The ambivalent role of Urdu and English in multilingual Pakistan: a Bourdieusian study

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Abstract
Pakistan, one of the eight countries comprising South Asia, has more than 212.2 million people, making it the world’s fifth most populous country after China, India, USA, and Indonesia. It has also the world’s second-largest Muslim population. Eberhard et al. (Ethnologue: languages of the world, SIL International, 2020) report 77 languages used by people in Pakistan, although the only two official languages are Urdu and English. After its Independence from the British colonial rule in 1947, it took much deliberation for the country to make a shift from its monolingual Urdu orientation to a multilingual language policy in education in 2009. This entailed a shift from the dominant Urdu language policy for the masses (and English exclusively reserved for elite institutions), to a gradual and promising change that responded to the increasing social demand for English and for including regional languages in the curriculum. Yet English and Urdu dominate the present policy and exclude regional non-dominant languages in education that themselves are dynamic and unstable, and restructured continually due to the de facto multilingual and plurilingual repertoire of the country. Using Bourdieu’s (Outline of a theory of practice Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977a, The economics of linguistic exchanges. Soc Sci Inform 16:645–668, 1977b, The genesis of the concepts of habitus and field. Sociocriticism 2:11–24 1985, Language and symbolic power Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991) conceptualization of habitus, this study analyzes letters to the editor published between 2002–2009 and 2018–2020 in a leading English daily of Pakistan. The analysis unveils the linguistic dispositions that are discussed in the letters and their restructuring through market forces, demonstrating a continuity between the language policy discourse and public aspirations. The findings also indicate the ambivalences towards Urdu and English in relation to nationalistic ideologies, modernity and identity.

Keywords Multilingual education policy · Habitus · Pakistan · Letters to the editor
Introduction

In the multilingual global South, though the dominant languages enjoy a certain hierarchy, the symbolic value of the regional languages remains in constant flux across different domains. This is certainly the case of Pakistan. People in Pakistani society in general are linguistically diverse, and while one language represents their ethnolinguistic identity, others are incorporated in everyday living for business transactions, official matters, religious practices, entertainment, and education, indicating that no one language is sufficient for meeting all the communicative requirements across various social situations. In education, for example, both English and Urdu are important. Parents grant more capital to English for its access to employment, a modern identity, information channels, and the global economy, but for their children Urdu cultivates and nurtures local, cultural, and societal bonds, and for girls it even symbolizes familial values (Ashraf, 2008). With 77 living languages, of which only these two (i.e., Urdu and English) are dominant, Pakistan’s language policy has often been presented with ideological conflicts, the most salient of which was the Urdu and Bengali conflict concluding in the separation of East Pakistan from West in 1971 as a sovereign state—now Bangladesh. In order to theorize these multilingual identities, one needs to be conscious of the unique South Asian linguistic practices, where, in the words of Canagarajah, (2004) “the self is composed of multiple subjectivities that are derived by heterogeneous codes, registers and discourses found in the society, with unequal status and power deriving from differential positioning in socioeconomic terms” (2004, p. 117). There is a conflict and tension within and between these subjectivities, and “in order to attain coherence and empowerment, the subject has to negotiate these competing identities and subject positions in relation to the changing discursive and material contexts” (p. 117). These processes often result in appropriation of top-down institutional policies. Moreover, the need of different languages for gains in different social domains gives rise to a multilinguals’ paradoxical view of nationhood, the assets they may be able to access in Pakistani society (e.g., education, social connections), and the value of multilingualism in education. The present study sets out to examine these tensions and paradoxes as they are captured in published responses to language policy formation in Pakistan in the genre of letter to the editor.

Viewed from the perspective of French sociologist Bourdieu (1977a, b, 1985, 1991), people are influenced by a sense of value in determining the rules for their choices within the contexts and constraints of different social spaces or fields. Bourdieu called these dispositions *habitus*, which he defines as the “subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception and action” (1977a, p. 86). The Bourdieusian proviso that habitus is “subjective but not individual” signals a definitional tension between group and agent, macro and micro forces. Sociologist Loïc Wacquant, one of Bourdieu’s contemporary interpreters in the U.S., illuminates this tension by defining habitus as “deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them” (Wacquant, 2005, p. 316). Of these internalized systems and deposited lasting dispositions, the
linguistic habitus is a subset, acquired in determining the more valued language(s) in a socially defined context or, as Bourdieu calls it, market. The linguistic market defines the social conditions of acceptability, often reflected in accents and discursive resources employed by agents. The dominant language establishes the norm against which the prices of the other modes of expression, and the values of the various competences, are defined (Bourdieu, 1977b). Accordingly, standardized or legitimized national language(s) lend authority to certain languages that lower the value or market share of other languages, resulting in individuals developing their “linguistic sense of placement” (Salö, 2015), and aligning their linguistic practices accordingly. Agents’ development of this linguistic sense of placement, however, is considerably complex in multilingual settings. Bourdieu’s theorization was grounded in his experiences in France and Algeria. Other scholars working in the Global South have debated the applicability of Bourdieu’s theory in these other contexts, which are characterized, as Pakistan is, by much higher linguistic diversity than Bourdieu could have envisioned (see Moraru, 2016; Stroud, 2002; and Swigart, 2001). Among several theoretical extensions of habitus proposed in this discussion, scholars like Benson (2013, 2014) have felt the need to use the term multilingual habitus to capture the reality that agents’ linguistic utterances are regularly borrowed from more than one language. Other scholars like Lamb (2015) prefer the near-synonymous term plurilingual habitus so as to emphasize even more fluid shifts whereby agents borrow from different languages in their repertoire without seemingly drawing clear-cut boundaries between languages (see also Canagarajah, 2009). It is helpful for the goals of the present research to consider a multilingual or plurilingual habitus, as it helps envision agents in multilingual markets as adopting different systems of dispositions in their socialization to compete against inequity or for access—a process enhanced with the forces of globalization and digitalization.

In this study, I combine the perspectives of individual multilingual sensibilities and responses to heterogenous market forces to understand the metadiscourses of habitus as encapsulated in letters to the editor published in Dawn, a widely disseminated national newspaper, over the course of the 2000s. This was a critical period in Pakistan’s political history (Ashraf, 2014) as well as significant for being the time when Pakistan transitioned to its first multilingual education policy, promulgated in 2009. In past language policy scholarship, letters to the editor have been analyzed for the window they afford into language ideologies (e.g., Hiss, 2013). But letters to the editor, I argue, are also revealing of the habitus of those who have produced them: They not only can become data that help to understand how public voices enact the policy discourse, but they also encapsulate metadiscourses of habitus that an analyst can unpack. Therefore, in the present study I hope to show how these enactments of the policy discourse in Pakistani letters to the editor heighten our understanding of the mechanisms through which linguistic habitus functions in relation to language policy. I specifically address three research questions in my analysis: What are the certainties and ambivalences that (re)structure the linguistic habitus of multilingual Pakistani speakers as related to the heterogeneity of the market? What conceptualizations of the standardized national language, Urdu, are endorsed by people in Pakistan? How is education related to the values and forces of the various markets?
Given that habitus is multidimensional and constructed socio-historically, I first present Pakistan’s historical background. This section is followed by an overview of the theoretical orientations on the agency of habitus in multilingual settings. I then present the methodology. The analysis unveils the evolving process through which the writers of Dawn’s letters to the editor act, think, and make sense of the language policy and practices in relation to market values ascribed to languages. I end with a discussion of the findings and their implications.

**Pakistan’s historical background**

Forming the southern part of the Silk Road, what now is modern Pakistan has always been a site of connecting the East and the West through transmigration, intercultural contacts and semiotic systems that can be traced back to 500 BCE. From the Indus Valley Civilization of the Bronze Age to the present, the linguistic diversity of this region, with fluid shifts in codes, suggests linguistic dispositions influenced by the market values of different languages. For example, in 500 BCE, Sanskrit, very much like Latin in medieval Europe, was the typical literary and religious language, Prakrit and Pali were essentially the vernaculars and the spoken languages, and Old Iranian influenced Persian, Afghan, Kurdish and Ossetic languages (Lamberg-Karlovsky, 2002). In addition to the regional languages, foreign invasions inspired plurilingual practices. For example, Greek edicts, inscriptions, and coins bearing Greek scripts with Indo-Aryan language influences were in use even before Alexander’s advent in 327 BC till as late as the eighth century AD (Khalid et al., 2011). Similarly, scripts in Arwi (i.e., Tamil written in the Arabic script) were used in South India and Sri Lanka, reflecting a practice of mixing scripts and languages that continued from the eighth to nineteenth century (Alim, 1993). During the Mughal era that coincides with the Renaissance in Europe (1526–1540 and 1556–1857), literacy practices flourished in several local languages. Persian was an influential and official language, Arabic was the lingua franca, while amongst themselves the emperors used Turk (Rahman, 2002). This multilingual society dramatically shifted to a monolingual view with the British colonial movement, in just 90 years (1857–1947), creating a hierarchy of languages with English at the top, and introducing later nation-state single language policies which unleashed local reactionary movements and generated chauvinistic, exclusivist ideologies and communal tensions that went against local pluralism (Ashraf, 2018; Canagarajah & Ashraf, 2013). The onset of the British colonial movement also marked a shift from inclusion, acceptance, and tolerance to exclusion, less acceptance, and less tolerance of multilingualism.

After Independence from Britain in 1947, Pakistan designated Urdu its national language, and the inherited colonial English as official. This went against the grain of local multilingualism but promoted the birth of Pakistan in the nation-state era. The challenges for this two-language policy were not small, however, and they continue to be present to this date. For one, despite its lingua franca status across Pakistan and North India, Urdu is the mother tongue of only about 8% of the total population (Pakistan, 2001). Second, Urdu does not have the same linguistic capital as English (Ashraf, 2008; Shamim & Rashid, 2019), but dominates English in some
fields where it is ritualized, and where it confers unequal values to other languages. Every so often, its users are referred to as desi, i.e., an Urdu word with the pejorative meaning of “the local, lesser developed people,” perhaps a quality similar to what would be characterized as peasant or backward in western English contexts. In the long run, Urdu has been the medium of education in Pakistani elementary and secondary schools since Independence, but it has not replaced English in professional, higher or STEM education. Recently, the National Education Policy (2009) and the latest National Education Policy Framework (2018) have proposed a multilingual policy, starting from mother tongue (i.e., L1) as medium of instruction in early grades, and moving to Urdu and English (i.e., L2) at lower or higher secondary levels. This multilingual compartmentalized progression from early grades to higher secondary levels presents a system of regulation which shapes people’s linguistic sensibilities concerning normativity, acceptability, and appropriateness (see also Hanks, 2005).

**Theoretical framework**

**Viewing habitus in multilingual practices and education**

Bourdieu’s (1977a, 1977b, 1985, 1991) theory of habitus and its relatedness to field and market offer a tool to reconcile external social structures and subjective experiences. Hanks (2005) and Joseph (2020) chronicle how influential in his development of the theory was Aristotelian hexis, which combines intention and judgement, Merleau-Ponty’s corporeal habitus and chair, visible in the familiarity and immediacy of dispositions or embodiment, and Panofsky’s habits of mind, which involves the cultural production of what is taken as habitual action or practice, and which is sedimented in an individual’s subjectivity through social interaction. Bourdieu assumes that agents have an individual history which is shaped by education of their social milieu and by their collective history. As such, Bourdieusian theory and the construct of habitus with its two related notions of field and market are useful for the present purposes to investigate top-down and bottom-up language policy dynamics. His conceptualization of habitus functions with a generative principle of deliberate choices within the parameters of a social field forming the rules of the marketplace that render value and an instinctive, corporeal cognition to certain acts. As already mentioned, Bourdieu’s habitus refers to agents’ individual subjectivities and dispositions that are in fact not entirely individual but internalized and shared among members of a group or class when certain features of their habitus overlap (1977a; also Wacquant, 2005). He defines field as a social space in which agents take different positions that are determined by the historical process of occupancy, symbolic boundaries of constraints, the trajectories of the agents, and the habitus that is shaped by engagement (Hanks, 2005). Accordingly, the economic, educational, and artistic fields each have their own discursive features, rules, and laws, often overlapping in homologous fields. It follows that the linguistic marketplace regulates the value of a language in different fields. A study of habitus thus is an investigation into the processes in which the ingrained, and often unconscious aspects of
sociolinguistic behavior and the agency of individuals respond to language policy-making, for example in a complexly multilingual setting such as in Pakistan.

Recent studies have examined how habitus manifests in the relationships and commitments between languages, individuals, and communities, collaboratively subverting monolingual ideals (Lamb, 2015), or constructing heterogeneous, alternative, or illegitimate linguistic practices (Moraru, 2020). Scholars also draw attention to the functional multilingualism of social agents and their habitus in various contexts of interaction (Moore & Gajo, 2009; Salö, 2020). For example, Moore and Gajo (2009) place analytical weight on multilingual agents, who find themselves at various points along a situational continuum; various positionings on this continuum induce alternative choices and social adjustments, particular language modes e.g., the choice of one language or the possibility of code-switching, and endorsing different identities as a speaker e.g., a monolingual, a bilingual or a learner identity, all within the same conversation. Agents’ multilingual sensibility and habitus allow them to negotiate different hierarchies of valuation, and these hierarchies contribute to the creation of social capital i.e., accrued or virtual resources that influence the development of durable networking and social mobility (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), and to the (re)production of identity. Discussing Eastern societies and especially Arabic language and identity, Suleiman (2014) cautions against a reductive view of national identity, and for the recognition of implicit ethnolinguistic and religious bonds that exist in pluralism. He includes both the symbolic and instrumental roles of languages in the formation of national identity, viewing the former as a construct of group boundary and the latter in its communicative function. The Bourdieusian theory of habitus also offers a profitable vantage point into the study of dynamic language policy in the sociohistorical context of South Asia and Pakistan, where different languages either gain or are granted legitimacy and symbolic capital, e.g., in establishing national identity, cultural capital, or medium of education. Such an investigation into the restructuring of the linguistic and cultural habitus in multilingual settings can illuminate the social phenomena in which the symbolic and instrumental roles of language in a repertoire of identities (Joseph, 2012) constantly shift, negotiate, and renegotiate new social identities in the presence of conflicting nationalism and polarization.

Bourdieu (1977b) regarded the education system as a crucial object of struggle for its authority to legitimize certain language(s) or varieties. Ethnographers of education studying non-Western multilingual contexts extend the conceptualization of habitus to study multilingual contexts, and individuals who embody either monolingual or multilingual dispositions according to the rules of the market (e.g., Benson, 2013; Gogolin, 2002; L’nyavskiy-Ekelund & Siiner, 2017). In her studies about multilingual schooling in Africa and Asia, international and comparative education scholar Carolyn Benson notes that viewing language from the perspective of bounded entities, preserves the dominance of certain languages and “prevents educators from understanding the linguistic, cognitive and cultural resources that learners bring with them to the classroom” (2013, p. 15). In linguistically diverse contexts like Africa, Benson (2013) reminds us that the very presence of functional multilingualism authenticates an unquestioned linguistic habitus in a place unique to a given market, but pervaded by assumptions of a unifying language. She draws attention
to the unrealistic and imperfect ideologies of (a) single or dominant language(s) as the solution, for being “contrary to the nature of multilingual societies” (Milligan et al., 2020, p. 119). She urges stakeholders at the policy stage to engage in careful and systemic planning at curriculum levels, so as to avoid creating a system that represents a tunnel vision of the education system or neglecting other curricular content in favor of just one language (Benson, 2014). In South Asian countries, as Khubchandani’s (2008) encyclopedic essay informs us, the gap between ideal language and language in function is often quite wide because the educational institutions usually adopt a minimalist approach “with vague commitments and qualifying clauses which are, in turn, a result of negotiating with contradictory agendas of market forces, serving the interests of the elite, and succumbing to the demands of ethnic pressures” (p. 377). Given that an investigation into habitus in itself responds to the social formation of speakers, their dispositions to include language(s) in certain ways, and the embodiment of values granted to the language(s) in different markets, the distinction between monolingual and multilingual dispositions is all the more useful in South Asian and hence Pakistan’s language policy context, where more than one language have had varying degrees of linguistic capital in homologous fields sociohistorically leading to social reproduction of inequality.

Letters to the editor in language policy research

Language policy debates have found an outlet in the letters to the editors’ section in newspapers as some previous studies indicate (e.g., Fitzsimmons-Doolan, 2009; Georgiou, 2011). Yang’s (2017) longitudinal analysis of a Korean newspaper corpus sought to understand the discourses of national identity and struggle of language choice between Korean and Japanese. This researcher showed that newspapers serve as public institutions to disseminate facts, but also as a discursive venue to interpret facts. In the United States, Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2009) analyzed a newspaper corpus in order to evaluate the pluralist narrative in language policies that promoted multilingualism in relation to immigrant discourses in Arizona at the time. As a genre, letters to the editor offer opinions by non-professional writers (Young, 2013), and they are published only after attaining the editorial approval for their arguments (Nip, 2006). Nevertheless, they also offer a deliberative form of democracy (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2001) in its resistant narrative (Ashraf, 2014). In this context, worth mentioning is Georgiou’s (2011) study of newspaper texts from letters, editorials, cartoons, opinion texts, and news texts, all responding to the policy of standardization and transliteration to Cypriot Greek in Cyprus. In her analysis, the policy signified top-down discourse going against the grain of the changing sociolinguistic realities of the society, and she found the responses represented refusal to endorse standardization. Georgiou’s study advocates for consideration of lay ideas in policy decisions to avoid undesired outcomes. Hiss (2013) analyzed Norwegian letters to the editor and short opinions to examine how language ideologies about Sámi and Norwegian were publicly debated through newspaper texts. Hiss’s corpus analysis reveals how writers of the letters anchored their evaluations and stances on language ideologies, essentially expressing judgements of other people’s behaviors.
As this literature suggests, letters to the editor are valuable data not only to understand responses to top-down language policy but also because they can expose “a nation’s ideals” (Hart, 2018, p. 24), thus making multiyear investigations of how discourses are structured and beliefs performed in them worthwhile. In the present study, I treat the genre as gleaning data that help to understand public voices’ metadiscourses of linguistic habitus. The Pakistani letters to the editor I analyze heighten our understanding of the mechanisms through which linguistic habitus functions in relation to language policy.

Method

The present data consist of 64 letters to the editor on the topic of the state of education in Pakistan, published in Dawn, the oldest and largest English-language daily newspaper in Pakistan. Of them, 61 were published between 2002 and 2009. They come from a corpus of 1881 Dawn letters created by Ashraf (2014). First, a stratified random sampling strategy was applied, whereby all letters to the editor published on the 8th to 15th of the months of April, May, and June from 2002 to 2009 were collected. Next, the topic identification (i.e., deciding which letters discussed themes relevant to the present study) was done via automated corpus analyses followed by manual analyses. Table 1 lists the results of the searches, which took place as follows. In the first stage of automated analyses, the corpus analysis tool SEM-TAG in Wmatrix assigned semantic tags to words after the Parts of Speech (POS) tagging, giving a general-sense field of words from a lexicon of single words and list of multi-word combinations (Rayson, 2008). The semantic tag of Education in general included words like education, teachers, students, schools, teaching, universities, etc. The subset of letters that addressed the medium of education and language(s) in function was identified automatically too. After the initial tagging, the automated analyses identified 78 letters. The next step of manual analyses involved reading each letter and excluding the ones which made only a passing reference to education or the language-in-education. This final step left a total of 61 letters, classified manually after inspecting automated semantic tags into three main themes: education and language, culture and language, and civic sense and language. Together the 61 letters contained discussions on medium of instruction, problem with the system, standard of education, teachers, comparison with regional languages, comparison with foreign countries or languages or education systems, culture, civic responsibility and solutions suggested. It is possible that the public opinion expressed by writers of letters to the editor on a given topic in this newspaper have changed since 2009. Therefore, I replicated the same exact methods and collected all letters in the Dawn published on the 8th to 15th of the months of April, May, and June from 2018 to 2020. Most letters (63) from this second dataset belonging to the domain of general education commented on school fees structure and online schooling after the COVID-19 pandemic, and thus were excluded from further analysis. Three letters between 2018 and 2020 were on the topic of the state of education and language in Pakistan and were retained. (They did not, however, show any changes over time and
| Manual coding                  | Themes                                                                 | Title of letter                                      | Date of publication |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Education and language         | System of Education & medium of instruction                           | Language question in education                       | 19-Apr-07           |
|                                | Medium of education                                                   | Educating people                                     | 5-May-07            |
|                                | English, Urdu or mother tongue                                        | Mind your language                                    | 16-Jun-07           |
|                                | Socioeconomic disadvantage; high fees                                 | Education going nowhere                               | 19-Jun-07           |
|                                | Free education                                                        |                                                      |                     |
|                                | Private schools and admission                                          | CSS exam 2007                                         | 15-Apr-07           |
|                                | Quality of teachers and teacher absenteeism                           | Teaching in mother tongue (ii)                       | 20-Apr-04           |
|                                | Teacher training and qualifications                                    | Role of teacher                                       | 19-Apr-04           |
|                                | Teacher role expectations                                              | Expensive education                                   | 20-May-03           |
|                                | Prejudice among English speaking                                      | The textbook muddle                                   | 14-May-03           |
|                                | Issues of learning English vs disadvantages of not knowing English     | Promoting education in Pakistan                       | 18-Apr-03           |
|                                | Textbooks: contents, errors, quality, distribution                    | English as medium of instruction                      | 17-Apr-03           |
|                                | Federal and provincial budget vs. lack of support                      | Education made too costly                             | 19-Jun-02           |
|                                | Literacy ratios and practices and languages                            | CSS reforms                                           | 19-May-02           |
|                                | Civil Superior Services                                                | Correction                                            | 18-May-02           |
|                                | Employment; Curriculum and assessment                                  | A bad experience                                      | 16-Apr-02           |
|                                |                                                                        | Language question in education (ii)                   | 17-May-07           |
|                                |                                                                        | Language question in education (i)                    | 1-Apr-07            |
|                                |                                                                        | Re: Teaching in mother-tongue (ii)                    | 17-May-07           |
|                                |                                                                        | Teaching in mother-tongue (i)                         | 18-Apr-04           |
|                                |                                                                        | Courses at Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur      | 18-Apr-04           |
|                                |                                                                        | Re: Equivalence certificate                           | 15-May-03           |
|                                |                                                                        | Re: Medium of instruction                             | 20-Apr-03           |
|                                |                                                                        | Textbooks not available                               | 17-Apr-03           |
|                                |                                                                        | Medium of instruction                                 | 17-Apr-03           |
| Manual coding | Themes | Title of letter | Date of publication |
|---------------|--------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Culture and language | Multilingual and cultural practices | Another side of Singapore | 16-Apr-04 |
| Mixing of languages | | Literature and vulgarity | 16-Jun-03 |
| Television media including state media language | | Crack down on cable operators | 14-Jun-02 |
| Comparison to other cultures | | PTV’s Language | 18-Apr-02 |
| Literature and vulgarity | | Speaking power | 15-Apr-02 |
| Literatures and local translations | | Majaaz postage stamp | 20-May-08 |
| Loss of literature and values in the generation | | Amir Hamza in the land of Qaf | 19-Apr-08 |
| Speech and power | | Languages: creating a new reality? | 18-Jun-07 |
| Hierarchy of English and speakers of English | | One language | 18-May-07 |
| Cable television and foreign culture | | Urdu & Hindi: different, yet similar | 14-Apr-07 |
| Having one language; language vs. diversity | | Allama Iqbal in Iran | 6-Jun-06 |
| Local languages and identity; | | The language barrier | 19-Jun-04 |
| Urdu not promoted | | Urdu as Punjab’s mother-tongue i | 18-May-04 |
| Urdu in relation to other languages e.g., Hindi, Punjabi; | | Punjab’s mother-tongue | 19-May-04 |
| Local languages, power and elites; | | | |
| Language barriers; hierarchy of English; | | Re: Punjab’s mother-tongue | 15-May-04 |
| Pragmatic view of English; | | Sindhi transmission | 19-May-03 |
| Standardizing education | | East versus West | 17-Jun-03 |
| | | Urdu as Punjab’s mother tongue | 10-May-04 |
| | | Karachi and Sindh | 10-Apr-18 |
### Table 1 (continued)

| Manual coding                  | Themes                                           | Title of letter                  | Date of publication |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Civic sense and language       | Civic language                                 | Where the tail wags the body     | 18-May-05           |
| Civic sense; responsibility    |                                                | Tribute to Khan sahib            | 17-Apr-07           |
| Knowledge of local culture;    |                                                | Call of conscience               | 5-May-09            |
| Metalinguistic awareness of    |                                                | Squash affairs                   | 15-May-05           |
| cultures and languages        |                                                | Manners of the well-bred         | 16-May-02           |
| Learning sports                |                                                | Why referendum                   | 17-Apr-02           |
|                                | Miscellaneous                                  | Keenjhar lake tragedy            | 16-Jun-03           |
|                                | Personalities                                  | A teacher remembered             | 17-Apr-05           |
|                                |                                                | Varsity chairs: an appraisal     | 19-May-09           |
|                                |                                                | Alistaire Cooke                  | 16-Apr-04           |
|                                |                                                | Musharraf’s option               | 18-May-07           |
|                                |                                                | Controversy over curricula       | 14-Apr-04           |
|                                |                                                | Technical education              | 15-Apr-04           |
|                                |                                                | The educational dilemma          |                     |
instead converged on the themes uncovered for the main corpus.) This yielded 64 letters in total for analysis in the present study.

In terms of genre, Pakistani letters to the editor have distinct patterns in content and length. They heavily rely on rhetorical questions, emotive language, and evaluative stance (Ashraf, 2014). With respect to discourses on education, an initial reading exhibited themes conveyed in linear, bi-directional, or even cyclical patterns employing linguistic features (e.g., modals, adjectives), or discourse styles (e.g., epistemic claims, stance, and indexicality). This subset of 64 letters revealed discourses on language attitudes and common values hinting linguistic dispositions as homogeneous, dynamic, or multilingual. For purpose of uncovering the mechanisms in which these sociolinguistic discourses are produced, this study combines a fine-grained analysis of linguistic and discourse features in interrelationship with the surrounding semiotic structure in the letters. This dual approach is well suited to understand the metadiscourses of theory and practice in the conceptualization of national language and language of education and how the restructuring habitus works in relation to the values and forces that endow them linguistic capital.

Before presenting the analyses and findings, it must be pointed out here that this study has its own limitations and merits. The data source is limited in certain ways. Firstly, the fact that the letters, as all letters to the editor, were edited before published bears on the trustworthiness of their representing the voice of the people. Secondly, the newspaper caters to an English-speaking sector in Pakistani society, despite its equally emphatic promotion of Urdu education and language. Nevertheless, within these constraints, the ensuing analysis is of a conversation between the actors in the center comprising of an English-speaking literate section of the population, who engage in dialogue on language and education, with the bureaucracy and the larger public. Although this English-speaking population is not a homogeneous group and is comprised of different linguistic and ethnic groups, it represents Pakistan’s diverse and literate population, who are directly influenced by the languages, and the education policies.

Analysis and findings

The following analysis functions at two levels: (a) it scrutinizes the unequal values ascribed to languages in the letters to the editor (henceforth LEs), and (b) it elucidates the evolving process through which the writers act, think, and make sense of contextualized practices in relation to different market forces in the multilingual ecology of Pakistan. Longer excerpts are numbered, and unnumbered additional excerpted LE language is offered as well, always italicized, to substantiate interpretations. In both cases, I have included the titles of the letter and the date of publication italicized in parenthesis. As can be seen in Table 1, some letter titles repeat, which were assigned a number by the newspaper Dawn and copied as they appeared in the newspaper. In few cases, I assigned a number to letters with similar title in the corpus in chronological order. The variation in themes and years offers a view into the “polymorphic spaces of unequal values and shifting boundaries” (Moore & Gajo, 2009, p. 140) in relation to national identity, education, and cultural identities.
The ambivalent role of Urdu and English in multilingual Pakistan:...

National identity is a construct often fashioned out of historical interpretations (Suleiman, 2014). In the LEs, internalized rules for the one nation-one state ideology prevail in the market for Urdu. Excerpts 1 through 3 below illustrate this theme.

1. Urdu has risen out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, and tastes of many generations of people spanning centuries and nobody should try to change this reality” (Languages creating a new reality/18-Jun-07)

2. It is no joke to replace the language of another origin with the language of another land. It only serves the all-powerful vested interests. Things are not the way they have been claimed... Urdu is the federal language of Pakistan. It can play a meaningful role by linking all of us—Sindhis, Punjabis, Baloch and Pathans—in a harmonious blend, keeping intact our cultures and languages. In this way, it becomes the symbol of our national identity, but one should refrain from allotting it the role of dictatorship. We had been victim of that psyche of monolingual imperialism in the recent past, in 1971. (Urdu as Punjab’s mother-tongue i/18-May-04)

3. We should all strive to make Pakistan a place where all languages can attain equal status, can flourish and grow without the danger of extinction. We hope the day arrives soon when these languages will become the source of earning and status for their respective communities (Urdu as Punjab’s mother-tongue ii/20-May-04)

National identity emerges as a market force that gains strength through Urdu and ‘nationalistic Islam.’ It is ritualized in the historical context of Independence in the fields of both nationhood and education, and at times celebrated in its comparison to Hindi (also in Re: Medium of instruction/20-Apr-03). Urdu and Hindi, identified as ‘Khari Boli’ or ‘Hindustani’ till the late nineteenth century, “are mutually understandable in spoken form but are written in very dissimilar style” (Urdu and Hindi: Different yet similar/14-Apr-07). They were standardized as two separate languages representing the Muslim and Hindu majority populations in a struggle for Independence under the British colonial rulers.

Urdu is the sole legitimate language for national identity, as the excerpts above illustrate, but outside the field of nationhood, it exists in harmony with other languages in the multilingual ecology, e.g., Punjabi, Sindhi, or Persian— even Hindi if it is not linked to the past (also in Urdu and Hindi: Different yet similar/14-Apr-07, Language question in education/19-Apr-07, Language question in education?17-May-07). The use of the perfect tense in relation to national identity in these letters intensifies the tension and contrast, unlike the use of modals in other letters that are open to diversity and homogeneity as way forward. In Examples 4 and 5 below, a marked shift from homogeneity to diversity is called for by the writers, and symbolic capital is structured in subjective judgements and appeals to logical reasoning through expressions like good for Pakistan and something that would lead to uniformity. They build a theme of common values

Urdu as the national language
in diversity, taking positions through epistemic claims by referring to actually occurring events, past incidents, and binary opposition (Ashraf, 2014).

4. Pakistan’s future is better served not by homogeneity but by diversity and unity. In future, the Punjabis should be able to speak Punjabi along with Urdu and English, while the Sindhi children should be capable of reading and writing in their own language while using Urdu and English at different levels. This linguistic and mental diversity will do more good for Pakistan than any simple prescriptions that lead to uniformity. (Re: Medium of instruction/20-Apr-03)

5. What is the Punjab score after 135 years of Urdu teaching? Before the partition the vernacular final examination required one of three languages: Punjabi, Urdu or Hindi, which was also the medium for other subjects (Language question in education i/19-Apr-07).

The social value of a language or languages is in their relationship to all the other linguistic products in the market, and this determines their distinctive value (Bourdieu, 1977b, p. 654). To Bourdieu the effect of any new experience is integrated into the experiences already shaping the habitus in the form of classifying and generating schemes (ibid. p. 661). In this sense, Urdu is viewed by many of the LE writers in relativistic differences with other languages in education, shedding light on how one language may gain both meaning and value through the complex emergence of historical, social, and economic conditions, and yet that same one language in synergy with those conditions may grant that place to another language in a different market thereby viewing languages in a continuum. The writers’ work of positioning the self and others through strategies of alignment, dissociation and confrontation constructs ideological language boundaries as Hiss (2013) demonstrates in the case of Sámi and Norwegian in Tromsø. In contrast, in the case of Pakistan a look at the process of restructuring habitus that evolved through actions, thought-process, and perceptions of the sociohistorical and economic development over years unveils how LEs deconstruct notions of national unity for diversity. Consequently, the analysis unfolds the shifts in the linguistic capital that Urdu affords the writers, by being embodied in social journeys that are a reflection of the lived trajectories of individuals and societies advancing from the one-nation, one-state ideology to a more emancipated view. Though in the promotion of homogeneity and uniformity, LEs also tap into the untold narrative of the marginalized languages in the national discourse.

The unequal linguistic capital afforded by English vs. Urdu

The unequal linguistic capital accumulation of both English and Urdu in Pakistani education (Haidar, 2019; Shamim & Rashid, 2019) is delineated in positive and problematic accounts in the LEs. In excerpt 6, the author engages in the public debate through an emotional personal experience.
6. I had the opportunity to teach physics to a matriculation class in an English-medium school for a few months. To my astonishment, the students were learning every topic, including pure technical and science topics, by rote. ... as English was medium of instruction from class 1, the students were not able to develop writing ability and, as a result, took recourse to learning by rote. And both teachers and parents encourage this mode of learning to enable the students to get good marks. (Medium of instruction/17-Apr-03)

The use of emotive words and the personal stance in 6 plays a role in dismantling the popularity of English medium schools but also throws light on the complex interrelationship of both English and Urdu in “learning.” The absence of knowledge itself and an ambivalence towards introducing English from class one is evoked in students’ inability to develop writing skills. This is also a microcosm of practice guided by a set of beliefs and assumptions that undergird success in the field by identifying the stakes at play, as actors engage in a language game in which ends are pursued with certain discursive resources according to established guidelines (Bourdieu, 1985). In the LEs, the (re)production of social inequality is strikingly noticeable in the linguistic capital of English, which outweighs that of Urdu. The mechanisms of redressing inequality assume the introduction of English in education should happen at an early age i.e., preferably before the age of 10, from primary school and up (The Language Barrier/19-Jun-04 & Teaching in Mother Tongue ii/17-May-07) as established in scientific research, lingua franca of the whole world status, a shared legacy of the subcontinent, and used in India as an asset (The Language Barrier/19-Jun-04). On the other hand, the value of Urdu is largely inscribed in expressions of affinity e.g., mother tongue, a federal, national and regional language (Sindhi Translation/19-May-03; Re: Medium of Instruction/20-Apr-03), leading to better understanding and discouraging rote learning (Our educational standards/20-Jun-03 & Medium of Instruction i/17-Apr-03). Urdu is also situated in certain boundaries of time and space, where it is taught in government-run schools (Teaching in Mother Tongue i/18-Apr-04), and was a medium of education before Independence (Language Question in Education i/19-Apr-07). Some letters discursively express attitudes and sets of beliefs through implicit binaries. For example, in negative contexts of controversy over the medium of education, as an apt choice with which no sane person would disagree, centered in scientific research, and which would lead to better education. Modals like will, need to, should, must be, and have to are emotively supported in clauses that point to the consequences of the other language in schools, are also illustrative of the values that are at stake in LEs, as in excerpts 7 and 8.

7. If needed, the medium of instruction should be Urdu so that the students can understand better what they are being taught. (Our educational standard/20-Jun-03)

8. On the controversy about English and Urdu as medium of instruction, no sane person will disagree with having the mother tongue as the medium of instruction (East vs. West/17-Jun-03)
The linguistic and discourse features in the *Dawn*’s LEs further shed light on the sets of beliefs and assumptions that underpin the social worlds of the agents. In 7 and 8 readers are invited to share the authors’ stance through attributive adjectives, e.g., over the fees structure as *unjust demands of the so-called prestigious English medium schools* (*Education made too costly/19-Jun-02*), and over the quality of textbooks or teaching of English in these schools (*The textbook muddle/14-May-03, Expensive education/20-May-03*). In other instances, predicative adjectives are employed in strategies of persuasion to position English in contexts of development, employment, internationalism, and globalization located *around every street corner* (*Correction!/18-May-02* going to which students take pride in (*East vs. West/17-Jun-03*), and which are considered the best (*East vs. West/17-Jun-03*).

With the unequal linguistic capital endowed to both the dominant languages, agents with the most symbolic power impose their practices as more valuable by making the laws operate to their advantage, thereby rendering them illegitimate in other markets (Bourdieu, 1991). We also see that in the market of education, non-dominant languages are largely excluded, which as Benson (2013) notes serves “to impose monolingualism on multilingual societies, disregarding the cognitive and linguistic experiences and development of learners who speak NDLs [i.e., non-dominant languages]” (p. 288). This heterogeneity of the linguistic marketplace of Pakistan in the LEs uncovers the most generally hidden deep structures of the social worlds, the mechanisms of the production of inequality, and the transformation of local and global identities (Bourdieu, 1989).

**Linguistic habitus and the socioeconomics of education**

Economic capital plays a large role in the individual’s capacity to enter the labor market, but in the LEs national ideologies are also subverted in this market. The description of schools is often framed in the binaries of rich and poor, where the socioeconomic perspective contributes to the flux in the linguistic identities. This is heightened in powerful assertions casting one group as advanced and the other as *desi* or ‘backward.’ Capital functions in relation to a field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), and agents’ dispositions are modified in relation to the field (Salö, 2019), which LE excerpts 9 through 11 exemplify. Here the writers reconstruct Urdu’s relatively high symbolic value in the field of nationhood to that of a disadvantaged social class, that is not functionally literate and is unable to access private English medium schools. Below the LE depictions of a disadvantaged, functionally illiterate social class are polarized and reflect an explicit, strongly-worded ideology of social and economic stratification.

9. This system is class-based—one for the well-off people who send their children to high-level English-medium schools and one for the toiling masses whose children go to poorly-organized and poorly-equipped desi schools, where they get no idea how much science has progressed. (*Promoting education in Pakistan/18-Apr-03*)
10. A person with an income of Rs10,000 per month and with four school-going children would have to beg, borrow or resort to unfair means to meet the unjust demands of the so-called prestigious English medium schools. (Education made too costly/19-Jun-02)

11. The public schools are in a pathetic state and it is quite sad to see their dilapidated condition. (Educating people/5-May-07)

The disadvantaged social class theme is also built in linear and bi-directional fashion in many other letters, such as Expensive education/20-May-03; Teaching in mother tongue i/18-Apr-04; A bad experience/16-Apr-02; The language barrier/19-Jun-04, Language question in education/19-Apr-07, Language question in education/17-May-07; Education going nowhere/19-Jun-07, etc. For Urdu-medium students, English-medium schooling implies a foreign or (non) national identity. Consequently, local identities are viewed in these LEs as an undesirable feature of non-progressive Urdu-medium public schools. In a continuity between the so-called prestigious English medium school philosophy and the bourgeoisie requirement of the school, exclusion of nondominant languages and cultural values is perceived as desirable in LE (see also Lamb, 2015). This sense of relational thinking is activated in the class-based discussion of inclusion and exclusion through different linguistic and discourse strategies. For example, the use of epistemic claims lends a sense of credibility to this narrative of English that divides people in two groups, one that speaks English, and one that doesn’t and that throughout all these years has remained an elite language (Teaching in Mother Tongue i/18-Apr-04); English is a foreign language not understood by 60% uneducated population who cannot be taught in English, as they can’t even speak the national language (Medium of Instruction ii/18-Apr-03). It is claimed that less than 2% [Pakistanis] speak English (Teaching in Mother Tongue i/18-Apr-04), while the rural population does not understand a word in English (PTV’s language/18-Apr-02), and many are not able to spell their name in English (Education going nowhere/19-Jun-07). One needs to be conscious of the fact that despite the fees and issues related to the quality of education, the growth of school enrolment in private English medium has increased in both rural and urban areas in Pakistan. It would be incorrect, therefore, to assume that in socioeconomic disadvantage these writers lean towards seeing Urdu as more valuable. Instead, the occurrence of the medium of education debate in these letters as perpetuating socioeconomic asymmetries demands a reading that is a bid for inclusion by what is suggested in a letter: bridging the gap between the rulers and the ruled (The Language Barrier/19-Jun-04; also Language Question in Education ii/17-May-07).

The socioeconomic classification also emerged in LEs through commentaries on the relevance of Civil Superior Services (CSS). This is a Pakistani test for bureaucratic jobs that examines the candidates’ English writing skill through an essay ranging between 4000 and 5000 words. These LE writers see the CSS as based on wrong premises, unfairly being a test of their writing speed and wrongly judging the students’ writing skills in presenting relevant, solid and logical developments of ideas in excellent English (CSS Exam 2007/15-Apr-07; CSS Papers 13-Jun-19) instead
of decision-making and leadership qualities (CSS reforms/19-May-02). Excerpt 12 illustrates this negative appraisal of the CSS.

12. About 95 per cent of students fail either in the English essay or English precis and composition paper. In the latter paper, many candidates fail by just one or two marks. (CSS Papers/13-Jun-19)

Irrespective of the skills demanded in CSS candidacy, excellent literacy practices in English carve membership in this select national policy-making group. The value of English literacy as an elite marker limits the role of Urdu language in the bureaucracy, and also positions it distantly from the larger public for whom policy is designed. By defining what is included and what is excluded, and what is silenced and marginalized, in the CSS candidacy, this theme in the LEs offers a classic example of the kind of elitist education systems that Bourdieu’s theorization of inequality and power centers on. This resonates with the linguistic capital of Urdu, a language that gains value in the constructs of nationhood and national identity but loses in the complex space of education, where LE writers identify Urdu without English with marginalization and socioeconomic disadvantage.

It must be noted that there is consistency in the official policy discourse (e.g., Policy Framework, 2018, p. 3; Policy, 2009, p. 27.) and the LE public discourse here. Presenting the vision for the future, the National Education Policy document explains the gap between the Urdu and English schooling: “the rich send their children to private run English medium schools which offer foreign curricula and examination systems; the public schools enrol those who are too poor to do so” (2009, p. 16). Similarly, in parents’ belief that English education will help their children’s prospects, there is harmony in both official and public discourses, as writers argue that Urdu be adopted as medium of instruction and English to be taught as a compulsory subject to improve the quality of education (Medium of instruction/17-Apr-03); and that English should serve as medium of instruction, regional languages as compulsory language subjects, to promote harmony and diversity and match it with international standards (Medium of instruction i/18-Apr-03). This lack of a unified linguistic market reverberates with findings on parents’ choices for both the languages English and Urdu in schooling, as they juggle between the two dominant languages and worldviews (Ashraf, 2008).

Hybrid cultural identities in the linguistic habitus of multilingual and plurilingual Pakistan

Bourdieu (1998) marks the field with constant, permanent relationships of inequality as struggles for either its transformation or preservation. As mentioned in the Introduction, scholars wishing to work with Bourdieu’s insights in the Global South have debated the applicability of his theory in these new contexts (e.g., Moraru, 2016; Stroud, 2002; Swigart, 2001). Can we extend his theorization from his experiences in France and Algeria to high linguistic diversity contexts? Can we rely on notions of multilingual (Benson, 2013, 2014) or plurilingual (Lamb, 2015) habitus as are
put forth by some scholars working in the vast global South to which most of the world languages belong? I approach this with caution in this analysis section, as I view agents in multilingual markets adopting different systems of dispositions in their socialization to compete against inequity or for access—a process enhanced with the forces of globalization and digitalization, which are more heterogenous and multilingual than France was.

In the LE corpus, outside of education few letters argue for making available the non-dominant and regional languages in signage that signals danger or fosters preservation of culture (Keenjhar Lake Tragedy/16-Jun-03, Manners of the Well-Bred/16-May-02, East vs. West/17-Jun-03). This gives a notion of a rather unified linguistic market. In education, however, in the mind of LE writers the desirability of legitimate or standardized languages precludes the diverse linguistic and cultural resources brought to the school by multilingual students. The LE corpus unveils comments on this aspect of linguistic sensibilities too (e.g., One Language/18-May-07; Ptv’s Languages/18-Apr-02), as shown in 13 and 14.

13. [P]lease speak in one language throughout … do not utter one sentence or word in English and the other sentence or word in Urdu when addressing an event. By mixing the languages we are confusing people and showing our ignorance. (One language/18-May-07)

14. I had the occasion to watch a programme on psychology on a Pakistan Television … A psychologist was being interviewed by a lady who was putting all her questions to him in English while the replies were being given entirely in Urdu. I could not decide if the programme was in English or in Urdu. (PTV’s language/18-Apr-02)

Some writers regret using English words more frequently whereas Urdu equivalents are available (Literature and vulgarity/16-Jun-03; East vs. West/17-Jun-03), lament the loss of local identities in favour of the West, and show dismay or disapproval over children losing the rich local literature in favor of globalized English as in 15 and 16

15. [A] social problem in which he lamented the westernization of our society… [T]he new generation greets with a “Hi” instead of “Assalam Alaikum”, […] it takes pride in going to the English-medium schools (East vs. West/17-Jun-03)

16. The young generation without having read the books like Dastan-i-Amir Hamza and others like it does not even know what great reading pleasure they are missing as compared to the stories from the West which they likely take, as superior to ours, a sad trend set in their minds, of late. (Amir Hamza in the land of Qaf/19-Apr-08)

Assumptions about what is acceptable and appropriate use of language are garnered in recommendations, e.g., to support translations of local literature to maintain ties (see also Suleiman, 2014). Such practices on the one hand, create spaces for subversion of the monolingual hegemony and, on the other, they also authenticate
agents evaluating their choices with expanded competence or metalinguistic awareness of what needs to be adapted for a given chance of profit. Linking language and social discourses, Bourdieu (1977b) regarded variations of patterns as constitutes of a congruent system of differentiations ascribed to socially distinct modes of acquisition. A metalinguistic evaluation allows multilingual speakers to use two or more languages acquired separately or together without equal or entire fluency in them, for different purposes, in different fields of life, with different people. In doing so, these writers enact monolingual hegemonic ideologies, but also demonstrate that the reality of multilingual practices is profoundly embedded in Pakistani society, however regrettable these voices may find it. It is no wonder then that there has been no widespread acceptance of a state-level attempt in recent years by the ILM Initiative (2015) to create a modern Urdish curriculum recommending use of English terminology and Urdu explanation for students grappling with the linguistic and cognitive difficulty levels of students.

**Summary of findings**

As shown in the analyses presented, in LEs people restructure their linguistic habitus to the rules and laws of price formation according to the symbolic and instrumental functions of language. This is demonstrated in ambivalent associations with English that offset locality, and the opposite associations with Urdu as the heritage of the past that did not include English in nationhood and nation-building. Moreover, this cultural conflict is problematized in socioeconomic gaps because huge sections of the population who desire English are either deprived or not affected at all by this *international lingua franca*. LEs identify perhaps the major dilemma that challenges not just Pakistan but many developing economies, including South Asian economies: erasure of the role of nondominant and regional languages from education as part of a contested investment of governments in promoting English-oriented language policies, guided or misguided by the laudable goal to address issues of poverty and illness.

These findings from the analysis of letters in relation to nationalistic ideologies, the linguistic capital in education, plurilingual practices, and their impact on people’s aspirations characterize the linguistic habitus that is restructured, (re)evaluated and (re)sanctioned by the power dynamics in multiple markets in Pakistan’s society. These processes have transformed from the nation-state era to the globalized world where, as Benson and Elorza (2015) claim, the lingua franca is more multilingual than ever, as is the need to reassess our “unquestioned assumptions pervading language policy” (Benson, 2013, p. 290). The complex language and educational choices found in the letters are not exclusive of Pakistan. Scholars have shown that other countries face similar dilemmas for English education and prospects of growth for multilingual people, including Anchimbe (2013) for Cameroon, Chen (2010) for Taiwan, Heugh (2013) for South Africa, Namanya (2017) for Philippines, and Opoku-Amankwa (2009) for Ghana. Milligan et al. (2020) note that often in policy discussions there is a tendency to support English as means of promoting equity to focus on institutional access. This is true of the National Education Policy (2009).
and the latest Education Policy Framework (2018) in Pakistan, both of which suggest implementation of an action plan to uplift English language teaching. Though the LE writers in the present study raised such questions, one needs to be mindful that even if English is made accessible to students enrolled in the government schools, there are no assurances of equity, or of the quality of education, or that the English language skills of students will improve.

Conclusion

Language policy is often viewed as a matter of supporting target language proficiency in whatever languages are chosen as advantageous for a society (Gorter & Cenoz, 2016; Tollefson, 2008). This approach, however, risks feeding into discourses of deficit, where individuals and communities are paternalistically viewed as in need of linguistic remediation. The present study has taken an ontological shift away from issues of proficiency and deficit and onto a recognition of de facto multilingual and plurilingual repertoire as characterizing a society such as Pakistan. Instead, it has investigated public voices enacting the policy discourse, thereby centering language policy on metadiscourses that reveal the habitus in non-normative spaces of those who have produced the letters. The metadiscourses of habitus illuminate how writers vacillate between a desire to instill nationalistic ideologies and a wish to emancipate in pursuit of global trends, to use different codes for gains, all the while as they participate in the cultural production of nationalistic ideologies. These metadiscourses identify the educational issues related to the linguistic habitus as embedded in people’s conceptualization of education, unearthing the ambivalences in their affinity to dominant languages as English and Urdu in Pakistan, and the tensions between notions of local and national identities and modernity. Though LE themselves are not practice, they offer logic for the practice. The ontological shift taken recognizes that dominant and non-dominant languages are enmeshed into a de facto multilingual and plurilingual repertoire in the society, and that practices are inherent, robust, and organic. As such this view of policymaking extends beyond the policy document itself, and lends agency to the various actors enabling and interpreting the policy (Liddicoat, 2020), or appropriating it in practice (Canagarajah & Ashraf, 2013). With LEs, the discourse on language policy thus extends beyond discourse on language and society, and includes reactions to it (Georgiou, 2011). In this sense, this study offers new ways of looking into language policy scholarship, and into the ways people conceptualize their linguistic habitus in relation to the market value of education as a means that increases their social capital.

Instead of top-down policies, a multilingual model works best in communities with “shared spaces,” where many language groups accommodate others in the same geographic space (Khubchandani, 1997). Having more leverage than monolingual speakers, the multilingual users—as in Pakistan—have the choice of foregrounding their identities with either the national, regional, or dominant languages, drawing from their multilingual sensibility (Kramsch, 2013). Their linguistic habitus structures around the framework of market opportunities and constraints, as Bourdieu...
(1991) identified. Yet, their multilingual competencies and habitus are skewed in discourses of dominant language ideologies reinforced by official language education policies. The LE corpus enables the narrative of this ambivalent linguistic habitus to be explicated in the discourses of multilingualism, multilingual identities, and the medium of education. It draws attention to the complex construction of multilingual people and the role of education in it. The dilemma in most postcolonial settings is that the monolingual ideologies are more powerful, and multilingualism goes against the grain for those who seek to get ahead. By patronizing a multilingual disposition across the board at all educational levels, this study is a hopeful invitation to future policy initiatives that make space for the non-dominant languages of the majority people by including, recognizing, and appreciating them in different markets for participation within and across diverse democracies.

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