

Appropriation in Language-in-Education Policy: A Case Study of Contextualizing Teachers' Linguistic Practices

Yusara Anwar, Nor Liza Ali

Language Academy, University Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur

Email: norlizaa.kl@utm.my, yusara@graduate.utm.my

Corresponding Author Email: yusaranwer@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper seeks to highlight the agency of policy actors, undermining the top-down imposition of language policies in education (LE) at the micro level. The agency of the implementers or actors of the Language Policy and Planning (LPP) is an important factor that plays its role in the process of appropriation of these policies. A particular focus is on the innermost layer of the LPP onion—the language attitudes and practices of the educators—to unveil the power of agency in negotiating the medium of instruction (MoI) policy. To encompass an overarching viewpoint on this notion, this paper employs an ethnographic case study method in the context of an urban college in Pakistan nested against the scoping review of the preceding five years' research about LE appropriation in the educational context. The findings reveal a complex interplay between different languages in a multilingual community where the classroom dynamics are shaped by wider societal narratives by providing ethnographically oriented analyses of teacher agency. The regional languages (RLs) serve as an identity badge; however, their applicability diminishes in the higher education context where English is spotlighted as MoI and Urdu serves as the bridging language. These strains at the micro level reflect the wider linguistic ecology: the vitality of English is situated in its prestige and perception as a ladder to vertical mobility, eclipsing the status of the national and RLs.

Keywords: Policy Appropriation, Ethnography, Agency, Language-in-Education, English-Medium Instruction

Introduction

Language planning can exist and take place simultaneously at different levels whereby the context, roles, and motivations of the different groups of *actors* play a critical role in the success or failure of LPP. Language planning research began to acknowledge the role of micro-level language planning in the 1990s (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997) and since then there have been many studies of micro-level work in several contexts (see Baldauf, 2005, 2006; Chua &

Baldauf, 2011). Micro planning refers to cases where institutions, groups, or individuals create a plan to utilize and develop their language resources, one that is not directly the result of some larger macro policy but is a 'response to their own needs, language problems, or requirement for language management' (Baldauf, 2005, p. 231; Baldauf, 2006, p.155). While micro-language planning can apply to many different areas of language planning, one of the most significant sites for such work is language-in-education (LE) planning which also covers the scope of this investigation.

Conventional views of language planning have focused on two major facets of language policy: 'corpus planning', and 'status planning,' each of which focuses on the language itself rather than on its speakers. Status planning is often linked with the "formal promotion" of one or more languages by state or international organizations. A language acquires a preferential position when it is given an official status or "privilege," typically in the form of a written standard as, for instance, when a language is given the status of a medium of instruction (Mol) in education. The choice of language or languages as Mol affects societal perceptions of what is "correct," "proper," or "preferred"; extending prestige to the labels that ascribe status to languages in the educational contexts (Wiley & García, 2016; p. 49).

This paper expands on this contention revealing how status planning including the decision about Mol can have implications for its speakers and the society. Grin (2010, as cited in Darquennes et al., 2020) asserts that selecting a language as an Mol is a decision that "matters" owing to its broader relevance since it "touches upon non-material, symbolic issues with a considerable political, social and cultural content", adding

"The exclusion of a language in favour of the use of another lowers the prestige and social recognition of [the other], depriving its native speakers of an asset (i.e. the full usability of their best language skills), with non-tangible consequences (a feeling of marginalization, for example), but with tangible consequences too (the higher costs incurred, by comparison with native speakers....., to achieve academic and professional success)" (p.7).

Consonantly, English as an Mol holds a symbolic significance in Pakistan (see Anwar & Ali 2021; Rahman, 2019; Manan et al., 2015) where 'prestige' has been associated with English at the top of the hierarchy, and then Urdu (the national language) as a second language that may conflict with the regional languages (RLs) due to the local communities' sense of identity and aspirations at the micro-level.

This paper scopes a review of the latest studies below that unravel the debate on how the selection of a language as an Mol at the macro level can have wider social implications that extend beyond the institutional boundaries; while at the same time signifying language-associated values at the micro level through classroom dynamics. The rationale and strength of following methodological stages of scoping studies (see Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) lie in setting up an unbiased criterion to include the literature in the field which otherwise may get little attention. The research questions are further explored— from general discussion spanned over different settings to a specific site— by employing a case study method and ethnographic analyses of the findings revealed through interviews of the educators in the context of higher education in Pakistan. The ethnographic perspective offers a micro-focused, deeply contextualized interdisciplinary approach to address LPP issues.

This study aims to address the questions:

What is appropriation in LE policy enactment?

How can the agency of policy actors affect their language choices in classroom dynamics?

Actors, Agency and Appropriation: an Overview

Contemporary studies in the field have shown more interest in understanding LPP at the micro-level specifically in terms of agency and appropriation. The issue of the micro-level policy enactors, 'agents', 'arbiters' (Jonson, 2013), 'players' (Chua, 2018) or what Zhao (2011) also calls 'actors' did not really emerge until the 1990s when scholars like Cooper and Harmann began to theorize LPP as an independent discipline, attending to the largely under-addressed questions of 'who' the policy actors are and their role (Shouhui & Baldauf, 2012). This shift in the focus to human agency against structure; and practice against stated policy is commensurate with the anthropological stance in the field of LPP.

Giddens (1986) terms agency as an individual's capability to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. "An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to make a difference, that is, to exercise some sort of power" (p. 14). The notion is an acknowledgement of the influence that lies in the agency of the actors against structure defining their capacity in broader terms than just mere implementers. Hornberger (2006) cites a series of scholarships (e.g. Canagarajah, 2002; Davis, 1999; Freeman, 1998, 2003; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996) that called for greater attention to the role of human agency in LPP and provided rich resources emphasizing on "ideology, ecology, and agency" for moving the LPP field forward in the new era (p. 13).

Wiley & Garcia (2016) discuss the role of agency in language planning and policy (LPP), which asserts that policy actors have the ability to *interpret and reinterpret* policies even when they are directed by national top-down policy blueprints. Moreover, within the context of education language policies, at the level of implementation, teachers, parents, and the students themselves help to determine the effectiveness of policies in practice (Menken & García, 2010). In the same vein, Chua & Baldauf (2011) also recognize the agency and power of the local actors in *rejecting or accepting* the macro policies regarding it as a necessary process of appropriation of language policies.

The agency of actors at the micro-level — and the agency of teachers in particular—has received attention from many recent scholarships in the LE domain. (e.g. Baldauf, 2005; Menken & Garcia, 2010; Zhao, 2011; Zhao & Baldauf, 2012; Ali & Hamid, 2018). Within the institutions and beyond, parents and other stakeholders in the community can play significant roles in creating practices that have the force of policy from the bottom up. Levinson and Sutton's (2001; p.1) definition of educational policy as a process "constituted by diverse actors across diverse social and institutional contexts" regarding it as "a complex social practice" highlights the agency of policy actors demonstrating the power of policies beyond formal papers (McCarty, 2011). Johnson & Johnson (2014) further define a *language policy arbiter* as any language policy actor (such as administrators or instructors) who has "disproportionate power in how a policy gets created, interpreted, or appropriated" compared to others at the same level or context (p. 5). In crux, the process of appropriation refers to describing the negotiation and implementation of language policy (Levinson and Sutton, 2001; Menken & García, 2010), nevertheless involving creation and reinterpretation on the part of the

enactors. These scholarly perceptions highlight the recognition of individual agency as a contextualized phenomenon arguing that the agency of the micro-level 'actors' influences their language practices in the institutions which "reflect broader sociolinguistic conditions" (Grin, 2015; p. 102). These notions endorse the power vested in the agency of the education policy actors at the micro level that is essentially contextualised by the societal discourses where it exists.

Johnson (2009) explains the ethnography of language policy is a method for linking micro-level educational practices with macro-level language policies and discourse. This method is based on the philosophy that critical analyses of language policy texts should be combined with empirical data collection on policy interpretation and appropriation in some local educational contexts. García & Menken (2010) delve deeply into the role of educator's agency in LE policy appropriation and promote what Hornberger and Johnson (2007) call ethnography of language education policy to outspread investigation in this field: "[E]thnographies of language policy offer unique insights into LPP processes through thick descriptions of policy interpretation and implementation at the local level how the policy creation is interpreted and implemented in the various *contextual* layers through which a language policy must pass" (p. 511). Classroom practitioners are placed at the heart of LPP Onion by Ricento and Hornberger granting them a central position as agents who bring 'educational and social change' at the grassroots level without even realizing this (1996, p.417). The *onion's* three layers have also been visually manifested in French and Armitage (2020) situating the teachers in the innermost strata.

Teachers are not just the policy conductors rather they actively outline how a policy is practised and appropriated. Once a policy is put into action, it is open to different translations by those who appropriate it in practice. The notion of appropriation, also referred to as *accommodation* of policy (Ali & Hamid, 2018) is meant "as a form of creative interpretive practice necessarily engaged in by different people involved in the policy process" (Levinson et al. 2009; p.768), that may or may not reflect the macro-level goals. Hamid & Nguyen (2016) cite Lin's (1999) research in Hong Kong on teachers' *negotiator role* to ensure students' engagement in learning and in adjusting the English course in their micro context to meet social expectations of English. They also refer to Martin's study (2005a, 2005b) in Malaysia and Brunei, highlighting how teachers appropriate— accept, accommodate, or resist the textbook content to meet the students' social, and cultural expectations. Johnson (2009) also argues extensively upon the agentive role that teachers played in responding to resisting Philadelphia's *English-only* proposition to meet the needs of their classrooms, also referring to Stritikus (2002) that teachers are not simply "conductors" of policy implementation—they actively shape how a policy is experienced and negotiated. This paper extends the role of the educators as 'soldiers' (Shohamy, 2006; p. 78), in appropriating LE using ethnography of the LPP stance in the case study following the scoping review.

LE Appropriation — Scoping Review

The methodological framework of Arksey and O'Malley (2005) has been used to extract findings for review of the recent research to scaffold the bridge between the epistemological knowledge and empirical data in this article. The objective is to supplement the introductory literature with the updated indexed studies in the field through a focussed, pithy review addressing the concept of *'appropriation* in LE. In the subsequent section, the analysis of the

data collected through ethnographic interviews in the higher education context of Pakistan is presented to connect or *consult* this review and the Discussion of the findings about appropriative processes in LPP at the micro level.

Initially, the search via Google Scholar yielded about 3,000 results; within the specified year range; which had to be contained considering the time, space and content restrictions for this paper. What was sought through the scoping of the studies was *depth* rather than *breadth*. For the *data elimination* step, therefore, the focus was narrowed to two sources for inclusion searching through the electronic databases of Scopus, and Web of Science (Core Collection). Search inclusion criteria were set to Language Policy Appropriation within *Article Title, Abstract or Keywords* and the year range was between 2020 to 2024, to ensure that the latest publications are taken on board. 56 papers were found using these parameters: screening of this data revealed 30 papers from the field of language and education, 16 from the field of linguistics and 15 from other sub-disciplines such as Sociology, graphically depicted in **Figure 1**.

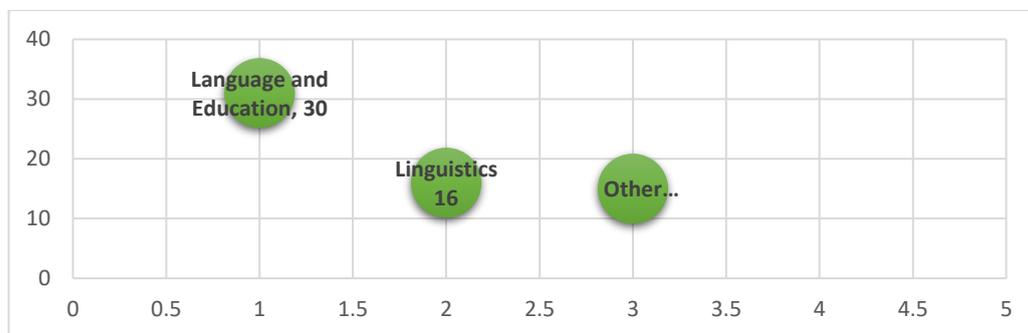


Figure 1 Graphical Representation of Initial Discipline-Wise Data Screening

This data was further reduced to seven papers that dealt with LE and contained the word ‘appropriation’ in the title, abstract or keywords.

The data corpus in

Table 1 charts the study parameters (e.g. customised date 2020-2024, databases), title, context, methodology, and data collection tools obtained through full screening of the articles for this review. The descriptive analysis of this data follows the charted version, collating the review in the last part of this segment.

Table 1

The Data Corpus (2020-2024)

Authors	Year	Title	Context	Methodology	Data Collection Tools	Databases
Fuentes	2020	English Learners’ Appropriation of English Language Policy at a U.S. University	US Univesity English Support Program	Ethnographic study	Interviews with administrators bi/multilingual students	Scopus / Web of Science

Rubio	2022	Educational Language Policy in Massachusetts: Discourses of The LOOK Act	LOOK Act in Massachusetts	Johnson (2013) heuristic Ethnography LPP	Policy of Document analysis
Manan et al.	2022	Celebratory Or Guilty Multilingualism? English Medium Instruction Challenges, Pedagogical Choices, and Teacher Agency in Pakistan	Higher Education Universities in Pakistan	Qualitative method	Interviews
Sah & Karki	2023	Elite Appropriation of English as a Medium of Instruction Policy and Epistemic Inequalities in Himalayan Schools	Five schools in Mt. Everest region and Kathmandu, Nepal	Phenomenological research	Analysis of interviews and focus groups
Kir	2024	English-Medium Instruction (EMI) As the Great (Un)Equaliser: Experiences of Former EMI Students in Turkey	Turkish EMI university	Bourdiesian framework and a phenomenological design	Semi-structured interviews with former EMI students
Tenorio	2024	When Language Gets into the Equation: Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) Policy Appropriation in Elementary Mathematics Instruction	Rural schools in the Philippines	Instrumental case study	Documentary analysis, observations, interviews, focus group discussions

Rubio (2022) studies the language and intertextual discourses of the bilingual education policy interpretation and appropriation by agents at various levels in Massachusetts, US. The Act Language Opportunity for Our Kids (LOOK Act), 2017 was celebrated as a victory for bilingual education after 15 years of mandatory English-only education. The paper discusses the challenge of achieving equity for English learners in the United States, highlighting that it remains an elusive goal despite being essential. Where it emphasizes that language policy in education is a central issue, indicating that existing policies may not adequately address the needs of English learners. The discourse surrounding the LOOK Act reveals complexities in implementing effective language opportunities, suggesting that legislative measures alone may not suffice to overcome systemic barriers. Overall, the paper accentuates the need for comprehensive strategies to ensure equitable educational outcomes for English learners.

Kir (2024) uses the term 'elite appropriation' of EMI universities that perpetuates the existing inequalities in society when EMI is not implemented in a way that is inclusive of all students. The study uses a phenomenological design utilizing a Bourdieusian framework to analyse the experiences of five former Turkish English-medium instruction students who dropped out of the university. The analysis of the findings of this study uncovered the 'capital gap between students from various social-class backgrounds' (Kir, 2024): those who are prepared with the desired cultural, social and economic capital, in the form of EMI background still have an edge over the others who come from a different stratum and this gap seems to persist in the universities. EMI policy studies depict commonalities with the other research in the field of LPP establishing a nexus with the social class issues and other dynamics; For instance, their sense of belonging at their universities, their language and ethnic identities, etc.; considering it significant in defining the experiences within EMI institutions.

Sah and Karki (2023) use the metaphors and terminologies from the Bourdieusian framework (1993) to argue how EMI undermines the potential of all other languages; imposing 'English as a natural and neutral medium of academic excellence' in developing societies (p. 3). They refer to Piller and Cho's (2013) ideology of commodification of English education as international, and quality reinforcing the status of English as the prioritised language of education. In other words, the neoliberal ideology of imposition of English as an MoI propounds English as the symbolic capital, including material (economic), psychological, and strategic, wealth in the linguistic neoliberal market, motivating parents as stakeholders aspiring for EMI education for their children's prospects (Sah and Li, 2018). The paper investigates the perspectives of different stakeholders and the ways EMI policy has been interpreted, appropriated, and negotiated in low-resourced schools in Nepal debating that the *appropriation* of English and Nepali (the national language) in the EMI policy is a standard of *elite* bilingualism because these two languages have more ideological power in the appeal of socioeconomic and sociopolitical benefits, which overall foster inequalities for minoritized students, lacking requisite resources and whose languages are not given prestige.

The same is argued by Manan et al. (2022) who investigate teachers' language *appropriation* strategies within the context of EMI in Pakistani universities contending about how they feel ashamed —'guilty' of their multilingualism due to the low status of other local/indigenous languages against English. The research emphasizes that teachers can act as both policymakers and implementers, challenging institutional constraints and reshaping pedagogical norms. The research accentuates the importance of recognizing local languages

in educational settings to better support diverse student backgrounds. It highlights the tension between 'guilty multilingualism,' where teachers feel ashamed of using local languages, and 'celebratory multilingualism,' which values local multilingualism as a pedagogical asset (Manan et al., 2022).

To ensure that EMI is inclusive, institutions should ensure that students have the necessary English skills and pedagogic training considering the social, linguistic, cultural, and economic backgrounds of students. Students, as stakeholders in the LE policy, adapt and strategize their language practices to negotiate the Mol. Employing an ethnographic design Fuentes (2020) investigates the impact of language policies on bi/multilingual students in higher education institutions and how "students' appropriation of language policies shapes their educational experiences." This study highlights the strategies of bi/multilinguals, who fall short of their university's language proficiency benchmark and are subsequently classified as non-citizens by their university, must adopt to navigate their immigrant identities, adapt to language policies, and look for ways to obtain English language *capital* in order to thrive at a university (Fuentes, 2020).

Kuteeva & Kaufhold (2024) attempt to address the question of how EMI is promoted in the videos through multimodal critical discourse analysis; while reporting that EMI programs are frequently marketed as elite educational offerings that grant students access to prestigious global opportunities. They report "References to international rankings and multinational business partnerships position [EMI programs] on the global education market" (p. 1). The emphasis on English as a primary medium creates linguistic barriers for students from less privileged backgrounds, reinforcing inequities in educational access. "English is both taken for granted and serves a gate-keeping function" (p. 2). EMI promotes cultural capital by integrating elements such as prestigious accents, institutional rankings, and academic traditions in its discourse. This study didn't dwell upon the term appropriation in language policy, so didn't constitute the data corpus for this scoping review, however, its inclusion in the discussion and critique is relevant to the research aim in the sense that it explores EMI as an 'elite' promotional brand in the higher education context of Sweden; and that too within the range of years of set as a search parameter for this review.

Conversely, Tenorio's (2024) paper on an instrumental case study to explore the appropriation of the mother-tongue-based education system revealed contending undercurrents for resisting the LE policy by the teachers in a rural Philippine elementary school. According to the study, educators have mixed feelings about and difficulties implementing the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy in a math classroom. They do not consistently adhere to the recommended MTB policy and code-switch throughout discussions. Fidelity to the policy becomes evident only when authority is present. Because of their colonial mindset, perception of the policy's complexity, and non-utilitarian perspective of the local language, teachers typically have negative sentiments towards it. The issues that prevent teachers from effectively implementing the policy include a mismatch between 'the students' language and the language of instruction, lack of equivalent for some mathematics terms', and poorly designed teaching and learning resources (Tenorio, 2024).

Summary

In collation, this data mining review reveals a pattern of branding *EMI with elitism* explicitly (Kuteeva & Kaufhold, 2024; Sah & Karki, 2023; Kir, 2024) or implicitly (Manan et al., 2022; Anwar & Ali, 2021) aligned with the critical and ethnographic shift in LPP that gained traction in the 1990s which looked at how language is connected to inequality and power within the social structure (see Tollefson, 1991). Consequently, there was a gradual shift in LPP toward ‘the understanding of language as social practice’, identities as multiple, and ‘research methodologies that emphasize process’ (Tollefson & Pérez-Milans, 2018; p. 13) and practices at the micro level. A deeper analysis of the review of these papers manifested that where the MoI was English, there surfaced an underlying awareness of inequality that exists between language statuses. The findings also revealed that research about foreign language policies and bilingual education have been the focus of the appropriative strategies on the part of the social actors that play agentive roles in policy implementation including administrators, teachers, students and also parents in some cases.

Method

The Case Study

This study adopts a blended approach of ethnographic case study (ECS) method that has also been used by Angers & Machtmes (2005) to study the beliefs, context factors and practices of three school teachers. Both case study and ethnography are qualitative research domains that pay heed to the context in which the activity or individual is placed, thus revealing the interrelation of both: ethnography has a “case study character” and is “intimately related” to case studies (Ó Rian, 2009, p. 291). An ethnographically informed case study design was selected for this study which was nested in the broader context of MoI at the undergraduate level in Pakistan. According to Abalos (2011), “It is not the data collection techniques that determine whether the study is ethnographic, but rather the ‘socio-cultural interpretation’ that sets it apart from other forms of qualitative inquiry” — A social situation always has three components: a place, actors, and activities and it is the socio-cultural interpretation of the interactions of these three that is the focus of the ethnographic research. Wodak & Savski (2018) focus on how individual actors act to interpret language policy in institutional settings and also reference Johnson (2013) for the multilevel LPP appropriation within an institution; done as part of a historical-structural analysis (see Tollefson, 1991). This study is part of research in the educational settings studying the ethnography of LPP “embedded in the historical context of a given society or organization” (Wodak & Savski, 2018, pg. 22); particularly the historical process of colonialism and its continuing consequences have received specific attention in this analysis (Tollefson, 2013).

Taken together, these critical perspectives and an emerging emphasis on ideology and agency are indeed rich resources for moving the LPP field forward in the new millennium (Hornberger, 2006). This approach to LPP is deeply contextualized and considers human agency as the effecting factor rather than mere policy documents. Language planning exists at various levels of the framework that are the outcome of the complex process of appropriation of the state and institutional policies. Ricento and Hornberger, (1996) and Hornberger and Johnson, (2007) argue that it is not a text dictating circumstances from the top down rather, it is a multi-layered construction involving active humans as their tools. Johnson (2013) contends that in the ethnography of LPP, the goal of the study is policy as ‘broadly defined, and certainly not restricted to written texts... to account for how human

agents engage with LPP processes.’ Though typically the foundation of ethnography is long-term participant observation in a particular site or community, however, ‘educational language policy often moves *fast* making long-term anything problematic’ (p.10).

Research on what Menken and Garcia (2010) refer to as "agency in implementation" (p. 2) is essential to place LPP in local contexts and gain insight from the actual language engagements of the stakeholders at the micro level (Hornberger and Johnson, 2007; Johnson 2013; Menken and Garcia, 2010a, 2010b). This investigation is a contribution to a few other studies on the role of micro-level *appropriation* in the classroom in the Pakistani context (e.g. Manan et al., 2022), simultaneously contextualizing these linguistic practices from an ethnographic lens.

Site and Sampling

The ECS necessitates that the number of participants is kept reasonably small (Creswell, 2007) providing this opportunity to receive “thick” data for descriptive reporting. The data consists of the narrative interviews of four teachers. I decided to choose the participants through purposive sampling (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018) since I required participants willing to commit to a six-month long period that involved narrative interviews and ethnographic observations, of which this study is but a vital component.

The site is a populous public college for women situated in the heart of the main city of the province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), that hosts students and teachers hailing from rural and urban backgrounds. Besides, the mother tongue of most of the population is Pashtu, even otherwise it’s a dominant local/Regional Language (RL). Urdu—the national language— is also widely spoken and understood as a link language. The college works under the auspices of the Higher Education Department— therefore, all the policies and directives are conveyed through this governmental body with limited powers vested in the principal and administrator at the institution. Their role is more of management and administration than to intervene in the macro education policy directives. They do not; cannot; create policies but add a level through which the policies need to pass to be conveyed to and enacted in the classrooms.

Agents

The *actors* for this study are the content-area lecturers teaching science subjects (e.g., Zoology) in a Bachelor of Science (BS) program i.e. typically a four-year undergraduate degree. These content teachers were purposely selected over English language teachers (who are supposed to hold an MA in English) because the study aims to capture broader classroom practices. Ethnography of language policy demands that the researcher does not limit observations merely to schools and classrooms. To understand what goes on in schools we need to look outside schools, in the wider social and cultural environment (Blommaert, 2013) that shapes the ideology of the actors. For this purpose, the interviewees’ profiles—including pseudonyms, roles, and background information (educational background, experience, and rural/urban context)—were tabulated as below:

Name	Pseudonym/ Coding	Actor’s Position /role	Background information (Educational Background; Experience; Rural/Urban)

All names and identifying information have been anonymized.

Data Collection Tool — Interviews

Ethnographic interviews are typically open-ended, allowing for flexibility, dialogue, and the possibility of unexpected findings. As a general guideline, however, the topics broadly covered the teachers' general language perceptions, language-related experiences in education, individual preferences for the use of certain languages, and language practices inside the classroom. All interviews were conducted primarily in Urdu frequently switching to English if the interviewee was comfortable, but words from local /RL naturally came up during the discussions. Throughout the data collection, the main aims were

- To perceive the application of Mol viz a viz language practices, and
- To identify the role of languages in their immediate and broader societal context in this multilingual polity.

Data Analysis — Findings and Discussion

Creswell (2014) has cited Spindler and Spindler: "The ethnographic interviewer must not predetermine responses by the kinds of questions asked" (Spindler & Spindler 1987, p. 18) and the responses need to be *contextualized*. During the data analysis stage, the data was organized into categories, reviewed and constantly coded; broadly it was done manually and also using NVivo 12 for categorization. These recorded interviews were first transcribed and translated into English and then thematically analysed. Riessman (2008) recommends thematization for the analysis of narratives and ethnographic data explaining how 'prior theory serves as a resource for interpretation of spoken and written narratives' (p. 74), and how these narratives in turn have shaped individual and group identities. The data thus obtained through the interview texts is analysed through the lens of the ethnography of LPP.

Teachers' Language Perceptions

The findings revealed that the background of the teachers, among other factors, influenced their perceptions and language negotiating strategies, reflecting a complex interplay of various considerations. "Decisions about language are always context-dependent and hence can be both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic. LPP scholars have used the notions of language orientations, language attitudes, and language ideologies to theorize these processes" (McCarty, 2014, p 9). As referenced in Baldauf (2004) Harmann's pioneering exploration of prestige planning offers a nuanced understanding of planning as a process enriched by individual agency— Individual's personal backgrounds, expertise, and perceptions can be decisive in whether certain LPP requirements are accepted or rejected; what is termed as appropriation as discussed previously in depth in this document.

Ms. Shazia had her primary schooling in Swat, where the RL Pashtu has been dominant in the society as well as in the school. It is a remote area in the north where only the RL, Pashtu was the Mol at the primary level at that time. She recalls

From the intermediate [Foundation] level onwards our science subjects were in English-medium.... This transition from Pashtu-medium [primary schools] to Urdu-medium [in urban areas] and then to EMI had been really challenging to cope with, and I flunked... had to repeat a class...because I couldn't understand a word in the beginning... when I reached the higher education college; because the textbooks were in English and the language of instruction was also English.

She strategizes classroom language by using 'mix languages' as she puts it, i.e. code-switching between Urdu and English; realizing how challenging this transition to EMI at BS level could be for the students who are the *product* of Pashto/ Urdu medium schools hailing from peripheral areas where Pashto is the main language of communication in or outside the classes.

On the other hand, teachers educated in EMI schools often regard English as essential for academic and professional success. Ms Humera, who had been educated at an urban EMI school (convent e.g.) articulated this belief that Pashto could be their home language but for academic settings, for reading and writing particularly, it has to be English; and sometimes Urdu; stating, "*If there is English, the girls would progress and if there is Urdu, they will go backwards*". This perspective underscores the viewpoint, which reflects the teachers' personal experiences where English may have been essential to their educational paths, emphasising the idea that fluency in the language is synonymous with academic progression while the Urdu medium may not facilitate this. She feels it's '*difficult to translate the specific terminologies in Urdu or Pashtu because I just know them in English, I have to take help from Google to translate the scientific language [registers] in Urdu to make the students understand.*' Since the scientific terminologies are sourced from texts that are in English, finding their exact words in the indigenous language(s) can be challenging for educators coming from EMI institutional backgrounds and this adds an extra layer of preparation for the lesson to find the translations of the terms.

The cultural backgrounds of the teachers, including their native languages, significantly influence their attitudes toward language instruction. For instance, another educator Ms. Bina, expressed a strong cultural affinity to her mother tongue, saying, "*Pashtu is good, it's very good... it's just an attachment to it*". This statement reflects respect for their mother tongue while acknowledging the practical necessity of English in the educational system. Their cultural identity shapes their understanding of the importance of preserving their native language(s) alongside adapting to the demands of English instruction.

Ms. Bina highlights the significance of adopting English for instructions at the same time commenting "*Sometimes... there are girls whose English is so weak that we don't understand their sentences...*". This highlights the challenges they face when students struggle with English, often leading them to rely on Urdu to ensure comprehension. Their language skills influence their teaching strategies and the methods they engage to communicate effectively with students.

The teachers' proficiency in English directly impacts their confidence and effectiveness in teaching the language. Those with extensive experience in English language instruction may develop specific strategies to address language barriers. For example, "*Our focus is on clarifying the concept so that they can understand it in any language*"(Ms. Nadia). This reflects an adaptive teaching approach, emphasizing the importance of concept clarity over strict adherence to English. Their professional experiences shape their understanding of effective teaching practices and the necessity for flexibility in Mol.

Teachers are also influenced by societal attitudes toward English, which is often perceived as a language of prestige and opportunity. One respondent asserted, "*English is required for their*

[students'] future" (Nadia), indicating a belief that English proficiency is essential for success in the job market. This societal pressure can lead teachers to prioritize English instruction, despite challenges, as they feel their students must compete in a globalized world. The motivations behind teaching English are shaped by the teachers' backgrounds and personal beliefs. For instance, Ms. Nadia also emphasized the role of educated parents in teaching their children, stating, *"I think if a mother has good English or good Urdu, she will be able to teach her children in a better way, than [knowing] just mother-tongue"*. This reflects a commitment to fostering language proficiency among their students, as they believe that strong English language skills are crucial for future success.

Wodak and Fairclough (2010 as cited in Johnson, 2013) argue that language policy can be recontextualized in different ways because of the unique sociolinguistic and sociocultural features (e.g. language attitudes and ideologies) within a particular context. 'Persons, encounters and institutions are profoundly interlinked, and a great deal of research is concerned with the nature and dynamics of these linkages'(p. 5). The role of languages in the teacher's immediate environment and outside the institution influences educator's perceptions, beliefs and attitudes. Language policies often originate at the national or institutional level, prioritizing dominant languages like English as MoI to align with global academic and professional trends; yet the practitioners' language attitudes contextualize their practices at the microlevel.

Classroom Dynamics: Processes of Creation, Interpretation, and Appropriation

As revealed above, the interview narratives reveal the power of teachers' agency—underlying language ideologies that shape teachers' beliefs about the importance of English, Urdu, and Pashto— in determining the classroom language policy. The educators' bilingual approach; primarily using Urdu and English for instruction; is essential for catering to the diverse educational backgrounds of students. With a majority of students preferring Urdu viz a viz English for comprehension and illustration, the teacher recognizes the need to use this language to ensure clarity and understanding. The respondent Ms. Humera states,

"The girls who have come from Urdu medium (schools) want that they should be taught in Urdu, it makes more sense in Urdu to them," indicating the necessity of using Urdu for effective communication and teaching. However, less than half of students are comfortable with EMI, which is crucial for discussing scientific concepts that may not have direct translations in Urdu"; emphasizing the growing importance of English in higher education, where scientific terminologies often originate from English-speaking contexts.

The teacher accentuates the importance of using Urdu in the classroom to connect with students. While English is the MoI, the teacher acknowledges that many students are more well-versed in Urdu or Pashto. This is evident when the respondent states, *"While Pashto is the local language, mostly speak Urdu and Pashto too in the classroom"* (Interview 2, Ms. Bina). This highlights the necessity of adapting language use to meet students' needs and ensure effective communication. The teacher interprets and negotiates this EMI policy in the context of her classroom, acknowledging both the need for global relevance (using English for scientific terms) and the local need for accessibility (using Urdu for explanations).

Ms. Humera's statement *"We use the (scientific) terminology in English only, they are very difficult to convert in Urdu and we do the rest of communication in Urdu for clearing the concept,"* demonstrates how the policy is filtered through the lens of practicality and teachers' agency. Despite EMI policy at the BS level to teach pure sciences, educators need to negotiate this in terms of practical goals of teaching where their emphasis is to clarify the concepts rather than improving English language proficiency.

"Those [English language teachers] who teach English subjects try to speak as much English as possible with the girls in the class. Their focus is on grammatical mistakes and improving their language skills, not ours" (Ms. Shazia).

And the comment: *"It's important, you know...sometimes the concept is clear to her (the student) but she doesn't know how to write [in English].... Then we tell her to improve her English through English classes or go to the library. There are some girls whose writing is very dirty. There is a girl in BS; her handwriting is so dirty I don't understand what she writes... I don't understand how she got here (in BS). Her writing is so bad that nothing makes sense"*. (Ms. Nadia)

The content teachers cannot overlook the importance of English language proficiency as essential for academic achievement: it's the language of curricula and examinations. It's fundamental for expression and to 'make sense' in an academic setting. The concept of appropriation in policy enactment is particularly relevant here. Policies are not applied uniformly; they are interpreted and adapted by educators to suit their specific contexts. The bilingual strategy is a common practice of appropriation amongst educators; as it balances societal expectations (English as a global language) with students' linguistic capabilities (Urdu as an indigenous language). This shows how policies are not rigidly applied but rather moulded according to the needs of the audience. Yet, self-policing can have its limitations. The linguistic practices of the instructors in the classroom present an obvious non-preference of the RL, in contrast to its existence in the informal settings within the institution.

The casual staff-room language; the educators inform; is a combination of Urdu, Pashto, and English, with Urdu still being the widely used language. The respondent mentions, "Mostly Urdu is spoken," (Ms. Shazia) suggesting that it serves as a common ground for colleagues, fostering a sense of community and collaboration among staff members. The use of multiple languages in this context reflects the social dynamics of the workplace, where Urdu acts as a bridge for effective communication and camaraderie among educators. Nonetheless, Pashto also very much exists for everyday conversation particularly to communicate with the lower, lesser educated staff of the college and with those hailing from the rural background.

The use of the English-Urdu repertoire in a formal academic setting aligns with both the inclusivity goals of policy (using the national language) and the aspirational goals of society (emphasizing English). However, the informal use of multiple languages in the staff room reflects the need for flexibility in language use according to addressees and degree of formality in this multilingual ecology.

This adaptive enactment of policy demonstrates the practical challenges of implementing language policies in diverse societies. Ultimately, the findings suggest that individual *agency*

plays a crucial role in educational policy and practice, allowing teachers to navigate and redefine their teaching environments. Every actor perceives these policies from a different perspective and accordingly appropriates the original plans and discourses. Research indicates that educators who want to see change can wisely create spaces for the pedagogies they prefer (Mannan et al., 2020).

This approach has also been termed as *self-policing* or “doing language policy” by Amir (2013) at the institutional level referring to the process of interpretation and practice at the agentive level- particularly from the teachers’ point of view. Rahman (2010) argued that policy may be a stated document, a part of the constitution, and yet it may be nothing more than a “propaganda point” ..., *the real language policy* exists in the language *practices* of the people (p. 2).

Language Policy and Societal Discourses

Policies do not exist in isolation; they are *shaped* by societal narratives about language. As the national language, Urdu occupies a middle ground, enabling communication across different socio-economic groups. However, it lacks the global prestige of English.

Urdu is acknowledged as an important language for communication within Pakistan, especially in urban areas and the federal territory. The educator Ms. Bina advocates for the coexistence of Urdu and English, asserting, “*Urdu and English must be parallel to each other,*” indicating that both languages are necessary for effective communication across various contexts. In this case, Urdu acts as a unifying language that accommodates students from different linguistic backgrounds. It reflects a policy goal of inclusivity, where everyone can access education regardless of their native language. The quote, “*Mostly Urdu is spoken,*” indicates its dominant role as a bridge language.

Societal discourse positions English as a symbol of modernity, progress, and opportunity. The emphasis on English in the educational context as an MoI reflects its colonial legacy and its current status as the language of science, technology, and global communication. This historical and global context explains why English is prioritized in education, even in multilingual societies.

This is evident in the teachers’ emphasis on English as a necessary skill for higher education and international communication. However, this aspirational view also creates pressure on students from non-English-speaking backgrounds to conform. The teachers also touch on the cultural identity associated with language use. The respondents note that while Urdu is widely comprehensible at all social strata, Pashto is the home language for many students, which influences their informal interactions. The respondent labels Pashto as an ‘informal language’: dominant as a widely spoken people’s language: “*Students do talk to each other in Pashtu even in the class too;.....in the informal settings*” (Ms. Bina). This implies that RL is a language of ease and routine for the intra-ethnic communication, simultaneously serving as a symbol of cultural and ethnic identity.

While Pashto is widely used in everyday interactions, particularly outside the educational institution, its significance diminishes in formal and academic settings. The teacher points out, that unfamiliarity with Pashtu, is a “hindrance in everyday communication,” outside the class

even at the institutional level while interacting with the support and *class four* staff (e.g. peons, watchmen, sweepers etc) implying, on one hand the primacy and presence of the RL in the social discourses; while also unveiling its depreciating status in the *language pyramid* (see Melchers & Shaw, 2003 in Anwar & Ali, 2021). This suggests that, although Pashto is vital for local interactions and cultural identity, it lacks the prestige and utility associated with English and Urdu in educational and professional environments. Consequently, Pashto may be viewed as less relevant in contexts that prioritize academic and formal communication.

Pashto may not be the only mother tongue of all in this region, yet it is the sole language commonly spoken by the lower socio-economic groups and is largely excluded from formal education in the urban setting particularly at the higher levels. This exclusion reflects societal hierarchies where local languages are devalued in favour of those associated with power and privilege: *“Mostly the people who are from lower [social] class or non-educated can speak Pashto only,”* features this dynamic. These positioning and social statuses of languages impact the institutional practices and the way they are negotiated according to the context. Ms. Shazia with her Pashtu-speaking origin and educational background, voices the concern of how decapacitating it could be to just stick to RLs as MoI at the behest of other languages. The realization that it cannot serve as the MoI at the higher education level is strong.

“Pashtu is majorly spoken in the KP region, but it’s difficult to interact with [communities] outside this province if we just cling to the RLs....., our communication capacity would be very limited then;... we couldn’t go forward in society and go up the higher levels. For this reason, I don’t think Pashto should be [MoI] at the BS level”.

Her comments highlight the necessity of adopting Urdu as a bridge language for inter-state connectivity; at least. At the same time, it manifests the significance of adopting English as an MoI at the higher education level for upward mobility as well as a vehicle for connection to the world beyond. Proficiency in English symbolises power associated with its prestige: one of the educators, Ms. Humera observed that students who are more proficient in English may intimidate their peers, creating a challenging environment for those who are less confident in their English language skills, *“Sometimes students approach with the complaint, and we also observe in the class, that the English-medium students try to intimidate and dominate others by speaking in English”*. The societal hierarchy of languages mirrors power structures, where language proficiency becomes a determinant of access to education and opportunity. The institutional discourses thus uncover the wider undercurrents where EMI schooling stands for upper social strata and Urdu/ RL- medium schooling for a commoner; private high-fee institutions set against the public institutions.

Discussion

This case study exists as a method in its own standing; simultaneously supplementing as a “consultation exercise” (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; p.9) to apprise and validate findings and patterns summarized from the main scoping review, in a nutshell. Parallel to the oft-referred *guru* literature in the field of LPP, this paper dedicates space for the review of the latest studies by following a transparent iterative process of scoping studies. According to Ricento (2000), the key element which separates the older, positivistic/technicist approaches from the newer critical/postmodern ones is agency, that is, the role(s) of individuals and collectivities in the processes of language use, attitudes, and ultimately policies” (p. 208).

Hornberger (2006) argued eloquently that “language [diversity] is not a problem unless it is used as a basis for discrimination” (Haugen, 1973, p.40). Moreover, “To take a simple example: to declare a language the national official language, while not providing incentive or opportunity for it to be a school language..... will not go far toward achieving the stated goal (Hornberger, 2006; p.10). In multilingual societies; as is the context of this case study; the positioning of languages is highly impacted by the official status of a language. These dynamics are reflected in the educational settings in the perceptions and practices of the stakeholders rendering it significant to analyse them in relation to the societal discourses.

Peláez & Usma (2017) employed critical and sociocultural approaches for the study of policy revealing there exists the perpetuation of inequality through nonconsensual and centralized policies. They use the metaphor of ‘language policy appropriation as a chain’(p.130); reverberating the notion of the oft referred ‘LPP Onion’ (García & Menken, 2010; Johnson & Ricento, 2013, French & Armitage, 2020) unpeeled ethnographically (Ricento & Hornberger 1996; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007); effectively illustrating the multilayered nature of the LPP that serves to reframe it as a complex sociocultural process (Hornberger 1988; McCarty 2011). Tollefson (2013) observed that with the development in critical approaches, LPP scholarship now deals with how economic disparity and macro policies influence the life opportunities for the low and working-class people, and also how it is more generally sociocultural, dealing with the issues of status and prestige. Critical LPP, hence, advanced from a concern with economic resource redistribution to regard and appreciation for sociocultural diversity in growing multiracial and multicultural societies. This implies a new perspective on what can be called identity politics: this trending perspective in LPP scholarships has engaged mainly on social issues around ethnolinguistic identity, and wider concerns on global issues such as ethnonational struggles (Block & Corona, 2019). The appropriative strategies at the classroom level reflect the broader social strains in the context of multilingual Pakistani ecology concerning “language as a symbol of identity” dispersed over regional boundaries of the country as ethnic groups and their RLs; and the use of language as an Mol entering into “politics of social class, deprivation, marginalization...affecting the way social mobility and class formation are affected by language. Both are connected with politics, i.e., the way in which power is distributed in society” (Rahman, 2010). Local/RLs are “perceived to be good as identity carriers” that could be best used in intra-ethnic and everyday communication, whereas research at the higher education level has uncovered “an explicit privileging of Urdu and English” as a language of *academic literacy* possessing wealth and power (Manan & David, 2014). Urdu is the link language and a vehicle for nationalistic unity between the people of indigenous linguistic background (Abbas et al, 2018), — serving as “a centralizing, cohesive symbol of the nation” (Rahman, 2019; p.9)—and is also the medium of instruction (Mol) in educational institutes, particularly in public schools. Whereas English is the official and international language, EMI is used in private elite schools and also at higher levels especially to study science and technology. English remains to have a special status in Pakistan in keeping with other postcolonial states due to its century-long hold in the ruling and elite class during the British Raj. Alam (2007) observes “From Jinnah [the founder]to the current leader.... the preferred language of Pakistani rulers has been English. The masses, by general inclination keen to follow the ruling class, have honestly tried to keep pace.”

This interplay between policy and discourse reveals how language choices in education reinforce social stratification while also providing pathways for progress. English is regarded

as a “*passport* to power, prestige and an array of social, economic and cultural goodies” in the context of Pakistan (Manan et al. 2015, p. 221), and “English for the elite” (Rahman, 2019). These dynamics illustrate how language policy both mirrors and perpetuates societal inequalities, particularly in the context of EMI as also emerged from the findings and discussion of the scoping review above.

Conclusions

The teachers’ linguistic practices exemplify how language policies are dynamically interpreted and adapted within specific physical, social, and historical contexts. They also highlight the tensions between inclusivity and aspiration, as well as the broader societal inequalities reflected in language use. Where RLs stand for ethnic identity and cultural affinities, their applicability diminishes in the educational linguistic practices particularly in the formal settings in higher education endorsing their status as *informal language* placed at the lowest rung of the ladder. Urdu maintains its standing as an urban language, a vehicle of nationalistic unity and link—widely spoken and understood—for intra-regional and ethnic communication. In classroom settings, it still serves as a *bridging language* by the educators used as a medium of communication and filling in gaps in comprehension and proficiency in English even when EMI is the stated policy. As discussed above, the status of English particularly as Mol commensurate with *prestige* in the hierarchy of languages (English > Urdu > RLs) in this diverse linguistic ecology eclipsing the status of Urdu and RLs as a ladder for vertical mobility.

Educators’ backgrounds—including their educational experiences, cultural settings, language proficiency, professional experiences, social expectations, and personal motivations—have a significant impact on their agency and approaches to teaching English. These factors influence their commitment to helping students develop the language skills they will require in the future and how they manage the challenges of teaching in a multilingual environment. By providing particular examples of how these factors manifest in their teaching beliefs and methods, the interview narratives highlight the complexity of language learning in respective educational settings and how these influences show up in their teaching philosophies and practices.

In inference, analysing the teachers’ perceptions and appropriative practices through the lens of the ethnography of LPP reveals the complex dynamics at play in educational language. It highlights the discourses on how the classroom practitioners’ agency is shaped by cultural and societal contexts that significantly inform their language practices and Mol implementation. This perspective underscores the importance of understanding language policies not just as top-down mandates but as *lived* experiences that are shaped by the realities of learning and teaching in multilingual polities. By considering these factors, educators and policymakers can better address the challenges and opportunities presented by language instruction in diverse educational contexts.

This study attempts to contribute to the investigations approached through the multidisciplinary lens-ethnography of LPP has been regarded as a method as well as a theoretical perspective. By applying the theoretical framework of the ethnography of LPP, we can see that language policies are not static; they get shaped and appropriated through interaction with societal discourses and local realities. Multilingual practices can bridge gaps

in accessibility while also reinforcing hierarchies. Understanding the contexts in which policies are enacted is essential for creating more equitable language practices.

In the same vein, ECS also guides the case study method as a contextualized design. It is contended that syntheses of both- Ethnography of LPP and ECS- complement the situations where the data has to be collected from a single site to study the human agents and their interactions, processes and linguistic attitudes. Inter/multidisciplinary perspectives may appear experimental at one stage, yet they add to the richness of approaches to address an issue. Also, paving the way for future research. Here also lies the significance of this study.

Notes

- The BS program in the context of colleges and Universities in Pakistan is an undergraduate program offered in a variety of fields such as Botany, Chemistry, Mathematics, Computer Science, Physics, Business, and many others. The BS degree corresponds to a Bachelor's degree in other countries and is generally pursued after completing higher secondary education (12th grade or equivalent).
- The title 'Ms.' in the context of this study has been used as a generic deferential title with the pseudonyms of the educators, regardless of their seniority-wise designations (e.g.: Professor) and marital statuses, in any manner.

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