

Unraveling Language Dynamics: A Case Study of Language in Education in Pakistan

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Abstract : This research investigates the intricate dynamics of language policy, ideology, and the choice of educational language as a medium of instruction in rural Pakistan. Focused on addressing the complexities of language practices in underexplored educational contexts, the study employed a case study approach, analyzing interviews with education authorities, teachers, and students, alongside classroom observations in English-medium and Urdu-medium rural schools. The research underscores the significance of understanding linguistic diversity within rural communities. The analysis of interviews and classroom observations revealed that language policies in rural schools are influenced by multiple factors, including historical legacies, societal language ideologies, and government directives. The dominance of Urdu and English as the preferred languages of instruction reflected a broader language hierarchy, where regional languages are often marginalized. This language ideology perpetuates a sense of linguistic inferiority among students who primarily speak regional languages. The impact of language choices on students' learning experiences and outcomes is a central focus of the research. It became evident that while policies advocate for specific language practices, the implementation often diverges due to multifarious socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors. This disparity significantly impacts the effectiveness of educational processes, influencing pedagogical approaches, student engagement, academic outcomes, social mobility, and language choices. Based on the findings, the study concluded that due to policy and practice gap, rural people have complex perceptions and language choices. They perceived Urdu as a national, lingua franca, cultural, easy, or low-status language. They perceived English as an international, lingua franca, modern, difficult, or high-status language. They perceived other languages as mother tongue, local, religious, or irrelevant languages. This research provided insights that are crucial for theory, policy, and practice, addressing educational inequities and inclusive language policies. It set the stage for further research and advocacy efforts in the realm of language policies in diverse educational settings.

Keywords : language-in-education policy, language ideology, educational language choice, pakistan

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