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Marginalization of Punjabi in Pakistan: Exploring Language

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The study critically analyzed the historical, socio-political, and ideological influences that have shaped Pakistan's language policies, particularly those that have marginalized Punjabi. This study examined the impact of prevailing language ideologies on popular perceptions and public policy outcomes. This research employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) alongside Language Ideology Theory as theoretical framework. Research design was qualitative. The data was collected from scholarly literature, policy documents, and historical records. The research conducted a thematic and critical analysis of the data to reveal underlying power dynamics and ideological presuppositions within language policies and public discourse. The analysis indicates that Urdu was established as a language of national cohesion through nationalist principles, whereas English serves as a symbol of opportunity and Punjabi is predominantly confined to rural and informal settings. The National Education Policy (2009), in conjunction with the Punjab Curriculum Policy (2015), effectively excludes Punjabi from educational contexts, thereby perpetuating systemic language discrimination that jeopardizes the future viability of the language. Media outlets have reinforced prevailing linguistic stereotypes by portraying Punjabi as a language associated solely with the rural existence. The research findings provide crucial insights for education policymakers and educators aiming to formulate language policies that promote equality within multilingual communities.

INTRODUCTION

In every multilingual society, the establishment of language policies is essential for shaping the social linguistic landscape. The selection of language is intricately connected to political and cultural dynamics, as well as the expressions of group identity. The language planning system in Pakistan embodies a complex interplay of historical priorities, reflecting the dynamics between governmental policies, political agendas, and the diverse national ethnic groups alongside various socio-economic power structures. Punjabi distinguishes itself from the multitude of languages in Pakistan, as it serves as the native tongue for the majority of its populace, yet it endures an inconsistent legal standing. Political officials and educational institutions tend to disregard Punjabi, despite its widespread use among Pakistani citizens, as they place greater emphasis on Urdu as the national language and English as the esteemed medium for international engagement. This study investigates the historical evolution of language policies in Pakistan concerning Punjabi, while also assessing the challenges faced in multicultural contexts and their implications for both academic and ethnic dimensions.

Preliminary inquiries arise regarding the enforcement of language policy, as the official discourse overlooks Punjabi, thereby questioning the formation of national identity and exposing the

disparities inherent in language hierarchy systems. A thorough analysis of Punjabi from both historical and contemporary viewpoints reveals significant social and political factors that have influenced its current state. This study investigates the contexts and challenges associated with comprehending the effects of policy frameworks on the preservation of the Punjabi language as a vital cultural and linguistic heritage.

Pakistan's provinces are home to over 70 languages, reflecting a remarkable linguistic diversity, as noted by Rahman (2010). The Census of Pakistan (2017) indicates that Punjabi constitutes the largest linguistic community in the country, with 48% of residents identifying it as their native language. The considerable numerical dominance of Punjabi speakers does not manifest in official institutional representation, as the language policies inherited from the colonial era have relegated Punjabi to a subordinate status. Throughout the period of British colonial rule, Urdu emerged as a lingua franca while English established itself as the official language of bureaucracy, creating a framework of linguistic supremacy that persisted even after Pakistan gained independence in 1947 (Rahman 2002).

In a significant national initiative, Pakistan has designated Urdu as its official language, prioritizing it over several regional languages, including Punjabi, in an effort to foster unity among its diverse populace. The sociopolitical marginalization is intricately linked to the increasing exclusion of Punjabi within Pakistan's national framework, driven by widespread negative perceptions of the language across society. Punjabi faces scrutiny in public discussions, often regarded as an informal rural dialect, even as there are increasing initiatives to promote Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi as regional symbols (Shackle 1970). In the realm of education and governance, Punjabi speakers predominantly utilize Urdu and English, while urban areas observe a generational decline in the preservation of the Punjabi language (Mansoor, 2004). Multilingual communities are encountering a growing erosion of linguistic diversity, as prevailing languages overshadow a multitude of linguistic expressions (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2008).

An in-depth examination of Pakistan's historical language policies is crucial for formulating effective solutions to contemporary Punjabi linguistic challenges. Language policies shape linguistic practices and influence the preservation of culture, the efficacy of educational environments, and the processes of community cohesion. This study examines the language policies pertaining to Punjabi across Pakistan, emphasizing the critical necessity for robust multilingual strategies to facilitate enduring language advancement.

Scope of the Study

This study examines the evolution of Punjabi language policies in Pakistan over time, addressing current challenges and analyzing their implications within the country's multifaceted linguistic landscape. This research examines the utilization of the Punjabi language within educational frameworks, governmental bodies, and media outlets, while also exploring the political circumstances contributing to its diminishing prominence, despite Punjabi being the primary language for the majority of the population. The study conducts an evaluation of the impact of current language policies on Punjabi speakers across urban and rural settings, revealing distinct patterns influenced by cultural and linguistic localization. This investigation integrates historical documentation, policy data, and sociolinguistic methodologies to develop a comprehensive understanding of the status conditions of Punjabi, while also suggesting potential strategies for inclusive language planning within Pakistan's diverse linguistic landscape.

Problem Statement

Punjabi serves as the primary language in Pakistan; however, it is often marginalized in critical domains such as education, governance, and media outlets. This tension elucidates the disparity between its widespread utilization among the populace and the formalized approach taken by institutions. The national standing of Urdu, coupled with the esteemed position of English, has relegated Punjabi to informal contexts and rural areas, resulting in a diminished intergenerational transmission, especially among urban populations. The concurrent disregard for the Punjabi language in Pakistan jeopardizes the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of Punjabi traditions and raises significant concerns regarding the fairness of language policies within the

diverse societal fabric of Pakistan. Language policies that fail to acknowledge or advance Punjabi contribute to significant issues, leading to cultural deterioration, educational disparities, and a contraction of functional domains. This study conducts a thorough evaluation of the neglect experienced by Punjabi, exploring the socio-political dimensions as well as institutional and historical factors, before analyzing their implications for the cultural resilience and linguistic diversity of Pakistan.

Research Questions

What historical and socio-political factors have contributed to the marginalization of Punjabi in Pakistan's language policies, and how have these influenced its status in education, governance, and media?

What role do informal cultural practices, such as Punjabi music, oral traditions, and literature, play in resisting the marginalization of Punjabi, and how can these be integrated into language policy planning to promote linguistic equity?

How do prevailing language ideologies in Pakistan shape public perceptions and policy decisions regarding Punjabi, and what implications do these ideologies have for linguistic diversity and cultural preservation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The language policy of Pakistan, formulated post-independence in 1947, reflects the intricate power dynamics at play, aligning political identities with a spectrum of linguistic options, ultimately elevating Urdu to the status of a national unifier. Rahman (1996) posits that the government promoted Urdu as the exclusive national language in an effort to forge a unified identity amidst a backdrop of linguistic diversity in the region. The implementation of the government policy has led to a diminishing status for regional languages, particularly Punjabi, which officials have deemed as less significant. Throughout the colonial era, both Urdu and English were granted preferential treatment within the educational administration, thereby creating a linguistic framework that effectively excluded Punjabi from formal educational systems (Shackle, 1977).

Theoretical Framework

The Language Ideology Theory establishes a robust analytical framework for examining the socio-political and cultural dimensions of Punjabi language policy implementations in Pakistan. The Language Ideology Theory examines societal attitudes towards language and investigates the influence of these beliefs on governmental policies and public behavior (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). The beliefs we refer to as language ideologies are intricately woven into the fabric of our historical contexts and political frameworks, as well as the cultural values that sustain social power dynamics and hierarchies. Language ideologies in Pakistan serve to uphold national unity while simultaneously promoting modernity and socioeconomic progress, albeit at the expense of the marginalized Punjabi language and the erosion of regional cultural values.

The current theoretical framework incorporates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to augment analytical rigor. The main aim of CDA analysis is to comprehend how linguistic frameworks reveal and reinforce structures of dominance and ideologies, alongside social classifications, via discourse (Fairclough, 1995). The approach is most effective in examining the ways in which Punjabi navigates its marginalized status, considering both the written discourse and the institutional frameworks involved. The examination of discourse among governmental documents, educational policies, and media representations via Critical Discourse Analysis facilitates the assessment of how language ideologies are constructed and legitimized, subsequently being reproduced across public platforms.

Under the provisions of Pakistan's 1973 Constitution, Urdu is designated as the national language, serving as a pivotal element for the official framework of national unity, while Punjabi is notably omitted from this status. Through CDA, researchers analyze languages and particular linguistic choices within these texts to comprehend their function in establishing systemic hierarchies of linguistic dominance. Educational policies that opt to promote Urdu and English ultimately yield

a similar outcome by relegating regional languages to a subordinate status, thereby fostering a perception of diminished value for the Punjabi language in modern society.

Media representations illustrate the profound influence of linguistic beliefs on public perceptions regarding the status of language. Through CDA, one can analyze how entertainment media portrays Punjabi in a comedic and provincial manner, thereby reinforcing a connection between the language and everyday rural life, while simultaneously hindering its acceptance in urban and influential professional settings. Analysis of digital grassroots platforms through critical discourse analysis indicates that Punjabi is increasingly emerging in informal communication spaces, serving to challenge dominant institutional ideologies. Scholarly investigations reveal that language policies reflect prevailing ideologies that systematically marginalize minor languages, thereby perpetuating broader social inequalities (Kroskrity 2000). This viewpoint is further substantiated by examinations of policy documents and public discourse, revealing the underlying mechanisms that uphold prevailing ideologies to which Critical Discourse Analysis contributes. The institutions in Pakistan place a significant emphasis on Urdu, recognizing it as a symbol of identity and a language of power. This prioritization has resulted in the intentional marginalization of Punjabi, despite its status as the native language of the largest demographic group. The application of Language Ideology Theory alongside Critical Discourse Analysis creates a comprehensive framework for examining the ways in which political beliefs shape policy decisions and public responses, ultimately influencing the current conditions in Punjabi society across various domains and through intergenerational transmission.

This examination integrates Language Ideology Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis to develop a sophisticated framework that elucidates the mechanisms through which systemic and discourse-oriented factors contribute to the linguistic marginalization of Punjabi in Pakistan. The integrated analytical approach allows scholars to meticulously explore the intricate interplay between language policies and their associated power structures and sociocultural frameworks, yielding significant insights into the management of linguistic diversity and social equity.

Punjabi's Status in Education

Educational institutions function devoid of Punjabi, consequently fostering patterns of marginalization within the community. In contrast to Sindhi, which benefits from institutional support within Sindh Province, Punjabi does not enjoy similar state backing for its preservation and educational advancement through academic institutions (Malik 1996). Research indicates that corporations rooted in native languages significantly enhance academic achievement (Cummins 2000); however, Punjabi has been systematically excluded from all primary educational curricula across the Punjab province. The absence of a clear policy benefits Urdu and English, particularly among the increasing number of urban Punjabi-speaking families who perceive these languages as tools for social advancement (Mahboob, 2002).

Linguistic Shifts and Intergenerational Transmission

Urban environments exhibit a reduction in the use of the Punjabi language, attributable to altered mechanisms that facilitate the transmission of languages across generations. The study conducted by Gill (2017) indicates that Punjabi families are increasingly favoring Urdu and English, leading to a decline in the use of Punjabi in familial and social contexts. The prevalence of Punjabi notably declines in urban centers such as Lahore, as inhabitants experience significant pressure to conform to the linguistic norms of Urdu and English. Numerous linguistic investigations substantiate that this pattern engenders dual effects on the language utilization of Punjabi speakers, as well as their cultural identity formation and lifestyle practices (Mughal & Saeed, 2021).

Power Dynamics and Cultural Suppression

The Punjabi language is afforded minimal acknowledgment in Pakistan due to prevailing national socio-political dynamics. As noted by Aslam (2020), the policy of excluding Punjabi from official institutions illustrates the manner in which Urdu and English function as dominant symbols of Pakistani unity on a global scale. This practice results in Punjabi losing its historical context and cultural significance, relegating it to the status of an informal rural dialect, stripped of educational or recognized application. Scholars Akhtar and Rehman (2015) have characterized this policy as a mechanism for constraining cultural traditions that confront the heritage identity of Punjabi-speaking communities.

Punjabi in Media and Popular Culture

The success of the Punjabi language in the media is largely contingent upon the efforts of media agencies and institutions. Research demonstrates that Punjabi asserts itself robustly within the realms of popular music and film, while concurrently encountering limitations in its application within the mainstream media landscape (Haque, 2011). The dominance of Urdu and English in television and print media reinforces the public perception that Punjabi is devoid of linguistic prestige. Despite the apparent lack of engagement from governmental bodies, Punjabi continues to assert itself as a formidable cultural presence in the realms of music and traditional ceremonies (Bukhari, 2019).

International Perspectives on Multilingualism

Investigating multilingual communities allows for a deeper comprehension of the challenges and advancements that Punjabi, alongside other regional languages, encounters in its pursuit of recognition. The interdependence of social and cultural cohesion is significantly influenced by the recognition of language rights, alongside the implementation of supportive language policies, as articulated by Skutnabb-Kangas (2009). Research on language policy in India illustrates that thorough integration of local languages within educational and governmental frameworks fosters both national equality and unity (Annamalai, 2001). The study emphasizes the necessity for Pakistan's language policies to acknowledge and embrace the cultural heritage of Punjabi inclusively.

Implications for Cultural Sustainability

The process of marginalizing the Punjabi language significantly affects the preservation of cultural elements. Malik and Farooq (2020) emphasize that the diminishing use of Punjabi poses a significant threat to its essential oral and written cultural expressions, which are crucial to the cultural heritage of Pakistan. The documentation, coupled with preservation initiatives for Punjabi literature, poetry, and folklore, signifies a crucial endeavor to counteract this demographic trend. The limited success of these initiatives can be attributed to their operation without the support of established institutions (Khan, 2019).

There has been a growing number of scholarship that has been concerned with the meeting point of language policy, identity, and political power in Pakistan, namely on the roles of Urdu, Punjabi, and Bengali in history and discourse. They (Hashmi et al. 2024) engage in a critical discourse analysis that follows up the way in which Urdu has been discursively constructed as a symbol of Islamic identity as well as a symbol of national unity and on the other hand marginalizes languages like Punjabi and Bengali. The ideological privileging of Urdu here is in line with state's post-colonial nation building efforts of going forth with the liberal take on language policies as tools of cultural dominance. For instance, Hussain et al. (2020) examine how Punjabi has historically been neglected and marginalized systemically, how language ideologies have excluded it from what language is regarded as legitimate for use in formal domains such as education and governance even though it is in wide use among the population. Refusing to focus on one side of this theme, Hussain et al. (2024) carried the study forward by analyzing the evolution of Urdu and Punjabi in the political discourse of Pakistan, how language has evolved as a tool to reinforce elite control and silence regional linguistic identity. Moreover, the support is further bolstered by Arshad, who analyses partition era and post-independence policies that created the political and educationally disenfranchised Punjabi speakers in Punjab. Another set of studies relate to the current study by demonstrating how Pakistan's language policies (i.e.,

imposition of Urdu and neglect of Bengali and Punjabi languages) have served as ideological and political instruments, creating power hierarchies and intensifying socio political fragmentation, resulting in secession of East Pakistan.

Language ideology and critical discourse analysis theoretical frameworks surrounding the marginalization of Punjabi in Pakistan is notably lacking, even though there exists a plethora of research focused on the implications of language policy. It is essential to investigate the reasons behind the continued limitations placed on Punjabi within educational institutions, public governance sectors, and media networks. Previous studies have primarily focused on the prevalence of Urdu and English, as well as the shared challenges faced by regional languages (Rahman, 1996; Malik, 1996). The interplay of public ideologies influencing policy decisions, coupled with the power dynamics within the Punjabi context, has garnered insufficient scholarly attention. Studies indicate that the Punjabi language continues to thrive within musical and oral cultural domains (Bukhari, 2019); however, there is a notable deficiency in analytical methodologies aimed at leveraging this heritage to influence policymaking for linguistic equity. This study aims to broaden the scope of current research by conducting a thorough assessment of the factors that marginalize the Punjabi language and their implications for both linguistic diversity and the cultural sustainability of Pakistan.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach will examine the interplay of historical, socio-political, and ideological factors that have influenced the language policy stance of Punjabi throughout the history of Pakistan.

Data Collection

The foundation of this exploratory study is built upon secondary data derived from policy documents, academic literature, and historic records, which collectively examine the evolution of language policy and its impact on Punjabi. This study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) methodology to uncover concealed language ideologies and the power dynamics present in official government documents, educational frameworks, and media communication channels. The examination conducted via this methodology elucidates the manner in which language ideologies uphold linguistic hierarchies, simultaneously enforcing marginalization upon speakers. This study examines Punjabi cultural artifacts, including traditional music and folk traditions, as well as literary contributions, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the informal dimensions that encompass spoken interactions and the ritualistic functions of the Punjabi language.

Data Analysis Techniques

The study employed artifact analysis to investigate the role of informal cultural expressions as instruments of self-determination in the context of Punjabi marginalization by formal systems. This research employs a hybrid analytical framework that integrates critical discourse analysis with thematic analysis and comparative elements to explore the intricate relationships between political language policies, cultural practices, and their ideological implications. The methodological approach establishes a thorough framework for investigating essential research inquiries, thereby enhancing the ongoing discourse surrounding Pakistan's language policies and cultural integration.

Data Analysis

This study examines how Punjabi marginalization inside Pakistani boundaries was caused by historical collectives with sociopolitical pressures and ideological convictions. In order to demonstrate how linguistic ideologies influenced public opinions, administrative decisions, and institutional processes, this analytical study incorporates a number of sources, including policy papers, scholarly research, historical archives, and media entries. The study reveals how linguistic superiority frameworks initiate their support structures through the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) within Language Ideology Theory. The study assesses Punjabi informal cultural practices that employ music, traditional stories, and literature to challenge

prevailing ideas. The combined results of several data sources illustrate the Punjabi language's exclusion from official spheres, as well as its cultural influence and potential avenues for linguistic equality. Through the use of thematic classification and critical evaluation, the research contains evidence-based conclusions that highlight the resilient and challenging features of Punjabi presence in Pakistan's multilingual context.

Table 1. Analysis of Policy Documents

Policy Document	Key Provisions	Implications for Punjabi	Critical Analysis
Constitution of Pakistan (1973)	Declares Urdu as the national language and promotes English as the official language.	Punjabi is not mentioned explicitly, limiting its role to informal and rural contexts.	Reflects a top-down approach prioritizing Urdu for unity and English for prestige, excluding regional languages like Punjabi (Rahman, 1996).
National Education Policy (2009)	Emphasizes the use of Urdu and English in education while promoting regional languages where feasible.	Punjabi is rarely implemented in schools, even in Punjab province.	A lack of clear implementation strategies for Punjabi perpetuates its marginalization in education (Malik, 1996; Gill, 2017).
Punjab Assembly Language Policy (2012)	Encourages the use of Urdu and English in provincial administration, with no formal recognition of Punjabi.	Punjabi remains excluded from official administrative use.	Fails to recognize Punjabi as the majority language of the province, undermining its institutional presence (Aslam, 2020).

By scrutinizing policy documents, researchers discerned the ways in which entrenched power dynamics and linguistic ideologies within these policies contributed to the social marginalization of Punjabi speakers. The selection of Urdu as the national language, alongside English as the official language, within the framework of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973), was a strategic decision aimed at fostering national unity and enhancing political prestige. The official framework excludes Punjabi from its scope, confining its usage predominantly to rural areas, despite it being the most widely spoken language in Pakistan (Rahman, 1996). The National Education Policy (2009) acknowledges the importance of regional languages; however, it fails to implement any definitive strategies for the incorporation of Punjabi into the educational framework within the Punjab province (Malik, 1996; Gill, 2017). The Punjab Assembly Language Policy (2012) illustrates the continued marginalization of Punjabi, as it lacks official status in contrast to the administrative prominence of Urdu and English. The institutional silence within the region undermines both the practical utilitarian profile of Punjabi and its genuine status in its indigenous context (Aslam 2020). Language policy documents reveal ideological inclinations favoring Urdu and English as pivotal instruments for fostering national unity and socioeconomic advancement, while systematically denying official recognition to Punjabi. This dynamic underpins the investigation into the suppression of the Punjabi minority language in this research study.

Table 2. Analysis of Academic Literature

Study	Key Findings	Relevance to Punjabi	Critical Analysis
Rahman (1996)	Language policies in Pakistan reflect a colonial legacy and power hierarchies favoring Urdu and English.	Punjabi is sidelined as an informal language due to the dominance of Urdu and English.	Highlights the need for decolonizing language policies and promoting linguistic equity.
Mahboob (2002)	Societal preference for English as a language of prestige exacerbates regional language decline.	Urban Punjabi speakers often abandon Punjabi in favor of English for socio-economic mobility.	Demonstrates how language ideologies shape public perceptions and contribute to language shift.

| Gill (2017) | Urban Punjabi families prefer Urdu and English, leading to a decline in intergenerational transmission. | Punjabi's functional domains are shrinking in urban contexts, weakening its cultural and linguistic continuity. | Reflects the socio-cultural pressures shaping language use patterns, particularly in urban areas. |

An analysis of academic literature concerning research inquiries elucidates the manner in which historical occurrences, coupled with ideological convictions and sociocultural dynamics, contribute to the marginalization of Punjabis within Pakistan. The colonial framework established linguistic hierarchies that positioned Urdu and English at the apex, relegating Punjabi to a subordinate status. Consequently, there is a pressing need for de-colonialization of legitimacy policies to achieve language equality (Rahman 1996). The examination of the research question reveals the influence of social and political factors on the oppression of the Punjabi language. The capacity of urban Punjabi speakers to elevate their socioeconomic status results in a transition towards English, as evidenced by Mahboob (2002), who examines the societal reverence for the prestige of the English language and its influence on public policy decisions. Gill (2017) elucidates the decline of Punjabi transmission across generations in urban areas, particularly as families opt to communicate in Urdu and English to secure social advantages. The decline in functional domains of Punjabi language utilization exposes the underlying social and cultural dynamics that govern its patterns of usage. The comprehensive results of this research provide crucial insights into the ideological and social factors contributing to the decline of the Punjabi language, addressing inquiries related to language code ideologies and the obstacles to maintaining Punjabi culture.

Table 3. Analysis of Historical Records

Historical Period	Language Policy/Practice	Impact on Punjabi	Critical Analysis
British Colonial Era (1858–1947)	Urdu and English were institutionalized as languages of governance and education.	Punjabi was relegated to informal use, losing its institutional significance.	Colonial policies laid the foundation for the linguistic hierarchy that persists in Pakistan (Shackle, 1977).
Post-Independence Period (1947–1970s)	Urdu declared the national language to unify the diverse ethnic population.	Punjabi's exclusion from national identity-building efforts limited its formal development.	Nationalist ideologies marginalized regional languages under the guise of promoting unity (Rahman, 1996).
Contemporary Era (1980s–Present)	English emerged as a dominant language for Education and socio-economic mobility.	Punjabi remains marginalized in education and media, with increasing language shift in urban areas.	Reflects the growing socio-political influence of English and the continued neglect of regional languages like Punjabi (Aslam, 2020).

The examination of historical records reveals that language policies, in conjunction with language ideologies, have perpetuated the ongoing marginalization of Punjabi. During the period of British Colonial governance from 1858 to 1947, both Urdu and English were designated as official languages for administration and education, while Punjabi was relegated to a status of traditional spoken use, consequently establishing a lasting hierarchy that positioned it beneath Urdu and English (Shackle, 1977). Following independence, Urdu was established as Pakistan's national language (1947–1970s), a decision that engendered division, as Punjabi was excluded from official nation-building efforts and faced challenges in achieving institutional advancement (Rahman, 1996). In the Contemporary Era (1980s–Present), English has ascended to a position of prominence in educational settings, correlating with social mobility, while Punjabi has been relegated to a marginalized status within both educational and urban contexts. Evidence indicates

that English is progressively acquiring political prominence, whereas Punjabi and other regional languages continue to experience persistent disregard (Aslam, 2020). The findings elucidate the research questions by demonstrating how political and historical factors rooted in colonial and nationalist ideologies have constructed an exclusionary system against Punjabi, thereby diminishing both its functionality and cultural sustainability.

Table 4. Analysis of Language Ideologies in Government Documents

Government Document	Language Ideology Reflected	Impact on Punjabi	Critical Analysis
Constitution of Pakistan (1973)	Urdu is presented as the symbol of national unity, while English symbolizes modernity and international prestige.	Punjabi is excluded, reinforcing its perception as a less prestigious and informal language.	Reflects a monolingual ideology that disregards linguistic diversity and undermines Punjabi's cultural and linguistic value (Rahman, 1996).
Punjab Assembly Language Policy (2012)	Promotes the use of Urdu and English in administration while ignoring Punjabi despite being the majority language of the region.	Punjabi remains confined to rural and informal contexts, limiting its institutional development.	Demonstrates a hierarchical ideology where regional languages are subordinated to Urdu and English for governance and official use (Aslam, 2020).
National Cultural Policy (2005)	Emphasizes preserving cultural heritage but fails to prioritize regional languages like Punjabi in official cultural programs.	Punjabi is symbolically recognized but lacks practical measures for preservation and promotion.	Highlights the disconnect between policy rhetoric and actionable measures to protect linguistic diversity (Shackle, 1977).

The analysis of governing documents reveals the manner in which policy development incorporated systematically discriminatory language ideologies that marginalized Punjabi, while simultaneously addressing research inquiries regarding the systemic background factors that contributed to its dismissal. As per the Constitution of Pakistan established in 1973, Urdu is recognized as the official emblem of national unity, while English serves as a representation of modernity. In stark contrast, Punjabi is entirely overlooked, leading to its designation as a marginalized linguistic entity (Rahman, 1996). The Punjab Assembly enacted a Language Policy in 2012, designating Urdu and English as the official languages for governance, notwithstanding the fact that the predominant demographic communicates in Punjabi. The existence of such authority sustains a hierarchical framework wherein national or official languages attain dominance over various local dialects (Aslam, 2020). The National Cultural Policy (2005) offers a symbolic acknowledgment of Punjabi at the national level; however, it falls short in implementing practical measures to sustain and promote the language, revealing a significant disparity between the rhetoric of policy and its execution (Shackle, 1977). Researchers have elucidated how official government documents perpetuate prevailing language ideologies that prioritize nationalism and global dominance over linguistic diversity, thereby further marginalizing Punjabi in formal contexts.

Table 5. Analysis of Educational Policies

Policy Document	Language Ideology Reflected	Impact on Punjabi	Critical Analysis
National Education Policy (2009)	Urdu is emphasized as the national medium of instruction, with English as a tool for socio-economic mobility.	Punjabi is excluded from curricula, even in Punjab, leading to its reduced role in formal education.	Reinforces a deficit ideology, viewing Punjabi as unsuitable for modern education and socio-economic development (Malik, 1996).

Punjab Curriculum Policy (2015)	Focuses on Urdu and English as mediums of instruction, with regional languages given optional and minimal recognition.	Limited use of Punjabi in primary education, with no significant efforts to promote it in higher education.	Demonstrates linguistic inequality by relegating Punjabi to a secondary role, even in the region where it is most widely spoken (Gill, 2017).
Higher Education Language Strategy	Encourages English as the primary medium for higher education while neglecting regional languages like Punjabi.	Punjabi is absent in academic research and higher education curricula, reducing its scholarly and intellectual value.	Reflects power dynamics where English dominates academic discourse, marginalizing regional languages and their intellectual traditions (Mahboob, 2002).

The prevailing language ideologies embedded within educational frameworks have significantly curtailed access to Punjabi and constrained its instructional role in formal learning environments. The National Education Policy (2009) designated Urdu as the principal medium of instruction in national education, positioning English as a means to facilitate economic advancement. However, it notably omitted Punjabi from all educational curricula, even within its home state of Punjab, thereby relegating Punjabi to a diminished status and fostering a misguided perception of its academic value (Malik, 1996). The Punjab Curriculum Policy (2015) prioritizes Urdu and English as primary languages, offering inadequate acknowledgment of regional languages. This relegates Punjabi to an optional subject in primary education and neglects its broader educational potential beyond this stage. According to Gill (2017) in his research, Punjabi occupies a subordinate status in regions where it exhibits the most robust linguistic presence. The Higher Education Language Strategy undermines Punjabi by prioritizing English, leading to a notable absence of Punjabi in academic discourse and a reduction in its scholarly acknowledgment. The findings collectively illustrate the manner in which educational frameworks uphold Urdu in conjunction with English as primary language standards, simultaneously reinforcing a dualistic linguistic hierarchy that influences cultural and linguistic sustainability. This dynamic also addresses the socio-political and ideological constraints that contribute to the diminished status of Punjabi.

Table 6. Analysis of Media Representations

Media Platform	Language Ideology Reflected	Impact on Punjabi	Critical Analysis
Mainstream News Channels	Urdu and English dominate as languages of formal discourse, while Punjabi is rarely used in news broadcasts.	Punjabi is excluded from high-prestige domains, reinforcing its perception as a language of informality.	Reflects the ideology that associates Punjabi with rurality and limits its use in urban, professional contexts (Haque, 2011).
Entertainment Media (Television)	Punjabi is featured in folk and comedic roles but rarely in serious or prestigious representations.	Reinforces stereotypes about Punjabi as an informal, rural, and comedic language.	Contributes to a lack of diversity in the representation of Punjabi culture and identity in mainstream media (Bukhari, 2019).
Social Media Platforms	Increased use of Punjabi in informal digital spaces for music, memes, and cultural content.	Punjabi thrives in informal, user-generated content but lacks institutional support in digital education and governance.	Reflects grassroots resistance to its marginalization but highlights the lack of institutional promotion for Punjabi in professional digital domains (Gill, 2017).

The media reinforces the marginalization of Punjabi culture by linking it to commonplace environments, thereby associating the language with a rural context. Mainstream news channels

employ English and Urdu linguistic frameworks for formal discourse, leading to the persistent marginalization of Punjabi from esteemed spheres, particularly within urban and professional environments (Haque, 2011). Entertainment media often relegates the Punjabi language to traditional folk entertainment roles, neglecting significant creative opportunities for more serious narratives. This oversight ultimately undermines the diversity of cultural and linguistic representation (Rawan Bukhari, 2019). Social media currently offers Punjabi speakers informal digital platforms where they can utilize their language to create musical expressions, user-generated content, and memes, all while resisting the threat of linguistic erasure. The lack of institutional support for Punjabi limits its application within digital education frameworks and governance systems in professional sectors (Gill, 2017). Research findings reveal media-influenced language ideologies that diminish the prestige of Punjabi while also highlighting its vibrant existence in informal cultural contexts where societal engagement intersects with institutional disregard.

DISCUSSION

The language policies in Pakistan consistently exhibit a discriminatory stance towards Punjabi, a consequence of historical and political factors that have shaped the linguistic hierarchy within the nation. During the period of British colonial rule from 1858 to 1947, Urdu and English emerged as dominant languages within administrative and educational frameworks, thereby establishing an educational environment that marginalized Punjabi (Shackle, 1977). The populations of North Indian Muslims employed Urdu as a lingua franca; however, the locus of administrative authority was firmly established in English. This dynamic resulted in Punjabi being relegated to informal contexts, predominantly within rural settings. The advent of independency facilitated the ongoing pursuit of a foundational Urdu agenda, wherein the government consistently promoted this language as a cohesive national instrument aimed at fostering national identity and unifying the diverse linguistic and ethnic groups within the country (Rahman, 1996). In spite of holding a majority position within the nation, Punjabi speakers have been deprived of national acknowledgment due to a language policy that systematically omits their native language from the overarching narrative of nation-building initiatives.

Following independence, socio-political developments intensified the marginalization of Punjabi speakers. Following the attainment of independence in 1947, the government designated Urdu as the national language of Pakistan, aiming to project a cohesive identity for the nascent state. The selection of Urdu by Pakistan and its populace reflects a profound connection to cultural beliefs that hold significance for South Asian Muslims, while simultaneously representing a departure from the prevailing status of Hindi in India. Punjabi diminished in its standing as a significant national language as it was perceived by the local populace as rural, informal, and lacking the necessary formal authority representations within the framework of Pakistan's "one-unit" narrative (Rahman, 1996). In the aftermath of independence, English attained a global prominence that solidified a dual language framework, with English prevailing in the realms of power while simultaneously emerging as the principal language for governmental authority and economic progress (Mahboob, 2002). The suppression of multilingualism advanced as the unfamiliar Punjabi language retreated to more personal and informal contexts.

The policies governing education language persist in excluding Punjabi, despite its status as the predominant indigenous language across the Punjab province. The official educational policies, such as the National Education Policy (2009) and the Punjab Curriculum Policy (2015), have established Urdu and English as the primary languages of instruction, while systematically excluding Punjabi from primary education and entirely omitting it from higher educational contexts. The basis of this exclusion rests on a perspective that perceives Punjabi as lacking contemporary developmental potential, thereby rendering it unsuitable for educational applications (Malik, 1996; Gill, 2017). A growing trend among Punjabi-speaking urban families is the preference for English and Urdu as the primary languages for their children, leading to a noticeable decline in the transmission of Punjabi and its functional domains.

The official provincial administration exhibits a conspicuous absence of representation for the Punjabi language, highlighting its ongoing status of marginalization. The 2012 Language Policy of the Punjab Assembly advocates for the promotion of Urdu in conjunction with English, while simultaneously acknowledging the Punjabi language in its entirety, despite its position as the predominant linguistic identity within the province, as noted by Aslam (2020). The exemption factor reinforces system-justified convictions regarding official languages as symbols of power, simultaneously advocating for the use of Punjabi exclusively in nonofficial rural contexts.

Audiences engaged with media often observe a notable absence of Punjabi-speaking content within esteemed broadcast news programs and professional media coverage. Entertainment media segments assign roles in the Punjabi language exclusively to comedic narratives and folk performances, perpetuating rural stereotypes as noted by Haque (2011) and Bukhari (2019). Punjabi exemplifies resilience by its application in informal cultural arenas online, particularly through the sharing of music, the creation of memes, and the posting of user-generated content (Gill, 2017). In the absence of systematic support, Punjabi lacks a meaningful presence in both workplace digital environments and educational contexts.

The omission of Punjabi signifies a historical alliance between colonial impact and national discourse, alongside present power dynamics that elevate both Urdu and English as emblems of national identity. Such exclusionary factors function within all educational frameworks, intertwined with governance and media, to foster bias against Punjabi as a linguistic entity. The marginalization of Punjabi results in diminished functional domains, jeopardizing cultural sustainability and threatening its established identity. This situation necessitates the implementation of inclusive language policies that advocate for linguistic diversity.

The fusion of Punjabi music and traditional oral heritage constitutes essential resources for resisting Punjabi suppression, safeguarding cultural integrity, nurturing communal spirit, and challenging existing language conventions. Punjabi continues to thrive in unstructured cultural realms through these enriching practices that exemplify cultural resilience in the face of formal institutional marginalization within educational contexts, governmental spheres, and mass media landscapes.

The enduring vibrancy of the Punjabi language is fundamentally bolstered by a multitude of musical traditions that thrive in both traditional and modern expressions. Renowned vocalists Noor Jehan and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, along with contemporary Punjabi artists, have significantly contributed to the global appreciation of the language through their musical performances, which resonate effectively with urban and diaspora communities. In his study, Bukhari (2019) illustrates how Punjabi music serves as a form of cultural resistance, showcasing the emotional depth of the Punjabi language while challenging adult-centric and rural stereotypes. The widespread acclaim of Punjabi music on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok exemplifies the manner in which digital environments usurp traditional institutional roles to foster support for the Punjabi language.

The transformation of medicine through language is cultivated by the rich tapestry of Punjabi storytelling, poetic insights, and traditional proverbial practices. The enduring cultural traditions impart significant lessons accumulated over centuries, which both rural families and urban residents diligently pass down through generations. Rahman (2002) posits that Punjabi oral traditions serve two crucial purposes: they preserve the linguistic diversity of Punjabi and act as a counter-narrative to the standardized language frameworks that facilitate Urdu. The literary and oral artistic contributions of Waris Shah, Bulleh Shah, and Amrita Pritam represent significant endeavors in contesting societal conventions, while simultaneously honoring cultural identity and opposing linguistic dominance.

The documentation of speakers' authentic experiences and cultural heritage through Punjabi literature serves to counteract linguistic and cultural marginalization. Prominent figures from history, Shiv Kumar Batalvi and Faiz Ahmad Faiz, meticulously shaped their creations to demonstrate that Punjabi surpasses its recognized distinctions, satisfying both intellectual and creative pursuits. Khan (2019) argues that the hesitation of institutions to endorse the

publication of Punjabi literature, along with the processing of archives and translation efforts, considerably hinders educational access to this corpus of work.

Formal language policies are established independently of cultural practices, resulting in the marginalization of Punjabi within educational and institutional contexts. The integration of cultural practices into the language planning framework by policymakers facilitates the realization of linguistic equity. The educational framework in the Punjab province ought to integrate Punjabi music in conjunction with oral traditions to cultivate a sense of pride among students in their linguistic heritage, while also promoting its intergenerational transmission. Promoting the contemporary relevance of Punjabi involves engaging in community-driven cultural initiatives that highlight storytelling and poetry reading, thereby enriching the understanding of Punjabi within both educational and social contexts.

Digital platforms establish a structured environment for the formalization of these practices. It is imperative that both public and private organizations allocate financial resources to enhance Punjabi multimedia content, encompassing podcasts, digital storytelling, and music, in order to broaden online representation. Clearly defined policy guidelines should govern the distribution of adapted Punjabi literary texts among Urdu and English audiences to preserve the language's genuine identity and broaden its public engagement.

Punjabi music, in conjunction with oral traditions and literature, serves as a crucial instrument in countering the marginalization of Punjabi culture, as it preserves cultural richness and fosters the evolution of identity. Despite their potential contributions, their genuine worth remains unacknowledged as they are marginalized from conventional policy frameworks. The formulation of language policy is enhanced by the integration of Punjabi's informal cultural practices, fostering linguistic equity as well as cultural pride and sustainability among its speakers. A fundamental change in language policy must arise in conjunction with a comprehensive framework that acknowledges cultural practices as pivotal agents for the preservation and revitalization of marginalized languages.

The prevailing language ideologies in Pakistan shape perceptions and influence decisions regarding Punjabi, leading to its unfortunate marginalization and jeopardizing both linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. A multitude of dominant ideologies advocate for Urdu as a means of fostering national unity, while simultaneously elevating English to a status associated with economic advancement and a crucial benchmark for global development. Research conducted by Rahman (1996) indicates that Punjabi speakers perceive their native language as predominantly situated within rural environments and domestic contexts. These circumstances contribute to the reinforcement of the notion that Punjabi holds a lesser status compared to Urdu in formal settings.

Following India's attainment of independence, a particular ideology surfaced that regarded Urdu as a significant emblem of national unity. The proponents of nation-building chose Urdu as a means to unify Pakistan's diverse ethnic communities, even though it is the mother tongue of only a small fraction of the population (Rahman, 1996). The monolingual cultural orientation significantly diminished the status of Punjabi, simultaneously establishing a hierarchical language system that systematically excluded other regional languages from participation. Political ideologies have marginalized Punjabi due to its associations with rurality, simultaneously negating its role in national narratives, which has consequently led to a decline in its official use within both educational and governance frameworks (Aslam 2020). The intertwining of these ideologies has fostered a public perception that associates Urdu with patriotism and English with progress,   consequently   leading   to   the   marginalization   of   Punjabi. The urban populace, in particular, harbors views regarding the Punjabi language that are shaped by prevailing ideologies, which diminish it to mere symbols of a bygone era or rural destitution. Parents living in urban Punjabi-speaking households often opt for Urdu and English in their child's education, viewing these languages as crucial for attaining economic and social advancement (Mahboob, 2002). The diminishing proficiency of young Punjabis in their native language results from a linguistic transition that undermines the protective barrier surrounding Punjabi, both intergenerationally and in various practical contexts (Gill, 2017).

The principles governing language shape the choices that result in the preservation of systems of linguistic hierarchy within policy frameworks. The National Education Policy (2009) and the Punjab Curriculum Policy (2015) prioritize Urdu and English, relegating the instruction of the regional language, Punjabi, to a minimal and optional status. The ideology posits that Punjabi is deficient in qualifications pertinent to contemporary educational frameworks and developmental requirements, thereby advocating for its marginalization from organized sectors (Malik, 1996). The Punjab Assembly Language Policy (2012) indicates that, alongside Urdu and English, Punjabi does not possess official institutional recognition, even though it serves as the predominant language in the Punjab province (Aslam, 2020).

The implications of these linguistic and cultural beliefs are significant, influencing both diversity and the standards for cultural protection. Language policies that exclude Punjabi from official domains serve to undermine linguistic diversity and the rich tapestry of its oral and written cultural heritage. The works of Waris Shah and Bulleh Shah, along with other esteemed Punjabi poets, risk becoming historically estranged from contemporary audiences due to the lack of promotion by traditional authorities (Khan, 2019). The devaluation of the Punjabi language exacerbates broader socio-political disparities, particularly when linguistic heritage intersects with class distinctions and regional variances.

The portrayal of the Punjabi language in media as solely suitable for humorous rural narratives poses considerable risks to the preservation of its culture, as it eclipses its profound intellectual and artistic capabilities (Bukhari 2019). Through social media grassroots initiatives, individuals articulate their dissent against these ideological frameworks. Punjabi communities sustain their cultural presence in the face of institutional discrimination through the avenues of digital music, social content, and meme sharing (Gill, 2017). The existing resilience-based initiatives are inadequate in fostering meaningful change unless there is a comprehensive transformation of institution-wide policies that challenge prevailing governing beliefs.

The language ideologies in Pakistan, rooted in national values and contemporary aspirations for economic advancement, have inadvertently reinforced public biases and influenced policy decisions. This has resulted in the systematic marginalization of Punjabi from official recognition, posing a significant threat to the country's linguistic diversity and cultural preservation. The prevailing public perceptions regarding language hierarchies, coupled with entrenched discriminatory stereotypes, serve to diminish the status of Punjabi. This dynamic effectively restricts its utilization in official contexts, leading to its exclusion from educational frameworks, state governance, and media engagement. The preservation of linguistic diversity alongside the safeguarding of cultural heritage necessitates the prompt implementation of inclusive language policies that challenge prevailing notions, while simultaneously showcasing the academic significance of Punjabi and facilitating access to its official applications.

The data from the study illustrates the ways in which historical political factors, coupled with social dynamics and ideological influences, persistently undermine the value of the Punjabi language, while favoring Urdu and English as the prioritized languages of the state. Throughout the colonial era and the subsequent period of independence, nationalism collaborated to elevate Urdu as a cohesive emblem, while positioning English as the language of authority, thereby relegating Punjabi to a more rural and informal context. The National Education Policy (2009) and the Punjab Curriculum Policy (2015) serve as significant institutional mechanisms that create linguistic hierarchies, failing to acknowledge the Punjabi language as a viable medium for education or administration within the Punjab province. The public perceptions shaped by these policies regard Punjabi as a language of lesser prestige, devoid of educational and professional legitimacy. This has led to a decline in interfamily language transmission and a reduction in its functional applications, particularly in urban areas. Media stereotypes endure due to their inability to portray Punjabi in a manner that transcends comedic and folk representations, simultaneously denying this language the esteemed roles it deserves in news broadcasting and professional domains. Punjabi music, in conjunction with traditional oral expressions and digital media content, functions as a grassroots mechanism that counters language decline and sustains linguistic vitality, despite institutional neglect of the language. The findings indicate that Pakistan requires comprehensive language policy reforms that confront entrenched traditions and

promote linguistic equality, while facilitating the use of Punjabi in formal contexts to safeguard cultural heritage and linguistic diversity.

This research investigation substantiates earlier academic findings that detail the historical and political marginalization of Punjabi within the institutional language hierarchy of Pakistan. Rahman (1996) posits that colonial administrations established Urdu and English as the official languages across the region, dismissing Punjabi as lacking institutional status and unsuitable for administrative or educational purposes, a situation that continues to influence the contemporary post-independence linguistic landscape. The research conducted by Mahboob (2002) and Gill (2017) elucidates the manner in which contemporary ideologies have influenced public perceptions, attributing a rural identity to Punjabi while marginalizing it from urban environments and familial contexts, due to its perceived low social status. The findings presented by Malik (1996) are further substantiated by this study, as educational frameworks such as the National Education Policy (2009) demonstrate a limited integration of Punjabi, resulting in linguistic inequalities and detrimental effects on cultural heritage. Research conducted by Bukhari (2019) and Haque (2011) reveals that media often portrays the Punjabi language in a manner that is both informal and comedic, thereby reinforcing existing linguistic hierarchies. The grassroots resistance examined in this study aligns with Gill's (2017) theory regarding informal spaces as arenas of cultural resilience, thereby demonstrating that the Punjabi language retains a robust presence in domains beyond institutional oversight. The findings align with established studies, affirming the systematic marginalization of the Punjabi language, thereby underscoring the necessity for comprehensive linguistic policy reforms that promote language diversity.

The research findings are intricately aligned with the theoretical framework established through Language Ideology Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), illustrating the profound influence of ideological constructs on Pakistani attitudes and governmental decisions pertaining to the Punjabi language. Through the lens of Language Ideology Theory, researchers have elucidated the ways in which Urdu and English emerged as emblems of national unity and progress, while Punjabi is relegated to a position of inferiority, often linked with rural and informal language practices. The findings indicate that these concepts are institutionalized through educational regulations, such as the National Education Policy of 2009, and governmental language policies, like the Punjab Assembly Language Policy of 2012. These frameworks establish the predominance of Urdu and English over Punjabi, thereby reinforcing Krossrity's (2000) exposition of power hierarchies. The examination employs Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate the ways in which policy documents and media captions perpetuate these ideologies, while the media presents the Punjabi language in limited conventional characters, thereby reinforcing its marginalized status. Punjabi music, in conjunction with digital content, serves as a platform for dissent against prevailing ideologies while simultaneously preserving cultural heritage. This framework for assessing language ideologies in conjunction with discourse patterns adheres to theoretical standards, as it elucidates the manner in which power structures within public discourse and policy implementations foster structural inequality, while simultaneously revealing potential pathways to combat this discrimination.

CONCLUSION

This study conducted the analysis of the historical, socio-political, and ideological factors that contribute to the institutionalized neglect of the Punjabi language in Pakistan, alongside the promotion of Urdu and English as dominant languages. In the era of colonialism, subsequently leading to independent India, nationalist movements positioned Urdu as a symbol of unity, while English was embraced as the language of modernity, with Punjabi relegated to the status of an informal rural dialect. The National Education Policy (2009) and the Punjab Curriculum Policy (2015), alongside various exclusionary language policies, serve to limit the use of Punjabi within educational contexts, simultaneously curtailing its role in governance, despite the apparent support for the Punjab province. The existing governing policies have fostered a perception among the public that Punjabi lacks value in formal contexts or prestige, which in turn results in a diminished likelihood of families transmitting the language to subsequent generations and restricts its utility in urban environments. The fundamental expressions within media perpetuate these ideologies by consistently depicting Punjabi individuals in stereotypical roles, while

simultaneously excluding them from major broadcasting platforms, thereby directly contributing to the marginalization of the language.

The research illustrates a dichotomy, as informal cultural practices such as Punjabi music, combined with methods for preserving oral history and digital content, sustain the cultural presence of the language and foster environments in which Punjabi can flourish, notwithstanding the prevailing policies of disregard. The daily practices challenge institutional neglect by showcasing the resilience of Punjabi speakers, effectively thwarting the potential for linguistic extinction at foundational cultural tiers. The findings of the research underscore an urgent necessity for language policies that safeguard the intrinsic value of the Punjabi language as a cornerstone of cultural heritage. The integration of Punjabi within administrative frameworks and educational programs, coupled with media initiatives, will safeguard local cultural heritages and promote equitable language access, while dismantling hierarchical structures that restrict the representation of minority languages. Formulating a national identity and ensuring cultural sustainability necessitates the adoption of innovative language ideological frameworks and policy development strategies that advocate for linguistic diversity and the equitable recognition of marginalized languages.

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