punjabi-speaking parents. Hence, she was not able to pass it on to her children. However, she feels that her children should learn Punjabi in school, and they should at least be able to understand it especially because they live in Punjab and that is the “language used by shopkeepers”.

One parent who spoke in Punjabi when he talked to elders and for business purposes said the following when asked if he would want his children to learn Punjabi in school as a separate subject:

It is good if my children know Punjabi, it will benefit them when dealing with people. Punjabi is considered a crude language and people speaking it are not considered very polite. My children already learn English, Urdu, and French in class and I’m planning on having them learn Chinese as well, but I don’t think Punjabi as a separate subject would be really necessary.

Shafi (2013) found that Punjabi is not considered to be a language that can help secure a lucrative job. Punjabi has lost its value in the linguistic market. With time people have developed a negative disposition towards Punjabi and have learned that it is of no significance in their lives. Only two parents thought it was important for their child to learn Punjabi in school. One of them proudly said, “No doubt keeping up with the rest of the world is important, but one should have strong ties with their actual roots.”

The most striking response related to Punjabi was from a mother: Thankfully, I am [fluent in Punjabi]. My mother tongue is Punjabi. This is part of my identity and culture. I believe it is part of what represents us. My children sometimes tease me when I talk in Punjabi, but I always tell them that I am proud and very thankful.

This parent uses Punjabi while communicating with the house staff, her sisters, brother, parents, parents-in-law, and cousins. Her children are missing from the elaborate list of people she speaks with in Punjabi. The reason is embedded in her answer where she says that her children make fun of her when she speaks in Punjabi. Although she declares she is proud of the Punjabi language, she does not continue speaking with them in Punjabi. It is important to mention here that her husband was the only other interviewee who was proud of his Punjabi language and linguistic skills. He wanted his children to learn Punjabi in school. He considered Punjabi ‘a beautiful language’ and in the same line admitted that ‘society considers it rubbish’. In an extensive study, Mansoor (2017) revealed that “a number of Punjabi students see Punjabi as crude, uncivilized and that language of villagers”. In the same study, she found that 60% of urban Punjabi students did not want to study Punjabi. Only 3% wanted Punjabi to be a compulsory subject as compared to 84% willing to have Urdu as a compulsory subject in school. 89% of students wanted to study English as a subject.

A parent proudly stated that he knows Punjabi very fluently and he has used Punjabi with his friends and family all his life. Now ‘times are changing’ so he needs to speak in English also, but he still uses Punjabi with close friends and his parents. Punjabi is experiencing linguistic devaluation (Bourdieu, 1977) as a result of ‘a slow transformation of symbolic power relations’ (p. 651) that is palpable from the experiences shared by the participants. This slow transformation is only evident in the upper class of Punjabis. The

middle class and lower class have high ethnolinguistic vitality according to recent research conducted by Mansoor et al (2020). Many literate Punjabis especially in Lahore, the capital city of Punjab, are struggling to revitalize the language in the educated circles.

A working mom said:

I consider myself to be extremely fluent in Punjabi. However, my use of the language is mostly restricted to communication that I have with my mother-in-law. As an avid Punjabi reader, however, I do tend to occasionally use a Punjabi idiom or metaphor at work; it kind of enhances the humorous perspective of an individual and is most definitely one of the fundamental elements of leadership.

Although some parents are themselves well versed in Punjabi language, they do not speak with their children in Punjabi. The future of language is governed by the school systems that control the producers and consumers of society (Bourdieu, 1992) and parents choose to send their children to English medium schools where Punjabi may or not be offered as a subject.

#### **4.4 Major Emerging Language**

##### **4.4.1 Mandarin**

Before the analysis of the findings related to Mandarin, it is important to provide context for the Chinese language. China is investing \$62 billion in Pakistan through China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project (Rahman & Shurong, 2017). The number of projects that will be carried out in Punjab is 176, Sindh 103, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 19, and Balochistan 8. A new trade route will be built from Kashgar in China to Gwadar in Pakistan (Mansoor et al, 2020). Along this route, Special Economic Zones (SEZ) will be created. This project will not only have an impact on the economy of Pakistan, but it may also influence the language and culture of Pakistan because of the increased interaction of the people from both countries. According to Misbah Rasheed, a Chinese language instructor at the Islamabad-based National University of Modern Languages (NUML) the demand for learning Chinese has surged ten times since the announcement of the CPEC project, raising the number of students to 2000 from 200 (Baloch, 2017). The Chinese Language Department was set in the 1970s for



‘familiarizing Pakistani military officials with Chinese culture’. Later, its doors were opened to the public.

When asked which language parents would want their child to learn, 48% of the parents said they would want their child to learn Chinese. One of the parents stated that China is one of the superpowers and it is opening gates for jobs and new talent.

In my own business, I have to work with Chinese and I visit China every one or two years and it would be really beneficial if my children learn this language. That is because with China being one of the leading economies today it is essential my children learn this language for future purposes.

Language inherently does not possess power. It is “worth what those who speak it are worth, i.e. the power and authority in the economic and cultural power relations of the holders of the corresponding competence (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 652).” Another parent considers China a ‘superpower’ and wants his child to learn their language because he ‘knows the use of this language is growing worldwide’. The father also stated that he would feel “proud” if his child learned Chinese.

Someone who works for Huawei, Pakistan reported that the chances of promotion for people who know Chinese are more than for those who do not know the language. Although the children of the parents interviewed for this research will not become interpreters or translators, they will learn Chinese for such office jobs as Huawei or their own business with Chinese. Parents want their children to learn Mandarin because of its instrumental use. As Chiswick (2008) points out, “Language skills are human capital produced using scarce resources in terms of time and out-of-pocket expenses. (p. 4)” Parents make these investments because they can anticipate the increased demand for Mandarin owing to the CPEC project hence, they want to position their children for better opportunities. These investments may be rewarded “in the form of higher earnings, lower costs of consumption, greater political involvement, and larger social/communication networks..” (Chiswick, 2008, p. 4). The anticipation of reward is unconscious and “the anticipation of profit is durably inscribed in the language habitus” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 253). The disposition towards a certain language is fluid and it changes based on the linguistic market. A new valuable language is emerging in the Pakistani linguistic market.

#### **4.1.2 Minor Emerging Languages**

An equal percentage of parents (15%) wanted their children to learn French, German, and Arabic. Those parents who wanted to migrate to Canada or wanted their children to get admission to higher education in Canada desired that their children could learn French. Many Pakistani parents are not financially capable of sending their children abroad for higher education, so they opt for countries like Germany where maximum scholarship is available. In 2014 Garcia found that 62 out of 75 undergraduate students who were learning a second language to pursue higher education were enrolled in German language programs. A parent wanted his child to learn German to understand 'near perfect technological superiority and advancement.' Although parents want their children to learn German and French for accessing higher education in a foreign land, they want their children to learn Arabic for religious benefits so that they can understand the Quran.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study offers insight into the intricate landscape of language preferences and aspirations among Punjabi parents in Pakistan, echoing Pierre Bourdieu's sociolinguistic theory. The significant revelation that none of the twenty-six parents who were interviewed engage in Punjabi discourse with their children at home underscores a transformative shift in linguistic dynamics, an observation that Bourdieu's theory effectively elucidates. Bourdieu's lens sharpens our understanding of the intricate relationships at play- parents' linguistic practices intertwined with their social trajectories, aspirations, and perceptions of societal value. As noted, Punjabi parents don't want their children to learn Punjabi in school as a separate subject. The diminishing use of Punjabi among elite households, despite a sense of emotional attachment, suggests a strategic orientation towards linguistic capital accumulation, aligning with Bourdieu's tenets.

In contrast to the diminishing importance of Punjabi, most Punjabi parents want their children to learn Mandarin, French, German, or Arabic. Notably, around half of the parents interviewed want their children to learn Mandarin. All these parents anticipate that it would help their children conduct business and communicate with the Chinese people because it is set to become the most important language of the future. Mandarin is joining English on the throne of the language hierarchy since China is now

emerging as a formidable economic superpower. The desire to teach these languages is aimed at conferring their children with a competitive edge within the realm of languages as high linguistic capital can result in higher economic capital for their children that will in turn translate into a higher social capital.

Undeniably, English enjoys a prestigious status in formal situations in Pakistan, but it is mostly restricted to formal conversations that take place at work. At work, employees prefer to speak in Urdu unless it is necessary to speak in English which reveals a complex interplay between linguistic prestige and functional necessity. Those necessary situations that require English proficiency include formal meetings, presentations, and job interviews. Within meetings, employees talk in English, but the nuanced small talk is always in Urdu. Parents themselves speak Urdu at home and outside the home. They shift to the Punjabi language when they talk to their parents and old friends, servants, shopkeepers, especially fruit vendors. Parents also associate speaking in Punjabi with their relatives in the village.

The findings of this study reveal that the Urdu language has devalued over the past two decades. Earlier studies had shown a similar attitude to Punjabi that led to the decline of Punjabi in elite households. In earlier reports (Mansoor, 2016) Punjabi was the language used to communicate with vendors and shopkeepers. It was not a preferred language by students who believed it to be associated with 'uneducated' people. In the current study, parents have reported that their children use Urdu only with their servants or grandparents. Parents want their children to learn French because it is one of the official languages of Canada. They aspire to send their children to Canada for higher education. Canada has recently made immigration easy for students who have completed eighteen years of education and know English. Knowledge of English opens doors for international opportunities. Due to the ongoing economic and political instability, many Pakistanis are emigrating and the need for English has increased manifolds. Higher education in Germany is free for students who know German. Many parents who cannot afford to pay full tuition want their children to study abroad in Germany. Some parents also want their children to learn Arabic because they want their children to understand the Quran.

An interesting finding is that people who work for multinational or national companies believe English is important for professional success but the parents who run their own businesses consider Mandarin to be important for professional success. This finding merits a thorough investigation by future researchers. For decades, Pakistan's linguistic policy has been vague. It has encouraged the divide among classes of society as it serves the elite by reserving jobs for the students graduating from English medium schools and universities. It is recommended that all Pakistanis should have access to English medium schools that enable them to communicate effectively in the global world. All Pakistanis should have equal access to knowledge and language should not act as a barrier. Unless the language policy is addressed and amended the great Pakistani societal divide will not be overcome.

The findings of this research are limited because of a small sample size taken from a specific socio-economic background. Hence the results are not generalizable to a large population, but the findings can be used in future research, for example, to explore the attitudes toward Mandarin. Future researchers can focus on the reasons why Punjabi has evolved from a prestigious language to a 'burden' in Pakistani Punjab. In essence, this research not only adds to our understanding of the linguistic landscape in Punjabi households but also offers insights into how linguistic capital is tied to social standing. The research highlights the importance of overcoming language barriers to bridge societal gaps.

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