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Linguistic Imperialism and Elite Reproduction through English Policy in Pakistani Three Tier Education: A Critical Postcolonial Discourse Analysis



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Abstract

This study investigates linguistic imperialism and discourse colonialism in Pakistani English-medium instruction (EMI) education policy using Critical Postcolonial Discourse Analysis. Rooted in Pakistan's colonial linguistic legacy, the research examines how EMI policy discourse constructs linguistic hierarchies and embeds postcolonial ideological patterns. Guided by Phillipson's Linguistic Imperialism theory and Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis model, integrated with postcolonial perspectives from Bhabha and Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, the study adopts a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm. Data were collected through documentary analysis of official policy texts, drawn from a population of twelve (N = 12) national and provincial EMI policy documents published between 2009 and 2025. Using purposive, criterion-based sampling, six (n = 6) documents were selected, including the National Education Policy 2009, National Education Policy 2017–2025, and the Single National Curriculum 2020–21. Findings revealed five recurring discourse codes: 'globalist legitimation,' 'functional bifurcation,' 'implementation erasure,' 'colonial residue naming,' and 'elite/mass stratification,' with colonial genealogy consistently underacknowledged across the corpus. Results demonstrate that Pakistani EMI policy discourse reproduces linguistic hierarchy through naturalization and omission rather than overt assertion, extending linguistic imperialism theory to granular textual analysis of national policy.

Keywords: Linguistic Imperialism, Discourse Colonialism, Postcolonial Theory, English-Medium Instruction, Critical Discourse Analysis, Language Policy, Pakistan, Linguistic Hierarchy, Fairclough, Hegemony

Introduction

Language has never been a neutral tool of instruction in a postcolonial society but rather a device used to reproduce colonial power structures long after the formal power structure of the colonial past has been removed. In South Asia, the British colonial system created an official English that enabled elite mobility and institutionalized language hierarchies that have endured (Rahman, 1996). There is also a parallel notion that language policy is not limited to direct colonial rule and extends into the postcolonial period, as Said

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(1994) notes, and that Pakistani education is a site where these colonial ideas live on, as Saigol (1993) notes.

Postcolonial theorists believe that, in the absence of overt coercion, linguistic dominance is exercised through subtler discursive processes. Bhabha's (2019) theorisation of cultural hybridity and ambivalence renders the binary of colonizer and colonised difficult to simplify, while Ashcroft et al. (2022) provide methodologies for analyzing formerly colonised institutions' "writing back" against imposed linguistic norms. Language is used as an inseparable element in ideology and social power in critical discourse analysis (CDA), which was extended by Fairclough's (2020) research along with Chouliaraki (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).

According to the framework proposed by Kachru (1986), English is a language that brings power to the user, but not to all the populations of the world; e.g. the "Outer Circle" populations like the Pakistani population need to be educated in their own language, not in an imposed one. Pakistani scholarship too confirms this trend: English in postcolonial contexts is epistemic and linguistic imperialism, which undermines indigenous knowledge systems, and EMI exposure is negatively correlated with academic achievement (Hassan, 2024, quoted in Zaman & Khan, 2025), and EMI without pedagogical support, exacerbates the urban/private–rural/public dichotomy (Ali & Khan, 2023, quoted in Zaman & Khan, 2025). The concept of postcolonial theory is explicitly used for framing the issue of EMI policy as an example of linguistic imperialism (Raza & Mahmood, 2024, as cited in Zaman & Khan, 2025), and the issue of language loss is still very striking in Pakistan and Bangladesh, two postcolonial states (Kalyanpur et al., 2023, as cited in Global Ed Leadership, 2024).

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Statement of the Problem

Although there is a growing awareness of the ideological role of English in Pakistan, the policy discourse still has been studied mainly from the pedagogical or economic perspective with little critical postcolonial discourse analysis of the EMI policy documents. This study aims to fill that gap.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how Pakistani EMI policy discourse constructs linguistic hierarchies.
2. To analyse postcolonial ideological patterns embedded in EMI policy texts.

Research Questions

1. How does EMI policy discourse construct linguistic hierarchies in Pakistan?
2. What postcolonial ideological patterns underlie Pakistani EMI policy texts?

Limitations of the Study

The study primarily focuses on textual analysis of selected policy documents over a certain period and fails to take into account classroom practices, students' perceptions and regional variations, which limit generalizability in different educational settings in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations: Linguistic Imperialism and Postcolonial Discourse

Phillipson's (1992) conceptualisation of linguistic imperialism, which views the worldwide dissemination of English as an inseparable aspect of colonial power structures, forms the theoretical basis of this study. Kachru (1986) categorises the post-colonial nations as an "Outer Circle", where English is a source of linguistic power as unevenly as it is in Pakistan. In destabilizing binary framings of 'colonizer' and 'colonized' Bhabha (2019) offers a means of reading how institutions resist imposed linguistic norms, as Ashcroft et al.

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(2022) provide tools for doing just that. Building on this earlier work, Fairclough (2020) then moves from language to ideology and power, and to discourse in the context of late modernity, extending the work of Chouliaraki and Fairclough (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).

International Relations and Cultural Diversity Education in Pakistan

In line with Said (1994) and Saigol (1993), Rahman (1996) shows how colonial language policies still influence the contemporary situation in Pakistan: English is still regarded as the language of the elite, Urdu is still used as a national language, and it is still these two languages that allow for elite socio-economic mobility.

The current policy and stratification of EMI are described.

Persistent trends and challenges in English-language education in Pakistan are outlined by Shamim (2008), an additive bi/multilingual analysis of an "English-medium fever" by Manan et al. (2015), and access and equity issues in higher-education language planning by Mansoor (2005). Channa et al. (2025) explore the practice of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) EMI policy in the context of appropriation by the Government Primary Teachers in Balochistan.

Discourse Colonialism and Recent Critical Turns

The study of EMI exposure and its impact on the academic achievement in Pakistani context is predominantly based on the assumption that EMI is considered a neutral global language and that its study does not necessarily bring postcolonial theory to the foreground of Pakistan's EMI policy (Zaman & Khan, 2025). The results of the studies reveal that there is an inverse correlation between the level of EMI exposure and academic achievement (Hassan, 2024), and that there is a significant gap between urban and rural areas in the absence of pedagogical support (Ali & Khan, 2023), while the

postcolonial theory is directly applied to the Pakistani context of EMI policy (Raza & Mahmood, 2024).

Research Gaps

1. Although stratification results are documented in existing scholarship, rarely there is a systematic linguistic analysis of the discursive construction of stratification in policy texts.
2. Gap in literature: The postcolonial theory is used in a broad sense for education in Pakistan, but this theory has not been studied in relation to the discursive strategies used to encode colonial ideology in official EMI policy documents.

Research Methodology

The critical Interpretivist paradigm used in this study is the perspective of social constructionism, which assumes that not all policy texts represent educational reality, but rather they act to create linguistic hierarchies and ideological positions (Fairclough, 2020). Reality here is discursively constructed, not objectively present, and is in line with the postcolonial idea that language is a medium of power and not neutral (Phillipson, 1992). This paradigm is suitable because the study goals do not call for the measurement of observable variables but rather uncover meaning that is embedded in the variables.

The research paradigm adopted is interpretive and qualitative, which are not positivist in terms of value neutrality in research. The researcher's interpretative approach assumes a discursive perspective on ideology, as advocated by Fairclough (2020), who asserts that discourse cannot be separated from ideology and social power and that policy language is historically embedded and politically significant, which is in line with Said

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(1994) who argued that cultural and linguistic authority does not end with the end of formal colonial rule.

The research method is qualitative document analysis technique, based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) proposed by Fairclough (2020; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) which has three dimensions, namely text, discursive practice, and social practice. This approach is used in conjunction with Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA) that incorporates the postcolonial reading techniques of Ashcroft et al. (2022) and the concept of hybridity of Bhabha (2019) to gain insight into the linguistic encoding of colonial ideology in policies.

The CDA (Fairclough, 2020) is a theoretical framework that uses vocabulary, grammar and text structure analysis to identify ideology, and Linguistic Imperialism theory (Phillipson, 1992) is a theory that sees these language features as tools of hegemonic domination. These frameworks enable a systematic coding of lexical hierarchies (e.g., "modern" versus "vernacular") in policy discourse as well as agency patterns and legitimation strategies.

Data collection is based on documentary method, which involves the selection of purposive official Pakistani education policy texts documents from federal and provincial authorities. No interviews or surveys are used because the goals are focused on the way the text is constructed, not stakeholder perceptions.

The population was formed of all the national (2009–2025) and provincial (Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan) English-medium instruction (EMI) policy documents that were published in Pakistan during this period (N = 12), these documents comprised the National education policy 2009 (Government of Pakistan, 2009), National education policy 2017–2025, the

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Single national curriculum 2020–21 (Channa et al., 2025) and provincial policies for school education in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

The documents are selected through purposive (criterion-based) sampling method as six documents ($n = 6$) are found explicit about the medium-of-instruction provision including the National Education Policy 2009, National Education Policy 2017-2025, Single National Curriculum 2020-21, Punjab School Education Policy, HEC Language-in-Education Policy Statement, and the Balochistan SNC implementation guidelines. This gives a 50% sample to population ratio to achieve in-depth qualitative textual saturation (Fairclough, 2020).

Data Analysis

Overview

The analysis of the six purposively selected English-medium instruction (EMI) policy texts introduced in the Methodology chapter is conducted based on the two layered analytical framework adopted in the Methodology chapter – namely the two pronged analysis of the English-medium instruction (EMI) policy documents from two frameworks: the two-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model proposed by Fairclough (2020) and the two-dimensional Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA) model proposed by Bhabha (2019) and Ashcroft et al. (2022). The interpretive lens provided by Phillipson's (1992) Linguistic Imperialism theory allows for the analysis of linguistic choices at the text level as strategies of hegemonic domination at the social practice level.

Analysis is carried out both inductively and deductively: codes are identified from patterns emerging during the sampling of texts and from categories that

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are expected in the light of the theoretical framework (e.g. legitimization, agency deletion, hierarchy of the lexicon). Wherever verbatim quotes from the primary policy documents were available and could be independently verified, then these are given as direct text 'samples' in double inverted commas. Where it has not been possible to verify the exact wording of a specific document, the analysis is based on the consistent characterisation of the provisions of that document in peer-reviewed secondary literature, and thematic labelling is given in a single inverted comma, rather than being verbatim quoted. This distinction remains throughout to enhance the analytical clarity.

Textual-Level Analysis: Lexical and Grammatical Construction of Linguistic Hierarchy

Fairclough's (2020) model at the text level guides focus on the micro-linguistic level of vocabulary, transitivity, and modality as the sites of the encoding of ideology in text. This can be seen in the national education policy 2009 (Government of Pakistan, 2009) which provides a clear illustrative sample. English is an international language and important for competition in a globalised world order is said in the document (Government of Pakistan, 2009). There are a few features in the text that can be analyzed here. First, the lexical association between international and globalised places English in a discourse of unmarked universal modernity which is the 'globalist legitimization' strategy of this study. Second, the copular construction ("is... important for competition") has the effect of making necessity in English look like a fact of nature, rather than a policy decision, and thus eliminates other possible framings. This is in line with Phillipson's (1992) view on linguistic imperialism which works partly by naturalizing English as a valuable and inevitable

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language, thus effacing the medium of instruction from political and historical contexts.

Conversely, the provisions on Urdu and regional languages in the same policy discourse are always expressed in terms of unity, symbolism and cohesion, rather than competitiveness and opportunity — for example, national-language provisions are always in terms of bringing people together and symbolising integration, not economic advancement or academic success. This asymmetry is the analysis code that is presented as 'functional bifurcation': Urdu and regional languages are assigned an affective, inward, and cohesive function whereas English is assigned an instrumental, outward and competitive function. This division is one of the textbook discursive processes of linguistic imperialism as it assigns English the language of the practical development, and indigenous languages the symbolic status only (Phillipson, 1992; Zaman & Khan, 2025).

The second is a text from the notification issued by the Government of the Punjab in 2009 for the conversion of Government Schools into English medium schools from 1st April 2010 (Government of the Punjab, 2009). What is interesting about this transitivity pattern is that the school is the grammatical subject of the conversion, the institutional agent (unnamed) is the one doing the conversion, and the agent who would have to do the pedagogical work of this change (the teacher, the student, the community) are not represented in the clause at all. The identification of this agency deletion was found in many policy texts throughout the sampled corpus and is coded as 'implementation erasure' in which the policy texts call for change at the level of the institutional category (the school) but are linguistically silent about the human labour necessary to implement the changes. Even as primary

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teachers are the primary implementers of the policy, they were found to be linguistically and institutionally disadvantaged in the policy formulation process as reported by Channa et al. (2025) in their study on Single National Curriculum (SNC) appropriation in Balochistan.

Table 1 below summarises the coding scheme developed from the textual-level analysis, with illustrative sources.

Table 1: Coding Scheme for Textual-Level Discourse Analysis

<i>Code (Theme)</i>	<i>Linguistic Feature</i>	<i>Illustrative Sample/Source</i>	<i>Theoretical Interpretation</i>
<i>'Globalist legitimization'</i>	<i>Lexical pairing with "international," "globalised," "competition"</i>	<i>"English is an international language... important for competition in a globalised world order" (Government of Pakistan, 2009)</i>	<i>Naturalises English dominance as apolitical necessity (Phillipson, 1992)</i>
<i>'Functional bifurcation'</i>	<i>Asymmetric vocabulary: English = opportunity; Urdu = symbolism</i>	<i>NEP 2009 provisions on Urdu as national cohesion symbol (Rahman, 1996)</i>	<i>Reserves instrumental value for English; indigenous languages symbolic only</i>
<i>'Implementation erasure'</i>	<i>Passive/agentless constructions mandating conversion</i>	<i>"Government Schools into English medium schools from 1st April 2010" (Government of the Punjab, 2009)</i>	<i>Deletes teacher/community agency; centralises authority (Fairclough, 2020)</i>
<i>'Colonial residue naming'</i>	<i>Explicit historical framing of English's origin</i>	<i>"[English] was imposed as language of the rulers during the</i>	<i>Rare textual acknowledgment of colonial legacy, quickly reframed as</i>

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		<i>British rule" (cited in Government of Pakistan White Paper, 2007)</i>	<i>pragmatic necessity</i>
<i>'Elite/mass stratification'</i>	<i>Distinctions between EMI and non-EMI school categories</i>	<i>SNC dual-track school typology (Channa et al., 2025)</i>	<i>Reproduces class-based access hierarchy (Manan et al., 2015)</i>

Discursive Practice Level: Production, Distribution, and Intertextuality

The second dimension of Fairclough (2020) is the way texts are created, circulated and interpreted. A characteristic feature of the sampled policy corpus is the apparent intertextuality of the documents: every successive document (NEP 2009, the SNC 2020-21 and provincial implementation notifications) draws on international frameworks – most notably UNESCO's Education for All agenda – as external legitimating authorities. Secondary analysis also indicates that the policy decision to adopt English as medium of instruction up to Grade 4 was clearly made to meet international requirements of quality education (see Rahman 2016). This intertextual borrowing does what this study calls 'external legitimation transfer': the policy text takes the authority of an institution that is globally recognised to legitimise a linguistically contested choice in a policy context, thus discursively shielding the policy from local political challenge.

A second discursive-practice pattern is about policy production and policy appropriation. Channa et al. (2025) provide an empirical proof that SNC-EMI provisions were drafted at the centre (federal and provincial curriculum authority) with little or no consultation from the teachers who will implement it in Balochistan classrooms. Such a top-down production process is

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discursively readable in the sampled texts themselves: policy language is consistently directive and declarative, using "shall be" and "will be taught" as modes of modality, and not using consultative and conditional modes of modality, corresponding to the "English-medium fever" that Manan et al. (2015) describe in the policy. It can be seen that there is no mention of consultative text markers, which is in line with what Fairclough (2020) noted and observed, that the discursive practice reflects the institutional power relations in which the text is produced.

The understanding of these texts from the audience also has a stratified form. The results of secondary survey and the research through interviews suggest that the perceptions of EMI policy differ between the elite and non-elite population of the private and government schools, respectively: while the former groups view the policy as a reinforcement of their linguistic capital, the latter groups reported difficulties in understanding the policy and its implementation (Zaman & Khan, 2025; Channa et al., 2025). The differential uptake confirms Fairclough's (2020) work on the fact that discursive practice is never uniform across a heterogeneous readership, and it underpins Bhabha's (2019) concept of ambivalence, that is the same policy text being read as opportunity, as well as imposition, based on the reader's prior relationship with English.

Social Practice Level: Ideology and Hegemonic Reproduction

On the broadest analytical level, Fairclough (2020) points out that the patterns in a discourse are related to broader social structures and relations of power. The textual and discursive patterns mentioned above coalesce into a coherent ideological configuration: English as modern, competent and global - 'citizen of the world' - and Urdu and regional languages as markers of local identity

but not necessarily of competence or opportunity. This formation mimics the description of what Rahman (1996) refers to as a 'linguistic hierarchy' that was 'persistent' and 'colonial' in that 'English remains an instrument for elite socio-economic mobility'.

The postcolonial aspect of such hegemonic reproduction is analytical different from the sole linguistic imperialism. The concept of structural and institutional advantage offered by Phillipson (1992) can be used to explain why English continues to exist in Pakistan, while the theory of hybridity presented by Bhabha (2019) can be used to help understand the ambivalent nature of Pakistani EMI policy discourse. This is not merely a case of imposing English on people, but the creation of a hybridised justification that sees English as being compatible with, and not in opposition to, national identity, as evidenced by the juxtaposition of English as a tool of "competition in a globalised world order" and Urdu as a symbol of "national cohesion" in the same paragraph of the NEP 2009 (Government of Pakistan 2009). The juxtaposition is a typical postcolonial discursive manoeuvre as described by Ashcroft et al (2022) that neither rejects nor uncritically accepts the language of the coloniser, but instead absorbs it into a hybridised national narrative which manages and does not solve the underlying linguistic hierarchy.

Cross-Document Thematic Comparison

All of the six documents were evaluated cross-examined in order to determine the qualitative presence of the five codes described in Table 1 and the extent to which these patterns are consistent across the sampled documents. The assessment is based on the direct analysis of the primary text (NEP 2009; Punjab 2009 notification) as well as convergent secondary-source analysis of the character (SNC 2020–21; provincial school education policy; HEC

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language-in-education statement; Balochistan SNC implementation guidance).

Table 2: Cross-Document Presence of Discourse Codes

<i>Sampled Document</i>	<i>'Globalist Legitimation'</i>	<i>'Functional Bifurcation'</i>	<i>'Implementation Erasure'</i>	<i>'Colonial Residue Naming'</i>	<i>'Elite/Mass Stratification'</i>
<i>National Education Policy 2009</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>National Education Policy 2017–2025</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>
<i>Single National Curriculum 2020–21</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Punjab School Education Policy</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>HEC Language-in-Education Statement</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>
<i>Balochistan SNC Implementation Guidance</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>

It can be seen from the pattern in Table 2 that there were two consistent findings that are related to the research questions of this study. Next, 'globalist legitimation' and 'elite/mass stratification' are found at 'high' levels in most of the policies sampled, meaning that English as globally necessary is hardly a

one-time occurrence in any given policy document, but rather a stable feature of Pakistani EMI policy discourse throughout the sampled time period (2009–2025) — directly addressing Research Question 1 about how policy discourse constructs linguistic hierarchies. Second, 'colonial residue naming' is at a low or zero frequency in all six documents, that is, the policy texts do not explicitly name colonial history as the genealogy of hierarchy. The absence itself is analytically significant, and the postcolonial ideology is expressed in these texts most often in this way – through the act of omission and naturalisation, as Bhabha (2019) suggests – rather than through explicit mention of the colonial.

Interpretation through Linguistic Imperialism and Postcolonial Theory

The findings from the textual, discursive and social practice analysis lead to the conclusion that Pakistani EMI policy discourse operates as a site of discourse colonialism, which is defined as an “English language of opportunity” that is textually naturalised in the discourse while the institutional agency needed for making such an opportunity equitably available is systematically erased. This discovery is an extension to Phillipson's (1992) linguistic imperialism framework in that it shows how it works in the specific choices of grammatical and lexical items in the official text of Pakistani policy rather than at the level of general observation of the spread of English in the world.

The recurrent 'functional bifurcation' and 'elite/mass stratification' trends found in the sampled corpus further support the growing concerns of the secondary literature related to the reproduction of the colonial-era linguistic stratification in the Pakistani context of EMI policy (Rahman, 1996; Manan et al., 2015; Zaman & Khan, 2025). The virtual lack of the 'colonial residue naming' code throughout the corpus also indicates that this reproduction

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occurs largely without examination in the policy discourse itself, lending empirical support to Said's (1994) overall contention that the cultural authority of imperialism is most tenaciously asserted just at the very moment of least overt naming.

The data analysis reveals linguistic hierarchy in the Pakistani EMI policy discourse and shows that in this discourse, colonial genealogy is discursively unacknowledged, but what is identified instead are predictable and recognisable strategies of constructing language hierarchy, such as globalist legitimization, functional bifurcation, implementation erasure, and elite/mass stratification. The findings directly relate to the two research questions outlined in Chapter One, and serve as empirical evidence for the discussion and conclusion that will be presented in the next chapter.

Findings

The analysis of the data in Chapter Four yielded four main findings that addressed the two research questions of the study: What are the linguistic hierarchies that are created and presented in the EMI policy discourse in Pakistan, and what are the postcolonial ideological patterns embedded in these discourses.

First, the study revealed that Pakistani EMI policy documents have consistently used a strategy of 'globalist legitimization', in which English is lexically and grammatically represented as unmarked, a natural reality, and a language 'needed' to be used in a globalized, competitive world order. This pattern was found in four of the six sampled documents, in all of which it was employed at "high" intensity (National Education Policy 2009, National Education Policy 2017–2025, Punjab School Education Policy, and the HEC Language-in-Education Statement), suggesting that this is not a unique rhetorical strategy

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but a consistent discursive feature that was maintained throughout sixteen years of policy production.

Secondly, the study found a consistent discursive embedding of a 'functional bifurcation' between English, which is given an instrumental value such as opportunity for the economy, competence in science, and competitiveness in the global market, and Urdu and regional languages, which receive only symbolic and affective value, mostly that of national unity and cultural cohesion. This discrepancy was most marked in two documents, both of which received a rating of 'high' on this code, the National Education Policy 2009 and the Single National Curriculum 2020–21, both of which illustrate a textual technique for creating language hierarchy (rather than simply claiming it), directly addressing Research Question 1.

Thirdly, an intensity of "high" was found in the Single National Curriculum, the Punjab School Education Policy, and the Balochistan SNC implementation guidance for the grammatical erasure of teachers, students, and communities that are responsible for implementing EMI policy. Channa et al. (2025) provide empirical proof that Balochistan primary teachers' voice was hidden from the policy-making process of SNC, thus confirming the textual erasure of agency identified through CDA as actual exclusion in policy production practice.

Fourth, (and most important for Research Question 2), the presence of 'colonial residue naming' was determined as low or nonexistent in all six of the documents sampled. Although there is clear continuity in language administration from the colonial period to today's EMI policy, it is rare for the texts to explicitly mention this historical continuity. The lack of this implies that the postcolonial ideology in Pakistani EMI policy is more likely to be achieved through naturalisation and omission than through explicit assertion, which

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supports Bhabha's (2019) argument that colonial discourse works through disavowal as well as Said's (1994) claim that imperial cultural authority is most effective when it is un-named.

Together, these results show that EMI policy discourse does not merely reflect the already existing linguistic inequality, but reinforces it by recognisable, patterned choices of texts, and at the same time hides the colonial roots of the linguistic inequality. The stability of the 'elite/mass stratification' code (standardly 'high' or 'moderate' across all six documents) further reinforces the fact that despite the successive policy changes in the period from 2009 to 2025, the formal policy change does not seem to have changed the underlying ideological structure of Pakistan's Language in Education discourse.

Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the issue of linguistic imperialism and discourse colonialism in the policy of English-medium instruction in Pakistan by employing a critical postcolonial discourse analysis. The study aimed at two goals: firstly, to analyze the linguistic hierarchy construction of Pakistani EMI policy discourse and secondly, to analyze the postcolonial ideology patterns in the Pakistani EMI policy texts based on the theory of linguistic imperialism (1992), by Phillipson and three dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis model (2020) by Fairclough with the help of postcolonial theoretical resources of Bhabha (2019), Said (1994) and Ashcroft et al. (2022).

The Literature Review confirmed that the policy on language in education has been identified as a colonial legacy in Pakistan from long time back, as many researchers such as Rahman (1996), Manan et al. (2015) and Shamim (2008) have reported the structural dominance of English over Urdu and regional languages. The review, however, uncovered two particular gaps: there was little

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systematic discussion of the language of policy documents with respect to the discursive construction of these hierarchies; and usage of postcolonial theory to trace specific discursive strategies within official policy texts was limited, and had not been applied to Pakistani education.

Both gaps were addressed in the Data Analysis chapter. The study analyzed the distribution of five recurring discourse codes in a purposive sample of six national and provincial EMI policy documents, which are 'globalist legitimization,' 'functional bifurcation,' 'implementation erasure,' 'colonial residue naming,' and 'elite/mass stratification. The analysis showed that the linguistic hierarchy in the EMI policy discourse in Pakistan is brought into existence through certain identifiable textual processes: the naturalisation of English as a language of necessity across the globe, the instrumentalisation of English versus the symbolicisation of the indigenous language and the grammatical deletion of the human agency needed for an equitable implementation. In parallel, this analysis revealed that these patterns' colonial heritage is rarely even mentioned in the policy documents themselves, meaning that the colonality of this discourse is largely effected through silence and naturalization.

The results have both theoretical and practical implications. In theory, the study takes Phillipson's (1992) definition of linguistic imperialism beyond a general observation of the spread of English in the world to the granular level of the grammar and lexicon of individual national policy texts, and shows the value of the fusion of CDA with postcolonial theory to education policy research. The results suggest that the discursive architecture formed by successive education policy changes in Pakistan from 2009 to 2025, though varied in their structure and provincial implementation, is rather stable,

highlighting the need to not only resource implementation of policies but to also question the underlying ideology of education policy discourse itself, if significant progress is to be made in reforming linguistic inequality in Pakistani education.

This study has limitations as the focus is on textual analysis and does not include analysis of implementation outcomes or stakeholder perception, and findings cannot be assumed to represent lived classroom experience, but rather policy discourse. This discourse analysis approach could be extended and tested through further research in classrooms or with stakeholder perception data.

Recommendations

1. To bring English-medium policy to the public conversation, rather than its naturalised assimilation, policymakers should make clear the colonial history of the policy in official documents.
2. The future drafts of EMI policy should be instrumental, opportunity linked and not symbolic language in Urdu and regional languages.
3. Language of policy documents should include a specific reference to implementing agents (teachers, districts) and avoid agent-less directive constructions.
4. Teacher representatives should be represented in curriculum authorities when developing policies to minimize implementation gap.
5. The future studies should combine discourse analysis with stakeholder-perception research with province-to-province comparison.

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