

Navigating Linguistic Diversity: English as a Lingua Franca in Peshawar's Multilingual Landscape

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the impact of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) on the linguistic and cultural dynamics of Pashtoon society, with a focus on the Peshawar region. Using qualitative interviews, the study examines how English influences language practices, identity formation, and socio-economic opportunities within Pashtun communities. Findings show that English proficiency facilitates access to higher education, employment, and transnational mobility, yet it also deepens urban-rural inequalities due to uneven distribution of quality education and English language resources. While English is often pursued for upward mobility, especially by urban youth, Pashto remains a powerful symbol of cultural heritage—reflecting shared history, oral traditions, values, and communal solidarity. The research underscores the tension between these two linguistic forces and highlights the urgent need for balanced multilingual policies that foster bilingual education, preserve indigenous cultural expression, and expand equitable access to language learning. By capturing the dual impact of ELF, the study offers contextually grounded insights to inform inclusive and culturally sustainable language planning.

Keywords: English as a Lingua Franca, Pashto, Pashtoon identity, bilingual education, cultural preservation, linguistic diversity, urban-rural divide, globalization, Peshawar, code-switching.

INTRODUCTION

Through language human beings convey messages, yet they also maintain cultural values that advance their social position as well as their ancestral heritage. Modern globalization has made English establish itself as the main Lingua Franca (ELF), which enables language exchange throughout different linguistic communities yet modifies local cultural practices and language systems. The expanding use of English by Pashtoon society—an ethnolinguistic community that holds strong roots in the Pashto language and Pashtunwali community morals—reveals opposing phenomena pertaining to global access against cultural heritage decay. ELF refers to the use of English as a common language among speakers with different native tongues, often devoid of its native cultural associations (Jenkins, 2007). Due to globalization, English functions as an essential

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catalyst which enables international education communication together with business operations and diplomatic activities (Crystal, 2018). The prevalence of English causes various local languages and social practices to become less dominant. Pashto functions in Pashtoon society beyond speaking, as it represents the cultural identity through preserving traditional poetry and oral heritage and promoting tribal unity (Rahman, 2002). Modern global trends and expanding educational and professional use of the English language threaten the continued importance of the Pashto language within younger generations. The central area of Peshawar has become the main arena where this linguistic shift occurs since English-medium education thrives even though Pashto faces difficulties to sustain its dominant position.

English reaches a global status because of two main historical factors, which include British colonial activities and American cultural spread from the twentieth century onwards. According to Crystal (2018), British imperialism established English throughout its colonies through administrative, educational and legal systems. The institutionalization practices under British colonial rule allowed English to persist in Pakistan and India and other previously colonized countries after their independence. After the United States strengthened English's worldwide position through military dominance and both the development of technologies and its worldwide film distribution (Graddol, 2008). English plays a vital role as the main language of operation inside multilingual international bodies, including the United Nations, and it facilitates communication among diverse language communities (Kachru, 2005).

Multiethnic Pakistan, along with other nations of similar types, serves ELF as both an intercultural intermediary tool and an agent that produces social and economic distinctions among its speakers. The government of Pakistan established English as one of its official languages together with Urdu. The implementation of English as an official language by the government resulted in broad social segregation between English-speaking city dwellers and rural communities who speak Pashto (Rahman, 2002). Pashto remains vital to Pashtuns because it contains cultural principles like *Milmastya* (hospitality), *Gharat* (honor) and *Badal* (revenge), which substantiate *Pashtunwali* (Caroe, 1958). The growing preference for English language use in educational and employment settings creates a threat to Pashto's presence in formal institutional domains. The acceptance of the English language benefits global opportunities and education while threatening cultural diversity preservation. English dominance in Pashtoon society shows a trend toward losing *Pashtunwali* traditions because these customs directly connect to the use of Pashto. English represents the symbol for status advancement and social upward mobility and its acceptance in Peshawar's urban areas reflects a strong conflict between ELF globalization and the maintenance of local language traditions. Rural populations benefit less from a 'quality' education owing to limited access as compared to the urban youth, who are free to access English medium education and opportunities that encompass the whole world. This demonstrates a real social and cultural impact of this linguistic change.

Research Problem

English as lingua franca for globalization is the research subject of more investigation, but very little sociocultural investigation on groups such as the Pashtuns. In fact, there is a dual face of threat through the use of English which is one helping in weakening the position of the language Pashto and another is the cultural interaction which threatens the traditional factors which helped to identify Pashtoon in cultural perspective relating to their original linguistic background. Language use, however, is changing more than just acquiring a new communication tool, it challenges relationship between linguistic systems, cultural traditions and communal values and social power. It was on a basis of Pashto language as all Pashtoon culture practices and historical values and the community beliefs forming them emerged as a universal language. In formal educational and professional institutions there is a threat to our native language of 'Pashto' as a formal medium of language. However, how would the Pashtoon youth play out his cultural past with the same linguistic shift into the globe's coverage. Furthermore, the unequal distribution of access to English education exacerbates socio-economic disparities between urban elites and rural populations.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following research questions in order to achieve these objectives.

1. What does this growing usage of English in Pashtoon society mean for the tradition of cultural traditions and identity written in Pashto?
2. What role does lack of English language play in the unequal conditions between city and rural Pashtuns?
3. What challenges does Pashtuns face in using English in education and jobs while still wanting to feel cultured and proud of the cultural symbol of Pashto?

Significance

By providing knowledge of how ELF affects traditionally insular communities such as the Pashtuns, this research adds to academic discussions of linguistic imperialism and globalization. Most of the existing literature on ELF impact has been macroeconomic and/or political, but this study brings a unique micro level approach because it examines how linguistic globalization affects cultural identity, social mobility, community values in the Pashtoon society. The results presented in this study could inform policymakers and educators involved in developing bilingual education systems that are responsive to global demands of English and local need for Pashto. Examples of such models could be used to build an education system that is more equitable and that supports economic mobility and preserves one's cultural heritage. For example, Language Pashto in the formal curriculum while having a grip on English can create a more inclusive language education nonetheless holding the balance between the Pashtoon culture and the globalized world.

This study examines these dynamics within Pashtoon society in Peshawar, a region afflicted by the tension between tradition and modernity for wider implications in other multilingual communities that face similar challenges in the world over.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English acquired the global status as a result of the historical events, such as British colonial expansion, and American cultural influence during the 20th century (Crystal, 2018). The research by Crystal gives an extensive examination of English's global language development while focusing on British colonial power and industrial progress that enabled English worldwide spread. British Empire colonial expansion integrated English through administrative, educational and legal systems in its colonies, which resulted in its continued usage after independence (Crystal, 2018). English survived British colonization in India and Pakistan because it acted as an essential language to connect different speaking populations.

The worldwide expansion of the United States reinforced English as its predominant language. The rapid globalization of English happened through American technological achievements as well as military power and Hollywood media exports (Graddol 2006). Graddol describes how American power during and after World War II established English as a leading language worldwide because it served as vital for both international exchange systems and social and economic upward mobility. The global use of English instead of French for diplomatic purposes started during the post-World War II period because America became economically and culturally dominant (Graddol, 2008). English has become the dominant global language today because it serves as the primary operational language in United Nations international organizations and functions as a unifying medium for multilingual populations (Kachru, 2005). Kachru studies the evolution of English in multilingual communities with special attention to Asian regions where people use English as a connecting language, yet it simultaneously interferes with traditional local languages.

The dominance of English in modern societies leads to linguistic homogenization and contributes to diminishing local languages from use. The multilingual communities of South Asia use ELF as their bridge language, although this practice creates tension against their native linguistic backgrounds (Kachru, 2005). The Pakistani government has established English as an official language parallel to Urdu, which generates an economic disparity between wealthy English speakers with better access to education and work opportunities and the population that uses native linguistic communities, especially Pashto speakers (Rahman 2002). Rahman studies the social and political developments of English institutionalization in Pakistan to show how this process generates dual economic and social gaps between speakers of English and regional language users. ELF contributes to growing social gaps in societies since it diminishes language diversity, according to Canagarajah (2005). Based on his evaluation, Canagarajah advocates for policies which priorities linguistic diversity together with equity across multilingual communities. English institutionalization within Pakistani society connects to key power structures between dominant groups in the country. Most Pakistani elites living in urban areas possess higher

socioeconomic status and better English proficiency, which creates a language division between themselves and rural populations who primarily speak regional languages (Rahman, 2002). The urgent need for linguistic equality policies emerges from this situation because they must protect language diversity while allowing for global benefits to be obtained (Mufwene, 2004). Mufwene demonstrates in his research on language ecology that studying global-local language dynamics helps sustain languages while preserving cultures.

Language functions as both a communication channel and a cultural entity which contains fundamental cultural elements and historical narratives as well as customary social frameworks. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, language directly affects both cognitive functions and cultural social practices (Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1956). The Pashtoon cultural heritage is strongly connected to the use of the Pashto language, while Pashtunwali serves as a central moral body which encompasses principles including hospitality (Milmastya), honour (Ghairat), and revenge (Badal) based on Caroe (1958). Pashtoon culture faces a difficult dilemma because the growing English language adoption threatens to damage their linguistic tradition while also making them more connected to global community standards. English access to global opportunities threatens the cultural value of Pashto when its use supersedes Pashto in formal educational settings and employment environments (Hussain, 2023). Peshawar stands as a prime example of the Pashtoon cultural center which has undergone this transformation. The cultural heritage of Peshawar bases its customs on tribal organizations alongside Islamic traditions, which establish Pashto as a central element of identity.

Globalization together with ELF has led academic and professional institutions to adopt communication systems which prefer English over Pashto. The cultural future of the Pashto language faces serious risks because of its declining presence in modern society. Modern-day youths display dual linguistic behavior by switching between English and Pashto while also incorporating elements from English into their ordinary speech patterns. The use of English vocabulary in academic institutions represents global forces of cultural standardization, according to Fairclough (2009). Fairclough (2009) also notes that English is a major agent of setting cultural standards in schools, offices and official institutions, while also helping to support language diversity in casual and online spaces. Many people mix languages, create hybrid expressions and use local terms online in ways that resist the majority's spoken standards. As a result of this duality, English simultaneously promotes sameness in a few fields and allows individual countries to express themselves and use new forms of language.

The dual use of these languages demonstrates the conflict between people who want to protect their cultural customs and those who adopt globalized ways of life. The struggle for Pashtoon youth exists between keeping Pashto as their cultural symbol and using English for their educational and professional success (Hussain, 2023). The need to manage English and Pashto usage represents a fundamental language ecological tension between global leadership languages and native tongue preservation. Preserving linguistic diversity remains vital to protect cultural heritage and acceptance of globalization benefits (Mufwene 2004). The beneficial practical elements of bilingualism in contemporary socio-

economic circumstances contradict a growing intergenerational cultural divide observed among Pashtoon people. Pashto language and cultural foundations held dear by older generation members face possible destruction through the growing English language adoption (Rahman, 2002). Youth members of the community view bilingualism as a path to better career prospects, yet they must adjust their communication style to match English-speaking professional environments. To ensure cultural preservation of Pashto words and cultural heritage, the public needs multilingual policies supporting local languages together with their traditional concepts. The necessity of English as a tool for Pashtuns to advance socio-economically through globalization creates important issues about both language rights and cultural heritage protection.

The coexistence of the Pashto language with English requires an environment that promotes inclusion. The maintenance of this balance protects Pashto as an essential identity component of the Pashtoon people while providing them with opportunities to succeed in a globalized environment. Pashtun language studies have highlighted that younger generations tend to be more positive about English than older generations. Many younger people consider proficiency in English to be essential for advancing in their social life, getting into higher levels of education and joining global work situations. Moreover, senior figures in the community regularly believe that English gaining influence threatens the continued existence of their cultural traditions and the Pashtun language. (Haidar, Malik, & Samiullah 2022). Adding to these issues is the practical difficulty in bringing bilingual education policies to teaching and learning in Pakistan. According to Mahboob (2009), there are several problems, like political destabilisation, weak teacher training and inadequate Pashtun- and language-related curricula in rural regions that make such policies ineffective. As a result, there's a wide difference between the ideals of multilingualism and what actually takes place in everyday life.

The research into English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in multilingual communities has shown conflicting results in Pashtoon society of Peshawar and other regions. The use of the English language delivers students access to educational resources and opens doors to international business prospects as well as technological developments. The English proficiency of urban Pashtuns grants them outstanding educational opportunities and improved professional chances in society (Jenkins 2007). Jenkins explains that ELF functions as a worldwide resource through which people establish international relationships to gain professional and economic growth. The residents of Peshawar who excel in English can advance both educationally and professionally in the globalized market while securing societal elevation (Graddol, 2008). According to Graddol, the status of English as a lingua franca proves essential for people to move successfully through modern globalization and technological advancement. Linguistic inequality results from ELF adoption because it gives an advantage to native English speakers against non-native speakers, especially rural people who lack access to quality English education (Canagarajah, 2005). The Pakistani multilingual society shows an unbalanced allocation of language resources, according to Canagarajah, because social-economic differences block rural Pashtuns from learning English. The gap between urban elites and rural communities in Peshawar becomes increasingly prominent because rural area residents lack basic

infrastructure together with educational facilities. Research by Laraib, Alam, & Haris. (2021) shows that socioeconomic factors working with parental participation establish important impacts on Pashtoon English language learning acquisition. Rural families typically do not have enough resources and motivation to focus on English education; therefore, their children experience learning disadvantages compared to urban students.

In conclusion, English achieves global dominion because of British colonial growth from history and subsequent American increases in cultural and economic power. The Pashtoon society of Pakistan incorporates English as an ELF that connects inhabitants to international opportunities but creates social and economic inequalities between different groups. Urban areas give an advantage to elites who master English because rural populations experience hurdles because of limited structural and financial constraints. The current situation jeopardizes the survival of the traditional language Pashto since it represents an essential cultural tradition for Pashtoon society. The coexistence of English and Pashto represents the struggle between communities to balance their commitment to contemporary culture with their cultural traditions. The accessibility of professional opportunities through English learning causes a threat to native traditions and native languages because of decreasing use. Resolving these issues demands governmental support toward endorsing multilingual education and fair English education systems alongside efforts to protect linguistic diversity. The successful balance of Pashto's ethnic value with international opportunities enables cultural preservation alongside economic development in modern global settings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design and rationale of this research followed a qualitative method in order to study the cultural and linguistic dynamics between English and Pashto among Pashtun communities, particularly those working in higher education institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). It was the lecturers and professors who were participants in the study because they were considered to be the most informed and professional in using the language in both the sociocultural and academic settings. As the points of transmission, transformation, and negotiation of language ideologies, they are central agents of the action of language ideologies in the university. Using a qualitative approach, I considered that such a deep and interpretive qualitative study could explore linguistic identity in how these individuals perceive and enact it in their professional contexts. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), for complicated topics in society, qualitative research helps us explore through what people go through and how they understand the world. It provides a chance for researchers to discover the methods people use to make sense of things in their culture and language. Yet, Creswell and Poth also explain that being honest about your role helps address any bias, so the results are credible and reliable.

Qualitative Approach

Data for the study was collected through purely qualitative research, aiming to collect more in-depth data rather than a large quantity in this study. Data collection took place through the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, which were

important as they provided flexibility in conducting open dialogue. Such methods allowed participants to discuss views on language use, identity, and the cultural expectations in a more nuanced manner. Bryman (2016) states that qualitative designs allow researchers to understand individuals' ways of making sense of various social settings. Bryman also mentions that such approaches can generate rich insights but at the cost of the generalizability of findings due to their contextual nature. In an attempt to increase internal validity, there was a focus on collecting detailed, contextual data from a large, diverse sample of university educators, accepting the limitations associated with qualitative generalization.

Sampling Strategy

This research recruited individuals with expert knowledge of how language and identity shape learning experiences in university through purposive sampling. The study brought together 12 professors and lecturers from universities and 6 seniors and 4 parents from urban and rural areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Students and parents were involved so that their perspectives could help educators gain a better understanding of different age groups and the language environment. Those selected for the study had experience teaching in bilingual or multilingual programmes and were also administrators. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016), this manner of sampling brings forth participants with significant insight related to the research problem.

Data Collection

The data collection was achieved through both semi structured interview and focus group discussion. Researchers were able to use qualitative research methods to describe comprehensive and take part in active discussion about educational language usage. Through interviews, individuals could think through, and in focus group, collective meaning making. As Creswell and Poth (2016) suggests these research methods are excellent at studying a subject's subjective experiences because they facilitate clarification opportunities as well as follow up questions that standard fixed format surveys do not. According to Field, there are two technical problems with the data collection techniques, because people tend to adjust their answers so they match what researchers expect of them. Before the discussions commenced, interviewers kept an eye on test protocols to act neutral and had a conversation with interviewees in an enjoyable, respectful and nonjudgmental way to gain honest input.

Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the collected data. First, I went over each transcript several times to get to know the data and then I came up with initial codes to spot important patterns. Similar codes were combined into themes which were then examined, defined and adjusted to maintain consistency with the research questions. Because of this approach, similar themes concerning language identity, the English-Pashto language relationship and education could easily be spotted in the participants' stories.

Ethical Considerations

Strict ethical procedures were conducted in order to keep participants safe and to guarantee their rights always during the period of the research. Informed consent, describing that the study purpose was every participant had been informed, and it was voluntary as well as participants right to withdraw at any time, had been provided to every participant prior to data collection. Specifically, the study offered anonymity and confidentiality to the participants by means of private pseudonyms assigned during the transcription as well as the reporting stage. Bryman (2016) indicates ethical transparency both ensures participant safety and builds research credibility because participants tend to share honest and reflective viewpoints after receiving protection measures. Bryman acknowledges that keeping participant anonymity becomes difficult in small academic networks because professionals tend to share overlapping professional relationships. The analysis excluded mentioning specific university names as well as department information or job titles to protect participant identities.

Findings

The qualitative data were systematically collected through interviews conducted with Parents, Lecturers Professors and Students from various universities in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. The thematic analysis approach was adopted to systematically identify, evaluate, and interpret constructs of meaning in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The study aimed at interpreting how English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) impacted the Pashtoon community in terms of language use, cultural identity, socio-economic potential and educational hurdles. The data found that there was an agreed, powerful emotional connection attached to Pashto as a cultural symbol. Pashto was, in participants words, at the heart of their identity and cultural heritage. Though, they also acknowledged the actual advantages of English to socio-economic rise. English was viewed as necessary for improvement of education and employment assistance, especially in urban areas.

The figures revealed very unequal access to good quality English education for urban and rural areas. Urban participants enjoyed access to superior educational resources and urban rig resources, whilst rural populations faced severe hurdles of inadequately educated teachers and committed poor resources. Participants frequently switched codes between Pashto and English, as they practically had to move between these two language ecologies. Social media offered a passage for this linguistic hybridity. However, worries about cultural destruction and loss of Pashto talk were also existing – discussing educational frameworks which put English over Pashto. Therefore, the thematic analysis found that the influence of ELF on Pashtoon society was found to have a multifaceted impact. English offered social and economic mobility and global networking, but it was also accompanied by problems of cultural or linguistic retention. The outcome showed the need to have policies that promote multilinguism, thus producing the feeling of English and Pashto as acceptable in both educational and working environments.

IDENTIFIED THEMES: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

Four primary themes for the thematic analysis of the qualitative data of the studies were Cultural Identity and Language Use, Socio Economic Inequality and Language Use, Linguistic Adaptation and Hybridity and Institutional Challenges and Community Resistance. An important issue that helps to know what ELF does to the society such as in the usage of language, cultural identity, socio-economic opportunities and barriers with regard to educational.

Cultural Identity and Language Use

In the context of understanding how the Pashtuns form their cultural identity, the analysis of language relations is among the core aspects. There are two points that are included in the theme; emotional attachment to Pashto and practical use of English. The Pashtoon population, to show the deep bond of their emotions with the Pashto language, involve themselves in all sections of the Pashtoon population. The participants showed distinct feelings toward Pashto because they viewed it as representing their cultural roots and national heritage. "An undergraduate shared, 'Pashto is my heartbeat; it keeps me grounded,' expressing the emotional bond with his linguistic heritage." "A teacher similarly reflected, "Pashto is the soul of our traditions. When we switch to English, we gain the world, but risk losing our own world." (Response 7). Another postgraduate expressed a reconciliation strategy, saying, "I cite English sources in my papers, but I always begin with a Pashto proverb or a reference from Khushal Khan Khattak to root my thinking." (Response 6) in these response, indicating the importance of this language for sustaining cultural origins.

The emotional bond people have with Pashto supports belief systems emphasized by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1956) about the relationship between language and cultural identity. The hypothesis about language shaping thought and perception becomes apparent through Pashto, which contains many centuries of its poetry along with oral history and tribal connections (Rahman, 2002). Different populations express their sentiments towards their linguistic connection in diverse manners. The undergraduates displayed an intense personal bond to Pashto because they believed it was vital to their cultural legacy. Undergraduates stated how Pashto functions as their cultural "pureness" in their statement, "Pashto keeps us asil [pure]" (Response 4). The Pashto language holds essential value, according to postgraduate students, for sustaining their tribal cultural heritage. One postgraduate student combined English thesis content with Pashto proverbial heart (Response 5) because of the academic requirements competing with cultural traditions. Teaching staff saw the essential function of Pashto in cultural preservation and identity preservation because they supported bilingual educational programs which would preserve cultural elements. The parents highlighted their worries regarding Pashto language fade from usage by young people while explaining that language acts as a crucial element in cultural value transmission.

The necessity for socio-economic advancement together with global access made English acquire vital importance. As a postgraduate explained, English language access is

essential for attending both journals and professional conferences (Response 5). The practical adoption of the English language for business activities aligns with wider globalization trends because it functions as an international communication tool for economic growth (Graddol, 2008). The focus on English education contributes to linguistic homogenization, which threatens the continued use of native languages such as Pashto (Canagarajah 2005). Multiple populations have differing views about how English functions in real-life applications. English appeared essential to undergraduates since they believed it provided their access to worldwide educational materials and funding opportunities. The graduate students pointed to English as essential for academic and workplace excellence since it serves their needs in worldwide interactions. The educational staff acknowledged English value as an indispensable language for practical workplace requirements, yet they insisted on keeping Pashto prominent to preserve cultural heritage. The economic advantages of English usage were acknowledged by parents, although they feared its impact on traditional culture, which showcased their pursuit of social advancement. This theme demonstrates how Pashto and English languages create a dynamic cultural relationship among Pashtuns. Pashto maintains its role as a fundamental cultural marker, but people view English as necessary for obtaining socio-economic success. Multilingual policies need to be established because they provide balance which maintains and values both languages during educational and professional pursuits.

Socio-Economic Inequality and Language Access

This theme encompasses two subthemes: Urban-Rural Divide and Economic Opportunities. The research participants observed that educational opportunities for quality English tuition varied substantially between urban and rural regions. Response 9 reveals that the structural barriers experienced by rural students include their limited availability to English television programs and tutors. The socio-economic inequalities plaguing society intensify because linguistic inequality grants higher quality education to urban elite populations than it does to rural populations according to Rahman (2002). The educational situation in Pakistan demonstrates stark differences between urban and rural areas because cities like Karachi and Lahore provide quality facilities yet rural areas experience major infrastructure and educational staff deficiencies.

Different populations show distinct patterns of separation between city and country districts. The students from urban areas reported better access to educational resources but the students from rural regions faced problems because of insufficient quality English education. A rural undergraduate explained the systemic barriers through their statement "We don't have English textbooks or qualified teachers" (Response 3). Another rural student shared, "When I applied for a scholarship, I couldn't even understand the form. That's how far behind we are." (Response 7). A parent from a rural area commented, "My son wants to become a doctor, but he cannot compete because his school doesn't even have a proper English teacher." (Response 13). The urban-rural divide emerged as a key understanding for postgraduate students who studied through their educational path. According to the subject in Response 6 "I had to relocate to the city to get better English education." This statement shows why students need to urban move for top-quality educational materials. Rural educators reported to their colleagues that basic infrastructure

combined with insufficient qualified educators remains a major challenge in rural districts. The educational institution in rural areas faces operational obstacles because they lack power supply and safe drinking water according to a teacher's observation. The parents interviewed voiced worries about how the educational divide could affect their children's prospectus. A parent stated that "My child cannot match urban students because of poor English abilities" (Response 14). One lecturer noted, "Our students are capable, but language is the wall they cannot climb. It stops them from applying abroad or getting good jobs." (Response 11). An undergraduate student who relocated from a rural area said, "I had to take up a job just to pay for English coaching. In the city, it's available, but never which highlights parental worries regarding social and educational differences.

Linguistic Adaptation and Hybridity

This theme encompasses two subthemes: Code-Switching and Role of Social Media.

Code-Switching: Pashto and English switching happened often because participants needed dual language capability for various situations. A participant revealed how their cultural blend appears when they post Pashto content with English hash tags (Response 2). Multilingual populations demonstrate code-switching as their adaptive approach for handling both worldwide and local languages according to Kachru (2005). Research indicates that code-switching happens naturally throughout bilingual speech exchanges particularly when people lack direct translations for words or want to transmit cultural elements (Malik, 1994). The usage of English for formal technical communications in Pashto and English language interactions depends on education level and social position of speakers (Khan & Nazir, 2024).

The manner in which code-switching presents itself proves different from one population to another. College students switched their language settings on social media networks to combine their linguistic and cultural backgrounds in more casual situations. A respondent expressed their approach by admitting to using Pashto text captions accompanied by English hashtags ("Response 2") as a way to combine both languages when communicating digitally. The graduates who had completed their postgraduate studies understood the functional value of code-switching because professional workplaces typically need English to handle technical terminology. The subject matter dictates English language use during academic activities however Pashto becomes his cultural communication tool (Response 5). Educational staff showed students the advantage of code-switching techniques as a method to enhance comprehension and student interest. The educator recommended teaching English through examples based on the Pashto language (Response 9) in order to support bilingual education. Parents showed worry that Pashto language skills of next-generation speakers might weaken because they speak English too often.

Role of Social Media: The analysis discovered social media functions as platforms that enable cultural exchanges together with language mixture. The participant observed that Twitter connected both English-educated scholars with Pashto poets (Response 5) to

demonstrate the impact of digital platforms on language adaptation. Social media platforms play a vital role in supporting linguistic diversity since they create multilingual communication spaces during which cultural exchange takes place (Fairclough, 2009). Members of Pashtoon society blend English with Pashto on Facebook and Twitter to display cultural flavors and reach out to a wider network of users, according to Khan & Nazir (2024). Digital communication platforms bring together international languages and local national tongues in a way that shows how societies with multiple languages are modernizing their communications.

Institutional Challenges and Community Resistance

The theme consists of educational barriers together with community-led solutions as its subtheme.

Educational Barriers: The education system received widespread criticism from participants because it made English the primary language while disregarding Pashto, which caused cultural distancing. A teacher recommended that ethnic schools should adopt their language for teaching science principles (Response 9). The analysis emphasizes the necessity of educational system reform, which should combine global language requirements with protection of local heritage (Mufwene, 2004). The educational focus on English creates language barriers for rural students because most schools use Pashto as the primary language even though English remains inaccessible (Rahman, 2002).

The educational hurdles that prevent students from learning appear differently to each student population. Undergraduate students from rural areas mentioned insufficient educational resources as well as the inadequacy of qualified English instructors, which made it harder for them to match their performance to urban students. A student from a rural background stated that their institution had no English textbooks or professional teachers for the subject (Response 3). The postgraduate students understood that bilingual education remains crucial for resolving such educational inequalities. A participant at the postgraduate level argued that bilingual education would serve as a connector between urban students and rural students (Response 6). The educational approach strengthens culture preservation and helps students move toward better economic positions. The teacher proposed to incorporate Pashto content within STEM educational programs (Response 10). The parents emphasized their worries about how educational obstacles would affect their children's professional possibilities, thus prompting the necessity to develop community-led initiatives that protect Pashto.

Community-Led Solutions: Native citizens established language clubs throughout their local communities as a way to defend the survival of the Pashto language. Community members should invite elder mentors to share Pashto proverbs as a way of preserving cultural heritage, according to the parent's recommendation (Response 15). The initiatives demonstrate the relevance of grassroots actions for defending cultural heritage and sustaining linguistic diversity, according to Canagarajah (2005). Bilingualism programs, along with cultural exchange initiatives managed by communities, work to protect Pashto together with world languages like English. Pashto and English face intricate

social changes in Pashtoon society which are explored through linguistic adaptation and hybridity and institutional challenges and community resistance. The combination of code-switching along with social media has enabled linguistic hybridity, but educational and cultural challenges maintain a significant barrier. The research results demonstrate the crucial requirement of multilingualism policies because they should protect both English and Pashto languages within educational systems and professional environments.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates the multifaceted relationship between the English language and the Pashto language, which reveals the advantages and obstacles Pashtoon society faces while utilizing English as an ELF. Socio-economic mobility together with global connectivity defines English as a language that improves access to better educational resources and job opportunities (Jenkins, 2007). English dominance has adverse effects on local languages such as Pashto because it results in their marginalization, according to Mufwene (2004). The obtained results make it clear that educational and professional institutions must support English and Pashto languages equally to maintain their cultural importance. The research follows linguistic diversity and cultural hybridity theories by supporting local language maintenance through worldwide integration (Mufwene, 2004).

The strategy of multilingualism serves as a primary method for sustaining linguistic diversity together with cultural heritage preservation, especially in societies which possess worldwide languages such as English that control the linguistic space (Canagarajah, 2005). Access disparities between urban and rural populations in English education trigger wider patterns of ethnic and linguistic divisiveness that create development obstacles, according to Alesina & La Ferrara (2005). Rural communities in Pakistan face massive educational inequalities because they lack both good educational infrastructure and well-qualified educational staff (Rahman, 2002). The language-blending capabilities of social media platforms emphasize the changing style of communication within multiple language communities (Fairclough, 2009). Linguistic diversity finds crucial support through social media platforms because they create domains for multilingual communication and cultural exchange (Fairclough, 2009).

The study strengthens debates regarding linguistic imperialism and cultural hybridity through its findings about how language policies should balance worldwide linguistic requirements with preservation of regional cultures. The development of both economic progress and cultural preservation becomes possible through cultivating an inclusive linguistic framework that builds upon community leadership as well as multilingual practices (Canagarajah 2005). The policy development process needs to analyse the relationships between international languages and local languages to create policies which champion equal access to languages and cultural diversity. This research study delivers important knowledge about ELF effects on Pashtoon cultural identity but simultaneously generates numerous important unanswered enquiries. The recommendation of multilingualism to solve linguistic disagreements depends on equal educational resource access among all stakeholders, a condition which rural communities might not experience (Rahman, 2002). The use of social media to spread linguistic mixture results in cultural

homogenization because world languages like English gain dominance within digital communication (Fairclough 2009). Future investigations need to discover complex approaches to advance linguistic diversity together with cultural safeguarding within the current digital paradigm.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to establish that English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has an impact on Pashtoon linguistic and cultural landscape, especially in Peshawar region. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach in order to explore the extent at which English influenced language preferences, socio economic mobility and cultural identity amongst the community. The findings confirm that in spite of various efforts made to uproot Pashto from its place, Pashto is still a partially or more important marker of identity, an anchor in tradition, a reminder of ancestral values and community heritage. It was found to be highly emotionally charged across participant groups; Pashto was linked to the imperative for cultural continuity across and between groups.

On the other hand, English has been gaining enormous utilitarian value among the urban youth and the reason for this is that English is linked with education, employment and also with global communication. This preference for English is not the only sign of a complex linguistic shift: as people move between cultural protection and economic hikes, they are cutting, combining or otherwise messing with their languages which sometimes results in nothing more (or less than) English. Yet the research also shows that obtaining an English education is uneven. Urban student tends to be with good infrastructure as well to a qualified teacher while the rural students are not likely to have a very good infrastructure and in some case they have poor instructions.

Globally, the unequal access to resources creates wider socio economic inequities and deny rural Pashtuns fuller participation in global opportunities. Additionally, the study showed how many bilingual Pashtuns code switch, mixing English and Pashto when talking. On social media, this is visible and very much represents a dynamic and evolving linguistic identity, rather than a case of tradition eroding slowly. However, supporting these hybrid language practices can be a way to keep the cultural relevant, yet contemporize these approaches. Participants stressed that the education system—above all other institutions—needs to be reformed to more accurately mirror the bilingual character of the region. Some called for policies that would blend both English and Pashto in the classroom and for an inclusive system that would have a place for our cultural values, yet promote socio economic mobility. At the grassroots and community level, however, we've also seen movements and initiatives arise promoting the use of Pashto amongst younger generations, intergenerationally.

This research thus suggests that as an enabling language of global engagement, there is potential for a threat to indigenous culture identity. It advocates for the development of equitable, bilingual education policy not marginalizing linguistic natives. The study instead contends for a multilingual framework in which English and Pashto coexist, rather than being opposed, within the system. This strategy is an effort to foster

cultural resilience and inclusive development so that all sub-categories of Pashtoon society, urban or rural, can participate economically in the world without sacrificing their language.

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