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An Insight Into Language Polices And Development In Kohat: A Qualitative Study Of Language Development In Three Dissimilar Families



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Abstract

This qualitative case study examines family language policy (FLP) and its role in shaping children's language development across three socioeconomically distinct families in Kohat, KP, Pakistan. This study is guided by Spolsky's (2004) framework of language practices, beliefs, and management. In this study, Data were collected through semi-structured parental interviews and home-based observations. The findings reveal clear socioeconomic variations in family language policy. As the high-SES family prioritizes English for education and social prestige, the middle-SES family maintains Pashto for cultural identity while using Urdu and English for educational purposes and the lower-SES family sustains Hindko as the dominant home language with limited exposure to English. Likewise, observational data corroborate interview findings, demonstrating that socioeconomic conditions, parental ideologies and access to linguistic resources that shape children's linguistic environments. Finally, the study contributes to family language policy research by offering a localized, comparative perspective from a non-metropolitan Pakistani context.

Key Words/Phrases: Family Language Policy (FLP), Socioeconomic Status (SES), Multilingualism, Language Practices, Language Beliefs, Language Management, Child Language Development, Pashto, Hindko, Urdu, English.

Background of the Study

Language plays a central role in shaping human identity, culture, and cognitive development. Within the family, language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a key mechanism for socialization and cultural transmission (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). Since early language exposure takes place at home, families have a decisive influence on children's language development. In this context the concept of Family Language Policy (FLP) has gained increasing attention in sociolinguistic research. According to Spolsky's (2004) framework, FLP comprises language practices, language beliefs or ideologies and language management. Moreover, research demonstrates that parental language choices significantly affect their children's bilingual development, heritage language maintenance, and identity formation, particularly in multilingual settings. Additionally, Socio-economic status (SES) strongly shapes family language policies by influencing access to linguistic resources and attitudes towards different languages (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008). For instance, higher socio-economic families often prioritize English due to its association with education and social mobility, whereas middle- and lower-class families tend to balance local and national languages alongside educational needs (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013). However, most FLP studies are situated in Western contexts, thereby leaving multilingual regions such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under-researched. In contrast Kohat, characterized by linguistic diversity and socio-economic variation, provides a valuable context for examining FLP. Therefore, this study therefore investigates how family language policies differ across socio-economically diverse families in Kohat and how these policies influence children's language development.

Statement of the Problem

As family Language Policy (FLP) plays a vital role in children's language development by shaping language exposure and use at home. In multilingual societies such as Kohat socio-economic differences among families influence FLP practices through variations in education, cultural norms and daily language use. However, despite the linguistic diversity of the region limited research has examined how these socio-economic differences affect family language policies and children's language development in Kohat. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by analyzing FLP in three socio-economically distinct families.

Rationale of the Study

Home is the primary context for early language learning, therefore making FLP crucial to children's linguistic development. Moreover, socio-economic status shapes access to languages and linguistic resources, particularly in Kohat's multilingual setting. By examining FLP across different socio-economic groups, this study not only enhances understanding of how social factors influence language development but also provides insight that may inform educational practices and language related policy initiatives. Ultimately, the study aims at reducing linguistic inequalities among children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Research Questions

How does family language policy affect children's language development in high, middle, and lower-class case families in district Kohat?

What are the differences in family language policy of high, middle, and lower-class case families in district Kohat?

Research Objectives

To examine the effects of family language policy on children's language development in high, middle, and lower-class families in district Kohat.

To discover the differences in family language policy between high, middle, and lower-class families in district Kohat.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language development results from the interaction of innate abilities and social environment. On one hand Chomsky (1965), emphasizes an inborn language faculty on the other hand, Vygotsky (1978) highlights the importance of social interaction in language learning. Building on these views interactionist perspectives combine both approaches thereby stressing the role of meaningful caregiver input in children's language development (Hoff, 2006). Overall, families play a central role in shaping early language experiences, particularly in multilingual settings (Owens et al., 2012; Hassan et al., 2023; Nigar., 2025). Moreover, research consistently shows that socioeconomic status (SES) influences children's language development. For instance, Hart and Risley (1995) demonstrated that higher-SES families provide richer linguistic input which consequently led to stronger language outcomes. Language policy was initially viewed as a state-level practice (Kloss, 1969) however, Spolsky (2004) expanded it to include beliefs, practices, and management at individual levels. Within this framework, Family Language Policy (FLP) applies language policy to households specifically focusing on how parents manage language use and

transmission (King et al., 2008). Furthermore, FLP is now understood as dynamic and shaped by social pressures and family negotiations (Fogle & King, 2013). In this regard, FLP is closely linked to socioeconomic status and language prestige. For example, Higher-SES families often prioritize English for mobility whereas lower-SES families tend to maintain regional languages (Akram et al., 2024). In multilingual contexts, families continuously negotiate between heritage language maintenance and dominant language acquisition therefore reflecting broader social hierarchies. In Pakistan, specifically English and Urdu dominate educational and social domains, while regional languages, viz. Pashto and Hindko are marginalized. According to Rahman (2020) identifies English as a marker of elite status which influencing parental language choices. More recently, FLP studies show that families strategically use heritage languages for identity construction while adopting dominant languages for education (Sheikh & Khan, 2024; Ilyas et al., 2025). Despite these advances limited attention has been given to how family language policy varies across socioeconomic groups within smaller multilingual communities. Consequently, contexts including, Kohat, where Pashto, Hindko, Urdu, and English coexist, remain underexplored. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by examining FLP practices in families from different socioeconomic backgrounds in Kohat.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore family language policy (FLP) in everyday family contexts. Specifically, qualitative methods were used to capture complex language practices, beliefs, and management strategies through semi-structured interviews and observations guided by Spolsky's (2004) framework. As a result, the case study approach enabled in-depth analysis and comparison of FLP across three socio-economically diverse families in Kohat. Moreover, the case study design allowed family language practices to be examined within broader sociocultural settings thereby facilitating comparison across three socioeconomically diverse families in Kohat (De Houwer, 2021).

Research Type

The study adopted a descriptive qualitative design to document existing patterns of language use, beliefs, and management without altering the research setting. This approach is appropriate for FLP research as it enables analysis of naturally occurring language practices (Creswell, 2014). Accordingly, data were thematically analysed using Spolsky's (2004) framework, supported by previous FLP studies highlighting parental ideologies and language transmission (King & Fogle, 2008; Curdt-Christiansen, 2018).

Data Collection Methods

Similarly, the study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to document existing family language practices, beliefs, and management without manipulating the research context. In doing so the study captures naturally occurring language use (Creswell, 2014). Subsequently, data were analysed thematically using Spolsky's (2004) framework.

Population and Sampling

The study population comprised families in Kohat, Pakistan, representing different linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds. To ensure comparability, Purposive sampling was used to select three socioeconomically distinct families (high-, middle-, and lower-SES). This selection enabled to enable systematics comparison of family language policy (FLP) across social classes. Specifically, the high-SES family primarily uses English at home, with Urdu as a secondary language while Hindko and Pashto serving cultural functions. In contrast the middle-SES family mainly uses Pashto for home interaction, Urdu for formal and educational purposes, and limited English for academics needs. Meanwhile, the lower-SES family predominantly uses Hindko, with Urdu introduced through schooling and minimal use of English. Overall, this sampling strategy allowed focused comparison across socioeconomic groups without aiming for statistical generalization which is consistent with FLP research practices (King & Fogle, 2008; Curdt-Christiansen, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed thematically using Spolsky's (2004) family language policy framework in conjunction with Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure. Specifically, the analysis focused on language practices, language beliefs, and language management thereby allowing identification of socioeconomic patterns in family language policy across the three families.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Middle Class Family

The analysis begins with the middle-class family because this group represents a transitional socio-economic position where traditional linguistic practices intersect most visibly with educational aspirations and upward mobility. As a result, this group is analytically central to understanding variation in family language policy across classes. To guide the analysis Spolsky's Language Policy Model (2004) was used as the analytical Framework. According to Spolsky family language policy comprises three component including Language Practices (Actual language use in real-life situations), Language Beliefs/Ideologies (Attitudes and values about languages) Language Management (Strategies or efforts to influence language behaviour). Accordingly, each theme below aligns with one or more of these components.

Theme 1: Pashto as the Core of Family Communication and Identity

(Spolsky's Components: Language Practices and Language Beliefs): Interview and observational data clearly indicate that Pashto is the primary language of everyday interaction in the middle-class family. In particularly both parents and children describe Pashto as the most natural and emotionally comfortable medium for home communication. Moreover, it is consistently used during informal family interactions. Even through children possess competence in Urdu and English for academic purposes, they revert to Pashto in casual, unmonitored contexts thereby confirming its role as the unmarked home language. Beyond its communicative function, Pashto holds strong ideological value as a marker of cultural identity and ancestral heritage. Consequently, Parents express a clear commitment to maintaining Pashto across generations despite increased exposure to Urdu and English. As one parent stated, "Pashto is spoken because it is natural and easy for everyone in the family."

Theme 2: Instrumental Roles of Urdu and English in Educational Advancement (Language Practices, Beliefs, and Management): The family follows a functional multilingual policy in which each language serves a specific role. For example, Urdu is used for school-related communication, guests, and formal contexts whereas English is valued primarily for academic success and future employment. Thus, Pashto remains the home language while Urdu and English are strategically promoted for educational and professional advancement. Illustrative quote: “English is needed for higher studies and jobs, but Urdu and Pashto are also important for culture and national identity.”

Theme 3: Influence of Schooling on Home Language Practices (Language Practices and Management): Importantly formal education strongly influences family language use. As children enter school Urdu and English are introduced prompting parents to adjust home practices to support academic needs. As a result, generational multilingualism emerges with children using Pashto at home and Urdu and English in educational settings. Illustrative quote: “The shift happened when going to school... Urdu was necessary, and later English was added.”

Theme 4: Language Correction and Norms (Language Management): In addition, Parents actively regulate language use through correction particularly in English grammar and appropriate language choice. Implicit norms guide language behaviors include such as Pashto for home, Urdu for formal interaction, English for academics, and Arabic/Urdu for religious purposes. As Illustrative quote: “Yes, children are corrected if they use wrong Hindko words or wrong English grammar.”

Theme 5: Balancing Tradition and Modern Aspirations (Language Beliefs, Management, and SES Impact): Overall the family balances cultural maintenance with aspirations for upward mobility. While Pashto remains central to identity, English proficiency is actively encouraged to enhance educational and career opportunities. This reflects a dual orientation toward heritage preservation and social advancement. Illustrative quote: “Parents hope children become fluent in English but are concerned that Pashto should not weaken.”

Theme 6: Socioeconomic Status as a Shaping Factor (Language Practices, Beliefs, and Management): Finally, Socioeconomic status significantly shapes the family’s FLP. With educated parents and moderate income, the family practices functional trilingualism, maintaining Pashto while strategically incorporating Urdu and English to support education and mobility. Illustrative quote: “As a middle-class family, Pashto remains dominant, while Urdu and English are added for education and upward mobility.”

These findings closely align with recent family language policy (FLP) research highlighting the middle class as a site of linguistic negotiation between heritage maintenance and educational aspiration (Curdts-Christiansen 2018). Similarly, the central role of Pashto as the primary home language reflects findings that heritage languages remain emotionally dominant and identity-forming in non-elite households (Karpava, 2023). Moreover, the functional use of Urdu and English for schooling and future mobility supports recent studies showing that middle-class families allocate

languages to specific domains rather than allowing full language shift (King & Fogle, 2008). Likewise, the influence of schooling on home practices and parental language correction mirrors evidence that education drives implicit language management, particularly in English acquisition (Schwartz et al., 2010; Gul et al., 2022)

Table 1 Tabular Representation of the Results about the Middle-class family

S.NO	Theme	Spolskey Component(s)	Key focus
1	Pashto as Core of Identity	Practices + Beliefs	Native language, cultural roots, home communication
2	Functional Multilingualism	Practices + Beliefs + Management	Urdu/English used for education, formality, and mobility
3	Schooling as Language Driver	Practices + Management	School introduces new languages, shifts usage
4	Correction and Language Norms	Management	Family rules and corrections in language use
5	Tradition vs. Aspiration	Beliefs + Management	Balancing Pashto with need for English
6	Socio-Economic Status Influence	All Three	SES shapes language access, values, and usage

High Class Family

This section, analyses the family language policy of a high socio-economic status family in Kohat. Although the family belongs to a Hindko-speaking background, with Urdu and Hindko as heritage languages. However, English dominates daily interaction due to its strong association with education, prestige, and global mobility. Pashto is used minimally and mainly in external social contexts. This profile reflects the linguistic practices of an elite urban household in Kohat.

Theme 1: English as the Dominant Language of Prestige and Education

(Language Practices, Beliefs, and Management): English is the primary language used with children and in educational, digital, and professional domains. Parents actively promote English through English-medium books, media, and schooling, viewing it as a marker of modernity and high social status. Illustrative quote: “English is associated with modernity, high education, and status in Kohat.”

Theme 2: Context-Based Multilingual Practices

(Language Practices): Despite English dominance, the family maintains a multilingual repertoire. Urdu is used for wider communication, Hindko for interaction with elders, and Pashto for limited informal or social use. Code-switching, especially among children, is common and reflects linguistic flexibility. Illustrative quote: “We speak Pashto when people do not understand Urdu or English.”

Theme 3: Heritage Languages and Identity

(Language Beliefs): Urdu and Hindko are valued as symbols of cultural and family identity. Parents emphasize maintaining these languages alongside English to preserve cultural roots and respectful communication across generations. Illustrative quote: “Urdu and Hindko reflect our family and cultural identity.”

Theme 4: Intergenerational Shift Toward English

(Language Practices and Management): An intergenerational shift is evident, with grandparents using Hindko, parents combining Urdu and Hindko, and children becoming English-dominant. This shift is driven by education, socioeconomic advancement, and globalization. Illustrative quote: “The change is due to education, respect, and globalization.”

Theme 5: Strategic Language Management

(Language Management): Language use is consciously regulated: English for education, Urdu for visitors, Hindko for elders, and Pashto for informal contexts. Parents correct children’s language use and carefully select English-based learning resources, reflecting goal-oriented language planning. Illustrative quote: “Children are corrected when they use languages incorrectly.”

Theme 6: Socio-Economic Status as a Determining Factor

(Language Practices, Beliefs, and Management): High socioeconomic status enables access to English-medium education, digital resources, and elite social networks, making English the dominant and expected language. Heritage languages are maintained symbolically, while English is prioritized for social positioning and mobility. Illustrative quote: “High socio-economic background makes English the natural choice.”

The findings from the high socio-economic family align with recent FLP research showing English dominance in elite households. Studies indicate that upper-class families prioritize English due to its association with educational success, global mobility, and social prestige (Curd-Christiansen 2018). Similar to the present study, affluent families allocate languages by domain, using English for education and status, Urdu for formal communication, and heritage languages symbolically for elders (Mirvahedi & Hosseini, 2023). The observed intergenerational shift toward English is consistent with evidence that higher socio-economic capital accelerates heritage language shift unless actively maintained (Curd-Christiansen, 2018). Within Pakistan, recent studies confirm the normalization of English as a home language in high-income urban families (Rehman & Sultana 2020). Overall, the findings demonstrate that high socio-economic status strongly shapes FLP, resulting in English dominance, strategic multilingualism, and reduced functional use of heritage languages.

Table 2 High class family

S. No	Theme	Spolsky’s Components	Key Focus
1	English as Dominant Language	Practices + Beliefs + Management	English used for education, prestige, technology, and daily interaction; actively promoted at home
2	Contextual Multilingualism	Practices	Urdu, Hindko, and Pashto are used selectively based on addressee and social context
3	Language and Identity	Beliefs	Urdu and Hindko linked to family and cultural heritage; Pashto carries limited symbolic value as a marker of social courtesy and interethnic communication

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4	Generational Shift Toward English	Practices + Management	Shift from Hindko/Urdu in older generations to English dominance among children, driven by education and socio-economic mobility
5	Conscious Language Management	Management	Parents set explicit language rules, correct usage, and regulate exposure through books, media, and digital resources
6	Socio-Economic Status as a Language Policy Driver	All Three	High SES enables English dominance and access to resources; local languages maintained mainly for cultural continuity

Lower-Class Family

Theme 1: Hindko as the Core Home Language

(Spolsky's Components: Practices, Beliefs, and Management): Hindko is the dominant language used by all family members for everyday interaction. It is closely linked with family identity, heritage, and emotional comfort, and is consciously maintained by parents. Quote: "Hindko is part of the family's identity and heritage."

Theme 2: Urdu as the Language of Education and Wider Communication

(Spolsky's Components: Practices and Beliefs)" Urdu occupies a secondary but significant role, mainly used for schooling, official matters, and communication outside the family. It is also the main language of media and educational materials in the household. Quote: "Urdu is required for studies and communication across Pakistan."

Theme 3: Limited Use and Confidence in English

(Spolsky's Components: Practices, Beliefs, and Management): English is used minimally and mainly for school homework. Parents lack confidence in English, which restricts home-based exposure and practice. Quote: "English is important for education, but the family is not confident in it."

Theme 4: Multilingualism Limited to Practical Domains

(Spolsky's Component: Practices): Pashto is used occasionally with relatives or neighbors, indicating situational multilingualism. These languages are used for immediate communicative needs rather than symbolic or cultural purposes.

Theme 5: Intergenerational Continuity of Language Use

(Spolsky's Components: Practices and Management): A stable intergenerational pattern is evident: Hindko dominates home interaction, Urdu supports education, and English remains limited. Quote: "Hindko was always natural at home; school required Urdu."

Theme 6: Language Management Shaped by Limited Resources

(Spolsky's Component: Management): Language management is guided by economic constraints and practicality. Hindko is prioritized at home, Urdu for school and formal needs, and English receives minimal attention. Quote: "Lower-class status limits English exposure; Hindko dominates daily life."

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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Theme 7: Socio-Economic Status and Language Opportunities

(Spolsky's Components: Practices, Beliefs, and Management): Low socio-economic status restricts access to English resources and technology, reinforcing reliance on Hindko and functional use of Urdu. Quote: "Hindko dominates because it is easiest and practical; English exposure is limited."

Table 3 Lower class family

S. No	Theme	Spolsky's Component(s)	Key Focus
1	Hindko as Core Home Language	Practices + Beliefs + Management	Hindko used naturally and comfortably in daily home interaction; strongly linked to family identity
2	Urdu as Language of Education	Practices + Beliefs	Urdu used for schooling, official communication, and mass media
3	Limited English Use and Confidence	Practices + Beliefs + Management	English restricted to school texts; limited exposure leads to low confidence and minimal spoken competence
4	Practical Multilingualism	Practices	Pashto used occasionally in social interaction; no strong symbolic or identity role
5	Intergenerational Continuity	Practices + Management	Stable use of Hindko across generations; gradual increase in Urdu due to schooling requirements
6	Language Management Based on Practical Constraints	Management	Parents apply simple, need-based language rules; corrections occur mainly in Urdu, while limited financial and educational resources restrict structured English learning
7	SES as a Constraint on Language Development	All Three	Low income and limited parental education reduce access to English input, resulting in a functional but restricted multilingual repertoire focused on immediate communicative needs

Comparison and Contrast Between These Families

When compared the three families demonstrate distinct family language policies shaped primarily by socio-economic status, educational access, and social aspirations. The middle-class family maintains Pashto as the core home language to preserve ethnic identity, while strategically using Urdu for social and formal interaction and English for education and upward mobility. Their language policy reflects a balance between cultural continuity and pragmatic advancement, supported by active parental language management. In contrast, the high-class family prioritizes English as the dominant home language, viewing it as a symbol of prestige, modernity, and global mobility. While Urdu, Hindko, and Pashto are maintained symbolically, English is carefully managed and reinforced through strict correction, schooling, and digital exposure. High socio-economic capital enables deliberate multilingual proficiency and strong language regulation. The lower-class family, however, adopts a necessity-driven language policy. Hindko remains the dominant home and identity language, Urdu is used functionally for education and public interaction, and English is limited

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to school requirements. Economic constraints and limited educational resources restrict English exposure, resulting in minimal language management and low confidence in global languages.

Overall, the comparison highlights that while all families are multilingual, socio-economic status strongly determines whether multilingualism is strategic, aspirational, or purely functional, thereby reinforcing broader social stratification in Kohat (Table 4).

Table 4.4 comparison of the Middle-Class, High-Class, and Lower-Class families

Aspect	Middle-Class Family	High-Class Family	Lower-Class Family
Core Home Language	Pashto is the primary home language and is strongly tied to ethnic identity and everyday interaction.	English is dominant in the home and is closely associated with education, prestige, and social positioning.	Hindko dominates home communication, valued for comfort, familiarity, and cultural identity.
Multilingual Use	Functional multilingualism: Pashto for home interaction, Urdu for guests and formal situations, and English mainly for education and future careers.	Rich multilingual repertoire with systematic contextual switching among English, Urdu, Hindko, and occasional Pashto.	Limited multilingualism: Hindko at home, Urdu for education and official matters, and Pashto used only occasionally in social contexts.
Language Beliefs	Pashto is viewed as essential for heritage preservation, while English is valued for socioeconomic mobility.	English symbolizes modernity and elite status; Urdu and Hindko retain symbolic value for cultural continuity.	Hindko represents cultural identity; Urdu is important for schooling; English is perceived as difficult and less attainable.
Language Management	Active parental management: correction of children's speech (especially English grammar and inappropriate words) and clear contextual rules for language use.	Conscious and strategic management: deliberate choice of English-medium schooling, controlled exposure through books, media, and digital resources.	Practical and minimal management: emphasis on correcting Urdu for school purposes; little regulation of English due to limited proficiency and exposure.
Influence of Education	Schooling introduces Urdu and English, prompting parents to support academic language needs while maintaining Pashto at home.	English-medium education strongly shapes home language practices; extensive digital exposure reinforces English dominance.	Education emphasizes Urdu and limited English, which influences parental correction practices but does not extend to home language shift.
Socio-Economic Impact	Middle SES enables moderate investment in English education, resulting in functional trilingual competence while Pashto remains dominant.	High SES allows full access to English-medium education, technology, and elite linguistic practices, leading to English dominance.	Low SES restricts access to linguistic resources, resulting in limited English proficiency and a focus on practical language use.
Generational Shift	Gradual shift from Pashto-only use to functional trilingualism driven by schooling.	Clear generational shift from Hindko/Urdu to English dominance among children.	Stable Hindko home use with a gradual increase in Urdu due to schooling; English remains minimal.

Role of English	Important for future mobility but balanced with Pashto for identity.	Dominant language for education, prestige, and modernity; actively promoted at home.	Restricted to school homework; low confidence and minimal home use.
Cultural vs. Modern Aspirations	Balances cultural preservation (Pashto) with modern educational demands (English).	Prioritizes English for modernity and status while maintaining heritage languages symbolically.	Prioritizes cultural comfort and practicality over aspirations linked to modern or elite language use.

Observational Data

Importantly Observational data strongly supported the interview findings across all three families. the high-class family, children were frequently observed using English during homework, media use, and sibling interaction, confirming its dominance. Urdu was mainly used with elders, while Hindko and Pashto appeared only occasionally in informal contexts. In the middle-class family, Pashto remained the dominant language in natural inter/action, with Urdu used for school-related activities and limited English confined to textbooks or memorized expressions. In the lower-class family, Hindko was consistently used in all home interactions, with Urdu appearing only for academic purposes and minimal exposure to English. Overall observation confirmed that socio-economic status shapes the natural home language environment, reinforcing interview-based claims. The convergence of interviews and observational data provides strong evidence for understanding family language policies, with detailed activity-wise and comparative patterns presented in Tables 6 and 7.

The observational findings align with recent family language policy research highlighting the value of naturalistic observation in validating reported practices (De Houwer, 2022). Consistent with Curdt-Christiansen (2018), children's spontaneous language use during play, study, and media engagement reflected dominant family language ideologies. The class-based patterns observed English dominance in high-SES families, heritage language maintenance in lower-SES households, and functional multilingualism in middle-class homes mirror recent comparative studies (Mirvahedi & Hosseini, 2023). Overall, the convergence of interview and observational data supports triangulation as an effective approach for capturing lived language practices shaped by socio-economic stratification.

Table 5. Comparison of Interview and Observation Findings Across Families

Family Type	Interview Findings	Observation Findings	Match / Difference
High-Class Family	Parents reported English as main home language; Urdu used with elders.	Children were observed speaking English during homework, mobile use, and play; Urdu only with elders; little Pashto/Hindko.	Strong Match – observation confirms interview.
Middle-Class Family	Parents stated Pashto is daily home language; Urdu for homework; English limited.	Observed natural Pashto conversation; Urdu only during study time; English only in books.	Strong Match – practices align with interviews.
Lower-Class	Parents said Hindko	Observed complete Hindko	Strong Match –

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Family	is the only home language; Urdu used for school; no English exposure.	dominance; Urdu only in textbooks; English almost absent.	observation fully supports interview.
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Table 6. Observed Language Use in Daily Home Activities

Activity / Setting	High-Class Family	Middle-Class Family	Lower-Class Family
Daily Conversation	English mostly	Pashto	Hindko
Homework Time	English + some Urdu	Urdu + some English	Urdu (only reading)
Interaction with Elders	Urdu	Pashto/Urdu	Hindko
Watching TV / Mobile	English cartoons	Urdu/Pashto mix	Urdu/Hindko
Playtime with Siblings	English	Pashto	Hindko
Code-Switching	English → Urdu	Pashto → Urdu	Hindko only
English Exposure Level	High	Moderate–Low	Very Low

Table 7. Themes Supported by Interview and Observation

Theme	Interview Evidence	Observation Evidence	Interpretation
Dominant Home Language	High-class: English; Middle: Pashto; Lower: Hindko	Observed same patterns during conversation	Confirms socio-economic effect on language
Language in Studies	Urdu & English used during homework	Children used Urdu instructions; English only for reading	Academic languages differ from home languages
Intergenerational Interaction	Elders prefer Urdu/Pashto/Hindko	Observed parents switching languages when speaking to elders	Home language shift visible
Children's Code-Switching	Parents reported frequent code-switching	Observed English ↔ Urdu and Pashto ↔ Urdu switching	Shows multilingual flexibility
Exposure to English	High-class: high; Middle: medium; Lower: low	Observed through media, books, and speech	Confirms English depends on class & schooling

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, using Spolsky's (2004) framework, this study examined family language policy across high-, middle-, and lower-SES families in Kohat. The findings show that socio-economic status strongly shapes home language practices, beliefs, and management. In the high-SES family, English dominates daily interaction and is strategically promoted for education, prestige, and global mobility, while local languages are maintained symbolically. The lower-SES family follows a need-based policy, with Hindko as the primary home language, Urdu limited to schooling, and minimal English exposure due to resource constraints. The middle-SES family reflects a transitional pattern, maintaining Pashto at home while valuing Urdu and English for wider communication and academic advancement. Overall FLP in Kohat is driven more by structural inequalities than individual preference, positioning

language as a marker of identity, power, and social stratification.

Educational and Policy Implications

Therefore, inclusive multilingual education policies in Pakistan. Strengthening mother-tongue instruction, improving Urdu-medium education, and providing equitable access to English can reduce linguistic inequality and support balanced language development across socio-economic groups.

Limitations

However, the study focused mainly on SES and examined a small number of families at one point in time, limiting generalizability. Other influencing factors such as gender, religion, and digital media were not explored in depth.

Future Research

Consequently, Future studies should adopt longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches, incorporating variables such as child agency, gender, and media exposure to gain a deeper understanding of evolving family language policies in diverse contexts.

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