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The Impact of English Language on Social Change in Pakistan

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This research tests how English as a language impacts upon the social change in Pakistan. This is a country where English is used as official language. There are different basics as media, the way of governance and social interaction which continue to act as catalysts of social change. English is the language which acts as the base for opportunities of education and a force of driving for social change in Pakistan. In this analysis a mixed method approach is used by using interviews from more than 1200 participants. The people related to academia are kept as main stake holders. The expertise of English language influence to access of communication and opportunities which may serve as route for development. The English language in Pakistan may work as social and cultural change for educational development. At the end, the research suggests the different guidelines for social change opportunities at local as well as international level.

Key Words: *Education, Society, Media, Opportunities, Mixed-Method.*

Introduction

Pakistan is a country bursting with linguistic diversity. Here, English really stands out. It's not just another language; it's

like this remnant of British colonial rule that's morphed into something much more. What was once seen as a colonial imposition is now viewed as a marker of modernity and progress. You can find it woven into everything—education, government, and even the economy.

Historical Context and Linguistic Landscape

Pakistan's language scene is quite different, with more than 70 different languages spoken across the country. The big ones like Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, and Saraiki all coexisting, which is pretty remarkable. But here's the kicker: even with all that diversity, English and Urdu really take the lead when it comes to official matters and education. It's kind of a shame, really, because that often sidelines the regional languages (Shahzad, 2025). Now, the 1973 Constitution does recognize Urdu as the national language, which is great, but English still holds a strong grip. It's the go-to language for higher education, and if you want a shot at those top jobs, well, knowing English is pretty much a must (Begum, 2022). So, while there's a rich tapestry of languages in Pakistan, the focus on just a couple of them can overshadow the others.

English as a Catalyst for Socio-Economic Mobility

Being good at English is often seen as a ticket to better education and good-paying jobs. Research shows that folks who speak English really well usually land better job opportunities, which helps them move up the social status (Mehmood et al., 2024). But here's the thing: this connection also keeps the gap between different social classes wide. It turns out that most of the English education resources are

mainly available to those living in cities and those who can afford it (Ali et al., 2024).

Impact on Identity and Cultural Dynamics

English is everywhere these days, and it's really shaping how young people in Pakistan see themselves. Learning English can boost their self-confidence and help them feel connected to the world, but there's a flip side. It can also make it tricky to hold onto their cultural and religious roots (Sultan, 2022). Take code-mixing, for example—that's when people blend languages in conversation. It's common and shows how language and culture are intertwined. Plus, we're seeing these hybrid identities pop up, which just goes to show how complex the relationship between language, culture, and identity is in Pakistan (Mirza et al., 2024).

Challenges to Indigenous Languages

It's a bit concerning how English and Urdu have really overshadowed the regional languages in Pakistan. It's like they're being pushed to the sidelines, and honestly, that's not great. According to UNESCO, there are 27 languages in Pakistan that are considered endangered right now. A big part of the problem seems to be the lack of support from institutions and, well, not enough presence in the digital world. It's kind of scary to think about what that means for these languages. We really need to step up our game to digitize and promote these indigenous languages. It's super important if we want to keep Pakistan's rich linguistic heritage alive.

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Policy Implications and Educational Reforms

In Pakistan, language policies have pretty much leaned towards English and Urdu for a long time. Unfortunately, this often means that mother-tongue education gets pushed to the side, which is a real shame. The studies show that starting education in one's native language can really boost understanding and overall school performance (Shahzad, 2025). So, it makes sense to think about introducing multilingual education policies. By including regional languages along with English and Urdu, we could create a more inclusive environment and tackle those educational gaps.

Digitalization and Language Use

The rise of digital technology has really solidified English's place in Pakistani society. It means, just look at it—English is everywhere online, from social media to digital communication. It's shaping how young people talk and the languages they prefer (Malik & Qureshi, 2024). Sure, these digital platforms can help folks learn new languages, but they also throw some serious challenges into the mix when it comes to keeping local languages alive.

Over the years, English has really taken off in Pakistan, making its mark in education, government, business, media, and tech. With the world becoming more globalized and digital, being good at English has turned into a must-have skill—kind of like a social currency. As Pakistan tries to find its place in global markets and discussions, English has become more than just a way to communicate. It's a way to empower people, especially among the urban elite (Ahmad & Ali, 2021; Farooq & Arshad, 2021). But let's be real: the rise of English has some tricky implications for cultural identity and social equity.

British Colonial Era

The British colonial era set up this whole situation, where English has a lot more value compared to local languages like Urdu, Punjabi,

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Pashto, Sindhi, and Balochi (Ayres, 2009; Rahman, 2021). After gaining independence, English became a symbol of prestige and access to power. While this has helped create a bilingual elite and connect Pakistan to the world, it's also widened the gaps between urban and rural areas, and between those who study in public vs. private schools (Butt & Kazmi, 2021; Hassan & Raza, 2022). Now, let's talk about the youth. English is playing a huge role in shaping their identities and dreams. Many young Pakistanis see being fluent in English as essential for doing well in school, landing good jobs, and even traveling abroad (Bukhari & Gul, 2020; Ghafoor & Younas, 2024). Social media, online classes, and global entertainment just keep pushing English to the forefront. But here's the thing: while this trend can empower some, it also leaves behind those who can't access quality English education, often because of money issues (Channa, 2020; Bashir & Qureshi, 2023).And we can't forget the economic angle. In today's job market—especially in areas like IT, business, and diplomacy—knowing English isn't just a nice-to-have; it's basically a requirement (Ali & Zahid, 2022; Shamim & Rashid, 2019). So, English becomes this gatekeeper for better-paying jobs, which just reinforces existing class divides. But the pressure is real. Many students and families pour tons of time and resources into learning English, sometimes neglecting their native languages and cultural ties in the process (Haider, 2018; Rahman, 2021).

English & Nationalism:

On top of that, the dominance of English is shifting how nationalism and identity are talked about in Pakistan. It's the language of science and international affairs, and it's often linked with being modern and progressive. But this also raises red flags about cultural loss and the overshadowing of local languages (Canagarajah, 2013; Crystal, 2019). There's this ongoing struggle between wanting to embrace English for global relevance and the need to protect local languages for the sake of cultural continuity. That's a tough problem for educators, policymakers, and communities to tackle. So, to wrap things up, English's widespread influence in Pakistan is like a double-

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edged sword. It can open doors for social mobility and global engagement, but it also deepens inequalities and creates a hierarchy of languages. This research aims to dig into just how much English has shaped social change in Pakistan—is it a force for transformation, a source of division, or maybe a bit of both?

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the socio-economic impact of English language proficiency in Pakistan.
2. To examine the relationship between English language and access to education and employment.
3. To explore the cultural and identity-related implications of English language use.
4. To investigate the regional and class disparities in English language acquisition.
5. To propose policy recommendations for inclusive language education in Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. How has the English language influenced social change in Pakistan?
2. What is the relationship between English proficiency and socio-economic mobility?
3. How do cultural identity and social perceptions shift due to English language use?
4. What are the regional and class-based disparities in English language education?
5. How can language policy in Pakistan be reformed to reduce inequality?

Literature Review

Historical Context and Colonial Legacy

The prominence of English in Pakistan is deeply rooted in its colonial past. Post-independence, English retained its status as an official language, symbolizing power and prestige (Rahman, 2002). This colonial legacy has perpetuated socio-linguistic hierarchies, where

English proficiency often correlates with socio-economic advancement (Shamim, 2008).

English and Socio-Economic Mobility

English proficiency is frequently linked to better employment opportunities and higher income levels in Pakistan. Studies indicate that English-speaking professionals often earn significantly more than their non-English-speaking counterparts (British Council, 2013). This economic advantage underscores the role of English as a tool for socio-economic mobility (Mahboob, 2009).

Educational Disparities and Language Medium

The medium of instruction in educational institutions significantly impacts learning outcomes. English-medium schools, often catering to urban elites, provide better resources and opportunities, while Urdu or regional language-medium schools lag in quality (Coleman, 2010). This disparity contributes to the widening educational gap between different socio-economic groups (Shamim, 2008).

Language Policy and Planning

Pakistan's language policies have been critiqued for favoring English and Urdu at the expense of regional languages. The lack of a comprehensive multilingual policy has led to the marginalization of indigenous languages (Mansoor, 2005). Efforts by the National Language Promotion Department aim to promote Urdu, but challenges persist in implementing inclusive language policies (National Language Promotion Department, 2023).

Identity Formation and Cultural Implications

Language plays a crucial role in identity construction. English language learning influences the identity of Pakistani youth, often leading to hybrid identities that blend local and global cultures (Sultan, 2022). However, this can also result in identity conflicts, as individuals navigate between traditional values and modern influences (Norton, 2013).

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Digital Media and Language Evolution

The rise of digital media has transformed language use among Pakistani youth. Social media platforms have introduced new linguistic forms, including code-switching and the use of emojis, impacting formal writing skills (Sikandar, 2025). While digital platforms offer opportunities for language learning, they also pose challenges in maintaining language standards (Malik & Qureshi, 2024).

Preservation of Indigenous Languages

Many indigenous languages in Pakistan are endangered due to the dominance of English and Urdu. Efforts to preserve these languages include promoting mother-tongue education and documenting linguistic heritage (Ahmed, 2023). However, these initiatives require robust policy support and community engagement (Shahzad, 2025).

English Language Teaching and Professional Development

Organizations like the Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers, or SPELT for short, really do a lot to boost English teaching standards in the country. They run professional development programs aimed at giving teachers the modern skills they need to tackle the challenges of teaching English in various settings (SPELT, 2023).

Socio-Economic Opportunities in Pakistan

Unfortunately, there are still noticeable gender gaps in accessing English education in Pakistan. The socio-cultural norms often hold women back from getting the education they deserve, which limits their English skills and, ultimately, their chances for better socio-economic opportunities (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). To really make a difference, we need specific interventions and inclusive policies that tackle these issues head-on. And speaking of inclusivity, there are also regional movements pushing for recognition of languages like Punjabi. The Punjabi Language Movement is one such example, emphasizing the need for linguistic rights and the preservation of culture (Punjabi Language Movement, 2023).

English and Gender Biasness

And let's not overlook the role of English in gender dynamics. Recent studies by Fatima and Aslam (2021) suggest that if women can attain English literacy, it can really empower them—giving them more autonomy and a voice in civic matters, especially in conservative or rural areas. But the truth is, access isn't uniform. Many women still face multiple hurdles like poverty, patriarchy, and

Methodology

This study takes a bit of a mixed-methods approach. By combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques, it aims to get a good grasp on how the English language influences social change in Pakistan. The idea is to explore all the different angles and really understand how English plays a role in shaping society there.

Research Design

We carried out a cross-sectional survey. We also held some semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions—those FGDs. By mixing these different methods, we really aimed to boost the reliability and get deeper insights into the data. It's all about looking at things from multiple angles**.**

Population and Sample

The population included:

- University students,
- School teachers,
- Policy experts,
- Urban and rural residents.

A **stratified random sampling** technique was used to select 1,200 respondents from all four provinces, stratified by:

- Age (15–60 years),
- Education level (primary to postgraduate),
- Sector (public/private).

For qualitative data, 25 interviews and 4 FGDs (each with 8–10 participants) were conducted.

Data Collection Tools

- **Questionnaires**: Structured with Likert scale items measuring attitudes towards English language and perceived social mobility.
- **Interview Protocols**: Designed to probe deeper into perceptions, cultural conflicts, and identity shifts.
- **Audio Recordings**: For qualitative analysis (transcribed for coding).

Variables

Independent Variable: English language proficiency
Dependent Variables:

- Employment opportunities
- Social mobility
- Access to digital technologies
- Identity transformation

Control variables included gender, locality (urban/rural), and socio-economic background.

Tools and Techniques of Data Estimation

To analyze the data effectively, the following tools and techniques were employed:

Method	Purpose	Software Used
Descriptive statistics	Frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations	SPSS v26
Inferential statistics	Correlation and regression analysis	SPSS v26
Thematic coding	For qualitative interviews	NVivo
Factor analysis	To identify clusters in variables (e.g., identity, access, aspirations)	AMOS

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Method	Purpose	Software Used
ANOVA	To test variance in impact across demographic groups	SPSS v26

Regression Equation**:**

The model used:

$Y=\beta_0+\beta_1(EngPro)+\beta_2(Edu)+\beta_3(Region)+\beta_4(Gender)+\varepsilon$

Where:

- YYY = Social change indicator
- $EngProEngProEngPro$ = English proficiency
- $EduEduEdu$ = Educational level
- $RegionRegionRegion$ = Urban/Rural
- $GenderGenderGender$ = Male/Female

Results and Interpretation

Descriptive Analysis

- **78%** of urban respondents associated English with professional success.
- **66%** of rural respondents lacked access to quality English instruction.
- **72%** of students saw English as crucial to global connectivity.

Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	p-value
English Proficiency	0.638**	0.045	0.000
Education Level	0.324**	0.038	0.000
Region (Urban=1)	0.289*	0.056	0.013
Gender (Male=1)	0.148	0.048	0.093

($**p < 0.01$; $*p < 0.05$)

Interpretation

- **English proficiency** has a strong and statistically significant effect on social change.

- **Education** enhances the effect of English, indicating complementarity.
- **Urban dwellers** benefit more from English access than rural ones.
- **Gender** has a weaker but still visible impact; women face more barriers to English access.

Thematic Findings

- **Identity Shift**: Urban youth exhibit hybrid identities, adopting Western cultural elements.
- **Digital Divide**: English proficiency aids in navigating digital platforms and accessing global knowledge.
- **Cultural Tension**: Rural participants express fear of cultural erosion due to English dominance.

Conclusion

This study concludes that English language proficiency plays a pivotal role in facilitating social change in Pakistan. It serves as a powerful tool for:

- **Economic mobility**,
- **Educational advancement**,
- **Digital inclusion**, and
- **Cultural hybridization**.

However, the benefits are **not equitably distributed**. Rural, female, and economically disadvantaged groups face systemic barriers to English acquisition. Moreover, while English promotes global integration, it also introduces identity conflicts and marginalizes indigenous languages.

Policy Recommendations

Inclusive Language Policy

- Integrate English as a second language from **primary level**, but not at the expense of **regional languages**.
- Promote **bilingual curricula** that respect local identities.

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Teacher Training and Infrastructure

- Train English teachers especially in **rural areas**.
- Provide **digital learning resources** (e.g., audio lessons, mobile apps) for underprivileged communities.

Bridging Urban-Rural Gap

- Establish **community-based language centers** in rural and semi-urban areas.
- Partner with **NGOs** to deliver mobile English learning programs.

Gender-Sensitive Approaches

- Develop English language policies that **empower women**, especially through **digital platforms** and **female-only learning spaces**.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Form a **Language Policy Implementation Board (LPIB)** to evaluate the impact of language reforms on social outcomes.
- Use data analytics to **track performance** and **adapt curricula** accordingly.

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